

ISLAMIC STUDIES

For

SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL

BOOK 3

by

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## DEDICATION

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I dedicate this book to SHEIKH AHMED LEMU, my husband, without whose encouragement it would not have been completed.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Praise be to Allah the Guide to His path, to whom all service is due, and may His bounties and blessings be on His Messenger and on his household, his companions and on all who follow the Guidance until the Day of Judgment.

My gratitude also goes to the following who helped to make this book ready for publications:

My husband, for his corrections and many valuable suggestions;

My typist, Mallam Aliyu Muhammad, for his endless patience;

My son, Nuruddeen, and daughter, Maryam, who helped with the proof reading.

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## PREFACE

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Islamic Studies for Senior Secondary Schools has been written to guide students through the topics prescribed in the National Curriculum for Islamic Studies in preparation for the West African Senior School Certificate examinations.

It will be noted that the Senior Secondary Curriculum is divided into the following sections:

Paper 1     Hidayah (Guidance)

Section A: The Qur'an

Section B: The Hadith

Section C: Tahdhib (Moral Education based on the Qur'an and Sunnah)

Paper 2     Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence)

Section A: Tawhid (Faith)

Section B: Ibadat (Modes of Worship)

Section C: Mu'amalat (Human Transactions)

Paper 3     Tarikh (Historical Development of Islam)

Section A: Sirah (The Life of the Prophet and the Leadership of the Four Orthodox Caliphs)

Section B: The Spread of Islam to West Africa

Section C: Contributions of Muslims to World Civilization.

This series of books has a long history. It goes back to the 1980's when the Nigerian government adopted the 6-3-3-4 system for primary and secondary schools.

The ERCD during that time set up a panel of scholars to prepare the new curricula for all the school subjects, including Islamic Studies. Among these scholars were the late Justice Bashir Sambo, the late Professor Doi, the late Professor Ismail Balogun, Professor Daud Shittu Noibi, Justice Abdulkadir

Orire, Justice Sheikh Ahmed Lemu, Professor Bidmos and Dr. Rahimson. I was also honoured to be a member of the panel.

To our surprise "Islamic Studies" was the last group to be summoned and time was against us. However, the challenge increased our determination to catch up with other subject groups who had been working on their curricula for several months. Fortunately the Islamic Studies members were already well known to one another, and had a good relationship. The most important objective of the panel was to provide a curriculum that would go beyond the limited contents in the old curriculum. It was agreed that they should aim to provide a broad enough syllabus for students to understand their religion and apply it to their daily lives.

In order to speed up the work the members were divided into sub-groups. Work began in the early morning and continued until night, while the scholars passed over their work for the other members to comment or amend.

Thanks to the harmony and good rapport among members, the panel finished the work and submitted it to the ERDC in record time. The curriculum was published and circulated to schools.

However this was not the end of the challenges to the new curriculum. Some of the new topics were not familiar to the Islamic Studies teachers. For example, some had no prior knowledge of the spread of Islam to West Africa. Some were not aware of the great achievements of Muslims in the arts, sciences, medicine, sociology, philosophy and so on. There was concern that some teachers might ignore these aspects of the new curriculum. It was this situation that prompted me to embark on writing a series of books for Junior and Senior Secondary students. These books could not have been written without the selfless inputs of the scholars on the panel. Thanks to their wide knowledge, the books have remained in circulation over the decades.

At the end of each chapter is a section entitled "EXERCISES". Some of these are questions designed to test whether students have remembered and understood the contents of the chapter. Other questions however are intended to make the student think and relate what is in the chapter to his daily life or to the situation of our society today. In this case the answer is to be found not in the text but in thought and discussion between teacher and students on the

implications of the text for our way of life.

Over the past years the books have been published by the Islamic Education Trust, alongside my New Junior Islamic Studies Series. We have however, for reasons of easier access, decided to choose Oxford University Press as our publisher with effect from the current year, 2013.

I have taken this opportunity to make one or two additions including an Appendix providing extra resources for teachers of Islamic Studies.

B. Aisha Lemu, *MON, FNAE*  
Minna

January 2013 / Safar, 1434 A.H

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# SECTION I

## HIDAYAH (GUIDANCE)

### PART A: HADITH

## Hadith No. 15 from An-Nawawi's Forty Traditions

**Subject Matter:** "Let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak good or be silent, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day honour his neighbour, and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day honour his guest."

**Arabic Text:**

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى  
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ : مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ لِيَصُمْتُ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ  
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ جَارَهُ وَمَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ  
بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ ،

**Transliteration:**

*'An Abi Hurairata radi Allahu 'anhu, anna Rasul Allah, Sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallama qala "Man kana yu'minu billahi wal yaumil akhiri, fal yaquI khayran awil yasmut, wa man kana yu. minu billahi was yaumil akhiri, fal yukrim jarahu, wa man kana yu'minu billahi was yaumil akhiri, fal yukrim dayfahu."* Rawahu al-Bukhari wa Muslim.

**Full Translation:**

It was narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (may the benediction and peace of Allah be with him) said: "Let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day either speak good or be silent; and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day honour his neighbour; and let him who believes in Allah and the Last Day honour his guest." It was transmitted by Bukhari and Muslim.

**COMMENTARY:**

By reference to our belief in Allah and the Last Day, the Prophet reminds us that we shall be accountable to Allah on the Day of Judgment for everything we say and also for good treatment of neighbours and guests. Showing honour and generosity to neighbours and guests becomes hereby a religious duty. (It is to be remembered, however, that Islam also imposes some conditions on a guest, so that he should not over-stay his welcome or make himself a burden on his hosts.)

**EXERCISES**

1. Imagine you are in the company of others who are backbiting or discussing activities which are *haram* (forbidden) for Muslims. How should you respond?
2. Mention some ways in which you could show honour to neighbours.
3. Mention some ways in which you could make a guest feel welcome and honoured in your house.
4. Write out from memory the Arabic text and English translation of the above Hadith.

## Hadith No. 8 from Bukhari Vol. 3

**Subject Matter:** "He who does not give up uttering falsehood and acting according to it, Allah has no need for his giving up food and drink."

**Arabic Text:**

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَنْ لَمْ يَدَعْ قَوْلَ الزُّورِ وَالْعَمَلَ بِهِ فَلَيْسَ لِلَّهِ حَاجَةٌ فِي أَنْ يَدَعَ طَعَامَهُ وَشَرَابَهُ،

**Transliteration:**

'An abi Hurairata radi Allahu 'anhu qala qala Rasul Allahi Sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallama "Man lam yada' qaula al-Zuri was 'amala bihi fa laysa lillahi hajatun fi an yada'a ta'amahu wa Sharabahu."

**Full Translation:**

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may benediction and peace of Allah be with him) said: "He who does not give up uttering falsehood and acting according to it, Allah has no need for his giving up food and drink".

**COMMENTARY:**

This Hadith relates to fasting. It means that fasting has no value in the eyes of Allah unless the person fasting tries at the same time to purify his thoughts, words and behaviour. This is why some people derive no spiritual benefit from fasting, sincerity, repentance and the desire to avoid more sins are therefore necessary for a Muslim to derive full reward from his fast.

### EXERCISES

1. What is the difference between fasting to get slim and fasting in Islam?
2. In what ways is fasting a discipline of body and soul?
3. What is meant by "the spiritual benefits of fasting" and why is it necessary to avoid sinning as far as possible in order to obtain them?
4. Write out from memory the Arabic text and English translation of the above Hadith.

## Hadith No. 3 from Abu Da'ud Vol. 13

**Subject Matter:** "With Allah, the most detestable of all things permitted is divorce. ..

**Arabic Text:**

عَنِ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ  
وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ : أَبْغَضُ الْحَلَالِ إِلَى اللَّهِ عَزَّوَجَلَّ الطَّلَاقُ

**Transliteration:**

*'An ibn 'Umar radi Allahu 'anhū 'anin Nabiiyyi sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallama qala abghad al-halali ila Allahi 'azza wa Jalla al-talaqu.*

**Full Translation:**

It was narrated by Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (may benediction and peace of Allah be with him) said: "With Allah, the most detestable of all things permitted is divorce."

**COMMENTARY:**

In Islam, marriage is recommended as a great blessing. In a successful marriage the partners give each other love and companionship, compassion and peace of mind. This provides the ideal atmosphere for the care and upbringing of children, where both husband and wife through their example and guidance can with Allah's help impart to the children discipline, self-confidence, and religious and moral values.

Both husband and wife are therefore urged to take patience with each others' faults and short-comings so as to keep the marriage intact and stable.

However, there are some marriages where the partners find themselves to be so incompatible that the home, instead of being a refuge of peace and tranquility, becomes itself a battle-ground. The partners and their children (if any) find no happiness but only tension or quarrels. Or it may be that one of the partners fails or refuses to carry out his or her duties as required in Islamic marriage.

Therefore Allah the Merciful has permitted divorce as a way out in such cases. This Hadith makes it clear however that although Allah in His Mercy has made divorce lawful, He hates it. It is therefore morally incumbent on a Muslim man or women:

- (a) to avoid doing anything that could give grounds for divorce:
- (b) never to embark on divorce lightly; and
- (c) to use divorce only as a last resort when all else has failed.

### EXERCISE

1. What are the purposes of marriage?
2. How can a peaceful and happy marriage be maintained?
3. What are the harmful effects of using divorce without just cause?
4. What would be the feelings of a child whose parents are not on good terms, or are divorced?
5. What would be the harm of total prohibition of divorce under all circumstances?
6. Write out from memory the Arabic text and English translation of the above Hadith.

## Hadith from Ibn Majah and Baihaqi, in Mishkat al-Masabih Vol 2.

**Subject Matter:** "The seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim male and female."

**Arabic Text:**

**Transliteration:**

عَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ  
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى  
كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ وَمُسْلِمَةٍ "

*"An anasin radi Allahu 'anhu qala qala Rasul Allahi Sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallama: Talab al-ilmi faridatun 'ala kulli muslimin wa muslimatin."*

**Full Translation:**

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may benediction and peace of Allah be with him) said: "The seeking of knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim male and female."

**COMMENTARY:**

Islam is not a religion based on blind belief. A Muslim is urged in the Qur'an to observe, consider, think, and reflect deeply on the created world which he sees around him, which is full of Allah's signs that will guide him to belief in Allah as the conscious and merciful Creator. Knowledge inspires in a Muslim respect for Allah and fear of breaking His laws. As the Qur'an says in Surah 35 verse 28: "It is the learned among His servants who truly fear Allah."

The Hadith specifies moreover that there is no difference between men and women, girls and boys, in the duty of seeking knowledge.

In another Hadith the Prophet (ﷺ) is reported to have said: "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave." Therefore even after a Muslim has finished his or her formal education in school, college or university, he or she should find other ways, formal or informal, of enlarging his or her knowledge and understanding. It is a lifelong process.

The Qur'an tells us that when Allah created the first man, Adam, He "taught him the names" (Qur'an 2:31) - which some commentators understand to imply that Allah taught man to conceptualise and to speak. This is the basis of all knowledge and it is one of the greatest faculties that distinguishes men from beasts. The man or woman who refuses to develop this gift from Allah and seek for knowledge is therefore acting in disobedience to the advice of the Prophet (ﷺ).

### EXERCISES

1. Allah said in the Qur'an (Surah 35 verse 28): "It is the learned among Allah's servants who truly fear Him." How would you explain the connection between knowledge and fear of Allah?
2. In what ways could a Muslim continue to enlarge his knowledge and understanding after he or she has left full-time education?
3. How would you try to convince an uneducated Muslim to educate his children, both male and female?
4. Write out from memory the Arabic text and English translation of the above Hadith.

## Hadith No. 2 from Tirmidhi 39

**Subject Matter:** "He who goes forth in search of knowledge is striving hard in the way of Allah until he returns."

**Arabic Text:**

عَنْ أَنَسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ  
صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ مَنْ خَرَجَ فِي طَلَبِ الْعِلْمِ فَهُوَ  
سَبِيلَ اللَّهِ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ ،

**Transliteration:**

*'An Anasin radi Allahu 'anhu qala qala Rasul Allahi sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallama: man kharaja fi talab al-'ilimi fa huwa fi sabil Allahi hatta yarji'a.*

**Full Translation:**

Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (may benediction and peace of Allah be with him) said: "He who goes forth in search of knowledge is striving hard in the way of Allah until he returns."

**COMMENTARY:**

Searching for knowledge is here identified as a religious activity of high value and reward in Islam. In particular, this Hadith identifies those who leave their homes or perhaps even their countries to seek for and bring back knowledge.

Knowledge in Islam means not just the amassing of facts or useless information, but useful knowledge that benefits the learner intellectually, spiritually, morally and practically, and which he may pass on or utilise to benefit others. The Prophet (ﷺ) used to pray: "O Allah, benefit me from the knowledge that You have given me, and give me knowledge that is beneficial to me."

### EXERCISES

1. How would you distinguish between useful and useless knowledge. Can you give examples?
2. What does the above Hadith encourage us to do?
3. Write out from memory the Arabic text and English translation of the above Hadith.

## Hadith No. 23 from Bukhari 2

**Subject Matter:** “The signs of a hypocrite are three: When he speaks, he lies; and when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is charged with a trust, he deceives.”

**Arabic Text:**

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ  
عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: آيَةُ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثٌ، إِذَا حَدَّثَ  
كَذَبَ وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ وَإِذَا أُؤْتِمِنَ خَانَ،

**Transliteration:**

*'An Abi-Hurairata, radi Allahu 'anhu, 'anin Nabiyyi sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallama: qala ayatun munafiqi thalatun: Idha haddatha kadhdhaba, wa idha wa'ada akhlafa wa idha 'utmina khana.*

**Full Translation:**

Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (may benediction and peace of Allah be with him) said: "The signs of a hypocrite are three: When he speaks, he lies: and when he makes a promise, he breaks it: and when he is charged with a trust, he deceives."

**COMMENTARY:**

A hypocrite is a person who claims to believe in Allah and the Last Day, but is not sincere in his faith. Since he does not truly love or fear Allah, he does not follow Allah's guidance. Therefore he has no firm moral principles. He acts and speaks according to the convenience or advantage of the moment - hence the lies, the broken promises and the untrustworthiness. Sincerity is a very important quality in a Muslim. His ability to be honest in his behaviour in respect of the above three points is a reflection of the degree of his sincerity.

**EXERCISES**

1. A person is seen to be praying, fasting etc. and yet in your personal relations with him you find he is not to be trusted in his words or deeds or promises. Would you consider him to be a sincere believer? If not, why not?
2. Stop and reflect on how reliable you are. Do other people believe your words? - have faith in your promises? - entrust you with their property or their secrets? Think carefully about the implications of your answers.
3. If one, after self-examination, discovers that one does not possess the qualities mentioned in the Hadith, what could be done to remedy the situation?
4. Write out from memory the Arabic text and English translation of the above Hadith.



## Hadith No. 16 from An-Nawawi's Forty Traditions

**Subject Matter:** A man said to the Prophet (SAW): "Counsel me!" He (the Prophet) said: "Do not get angry." The man repeated (his request) several times, and he (the Prophet) said: "Do not get angry."

**Arabic Text:**

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَجُلًا قَالَ  
لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: أَوْصِنِي: قَالَ:  
لَا تَغْضَبُ فَرَدَّدَ مَرَارًا قَالَ: لَا تَغْضَبُ، رَوَاهُ الْبُخَارِيُّ

**Transliteration**

*'An Abi Hurairata radi Allahu 'anhu: anna rajulan qala lin Nabiyyi  
sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallama: ausini, qala: "La taghdab". Fa raddada miraran,  
qala: "La taghdab." Rawahu al-Bukhari.*

**Full Translation:**

It was narrated on the authority of Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that a man said to the Prophet (may benediction and peace of Allah be with him): "Counsel me!" He (the Prophet) said: "Do not get angry." The man repeated (his request) several times, and he (the Prophet) said: "Do not get angry." It was related by Bukhari.

### COMMENTARY:

Many people came to the Prophet for moral guidance on their behaviour, and the Prophet (ﷺ) would in replying give advice that applied to the particular person who asked and would at the same time guide people in general. This Hadith serves as a reminder to all Muslims not to allow anger to possess them so that they speak or act unjustly or harshly.

The Prophet's example in this respect is recorded in a Hadith where Anas reported that he worked for the Prophet for many years and the Prophet never once spoke to him word of impatience or blamed him for anything he did or omitted to do. (Bukhari Vol. 8)

In another Hadith from Abu Hurairah in Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet is reported to have said: "He is not strong or powerful who throws people down, but he is the strong among us who masters himself when angry."

### EXERCISES

1. The Prophet on one occasion advised that if one becomes angry while standing, he should sit down; and if he becomes angry while sitting, he should lie down. What is the wisdom of this advice?
2. Can you think of other methods of controlling anger when things go wrong?
3. What are the bad consequences of uncontrolled anger?
4. Write out from memory the Arabic text and English translation of the above Hadith.

## Hadith No. 11 from Tirmidhi 10

**Subject Matter:** "The most perfect of the Believers (in faith) is the one whose moral character is the best, and the best among you are those who are kindest to their wives (or women folk)."

**Arabic Text:**

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ : قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى  
اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ  
خُلُقًا وَخَيْرُكُمْ خِيَارُكُمْ لِنِسَائِهِمْ .

**Transliteration:**

'An Abi-Hurairata radi Allahu 'anhu qala qala Rasul Allahi sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallama: "Akmal al-Mu'minin imanana ahsannhum khuluqan wa khiyarukum khiyarukum li nisa'ihim."

**Full Translation:**

It was reported by Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (may benediction and peace of Allah be with him) said: "The most perfect of the believers (in faith) is the one whose moral character is the best, and the best among you are those who are kindest to their wives (or women folk)."

**COMMENTARY:**

Women in Islam are given such respect that a man's moral character may be measured by how he treats the women in his family. Therefore those men who treat their wives like slaves, ignoring their rights, ordering

them about, never consulting them or considering their own needs and feelings, would score very low as believers in the eyes of the Prophet and in the eyes of Allah.

In this Hadith the Prophet once more states that perfect faith is tied to good moral character. Good moral character is itself tied to mercy and kindness to those under our care. Women by their average size and physique are physically weaker than men. For this reason some misguided men end every quarrel with a beating, like a school bully who takes pleasure in beating smaller boys.

Moreover, because of a woman's role in child-bearing and infant care she is to a great extent dependant on her husband's support and maintenance. Some men regard maintenance of the wife as a favour instead of a duty to her, and make it another cause for despising the wife and women in general.

All such attitudes have been condemned in the Qur'an and Hadith. "The law of the jungle" and "the survival of the fittest" have no place in Islamic marriage or in the Muslim family. On the contrary it is kindness to those who are weaker — women, children, the old, the sick, the bereaved — that is the mark of a true believer.

### EXERCISES

1. What is the connection between moral character and faith?
2. Why is good moral character linked with kindness to women?
3. In which ways can men show kindness and consideration for women?
4. Write out from memory the Arabic text and English translation of the above Hadith.

## PART B: TAHDHIB

### [Moral Education]

## CHAPTER 9

### Trust (Amānah)

*"Allah commands you to render back the trusts to those entitled to them."*  
(Qur'an 4:59)

*Anas reported that Allah's Messenger said: "He has (really) no faith who does not fulfil his trust, and he has (really) no religion who does not fulfil his promise."*  
(Hadith from Bayhaqi)

*Abu Huraira related that Allah's Messenger said: "A hypocrite has three characteristics: when he talks he lies; when he makes a promise he does not fulfil it, and when trust is bestowed upon him he betrays it; even if he joins in prayer, observes the fast and esteems himself a Muslim."*  
(Hadith from Bukhari and Muslim)

#### 1. The Meaning of Amānah

Amānah may be translated as "a trust". It is a very important concept in Islam, and emphasises the aspect of man's free moral choice and responsibility for his actions.

Examples of Amānah are numerous. Almost every day we are given something in trust by our parents, our teachers or our friends. A simple example is when a fellow-student gives a friend something like a book or some money to take care of for him. It is very important not to take this lightly, as it is a test of whether he is worthy of a trust. He should do everything in his power to ensure that the article is returned undamaged and complete to its rightful owner. The same applies to someone who is appointed as Treasurer of a Society or Organisation, or a Government official.

Another example of Amānah is when someone is appointed as Trustee of an orphan's property until he/she grows up. Or a person may be asked by a close friend or relative to take care of his family while he travels overseas. He should carry out these responsibilities to the best of his ability and justify the confidence placed in him.

## Leadership and Justice

*Ibn 'Umar reported that Allah's Messenger said: "Take care! each of you is a shepherd and each of you will be asked concerning his flock. A leader is the shepherd over (his) people and he shall be asked concerning his flock; and a man is shepherd over the people of his house, and he shall be asked concerning his flock; and a woman is shepherd over the household of her husband, and over her children, and she shall be asked concerning them; and the slave of a man is shepherd over the substance of his master, and he shall be asked concerning it. Take care, then, each of you is a shepherd and each of you shall be asked concerning his flock."*

(Hadith from Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Da'ud and Tirmidhi)

*"O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of Allah, even though it be against your own selves or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, Allah's claim takes precedence over (the claims of) either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice: for if you distort (the truth), behold, Allah is indeed aware of all that you do."*

(Qur'an 4:135)

*The Messenger of Allah is reported to have said: "Whoever has two wives and does not deal justly between them, shall come on the Day of Resurrection with half his body falling off."*

(Hadith from Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah)

### 1. Leadership in Islam

The first Hadith quoted above makes it clear that leadership in Islam is important at all levels. Almost every adult person has leadership responsibility at one or another of the levels mentioned, either in his or her place of work or within the family.

Leadership means a form of guardianship and a person will be called to account by Allah for that guardianship. Leadership therefore implies caring for the welfare of those who are under leadership, doing what is best for them and guiding them on a correct course.

### 2. The seriousness of the obligation of Amānah

The hadith at the beginning of this chapter indicate that Amānah is a very serious obligation for a Muslim. These hadith indicate that if he betrays his trust, there is some serious defect in his faith. He is described by the Prophet as having "no faith" and "no religion". His untrustworthiness is also taken as one of the signs of a hypocrite.

It is therefore important for a Muslim to recognize that any trust he is given is a test which he may pass or fail. He should make every effort to fulfil his trust, even if it means some inconvenience to himself. Allah says in the Qur'an that He is the witness of all trusts and agreements even when they are made in private by two persons. For his trustworthiness Allah will reward him and people will value and trust him as a man of honour.

### EXERCISES

1. Give some different examples of Amānah (Trust) in everyday life.
2. Quote from memory some hadith and a Qur'anic verse about fulfilment of trusts.
3. Recall any occasions when you may have given a trust to someone and your trust was betrayed. What did you feel about trusting the person again?

## 2. The Importance of Justice

If a person is rightfully holding a leadership position, such as a parent or a constitutionally-chosen ruler, those under his or her leadership have a duty to obey provided the leader does not ask them to do what is against Islam.

The leader should therefore not abuse his position to commit injustice towards those under his leadership and care. A leader should seek the truth, uphold the truth and tell the truth, and should not favour his own family or class or tribe to the detriment of others. A leader who is partial or prejudiced and does not deal justly can never have peace. This applies to a Head of State, or a leader of any kind of institution or organization.

It also applies, as is seen in the last hadith quoted above, to family life. A husband of more than one wife who does not deal justly between them is warned of his fate in the Hereafter, when his bodily shape will reflect the imbalance of his leadership.

## 3. Harmful effects of injustice

Injustice in a leader causes hatred, jealousy and distrust among the followers.

Injustice in a husband has the same effect on wives and children. Whether the family or the nation, there can be no peace and tranquility but only constant distrust, resentment and periodic crises.

Students who take on leadership roles at school also soon become aware that if they do not show justice and fair play they become unpopular and cannot obtain the willing co-operation of those they hoped to lead.

## 4. The Model Just Leader

The best example of just and responsible leadership is to be found in Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). This has been described in some detail in Book 1 of this series. The study of his life and ways of dealing with people is therefore a source of inspiration and understanding for all generations to come.

## EXERCISES

1. Explain how Islam has assigned responsibilities of leadership at all levels, according to a Hadith.
2. What are the responsibilities of leadership, and what makes a good leader?
3. Quote a Hadith on justice in the family.
4. Describe the likely ill-effects if a leader is unjust:
  - (a) in the nation or community
  - (b) in the family.
5. How could good leadership be demonstrated by a student who is appointed a Head Boy, Head Girl, Prefect, Class Monitor or President of a students society?
6. Look up Book 1 Chapter 58 of this series and review the practice of leadership and justice of the Prophet.

## Perseverance and Patience

*"By the (flight of) time!  
Verily man is in (a state of) loss,  
Except those who attain to faith,  
and do good works,  
and enjoin upon one another keeping to truth,  
and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity."*

(Qur'an 103:1-3)

*"O you who believe!  
Seek aid in steadfast patience and prayer:  
For, behold, Allah is with those who are  
patient in adversity."*

*"And say not of those who are slain in God's  
cause, 'They are dead': nay, they are alive,  
but you perceive it not."*

*"And most certainly shall We try you by  
means of danger, and hunger, and loss of  
wordly goods, of lives and of (labour's fruits).  
But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in  
adversity,"*

*"Who, when calamity befalls them, say,  
'Verily, unto God do we belong and, verily,  
unto Him we shall return.'*

*"It is they upon whom their Sustainer's  
blessings and grace are bestowed, and it is they,  
they who are on the right path!"*

(Qur'an 2:153-157)

The Prophet is reported to have said:

*"Wondrous are the affairs of the true Believer.  
For there is good in all his affairs and this  
is so only for the true Believer (Mu'min).  
When something pleasing happens to him, he is  
grateful (to Allah), and that is good for  
him, and when something displeasing happens  
to him, he exercises patience and perseveres,  
and that is good for him."*

(Hadith from Muslim)

Umm Salamah reported that the Prophet (p.h.u.h.) said:

*"The Prophet loved an action which could be performed  
regularly, although it were little."*

(Hadith from Nasa'i)

### 1. The meaning of Sabr

*Sabr* is an Arabic word which means patience, perseverance or endurance. It is a quality which every Muslim should try to cultivate, in view of the importance given to it in the Qur'anic verses and Hadith quoted above, which are examples of many others.

### 2. Sabr in the Qur'an

In the first quotation above, Surah 103 of the Qur'an, practising and encouraging others to practise *sabr* and holding to the truth are described as essential qualities for man to succeed in his earthly trials.

This point is further elaborated in the second quotation (Qur'an 2:153-157). This passage counsels Muslims to pray for Allah's help and practice *sabr* whenever they face hardship, loss and danger. It assures that they are on the right path and that Allah's blessings and grace are theirs.

### 3. Other Illustrations of Sabr

Further illustrations of the importance of *Sabr* are found in other verses of the Qur'an and in the Hadith. The first above-quoted Hadith teaches us how to respond to the ups and downs of our daily life in such a way that each brings



blessings. A truly faithful Muslim responds with gratitude to Allah when things go right, and with *Sabr* when things go wrong, so that he constantly pleases Allah with his faithfulness.

The second Hadith indicates that even in matters of worship or good deeds it is small things done regularly with patience that are more pleasing to Allah than sudden bursts of piety followed by relapse when the person gets tired. *Sabr* therefore also implies steadiness and constancy.

#### 4. How the Prophet demonstrated Sabr

The Prophet practised *Sabr* throughout his life, which was full of hardship and persecution by the idol-worshippers and betrayal by the hypocrites. The occasion when he was stoned and driven out of Ta'if illustrates his practice of *Sabr*. So does his endurance of the behaviour of hypocrites such as Ibn Ubayy in Madinah. So does his patience with his servant as witnessed by Anas who reported that he served the Prophet in his house for ten years and the Prophet never once reproved him or asked him why he did something or did not do something. Other examples of the Prophet's *Sabr* may be found in Book 1 Chapter 58 of this series.

#### EXERCISES

1. Explain what is *Sabr*?
2. Summarize what the Qur'an says about *Sabr*.
3. What should be a Muslim's response:
  - (a) When things go right for him?
  - (b) When things go badly for him?
4. Describe what kinds of small but regular acts of extra worship or help to others could you perform.
5. Give some more examples of how the Prophet practised *Sabr*.
6. Give examples from the life of students of events which necessitate the exercise of patience, endurance and perseverance.

## Taqwa (God-Consciousness)

*"Righteousness does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west - but righteous is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and Revelation, and the Prophets; and spends his substance - however much he may cherish it - upon his near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage; and is constant in prayer, and renders the Zakat; and (righteous are) they who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in time of danger: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they who are conscious of Allah."*

(Qur'an 2:177)

*"O you who believe!  
Fasting is prescribed for you,  
As it was prescribed for those before you,  
So that you may attain Taqwa."*

(Qur'an 2:183)

#### 1. The meaning of Taqwa

*Taqwa* may be translated as "God-consciousness", and is sometimes also translated as "piety" or "fear of God". *Taqwa* is shown in righteous action.

#### 2. Qur'anic description of those who have Taqwa

A full description of people who are "conscious of God" and therefore righteous in conduct is given in the verse of the Qur'an quoted above. This verse makes it clear that *Taqwa* is not mere compliance with the outward forms of religion. Rather *Taqwa* comprises sincere practice of the Pillars of Islam and moral firmness, including:

- (a) Belief in Allah and the Day of Judgment, and in His Angels, Revelations and Prophets;
- (b) Free giving of Sadaqah to those in need (even of the things a person who like to keep for himself) as well as payment of the compulsory Zakat;

- (c) constancy and regularity in prayer;
- (d) keeping of promises; and
- (e) patience in times of misfortune, hardship and danger.

These are the qualities which can identify people who are true to Allah, to their faith and to other people, and it is such people who have *Taqwa*.

### 3. Means of attaining Taqwa

The second Qur'anic verse quoted at the opening of this chapter gives an indication that a person can improve his *Taqwa* by the faithful practice of any of the Islamic modes of worship including fasting, in addition to those already discussed. Fasting is a strict test of self-restraint and endurance. It is also an excellent exercise in *Taqwa* since the genuineness of a fast can be known only to Allah and the person concerned.

### 4. Implications of Taqwa for the individual, family and society

The possession of *Taqwa* must obviously improve the attitudes and behaviour of the person who possesses it. He or she is firm in faith, generous and kind to family and relatives and to all those in need or distress; patient and enduring when hardship or danger comes. He has learned to overcome his selfish tendencies and to rely on God for his support and safety.

If every Muslim will strive to practise his religion in full sincerity there is no doubt that his *Taqwa* will increase. He becomes a better person, who will tend under any circumstances to take right moral choices. Thus not only does he benefit himself in this world and the hereafter; he also benefits his family and the society where he lives and works. He does not need to be lectured, watched, policed or forced before he does good. It is the cultivation of *Taqwa* at individual level that therefore ultimately produces a good society as a whole.

### EXERCISES

1. How is *Taqwa* translated in English?
2. List the actions and behaviour which may be regarded as evidence of *Taqwa* in a Muslim.

3. Mention some ways by which you could strengthen your own *Taqwa*.
4. Explain how cultivation of the quality of *Taqwa* must affect the individual, family and society.
5. Enumerate some common vices in the society which are due to weakness in the *Taqwa* of the individuals concerned.



## Unity and Brotherhood

*"And hold fast, all together, unto the bond with Allah, and do not draw apart from one another. And remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessings you became brethren ...."*

(Qur'an 3:103)

*"All believers are brethren. Hence (wherever they are at odds) make peace between your two brethren, and remain conscious of Allah, so that you might be graced with His mercy."*

(Qur'an 49:10)

*"And pay heed unto Allah and His Apostle, and do not (allow yourselves to) be at variance with one another, lest you lose heart and your moral strength desert you ...."*

(Qur'an 8:46)

Numan b. Bashir reported that Allah's Messenger (p.b.u.h.) said:

*"You see the believers in their mutual pity, love and affection like one body. When one member has a complaint, the rest of the body is united in its wakefulness and fever."*

(Hadith from Bukhari and Muslim)

### 1. The importance of Unity and Brotherhood

In the early days of Islam the Muslims were few and politically weak. But the common faith in Allah formed a bond of love between them and they supported each other under persecution and hardship. When the Muslims of Makkah migrated, the new Muslim City-State of Madinah was populated by many different groups. There were the two rival tribes of 'Aws and Khazraj who had formerly been quarrelling between themselves but who were now entering Islam. There were also the Makkah immigrants of the Quraysh tribe. In addition there were other groups of Madinan idol-worshippers, hypocrites and Jews who could not be relied on to help the Muslims in their times of danger and who were striving in their own ways to sabotage the Islamic State.

The Prophet helped to unify the Muslims by asking the Ansar (Helpers) to make themselves individually responsible for accommodating and helping the Muhājirūn (Emigrants from Makkah) to find a means of livelihood in Madinah.

The unity and true spirit of brotherhood of the Muslims was strong enough to withstand all attempts to cause dissention. Hence in spite of their small numbers they were able to defeat the Quraysh in battle and defend themselves against much larger armies. Their spirit of brotherly love moreover made a great impression on other nations so that they also flocked to become a part of the universal brotherhood of Islam. By the time of the Prophet's death most of Arabia had embraced Islam, and under the first Four Righteous Caliphs, the brotherhood of Islam encompassed Arabs, Syrians, Africans, Persians, Indians, Chinese, Malays, Egyptians, Berbers and numerous other tribes and nationalities. The multi-racial and international brotherhood of Islam was established.

### 2. Unity and brotherhood today

Today Islam has spread still further and there are Muslims living in every continent and almost every country in the world, including Western Europe, North and South America, the Caribbean, Japan and Australia.

In our modern world, torn by international conflicts and racial oppression, the Islamic teachings of universal brotherhood are more than ever needed. It is therefore necessary for Muslims to put aside un-Islamic disputes among themselves and demonstrate the unifying spirit of Islam for the world to see and learn from it. This Islamic brotherhood can still be experienced at personal level. Wherever a Muslim travels in the world he always feels at home among other Muslims. Muslims everywhere feel a sense of brotherhood in welcoming another Muslim from a distant land. Unfortunately the leaders of some Muslim countries have strayed from the path of Islam and fostered nationalistic sentiments in imitation of other countries and have therefore allowed disputes to break out between Muslim nations.

Even within some Muslim nations there are examples of factionalism, based on ethnic groups or sectarian inclinations. All these divisions weaken the unity of the Muslim Ummah and waste its energies.

## Enjoining what is right and Forbidding what is wrong

From this it can be seen that if Muslims fail to obey such Qur'anic injunctions as those quoted at the opening of this chapter (Qur'an 3:103; Qur'an 49:10) and the corresponding Hadith, they cannot enjoy the fruits of unity and brotherhood. Allah's way of dealing with mankind (Sunnat Allah) is constant and He has said:

*"Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves."*

(Qur'an 13:11)

Muslims must therefore resist the tendency of factionalism, and make peace between quarrelling groups. The practice of Islamic brotherhood, mutual cooperation and love are among the most important duties of Muslims to one another and to Islam.

### 3. Unity, Brotherhood and Hajj

Hajj is one of the Islamic institutions which fosters Islamic brotherhood and unity. It brings Muslims from every race and tribe together and enjoins them to treat each other with love and kindness. It thus offers many opportunities for increasing understanding between Muslims of all races.

#### EXERCISES

1. Assess the situation in Madinah just after the Hijrah with regard to the need for unity. How did the Prophet help to foster brotherhood between the Madinan Ansar and the Makkan Muhājirūn?
2. Discuss some international current events which show the need for Islamic teachings of international brotherhood.
3. Give examples of some effects of factionalism or nationalism or tribalism which could weaken the Muslim Ummah.
4. In what ways is international brotherhood fostered by the Hajj?

*.... In this way Allah makes clear His messages to you so that you might find guidance, and that there might grow out of you a community (of people) who invite unto all that is good, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong: and it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state."*

(Qur'an 3:103-104)

*"You are indeed the best Community that has ever been brought forth for (the good of) mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in Allah ...."*

(Qur'an 3:110)

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reported that the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h.) said: *"Whoever of you sees any wrong action, let him correct it with his hand; and if that is not possible, correct it with his tongue; and if that is not possible, correct it with his heart; and that is the weakest degree of faith."*

(Hadith from Muslim)

### 1. A duty for the Muslim Community

The first Qur'anic verses quoted above (Qur'an 3: 103-104) make a clear connection between Allah's messages and our finding guidance in them and responding to that guidance. The impact of the Qur'anic message should therefore result in a moral change in society as the believer not only reforms his own behaviour to accord with Allah's guidance, but also exerts pressure on others to abandon evil-doing and do what is right.

The second Qur'anic quotation confirms that the Muslim Community at the time of the Prophet did actually fulfil this duty.

### 2. A duty for Muslim communities for all time

If we examine some of the practices going on in Muslim communities today we can see that we have fallen away in many respects from the high moral standards of the Muslims at the time of the Prophet. In some places

Muslims openly practice flagrant injustice, oppression, cheating, sexual immorality and other sorts of wrong-doing and are not corrected by the rest of Muslim community. They therefore no more merit the description "you are the best Community" because they have stopped the practice of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.

### **3. How to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong**

The Hadith at the opening of this chapter makes it clear that the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil is not reserved only for a particular group in the community such as a priesthood or a police force or Government officials. It is the duty of every Muslim, whatever his or her social position, sex or age according to his or her ability. But this does not mean that everyone should take the law into his own hands and physically intervene to stop wrong-doing by force. Physical force is not always the best way of stopping wrong-doing. The Hadith means that each person should exert pressure against wrong-doing within the limits of his power and influence. A leader may perhaps have the power to stop wrong-doing by proper use of the police, the law, and other sanctions at his disposal. The leader has the duty to use any of these that may be effective in stopping the wrong-doing.

The ordinary citizen or a young person obviously does not normally possess the same powers to change things "with his hand". However, he has a tongue, and he should use it to speak against the evil concerned, and try to persuade those involved to stop. Or he could use his tongue to report the matter to a higher authority. By extension this includes writing to the authorities and writing to the press in order to mobilise public opinion and public pressure so that the wrong-doing may be stopped.

There may be circumstances however where a person is in such a difficult or dangerous situation that he cannot even speak against the evil. In this case he is expected at least to hate it in his heart and not join in the evil or feel indifferent to it.

Students may therefore consider what they can do to comply with the need to enjoin right and forbid wrong-doing in their own families and schools. They should not forget that as young people they must exercise a lot of tact and politeness in correcting or advising their elders.

### **EXERCISES**

1. Quote from memory the translation of Qur' an 3: 110
2. Explain the implications of the duty of enjoining right and forbidding wrong.
3. Quote from memory the Hadith about stopping wrong-doing.
4. Explain the meaning of the above Hadith.
5. Give examples of how to implement the above Hadith under various circumstances.
6. Illustrate how a junior student could apply the teaching of forbidding what is wrong and enjoining what is right among fellow students.

## Islam and Culture

*"Now whenever Allah and His Apostle have decided a matter, it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to claim freedom or choice in so far as they themselves are concerned: for he who (thus) rebels against Allah and His Apostle has already, most obviously gone astray."*

(Qur'an 33:36)

*"O you who have attained to faith! Surrender yourselves wholly unto Allah, and do not follow Satan's footsteps, for verily, he is your open enemy."*

(Qur'an 2:208)

### 1. The Meaning of Culture

Culture means the way of life of a people - their concepts, practices, manners, recreations, arts, dress and institutions.

Every nation and tribe in the world has its culture derived from its history, religion, and geographical circumstances. Cultures can be modified by changing circumstances and by contact with other cultures.

### 2. Islamic Culture

Islam gave birth to a new civilization and a new culture and way of life based on Islamic ideals, injunctions and precepts drawn from the Qur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Wherever Islam spread, it carried its culture and way of life which either superceded or blended with the culture of the locality.

### 3. Islamic Culture and Arab Culture

When the Prophet began his mission, the culture of the Arabs was a mixture of good and bad practices. Among their good practices was their love of hospitality and generosity. Among their bad practices were their inter-tribal vendettas and their ill-treatment of females.

The Prophet did not reject what was good in the pre-Islamic culture. He reaffirmed the good values and habits, practiced without comment those that were, so to speak, neutral, and made every effort to reform or remove the social

remove the social practices that were morally abhorrent or contrary to the teachings of the Qur'an.

It is therefore not correct to say that Islamic culture is Arab culture. Islamic culture is firmly based on the Qur'an, which is revealed for all nations and all times, and the Sunnah of the Prophet whom the Qur'an described as "a beautiful example" (Qur'an 33:21) for all believers to emulate.

### 4. Features of Islamic Culture

Islamic culture can be recognized in every aspect of a Muslim's life, from the moment he rises until the moment he sleeps. His day is punctuated by 5 occasions of prayer to his Creator. What he eats and drinks, and the way he eats and drinks, what he says: ("Bismillah", "in-sha Allah", "Al-hamdu lillah", "Assalamu Alaykum" etc.) all affirm his Islamic identity. His or her way of modest dressing, practices of hygiene, entertainment and type of social gatherings should all indicate that he or she is a Muslim.

### 5. The basis of acceptance or rejection of features of local culture

In every land that Islam reached or reaches it finds an indigenous culture. That indigenous culture, like the pre-Islamic Arab culture, contains some practices which are from an Islamic view point good, some which are bad, and some which are neutral.

Those that are compatible with Islamic values should obviously be preserved. For example, if the local culture teaches respect for elders and parents, Islam re-affirms this aspect of the culture. If the local cooking features yam or guinea corn rather than Arab bread or yoghurt there is no need to change the diet since all of these are morally neutral.

If however, the local culture includes drinking alcohol, promiscuous sexual relationships, vulgar dancing, witchcraft, fortune telling, superstitious beliefs, a caste system, cruelty to widows or other degrading practices which Islam has prohibited, a Muslim should abandon these things and urge other Muslims to abandon them.

The Qur'anic verses (Qur'an 2:208; 33:36) at the opening of this chapter urge believers to surrender themselves wholly to Islam. Therefore they should not cling to those features of their nation's pre-Islamic culture which Islam has specifically forbidden, but identify themselves whole-heartedly with Islamic values.

## 6. The basis of acceptance or rejection of western culture

By the same token, Islamic standards should be applied to the western culture which has spread to so many parts of the world in the wake of western economic and political power and colonization. A Muslim should use the criteria of the Qur'an and Sunnah to distinguish between what is good, what is neutral and what is bad in western culture and adopt, adapt or reject its various aspects accordingly.

For example, Islamic culture promotes education, medical and scientific research, and the welfare of the needy, just as western culture values these things, albeit from a different perspective. Muslims can learn from and make use of the western experience in these fields, and adapt them as required to conform with Islamic values.

Eating at a table or eating seated on the floor are both morally neutral practices, therefore a Muslim may take his choice, provided Islamic etiquette in eating is maintained.

However, the evils of certain aspects of western culture should be identified and avoided, such as drinking alcohol, sexual laxity, carelessness about dress and social behaviour, lack of respect for parents and elders, extreme individualism, secularism and neglect of spiritual development.

Islam in effect is a basic universal culture, and local variations in culture should reflect only what was good by Islamic standards of the pre-Islamic or other cultures, while its bad aspects are superseded by Islamic values and culture.

## EXERCISES

1. Define Culture.
2. Explain in what ways Islam accepted some aspects of Arab culture and replaced others with new Islamic values.
3. Explain on what criteria a Muslim should accept or reject aspects of:
  - (a) local culture
  - (b) western culture.

4. Mention some practices from traditional local and modern western cultures which are:
  - (a) acceptable in Islam
  - (b) unacceptable in Islam
5. Quote from memory the meaning of Qur'an 2:208:

## SECTION II

# SIRAH

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## Cleanliness

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### 1. *A Muslim must be clean*

Allah says in the Qur'an (74: 4 - 5): '**And purify your inner self and garments and keep away from all defilement.**'

The Prophet is reported to have said: '**(The religion of) Islam is clean, hence you should also keep yourself clean. No one will be allowed to enter Paradise except he who is clean.**' The cleanliness is of both the body and the mind.

### 2. *Why is it good to be clean?*

A dirty body, dirty hair, dirty teeth, dirty clothes are all unpleasant to look at, and give a bad smell. They offend other people.

A dirty body, dirty hair and dirty clothes attract lice. The dirty person therefore scratches his body and causes sore places which attract flies and spread germs. The lice may spread to other people.

Dirty teeth become yellow and rotten, give pain and soon have to be pulled out.

But clean, white teeth and a clean body in fresh, clean clothes are beautiful.

In the same way, if a person's mind and heart is clean, his character is good and pleasing. But if his mind is unclean it is a place of bad thoughts and a source of bad deeds.



### 3. *How should a Muslim keep himself or herself clean?*

*The body.* A Muslim should try to bathe daily if water is available.

*The hair.* The hair may be washed at least once a week.

*The teeth.* The teeth should be brushed several times a day (with a toothbrush or toothstick). It is recommended to brush the teeth at the time of ablution.

Aisha (the Prophet's wife) reported that the Prophet said: **'The toothstick is a means of purifying the mouth, and is pleasing to the Lord.'** (Hadith from Bukhari)

*The mind.* A Muslim should follow the guidance of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. He should do what is good and avoid what Allah has forbidden. If a Muslim does wrong he should repent sincerely at once and resolve not to repeat it. Regular prayers and fasting also help a Muslim to remember Allah regularly and to cleanse his heart and mind.

### 4. *Cleanliness for prayers*

A Muslim should be particularly clean and smart for prayers. He is to present himself in prayer before his Lord and King. Therefore he should make himself clean and pure by ablution (*al-wudū'*), make sure that his dress is clean and neat, and his mind free of bad thoughts

### 5. *Cleanliness of surroundings*

A person cannot stay clean if he allows his surroundings to be dirty. A Muslim should therefore keep clean his room, his house

and the surroundings of his house. He should burn or bury his rubbish and not leave it to blow around on to other people's property or on the road. He should not use roads or footpaths as toilets. These teachings on cleanliness are a way of showing respect for Allah, respect for our neighbours and other people, and respect for ourselves.

## QUESTIONS

1. What did the Prophet Muhammad say about keeping clean?
2. What is the harm of a dirty body, hair, teeth and mind?
3. How should a Muslim keep clean his:
  - (a) body?
  - (b) hair?
  - (c) teeth?
  - (d) mind?
4. Why should a Muslim be clean and neat for prayers?
5. A Muslim should clean the place where he lives, and its surroundings. Mention two bad habits that he should avoid which annoy other people.
6. What steps do you take to keep yourself and your clothes clean, from the time you get up until the time you go to bed?

## Relations with Non-Muslims

The Qur'an and Hadith make the position on the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims very clear. This position is summarized in Qur'an 60:8-9 which says:

"As for such (of the unbelievers) as do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave toward them with full equity: for verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth; and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who truly are wrongdoers!"

In other words, Muslims are enjoined to relate with non-Muslims amicably, with kindness and with justice, unless they are hostile or persecute Muslims or drive them out of their homes.

It further reaffirms that Muslims should not even engage them in argument "except in a most kindly manner" (Qur'an 29:46).

When it comes to social relations which fall under the category of *mu'āmalāt* (social transactions) the principle of jurisprudence stands that everything is permissible except where there is an explicit verse from the Qur'an or Sunnah that stipulates otherwise. The normative stance of Islam is that Muslims are urged to relate with all people with "*birr*" (goodness) and "*taqwa*" (piety, God-consciousness).

An examination of Islamic sources indicates that friendliness with non-hostile non-Muslims is permitted in Islam.

For example, it is permissible for marriage to take place between Muslim men and non-Muslim women who are Ahl-al-Kitab (people of the Book - Jews and Christians). This indicates a very close and loving relationship.

Islamic sources make it clear that there are good and bad members in all

faith groups.

The Prophet (ﷺ) trusted certain non-Muslims with his life and the lives of other Muslims.

The Prophet's openness to friendly relations with non-Muslims was such that he freely allowed them into his Mosque for discussions on their mutual pacts and alliances.

Muslims are allowed to visit non-Muslim neighbours and associates and may host non-Muslims in their homes.

Kindness and friendly gestures such as giving charity (*Sadaqah*) to all people, including Muslims, is encouraged in Islam.

Muslims are also expected to be dutiful and loving to their non-Muslim parents and relatives.

Nevertheless, a Muslim is advised not to allow his own moral and spiritual development to be weakened out of a desire to be accepted.

### Exercises

1. In a country which has a population that has large numbers of Muslims and Christians, what do you think are the best ways of achieving peaceful co-existence? Make 5 suggestions.
2. What are the likely consequences if people of different faiths avoid one another and refuse to co-operate?
3. What could you as a student do to foster good relationships with fellow students of different faiths?



## Islamic Political System I

### 1. The Sovereignty of Allah

When Allah created man He did so with the intention of placing him as His Khalifah (i.e. Vice-gerent) on earth (Qur'an 2:30).

A vice-gerent is an agent sent by a king to administer a territory in the king's name and in accordance with the king's instructions. The vice-gerent is not independent of the king, but is answerable to him for the way he governs the land. That way must be with justice. In another verse of the Qur'an Allah says, addressing Prophet Da'ud:

"Behold, We have made you a vice-gerent on earth: judge, then, between men with justice, and do not follow vain desire, lest it lead you astray from the path of Allah ..." (Qur'an 38:26)

The Qur'an also says

"And unto Allah belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, and Allah has the power to will anything." (Qur'an 3:189)

### 2. Sovereignty of Allah as the basis of the Islamic Political System

This concept of the sovereignty of Allah and the vice-gerency of man on earth is fundamental to the Islamic concept of political organization.

It has a number of important implications:

- (a) Man is not independent of Allah, but is to carry out Allah's will on earth.
- (b) Man is sent to earth not in disgrace as a punishment for his disobedience but in order to fulfil the noble role for which he was created - that of Allah's vice-gerent on earth.
- © Insofar as Allah may have given specific instructions through His messengers on how man's affairs on earth are to be administered according to His sovereign will, it is the duty of the vice-gerent to apply such instructions.

Where Allah has revealed a clear law, the vicegerent is to apply it and has no authority to introduce policies or methods that contradict that law.

### 3. The Significance of Allah's sovereignty and man's vice-gerent in the Islamic political system.

Personal judgment has its place but it cannot supercede Allah's basic laws or procedures established by the Prophet under divine guidance. This latter point was clearly illustrated by the Prophet's questions to Muadh ibn Jabal when he was sending him off to take up a post of Governor of Yemen. He asked him:

"How will you decide when a case is brought before you?" He (Muadh) replied: "I shall decide by the book of Allah" "But if you find nothing (therein)?" "Then I shall decide by the example of the Prophet." "And if you find nothing in the example of the Prophet?" "Then I shall exercise my own judgment and I shall not fail." The Prophet stroked his breast (in admiration of his excellent judgment). (Hadith from Tirmidhi)

The political organization of a Muslim nation should therefore operate within a set of guidelines, some of which are permanent and binding, others of which require the exercise of wise human judgment in accordance with the changing needs and circumstances of the time.

Vice-gerency therefore carries a heavy responsibility. Man, through his social, economic and political organization, is responsible as a governor and care-taker of the earth. He cannot claim it as his own, to do as he likes on it. He is not to rule as a tyrant but as a servant of Allah. He is to care for it as a servant cares for his master's property, doing what will benefit it and forbidding what will harm it. He is not to destroy or kill wantonly the plants and animals which Allah has placed on earth to feed us and help us. He is rather to take good care of them and nurture the earth's resources as gifts from Allah not only for himself but for later generations.

The responsibility of vice-gerency applies not only to national and political leaders but to every sane adult human being in one capacity or another. A Hadith from Ibn Umar reports that the Prophet said:

"Take care! Each of you is a care-taker, and each of you shall be asked concerning what is under your care: a leader is care-taker over (his) people, and he shall be asked concerning what is under his care; and a man is care-taker over the people of his house, and he shall be asked concerning them; and a woman is caretaker over the house of her husband, and over his children, and she shall be asked concerning them; and the slave of a man is care-taker over the property of his master, and he shall be asked concerning it. Take care, then, each of you is a care-taker and each of you shall be asked concerning what is under his care"

(Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud)

This Hadith states that each human being will be called to account for his responsibilities as a vice-gerent at his or her own level of responsibility. If each person administers his own sphere, whether great like the nation, or small like the family, in accordance with Qur'an, Sunnah and good judgement, the society may be describe as truly Islamic. This is a basic definition of an Islamic State. Even if a particular State calls itself an "Islamic Republic" or an "Islamic Kingdom", the true criterion for the description "Islamic" is not the title but whether or not the State and its citizens recognize the sovereignty of Allah and administer their affairs in accordance with the injunctions of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

## EXERCISES

1. In what sense is man described as Allah's Khalifah (vice gerent) on earth?
2. How does the concept of Allah's sovereignty and man's vice-gerency define the basis of the Islamic political system?
3. What is the meaning of the Prophet's questions and Muadh Ibn Jabal's answers as quoted in the Hadith in Section 3 above?
4. If man is Allah's vice-gerent on earth, what are his responsibilities towards the other forms of life such as plants and animals which Allah has placed on earth?
5. How did the Prophet define levels of leadership and their responsibilities?

## Islamic Political System II

### 1. Islamic Political Administration

Islam does not prescribe a detailed and specific system of political administration.

However, there are certain principles and features of political administration that are prescribed in the Qur'an or the Sunnah which are binding on Muslims whatever political system they may devise or adapt in accordance with the needs of the times and the state of development and education of their people.

These principles are not the product of human debate or human legislation. Therefore they cannot be withdrawn at will. They are fundamental God-given principles which must be guaranteed under any Islamic system of government. The features mentioned here relate to the rights and duties of the ruler and the ruled.

### 2. 'Adalah (Equality before the Law)

It is a fundamental right of every person to be given fair and equal treatment in accordance with the law.

Whether rich or poor, powerful or weak, he or she is to get a fair hearing and fair treatment. It was recorded that a woman of noble family was arrested for theft, and the case was brought before the Prophet. The woman's family persuaded a close companion of the Prophet to intercede with him on behalf of the woman so as to avoid bringing shame on them. But the Prophet replied:

"The nations that lived before you were destroyed by Allah because they punished the common man for his offences 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."

Moreover those who have to decide cases are warned in the Qur'an not to be prejudiced against any person who may come before them:

"O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in devotion to Allah, bearing witness to the truth in all equity, and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just; this is closest to God-

consciousness." (Qur'an 5:8).

Islamic administration is therefore to uphold absolute justice for all its citizens, whatever their religion or ethnic group.

### 3. Shura (Consultation)

A Muslim ruler is to seek advice from his people in administering the affairs of state, in accordance with the injunction of the Qur'an:

"And take council with them in all matters of public concern; then, when you have decided upon a course of action, place your trust in Allah: for verily, Allah loves those who place their trust in Him." (Qur'an 3:159)

The means of seeking advice from his people may be informal and individual or it may be institutionalized in the form of an advisory council, a parliament or any other acceptable body chosen to look into issues and recommend action to be taken. The nature of such an advisory body is therefore to be decided in accordance with the needs and circumstances of the time. It applies not only to national level but to all levels of decision-making.

The principle to be understood is that a Muslim leader is not to rule arbitrarily, by his own whims or wishes. Even if he is wise, he is not to regard himself as the only source of wisdom, but to consult others for their views.

It is recorded that before the battle of Badr the Prophet had planned to position his men in a certain way. One of his men asked him whether this plan or strategy was a result of a revelation from Allah or was of his own devising. The Prophet replied that the plan was his own. The man then proposed an alternative strategy, which the Prophet then preferred to his own and adopted. Thus the Prophet showed by practical demonstration that no leader should regard himself as too wise to heed advice and hear others' views. Shura (consultation) is therefore a duty prescribed in the Qur'an and Sunnah, for a leader at any level.

### t4. Masuliyah (Accountability)

As may be seen from the above, requirements of fair and equal treatment of all citizens and consultation by the ruler, a Muslim leader is not appointed as a tyrant over his people but as a guardian responsible for their welfare. He will be called to account on the Day of Judgment for how he discharged that responsibility. According to Abu Sa'id, the Prophet said: "Verily, the most beloved in the sight of Allah on the Day of Resurrection, and the nearest to

Allah in respect of seat, will be the just leader; and verily, the most hated of men in the sight of Allah on the Day of Resurrection and the most severely punished, and the furthest from Him in respect of seat, will be the tyrannical leader." (Tirmidhi)

Allah say in the Qur'an:

"It is He who has made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth, and has raised you in ranks some above others, so that He may try you by means of what He has bestowed upon you..." (Qur'an 6:165)

A Muslim ruler or leader should therefore be fully conscious that he is undergoing a trial and that his power for good and evil is being monitored and recorded against the Day when he will account before his Sovereign Lord for how he exercised that power.

### 5. . The Moral Basis of Administration and Citizenship

It is the duty of every Muslim to do good and avoid evil, and also to urge others to do the same. A leader at any level may possess the authority to command what is good and forbid what is bad. For example a head of government is in a position to introduce and enforce policies to promote these aims. On a smaller scale a mother, as a leader of a household has authority over her children. She may urge them to do good and avoid evil, and also enforce her advice with reward or punishment.

A well-known Hadith spells out the levels of responsibility for stopping evil. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reported that the Prophet said:

"Whoever sees an evil, should change it with his hand and if that is not possible he should change it with his tongue and if that is not possible he should hate it in his heart, and that is the weakest degree (of faith)."

This Hadith means that every Muslim has a duty to struggle against evil and injustice, to the limit of his or her power. A leader or ruler who is able to enforce his orders because of his authority has a duty to stop evil "with his hand." Another person may have no authority or power to stop the evil "with his hand"; he is to use his tongue, speak or in any other way warn against the evil and try to persuade others to stop it. Another person may be for some reason unable even to speak against the evil. But even the weakest of believers must at least hate it in his heart and not join in the evil or accept it.

From this it can be seen that the duties of Islamic leadership and the duties

of a citizen in observing good conduct and in opposing evil-doing are only a matter of degree. There is no wide gulf between the moral responsibilities of the ruler and the ruled.

However, Muslims have a duty to obey their constituted leaders in order to achieve social and political unity and co-operation for the common good. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"And obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those among you who are in authority." (Qur'an 4:59)

Without acceptance of authority there will be anarchy, lawlessness and internal conflict.

But if the leaders issue orders which are contrary to the clear teachings of Islam, the Muslim subject is no longer bound to obey, since obedience to Allah comes before obedience to any human being.

In this way Islam has firmly established the moral basis of the Islamic state and the moral imperative of all Islamic administration.

### EXERCISES

1. What are the sources of the basic principles of Islamic administration?
2. A noble family once approached the Prophet hoping to get favourable treatment for one of their womenfolk who was guilty of stealing. What was the Prophet's reply?
3. What does the Qur'an say about a leader consulting his followers?
4. Mention an occasion when the Prophet changed his strategy as a result of advice which he accepted.
5. Quote a Hadith and a verse of the Qur'an which draw attention to the accountability of a ruler or leader on the Day of Judgement.
6. Give examples based on everyday life to show how to apply the Hadith on responsibility for stopping evil.
7. What are the benefits of obedience of citizens to constituted authority?
8. What are the consequences of disobedience of citizens to constituted authority?
9. What are the circumstances under which Muslim citizens should not obey their leaders?

## Islamic Political System III

### 1. Human Rights in Islam

The Islamic Political system should guarantee basic rights to all its people, including the following:

#### (a) Security of Life and Property

Allah commands in the Qur'an:

"Do not kill a soul which Allah has made sacred except through due process of Law." (Qur'an 6:151)

During his Farewell Hajj the Prophet told the believers:

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

By this neither the State, nor any individual has any right to take away someone else's property, provided it was legally acquired, or to take anyone's life unless through the proper legal process. These injunctions apply to both Muslim and non-Muslim citizens.

#### (b) Protection of honour

A Muslim is to respect people's honour and avoid humiliating them in the eyes of others. In this regard the Qur'an commands:

"Do not allow yourselves to speak ill of one another behind your backs..." (Qur'an 49:12)

"O you who believe, do not let one set of people make fun of another" (Qur'an 49:11)

#### (c) Sanctity of Private Life

The State should take necessary measures for its security. However, apart from such measures the citizen's private life should not be disturbed.

The Qur'an has warned:

"Do not spy on one another." (Qur'an 49:12) "Do not enter houses other than your own unless you have obtained permission and greeted their inmates." (Qur'an 24:27)

#### (d) Respect for the chastity of women

Under all circumstances of peace or war, a Muslim is to respect a woman's chastity. This applies whether she is Muslim or non-Muslim, a fellow-national or a stranger or an enemy.

The Shariah punishment for slandering a chaste woman with an accusation of adultery is 80 lashes.

Rape is also an act of violent adultery (*zina bil-harb*) and grave mischief (*hirabah*), and therefore may carry the death penalty.

#### (E) The Right to the Basic Necessities of Life

The Qur'an affirms the duty of Muslims to help anyone in need:

"And in their wealth there is an acknowledged right for the needy and destitute:" (Qur'an 5:12).

This injunction makes it binding on Muslims to help the downtrodden, whatever their religion, through *Zakat* or *Sadaqah* or to assist them in any other way, preferably so that they become self-supporting.

The Prophet further said that the Islamic State should support those who are without support. "The Head of State is the guardian of him who has nobody to support him." (Abu Daud and Tirmidhi) Some of the Righteous Caliphs used to go round personally to ensure that people's basic needs were being met. Those who could not provide for themselves were helped from the Public Treasury.

#### (f) The Right to Freedom

A free man or woman, boy or girl, is not to be sold into slavery. The Prophet is reported to have said:- "There are three categories of people against whom I shall myself be a plaintiff on the Day of Judgement. Of these three, one is he who enslaves a free man, then sells him and eats this money." (Bukhari and Muslim).



Islam encouraged Muslims to set free slaves as an act of expiation of sins.

### **(g) Equality of human beings**

There is no allowance for racial or tribal sentiments in Islam. The Qur'an says:

"O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is the one who is deeply conscious of Him. Behold, Allah is all-Knowing, all-Aware."  
(Qur'an 49:13)

The Prophet is reported to have said:

"No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab 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."  
(Bayhaqi)

### **(h) Personal Freedom**

No person should be put in prison until he has been found guilty of an offence in open court. He must be allowed to defend himself against any accusation.

### **(i) Freedom of faith**

The Qur'an says:

"There should be no coercion in the matter of faith."

Therefore non-Muslims have a right to practise their religion. Muslims should invite them to Islam and welcome them into it if they decide to convert. But they are not to put any unfair moral, social or political pressure on them to change their religion.

Nor is it permitted to abuse other people's religions. Allah says in the Qur'an:

"Do not abuse those they appeal to instead of Allah." (Qur'an 6:108)

This does not stop rational discussion of religion with non-Muslim — only it must be done in a decent way. The Qur'an says:

"Do not argue with the People of the Book except in a most kindly manner."  
(Qur'an 29:46)

### **(j) Rulers are not above the Law**

In an Islamic State, the position of leadership does not carry immunity from the law, as in some other states, both ancient and modern.

If an ordinary person has a complaint against the ruler he can take his case to court and the ruler must appear before the Judge to answer the charges. In the same way if the ruler has a private complaint against an ordinary person he must take his case to the court for resolution in accordance with the law. He is not allowed to misuse his power as a leader to impose private punishment on any citizen.

These are some of the important rights which must be given to citizens of an Islamic State.

## **2. The Rights of Non-Muslims in an Islamic State**

An Islamic State is not based on racial, national or tribal concepts. It is an ideological state established by Muslims who wish to conduct their affairs at all levels in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Within the Islamic State there may be non-Muslim minorities. This was the case when the Prophet established the Islamic State in Madinah. There was a substantial Jewish minority in Madinah, and the Prophet entered into an agreement with the Jews which spelled out their rights as non-Muslim citizens in the Islamic State. It was called the Constitution of Madinah, and is regarded as the earliest such written document of its type in the world.

It established the pattern for the future relations within an Islamic State between the Muslim majority and the non-Muslim minorities.

The basic principle of this relationship was that of religious tolerance, and non-interference in the religious affairs of the minority.

The non-Muslims living in an Islamic State were referred to as *Dhimmis*, that is, "Covenanted people", meaning that they had entered into a covenant with the Muslims who now guaranteed their protection.

The *Dhimmis* paid a tax called the *Jizyah* which in effect was a kind of defence tax. *Dhimmis* were exempted from military service. If due to some misfortune the Islamic State could no longer guarantee the protection of the *Dhimmi*, the *Jizyah* was refunded. From this it may be concluded that the *Jizyah* was a tax in lieu of military service.

The life, property and honour of a *Dhimmi* were to be respected just in the same way as those of a Muslim citizen. The civil and criminal law also made no distinction between a Muslim and non-Muslim citizen. In the days of the Prophet a Muslim killed a *Dhimmi*, and the Prophet ordered his execution, saying: "I am responsible for obtaining redress for the weak."

The Islamic State was not allowed to interfere with the personal and religious affairs of a non-Muslim individual or community. If they had a religious law of their own they were allowed to have it applied to them in personal matters.

They are to be allowed freedom of belief and conscience and the right to perform the ceremonies of their religion. This is in accordance with the injunction of Allah in the Qur'an:

"There should be no coercion in the matter of faith." (Qur'an 2:256)

They may also teach and propagate their religion among their own community and among other non-Muslims.

Their places of worship are not to be destroyed, (and if they are damaged they may be repaired.)

Government posts should be open to them without prejudice with the exception of a few key posts, such as that of Head of State, and those responsible for formulation of State policies. This is because of the nature of the Islamic State which is based on ideology.

All other occupations and professions are open to non-Muslims.

Non-Muslims are therefore given a great degree of freedom to practise their own religion and participate in the life of the nation — social, economic, cultural and political.

### 3. Muslim State and Islamic State

An Islamic State is an ideological state which bases its conduct of affairs at all levels on the Qur'an and Sunnah. This includes Islamic principles of political, administrative, economic and social life and the system of law.

The Islamic State is therefore different from a Muslim State. A Muslim State is a country where the great majority of the people are Muslims, but their conduct of state (political, administrative, economic, social and legal) does not necessarily follow the principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Among Muslim Countries today, it is hard to find any that may be described as an Islamic State because most of them unfortunately do not apply Islamic standards to their total way of life in the spheres indicated in the last paragraph. Even the few countries which have preserved the *Shariah* as their legal system in the courts may be found to be ignoring the Islamic economic principles such as the prohibition of interest in their banking system and in Government lending and borrowing.

Large Muslim areas in Asia were conquered by Communist powers where every effort was made to stamp out Islam and other religions.

Some other Muslim countries were conquered and colonized by the European powers and forced to adopt western systems of education, political structure, law and economics. Although most of these countries are now politically independent, these western institutions have become entrenched in their national life.

Some of the Muslim countries have rulers who are tyrants and hypocrites who try to force un-Islamic ideologies on their people and persecute Islam and the committed Muslims.

There are however some signs of change arising from the Islamic re-awakening all over the world in recent decades. Interest among Muslims in returning to Islam has been growing, not just as a way of belief and worship but also as an intellectual framework and a guidance for the conduct of state in all its aspects: political, economic, legal and social.

In some Muslim States the Governments have responded to this movement (which has the support of some intellectuals and the mass of ordinary people) by approving the establishment of modern institutions based on Islamic principles, such as Islamic Universities, Islamic banks, Islamic welfare schemes based on *Zakat*, revision of the legal systems to remove un-Islamic laws and so on. These are useful steps on the way to re-establishing States that are Islamic in both spirit and practice.

#### EXERCISES

1. List some of the human rights that should be guaranteed by an Islamic State.
2. What does the Qur'an say about preserving people's honour?
3. What did the Prophet say to prohibit racial discrimination?
4. What does the Qur'an say about freedom of religion?
5. What was the Constitution of Madinah?
6. What constitutional rights were given under an Islamic state to the *Dhimmis* (non-Muslim people under the protection of the Muslim State)?
7. What is the difference between a Muslim State and an Islamic

State?

8. Why is it difficult to find a true Islamic State at the present time?
9. What steps are some countries taking to re-Islamize their political, legal and economic systems?



## Political Administration of the Prophet and the Four Rightly Guided Khalifahs

### 1. The Political Administration of the Prophet

We have seen in Chapters 59, 60 and 61 that the Prophet's way of administering the Islamic State in Madinah was quite unlike the ways of the kings and Emperors of the surrounding territories.

The Prophet's qualities of simplicity, humility, justice, firmness and kindness were reflected in his administration. Examples have been given of the Prophet's patience, wisdom and trustworthiness, and of his desire for peace, and magnanimity towards his former enemies.

We have also seen in Chapter 60 that the concept of an Islamic administration is based on justice and equal treatment for all its citizens. It requires the ruler to consult his people on matters of public concern, and holds leaders at all levels accountable to Allah for their treatment of those under their care. It further requires all its people, including the leadership, to command what is good and forbid what is evil, to the limit of their ability. This phrase was used in the Qur'an to describe the quality which distinguished the Muslim Ummah (community) from other nations:

"You are the best community raised for mankind: (in that)  
you command what is good and forbid what is  
bad."  
(Qur'an 3:110)

The Islamic criterion of good and bad is provided by the Shariah. A very important characteristic of an Islamic community is that it takes the Shariah, based on the Qur'an, as its standard of conduct and also its legal means of regulating conduct.

### 2. Abubakr's Administration

The four Rightly Guided Caliphs, each of whom was a close companion of the Prophet, had observed from the Prophet's example how an Islamic State should be governed, and each shared the sense of responsibility and humility that came with the high office of Caliph.

The method of choosing a Caliph was based on the idea of an electoral group of prominent companions who would assess the possible choices and agree to recommend one. The people would then, if they agreed, confirm that choice by taking an oath of allegiance (*Bai 'ah*) to the new leader. None of the Righteous Caliphs sought for office or campaigned for it. As pious Muslims they knew that leadership brought not pleasure but heavy responsibilities.

When Abubakr was chosen as the first Caliph he addressed the people. He said, among other things:

"O people! I have been selected as your Trustee although I am no better than anyone of you. If I am right, obey me. If I am misguided, set me right. Of course truth is honesty and a lie is dishonesty. The weakest among you is powerful in my eyes until I get him his due, insha Allah. The most powerful among you is the weakest in my eyes until I make him pay due rights to others insha Allah. Allah sends down disgrace on those people who give up Jihad in the path of Allah. Allah surely sends down calamities on such people who indulge in evils. "I ask you to obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger (Benediction and peace of Allah be upon him) If I disobey Allah and His messenger you are free to disobey me. Now come and offer Salat.

With these words Abubakr showed the role of the Caliph in its exemplary form. He saw himself as a Trustee entrusted with ensuring justice between the strong and the weak. He recognised his human fallibility and asked people to help him with good advice. He told them that if he should ever depart from obedience to Allah and His Messenger he would lose the right to their obedience. In other words their obedience would depend on his holding firmly to the Islamic conduct of public affairs as enjoined in the Qur'an and demonstrated by the Prophet.

There were many wars during Abubakr's Caliphate against some rebellious tribes and against those who followed false prophets who set themselves up in a vain attempt to achieve fame and power.

In addition, Abubakr sent an army to Syria in response to attacks by Bedouin tribes on the Syrian frontier, who were being supported by the Byzantines in order to weaken the young Muslim State.

Abubakr gave each army commander instructions before they set out. These exemplify the moral emphasis of the Islamic State whether in peace or war, as follows:

1. Always fear Allah because He knows what the hearts conceal.
2. Treat your subordinates well.
3. Honour the representatives of your enemies.
4. Always be truthful.
5. Keep away from untruthful men and be intimate with those who are truthful and faithful.
6. Do not be dishonest in any way.
7. Do not disturb saints and worshippers of other religions.
8. Do not destroy places of worship.
9. Do not kill a woman, an old man or children or those who are not fighting with you (i.e. civilians)
10. Do not cut flowering trees.
11. Do not ruin any populated place.
12. Do not kill goats, camels and cattle beside what you need to eat
13. Do not burn fruit-gardens.
14. Do not be dishonest in booty.

Abubakr demonstrated the true spirit of an Islamic ruler. He did not seek office for himself. He used to tell people: "I swear by Allah I never liked to be a Caliph. I even never thought about it, nor desired it secretly or openly. The yoke of Caliphate has been put on my neck by force. I wish to transfer this trust to a more suitable person."

He ruled by consultation (*Shura*) with his Advisory Council and appointed officials on merit without bias. He used to inspect personally the activities of his officials and to see for himself the conditions in the army camps.

In all those ways Abubakr established a pattern of Islamic leadership which exemplified the Hadith in which the Prophet is reported to have said:

"The best of leaders are those whom you love and who love you, for whom you pray and who pray for you; and the worst of your leaders are those whom you hate, and who hate you, whom you curse, and who curse you."  
(Muslim)

This advice is valid for all time.

### 3. Umar's Administration

Umar, like Abubakr before him, kept strictly to the Sunnah of the Prophet. With characteristic vigour and dynamism he showed the world the justice, fairness, integrity, compassion and excellence of the Islamic State. It was this rather than physical force that caused so many people to enter Islam and stay in it.

*Following the Sunnah*

This intention was made clear in Umar's instructions to Sa'd Abi Waqqas when he sent him out in command of an army to meet the Persian forces:

"Allah does not repel evil with evil but He repels evil with good. All men high and low are equal before Him. One can win Allah's favour only through devotion to His service. Remember that the Sunnah is the only correct way of doing things. You are going on a heavy mission which you can discharge only by following the truth. Inculcate good habits in yourselves and in your companions."

#### *No abuse of power*

In the time of Caliph Umar, Islam spread from Persia in the East to North Africa in the West. In spite of the enormous power that Umar now held, he lived a life of piety and simplicity. He drew the smallest possible salary from the Public Treasury (*Baitul-Mal*). If he wanted to use a lamp for his private purposes he would not use the oil from the Public Treasury. When he finished his official work he would put out the light and use his own.

#### *Care for people's welfare*

Umar used to go out at night without being recognized into the city of Madinah to find out for himself the needs and conditions of the ordinary people, and to ensure that they got justice and necessary help.

#### *Shura (Consultation)*

Umar based his rule on the Islamic principle of Shura (Consultation). He had several bodies for this purpose. The first consisted of a small number of very prominent Companions. This may be called a Higher Advisory Council and all important matters were decided in consultation with them.

The second body was a General Advisory Council which consisted of a larger number including many Companions among the Ansar (Helpers) and Muhajirin (Emigrants) and the chiefs of various tribes and clans.

A third body consisted of selected Companions who were called in when there were matters of special interest on which their views were sought.

Decisions were usually taken on the basis that the *Majlis ash-Shura* was

unanimous, or sometimes on the views of the majority. However the Khalifah was not bound to accept the view of the majority if he felt it was not in the interest of Islam and the Muslims. As the person finally responsible for all decisions he could exercise a veto.

#### *Freedom of Speech*

All members of the *Majlis ash-Shura* were allowed and urged to give their opinions freely and sincerely. On one occasion a man stood up and said: "O Umar, fear Allah." The other people tried to stop him from continuing, but Umar said: "Let him speak, he is free to give his opinion. If people do not give their opinions they are useless and if we (the rulers) do not listen to them, we are useless."

Men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims were all free to express their opinions.

#### *Equality of all before the Law*

Umar appointed truthful, trustworthy and pious men as Qadis (Judges). There was no interference by the executive in the administration of justice by the Qadis.

If a person had any complaint against the Caliph, Umar would appear before the judge in person to answer the complaint. On one occasion Umar was called before Zayd ibn Thabit, who was a Judge in Madinah. Zayd wanted to stand up as a mark of respect for the Caliph, but Umar remarked: "This is your first unjust behaviour" - meaning that the judge is to be completely impartial towards the people who appear in his court. The Caliph then took his seat beside the complainant. The complainant wanted Umar to take an oath, which the Judge, Zayd, wanted to spare him, out of respect for the office of Caliph. But Umar answered: "You cannot be a just Qadi until a common man is equal to Umar before you."

Umar himself also held courts and dispensed impartial justice to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. When a Muslim killed a Christian, he inflicted the death penalty on the Muslim.

#### *Establishment of Schools*

Umar also developed the School System, which was at that time based in the mosques. Schools were established in all the Muslim territories and teachers were paid good salaries. Competent students were given bursaries and other forms of encouragement. The education laid emphasis on literacy, knowledge of the Qur'an and Sunnah and good understanding of the Arabic Language.

#### *Organization of Taxes*

The *Bait-ul-Mal* (Public Treasury) was further developed and organized as an institution. They were established in every province as centres for revenue collection and distribution on a sound and just basis.

#### *Allowances to the Poor and Disabled*

Allowances were given to poor and disabled people regardless of their faith. Umar's own night-time investigations in the city helped to bring to light needy cases.

#### *Government Encouragement of Agriculture*

Agriculture as the major source of income was given special attention. Irrigation canals were dug, and also many small dams and large pools constructed to improve water supplies. People who moved into uncultivated land and brought it under cultivation were allowed to keep it. However, Arabs were not allowed to seize the lands of the people in the conquered territories, although they could buy land.

These highlights of the administration of the Muslim territories at the time of Umar give some idea of the unique nature of the Islamic system initiated by the Prophet and developed under the Righteous Khalifahs.

#### **4. Uthman's and Ali's Administrations**

Uthman and Ali maintained the Islamic institutions established by their predecessors and ruled with the same spirit of submission to the Qur'an and Sunnah. Like Abubakr and Umar they lived in the simple style demonstrated by the Prophet. Neither of them sought the leadership, but when it was pressed upon them they exerted themselves to their limits to be faithful to the trust given them.

Unfortunately, political circumstances made it difficult for them to develop new features of political administration. Uthman was an old man by the time he became Caliph, and he had the extremely difficult task of taking over from a man like Umar, who was one of the most outstanding and charismatic leaders the world has ever seen. By the time Uthman took over the Caliphate the Muslim Empire had under Umar expanded very widely, to include many nations. In the absence of Umar's strong and dynamic leadership this gave rise to widespread political and administrative problems. The gentle Uthman found himself being pushed and pulled by various factions. This developed into civil strife and finally cost him his life.

After the death of Uthman, Ali was chosen as Khalifah but was immediately sucked into further disputes and finally into civil war. After 4 years and 9 months he was assassinated. Therefore the conditions of peace were not present which would have enabled him to expand on the administrative achievements of Abubakr and Umar.

#### **5. After the Four Righteous Caliphs**

The Caliphate continued after the death of Ali under Muawiya and his successors. There were leaders of different quality among them. The Muslim world stretched from western China to Spain, and Islam spread across oceans and deserts to reach the East Indies and many parts of Africa.

Muslim civilization established itself and in due course enriched the whole world with its development of education, science, medicine, agriculture and ideals of God-consciousness and good conduct.

However, many of the later Caliphs lacked the Islamic moral qualities and religious training of the Four Righteous Caliphs. The Caliphs' courts became centres of luxury in the manner of ordinary kings and emperors. The Caliphs sought to make the leadership a family inheritance, which brought about rivalry among sons and struggle for power between rival houses and dynasties.

The simple and austere life-style of the Prophet and his close companions was lost and the leadership neglected the Sunnah.

## 6. The continuing Ideal of an Islamic State

The foregoing is a brief summary of the ways in which the Righteous Caliphs developed and applied the concept of an Islamic State. It indicates not only the institutions set up for the benefit of the ordinary people but also the spirit of accountability that is essential for responsible political leadership. (Economic aspects of an Islamic State will be discussed in the next chapter).

Any Muslims who cherish the hope of reviving the glory of an Islamic State on the model of Madinah under the Prophet and the Righteous Khalifahs have therefore to give careful thought to two requirements:

(a) how best to develop and operate, basic Islamic institutions (such as *Shura*, *Zakat*, schools and the judiciary) in the context of our present social, economic, political and educational background; and

(b) how to educate and train leaders, administrators and officials so that they are motivated by the ideals of service to mankind and accountability to Allah, since no system, however excellent, can work without human beings who are ready to put the welfare of the community before personal greed and selfishness. In the words of the Qur'an;

"Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Qur'an 13:11)

## EXERCISES

1. The Qur'an says of the Muslim community: "You are the best community raised for mankind" - What qualities are required of a Muslim community for it to deserve this description?
2. How were the Righteous Khalifahs chosen for office?
3. What instructions did Abubakr give to his army commanders about behaviour in war?
4. What instructions did Umar give to the Muslim commander, Sa'd Abi Waqqas, when he set out to meet the Persian army?
5. Give an example of how Umar refused to use public property for his personal use.
6. Mention one of the ways in which Umar involved himself personally to find out the needs of the ordinary people.
7. How did Umar arrange to implement the Islamic principle of *Shura* (Consultation) which was prescribed in the Qur'an?
8. Give an example to show how Umar encouraged freedom of speech.
9. Give two examples to show how Umar insisted on equality of all men before the law.



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## Islamic Economic System I

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### A Comparison of the Capitalist, Communist and Islamic Economic Systems

10. How did Umar encourage education in the Islamic State?
11. From what source did the Islamic State take care of the welfare of the disabled?
12. In what manner did Uthman and Ali maintain the tradition of the Prophet and the first two Khalifahs?
13. Explain the distinction between the style of administration of the Four Righteous Khalifahs and of those who followed them?
14. Mention some of the steps required of the Muslims if they wish to apply Islamic principles of political and social administration to modern conditions?

#### 1. Present-day Economic Systems

Today's world is divided into two basic economic groups: the majority being Capitalist countries and a small number of Communist countries. Some countries have applied a mixture of the two systems. Each system has advantages and disadvantages.

#### 2. Capitalism

Capitalism advocates private ownership of property, economic freedom and free competition. The Government should minimize its involvement and participation in the economy. The financial system depends heavily on interest-bearing loans through banks and other institutions.

Capitalists believe that their system has several advantages:

- (a) The profit motive makes people work harder. If people are allowed to earn as much as they can, they will work harder, be more productive and think up new ideas and inventions.
- (b) This efficient productivity provides jobs and thus increases the national wealth for the benefit of all.
- (c) Because of free competition, prices are kept at a reasonable level. The public has a wide choice and will choose products that are of good quality and acceptable price. Those people who sell goods or services of poor quality and high price are likely to go out of business.

Capitalism has however some disadvantages, the main ones being:

- (a) The wealthy are free to pursue their aims in a selfish way, placing their individual and family interests before the common good of society;
- (b) Unless the State imposes heavy taxes and other controls, individuals or families become extremely wealthy. Wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of a few people. There is a wide gap between the standard of living of the rich and the poor. This wealth is inherited within the family, whose young have many advantages over the children of poor families. A purely capitalist society becomes divided by class differences as the wealthy live in luxury while others are in dire poverty. Class hatred can develop to the point of civil disorder and even revolution.
- (c) The system of paying a fixed interest on loans is one of the causes of inflation which is a feature of most modern capitalist economies.

### 3. Communism

The main feature of the Communist system is the ownership of all property and means of production by the State. Private ownership is not allowed. The State owns and controls the economy and aims to provide for every citizen according to his needs.

Communists believe that the advantages of this system are that:

- (a) Every citizen is ensured of his basic needs in life;
- (b) Everyone is given work to do and the sick are taken care of by the State.
- (c) The profits of all industries and businesses do not go to increase private wealth but to the State which provides facilities for the benefit of the people.

Some of the disadvantages of the Communist economic system are:

- (a) The State becomes all-powerful and decides for itself what is good for people. The individual citizen sacrifices his personal liberty and becomes like a slave dependant on the State, in return for his guaranteed livelihood.
- (b) Where people work for the State with guaranteed jobs, they tend to become careless about efficiency and productivity;

- (c) Where the State has a monopoly on the production of any item, the public is forced to buy it, good or bad, because it has no choice. The result of absence of competition is often poor quality of products and services and little incentive to improve.

### 4. Economic System of Islam

The basic principles of the Economic System of Islam are:

- (a) *Allah as the Ultimate Owner of All Property: Man as the Trustee*

Allah says in the Qur'an:

"The earth belongs to Allah: He gives to His servants as He pleases." (Qur'an 7:128)

Since Allah is the Creator and Sovereign of the entire Universe, everything in it belongs to Him. Human beings are born and die, and while they are on earth they hold property as Trustees. They have the right to own, use and take the benefits of the property but they must abide by Allah's laws regarding its acquisition, use and disposal.

- (b) *Encouragement of Initiative and of disposal of surplus wealth*

Human beings have different levels and types of ability. Their abilities are not equal, therefore they are not equally productive.

"And Allah has made some of you to excel others in means of subsistence." (Qur'an 16:71)

Islam does not enforce an artificial equality. It allows free enterprise, so that a man is encouraged to exert himself to the best of his ability and get financial benefit for his hard work. "And for men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn." (Qur'an 4:32) He is however subject to a number of Islamic financial and economic laws that encourage the disposal of surplus wealth for the general benefit of the community and for the poor and needy in particular.



encourage the disposal of surplus wealth for the general benefit of the community and for the poor and needy in particular.

"And they ask you (Muhammad) as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare (over and above your needs)." (Qur'an 2:219)

One can see the advantages to this approach, which takes account of human nature.

Under the Communist system there is little incentive for the individual to work hard and use his initiative. The Government pays or provides for the worker "each according to his need" therefore he never sees the material reward of his extra effort, nor does he possess any surplus to dispose of. The Government takes it away at source.

Under the pure capitalist system, the hard-working or clever individual can collect the fruits of his success, but has no obligation to give what is surplus to help the needy. Because of this defect in pure capitalism, democratic capitalist countries have found it necessary to take special measures to relieve the poor and suffering through taxes, and various welfare schemes. In many nondemocratic capitalist countries, however, the poor are left to fend for themselves or die. This causes class hatred and social unrest.

The Islamic system embodies the best combination: encouragement of individual initiative and disposal of surplus, partly by compulsory taxes such as *Zakat* and partly by *Sadaqah* (Voluntary Charity).

#### (c) Wider Circulation of Wealth

In order to avoid concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, to the neglect of the weak, a number of measures are prescribed or recommended in Islam, including *Zakat*, *Sadaqah*, the laws of inheritance, and *Waqf* (Charitable Trusts). Some of these measures will be discussed with further explanation in Chapter 65.

#### (d) Social and Individual Welfare

The Islamic State is committed through *Zakat* and the *Bait-ul-Mal* to caring for the basic needs to the less fortunate members of society and helping them. However, every able-bodied person is expected to seek some work with which to sustain himself honourably and not to deliberately place himself as a permanent burden on the community. The aim of Islamic Social welfare is therefore not only to help the needy out of their immediate misery but to encourage them where possible to become self-supporting.

#### (e) Prohibition of harmful economic practices

Certain harmful economic practices have been prohibited in Islam. Examples of these are hoarding, *riba* (interest), gambling, all forms of deception, and cheating (*Tatfif*). These will also be explained further in the next chapter.

### 5. The Balanced System

It will be seen from the above comparisons that the Islamic economic system has since its inception over 1400 years ago prescribed a balanced system of economic life which has given due weight to both the aspirations of the individual and the needs of society. The good features of both capitalism and communism are present while their harmful aspects have been as far as possible neutralised. The Islamic System remains therefore the most suitable for sound social and economic development. The eternal principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah have stood the test of time and are as valid today as they were when they were first propounded and practised in the Islamic State of Madinah and developed with the spread of Islamic civilization.

#### EXERCISES

1. Discuss some advantages and disadvantages of:
  - (a) The Capitalist economic system
  - (b) The Communist economic system

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Islamic Economic System II  
Halal and Haram in Economic Life

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2. Outline the basic principles of the Economic System of Islam.
3. Why does the Islamic Economic System deserve to be called a balanced system?

**1. Purity of Source of Income**

Muslims are urged to work for their daily bread. The Prophet is reported to have said:

"No one has ever eaten better food than what he eats from the work done by his hands. .." . (Bukhari)

However, the economic aspect of man's life has not been left without moral guidance in Islam. There are many ways of earning a living, some of which may actually harm other people or the society in general. The harm may come either from the nature of the work the man does or from the way in which he or she does it.

For example, a person whose source of income is from selling dangerous drugs is obviously doing harm to others. The nature of his or her work is to harm others.

Another person may be trading in foodstuffs. This is not in itself a harmful trade. However, if in order to make more money he hoards his goods until they are scarce and then inflates the price, it is the manner of his trading which harms the society .

The Islamic code of halal and haram (lawful and unlawful) applies to all aspects of human life, including the economic aspect. A Muslim's source of income should be entirely halal (lawful) in both its nature and in its manner. It will then not only bring profit to the individual concerned but to other people and thereby to the community and nation as a whole.

"And do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means." (Qur'an 2:188)

Therefore for a Muslim, his aim should not be to make money by all means. However lucrative a particular trade is, if the article of trade has been forbidden in Islam, such as alcoholic drink, he should avoid dealing with it. If a method of business has been forbidden in Islam he should avoid practising it.

## 2. Some Unlawful Economic Practices

Among the harmful economic practices made unlawful by the Qur'an and/or the Sunnah are the following:

### (a) *Riba (Usury or Interest)*

Riba is a system of lending money. When the borrower returns the money at a fixed time he gives back the capital and also a fixed and agreed percentage of interest. The person who lends the money takes no risk: his profit is guaranteed by law. Only the borrower takes a risk.

This system, which is the basis of the prevalent western banking system, is unlawful to Muslims. The Qur'an condemns it in the strongest terms:

"Those who devour usury will not stand except as one whom the Evil One by his touch has driven to madness. That is because they say: 'Trade is like usury' but Allah has permitted trade and Forbidden usury. Those who after receiving direction from their Lord, desist, shall be pardoned for the past; their case is for Allah (to judge); but those who repeat (the offence) are companions of the Fire: they will abide therein (for ever). Allah will deprive usury of all blessing but will give increase for deeds of charity, for he loveth not creatures ungrateful and wicked." (Qur'an 2:275-276)

"O you who believe! Fear Allah and give up what remains of your demand for usury, if you are indeed believers." "If you do it not, take notice of war from

Allah and His Apostle: but if you turn back you shall have your capital sums; deal not unjustly, and you shall not be dealt with unjustly. If a debtor is in difficulty, grant him time till it is easy for him to repay. But if you remit it by way of charity, that is best for you if you only knew." (Qur'an 2:278-280)

For Muslims a loan must be interest-free. Islam does not oppose lending money for investment in business, but it should be on the basis of shared risk- sharing of either profit or loss, not on the basis of interest. The lender thereby has a strong stake in the success of the borrower, and shares his hopes and disappointments.

Anybody who undertakes any enterprise or business knows that he takes a risk of failure, however much he hopes to succeed. However, under the interest system a person who lends money as an investment is guaranteed his money back plus a fixed interest. Whether the borrower succeeds or fails, the lender must succeed. Therefore the lender does not care about the borrower, and has no interest in his fate.

Another disadvantage of riba (usury, interest) is that it is an important cause of inflation. When all economic activity is based on loans with interest, the cost of the interest must be added to the cost of production.

Moreover at international level borrowing money at interest from other countries leads in most cases to a state of permanent debt whereby the rich lending nations gain direct or indirect control over the poor borrowing nations. In this way whole nations become like beggars. The Islamic alternative to Interest banking is Islamic banking which has established itself and become popular in recent years in some countries (e.g. Pakistan, Malaysia, and Sudan). Under this system money is loaned to or from the Bank without interest. On loans for investment purposes the borrower and lender share the profit or loss.

In view of the stern warning of the Qur'an on riba (interest) quoted above, it is the duty of Muslims all over the world to establish Islamic banks. Only in this way can they find lasting blessings and prosperity instead of Allah's curse on their wealth.

*(b) Monopoly and Hoarding*

The Islamic economic system prohibits all practices which cause artificial raising of prices and inflation. Among such practices are taking advantage of monopoly, hoarding and the activities of certain kinds of middlemen.

Monopoly is subject to abuse when a single individual or company deliberately manoeuvres to become the sole supplier of essential goods or services in order to raise their price. Since he is the sole supplier people are forced to pay, however high the price.

In a similar category is hoarding, where a supplier or group of suppliers refuse to sell a certain commodity, but hide it until it becomes scarce, when they can sell it at a high price and make a large profit. All such exploitation is prohibited in Islam.

*(c) Middlemen who provide no service*

It is permitted for middlemen to trade in items, buying them in one place and transporting them to another place for sale. Such middlemen provide a service in distributing goods and making them available where required.

However, it is not lawful under the Islamic system for a middleman in a market to buy and sell in the same place. This is the practice whereby peasants or farmers bring their produce to market and sell it to a middleman at a low price who then increases the price as he likes and resells it to the public. This practice serves only to increase the price of produce. Moreover, it is usually the middleman who makes a large profit out of little work and becomes richer than the farmer who laboured for many months in the fields for a small profit. The Islamic system seeks to promote the interests of the primary producers and the consumers, and allows for middlemen only when they are genuine distributors performing a real service in carrying goods to where they are needed.

*(d) Fraud, and Cheating (Tatfif)*

Fraud and Cheating of all kinds are condemned in the Qur'an and Hadith.

The Qur'an contains a Surah which begins:

"Woe to those who deal in fraud (tatfif) those who, when they are to receive their due from (other) people, demand that it be given in full, but when they have to measure or weigh whatever they owe to others, give less than what is due "Do they not know that they are bound to be raised from the dead (and called to account) on an awesome Day - the Day when all men shall stand before the Sustainer of all the Worlds?"  
(Qur'an 83:1-6)

Uthman reported that the Prophet once said:

"Measure out when you sell anything, and measure out when you buy."  
(Bukhari)

Abu Hurayrah reported that one day the Prophet passed by the market place to where there was a heap of corn. He thrust his hand into it, whereupon his fingers felt damp. He said:

"What is this, corn seller?" The man said "O Prophet of God! Rain fell upon it." The Prophet then said: "Why do you not then keep (the wet portion of) it above the (dry) corn, so that men may see it? He who deceives us, is not of us." (Muslim)

People were not only warned against cheating. Measures were taken at the time of the Prophet, and under the Khalifahs to stop it by employing market inspectors to check on weights and measures and to uncover any illegal practices which might be going on. Such cases were then dealt with under the law.

All these Islamic economic measures were aimed at fair trading, preventing exploitation, and controlling inflation of prices.

These, in brief, are some of the main ways in which harmful economic practices are made illegal (haram) in the Islamic system.

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## Islamic Economic System III

### Islamic Economic Prescriptions

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In the last Unit we examined some of the Islamic prohibitions of certain economic practices, which are designed to protect people from exploitation, cheating and inflation.

#### 1. Islamic Prescriptions for economic and social well-being

In addition to the prohibitions mentioned, there are certain positive Injunctions which have beneficial effects on the economic and social well-being of the community or nation.

#### 2. Zakat

*Zakat* is a compulsory levy on wealth. It is to be paid at 2½% on savings of money, gold and silver and on stock-in-trade. It is also paid at fixed rates on animals and crops, if their number/value has reached a certain minimum called the *Nisab*. This tax is to be paid by Muslims, through organized collection by the Government or by Voluntary organizations or directly to those who are in need of help.

There are eight categories mentioned in Qur'an 9:60 who are eligible to receive *Zakat*: "The offerings given for the sake of Allah are (meant) only for the poor and the needy, and those who are in charge thereof, and those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and (for) those who are over-burdened with debts, and (for every struggle) in Allah's cause, and (for) the wayfarer: (this is) an ordinance from Allah and Allah is all-knowing, wise."

Of these eight, six serve to re-distribute wealth directly from those who have it to those who are either temporarily or permanently in need.

The institution of the *Bait-ul-Mal* (Public Treasury) was established by the Prophet and developed by the Righteous Khalifahs. Income from *Zakat* and later from other sources was paid into the Bait-ul-Mal and taken out as required for those in need, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

#### EXERCISES

1. Mention some occupations or sources of income which are by their nature unlawful (haram) for Muslims.
2. Discuss some of the unique and harmful aspects of *riba* (interest) loans.
3. What is hoarding and what is its harm?
4. What does Qur'an 83: 1 -6 say about fraud (*Tatfif*)?
5. Abu Hurayrah reported a Hadith in which the Prophet uncovered a form of cheating in the market. Describe the incident and what the Prophet said to the man concerned.
6. Describe other measures which the early Muslim leaders took to stop economic exploitation.
7. Which of the above mentioned harmful economic practices are common in our own times, and what steps could Muslims take to stop them?
8. Describe the Islamic alternatives to Banking with interest.

In this way all those who would otherwise have been reduced to abject poverty and starvation were given relief and a chance to escape from debt, begging or crime.

### 3. Sadaqah

*Zakat* as described above is a basic and compulsory duty for every Muslim of means and its amount is specified. On top of this however, he is expected and encouraged to give *Sadaqah* (Voluntary Charity) of any amount he can spare (Qur'an 2:219) The amount is left to the individual to decide in the light of his own financial situation, and also in the light of how urgent is the need of the person or persons who are to receive it.

The Qur'an in this respect urges us as follows:

"O you who have attained to faith! Spend on others out of the good things which you may have acquired, and out of that which We bring forth for you from the earth; and choose not for your spending the bad things which you yourself would not accept without averting your eyes in disdain. And know that God is Self Sufficient, ever to be praised. Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty and bids you to be niggardly, whereas Allah promises you His forgiveness and bounty; and Allah is Infinite, All-Knowing, granting wisdom unto whom He wills and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted wealth abundant. But none bears this in mind save those who are endowed with insight.

For, whatever you may spend on others, or whatever you may vow (to spend) verily, Allah knows it; and those who do wrong (by withholding charity) shall have none to succour them." (Qur'an 2:267 - 270)

It is the duty of every Muslim community to ensure that nobody in it starves to death or is left without clothing or shelter. According to a Hadith from Ibn Abbas the Prophet said:

"He is not a believer who eats his fill while his neighbour beside him goes hungry." (Baihaqi)

A Muslim society therefore has an absolute duty to care for its poor and destitute.

### 4. Inheritance Laws

The laws of Inheritance in Islam help in spreading wealth so that it cannot remain concentrated among a few individuals. On a person's death all his wealth is calculated and distributed among his heirs male and female, in prescribed proportions:

"Men shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind, and women shall have a share in what parents and kinsfolk leave behind, whether it be little or much - a share ordained (by Allah)." (Qur'an 4:7)

It is not permissible for a Muslim to make a will leaving all his wealth to one particular person, or to cut out of his inheritance any of the relatives entitled to a share. These relatives include sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, wives, brothers and sisters.

It follows that under the Islamic laws of inheritance death necessitates the spreading of one person's wealth among many others. As one member of the family after the other dies, wealth is divided and within a few generations re-circulated through many different hands.

### 5. The Circulation of Wealth

The measures mentioned above, combined with the prohibitions mentioned in the last chapter, all have two basic effects; the circulation of wealth and the availability of the basic needs of life — food, clothing and shelter — to all the people. This was achieved to such a degree during the



time of the Righteous Khalifahs that at one stage there was nobody to be found who needed the Zakat.

Islam does not deny the value and pleasure of wealth and the good things of this world. However we are most severely warned against making wealth and worldly pleasure our sole aim in life:

"Woe to every slanderer, fault-finder!  
(Woe to him) who amasses wealth and counts  
it a Safeguard, thinking that his wealth will  
make him live forever!  
Nay, but (in the life to come such as) he shall  
indeed be abandoned to crushing torment!  
(Qur'an 104:1-4)

The Islamic emphasis in economic life is on generosity: no cheating, no exploitation, no greed for unfair profits, no wastefulness. Instead surplus wealth is to be used to show kindness to the less fortunate and to benefit the community as a whole.

## 6. Sadaqatun Jariyatun and Waqf

*Sadaqah* (charity) can be given to help someone to meet his immediate needs. It can also be given in such a way that it gives continuous benefits over a long period of time. For example if someone establishes a school where children continue to learn, or a Mosque where people continue to pray, or a public water tap where people continue to drink, or plants a tree where the public continue to enjoy its fruit and shade, the reward of his action will continue to come to him for as long as it continues to benefit others, even after his death. This is called "*Sadaqatun Jariyatun*" or "Continuous Charity".

Such charity can also be established when a person dies by the making of a will donating part of his or her wealth as *waqf*, that is a charitable bequest or endowment. A person can only make a will in respect of up to one-third of his wealth. The rest must be distributed among his family.

*Waqf* (Charitable bequest) is commonly given for the establishment or support of schools for the poor, orphanages, mosques and public utilities such as facilities for travellers. It could take the form of an investment or a house for rent, the income from which is to be used for a charitable purpose.

In this way when a person dies a portion of his wealth reaches outside his family to benefit the public in general and the poor and needy in particular.

## 7. Application of the Islamic Economic System

It may be asked why, if the Islamic Economic System is so good, many Muslim countries have a problem of economic inequality. The answer is that just as there is a difference between an Islamic State and a Muslim State politically, so there is a difference between them economically. It is in only a minority of Muslim countries or communities that the *Zakat* is properly collected and distributed by the Government as it should be. In many Muslim areas the institution of *Waqf* (Charitable bequests) is almost unknown. The economics of most Muslim countries are nowadays based on *Riba* (Interest) which Allah has cursed. In some countries fraud, cheating, hoarding, bribery and exploitation are the norm in economic life. How could such countries prosper when their people do not obey Allah?

A Muslim State or Community does not prosper just because it is composed of nominal Muslims. It prospers only when its people put into practice the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah in all aspects of their life. Allah summed it all up in the Qur'an when He said:

"Allah does not change the condition of a people until  
they change what is within themselves."  
(Qur'an 13:11)

With the present - day revival of Islam, the Muslims face the challenge of applying Islamic economic principles as outlined in these chapters in the modern context. An objective person will agree that if they are put into practice they will effect a great change in society, and offer a balanced alternative to the economic systems now prevailing in most parts of the world.

## EXERCISES

1. Explain how *Zakat* helps to distribute and circulate wealth.
2. Discuss how *Zakat* is collected and distributed in your own country community. Is it correctly done? Does it achieve its aims? If not, how would you suggest it be done?
3. What is the function of the *Bait-ul-Mal* in a Muslim Community?
4. According to the Qur'an what amount should be given as *Sadaqah* (Voluntary Charity)?
5. How do the Islamic Laws of inheritance help to circulate wealth in the wider community?
- .6. Explain what is *Sadaqatun Jariatun* and give 8 examples.
7. Explain what is *Waqf* and give some examples of its uses. Suggest various ways of encouraging the establishment of *Waqf* and *Sadaqatun Jariatun*.
8. What does Allah say in the Qur'an about the responsibility of people for effecting change in themselves and their society?

Praise be to Allah at the end as at the beginning

## SECTION III HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAM

### PART A: The Spread of Islam

## Early Contact of Islam with Africa

### The Migration of Muslims to Abyssinia

Muslims reached the continent of Africa very early, even before the Hijrah to Madinah in 622 A.C. In the fifth year of the Prophet's mission, the persecution of Muslims in Makkah had become severe, and he proposed for their own safety that those most vulnerable to persecution should seek refuge in Abyssinia in Africa, across the Red Sea, where there was said to be a righteous Christian king who would protect them until the situation at home improved.

### The Mission of the two envoys to the Negus

The Quraysh, on learning where the Muslims had sought refuge, sent two envoys loaded with fine gifts to the Negus (king) of Abyssinia and his courtiers. They informed the Negus that the Muslims who had sought refuge with him were following an invented religion and asked for them to be sent back for their own people to deal with them.

### Ja'afar's Speech on Islam

The Negus allowed Ja'afar Ibn Abi Talib, the leader of the Muslim group, to respond to the accusations. Ja'afar addressed him:

"O king, we were an uncivilized people, worshipping idols, eating carrion, committing abominations, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong devoured our weak. Thus we were until God sent us an apostle whose lineage, truth, trustworthiness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship Him and to renounce the stones and images which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and kindly hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him and he gave us orders about prayer, alms-giving, and

fasting (enumerating the commands of Islam). We confessed his truth and believed in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God, and we worshipped God alone without associating aught with Him. We treated as forbidden what He forbade, and as lawful what He declared lawful. Thereupon our people attacked us, treated us harshly and seduced us from our faith to try to make us go back to the worship of idols instead of the worship of God, and to regard as lawful the evil deeds we once committed. So when they got the better of us, treated us unjustly and circumscribed our lives, and came between us and our religion, we came to your country, having chosen you above all others. Here we have been happy in your protection, and we hope that we shall not be treated unjustly while we are with you, O King."

The Negus asked him to recite a portion of the Qur'an and Ja'afar recited from Surah Maryam where God speaks about the miraculous birth of Jesus. The Negus and his bishops were moved, and he responded:

"Indeed, this (Scripture) and what Jesus brought arise from the same source. You two may go, for by God, I will never surrender them to you and they shall not be betrayed."

The Makkan envoys had one more try to turn the Negus against the Muslims. They told him that the Muslims insulted Jesus, saying that he was a human being, or a slave. When called, Ja'afar answered: "We say about him, that which our apostle brought, saying, he is the slave of God, and His apostle, and his spirit, and his word, which he cast unto Mary the blessed virgin." The Negus took a stick from the ground and said. "By God, Jesus, son of Mary, he does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick."

The Negus was not to be moved from his support for them. He gave the Makkan delegation back their gifts and they went away disappointed.

### The Ultimate Conversion of the Negus to Islam

It was reported by Ibn Hisham, an early Muslim historian, in his biography of the Prophet, that the Negus subsequently embraced Islam and that when later the news of his death reached the Prophet in Madinah, he prayed for him. (There is clear evidence in the Hadith that the Prophet prayed for the Negus on hearing of the death, which confirms that he was aware of the Negus' conversion. If he had died a non-Muslim, the Prophet would not have offered his prayer for him in view of the divine prohibition in the Qur'an of praying for

a non-Muslim after his death.)

Thus the first encounter between Islam and Africa created a favourable impression on both sides. The Muslims appreciated the honesty and fairness of the African ruler, the Negus, and the African ruler admired the clarity and simplicity of Islam and the moral integrity of the Muslims, and ultimately embraced Islam.

The stay of the Muslims in Abyssinia was not however very prolonged. After the Hijrah, most of them left Abyssinia to join the Prophet in Madinah, where they were no longer subject to the persecution of the Quraysh.

### EXERCISES

1. When and why did Muslim converts from Makkah go to Abyssinia?
2. Where is Abyssinia?
3. How did the Negus of Abyssinia respond to the request of the Makkan envoys that the Muslims should be sent back?
4. What did Ja'afar ibn Abi Talib tell the Negus about Islam in Makkah?
5. What was the Negus' response to Ja'afar's words?
6. Why did the Prophet (S.A.W) pray for the Negus when he heard of his death?

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## The Spread of Islam to Egypt

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### 1. The Struggle with the Byzantines and Persians

After the Hijrah to Madinah and the formation of the Islamic State, the Prophet (S.A.W) established relations with other States, and sent envoys and delegations to call the rulers of nations and tribes to respond to the message of Islam. The dominant nations at that time were the Byzantines (based in Constantinople but with an empire covering the eastern Mediterranean and much of North Africa) and the Persians. Among those to whom the Prophet sent envoys was Muqauqis, the Patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt.

By the time of the Prophet's death, Islam had spread to all parts of Arabia under his leadership, and the Byzantines began to feel concerned about the emergence of Islamic political power in Arabia. Under the leadership of Caliphs Abubakr and Umar, hostilities developed into full scale war and the Arabs, fired with faith and confidence in their mission as the standard-bearers of Islam, scored significant victories to the North, in Palestine, Syria and Iraq, and in the north-east into Persia and Central Asia. The Islamic State soon became a major power.

Meanwhile there was a great opening up of trade and commerce between Arabia and surrounding regions, reflecting the new prosperity.

### 2. The Situation of Egypt as a Byzantine Province

Among the nations with which Arabia traded was Egypt, lying to the west across the northern part of the Red Sea. Egypt was already an ancient land, cultivated and civilized since the time of the Pharaohs. The fertile valley and delta of the Nile produced corn, fruit and vegetables in abundance. Egypt was at this time under the alien Byzantine rule. Although many of the Egyptians had embraced Christianity, their native Coptic Church was of a different sect from that of the Byzantines, and there was considerable public discontent among the Egyptians because of religious persecution by their rulers.

### 3. 'Amr ibn al-'As

In 639 A.c. 'Amr ibn al-'As, one of the Muslim military leaders, asked for permission from the Caliph 'Umar to carry the war against the Byzantines into Egypt. 'Amr already knew Egypt as he had before Islam been a trader conducting most of his business in that country. The capture of Alexandria, which was then Egypt's capital and the base of the Byzantine navy, would be an important step in the war against the Byzantines, but there was a large Byzantine garrison to defend it.

'Amr obtained Caliph 'Umar's somewhat reluctant permission for his expedition when 'Umar was in Jerusalem, and he set out with an army of 4,000 men for Egypt. When 'Umar returned to Madinah and consulted with others, they realised that 'Amr's mission was very risky and dangerous, and a messenger was sent to 'Amr to halt his advance. 'Amr received the letter at the border between Palestine and Egypt, and guessing its contents, recalled 'Umar's previous instructions: "If a letter from me ordering you to turn back from Egypt overtakes you before entering any part of it then turn back; but if you enter the land before the receipt of my letter, then proceed and solicit Allah's aid." It was reported that 'Amr therefore did not open the letter until he was over the Egyptian border, and so considered himself free to continue his advance.

### 4. Encounters with the Byzantine Army

After some minor successes he reached Babylon on the River Nile. The Patriarch (Muqauqis) names Cyrus, who was also the imperial representative of Byzantium, together with his commander-in-chief, hastened to the defence of the city, which was besieged. Reinforcements in due course arrived from Arabia, bringing 'Arnr's army to about 10,000 men, facing 25,000 Byzantine soldiers.

As the siege continued, 'Amr attacked nearby 'Ayn Shams and the Byzantine army was completely routed. Their commander-in-chief fled to Alexandria. Cyrus, the Imperial representative, who was besieged in Babylon, agreed to negotiations. When Cyrus was offered the choice of Islam, or to pay the *jizyah* tax or to fight, he agreed to pay *jizyah* and rushed to Alexandria to forward the terms to the Emperor of Byzantium. The Emperor rejected what Cyrus had done as treason and exiled him.

### 5. The Surrender of Egypt to the Arabs

Meanwhile the siege of Babylon continued and the following year it fell to the Muslims. 'Amr proceeded to Alexandria, which was, after Constantinople, the finest and strongest city in the world. The city was well defended by high walls and towers with a garrison of 50,000 men armed with engines of war, and behind it lay the docks of the Byzantine Navy. 'Amr had neither the men nor the war machines, nor a single ship with which to make an impact on these defenses, and at first suffered many losses, and had to withdraw to Babylon. However, within a year the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius died and his successor re-instated Cyrus in Egypt, and sent him to conclude the peace. Cyrus signed a treaty with 'Amr handing over Egypt to the Arabs, and agreeing not to allow a Byzantine army to attempt a return to Egypt.

The news of the capitulation was carried to Umar who held a simple service of thanks-giving in the Mosque in Madinah.

### 6. Reasons for the Arabs' success

One may wonder at the comparative ease with which the small and unsophisticated Arab army could gain a whole country from a major power.

Part of the answer must lie with the spirit of the Arab Army, which made a deep impression on those who witnessed it. According to an Arab historian, Ibn 'Abd-al Hakem, Cyrus' envoys gave the following account of the Muslim soldiers:

"We have witnessed a people to each and every one of whom death is preferable to life, and humility to prominence, and to none of whom this world has the least attraction. They sit not except on the ground and eat nought but on their knees. Their leader is like unto one of them: the low cannot be distinguished from the high, nor the master from the slave. And when the time of prayer comes none of them absents himself, all wash their extremities and humbly observe their prayer."

Another reason for the Arabs' victory may be the hostility that already existed between the native Coptic Christians of Egypt and their Byzantine rulers. The Egyptians had for years suffered persecution and continual attempts to make them abandon their form of belief and worship. Therefore the Bishop of Alexandria had from the first ordered them to offer no resistance to the Arabs, out of knowledge that, once they agreed to pay *jizyah* as "People of



the Book", they would be allowed greater religious freedom than they had been given by their fellow-Christian Byzantine rulers. Hence, many of the native Egyptians welcomed the Muslims as better rulers than the Byzantines, and gave them their co-operation.

The *jizyah*, which was paid by those who chose to remain Christians or Jews, was a tax in lieu of army service, in return for which the Islamic State guaranteed the protection and freedom of the religious groups concerned.

## 7. The New Administration under Muslim Leadership

'Amr then established a new capital at the site of his camp at Fustat, close to Babylon and near the site of modern Cairo. There he built the first Mosque in Egypt. He proceeded to take over the administration of the country, and in order to facilitate communication and commerce with Arabia, cleared the old Pharaonic canal leading from the River Nile to the Red Sea.

'Amr also gave his attention to improving the government of the country, the administration of justice, and the organization of taxes.

The Byzantines tried briefly to stage a return. In 645 A.C. 300 ships attacked Alexandria and slaughtered the Arab garrison of 1,000 men, but 'Amr recaptured it in 646, and demolished the walls. From that time the ancient Egyptian capital remained continuously in Muslim hands.

## 8. How 'Amr and Caliph 'Umar dealt with a problem of Superstition

An interesting story illustrates the way in which 'Amr and Caliph 'Umar dealt with a serious problem arising from an ancient Egyptian custom and superstition.

It had long been an Egyptian custom to throw into the River Nile in July of every year a virgin dressed in bridal clothes, as an offering to propitiate the "God of the River Nile". Even after becoming Christians, the Egyptians insisted on maintaining this ancient custom.

'Amr was approached by the elders when the month came, seeking his permission to follow their usual custom. 'Amr said that such a practice could not be permitted in an Islamic State, that Islam knew of no god of the Nile, but only One God, and Allah did not need to be propitiated.

The elders listened but were not satisfied. They warned 'Amr that without the sacrifice there would be no rising of the river in flood, on which

the agriculture of all Egypt depended. 'Amr refused, and the elders went away disgruntled.

July passed, and August, and there was no rise in the level of the river, and the Egyptians blamed the Muslims for their refusal to tolerate their custom.

September came and still there was no flood. 'Amr himself became anxious and wrote to the Caliph 'Umar. 'Umar approved of 'Amr's refusal to allow human sacrifice, and along with his letter to 'Amr he sent a card on which was written:

"In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. From the slave of Allah, 'Umar Commander of the Faithful to the Nile of Egypt. Everything in the universe is subject to the will of Allah. The rise of your level is subject to the will of Allah, and we pray Allah to command you to rise in level."

'Umar directed 'Amr that the card should be thrown in the middle of the river. 'Amr assembled the people on the river banks, and after reciting some verses of the Holy Qur'an, he pronounced the name of God and threw 'Umar's card in the middle of the river, and the Muslims on the banks raised their hands in prayer to God to make the river rise. The card floated away and disappeared.

The following morning the river began its full flood, and the custom of sacrificing a virgin to the "River god" was finally ended. Many Egyptians came to believe in the truth and blessing of Islam, and a process of conversion and assimilation with the Arabs began which continued over the centuries, even though the Coptic church was still given protection in the Islamic State and continues to function in Egypt until today.

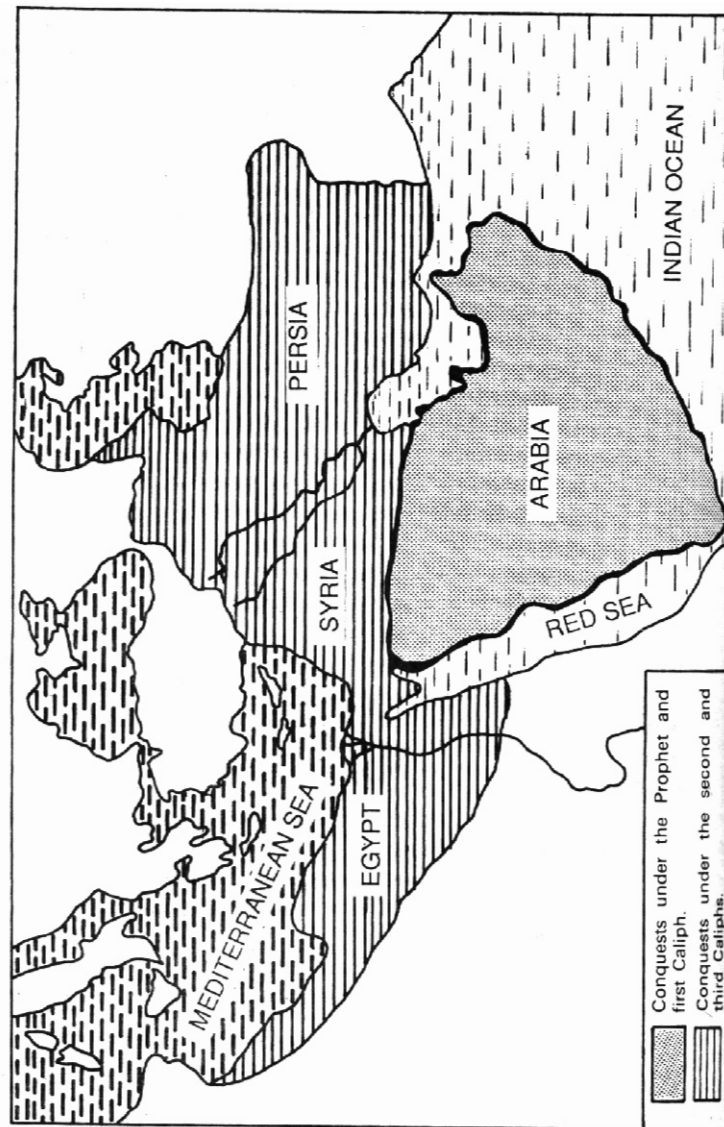
## EXERCISES

1. Which were the dominant nations around Arabia at the time of the expansion of Islam?
2. Which areas comprised the Byzantine Empire?
3. Why was the attack on Egypt important in the struggle with the Byzantine Empire?
4. Explain how Egypt was ceded to the Arabs by the Byzantines.
- 5.. Give two reasons why Amr's small army was able to defeat the Byzantines and occupy Egypt.
6. Explain the meaning of the *Jizyah*.
7. How did 'Amr and Caliph 'Umar handle the old Egyptian superstition of human sacrifice to the so-called "god of the Nile"?



## The Spread of Islam to the Rest of North Africa

Map 1. Empire of Islam ca. 656 A.C.



### 1. Byzantine Colonies in North Africa

The Byzantines had established themselves not only in Egypt but all along the coastal plains of North Africa by the Mediterranean Sea. They had constructed forts and posted garrisons in these settlements for their protection. However, like the earlier colonizers of North Africa — the Phoenicians, the Romans and the Vandals — the Byzantines had only occupied the coastal areas for trade and for gathering supplies of grain to be sent across the sea to their "metropolitan" homelands. They were not therefore, settlers, nor did they penetrate to the interior of the country, which was occupied by its native Berber inhabitants. The majority of these remained pagans, although a few near the coast had converted to Christianity and Judaism.

However, as in Egypt, there were sectarian differences between native Christians and the Byzantines, which made the native Christians more receptive to Arab rule.

### 2. Expeditions to the West

After the fall of Egypt, 'Āmr ibn al-As with characteristic swiftness in 642-3 A.C. sent his cavalry west into Pentapolis where they occupied Barka without resistance under the leadership of 'Uqbah b. Nafi', 'Āmr's nephew. 'Uqbah proceeded west to Tripoli before he was halted by Berber resistance.

### 3. Establishment of Qairouan

This expedition was followed up by later ones. Between 669 and 775 A.C. 'Uqbah achieved further advances, including the establishment in 670 A.C. of the Muslim City in Qairouan (in *Ifriqiyah*, corresponding roughly with modern Tunisia) as a naval and military base. This marked the beginning of the conversion of the Berber tribes to Islam. Such Berber converts then joined the struggle against the Byzantines and against the pagan Berber resistance. Unlike the Byzantines and other invaders before them, Muslims not only occupied the lands but settled there, mixing with the local inhabitants. Qairouan became an important centre of Islamic learning and missionary

activities whose influence would in due course extend into the Western Sahara.

#### 4. Further Struggle with the Berber Tribes

The establishment of Qairouan facilitated a further push to the West. 'Uqbah advanced as far as Tangier and the Atlantic Coast and into the Berber territory of the Atlas Mountains. However, he avoided attacking the Byzantine coastal towns, and since he had no settlers to leave behind, this expedition had no lasting achievement. 'Uqbah was killed in an ambush by a Berber army on his return journey eastward in 685 A.C.

The pagan Berbers at this time made a determined attempt to resist the Muslim presence and captured Qairouan. It was not until 693 A.C. that the Umayyad Caliphate was able to send an army of 40,000 which took Carthage (a major Byzantine city on the north coast of Tunisia) in 695 A.C. Two years later it was lost again, and was at last recaptured by land and sea assault of the Muslims in 698 A.C. under Hassan b. Al-Nu'man.

#### 5. Conversion of the Berbers

The Byzantine colonialists escaped by sea across the Mediterranean. The majority of the native pagan population converted to Islam within a short space of time, apparently impressed by the clear religious teachings and the behaviour of the early Muslims. However, Christians and Jews who wished to retain their religions were permitted to do so on payment of the *jizyah*. The evidence of this is the survival of the North African churches in the Islamic State for many centuries, as well as the continued survival of communities of North African Jews until the present century.

The Muslim Berbers then joined their co-religionists in pressing west across the areas now known as Algeria and Morocco. By the end of the first decade of the 8th Century A.C. the rest of the Maghrib (North Africa) was under Muslim control, and in 710 A.C it was a joint Arab-Berber army which set out across the sea for Andalusia, to begin the conquest of Spain. Most of Spain was occupied and ruled by the Muslims for centuries. It became one of the fairest provinces of the Muslim Empire, famous for its beautiful buildings; its universities and its high Islamic culture.

The Berbers, like the Arabs, were pastoralists, occupying vast lands in the Atlas Mountains and on the northern fringes of the Sahara. One branch of the Berbers, the Sanhajah, extended far south into the Sahara, across which they had established trade with black West African nations.

Thus with the spread of Islam among the Berbers across North Africa, it became only a matter of time before its message would cross the Sahara and spread into West Africa.

#### EXERCISES

1. In what way did the Byzantines colonise North Africa?
2. What made the City of Qairouan important?
3. In what way did the Muslims' occupation of North Africa differ from that of earlier invaders?
4. Describe the expansion of Muslim rule to the west after the conversion of the Berbers.
5. How did the Berbers become the means by which Islam reached West Africa?

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## The Spread of Islam to West Africa through Traders and Teachers

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### 1. Islam among the Berbers

The acceptance of Islam among the formerly pagan Berbers of North Africa in the 8th Century A.C. was in many cases quite superficial. Some joined because they felt it was useless to resist, and some because they wished to join the Muslim army in its advance into Spain, while others were sincere in the practice of their new faith.

The true conversion of the Berbers as a whole took several centuries, particularly among the mountains and deserts of the interior. In 718 A.C. the pious Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abdul Aziz sent ten learned Muslim theologians to teach the Berbers their duties as Muslims. Many other teachers followed but with limited response. The Berbers were resistant to change — due in part to resentment at their loss of sovereignty to the Arabs.

In the early eleventh century A.C., Yahya b. Ibrahim, a chief of the Sanhajah, one of the Berber tribes of the western Sahara, sought on his return from Hajj for a pious, learned teacher who would accompany him to enlighten his fellow tribesmen in the interior, who had nominally embraced Islam. At length in North Africa he found one ready to brave the dangers of the Sahara, named Abdallah b. Yasin. Yet in spite of Abdallah's ardent preaching, the tribesmen refused to change their way of life to comply with Islamic teachings. At last he and a few followers withdrew to an island and established a retreat (called "ribat" in Arabic) where they could stay devoting themselves entirely to prayer. This caused the more devout Berbers to repent over their wickedness which had driven away their pious teacher, and they came humbly to seek his forgiveness and instruction, until their numbers swelled to over a thousand. He then urged them, out of gratitude to God, to go back to their respective tribes and clans and teach them the law of God and threaten them with His chastisement. "If they repent, amend their ways and accept the truth, leave them in peace, if they refuse and persist in their errors and evil lives, invoke the aid of God against them, and let us make war upon them until God decide between us."

The followers carried out his instructions, but their preaching was of no avail. Abdallah b. Yasin also left the retreat to preach but found the Berber chiefs still unwilling to listen. At last in 1042 he led his followers (to whom he gave the name of al-Murabitun — the people of the ribat — known to European historians as the Almoravids) in an attack on the neighbouring tribes and forced their submission. His success in war made much more impression on the warlike Saharan tribes than all his preaching, and they soon began to practise the religion voluntarily. Abdallah b. Yasin died in 1058 but after his death the Almoravid movement continued, spreading both south across the Sahara and northwards into Morocco. From there they were invited to help the Muslim kings in Spain against Christian attacks from the North, and by 1110 A.C. all the Muslim States in Andalusia (Spain) came under Almoravid control.

### 2. The Role of Traders in the Spread of Islam to West Africa

In spite of the long resistance of some of the Berber tribes, it was through the earlier Berber converts who were traders that Islam first found its way into West Africa, starting probably in the early 8th Century A.C. following the trans-Saharan trade routes.

Trade had been going on across the Sahara for a considerable period before the arrival of Islam. The Arabs in North Africa came to realise that beyond the Sahara lay African empires with large supplies of gold, and other commodities, and people to whom the message of Islam had not reached. They took steps to develop the trade routes, digging wells across the Western Sahara to ease the hardship of the crossing. In exchange for gold, ivory and kola nuts, the West Africans wanted supplies of salt and commodities from the Arab lands and beyond.

The Islamic world had from its inception been involved in trade, and some of the earliest Muslims in Makkah had been traders, including Abubakr, Uthman and the Prophet himself (S.A.W.).

From the 8th Century A.C. Muslim merchants, mainly of Berber stock, from North African, now took the trans-Saharan routes, forming settlements along the way, and establishing trading bases south of the desert among the black West African peoples. By the late 9th and early 10th centuries A.C. Muslim quarters were established in the cities of West African States such as Ghana and Borno.

The Muslim traders at the same time acted as voluntary missionaries. Islam does not have a priesthood, therefore the duty of gaining knowledge of the religion and teaching it to others is spread among the community in general. The five pillars of Islam are practised by all, therefore every Muslim is expected to understand its basic teachings, to know how to pray and fast and to carry out his religious duties without relying on a professional cleric or member of a priestly caste. Any Muslim who has the ability to lead the prayer may be chosen as an Imam (prayer-leader) either temporarily or permanently. Therefore a trader who was a practising Muslim would take it as a natural duty to pass on to others the teachings of Islam.

It must be stated however that not all traders to West Africa were learned enough to convey to their converts more than the rudiments of their religion. Few of them were also scholars. Therefore although Islam became quite widely spread, knowledge of it was generally shallow.

The West Africans could not fail to be impressed by the Islamic mode of prayer, and the dress, manners and moral standards of the Muslims whose life reflected to some degree the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and the rules of the Shari'ah. They could observe the way Muslims would break off their activities at prescribed times for performance of the five daily prayers, which could be done anywhere, alone or in groups, in open spaces or in simple mosques.

Such mosques would usually be associated with the teaching of both adult converts and children either by a trader himself or by learned Muslims who also travelled the trade routes and settled in the West African States. The Muslims were generally literate, and this gained respect for them among the rulers as well as the ordinary people.

In some states Muslims were absolved from certain local customs which compromised the principles of Tawhid. For example, pagan subjects were required to crawl on the ground before their ruler, while throwing dust over their heads and shoulders, as a mark of total submission, but Muslims were instead permitted to stand and clap their hands as a mark of respect.

Conversions to Islam soon began among the native population, and many Muslim converts were employed by the State in high posts where their literacy was an asset in administration. It was not long before some of the rulers themselves converted to Islam, which further enhanced its spread particularly in the courts and the urban areas.

In due course other events and movements affected the spread of Islam in West Africa. However the role of the individual Muslim trader/teacher was a constant factor for many centuries in the steady progress of Islam throughout the region.

## EXERCISES

1. The spread of Islam among the Berbers was not without opposition. Why was this?
2. How did Abdallah b. Yasin at last make an impression on the Berber chiefs of the Sahara?
3. When was Islam brought to West Africa, by whom, and how?
4. Which items of trade were carried across the Sahara from West Africa to the Arab lands?
5. How were the North African traders able to carry out a dual role in West Africa?
6. Name some of the early trading centres in West Africa. Which factors affected their geographical location?
7. Which aspects of the Muslim traders' way of life might have impressed the West Africans who saw them?
8. How did the presence of Muslim traders lead to the conversion of West African kings and their administrations?



## The role of the Sufi Orders in the spread of Islam in West Africa

### 1. Sufism

Sufism is the name given to Islamic mysticism. It refers to the attempt of a believer through inner purification, prayer, meditation or other acts of worship to come closer to God and achieve direct and personal experience of Him.

### 2. Growth of Sufi Orders

In the course of history certain outstanding masters of Sufism became the founders of Sufi orders. These are known as Tariqas (*Tāriqah* being the Arabic word for a way or path). Disciples would gather to learn from the master, and where such gatherings became residential, a *zawiya* or house of retreat for meditation would be established. The retreat might be for short or long periods, and might involve group prayers, *dhikr* (i.e. practices for remembrance of God) or other activities designed to bring the soul into a state of receptiveness.

Alternatively Sufi prayers and meditation could be done in a mosque after congregational prayer, or individually at home, without the necessity of a prolonged retreat.

The practice is traced to voluntary group meditation as far back as the time of the Prophet which is recorded in the Hadith; but the growth of specific religious orders for the teaching of Sufi practices was a later development in the history of Islam.

The leaders of such Sufi orders in some cases came to be regarded as saints, and in North Africa and eastern Sudan this gave rise to a cult of saints and their tombs after their death. The saint or saint's tomb was believed to be a source of baraka (blessing) on those who paid a visit. The cult of saints and tombs however did not spread to West Africa except in the far North Western areas occupied by the Moors.

### 3. The Sufi Training

The true Sufi initiation and training is always done at a personal level from master (Sheikh) to disciple. The disciple may in due course qualify as a master to initiate others, and so the chains of transmission may ultimately be traced back to the founder of the order.

The essence of the composition of *dhikr* which originated with the founder of each order, is traced back to verses of the Qur'an or to certain Hadith of the Prophet (S.A.W.) even though the mode of practice by some Sufi orders could not necessarily be derived from any known practice of the Prophet.

The centre of the Sufi ritual is the *dhikr* (remembrance of God) in congregation or alone. When performed collectively it is chanted in rhythm. In some parts of the world this practice culminates in an ecstatic state when the adept experiences a feeling of mystical union with God.

For many West African Muslims association with a Sufi order is confined to the practice of adding a certain formula of *dhikr* to the meditations and supplications following the daily prayers. For the majority this practice is not done in the expectation of any mystical experience. However, belonging to one of the orders may strengthen and purify the moral conduct of the person concerned, since admission is only granted to those who are ready to submit to the moral discipline of the order. This may involve strict avoidance of alcohol, smoking, lying, corruption and association with pagan cults, along with other positive injunctions. The initiated member then has an added incentive to be worthy of his status in the Order.

### 4. The Qadiriyyah Order

The Qadiriyyah order was established by Abdulqadir Jilani in Baghdad in the twelfth century A.C. It spread into West Africa in the fifteenth century through Timbuktu, near which a centre was established for the order. Two important jihad leaders, Sheikh Ahmad Lobbo of Masina and Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio, were members of this order which produced a number of other scholars, missionaries and leaders, including Sheikh Mukhtar al-Kunti.

### 5. The Tijjāniyyah Order

This order was established by Sheikh Ahmad b. Muhammad at-Tijjāni (1731-1815 A.C.) in Morocco/Algeria. After his death, missionary

activity was undertaken by his followers which carried the teachings of the order across the caravan routes to West Africa.

The Tijjāniyyah order became more widespread than the Qadiriyya and in some areas replaced it. At the time of the conquests of al-Hajj Umar Tal (d. 1864) in the western Sudan the Tijjāniyyah order was officially recognised and promoted in the subjected territories. When the empire in due course broke up, the Tijjāni allegiance remained strong.

## 6. Role of the Sufi Orders in West Africa

The impact of the Sufi orders in West Africa was spiritual, moral and occasionally political.

As indicated, the orders offered a method of achieving spiritual advancement through training in mystical practices. At the same time the sense of belonging to a brotherhood and striving for moral purification under the guidance of a Sheikh would exert influence over the behaviour of any Muslim who was seeking to please Allah. These aspects were very attractive to people of a naturally religious disposition who sought personal commitment in their religious life. In this way the Sufi orders were themselves responsible for attracting people to Islam as well as providing an avenue of spiritual and moral advancement for born Muslims.

The *tariqas* could play an especially important role in times of political turmoil, when the ordered structures of society broke down. This was so in West Africa after the Moroccan invasion of 1591 A.C. This invasion broke up the Songhai Empire into small independent Kingdoms in which Islam was no longer the State religion. Paganism had its opportunity to make a come-back and many local rulers were either pagans or nominal Muslims who ruled by their whims without reference to Islamic norms of government and society. The constant warfare between the petty kingdoms destroyed both trade and learning. Timbuktu, the intellectual cradle of Islam in West Africa, was desecrated, its scholars killed or scattered. Yet it was during this period between the 15th and 18th centuries that the Qadiriyya Tariqa entered West Africa and became firmly established, to be reinforced by the Tijjāniyya Tariqa in the 19th Century.

These Sufi orders were not in themselves militant, but could eventually contribute to the militant jihads that broke out in the 19th century in West Africa in several ways. Firstly, they taught the ethic of asceticism and *tarbiyya*

(character training), thus raising a brotherhood of men ready to endure hardship for the sake of the lofty ideals of Islam. Secondly, they could operate outside the structure of the government as moral and religious movements dedicated to personal piety. Thus their activities could fill some of the gaps left by the States' withdrawal of support for Islamic education. (In this one may see a parallel with the underground flourishing of Sufi brotherhoods in Soviet Central Asia in the 20th Century as a response to the suppression of Islam and Islamic education by the Communist government.)

It is therefore a matter of no surprise that when matters came to a head between the Muslims and their tyrannical rulers in 19th Century West Africa, the jihad leaders were men trained in the spiritual and moral discipline of the Sufi orders.

## QUESTIONS:

1. What is the basis of Sufism in Islam?
2. Describe the disciplines and practices of the Sufi orders.
3. How could membership of a Sufi order affect the moral conduct of a disciple?
4. Where did the Qadiriyya order originate and when did it enter West Africa?
5. Where did the Tijjaniyya order originate and when did it enter West Africa?
6. Why were the Sufi orders important in the 15th-19th century in West Africa? In what way were they relevant to the jihads of the 19th century?



## The role of the reformers in the spread of Islam in West Africa

### 1. The Need for Reform

In the previous chapter we have referred to the situation in most of the West African region from the 16th-19th Centuries. The Moroccan invasion of Songhai in 1591 destroyed a thriving Muslim State. The sacking of Timbuktu ended a glorious period of intellectual activity which had lasted for over 700 years.

The break-up of the Songhai empire resulted in a resurgence of indigenous religions within the petty States which had lost their Islamic leadership. The leaders of the new States often bore Muslim names but neglected the teachings of Islam. They neglected to apply the Shari'ah, and oppressed their people with arbitrary rule and crippling taxes. In all affairs pagan traditions were mixed with Islamic principles. The rulers surrounded themselves with compliant scholars who would, in return for the ruler's favour, give approval to his deeds. More knowledgeable scholars of integrity kept away from the courts, and only occasionally would a voice of criticism be heard.

### 2. The Reform Movement of Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio

In the 19th Century the situation described above reached a crisis point when a series of Islamic reformers had the courage to challenge the oppression of the rulers, first by preaching and teaching, and ultimately on the battlefield.

As a historian of West Africa, Professor Abdullahi Smith has described it:

*"The history of the West African Savannah in the 19th Century has its own independent theme; and this consists in a series of revolutionary movements which radically changed the social and political complexion on the whole zone during the hundred years or so before the establishment of the European governments. These movements were Jihads resulting in the formation of Islamic States, the emergence of a new West African Muslim aristocracy and wide spread conversion to Islam."*

The first of these reform movements was that of Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio. In 1774 at the age of twenty he embarked on teaching the basics of Islam to people in and around his own town of Degel in the Hausa State of Gobir. In due course he was joined by his brother Abdullahi and his son Muhammad Bello, and their teaching programmes expanded into other States such as Zamfara.

While so doing they continued their own studies and produced at least 258 books and pamphlets between them on a wide range of subjects.

Wherever they travelled they left behind some of their own students who could take over the education of the people. Men and women, young and old, came to learn from them, and the Sheikh's fame spread widely all over the Hausa States and into Borno and Macina.

This process could have continued for a much longer period had not the rulers brought about a confrontation. Seeing his own popularity, and their power dwindling as that of the Sheikh grew, the ruler of Gobir tried to put a stop to the movement by prohibiting conversion to Islam and the outward signs of Islamic identity such as the turban and the veil, as well as forbidding the Sheikh's followers to preach. The Sheikh's response was to perform a Hijra (Religious Emigration) and withdraw his community from Gobir in 1804. Pursued by the Gobir army, the Sheikh rallied his community (Jama'a) to take up arms and face the enemy on the field of battle. With astonishing success they withstood the onslaught and carried the Jihad beyond Gobir to overthrow its allies in the other Hausa States. By 1810 A.C. most of the fighting was over, and the Jama'a began the task of putting into the practice the ideals of an Islamic State which they had been preaching.

The Sheikh himself then left the administrative work to his brother Abdullahi and son Muhammad Bello and devoted himself to laying the intellectual foundations of the new state, based on the Islamic principles of "'Amr bil Ma'arūf wal Nahy 'anil Munkar" (commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong)" (Qur'an 3:110).

The Sokoto Caliphate covered a vast area corresponding roughly with that of the present Northern States of Nigeria, and reaching as far South as Yorubaland. The resources of the State were placed at the service of Islam, and there were widespread conversions within the area of the new State.

### 3. Other Reformers (Mujaddidun)

The influence of the Sheikh and his reform movement was felt in other parts of West Africa. Among the Sheikh's disciples was Ahmad Labbo in Macina, in the pagan Bambara State of Segou to the West of Hausaland. He faced a similar situation of decadent rulers supported by corrupt scholars. He corresponded in 1815-1816 A.C. with the leaders of the Sokoto Caliphate who supported his right to criticise and ultimately lead a jihad against the pagan establishment in Macina. By 1818 the administration was overthrown and an Islamic State set up in its place, which drew heavily on the writings of the Sokoto leaders.

Another important reformer of the 19th century was Hajj Umar al-Futi of Futa Toro in Senegambia. In 1825 he left for Hajj, where he was initiated into the Tijjaniyya Sufi order. On his return he stayed from 1813 until 1837 in Sokoto, where he learned from its leaders, participated in its campaigns and married one of Muhammed Bello's daughters. In 1839 he settled in Futa Jallon and there gathered disciples in preparation for the inevitable conflict. A pagan army was sent to destroy his base, which was routed. Hajj Umar followed up with a successful attack on the pagan Bambara State of Ka'arta in 1855 and also clashed with the French who were then extending their power from the coast. He conquered the pagan Bambara State of Segou where he founded his headquarters and later took over the State of Macina from the heirs of Ahmad Labbo, where he died in 1864.

### 4. Effects of the Reformers and Jihads

The reform movements and jihads of the 19th Century changed radically the political, social, economic and intellectual conditions in the West African States.

Many groups of pagans became accessible to Muslim da'wah activity for the first time, and there were widespread conversions of groups of people to Islam.

At the same time, the educational level of the Muslims was raised so that they achieved a better understanding of the meaning of being a Muslim, both at the personal level and with regard to Islamic requirements for the conduct of justice within State and society. Aspects of pagan belief and practice that had been mixed with Islam could be more readily identified and rejected than in earlier centuries.

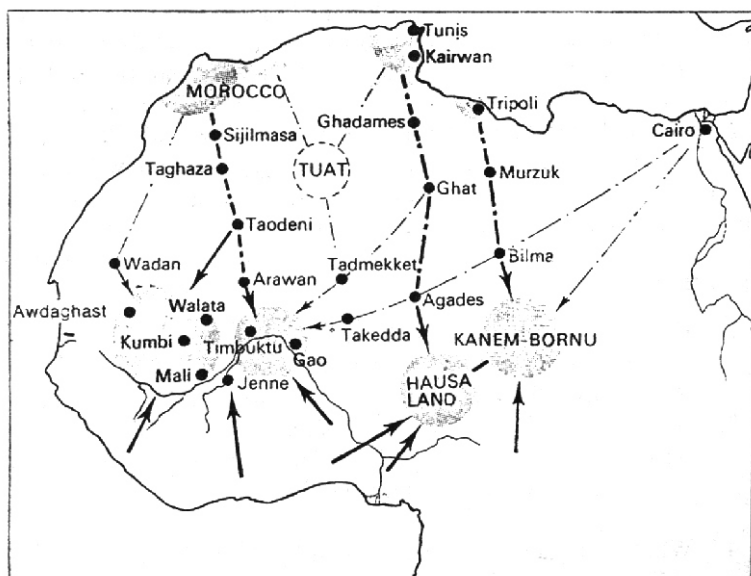
The aim of the reform and subsequent jihad was not to convert pagans by force, since such a project would be contrary to the teachings of Islam. The leaders of the jihads were too learned to be unaware of this.

The aim of the reform was rather to enlighten Muslims at all levels about the true teachings of their religion, and where that aspiration was forcibly suppressed, to meet force with force and remove the political obstacles by means of *jihad*.

### EXERCISES

1. Describe the circumstances which led to the Islamic reform movements of the 19th Century in West Africa.
2. What caused Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio to embark on jihad?
3. Account briefly for two other *jihads* in 19th Century West Africa, and mention their connection with the reform movement of Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio.
4. What changes were brought about by the 19th Century jihads in West Africa?
5. In what ways did the situation and activities of the Islamic reformers differ from those of the Islamic missionaries of earlier centuries in West Africa?

## The impact of Islam on Economic Life and Political Systems of West African Empires



Map 2. The Trans-Saharan Trade Routes

### 1. The Arrival of Muslim Traders

The arrival from the 8th Century A.C. of Muslim traders from North Africa opened up West Africa to international trade. The chief exports from West Africa were gold, ivory, kola nuts, pepper and slaves. The West Africans received in return salt, silk cloth, metal ware and other manufactured goods from North Africa and beyond. Since the Muslim Empire stretched from Spain in the West to the borders of China in the Far East, trade took place over vast distances. In this way useful connections were established with the rest of the Islamic world, bringing an exchange not only of products and artefacts but also of intellectual ideas and economic practices.

### 2. Muslim Trading Cities

Since the West African trade was towards the north, the great trading cities grew up along the northern borders where the savannah meets the desert. Here the caravans would rest and unload after their crossing of the Sahara. So the cities were like ports where ships would load and unload, with camels taking the role of the "ships of the desert". Among such important trading terminals were Timbuktu, Gao, Awdaghast, Kumbi, Jenne, Borno, and in later times Kano.

### 3. Muslim Trading Practices

Islam does not divide life into "secular" and "sacred" compartments. Even everyday activities and work, if done with the right intention, and provided they are halal, are considered a part of worship. Therefore Muslims have always considered economic activities, including trade, important. The Qur'an and Hadith teach that trade should conform with principles of honesty and fairness at both the organizational and individual levels. Hence the Muslim traders brought with them to West Africa Islamic principles of market

organization, inspection of goods, weights and measures, and fair means of buying and selling. Literacy was also important for long-distance trading, in recording orders, sales and agreements, particularly in light of the Qur'anic injunctions on written contracts and witnesses in commercial transactions. (Qur'an 2:282). The Islamic prohibition of interest, hoarding, exploitation and cheating, and the strong emphasis on keeping promises, helped to make trade relationships harmonious and beneficial to both buyer and seller. Even when traders might try to evade the Qur'anic prohibition of interest by various devices, such agreements could have no legal backing. Therefore it was rare for traders to sink into perpetual debt through interest-bearing loans.

#### 4. Impact of Islam on Political Systems in West Africa

Before the arrival of Islam in West Africa several ethnic groups in the Savannah belt had organized themselves into substantial trading empires.

The spread of Islam within these empires was a gradual process from the 8th Century onwards. Empires established themselves and eventually declined over the centuries, to be superseded by others. Such empires sometimes began under pagan leadership but once established became predominantly Muslim in leadership and in urban population.

Nevertheless the indigenous religions of the people existed side by side with Islam, particularly in the rural areas. These religions were based on cults of various local and tribal gods and on the worship of ancestors. The Head of State was traditionally regarded as the leader of all the cults, and played a ritual role as an intermediary between the people and the gods. This role of semi-divine king was often sustained by the practice of royal seclusion. Very few people would be allowed to see the king. Those who came into his presence were required to show the utmost humility by prostrating before him. In the empire of old Ghana the king would not speak to his subjects directly but through an "interpreter" who would relay his words to the listeners. Similar practices were reported by the great Arab traveller Ibn Battuta when he visited the Empire of Mali in 1532. The rulers of Songhai and the Mais of Borno also lived in semi-seclusion from their subjects.

These practices associated with traditional divine kingship generally continued even though the majority of the kings became Muslims. They are indications that although many Muslims in West Africa embraced Islam with enthusiasm, performed their acts of worship, and gave generous patronage to the *Ulema* (Scholars), there was still considerable adherence to pre-Islamic customs that could not be reconciled with Islam.

It appears that in the early centuries Islam and paganism in West Africa flourished side by side, and with considerable tolerance by Muslims of un-Islamic practices. This may have been partly due to shallow knowledge of Islam among most of the Muslim population, who were far from the Muslim heartlands and international centres of education. It may also have been a recognition of the fact that although Islam was strong in the royal courts and the towns, the rural areas, where most of the population lived, were still largely pagan. To clash openly with the pagan cults could have prevented further spread of Islam. The initial task of Muslim missionaries and teachers was to put across the basic principles of Islamic belief and establish the forms of Islamic worship. It may have been considered expedient to tolerate survivals of pagan custom or give them an Islamic colouring in the belief that, with the passage of time and the spread of Islamic education, such pagan survivals would eventually wither away.

Thus although the coming of Islam to West Africa in the period from the 8th-18th centuries influenced the conduct of state affairs in some organizational aspects, most of the West African States of this period, with some notable exceptions, could not be described as truly "Islamic" in ideology or concept. Similarly, although there were in some of these States Islamic courts, and Islamic judges who were held in high respect, it appears that in applying the law they were guided more by local custom than by the provisions of the Shari'ah. However there were over the years a number of noteworthy attempts at more comprehensive Islamization under the leadership of able Muslims such as Askiya Muhammad in Songhai, Idris Alooma in Borno, Muhammad Rumfa in Kano and Muhammad Korau in Katsina.

The 19th Century Jihads such as that of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio brought about more far-reaching attempts to reform the whole socio-political, legal and economic system in line with the Qur'an and the practice of the Prophet (S.A.W.) and the Rightly Guided Caliphs.



## The Impact of Islam on Social Life and Intellectual Activities

This movement involved much intellectual effort and discussion of the requirements of an Islamic State, and numerous books were written addressing this topic.

The achievements of the Sokoto reform leaders were great and in some respects permanent over a large area of what is today Nigeria. However, later generations of emirs who inherited titles of leadership did not always inherit the same religious motivation. The decline of religious and intellectual commitment among the leadership led to the decline of a truly Islamic conduct of State. Some Emirs could not resist the corrupting effects of power and came to resemble in their behaviour and administration the very tyrants the Caliphate had preached against and overthrown.

Nevertheless, the Sokoto Caliphate at the time of its founders remains illustrious as an example of how Islamic ideals of a moral political order could be and were applied in the heart of Africa by an indigenous people more than ten centuries after they were first taught in Makkah and Madinah.

### EXERCISES

1. What was the impact of the trans-Saharan Trade on the cities of West Africa?
2. Which Islamic trading practices would contribute to peaceful commercial relationships and mutual benefit of buyers and sellers?
3. (a) What special role was played by the Head of State in pre Islamic cultures in West Africa?  
(b) What led to the survival of pagan or semi-pagan ideas and practices in the early empires of West Africa, even after Islam became the dominant religion of the rulers?
4. Which movement in the 19th century brought about a radical transformation of the conduct of State in part of West Africa in line with Islamic socio-political teachings?
5. What is the significance of the Sokoto Caliphate to Muslims?

### 1. The Impact of Islam on Social Life

Religion and culture are closely inter-related with social life and social custom. Islam as it spread across West Africa brought many changes in social life, although the degree and speed of change varied from place to place and time to time.

#### (a) Dress, hygiene and diet

The most obvious or visible changes in African social life brought by Islam were related to dress, diet and manners. For both men and women the loose and dignified Islamic styles of dress were adopted in place of the semi-nude condition common in pagan societies. With this went greater cleanliness of clothing and of the body due to Islamic ablutions and other practices of hygiene, and encouragement of the use of soaps and perfumes.

The Islamic dietary laws brought the concept of more humane methods of animal slaughter, and the prohibition of eating carrion, blood, pigs and dogs. The prohibition of alcohol had an impact on social life. It also affected public ceremony where libations of alcohol had been a common feature of traditional social activities.

#### (b) The Family

The family structure and roles of men and women underwent some modification under Islamic influence. In the tribal system the clan and clan leader have wide powers. The Islamic legal system however gives more importance to the immediate family unit (parents, children, grandparents) rather than the wider clan. This applies in matters of authority and also in respect of inheritance. For example, whereas in the tribal/clan system a widow would often be "inherited" by the late husband's brother, the Islamic law allows the widow to re-marry according to her choice.

The Islamic duty of the husband to provide for the maintenance of his wife exercised a moderating influence on the heavy farm work often assigned to women in African societies. Attitudes towards sexual morality were also affected, even though the Islamic legal punishments for adultery and fornication were seldom applied in practice.

for adultery and fornication were seldom applied in practice.

**(c) Language**

The coming of Islam brought with it many Arabic loan words, particularly those related to religion and education which were incorporated into the local languages of West Africa. The Hausa language is particularly rich in such Arabic "loan words".

**(d) Representational Art**

Artistic activities were also affected by the Islamic injunctions against the portrayal of living beings. This cut at the root of traditional pagan art form such as idols, statues, carvings, masks and other animal and human representational art forms. In its place there developed abstract and stylised designs, used on buildings, household artefacts, pottery, woven cloth and embroidered items.

**(e) Tribe, social class and caste**

Tribal life is by its nature limited and parochial. By contrast, Islam could be perceived from the start as a universal religion which superseded the boundaries of nation and tribe. Inter-marriage between races and tribes was not frowned on, and membership of the Islamic faith implied membership of a world-wide community of believers of many races. This membership of an international community could be experienced by all who made the pilgrimage overland across the Sahara and North Africa or directly across the Sudan and the Red Sea.

The Islamic concept of brotherhood also modified existing divisions on the basis of social class, and gave no room for the establishment of classes of "outcasts", as found in some pagan societies. This is not to say that tribal consciousness and social class ceased to exist, but that Islamic concepts and practices such as the prayer, fasting and zakat reinforced the idea of basic human brotherhood irrespective of status or tribe. The daily standing in rows for prayer, shoulder to shoulder, in the neighbourhood mosques, in the Friday mosques, in the 'Id prayers and in the Hajj could not fail to convey this message.

**(f) Halal, haram and the Shari'ah**

The Islamic concepts of Halal (Lawful) and Haram (unlawful) and the comprehensive legal framework of the Shariah gave a new image and outlook to the West Africa Muslim, which would differentiate him from his pagan compatriots in appearance and social behaviour.

The impact of Islam on formerly pagan West Africans was observed at first hand by European explorers and traders as they penetrated from the generally pagan coast lands of West Africa into the Islamized interior. For instance Joseph Thomson, in 1877 reported:

"In steaming up the river (i.e. the Niger), I saw little in the first 200 miles to alter my views, for there luxuriated in congenial union fetishism, cannibalism and the gin trade. But as I left behind me the low-lying coast region, and found myself near the southern boundary of what is called the Central Sudan, I observed an ever-increasing improvement in the appearance of the character of the native; cannibalism disappeared, fetishism followed in its wake, the gin trade largely disappeared, while on the other hand, clothes became more voluminous and decent, cleanliness the rule, while their outward more dignified bearing still betokened a moral regeneration. Everything indicated a leavening of some higher element, an element that was clearly taking a deep hold on the Negro nature and making him a new man. That element you will be surprised to hear is Mohammedanism (sic). On passing Lokoja at the confluence of the Benue with the Niger, I left behind me the missionary outposts of Islam, and entering the Central Sudan, found myself in a comparatively well-governed empire, teeming with a busy populace of keen traders, expert manufacturers of cloth, brass work and leather; a people, in fact, who have made enormous advances towards civilization."

One may find the tone of surprise patronizing, but the first hand observations of a stranger may be valid indices of the impact of Islam on a formerly pagan people.

**2. The Impact of Islam on Intellectual Activities**

Islam being a religion based on a revealed book, brought with it the arts of reading and writing. The ability to use a written language, was a great stimulus to intellectual life. For the first time, historical events in West Africa could be recorded in written documents. Schools sprang up wherever Muslims lived — Qur'an Schools for children, 'Ilm Schools for the older students. At least one centre reached the status of a University — that of Sankore in Timbuktu, established in the 16th century. Some students went further a field in search of knowledge, to the University of Qairouan in North Africa, or to Al-Azhar University in Egypt.



Arabic script was also utilized for the writing of local languages. West African scholars mastered the Arabic language itself and produced books in both Arabic and the vernacular, mostly related to topics of religion and moral conduct, and including many volumes of poetry. Among the most prolific and famous scholars in West Africa were Ahmad Baba of Timbuktu, Sheikh al-Naghili, (who was strictly speaking a settler) Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio, Sheikh Abdullahi Fodio, Muhammad Bello and Sheikh Uthman's daughter, Nana Asma'u who composed religious poetry in several languages..

Sheikh al-Maghili (died 1504) was famous for his book "The Duties of Kings" which was written as advice on good government for the king Muhammad Rumfa of Kano in about 1490 A.C. Some of the most famous books of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio are described in Chapter 83 of this volume. His son Muhammad Bello's books covered a similar field of study.

Other important works by Muslim scholars included the Tarikh As-Sudan (History of the Sudan) by Abdulraham As-Sadi and Tarikh al-Fatah (the History of the Seeker of Knowledge) by Mahmud Kati. Both writers lived in Timbuktu. Their books were completed around 1665 A.C. and give a lot of valuable information to later scholars about the early history of West Africa.

Thus although divided from the rest of the Muslim World by the barrier of the Sahara, West Africa became an outpost of Islamic scholarship and developed its own tradition. This tradition and many of the old books have survived and provided a source of inspiration to West African Muslims in the Islamic reawakening of our own times. Nowadays scholars can cross the Sahara to attend courses and conferences in just a few hours by air instead of the many weeks and months needed in earlier centuries when the only means of transport was by camel-back in the burning heat across waterless tracts of sand and rock.

## EXERCISES

1. If you were to spend a few days in a Muslim town or village and a few days in a pagan area, what differences would you expect to see in the daily life and social behaviour of the people?
2. How did the Islamic Law modify the customary law of the tribal/clan system in respect of the family affairs? Give some examples of differences between the two systems.
3. Give some examples of Arabic words that have been "borrowed" by your own language, or other West African languages.
4. How would Islamic teachings about the brotherhood of all mankind and the experience of Hajj, modify the concept of tribal solidarity and exclusiveness.
5. Why did the coming of Islam to West Africa stimulate literacy and education?
6. How did the coming of literacy affect our current knowledge of the history of West Africa?
7. What types or levels of education were available to Muslim students in the West African Empires?
8. Give the titles and authors of some important books written by West African scholars of the past.

## The Impact of Islamic Values: Integration and Syncretism

### 1. Two Cultures

When Islam began to penetrate West Africa, it met ready-formed empires such as that of Old Ghana, and a pattern of beliefs and customs based on African traditions and religion.

Although African traditional religion encompasses the concept of a supreme God, it also features cult worship of various lesser deities, natural phenomena, spirits, ancestors and idols. Other common features of West African traditional religions are divination, witchcraft and various superstitions with regard to unusual phenomena. In some cases such superstitions could involve human sacrifice and even cannibalism. It was also common for the King or Chief to be regarded as a semi-divine figure whose cultic role in some areas was to ensure the fertility of the annual planting of crops.

All such beliefs and practices are contrary to Islamic teachings of one God, Unique and without partners, to whom a Muslim should pray without intermediary.

A belief system has its outward forms in people's ceremonies, festivals, art forms and general way of life. Therefore the West African traditional religion found cultural expression in masquerades, fertility festivals, masks and fetishes, as well as spirit dances and the use of alcohol on both religious and social occasions. All such practices or art forms are considered outside the pale of Islam either because they are *haram* (unlawful) in themselves or because of their association with idol-worship and *shirk* (polytheism) in general.

### 2. The Attitude of Islam towards Local Cultures

Islam is a culture in itself in the sense that its teachings relate to the whole of life - spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, cultural, and to some extent, material. However, as Islam spreads to parts of the world where it has hitherto been unknown, it comes into direct contact with people of other cultures, some of whom convert to Islam. Such new converts may want to bring with them some of their cultural practices which belong to their own tradition. What is the attitude of Islam to such a situation?

The Islamic approach is to accept any good customs which are compatible with the principles of Islam and to reject customs that conflict with them.

### 3. Confirmations and Modifications of Cultural Values

In some cases Islam met features of West African culture which it could endorse. For example African societies generally teach children to show great respect to their parents and elders and Islam confirms this practice.

In other cases the local custom may be basically acceptable but it requires Islamic modification or restriction. For example, most traditional African societies practise polygamy. Islam also permits polygamy, but subject to a restriction in number and subject to certain conditions that ensure fair treatment and justice.

### 4. Integration, Change and Takhlit (Syncretisms)

When Muslims first arrived in West Africa they were visibly foreigners and strangers. They practised Islam, attracted the attention of indigenous people, and by teaching and example were able to find converts among them. Such converts were at first not numerous, and were almost all people of cities and towns. The Muslim community as it grew was generally respected and admired by the rulers because of their literacy, dignified way of life and their contacts through trade with the outside world. However, the Muslims could rely only on persuasion and moral force to get a convert to foresake customs or values that belonged more to paganism than to Islam.

As the Qur'an says:

" ... Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings ... "  
(Qur'an 6:108)

As the number of local converts grew, there would be a greater tendency for people to embrace Islam while retaining some un-Islamic values and customs, either consciously or unconsciously. Thus over a period of time one might perceive a modification of Islamic practice.

When such local influences reach the stage of distorting basic Islamic teachings, it is called *Takhlit* (syncretism). The community may be Muslim in name, but their practice of Islam may contain so many un-Islamic elements that it is in reality a mixture of Islam and pre-Islamic custom. In the course of the spread of Islam across West Africa over many

centuries, *Takhlit* has sometimes presented problems which the 'Ulema' (learned scholars) tried to tackle in various ways.

The obvious first step was widespread and intensive preaching and teaching so as to guide people away from their errors. This could be successful if there was co-operation from the rulers and political leadership.

However, in some cases the rulers themselves constituted a part of the problem. Some of them were opposed to greater Islamization because they were tyrants and wanted to rule as tyrants without the restrictions imposed by Islam on their unjust exercise of power or unlawful enjoyment of the luxuries of high office.

The ruler might suppress the peaceful reform, prohibit preaching or drive away the reformers. It was situations like this which sometimes led to a Jihad of the sword in West Africa, as described in Chapter 70.

The problem of *Takhlit* is not confined to the West African past. Today it is still to be found in some semi-Islamised or newly Islamised areas and communities. Even in some long-Islamized areas there are survivals of harmful pre-Islamic customs which have for so long been practised that the people concerned have taken them to be a part of Islam. Every educated Muslim therefore has a role to play in tactfully guiding the affected people towards the true teachings of Islam.

## EXERCISES

- I. Which features of West African traditional religious beliefs are contrary to the teachings of Islam?
2. Describe some cultural/religious practices based on traditional West African beliefs.
3. What is the attitude of Islam towards various features of pre Islamic culture and belief among converted people?
4. List some traditional West African cultural practices and assess how far they coincide with Islamic teachings or differ from them.

5. What is *Takhlit* and how does it arise?
6. How did the learned scholars of Islam in West Africa try to cure the problem of *Takhlit*?
7. Mention some features of *Takhlit* that exist in our society today and suggest how they could be eradicated.

## Global View of the Distribution of Muslims

### 1. The Qur'an as the final Revelation

The Qur'an is the completion of God's revelations to mankind. No other Holy Book or Prophet is awaited. Allah says in the Qur'an:

*"This day I have completed your religion and conferred my favour on you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion ..."* (Qur'an 5:4)

The duty of Muslims is therefore twofold:

- (a) to understand and practice Islam in their own lives.
- (b) to convey the message of Islam to others.

### 2. The Spread of Islam

Islam spread rapidly from the time of the Prophet. During his lifetime all Arabia embraced it. By the end of the period of the Righteous Caliphs the Muslim world had spread from North Africa to Central Asia, and during the succeeding Umayyad and Abbasid Dynasties it reached from Spain to the borders of India and China. Through the effort of Muslim traders, missionaries, and Sufis, Islam continued to spread - into West Africa, down the East African Coast, into China and South East Asia as well as the Indian subcontinent. Other races and dynasties successively took up the intellectual and political leadership of the Muslim world, in Iran, India and Turkey until the downfall of the Turkish Caliphate in 1914.

By that time the European powers had colonised large areas of the Muslim world and held it politically in check. Colonial rule in many countries brought suppression of Islam and weakening of Islamic education and intellectual life. However, in spite of this, Islam continued to spread in some areas, especially where the colonialists practiced indirect rule, as in Nigeria. This is clear evidence that Islam spreads in conditions of peace by its own intrinsic values and appeals to human reason.

In the last century the imposition of Communist rule and ruthless suppression of all religion in the Soviet Union and China succeeded only in driving Islam underground, but did not remove the love of Islam from the hearts and minds of the people. The lifting of religious suppression there has

brought a revival of open Islamic activities.

With the ending of colonial rule by the European powers since the middle of the 20th century, Muslims in former colonies have begun to re-assert their identity and their wish to live as Muslims. Large numbers of Muslim migrants have also settled in Europe and North America in the last few decades, where they have found converts among the indigenous people. They have also been active in the production of Islamic literature in European languages. As a result of active da'wah work, Islam is spreading fast among African-Americans and West Indians, who have become aware of their roots in Islamic West Africa before the slave trade carried their ancestors across the Atlantic. Muslim communities, large and small, now exist in almost every country of the world. They form part of the worldwide Muslim community, together with those countries which have been predominantly Muslim for centuries, such as the Arab lands, Iran and Turkey, although in the last half century some of the leaders of such traditionally Muslim countries have often seemed preoccupied with other ideological orientations.

### 3. Global Distribution of Muslims

The Muslim population of the world is now estimated at over one billion. Muslims constitute about one-fifth of the world population; that is, one in five human beings is a Muslim. There are over 42 Muslim States, mainly in Asia and Africa. The total number of Muslims worldwide is estimated to be above 2.1 billion.

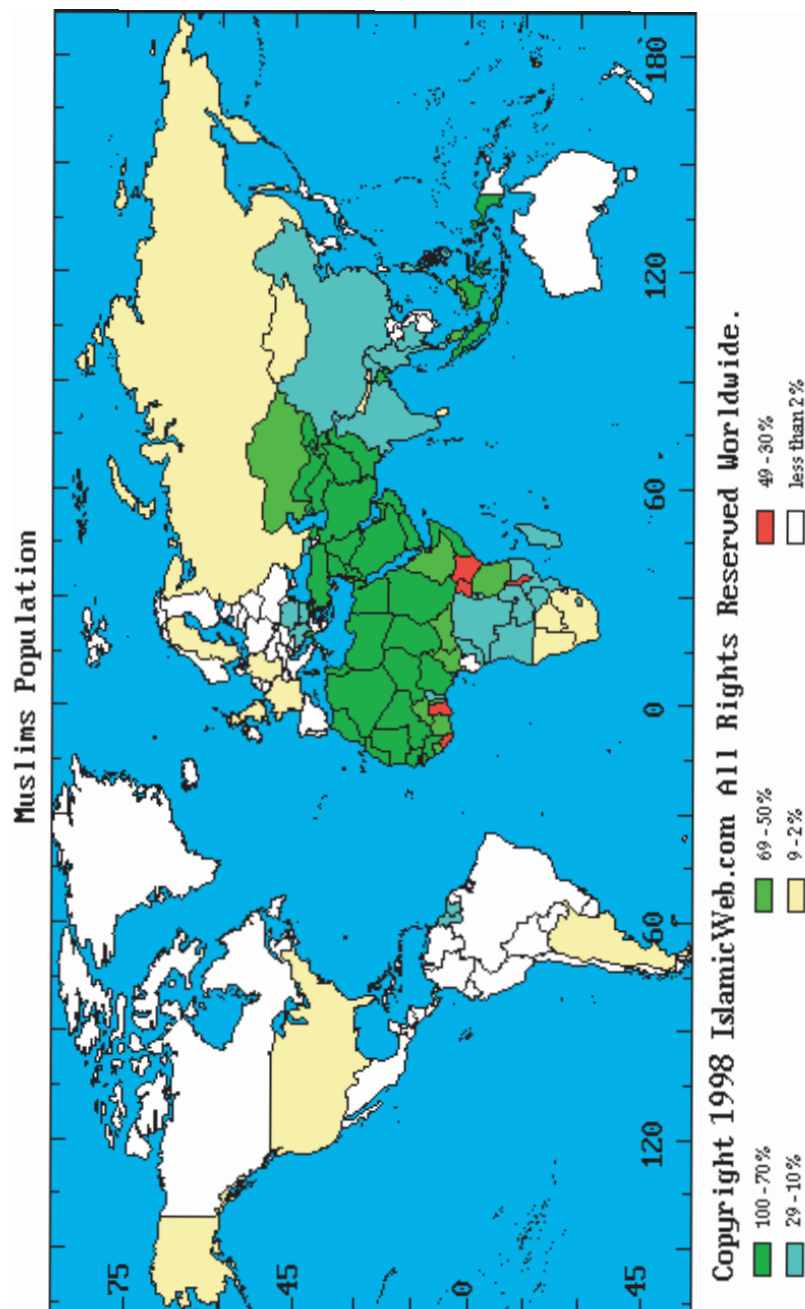
#### (a) Muslim Majorities

The largest predominantly Muslim nation is Indonesia, with a Muslim population of 170,310,000 (95% of total population) followed by Pakistan (136,000,000), Bangladesh (106,050,000), Turkey (62,410,000), and Iran (60,790,000)\*

Arabs (or more accurately, Arabic-speaking people) number over 130,000,000, but they are spread over 20 different nation states, thirteen states in Asia, eight in Africa. The largest single Arab State is Egypt, with over 53,730,000 Muslims.

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\* Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Center for Islamic Countries (SESRTCIC), Ankara, Turkey, 2000; <http://www.adherents.com>.



#### (b) Large Muslim Minorities

There are other predominantly non-Muslim countries with large Muslim populations. Prominent among these are India (103,000,000), the former U.S.S.R. with a Muslim minority of over 60,000,000, and China with over 37,108,000 - figures which exceed the total populations of many Muslim countries. Sizeable Muslim minorities also exist in the Western world. (The true figure for China may be up to over 100 million, taking into account the populations of ethnic groups who are over 95% Muslim. Reliable religious statistics are difficult to obtain in many countries, especially where religious freedom is limited by the state.)

#### 4. International Co-operation

Two major Muslim international organizations have been established to promote Islamic educational, cultural, economic and social development in the present time. These are the World Muslim League (1962) and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (1971). These organizations are helping to bring Muslims of all nations together for mutual assistance and development within an Islamic framework.

Apart from these there are numerous Islamic organizations at national and international levels which encourage Muslim youth activities, conduct charitable work among refugees, orphans and the needy, and sponsor educational, scholarly and cultural development among Muslims worldwide. Examples of these are the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), the International Islamic Charitable Foundation, the International Islamic Relief Organisation, and the International Institute of Islamic Thought. There are also professional associations of Muslim doctors, engineers, scientists, economists and others which conduct their activities at international as well as national levels.

The work of these organizations is supplemented by the efforts of thousands of smaller associations at local level designed to encourage da'wah, education, self-sufficiency, charity, and the moral and spiritual development of the community.

#### 5. Muslims and the World

Many Muslim lands are still struggling to recover from the distorting effects of colonial and soviet occupation and its aftermath of economic dependency. Attitudes of intellectual and psychological dependency are gradually fading under the stimulus of the global Islamic re-awakening. The problem caused by



the establishment by force of the State of Israel in the heart of the Muslim lands has yet to be resolved.

Probably the greatest problem facing the Muslim Ummah today is ignorance of Islam among both Muslims and non-Muslims. In respect of non-Muslims, this ignorance is often due to false information and misconceptions in books and in the media. There is also a great deal of ignorance of Islam among Muslims themselves partly because of the neglect of Islamic education during the colonial era, and partly due to outmoded methods of teaching Islam in the contemporary society. Another important problem is the secularising effect of modern education, intellectually and socially. Consequently many of the educated elite among the Muslims are unwilling to apply Islamic solutions to contemporary problems. On the other hand those brought up exclusively in the traditional educational system often lack the right approach in dealing with the sophisticated society of present times.

Nonetheless, there is every hope of the continued spread of Islam through modern means of mass communication and the active presence of committed Muslims in almost every corner of the world in the modern era, who practise their religion faithfully and explain it to others.

People turn to Islam today for the same reasons that they have turned to it for the past 1400 years. That is, that it carries a clear and rational call to believe in God and in permanent moral and spiritual values in an ever-changing world. It further challenges the secular view of man by prescribing a way of life that offers a balance between the claims of this world and the hereafter. It upholds the brotherhood of mankind in submission to the One God, the Merciful. It puts no barrier between man and God but prescribes ways of worship which every person can carry out without priest or intermediary. It holds man responsible for his behaviour towards fellow human beings and towards all else that is on earth including the environment. It holds out hope for those who are sincere and repentant. It encourages justice, truthfulness, kindness and forgiveness, trust in God and patience in adversity.

These qualities and features of Islam are as valid now as ever, particularly at a time when so many people the world over have lost their previous faith and are seeking with an open mind for true guidance in their lives.

God Himself has said that: "It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth, to proclaim it over all religion ...." (Qur'an 48:28) and it should be every Muslim's desire to contribute his own effort towards bringing the light of Islam to those who are still searching for the truth.

## EXERCISES

1. Intellectual and political leadership of the Muslims passed over the centuries from the Arabs to other races. Which other nations played leading roles in the history of Islam?
2. In spite of suppression of Islam in many parts of the world during colonial rule, Islam continued to spread in some areas such as Nigeria. How would you account for this?
3. Which factors are causing Islam to spread again in the second half of the 20th century and the new 21st century?
4. Which predominantly Muslim countries have the largest Muslim populations today?
5. Which non-Muslim nations have large Muslim minorities?
6. Which organizations have been established to promote national co-operation among Muslim nations for educational, cultural, social and economic development and charitable relief?
7. Which Islamic organizations exist today
  - (a) in Nigeria as a whole, and
  - (b) in your locality? How effective are they? Where do they get their support?How could they get greater support and be more effective?
8. Which factors are hindering the spread of Islam in the world today and which factors are helping it?
9. What could you, as an educated person, do to help spread the knowledge and practice of Islam among your community and among other people in general?



## Qur'an and Sunnah as Sources of Islamic Civilization

### 1. The Sources of Civilization

At the root of every great civilization lie certain basic religious beliefs and concepts which people hold to be true. These beliefs and concepts inspire the directions and forms which a particular civilization takes and give it a distinctive ethos and culture.

### 2. The Sources of Islam

The Sources of Islam are:

- (a) The Qur'an — seen as the completion of God's guidance to mankind, and exemplified in
- (b) The Sunnah — the Prophet's explanation or demonstration of the Qur'an in practice.

Muslims are required to base their way of life on the teachings of these sources-to fulfil the duties placed on them, to avoid the sins which they are warned against, and to have faith in Allah alone as the ultimate judge of His creation.

### 3. The Concept of Civilization

Civilization means emergence from an ignorant and primitive state to a higher one, through education, refinement of morals, manners and aesthetics and sound development of legal, economic, social and political institutions.

### 4. Islam and Civilization

The establishment of Islam as the predominant religion in a wide empire acted as a catalyst to civilization because the Qur'an and Hadith required of Muslims the development of those faculties and institutions which lead from a comparatively savage stage to civilization. These may be summarized as follows:

#### (a) Education:

The very first revelation of the Qur'an began with the command, to "Read!", and mentioned the pen as the instrument of learning and human progress:

*"Read, in the name of thy Sustainer who has created — Created man from something that clings! Read — for thy Sustainer is the Most Bountiful One who has taught (man) the use of the pen — taught man what he did not know."*

There are numerous Ahadith of Prophet Muhammad which follow up the theme of learning:

*"Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."*

*"The search for knowledge is compulsory for every Muslim, male and female."*

*"The ink of the scholar is more precious than the blood of the martyr."*

*"One learned person is harder on the devil than a thousand ignorant worshippers."*

It is recorded that the Prophet set such store by education that after the Battle of Badr he undertook to release freely any prisoner-of-war who could teach ten Muslims how to read.

Moreover many verses of the Qur'an contain specific injunctions to study and ponder on the creation and how it is made — the heavens, the earth, the animals, vegetation, the human being and his formation from fertilization to birth, the water cycle, the mountains and seas, the ant, the bee, the camel, each of which contain "*ayat*" ("signs" or "messages") which give a clue to the wisdom, subtlety and power of the Creator.

Therefore the Qur'an itself is a spur to methodical scientific investigation as an essential part of man's search for knowledge, just as the Hadith acted among other things as a spur to medical research by indicating that for every disease on earth there exists its cure if one can find it.

#### (b) Refinement of Morals, Manners and Aesthetics

The Qur'an not only sets out for mankind the major moral commands and prohibitions of God — injunctions on kindness to parents and spouses, care of neighbours, the brotherhood of man, prohibition of murder, adultery, stealing, alcohol, gambling, usury, cheating, exploitation and so on. It follows up with verses enjoining on people the spirit of peace, humility and consideration for others.

*"Call people to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching, and speak to them in ways that are best... "*  
(Qur'an 16:125)

*"... Return evil with that which is better, then he between whom and thyself was enmity (may become) as it were thy friend and intimate."*  
(Qur'an 41:34)

*"Kind words and the covering of (people's) faults are better than charity followed by injury."*  
(Qur'an 2:264)

*"And do not turn your cheek away from people in (false) pride, and do not walk haughtily on earth: for behold, Allah does not love anyone who, out of self-conceit, acts in a boastful manner. Hence, be modest in your bearing, and lower your voice: for, behold, the ugliest of all voices is the (loud) voice of the donkey .... "*  
(Qur'an 31:18-19)

The Hadith also abound with injunctions on morals and manners, including the need to take moral action, if it is within one's power, to stop wrong-doing and promote what is right:

*"Whoever of you sees any wrong action, let him correct it with his hand; and if that is not possible, correct it with his tongue; and if that is not possible, correct it in his heart; and that is the weakest degree of faith."*  
(Hadith from Muslim)

Moral integrity stands at the heart of the Islamic reform, and marks Islam out as a reforming religion. Much as man may love the things of this world he must be ready to put them aside for the sake of the truth, and indeed be ready to die for it.

*"Let not fear of men hinder a person from speaking the truth when he knows it."*  
(Hadith from Muslim)

Moral integrity should in fact be the hallmark of an Islamic Society, according to the Qur'an:

*"You are the best community raised for mankind, (in that) you command what is right and forbid what is wrong .... "*  
(Qur'an 3:110)

In success or failure the faith of a true believer should convert his exultation to gratitude to God, and his despair to patient perseverance:

*"Wondrous are the affairs of the true believer, for there is good in all his affairs and this is so only for the true believer (Mu'min). When something pleasing happens to him, he is grateful (to Allah), and that is good for him, and when something displeasing happens to him, he exercises patience and perseveres, and that is good for him."*

(Hadith from Muslim)

Such Hadith instil in man a sense of proportion, dignity and humility, restraining him from excess of ungoverned pride, anger, vengefulness or other anti-social behaviour.

This self-restraint should find expression in courtesy and consideration towards others, commonly called "good manners". According to a Hadith:

*"The best beloved of me among you is he who is the best in manners."*  
(Bukhari and Muslim)

Of course the possession of high moral teachings did not prevent the failure of some individuals to comply with them. There were, as always, the good, the bad, and those in between. However, the knowledge of the moral teachings of Islam did with time become widespread in the society even among ordinary people, so that when the leadership itself sometimes deviated from the right path, it was the ordinary people who, using the Qur'an and Hadith as their criteria of judgment, could pass comment that so-and-so practice was contrary to Islamic teachings.

A glance at any volume of Hadith will give an idea of the degree of moral refinement to be learned by the Muslim, which applies to every aspect of his behaviour in respect of relatives, friends, neighbours, strangers, animals, enemies, and to the great events of life itself: marriage, birth, and death.

There is no doubt that the earnest search for morality in public and private conduct is a key factor in the development and rise of any civilization.

Together with the progress in education and the moral and spiritual refinement already mentioned, went a development of the aesthetic sense - the sense of beauty - promoted by the many references to the beauty of the creation found in the Qur'an. Such references include the heavens and the earth, the vegetation and the animals. A vision of beauty is also found in the

references to the Paradise (*al-Jannah*) with its gardens, rivers, shady trees, precious artifacts (cushions, carpets, goblets), sweet fruits and pure, beautiful and charming companions, male and female.

This love of beauty came to be reflected in the poetry, literature, art, architecture, gardens and music of the Muslim world, examples of which have survived to this day. Muslims excelled particularly in the field of architecture, developing the graceful Islamic styles to perfection in such buildings as the Taj Mahal in India, the Alhambra Palace in Spain and in numerous mosques, large and small, in Iran, Turkey and other lands.

### (c) **Economic, Social, Political and Legal Development**

A third key contribution to the rise of Islamic Civilization was its economic, social and political development along with the Islamic legal system. With its call of the Unity of God and the Brotherhood of man Islam overcame tribal, racial and national barriers and established a truly multi-racial state, covering vast areas of the globe which had never been united before.

Islam brought together over the centuries people from China and Central Asia, India, South East Asia, Iran, Syria, Arabia, East, North and West Africa, Turkey and parts of Southern Europe. This new bond gave rise to new political affiliations and patterns of economic development based on interest-free investment and other moral principles in accordance with the injunctions of Shari'ah. New trade links were forged by land and sea, and great advances were made in the uses of technology and in economic activity. At the same time, provisions for social welfare were developed based on such Islamic institutions as the Bait-ul-Mal (the public treasury), zakat as a compulsory welfare tax, *Sadaqah* as voluntary charity and *Waqf* (charitable endowment) established to help the poor, the sick, students, travellers and others in need.

Lastly, it is also pertinent to mention the Shari'ah as a highly developed legal system based on the Qur'an and Hadith, which was elaborated by scholars and applied all over the Muslim world.

Such a multi-racial civilization based on faith in God and virtue has its authority and inspiration in the Qur'an, which says:

*"We have created you all from a male and female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another (not so that you may despise one another). And the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him."* (Qur'an 49:19)

Rejection of racial or class superiority also stems from the Hadith where the Prophet enjoined:

*"Obey whoever is placed in authority over you, even if it be an African slave."*

Islamic civilization therefore became a world civilization encompassing people of many races and religions who intermingled and often travelled widely along the routes of the Muslim World. It is also remarkable for its provision for religious minorities of "People of the Book" to co-exist peacefully as communities within the Islamic State, to practise their own religion and rise to high positions in the State and society. This also had its basis in the practice of the Prophet who conducted dialogues with Christians and Jews and entered into political agreements with them which acknowledged their right to practise their religion.

The above points give a brief idea of the way the teaching of the Qur'an and Hadith inspired the early Muslims to establish a new political entity based on Islamic principles of morality, and to call all nations to join in contributing to a new civilization based on justice, faith in One God and the Unity and brotherhood of mankind.

### **EXERCISES**

1. What are the basic sources of Islamic teachings?
2. What is the meaning of "Civilization" and how is it achieved?
3. Which Islamic precepts encourage the spread of education?
4. Quote the meaning of any Qur'anic verses or Hadith which emphasise moral action, respect for others and refinement of manners.
5. Which significant prohibition distinguishes Islamic economic activities from those of non-Muslims?
6. How do the teachings of Qur'an and Hadith break down racial barriers and help to create a multi-racial state?
7. Which Islamic institutions help to take care of the social welfare of the society?
8. Summarize the main characteristics of Islamic Civilization.

## The Emergence of Islamic Civilization

### 1. Islam as the Mainspring

We have seen in the previous chapter that Islamic civilization . was based on Islamic faith as taught in the Qur'an and Sunnah. By reading what the Muslims of the early centuries of Islam wrote in their books, and looking at their buildings and artefacts, it becomes clear to us that deep faith in Islam was the mainspring and inspiration for their amazing progress and leadership in civilization and science for many centuries.

### 2. Attitudes towards foreign ideas

Since Islam was taught initially to the Arabs, it follows that the earliest converts were mainly Arabs, although there were people of other races holding honoured places among the early converts such as Bilal (from Africa) and Salman (from Persia).

When Islam spread outside Arabia it encountered, and soon became the religion of people of earlier civilizations--Byzantines, (the inheritors of Greek/Roman civilization in the Eastern Mediterranean), Egyptians (descended from the ancient civilization of the Pharaohs), Persians and other Asian groups from the highly developed civilizations of China and India.

Such people brought with them into the Islamic melting pot the intellectual legacies of their various civilizations.

The attitude of Islam towards the ideas, discoveries, institutions and practices of other people was to examine them, and adopt or adapt or ignore or reject them according to how far they were compatible with the teachings, spirit and principles of Islam. A well-known Hadith of the Prophet describes knowledge as "*the stray camel of the Believer*", who should take possession of it wherever he finds it. Since the early days of Islam there was also another saying that urges Muslims to:

*"Search for knowledge, even unto China".*

China was not a Muslim country, and was very distant from Arabia. The implication of the Saying is that Muslims are urged to go in search of knowledge and skill wherever it may be found.

Muslim scholars began to uncover the literary and scientific legacy of ancient civilizations, particularly those of Greece, Persia and India, and over a period of centuries translated, commented on and critically assessed the ideas of the ancient non-Muslim writers. In response some Muslims formulated their own systems of philosophy and scientific enquiry in which ideas contrary to the Qur'an and Sunnah were generally excluded, filtered out or modified so as to reflect the Islamic world view.

### 3. The Bayt al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom)

The movement to learn from earlier civilizations was fostered particularly during the Abbasid dynasty, established in 750 A.C. with its capital in Baghdad.

Successive Caliphs — al-Mansur, Haroun ar-Rashid and al Ma'mun — gave generous patronage to scholars and encouraged translation of ancient books. This movement found its most systematic expression in the establishment by Al-Ma'mun in 830 A.C. of the Bayt al Hikmah (The House of Wisdom) or the Bayt at-Tarjumah (House of Translation) as a centre for translation and research.

At this period the Muslims learned the art of paper-making from the Chinese who were brought into the empire, and this gave further impetus to scholarly activities.

### 4. The Preservation of the Learning of the Ancient World during Europe's Dark Ages

The Muslims in this way preserved and revived the learning of the ancient world. In the case of Greek learning in particular this was a great service to mankind, since scientific studies had for centuries been neglected in Europe and left to decay. These centuries are known as "the Dark Ages" of Europe, during which the light of scientific learning and enquiry was all but extinguished. If the works of the ancient scholars had not been translated and developed by the Muslims, many of them would have been lost or destroyed before Europe began to emerge from the Dark Ages and realise the value of the scholarly legacy of the ancient world.

### 5. The Development of Arts and Sciences by the Muslims

From the 9th to the 13th centuries the Muslims were the acknowledged world leaders in the development of the Arts and Sciences. Among the arts,



poetry, calligraphy and architecture were highly prized and mosques and other buildings remain which express the Islamic ideals of beauty and harmony. The love of beauty also found expression in artefacts for daily use and decoration: ceramics, metalware, glassware and production of fine fabrics and decorated carpets.

The design of cities developed distinctive Islamic features, including mosques, schools, covered markets, bath houses, hospitals, caravanserais (inns for travellers) and private houses based around central courtyards with gardens, trees and fountains.

Visitors from Europe and other lands at this period used to marvel at the comforts and luxuries available in the Muslim world, and at the general state of cleanliness and development, which owed much to the encouragement given by Islamic teachings both to hygiene and to technological improvements.

Philosophy and science sprang to life again as the Muslim scholars translated, commented on and developed almost every field of study: mathematics, chemistry, physics, botany, zoology, astronomy, geography, medicine, surgery, anatomy, physiology, optics, pharmacy, agricultural science, pharmacology, veterinary medicine, animal husbandry, mechanics, sociology and political disciplines, philosophy of history, law, ethics, jurisprudence, grammar and theology.

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica: "Muslim scholars calculated the angle of the ecliptic, measured the size of the Earth, calculated the precession of the Equinoxes, invented the pendulum clock, explained in the field of optics and physics, such phenomena as refraction of light, gravity, capillary attraction and twilight: used the globe in teaching the geography of a round earth, and developed observations for the empirical study of the heavenly bodies.

"They made advances in the uses of drugs, herbs and foods for medication; established hospitals, with a system of interns and externs; discovered the causes of certain diseases and developed correct diagnoses of them; proposed new concepts of hygiene, made use of anaesthetics in surgery with newly innovated surgical tools; and introduced the science of dissection in Anatomy. They furthered the scientific breeding of horses and cattle; found new ways of grafting to produce new types of flowers and fruits; introduced new concepts of irrigation, fertilization and soil cultivation, and improved on the science of navigation. In the area of chemistry Muslim scholarship led to the discovery of such substances as potash, alcohol, nitrate of silver, nitric acid, sulphuric acid

and mercury chloride. It also developed to a high degree of perfection the arts of textiles, ceramics and metallurgy."

In Mathematics the Arabs adopted the concept of zero from the Indians, which enabled them to develop new areas of mathematics. Some mathematical processes retain their Arabic names today, such as *Al-Jabr* (Algebra). Similarly in chemistry, words like "alcohol" and "alkali" derive from their Arabic names *al-kohl* and *al-qaliy* respectively.

## 6. Establishment of Schools and Universities

The Muslims' search for knowledge, which began in the Mosque in Madinah, developed into a widespread system of schools and universities all over the Muslim world. Among the most famous were the Nizamiyyah University in Bagdad and the Al-Azhar University in Cairo (both founded in the 9th century). Al-Azhar is comparatively the earliest university in the world to have survived continuously to this day. (The University of Paris was not founded until the 12th Century and that of Oxford until the early 13th Century). Al-Azhar University is still functioning today, taking in thousands of students from all over the world.

In West Africa also the movement for education was felt, with the establishment of Sankore University in Timbuktu in the 16th Century.

The Schools were numerous, and often attached to mosques. To a great extent they offered equal educational opportunity to all, and the universities also gave charitable assistance to poor students. Since mosques were many, education and literacy became widespread. At the time of the Abbasids, 3,000 mosques were reported in Baghdad alone, and in Alexandria in the 14th Century there were as many as 12,000 mosques, most of them with schools attached.

## 7. Transfer of Scientific knowledge to the West

In the 12th and 13th centuries the nations of Europe began to awake from their condition of intellectual backwardness and set out to learn from the Muslims. Some European scholars travelled to Muslim universities to learn, particularly to the famous Muslim Universities in Spain. Others embarked on translation of the Islamic works into Latin. These had a great impact on western scholars and students, and contributed in large measure to the European Renaissance. Some of the famous Muslim books remained for centuries as

standard teaching materials in the European universities (examples of which are given in the following chapters).

5. If you were a traveller visiting Baghdad in the 8th and 9th centuries A.C. what arts or artefacts and what features of the city would you expect to see?
6. Mention ten subjects which were studied by Muslims in the course of their search for knowledge in the early centuries of Islam.
7. What advances and discoveries were made by Muslims in the course of their search for knowledge in the early centuries of Islam?
8. Which university founded in the 9th Century has survived continuously to the present day?
9. How can we know that education was widespread among all classes in the early centuries of Islam?
10. How was the knowledge of the Muslims transferred to Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries A.C.?
11. Discuss how Muslims should, in your opinion, respond to the present day scientific and technological advancement of other nations.



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## Jabir ibn Hayyan The Father of Chemistry 721-815 A.C.

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### Life

Jabir ibn Hayyan was born in Tus, in Iran. Shortly after he was born his father, who was a pharmacist, was executed for political reasons. He was taught by the famous Imam Ja'afar al-Sadiq, studied medicine and became a court physician to the Abbasid Caliph Harūn ar-Rashid. Because of his close connection with the house of Bermakides, whose members occupied high posts as viziers under Harūn ar-Rashid, he shared in their misfortunes at the time of their downfall in 803 A.C. and died in exile in Kufa, in modern Iraq.

### Works

Jabir wrote more than 100 works, mainly on alchemy and chemistry with others on astronomy and trigonometry. Of these books only 22 survive in Arabic.

He introduced experimental research which led to rapid progress in the understanding of Chemistry.

Some of his famous books on alchemy are The Book of Mercy, the Book of Concentration, the Book of the Kingdom and the Book of Balances. "We find in them remarkably sound views on method of chemical research," writes George Sarton. Among Jabir's studies were the geological formation of metals, refinement of metals, preparation of steel, dying of cloth and leather, varnishes to waterproof cloth and protect iron, the use of manganese dioxide in making glass, the use of iron pyrites for writing in gold, distillation of vinegar to concentrate acetic acid, and the magnetic force. He also did work on calcination, reduction, evaporation, sublimation, distillation, melting and crystallization. He was familiar with the preparation of a number of basic substances and their compounds.

Some of his works on chemistry were translated into European languages including Latin. He was known in Europe by the name of Geber. In 1144 A.C. his book "The Composition of Alchemy" was translated into Latin. Also in the 12th Century his "Book of Seventy" was translated by

Gerard of Cremona, who was famous for his translations of Arabic scientific works. In this way Jabir exerted strong influence in the development of modern Chemistry.

### EXERCISES

1. Give an outline of the life of Jabir ibn Hayyan.
2. For what scientific achievements is Jabir famous?

## Al-Rāzī Alchemist, Philosopher and Physician 865-925 A.C.

### Life

Abubakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariya' Al-Rāzī was born in Rayy (in Persia) and studied mathematics, alchemy, philosophy, astronomy and medicine in Baghdad. He soon showed his talent for medicine. He served for a time as chief physician in a newly established hospital in Rayy, and later held a similar position in Baghdad.

In accordance with the practice of his time al-Rāzī practised medicine in the courts of various princes where he achieved a high reputation and was greatly in demand, both as a doctor and a medical administrator.

His fame attracted students from many parts of the Islamic world. So many students attended his lectures that his voice could not be heard by those sitting far away; it was necessary for those sitting nearer to pass on his words to those at the back.

It was recorded that when he wanted to select a new site for the great hospital in Baghdad he hung up pieces of meat at various sites and observed the speed of their putrefaction in order to determine the healthiest site.

During all this time he was writing the books which were his enduring legacy of scholarship.

He died in 925 A.C. in his home town of Rayy.

### Works

Rāzī was a prolific writer, and in accordance with the practice of his time he was knowledgeable in many of the sciences. Hence his writings include works on medical science, chemistry, physics, music, philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and ethics. He wrote about 200 books of which half are on medical subjects.

His most famous books were Kitab al-Mansur (composed for Mansur al-Ishaq the ruler of Rayy) and Kitab al-Hawi, "The Comprehensive Book."

Kitab al-Mansur was a gigantic medical work of 10 volumes. It was translated into Latin in the 12th Century by Gerard of Cremona and thereby became well known in the West.

In Kitab al-Hawi, Razi surveyed Greek, Syrian and early Arabic medicine, as well as some Indian medical knowledge. To these studies he added commentaries based on his own judgment and medical experience. This book runs into 20 volumes and is one of the most comprehensive medical encyclopaedias ever written. It was translated into Latin in the 13th Century.

These works were subsequently translated into many other languages and printed in the West, where Razi's authority on medicine was undisputed until the 17th Century. His works and those of Ibn Sina were compulsory texts for the training of European physicians. In Europe al-Razi was known as Rhazes.

He wrote numerous other smaller works on diseases and diet and also on natural sciences. Among his topics were alchemy, chemistry, optics, time, space, motion, nutrition, putrefaction, growth, gravity, meteorology, and the atomic theory of matter. He was moreover interested in musical theory and practice and wrote an encyclopaedia of music.

Razi also wrote on philosophy, metaphysics and ethics, although many of his works on these subjects have been lost. He was an admirer of the Greek philosopher Plato and interpreted and developed Plato's ideas in a way that was in some respects inconsistent with the teachings of Islam.

This versatile genius was described by Max Mayerhof as "undoubtedly the great physician of the Islamic world and one of the greatest physicians of all time." His legacy was not only to his own age and people, but to the whole of mankind.

### EXERCISES

1. Give an outline of the life of Rāzī.
2. For which works was Rāzī famous?
3. How did Rāzī's work influence later developments in medical science?

## Ibn Sīna Philosopher and Physician 370 - 428 A.H. (980 -1037 A.C.)

### Life

Ibn S'ina (known as Avicenna in the West) was born near Bukhara in Central Asia. His native language was Persian. He was well educated at Bukhara and soon showed his extraordinary intelligence and memory. By the age of 14 he had already overtaken his teachers, and by the time he was 16, famous physicians were working under his directions. At 18 he had mastered all the then-known sciences, and the progress he made thereafter was by the use of his own brain and his own initiative. He produced his first book on philosophy at the age of 21.

He joined public administration to earn his living on the death of his father, and as his fame spread he was consulted not only on medical matters but also on politics. The envy of others led to his persecution, flight, imprisonment and escape. After these adventures he lived for 14 years in relative peace at the court of Isfahan, and died in Hamadan, where he was buried.

### Works

Meanwhile, he wrote books in the night and even while travelling on horseback or in prison. He was a very fast writer. As a philosopher he was therefore not of the theoretical, detached type, constructing systems of ideas which do not correspond with observed reality. He was rather "a scientific man, who attempted to bring the theories of Greeks to the level of that which needs to be expressed by the study of the concrete, when apprehended by a great mind."

Some of Ibn Sina's works have been lost, including his Kitab al-Issaf "The Book of Impartial Judgment" which might have given clues to the evolution of his thought. He wrote altogether between 200-300 works in which he contributed to the advancement of all the sciences of his day: Natural history, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, medicine, mathematics, music, economics, politics, poetry, moral and religious

affairs, Qur'anic commentary and philosophy. In addition he wrote poetry as a vehicle for expressing his philosophy and also as a medium of instruction for logic and medicine.

His most famous books were the Kitāb al-Shifā' (Book of Healing of the Soul) — a philosophical work — and the Qānūn fi'l-tibb" (Canon of Medicine).

The latter book remained the authority on medicine both in Muslim lands and in Europe for 700 years until the modern age of experimental science began. Some of its teaching and treatments are still useful to doctors even today.

Ibn Sina was not only interested in pursuing the various individual branches of knowledge for themselves. He sought through philosophy and metaphysics to find the underlying 'principles of existence itself, attempting to reconcile Greek philosophy with the revelation of the Qur'an and his belief in God as the Creator of all things.

Ibn Sina's greatest works were translated into Latin, and he and al-Rāzī were recognized in Europe as the greatest masters of medicine, philosophy and natural sciences. Ibn Sīna's "Canon of Medicine" was translated 87 times, all or in part, and formed the basis of medical teaching and practice in European universities from the 12th to the 17th Century.

His philosophy also had profound influence on the thought and work of Christian philosophers in Europe such as St. Thomas Aquinas and Roger Bacon.

Ibn Sīna stands as one of the world's great and influential figures in the development of science, medicine and philosophy.

### EXERCISES

1. Give an outline of the life of Ibn Sīna.
2. For which works was Ibn Sina famous?
3. How did Ibn Sīna's ideas influence later developments in medical knowledge and philosophy?

## Al-Ghazālī

### Theologian, Jurist, Original thinker, Mystic and Religious Reformer 450-505 A.H. (1058-1111 A.C.)

#### Life

Abu Hamid Muhammad, known as al-Ghazali was born at Tus in Persia. He was orphaned at an early age and received most of his education in Naysabur under an eminent teacher.

When he was 28 he moved to join the many scholars at the court of Nizam al-Mulk in Baghdad. Nizam al-Mulk was a great Minister and Patron of learning.

When Al-Ghazali was 34, Nizam al-Mulk sent him as chief professor to the Nizamiyya, a college he had established in Baghdad. For four years he enjoyed fame there as one of the most respected teachers. At the same time he wrote books and pursued his study of philosophy, including the Neoplatonist works of Al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīna.

At around this time he passed through a stage of doubt and scepticism about his beliefs, from which he emerged determined to find the truth and a way of life which could satisfy his mind.

The nervous illness from which he suffered at this time prevented his continuing his lectures. He made a pretext of going for Hajj, but in reality he took the chance to get away, abandon his whole career as a professor and jurist, and adopt the poverty of a Sufi (mystic). His reasons for doing so are much discussed. He said that he was afraid of going to hell. He also had many criticisms of the *'ulema* of his day who were generally corrupt. He was also apparently seeking beyond philosophy for a deeper understanding of the meaning of life, which could only be done in solitude.

For about 12 years al-Ghazali remained in retirement during which time he visited Damascus, Jerusalem, Makkah and Madinah before returning to Tus. During his retirement he lived alone as a poor Sufi, giving his days to prayer, meditation and spiritual development. It was during this time that he composed his greatest book, *"Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn"* (The Revival of the

Religious Sciences). He emerged from this retirement convinced that the mystic path was the highest way of life for man.

When he was 49 he was persuaded by the son of Nizam al-Mulk to return to academic work at the Nizamiyya School.

Before his death however he once more retired to Tus, where he trained disciples in the way of life of a Sufi.

#### Works

More than 400 works are ascribed to Al-Ghazali, but some of these probably had other authors. Al-Ghazali wrote books on Fiqh (Jurisprudence), philosophy and logic, theology and sufi theory and practice.

The best-known philosophical work is *"Tahafut al-falasifa"* (The Inconsistency of the Philosophers), in which he demonstrated the mistakes and inconsistencies of some of the philosophers (such as al-Razi) in departing from clear teachings of the Qur'an. He was able to do this because he was himself fully a master of the disciplines of philosophy and logic.

Al-Ghazali's greatest work however was the *"Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn"* (Revival of the Religious Sciences). The book is in four volumes, dealing with *'Ibādāt* (Acts of Worship), *'ādāt* (social customs), *muhlikāt* (vices of faults of character leading to punishment) and *munjiyāt* (virtues or qualities leading to salvation). It is therefore a complete guide to the way of life for a Muslim in worship, behaviour, purification of the heart and spiritual advancement.

Al-Ghazali regarded knowledge as essentially a means of salvation, and in his book he sought to explain how the regulations of the Shari'ah help to bring man into a state of salvation.

His mystical experiences led him to insist on inner purity and not just outer conformity to religion and morality. His comments are valid not only for his own time. For instance he wrote: "A number of people build mosques, schools and inns and think they have done virtuous deeds. But the funds out of which the building in question was erected were obtained through questionable means and, if the money invested was earned through moral sources, the motive behind the construction was popularity and not the service of humanity."

He traced moral degeneracy to its source among the 'ulema (religious leaders):

"The morals of the subjects have deteriorated because the life of the ruling class has much degenerated, which is ultimately the result of the moral weakness of the religious leaders. The 'Ulema have sold their conscience in the lust for wealth and power."

The *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* has been translated and published in many languages, including English, and has a great deal to teach people of all times and places.

Al-Ghazali's work was so convincing and comprehensive that after him few philosophers could improve on his conclusions. His books were among the first to be translated into Latin (in the 12th Century A.C.) in which form they were influential in the development of European thought, particular in the works of Thomas Aquinas.

## EXERCISES

1. Give an outline of the life of Al-Ghazali.
2. Which is Al-Ghazali's most famous book and what is it about?
3. In what ways is Al-Ghazali's writing of benefit to people of all times and places, including today?

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## Ibn Rushd Philosopher and Scholar of the Natural and Islamic Sciences 520-595 A.H. (1126-1198 A.C.)

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### Life

Abul Walid Muhammad, known as Ibn Rushd, was born in Cordova (in Spain) of a learned and important family. His grandfather had been a Maliki Jurisprudent, a Kadi and Imam of the Great Mosque, and his father also was a Kadi.

He was given an excellent education in the sources of jurisprudence and in philosophy. Cordova was at that time the great centre of learning in the West.

The rest of his life was spent between Marrakesh in Morocco and the cities of Seville and Cordova in Spain, serving as a kadi and physician. At the same time he was studying and writing on philosophy. Unlike some of the other philosophers he was noted for his humility and good relations with other people.

For a brief period towards the end of his life he fell from favour with the Caliph, and was attacked by the orthodox jurists who disapproved of his philosophical speculations or were jealous of his reputation. He was banished and edicts were passed ordering his books to be burnt. However, two years later the Caliph relented and once more called him to the court.

He died not long after in Marrakesh and was buried there but his body was later taken for final burial in his home town, Cordova.

### Works

Among Ibn Rushd's most famous works are the following:

- (a) **Fasl al-Makal** (The full title of the book means "An Authoritative Treatise and Exposition of the Convergence which exists between the Religious law and Philosophy"). It is a book on methodology of philosophy which skillfully makes use of techniques of discussion used by Greek philosophers such as Aristotle.



In this book Ibn Rushd defends the role of the Philosopher against the criticisms of those who regard philosophy as speculation leading to kufr (unbelief). He gives a definition of philosophy which is fully in accord with Qur'anic recommendations. In his view a rational understanding of the creation leads to knowledge of the Creator.

The theme of the book is the agreement of law and reason, of religion and philosophy, as two methods of arriving at the same truth.

However, in his view philosophy and philosophical interpretations of Qur'anic verses should not be extended to the common man. They should be practised only by the scholars who have the requisite training. If the common man is encouraged to dabble in popularised philosophical interpretation it may lead to divisions and sects among Muslims.

- (b) **Kitāb al-Kashf:** (Book of Realisation) This book is a criticism of the various theological sects, in which he demonstrates their scholarly weaknesses.

The main topics covered are the existence of God, the unity of God, the attributes of God, God as Light, the creation, the sending of Prophets, predestination and divine decree, justice and injustice and the hereafter.

- (c) **Tahafut al-Tahafut:** (The Inconsistency of (the book called) "Inconsistency of the Philosophers").

In this book Ibn Rushd defends what he regards as the strict and reliable philosophical teachings of Aristotle against the criticisms of Al-Ghazali that philosophy leads to kufr (unbelief). In doing so Ibn Rushd gives a full picture of his own views on all the major problems of philosophy.

Ibn Rushd was known in the West as Averroes. His works were translated into several European languages and published many times from the 12th to the 16th Centuries. It was through his commentaries that the West came to know about Aristotle and other Greek philosophers.

Ibn Rushd's books became extremely popular among scholars in Western countries and had much influence in the development of Western thought, both Christian and Jewish.

## EXERCISES

1. Give an outline of the life of Ibn Rushd.
2. For what works was Ibn Rushd famous?
3. What ideas did Ibn Rushd express in his books of philosophy?



## Ibn Khaldūn

### Father of History as a Science

#### 732-808 A.H. (1332-1406 A.C.)

#### Life

Ibn Khaldūn was born in Tunis in North Africa. His forefathers had come from South Arabia and settled in Spain where for 4 centuries they had occupied prominent positions in administration and the army. After the Christian re-conquest of Spain, his grandfather fled to North Africa.

His father was a scholar who arranged for the best possible education for Ibn Khaldūn. He studied the Qur'an, Hadith, grammar, poetry and fiqh (Jurisprudence).

From the age of 20 until he was 43 he occupied various high positions in areas that are now Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. He suffered many changes of fortune in the winds of political change, finding himself in and out of prison as his political patrons rose or fell.

In the last 31 years of his life he spent much of his time in Cairo as a scholar, teacher, and judge, and there he died and was buried.

#### Works

However, it is not for these public activities that Ibn Khaldūn is remembered, but for his work on a book he wrote that opened an entirely new approach to history.

From 776-780 A.H. (1375--1379 A.C.) he retired with his family to a castle near Oran (now in Algeria) where for 4 years he had peace to concentrate on his work, entitled 'Ibar (Universal History). The most important part of this work, which he finished at this time was the Mukaddimah (Introduction), in which he spelled out his new approach to history. The rest of the book was written and revised and re-written during the remainder of his life. Most of his other works have not survived.

Before Ibn Khaldūn, History had been regarded merely as a chronology of past events — a list of events and dates. The Greek philosopher Aristotle had not regarded history as a science because it dealt with events that were constantly changeable and in his view unpredictable.

Ibn Khaldūn looked deeper into the causes of the rise and fall of nations and was able to distinguish certain patterns of civilization, and to relate events to their economic, social and cultural backgrounds.

The Mukaddimah has been described as "an introduction to the historian's craft ... an encyclopaedic synthesis of the methodological and cultural knowledge necessary to enable the historian to produce a truly scientific work."

Ibn Khaldūn did not build his system on mere speculation but tried always to relate it closely to reality and probability of facts, based on his research and observations.

The main part of the Mukaddimah is divided into 6 long chapters as follows:

- Chapter 1: A general treatise on human society, including the influence of the environment on human nature, together with ethnological and anthropological studies.
- Chapter 2: On rural and primitive societies
- Chapter 3: On the different forms of government, states and institutions.
- Chapter 4: On the urban, developed and sophisticated societies.
- Chapter 5: On industries and economic affairs
- Chapter 6: On scholarship, literature and cultural matters.

As can be seen, this approach opened up a new science which contained the starting point not only for a philosophy of history but also for an approach to economics, sociology, anthropology and a whole range of social sciences which have been recognized and developed only in the modern world.

Ibn Khaldūn interpreted history as a series of cycles of the rise and fall of nations, which had intelligible and rational causes. He could not fail to note that the Arab/Muslim civilization of which he was a part was itself in decline and that new civilizations were being born in other lands.

It was perhaps this very decline in the vigour of Arab/Muslim civilization which caused Ibn Khaldūn's break-through not to be appreciated in his own time. He was a genius without emulators or successors and the magnitude of his work was perhaps not understood until the present time, when the areas of scientific study he first unveiled have become major subject areas in the modern world.

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## Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio Scholar, Philosopher, Mystic and Reformer 1754-1817 A.C.

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### EXERCISES

1. Give an outline of the life of Ibn Khaldūn.
2. Name and describe the contents of Ibn Khaldūn's famous book.
3. In what way did Ibn Khaldūn see history as a science and not just as a list of events and dates?
4. Ibn Khaldūn provided a starting point for a number of fields of study which are now recognised as subjects in modern schools and universities. Give some examples of these.

Muslim scholarship was not restricted to the Golden Age of Islamic Civilization or to the Arab homelands in Asia and North Africa.

Although Europeans seized the initiative in the development of science from the 15th century and the Muslims entered a period of decline, love of knowledge and respect for education did not die. Traditional centres of learning still functioned, and Muslims from distant parts of Asia and Africa continued to travel to the old intellectual centres and universities whence they carried the scholarly tradition and love of learning to far corners of the Muslim world.

It was from such a background that Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio rose to prominence in the 18th/19th Centuries in the part of West Africa now known as Nigeria.

### Life

Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio was born in Maratta in the Hausa State of Gobir in 1754 A.C. While he was still young his family moved south to Degel. His father was a scholar and he personally taught Sheikh Uthman the Qur'an. Later Sheikh Uthman moved from place to place to be taught by other scholarly relatives. He showed his aptitude in studies and read widely in the Islamic sciences. He was much impressed by one of his teachers in Agadez, Jibril ibn Umar, through whom he was admitted into a Sufi order.

In about 1774-75 A.C. Sheikh Uthman started his career as a teacher, and spent the next 17 years teaching, preaching and studying in Kebbi, Gobir and Zamfara.

His high reputation spread, and in course of time a community of scholars gathered around him. He trained not only men but also women in scholarship, including his own daughters. His preaching also gained followers among the Hausa peasants who suffered all sorts of oppression under the arbitrary rule of their chiefs. These chiefs were nominally

Muslims but in practical affairs they ignored the Shari'ah and Islamic principles of just administration. The people's way of life was in practical terms more influenced by polytheism than Islam.

In 1797-98 A.C. the Sultan of Gobir, alarmed by the ever-growing success and popularity of Sheikh Uthman's message and the growth of his community, issued a decree that none of the Sheikh's followers should be allowed to preach, that it was forbidden to convert sons from the religion of their fathers, and that turbans and *hijab* (symbols of the Islamic identity of his followers) were prohibited.

Affairs reached a climax when the Sheikh's followers rescued some Muslim prisoners from a Gobirawa military expeditionary force. Realising that an attack was imminent, the Sheikh and his community emigrated to Gudu, to the north west in 1804. The Sheikh was elected Imam (leader) and caliph of his community and they prepared to defend themselves against the forces of the Gobir state.

For the next 5 years the Sheikh was primarily occupied with the conduct of the *jihad* and the organization of the caliphate. The caliphate was established so as to remove oppression and exploitation of the people, and the Sheikh wrote his views on this in a book called *Bayan wujub al-hijra* (The Explanation of the necessity of Hijrah on account of religious faith) in 1806. He laid much emphasis on the moral character of leaders, judges, police and tax officials, and insisted that only learned, just, trustworthy and pious men should be appointed as ministers and administrators (emirs).

After a series of battles, the Sheikh was recognised as Caliph by leaders of the Muslim communities in Katsina, Kano, Daura and Zamfara. Other flag-bearers of the *jihad* established Emirates in other parts of the area now known as the Northern States of Nigeria. In 1808 the Gobir capital fell, and the main military aims of the *jihad* were achieved.

Although the *jihad* had succeeded, the Sheikh was concerned that the reforming movement which was its inspiration and purpose was being widely forgotten. Leaving the consolidation and administration of the Caliphate to his brother Abdullahi and his son Muhammad Bello, the Sheikh retired to Sifawa to continue his mission as a teacher and writer. He settled there in his usual simple style with about 300 students.

During his five years in Sifawa the Sheikh wrote most of his many works.

Around 1815 he moved to Sokoto, where his son Muhammad Bello was then based, and died there at the age of 62.

## Works

The Sheikh was highly influential on the course of history in West Africa. His task of reform and renewal was carried out by his preaching and teaching, (and also that of his family and followers) and by his numerous works in both Arabic and Fulfulde in which he wrote on most of the Islamic sciences. His writings were often related directly to the correction of injustices and un-Islamic behaviour, particularly among the learned who were those to be entrusted with leadership. For this purpose he also used the medium of poetry in Arabic and Fulfulde, so as to make his words easier to memorise and repeat.

Sheikh Uthman wrote over 115 works, the largest and most famous of which was the *Ihyā' al-Sunna wa Ikhlāḥ al-bid'a* (The Revival of the Sunnah and removal of Satanic innovation).

The book is divided into 33 chapters, whose subject matter is:

1. Definitions (Chapters I and 2)
2. The need for adherence to the Sunnah (Chapter 3)
3. Theology (Chapter 4)
4. Fiqh (Chapter 5-30)
5. Mysticism (Chapters 31-33)
6. Conclusion

In his introduction he makes clear his purpose:

*"My intention is neither to bring shame on people or to engage in finding fault with them .... for whoever pursues the weaknesses of his fellow-man, God will pursue his weakness until He exposes him, even if he is in the recess of his house. The believer looks for excuses while the hypocrite pursues (others') faults, and God helps man as long as man helps his fellow-man."*

From this statement it can be seen that the Sheikh's reforming purpose was uppermost. He was writing not to display his scholarship or to explore new fields of knowledge. Rather he tried to bring out the truth and the spirit of Islam and thereby to modify the behaviour and correct the errors of his people.

The legacy of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio was political, intellectual and spiritual. The political legacy was the welding together of the Hausa and

other States under a single administration and the resulting sense of unity based on religious leadership, which was to survive the colonial period and beyond it.

The intellectual legacy was a tradition of scholarship (an ideal for both males and females) linked with just and righteous leadership . which is an inspiration to West African Muslims of all ages.

The religious and spiritual legacy was a sense of reverence for Sheikh Uthman's saintly character, and consciousness of the need to continue his struggle against ignorance, oppressive customs and polytheistic influences.

#### EXERCISES

1. Give an outline of the life of Sheikh Uthman Dan Fodio.
2. What is the name of Sheikh Uthman's most famous book, and what was it about?
3. What were the aims of Sheikh Uthman's writings and preaching?
4. What is the legacy of Sheikh Uthman dan Fodio to later generations?

## SECTION IV

## PROJECTS

## Projects: Methods and Topics

A class project is an opportunity for students to dig deeper into a particular topic and to gather information for themselves within a given time-limit. It offers at the same time a way of group revision, and helps to put topics in a wider and more meaningful perspective.

The project method may be applied to many topics. We shall here take a few examples and make some suggestions as to how to go about them. These suggestions should be adapted to suit local facilities. For example some schools or towns have well-equipped libraries with useful reference books; others do not. Some schools have relevant resource persons, some have means of buying art materials, while others are remote from resources of any kind.

### Project on the Mosque

Students may be divided into groups so as to pursue various aspects of the topic, on which they will then report back or display materials they have gathered or prepared:

- (a) The meaning of the word "masjid". Origin of the mosque. The Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. The design and essential features of a mosque and their use. Various styles of mosque, decoration, use of different building materials etc.
- (b) Uses of mosques at the time of the Prophet and Four Righteous Caliphs: place of prayers, centre for meetings, school, lecture hall, court, etc. Uses of mosques today. Visits to and reports on local mosques. Photographs, drawings, or models of local mosques. Architectural designs and plan for beautiful but simple mosques suitable for the locality.
- (c) Detailed report on the condition of the School mosque and place of ablution and proposals for their improvement. Survey of the use made of the school mosque and how it could be made more useful with additional facilities or activities. Ideally this project could include follow-up action by the students to implement their proposals.

### Project on the Qur'an and Hadith

- (a) Gathering of various copies of the Qur'an and volumes of Hadith, including translations into English and local languages. Comparison of styles of writing of the Arabic text, layout, decoration, etc.
- (b) Writing out on art paper or posters of selected Qur'anic verses or Hadith in handwriting for display (both in Arabic and translation). Designs for book-covers for Qur'an and volumes of Hadith.
- (c) Reports on how the Qur'an was revealed, compiled and preserved. Posters on aspects of the history of Qur'an and Hadith.
- (d) Essays on any aspect of the guidance given in the Qur'an and Hadith.
- (e) Collection on tapes of various styles of recitation of the Qur'an with Tajwīd. Competition of recitation of the Qur'an with Tajwīd among students.

### Project on the Five Pillars of Islam

- (a) Find and write out the verses of the Qur'an in which each of the Five Pillars is enjoined on Muslims.
- (b) **Iman (Faith)**
  - (i) How could the existence of one God be explained to a polytheist?
  - (ii) Explain the significance of the *Kalimatush-Shahadah* (Declaration of faith).
  - (iii) Make an inventory of local superstitions or practices that may be associated with *shirk* (associating something with God) and explain how each is incompatible with the spirit of *Kalimatush-Shahadah*.
- (c) **Salat (prayer)**
  - (i) What are the objectives of Salat (e.g. ref. Qur'an 29:45)?
  - (ii) Why is concentration in prayer important, and what can a worshipper do to improve concentration?
  - (iii) Describe errors in prayer that are common among the Muslims in your locality and how to correct them.
- (d) **Sawm (Fasting)**
  - (i) Definition, and common errors, in fasting.
  - (ii) In what way can fasting improve self-discipline and morality?
- (e) **Zakat (Welfare dues)**
  - (i) What is the purpose of Zakat? In what ways could the payment of zakat be rightly described as a means of spiritual purification of the

- giver as well as his property?
- (ii) How far does it serve its purpose in your society? Can you suggest improvements in its collection and utilization?
  - (iii) How is zakat collected and distributed in your society?
  - (iv) In what way could the payment of Zakat be regarded as a real gain for the giver?

**(f) Hajj (Pilgrimage)**

- (i) What are the essential rites of Hajj?
- (ii) What is the significance of the various rites of Pilgrimage and their connection with Prophets Ibrahim and Isma'il. What is the significance and history of the Ka'aba?
- (iii) How does the Hajj illustrate and promote unity among all Muslims?

**Other Suggested topics for Projects**

**Shari'ah:** Sources of Shari'ah, 4 Sunni Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence, Visit to local Shari'ah Court in session, Shari'ah in Nigeria, Mock Shari'ah Court session to decide cases on a marriage dispute, business transaction, inheritance etc.

**Marriage:** Rights and duties of Husband and Wife, Divorce and its consequences.

**Comparative Study of Inheritance:** Customary, western and Islamic, with a view to highlighting the greater justice of the Islamic system.

**Summary**

The project methods of sending students to go and gather information on specific points and present it to the class assists both understanding and revision. It may be applied to many of the Islamic topics studied in secondary school. In this way revision is made more interesting and the subject is broadened out. New areas of discussion are opened which help the student to appreciate the relevance of Islamic teachings to his or her own life.

The aim should be that the student leaves secondary school not only knowledgeable about Islam, but able to explore and think about all areas of knowledge and experience from an Islamic perspective. In this respect Islamic Studies may be seen as a preparation not for final leaving examinations but for life itself.

May God therefore grace the students with intelligence and understanding, patience and humility, courage and good will. May He help them to put into practice what they have learned and pass it on to others. May He guide them throughout life on the straight path and bring them to al-Jannah.



# APPENDIX

## EXTRA RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

Islamic Studies covers a vast amount of knowledge, but there are certain topics that are traditionally essential for young learners. These include the Qur'an, the Hadith, the Five Pillars of Islam, the Six Cardinal Beliefs, the 99 Names of Allah, the Life of the Prophet, the Early History of Islam, the Rightly Guided Caliphs, *Tahdhib* (Moral Teachings) and Schools of Thought.

The topics are found in virtually every textbook on Islam. However Islamic knowledge goes much further and Muslim scholars over the centuries have interpreted this knowledge through four or more Schools of Thought. Scholars therefore have traditionally respected one another's interpretations even if they held different opinions.

With greater access to the internet and various websites on Islam (for or against Islam) many young students are confused. The Appendix is therefore designed to empower students and teachers when dealing with common contemporary questions.

May Allah continue to guide us.

### **1. Why do some Muslims prefer to use the name "Allah" instead of "God" when referring to the One and Only Creator of the Universe?**

"Allah" is one of the names of the Creator which means "The One God". The Pagan Arabs and Arab Christians today also use the name Allah to refer to the One and Only Creator of all. The name "Allah" is a unique name as it does not take a plural form like "gods" or a gender

like "goddess". Other names of Allah like "Al-Raheem" (The Most Merciful) can take a plural form like "Rahimeen" or a gender like "Raheemah". But when they take other forms, they do not refer to the One God and Creator of all. Muslims can use the word God to refer to Allah, but not "gods" or "goddess". Allah is the Infinite and so are His attributes and names. We only know what He has allowed us to know through His revelations and by observing His creation. This fact is discernible from one of the supplications of the Prophet (p) where he said, *"I ask you by every name that is yours, by which you have named yourself, sent down in your book, taught any of your creation, or kept its knowledge exclusively in your presence in the knowledge of the unseen, that you make the Qur'an the springtime of my heart, light of my sight, healing of my heart, and the removal of my anxiety and sadness."* (Ahmad). *"God's are the most beautiful names. So call upon Him by means of them."* (Qur'an 7:180). The Qur'an clearly states that all nations and peoples on earth have received divine messengers at some time in the course of human history or pre-history. Qur'an 35:24. Consequently, God and His names are part of a universal human legacy in all human languages. "God" is one of the most beautiful names of Allah in the English language.

And Allah knows best.

### **2. Is it true that child-marriage is allowed in Islam even though it clearly has some health, psychological, educational and financial disadvantages to the girls involved?**

Traditionally, a parent or guardian may choose to marry off his daughter at any age. When it is at a very early age it is usually called a betrothal because it is not allowed to

consummate such a marriage until after the girl reaches maturity. At that age she has the legal right to accept or reject such an arranged marriage. In some cultures, girls (and young men) want to start having sexual relations very early in life, and children may be born out of these relations. There is therefore, usually an arrangement for accommodating and supporting such girls in the extended family. Sometimes, these marriages were influenced by other social and political realities of the societies or families involved. Such was the case of the Prophet's marriage to Aisha. In other cultures, especially where formal education is becoming more important to society, such marriages are seen as limiting the future options of the girl. Most families therefore prefer to delay the marriage of their children to when they are more mature, are aware of their rights and responsibilities, understand the implications of a marriage contract, and are physically, mentally and emotionally developed enough to raise children. Because of the growing importance of education and financial interdependence, many parents also want their children to have completed a significant part of their formal schooling. While marriage is recommended as a *sunnah*, the age at which a girl gets married is left open and optional (*mubah*) for those concerned. The Prophet married off his daughter Fatima to Ali bin Abi Talib when she was at least 18 years old.

An Islamic State in consultation with its scholars and citizens has the right to put a minimum age for driving, official assignment, and military enrolment, etc. if it believes that this is in the best interest of the general public (*maslaha*). So too does the State have the right to put a minimum age for marriage, or to ensure all marriages are conducted by competent persons, etc. If it considers that it is in the best public interest (*maslaha*) of its Muslim citizens or those

concerned, or if it believes, based on empirical evidence that the advantages or benefits of such a policy would be greater than the disadvantages or harm (*mafsada*), such measures may be considered permissible in the view of some scholars. And Allah knows best..

**3. How does Islamic law suggest a male and female get to know each other enough for marriage? What are the guidelines for courtship in Islam?**

Different cultures have various methods of getting their young people married that are Shari'ah compliant. What is important (in all interactions and transactions – *mu'amalat*) is that a Muslim does not do anything that is prohibited while trying to get to know each other better for marriage – which itself is encouraged (*sunnah*). The most important rules to observe are: 1) Ensure the purity of your intentions; 2) The purpose of meeting should be *halal* (permissible) and not for any illegitimate reasons; 3) No physical contact with each other; 4) Observation of Islamic teachings regarding modesty in behavior and in dress; 5) No seclusion in a closed private place that is away from public view. Also consult wise people who know the person better than you and who know you very well too. Don't rush! Read books on the subject, and consult (Qur'an 42:38, 3:159) wise Muslim elders for more advice, while you continue to pray for Allah's guidance. And Allah knows best.

**4. Do the crescent-moon and star not have spiritual or ritual status in Islam, especially as these symbols are associated with Ramadan, mosque architecture etc.?**

The crescent moon and star are symbols that are not from the Qur'an or Sunnah. They have been culturally associated with Islam since the time of the Ottoman Turks who ruled the

last Caliphate. Many mosques, Islamic organisations and flags use the symbol. It is neither prescribed nor is it forbidden by the Qur'an or the Sunnah. And Allah knows best.

**5. What is meant by “Islamic” culture, “Islamic” dress, etc.?**

Any cultural practices that do not contradict the teachings of Islam are Islamically accepted and respected as part of *'urf* (custom) and *aadah* (tradition or norms), and have their legal recognition in Shari'ah. These could include modes of dressing, food, language, architecture, medicine, agriculture, business, etc. Cultural practices that are associated with other religious traditions and superstitions are not to be emulated by Muslims. Cultural practices should not be classified as “Islamic” or “non-Islamic”, but based on whether they contradict or are aligned with the teachings of Islam. Scholars therefore classify every action as being either compulsory (*fard/wajib*) or prohibited (*haram*), encouraged (*mustahab/mandub*) or discouraged (*makruh*), or simply permissible (*mubah* or *ja'iz*). Islam should not be used as a tool for cultural imperialism. Allah has created us into various nations and tribes with various languages and races as part of His signs and greatness, and so that we know one another, appreciate and respect our global diversity (Qur'an 49:13, 30:22). And Allah knows best.

**6. Does a woman have the right to divorce her husband in the same way as her husband does?**

Both the husband and the wife in Islam have rights to divorce which they can exercise if absolutely necessary. The exercising of these rights only differs in their legal procedure. When the husband initiates a divorce, it is called *Talaq*. When the wife initiates a divorce, it is called *Khul'u* (Qur'an 2: 229)

The couple (usually the wife) may sometimes want to specify special circumstances or rights to divorce by mutual consent in their unique marriage contract at the time of marriage or after. In the case of *Khul'u* the Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence (*madhhab*) appears to respect the woman's right of divorce more than the other schools, in that the Maliki school – following the practice of Caliph Umar and Uthman - does not regard the husband's consent to such a divorce (*khul'u*) as required before a judge can endorse the divorce. There are other forms of divorce in Islam that may be initiated by the husband, or the wife, or through the courts. And Allah knows best.

**7. Can Muslims eat the food given by non-Muslims?**

The Prophet Muhammad (p) and his Companions ate food including meat prepared by Jews and Christians. Muslims have not been prohibited from eating non-meat foods that are prepared by non-Muslims such as fruits, vegetables, and other plant products. Islam has also not prohibited the consumption of fish, milk, eggs and other similar dairy products that might have been prepared by non-Muslims.

What has been prohibited is the consumption of animals that are sacrificed as offerings to idols, or “*dedicated to any other than Allah*” (Qur'an 6:121). The Qur'an (2:173, 16:115) also prohibits Muslims from consuming unclean things such as the flesh of carrion, blood and, the flesh of swine (i.e. pig meat). Muslims are also forbidden from eating any animals that have been killed in cruel ways, such as by being beaten to death, by being strangled, or by being made to fall from a height, etc. (Qur'an 5:3). The fact that the Qur'an (5:5) permits a Muslim to marry a chaste woman from among the People of the Book, such as Jews and Christians, implies that Muslim and non-Muslims families are going to live and dine with

each other. Therefore, the Qur'an (5:5) clearly states that Muslims are allowed to eat the food (or animals killed) by the People of the Book.

Based on a number of hadith and opinions of the Companions of the Prophet (p), Muslim scholars have however disagreed on a number of details regarding eating an animal killed by non-Muslims. They disagreed for example on whether non-Muslims should comply with the Islamic rules of slaughtering animals in a more merciful way – such as with a sharp knife to the neck, etc. – instead of other more painful methods, and on whether Allah's name must be mentioned (as recommended by Qur'an 6:121) when they slaughter their animals, and on whether it is permissible to eat an animal slaughtered for their festivals such as Christmas. Some regarded these as all permissible while other did not. The Companion, Ali bin Abu Talib said: *"If you hear a Jew or Christian mentioning other than Allah (on their animal) do not eat it. If you did not hear them mentioning other than Allah on it, eat it because Allah has permitted their animal for us and He knows what they utter"*. Based on this and other evidence, many respected Muslim scholars are of the opinion that a Muslim is not required to inquire into how an animal was slaughtered nor what was mentioned or not mentioned when it was being slaughtered. The great scholar Sufyan Al-Thawri was reported to have said *"If you see a man doing something over which there is difference of opinion among scholars, and which you believe to be forbidden, you should not forbid him from doing it"*. Even if a Muslim is personally not comfortable with the opinion of a certain scholar or School of Thought, and does not want to eat the food of a particular non-Muslim for one reason or another, this should not be done in such a disrespectful way as to hurt the good positive relations between Muslims and peaceful non-Muslims. Allah

says in Qur'an 60:8-9, *"Allah does not forbid you in respect of those who do not fight you because of your religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being good and dealing justly towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly"*. And Allah knows best.

#### 8. Should a woman be forced to marry someone against her will?

No one should be forced into a marriage. Marriage is meant to be a loving relationship of kindness and tranquility, where a couple try and create a compassionate environment for the proper upbringing of children. Neither a man nor a woman should be forced into marriage.

The Prophet Muhammad said in a Hadith narrated in Sahih Muslim and others that *"A woman who was once married ("matron") has more right regarding herself than her guardian, and the virgin's consent is to be sought and her consent is her silence"*. It is reported in Sahih Bukhari and others, that Khansā bint Khazām Al-Ansariyyah was married off by her father against her wish while she was a "matron", so she came to the Prophet (S.A.W) and complained and the Prophet rejected the marriage. It is also narrated in the hadith collections of Abu Dawud, Ibn Majah and Ahmad, that the Companion, Ibn Abbas (R.A) related that: *"A young virgin girl came to the Prophet (S.A.W) and complained that her father had married her off against her wish and the Prophet gave her the choice to ratify or repudiate the marriage"* Based on these hadith, it should be clear that a woman has the right to reject a marriage proposal by anyone.

According to Imam An-Nawawi, (in his Commentary on Sahih Muslim, IX, 204): *"The woman has a right over herself concerning marriage, and her guardian has a right over her concerning marriage; but her right takes precedence over his."*



If he wishes to marry her to someone of a proper background, and she refuses, then she cannot be compelled; while if she wishes to marry someone who has a proper background, and her guardian refuses, he will be compelled to submit to her wishes; and if he persists in his refusal, the judge (qadi) is authorized to give her away in marriage in his stead."

Marriage in Islam is a civil contract between the bride and the groom that needs the consent of each one of them. And Allah knows best.

**9. Does Islam believe in forgiveness in law, if it also accepts the law of "equitable retribution" (qisas) – "an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth", etc.?**

The law of "equitable retribution" is meant to deter and punish those who are intent on hurting others. As a rule the "equitable retribution" for injury is done in the form of financial compensation and not literally "an eye for an eye". When someone has been wronged, the Qur'an makes it clear that Muslims should always stand for justice and never swerve to injustice irrespective of religion, wealth, gender, etc. The Qur'an (5:8) says, *"O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just; this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God; verily, God is aware of all that you do."* (See also Qur'an 4:135).

Equitable retribution therefore is permissible in Islam, through the right legal channels, when one is wronged (Q.2:194), but Allah also makes it clear in Qur'an 16:126: *"And if you have to respond to an attack, respond only to the extent of the attack levelled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for you (since God is with) those who are*

*patient in adversity."* It is however always the choice of the victims of injustice to seek justice or to forgive the wrong done to them.

The Islamic ideal though is not only to forgive and be patient with harm done to us, but to respond to the bad done to us with goodness and compassion. In Qur'an 41:34, Allah says, *"Since goodness and evil cannot be equal, repel (evil) with something that is better – and lo! he between whom and you was hatred (may then become) as it were your friend and intimate."* Qur'an 23:96 conveys the same message. In Qur'an 28:54, those who respond to evil with goodness are promised a double reward by God.

The Prophet Muhammad (p) also said: *"Do not be people without minds of your own, saying that if others treat you well you will treat them well and that if they do wrong you will do wrong; but accustom yourselves to do good if people do good and not to do wrong if they do evil."* (Hadith in Tirmidhi)

And Allah knows best

**10. Why do Muslim scholars prohibit the imitating of non Muslims? What kind of "imitation" is it that Islam prohibits? Does it include imitation in dressing, language, technology, medicine, etc.?**

The Prophet is reported to have said, *"He is not one of us who imitates a people other than us. Do not imitate the Jews and Christians."* (Tirmidhi) According to another version, *"Whoever imitates a people is one of them."* (Ahmad). Some Muslims have unfortunately grossly misinterpreted these hadith as prohibiting every form of imitation. They forget that the Prophet and his companions also imitated and adopted various strategies and aspects of non-Muslim cultures ('urf) that were acceptable to Islam.



A general and fundamental rule in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) is that anything that belongs to the category of social transactions (*mu'amalat*) as opposed to prescribed religious worship (*ibadah*) or creed (*aqidah*), is governed by the general rule that is *“everything is permissible except what is prohibited”* by clear and explicit textual evidence of the Qur'an or authentic sunnah, or if it contradicts definite objectives (*maqasid*) of Shari'ah. In other words, whatever is not prohibited by clear evidence is in fact permissible. What is prohibited for a Muslim to imitate in others in whatever contradicts the teachings of Islam, or in what is a distinctive religious worship (*ibadah*), creed (*aqidah*) or symbol of religious identity. A Muslim is therefore prohibited from using religious dressing, or grooming, or anything else that identifies him or her as being a non-Muslim. If however such imitation is purely in areas of *mu'amalat* such as science and technology, commerce, language, culture, education, agriculture, security, medicine, etc., there is no prohibition in this. If it is beneficial and promotes the objectives (*maqasid*) of Islam, then such imitation is actually respected and encouraged irrespective of which culture (*'urf*) it emanates from, whether native or foreign, Muslim or non-Muslim. And Allah knows best.

#### 11. What is the difference between Islamic and Arabic culture?

Some Non-Muslims and even Muslims have unfortunately assumed that whatever is Arab is Islamic, and whatever is Islamic is Arab; or that whatever has its origin in non-Muslims cultures is automatically unislamic. This has led to the wrong conclusion that to become Muslim necessitates abandoning all aspects of a person's cultural heritage for that of Arabs, Pakistanis or any other Muslim-majority tribe/nation.

Islam acknowledges the diversity in people's differences in culture, tribes, race, languages, etc. as not only legitimate but a sign of Allah's bounties. (See Qur'an 30:22). However, it also frowns upon and even condemns those aspects of a culture that contradict its teachings and principles. No culture (Arab or otherwise) can therefore be classified as completely Islamic or completely un-Islamic.

In another verse, Allah says, *“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is All-Knowing, All-Aware”* (Qur'an 49:13). It is therefore Allah's will that there be diversity in the various nations, communities and tribes of humankind. It is also decreed that there is no inherent superiority of one nation, tribe, or race over the other since *“the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him”*.

Arab culture is not the basis for Islam, nor the practice of the majority of Muslims. The basis of Islam comes from the teachings of the Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (p). In fact, most of the followers of Islam live in Indonesia, India, Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Africa, and Pakistan and other non-Middle Eastern countries. **Arabs only make up 15-20%** of the followers of Islam. Hence, though the majority of Arabs are Muslim, an Arab is not necessarily a Muslim, and a Muslim is even less likely to be an Arab. There is, indeed, at least an 80% chance that a Muslim is non-Arab.

Though Islam respects the diversity within mankind, it also recognizes that some aspects of nearly every culture or community are in contradiction with the guidance of Islam for a just and God-conscious community. Islam, therefore, has criteria for assessing the permissibility or otherwise of any aspect of society, whether Middle-Eastern, Western,

Asian, African, or others. This is discussed in detail by scholars in books on the principles and objectives of Islamic jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh* and *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*).

From an Islamic legal (*fiqh*) perspective therefore, various aspects of a particular culture could therefore be classified as either compulsory/obligatory (*fard* or *wajib*), encouraged (*mustahab* or *mandub*), merely permissible (*mubah* or *ja'iz*), discouraged (*makruh*), or prohibited (*haram*) based on the extent to which they are supported or condemned by the teachings of Qur'an or Sunnah.

Classifying various aspects of cultures as being either "Islamic" or "unIslamic" is very simplistic and often misleading, as it obscures the immense diversity of what is permissible in Islam that may not have originated with Arabs or even Muslims. There are many aspects of various non-Muslim cultures that are completely acceptable (*halal*) in Islam. Whatever is not explicitly prohibited and does not contradict Islamic teachings is in fact permissible. Islam is, in this sense, a universal '**supra-culture**' which permeates and validates the acceptable and desirable aspects of all cultures.

It may therefore be argued that the term "Islamic" could in some cases create more misconceptions than it tries to clarify! Allah knows best.

## **12. Why are Muslim women prohibited from marrying non Muslim men from among the "People of the Book"?**

In the view of the general consensus (*ijma'*) of Muslim scholars based on their interpretation of the relevant verses of the Qur'an, the Sunnah and practice of the Companions, Islam prohibits (*haram*) the initiation of a marriage between a Muslim woman and any non-Muslims man including Jews and Christians (Qur'an 60:10, 2:221). It prohibits (i.e. regards as *haram*) a Muslim man to marry a pagan or atheist woman,

but allows (Qur'an 5:5), though discourages (*makruh*) his marriage to a Jewish or Christian woman (Qur'an 33:55, 2:221).

Various reasons have been given to explain the wisdom behind this prohibition for the Muslim woman.

Islam placed great emphasis on the importance of enhancing and preserving family ties, especially as the family is the first environment for the molding of children. It is estimated however that inter-faith marriages have about 50% higher divorce rates than intra-faith marriages. In many societies today divorce rates are already nearing 50%. Inter-faith marriages would therefore have nearly 75% divorce rates. It is no wonder that most religions either prohibit or at least discourage inter-faith marriages. Where there is a greater risk of divorce and family breakdown, the woman (and children, if any) are usually the most likely victims. Islam protects Muslim women from this risk by preventing them from initiating inter-faith marriages.

A non-Muslim husband is not liable to take care of his wife as Islamic law would require (4:4) (4:24) (4:25), one that cannot be taken back (2:229) (4:20), it will not be fair for him to be held accountable to an Islamic court if he defaults or does not give her the rights Islam gives her. Some religions do not give women a right to divorce.

Many religions including Christianity do not allow their follower to be "yoked in marriage with an unbeliever". Any Christian who fully believes in their scripture, and decides to get married to a Muslim is not respecting their own religious tradition. Why then should a Muslim woman agree to get married to him?

As the husband is the head of the house in most other religions, a Muslim woman may have difficulties if her non-Muslim husband brings alcohol or pork into the house, or

does not allow her to enjoy her freedom to practice Islam to her satisfaction.

While it is an article of faith for a Muslim to respect the great prophets such as Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them), both Jews and Christians have no such respect for Muhammad (p) who some of them regularly criticize as an imposter and false prophet.

There is also the fear that the husband will have a greater influence on the religious up-bringing of his children, and that the children of a Muslim woman may be brought up as non-Muslims.

Most of these reasons would apply to any inter-faith marriage. Consequently, some Maliki scholars are of the opinion that all inter-faith marriages should be prohibited. Ultimately, the basis for any authoritative prohibition in Islam is the Qur'an and Sunnah. And Allah knows best.

**13. Can a non-Muslim inherit from a Muslim relative, spouse, or friend, and vice-versa?**

There are 2 main ways or circumstances through which a person can inherit from another. The first is if there is a will (*wasiyyah*) left by the deceased that states who will inherit from them. The second is where there is no will left behind (*mirath*). The general consensus (*ijma'*) among Muslim scholars is that if there is a will (*wasiyyah*) left behind by the deceased, then a non-Muslim can inherit from a Muslim, and vice-versa. For example, the Prophet's wife, Safiyyah bequeathed a third of her property to her brother through a will she had left behind.

Where there is no will left behind, the majority hold that there cannot be any interfaith inheritance based on a hadith where the Prophet (p) is reported to have said that there is no

interfaith inheritance between Muslims and non-Muslims. And Allah knows best.

**14. Do "People of the Book" (*Ahl al-Kitab*) exist today, and are the Jews and Christians of today still to be regarded as "People of the Book"?**

According to the majority of Muslim scholars the Jews and Christians of today are still members of the religious community described or referred to in the Qur'an as *Ahl al-Kitab*, and should be honoured as such.

Some Muslims argue that the *Ahl-al-Kitab* ("People of the Book", or "People of Earlier Revelation" before Prophet Muhammad) are no longer in existence. They say the present-day Christians and Jews - unlike those of the time of the Prophet Muhammad (p) - are not the same as those described in the Qur'an and Hadith as *Ahl-al-Kitab*, because (among other reasons), they have corrupted the teachings of their scriptures and therefore their scriptures are no longer authentic.

However, the Qur'an speaks of the Christians at the time of the Prophet (on whom be peace) as having believed in the Trinity (Qur'an 4:171, 5:73) the divine Sonship of Jesus (Qur'an 9:30), the crucifixion of Jesus (Qur'an 4:157) and the belief that he and his mother (Mary) were divine or to be worshipped (Qur'an 5:116), etc. The Qur'an also states that some of the Arab Jews believed that *Uzair* was a son of God (Qur'an 9:30), and that some of the *Ahl al-Kitab* corrupted their scriptures (Qur'an 2:79). These beliefs are therefore not new or recent teachings of Judaism or Christianity. In spite of all these, the Qur'an and the Prophet (on whom be peace) still considered these Christians and Jews as *Ahl-al-Kitab* (People of Earlier Revelations) and permitted conditional

intermarriage and eating of what they slaughter, etc. (Qur'an 22:17; 5:5).

To believe that there are no more *Ahl-al-Kitab* existing today would also indirectly imply an abrogation or even irrelevance (for all present and practical purposes) of all references in the Qur'an or Hadith to *Ahl-al-Kitab* (Qur'an 3:64; 5:82; 22:17 etc.). In fact, among the hadith literature on the Signs of the Last Day are some that indicate the continued presence of Jews and Christians. All the major classical literature of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) that discuss issues related to the *Ahl al-Kitab* – such as eating their food, marriage to them, etc. - have assumed their continued existence to this day.

The Jews and Christians of today therefore, are still members of the religious community described in the Qur'an as *Ahl al-Kitab*, and should be honoured as such. And Allah knows best!

#### **15. Is polygamy not a Sunnah, and why are some Muslims against it?**

Polygamy (or more correctly, polygyny) was a practice that existed in many cultures before Islam. As the practice had some social and economic benefits in certain contexts, Islam did not ban it completely. Islam instead regulated polygamy (Qur'an 4:3); restricted the number of wives to a maximum of 4; made legal the equality of rights for each wife; and promised severe punishment in the hereafter for an unjust husband. The Prophet (p) warned that *"A man who marries two women and then does not deal justly between them will be resurrected (on the Day of Judgment) with half his body hanging down"*, (and see also Qur'an 4:129). Islam also gave a wife the choice of divorce (*khul'u*) if she feared abuse and did not want to stay in a marriage. This right could also be part of her marriage contract (as is more commonly practiced in the

Shafi'i and Hanbali Schools of Thought). Islam has also prohibited forced marriage. It cannot be forced onto a woman, especially if she has good reasons to fear injustice. A woman's consent to be a second, third or fourth wife must be sought. As with monogamous marriages, some polygamous marriages work very well and the co-wives are sisters in faith and good friends of each other.

Islam does not advocate the indiscriminate practice of polygamy. Polygamy is not mandatory for a Muslim man. Some circumstances may promote its practice in a society (such as the existence of excess women in times of war who have no other means of being cared for). Other circumstances may discourage it (such as if it undermines the objectives of marriage – tranquility, love and mercy), or even prohibit it (such as the inability to do justice to each wife). For some women, the institution of polygamy ensures that a father has legally recognized responsibilities to his children from different women to whom marriage also implies legal responsibility.

From a study of the Qur'an (4:3) and the Prophet's polygamous marriages (to mostly widows), one realizes that the permission to practice polygyny is therefore not associated with mere satisfaction of passion. It is rather associated with compassion and justice. Polygamy in Islam has therefore not been banned because it is often able to solve some problems that monogamy is not capable of solving. Due to the widespread abuse of the permissibility of polygamy by certain men, some Muslim countries have put down various legislations and procedures that have significantly restricted the freedom to practice polygamy in the interest of "public benefit" (*maslaha*) or preventing harm (*mafsada*). And Allah knows best.



#### 16. Why can a woman not marry more than one man?

The marriage of a woman to more than one man is called polyandry. Shari'ah rulings are all based on the objective of promoting benefit (*maslaha*) and minimizing harm (*mafsada*) to the individual and society. Rulings on sexual relationships are no different. The prohibition of Muslim women from marrying more than one man at a time, thus, follows this rationale. The benefits to women of avoiding multiple marriage partners far outweigh its advantages. In Islamic law, an act may be prohibited, not due to its lack of any advantage whatsoever, but because from a holistic or broader perspective, the disadvantages in permitting it would be far greater and graver than the advantages. This is the case with polyandry. Women in such relationships have higher risks of sexually transmitted diseases from multiple partners; there is always the question of doubt over parentage of the child, as DNA testing is expensive and not available to most people; children grow up uncertain about their real fathers; the wife in such a relationship often lives with more conflict with and between the husbands; etc.

An even greater problem with polyandry is that it gives the men a valid excuse to also have multiple partners. Permitting polyandry (marriage of a woman to multiple men) would essentially imply the permissibility of both polyandry and polygyny (marriage of a man to multiple women). It could be argued that this option would be fair to all concerned. However, the practical implication of such liberty is that a matrix of intermarried clusters of people would probably arise. This would include situations where a man may marry up to four women, one or more of whom is also married to up to three other men. Some monogamous couples would exist, but in situations where clusters of people are all married to each other, the likelihood of continual conflict and

absence of clear family lines or leadership would be pervasive. Should any one 'family member' acquire a sexually transmitted disease, such as HIV/AIDS, it would spread to affect everyone linked by marriage. This could result in a plague affecting a vast number of people in a very short period of time. Such conditions would have the potential of easily wiping out entire communities of people.

This sort of polygamous arrangement would simply equate to a legalization of sexual promiscuity, with its consequent family and social collapse, along with all the other problems arising from these.

In Islamic law, an act may be prohibited, not due to its lack of any advantage whatsoever, but because from a holistic or broader perspective, the disadvantages in permitting it would be far greater and graver than the advantages. And Allah knows best.

#### 17. How are we sure the Qur'an originally comes from God, and not any other source?

After a careful consideration of certain factors, it is not reasonable to conclude that the Qur'an could have come from any other than God, Who by the way is also the only One that has ever claimed authorship of Scripture. From what we know of the comprehensive contents of the Qur'an, its style (compared to the hadith), its prophecies, its statements related to scientific facts only recently discovered, its teachings on ethics and virtue, etc. make it impossible for it to have been authored by anyone other than Allah. In addition, from what has been reliably recorded about the integrity of Muhammad (p), and his educational background and the times he lived in, it is unreasonable to conclude that he could have authored the Qur'an. In short, the contents of the Qur'an and what we know from historical evidence about



Muhammad (p) and his environment make it reasonably certain that the Qur'an is divine revelation from God, and that Muhammad was a genuine prophet. There is also no other candidate that can be proven to have authored the Qur'an, or any who claimed to be its author other than God Himself (Qur'an 4:82).

**18. Is it true that a Muslim woman's inheritance is half that of a man's?**

Inheritance is defined as property of a deceased person, which is transferred to his/her heirs under the laws of inheritance, or by bequest through a will. In Islamic law, there are circumstances where a woman inherits more than, the same as, or less than a man. How much a person gets in inheritance depends not on gender but on 3 main factors:

1. **The degree or closeness of kinship or relationship with the deceased.** So, for example, a daughter whose mother dies will inherit more from deceased than her father who is the husband of the deceased. This is because the daughter is a closer (blood relation) than that of the father (who has a marital relationship) with the deceased.
2. **The generation to which the heirs belong** Grandchildren (such as a granddaughter) will usually receive more from their parent who dies than do the grandparents (such as a grandfather). This is because the grandchildren will more likely face a longer future of financial responsibilities, and will be responsible for the elderly. Similarly, such a daughter inherits more from her deceased father than any inheriting uncle(s).
3. **The financial responsibility upon a particular heir** When the heirs are equal in the first 2 aforementioned factors, their shares of inheritance will be affected by the third. Because the Qur'an (4:4, 4:34, etc.) makes men

financially responsible for women, this 3<sup>rd</sup> factor gives those men who are responsible for women more of the inheritance so as to justify the extra financial burden of responsibility placed upon them. In this instance, a brother may inherit twice what his sister inherits. However where the male (e.g. a half-brother) is not financially responsible for his half-sister (from a different father but same mother) as in Qur'an 4: 12, the 2 of them get equal shares of inheritance (either a sixth or a third).

The Grand Mufti of Egypt, Sheikh Ali Gomaa, (in his book "Responding from Tradition", 2011, p.46-53) cites the results of researchers into this subject who have concluded that there are only 4 scenarios in which a woman inherits half that of a man; about 11 scenarios in which a woman inherits a share equal to that of a man; many more (no less than 14) scenarios in which a woman inherits more than a man; and many situations in which a woman inherits and her male counterpart does not inherit at all.

Basically, there are circumstances in which a woman inherits more than a man, the same as a man, or less than a man. Each case depends on closeness to the deceased, generation, financial responsibility and of course, who else is inheriting. It should however be mentioned that Islamic law is the only law that has guaranteed women (whether mothers, daughters, and wives) a fixed share of inheritance which they cannot be denied. Most other laws leave the sharing of inheritance entirely to the decision or will of the deceased.

The Islamic laws of inheritance accept that a will (*wasiyyah*) of up to a third of the estate may be left by the deceased for others (including distant relatives, friends, etc.) who are not automatically inheriting. And Allah knows best.

**22. Are women allowed to go out for any needs, or is it islamically preferable for them to stay at home and focus on the family needs?**

Like men, women are not all the same. They have differing priorities, needs and interests. Some are married and have children to care for, while others are not. Some are young, educated, and not yet married, while others are not. Some are well-to-do and have house-help, while others are poor. Some have helpful extended families, others do not. Some have skills that society needs and they want to work, earn and contribute to a better society by “enjoining right and forbidding wrong” (Qur’an 9:71), while others have other priorities.

The Qur’an (in 33:33) forbids women from doing “*tabarruj*”. Some Muslims have tried interpreting verses of the Qur’an (such as Qur’an 33:33) in such a way as to claim that women are not allowed to go out of their homes even for legitimate reasons. However, scholars such as Ibn Kathir cites Qatadah as saying the meaning of *tabarruj* is “*walking outside their homes in a flirtatious manner*”. In addition, numerous hadith have helped shed sufficient light on this matter and corrected such a misconception. The Prophet (p) is reported by Aisha, in a hadith narrated in Sahih Bukhari, as saying: “*Women are allowed to go out for their needs*”. There are many hadith showing that women at the time of the Prophet (p) including his wives went to the mosques, for pilgrimage, to the markets, to farms, to visit friends and families, travelled, and some even went to the battle field! The fact that a woman is enjoined to wear the hijab dress-code automatically assumes that she is going out of her house! There is in fact no place mentioned in the Qur’an or Sunnah that is permissible (*halal*) for a man to go but forbidden (*haram*) for a woman as is also clear from the lives of the pious female Companions of

the Prophet (p). What is prohibited for a man or woman is to be alone together in a secluded place. Other conditions such as proper dressing and behavior, legitimacy of purpose and purity of intention also apply to all concerned.

Some roles that women go out for are actually essential to any healthy functioning Islamic society, and are regarded as part of women’s contribution to collective social obligations (*fardu kifaya*) – such as in their fields of medicine and education, etc. Some of these roles are obligations (*fard*) upon those women who have the required skills. For women to be absent or insufficient in these professions would lead to a situation of dire necessity (*darurah*) and suffering (*fitna*) or embarrassment for other women and even responsible God-conscious men. And Allah knows best.

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- Ibn Rushd, Qaradawi, Taqi Usmani, DIN.

(For further reading: Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh al-Sunnah*, vol.1; *A Woman Traveling without a Mahram* Islamic Education Trust, Minna, 2013).

(For further reading on the various views of scholars regarding who the “Ahl-al-Kitab” are, and whether they still exist today, see Sheikh Khalid Abdul-Qadir, *Fiqh al-Aqalliyat al-Muslimah* (Lebanon: Darul-Iman, 1998) p.26-27; Zaidan, *Al Mufasssal fi Ahkam al Mar’ah*, (Mu’assasat al Risalah, Beirut, 1993) Vol. 6, p.307; Rashid Rida, *Tafsir al Manar*, Vol. 6, p.190; Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Ahkam Ahl al-Dhimma* in CD Rom of *Maktabah Ibn Taymiyyah*, Ibn al-Qayyim and Ibn Jawzy; Qurtubi, *Al-Jami’ li Ahkam al-Qur’an*, (Dar al-Kutub Beirut 2001) Vol. 6, p.11; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahl\\_al-Kitab](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahl_al-Kitab) (21/06/2006). See also Appendix II: *Do the Ahl al-Kitab Exist Today?*, in *Protection of Churches, Synagogues and Mosques in Islam*, 2012, Islamic Education Trust, Minna, Nigeria).

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## RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

These online resources have very useful information and products on Islam. This list is, however, far from being exhaustive, as new websites appear on the internet daily. Other Islamic websites may be even more informative than the above listed, and whereas these websites are recommended, not all the views and opinions expressed in them necessarily reflect those of DIN or the IET.

[www.altafsir.com](http://www.altafsir.com)  
[www.discoverislam.net](http://www.discoverislam.net)  
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