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Guidelines of the Holy Qur'ān for Observance of Obedience In the Behaviouristic Way

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ABSTRACT

'Obedience' is a crucial and significant factor of psychology for the behaviour change. Psychologists consider it as a basic and a necessary requirement for all communal living. Psychological experiments prove that people have a natural tendency for obedience and it is thought that obeying minor orders increases the probability of later obeying major ones. Therefore, in order to bring the radical change in the entire society, the Holy Qur'ān emphasizes the obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ i.e. obedience of the leader. However, quite psychologically, the mode of revelation from Almighty Allah is not abrupt and rigorous at first. First of all, people were made conscious of the worth and excellence of the Prophet's obedience. Then gradually the level of obedience increased till it was said that people had no right to decide their issues themselves but through the guidance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The article deals with the same description. It is a well-known fact that humans are found to be surprisingly obedient in the presence of perceived legitimate authority figures. Addressing this natural instinct of human, the Holy Qur'ān outlines obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the essence of faith and submission. The details in the article is based on a proven research that people will more likely agree to do complicated tasks assigned to them, after they have previously agreed to do the simpler ones. The same was practiced by the Holy Qur'ān.

Keywords: *Obedience, Psychological Experiments, Qur'ān, Guidance, leader.*



Introduction

In the science of psychology, obedience is defined as the behaviour performed in response to an order given by someone in a position of authority.¹ It is described as a form of social influence where a person acts in response to a direct order from another one, who is usually an authority. Psychologists assumed that without such an order the person would not have acted in this way. Obedience requires a hierarchy of status. Therefore, most often, the person who gives the order has a higher status than the person receiving the order.

Humans are found to be surprisingly obedient in the presence of perceived legitimate authority figures.

Stanley Milgram carried-out an experiment in the 1960s to find how the Nazis managed to get ordinary people to take part in the mass murders of the Holocaust. In the experiment, participants were told they were going to contribute to a study about punishment and learning, but the actual focus was on how long they would listen to and obey orders from the experimenter. The participants were instructed that they had to shock a person in another room for every wrong answer on a learning task, and the shocks increased with intensity for each wrong answer. Even after the 'learner' pounded on the wall and stopped answering questions, many of the participants continued to deliver shocks, including the last shock labelled XXX, 450 volts.² Prior to this experiment, psychiatrists had been asked to predict how many people would deliver the full range of shocks, including the last 450 volts. They said that only 0.1 percent of the population would do so. The general public was asked the same question and predicted that only 2 percent would deliver the 450 volts. To the horror and dismay of many, including Milgram, 65 percent of the participants delivered the full range of shocks. Milgram's experiments clearly demonstrated that a large percentage of people obey orders. It is fairly applicable for all sensible orders. However, in this particular example they knew the order to be unreasonable, yet they obeyed the order.³

Psychologists have suggested several reasons why so many participants in Milgram's experiment obeyed to the end, even though they believed they were inflicting severe pain on someone else. One of the main reasons is that people obey because they have learned to follow the orders of authority figures, whether they are religious leaders, army commanders, doctors, scientist, or parents. People also obey because they have learned to follow orders in their daily lives, whether it be in traffic, on the job, or in personal interactions. It is thought that obeying minor orders increases the probability of later obeying

major ones. In discussing the Milgram study, one author has suggested that the subjects' willingness to obey minor requests – delivery of small, harmless shocks – contributed to their eventual willingness to deliver maximum shocks.⁴

Foot-In-The-Door Phenomenon

Foot-in-the-door is a technique in psychology, in which going along with small requests may result in compliance with subsequent, much larger requests.⁵ This phenomenon is defined by Myers as the tendency for people who have first agreed to a small request to comply later with a larger request. A door-to-door salesperson soon learns that if she can get the customer to comply with her request to let her in the door, the customer is more likely to comply with a later request to buy the product.⁶

The foot-in-the-door technique refers to the increased probability of compliance with a second request if a person complies with a small, first request. Therefore, this technique is described as a compliance tactic that involves getting a person to agree to a large request by first setting them up by having that person agree to a modest request. This technique succeeds because of the basic human reality that social scientists call “successive approximations”. Apparently, the more a person agrees with small requests, the more he feels like to go along with larger requests. The principle involved is that a small agreement creates a bond between the requester and the requestee. Even though the requestee may only have agreed to a trivial request out of politeness, this forms a bond. When a future request is made, the requestee feels obliged to act consistently with the earlier one.

For example, if you want someone to give you 5 hours of his time a week for the four months as a volunteer for a charity (a larger request). In order to get him to agree to this larger request, you first ask him to volunteer for 1 hour of his time and one time only. After hearing this small request, which he is willing to agree to, you then work your way up asking him to volunteer time until he is willing to agree to the big request. He is more likely to agree to this when he has already said yes to the small request.

In one of the first demonstrations of this phenomenon, housewives were asked to put up a small sign in one of their windows or to sign a petition. Two weeks later, they were asked to put up a large, ugly sign on their front lawns. Results showed that significantly more women complied with the second request if they had been previously approached and had complied with the first request.

A review of fifteen years of research on the foot-in-the-door technique indicates that it works well in persuading people to comply and that it does occur often.⁷

The essence of the above discussion is that ‘obedience’ is a crucial and significant factor of psychology for the behaviour change. Psychologists consider it as a basic and a necessary requirement for all communal living. It is described in psychology as a norm, not as an exception. In addition, psychological experiments prove that people have a natural tendency for obedience. Psychologists also describe that people tend to comply more readily with a large request if they have already agreed to a small favour. This technique is called foot-in-the-door technique and it is used to get compliance from others (to get them to behave in a way you want) in which a small request is made first in order to get compliance for a larger request. It is claimed that this technique is found fruitful and successful mostly.

Therefore, in order to bring the radical change in the entire society, the Holy Qur’ān emphasizes the obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ i.e. obedience of the leader. However, quite psychologically, the mode of revelation from Almighty Allah is not abrupt and rigorous at first. Primarily, the Holy Qur’ān highlights the importance of obedience and heeding the advices. Allah praises those who listen to good words and obey them as,

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ. أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ⁸

“Those who heed attentively and follow the best from it; it is these whom Allah has guided, and it is these who have intelligence.”

In the above verse, the Holy Qur’ān categorically describes the distinctive quality of successful people for whom Allah declared glad tidings of Paradise. Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdūdī extracted two meanings of this verse:

- i. That they do not follow every voice but ponder over what every man says and accept only what is right and true.
- ii. That they do not try to give a false meaning to what they hear but adopt its good and righteous aspects.⁹

In this connection, the Holy Qur’ān draws the attention of humanity towards the glorious personality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ—a personality who provided shelter for the Muslims during the period of worries and terror. He was the one who stayed firm despite the difficulties. Without any shadow of a doubt, the personality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the source of hope, confidence and reassurance for humanity. It is said in the Holy Qur’ān:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا¹⁰

“Indeed following the Noble Messenger of Allah is better for you—for one who is confident of Allah and the Last Day, and remembers Allah much.”

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Shabbīr Aḥmad 'Usmanī comments on the above verse as,

“Those who have hope for the meeting of God and the reward of the Hereafter, and remember God oft, for them the blessed personality of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the best example. They ought to follow his footsteps in all affairs, in all moments of peace and motion, in all manners of sitting and departing, and they should learn his conduct in courage, steadfastness and perseverance etc.”¹¹

The Holy Qur'ān describes obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the essence of faith and submission. Uttering mere verbal claim alone is not recognized as the True love of Allah and faith. The Holy Qur'ān guides that the passion and claim of loving Almighty Allah must be affirmed with a conscious obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and its implementation in the course of life. It is stated in Surah Āal-e-Imrān that to be a true believer is not to repeat certain words or to experience certain feelings or to observe certain rituals. True faith is total obedience to Almighty Allah and His Messenger ﷺ.¹²

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ.

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكٰفِرِينَ¹³

“Proclaim, (O dear Prophet Mohammed – peace and blessings be upon him), ‘O mankind! If you love Allah, follow me – Allah will love you and forgive you your sins’; and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Proclaim, ‘Obey Allah and the Noble Messenger’, so if they turn away – then Allah is not pleased with the disbelievers.”

Sayyid Qutb quotes Imām Ibn Kathīr in the commentary of the above verses who says that this verse gives a verdict in the case of anyone who claims to love God but does not follow the way of life laid down by the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. His very claim is an absolute lie unless he follows the Muhammadan legislation in all his actions and statements. In addition, in commentary on the verse, “Say: ‘Obey God and the messenger.’ If they turn then backs, God does not love the unbelievers,” Imām Ibn Kathīr says:

“This verse indicates that to disobey the Holy Prophet ﷺ is to reject the faith. God does not love anyone who may be described as an unbeliever, even though he may claim to love God.”¹⁴

Having explained obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the basis of faith and disobedience is meant for the rejection of faith and a sign of disbelief, the Holy Qur'ān highlights the status of his obedience and its worth in *Islām*.

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ: وَمَنْ تَوَلَّىٰ فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا¹⁵

“Whoever obeys the Noble Messenger has indeed obeyed Allah, and for those who turn away – We have not sent you as their saviour.”

In the above verse, the Holy Qur’ān emphasizes the obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ throughout the life to the extent that it is parallel to the obedience of Almighty Allah. Sayyid Qutb comments on this verse and says,

“Those who obey the Messenger ﷺ obey God; there is no distinction, in this context, between God and His Messenger ﷺ or between what God says and what the Messenger ﷺ says. Those who reject the Messenger ﷺ and walk away from him will be referred to God for punishment.”¹⁶

This verse outlines the basic rule to which all matters in *Islām* are referred: obedience to God and His Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, i.e., a submission which leaves no room except for absolute obedience and total compliance in all affairs.

In this connection, adopting the methodology of the foot-in-the-door technique of psychology, the Holy Qur’ān suggests that it is better for the believers to consult and look towards the Holy Prophet’s guidance for the solution of all their disputes and conflicts. This is the best for themselves.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَ أُولَى الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ؕ

فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ. ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا¹⁷

“O People who Believe! Obey Allah and the Noble Messenger and those amongst you who are in authority; so if there is a dispute amongst you concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the Noble Messenger (for judgement) if you believe in Allah and the Last Day; this is better and has the best outcome.”

Believers are directed to obey God and to obey His Prophet ﷺ. Thus, obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is obeying Almighty Allah. Muftī Aḥmad Yār Khān Badāyūnī, in commentary on the above verse, says that the obedience to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is incumbent under all circumstances. If any differences take place, the solution should be sought through a categorical guidance from the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Moreover, from this verse, we learn that Faith is the claim and action is the proof thereof. Whoever merely makes a verbal claim of believing in Allah Almighty and His Holy Prophet ﷺ, but in deeds behaves like the infidels, the claim of such a person is baseless and without any proof.¹⁸

Now came the moment when Allah asked for a larger demand from the believers that once the order of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come, no one has the right to argue but to follow it. According to the foot-in-the-door technique of psychology, as people had developed the significance of the obedience in their mind and they

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had also understood the worth and necessity of the obedience of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they were more ready to accept the decisions and instructions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in all affairs of their life. Therefore, now it is said:

وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ. وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلًّا مُبِينًا¹⁹

“And no Muslim man or woman has any right in the affair, when Allah and His Noble Messenger have decreed a command regarding it; and whoever does not obey the command of Allah and His Noble Messenger, has indeed clearly gone very astray.”

The above verse of the Holy Qur'ān represents an element of organizing the nation on Islamic teachings, emphasizing the obedience of Almighty Allah and His Noble Prophet ﷺ in particular. The Holy Qur'ān stresses the Muslims' bond and attachment with the Holy Prophet ﷺ and clarifies his role in their society. A law is declared that Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ have complete authority over the Muslims' lives. Once they order, a Muslim must carry it out. Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdūdī describes the context in which this verse was revealed as, Ibn Abbās, Qatādah, 'Ikrimah and Muqātil bin Ḥayyān say that this verse was revealed at the time when the Prophet ﷺ proposed to Zainab for Zaid, and Zainab and her relatives did not agree. According to Ibn Abbās, when the Prophet ﷺ made the proposal, Zainab said, *“I am better than him in lineage.”* Ibn S'aād says that she also said, *“I do not approve him for myself. I am a Quraishite by birth.”* The same sort of disapproval was expressed by her brother, Abdullah bin Jahsh, because Zaid was a freed slave of the Prophet ﷺ and Zainab was the daughter of his paternal aunt, Umaimah bint 'Abdul Muṭṭalib. They did not like the Prophet ﷺ to propose a girl of a noble Quraishite family, who was none other than his own first cousin, for his freed slave. At this, this verse was sent down and on hearing it Zainab and all her relatives yielded to the proposal at once. Then the Prophet ﷺ married them, paid ten dinars and 60 dirhams from his own pocket as dower on behalf of Zaid, provided the bridal dress and sent some articles of food for domestic use.²⁰

This statement of the Holy Qur'ān outlines a general rule which has a deep and a thoughtful effect on believers' lives. Mawdūdī states, Though this verse was revealed on a special occasion, the injunction given in it is the cardinal principle of the constitutional law of *Islām*, and it applies to the entire Islamic system of life. According to it no Muslim individual or nation, or institution, or court or parliament or state, is entitled to use its own freedom of opinion in a matter in which Allah and His Prophet ﷺ have already given a

decision. To be a Muslim means to surrender one's freedom of opinion and action before Allah and His Messenger. It would be a contradiction in terms if a person or a nation claimed to be Muslim and then reserved for itself the freedom of choice and action. No sensible person can think of combining the two contradictory attitudes together. The one who desires to remain a Muslim will inevitably have to bow down to the command of Allah and His Prophet ﷺ, and the one who is not inclined to bow will have to admit that he is not a Muslim. If he does not admit he will be regarded as a hypocrite both by God and by the people even though he might proclaim to be a Muslim at the top of his voice.²¹ When this component of the Islamic belief had been constituted amongst Muslims, they submitted themselves wholly to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, leaving nothing for themselves. They willingly accepted everything God and His Messenger ﷺ willed for them. Thus they surrendered themselves truly and entirely to Almighty Allah and His Messenger ﷺ. *"In fact, when this basic element of Islamic faith found its root in the hearts of the first Muslim community, it produced plentiful and sweet fruit in a very short period of time."*²²

As described in the foot-in-the-door phenomenon of psychology, it was now possible to ask people to sacrifice everything in obedience to the Prophet ﷺ even their lives. Hence, very rightly & timely the Holy Qur'ān instructs believers, *فَقَاتِلُوا الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَلَا بِالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَا يُحَرِّمُونَ مَا حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَلَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ حَتَّى يُعْطُوا الْجِزْيَةَ عَنْ يَدٍ وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ*²³

"Fight against the People given the Book(s) who do not accept faith in Allah and the Last Day, and who do not treat as forbidden what is forbidden by Allah and by His Noble Messenger, and who do not follow the true religion, until they pay the tariff with their own hands with humiliation."

We see that people gave their lives, and submitted their wealth and property willingly. The Holy Qur'ān indicates them,

*إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَ جَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ. أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ*²⁴

"The true believers are only those who accepted faith in Allah and His Noble Messenger and then did not have any doubt, and fought with their wealth and their lives in Allah's way; it is they who are the truthful."

That was the result of the charismatic leadership of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the Divine psychological methodology of reformation. We see that the Holy Qur'ān adopted foot-in-the-door phenomenon of obedience in the science of psychology, which is actually a persuasion technique to gain initial trust first prior asking big favours in the future. Psychologists suggest that if you want to get someone to

do you a big favour, test the waters first by requesting small things. Research has proven that people will more likely agree to do complicated tasks assigned to them, after they have previously agreed to do the simpler ones. The same was practiced by the Holy Qur'ān. First of all, people were made conscious of the worth and excellence of the Prophet's obedience. Then gradually the level of obedience increased till it was said that people had no right to decide their issues themselves but through the guidance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

History proves that people readily believed and followed the Qur'ān injunction because once people make a commitment; they are more likely to follow through with the bigger responsibilities.

Holy Qur'ān psychologically set the foundation for reformation or behaviour modification. The psychological principle of obedience was observed successfully which ended into a complete devotion and sincerity of the nation towards the leader. This was the basis after which elimination of ethical misbehaviours from the society became possible. So, we observe that the Holy Qur'ān points out and eradicates unethical behaviour from the society in a very successful manner. The development of social ethics in that society occurred as people had already developed the attitude of obedience and submission to Almighty Allah and His beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

A few aspects of the elimination of unethical behaviour from the society by the Holy Qur'ān are discussed as under.

Fulfilment of the Rights of Muslims

Human relation, whether it be between the individual and society, parents and children, husband and wife, or the member states, should be based on mutual love and respect. As long as people fulfil their obligations to each other, there prevails complete peace and cordiality. But the moment they encroach upon the rights of others, there ensues conflict and strife.

Moral depravity essentially brings about the fall of nations. The Holy Qur'ān has, therefore, underlined the need to develop sound moral attributes in the life of the individual as well as the community. It instructs that all dealings, whether it be between the two individuals or nations, it is essential to undergo the supreme guide of the Holy Qur'ān. Since the Qur'ān teachings are for the human benefits, one should abide by them in his own interest. On this depends the progress and prosperity of the individual and society. Almighty Allah says in the Qur'ān,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَاتِّبَائِي ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ²⁵

“Indeed Allah decrees the commands of justice and kindness, and of giving to relatives, and forbids from the shameful and evil and rebellion; He advises

you so that you may pay heed."

In the above verse, there are three instructions for the believers on which depends the establishment of a just social order and a peaceful society. In the first place, believers have been commanded to deal out justly in distributing the rights of their fellow-beings. It demands to ensure moral, social, economic, legal, political, and personal rights of every individual of the society. Secondly, the Muslims have been ordered to do good to the fellow creatures. This demands generosity, forbearance, cooperation, gratitude, compassion and respect for all other fellow Muslims. Thirdly, the faithful have been enjoined to be kind and compassionate to their relatives. This is yet another form of good behaviour. To show liberality to the kith and kin does not simply imply sharing the joys and grief of the relatives. The well-off individuals should also share their wealth with the poor relatives. It is made incumbent upon the affluent persons in the family to look after them. The concept of justice and wellbeing which have been outlined in the verse mentioned above, are not confined to the kith and kin. They rather extend to the Muslims as a whole. The Muslims irrespective of colour, caste, language and nationality, form one community. Hence, the verse manifestly outlines the entire course of social order, forbearance and patience. This is how a society can win the divine favour and grace. The Holy Qur'ān promises. 'The mercy of Allah to those who do good.'²⁶

Falsehood and Breach of Trust

Faith and falsehood cannot co-exist. A true Muslim may have other weakness but he is not expected to resort to falsehood. Lying is a very grave sin. It is the most serious of perfidy because it betrays the confidence of a person and thereby plays false upon him. The Holy Qur'ān enjoins upon the faithful to foster the virtue of truthfulness because it prevents them from falling into other vices.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوِّمِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِبِهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوَالِدَيْكُمْ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِن يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ

بِهِمَا. فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلَّوْا أَوْ تَعْرَضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا²⁷

"O People who Believe! Be firm in establishing justice, giving witness for Allah, even if it is harmful to yourselves or parents or relatives; whether the one you testify against is wealthy or poor, for in any case, Allah has the greater right over it; then do not follow your wishes for you may stray from the truth; and if you distort testimony or turn away, then Allah is Well Aware of your deeds."

Truthfulness is a divine attribute. It is recommended to promote this attribute in ourselves, even if it is detrimental to our own interest or to the interest of those who are near and dear to us. In other words, we should refrain from lying under

all circumstances.

On the other hand, a lie is the mother of all vices and, therefore, if a person forbears from falsehood, he will overcome all other vices. It is the reason that the Holy Qur'ān instructs to refrain from falsehood.

“And avoid false speech.” ²⁸ *وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ*

Those who invariably speak the truth they are very much appreciated and praised. Almighty assures His pleasure to them and gardens in the Paradise.

قَالَ اللَّهُ هَذَا يَوْمٌ يَنْفَعُ الصَّادِقِينَ صِدْقُهُمْ. لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٌ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا. رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ. ذَلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ²⁹

“Proclaimed Allah, “This is a day on which the truthful will benefit from their truthfulness; for them are Gardens beneath which rivers flow, in which they will abide for ever and ever; Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Allah; this is the greatest success.”

A society based on truth leads to truthfulness in every aspect of life. When people are truthful in their dealings, treatment and in relationships, the rest of the social problems do not even raise.

Justice and Equity

The Qur'ān concept of justice is based on balance, equity, duty and trust. *Islām* lays stress on the even dispensation of justice, that is, good should be rewarded and the evil should be punished. The Holy Qur'ān holds out the assurance that on the Day of Judgement every soul would be rewarded as per their deeds.

وُؤْفِيَتْ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَّا عَمِلَتْ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ³⁰

“And every soul will be repaid for its deeds in full, and He knows very well what they used to do.”

In the administration of justice, the believers have been enjoined to maintain equity between Muslims and non-Muslims, friends and foes.

Justice is enjoined upon man as a duty. He who shrinks this responsibility would be punished in the life hereafter. It is a kind of trust which every individual must discharge conscientiously. The Holy Qur'ān stressfully says,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُكُمْ أَنْ تُؤَدُّوا الْأَمَانَاتِ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا. وَإِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِالْعَدْلِ ³¹

“Indeed Allah commands you to hand over whatever you hold in trust, to their owners – and that whenever you judge between people, judge with fairness.”

Almighty Allah wants a fair and reasonable balance and right proportion, not even distribution of rights. In addition, He calls for providing equal opportunities to all the members of society to improve their condition.

Honesty in Trade

It is normally observed that in a society where people are unscrupulous in earning their livelihood, there prevails selfishness which raptures the bond of

human relation. This state of affair is by no means conducive to the peace and progress. Hence, regulation of the economic life in accordance with the teachings of Allah and His Messenger ﷺ is indispensable for a prosperous society.

The key to prosperity in commercial transactions is honesty and fair-dealings. The divine munificence befalls on those who deal in business transactions honestly and conscientiously. They hold a respectable position in the society and they also enjoy blessings in their earnings. Dishonesty may yield temporary benefit but in the long run, it proves to be ruinous. The business community should, therefore, refrain from those practices which are prohibited by Allah and which would make it unworthy of His grace. The Holy Qur'ān instructs the businessmen to observe the same weight for the sale as well as the purchase.

أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ ۝ وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطِاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ۝ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْمُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ³²
“Measure in full, and do not be of those who reduce. And weigh with a proper balance. And do not give the people their goods diminished, and do not roam the earth causing turmoil.”

Besides, it is also prohibited to sell the commodities without making their defects, if any, known to the buyer. If the trader knows the defect of the goods, he should reveal it to the customer categorically. In a nutshell, in order to stable the society and to bring it on the track of prosperity, the Holy Qur'ān opposes exploitation and economic injustice in any form. Those who conduct their business truthfully have been promised great reward in this world as well as in the world to come. As for those who transgress these rules, they should be prepared to face the consequence on the Day of Judgement.

The Evil Practice of Usury

Allah has enjoined upon the believers to refrain from exploitation and economic injustice in order to establish a social order in the community. The Holy Qur'ān denounces all such practices which are likely to promote economic injustice.

The edifice of Islamic social justice is structured along the principle of kindness, compassion, generosity and self-denial. Rich people in the community should look after the less fortunate ones. And they should do so not for the sake of worldly gain but to propitiate Almighty Allah. Usury is baneful in many respects. In the first place, it promotes selfishness, miserliness and hard-heartedness. The more a man is involved in usury, the more he becomes morally decadent. Secondly, usury establishes a relationship among people in which all transactions are based on personal interest. The needs of one man become a source of exploitation for another. The affluent sections of the community maximize their profit at the expense of the poor. This kind of relationship is far

Guidelines of the Holy Qur'ān for Observance of Obedience

from conducive to social stability or mutual understanding. Consequently, there develops a sense of jealousy and distrust towards others and destroy the whole society.³³

The Holy Qur'ān strictly forbids usury to the extent that it has been declared as a war against the Almighty Allah:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِن تُبْتِغُوا فَالْهَمُ لَكُمُ رُءُوسُ أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَطْلُمُونَ وَلَا تَطْلَمُونَ³⁴

“O People who Believe! Fear Allah and forego the remaining usury, if you are Muslims. And if you do not, then be certain of a war with Allah and His Noble Messenger; and if you repent, take back your principal amount; neither you cause harm to someone, nor you be harmed.”

In addition, Allah announces severe punishment for all those who devour usury. There is evidence that no society has built its economy on interest. In fact, these societies are far away from the real prosperity, peace and security. The entire community lacks social welfare, integrity, tolerance, compassion and open-handedness. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān declares it unlawful and directs all believers to avoid this evil practice so that Muslim societies may be spared the socio-economic exploitation and injustice.

The Curse of Bribery

The Holy Qur'ān always lays great stress on lawful earning. Wealth acquired through unlawful means is unlawful, as it promotes selfishness and exploitation. There are many avenues of unlawful income. Bribery is one of them. Like all monetary transactions, it involves two individuals: the donor and the recipient. The former bribes the latter to gain his favor to get an unlawful work done. The latter accepts the illegal gratification because of his insatiable lust for money. Both of them are, therefore, equally guilty in this illegal traffic and deserve punishment. In a society where bribery becomes rampant, the people suffer terribly because they are deprived of their due rights. In other words, they become the victim of gross injustice and exploitation. Almighty Allah has, therefore, prohibited this corrupt practice. The Holy Qur'ān says,

وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبُطْلِ وَتَذْلُوبِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ³⁵

“And do not unjustly devour the property of each other, nor take their cases to judges in order that you may wrongfully devour a portion of other peoples' property on purpose.”

In the above verse, the believers have been enjoined to forbear from 'eating up' the property of others. This practice is extremely detestable and forbidden by *Islām* because it aggravates human suffering and destroys the society.

Slander and Backbiting

Slander and backbiting militate against the spirit of love and respect among the follow-beings. The Holy Qur'ān, therefore, condemns them in unequivocal terms. The Holy Qur'ān says,

وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا. أَيُّجِبُ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ. وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ. إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَوَّابٌ رَحِيمٌ³⁶

“And do not slander one another; would anyone among you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? So you will hate that! And fear Allah; indeed Allah is Most Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.”

Backbiting has been declared as a major sin. The verses of the Holy Qur'ān and traditions of the Prophet ﷺ endorse that backbiting and scandal-mongering are moral vices of serious nature. Backbiting is likened to ‘eating the flesh of one’s dead brother’ and slander, since it is unfounded, is even worse than backbiting.

The result of all such ethical teachings was a modest, well-behaved and a refined society where people loved to help each other even at the cost of their own interest. The society established by the Holy Qur'ān was free from deceit, fabrication, exploitation and vulgarity. Each individual of the society was inclined towards the establishment of brotherhood, benevolence and peace.

It seems worthwhile to mention a glimpse of the first Muslim community for the categorical description of the accomplishment of Qur'ānic mission. Maulānā Mohammad Yūsuf Kandhlawī, in his book *‘Hayāt-us-Şahābah’* quotes that S’aid bin Abī Bilāl reports, ‘Once ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar stayed at ‘Jahfa’ in a state of sickness. He expressed his desire to have fish. After a hot search, only one fish could be found out. His wife Şafyah bint Abū ‘Ubaid cooked it. As it was served, a beggar turned up. Ibn Umar asked the beggar to take away the fish. His family members said, ‘We have got this fish after much difficulty. We can give the beggar something else’. He said, ‘But Abdullah has a liking for fish’. ‘Umar bin Sa’id reports his (Ibn ‘Umar’s) wife to have said, ‘I give him dirham which is more useful for him. It is better you fulfill your desire of having fish’. He replied, ‘I do not want to fulfill my desire’.³⁷

This exhibits the passion of sincerity found in that society. This was not the sincerity with poor alone; in fact, it was a sheer loyalty with the instructions of Allah and guidance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Another incident is reported by Abū Hurairah who states that a person came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and said, ‘I am deeply in trouble’. He sent his messenger to some of his consorts one by one but the common reply was that they had nothing save water. Thereupon he said, ‘Who will keep him as a guest tonight?’ An Anşarī got up and said ‘Myself O’ Messenger of Allah!’ Thus the Anşarī took him to his house and asked his wife if

she had something to eat?' She replied, 'There is nothing other than what could suffice our children'. He said to his wife, 'Try to entertain the children with something else and if they ask for supper, try to make them asleep. Moreover, put out the lamp while the guest comes in and act as if we are eating'. According to the narrator both the husband and wife sat with the guest (in darkness) and the guest took the food while they remained hungry. Next morning he called on the Prophet ﷺ and as he saw him he said, 'Allah was set with wonder to see you and your wife treating your guest.'³⁸

These examples display the sheer success of the Qur'ānic methodology of reformation. This is a superb guideline for us that reformation in any nation primarily requires that a sense of obedience should be established to the extent that people decide each and everything about their life with respect to the guidelines of the leader. Here comes the moment when the entire nation can be reformed positively and their all unethical, immoral and vicious activities can be eliminated. The result is always a shining one as proven from the history that the nation developed from the Qur'ān methodology of reformation leads the world and set examples for the forthcoming generations too.



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References & Notes:

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⁶ Ibid. p. 572.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 572-573.

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⁹ Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdūdī, 'Tafhīm-ul-Qur'ān', English Translation, 'Towards Understanding the Qur'ān' by Zafar Ishāq Anṣārī, (UK: The Islamic Foundation), CD Version.

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- ³⁴ Al-Qur’ān, 2: 278-279.
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