

me exceed the cannot be maintained by anything less than the limits of Allah.

3. SOCIAL SYSTEM

Beyond the limited sphere of home lies a vast collective social life which is known as society. Islam has also laid down some fundamental principles in respect of this sphere. Let us acquaint ourselves with the basic concepts of the Islamic social system. Their detailed study would be taken up subsequently.

According to Islam the multitude of people, who collectively form a society, are off-springs of one parentage:

Who created you from a single soul (4:1).

As such they are all equal by birth. There is neither a difference of high and low, nor of pure and impure. People of every colour, ciime and race are equal in status and rights.

There cannot be any distinction among them because of any peculiarity of colour, race, country or language. Only one thing can be group of men who has faith in the religion of Allah. There is another which does not have faith in it. The former is called Islamic society and the latter is known as un-Islamic or infidel society. Evidently their basic premises are quite different. When their premises are different their structures must also follow suit. In major affairs of life there is no similarity among them. For example, the relationship of marriage which is the corner-stone of social system, cannot be established between Muslims and non-Muslims. Nor can they become heirs of each other.

Islam at a glance

Thus on the basis of faith and religion emerge two permanent societies. Naturally Islam has separate injunctions for each of them. As for the non-Muslims society is concerned it is the essence of teachings that its members should be treated in usual manner. In their dealings with them, the Muslims cannot make any exception in matters like justice and equity, honesty and trustworthiness, compassion and kindness, uprightness and promise. In respect of Islamic society, Islam has given express injunctions. These injunctions form "the Social System of Islam". Here is the gist of these injunctions:

1. Instead of any class war or tribal rancour the mutual relations of Muslims are based on brotherhood, sympathy, co-operation and sacrifice. There is a Divine injunction that:

The believers are naught else than brothers (49:10).

What kind of "brotherhood" this is in actual practice is elucidated in the following verse:

But give them preference over their selves even when they themselves are needy (59:6).

Let not a folk deride a folk;

Nor let women deride women;

Neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nick-names;

Shun much suspicion and spy not, neither backbite one another (49:11-12).

"Muslims are like a building, each constituent of which is a support for the other" (Bukhari). ۞

"In respect of natural love, compassion and kindness, Muslims are like a body which is in fever and feel discomfort if any of its part is ailing" (Bukhari).

"Do not be envious of each other. Nor give a higher bid in auction to raise the price, nor foster any ill-will against each other, nor abandon contacts with each other, nor interfere in the sale deeds of others to promote your own interest--but be a good bondsman of Allah and treat each other as brothers. Each Muslim is a brother unto other. Neither he makes any excesses on the other nor leaves him helpless in lurch, nor looks down upon him. It is the bounden duty of each Muslim to respect the blood, property and honour of every Muslim" (*Muslim*).

"Every Muslim has six obligations towards another Muslim:

- (i) When a Muslim meets another he should salute him in the prescribed manner;
- (ii) When a Muslim cries for help he should assist him;
- (iii) When a Muslim seeks advice from another he should give him;
- (iv) When a Muslim sneezes and says *Al Hamdu Lillah* (Allah be praised) the other Muslim should follow his prayer and say: *Yarhamuka-Allah* (Allah have mercy on you);
- (v) When a Muslim falls sick he should visit and inquire about his health;
- (vi) When a Muslim dies he should attend his funeral".
(*Muslim*)

"It is not permissible for a Muslim that he abandons his brother for more than three days" (*Bukhari*).

"No Muslim should send a proposal of marriage to woman whose hand has already been or is being sought by someone else, till the first party either marries or refuses. (*Bukhari*)

"Beware of such things as estrangement or mutual relations because they are capable of sweeping the religion away"
(*Tirmidhi*).

Such is the nature of mutual relationship amongst people in Muslim society. Whenever this state of love and brotherhood is found in danger because of any misunderstanding or selfishness, it is obligatory for others that they rush for redeeming the situation.

The believers are naught else than brothers. Therefore make peace between your brethren (49:10) .

It is stated in a tradition that the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. said to his companions Allah be pleased with them):

"May I tell you something which is higher than fasting, almsgiving and prayer? The companions said, "Please do let us know about it". He said, "It is keeping your mutual relations cordial" (Tirmidhi).

2. Virtues such as welfare of people and fear of Allah be encouraged in the society. These should not only be encouraged but people should co-operate with each other in such noble acts:

Help ye one another unto righteousness and piety (5:2).

Even this is not enough. People should actually incite each other for such acts:

And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends one of another, they enjoin the right (9:71).

3. Vices should not be allowed to flourish in the society. The right course to achieve this end, is that on the one hand no one should be helped in an evil deed:

Help not one another unto sin and transgression (5:2).

On the other hand one should do one's best to keep the people away from evils:

"Whosoever amongst you sees evil, he should check it with the help of his hand" (Bukhari).

Keeping the people away from evils is not only a service and betterment of the society, it is also a service and betterment of the person who is being prevented from doing it. The Prophet Muhammad once advised:

"Help your brother whether he is aggressor or the victim of aggression".

On hearing this advice his companions (*r.a.*) inquired from him

s.a.w.:

"O Prophet of Allah! We can make out the reason for helping the aggressed but we cannot understand how an aggressor should be helped?" He replied: "You should stop him from aggression because that amounts to his help" (*Bukhari*).

4. All such sources should be sealed up which cause an inflow of sexual evils in the society. The following measures have been employed for this purpose:

(a) Adultery is listed among the worst of the sins:

And whoso doeth this shall meet the punishment of his sin (25:68).

The whole society is charged with intense hatred against this sin.

The adulterer shall not marry save an adulteress or an idolatress, and the adulteress none shall marry save an adulterer or idolator (26:3).

(b) Punishment prescribed for one who is guilty of adultery is equally terrible. He is stoned to death or is scourged with a hundred stripes. It is also provided that this punishment should be inflicted in public and maximum number of persons should witness it. The executioner of the punishment should not show any leniency in doing his duty:

And let no pity for the twain take hold of you, and let a party of the believers witness their punishment (24:2).

In general circumstances the women's sphere of work is limited to their homes and they have been prohibited to turn out:

And stay in your houses (33:33).

Free mixing of men and women is strictly forbidden. With the exception of such relatives as are very close to them, women are not permitted to come in the presence of men unveiled.

Draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad) (33:59).

Similarly women have also been enjoined not to come out perfumed. Nor are they permitted to use such ornaments which produce sound while walking when they go out. They are also enjoined not to talk unnecessarily with the men who are not very close relatives. When they are obliged to do so, they should not speak with them in a soft tone:

Be not soft of speech, lest in whose heart is a disease aspire (to you) (33:32).

- (c) Muslim women are strictly forbidden the use of such garments which are worn for display or effect. Same is true of their manners. Such women have been cursed who wear clothes which reveal their body. Also cursed are the women who walk with a swinging gait.

"Women who would be naked in spite of being dressed they would be inclined to evil and make their husbands inclined towards it; their heads would be like humps of *bhukht* camel inclined toward one side. They will not enter Paradise and would not smell its odour" (*Muslim*).

- (d) Shame and modesty are strongly commanded and have been declared constituents of faith:

"Modesty is a branch of faith" (*Bukhari*).

(e) Muslim men and women are enjoined not to focus their eyes on their opposite sex when they come across them. Instead they should lower their eyes in such an event:

Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and not to display of their adornment except that which is apparent (24:30-31).

(f) Similarly the Muslims, both men and women, have been ordained not to enter anyone's house without announcement and permission

O ye who believe! Enter not houses other than your own without first announcing your presence and invoking peace upon the folk thereof (24:27).

(g) Propagation of evil is strictly forbidden as it injures the intellectual modesty of the society and weakens the natural hatred of people against that evil. Those who do so have been warned of severe punishment:

"There is forgiveness for every one of my followers except one who spreads obscenity" (Bukhari).

Those who want to see society inclined to obscenity have been reprimanded in the Qur'an:

Lo! Those who love that slander should be spread concerning those who believe, there will be a painful punishment for them in the world and the Hereafter (24:19).

(h) Marriage is enjoined and celibacy of young men is pointedly condemned:

"Whosoever amongst you can afford to marry he must marry for it makes man modest and chaste" (Mishkat).

It is ordained that when a girl comes of age she should be married immediately on the availability of a suitable match:

"When one of you gives you the proposal of marriage whose religion and behaviour please, you then marry him but if you do not do that, then it may be source Of wide spread corruption on the earth" (Tirmidhi).

Islam has also made the institution of marriage simple and convenient. Except for very close relatives marriage is permissible with all others. Difference of caste is also no bar for marriage. It is said:

"In marriage people usually go after caste and family, beauty and riches but you Muslims should only see the faith and conduct" (*Mishkat*).

"Look unto his religion" (*Mishkat*).

In respect of dowry and gift Muslims have been ordained to adopt a middle course. Similarly marriage ceremony has also been made so plain that one does not feel any inconvenience in it. Neither one needs a priest for it nor an officer. Nor is it subject to any other condition. The twain can perform the ceremony themselves by giving their consent in the presence of two witnesses. This would suffice for the purpose.

In certain moral or social exigencies one is also permitted to make up to four marriages. This permission is subject to condition that he would be just to each of them. For example, it would be quite justified if it is done for the sake of an orphan who cannot be brought up without being taken as a foster child. It would also be valid if a person finds himself unable to be content with one wife:

Marry of the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four (4:3).

Widow and widowers have been advised to start their matri-

monial life afresh. Similar injunctions exist for slaves of either sex. Whoever of them is fit for marriage should be married:

"And marry such of you as are solitary and the pious of your slaves and maidservants" (24:32).

This has been ordained for the reason that no one in the society who is sexually potent, leads a life of celibacy. If he is neglected he may succumb to some sin.

5. Islam also restrains from such entertainments which incline a man to debauchery and licentiousness or impair his intellectual powers and paralyse his moral sense. This accounts for the prohibition of all such things as dance, music, liquor and other intoxicants in Islam.

6. As regards the style of living and eating, Islam exhorts nothing but moderation. According to the definition given in the Qur'an, a Muslim is neither extravagant nor miserly in spending

And those who, when they spend are neither prodigal nor grudging and there is a moderate position between the two (25:67).

It would be relevant to quote here two sayings of the Prophet *s.a.w.* on this subject. He *s.a.w.* said:

"Allah wants to see the effect of His blessings on His slave" (*Muslim*).

At the same time Allah has strictly forbidden a living that is ostentatious, luxurious and extravagant. For instance wearing of such a dress is not permissible which is so very low as to touch the ground by way of pride:

"He who drags his cloth (lower garment) out of pride, Allah will not look at him (with Mercy) on the Day of Resurrection" (*Mishkat*).

Similarly the use of gold and silver ornaments is not allowed. Men are not permitted to wear silken clothes or sit upon silken mat.

"The Messenger of Allah prohibited us to eat or drink in gold or silver utensils and to use the silken fabrics for dress or bed" (Mishkat).

One should have only such household goods as are essential for one's use:

"One bed for husband, the other for wife, the third for guest and the fourth is for Satan" (Muslim).

Construction of huge and high mansions is also not viewed with favour. The Prophet *s.a.w.* said:

"Every expense that a Muslim makes on himself is in fact an expenditure in the way of Allah, except for expense incurred on buildings exceeding one's own requirements as there is nothing good in them" (Tirmidhi).

Muslims have also been told to avoid a luxurious life:

"Beware of luxurious living for Allah does not like those who have taken to luxurious living" (Mishkat).

7. The natural capabilities of men and women are as different as their spheres of activities. Their appearance and dress should also be likewise different. The Prophet *s.a.w.* has ordained:

"Allah has cursed such men who acquire the appearance of women, and also woman who imitate men" (*Bukhari*).

8. Muslims should never lose their grip over forbearance, grace and serenity. The death of a relative is very trying but one is enjoined not to give way to impatience and crying even in that event:

"One should not slap one's face or raise fulsome lamentation, or tear one's clothes or dishevel one's hair" (Abu Dawud).

Similarly one should not feel overjoyed in the event of great happiness:

Nor ye exult because of that which hath been given (57:23).

Islamic injunctions do not ordain only such virtues as patience, grace and serenity, they also enjoin the observance of pleasing habits. It enjoins:

"Do not eat with the left hand" (*Muslim*).

"Do not clean private parts with your right hand. It would be still better if you do not even touch your private parts with your right hand" (*Bukhari*).

"Do not walk with one foot covered and the other uncovered" (*Muslim*).

Do not shave a part of your head:

"The Prophet of Allah *s.a.w.* has forbidden to shave a part of one's head" (*Bukhari*).

9. Muslims have been forbidden such acts as are devoid of any consequence here or in the Hereafter. Among the basic virtues of a Muslim listed in the Qur'an one is that he does not have any concern with futile deeds:

And who shuns all that which is vain (18:3).

The Prophet *s.a.w.* has said:

"One of the hallmarks of a Muslim is that he keeps himself aloof from useless things" (*Tirmidhi*).

10. Islam forbids such acts as are earmarked for some un-Islamic society and are likely to impair the cultural identity and religious temper of the Muslims. For instance it is ordained that:

- (a) No Muslim should fashion himself in the style of nonbelievers otherwise he would be reckoned one of them.

"He who imitates a people is one of them" (*Abu Dawud*).

(b) The Muslims should have beards and moustaches of style opposite to the non-Muslims:

"Oppose the non-believers, grow beards and trim moustaches" (*Bukhari*).

(c) The Christians and the Jews keep their hair undyed, oppose them.

"The Muslims are advised to do otherwise" (*Bukhari*).

In short, the temper of the Muslim society is attuned to righteousness and uniformity that they are distinguished in each and every respect. For them all such so-called liberal views which regard that essentially there is a good deal in common between belief and unbelief, is sheer flattery and deceit. Islam believes that white is different from the black. It strongly refutes any idea that the two have anything in common.