Chapter 3

Tadabbur - E- Qur’an

The Tadabbur-i-Qur’an is a monumental commentary of the Qur’an written by Amin Ahsan Islahi (d: 1997). Extending over nine volumes of six thousand pages, this masterful work was completed in a span of twenty two years. It is a unique commentary by a person no less unique. ‘Abide by the truth even if your shadow deserts you’, was his life-long motto and anyone who has had a chance to carefully read this commentary will testify that Islahi has tried his utmost to live up to this motto. He has tried to develop deep to ascertain the meaning and purport of the Qur’anic verses and has openly confessed where he has been unable to do justice with understanding some verse.

If Islahi’s mentor, the phenomenal Qur’anic scholar, Hamid Uddin Farahi (d: 1930) founded the view that the Qur’an possessed structural and thematic nazm (coherence; meaningful arrangement), it is Islahi who established in his commentary that this was actually correct.

The main features of the nazm elaborated by Islahi in this commentary may be summarized thus:

1. The surahs of the Qur’an are divided into seven discrete groups. Each group has a distinct theme. Every group begins with one or more Makkan Surah and ends with one or more Madinan Surah. In each group, the Makkan Surahs always precede the Madinan ones. The relationship between the Makkan Surahs and Madinan Surahs of each group is that of the root of a tree and its branches.

2. In every group, the various phases of the Prophet Muhammad’s mission are depicted.

3. Two surahs of each group form a pair such that each member of the pair complements the other in various ways. Surah Fatihah, however, is an exception to this pattern: it is an introduction to the whole of the Qur’an as well as to the first group which begins with it. There are also some surahs which have a specific purpose and fall in this paired-surah scheme in a particular way.
4. Each surah has specific addressees and a central theme around which the contents of the surah revolve. Every surah has distinct subsections to mark thematic shifts, and every subsection is paragraphed to mark smaller shifts.

Following is a brief description of the seven Qur’anic groups

- **Group I** – Surah Fatihah (1) – Surah Maidah (5)
  Central Theme: Islamic Law.

- **Group II** – Surah An‘am (6) – Surah Tawbah (9)
  Central Theme: The consequences of denying the Prophet (sws) for the Mushrikin of Makkah.

- **Group III** – Surah Yunus (10) – Surah Nur (24)
  Central Theme: Glad tidings of the Prophet Muhammad’s domination in Arabia.

- **Group IV** – Surah Furqan (25) – Surah Ahzab (33)
  Central Theme: Arguments that substantiate the prophethood of Muhammad (sws) and the requirements of faith in him.

- **Group V** – Surah Saba (34) – Surah Hujrat (49)
  Central Theme: Arguments that substantiate the belief of Tawhid and the requirements of faith in this belief.

- **Group VI** – Surah Qaf (50) – Surah Tahrim (66)
  Central Theme: Arguments that substantiate the belief of Akhirah and the requirements of faith in this belief.

- **Group VII** – Surah Mulk (67) – Surah Nas (114)
  Central Theme: Admonition (indhar) to the Quraysh about their fate in the Herein and the Hereafter if they deny the Prophet (sws).
This is just a brief introduction of the thematic and structural coherence in the Qur’an as presented by Islahi in his Tadabbur-i-Qur’an. The masterpiece needs to be studied by every person who wants to understand the Qur’an so that he may have an idea of the giant leap forward it has brought about in the field of Qur’anic Exegesis.

For quite some time, there was a theory that there is no coherence in Qurān. It was asserted that Qurān is a collection of different verses having no logical connection with each other. The theory and some of them proposed chronological order on the bases of which the Qurān should be rearranged. On the other hand Qurān has the most important place in the Muslim community. They derive all religious guidance and aspirations from the Qurān.

The concept of nazm in Qurān adopted by Islahi in his exegesis lead him to interpret Qurān in many places different from the other ‘Ulama. Another characteristic of Tadabbur-i-Qurān is specification of the addresses of the text. This is important to determine implication of the tenants of Qurān upon the Muslims.92 Tadabbur-i-Qurān is influencing Islamic literature more than any other Qurānic exegetical work in the modern times. No future scholar undertaking interpretation and exposition of Qurān or working on Islamic themes, can afford to ignore this monumental exegetical work of Islahi.

For example the very title of Richard Bell’s work on the Qurān is The Qurān, Translated, with a Critical Rearrangement of the Suras 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1937-39).


For detail, Hafiz Iftikhar Ahmad, Al Shaikh Ameen Ahsan Islahi wa Mihiijah fi Tafsirah Tadabbur-e-Qurān (Shaikh Ameen Ahsan Islahi and his Methodology in his tafsir Tadabbur-e-Qurān) (Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Arabic, Islamia University, Bahawalpur, 1996). Another work is of Herman Roborgh, A Critical Analysis of Amin Ahsan Islahi’s Approach to Understanding the Qurān’, (Ph.D. thesis Aligarh Muslim University, India, 2006).

Consult for details, Javid Ahmad Ghamidi, “Islamī ‘alum par Tadabbur-i-Qurān kay ‘Asrāt,” speech delivered at Islahi Seminar, Islamabad, 13 December 1998 (Vedio Cassette available at Danish Sara, Lah
By analyzing the contents of each surah, the central theme and subject of each surah is ascertained. As a result, each surah comes out to be a very effective and eloquent oration on a specific subject. The analysis of the discourse has been conducted in a manner so that the sequence of the verses is brought out of its own accord and its relationship with the central theme is also unveiled.

It should be kept in mind that the Almighty has invested this Qur’an with the status of a barometer between good and evil and then handed it to us. If this barometer does not remain with us or if we are not aware of the method of using it, we will have no means to distinguish good from evil. With great sorrow, I am compelled to submit that we Muslims find ourselves in this situation. Though we have the Qur’an with us, we do not have its true knowledge. It is generally read to gain reward or to transfer reward to a deceased or selling its copies. The more vehemently a person takes its name, the farther away is he from its true comprehension. If we want to keep this ummah alive in its capacity as the Muslim ummah, then this will not be achieved by merely talking about achieving this unity or by blindly reading the Qur’an.

An Analysis of the Meanings of the Surahs of Group six

➢ Surah Mumtahinah

The surah can be divided into the following six sections:

Verses (1-3)

The surah begins with a warning sounded to the weak Muslims who had secret ties of friendship with the Idolaters of Makkah even after they had expelled the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims from their land -- their only fault being that they had accepted faith. It is pointed out that these people are not worthy of such ties as they will try all they can to make the Muslims reject faith; furthermore, if family ties at the expense of sincerity with Allah and the Prophet (sws) are established then such relationships will
never be of any use to them in the Hereafter: they will stand severed in the next world.

**Verses (4-7)**

A few glimpses of the episode of the Prophet Abraham (sws) are depicted and the addressees are directed to learn a lesson from it. He had proclaimed total acquittal from his nation unless they professed faith in the one and only Allah. In this regard, they are told to hold steadfast to Abraham’s prayer (du`a) which he had often said to persevere in the difficulties of his own Hijrah. Moreover, glad tidings are given to them that it is quite possible that these people, from whom they are directed to break their ties, may accept Islam in the near future.

**Verses (8-9)**

An explanation of the fact that what has been asked is dissociation with those who had waged war with the Muslims and compelled them and the Prophet (sws) to leave their homes; those who have not done so, should be dealt with befittingly.

**Verses (10-11)**

Certain directives relating to the women who had migrated from Makkah are given: they should only be accepted after they have been examined as regards their faith. If it is proven that they have migrated only for the cause of Islam, only then should they be included in the ranks of the Muslims. It is not lawful for the Muslims to keep idolatrous women in marriage. They should liberate them and mutually exchange the dowers.

**Verse (12)**

The Prophet (sws) is directed to take a covenant from women who come to him for the cause of Islam and intend to lead their lives according to its directives.
**Verse (13)**

At the very end of the surah, Muslims are warned not to establish friendship with the Jews and the disbelievers. Both will meet the same fate: they have been shaken from their very roots.

**Collection of the Qur’an: Amin Ahsan Islahi’s View**

These verses urge the Prophet (sws) to be patient on the hastiness and various new demands of his opponents. It was with the sole support of divine revelation through which the Prophet (sws) was able to truly discharge the heavy responsibility of openly warning his people imposed on him by the Almighty. He was like a soldier, fighting at a battle front, who could not move even one step without guidance from his Lord. In order to torment him, his opponents would raise all sorts of demands and objections before him. In this manner, they would try their utmost to check his advance in his preaching mission. Earlier in this sūrah, one of their demands is cited: they would ask the Prophet (sws) to bring forth the Day of Judgement which he was threatening them with; if it was certain to come, why was it not arriving? Similarly, they would object that if the Quran is God’s word, why was it not revealed all at once? In short, they would shower objections from all sides, and the Prophet (sws), on the other hand, would wait for divine revelation to answer all these objections. It was through divine revelation that his heart would receive strength, his soul would be rejuvenated, his intellect guided and his determination strengthened. Consequently, it is evident both from the Quran and Hadīth that whenever there was a delay in the advent of revelation because of some divine wisdom, he would keep looking up to the heavens. This impatience and keenness would also be evident when Gabriel would deliver the revelation to him. Like an enthusiastic student he would want to learn all the revelation as soon as possible and also preserve it fully lest even a drop of this blessed rain go waste. With this background in mind, let us now deliberate on these verses.
By the words 

لا تَحْرَكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلْ بِهِ

the Prophet (sws) has been stopped from showing hastiness and impatience which would overcome him whenever a revelation would descend upon him. Although the subject of keenness and hastiness is very commonly found in the literature of most languages, it is almost impossible to express in words the hastiness and impatience with which the Prophet (sws) would be overcome when he would receive a revelation after a long gap and in the face of his opponents idle talk. When a child is hungry and his mother presses him to her bosom, he wants to drink all the milk in a single breath; when a traveller exhausted from traversing a desert sees a bucket full of water after a long wait, he wants to gulp all of it in one sip; similarly, if a person, suffering from the pangs of being away from his beloved, receives a letter from her, he would want to read each and every word of it in a single glance. Although these examples are deficient, yet as indicated earlier, they can give us some idea of the hastiness and anxiety so spontaneously expressed by the Prophet (sws) whenever he would be blessed with divine revelation.

All these motives were very genuine and noble; however, it was God's wisdom that the Quran be revealed gradually – just as it was being done. Consequently, the Prophet (sws) was repeatedly urged to exercise patience. In Sūrah Tāhā (114-115) too he has been similarly urged. I have already referred to some aspects of this there. Here too the subject primarily is the same. However, with respect to his mental state during the time of revelation of this sūrah, here he has been subsequently assured of the preservation of the Quran also. The Almighty has taken it upon Himself to collect and arrange it and to recite it before the Prophet (sws) and make him memorize it as well as to explain any verse of the Quran which needs elaboration. The Prophet (sws) was told to be content on whatever portion of the Quran he would receive and not show hastiness and anxiety about it. He should also not worry about its preservation. He should leave all these to his Lord. Every task would be completed at its appointed time in accordance with the wisdom of God.

The word جَمْع is a comprehensive one: it means preservation in the heart of the Prophet (sws) and also bringing together all the parts of the Quran. Consequently, the Prophet (sws) would continuously receive guidance regarding the placement of the revealed verses in various sūrahs. As a result, he would direct the collectors to
insert these verses at their specific places. They, of course, obeyed these instructions diligently.

A further arrangement that was made by the Almighty was that in each Ramadān, the Prophet (sws) would read out the Quran revealed till that time to Gabriel in order to safeguard any loss from memory. It is evident from various narratives that in the last Ramadān of the Prophet (sws) this reading took place twice. The word قُرْآنَه points to this reading.

The verse فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ implies that the Prophet (sws) should not ask that the Quran be quickly revealed to him. He should leave the matter to God, Who would reveal it in a specific amount as per His wisdom. He will also arrange to preserve and collect and arrange it. The Prophet’s responsibility is to only follow the recital of what has been read out to him of the Quran. He should read it, act on it and call people towards it. Also, he should pay no heed to the demand of people who are asking for its revelation in one go.

I will now present excerpts from the tafsīr of my mentor Imām Hamīd al-Dīn Farāhī which he has written while explaining these verses. He writes:

When the Prophet (sws) would receive divine guidance, he would think that he was being given a great responsibility and that he was being entrusted with a great thing; the slightest of blemish or loss of even a single letter would hold him accountable before God. Simultaneously, he wished to receive more and more divine revelation for any part of it might be instrumental in giving guidance to his people. Both these aspects are very evident regarding this matter. Consequently, the assurance sounded to him in this sūrah takes into consideration both these aspects.

First, the Quran was collected and arranged in the lifetime of the Prophet (sws) and recited to him in a specific sequence. If this promise was to be fulfilled after his death, he would not have been asked to follow this new recital [referred to by the words: “So when we have recited it out, follow this recital”].

Second, the Prophet (sws) was directed to read the arranged Quran in its new sequence … this directive means that the Prophet (sws) must have communicated the final arrangement of the Quran the way it was finally recited
to him. And this arrangement must have been the same as the one found in the guarded tablet (the *lawh-i mahfūz*). This is because the final recital had to match the original recital.

Third, after this collection and arrangement, the Almighty explained whatever He intended to from among specifying a general directive or vice versa, furnishing supplementary directives and reducing the scope of some directives.

**Farāhī further states:**

All these conclusions are evident from the Quran and also corroborated by Hadīth literature. Consequently, the Prophet (sws) would read out whole sūrahs of the Quran to people and this could not have been possible unless they had been read out to him in their specific sequences. The Companions (rta) would listen to and preserve the Quran in accordance with this arrangement and abide by it. It is known that the Prophet (sws) would direct the Companions (rta) to place the revealed verses of the Quran at specific places of specific sūrahs and the Companions (rta) would obey this directive. Then when some explanatory verse would be revealed, the Prophet (sws) would have it written at either the place immediately following the verses which needed this explanation or at the end of the sūrah in case these verses related to the whole theme of the sūrah.

Deliberation reveals another distinct feature of these explanatory verses: they themselves contained words which would show that these verses have in fact been revealed as explanation. They would generally be of the wording: كَذَٰلِكَ يَبِينُ اللهُ أَيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ (thus does the Almighty explain His verses for people … )

Similarly, it is known from authentic and agreed upon narratives that once the whole of the Quran had been revealed, Gabriel recited the complete Quran to the Prophet (sws) in its real sequence. This clears many doubts about the sequence and arrangement of the Quran.

*(Tadabbur-i Quran)*
1. To swiftly learn it, do not hastily move your tongue to read it. It is our responsibility to collect and to recite it. So when we have recited it, follow this recital. Then upon us is to explain it.


Gleanings from Tadabbur-i Qur‘an (Last Verse of Surah Fath)

Translation

Muhammad is God’s Messenger and those who are with him are stern to the disbelievers but merciful to one another. You will find them ardently kneeling and prostrating to seek God’s grace and pleasure. They can be distinguished by marks of prostration on their faces. Thus is their example in the Torah and in the Gospel their example is like a sown land which puts forth its shoot and supports it; then it became strong and firm upon its stalk, delighting the farmers so that it enrages the disbelievers through it. God has promised those from these people who embraced faith and did good deeds forgiveness and a rich reward

Explanation

Here, at the end, there is a reference to the attributes of the Prophet (sws) and of His Companions (rta) as well as to the gradual dominance of Islam as mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel.

The purpose of citing this reference is to show to the Muslims how they are portrayed in the previous scriptures. In this manner, they are conveyed glad tidings and also become aware of the qualities God wants to see in them and which are the ones which will introduce them among others.
The second purpose for this citation is to warn the People of the Book that they must not deliberately sound as if they know nothing and also not intentionally conceal the truth. The Almighty had informed them earlier about these details so that when the time came they would bear witness to them; however, it was their misfortune that instead of bearing witness to them, they showed animosity and opposition.

The third purpose of this citation is to make evident to the Muslims that the Almighty will grant them dominance in Arabia but this would take place gradually; neither should they become impatient nor lose hope. They should patiently and diligently nurture the seed they have sown. The time will come when the Almighty will make it into such a strong and expansive tree that the whole world will seek refuge in its shade.

The expression مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللهِ has generally been translated such that مُّحَمَّدٌ is regarded to be mubtada’ (inchoative) and رَّسُولُ اللهِ to be the khabr (enunciative); however, in my opinion، رَّسُولُ اللهِ is an attribute and ‘atf al-bayan. The predicate is stated ahead as: أَشِدَّاء عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاء بِئْنَهِمْ. This is an allusion to a parable mentioned in the Torah in which the whole community of the Muslims is portrayed such that Muhammad (sws) is their chief and leader. If رَّسُولُ اللهِ is regarded to be the predicate thereby regarding مُّحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللهِ as a complete sentence so that a new sentence begins with وَالَّذٌِنَ مَعَه، this eloquence of the discourse will be lost. The real majesty of this whole group will become evident only when Muhammad is presented as its ultimate exemplar, as indeed he was.

The words وَالَّذٌِنَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاء عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاء بِئْنَهِمْ express a distinctive feature of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta): they are stern and rock-hard to the disbelievers but as soft as silk to one another. In other words, all their honour and support is faith-specific. If people who do not share their religion try to use them for their interest, they will not even be able to insert a finger between the edifices which constitutes the believers. On the other hand, they are very merciful and affectionate to the faithful. This subject is discussed in the same context in verse 54 of Surah Ma‘idah thus: أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنٌِنَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكَافِرٌِنَ (54:5) (who are soft towards the believers and stern towards the unbelievers, (5:54)). Since both discuss the same topic, I am reproducing below what I had written so that the real meaning of this part of the verse becomes evident in the light of the parallel verse:
The word أَذِلَّةٌ is the plural of ذَلٌِْلٌ. In Arabic, this word connotes both a positive and a negative meaning, as I have explained while writing the tafsir of verse 123 of Surah Al ’Imran. When it connotes its positive meaning, as is the case here, it means soft-spoken, gentle, obedient, humble and docile. The word ذَلُوْلٌ also occurs in this meaning. An obedient camel is called ناقة ذول.

The word أَعِزَّةٌ is the plural of عَزٌِْزٌ. It is used in contrast with أَذِلَّةٌ. It means something hard, difficult, burdensome, difficult to surmount and non-docile. If it is said: "هُوَ عَزٌِْزٌ علٌَ" it would mean: “that thing is very burdensome for me; to control it is very difficult for me.”

In this regard, I had explained the meaning of شَدٌِدٌ عَلٌَ in the following words:

Same is the meaning of شَدٌِدٌ عَلٌَ. A beautiful couplet of a Hamasi poet reads:

إذا المرء أعٌته المروءة ناشئا
فمطلبها كهلا علٌه شدٌد

At another place, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said:

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone … Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed. (Matthew, 21:42-44)

In the prediction of the Torah cited earlier from Deuteronomy, these words also occur:

Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand. At your feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction. (Deuteronomy, 33:3)

If the underlined words are reflected upon, one can see that the translation has rendered them ambiguous; however, what is said is no different to what is mentioned by the Qur'an in the words: إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمُ فَخَرَجَ شَطْأً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ.

After the parable of the Torah, the words: وَمَثَلُهُمْ فًِ الِْْنجٌِلِ كَزَرْعٍ أَخْرَجَ شَطْأً فاَسْتَغْلَظَ فَاسْتَوَى
refer to the parable mentioned in the Gospel. In the parable of the Torah, the devoutness in worship of the believers, their supremacy and their compassion and justice with other nations are portrayed. In the parable of the Gospel, their gradual rise is depicted: though they will have a very frail beginning, yet one day they will become such a strong and expansive tree that many great nations will seek refuge in its shade.

In the Gospel of Matthew, this parable is mentioned thus:

He told them another parable: The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches. (Matthew, 13:31-32)

With slight variation, this parable also occurs in chapter 4 of the Gospel of Mark and chapter 8 of the Gospel of Luke. The Qur'an has explained this parable by saying that Islam will pass through the same stages regarding its gradual rise to dominance as the stages of a sown crop. The seeds which are cultivated in a land initially put forth thin shoots; then these shoots receive support as a result of which these shoots become strong and sturdy and the plants stand on their stems. Similarly, a day will come when the seed of truth sown in Arabia will bear fruit and reach full bloom. The planter of this seed will be overjoyed to see it; however, this will cause heartburn and anger in those who tried to stop its development.

The particle لِ in لَِغٌِظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ is to express the consequence and the word الْكُفَّارَ is highlighting the real meaning of the parable. Since believers are implied in the parable, here at the end by saying that their rise and ascent will be a cause of yearning and envy for the disbelievers, it is as if the entity for which the parable was stated has been referred to. It is very common in the Arabic language that at the end of a parable or a metaphor a word is used which points to the entity for which a parable or a metaphor is mentioned so that the real purport becomes evident. In the parable of the light mentioned in Surah Nur, a clear example of this is present.

The words وَعَدَ اللهُ الَّذٌِنَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْهُم مَّغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظٌِمًا at the end bring glad tidings of the promise of divine help and support for whose substantiation the predictions of the Torah and the Gospel were mentioned: people who became exponents of the
qualities stated and also remained firm in faith and deeds will be granted forgiveness and great reward by the Almighty. As for those, who lay claim to faith but their sympathies are more with the enemies of Islam than God and His Prophet (sws) and who, at Hudaybiyyah, showed the weakness mentioned earlier in the surah, if they do not mend their ways will meet the fate destined for the opponents of Islam.

**Bismillāhi'l-Rahmāni'l-Rahīm**

*Meaning of the Verse*

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

**Historical Status of the Verse**

A study of the Quran reveals that since ancient times there has always been a mention of the meanings encompassed by this verse in revealed scriptures in one form or another. It may be the first time that these meanings are framed in such a sublime diction in the Quran, yet what they convey is so close to human nature that one strongly feels that the Almighty must also have revealed them in the very beginning. The Prophet Noah (sws), when his followers were boarding the ark, said something quite similar, as has been mentioned in the Quran:

And he said: Embark therein! In the name of Allah will it sail and cast anchor. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful. (11:41)

Similarly, the Prophet Solomon (sws) began his letter, addressed to the Queen of Sheeba, with these blessed words, as has been quoted by the Quran:

It is from Solomon and it [begins] in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful. (27:30)

**Attributes of the Almighty in the Verse**

Three attributes of the Almighty have been mentioned in the verse: Allāh, Rahmān and Rahīm. We shall briefly explain them.

Allāh: The word Allah has been made by prefixing the article alif-lām to the word ilāh. From the earliest times, this name has always been used for the Almighty specifically
as the Creator of the Universe and of every living being. This connotation of the word existed in pre-Islamic times as well in Arabia. The people of Arabia practised polytheism, yet they never equated any of their deities with the Almighty. They always acknowledged Him as the sole Creator of this world. They worshipped other deities only because they wrongly believed that these deities were close to God and could intercede for them. Their views have been stated in detail in the Quran:

We worship them only that they may bring us nearer to God. (39:3)

And if you ask them: who has created the heavens and the earth and subjected the sun and the moon [to His law]? They will reply: Allah. How are they then deluded away [from the truth]. It is Allah who gives abundantly to whom He pleases and gives sparingly [to whom He pleases]. Allah has knowledge of all things. If you ask them: who is it that sent down rain from the clouds and therewith revived the earth after it became dead. They will say: Allah. (29: 61-63)

Ask them: who is it that sustains you from the sky and the earth, or who is it that has power over your hearing and sight and who brings forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living and who directs all affairs? They will say: Allah. Then ask: Are you not afraid of Him? (10:31)

Rahmān and Rahīm: The noun Rahmān is the intensive form of Fa‘lān (eg: Sakrān and Gadbān), while the noun Rahīm is an adjective of the form Fa‘īl (eg: ‘Alīm and Karīm). A look at the usage of the Arabic language shows that the form Fa‘lān expresses great fervency and enthusiasm, while the form Fa‘īl expresses steadiness and perpetuity. In other words, the first depicts vigour and the second constancy in God’s mercy. A little deliberation shows that the Almighty’s mercy on His creation possesses both these characteristics. The enthusiasm and warmth is complemented by permanence. It is not that His attribute of Rahmān induced Him to create, and He later forgot to foster and sustain His creation. Indeed, He is nourishing and taking proper care of them because He is Rahīm as well. Whenever a person invokes His help, He hears his calls and accepts his prayers. Also, His blessings are not confined to this world only. Those who lead their lives according to the path prescribed by Him shall be blessed with eternal life and joy. It must be conceded that all these aspects cannot be comprehended without an integrated understanding of these attributes.

(Tadabbur-i-Quran)
Tazkiyatun Nafs

Tazkiyatun Nafs is an Arabic-Islamic term alluding to "tazkiyah al-nafs" meaning "purification of the self". This refers to the process of transforming the nafs (carnal self or desires) from its deplorable state of ego-centrality through various spiritual stages towards the level of purity and submission to the will of Allah. Its basis is in learning the shari'ah and deeds from the known authentic sunnah ('ilm) and applying it in your own deeds through life resulting in spiritual awareness of Allah (being constantly aware that He is with us by His knowledge and knows all that we do, along with being in constant remembrance or Dhikr of Him in your thoughts and actions) being the highest level of Ihsan.

In 1945 Islahi asserted in a lecture that purification of souls is a noble objective and thus could not be handed over to those mystics who are ignorant of the divine law. Islahi put forward his concept of purification of soul in this book. He delivered lectures on the subject in early 1950's and then in 1980s. These lectures were compiled and published in two volumes. Volume I discuss the literal meaning of word tazkiyah, its objectives and scope. He divides it in three categories; purification of knowledge, actions and purification of human relations and behaviour. In part I, he criticises the existing views of mystics on the subject and concluded that the parlance of mystics is contrary to Qurān and Sunnah. Qurān is the only source of purification of belief system. But how a person can benefit from Qurān? Islahi also highlighted the conditions and prerequisites of deliberation in the Qurān. Along with Qurān, Islahi stresses adoption of the model of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) for the purification of soul. In the same part, Islahi discusses various threats to such a move i.e., purification of knowledge and how it can be safeguarded. Part I comprises the acts of worship like namaz, rowzah, and hajj what are the possible threats to these acts and how it can be avoided? The second volume of the book discusses man’s relations with God, inner-self and other humans. Islahi says that shukr (gratefulness), 'ibadat (worship) ita'at (obedience), ikhlāī (sincerity), muhabat (love), khawf (fear of
God), hayā (modesty), wafā (loyalty) etc., should be the basis of man’s relation with God. The book elaborates man’s relation with inner-self. Last portion of the book discusses individual’s relation with family and parents.

Required behaviour towards poor orphans and neighbours and, relation with society and state. The book is important as Islahi himself declared it as containing the essence of his religious thought. Its English translation has appeared, titled, Self-Purification and Development, by Sharif Ahmad Khan from India.

Islahi, Tawḍīḥāt -i-Nafs, I: p.10.

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**Purification of Deeds**

By purification of deeds we mean that a particular deed should itself be justified and also be done with sincere motives. In other words, motivation is something through which we can determine the purity of a deed. Sometimes, an act appears to be very virtuous at the outset but when scrutinized, the motives working behind it turn out to be awfully heinous. Such an act is not accepted by God. Similarly, sometimes a doctor removes an ailing part from a patient’s body, but his act can never be branded as cruel because his motive was to save his patient from fatal effects that could have spread in his entire body. A Municipality sometimes demolishes a building, but we don’t declare it a tyrannous act only because it aims at the welfare of that locality’s populace.

On the contrary, consider that someone has opened an orphanage, or built a mosque, or erected a school in order to serve the Almighty and his own people. However, if his ill motives are disclosed to the masses as to pile up wealth or to show off no one gives any value whatsoever to his undertakings.

This is why Islam attaches such great importance to the motives behind an act, so
much so, that even a deed very pious and good in nature does not carry any value unless done with pure motives. Likewise, someone may not be held responsible for a bad act which has emanated from him unintentionally or for an evil act which he somehow perceived good and carried it out with pure intentions.

The question regarding good or bad motives of our acts originates from the freedom of intent. Man is not a passive entity, an immobile tree or senseless animal whose acts must be judged in their apparent form while no thought is given to the motives working behind them. No doubt, ignoring the motives ultimately means that we are equating man to animal.

It is for this reason that Islam gives importance to only those deeds which are done with freedom of intent. The deed which one is forced to do or which one performs unintentionally or accidentally has no importance in Islam. In other words, the question of acceptance or rejection is only concerned with deeds carried out knowingly and with proper intention. Allah will certainly accept an act done with pure intent whereas the one done with impure intent will be dealt with accordingly no matter how decent it appears to be at the outset. The following narrative sheds light on this very reality:

‗Umar (rta) narrates that he heard the Prophet (sws) say: Actions are judged by intentions. Every person will be held accountable for his intention. If someone migrated really in the way of Allah and His Messenger (sws), then his migration will be counted so. If someone migrated to meet a mundane purpose or to marry a woman he loves then his migration will be counted for the act before him. (Bukhārī, No: 52)

Islam attaches such importance to intention that sometimes an evil act is added to a person’s account before he actually commits it because of his firm intention. Similarly, a person is not deprived of the reward of a virtuous deed which he intends to do but somehow fails to do so. The reason being that he had full intention of carrying out that deed, but failed because circumstances prevented him. The following two narratives throw light on two aspects of the issue at hand:

Abū Bakrah (rta) narrates that the Holy Prophet (sws) said: ‘If two Muslims draw their swords to slay one another, both of them, the victim and the victor, will go to
Hell’. I asked: ‘O Allah’s Prophet (sws), the murderer going to Hell is quite clear, but how can the victim go there?’ The Prophet (sws) replied: ‘Because he also had intended to kill his rival’. (Bukhārī, No: 30)

Motives of Deeds

After explaining the importance of intentions and motives working behind deeds, it seems appropriate that we analyze the human psyche and find out the real factors, which prompt us on doing certain acts. There could be many motives of human activity but a thorough study of human psyche shows that these can be arranged under five major categories. These are:

i. Needs
ii. Desires
iii. Sexual Desires
iv. Emotions
v. Divine Spark

i. Needs

By needs we mean the basic necessities of life on which our existence depends. These needs force a man into various acts. For example, he eats when he feels hungry; drinks when he feels thirsty; puts on clothes to cover himself; finds shelter and makes weapons to ensure safety from dangers; gathers food for adverse weather conditions and builds houses to face hot and cold weather.

ii. Desires

Desires are a developed form of needs. Basic needs can be fulfilled by the very simplest of ingredients that can satisfy our needs. For instance, we can do with very rough form of clothes and very simple substance of food. However, human nature is instituted such that man does not only want to fulfill his needs through meager and
simple resources but he has a taste for a variety of foods and loves different kinds of
drinks. Deciding to cover his body, he ends up adorning it with the finest of attires.
He does not just long for a simple shelter to protect his self from hot and cold
weather, but often yearns to live in very well-decorated and comfortable lodgings.
These desires prompt him to tread many paths in this world. Actually, all the colors of
the world are the natural outcome of these desires. All the advancements in the fields
of education and civilization were spurred by these desires. It is these desires which
are at work behind all that is done in art and industry. These desires have developed
a moral value which renders the craving for respect and repute, the hunger for
immortality and the struggle for pre-eminence and domination, the most important
elements in life.

iii. Sexual Desire

Although sexual desire could have been placed under the category ‘Desires’, we
have portioned out a separate place for it because the basic drive here is sex. Many
other desires also come into being as a necessary consequence of this drive. It is
difficult to list the achievements that have been influenced by man’s sexual desires
because there is much controversy as to what has really been prompted by the
desire for sex. However, it is an undeniable fact that this desire has led man to most
of the magnificent works done in the fields of art, industry, literature, culture and
civilization. Any other factor could hardly claim such great influence on these fields.

iv. Emotions

By emotions we mean love and compassion, hostility and hatred, envy and jealousy,
honor and nobility, wrath and revenge, etc. These emotions have deep effects on the
human mind and manifest themselves dynamically. They force a person to carry out
various acts. Many of humankind’s feats – both good and bad – are a manifestation
of these emotions. They are analogical to steam, which can be very useful if kept
controlled, but causes irreparable loss if let loose. So this force is very useful if
handled wisely, otherwise it can be a source of grave dangers for humanity.
v. Divine Spark

By divine spark we mean the divine spirit that the Almighty has blown into man. In the words of the Holy Quran:

I breathed into him of my spirit. (15:29)

This divine spark in man is the reason that the angels prostrated before him. It enables him to differentiate between right and wrong. He has learned to appreciate moral values because of this quality. He is attracted to God because he has received this light from the Almighty. It always drives him upward if mundane needs try to overpower him. All positive qualities of man, which distinguish him from other creatures, spring from this source. This is the spark which subsequently made him capable of receiving revealed guidance. In short, it is this divine motive that prompts man to do good works and, subsequently, encourages him whenever he does so. Conversely, it rebukes him if he commits wrong. The Quran has also used the term Nafs-i-Lawwāmah (reproaching self) for it. The Almighty swore by it in Surāh Qiyāmah of the Quran and offered it as a very important argument present within man as proof of the Hereafter. Those who follow the theory of evolution presented by Darwin are not aware of this divine spark in man. This ignorance either leads to their failure to explain certain human inclinations or takes them to wrong conclusions in this regard. These people wander in search of some broken links in the chain of so-called evolutionary theory whereas they should seek the link provided by God, which the Holy Quran alludes to.

Two essentials

As mentioned earlier, we need to seek the pleasure of God and follow the Sharī‘ah in order to keep these motives on the straight path. Consequently, the real task is to learn how to keep the target of pleasing God before our eyes and never ignore it in all worldly affairs. To my mind, two things can help us accomplish this task: remembering Allah and keeping the thought of the Hereafter fresh in mind.
**Remembering Allah**

By remembering Allah we mean not only remembering Him occasionally but also keeping this remembrance alive in our heart. We should remember our Lord at every turn we take during a day. This will surely prevent us from taking any wrong turns. We must remember Him during every activity we undertake. This will surely save us from wandering far away from the real path. This remembrance should be done with an open mind, being fully conscious and appreciative so that it does not become a mere verbal exercise. It is not sufficient to repeat the name of Allah but to always keep in mind what is communicated to us through His attributes regarding his interactions with His creatures. In addition, we should always seek His guidance and help and also ask for His forgiveness for our mistakes. Due to this remembrance a man’s heart is fully devoted to his God and if by any trick of Satan he stumbles, God protects him.

Another fact that needs to be kept in mind is that when a person forgets his Lord, he in fact forgets himself because he no longer remains aware of the purpose of his presence in this world. Who has created him? Where will he go after this world ends? Who blessed him with all the blessings he enjoys? Why has he been blessed? Who and why has bestowed upon him all the powers and abilities he has? How do these blessings stand in conformity with his status in this world? As soon as he forgets Allah, he forgets all these things. Once he decides to blindly fulfill his mundane desires, he falls to a place even worst than the one occupied by animals. The Holy Quran has alluded to this reality in these words:

They forgot Allah and He made them unaware of themselves. (59:19)

This verse shows that remembering Allah keeps us on the right path when accompanied by the thought of the Hereafter. The words: ‘while standing, sitting and lying’ indicate that this remembrance is required to be performed in active life. Man does not need to abandon all his worldly activities in order to remember the Master of this universe.
Concern about the Hereafter

Concern about the Hereafter is in fact an aspect of the remembrance of the Almighty. This remembrance is useful only on the condition that we add concern of the Hereafter to it. It means that man pays heed to the fact that his life and the blessings of this world are mortal. All those who came into being are bound to die. Death is certain to visit all the infants, the young and the old. Nobody knows how long his breath will last. The rich and the destitute, the learned and the ignorant, the weak and the mighty all are subject to death. Every one has to face the darkness and loneliness of the grave. Allah has not created this world without any purpose and He is not affected by our decision of whether we spend our life following the right path or dissipate it in worldly affairs. He will certainly count our each and every saying and deed. We will not be able to hide anything from Him. Our dishonesty and deception will be caught. No interceder will be able to save us except with the permission of God. Nothing will bring us close to God except belief and virtuous acts. Allah is just as well as merciful and forgiving. Both His mercy and justice will be demonstrated in a perfect balance in the court of the Hereafter. Whoever is punished will suffer forever and whoever is blessed with Paradise will enjoy an eternal life. The truth of the matter is that we can neither imagine the severity of the torture nor the blessings that Allah has in store for us in the Hereafter.

(‘Tadhkiyah – i – Nafs’)

The Philosophy of Prayer Timings

The timings stipulated for the Prayer are most appropriate for worship as well as for the acceptance of supplications. They are soothing for the psyche, in accordance with the timings of prayer of the celestial bodies and other elements of nature. If we ponder over the timings of Fajr, Chāsht, Zuhr, ‘Asr, Maghrib, ‘Ishā and Tahajjud, it becomes evident that each one has special importance with regard to the above
mentioned factors.

Fajr, in particular, is the time of peace, tranquillity and mental relaxation. After a night long rest, when a person wakes up, he is fresh and contended. Prayer marks the start of a new beginning. Life demands a new vigour and this determination requires Divine guidance and providence.

At the Zuhr time, to a person of sharp intellect and a keen eye, a profound reality reveals itself and invites him to bow down: the sun, which was elevated to the level of the Divine in the past by fools, itself begins to bow down before the Lord and thus speaks through this celestial event that it is not the Creator but a creation and that it is not to be worshipped; it is but a worshipper itself.

The time of ‘Asr heralds a new reality: every high has a low. Nothing in the universe is above this law. Perpetuity is only for God – The Eternal. Just like the day dawned, completed half of its cycle and came at the verge of dusk, similarly this world was created, would reach its zenith and one day would come to an end. This silent reminder at the time of ‘Asr presses a person to take heed to the Hereafter and bow down before the Lord for penance.

The door opens to a new world at the time of Maghrib. This transition is identical to the one that takes place at the time of death and man enters into a new world – The Hereafter. The Creator brings the sign of night after day and of the moon-light after the sun rays. The day declines and stars throng the sky. The noise subsides and the heat of the day cools down; a tired person feels anew in the still of the night. A moron and an unemotional person may not feel this great change, but a person of sharp intellect and discerning mind can feel this celestial change in the universe. It is not possible for such a person as realises this event to remain indifferent to the omnipotence of the Creator Who brings this change in the heavens. If he has even a few sparks of life in his heart, he will take heed and bow down before his Creator and Lord – the Creator whose power and strength enabled Him to enshroud the world with the blanket of the night in the flash of an eye.

Ishā’s time is the time of accountability. The darkness of the night swallows the last remains of movements and motion. Man seeks rest, abandoning everything else so as to revitalise himself for the next endeavour. This marks the most appropriate moment for a person that before going to bed he should prostrate himself before his
Lord. For this may become his last resting period and he may never wake up in this world.

Tahajjud is the time of whispers and supplications. No other time of the day can be compared with this one because of its peaceful nature. In peace are the heaven and the earth at this time. Everyone sleeps. Probably Satan also slips into slumber. Only the Merciful Lord remains awake – the One Who never sleeps, or the most fortunate of people. If a person gets up and stands in the silvery shadow of stars, he will actually feel that the doors of heavens are open and the near sky is resounding with calls for peace and penance. The serene and sedate nature of this time are known to the worldly and the wise alike. Sleepers consider it to be the best of times for sleep, while the ones who remain awake think it to be the most desirable time to be awake. Both of them are right in their thinking, for the time which is best for sleep can be best for staying awake, as only the best of sacrifices is worthy in the eyes of the Lord. That is why the Almighty has specifically fixed this time for the prayer of the righteous. They get up from bed at this time to forsake sleep to beseech and invoke the blessings of Allah. Allah Himself descends to the lowest heaven to shower His mercy and to forgive all those who seek His mercy and forgiveness at this time. These are the timings of the prayer. How evident it is that each of them is so meaningful and apt for worship and casts immense influence on a person.

("Tadhkiya i Nafs")

The Philosophy of Fasting

When a person is overcome by material desires and cravings, he becomes negligent of his spiritual being and indifferent to the obligations imposed on him by his Creator. To help man in combating this onslaught, the Almighty has made fasting compulsory once every year for one whole month -- the month of Ramadān. With Ramadān comes restriction on our eating and marital relationship. Compared with some other forms of worship subscribed by Islam, fasting is somewhat demanding because its aim is to discipline and channel our soul. This objective, obviously, can only be
achieved by a tough training programme.

When we are having sehri, all of a sudden we hear the Adhān and we stop eating at once. Howsoever strong our need or want to do certain things may be, they are not allowed to us during our fast; we do not give in to our wishes and temptations. This restriction remains till the maghrib Adhān as God has appointed this time for us to discontinue our fast. Therefore, as soon as the Mu’adhīn begins his Adhān, we rush forth to eat and drink. After this, there is no restriction throughout the night. We spend the whole month of Ramadān in the same way. There is no doubt in the fact that we feel a certain amount of weakness and inability to perform to our full capacity but the patience and piety we acquire in return is as essential to the soul as air, water and food are to the body, for man does not live by bread and water alone but also by that which comes from his Lord.

Fasting is obligatory for every adult and sane Muslim. If during Ramadān, a person is ill or if he is travelling or if he is unable to fast owing to some reason, then he is required to keep the fasts he has missed whenever he is able to do so.

We gain a lot from fasting. The greatest achievement is that a man’s soul is liberated from the shackles of his wishes and desires and moves a step further towards the lofty summits of knowledge and intellect. He moves a step closer to the Kingdom of Allah by rising above all mundane needs. For this purpose, fasting puts a restriction on all such things which cause an increase in our desires and incline us towards pleasure. When a person endures such constraints, he is able to break his bond with this world and come closer to his Creator. It is this aspect of fasting because of which God says that fasting is for Him and He alone will bestow the reward for it.

The second achievement of fasting is that the doors of temptation and revolt are closed to a great extent. It is the tongue and the private parts on which the devil attacks the most. The Prophet (sws) said that whosoever could give him guarantee of the two things: one between the two cheeks and the other between the two legs, he would guarantee him Paradise. Fasting puts a check on both these instincts and weakens all inclinations of going overboard with these two. It makes it easy for a person to do all things that are pleasing to Allah and refrain from those which are displeasing to Him. It is this fact which the Prophet (sws) has stated by saying that Satan and his army are chained during the month of Ramadān.
The third thing which a person gains from fasting is that his actual distinction freedom of will is given a great chance to develop and strengthen so that his character becomes adorned with the qualities of resolve and determination. He gets disciplined enough to control all sorts of emotions and reactions rising in his self. If a person’s will power is weak he can neither control his wishes from exceeding the limits nor can he remain steadfast on the Shari‘ah. Moreover, he cannot keep such emotions as greed, provocation, hatred and love in check. This requires patience, and, to be patient, it is necessary that he possess a strong power of decision making. Fasting increases this power and disciplines it. It is this power that helps a person to stand for the truth instead of evil. This is the reason that the Prophet (sws) called fasting a shield and asked Muslims to use it in combating evil by just saying: ‘I am fasting’.

All these things can be attained from fasting, but for this it is necessary that the person who is fasting should refrain from all wrong doings, which if present during a fast, obliterate all its blessings. Although these wrongs are many, but there are some about which everyone should be aware of at all times.

One of these wrongs is that people tend to make Ramadān a month of festivities and fun time. They think that they are not answerable for the extravagance made in this month. They relish everything they eat. The result is that instead of trying to discipline themselves they end up pampering themselves. Throughout their fasts they keep dreaming about the delicious things they will eat once the fast is over. The result is that they end up learning nothing from their fasts.

To prevent such a thing from happening, it is necessary that a person should eat just enough to keep him working and not make eating the sole object of his life. Whatever is obtainable without too much of an effort should be eaten with thankfulness to the Almighty. Whatever is presented by the family should be consumed without fuss even if it is not tempting. The rich instead of overindulging themselves should give more to the needy and the poor. This is something which increases the blessings of fasting and has been commended by the Prophet (sws).

The second wrongdoing one often comes across is that because hunger provokes makes anger, people instead of making fasting a way of correcting it give hunger as a reason to justify it. They tend to quarrel at the slightest pretext with their wives and children and those under them. They do not hesitate to utter any slighting remark
which comes to their mind and sometimes if matters get out of hand even resort to abusing and beating. After this they tend to defend themselves by saying that things like this happen during fasting.

One solution to this problem is that a person should try to remain silent in respect of his fast and at least for this month put a lock on his tongue. Allah’s Prophet (sws) says that if a person keeps telling all sorts of true and false things during his fast, then God does not need his abstinence from food and drink.

The second remedy for this is that whatever time he has to spare, he should spend it in the study of the Quran and Hadīth and in understanding his religion. He should try to learn some of the supplications mentioned in the Quran and also those narrated in the Ahadīth. In this way, he will keep away from the above mentioned activities and later use this store of prayers to remember his God.

The fourth wrongdoing in this regard is that sometimes a person does not fast for God but just under pressure of his family or to prevent other people to think badly of him or just to put on a religious posture. This is also quite obviously something which negates the purpose of a fast.

The cure for this is that every person should keep reminding himself about the importance of fasting and think that if he is going to abstain from food and other things then why not for Allah. Apart from Ramadān, he should keep additional non-obligatory fasts and try to conceal them and hope that the obligatory ones will also one day be for Allah alone.

The Blessings of Spending in the Way of Allah

Spending in the way of Allah is a great virtue. It occupies paramount importance in divine religions. All Prophets of Allah emphatically urged their followers to spend in the way of Allah. In this article, we shall take a brief look at some of the blessings of spending in the way of Allah.

True Attachment with God

The greatest benefit of spending in the way of Allah is that it establishes a strong bond between a person and his Creator. A man’s heart generally lies where his
wealth is. If he hides away his wealth in some secret place, he finds himself thinking about that very place all the time. In case of investment in a business or a company, he cannot help being pre-occupied with the continued viability of the investee. In short, what is evident from practical experience is that man’s heart is affixed to his wealth. Keeping in view the foregoing explanation, it can be asserted that anyone who spends in the way of Allah would find that he is in an everlasting communion with God since he has entrusted Allah with his wealth. In this regard, Jesus (sws) is reported to have said:

Lay up for you treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Mathew 6:20-1)

Increase in Wealth

The fourth benefit of spending in the way of Allah is that it augments the wealth of the spender. The Quran says:

The parable of those who spend their substance in the way of Allah is that of a grain of corn: It grows seven ears and each ear has a hundred grains. Allah gives manifold increase to whom He pleases and Allah cares for all and He knows all things. (2:261)

The Quran sheds light upon this fact in the following words as well:

Allah blights usury and augments what is spent in His way. (2:276)

This spending no doubt will bear fruit in the Hereafter but in this very world the person who spends in God’s way enjoys a fabulous increase, for the needy people who are helped pray for their benefactor. And, as these people are pitiful, they much deserve that their prayers be granted by the Merciful Master. From some Āhadīth, we find that even the Angels of God pray for such a person:

The Prophet said: ‘Every day two angels come down from Heaven and one of them says: ‘O Allah! Compensate every person who spends in Your cause’, and the other [angel] says: ‘O Allah! Destroy every miser’. (Bukhārī: No. 1374)
It is, however, to be noted here that this ‘increase’ in no way means that the spender would find his safe overflowing with wealth or that his bank balance would increase or that the value of his property would augment overnight. Rather, it implies that the optimal benefit one can attain from the use of wealth is afforded to the person who spends in Allah’s way. How he succeeds to please the Lord, others remain unsuccessful; the profound respect and love he earns in others’ hearts, others obnoxiously obsessed with piling up their riches cannot even visualize and, above all else, peace of mind, the spiritual elevation and satisfaction that he drives from this spending are in fact blessings which have eluded many grand emperors of this world.

( Islahi’s Tadhkiyah - i – Nafs)

Mabādi-e-Tdabbur-e-Qur’an

Principles of Interpreting the Quran

On the principles of interpreting the Holy Quran one should proceed with this topic by firstly summarizing briefly the different approaches that commentators belonging to various schools of thought adopted for the commentary of the Holy Quran after the blessed era of the Holy Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta). This will be followed by a brief critical analysis of these approaches – a discussion which will be culminated in an exposition of the principles that I find fit and appropriate for commentary of the Holy Quran, sanctioned by both reason and practical adherence of the earliest commentators among the Companions of the Holy Prophet (sws). This format of speech, would be more beneficial for the audience as it will not only expose them to different approaches adopted by commentators of the Holy Quran after the blessed era of the Holy Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) but also let them know what is required for a comparative and analytical study of these approaches – hence a helpful endeavour in arriving at an opinion about the merits and demerits of each of these approaches.
A study of all commentaries written during the course of history reveal that there are four major schools of thought, provided a holistic view is taken while analyzing differences in their approach towards commentary of the Holy Quran. I intend to introduce you to all these four schools and their respective principles of interpreting the Quran one by one.

**Muhadithīn (Hadīth Experts) or Traditionalists**

The most credible school of thought among commentators of the Holy Quran is that of Hadīth experts or traditionalists. According to them, while writing a commentary of the Holy Quran, commentators should rely on explanations found in the Hadīth narratives, sayings of the Companions (rta) and those of early commentators of the Holy Quran. In their sincere effort to follow this approach of Quranic commentary, they have provided under each verse of the Holy Quran as many relevant traditions as they could find in the corpus of Hadīth narratives, sayings of the companions and the early commentators. Sometimes, these traditions would be inter-contradictory but they would be quoted as such without seeking any reconciliation between them or preferring one over the other. On this pattern, one famous commentary that was written – still available with us – is the commentary of the Imām Ibn Jarīr Tabarī, Jāmi‘ al-Bayān. It is, in fact, a reservoir of all narratives about Quranic commentary and the sayings of prominent early commentators of the Holy Quran. Under each verse, you will find some of these narratives and sayings but you will not be in a position to distinguish what is correct and what not. All commentaries written after him reiterate more or less what he already wrote. Like a candle lights another candle, this commentary has kindled many other commentaries. You will find that most succeeding commentaries are merely an abridged version of this commentary. The celebrated commentary of Ibn Kathīr also emanates from this commentary.

**The Approach of the Scholastics**

When the Muslims expanded their empire and came into contact with non-Arab nations, they had an exposure to the academic disciplines and philosophies in vogue in those regions. As a result, their outlook underwent phenomenal changes, of which the outcome was what is termed as ‘īlm al-kalām (scholasticism). This new wave of
scholasticism begot more than one school of thought, of which the representatives tried to popularize their views by committing to writing commentaries of the Holy Quran. They wrote less commentaries of the Holy Quran as they afforded arguments in favour of their views extracted from exotic disciplines and philosophies they came across. Of all the commentaries written on this pattern, two commentaries gained utmost fame and widespread recognition among the Muslims, namely, Kashshāf by Imām Zamakhsharī and Tafsīr Kabīr by Imām Rāzī. The former is an organ of the Mu‘tazilites and the latter is a mouthpiece of the Ash‘arites. The Tafsīr of Imām Ibn Jarīr among traditionalist commentaries has the same status as the Kashshāf of Imām Zamakhsharī and Tafsīr Kabīr of Imām Rāzī have among scholastic commentaries. After them, whoever went about writing a commentary on their pattern mainly retraced their footsteps only.

The Approach of the Muqallidūn (imitators)

By the muqallidūn, I am not referring to imitators of juristic schools and/or their juristic verdicts but those commentators who have merely imitated their predecessors while writing a commentary of the Holy Quran. For instance, most of the commentaries written after Imām Ibn Jarīr, Imām Zamakhsharī and Imām Rāzī have merely retraced their steps in their respective realms by either reproducing their whole discourse or writing a sort of abridged version of their commentaries. In other words, only a few commentaries, if any, have been written after them on an independent basis. This situation reaches such an extent that it almost became a standard for commentators of succeeding generations to write a commentary in an imitation of some acknowledged commentator.

The Approach of the Mutajaddidūn (Modernists)

Mutajaddidūn means people who are influenced by modern western thoughts and views. Like our scholastics laid foundations of a new discourse under the influence of Greek philosophy and tried to mould the Holy Quran as per their preconceived notions, and became so engrossed with their scholastic excursions that they ignored all other realities, modernists came under the sway of modern western ideology and grappled with the Holy Quran to ruthlessly twist its message in order to bring it in line
with the western ideology. In our nation, the pioneer of this movement was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khān. After him, this trend has continued to swell than to decline like a snowball. God only knows when this is going to end and when the book of God will be secured from the onslaughts of self-centred and ignorant people.

**The Correct Interpretive Approach**

Now I will present before you the approach of the commentary of the Holy Quran that I deem correct. This approach is also sanctified by reason, as it is attested by textual evidences that have reached us. I have reason to believe that it is this very approach which our early scholars used to follow while writing a commentary of the Holy Quran.

This approach emanates from and is based on some sources which may be divided into two categories:

First is the category of those sources which are absolutely certain and conclusive. They do not admit of a shadow of doubt about their validity. In writing a commentary of the Holy Quran, these sources should be taken guidance from in every situation. A commentary written thus though cannot be expected to be error free because the element of human error cannot be eliminated altogether but it would be more appropriate, if not, in the end result, then at least in the perspective of sources employed to write it.

**Language of the Quran**

The first source is the language in which the Holy Quran has been revealed. I do not intend to imply that Arabic which is generally written and spoken nowadays. It has little to do with the language of the Holy Quran. The Arabic language in which the Holy Quran has been revealed cannot be found in the journals that are now published in Egypt or Syria nor in the works penned by authors of these regions. For the language of the Holy Quran, we will have to go to Imru’ al-Qays, Labīd, Zuhayr, ‘Amr Ibn Kalthūm, Harith Ibn Hilizzah and discourses of the Arab orators of the times of ignorance.

We will have to gain so much competence in this literature that we become capable of distinguishing the sound from the unsound, while understanding their idioms,
appreciating their style of expression, assimilating their criteria of judgement for merits and demerits of a certain piece of literature, absorbing their style of brevity as well as explanation, developing a good knowledge base regarding their historical allusions and other indications. It is obvious that to achieve this capability is no child’s play. But they who want to understand the word of God cannot do otherwise than to acquire this capability in order to fathom the divine scripture. They ought not to confine themselves to making selections from the early translations and commentaries.

It is incumbent on them to interpret a word, an idiom and everything else in the text of the Holy Quran according to the ma‘rūf usage. To interpret these in accordance with rare meanings (shādh) is an egregious mistake, which we must avoid at all cost. It is an undeniable fact about the Holy Quran that it has been revealed in the ma‘rūf diction of the Arabic language. It is devoid of any rare usage of a word or an idiom. Those who did not keep this fact in consideration sometimes interpreted a certain part of the Holy Quran in accordance with the rare usage of a word or idiom. Generally this error does not culminate in a grave outcome except for that the verse/s is not interpreted according to the ma‘rūf usage. But sometimes it does cause a huge loss. So many deviant factions have emerged and taken a strong foothold by virtue of interpreting the verse/s of the Holy Quran according to the shādh usage. In this way, they were able to lend considerable support to their evil propaganda that they launched to destroy Muslims. Having a look at the history of these deviant factions, there remains no doubt as to the impropriety of interpreting thus the Holy Quran.

The Holy Quran has sprouted from the divine soil of wahī (revelation) and has seen its growth at the hands of the most eloquent and articulate personality of the Arabs – a book that flows more strongly than the currents of violent river and which struck the region of the Arabian Peninsula with more strength and speed than lightening, and changed the entire landscape, an all encompassing transformation of many powerful personalities of this region. To evaluate the qualitative characteristics of such a book with a deficient existing knowledge base is like trying to measure the vastness of the heavens with the scale of an architect.

At this moment, I am delighted to tell you that the book of my mentor Imām Hamīd al-
Dīn Farāhī, Jamhurah al-Balāgah, on the rhetoric of the Holy Quran has just been published. In this book, the author has pointed out deficiencies of the literature so far produced on the science of rhetoric, and has proved its uselessness to evaluate the subtleties of the Quranic rhetoric. He has also delineated the correct principles which may be observed while assessing the rhetoric of the Holy Quran. What now remains to be done is to peruse the Holy Quran and Arabic literature in order to collect more examples which may further consolidate the principles described by Imam Farāhī so that students of the discipline of rhetoric may gain maximum benefit from his efforts. By the grace of the Almighty, a considerable size of Arabic literature has just been published, which may be helpful to those who undertake this kind of work.

**Nazm of the Quran**

In interpreting the Holy Quran, the second source which may be an immense source of help and can lead us to the correct purport is the nazm of the Holy Quran. Nazm means that each sūrah of the Holy Quran has a definite ‘umūd or a subject and all the verses of the sūrah, in a very wise arrangement and interrelationships, are weaved into a cohesive net around this subject. When this ‘umūd or subject is discovered through a persistent study of the sūrah, and the interconnection of the verses in the perspective of this subject becomes clear, the sūrah does not remain a collection of disparate verses but comes to be viewed as one cohesive unit. Thus, to understand the Holy Quran, appreciation of the nazm of each sūrah is a prerequisite. As long as this nazm is not discovered, neither the actual worth of the sūrah and the wisdom lying therein can be appreciated nor can proper interpretation of the verses in terms of their interconnection be reached. This is an uphill task, however and perhaps because of this our commentators have paid little attention to this topic. They who felt an urge to do something in this context have spent marginal efforts only, which is why they could not produce any tangible results in this regard. In fact, the sort of relationship that they have shown between verses of a sūrah seems very superficial. This sort of connection can be figured between any two parts of a text, no matter how widely disparate these are. We do not imply this sort of relationship when we speak of the nazm of the Holy Quran. On the contrary, that kind of nazm is implied which is found in a formidable discourse and lofty literature – a reflection of which may be seen in the commentary of the Holy Quran by Imām Hamīd al-Dīn
1. In this regard, first of this entire mistake should be eliminated that the concept of nazm is something novel. Many scholars professed that the Holy Quran is embellished with nazm. In fact, some of them have written exclusive works on the nazm of the Holy Quran. Imām Suyūṭī writes:

'Allamah Abū Ja‘far Sheikh Abū Hayān penned an exclusive work on the nazm of the Holy Quran, of which the title is al-Burhān fī Munāsabah Tartīb-i Suwar al-Quran (Arguments about the Interconnection in the Arrangement of the Sūrahs of the Holy Quran) and from among our contemporaries, Sheikh Burhān al-Dīn al-Baqā‘ī has also written a book for this purpose titled Nazm al-Durar Fī Tanāsub al-Āay wa al-Suwar (Assortment of the Pearls in Arranging the Verses and Sūrahs).

Imām Suyūṭī has also mentioned a book that he himself wrote in which he not only spelled out the nazm of the Holy Quran but also discussed its miraculous aspects. He acknowledged the importance of the nazm of the Holy Quran in the following words:

The science of interconnection is a noble science. Commentators have scarcely dealt with this for its abstruse nature. Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī has given a lot of attention to this science. According to him, the subtleties of the Holy Quran are buried in the arrangement and interconnection of verses of the Holy Quran.

No doubt, Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī has paid special attention to the matter of nazm in the Holy Quran. But his efforts have not proved much fruitful because the amount of time and energy required for unfolding the nazm of the Holy Quran cannot be not spared by a busy author like him. How important this matter was to him is evident from his sporadic comments that he penned in his commentary. While interpreting
Some people say that this surah has been revealed in response to those people who mischievously used to say that if the Holy Quran had been revealed in some non-Arabic language, it would have been better. To say such things is to do great injustice to the Holy Quran, I daresay. The implication of their saying is that there is no interconnection between the verses of the Holy Quran. To say a thing like this is to level a damaging remark about the holy book. Given this remark, I do not know how it is possible to maintain that the Holy Quran is a well-arranged piece of literature let alone a miraculous divine work. My view is that this surah is a cohesive discourse from its beginning till its end.

3. People who have studied the anecdote of the collection and arrangement of the Holy Quran cannot dispute the fact that though it has been revealed in a gradual manner, the Holy Prophet (sws) determined the arrangement of verses of the Holy Quran. Whenever a revelation descended upon him, he would ordain where it had to be placed in the Holy Quran by issuing instructions to the scribes to write these verses at a particular point in a particular surah. Following his instructions, they would write the verses at the ordained place. Hence there is a consensus among the entire ummah that the arrangement of the Holy Quran has been done in accordance with how the Holy Prophet (sws) ordained. The question is that if the Holy Quran is a haphazard collection of verses why the Holy Prophet (sws) ordained the particular position of verses of the Holy Quran. In the absence of any deliberate post revelation arrangement, the best arrangement could only be the chronological arrangement. Every revelation that would descend down could have been placed next to the previous revelation without thinking. Therefore, the question is that why a fresh arrangement was made post revelation. There can be only one correct answer to this question: this fresh arrangement is based on a meaningful interconnection and correspondence of the verses of the Holy Quran. The quotation that we have given
above of ‘Allāmah Malwī also refers to this fact.

The Almighty says in the Holy Quran:

إِنَّ عَلِينَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلِينَا بٌََانَهُ (٧٥:١٧-١٩)

It is our responsibility to collect it and recite it to you. And when we have recited it to you, follow this recital. And then it is our responsibility to give further explanation, if needed. (75:17-19)

Ustādh Imām Hamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has written the following note while interpreting this verse:

There are three points that have been reinforced in these verses. The first is that the Holy Quran would be recited to the Holy Prophet (sws) in his life time, after compiling it in a particular arrangement. Because if this were to be done after his demise, he could not be directed to follow the fresh recital.

This verse necessitates that the Holy Prophet (sws) must have read out the Holy Quran to his followers after this last fresh recital by the Almighty to the Holy Prophet (sws) – a recital which was recorded in the lawh-i mahfūz. It is imperative that this recital should be according to the original.

The third is that whatever directive that the Almighty wanted to particularize or generalize, he did accordingly after this last fresh recital.

**The Mutawātir and Mashhūr Sunnah**

The fourth certain source for the commentary of the Holy Quran is mutawātir & mashhūr sunnah. Insofar as the matter of Quranic terms like, salah (the ritual prayer), zakāh (the alms tax), sawm (the fast), hajj (the pilgrimage), qurbānī (animal sacrifice), masjid-i harām (the sacred mosque of Makkah), safā (a place within the precincts of ka‘bah), marwah (another place within the precincts of ka‘bah), sa‘ī (walk between safā and places) and marwah, and tawāf (circumambulation of the ka‘bah) is concerned, these should be explained in the light of this Sunnah. The reason is that the Holy Prophet (sws) only has the prerogative to explain what is meant by these terms. The only thing that remains in this regard is to establish the authenticity
of these explanations as coming down to us from the Holy Prophet (sws). The truth of the matter is that there is no way to question the authenticity of these explanations because they have been preserved in the ritual practices performed across the Muslim world. These practices have come down to us through the same channel of transmission, tawātur\textsuperscript{10}, by which the Holy Quran has reached us. Hence the channel which has been instrumental in preserving the text of the Holy Quran has transmitted to us the meaning and significance of these terms. Therefore, he who concedes the credibility of the Holy Quran cannot doubt the authenticity of the meaning and significance of these terms. To repose faith in the Holy Quran makes it indispensable for him to believe in the knowledge based on Sunnah. Some minor differences in the specific form of Sunnah do not have any importance at all in our religion. All Muslims know for sure that they are obligated to offer five ritual prayers daily – they know this with such certainty as they know the Holy Quran. The question whether Āmīn (amen) should be said slowly or loudly though constitutes a difference of opinion is of little significance, especially when they emanate from solitary reports and not from tawātur. In such matters of secondary importance, an individual has an option to choose what he considers sound without confronting others who adopt the opposite viewpoint. It should however remain clear that to reject that body of Islamic knowledge which is sanctified by tawātur is tantamount to denying the Holy Quran itself – heresy for which there is no room in our religion.

The Hadīth Literature

From among all inconclusive sources, the most sacrosanct and hallowed is the corpus of Prophetic traditions and the sayings of the Companions (rta). In case this corpus had not fallen short of the established criteria of authenticity, it would have possessed as much importance and preference as the mutawātir Sunnah. But since this element of doubt about their soundness is not eliminated absolutely, whatever this source offers can only be accepted insofar as it conforms to the conclusive sources. They who exaggerate to give overriding importance to this corpus not only harm the Holy Quran but also fail to raise the status of this corpus in real terms. On the contrary, those who totally deny any role of the Hadīth literature in the study of the Holy Quran deprive themselves of the sublime light that this literature provides to help unravel many references and allusions of the Holy Quran. The middle-of-the-
road approach is that we should take as much help from this literature as required in unfolding the allusions of the Holy Quran; anything else should be ignored altogether. When a sound Hadith appears to contradict the Holy Quran, we should not reject it outrightly but deliberate further; we should only set aside it when there is no way to find some explanation of this Hadith in the light of the Holy Quran or that this Hadith contravenes some fundamental postulate of the religion of Islam. Inasmuch as the matter of sound Hadith narratives is considered, there is seldom any dichotomy between them and the message of the Holy Quran, which cannot be explained away. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that the Holy Quran has overriding importance on all such occasions – never to be lost sight of.

There is another thing that needs to be appreciated in case of narratives of shān-i nuzūl (occasion of revelation); besides establishing the authenticity of their chain of reporting, it should be kept in mind that all narratives of this category do not necessarily explain the first cause of revelation of a certain verse/s of the Holy Quran; rather these narratives usually purport to convey the circumstances for which the related verse/s contain some instruction or edict. This is something which has been reinforced by many a great commentator. To embrace this viewpoint is to escape most of the problems encountered usually during the study of the Holy Quran.

Recourse to narratives of shān-i nuzūl is only indispensable where the Holy Quran makes an allusion to a certain event or incident. For instance, the Holy Quran has made certain allusions to some events in Sūrah Tahrīm. Details of such events must be sought from the Hadith literature inasmuch as these lie in conformity with the Holy Quran. This follows that such details as the text of the Holy Quran does not admit of or which mar the character of those personalities that are sanctified by the Holy Quran itself should be rejected outrightly.

**Established History**

The second inconclusive source which may be helpful in the commentary of the Holy Quran is the established history of nations. The Holy Quran has referred to the history of various peoples in different ways. Sometimes allusion is made to calamities that befell the predecessors of the Arabs like the ‘Ād, the Thamūd, the people of
Madyan, and the nation of Lūt (sws). Sometimes the Holy Quran draws attention to the arrival of Abraham (sws) along with his son Ishmael into Makkah, the times of their stay in that region and the construction of the Ka‘bah. At other times, the milestones of the history of the People of the Book are invoked side by side making allusions to certain events of contemporary nations. In a nutshell, the Holy Quran in spite of having nothing to do with history as such involves many historical things. To get full insight into them, we need to have general acquaintance with the history and specific circumstances of those particular nations. Otherwise, the lessons or conclusions which the Holy Quran aims to draw by referring to their history may be lost upon the readers.

Hence there is no doubt that we depend upon this source in order to fully grasp the purport of the Holy Quran. However, this does not mean that it has preference over the Holy Quran, should any disagreement arise. This follows that the Holy Quran is the ultimate criterion to judge any information emanating from this source; whatever lies in agreement with the Holy Quran will be accepted and whatever differs will be rejected.

Previous Divine Scriptures

The third inconclusive source for the commentary of the Holy Quran is the previous divine scriptures. No one disputes the fact that the Holy Prophet (sws) is but one member of the sacred group of God’s apostles and that the Holy Quran is a divine book like other scriptures revealed to prophets. Given consensus on this, a lot of help may be sought from the extant scriptures. True, in order to know the truth from the falsehood, we are not in need of these scriptures. For guidance as to the truth, the Holy Quran, devoid of any shortcoming, is sufficient for us. We do not need stars after sunrise; much less we need these scriptures after the dawn of the Holy Quran. Nonetheless, there are certain incidental benefits which we may draw from them for gaining full understanding of the message of the Holy Quran.

Firstly, to make out some allusions of the Holy Quran, our commentators have to accept some narratives reported by the People of the Book; but since these narratives are nothing more than hearsay, they do not confer any certitude nor do they constitute an argument against the People of the Book because any claim made
on their basis would be as shaky as these narratives are. This calls for our direct study of their scriptures so that we could come up with solid information to say anything at all.

Secondly, the Holy Quran completes the message of all the previous scriptures; it amends whatever was changed in them. Consequently, when someone reads the Holy Quran along with these scriptures, they come to realize its due importance and authority; the blessing poured out on this ummah in the form of this Quran is also unfolded so as to become a revealing experience.

Thirdly, the Holy Quran has referred to many historical events while divulging divine edicts or narrating some illustrative incident. To get to the bottom of these historical references, intimate familiarity with these scriptures is indispensable. Because many of our commentators were not acquainted with the Torah and the Gospels, they did not succeed in their endeavours to penetrate such references.

Fourthly, the Holy Quran has accused Jews and Christians of incorporating changes in the word of God, impregnating it with such things as do not belong to it and deleting those facts which were clearly inscribed in it; other allegations included making lawful what was unlawful and vice versa, and their transgressions against the obvious and evident verdicts of their prophets, delivered upon divine bidding. To come up with arguments to support these allegations, an academic ought to do an insightful study of these scriptures; otherwise no fruitful debate may be accomplished with the People of the Book.

Fifthly, in spite of all deficiencies, these scriptures are what we have as remnants of the revelation made to previous prophets. There must be some part of the original revelation extant in these scriptures. He who is well acquainted with the Holy Quran can easily discern that part from these scriptures. Why should he not? What the Almighty revealed to the previous prophets is a treasure trove for the believers. More than anyone else, they have the prerogative to look for it, and embrace it wherever they find it. (Mabaddi e tadubbur e quran)

References: 1. Islāhī was invited to explain the principles of interpreting the Holy Quran to post-graduate students of the Punjab University on December 15, 1951. Given here is this speech with some necessary modifications.
2. Abū Ja‘far, Muhammad Ibn Jarīr al-Tabarî (d. 310 AH) is a renowned historian and theologian – celebrated for his Jāmi‘al-Bayān and Tarīkh Tabarî. (Translator)

3. A famous Indian Muslim scholar, educationist and politician. He led a movement among the Muslims for acquiring modern education – an endeavour in which he received considerable success. He died in 1898. (Translator)

4. Marfū‘ is a narrative whose chain of narration reaches the Holy Prophet in which is ascribed to him a saying, a deed or an affirmation (taqrīr). (Ibn Hajar, Sharh Sharh Nukhbah al-Fikr (Beirut: Shirkah Dār al-Arqam b. Abi al-Arqam, n.d.), 545-546). (Translator)


**Mabadi Tadabbur-eHadith**

The present work by Imām Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, a renowned Pakistani scholar, the author of a nine volume commentary on the Holy Quran entitled Tadabbur-i Quran, besides more than a dozen other books on various important Islamic disciplines, addresses some fundamental questions about the prophetic traditions, generally believed to be the second source of religious knowledge in Islam besides the Quran. The author has taken up the fundamental questions about the prophetic ḥadīth including the authenticity of the traditions, the difference between the Sunnah and the Ḥadīth, role of isnād, its importance and its inherent limitations, and some basic questions about the process of riwāyah (transmission) and dirāyah (textual) investigation. He sets forth principles of understanding the aḥadīth as well as the methodology of sifting the sound from the unsound reports. It is not, by form and content, an introduction to the Science of Ḥadīth. Iṣlāḥī confines himself to the discussion of a few fundamental issues while presuming a basic technical knowledge of the Science of Ḥadīth at the end of the reader. It is a seminal work in the sense that the author has discussed and highlighted facts which answer many questions on the authenticity of the prophetic tradition – oral, textual (i.e. aḥādīths) and practical (i.e. sunan) – and their relation to the foundational text, the Quran.
Muslims have always held that the Sunnah is the source of religious knowledge next only, in terms of reliability, to the Quran. However, the question of its authoritativeness and its relation to the Divine text has always been debated among them. Many scholars came to hold that the prophetic tradition consists of the traditions handed down to the subsequent generations by individual-to-individual reports (akhbār-i aḥād). Most of the authorities do not distinguish clearly between ḥadīth and Sunnah. Presuming the terms Sunnah and ḥadīth to be interchangeable, the scholars wrestled over the authenticity or lack of it in the prophetic tradition. Subsequently some people took extreme positions in this regard. Īṣlāḥī points out that a group of scholars declared all the aḥādīth as spurious tales while another declared the aḥādīth equal to and even overruling the Quran. Those who declared it equal to the Quran in authenticity and historicity did so while admitting it to be akhbār-i aḥād. On the other hand those who rejected it altogether rejected something which formed fundamental and inseparable part of the religion transmitted through perpetual adherence of the ummah in each generation.

Having distinguished from the Sunnah, which is an absolutely authentic and reliable source forming the fundamental part of the religion, the ḥadīth literature can be treated on scientific principles. For example, Īṣlāḥī argues, there is no need to defy reason and declare individual-to-individual reports, whose vulnerability has always remained clear to the Muslim scholarship, as historically equal or superior to the Quran. Similarly there is no need to defy academic principles and recklessly declare all the ḥadīth literature as spurious and unreliable. This distinction between ḥadīth and Sunnah proves that the Quran, an absolutely authentic source, does not stand in need of aḥādīth, a probable truth. The Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (sws) are the only sources of Islam. The aḥādīth come next to these sources as very useful record of the prophetic knowledge, explanation of the Quranic text, historic details regarding the formative phase of Islam and the best example set by the Prophet (sws). The remaining issues including the question of interrelation of the Book and the Sunnah and the Ḥadīth branch from and depend on the confusion regarding the boundaries of the Ḥadīth and the Sunnah. The question whether the Quran depends on the Ḥadīth or vice versa is resolved once it is established that the Sunnah is an independent source which does not rely on aḥādīth and that the Sunnah is an absolutely authentic source of knowledge, equal to the Quran as far as
the historicity of the sources and their Prophetic origin is concerned. The precepts of
the faith of Islam are set out in the Quran in textual form and are complemented by
the practices instituted by the Prophet (sws) in the form of the Sunnah. Then,
whereas the Quran is the word of God, the Sunnah is the demonstrative form of the
religious performance instituted by the Messenger of God. Both these sources
emanate from the Prophet (sws) who taught them to the generation of the
Companions (rta) who, in turn, by their consensus and perpetual adherence, handed
it down to the next generation and so on to our times. In Iślāhī’s view, the relation of the Book to the Sunnah is that of the soul to a body. The
body has to adjust according to the soul. It cannot mould or reshape the soul to
accord to it. That the Sunnah and the Ḥadīth cannot overrule the commands of the
Book has been argued by Iślāhī through rational and received arguments with the
help of examples. He terms the belief that Ḥadīth can override the Quran as
erroneous. Being clear on the authenticity of the Quran and the Sunnah on the one
hand and the probability of the aḥādīth on the other, he is able to show that the less
reliable source has to be in accord with the more reliable one.

The above mentioned facts and observations have a direct bearing on the process of
Ḥadīth interpretation. The principles of understanding the aḥādīth therefore assume
clear and concrete shape. The cornerstone of Iślāhī’s approach towards
understanding the Ḥadīth literature is his concept of the overarching authority of the
Quran. While introducing the principle of understanding the Ḥadīth literature, the
author stresses the importance of the consequences of the interrelation of the
Quran, the Sunnah and the Ḥadīth, for Muslim jurisprudence. He highlights the
status of the Quran over the rest of the sources and asserts that, being the word of
God, a textual evidence of absolute certainty, the Book is the basic criterion of true
religious knowledge. A summary of the principles of interpretation of Ḥadīth literature,
that we find emerging in Iślāhī’s work is as follows:

a) The aḥādīth, which are only probably true, are to be interpreted in the light of
the Quran. They are a branch of the root, the book of God. The aḥādīth only
explicate the themes of the Book. Therefore, the material of the aḥādīth must
accord to the themes of the Book. For whatever the Prophet (sws) said or did
always accorded perfectly to the dictates of the Book. This entails that a
student of the ahādīth should look for the basis of the traditions in the Book and understands them in the light of the word of God.

b) Since a ḥadīth report is to be seen as the part of a sprawling literature, one has to have comprehensive understanding of the whole corpus and one should interpret the part in the light of the whole. If a report does not fit well in the overall structure it has to be either reinterpreted to make it fit within the whole or has to be regretfully discarded.

c) One also needs to have a good understanding of the language of the prophetic traditions.

Transmitted through individual-to-individual mode of transfer the ḥadīth narratives contain all types of reports, sound and the unsound. Therefore, Iślāḥī advises caution in accepting a ḥadīth report solely on the basis of its isnād. Its contents have to be minutely discussed and assessed on various scales. In chapter 4, Iślāḥī discusses how it is incumbent to see if the ḥadīth under consideration is in accord with the religious taste (zawq) of the firm believers and those grounded in its knowledge. Here Iślāḥī invokes the valuable contributions of the traditional Muslim scholarship. The taste of the firm believers and established scholars of Islam is important for they are acquainted with the spirit of the religion and the nature of the Prophetic teachings based on their study of the Book of God. Their long and meaningful exposure to the corpus of prophetic knowledge enables them to assess whether a saying attributed to the Prophet (sws) is in line with the disposition of the Prophet (sws) and the essence of the religion. A true believer with a thorough knowledge of the religion can discern whether a statement can issue from the source they are familiar with. Similarly it must not contradict the customary practice of the ummah which is always based on the Quran and the Sunnah whose authenticity is not disputed. The Quranic teachings and the known Sunnah both have the overriding authority over the ahādīth reports. Collective reason of the human beings and any definitive argument should also help us discern whether a narrative ascribed to the Prophet (sws) is genuinely attributed to him or not.

It has been accepted by the scholars of the ummah from the earliest times that the Companions (rta) of the Prophet (sws) are not to be subjected to the principles of isnād investigation. However, the definition of a Companion has remained under discussion. Chapter 5 defines the term ṣahābī. It discusses the rationale of the view
that the Companions (rta) are all just and establishes this principle on the authority of the Quran and the prophetic traditions. After discussing the various views held by the earlier authorities, it sums up that only such persons may validly be called ṣaḥābah who had availed the company of the Prophet (sws) for a considerably long time and who received training at his hands in religion and morality. Not every person who happened to have occasionally seen the Prophet (sws) or met him once or twice can be taken as his Companion. This İslāḥī shows through citing the Quranic guidance and prophetic aḥādīth on the subject.

The chain of narrators or the isnād begins with the name of a Companion (rta) of the Prophet (sws), who claims to have witnessed him say or do anything. It travels through the individuals in the subsequent generations till it reaches one of the compilers. The Muslim traditionists evolved the discipline of asmā’ al-rijāl (Biographies), one of the sciences of which the Muslims can be genuinely proud of, to help investigate the biographies of the individual narrators on scientific grounds and ascertain whether they are reliable narrators to transmit material which is likely to constitute the part of the Faith. They made sure that the narrators bringing in a report are persons of impeccable moral character, sound memory, followed the religion faithfully, avoided sinfulness and developed a fair understanding of the religion of God. They made sure that the persons involved in the ḥadīth transmission had met their authorities whom they quoted. No other nation or religious group matches the Muslim accomplishment in this regard. This, however, does not mean that the discipline of asmā’ al-rijāl and the methodology of isnād criticism were flawlessly applied nor would it be incumbent to accept any ḥadīth merely because it is transmitted by the seemingly imposing isnāds.

Many pious individuals sought to rely on fabricated traditions to spread virtue and piety. They tried to exhort the believers to do certain good deeds which they considered were being ignored and to warn them of evil consequences of vices. This has not escaped the notice of the vigilant muḥaddithūn who discovered this evil and tried to expose the ‘pious’ fabricators. However, the muḥaddithūn did not strictly follow the principles of jarḥ wa ta‘dīl (investigation into the reliability of ḥadīth narrators) while analyzing the aḥādīth pertaining to exhortations and warnings. They observed the requisite caution only while investigating legal traditions containing teachings about ḥalāl wa ḥarām. Thus the evil of ḥadīth fabrication remained
operative. The pious fabricators spread the spurious traditions and these found entry even in the major ḥadīth works. The aḥādīth have also been invented to earn fame and support the innovatory beliefs and practices. Here too the muḥaddithūn did not show requisite vigilance. They opted for accepting aḥādīth from such innovators who did not openly confess their innovations and did not call others to follow their creed. This again opened the door to innovations on a large scale. Therefore, we can expect a great number of aḥādīth in the famous compilations which need to be reinvestigated. This demands that the student of the ḥadīth literature shows extra vigilance while relying on a narrative as a basis of any religious issue. The author concludes his discussions by identifying the primary sources of aḥādīth. He posits that it is extremely important to select the primary sources in any discipline. In the ḥadīth discipline, according to him, there are three works which can be considered the primary sources. He includes Muwaṭṭā of Imām Malik, Ṣaḥīḥ of Imām Muslim and Ṣaḥīḥ of Imām Bukhārī in the primary sources. He believes that a study of these books helps the student acquire sufficient knowledge of the discipline and there remains no need to thoroughly study other ḥadīth works. Other sources, however, can be resorted to for additional support and in-depth study of a particular issue.

**Difference Hadith and Sunnah**

THE religion with which we have been blessed by Almighty Allah through al-Quran only lays down broadly the fundamentals for life. It does not embrace all the details of expositions thereof. Comprehensive education of the Ummah (Muslim community) in the matter of details has been left entirely to the Mu'allim-i-Quran, the Prophet (PBUH) himself.

**Need for Sunnah**

The overall structure of Islam has been raised and completed through the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). For instance, basic commandments with regarding prayers, fasts, pilgrimage, zakat and other obligations and rites have, no doubt, been laid down in the Holy Quran. However, there are no details mentioned on any of these subjects; so much so that al-Quran does not even mention the details of such an extremely important matter as prayers, for example their timings, total number, and the number of raka'ahs in each prayer. The same is true of all other modes of worship and of other commandments and laws. For instance, al-Quran lays down the
cutting of the hands as a penalty for theft. However, the details have been left to the Prophet definition of ‘theft’ with reference to the value thereof, or what is the point where the hand should be severed etc.

**Interrelation**

We can see, therefore, that the relation between al-Quran and Sunnah is that of the soul and the body. In other words, the soul or the spirit of al-Quran is given, in the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), a form for its display. Both go together to complete the splendid edifice of Islam. Take away any one of them, and the whole structure falls apart. The interrelation which has been established between al-Quran and Sunnah by the Almighty Allah is not a casual matter. On the contrary, this is what is demanded by common sense and wisdom. Human affairs know no bounds and cannot possibly be confined to a single book. To cover everything, you need unlimited records.

Secondly, there are things in which it is not enough to teach them in theory alone. They must be demonstrated practically. Otherwise, simply imparting verbal education on such matters cannot be very fruitful. In fact, matters which call for practical demonstration can hardly be elucidated orally. It was for this mission that the Prophet (PBUH) was chosen, followed by a chain of Companions and later other luminaries held aloft the torch of the Din of Allah on earth. It is, therefore, very essential that the religious minded people devoted to spreading the light of the Din of Allah do their utmost to act upon the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH). They must be meticulous in this regard even in minor matters so that they can inspire others too to live up to the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH).

**Practical Issues**

In this connection, it must be clearly understood that the Sunnah is purely related to the practical aspects of life, ie, actions which are a part of our daily lives. Matters which concern beliefs or issues of academic interest are outside its domain. For instance Sunnah has nothing to do with articles of faith, history, occasion for revelation of the Quranic verses, etc. The sunna not been founded on Ahadith, which have an inherent prospect of either being right or wrong, as we have seen in the
foregoing pages. On the contrary, it is based on the perpetual adherence of the Ummah to it. Just as the veracity of al-Quran is proved by perpetuity in verbal adherence, likewise the veracity of Sunnah is equally proved by the Ummah’s perpetuity in practical adherence to it. For instance, we have not adopted the prayers, pilgrimage etc, in all their details because a few narrators explained them to us, but we act in a particular manner because the Prophet (PBUH) acted accordingly.

Thereafter, through him learnt the Companions, and through them learnt the followers of the companions, and then successors thereof learnt through the followers. In this manner, the later generations continued to learn through their earlier predecessors. In case, the narrative records also testify to this effect, it should be taken as additional testimony. However, if the narrations are found to vary in any manner, preference shall, in any case, go to the perpetual adherence to practice. If it is observed that in a certain case the Akhbar-i-Ahad differ from the Sunnah, reasons for variation shall be investigated. However, if the variation cannot be explained, we shall be obliged to give up the narrations, since in any case the latter are presumptive, whereas in comparison the Sunnah is a categorical reality.

Interrelation between the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the Hadith

The Quran and the Sunnah and the Hadīth are interconnected. Internally, the Sunnah and the Hadīth are a body to the soul – the Quran. Apparently, however, the Sunnah and the Hadīth provide details to the compact Quran: their interrelation is that of detail and brevity. Both the Quran and the Sunnah are equally important as far as the question of practicing the religion is concerned. We cannot separate the two. Following either is an obligation of equal degree.

The Quran marks the limits and outlines of the picture of believers’ life pattern and specifies the boundaries. It leaves the task of colouring and complementing the pattern for the Prophet (sws): it is for the Sunnah to give concrete shape and provide practical form to the believers’ life. The Quranic teachings are, therefore, confined to a comprehensive treatment of the principle teachings of Islam. We do not find the
requisite details and specifics of any fundamental issue in the Book for which we have to refer to the Sunnah and the Hadīth.

The Prayer is the most important worship ritual in Islam. The place of the Prayer in the philosophical foundations of the religion can be gleaned from the Quran. The basic components of this worship ritual as well as its relevance to human life too have been thoroughly discussed in the Book. However, we rely on the Sunnah and the Hadīth on the questions of the timings, the form, the recitations and the status (in terms of obligatory and optional) of the Prayer. The Quran only refers to these things. It does not detail them.

**Prophet (sws): the Divine Teacher of the Shari‘ah**

The Prophet (sws) did not carry out the task of filling out the outline of life as an additional voluntary service. It was his primary duty as the Messenger of God. His status as a teacher is one of the fundamental aspects of his position as a Messenger of God. This means that whatever he taught and told people is not excluded from his duty as the Messenger nor is it of lesser status than the Book. The Quran clearly says that he was not a mere reciter or communicator of the Book of God; he was a teacher of the Book and its explicator:

> It is He who sent to the unlettered people a messenger of their own who recites to them His verses, and purifies them, and teaches them the shari‘ah and the wisdom; although before his advent they were in manifest error. (Q 62:2)

The Prophet (sws) not only explicated the verses containing the Divine directives but also explained the subtle points of ḥikmah (wisdom) buried within the Book of God. The following Hadīth refers to this very quality of the Prophet (sws): “I have been granted the Quran and with it something similar to it.”¹

The above discussions show that the Sunnah is equal to the Quran for it enjoys historical reliability of an equal degree. If the Quran has been orally transmitted through generality to generality (tawātur-i qawlī), the Sunnah too has been handed down, practically, through perpetual adherence of the ummah with consensus (tawātur-i ‗amalī). We cannot grade and set a preference for either and cannot characterize either with relegation or elevation. Both sources are equally important.
when it comes to the question of following the religion of Islam.

**Genesis of the Extremist Positions on Authoritativeness of the Hadīth**

The foregoing discussion shows the natural interrelation between the Quran, the Hadīth and the Sunnah. However, during the early history of Islam, narrating Ahādīth was an extremely popular activity. This popularity remained ever increasing. This made many insincere people narrate Ahādīth without investigating the authenticity of the reports. This gave rise to a huge number of weak Ahādīth. Consequently some believers felt disinclined to a ready acceptance of Ahādīth. They publically expressed their views regarding the traditions. They would ask people to base their religious views on the Quran only. Various historical narratives detail such discussions. I would, however, confine my discussion to one pertinent historical narrative. This will help us understand how and when extreme positions in this regard originated.

Hasan narrates that ‘Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn was once sitting among his Companions (rta). Someone said: “Do not talk of anything other than the Quran.” ‘Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn asked [those present]: “Bring this man closer to me.” The man came near him. ‘Imrān said to him: “Suppose you are left only with the Quran. Do you find any information in the Book that explains that the żuhr and ‘asr Prayers consist of four rak‘āt, and maghrib of three and that you need to recite the Quran in the first two rak’āh. Similarly, do you see anything in the Quran guiding us to circumambulate the Ka‘bah seven times along with the circumambulation of the Šafā and Marwah [while offering ḥajj and ‘umrah]?” Then he said: “People learn from us, lest you go astray.”

**Ahādīth and the Sunnah cannot abrogate the Quran**

God has mercifully continued raising people in the ummah who have shown the right path to the believers guiding them out of the traps of exaggerating squabblers. When this dispute over the interrelation of the Quran and the Hadīth arose, the Almighty blessed some individuals with the power to protect and promote a balanced approach. The man who fulfilled this duty in a most beautiful manner is Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, the greatest servant of the discipline who excelled in the knowledge of the Prophetic traditions. When such exaggerations regarding the status of the Sunnah, in
relation to the Quran, were brought to his notice, he explained the correct view. Faḍl ibn Ziyād reports:

I heard Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal respond to a question about the Hadīth which says that the Sunnah overrules the Quran in the following words: “I dare not say so. However, the Sunnah explicates the Book, defines and explains it.”

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal believes that the Sunnah explicates, explains and defines the Quran. A Hadīth or a Sunnah cannot abrogate the Quran. To him, the importance of the Sunnah and the Hadīth is recognized. It cannot be denied by a believer. However, the claim that they overrule the Quran is absolutely baseless.

The Sunnah, though not weak in those aspects, too cannot abrogate the Quran. The Messenger of God was never allowed even to introduce the slightest change in the Quranic text. We learn from the history of the Prophetic struggle that the Quraysh refused to accept and believe in the Quran until the Prophet (sws) altered it for them. The Prophet (sws) was commanded by God to respond to this demand in the following words:

Tell them it is not my right to change it on my own accord. (10:15)

The Quran is the word of God. None other than the author can change and alter it. There are, no doubt, instances of abrogation in the Book. However, all the changes made in the directives of the Book were introduced by the Author Himself. Both the abrogating and the abrogated verses are part of the Quran. The Messenger was obliged by God to perfectly communicate to the people what was given to him, without altering it. He was obligated to explain to the believers whatever part required an explanation. He could not make the slightest change possible in it. He had no right to change it. If the Messenger is not given the right to alter the word of God, how can we validly give a Hadīth ascribed to him or a Sunnah attributed to him the right to abrogate the Book.

References:

Those who reject the Sunnah claim to believe in al-Quran, and still deny the Sunnah. It is hard to understand their logic, since, as al-Quran is proved by the verbal adherence of the Ummah, likewise the Sunnah is proved by the ractical adherence of the Ummah. If these people reject the Sunnah, there is no justification to accept al-Quran.

There is hardly any difference in the credentials of either. It is rather important that the difference between Hadith and Sunnah, elucidated in the foregoing pages, be kept in mind. When this difference was overlooked, the result was that the denial of a few Ahadith was construed to mean the denial of the Sunnah. Thereafter, whatever doubts were invented against the Hadith by the non-believers of Hadith were extended by them to deny the Sunnah as well, though the denial of the Sunnah is tantamount to denial of a l–quran itself, as already explained. Those who are familiar with the history of the denial of Hadith are fully aware that this mischief actually raised its head over a few Ahadith of anomalous nature. However, later on this matter turned into a hot-bed of debates; in the heat of arguments people lost sight of the difference between Hadith and Sunnah. In such battles of wits, the attacking party failed to realize what they were attacking; nor did the defenders knew what exactly they had to defend and wasted their energies on a different front. In their ignorance, either side ended up in a loss. The nonbelievers of Hadith stretched their doctrines so far as to touch the bounds of Kufr (disbelief), and the supporters of Hadith, on the other hand quite unnecessarily dragged the Sunnah as well along with

Haqīqat-e-Tauḥīd
Declaring the Oneness of Allah is the first condition for admission to the community of Islam. This is, in itself, sufficient proof of the soundness of this religion, and the emptiness and falsity of other religions. For there is no other religion but Islam which stipulates such a condition from its believers, and no other religion excludes from its community of faith those who do not proclaim it.

“There is no god but Allah”: is the key to Paradise and of salvation from the torment of Hell. One who comes at the Day of Judgement without this key will find no path to Paradise, even if he had believed in the Prophethood of Muhammad, recited the Qur’an, performed the five daily prayers, fasted the month of Ramadan and believed in everything else that Muslims believe. Indeed, Allah has made it clear to us that the good deeds of those who associate others with Him will not be accepted even if that person were a prophet or a messenger. Thus Allah told the Prophet Muhammad, as He had told the prophets before him, “It was revealed to you and to those before you [that] ‘If you should associate [anything with Allah] your work would surely become worthless, and you would surely be among the losers.’” And speaking of the prophets, He said, “But if they had associated others with Allah, then surely worthless would be whatever they were doing.”

- There is no god but Allah. This is absolute faith, the foundation of belief in the One God, the essence and the title of Islam, without which belief is impossible. It is the way to a life of fulfillment, the key to happiness and of goodness in this world and the means and secret of salvation in the next.
- There is no god but Allah. This is the most absolute of truths and the most noble of them, as the Prophet said, “The best thing that I and the prophets before me have ever said is: There is no god but Allah.”
- There is no god but Allah. This is a phrase of liberation which sets humanity free from slavery to created things, from submission and servility to rulers and tyrants, and makes them servants only of the One Who created them.
- There is no god but Allah. This means refusing to worship of worshiping anything besides Allah, and to affirm that worship is the right of Allah alone.
There is no god but Allah. This is the slogan of the Oneness of God, which is the spirit of Islam and the essence of belief. Worship has no value before Allah, and no chance of being accepted by Him, if it does not rest upon this foundation. There is no god but Allah.

There is no god but Allah. This was the first thing that all the prophets called their people to. “And we never sent a Messenger before you except that we revealed to him that, ‘There is no god but me; so worship Me.’” The denial in this phrase “There is no god” precedes the affirmation “but Allah.” This is because faith in Allah can only come after you have denied false deities that are worshipped instead of Him. Thus Allah says, “So whoever disbelieves in Taagoot [idols](41) and believes in Allah, has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it.” And the Prophet said, “Whoever says, ‘There is no god but Allah’ and denies whatever is worshipped besides Him, his property and his blood are protected and his recompense is with Allah.

Muslims distinguish between a Prophet, who is chosen by Allah to call his people to the Oneness of God, and to submission to Him alone, and a Messenger, who is also given a revelation. There have been many prophets, but few messengers. Among the messengers of Allah were Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad, Peace be upon them.

بَلالَّا ذَلِكُمُ اللََُّّ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شًَْءٍ لََّ إِلَهَ إِلََّ هُوَ فَؤَنَّى تُإْفَكُونَ (ٓٗ:ٕٙ)

Such is God your Lord, the Creator of everything. There is no god but Him. Where then can you turn away from Him. (40:62)

This Creator of the Heavens and the earth is self-sufficient and does not need anyone. Thus there is only one cause of creation and that is His intention of mercy. When He desired to bestow His favour, He created this world and blessed His creation with innumerable favours that cannot be counted. Thus just as His name is Allah, it is also Rahman.
Ask them: “Do you disbelieve in Him and associate partners with Him who created the earth in two days? The Lord of the Universe is He. And [after creating the earth] He set up on it mountains towering high above it and placed His blessings upon it and for all the needy according to their needs provided it with sustenance with correct measure – all this in four days. Then He turned towards the sky which was in the form of smoke and He said to it and to the earth: “Obey the directive willingly or unwillingly.” Both said: “We come forth willingly.” Then He made seven heavens in two days and to each heaven He assigned its task. And We decked the lowest heaven with brilliant stars and made it fully secure. All this is the design of the Mighty One, the All-knowing. (41:9-12)

The organization and management of the world within us and the one outside is a reality. It cannot be imagined without a being who is living and who can exist for Himself, needing no one for His existence, and is also instrumental in bringing others into existence:

God, there is no god but He, the Living, the Sustainer. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. All that is in the heavens and the earth belong to Him. Who can intercede with Him for someone except by His permission? He knows what lies before them and what is after them and without His will they cannot grasp any part of His knowledge. His dominion prevails in the heavens and the earth, and their protection does not weary Him in the slightest way and He is the Exalted and the Glorious One.
What is time? It is a concept which emanates from the fact that the Creator, who is living and is self-sustaining, is eternal. Thus, He is the foremost and nothing is before Him. He is the last and there is nothing after Him; He is the apparent and nothing is above Him; He is the hidden and nothing is below Him. He cannot be curtailed in time and space; however, His knowledge encompasses whatever is found in time and space:

\[
\text{هو الأول والأخر والظاهر والباطن وهو بكل شيء عليم} (57:3)
\]

He is the first and the last, the apparent and the hidden and He has knowledge of all things. (57:3)

Any conception of a being without attributes is mere supposition. Differences in opinion in this regard are nothing in reality and the essence of each opinion is the same. Thus all worthy attributes like creativity, justice, mercy, compassion, knowledge and wisdom are validated as the personal attributes of God and precede their effect because the cause of everything precedes its effect. Consequently, it is said that even after destruction of this world the grandeur and majesty of God shall continue to exist with full grace.

Reference: *Haqiqt-i-Shirk-u-Tawhid* by Amin Ahsan Islahi

**Haqiqat-e-shirk**

Religion remains one of the most important focuses of human thought and practice in the entire human history. After advancement in science and technology, it was claimed that religion had lost its vitality. But the claimants soon realised their fallacy, as some religions, due to their dynamism could not be banished from humanity. Different theories have been forwarded in the modern times to explain the religious phenomenon. These explanations are based on the theories of the origin of religion. The widely accepted view is that of evolutionists. According to this theory, since coming of the rational man, two elements originated religion: Fear and worship of those, who cause this Fear. Islahi being a religious scholar assesses this theory in
this book and rejects it. He advances his own idea of origin of religion primarily influenced from his knowledge of the Qurān.

The book consists of two parts: the concept of polytheism and monotheism in historical context and in the contemporary perspective. Part one discusses the concept of polytheism and its different kinds. It elaborates all the fallacies of Quraysh, ahl-i-kitāb (followers of the Holy Scriptures) and munafiqīn (hypocrites). This part also discusses the contemporary world and then analyses the conditions of Muslims in the context of their belief system. Two questions are specifically addressed: polytheism as a natural desire and the raison d’être of the polytheism.

Part of the two books discusses the concept of monotheism in the light of Quranic arguments. Islahi organised all the arguments into two categories; common and specific arguments. The first is comprised of anfusi (the selves) and ‘afāqi (universal). The second is confined to the specific style of Qurān.

On the norms and beliefs of the addressees. In the end the book discusses the impacts of monotheism in Islam.

Reference: Literally its meaning is to guard oneself from the ill effects of some thing. Islahi says that the term is used in four meaning in the Qurān. Islahi, Haqīqat-i-Shirk, pp.313-14.

وَللَّهُ الأَسْمَاء الْحُسْنَى فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا وَذَرُواْ الَّذٌِنَ ٌُلْحِดُونَ فًِ أَسْمَآئِهِ سٌَُجْزَوْنَ مَا كَانُواٌَْعْمَلُونَ (٧٠:٧)

And for God are only good names; call on Him by these names and keep away from those who distort them. And whatever they are doing, they shall soon receive its reward. (7:180)

Whatever conception of God one perceives, it cannot be devoid of majesty, splendour and perfection. Consequently, attributes such as al-Wahid (the only one), al-Ahad (the unique) and al-Samad (the rock) depict perfection; the attributes of al-Quddus (the holy), al-Salam (the one who is peace in entirety) and al-Mu’min (the peace giver) are attributes of splendour and al-Malik (the king), al-’Aziz (the powerful) and al-Jabbar (the dominant) are attributes of majesty. The attributes of majesty produce fear, respect and praise in a person; the attributes of splendour produce praise and love for Him and instill hope in a person. The attributes of majesty are more apparent to his senses and the attributes of splendour are more
apparent to his intellect and heart. If God is kept in consideration, the attributes of splendour appear more dominant and if a human soul is kept in consideration, the attributes of majesty appear dominant. Man while fearing God leaps towards Him for this very reason and tries to seek refuge in His attributes of splendour. In the supplications of the Prophet (sws), the words (اللّهُمَّ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ مِنْكَ) refer to this very reality. This is the prayer of the person who is overwhelmed with the love of His Lord, is apprehensive of His self-sufficiency and magnificence, is anxious of meeting Him and submits to all His decisions with full regard. When the Qur’an says that all gracious names are His, it means that every name which depicts His majesty, splendour and perfection is gracious and can be given to Him:

قُلِ ادْعُواْ اللََّّ أَوِ ادْعُواْ الرَّحْمَـنَ أًٌَّا

Tell them: “You may call [Him as] Allah or Rahman; by whatever name you call Him, His are the most gracious names.” (17:110)

Imam Hamid al-Din Farahi, after explaining these aspects in his al-Qa'id ila ‘Uyun al-‘Aqa'id, writes:

The conception of God in one’s heart should be someone who is kind, merciful, forgiving and compassionate. He smiles and laughs with full sympathy and is gentle. He is the kindest of the kind and the most merciful. He is a person’s support and avenges from his enemies on his behalf. This is because one can attain tranquility through Him, seeks His nearness and is anxious of meeting Him. Then hallowed is He as well and is also an embodiment of the truth. Thus it is logically impossible that He not differentiate between good and evil and that someone who is bad, filthy, unjust, antagonistic, one who forbids good, exceeds limits, is skeptical of the truth and is adamant in opposing the truth attain His nearness. Indeed, He is forgiving and merciful to those who turn to Him and adopt what is good and forsake what is evil, who remember His greatness and majesty so that he can give Him due regard, who keep humbling themselves before Him keeping in mind that He is self-sufficient and does not need any of His creations and is grand in His planning and management. Then in spite of the fact that all His decisions are the very truth and are decked with His relentless
mercy, His creations have knowledge of these decisions to a limited extent which is appropriate for them. Thus it is essential that all His decisions be accepted and His servants should be happy and content with all His commands and directives.

The greatness of the Almighty becomes evident from His attributes of perfection. When a person acquires the correct understanding of these attributes, he professes faith in a God Who is unique, peerless and only one of a kind; He is the rock of shelter for all; to Him solely belong the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them; no one shares His sovereignty and no one is His partner in running the affairs of this universe; there is nothing in this world which is hidden from Him; no affair of this world is beyond His jurisdiction and control; everything needs Him, but He needs no one; matter, plants and animals all prostrate before Him and are busy in celebrating His praises and glorifying Him; His power is immense and He is all-embracing and every particle of this universe is subservient to His will; Whenever He wants, He can destroy any thing at any time and whenever He wants He can recreate it; it is He who bestows honour or humiliation; every thing is mortal and He is the only immortal; He is beyond what is beyond yet He is closer to man than his life-vein; His knowledge and wisdom encompass everything; He even knows what is concealed in the hearts; His intention supersedes all intentions and His command supersedes all commands; He is free of all faults and is without any blemish and beyond any allegation.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّٰهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّٰهُ الصَّمَدُ لَمْ يُلدَ لَهُ وَلَمْ يَوْلَدْ لَهُ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (١١٢:٤)

Say: That God is alone. He is with every one. He is neither anyone’s father nor anyone’s son; and there is none like Him. (112:1-4)

All the efforts of the Prophets of God revolve around establishing tawhid in the society. Every single word of its history narrated by the Almighty in the Qur’an testifies to this reality. Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi writes:

They are sent in this world so that they can take people out of the servitude of others and make them the servants of God purely. They should consider Him to be their Creator and their king and only serve Him and show their obedience to
Him alone and only trust Him. They should seek help solely from Him. They should thank Him only when they are blessed with favours and seek His help only when in distress. Both in fear and in hope, they should always look up to Him and they should consign themselves to Him. Their love should be subservient to His love and their likings should be subservient to His likings. They should consider Him to be sole and singular as regards His being, His attributes and His rights and in no way should associate any one with Him in these matters whether this associate be an angel, a jinn, a prophet, a saint, any other person or their own selves.

It is this importance of tawhid on account of which the Qur'an has explicitly stated that without adhering to it no deed of a person is acceptable and if a person adheres to it then there is hope that every sin may be forgiven. The Qur'an says:

إِنَّ الَّلَّهَ لَا يُغْفِرُ أَن يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وِيُغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاء وَمَن يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ افْتَرَى إِنْ عَلِمَ إِلَّا عُزُومًا (٤:٤٨)

God will not forgive those who [deliberately] set up partners with Him; lesser than this [sin] however, He will forgive any sin for anyone He [according to His law] wants to. [No doubt], He who associates partners with Him is guilty of a heinous sin. (4:48)

The reason for this is that a person cannot remain persistent on his sin if he professes faith in tawhid, and if he happens to sin, he will find that the grace and blessing of God will induce him to repent and to seek God's forgiveness. Such a person will surely turn to God and as such become entitled to be forgiven before the Day of Judgement. For this very reason, the Prophet (sws) is reported to have said that a person shall surely be granted Paradise if he adheres to tawhid. The Almighty will not cast such a person in the fire of Hell.

The argument which nullifies polytheism is that no one has any basis of associating partners with God. At more than one place, the Qur'an has demanded from its addressees to present if they can any grounds for polytheism whether based on intellect or on divine sources. Only God Himself could have informed us if He had any associates or not and the only way to have knowledge of God's will in this regard were the Divine books He revealed or the traditions and narratives which have been
transferred generation after generation from his prophets and messengers. None of these contain anything which substantiates polytheism in any way:

قُلْ أَرَأٌَْتُم مَّا تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللََِّّ أَرُونًِ مَاذَا خَلَقُوا مِنَ الَْْرْضِ أَمْ لَهُمْ شِرْكٌ فًِ السَّمَاوَاتِ

Ask them: “Have you reflected on those whom you worship besides God? Show me what have they created on this earth or do they have a share in the heavens? Bring me a scripture revealed before this, or some other vestige of divine knowledge, if what you say is true.” (46:4)

Other arguments of tawhid which are cited by the Qur’an are also very sound and based on established facts derived from knowledge and reason. As examples, we shall present some verses here:

[Believers! Let them decide] and [regardless of what they think you should now fully understand that] Your God is one God. There is no god but Him. He is the Compassionate, the Ever-Merciful. There is no doubt that in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day and in the ships that sail in the ocean with cargoes beneficial to man and in the water which God sends down from the sky with which He enlivens the earth after its death, dispersing over it all kinds of living beings and in the manifestations caused by the winds, and in the obedient clouds that are between the sky and earth – surely in these there are signs for men of intellect [to understand this reality]. (2:163-164)

Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi writes:

If one reflect on this verse, it becomes evident that it cites parallel, in fact opposing, elements of nature which at the same time display amazing harmony and unity in the overall service which they do for this universe. A perfunctory look at each member of the pairs the verse refers to shows that they are
opposite to one another: the heavens and the earth, the night and the day, the ships and the seas. However, a deeper look shows that if from one aspect they seem opposite to one another, then from another they seem to complement one another for the overall benefit and well-being of this universe. Without the sky and its glowing suns and glittering stars, the earth would lose its liveliness and prosperity and in fact would cease to exist. Similarly, without this earth, who can tell, many stars and heavenly bodies would be gravely affected. Similarly, just as our life and that of other living things of this earth is dependent on the light, heat and freshness provided by the day, it is also dependent on the calm, peace and cool of the night. It is both night and day in unison which guarantee life on this earth. Look at the astounding expanse of seas and oceans around us and the mountainous waves which build up in them and produce awe and dread; however, in spite of such dreadfulness and fright they may cause, how smoothly and slickly do ships and boats glide across them and link the trade, economy, culture, knowledge and technology – in fact every thing – of various parts of our world.

The next part of the verse mentions rain from the heavens which once again sustains life and vivacity and once again embellishes the surface of the earth with greenery and vegetation. The heavens, one can clearly, see are millions of miles away from the earth; yet the two are harmonious with one another and come together to produce all this. Hidden in the earth are treasures of flora and foliage but it is only after the heavens send down rain that this concealed treasure is revealed. Similar is the relationship between clouds and winds. Heaps and mounds of moisture laden clouds stand their ground unless strong winds push them and propel them to various parts which have been fixed for them. It is these winds which thrust them towards north and south and east and west. It is they who make them vanish from the heavens and then make them re-appear on the horizon when they want to.

What then does a deep reflection on all these phenomena lead to? Is this world the battle field of opposing and conflicting elements in which contrasting and divergent forces always seem to be at logger-heads with one another or does there exist an immensely wise and prudent force which reigns supreme over all
these opposing elements and sagaciously uses them to create a systematic order and an over all purpose? Obviously, it is this second conclusion which one reaches after deeply observing this world. On further deliberation, one comes to the conclusion that this world has not come into existence of its own accord and nor is the development it has undergone be regarded as automatic. If such was the case how could its conflicting elements have worked in harmony with one another to achieve a higher goal – the harmony and concord which is so evident in every part of this universe?

The Qur’an says:

قل لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يُقُولُونَ إِذًا لََّبْتَغَوْاْ إِ لَى ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبٌِلاً (٧٤:٥)

Tell [them]: “If, as they claim, there were other gods besides God, they would surely seek to dethrone Him.” (17:42)

Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi writes:

The Idolaters of Arabia considered God to be the sovereign deity analogously on the basis of kings and rulers of this world; they also professed faith in a lot of other deities about whom they thought that they had a share in this rule and would be able to procure the nearness of God for those who worship them and would also be able to have the desires and wishes of these worshippers fulfilled. This verse is a refutation of this baseless claim. They are told that if God had partners and associates as they think then they, at some time or another, would have tried to rebel against Him and over throw Him and the whole system of this world would have been disrupted. The implication is that the worldly kingdoms and kings, on the basis of which they have analogously set up partners of God, every now and then would get disrupted and geographically altered because of the rebellions and disputes from their courtiers; however, here no one can even point out a single instance in which, for example, the sun left its path or the earth its orbit. In another verse, this aspect is referred to in the following words: لَوْ كَانَ فٌِهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلََّ اللََُّّ لَفَسَدَتَا (١٧:٢٢) (Were there other gods in the sky and earth besides God, they would have become disrupted, (21:22))
At another place the Qur'an says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَن فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَن فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالنَّجَومُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالْمُجَاهِرُونَ وَالْفَٰحِضُّ وَالْمُعَلِّمُ وَالْمُسْلِمُونَ وَالْمُحَمِّدَ وَالْمُتَّقُونَ

Do you not see that whatever is in the heavens and the earth: the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the beasts, and countless men – all prostrate before God? And there are many on whom punishment has become mandatory and He who is humiliated by God has none to honour him because God does what He intends. (22:18)

Cited here is the argument in favour of tawhid which is testified by every object of this universe by its very existence. We have already alluded to the fact that every object of this universe in its nature has an Abrahamic temperament. The sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains the animals that tread the earth all follow the divine law on which they have been created. None of them deviates from this law in the slightest manner. The sun whom some foolish people worship bears testimony from its very existence that it stands and bows before the Almighty every day. It raises his head at the time of sunrise and then stands before the Almighty till noon. After midday, it kneels before Him and at sunset prostrates before Him and remains in this state all night. It is to this reality which the waxing and waning of the moon and the rising and setting of stars point. The same is true for the mountains, trees and animals. Their shadows at all times stand, kneel or bow down before the Almighty and a little deliberation shows that such is the Abrahamic temperament of this shadow that it always remains opposite to the sun. If the sun is in the east, the shadow will stretch in the west and vice versa. In other words, the shadow of every object from its very existence tells us that it is not the sun but it’s Creator who is worthy of prostration.

This argument in favour of tawhid is more of a hint and is seldom grasped by logicians; however, for those who reflect on the universe, this hint has great value.

1. The following verse refers to this very reality: (His state of affairs is that when He intends When He intends [to do something] He need only say: “Be” and it is. (36:82)).
2. The word sha’yy is fa’IL from sha’a yasha’u and technically the fa’IL form here connotes the ma‘ful. (Translator’s Note)


4. Muslim, No: 486.


Islāmī Qānūn ki Tadwīn
Since the establishment of Pakistan, the introduction of Divine law has been the most important issue in the polity of Pakistan. The reluctance in conceding to the popular demand cannot be genuinely considered as the insincerity on the part of the ruling elite. Islahi felt that there are indeed certain genuine difficulties in the way of Islamīzation of laws in Pakistan. Islahi delivered several lectures in different law colleges and universities on the issue of codification of Islāmīc laws in Pakistan. These lectures were later compiled and were also translated in English. The book comprises of six chapters along with a forward by Mr. Justice (Retd.) Muhammad Afzal Cheema, Chairman Council of Islamīc Ideology, Pakistan. The first chapter discusses fundamental difference between man-made laws and Islamīc laws. The second chapter related to the dynamic nature of Islamīc law. The third chapter discusses sources of Islamīc law. According to Islahi, these are five: Quran, Sunnah, ijtihad, riwāj (custom) and ma‘lahat (expediency). In the fourth chapter Islahi discusses ijtihad, the most important and controversial issue. The problem of codification of Islamīc laws is discussed in the fifth chapter of the book. The last chapter discusses significance of ijtihad in the modern age. In this book, Islahi tries to dispel misunderstandings of intelligentsia about the nature of Islamīc law and its sources created with advancement in legal knowledge and change in the societal structure. In this book he also quoted the hazrat Maa’z history of evolution, in islam ijtihad is not the monopoly of a particular class or group, nevertheless it is equally true that not every one in islam is competent enough to carry out ijtihad.

Reference: codification of Islamic law SA rauf Islamic publication Lahore
This study sheds light on the question of codification in the Muslim world. It tries to explain historical attempts made for unification of Islamic law and explore the factors made these attempts fruitless. The study hinges upon a historical and analytical method and concludes some important findings. According to the study, attempts of codification go back to the era of the Abbasid Caliphate. Freedom of Ijtihād was one of the main hindrances making codification of the Islamic law prohibitive. However, the Islamic State had presented different ways to unify the laws, such as recognizing limited schools of law and appointing judges from certain schools of jurisprudence, then selecting certain books of Fiqh to be the reference of Fatwa and judgment and drafting collections of Fatwa by official directives from the State. The final status was promulgation of the official codes of law by the Ottoman Caliphs after enacting the policy of Tanzīmāt in 1839. Here, the “Majallah” for law of transactions and “Qānūn al-‘Ā’ilah” for the family law were produced in a way technically similar to the modern styles of codification.

**Introduction**

During the Muslim history, some attempts had been done to make the Islamic law more attainable and reduce its different jurisprudential views in a single code applying in the entire or a certain part of the Muslim world. However, the challenges of modernity had permanently posed the question of codification and differences of Muslim views are continuously observed. In this study, we will try to shed light on the historical progress occurred in the Muslim world pertaining this issue and then propose the main reasons made the act of this codification legally disputable.

Code, literally, means the act, process, or result of arranging in a systematic form, and codification means the act of codifying. It does include, in the view of law, two main aspects, namely: the act, process, or result of stating the rules and principles applicable in a given legal order to one or more broad areas of life in this form of a code; and, secondly, the reducing of unwritten customs or case law to statutory form.

**Codification Attempts in Islamic History**

In the period of the Prophet Mohammed (P. B. U. H) and of the four great Caliphs, the question of codification did not arise. With the passage of time, when a growing number of juristic schools appeared and the job of the courts was not as simple as before, it was not possible any longer to expect the harmony in scholars’ opinions.
and judges’ verdicts, as much as the rulers themselves, began to feel the necessity of a codified law.

The historians refer the very beginnings of codification in Muslim World, to the well documented event of Ibn al-Muqaffa’s dialogue, with the Caliph Abū Ja’far al-Manṣūr (95-158AH/713-775CE). Ibn al-Muqaffa’, a famous writer in Arabic literature, was the first to see the necessity of codification. He put a proposal before Abū Ja’far al-Manṣūr in a formal letter named “Risālat al-Ṣaḥābah fī Ṭa’at al-Suṭān” (Message of Companions in the Obedience of the Sultan) and because it was fruitless it was then called “al-Risālah al-Yatīmah” (The Orphan Message), stating:

‘And one problem of these two Islamic States (Chufa and Basra) and other provinces to which Amīr al-Mu’minīn has to give his deep thought is that of the divergence of opinion on Islamic Law, which has now reached such proportions that it is no longer possible to close our eyes to it If Amīr al-Mu’minīn would like it, the answer could be; that Amīr al-Mu’minīn issue a decree that all decisions and judgments so far passed be compiled in the form of a book and placed before Amīr al-Mu’minīn, and every sect must attach with it all the arguments which support their viewpoint, duly based on reasoning and authoritative references. Amīr al-Mu’minīn may thereafter review the whole record, and give his own judgment in each case, and restrain the law courts from contravention thereof. In this way all the scattered decisions and judgments – covering a variety of subjects of all shades – shall assume the form of a regular, written code of law, free of errors. Accordingly, all Islamic States shall come to be governed by a uniform legal system. It is hoped that Allah Almighty shall bring about a consensus of the Ummah on the opinion and verdict of Amīr al-Mu’minīn.

The Caliph did not accept the proposal in this form, but he kept it in mind. When he went to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca in (148AH/765CE), he indicated the idea to Imam Mālik. Mālik opposed the proposal and said that the followers of each school found solace in following their respective doctrines. It is also maintained that the Caliph went again to the pilgrimage in (158AH/775CE), and he put the whole scheme before Mālik. It is also believed that Mālik did not formally agree with the proposal, but compiled his Muwaṭṭa’ yet holding the opinion thereof of his own. History has it on record that during their reign, both Al-Mahdī (d. 169AH) and Harūn al-Rashīd (d. 193AH) also approached Mālik with the same question, which again was refuted by him. It is recorded by history that during the first three centuries of
Islamic history, the function of Ijtihād remained free of the interference of rulers; and judges remained free to implement the law according to inspiration of courtesy and justice based on the fundamental evidences of Islamic Holy References and other relative sources of jurisprudence like Analogy (Qiyās), Custom (ʿUrf) and Public Interest (Maṣlaḥah Mursalah).

The concept of codification was presented in various forms in the later history of Islamic jurisdiction. It was improved and advanced in very slow and gradual steps in such a form that it is sometimes difficult to decide how to categorize them from a contemporary perspective. Generally, the historians of Islamic legal system indicate the different typical approaches, that to be discussed in the following sections, as the very beginnings of the codification concept.

A. Adoption of the four prominent doctrines of jurisprudence: After the confusion of political order and division of power that occurred during the Abbasid era, a beginning of juristic rigidity came to be grounded. The majority of scholars favored adopting certain schools founded by famous Mujtahids to the extent that this gradually led to severe doctrinism in juristic opinions. This became dominant, especially after the conflict of opinions became obvious as a result of freedom of juridical opinions. The four best known schools of four great Imāms; Abū ʿAnīfa (d. 150AH/767CE), Mālik, Shāfiʿī (d. 204AH/820CE) and Aḥmad b. ʿA ṣ bāl (d. 241AH/855CE) became dominant. The Ḥanafī Doctrine diffused more due to the Abbasid’s adoption of this school and the appointment of major judges from its fellows, e.g. the popular judge Abū Yosuf (d. 189AH/805CE). Shāfiʿī Doctrine was preferred in Egypt, the place where the doctrine had grown in. Mālikī Doctrine became prevalent in West Africa (Maghrib). The judges mostly were selected from these schools according to the historical contexts of each and based on opportunities. Under the jurisdiction of Ṭūlūnid (254-292AH) and Akhshidid (323-358AH) the judges were selected from the four schools, with a certain favor to the Shāfiʿī School. Therefore, it became a judicial tradition for the judges to consult their doctrine in applying the rules. Yet, the rulers did not adopt a certain school to be the only reference of adjudication and people were free to choose the judge they preferred in accordance with the common acceptability of these doctrines.
B. Official selection of laws from a certain doctrine of jurisprudence: As a result of the enforcement of Ḥanafi Doctrine in the legal courts, the policy of courts, as well as the laws and juristic approaches became unified. Yet the diversity of opinions and disputes upon the best resolutions for juristic questions, within the Ḥanafi Doctrine from inside, remained truly an obstacle to a full adoption of a uniform code of law. This pushed the Ottoman rulers think about a preferable selection of legal resolutions, aiming at a uniform opinion to be imposed over all territories of the Ottoman Caliphate.

Later on, during the Eleventh Century of Hijrah (Seventeenth Century), another positive attempt was made under the orders of the Sultān Muḥammad Awrangzeb ʿĀlamgīr. A scholarly Board of five members, from the best Indian scholars and under the leadership of Niẓām Burhān Burī, was constituted with the directive to compile a book that, in the Sultān’s words, “should embrace such Fatāwā or judgments as had obtained the consensus of eminent scholars of jurisprudence, and which should be a treasure-house of valuable information, having the approval of religious luminaries”. The compilation of “Al- Fatāwā al-Hindiyyah/al-Fatāwā al-ʿĀlamgīriyyah”, within six volumes, was authored, but it did not fulfill the requisites of an official Code, owing to the fact that it was not compulsory applied, nor drafted in a systematical order and it encompassed both the rules of ʿIbādāt and Muʿāmalāt in which some of the rules were only imaginary and abstract truths. Although it was not compiled in the style of a modern Code, it was an important link in the chain of the works attempted in this direction.

Substantively the Majallah covered both less and more than a European Civil Code. It dealt with contracts (sale, hire, guaranty, dept, etc.) and some torts, but not with non-contractual obligations and did not regulate other areas of private law, such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and various aspects of genuine property.

The Ottomans, in enacting this policy, relied on the maxim of Legal Politics (al-Siyyāsah al-Sharʿīyyah) to legitimize it and gain the force of obedience upon the citizens. It was stipulated in Majallat al-Ahkām al-ʿAdliyyah that if an official command emanated from the Sultān to utilize a juristic opinion of a certain Mujtahid in a particular legal question because it was deemed more
suitable to the contemporary age and more respondent to everyday life of people, the judge should be bound by it and not utilize the reverse opinions. If such conduct happens, the verdict given will be out of validity and shall not take place to application with the executive personnel, ‘If an order has come from the Sulṭān, that as regards some special matter the opinion of one of the founders of the Law should be acted on, on the ground that it is more convenient for the business of the time and for people, in that matter the judge cannot act by the opinion of another founder of the Law and contrary to the opinion of that one. If he does, his judgment is not executed (Nafiz).’

C. Official selection of laws from various doctrines of jurisprudence: The policy of legal oriented politics (Siyāsah Sharʿiyyah) followed by the Ottomans was also manifested in the form of adopting different schools of Islamic jurisprudence, in the creation of later codes. Commonly it was decided by the scholars that an unqualified person (Muqallid) is allowed to follow opinions of different qualified scholars if he is keen to protect the objectives of the law. However, if he is not aware of these objectives and boundaries, he may transgress the limits of Sharīʿah at the end, especially when he consciously seeks the easiest opinion to apply, regardless of the authenticity it possesses. Combining this rule to right of a ruler to select the most suitable opinion, the Ottoman Caliphate drafted a code for the law of marriage, divorce, etc., which was known as “Qānūn Ḥuqūq al-'Ā'ilah al-'Uthmānī” (Ottomans Law of Family Rights, 1917). It was authored in accordance with the Ḥanafī approaches and incorporated selected opinions from other rites, considering public interests. As such, it considered rules of family in minorities' religions. Although this code was repealed in Istanbul only two years later, it was, for a long time, applied in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Jordan. Also, it is noteworthy that the Arab States followed similar steps in their family law, with special reference to the area of personal statute, trusts “Awqāf”, inheritance, and will “Waṣiyyah”.

D. Adoption of the foreign legal codes (man-made law): Throughout its entire history, the Ottoman Caliphate had felt the necessity of a well-established legal system. Although Majallah was considered an attempt for Islamization of
laws, on one hand, it was, on the other hand, counted as the Ottomans approach for adaptation of the foreign laws. N.J. Coulson, a professor in oriental laws, holds that the derivation of western law began as a result of the system of Capitulations in the Nineteenth Century. The Western powers ensured that their citizens residing in the Middle East would be governed by their own laws. This brought about familiarity with European laws particularly in mixed cases involving Europeans and Muslims in respect to trades and commerce. The laws applied under the Capitulatory system turned with the state’s desire for comprehensive legal codification to form the basic trends of this progress. At the same time the adoption of these European laws as a territorial system meant that foreign powers might acquiesce in the abolition of Capitulations that became increasingly irksome as a growing emphasis was placed on national sovereignty. As a result of these considerations a large-scale reception of European law was effected in the Ottoman Caliphate by the Tanzimat reforms of the period between 1839 and 1876.

The codification reforms started as a mass reflection to the huge advances realized in Europe. The citizens of the Ottoman Caliphate put the state under serious pressure asking for constitutional reforms, especially after the draft of the Napoleonic Civil Code.

The Caliphate promised the citizens that the orders applied in the state would be similar to European orders. The “Tanzimat” was the policy that adopted by Sulṭān ‘Abdul-Majīd on 3rd November 1839, in his first year of jurisdiction.

The first constitutional document that came to ground was Khaṭṭi Sherīf of Gülhane (Chamber of Roses). Its primitive section includes a deep description of the backwardness and instability in the Caliphate due to misapplication of Divine laws. It ‘figured out’ that the legal reform is the way for a solution. It also declares the principles of human liberty, recognizes dignity of ownership and equality to all residents before the law without any discrimination based on religion or job.

The foregoing discussion proves that the laws of the Ottoman Caliphate flowed in two opposing directions:

1. A direction towards westernization of the law in the form of adopting the foreign laws, with special reference to French Codes. These sets of laws distorted the
Islamic rulings in aspects of estates and penalties, e.g., article 54 in the land law stipulated equal inheritance between males and females. The penal law did not codify the Islamic penal system including the Ḥudūd, and usury was made legitimate.

2. A direction towards codification of Islamic law, and this movement was represented by two main compilations:

In addition to that, other laws dealing with different questions, such as those regulating local administration of the provinces, police, prisons, public buildings, societies, trade-unions, civil servants and their pensions were also promulgated.

Despite that, there existed “al-Maḥākim al-Khāṣṣah” (the Special Courts) which branched into Council Courts for the foreign residents inside the Caliphate and Spiritual Courts for the non-Muslim minorities in respect to the family law.

The institutional separation of Sharīʿah and Qānūn paved the way for future secularization. However, to Niyazi, codification was in itself an unmistakable mark of secularization in a Muslim society as it is a designed, concrete human effort to formulate the Sharīʿah as a positive law.

Following the 1923 Lausanne Peace Conference the new regime in Turkey reached the decision that the process of codification should be conducted in conformity with the legal systems of modern European States. This time, entirely novel codes were drafted, following the provisions of the Swiss Civil Code, Italian Criminal Code, German and Italian laws of land and sea trade, and the Neufchatel procedural law, all of which were accepted and ratified following the regular discussions in the Grand National Assembly. After a time other Codes followed these.

The work of juristic Ijtihād, which was based on the secondary sources of jurisprudence, namely consensus of opinion, analogy and principles of equity. These details and particulars formed a huge mass of Fatāwā or "responses" and filled up a great number of books and commentaries. So, it will not be a controversial fact that a code of laws may help Muslims utilize this huge heritage from which the codification should take place.

1. It may help Muslims filter and choose the most suitable opinions of former jurists and conclude with the best.
2. It is difficult today to have judges with qualifications sufficient to independently deduce the legal rules from the primary sources of law. Therefore, it will be interesting to have a code drafted by the qualified personalities and profound scholars, to give others a chance for accessible adjudication of the cases.

3. It may assist in unifying the decisions and judgments of the judges, e.g., in the beginning of the Saudi Arabian rulings, a sharp dispute among the judges was notified, the matter led to the enforcement of certain books as compulsory references for judgment.

4. The Muslims may not be capable to achieve mastery and excellence without getting rid of the influence of foreign laws which were enforced upon them, and this cannot be merely achieved without applying an alternative code deriving from the original sources of Islamic law.

However, the writer believes that Islamic legal system follows neither the common nor the civil law approaches, but could be regarded as a combination of both. Therefore, the style of Shar'iah codes should be different from counterparts in modern law.

The texts of holy Qur'an and Sunnah should remain authoritative as references of any code and the codification procedure should cover the issues of Ijtihad without contradicting general and specific texts of Shari'ah or jeopardizing the higher intents of its legal system. However, a space should be explicitly given to the external sources like collective Fatwa, scholarly consensus, custom and public interest, so eliminating the possibility of rigidity and imitation.

The Concept of Law in Islam

When scholars, politicians or lay observers speak of “Islamic law,” it is presumed that they are referring to “the sharia.” However, as demonstrated in this analysis, there is a subtle, but important, distinction between these two terms. The sharia is the totality of divine categorizations of human acts as laid out in the Quran and the Hadith, constituting issues of both legality and morality.

While there is no dispute regarding its divine origin, sharia, in and of itself, does not exist as a ready-made body of law to administer. Or in other words, while sharia is God-given, its application and interpretation is man-made and therein appears the
principal dilemma taxing Islamic legal history for over fourteen centuries: law is proposed by God, yet disposed by ordinary mortals. Between the original divine proposition and eventual human disposition appears an extensive field of intellectual activity, differences of opinion and hotly contested decisions. Therefore, the peculiarity inherent in Islamic law is its dual nature as both divine law and jurists’ law.

It is important to keep in mind that the sharia becomes law through the process of interpretation, codification and legislation.

2 This is the fundamental goal of Muslim jurisprudence: to reach an understanding (fiqh) of God’s articulations (sharia). Consequently, Muslim legal theory is referred to as usul-al-fiqh or the sources of understanding.

3 The word sharia itself is derived from the Arabic root shar, simply meaning straight path.

4 In Islamic tradition, it is under the heading of fiqh not sharia, where the rules and regulations applied in courts and enforced by the state actually reside. According to British legal scholar Noel Coulson, “Islamic jurisprudence is a speculative essay to comprehend the precise terms of Allah’s law.”

The Development of Law in Islam

Islamic law has been evolutionary in its growth phase. The first 150 years of Islam were characterized by an almost untrammeled level of individual freedom in legal reasoning based on divine revelations; when new circumstances posed challenges, the expression of personal opinion, known as ra’y, was widely acceptable. Law then occupied two separate spheres of divine ordinance and individual decision which did not combat each other. However, this pragmatic attitude soon became victim to the increasing sophistication of theological and philosophical inquiry and the political rifts in Islam.

Among the growing body of scholars rose the conviction that the legal sovereignty of God was all embracing. To allow human reason to formulate a legal rule—whether by continued recognition of a customary law or by juristic speculation on a new issue—was tantamount to heresy. In other words, human interpretation could not “compete with Allah.” A compromise solution was to devise a method of reasoning to
operate within the parameters of divine will. This appeared in the form of a human legislative authority whose function was harnessed to the implementation and development of the sharia with complete subordination to sacred revelation. However, this process did not occur in a water-tight closet, but rather in an organic cultural, social and political context.

**Divergence in Jurisprudence**

Throughout the development of Islamic legal theory, there has been wide-spread divergence in the interpretations of the Muslim jurists qualified to expound God’s sharia. This captures the tension between unity and diversity in Islamic legal doctrine which goes to the very core of Muslim jurisprudence. As divine revelation is a fixed and constant element and human reason the variable and fluctuating factor, an inevitable rift occurs between the ideal and the profane state of affairs. This was crystallized in the four different schools or versions of sharia law (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi and Hanbali). Their stabilizing force was essentially the doctrine of consensus or ijma, which addresses the paramount question of legal authority in Islam.

Therefore, the whole process of Muslim jurisprudence, from the definition of the sources of law to the derivation of substantive rules, was an exploratory effort of the human intellect. When an individual jurist reached a judicial conclusion, it was considered more of a conjecture; however, when the ruling was the outcome of a more or less unanimous consensus, it became an incontrovertible statement of the divine law. Hence, ijma provided an umbrella authority for the variant doctrines of the different schools. Where Muslim jurists could not agree, they agreed to disagree.

It is important to appreciate the significance of ijma as a candidly pluralistic Aspect of Islamic law which recognizes that no individual opinion can claim, against other variants, a unique authority. By extrapolation, it is apparent that Islamic law emphasizes collective rather than individual action in the temporal sphere.

**Ijtihad: Open or Closed**

The word ijtihad means “a total expenditure of effort in the attempt to achieve something whose realization is burdensome or difficult.” Commonly referred to as independent reasoning, ijtihad is a fundamental Islamic concept that is somehow
riddled with controversy. Although it is factually true that from the onset of the tenth century in Islam, the process of ijtihad was gradually circumscribed, this was merely due to the overwhelming belief at the time that Muslim jurisprudence had been invested with a largely uncontested doctrinal authority that no longer required greater elaboration. Further inquiry would be without purpose or meaning and it was this conclusion as well as a growing rift between Islamic political factions and the ulema that led to the compromise wherein “the doors of ijtihad were closed.” As ijtihad lost its creative force, future generations of jurists were denied the right of independent reasoning and were bound instead by the principle termed taqlid to follow their predecessors (however, this was more the case in Suni Islam rather than the Shia minority).

While various theories and opinions have flourished to explain this phenomenon of the closing of the door to ijtihad and its implications on modern Muslim societies, it is a fanciful assertion that this fundamental process of human reasoning is not allowed in the present day and age. This line of argument falters with the realization that law is by and large a mirror of a given society and ebbs and flows according to the changing social order. Islamic law remained static for an extremely protracted period because Islamic society itself was relatively stable. There was no real impetus to challenge legal authority until the past few decades of the twentieth century, which witnessed great upheavals in the social, political and moral fabric of Islamic nations. This evolution necessitates a critical reexamination of the contemporary validity of some of the medieval precepts of Islamic law; a process which can only occur with a renewed urgency towards ijtihad, for which there is no sound intellectual or moral basis for objection.

According to the Muslim jurist, Ibn al-Arabi, the denial of ijtihad amounts to nothing less than the denial of Allah’s continuing, living solicitude and the mission of the Prophet as a mercy to the worlds.26 Indeed, despite talk of its closed gates, it is not an exaggeration to claim that Muslims all over the world exercise ijtihad everyday in all matters from the mundane to the sacred. As most of the application of law is clarifying definitions, the contest over ijtihad is really about the role of the intellect in determining meanings and rulings. Whether desire for standardization and codification in Islamic law is inborn or state-induced, the fact remains that the resulting complacency in reinvigorating ijtihad among some Muslim circles, is
antithetical to the perpetual inward/outward receptivity enshrined in God’s sharia, where the onus on understanding the law is routinely placed on the reasoning abilities of the individual.

Islāmī Riyāsat

There was a time when I studied political science books with the assistance of my teacher, Moulana Hameeduddin Farahi, Rahamahu Allah alaih. The one I liked the most was *The Theory of the State*, First English Edition published in 1895, by the famous German Philosopher, Johann Kaspar Bluntschli (1808-1881). I intended to write a book myself in the same way about principles and fundamentals of an Islamic State. The reason that motivated me in my heart was that I saw the internationally famous books either do not mention the Islamic State or if they do, they take it as a theocracy, which is all derived from the Papal system, which is a well-known infamous system, and it is very unfair to Islam to speculate about any resemblance of the Islamic political system with it.

My intention remained alive in my mind and I kept collecting material for it however, I never got enough time to complete this book according to the plan I had in my mind. Different chapters of this book were written at different times and they were continuously published in the form of articles or booklets. It was my desire that once all the chapters were complete they would be shaped in the form of a book after a review but my work on Tadabbur Qur’an occupied me in such a way that neither I could even complete its all chapters according to my plan and nor it is expected that I could do it in future. On the other hand, the people who understand the value of this work continued demanding its publication as it is. Thus satisfaction of their demand was preferred over its completion. Although even in its present form, the book will be very beneficial for people interested in this subject, they will find new light on crucial issues, I feel sorry that I could not complete my favorite book according to my plan. The people who realize the value of the book are requested to accept it ignoring its weaknesses. It is no wonder that a servant of Allah would organize a comprehensive book on these lines. This is not difficult for Allah.
The Concept of the Islamic State

The concept of the Islamic state is concealed in the term Islam uses for the state. Anyone who has some insight in the Islamic literature knows that Islam does not use terms like, a state, kingdom or government for a political organization established on its principles but it uses terms like Khilafa, Imama or Imara. For this reason in order to explain the concept of the Islamic state it is necessary to reflect upon these terms and understand things associated with them.

The true Islamic concept of state can be gleaned from a critical study of the terms Islamic sources use for the state system. Students of Islamic literature know that the Islamic Sources do not employ the terms like state, kingdom or government for a political organization based on pure Islamic principles. These sources, quite distinctly, use the terms khilāfah, imāmah or amārah. This conscious deviation from the convention invites us to understand important implications of this innovation even before delving on the question of the Islamic concept of state.

The Difference between Khilafa and Imara

It is unfortunate that in some Islamic jurisprudence and dialectic rhetoric (ilm-ul-klam) books’ terms of Khilafa, Imama and Imara have been improperly used as being equivalent to each other, which can sometimes create confusion. However in the light of Quran and Ahadith it is obvious that they differ in their meanings. Khilafa is used for a state established in conformity with Islamic principles and the terms imama or imara stand for a government which fulfils intents of Khilafa and implements its plans. In other words the difference between a- Khilafa and b- Imama or Imara is the same as that between state and government.

This introduction explains that the first thing we need to remember is that in Islam a state is not merely a state but a Khilafa. Then we also need to bear in mind that an accurate concept of something is gained only through its standard form therefore, only standard forms of Khilafa are under consideration here. Its distorted forms, which are found in history, cannot be useful in this discussion.
The terms, khilâfah, amârah and imâmah, have been used interchangeably in some works on the Islamic fiqh (jurisprudence) and kalâm (scholastic theology). This has blurred the true Islamic concept of state. If we attempt to determine the meaning of these terms in the light of the Quran and the hadîth literature we learn that these terms have different significations. The term khilâfah, we learn, connotes a state founded on the principle guidance of Islam. Imâmah or amârah signifies a government which enforces the rule of khilâfah. It is, therefore, an organ of rule that fulfils the purpose of the Islamic state. In other words, difference between khilâfah and amârah can be compared with difference between the state and government.

The above preliminary discussion, it is hoped, shows that if we intend to gain a proper understanding of the Islamic concept of state, we have to appreciate that in Islam the state has the qualification of being a khilâfah. It is also equally important to consider that a true and correct perception of a thing can only be attained by a full understanding of its idea manifestation. We, therefore, by khilâfah, mean the ideal form of the institution. Various corrupted forms of khilâfah, examples of which may be found in the Islamic history, are not meant, being of no use for our purpose.

**Logical Deductions from the Concept of Khilafa**

The Qur'an is not merely story telling about the beginnings of humankind. Its objective is to provide us clues to a few facts of social and political sciences. Relating to the concept of Khilafa, the following facts become apparent for us from the Quranic account:

1. Consciousness about Khilafa is innate in human nature. This is not something he picked up from his surroundings, rater Allah created man Himself for this role and bestowed upon him consciousness about it. He has been equipped with this consciousness ever since and it has motivated him towards taking on a political life. He did not embrace this political life artificially or unintentionally but it is the fulfillment of its craving in his nature without which his personality remains incomplete.
2. The natural role of man on this planet is not of a sovereign autocratic existence but of Khalifa, viceroy of Allah. Although he enjoys an authority in a particular sphere, the authority is not his personally but rather it is delegated by Allah. For this reason its exercise is fair and lawful only within the bounds decreed by Allah and not
outside of them. A consequence of the concept of vice regency is also that he has to be answerable about all those exercises where they were against the intent of the final authority.

3. Final authority on this earth belongs to Allah and not to mankind. The authority of legislation and execution that mankind enjoys is either under revealed commandments or within defined circles where Allah has left man to exercise his choice.

4. As far as the objective of creation is concerned everybody qualifies for this status. Abilities to fulfill its responsibilities are innate in everyone. However, man is not forced to assume that status, rather he is free to assume it or not. He can become khalif by confining himself within the bounds decreed by Allah or become rebel by crossing His bounds. As Allah has created everybody for His worship but has not forced anybody and left everyone free to worship Him or not worship Him. Similarly He has not forced and for Khilafa.

Allah’s Wont (Custom) with Khilafa

We mentioned above that the Khilafa is by choice not by force. That choice consequently entailed that Allah would grant nations rule over land to test them; whether they follow their whims or keep their rule abiding by bounds decreed by Allah. The nations that behave rebelliously against Allah are deemed guilty and annihilated after their allocated test period ends. Qur'an mentions this tradition of Allah as:

وَلَقَدْ أُهْلِكْنَا الْقُروُنَ مِن قَبْلَكُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا ۖ وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيَوْمَئِنْ ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْقَوْمَ المُجْرِمِينَ ۙ (١٣٤) ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلاَئِفَ فِي الْرَّضُ ۚ مِن بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ ۙ (١٤١)

We destroyed the generations before you when they did brutal-injustice and their Messengers came to them with the clear signs, but they would not believe; so we recompense the guilty people.
This Khilafa is, although, effectively available to all human beings: its true deservers are only those who fulfill its obligation. Thus Allah declared Prophet Daud AS His Khalifa in clear words because his rule was in conformity with His commandments:


Daud, behold, we have appointed thee a viceroy in the earth; therefore judge between men justly Sura 38 Saad – Verse 26

The Difference between Khilafa and a Common State

After this description it is not difficult to understand similarities and differences between a common state and an Islamic state (Khilafa). Aristotle defined Man as ‘Speaking Animal’ this definition holds true for a non-Muslim equally well as it does for a Muslim because in spheres of physical existence and natural instincts both have similar needs and cravings. However, despite that everyone knows there is a big difference between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. Principles of life of a non-Muslim are different and principles of life of a Muslim are different.

Similarly there is not much difference between a common state and an Islamic state as far as their visible structure and physical composition are concerned. Establishment of a common state requires a human society, control over a land, ruling status with respect to internal affairs, a sovereign status with respect to external relations and a political organization (government) that can implement its intents and accomplish its objectives. Similarly an Islamic state or Khilafa for its establishment also requires all those elements. From this point of view there is not much difference between both of them however as far as their principles and objectives are concerned both are as far apart as heavens and earth.

Who Deserves Khilāfah

The right of khilāfah is potentially accrued to all human beings. It it can only be endowed upon those able to discharge the corresponding duties. God declared
David his vicegerent on the earth with clear command to conduct the right in accordance with his commands. David, we have made you our vicegerent in the land. Therefore, judge men justly.

Only the Prophets and Messengers of God and their followers rightfully deserve the right of khilāfah. Others enjoy this right only as followers of the example of the Prophets and Messengers in exercising the political power entrusted in them. People organized for the sake of serving God, and following him in their worldly matters are rewarded with the special blessing in the form of khilāfah of God. The Quran mentions this in the following words:

God promises those of you who believe and do good works to make them rulers in the land as he granted rule to those who went before them, to strengthen for them the faith he chose for them, and to change their state of fear to safety. They shall worship me and shall take no partners with me.

**Fundamental Principles of the Islamic State**

While discussing the implications of the term khilāfah, in the foregoing paragraphs, I mentioned that dominion on the earth is God’s alone. The Islamic State is founded on this fundamental reality. That the whole universe is subject to the divine will and that nothing happens without his will is an established fact, whether it is acknowledged or not. Islam, however, requires that God is acknowledged not only as the runner of the universe but also as a law giver.

Therefore, one has to acknowledge that the whole universe is run by him and dominion is exclusively his. None other than God has the absolute right to form laws about human affairs. He can legislate the laws of our private as well as collective life. This is why, in Islam, we acknowledge not only oneness of God but also the Prophethood of Muhammad.

One’s belief in the oneness of God and his omnipotence does not carry any meaning unless he believes in the Prophethood of Muhammad. Unless one does not believe in the Prophethood of Muhammad he will not be recognized the true believer. This is because he does not recognize the right of God as the law giver, the necessary corollary of his rule. The declaration of faith, which epitomizes our religious beliefs, is
two parts. By declaring that “there is no God but Allah” one acknowledges the cosmic rule of God and by declaring that “Muhammad is the Messenger of God” one submits to that God has given the law through the Prophet Muhammad. This divine law has to prevail. Negation of either parts of the formula of declaration of the faith necessarily negates the other. Belief in prophecy is a necessary part of belief in unity of God. Acknowledging God’s dominion over the whole universe and declaring that he is the creator and owner loses all meaning if the believer subjects himself to the rule and law coming from a creation. God’s dominion over the universe is set by default.

As a law giver, God reveals himself through the agency of Prophethood. The Prophets of God work as his representatives on the earth and explain to people what God commands them to do and what He prohibits them. They teach their addressees the manner of life God prescribes for personal and collective life of man. The Prophets are a very secure and impeccable source of knowing the divine will. They cannot be expected of committing even a slightest error in delivering God’s message. God watches over them and makes sure that they communicate his messages to the world without failure.

These Prophets are also guides to mankind in their personal capacity. In this capacity too they drive command. One cannot expect to be included among the faithful servants of God until and unless he obeys the Prophets unconditionally. To register oneself as a faithful servant of God one has to demonstrate true submission before the Prophets and Messengers of God.

The practical form of obeying God, therefore, is obeying the Prophets and Messengers. It is only the Prophet who informs us of God’s commands and implements them. This is why the Quran, in almost all instances, pairs the command to obey God with the directive to obey the Prophets and Messengers. This makes it abundantly clear that a believer has not been left with an option to differentiate between obeying God and following his Messenger. Those who ostensibly acknowledge the rule of God and practically negate the right of the Messenger as a law-giver and a guide can be compared with those who acknowledge a king while refusing to subject themselves to the authority of his representatives. Hypocritical
submission to a sovereign does not work in any political system of the world. Nor can it be tolerated in the law of God.

Reference: Mawlana Amin Ahsan Islahi, Masala-i-Tamlik awr Zakāt say Muta’aliq baī doosray Masail

The Islamic states by Amin Ahsan Islahi

Dawat-e-Dīn aur Uska Tarīq-e-Kār

‘Preaching’ -- the word instantly calls to mind the methods and devices long since popular among Muslims for propagating Islam. When a certain approach to a problem becomes time-honoured, people find it almost impossible to think of that problem without at the same time thinking of that approach to it. The approach looks so natural that anyone wanting to solve that problem automatically adopts it. Even a person who resolves to avoid taking it, sooner or later finds himself insensibly drawn to it. We, therefore, think it necessary to point out first the shortcomings of the prevalent mode of preaching Islam.

The shortcomings are of two types: conceptual and practical. In other words, the philosophy and the methodology are both wrong. That is the reason why most of the efforts made to spread Islam, far from advancing the cause of Islam, have actually damaged it. We shall begin by examining the theoretical errors.

The most egregious mistake of the propagators of Islam consists in their failure to understand correctly the stance of Islam, and, consequently, in their failure to present Islam in the light in which the Qur’a$n had presented it. According to the Qur’a$n, Islam has been the religion of God since the world was made. Every prophet that came, no matter where and when, preached Islam. Peoples of the world kept disfiguring Islam and playing tricks with it and God kept renewing and reviving it by sending more prophets until, through Muhammad, the last of the Prophets (pbuh), He revealed it in its complete and finished form, making it proof against any kind of change, garbling, or interpolation. Contained now in the Qur’a$n, this religion of Islam is not the religion of any one particular community, but the religion of the whole mankind. He who believes in it is a Muslim, he who does not is a non-Muslim. It does not discriminate against any prophet, does not deny the other books revealed by
God, and does not assert its absolute superiority over the other divinely-revealed religions. It only claims to be an accurate and reliable compilation of the teachings -- brought to perfection -- of all the prophets.

Our preachers and writers, however, presented Islam as the religion of the Muslim community only and, as such, as a religion hostile to the other religions. To prove its authenticity they poked fun at the other divine books and ridiculed even those of their teachings which, as Muslims and as believers in all the prophets, they ought to have been the first to affirm. With the Holy Prophet (sws) they compared other prophets and sought to establish their inferiority to him whereas the Qur’a$n explicitly forbids Muslims to accord any prophet absolute superiority over the others and tells that each prophet was endowed by God with some distinction peculiar to him only. The distinctive aspects of the prophethood of Muhammad were described by the Qur’a$n in specific terms and the Holy Prophet warned Muslims against claiming for him absolute pre-eminence over the other prophets.

But it was with a blind communalistic zeal that Muslims presented Islam and Muhammad (sws) before the world. The blunder was made not only by the ordinary preachers, pulpiteers, and writers but also by those illustrious authors whose books were, for Muslims and non-Muslims, the only means of understanding Islam. Take a look at the books written by these authors and you will find in them so many venomous utterances about the other prophets that you will be driven to conclude that, like Jews and Christians, Muslims too have developed the pernicious habit of discriminating against certain prophets. Literature and oratory of this brand were enthusiastically received by the Muslim masses because they humoured their communalistic pride and vanity. On the contrary, men whose books and speeches lacked this seductive quality failed to win a name or even to attract the attention of the people. They remained unesteemed by the populace and unappreciated by the elite.

It is true that this poisonous literature was produced largely in response to the provocation offered by certain foul-spoken non-Muslims, but the blame really rests on Muslims in so far as they returned evil for evil. Their imprudence bred ill-will in the hearts of non-Muslims, rendering them incapable of regarding Islam as a religion which was only meant to remind them of the truths they have forgotten and to make
over to them the legacy of their own prophets; they took Islam as a rival religion which desired to rob them of their own religion and impose itself upon them.

Secondly, Islam was not presented as a system of life which binds in a unity all the problems -- personal and collective, doctrinal and practical -- of life and solves them in a rational and natural manner. Instead, our preachers and controversialists placed the greatest emphasis on a set of certain issues which had cropped up as a result of Muslims' religious conflict with Christians and Hindus. The issues, for example, of the eternity of matter, reincarnation, the divinity of Christ, and the Trinity. Issues like these tickle only a handful of professional disputationists whose real achievement consists not so much in having solved them as in having made them more tangled. To try to convince such people is to waste one's time and energy. But our preachers spent their lives in waging wars over such issues. They never for once stopped to think that these issues interest only a few polemicists who do not want to solve them but to further complicate them. They never realized that the world today is facing an altogether different kind of problem, upon the solution of which hinges its salvation, and that any religion which offers a satisfying solto them will become the religion of the entire globe. If, in a world which has depleted its stock of devices for tackling its social and collective problems, if in such a world Islam had been introduced not merely as a set of certain dogmas and rituals but as a complete code of life, it would have been a different world today. But those Muslims who preached Islam or wrote about it probably entertained a Christian view of religion, namely that it is no more than professing a few articles of faith and has no positive bearing on the practical aspects of life. No wonder that the intelligentsia of the world, who had closed their ears to the meaningless hair-splitting of the Christian thinkers, showed complete indifference to the propositions of Islam, and that entire great hullabaloo about propagating Islam was ultimately reduced to an ineffectual clamour of a few individuals. Wastage of time and money was the only outcome.

No less glaring are the errors of practice.

We shall point out some of them.

1. Duality

While on the one hand Muslims claim to be a principled community, that is, a community raised on the principles of Islam, they possess, on the other hand, all the
qualities which might characterize a nation born of racial, historical, or cultural, homogeneity. They maintain that a Muslim is one who believes in God, in the books revealed by Him, and in the Hereafter, and also obeys the dictates of God and His Prophet (sws) in all spheres of life, but their ranks include men who are Muslims only by birth. They grant that Muhammad (sws) is their sole guide in every matter, and yet they have entrusted the reins of authority to those people who totally disregard the teachings of the Holy Prophet (sws). With loud professions they support the complete ethico-practical system of Islam and insist that one cannot deviate from it without ceasing to be a Muslim, but they themselves exemplify every vice and every immorality that can be found in other nations and still their Muslimhood remains unimpaired. They are all out for Islam, which, on their own admission, is inviolate, but then they call the entire history, from the Holy Prophet (sws) right down to Mustafa Kamal Pasha, Islamic, whereas a very large chunk of that history has not the remotest connection with Islam. They urge that the world's only hope of salvation lies in adopting the comprehensive system of Islam, but in practice they beat the bounds of Europe and America in order to find out whether the British or the American system is the more Islamic.

2. Wrong Targets

It was perhaps under the influence of the Christian missionaries that, in preaching, the Muslims always aimed at converting the downtrodden sections of society. This is a completely wrong approach. The first addressees in preaching must be those classes of the society whose thoughts and ideas are governing the societal system. It is these men who make or unmake a nation. If they are reformed, the whole system is reformed. And if they refuse to budge, then a reformation of the lower classes, if at all it comes about, is purely temporary, for the passive disposition of these classes soon gives way to the pressure of vices exerted on them from the really effectual classes above. It is just like the heart and the other organs of the body. A heart made wholesome would make the entire body healthy, but with the heart gone sick, plastering and massaging the body will be of no avail.

The only goal the Christian missionaries had in sight was that of swelling their numbers. And the method they adopted was quite suitable for that purpose. But Muslims do not preach with the sole end of increasing their numbers. Their job is to show mankind the right path, to bring about a wholesale reformation in the life of
man. Now this end can be achieved only when the entire milieu is changed, and that can happen only when the intelligent and dominant sections of society accept the proposed change. Those with a knowledge of sociology will agree with that upstart and revolutionary movements rise from below and throw the structure above into disarray, but the solidly-based reformatory and rational movements take root only when they work from top to bottom. All those Muslims who have tried to spread the teachings of Islam, whether among their co-religionists or others, have generally make this mistake that they have kept their eyes on the lower orders of society and, having them the kalimah and the prayer, have thought that their job is over. No doubt a partial reformation does take place in this way, but life as a whole remains as it was. When it is the whole atmosphere that is contaminated, an attempt should be made to treat the contamination rather than the victims of that contamination. Otherwise it would be like giving an injection to a patient who is living in a town stricken with plague. The injection might check the malignant influence, but for how long? That is why the prophets never addressed the common people first but the influential classes of society. It was through the reformation of these classes that they sought to reform the masses.

3. Hollow Words

Then the Muslims have preached with words only, they have never tried to live Islam. It is clear, however, that there are only a few persons so intelligent and morally so courageous that they would embrace Islam simply on account of the excellence of its principles. A large part of the world will admit the truthfulness of those principles only when they see them producing beneficial results in practical life. But the preaching which has been done here over a long period of time amounts to no more than a dream trip to the paradise of the Islamic life arranged by eloquent speakers, inspired preachers, and potent penmen. The high irony is that while these men have been hymning the praises of the system of Islam, the whole Islamic society, with all its vices of ja$hiliyyah, has been giving them the lie. Silent action is much more effective than loud protestations. That is why all the sermons vanished into thin air and the world remained obstinate. If, instead of hollow bombast, a group of persons had actually tried to evolve a society on the basis of the principles they believed in, they would have, even if they had failed, rendered a nobler service to Islam than that which they failed to render with their successful sermons and
writings. To prove that Islam is a blessing to the whole world, it is not sufficient to narrate moving anecdotes from the past, nor it would do to deliver speeches and compose articles on the logical possibility of Islam. The only way to accomplish this goal is that a group or party of men demonstrates in practice the worth of the doctrines they hold dear. An precisely has the lack been most conspicuous.

5. Cheap Tactics

In preaching, the Muslims also resorted to some of the base methods used by the Christians. They tried to adopt the same techniques with which the Christians tried to convert the world or which the Aryans employed to gain their ends. In debates they exerted to beat their rivals at splitting hairs, heaping abuse, and committing outrages. If some Muslim turned Aryan on account of some temptation offered or misunderstanding caused, the Aryans trumpeted their victory, and so did the Muslims when some Hindu professed Islam. Adoption of cheap tactics, like misleading immature children and actually running away with them, was an important plank in the preaching methodology of others, and so it became in the preaching of Islam. If, from prurient motives, some Hindu woman eloped with a libertine Muslim, it was hailed as an invaluable preaching trophy, and wantonness and immorality of this kind was regarded as a means of advancing Islam. As a result, many dissolute men and women made a business out of changing faith. In the morning they would get a shoulder-ride from Muslims announcing them that they had joined them, in the evening they would extract money from Christians or Aryans by proclaiming that they had turned Christian or Aryans. In the days when the Hindu proselytizing movements of Shuddhi and Sanghatan were going strong in certain parts of India, a notable Muslim appealed to the ‘Muslim prostitutes’ of Delhi to preach Islam to their non-Muslim clients! Such an approach made Islam look worthless to non-Muslims. They started thinking that Islam is also a commercial enterprise meant to increase the size of a particular community. And they were justified in thinking so, for how could they have been convinced of the superiority of Islam when they noticed that the Muslim were using Islam for the same purpose for which they were using their own religion and in a manner quite like their own?

Reference: Translated from Islahi’s “Da`wat-i-Din” by Mustansir Mir

Such as Jamā’at-i-Islāmī, Pakistan and its student wing Islamī Jamiat-i-Talba.

Sharif Ahmad Khan, Call to Allah and How the Holy Prophets Preached, 2nd edn. (Safat (Kuwait): Islamīc Book Publishers, 1982).
Ghayr Muslimon ke Ḥuqūq

Islamic Nationality and Non-Muslims

The above discussion abundantly proves that non-Muslims can never get an entry into an Islamic nation. It has also been explained that this differentiation is not based on religious bias. Rather the basic reason of the exclusion of the non-Muslims from the Islamic nation is that they reject the all-encompassing and universal principles promulgated by Islam and insist on adhering to parochial principles. These parochial principles instead of causing peace to prevail create nuisance and confrontation. Islam intends to draw them out of such narrow racial and regional tubes. It sets them on the vast highway of unicity of God and human nature. When they insist on their narrow-mindedness and parochialism, Islam lets them follow their path and unfetters itself from the chain of such mundane limits. If non-Muslims are not admitted in the Muslim nationality what place does Islam awards them in the Islamic State.

Rights of Citizens

An individual who fulfils the above mentioned requirements necessary for the citizenship of the Islamic State is accorded several rights. The Islamic State protects their rights on behalf of God and his Messenger. If a government confiscates any of their rights wrongfully it, in fact, violates the protection given them by the Almighty Allāh and his Messenger, which is a major sin. Now we turn to discuss the rights of a citizen in the Islamic State in order:

Protection of Life, Wealth and Honour

The most important and sacred right of a citizen is protection of his life and property. The state must guarantee that it will not violate their right to life, property and repute. It makes 27 in recent times; the concept of geographical nationalities has held sway.
Even the Muslims of an Islamic state close the door for their co-religionists from other countries. The situation is very grave. The earliest Muslims of Madīnah set an example of universal brotherhood for the rest of the world at the time of famous prophetic migration. They invited all the Muslims who were being persecuted in Makkah and adopted them unconditionally. The only condition that bound the two parties was their common faith. Now the same Arab world which once cradled the Madinan community has been badly affected by the idea of geographical nationality. If an oppressed Muslim leaves his country turned into the house of war (dār al-ḥarab) where he is no longer able to adhere to his faith, he is not admitted unless he fulfils the conditions for naturalization set for the aliens. Without fulfilling these legal requirements, he is never admitted to enter the universal refuge for Muslims. 28 Badavīs are those of the Muslims who did not settle in Madīnah. They accepted the faith but chose to live among their tribes.

**Protection of Private Property**

Lawful personal possessions may never be confiscated by the state. Private property of all the citizens will be protected by the state. Confiscating or infringing upon one’s private property means violation of the Shari‘ah. Writes Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf in his treatise Kitāb al-Kharāj:

The government has no right to confiscate property of a citizen except what is legally and conventionally due.

**Protection of Personal Freedom**

The Islamic State guarantees personal freedom to its citizens. God Almighty has granted man with free will. Man can decide upon acts and perform them in a set sphere. It is only on the basis of this free will and choice of act he is rendered accountable for his behaviour in this worldly life. God has ordained that, in his collective life too, man is not forced by the state to act in a specific way. The divine will therefore, acknowledges freedom of action for the individual in a set sphere of life. It is again this freedom of will which determines his success or failure on the Last Day. He can attain success and prosperity by making positive use of this freedom of choice or mar his destiny by misusing it.
Thus it would be perfectly in accord with the divine will that an individual’s personal liberty is guaranteed protection unless and until he does not misuse this liberty in damaging the personal liberty of other individuals or harming the collective interests. Therefore, if the government confiscates his personal freedom without any valid grounds it commits the crime of curbing the freedom of those whom God has granted liberty. It is rather held responsible for minimizing the chances of success of the victim in the Afterlife by hindering his way to do good deeds. This entails that unless and until it is proved beyond a shadow of doubt that someone poses threat to the liberty of other individuals and their fundamental rights he may not be deprived of freedom and liberty. Any restrictions may not be imposed on him. Islam does not approve of denying the basic and natural rights of an individual.

**Right to Religious Freedom**

Since in the Islamic State full citizenship and related rights are awarded only to Muslims, on the basis of religion of course, there is undoubtedly no choice of religious freedom for its citizens. One can put it in the form of an objection. The right to religious freedom awarded to the citizens of secular states is negated the citizens of the Islamic State. We, however, believe that concept of religious freedom in a secular state is mere illusion. Our view needs some clarification for this illusory aspect of the religious freedom in a secular state cannot be fully comprehended unless a sharp distinction between the Islamic state and a secular one is drawn.

The rights of citizens are no more acknowledged if they violate and go against the state Religion in political and collective affairs. The irreligious mundane democracies have, by creating this dichotomy between private and collective religious behaviour, made a show of religious freedom. They very vociferously claim that religious affiliation of a citizen does not affect his rights in the least. He is free to follow any religious tradition without incurring any loss of rights entailed by virtue of his citizenship. These rights are never denied him as long as he continues honouring the national constitution and law. This view of the present day liberal democracies can only be lauded by those who believe in a passive religion which does not guide man in social and political affairs.
Such a religion fails to provide any guidance regarding political and collective life of its adherents and accommodates influence of any Satanic or evil system. Based on my knowledge of the religious traditions of the world, I can safely claim that no divine messenger taught hollow religious teachings as are tolerating views which are in direct opposition to the religion itself.

A religion which claims to be divine in origin and, at the same time, holds that its originator did actually teach tolerance for unbelief, in fact, betrays its Messenger and accuses him of something a Messenger cannot be imagined to have indulged in. We need to appreciate that, in reality; this professed claim of religious freedom is nothing but a form of illusion and deception. One wonders why, after all that stressed contingency of the rights of citizens on their unfailing submission and unconditional Adherence to the constitution, modern nationalist secular democracy cannot be called a distinct religious creed. What differentiates between the Islamic state, which, grants the rights of citizenship only after one vows to remain loyal to the Almighty Allāh and his Messenger, and the irreligious democracies, which attach the rights with loyalty to their country, nation and the national constitution? Nature of the demand by both sides is the same.

Though both attach loyalty to a different entity –one demands that the citizens remain loyal to the Almighty Allāh and the other wants this right reserved for the national constitution – yet there is no difference in the nature of both the views; both hinge the rights upon fulfilment of the condition of loyalty to some entity which ties the citizens in a common bond.

**Legal Equality**

Islam puts all the citizens of the Islamic State, rich and poor, noble and commoner, ruler and the ruled, on equality in the eyes of the law. Every person from each class is subjected to the same laws under same judicial system. Neither will different laws prescribed for different classes, nor the laws be enforced to different people in different terms. Political, economic or social status of the citizens will not affect their position in the eyes of the law. The head of the state, in all the democracies, small or big, is considered beyond law. The Queen in the Great Britain, for example, may not be sued in a court of law, not for misdemeanours and nor even for graver wrongs.
On the contrary, in Islam, even the Messenger of God has to be treated just like a common citizen of the state, needless to say of the common political leaders. In fact the only thing that lends the Messenger prominence is that he is the first to believe in Islam and the first to submit to the sharī‘ah. He is the leader of those who follow the laws. Just as the Quran requires the believers to follow the sharī‘ah of God it commands the Prophet, in no unclear terms, to submit before him. The Messenger and the believers have believed on what has been revealed to him.

When it comes to the question of following the law, the Prophet is required to take the lead. His responsibility is far graver than that of the believers. This is demonstrated by the fact that failing to obey the law earns punishment both in this world and in the one to come. The law the Prophet brought for us was observed by him more diligently than anyone else ever does. He would surpass others in fearing the consequences of failing to obey the law. He never committed legal injustice to anyone. Still however, he presented himself before his followers at many occasions and gave them a choice to pay back any injustice and wrong he might have committed against them.

Once, a woman from a very noble family of the Quraysh was charged of theft. Theft in Islam is punished by cutting hands of the criminals. Some people considered the severity of the prescribed punishment and the social status of woman. They found it hard that a noble lady is punished so severely for theft. They desired to practice legal discrimination to which they were accustomed in the days of ignorance. ‘Usāmah b. Zayd, who was very dear to the Prophet, was requested to intercede with the Prophet in this regard. Forced by the insistence of those people he approached the Prophet only to find him greatly displeased at this.

After listening to ‘Usāmah the Prophet said: “You dare to intercede regarding the implementation of the laws of God?” Later on the Prophet addressed a congregation of the people and said that many bygone nations were annihilated only because of legal discrimination and injustice.

**Social Justice**

The Islamic state does not discriminate among its citizens on the basis of their social status, bloodline, race, colour and trade etc. These things are often made the marks
of difference among the humans. Islam declares that differentiating between the progeny of Adam at these bases is evil. Islam teaches that the only basis of superiority of one individual over the other is righteousness and God-consciousness. Individuals may not judge others on this basis too. It is only the prerogative of God to judge the inner faith and internal piety of individuals and determine their nobility or disgrace. None but He has the access to the realm of the unseen.

The Islamic State may not throw wild guesses and do the duty of God. It rests its policy on the external behaviour of individuals. This is why it considers all those citizens as fulfil the prerequisites of citizenship socially equal and treats them as such. The Quran provides the following guidance in this regard

**Status of Non-Muslims in the Islamic State**

Two major factors generally hinder an effort to determine with precision the rights of the Non-Muslims in the Islamic State. First, most people do not know that the Islamic sharī‘ah has promulgated different laws governing the affairs of the various categories of the Non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic State. Those who understand that such difference is observed do not reach at the correct basis of the difference. Second, a vast majority thinks that there can only be one kind of Non-Muslims, namely dhimmīs, in the Islamic State. They believe that it is the only category regarding which the laws of Islam have been worked in the hadīth and fiqh literature.

Mostly they are ignorant to that there could be other kinds of non-Muslims in the Islamic State whose rights and obligations are different than that of the dhimmīs. A failure to come to a correct position on these two matters has contributed towards erroneous stances and practical problems in the Muslim world concerning the rights of the Non-Muslims. We believe this can continue directing the Muslim States in wrong direction. This makes it imperative that, before defining the rights of the non-Muslims in the Islamic State, we explained the true Islamic position in this regard. We hope that clarity obtained regarding this issue would make it easy for us to rightly define the question of the rights of the non-Muslims in the Islamic State.
Rights of Ahl al-Ṣulṭān or Mu‘ā’ids

Rights of the Non-Muslims who are not defeated and who accept the Muslim rule for any other consideration on their part are not determined by the Islamic legal code alone. The terms of the treaty or pacts enacted with them provide a parallel source. They are subjected to the responsibilities they take as per the treaty. The Islamic State is obliged to fulfil the terms of the pact. The authorities are accountable before God and the people on their conduct in this regard. Though this principle determines the status and rights of this kind of non-Muslim population in the Islamic State yet the question remains to what extent the Islamic State can go in facilitating them. A compact and categorical answer to this question is that they can be awarded all kinds of rights that which do not translate into defiance of sovereignty of God and the principles of the Shari‘ah. We, however, feel that in order to create a clear picture of this situation in the minds of the readers, it would be more useful to present examples of treaties enacted by the Prophet and the companions with the non-Muslims of their time.

These examples, it is hoped, will help one understand in what circumstances they were enacted, to what kind of non-Muslims they were committed and what were the consideration behind these treaties. It will also make it possible for one to see the scope of rights and privileges allotted to the non-Muslims through these treaties. The Muslim governments can take great help from these examples in solving the issues of the non-Muslim minorities in the present day.

Treaties with the Non-Muslims

Examples of treaties with non-Muslims in the early history of Islam are numerous. During the rule of the rightly guided caliphs many such regions came under the Islamic State as can be termed protectorates. Aḍrāḥ, Bahrayn, ‘īlah, Dawmāh al-Jandal, Bayt al-Maqdas, Damascus, most parts of Syria, Bilād al-Jazīrah, Egypt and most parts of Khurasān are cases in point. The inhabitants of all these places entered into treaties with the Islamic State covering many political matters. Writes Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim:

Dealing with them is governed by the terms of the treaties enacted with them. They cannot be deprived of the rights granted by these terms. A thorough knowledge of
these treaties helps us explain the policies regarding the ahl al-ṣulḥ adopted by the Islamic State in its pristine form. Unfortunately I do not have access to many of the related works. Therefore, I have to remain content with a relatively abbreviated discussion based on Qāḍī Abū Yūsuf’s Kitāb al-Kharāj and Abū ‘Ubayd’s Kitāb al-Amwāl. Much of my findings on the current issue are based on these sources.

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**Treaty with the People of al-Fidk**

One prominent example of this kind of treaties is that of the treaty enacted with the People of al-Fidk. The following terms were agreed upon between the Muslims and these people: It was settled that they would be free. They will own half of their lands and half of their date orchards. The Messenger of God (the government practically) will own half of their lands and date orchards.77

These terms clearly state that the people with whom this treaty was enacted enjoyed freedom; they could not be enslaved. Their ownership over half of their lands and orchards was recognized. They were not merely employed to work as peasants on these lands. They were on the contrary, legal owners of half of their estates. When ‘Umar decided to expel these people from there he sent his representatives to them who assessed the worth of the half of their lands and orchards and paid them before they were expelled.

When ‘Umar expelled them out of the land he sent someone to them to assess the worth of their share of the land and the date palms. ‘Umar compensated them.78 It needs to be appreciated that they were expelled from the land during the reign of ‘Umar. This shows that the original treaty enacted by the Prophet was still effective. They were not subjected to the payment of jizyah. This provides clear evidence to the fact that the directive of jizyah is not general; it cannot be applied to all kinds of
non-Muslims living under the Islamic rule. In that case, they would have been subjected to pay the jizyah right after the revelation of the verses governing the jizyah tax.

**Treaty with the Christians of Banū Taghlab**

Christians of Banū Taghlab were originally Arabs. Their bravery and courage was legendary. ‘Umar wanted to impose jizyah upon them. Their chivalry and sense of honour made them defy the caliph. They accepted to leave their homeland in order to avoid this humility. ‘Ubādah b. Nu‘mān Taghlabī interfered and talked to ‘Umar on this issue.79 He addressed the caliph in the following words: “You well know the chivalry and bravery of the Christians of Banū Taghlab. These people live on the frontiers directly facing the enemy.

If they decided to help your enemy against you the enemy will surely prevail.” Considering this point ‘Umar decided to impose ṣadaqah on them instead of jizyah albeit double the amount of jizyah. The author of Kitāb al-Amwāl writes:

He said: “Being of ‘Arab origin, people of Banū Taghlab consider it too humiliating for them to pay jizyah. They are not herdsmen. They are cultivators and the enemy dreads them. Do not lend power to your enemies by alienating them.” ‘Umar imposed ṣadaqah upon them instead of jizyah. However, he imposed double of the usual amount of payable ṣadaqah.

**Jizyah**

This type of dhimmīs is subjected to the payment of a certain kind of tax called jizyah, corresponding to the guarantee given to them regarding their life and property. This tax is only applicable to the men who can render military service, since this tax is paid against exemption from the service. Women and children are of course natural exceptions. They do not need to pay the jizyah. Similarly, the old, the needy and the poor, the handicapped and the blind; all are exempted from this tax. Financially unstable clerics too are exempted from this duty.
It is principle of the Sharī‘ah that no dhimmī is subjected to pay except what is over and above his needs. This is applicable in all kind of dealings with the dhimmīs including this type of the non-Muslim citizens. That is why this tax has always been very minimal. In the early days of Islam, the amount imposed on the wealthy was one dirham, on the mediocre ½ dirham, and on the poor ¼ dirham monthly. What is more if it was noticed that a dhimmī was unable to pay the amount easily, he was granted more rebate. Nobody will be ill-treated or wronged to extract the jizyah from him. The dhimmīs will not be made to queue in the sun. No corporal punishment or torture is condoned.

The rightly guided caliphs always required them to pay what was convenient for them. Thus they could pay in jizyah things they produced. ‘Alī, for example, made the manufacturers of needles to pay the needles in jizyah, the producers of combs to pay the combs only, and the makers of ropes to pay the ropes only so that they are not put in inconvenience. ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, during his rule, issued a directive governing the issue of jizyah imposed on a deceased or a run away man. He decided that their liabilities in jizyah will not be received from the heirs.

We know that jizyah is a tax imposed on the minorities against their right of protection of life and property. It is not applicable once the Muslims rulers are no longer able to protect the life and property of the minorities. This is evidenced by many precedents in the Islamic history. During the time ‘Abū ‘Ubaydah was the governor of Syria, the Roman attacked parts of the province and pushed the Muslim armies back in many parts of conquered areas. The governor returned the jizyah received from the dhimmīs living in those areas before retreating. Happy at this kind treatment, the dhimmīs prayed for the success of the Muslims against the Romans.

They wished the Muslims returned and took over the control of the region again. They said that the Romans, in such circumstances, instead of returning the taxes to the occupied nation, would have looted their remaining assets. The dhimmīs are exempted from rendering military services. They are exempted from jizyah, if they render military services voluntarily. If the circumstances force the Muslim government to seek military help from them this too will remove the obligation to pay the jizyah from those of the dhimmīs helping the Muslims. Moreover, if a dhimmī
rendered any intellectual service he was customarily exempted from the payment of jizyah permanently.

During the rule of ‘Umar, a canal was dug between Cairo and the Red Sea. A dhimmī helped in preparing the layout of the proposed canal. In recognition of his service, he was granted permanent exemption from jizyah

Protection of Life for the Dhimmīs

Since the Islamic State imposes jizyah on the dhimmīs and pledges protection of their life and property it is obliged to protect the life and property of the dhimmīs just as it protects the life and property of the Muslims. The Islamic shari‘ah does not differentiate between life of a dhimmī and life of a Muslim citizen. Imām Sha‘bī, Nakha‘ī, Abū Ḥanīfah and their followers hold that if a Muslim citizen murders a dhimmī he shall be killed in retaliation.124 Ṭabarānī has narrated that once a Muslim citizen who had murdered a dhimmī was brought before ‘Alī.

At this the Caliph told him that he had all the right to forgive the murderer. He further said that the government is obliged to protect the lives of the dhimmīs. Therefore, their blood is no less important than that of the Muslims. The amount of diyah of the blood of a dhimmī is equal to that of a Muslim Many prophetic traditions condemn the killing of dhimmīs and warn the offender of great retribution.

It has been claimed that Imām Thawrī, Zuhrī, Zayd b. ‘Alī and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah held that in case of intentional murder there is no difference between the amount of diyah of the blood of dhimmīs and Muslims. ‘Amr b. Umayyah Dhamrī inadvertently killed two persons belonging to the tribe Banī ‘Āmir. The Prophet had enacted a treaty with the tribe. The Prophet made sure that the heirs of those killed were given the amount of diyah prescribed for killing a Muslim.

Protection of the Assets of the Dhimmīs

Not only is the life of the dhimmīs but their asset too is inviolable. Ṣa‘ṣah narrates: I informed Ibn ‘Abbās that we take belongings of the dhimmīs while passing through their lands. Ibn ‘Abbās asked me: “Without paying for it?” I responded: “Yes.” At this Ibn ‘Abbās said: “What is your view in this regard?” I explained that there is nothing
wrong in doing so. Ibn ‘Abbās said: “What you say is exactly which that the People of the Book would hold. Then he referred to a verse of the Quran which reads:

[They say] there is no blame on us in usurping the belongings of the unlearned people. They knowingly forge a lie against Allah. (3:75)

Abū ‘Abd Allāh ‘Abd Allāh or Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān narrates:

Though worthless today, it will become precious after drying up.”

‘Umar was in Jābiyah. A dhimmī approached him and said that a few individuals had ruined his grape orchard. ‘Umar went ahead and investigated the issue. He exclaimed, “Oh, you too!” The man replied: “Yes, the chief of the believers. Hunger overtook us and we committed this act.” ‘Umar commanded that the owner of the orchard be paid for what had been taken. According to another version of the narrative, the Caliph declared that he was quit of the transgressions committed by his men. They were to provide the visitors with basic needs. This was because the settlements of the dhimmīs were mostly situated away from the Muslim cities. There was usually no Muslim population living among them. At that time there were no separate rest houses for the government officials, administrators or tax collectors.

**Religious Freedom**

The dhimmīs are free to practice their religion. They can expressly perform their religious rites and rituals. The sharī‘ah dictates that if dhimmīs are allowed to settle in a conquered land they will be granted religious freedom. Following a long list of the conquered cities ‘Abū ‘Ubayd writes:

These are the cities of ahl al-‘anwah. The people living there are granted full freedom to live according to their religion and to follow their religious law. Any restriction, if at all, is applied to only those cities which have been built and populated exclusively by the Muslims or those which have been separated exclusively for national purposes after the fall.

Reference: The Islamic State by Amain Ahsan Islahi English Translation