

## **Establishment of Quranic System of Life**

Zamir Akhtar Khan

Qur'an is not a religious scripture in its restricted sense. It is a book of guidance *for* mankind. Its guidance covers all spheres of life ranging from individual to collective aspects. It starts from beliefs and culminates in establishing a just socio-politico-economic system. The first step towards establishment of Quranic system of life is to disseminate and propagate the knowledge and wisdom of the Holy Qur'an on the highest intellectual level. It will help achieve the revitalization of faith among the Muslims in general and their intelligentsia in particular, this will lead us to the ultimate objective of bringing about an Islamic Renaissance wherein the true Islamic way of life will reign supreme. In the following paragraphs practical measures will be suggested for establishing the Quranic system of life.

### **Living by the Qur'an (Hukm wa Iqamah):**

Establishment of Quranic System means molding the personal life of the individual and the collective life of the community according to the teachings of the Quran. Obviously, we are required to believe in the Quran, study it and ponder over its meanings in order that we may act upon its teachings in our actual life. The Quran is not a book of magical formulas or mantras which are chanted to ward off evil. It is not a mere instrument for attaining the blessings. Its Aayaat are not to be recited only for the sake of getting a reward from Allah (SWT) or for reducing the agony of death. Nor is it a subject of investigation and research in the sense that it should provide a good exercise to our intellectual and imaginative \faculties so that we could indulge in all sorts of abstruse

thinking and useless hair-splitting in the interpretation of its meanings,

The Quran, as we all know, is Hudal lin-naas,<sup>1</sup> guidance for mankind. The purpose for which this Book has been revealed will be realized only if people act upon its teachings and make it a guide for them in every sphere of their life. The Holy Prophet (SAW) has made it crystal clear that no useful purpose will be served by reading the Qur'an and pondering over its meaning if we do not try to mold our lives according to its injunctions.<sup>2</sup> If we disregard its injunctions, the reading of the Qur'an, instead of doing us any good, will undermine our faith. In this context, the Holy Book speaks in unequivocal terms:

*"And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, such are the disbelievers"*<sup>3</sup>

We have further clarification of and emphasis over this point in the following traditions of the Holy Prophet (SAW):

*"None of you can become a believer until all his desires are subordinated to what I have brought (i.e. The Revealed Guidance)".*<sup>4</sup>

*"One who deems lawful what the Qur'an declares unlawful is not a believer in the Qur'an (i.e. in reality, he does not hold it to be a Divine Revelation)."*<sup>5</sup>

### **Individual's quest for Truth:**

The case of a person, who is still exploring and wandering in quest of truth, and has yet to decide after a careful study of the Qur'an whether it is the absolute truth or not, is different. However, the person who believes in the Qur'an to be the Book of Allah (SWT) cannot benefit from it at all unless he studies it with a firm resolve that, however heavy the odds and however great the sacrifices, he would abide by its injunctions and modify his character according to its teachings. As it is understood by the literal meanings of the term *Tilawat*, the Qur'an yields

its perfect guidance only to those who surrender themselves to it and ponder over it long and assiduously. Self-abandonment combined with a prolonged concentration born of a deep cultivated self-discipline generates that state of submissiveness and self-effacement which has been referred to in the tradition viz. "None of you can become a believer until all his desires are subordinated to what I have brought."<sup>6</sup>

A person who desires to get full guidance from the Qur'an has, first of all, to put himself into this state of mind and afterwards as his contact with the Qur'an becomes closer and closer he will continue to get greater and greater enlightenment from it. The Holy Qur'an affirms:

*"While as for those who accept guidance, He increases their guidance and bestows on them their piety."*<sup>7</sup>

### **Qur'an: An instrument of spiritual development:**

If a person actually starts moving under the guidance of the Qur'an, he will soon find himself marching steadily along the straight path, and he will go on gradually rising to the higher and higher planes of spiritual development. On the other hand, if a person has not made up his mind to transform himself in accordance with the Qur'anic teachings, the time he spends on reciting the Holy Book will be just wasted. Recitation of the Qur'an, instead of doing him any spiritual good, may actually prove to be curse on him.

Imam Ghazali (RA) has quoted some mystic as saying that "Some readers of the Qur'an do not get anything from it except the imprecation which it pronounces upon them. When he recites "Allah's curse is on the liars" while he himself is a liar, he becomes the target of this curse." Similarly, when a reader reads: "So, if they do not desist (from devouring interest), give them an ultimatum of a war on

behalf of Allah and His Messenger.”<sup>8</sup> and if he himself violates this injunction of Almighty Allah (SWT), he becomes the addressee of this ultimatum. In the same way, when those persons who give short measure or short weight and those who indulge in backbiting and carping, read “Woe to those who give less in measure and weight”<sup>9</sup> and “Woe to every slanderer and backbiter”<sup>10</sup>, then they themselves become the addressees of these dreadful warnings.

Reasoning on this line, we can easily understand what a man will gain from the recitation of the Qur'an if his actions are not in accordance with its teachings.

#### **Qur'an is not mere intellectual exercise:**

As for those who study the Qur'an for investigation and research, for reflection over its meanings and for writing or compiling books on it, if they do not put the injunctions of the Qur'an into practice, we can say that they are the worst sinners. Their study and research is like indulging in a fascinating intellectual exercise which tantamounts to mere toying with the Holy Book, or even making fun of it. Consequently, instead of guiding them to the right path, it causes them to deviate and go astray:

*“By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads to the right path.”<sup>11</sup>*

The so-called scholars of the Qur'an disseminate all sorts of mischievous interpretations and become instrumental in misleading and misguiding the people in different ways. Their whole thinking on the Holy Book is motivated by a vicious attempt to run after the abstruse and the recondite. The Qur'an has aptly described their motives in doing so in the following words:

*“So they follow the part thereof that is figurative, seeking discord and searching for its hidden meanings.”<sup>12</sup>*

**Mind-set of Sahaba (Companions of the Prophet)**

The Companions (RAA) understood the supreme importance of incorporating teachings of the Qur'an into their lives. That is the reason why those, who had a special aptitude for reflecting over the Holy Book and would spend years together pondering over a single Surah, made such long pauses in their study. It was not so much for the assimilation of the fruit of their research or the consolidation of their theoretical knowledge as for developing a capacity for acting upon the Qur'anic teachings. They would not go ahead until they were satisfied that they were able to put into practice what they had learned from the Qur'an. Perhaps the reader will be a little surprised to know that by learning a Surah by heart, the Companions (RAA) did not mean only preserving it in memory but also comprehending its meanings clearly and molding their character in the light of the guidance they received from it. Positively, what the Companions (RAA) actually meant by Hifz al-Qur'an (memorizing the whole Qur'an) was that its words should be preserved in a person's memory, its knowledge should be reassured up in his mind, and its teachings should be reflected in his conduct so that his whole personality was imbued with the spirit of the Qur'an and the deepest recesses of his being were illuminated by its light.

**Holy Prophet: An embodiment of the Qu'ran:**

The type of relationship between human conduct and the Qur'an visible in the lives of the Companions (RAA) was to be found in its most consummate and perfect form in the life of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Ummul Momineen Ayesha (RAA) - wife of the Holy Prophet (SAW), who had the most intimate knowledge of his life and who as such was destined to play the role of a teacher for the Ummah – was once questioned about the Prophet's (SAW) mode of life. She answered “His

character was an embodiment of the teachings of the Qur'an."<sup>13</sup> This extremely wise and judicious answer brings into relief the deep impact which the Qur'an must have on the life of a true Muslim.

### **How to benefit from Quran?**

In short, the best way to benefit from the study of the Qur'an is that we should go on mending our ways and modifying our conduct in the light of its teachings as we go on developing a deeper and deeper understanding of its meanings, so that the Qur'an permeates into the composition of our character. Otherwise there is a danger that according to the pronouncement of the Holy Prophet (SAW) that "the Qur'an is a plea either for you or against you"<sup>14</sup> - the knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an may become an irrefutable argument against us for our damnation, and may become instrumental in bringing us a greater punishment from the Almighty (SWT) for our negligence and indifference.

### **Application of Qur'anic Injunctions:**

Here it is necessary to explain that Amal bil-Qur'an (acting upon the Qur'anic injunctions) has two phases - individual and collective. There are injunctions which pertain to a person's individual or private life and which he can carry out immediately. These become binding on him as soon as he comes to know of them. There is absolutely no justification on his part for any postponement or delay in the matter of incorporating these injunctions into his conduct. The punishment for negligence shown in this matter appears in the form of the withdrawal of Divine Grace and his consequent failure to live up to the principles embodied in the Holy Book. This gaping disparity between his word and deed, and between his belief and action, which is so hateful to Almighty Allah (SWT) amounts

to hypocrisy. This very fact has been referred to by the Holy Prophet (SAW) in these words:

*“Most of the hypocrites among my followers will be the readers of the Qur'an.”<sup>15</sup>*

Therefore, the only safe course for a person would be that he should immediately begin to act upon what he has been able to learn from the Qur'an.

### **Responsibilities of an individual vis-à-vis Society:**

As regards the injunctions that pertain to such affairs of our collective life as are beyond the control of an individual person, it is clear that he will not be bound to act upon them immediately. Nevertheless, it is his duty to try as far as possible to change" the existing conditions and help in the establishment of a society based on the Qur'anic principles so that it may become possible to act upon the entire teaching of the Qur'an. Under these circumstances, the efforts made by him in this direction will be "an excuse from him with his lord"<sup>16</sup> and will become a substitute for actual compliance with the injunctions that pertain to collective life. However, if he does not make any effort in this direction and remains content with himself and with his personal devotions, with his personal survival and the well-being of his family, then there is a danger that even his enactment of Qur'anic injunctions relating to personal and private matter will resemble the reprehensible practice of those whom the Qur'an censures in the following words:

*"Then do you believe in a part of the Scripture and reject the rest?"<sup>17</sup>*

### **Forceful Qur'anic Terms: Hukm & Iqamah**

The most general and widely used term in the Holy Qur'an for acting upon its teachings is Hukm bima anzalallah (to judge in the light of what

Allah has revealed). For grasping the real significance of the word Hukm, which is the core of this term, we should consider its use in the following Ayaat:

*"The authority is for none but Allah"*<sup>18</sup>

Here this word has been used in the sense of "command" or "authority" "And thus have we revealed it to be a criterion for judgment, in Arabic"<sup>19</sup>

Here the Qur'an has been styled as Hukm, which has been translated here as "a criterion of judgment."

*"Surely, We have sent down to you (O Muhammad!) The Book in truth, that you may judge between men by that which Allah has shown you."*<sup>20</sup>

Here a derivative of the word Hukm has been used to indicate the mission of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

Ayaat 44 to 47 of Suran al-Ma'idah categorically states that those who do not judge by the light of the Qur'an are none other than the unbelievers, the wrongdoers and the rebels.<sup>21</sup>

If we try to express the sense of the word Hukm in one word, the nearest English equivalent that strikes our mind would be "judgment" or "decision". However, in order to understand its full significance we must think of the two basic constituents of a person's conduct i.e. thought and action. When a viewpoint or a thought so completely dominates a person's mind that it comes to determine his judgment or decision, his action will be automatically subordinated to it. Therefore, for expressing the idea of putting its injunctions into practice, the Qur'an has employed the highly significant term Hukm bima analallah (deciding every issue in the light of what is revealed by Allah). The use of this term indicates that a person will act upon the teachings of the Qur'an only when his thinking is dominated by the Holy Book and the knowledge of Reality imparted

by it has gone deep down into both his heart and his mind.

Another term that is used by the Qur'an to denote the idea of acting upon the teaching of the Holy Book is Iqamah (standing fast by or establish). It has been used in Aaya 69 of Surah Al-Ma'idah, which says about the Jews and the Christians that:

*“And if only they had stood fast by the Torah and the Gospel and all the revelation that were sent to them from their Lord, they would surely have gotten provision from above them and from underneath their feet.”<sup>22</sup>*

Again it is used in ayah 71 of the same Surah, which makes the announcement:

*Say: “O people of the Book! You have no ground to stand upon unless you stand fast by the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been sent down to you from your Lord.”<sup>23</sup>*

The term “Hukm bima anzalallah” pertains to making the conduct of the individual conform to the teachings of Qur'an, but "Iqamah ma unzila minallah" pertains to the collective conduct of the community. It signifies the establishment of a system of life based on social justice that ensures perfect balance and harmony between the individual members of the society and its different classes. When people come to owe allegiance to such a perfect social order, the possibility of tyranny and transgression, cruelty and injustice is absolutely ruled out and all the doors of political oppression and economic exploitation are closed. This is why the ayah 69 of Surah al-Ma'idah quoted above specifically refers to the general social well-being and economic prosperity as an inevitable concomitant of such a system. The establishment of a perfectly just and equitable social order is the very purpose for which Allah (SWT) sent His messengers and revealed His

Books:

*“We have surely sent our messengers with clear signs (i.e. miracles and proofs) and sent with them the Book (i.e. revealed guidance) and the Balance (i.e. the Shari’ah) so that mankind may stand by justice.”<sup>24</sup>*

In the second ruku' of Surah AI-Shura we have a detailed discussion of this topic. Here we have a clear picture of the coordination subsisting between the fundamental Islamic concepts, mentioned in a highly meaningful and judicious sequence. These include Allah's authority or decision, establishment of Deen, belief in the Revealed Book, and the establishment of the just social order.

To begin with, we have the fundamental principle that Allah's authority of decision is supreme, and in ayah 10 we have, accordingly, been directed to recognize and uphold it under all eventualities:

*“And whatever it be wherein you differ, the decision thereof is with Allah.”<sup>25</sup>*

Ayah 13 of the same Surah refers to the manifestation of Allah's authority or decision in the form of Deen and Shari'ah:

*“The same Deen has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah, which We have revealed to you (O Muhammad!) and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus, namely, that you should establish Deen and make no divisions therein.”<sup>26</sup>*

Then in ayah 15, the Holy Prophet (SAW) has been instructed to declare his belief in the Book and to strive for the creation of a just Society by practically dispensing Justice to the people:

*“Now then, for that (reason) call (them to the same Deen) and stand steadfast as you are commanded, and follow not their desires but say: “I believe in the Book which Allah has sent down and I am commanded to do justice among you.”<sup>27</sup>*

This whole discussion is summed up in ayah 17:

*“It is Allah who has sent down the Book in truth and the Balance (i.e., Shar'iah, by which to weigh conduct) And what will make you know that perhaps the Hour is close at hand?”<sup>28</sup>*

Here again, as in the ayah from Surah Al-Hadeed quoted above, we have the word meezan (or balance) which is very significant term used at different places in the Qur'an. Maulana Sahbbir Ahmed Usmani (RA) has offered a comprehensive explanation of the term in the following words:

*“Allah (SWT) has guided man to devise the material balance by which material objects are weighed. He has also granted man the intellectual balance, which is another name for sense of justice and' fair play. But most important, the balance granted to us IS the Religion of the Truth which settles the basic issue of the respective right of the Creator and His creatures and by which all Issues can be justly decided.”<sup>29</sup>*

According to the Qur'an, the real cause of people's deviation from the -true religion, and of the chaos and anarchy in the world is their wicked tendency to dominate over others and keep them under subjugation. In ayah 14 of this very Surah where the Muslims are exhorted to curb schismatic trends, the cause of people's breaking away from the Religion of Allah (SWT) and forming sects has been pointed out:

*“And they became divided only after knowledge had reached them, through inequity and oppression among themselves.”<sup>30</sup>*

We are now led to consider the final fruit of molding our thought and action 11 according to the teachings of Qur'an. It should be, as we have discussed above, the establishment of Allah's Sovereignty and the rule of justice in the world. When such an order is set up, the world

becomes free from all sorts of inequity and oppression. Then the priests and divines cannot install themselves as god heads: the wealthy can no longer keep the circulation of wealth confined among themselves, and there is no possibility of any kind of coercion and exploitation. All become servants of Allah (SWT) and begin to behave towards one another like brothers. Their rulers consider it their foremost duty to safeguard the rights of the weak at all cost, and not to allow the powerful to tyrannize over them in any way.

### **Responsibility of Muslims:**

The establishment of such a just and equitable order in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an is the bounden duty of its followers. Its fulfillment is the believers' collective responsibility for which they will be answerable to the Almighty (SWT). It is, therefore, time they should clearly understand this responsibility and strive hard to discharge it. Perhaps that is why at the end of the discussion in Surah Al-Shura which we have reproduced briefly above, there is a mention of the Day of Judgment in the words: "Perhaps the Hour is close at hand". It implies the warning that we should not be guilty of any negligence and delay in this important matter lest we should be suddenly overtaken by the final Doom. This duty that we owe to the Book of Allah (SWT) will be fulfilled if we actually set up a system of social equity so that "mankind may stand by justice" and their rulers "may do justice among them" It will be seen that we have the foundation and structure of this system in the fundamental principles of our Deen and its code of life that have been enunciated by the Qur'an.

### **Practical Measures Vis-à-vis Individuals:**

It may well be asked as to what practical measures should be adopted for

the fulfillment of this duty. Although a complete answer to this question is beyond the scope of this paper, still a few remarks on this topic will not be out of place here. In the first place, let it be understood that the enforcement of the fundamental principles of Deen in the society and the establishment of a just and equitable order as envisaged by the Qur'an should not be conceived on the pattern of any secularized social, economic, or political movement, nor should we strive for the achievement of this splendid ideal as we do for the success of these movements. It would be fraught with grave danger and may even be suicidal to do so. We must know that just as there is only one method of bringing about the transformation of an individual as required by Islam, similarly there is only one method of effecting an Islamic Revolution in the society. So far as the individual is concerned, we should first make the Qur'an dominate his heart and mind so that his feeling, thinking, and reasoning may function in consonance with the Qur'anic spirit and his actions may, consequently, accord with Qur'anic teachings; and likewise for the change in society demanded by Islam, we have first to illumine the minds and hearts of its intelligentsia with the light of the Qur'an so that they are intellectually and spiritually transformed. After the edification of the intelligentsia who are the brain of the community, the light of the Qur'an could easily spread to other people who are, so to speak, the limbs of the community and generally follow its brain. Thus the heart of the whole community will beat in unison with the teachings of the Qur'an and the fundamental principles of Allah's Deen will come to operate and prevail in the form of a perfect system of collective justice.

There is no other way of bringing about this revolution, and the plea that this goal could be achieved by launching a political movement

by exploiting the emotional attachment of a Muslim people to their hereditary religion is absolutely vain, and making such an attempt would be like building sand castles.

Hoping to be excused for this digression, I must repeat that the duty of acting upon the teachings of the Qur'an - which assumes two forms, *Hukm bima anzalallah* and *Iqamah ma unzila minallah* - is an absolute imperative upon the Muslims, both individually and collectively; and, therefore, each one of us according to his means and capacity and the whole Ummah according to its strength and resources should earnestly endeavor to discharge this great responsibility.

## End Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> AI Baqarh : 185
- <sup>2</sup> Imam Zainud Deen, Jami-ul-Uloom wal Hikam, Dar-ul-Marifah, Beirut. P364
- <sup>3</sup> AI-Ma'idah : 44
- <sup>4</sup> Sharah AI-Sunnah
- <sup>5</sup> Tirmidhi
- <sup>6</sup> Sharah AI-Sunnah
- <sup>7</sup> Muhammad : 17
- <sup>8</sup> AI-Baqarah : 279
- <sup>9</sup> AI-Mutaffifin : 1
- <sup>10</sup> AI-Humazah : 1
- <sup>11</sup> AI Baqarah: 26
- <sup>12</sup> Aal e Imran : 7
- <sup>13</sup> Imam Ismaeel AI Bukhari, AI Adab-ul-Mufrad, Maktabah Ramania, Karachi.  
Page 99
- <sup>14</sup> Jami-ul-Uloom wal Hikam. P364
- <sup>15</sup> Ahmed
- <sup>16</sup> AI Aaraf : 164
- <sup>17</sup> AI-Baqarah : 85
- <sup>18</sup> Yusuf: 40
- <sup>19</sup> AI-Ra'ad : 37
- <sup>20</sup> AI-Nisa : 105
- <sup>21</sup> AI-Ma'idah : 44 - 47
- <sup>22</sup> AI-Ma'idah : 66
- <sup>23</sup> AI-Ma'idah : 68
- <sup>24</sup> AI-Hadeed : 25
- <sup>25</sup> AI-Shura : 10
- <sup>26</sup> AI-Shura : 13
- <sup>27</sup> AI-Shura : 15
- <sup>28</sup> AI-Shura : 17
- <sup>29</sup> Tafseer-e-Usmani, page 717 explanatory note 10.
- <sup>30</sup> AI-Shura : 14

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