

## Chapter 20: Distinguishing Features of Islam

Islam is the name of the religion of Allah. That is the religion preached by all Prophets. The most perfect form of it was conveyed to people through the last Prophet, Muhammad bin Abdullah. (May peace and blessings of Allah be on him and his progeny). With him the Prophethood came to an end. The message given by him is now known by the name of Islam throughout the world.

The Islamic teachings conveyed through the last Prophet, being the everlasting guide and the most perfect form of the religion of Allah, have certain special features consistent with the period of finality. These features in their totality could not exist during previous ages, the period of the minority of people.

Each of these features is a means of knowing Islam, and represents one of its basic doctrines. These features help forming a picture of Islam, though it may be a bit vague. They are also a criterion by which it can be judged whether a particular teaching is or is not a part of Islam.

We do not say that it is possible for us to mention all these features, but we will try to present an overall picture of them.

We know that every ideology, or for that matter, every school of thought, which offers a programme for the salvation, perfection and prosperity of man, also puts forward certain values and prescribes certain do's and don'ts, should and shouldn'ts on the level of the individual or society. Every ideology says what should happen and what should be done, and determines the general policy and the aims to be pursued, for example it may lay down that everybody should be free and should live a free life. Everybody should be bold and brave and should make continuous progress in order to attain perfection. A society should be built on the basis of justice and fair play, making an advance towards proximity to Allah.

These 'do's' and 'don'ts' should naturally be based on some philosophy capable of explaining them. In other words it is but natural that the injunctions of an ideology should be based on a particular conception of the world, man and society according to which it may be said that such and such should be like this or like that, because the world or man or society is like this.

A conception of the world means the sum-total of the views and interpretations regarding the world, man and society. In regard to the world it covers such views as: the world is like this or like that; it has such and such a law; it goes forward in such and such a way; its pursuer does not pursue such and such objective; it has or has not an origin; it has or has not a purpose. In regard to man the views which constitute the conception of the world are such as whether man has any innate nature; whether he is free or predestined; whether he is, in the words of the Holy Qur'an, a chosen being. As regards man the questions are: Whether society has a law independent of the laws governing the individuals; what laws govern society and history; and similar other questions.

As ideology is always based on a particular conception of the world which explains why the world, society or man is like this or like that, and determines what actions man should take and what sort of life he should lead. The answer of every 'why' of an ideology underlies the world conception on which it is based. Technically every ideology is a sort of 'practical wisdom', whereas every conception of the world is a sort of 'theoretical wisdom'. Naturally every practical wisdom is based on a particular theory. For example, the practical wisdom of Socrates is based on his particular outlook on the world, which forms his theoretical wisdom. Similar is the relation between the practical wisdom of Epicurus and others and their theoretical wisdom.

As various people have different conceptions of the world naturally their ideologies vary.

Now a question arises why there are so many conceptions of the world or so many cosmologies? Why should one school of thought look at the world in one way and another school in another way?

The answer to this question is not so simple. Some people have gone to the extent of asserting that it is the class position of an individual that determines his attitude and outlook and puts special glasses on his eyes through which he sees the world. According to this theory the methods of production and distribution create reactions that shape the mentality and the views of an individual in a certain fashion depending on how favourably or adversely he is affected by these methods. The views thus formed affect his judgement and his evaluation of the things. Mowlawi says:

*"If you feel giddy, you will find the whole house whirling round; if you travel in a boat, you will find the shore moving along with you; if you are distressed on account of some bad event you will find the whole world boring; if you are happy, you will find everything pleasant. You being a part of the world, you see as if the whole world is like you".*

According to this theory nobody can claim that his view alone is correct and the view of others is wrong, for the views are a relative matter only. They are the outcome of an individual's contact with his natural and social environment. Hence everybody's views may be presumed to be correct as far as he himself is concerned.

Anyhow, the matter is not so simple. There is no denying the fact that a man's thinking is greatly influenced by his environment. But it also cannot be denied that man is endowed with a faculty of

independent thinking free from any influence. It is this faculty which has been termed by Islam as the innate nature of man. We may deal with this question in detail on some other occasion.

Even if we hold that man has no independent, in fact, realistic thinking, it is still too early at this stage of cosmology to blame him.

What the modern philosopher who have made a close study of this question admit that the root-cause of the variety of conceptions of the world should be looked for in what is called the theory of knowledge.

The philosophers have paid enough attention to this theory. Some of them have asserted that philosophy is not cosmology. It is only the methodology of the pursuit of knowledge. The reason why there are so many cosmological theories is that there are several methods of knowing the world. Some say that the world should be known through reason. Some others are of the opinion that the knowledge of the world can be acquired only through illumination and inspiration. So there is a difference of opinion about the method, the source and the criterion of attaining the knowledge of the world. According to some reason has a very limited role in this respect, but according to others its role is unlimited.

In short, the ideology of every school is based on its conception of the world, which in its turn is based on its theory of knowledge. How far an ideology is progressive depends on how far its conception of the world is progressive, which in its turn depends on how far its method of attaining knowledge is progressive. In fact the practical wisdom of every school depends on its theoretical wisdom, that is its way of thinking. Therefore it is necessary that every school must in the first instance make its way of thinking clear.

Islam is not a school of philosophy and has not talked in philosophical terms. It has its own terminology, which is intelligible to all classes in accordance with their particular level of understanding. It is astonishing that though it has referred to these questions only in between other subjects, its ideology in the form of practical thinking and its world conception in the form of a logical doctrine can easily be deduced from its teachings.

Evidently here we have to be contented with making a reference only to Islamic world conception, and cannot dwell at length on the valuable views expressed by Muslim scholars such as jurists, philosophers, mystics and other thinkers on the questions of Islamic Ideology, Islamic World Conception and the Methods of Acquiring Knowledge. Should we make such an attempt, the task is likely to be voluminous.

At the most we can produce a list, though incomplete, of the main features of Islamic views on these questions. We may be able to complete the list on some other occasion.

A list of the main features of the views of Islam under their appropriate headings, viz. The –Methods of Knowing, Conception of the World and the Ideological Features of Islam is as under:

# 1. The Methods of Knowing

## (i) Is it possible to identify the truth?

This is and has always been the first question in this respect. Many of the thinkers are of the opinion that it is impossible to identify the truth correctly. They maintain that it is the lot of man not to know exactly what really in this world is and what passes in it. They consider it impossible to gain an indisputably accurate knowledge conforming to reality.

However, the Holy Qur'an regards it possible to know the truth. It invites man to know Allah, the world, himself and history. In the story of Prophet Adam, which is really the story of man, it considers him to be fit to learn all the Divine names or the realities of the world. The Holy Qur'an says that in certain cases human knowledge can comprehend some items of Divine knowledge:

***"They cannot comprehend anything out of what He knows save what He wills."*** (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:255)

## (ii) What are the Sources of Knowledge?

From the viewpoint of Islam the sources of knowledge are: the natural signs or the signs existing in the world, man himself, history or the social events and episodes of the nations and the communities, reason or the self-evident principles, heart, in the sense of the illuminating and purifying organ and the written record left by the past people.

In many verses the Holy Qur'an has asked people to ponder over the nature of the heavens and the earth: ***"Behold what is in the heavens and the earth."*** (Surah Yunus, 10:101)

Similarly the Holy Qur'an has invited people to study the history of the past nations intelligently with a view to take lesson from it: ***"Have they not travelled in the land so that they may have hearts to understand and ears to hear!"*** (Surah al-Hajj, 22:46)

The Holy Qur'an believes in the reliability of reason as well as of self-evident truths. It bases its arguments on them and says: ***"Say: 'Had there been gods besides Allah, then surely both the heavens and the earth (i.e. the whole universe) would have been thrown into confusion!'"*** (Surah al-Ambiya, 21:22)

***"Allah has not chosen any son, nor is there any god along with Him. Otherwise each god would have surely championed which he has created and some of them would surely have overcome others. Glorified be Allah above all that they allege."*** (Surah al-Mu'minun, 23:91)

Similarly the Holy Qur'an regards the heart as the centre of Divine inspirations and intuitions. Every man can receive inspiration in accordance with his sincere devotion and his effort to keep this centre

spiritually pure and active. The revelation of the Prophets is the highest degree of this kind of knowledge. The Holy Qur'an has repeatedly referred to the value of the pen and the book and on several occasions taken an oath by them: **"Nun. By the pen and that which they write therewith."** (Surah al-Qalam, 68:1)

### **(iii) What are the means of Acquiring Knowledge?**

The means of acquiring knowledge are the senses, faculty of thinking, argumentation, purification of soul and the study of the learned works of others. In Surah an-Nahl the Holy Qur'an says: **"And Allah brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers knowing nothing, and gave you hearing, sight and hearts so that you might give thanks."** (Surah an-Nahl, 16:78)

In this verse it has been expressly stated that contrary to the theory of Plato, man at his birth is devoid of every kind of knowledge. Allah has bestowed on him senses to study this world. He has given him conscience and the power of analysis so that he may subsequently go deep into the realities of things, and may discover the laws governing them.

According to his famous theory Plato believed that everything that existed had its corresponding form in the world of ideas. At the time of his birth man was already aware of all things, but was oblivious of them. He did not learn things anew in this world but only recollected them.

What has been mentioned in this verse is not contrary to the Qur'anic theory of innate knowledge. This theory does not imply that man at his birth actually knows all things. What the Holy Qur'an means is that the essence of man is in a state of growth and evolution, and that in his life he intuitively discovers certain fundamental and self-evident truths besides what he learns through his senses. The discovery of these truths is sufficiently convincing to force man to believe in them. That is what the Holy Qur'an means when it calls for '*tazakkur*' or recalling. Hence there is no contradiction between the Qur'anic verses calling for *tazakkur* and the above quoted verse of Surah an-Nahl.

In this verse hearing and sight, being the most important senses, have been mentioned as the instruments of knowing. Technically they are known as the means of superficial or primary knowledge, while heart or conscience which has also been mentioned in the verse, is technically described as the means of deep and logical knowledge.

Incidentally in this verse an allusion has been made to another important question also. It is the question of the stages of knowledge.

Apart from the sense and the faculty of thinking the Holy Qur'an equally recognizes piety and purity of soul as the means of acquiring knowledge. This point has been mentioned in many verses implicitly or explicitly: **"Believers, if you fear Allah, He will give you power to distinguish between what is good and what is bad."** (Surah al-Anfal, 8:29)

***"By the soul and Him who perfected it and inspired it with the consciousness of what is wrong for it and what is right for it! He is indeed successful who purified it and he is indeed a failure who corrupted it."*** (Surah al-Shams, 91:7 – 9)

Learning and reading are some other means of acquiring knowledge which have been formally recognized by the teachings of Islam. In order to illustrate this point, it is enough to say that the first revelation to the Holy Prophet began with the word, 'Read'.

***"Read in the name of your Lord who created. He created man from clot. Read, for your Lord is the most Bounteous, Who taught by the pen. He taught man what he did not know."*** (Surah al-'Alaq, 96:1 – 5)

#### **(iv) Subjects of Knowledge**

What are the things worth knowing and what is that which one should know? One should know Allah, the world, man, society and time. All of them are worth knowing and one should know all of them.

## **2. Conception of the World**

This book being an introduction to the Islamic conception of the world is mainly concerned with this subject and it is the subject which you will find scattered throughout this book. Anyhow, to maintain continuity, we give a brief narration of the main features of the Islamic conception of the world:

(1) Nature of the world is 'from Him'. In other words the reality of the world is derived from His reality. A thing may come out of another thing, but its reality is not necessarily completely derived from that of the latter. For example take the case of a son and his parents. The son comes from his parents, but the reality of his existence is different from theirs and is something additional to their reality. In contrast the nature of the world is 'from Him'. Its entire reality is nothing more than its attribution to Allah. Its reality and its attribution to Allah are identical that is what is meant when we say that the world has been created by Allah. Had the creation of the world meant differently, it would have been procreation and not creation. The Holy Qur'an says: ***"He does not beget nor was He begotten."*** (Surah al-Ikhlās, 112:3)

It makes no difference whether in terms of time the world has or has not a beginning. If it has a beginning, it is a limited reality "from Him". If it has no beginning, it is an unlimited reality "from Him". But in either case it is 'from Him', and its limitedness or unlimitedness makes no difference to its creational reality and its being 'from Him'.

(2) The reality of the world besides being "from Him" and hence transient by its nature, is not only changing and moving with the time, but is in itself a movement. As such it is continuously in the flux and is always in a state of being created and recreated. No moment passes without the world being created and annihilated.

(3) The realities of this world are a lower form of the realities existing in another world called the unseen world. Whatever exists here in a measured and limited form, is found in the transcendental or the unseen world in an unmeasured and unlimited form, or in the Qur'anic words, in the form of 'treasures': **"There is nothing but we have treasures of it and We do not send it down except in a known measure."** (Surah al-Hijr, 15:21)

(4) As the nature of this world is "from Him", it is also 'to Him'. This world has made a descending journey, but it is also in the state of making an ascending journey towards Him:

**"We are Allah's and indeed to Him we are returning."** (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 156)

**"The end of them all rests with your Lord."** (Surah an-Nazi'at, 79:44)

**"Remember that all things reach Allah at last."** (Surah ash-Shura, 42:53)

(5) The world has a firm and regular system based on causation. Every existing thing is governed by a Divine destiny through this system.

(6) The system of causation is not confined to material causes and effects. As far as the material dimension of the world is concerned, its causative system is material, but as far as its spiritual dimension is concerned, its causative system is not material. There is no inconsistency between these two systems, each of them having its own place. The angels, the soul, the protected Tablet, the Pen and the revealed Books are the means by which Divine favour operates in the world by Allah's will.

(7) The whole world is governed by unfailing laws and norms they being a part and parcel of the system of causation prevailing in the world.

(8) The world is a guided reality. Its evolution is guided. All the particles of the world are situated in such a way that they receive the light of guidance. Instinct, senses, reason, inspiration and revelation are all different stages of the general guidance of the world. Prophet Musa said: **"Our Lord is He who gave to everything its nature and then guided it aright."** (Surah Ta Ha, 20:50)

(9) In the world there is good as well as evil. There is consistency as well as inconsistency. There exist abundance and scarcity both. There is light as well as darkness. There are progress and development as well as stillness and stagnation. But the existence of what is good, consistent, abundant, bright and developing has the prime importance, whereas the existence of all that is evil, dark, inconsistent, and stagnant, is only subsidiary and secondary. Yet these subsidiary and secondary things play an important and basic role in the induction of what is good, consistent, harmonious and evolutionary.

(10) The world being a living unit and being administered by conscious forces (the angels managing the affairs of the world), is a world of action and of reaction as far as its relation with man is concerned. The world is not indifferent to a good man and a bad man. The rules of retribution, recompense and remuneration operate in this world as they do in the Hereafter. The faithful and the unfaithful are not

treated equally. The Holy Qur'an says: **"If you are thankful, I will give you more, but if you are ungrateful, then know that my punishment is terrible."** (Surah Ibrahim, 14:7)

Imam Ali says: *"The ingratitude of someone should not deter you from doing good. Maybe that someone whom you have done no favour gives you thanks. You may receive more gratitude from the grateful than you miss in the case of the ungrateful. Allah likes those who do good"*. (Nahjul Balaghah -- See Saying 194)

What Imam Ali means is that the world being a living organism, harmonious and co-ordinated, it is not necessary that a person should get the reward of his virtue from whom he expects it. He may get it from some other unexpected quarter. The world has Allah who likes the virtuous.

(11) This world will be followed by another world. That world will be eternal where everybody will be recompensed in accordance with the deeds performed by him in this world.

(12) The soul of man is an eternal reality. Man shall not only be raised as a living being on the Day of Resurrection, but during the interval between this world and the Day of Resurrection also he enjoys a sort of life which is stronger and more perfect than this worldly life. Some 20 verses of the Holy Qur'an indicate that while the body of man is in the state of decay following his death and prior to the Day of Resurrection, he is not totally devoid of some sort of life.

(13) The fundamental rules of life, that is the moral and human principles, are firm and eternal. It is only the secondary rules and not the main principles that are relative and subject to a change. Humaneness cannot be one thing in one age and something totally different in another. It is not possible that during one period of time humaneness may mean to be an Abuzar and during another period it may mean to be a Mu'awiyah. There are certain eternal principles according to which an Abuzar will be an Abuzar and a Mu'awiyah will be a Mu'awiyah. The principles according to which Prophet Musa is Musa and Fir'awn is Fir'awn, are eternal.

(14) Truth is also eternal. If a scientific truth is absolutely correct, it is correct forever and if it is wrong, it is wrong forever. If it is partly correct, and partly wrong, it is always partly correct and partly incorrect. What undergoes a change is a reality, and that too a material reality. As for the truths, that is intellectual ideas and mental beliefs, they remain firm from the point of view of their applicability or non-applicability to a particular reality.

(15) The world, the earth and the sky are founded on the principles of truth and justice: **"We have not created the earth, the heavens and what is between them except with truth."** (Surah al-Ahqaf, 46:3)

(16) It is the established practice of Allah to bring final victory to truth against falsehood. The righteous and what is right are always victorious: **"Our word has surely gone forth to our Prophets that they would be helped and that those who fight for Our cause would be victorious."** (Surah as-Saffat, 37:173)



(17) All men have been created equal. No man by virtue of his creation can claim any privilege or right which another man does not possess. There are only three things which make a man superior to others:

The first is knowledge: **"Are those who know equal with those who do not know?"** (Surah az-Zumar, 39:9)

The second is fighting for the cause of Allah: **"Allah has given those, who struggle with their lives and property, a rank higher than those who stay behind."** (Surah al-Nisa, 4:95)

The third is piety: **"Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is he whose conduct is best."** (Surah al-Hujurat, 49:13)

(18) Man by nature has certain innate tendencies and inclinations. They include his religious and moral inclinations. The main foundation of man's conscience is his God-given innate nature and not his class position, gregarious proclivities or his struggle with nature. All these influences are acquired conscientiously only. Man by virtue of his human nature can have a unique culture and ideology. He can resist his natural environment, social atmosphere, historical factors and hereditary tendencies, and can rid himself of their influence.

(19) Every man is born as a human being, and as such even the most wicked man is capable of giving up his bad habits and reforming himself. That is why the Prophets have been entrusted with the task of advising and giving spiritual counsel to even the most wicked persons and their worst enemies in order to awaken their human conscience. If that method fails, only then they are allowed to fight against them. In his first meeting with Fir'awn, Prophet Musa was told to say to him: **"Are you interested in reforming yourself. If so, I will guide you to your Lord, so that you may have a fear of Him."** (Surah al-Nazi'at, 79:19)

(20) Man's personality is a compound in the real sense. At the same time it is one single element and that too in the true sense.

Unlike other organic and inorganic compounds, the component parts of which when combined together, lose their identity and independent nature and are merged in a harmonious whole, the contradictory elements of which man's personality is made up, do not lose their nature totally. This results in an inner struggle in which man is pulled to different directions. In the language of religion this struggle is known as the contradiction between reason and passion or the contradiction between the soul and the body.

(21) As man has an independent spiritual essence, from which his will originates, he is free to exercise his will. No kind of compulsion can deprive him of his freedom of choice. That is why he is accountable for himself and his society.

(22) Like human individuals, human society is also a real compound. It has its own laws, traditions and systems. Throughout history society as a whole has never followed the will of one single individual. A

society is always composed of contradictory elements. The various intellectual, professional, political and economic groups forming it, never lose their identity completely. Clashes between these groups always continue in the form of political, economic, intellectual and doctrinal wars. Moreover, so long as man does not reach the zenith of humanity, a war will always be on between the developed men having the highest tendencies and the beastly men having the lowest tendencies.

(23) Allah does not change the destiny of any people unless and until they change themselves: ***"Allah does not change the condition of any people until they first change what is in their hearts."*** (Surah al-Ra'd, 13:11)

(24) Allah, the Almighty, who is the Creator of this world as well as of man, is independent of everything. He has no component parts. He is absolutely perfect. He shall always remain as He is. In His case any further development or evolution is impossible. His attributes are identical with His essence. The entire world is His work and a manifestation of His will. None can check or obstruct what He wills. Every other factor or will is perpendicular and not horizontal to His will.

(25) The world has a quasi-organic unity, because it has issued forth from one single source, is going back at a uniform pace towards it and is being managed and administered by conscious forces.

## **Ideological Aspect**

The Islamic ideology being very vast and having so many ramifications, it is hardly possible to describe all its features. Anyhow, acting in accordance with the maxim that something is better than nothing, we list hereunder what is conveniently possible:

**(1) Comprehensiveness:** As compared to other religions comprehensiveness is one of the distinguishing features of Islam. It would be more correct to say that comprehensiveness and all-inclusiveness are the principal characteristics of Islam which is the most developed and perfect religion. With the help of the four sources of Islamic law, the Muslim scholars can find out Islamic point of view about every question. The Muslim scholars do not believe that there can be a situation about which Islam has no rule.

**(2) Applicability of Ijtihad:** The general rules of Islam have been so arranged that they are amenable to *ijtihad*. Ijtihad means the discovery and application of firm and fundamental principles to the particular and changing cases. Further, the task of *ijtihad* has been made easy by the fact that reason has been recognized as one of the sources of Islamic law.

**(3) Liberality and Simplicity:** In the words of the Holy Prophet Islamic law is liberal and simple. There is a hadith in al-Kafi, vol. V, according to which the Prophet said that Allah had not given him the instruction to escape from worldly involvement. He had sent him with an upright, easy and liberal law. Islam has not prescribed any hard and tedious duties. *"In the matter of religion Allah has not put on you any undue constraint"*. As the religious law is characterized by liberality, any rule found to be causing

undue hardship, would be regarded as null and void.

**(4) Useful and Healthy Life:** Islam advocates a useful and healthy life and condemns extreme austerity and escape from life. That is why it has severely resented monkery and seclusion. *"There is no monkery in Islam"*.

In the ancient societies there existed either of the two tendencies; either monasticism and escape from worldly involvement or indulgence in this worldly life and escape from all that relates to the Hereafter. Islam has made the preparation for the Hereafter a part of this worldly life. The way to the next world passes through the life and the responsibilities of this world.

**(5) Socialization:** All Islamic teachings have a social character. Even such individualistic rules as prayers and fasting create collectivism. There are many social, political, economic, legal and penal rules of Islam which have this character. Similarly such precepts as *jihad* (the Holy War), urging to do good and restraining from evil originate from the collective responsibility of the Muslims.

**(6) Rights and Freedom of the Individual:** Though Islam is a social religion, it attaches great importance to society and considers the individual to be responsible to society, it does not overlook the rights and freedom of the individual and does not belittle his economic, legal as well as social rights. From political point of view, an individual has the right of being consulted and elected, from economic point of view he has the right of owning the product of his effort and receiving the remuneration for his labour. He can sell, lend, donate, endow, cultivate and invest his legal property and can enter into a partnership in regard to it. From the legal point of view he has the right of instituting a legal case, establishing his claim and giving evidence. From social point of view he has the right of choosing a profession, choosing a residence and choosing a course of study etc. From family point of view he has the right of choosing his life-partner.

**(7) Precedence of the Right of Society to the Right of Individual:** Where there is a contradiction or conflict between a right of society and a right of individual, the right of social or the public right gets precedence to the private right or the right of an individual. Anyhow, this matter is to be decided by an Islamic court of law.

**(8) Principle of Consultation:** From Islamic point of view the principle of consultation is a recognized principle in social matters. In those cases where no Islamic injunction exists, the Muslims should decide their way of action through consultation and collective thinking.

**(9) Elimination of Loss:** The rules of Islamic law though general and absolute, are enforceable only to the extent that they cause no undue loss or damage. This rule is universal and constitutes a sort of the right of veto in respect of every rule of law.

**(10) Importance of Usefulness:** In the case of every act whether it is individual or collective, the first importance is given to its useful result. From Islamic point of view every action which is not useful is

regarded as vain: **"Successful indeed are those who shun all that is vain."** (Surah al-Mu'minun, 23:3)

**(11) Importance of Lawful Transactions, Circulation of Wealth and Transfer of Money and Property:** All such deals must be free from every kind of fraud and underhand dealing. Any transaction otherwise will be unfair: **"And do not usurp one another's property by unjust means."** (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:188)

Transfer of wealth by means of gambling is tantamount to swindling and is unlawful.

**(12)** Any profit on the capital lying idle, not in circulation for beneficial purposes, and not subject to loss and diminishing which takes the form of a debt or a security is usury and unlawful.

**(13)** Every financial transaction must be conducted with the full knowledge and prior information of both the parties. Any transaction which involves a loss owing to lack of information is void. *"The Prophet has forbidden fraudulent transactions"*. This hadith originally relates to the fraudulent sale of defective items, but the principle of *ijtihad* has made the rule general.

**(14) Contrariety to Reason:** Islam respects reason and describes it as an inward prophet (guide). The principles of religion are not acceptable unless they conform to the results of rational research. In subsidiary matters relating to religion reason has been recognized as a source of *ijtihad*. Islam regards reason as a sort of purity and lack of it as a sort of ritual impurity. According to Islamic law insanity or intoxication invalidates minor ablution (Wuzu) just like urination or sleeping. Islam combats the use of every kind of intoxicant, because of its contrariety to reason. Reason is an integral part of religion.

**(15) Contrariety to Will:** Just as Islam respects reason, and in Islamic law there are certain provisions to protect it, Islam also respects will, which is the power which carries out the dictates of reason. That is why Islam considers all diverting activities which hinder the use of will-power to be prohibited and unlawful. In the language of Islam such diverting activities are called *"Lahw"*.

**(16) Work:** Islam is opposed to idleness and lethargy. As man receives much from society, he must do something for the benefit of society as well as for the benefit of himself. It is his duty to exert himself to do some useful work. An idle man's mind is the devil's workshop, as the proverb goes. Islam curses the man who is a parasite or a burden on society. *"Accursed is he who throws his burden on other people"*.

**(17) Sanctity of Occupation and Profession:** To have an occupation besides being a duty is something sacred and is liked by Allah. Occupation is semi-jihad.

*"Allah likes a believer having a profession"*.

*"A man who works hard for the sake of his family is like a person who fights for the cause of Allah"*  
(Wasa'ilush Shiah)

**(18) Prohibition of Exploitation:** Islam resents and censures every form of slave labour and serfdom. It

is enough for making a work unlawful, that it has the nature of utilizing the services of anyone else for one's own selfish and unfair ends.

**(19) Extravagance and Wastage:** People are allowed to exercise control of their property, but that does not mean more than that they have a freedom to use it within the frame-work allowed by Islam. They are neither allowed to waste it in any way nor to expend it unnecessarily. It is unlawful to spend it on those luxuries and outrageous embellishments which have been described by Islam as squandering.

**(20) Comforts in Life:** To provide the family (wife and children) such things which make their life easy is not only allowed, but is also encouraged so long as that does not involve extravagance and does not lead to anything unlawful.

**(21) Bribery:** The giver and the taker of illegal gratification have been severely censured by Islam and described as deserving of Hell-fire. Any money received as a bribe is unlawful.

**(22) Hoarding:** Hoarding of foodstuffs and not bringing them to market, with a view to sell them when the prices go up, is prohibited. The Islamic Government is allowed to seize such a stock and put it on sale at a reasonable price even without the consent of the owner.

**(23) Basis of earning is public interest and propriety and not the desire of people.** Normally in financial matters importance is attached to the people's wants and inclinations, and for the legality of any profession, it is considered enough that it is in demand by the public. But Islam does not consider a mere demand to be enough for the soundness and desirability of any job or profession. It considers propriety and soundness as a necessary condition. In other words existence of a demand is not enough for the legality of any profession. On this basis Islam prohibits a number of professions and transactions. Such prohibited professions are of several kinds:

i. *Dealing in Things Which Give Currency to Ignorance and False Ideas:* Anything which encourages ignorance, perversion of thinking or distortion of belief is unlawful, even if there exists sufficient demand for it. On this basis selling of idols and crosses, adornment of women with a view to deceive their suitors, praising of anybody who does not deserve a praise and soothsaying and divining are prohibited. Any income derived through such means is unlawful.

iii. *Dealing in Misleading and Stupefying Articles:* The sale and purchase of all such books, films and other articles which in some way or other spread misguidance or corruption in society, is prohibited.

v. *Any Action Which May be Helpful to Enemy:* To make money through any action which may strengthen the position of the enemy militarily, economically, morally or technologically and weakens the Islamic front is prohibited and is unlawful. Not only the sale of arms and other important equipment to the enemy is not allowed, but the sale of rare manuscripts is also prohibited.

vii. To make money through anything which may be harmful to the individual or society such as the sale

of intoxicants, gambling equipment, things which are basically unclean and the things that are forged or adulterated is prohibited. Gambling, defamation of a believer, support of the wrong-doers and acceptance of a post offered by an unjust ruler also come under this category.

There is also another kind of unlawful earning. There are certain tasks for which remuneration must not be accepted. They are too holy to be paid for and hence they should not be turned into a means of earning. Such tasks are *'ifta'* (telling the rules of Islamic law), administering justice, giving religious education, delivering a sermon and the like. The profession of a physician also possibly comes under this category.

These jobs are too sacred to be made a source of securing income and collecting money. These duties should be performed without accepting any compensation. The Muslim treasury should ensure that the expenses of those who undertake these sacred jobs are met.

**(24) Sanctity of Defending Rights:** It is a sacred duty to safeguard the individual as well as the social rights and to fight against any transgressor: ***"Allah does not like abusing others, unless a man has been wronged."*** (Surah an-Nisa, 4:148)

The Holy Prophet has said: *"The best jihad is to say the just word before a despotic ruler"*.

Imam Ali has quoted the Holy Prophet as having said: *"No nation can occupy a commendable position unless it is able to secure the rights of the weak against the strong without any fear"*. (Nahjul Balaghah – See Letter 53)

**(25) Continuous Struggle Against Corruption and Improving the Existing Conditions:** The principle of enjoining good and restraining from evil is, in the words of Imam Muhammad Baqir, the basis of all Islamic injunctions. This principle keeps a Muslim in a state of seeking continuous reform and making incessant struggle against corruption and disorder: ***"You are the best nation that has been raised for mankind, for you exhort to what is good and restrain from evil."*** (Surah Ale Imran, 3:110)

The Holy Prophet has said: *"You must exhort to do good and restrain from evil, otherwise Allah will put you under the control of the wicked. Then the good among you will be praying, but their prayer will be in vain"*. (Nahjul Balaghah)

**(26) Monotheism:** Islam is above all a monotheistic religion. It does not accept any doubt in regard to theoretical and practical monotheism. In Islam all ideas, behaviors and conducts begin with Allah and end with Him.

Islam severely rejects every kind of dualism, trinity, and polytheism and is opposed to every idea that is contrary to monotheism such as the recognition of two independent, fundamental and exclusive principles of Allah and Satan, Allah and man or Allah and matter. Whatever is done, must begin and end with the name of Allah and must be done for His sake and to gain His pleasure. Anything which does not

conform to this conception is un-Islamic. In Islam all paths lead to monotheism. Islamic morals spring from monotheism and end there. The same is the case with Islamic education, Islamic politics, Islamic economy and Islamic socialism.

In Islam every act begins with the name of Allah and with His help. *"In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful"*. *"All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the universe"*. Everything takes place with the name of Allah and with His support. *"I put my trust in Allah and on Him should the believers rely"*.

Islamic monotheism is not a mere idea and a dry belief, as Allah is not separate from His creatures. He is with all of them and encompasses them all. Everything begins with Him and ends with Him. The idea of monotheism encompasses the entire existence of a real monotheist. It controls all his ideas, faculties and behaviour, and gives them direction. That is why a true Muslim thinks of Allah in the beginning, in the middle and in the end of every act he performs. He never associates anything with Allah.

**(27) Doing Away with Intermediaries:** Though Islam acknowledges that Allah's blessings come to the world through certain intermediaries and believes that the system of causation operates both in material and spiritual affairs, it does not recognize any intermediary as far as the question of worship and adoration is concerned. As we know, all other revealed religions have been deformed and altered, and as a result the individual has forgotten the value of his direct contact with Allah. Now it is supposed that there exists a gap between man and Allah, and only the priests and divines can be in direct communication with Allah. Islam considers this idea to be polytheistic. The Holy Qur'an expressly says: ***"If My bondmen ask you about Me, tell them that I am close to them and respond to the prayer of those who pray."*** (Surah al-Baqarah, 2: 186)

**(28) Possibility of Coexistence With Those Who Believe in Only One Allah:** From the point of view of Islam, the Muslims under certain conditions can live amicably in their country with such followers of other religions, as originally believed in monotheism, though now they have deviated from their original beliefs, such as the Jews, the Christians, the Magians etc. But the Muslims cannot live together in a Muslim country with the polytheists. Anyhow, in their own higher interest the Muslims can conclude with the polytheists, a peace treaty, a non-aggression pact or an agreement on any specific subject.

**(29) Equality:** Equality and non-discrimination are the principal articles of Islamic ideology. From the point of view of Islam all men are essentially equal. They have not been created in two or more than two strata. Blood, race or nationality is not the criterion of superiority. A Qurayshi sayyid and a negro are equal to each other. In Islam freedom, democracy, and justice are the by-products of equality.

From the point of view of Islam an individual can be deprived of his civil rights in his own interest and in the interest of society. But that can be done under very specific condition and that too only for a limited period only. Anyhow this provision has nothing to do with any racial discrimination. From Islamic point of view temporary slavery is allowed only for reformatory and educational purposes. This question has no economic and exploitative significance.

(30) Rights, duties and punishments are bisexual in Islam. Man and woman both are human beings and as such they have many common characteristics. But as they belong to two different sexes, they have some traits which are peculiar to either of them only. Their rights, duties and punishments are common to both the sexes. In this respect there is no difference between a man and a woman. The right of acquiring knowledge, the right of worship, the right of choosing a spouse, the right of owning and disposing of property are all unisexual. But in some secondary cases where the question of sex has some special significance, the position of man and woman, though equal, is dissimilar and bisexual.

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