

Justice

In the first chapter we have dealt with world-view, monotheism and polytheism. Now we deal with justice which is the second fundamental principle of belief.

It is through the wisdom and intelligence with which we have been endowed by Allah that we differentiate between a good and a bad thing and we understand that oppression is a bad thing and justice is a good thing.

It is our belief that Allah does not do any harm to us nor does He oppress us.

The Causes of Injustice

(i) **Ignorance:** Sometimes ignorance becomes the cause of oppression as for example man does not know that there is no difference between a white race and the Negroes and hence a white man under his feeling of superiority oppresses the people belonging to the black race.

Thus by his ignorance and defective thinking a man starts doing things which result in oppression and persecution. But how the Almighty Allah Who is above all defects such as ignorance and Whose Knowledge is infinite, can do an act of oppression!

(ii) **Fear:** Sometimes it is fear which is the cause of oppression as for example one strong power is scared of another strong power which is its enemy and knowing that if it does attack the other power, the same would attack it and therefore in order to forestall this possible danger it commits oppression by making an attack on the other power.

Similarly a despotic ruler in order to be in a formidable position persecutes the people who want freedom from his oppression. But the Almighty Allah has no one as His rival so as to indulge in an act of oppression'

(iii) **Wants:** Sometimes the cause of oppression is based on one's sense of deprivation and thus from the psychological point of view one is obliged to an act of oppression for fulfilling his wants.

(iv) Meanness: Sometimes it is the inner meanness that some people oppress others or when they see the deprived and oppressed people, they derive pleasure in seeing them so.

After knowing the various causes of oppression you can decide as to which one of these can be attributed to Allah? In this context, the Holy Qur'an says:

Allah does not wish injustice for any of His creatures. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:108)

How could it be that Allah Who commands us for doing justice can Himself be an oppressor? The Holy Qur'an says:

Allah commands people to maintain justice, kindness, and proper relations with their relatives. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:90)

How is it possible that Allah Who commands man who is weak and who leads his life under the dictates of his unruly passions, not to become the cause of injustices if he receives injustice at the hands of his nation, may Himself Who possesses unlimited power and Who is not under the domination of any instinct, perpetrate injustice?

The Attributes of Allah

The acquiring of knowledge about the Attributes of Allah is closely related to our knowledge of recognition of Allah. As for example just as we trace the writer from his writing as well as from his style of writing and identify him by particular words and phrases which he uses as his style and which indicate his mental attitude also, in the same way every creation performs the following two main functions.

(i) Identifying its creator

(ii) Projecting the attributes of its creator and explaining the objective of its creation.

Justice—One of the Principles of Religion

When Almighty Allah possesses innumerable attributes, e.g. Wisdom, Knowledge and Power of creation why is it said that justice is one of the principles of religion? Why is it not said that first the Belief in monotheism and then existence, or first the Belief in monotheism and then Knowledge? But on the contrary it is said first the belief in monotheism and then justice!

The answer to this question is as follows:

A small section of the Muslims known as Ash'ari sect do not consider that Allah is Just. They think that whatever Allah has done is correct no matter it may be wrong or cruel. Further, the Ash'arite say that if Allah sends Imam Ali to Hell and his assassin the accursed Ibn Muljam to Paradise, nothing can stop Him, He can do so.

But we do not accept this logic as we consider Allah's Justice as one of the cardinal principles of our faith and according to Qur'anic reasoning and our own commonsense we say that all the acts of Allah are based on Justice and Wisdom and that Allah does not commit any act of cruelty or does anything wrong.

Moreover the belief that Allah is Just plays the following important role in building man's personality:

Advantages of Believing in the Justice of Allah

Self-restraint: From the point of view of self-control and abstaining from sins especially when man knows that his words and deeds are in the knowledge of Allah and not even a fraction of his deed however small it may be ignored from being taken into account, and that he will be paid back for his noble and evil deeds, he will then not consider himself independent in this world (Many Qur'anic verses can be cited in this behalf).

Cheerful Outlook: Anyone who has belief in the Justice of Allah in all worldly affairs possesses a cheerful outlook of life and as such when he considers Allah to be just he has cogent reason and a satisfactory answer of the unpleasant things. He accepts the unpleasant things without hesitation. Such a person never suffers from disappointments and despair.

Justice Plays its Role in Individual and Collective Life: The faith in the Justice of Allah helps to lay the foundation of justice in individual and collective life. Such a person prepares himself to accept justice in his personal and social life.

The Meaning of Justice

In the discussions on justice the basic problem is to give satisfactory answer to its criticism. We would present some explanation in the light of Qur'anic verses and the traditions.

(i) The first point is that Allah is Just and Allah never deprives anyone of his rights and according to the rationality of the laws, Allah bestows His Kindness on all His creatures and never does Allah oppress anybody.

Now we can see whether there exists somebody's right on Allah or whether there is any right of the creatures from the very beginnings so that cruelty has arisen out of the suppression of this right?

Were we present beforehand or did we have something beforehand which has been taken away from us? True, there is some differentiation between the creatures. Some are minerals, some are plants, some are animals and some are human beings, but none of these creatures possessed any existence or right before its birth and which is supposed to have been usurped.

Take for example a big carpet which we cut into small pieces. It will then be said that this carpet which

originally was big has lost its originality of being big by having been cut into pieces. But in the case of a carpet which was already made small it cannot be complained as to why it has been made small because before that it had no existence at all and when it was brought into existence it was made small already.

Thus this small carpet from the beginning had no quality of being big so that it was deprived of something which it possessed.

Allah, the All-Wise, has created all his creatures with difference when none of them had existed beforehand or had any claim or right. Allah established a system of lifecycle with cause and effect and set a particular line of action for every creature.

He never makes any discrimination between His two creatures or two nations in as far as His expectations from them are concerned in regard to their obligations and responsibilities. Similarly His reward or punishment is also based on justice for all.

He has taken into consideration the respective capabilities and capacities of each creature in His commands and accordingly He has fixed proportionate punishment for each so that there is no partiality or injustice done to anyone of his creatures.

Again take an example of a factory which manufactures spare parts of small machine and tires of big motor cars also. Would you brand the factory owner tyrant because he manufactures small parts and big tires? Or can the small machine parts themselves complain of the differentiation? The answer to this is certainly in negative.

It is so because in this Machine Age we need machine parts as well as tires. But there was a time when none of them existed before and the factory owner made them or brought them into existence according to the need of the time for two different functions. Here the kind of cruelty exists only when the machine parts would bear the burden of tires.

Now that when each one of them were brought into existence for its specific purpose and functions and no extra burden was put on it beyond its capacity the question of cruelty does not arise at all.

At this stage when the meaning of justice and cruelty has been abundantly clarified it is necessary to ponder over the following important point:

At every place and every occasion the concept of justice is not equality. For example, if a teacher without taking into consideration the abilities and the hard work of each student gives equal marks to all of them, he actually commits cruelty.

Similarly if a physician gives the same medicine to all of his patients without considering the nature of their diseases and conditions he does the same cruelty. In both these examples the demand of justice is that the teacher and the physician should treat his pupils and the patients differently according to their

merits and ailments respectively.

It should not admit any consideration, recommendation, favouritism etc, but this different attitude of treatment in different cases is according to the demand of the occasion. It does not come under the definition of cruelty.

(ii) The second point is that the objections to the Justice of Allah are only motivated by hasty decisions. Some of the examples are given below:

Suppose an Islamic Government out of necessity and in consideration of public welfare takes a decision to build a forty-five kilometer long road as every road has its utility for providing a means of communication for the smooth flow of traffic and for the convenience of pedestrians, but by laying down each and every road people have to undergo some sort of hardship until the time compensation for the demolition of houses and the construction of new houses at alternate places is affected.

Thus for the sake of avoiding hardship of a handful of people the overall interest of the people and the program for the public welfare cannot be ignored. In Islam despite the importance of individual rights and ownership of the people the overall rights of the society have been greatly emphasized.

The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali said to Malik Ashtar. "Call those people who have hoarded the things of public utility and remind them of doing good and abstaining from evil and if they still do not pay heed to your advice, bring them to task". He further said: "Hoarding is useful to a hoarder only, but it is harmful to the good of the society".

At yet another place, the Holy Imam said: "In the matter of administration your attention should be towards the comforts and benefit of the common people irrespective of the annoyance and displeasure of a selected few". (See: Letter 53, ***Peak of Eloquence***, ISP, 1985)

An Incident: A man had a pet dog. He went out to fetch something from the bazaar leaving his infant child in the care of his dog. When he returned to his house his dog welcomed him outside the house with blood-stained mouth.

He thought for a moment that the dog had devoured his child and under the heat of passion he fired his gun and killed the dog there and then and went inside hurriedly. There he found his child hale and hearty.

In fact a wolf used to visit the town and since the door of his house was wide open it went inside and wanted to devour the child. The dog jumped upon the wolf and in a grim battle he overpowered it and tore it into pieces and thereby saved the child from the wolf's clutches. But the man in his extreme haste fired at his faithful dog which had saved the life of his child.

The man repented of his action and came to rescue his dog but it had already died. The man said that he looked into the eyes of his dog which were lamenting over his wisdom and saying: "O man! How

hasty you happen to be? You make a hasty decision.

You should have first entered the house and seen for yourself the true situation. Why have you killed me? ' After this tragic event the man wrote an article captioned "O man! How hasty you are in taking a decision!"

There may be some people who may have prayed for something and it was not granted, but afterwards they thought that it was better that their prayers were not granted.

The Dangers of Hasty Decision

The Holy Qur'an warns man against taking a hasty decision as often man's action is based on baseless thoughts and speculations. There are many things which appear to be harmful but actually they are of benefit to man and similarly many things appear to be very good but actually they are harmful to man.

As for example the Holy Qur'an says about Jihad that man apparently considers it to be not good but actually it brings good to him.

Fighting is made obligatory on you but you dislike it. You may dislike a thing yet it may be good for you; or a thing may haply please you but may be bad for you. Only Allah has knowledge, and you do not know. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:216)

Fighting for the sake of Allah perfects man's abilities and brightens his capabilities. Those who put on airs and those who are men of action are distinguished in the battlefield. Fighting unites the scattered forces which are dedicated to the common cause and confers upon man honor and dignity. Basically fighting is the purpose of life for the people who have been oppressed and tyrannized.

The Holy Qur'an says:

It may be that you dislike a thing though Allah has placed abundant good in it. (Surah an-Nisa, 4:19)

If we look into the meaning of the word "**husban**" and collect its derivatives we learn that the Holy Qur'an warns that we should not think such and such thing, guess such and such thing, and conjure such and such thing. It tells us about things which contradict the decisions cursorily and hastily taken.

We read in the Holy Qur'an about the angels that, as they did not possess thorough knowledge about man, they pleaded to Allah that as they already worshipped Allah why He was creating man. But since Allah had willed to appoint His vicegerent on earth he bestowed upon man knowledge and brought out a stunning spectacle and established that their (the angels) decision about man was a hasty one.

In short, if we doubt about the Justice of Allah and say that if Allah is Just why and how such and such thing happened, then we should keep in mind that our speculations and decisions are mostly false and

wrong because in most of the cases the causes and the effects of problems remain hidden from us as our knowledge and experience are very limited.

It is for over several centuries that we have been considering the existence of forests as useless, but with the passage of time we have now realized that we obtain a number of useful things from these very forests.

Had not the people been saying for a long time that the glands in our body are quite useless? But now they say that these glands produce in the blood useful cells technically called phagocytes which devour the invading microbes in our body.

For years people thought that vermiform appendix, the blind pouch at the junction of the small and the large intestine was a useless thing but nowadays it is claimed that this appendix plays an important role in the prevention of cancer.

If we are reading a book which deals with highly important subjects and we come across a difficult word whose meaning is not known to us, we should not arrive at a hasty decision about the book and should not blame its author, but on the contrary we should review our understanding of the meaning of that word.

Now that we have comprehended the true meaning of justice and that our criticism of it is based on our superficial and hasty decision, we deal with the third point, that is, why we should try to know the causes of our troubles.

(iii) The third point is that while counting our troubles we altogether ignore our own doings and blame Allah for all that. We complain to Allah and say, "O Allah! if you are Just why am I faced with these troubles?"

Obviously many of the troubles and hardships are due to our own faults as for example if we do not take care of our health by hygienic methods we are sure to fall sick. Similarly according to the principle of doing good and preventing others from doing evil and if we do not prevent the evils the evil doers will overpower us and in that case our supplications, implorations and invocations would be of no use. On this subject too we take the guideline from the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

Whatever misfortune befalls you is a consequence of your own deeds. (Surah ash-Shura, 42:30)

When We let the people taste mercy, they rejoice in it, but when some misfortune befalls them because of their own doings they at once become desperate. (Surah Rum, 30:36)

As for man, whenever his Lord tests him by bestowing favour on him and blesses him, he says, 'My Lord is kind to me'. But when He tests him by stinting his means of living, he says my Lord has disgraced me. (Surah al-Fajr, 89: 15–16)

As a matter of fact we should try to find out the cause and reason of our misfortunes and afflictions within ourselves and in the latter part of the preceding verse as we read, "Since wealth does not necessarily guarantee everlasting happiness then why do you not honour the orphans, or urge one another to feed the destitute?" Thus your carelessness resulted in the wrath of Allah. This verse too tells us about our deeds being the cause of our misfortune and deprivation of Allah's Mercy. The Holy Qur'an says:

Eat of the lawful and good things which Allah has provided for you and give thanks for His favours if it is He Whom you worship (Surah an-Nahl, 16:114)

In this verse Allah tells of a place where Allah's blessings and bounties were in abundance but its inhabitants became ungrateful to Allah and thus became guilty of infidelity. And Allah plunged them into hunger, poverty and terrible fear. This verse also establishes that ungratefulness to Allah becomes the cause of afflictions.

We have already mentioned before that the misdeed of the people is the cause of their troubles and afflictions and consequently Allah's wrath befalls them. Here the following two questions arise.

(i) We see that those who indulge in all sorts of misdeeds, cruelties and oppression are leading a very prosperous life! Why is it so?

(ii) We say that it is due to our misdeeds that misfortune and afflictions befall us but those people whose misdeeds are even worse than ours are not subjected to any afflictions! Why is it so?

In the eyes of Allah, all the people are not accounted for in the same way, because:

(i) Allah punishes some people or a nation at once.

(ii) Allah gives a time to some people or a nation.

(iii) Allah does not punish a certain group of people or a nation at all and despite their misdeeds they lead a comfortable life until the Doomsday as according to the Divine Outlook on the Universe and life this world is not separated from the Hereafter.

It is possible that a teacher may be having different standards of reprimanding his pupils. He may punish some at once as a result of his anger, but he may leave some alone for a certain period of time; and against some who are the worst he may take no action at all, and leave them to themselves until the end of the session for the purpose of awarding the marks.

This sort of categorization is based on wisdom endowed by Allah because all the guilty ones are not equally responsible nor the nature of their deeds and mentality is similar so that we may deal with them equally from the point of view of punishment.

Sometimes the teacher reacts violently on the negligence of one of his best pupils because he did not expect such negligence from his best pupil while in the case of his unworthy pupils he does not crack down on them severely.

We read in the Holy Qur'an that Allah on certain occasions reprimanded his Prophets and Messengers for their actions though these were not under the commitment of sins because He would not have expected of so august a personage an unexpected action, but we read about the common people differently. The Holy Qur'an says:

We destroyed the inhabitants of certain towns only when they transgressed and did not repent before our deadline. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:59)

It is explained that Allah does not hasten the punishment for those who commit the sins by putting them into misfortune but from the side of Allah there remains a deadline within which they can repent of their misdeeds. The Holy Qur'an says:

They want you to bring upon them their punishment without delay. Allah never disregards His promise. One day for Allah is equal to a thousand years for you. To how many unjust towns have we given respite and then seized with torment. (Surah al-Hajj, 22:48)

I granted temporary respite to the unbelievers (so that they would repent, but they did not). At last I seized them with a terrible retribution. (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:32)

However, Allah gives the following reasons for His giving respite to the unbelievers:

The unbelievers must not think that our respite is for their good. We only give them time to let them indulge in their sins, and suffer an ignominious doom. For them there will be a humiliating torment. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:178)

After the martyrdom of the Chief of the Martyrs, Imam Husayn, when the accursed Yazid thought himself victorious and successful, the revered sister of the Holy Imam, Lady Zaynab recited this very verse of the Holy Qur'an and pointed out to him that his seeming victory, freedom, comfort and power were only increasing the burden of his sins so that these should become the source of terrible torment for him as the Holy Qur'an says that Allah provides the people greater comfort so that they should become used to it and then He strikes them suddenly with a painful torment. The Holy Qur'an says.

When they neglected what we exhorted them, We opened to them the gates to all the worldly gains so much so that they became immensely rejoiced with that and then we caught them suddenly and they became utterly surprised and dejected. (Surah al-An'am, 6:44-45)

Such sort of people are like those who climb a tree higher and higher and think that they are getting more successful but when they fall down from it they realize that their going up was the beginning of their torment. Thus Allah treats some people in the similar way save those who have the capability of

reforming themselves. The Holy Qur'an says:

Evil has spread over the land and the sea because of corruption and hence, Allah will cause some people to suffer so that perhaps they will return to Him. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:41)

In answer to the question as to why people are in comfort despite their flouting the Divine commands and why some receive punishment on that account, the above-mentioned verses from the Holy Qur'an will suffice.

In this context we would take the opportunity of referring to some ***ahadith*** (traditions) which warn the people to fear Allah if despite their sins they have not been faced with Allah's wrath so that the matter may not go too far away and they may lose a golden chance of retrieving and the punishment is meted out to them in the Hereafter by their being thrown into the Fire of Hell.

It is like that sometime a patient reaches such a stage of his disease that the physician gives up his efforts by losing all hopes and he then issues no instructions to the patient and allows him to eat whatever he likes whether it is harmful to him or not. Thus there are people who have committed many sins and to whom Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

Act as you wish; Allah is Well Aware of whatever you do. (Surah Ha Mim as-Sajdah, 41:40)

The Holy Prophet also when became disappointed with the people used to say:

My people, do as you wish and I will do what I believe. (Surah Hud, 11:93)

From the supplications of the Holy Imams we often read the following words. "O Allah! Do not leave me on my own".

In short Allah's wrath befalls the transgressors whom worldly comfort and pleasure prevented from getting warned and the punishment of the Doomsday awaits them eagerly.

(iv) The fourth point is that sometimes man despite the fact that he had not committed any sin or fault becomes afflicted with troubles. What is the analytical approach of the Holy Qur'an about the Justice of Allah?

Explanation: Allah's putting people on trial has been mentioned about twenty times in the Holy Qur'an. Thus one of the methods of Allah putting man on trial and hardships have been described above are just the means of that trial. Similarly, happiness and pleasure are also one of the means of trial. The Holy Qur'an says:

We shall test you through fear, hunger, and loss of life, property and crops. Muhammad, give glad tidings to the people who have patience. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 155-156)

Here the following points should be given due consideration:

(i) Does Allah not know the type and kind of man that He puts him on trial?

(ii) What is the means of trial?

(iii) People's reaction to unpleasant incidents!

(iv) Method of overcoming the difficulties.

The First Question: Obviously our trial is not for the purpose of His knowing our state of mind, mentality and reactive tendency because Allah already knows all this. He knows how we think and how we react but the purpose of the trial is to make us react by counteraction so that according to our deeds the question of recompense with reward or punishment is determined, because Allah never rewards or punishes a person on the basis of His Knowledge about his being good or bad, but He bases His decision on the deeds performed by that person.

The Second question: We said earlier that pleasant and unpleasant happenings are the source of man's trial. The Holy Qur'an says:

We test you with both misfortune and blessings. (Surah Anbiya, 21:35)

You (believers) will certainly be tested by the loss of your property and lives. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:186)

The Third Question: A friend of ours says that the people who face ordeals and misfortune can be divided into the following four groups:

1. Those when confronted with unpleasant incidents start complaining and finds fault with Allah's Justice, His Grace, Wisdom and His method of working things in this Universe. The Holy Qur'an tells of such a group of people as follows: ***When misfortune befalls him, he is perturbed.*** (Surah al-Ma'arij, 70:20) It means that when misfortune befalls such people they start grumbling and crying.

2. Those who bear hardship with patience and forbearance and they only declare: ***We are the servants of Allah and to Him we shall return.*** (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:156)

3. Those who exceed the second group in this respect as these people not only remain patient and steadfast but they also thank Allah about what befalls them . We recite in ***Ziyarat 'ashura*** as follows: "O Allah! I thank you in the same way as the companions of the Holy Imam Husayn had done".

Indeed, there are people whose main ambition is to bear hardships and martyrdom in the path of Allah and when they achieve their goal, they offer their sincere gratitude to Allah.

4. Those who are on a still higher plane than those of the third group and who not only do not complain or show patience and steadfastness but they also yearn for bearing hardships and misfortune.

We read in the Holy Qur'an that when the companions of the Holy Prophet asked him to provide them with means and materials (horses, swords etc.) for Jihad and the Holy Prophet said that he had no such means available with him, they returned crying that they had not been able to lay their lives for the cause of Islam. The Holy Qur'an says.

Those who come to you (Muhammad) asking to be taken to the battle, but you cannot find the necessary means for them, are exempt from the duty of fighting for the cause of Allah and they go away in tears grieving that they are not being able to keep the cause of Allah. (Surah al-Tawbah, 9:92)

People generally react to unexpected incidents very violently. If you hand over a peeled onion to a child, he shouts as soon as he puts it in his mouth and throws it away because he feels uneasiness in his eyes, but the father of the child goes out in the market and buys the onions for the kitchen use. The hardships in life are like that. One runs away from them while the other welcomes them.

The Fourth Question: We have said that Allah is Just, and our misfortunes and sufferings are sometimes for our trial, so that our inner faculties become perfect. Now let us find out what we should do in order to come out successful in our misfortunes. Here also we have to seek guidance from the Holy Qur'an.

Methods of Solving the Misfortunes

(i) To Have a Divine Outlook of the Universe The Holy Qur'an has praised the people who show patience. Since they consider the worldly affairs subservient to Divine control, and when they were in difficulties they say that they are for Allah, and they are only short-lived; they do not demand anything from Him; their coming in this world and all the bounties are from Him alone. They are only His trustees.

This world is not their permanent abode; it is a passage for the next world (the Hereafter). On arrival of death they shall return to Him, and shall not be perished. They exist in this world but there will be no change in their existence after death; only a place of their abode will be changed.

This type of outlook on Universe prepares the man to face the hardships and difficulties in an appropriate manner. This outlook is reflected by the following Qur'anic verse:

We are the servants of Allah and to Him we shall all return. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 156)

(ii) Familiarity with the Ways of Allah The Holy Qur'an asks us whether we should like to attain Paradise bearing hardships and making efforts like the other former nations who exercised patience in the extreme state of unpleasantness! Would we think that without experiencing all these things we would attain Paradise though like the people of the former nations, we have not yet experienced the ordeals like hunger, poverty, sickness, earthquakes, etc.!

The Prophets as well as the believers only awaited Allah's Mercy to rescue them from all their troubles.

The Holy Qur'an assured them of Allah's help to come to them ultimately and says:

Do you think that you will find your way to Paradise without experiencing the kind of suffering others have experienced before you? Distress and afflictions battered them until the Messenger and the believers sadly said, 'When will Allah send help?' Certainly Allah's help is near. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:214)

This verse of the Holy Qur'an points out to the fact that in the long period of history believers in Allah had to undergo great sufferings. Now that it is our turn to suffer as it is evident that the grinding wheel of time has to repeat its cycle anyway. It is the normal way of history that it has to repeat the events.

The Holy Qur'an at a number of places says to the Holy Prophet to look into the condition of such and such groups of people so that they may not get the impression that they are not the only persons to be afflicted by sufferings.

Indeed, if man understands that the afflictions and sufferings are the result of a process of a general rule; he will be in a better position to accept them and exercise patience. You observe fast during the month of Ramazan without any difficulty because it is commonly done by everybody during that month. But if in other months you have to observe fast, you will find it difficult to do so.

The Holy Qur'an which gives command for observing fasts says that other nations before you also observed fasts.

The knowledge of the past events of history helps man to bear things with patience and similarly the knowledge of the future happenings too helps to strengthen one's capacity of exercising patience. The Holy Qur'an says:

Prophet Khizr said to Prophet Musa: How can you remain patient with that which you do not fully understand. (Surah al-Kahf, 18:68)

Thus the thing that enhances man's power of exercising patience is the knowledge about the patient people and their method of exercising patience. Knowledge about the patience and steadfastness of the previous people is an effective means to face misfortunes and afflictions. The Holy Qur'an has mentioned number of such things and has cited the examples of patience of the people of former nations. The Prophets of Allah used to say to their adversaries as follows:

We shall bear with patience the hardships you inflict upon us. (Surah Ibrahim, 14:12)

When the magicians, who were called by Fir'aun to humiliate Prophet Musa, realized his righteousness they embraced his faith and despite Fir'aun's threats and intimidations replied as follows:

We cannot choose you in the face of the clear testimony we have received, and over Him who created us. So do what you are determined to do. All that you would do will only be confined to

our short-lived life on earth. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:72)

Hence, they meant to tell Fir'aun to do whatever he wanted. They would endure all the misfortunes that he inflicted upon them as they had discovered the right course leading to Paradise and were determined not to give up their stand.

(iii) Depending only on Allah The remembrance of Allah and the belief that He hears our implorations, watches our deeds and solves our problems by rescuing us from afflictions is like looking only at Allah. Allah in the Holy Qur'an says to Prophet Musa and Prophet Harun as follows:

Be not afraid; I am verily with you all the time and I hear and see. (Surah Ta Ha, 20:46) 102

Allah commanded Prophet Nuh: To build the Ark under the supervision and guidance of his Lord.
(Surah Hud, 11:37)

As soon as Prophet Nuh started building the Ark, the crowd of the infidels which passed by him made a fun of him and passed sarcastic remarks by saying that the Prophet had turned a carpenter but Prophet Nuh paid no heed to their taunts which became the means of his steadfastness, and reminded him that he was present before Allah and that Allah was supervising his work. Such firm determination and spirit of steadfastness instils a new life in man.

(iv) Concept of Reward and Punishment The fourth thing that inculcates in man the spirit of steadfastness is the concept of reward and punishment because forbearing the hardships in this world ensures a big reward in the Hereafter. The Holy Qur'an gives frequent examples in this regard.

(v) To Seek Help Through Prayers and Patience The fifth thing which makes a man steadfast is to seek help by Prayers, supplications and patience. The following verses of the Holy Qur'an asks us to take the support of prayers and patience:

Help yourselves (in your affairs) with patience and prayers. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:45)

Believers, help yourselves through patience and prayers. Allah is with those who have patience.
(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:153)

In Surah al-A'raf, 7:128, also it is said that we should seek help from Allah.

Besides, the traditions too indicate that in the face of difficulties Imam Ali used to get himself busy in prayers. Prayers bring the small one nearer to the great one and makes the weakest one the strongest, and creates serenity and satisfaction. The following verse says that remembrance of Allah creates serenity of the heart:

Remembrance of Allah certainly brings comfort to all hearts. (Surah ar-Ra'd, 13:28)

The gist of this discussion is that Allah is Just and whatever hardships befall us are from Allah; and they

are for the purpose of putting us on trial and as already mentioned before, the people who face hardships are divided into four different categories. The course of action which leads us to success has also been stated.

(v) The fifth point is that the doubt about the Justness of Allah arises out of our misgiving and wrong conclusions as without pondering over the thing in its right perspective we attribute our objections to Allah. As for example we know that death is the ultimate end of man's life and yet we object to Allah as to why such and such man died?

Sometimes we assume that this world is an everlasting abode and yet we complain as to why people die of floods, earthquakes, diseases etc.? Then we assume that this world is the place of comfort and we complain as to why we are afflicted with hardships and difficulties.

We are like a man who enters a lecture hall and starts questioning as to why tea and snacks are not available because of one particular thinking, which is a wrong one, it was thought that the hall was meant for a reception function. If we tell him that the hall was meant for delivering lectures he will withdraw his objections and will feel sorry for that.

Therefore, we should consider this world as it is. We should know the purpose of our existence and in that case all our objections will be nullified. We must be certain of the fact that this world is not a place of our permanent abode but it is a passage of our life.

If we adhere to this conviction then all our objections such as with regard to the dying of people on account of disease, floods, and earthquake etc. will be removed because we have come over here not to live for ever but for departing from here. It is a different matter by what means we happen to depart from here, either through disease, floods or earthquakes etc.

Example: A customer entered a glassware shop where the glasses were arranged in an upside-down position. He looked at them minutely and said the mouth of the glass was closed. He picked up a glass in that condition and remarked that it had not even its bottom.

The shopkeeper laughed at this and took the glass from his hand and put it into upright position and said, "Sir, the glass has its bottom as well as the mouth".

In the same way our objections are due to our wrong thinking and defective approach of things. So to say we see all things with coloured glasses. If we put on red glasses on our eyes we will take turnips as beets.

In short, all our objections originate from wrong thinking and incorrect interpretations. First we think that the world is a place of comfort and then we start making objections when we are faced with disappointments. As a matter of fact this world is a place of development and progress. This is a place where we sow the seeds. Obviously such a process involves hard work, hardships and difficulties.

Differences Develop the Society

If we accept some principles we shall realize that our basic differences play an important role in our life. First of all man's life is a social life, that is, we are not like self-growing grass which perishes all by itself. We are not born all by ourselves and do not perish all by ourselves without having any relation with somebody else.

Another point is the social life cannot function without mutual cooperation and cooperation only comes in the face of differences. It is because a certain man is perfect in a certain profession or field of activity and is weak in another.

The difference of capabilities, courage and perfection necessitates the improvement of the society so that one set of people or individuals should help to fulfil the wants and deficiencies of others. It is for that reason that differences give rise to necessities which develop the society.

Difficulties Build up Personalities

The Holy Qur'an says that unpleasant events and accidents in life are the danger signs for man. A life without difficulties and hardship makes man lethargic and pleasure-loving. It is said that if the road is smooth and straight, the driver falls asleep. We have read in the Islamic narrations that Allah afflicts His noble servants with difficulties and hardships.

The Holy Prophets have been subjected to the most trying and severest types of difficulties and their devout followers with hardships of a lesser degree. We read in the tradition that Allah nurtures His servants by afflicting them with difficulties in the same manner in which a mother nurtures her child by suckling. Difficulties not only help to build up man's personality but the experience of the past difficulties also does the same.

We read in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Did He not find you as an orphan and take care of you? Did He not find you perplexed and show you the way? And did He not find you in need and enrich you? So do not oppress the orphans, and do not drive the beggars away, and proclaim the bounties of your Lord. (Surah az-Zuha, 93:6)

Allah considers it good to revive the memory of past difficulties and hardships. The Holy Qur'an stresses that difficulties and hardships are meant for offering supplications and purifying the soul as is evident from the following verses.

We had sent Our guidance to the nations who lived before you and afflicted them with distress and adversity so that they might submit themselves to Allah. (Surah al-An'am, 6:42)

In every town in which We sent a Prophet, We tested its inhabitants through distress and

adversity so that perhaps they would submit themselves to Us. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:94)

The traditions say that had there been no poverty, diseases and death, no power on earth could subdue man and he would have been proud of his transgression. Really, comfort and luxuries make man without having any purpose and aim of life. Imam Ali says: "The wood obtained from the trees of the forest is comparatively strong". (See: Letter 45, ***Peak of Eloquence***, ISP, 1985)

Imam Hasan Askari says that in a way there is some goodness in misfortunes (***Biharul Anwar***, vol. 78, p. 374) in the sense that these misfortunes establish a link between Allah and us on the one hand and on the other divert our attention to doing something good.

Hardships affect our bodies with the result that our soul is strengthened. As for example the host has to undergo some sort of hardship in treating his guest with generosity but by this his personality is developed in attaining the quality of being generous and kind.

There is a tradition which says that hardships and adversities are warning signals to the cruel people. And for the believers they are a means of their trial and their betterment. For the pious and the saints they are a source of their attaining dignity and perfection. (***Biharul Anwar***, vol. LXXXI, p. 108) 111

An Example: The following are the three ways of prompting a soldier to work:

- (i) When a soldier commits any irregularity he is ordered to do a difficult job by way of punishment.
- (ii) Sometimes he is reformed by giving him a strenuous training so as to improve his abilities.
- (iii) Sometimes when his rank and status are to be elevated he is sent on leave or is assigned a difficult job so as to justify his promotion to the higher rank.

Hence, suffering is a trial for the believer and on this basis the bounties of Allah are not the proof of one's honour, nobility and virtue, for sometimes the best of pious and devout people are afflicted with misfortunes and adversities so that these people should derive strength to make themselves perfect, because unless sandal-wood is burnt its scented smell will not be felt.

Undergoing such sort of ups and downs in life is the means of gaining perfection for unless metals are not put into a furnace, they are not purified. Unless the soil is turned up with a plough it cannot be worthy of cultivation. Unless the grass is chewed by the teeth of a goat it does not get converted into flesh. Unless mutton is cooked on fire it is not fit to be eaten by human beings so as to become human protoplasm.

Similarly, unless man also suffers hardships and adversities and endures them bravely he cannot attain his spiritual purity and perfection. Our existence is not for the sake of eating and relaxing, for this thing is also common among the animals. What distinguishes us from the animals is the qualities of human attributes that we possess, e.g. the remembrance of Allah by way of worship, fraternity, and the spirit of

sacrifice. Obviously we cannot achieve these qualities without undergoing hardships.

Hardships Lead to Inventions

If you are not faced with any difficulty you will not be able to make something new or invent anything. If we had not happened to fall sick, the science of medicine would not have been so developed. If we had not experienced cold and hot weather we would have not been able to invent means to protect ourselves from cold and heat.

In some branches of science and technology such as medicine, military science, and industries, etc. we have become so advanced because we had to face enormous difficulties. This is such an established fact that one need not to go into details.

(vi) The sixth point is that man should not always keep an eye on the negative aspect of things only. There is a wise saying that if you lay hand on a lemon do not throw it away because it is sour but instead prepare a lemonade out of it. It is wise to see the positive aspect also and benefit from it.

Prophet Yusuf was thrown into a well by his brothers. Thereafter, he was rescued by some people of a passing caravan and was sold by them as a slave. He was accused of an ugly charge in Egypt and was sent to the prison. After all after these calamitous happenings he became the king of Egypt.

After a long time when he met his father, the latter asked him what treatment was meted out to him by his brothers? Prophet Yusuf replied to his father: "Do not ask me of the treatment of my brothers but only ask me of the Kindness and Benevolence that Allah had showered on me, how He took me out of the difficulties, that is conspiracies, serfdom, slander and the prison cell, and how He freed me from the baseless charge that had been levelled against me".

This is one way of thinking that man does not always think on the negative aspect of things, but he looks into the positive aspect of the things too.

We do not forget the tradition which has come to us from Imam Hasan Askari. He said: "There is no misfortune which does not have with it some goodness which overpowers it. (*Biharul Anwar*, vol. LXXVIII, p 374)

However the objections of some people against the Justice of Allah are based on the fact that they always look into the problem from one aspect only.

Here I quote an example narrated by a scholar: "The sun shines on the ocean and raises the water vapours, which are converted into clouds, laden with rain drops. The earth's gravitational force attracts these rain drops downward.

These rain drops together flood the small drains which turn into rivers. Man builds dam on these rivers

and generates electricity which helps the irrigation of agricultural lands. Now? if anyone out of sheer laziness or stupidity touches the live-wire and is electrocuted or if while ploughing the fields an ant-hill is destroyed, will somebody allow that man or the ants to blame Benjamin Franklin who discovered electricity and put it to useful purposes.

Will the ants be justified in cursing the sun, the clouds, the rains, the man and the cultivation of lands because its home was destroyed in the process. Is it not that these objections are based on selfishness?

Do such objections not indicate that we look into a problem from one aspect only and are motivated by selfish desires only as if the whole Universe should work for our own personal interest and that too for the temporary gain? Sometimes the difficulties that we face today turn to our benefit tomorrow, but we do not feel satisfied unless they give us fruitful result only today".

Another Explanation: In regard to Allah's Justice about unpleasant happenings is that we should accept one of the two concepts regarding the Universe. That is, we should either accept the well-balanced system of the working of the Universe or we should treat that system as defective. If in the Universe things are working on a set pattern and system, then there must be some unpleasant incidents also, or else one should try to find out any irregularities in it.

To understand this if we think over some unpleasant happening we shall come to know that they are governed by such fixed rules and harmonies that to accept them will amount to accepting those unpleasant happenings too. Take an example of a house which collapses over the heads of its inmates. Let us try to find out the reasons of such a mishap in the following manner:

- (a) The ball with which the children were playing in the street falls down on the roof of a house.
- (b) The ball after rolling down on the roof of the house reaches the mouth of a drain and blocks the flow of rain water.
- (c) When it rained, the rain water did not pass through the mouth of the drain and instead got accumulated on the roof and the inmates of the house remained quite unaware of this.
- (d) The rain water was soaked through the roof and the bricks also became wet and weak.
- (e) The roof of bricks which had become heavy with water gave way and collapsed. Some of the inmates of the house died because of the falling down of the roof.

The ball, its rolling, the slope of the roof, the narrowness of the hole on the roof, the weight of the accumulated water, the weakening of the bricks, the heaviness of the roof, the distance above the heads of the inmates who were sleeping under the roof, their bone structure and such other things are regulated by a fixed system.

If one accepts the general principle of a fixed system one will have to accept the happenings of the

mishap as a result of falling down of the roof over the inmates of the house. But if one wished that such an unpleasant accident should have not occurred, then it will amount to accepting a disruption and irregularity in the set system; as for example:

- (a) The ball should have been so heavy as to not fall on the roof, or
- (b) the arms of the children should have not been strong enough to handle the ball, or
- (c) the mouth of the hole on the roof had been so wide as to let the ball pass through it, or
- (d) the rains should have not occurred, or
- (e) the water should have lost its property of getting absorbed into the bricks, or
- (f) the bricks would have been hard enough in not absorbing the water inside them, or
- (g) the gravitational force of earth would have ceased to function on that particular night so as to avoid the falling down of the roof over the inmates of the house, or
- (h) the bones of the inmates of the house should have been as hard as steel, so that the falling down of the roof would have not crushed them, or
- (i) the heavy roof should have been as light as feather, so that by falling down over the inmates it would not have hurt them. From this it is proved that if we accept a definite system of cause and effect and order of working, we shall have to accept the happenings of accidents and mishaps as a natural consequence, and to defy the happenings of such mishaps would amount to breaking the natural laws and physical phenomena which have been established by Divine Wisdom.

In short, if this Universe has certain set principles and rules it envisages mishaps and accidents also. If it is decided that there should occur no mishaps or accidents, then there would be no definite principles and set rules of working of everything. One should remember that if there are irregularities and disorders the chaos thus caused would lead to manifold evils and mishaps.

Great Caution: In our discussion about the Justice of Allah and the variation found in the human faculties, we should also give attention to the fact that some people who consider themselves lacking in one or the other faculties may be having capabilities in other spheres of activities.

There are people who for the sake of personal benefit or greed or enmity adopt a certain profession or vocation in which they do not succeed, and bring frustration, they blame the Universe and consequently are embittered by failures and anxieties. On the other hand other people despise them and consider them as useless though such people show exemplary success in other departments.

It is said that the father of Charles Darwin was a physician and he wanted his son to adopt the same profession but Darwin could not make any progress in that field. His father got very much dejected and

he forced him to acquire religious learning so that he could have become a good priest but he proved a failure there too.

After failing in these two different fields, he chose natural sciences and became the pioneer in propounding a theory known as 'The Theory of Evolution'.

We read in the tradition that if a man faces failure in a certain field or profession he should change it; possibly in the other field he may attain distinction.

There is some hidden defect in every perfection, and in every defect there is a hidden perfection.

Imam Ali says: "Often physical characteristics and features do not respond to mental capacities. Many a time it is seen that very handsome persons are slow-witted and dull. Many tall and well-built persons are found to be cowards and un-ambitious while one often comes across very ugly and sinister-looking people who are good tempered, honest and pious.

Similarly, short and stumpy men may be very intelligent and foresighted. It is often found that men of good character have accidentally addicted themselves to bad habits". (See: Sermon 238, ***Peak of Eloquence***, ISP, 1985)

Therefore, every successful man is not successful in all the fields, nor he who is unsuccessful in one sphere of activity is necessarily unsuccessful in all his activities.

There are some people who join a particular field of activity on account of sheer jealousy, despite the fact that they have no aptitude or interest in it, but when they prove to be a failure they blame the Justice of Allah by saying: "O Allah! Why such and such man was successful and I met with failure?"

If such a man had adopted a profession in which he had some interest and which was in keeping with his inborn faculties he would have met with sure success. Thus it can be said that a man can be unsuccessful if he had been unable to recognize his own talents and mental disposition in a certain field of activity which he chooses for himself and if we give a careful thought to the success achieved by a person we can discover certain weaknesses, failures, and defects along with that success.

There are other questions which come to our mind in regard to our discussions on the Justice of Allah.

The First Question: Is the creation of Satan in line with the Wisdom and Justice of Allah? Was the creation of man not for the purpose of worshipping Allah, and accordingly was the creation of Satan the negation of this purpose? Apart from that man performs a certain deed after undergoing great efforts but errors and false notions on his part nullify such a deed in three different ways.

Firstly, such a deed loses its real image as envisaged by Divine Will from the very beginning because of its showy character. Secondly, in the course of performing such a deed an element of pride defeats the very purpose of its accomplishment; and thirdly, because of the sins committed after its accomplishment

the very deed is brought to naught. Can in such a case the creation of Satan be in consonance with the Wisdom and Justice of Allah?

Answer to the Question: The existence and the qualities that Allah gave to Satan were all good, and for a long long time he had been worshipping Allah. Satan's wickedness lay in his disobedience to the command of Allah and even worse than that his disobedience became his sin as he did not feel sorry for his misbehaviour and did not repent of his sin.

Not only that he became arrogant and moreover he objected to the command of Allah by saying that His command was unjust because he was made of fire and Adam was made of earth, and hence he was superior to Adam. Accordingly Satan's flouting the Divine command was due to his arrogance.

In the case of man, however, his unfounded fears are not such that he may become forced to commit sins. The strength of these unfounded notions leads to inclinations only. That is all. It does not kill our intention. And also there is a useful aspect of these fears, because our training and firmness of character lies in our fighting against our wicked desires and devilish notions.

If a dumb man does not commit backbiting, it does not give him any credit. We give a man title of a strong man because he lifts a heavy weight from the ground against the greater force of earth's gravity. Indeed the sign of strength lies in opposing or counteracting the gravitational force.

The Holy Prophet said, "If anger draws a man towards doing an evil thing and he controls himself, he actually is as strong as a wrestler".

Apart from that if a man falls a prey to the evil thoughts there is a door of repentance open to him up to the last hour and he can repent of his sins. On the other hand if we had been left alone with Satanic thoughts, it would have been a difficult thing, but as against the evil temptations induced by Satan we are blessed with wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Prophets which lead us to tread the straight path.

But for distracting us from this path we are followed by Satanic temptations. It is not that Satan draws us towards him but the fact is that we too attract him towards us. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an narrates the following incident of a depraved scholar:

Muhammad, relate to them the plight of the person whom We inspired with Our guidance, but he passed them by, so that Satan came after him and he went astray. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:175)

From this verse it is established that Satan reaches the people who by their own deed show their inclinations towards Satan. The man referred to in this verse was Bal'am a scholar, who belonged to the tribe of Bani Isra'il.

Allah had endowed him with some kinds of knowledge by virtue of which his supplications used to be granted by Allah, but he established his contacts with the court of Fir'aun and thus for the sake of attaining worldly gain and power he was detached from knowledge and the signs of Allah and fell into

the trap of Satan.

We learn from the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

Satan has certainly no control over the Believers who have trust in their Lord. The only authority he has is over his followers and those who consider things equal to Allah. (Surah an-Nahl, 16:99–100)

The fact that Satan has no power over the believers does not mean that he does not tempt them into wrong ways, but the fact is that those, who know the Satan quite well, are the true believers. They do not fall a prey to his temptations but resist them with full force and they are never influenced by him in any way. The Holy Qur'an describes the believers' resistance against the Satan in the following verses:

Those who are pious remember Allah when assailed by the instigations of Satan, and certainly they begin to understand, even though their (devilish) brothers would like them to continue in error and would not desist. (Surah al-A'raf, 7: 201–202)

Therefore, the believers are the antagonists of Satan and the transgressors are his friends and patrons. The Holy Qur'an says:

We shall make Satan the companion of whoever ignores the remembrance of the Beneficent Allah. (Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:36)

In short, Satan is such a creation of Allah that he could make the best use of his abilities but owing to his pride and obduracy he ruined himself for nothing. His ruination concerns him alone. The Satanic thoughts cannot, therefore, compel us to transgress and abandon the right path.

Thus for those, who fall under his trap, the door of repentance is open and the Satanic influences only come through our own doing. From all that has been stated now it cannot be said that the creation of Satan was against the Justice of Allah.

The Second Question: Another thing which is often asked in respect of the Justice of Allah is the problem of those unfortunate individuals who pass their lives under agony and hardship, and are subjected to humiliation by the people. They ask as to why such individuals have been created at all?

The answer to the second question can be found from the foregoing discussions as we have already stated before that the very cause of our unpleasant happenings is our own doing. The less fortunate people are also the product of our indifferent and lethargic attitude. It is the parents who should abide by the hygienic and psychological principles.

It is by their ignoring them that abnormal and retarded children are born. Fortunately, instructions on these principles have been laid down in the narrations of our infallible Imams. Cohabitation in the state of intoxication, menstruation, or food poisoning can have an adverse effect on the fetus.

It is necessary that for the purpose of enlightening the young men and women in the family planning centers, sex education, in line with Islamic teachings, be imparted so as to produce healthy children, and bring them up properly according to Islamic standard.

What is the Fault of a New-born Child?

The question arises: "What is the fault of the new-born child?" Our answer is: "What is the fault of Allah?" Here both, the new-born child and the Beneficent Allah are faultless. Those who are at fault are the parents, but the new-born child is the sufferer.

This is not so only in the case of a new-born child, but in all cases of oppressions and cruelties the fault is of the oppressors and the oppressed have to suffer.

If I throw a stone at you and you are wounded, then neither you nor Allah are at fault, but the fault is only mine and you suffer. Similarly when the question is raised as to why the offspring should suffer on account of the faults of the parents, the same question can be raised in case of the oppressors, who have committed oppression but the oppressed suffer.

If you brought a saltish or bitter yeast to a baker to make the bread for you, would you blame the baker who gave you the saltish or bitter bread?

If you sowed the seed of a watermelon and you got a watermelon will anybody raise an objection to it?

Would you expect to reach your destination in the north if you happen to travel southward?

Every food and every disposition has its natural effect and to save oneself from those effects one will have to defeat all the natural laws (which is impossible). To expect something else from the seed of a fruit or from the sperm is contrary to reason.

Again the question that the parents' fault was a temporary error but the damage done to a deformed baby was a permanent one has no concern with Allah. You can blind yourself in a moment with a knife and you remain blind for the lifetime. The fault was for a fraction of a moment but you suffered the agony for the whole life.

You smash a glass in a moment but the glass is broken forever. Similar are the psychological problems. If you abuse a man, he severs his connections with you for the whole of his life, and an apology made for a moment annuls the lifelong rancor and enmity.

I had cited an example of a man who was very careful about his health but when he took a spoon of poison he nullified all his efforts of maintaining his good health.

Here arises another point to consider that the parents did not know that their action according to the Divine laws would have an adverse effect on the new-born baby. The answer to this is that the parents'

awareness or unawareness does not affect the natural consequences.

It is immaterial whether or not we know that a certain wire is a live-wire and if we touch it we are sure to be electrocuted. Electricity would not stop its function if we are unaware of its existence, and would not leave us alive.

If by mistake we drink wine taking it to be water, we shall certainly be intoxicated because it is the effect of the wine to make one intoxicated. Hence the innocence of the parents is in the sense that they did not commit a mistake intentionally, but after all the natural effect of a certain action must follow its own course.

The second question that arises is with regard to humiliation of the physically-handicapped persons who are born as such. The matter of their humiliation by the people is not connected with Allah or anybody else but it is a matter of their own way of thinking.

We should not look down upon the people born with congenital physical defects. The sacred teachings of Islam have given many instructions in this regard.

In fact, it is the responsibility of the Government in power that it should take care of them with due respect and solemnity and provides them suitable work according to their individual capacity and ability so as to provide reasonable means for their livelihood and also ensure that their efforts are rightly rewarded by giving them maximum return. We wish to conclude this topic but not without making a request to our readers.

A Request: We should not entertain any doubt about the fundamentals of our beliefs and ideology. Whenever a problem regarding faith and ideology crops up and we cannot answer it we should better refer the matter to a religious scholar. We should note down the telephone numbers of a few religious scholars so that we may seek their guidance on even small objections.

Just as sometimes a small nail pierces our foot and makes us unable to walk, a small objection disturbs our mind and makes us skeptical about our faith and makes our life miserable although apparently it looks like a very trifling thing. Our youngsters who are often confronted with some such objections and criticisms raised by some vested interest should in particular be in touch with a well-informed, virtuous and pious scholar so that he may give them proper advice and guidance.

A Reminiscence: Once I happened to come across a few friends of mine who told me that the Islamic laws do not fall in line with the true spirit of culture and civilization because according to Islamic jurisprudence the four fingers of a thief are to be chopped off while communism says that if we change our financial system and satisfy everybody's wants, there would be no possibility of thefts.

When I inquired of them how they have formed such an opinion they told me that one of their teachers who were a supporter of socialism had told them such a theory which appealed to them and which they

took to their heart.

However, I replied to them that Islam does not allow chopping off the hands of every thief; on the contrary in Islam there are twenty conditions before a thief's hand can be chopped off. I asked them who amongst them knew those conditions.

All of them said that they did not know those twenty conditions. I told them that had they acquired some knowledge about Islamic laws they would have questioned their teacher in the classroom and told him that if he did not know the true facts about that matter he should have not poked his nose without having acquired proper knowledge about it.

I told my friends that they should have invited their teacher to, a frank discussion on the point or they should have consulted an Islamic scholar. After I told them a few of those conditions they started pondering over it and then we parted company.

I invite the attention of my esteemed readers on the statement that the Holy Qur'an claims that in the long run Islam would be triumphant against evil forces and the people of the entire world would ultimately embrace Islam, and Imam Mahdi, the Imam of the Age will rule over the whole world. But there are some certain conditions with this claim as follows:

- (i) People's attention towards Islam.
- (ii) Identification of Islam.
- (iii) Mental preparedness to understand Islam.

Indeed, the martyrs of the Islamic Revolution in Iran have turned the attention of the people towards Islam and in that way they have initiated a major step towards that direction. It is our duty now that we move forward to acquaint the people with the true spirit of Islam and then it is the duty of the other people who have been disappointed with different faiths and ideologies and are inclined towards Islam.

Therefore, it is necessary that we read at least one good book every week so that we keep ourselves abreast with the Islamic learning.

Imam Ali Riza said: "If people become familiar with Islamic guidance they would be easily inclined towards it".

In the study of books priority should be given to those books which deal with faith and general outlook on the Universe, because our deeds are based on our thinking, and therefore considering other schools of thought we should choose for ourselves a proper line based on solid arguments.

In concluding our discussions on the Justice of Allah we should like to invite the attention of the reader to the following important points:

Categorization–The Means of Recognizing Allah

Just as undue preference is cruelty, in the same way rational categorization is real justice besides being a source of recognition of Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

Among other signs of His existence is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the differences of languages and complexions. (Surah ar-Rum, 30:22)

Thus if a draftsman makes the same type of lay-outs and blueprints, an architect the same type of buildings, and the poet writes the verses of the same style, it will show his weakness and lack of knowledge, but if all these people show some originality in style and crafts it will speak of their creative faculty.

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