EPISTEMOLOGICAL BELIEFS AND POSTULATES OF ISLAM.

(a) Nature of Truth.

(b) Nature of Knowledge.

(c) Nature of Educand.
Nature of Truth:

The Quran uses the word Haqeeq to signify Truth. This word is opposite to the word Batil (falsehood) and is concerned with faith (Iman) as well as practice (Amal). The Quran presents Islam as a way of life. This way of life is very comprehensive and it always takes a particular stand in every matter related to every aspect of life—personal, social or religious. Man is expected to employ his mental, physical and spiritual powers and capabilities. It is believed that this leads to success and pleasure. So man should utilize, according to the directive of Islam, all the resources and the means he possesses. He should also decide in its light his personal behaviour with other human beings and with the whole external world with which he comes into contact. "Truth hath reached you from your Lord. Those who receive Guidance, do so for the good of their own soul; those who go stray, do so to their own loss." 3

Undoubtedly man is free to adopt any way of life. His freedom of choice and action is not restricted to following any particular system of thought and practice. The Quran also accepts this fact. 4 But when it invites human beings to adopt the Islamic way of life, it also discloses one more fact that the heavens and the earth and everything that exists between them are based on Truth 5 i.e., on Islam. As an evidence to this

2. Al-i-Imran, 19
3. Yunus: 108
4. Anam: 107
5. Ibrahim: 19
claim the Quran invites to study very minutely the creations of God and to find out any flaw or defect in them. Of course, man is unable to point out any flaw or defect in the creations of God. The Quran says that these are based on Truth and are functioning on these principles free from any flaw and weakness. These are bearing witness to the fact that any thing which is not based on Truth can hardly work properly and live long. It indicates that man should not build the system of his life independent of God. We find quite clear ordinances in the Quran that God has sent the Guidance and the Truth through His Prophet. In the light of these injunctions of the Quran it appears that man, in any period of history, whenever he evolved any system of life it was a false one and, also in future, whenever he will formulate guiding principles of life, he certainly be fail in his endeavour. It is because of the fact that man cannot grasp the true nature of human existence. He would therefore either exaggerate certain requirements out of all proper proportions or will ignore certain basic features of human existence. Thus, from the Islamic point of view man is unable to frame any system of life for himself. The Quran argues that man does not possess the kind of knowledge (Ilm) and the wisdom (Hikmah) required for this purpose. It is God only who is entitled for it. Only

6. Mulk; 3-4; Caf: 6
7. Ibrahim: 19
8. Tauba: 33.
He knows well man's psychology, his physical and mental capacities and the spiritual requirements. The Quran also discloses that God had sent down the Torah and the Gospel for the guidance of mankind before the revelation of this Book which has now brought the whole Truth and confirms the earlier scriptures.

Let us investigate some more arguments of the Quran in support of Islam claimed as a true way of life. In the chapter Al-i-Imran it has been said that all things which exist in the heavens and on the earth are obeying the laws of God, so man should also submit to Him. Only through this way he will be in conformity to the laws of nature and there would be no imbalances. At another place the Quran declares that only a submissive attitude to God is correct and all other are incorrect. Hence Islamic way of life should be followed. Again, it is claimed that without Islam justice in its true sense cannot be dispensed. Justice is possible only through the enforcement of Divine Laws. Because only He holds the status to guide mankind to Truth. No God, Goddess or any living or dead person can guide man to the Truth. These verses also indicate that those worldly leaders who makes rules, regulations and law do not possess the kind of knowledge that is necessary

9. Al-i-Imran: 6-7
10. The Torah was revealed to Prophet Moses and the Gospel to Prophet Jesus, for detail study of Torah and the Gospel see Tafhimul Quran vol.I, p.231-232.
11. Al-i-Imran:3
12. Al-i-Imran:83
13. Al-i-Imran: 19
14. Maida: 45, Talaq: 1
for formulating right principles for the guidance of human life. Man can never be free from prejudices and personal and sectional interests because these are natural human weakness and in the presence of these he is unfit to formulate just and the comprehensive principles for life individual as well as social. Whenever he shall try to formulate such rules his efforts would be coloured with prejudices and predilections. Thus it appears from the above teachings of the Quran that there is no way to attain the Truth except to accept the revelation of God.

We are informed that the Truth we are discussing here was presented by Prophet Muhammad (PBOH) in a very adverse and unfavourable circumstances. The majority of the pagan Arabs falsified the words of God uttered by the Prophet. They even branded him as a sorcerer and argued that what he was saying was not anything new, rather it was the same old story that they had already been hearing since times immemorial. According to their thinking Truth must be new, an old one could not be accepted as Truth. But contrary to their stand point the Quran confirmed that the message of Islam was always the same and will remain so forever. The adverse situation the Prophet faced in his early Meccan period did not last for long. History certifies

15. Yunus: 35
16. Saff: 6
17. An'am: 25
18. Shura: 19, Alqaf: 9, Zukhruf: 6, Mumin: 68
that the same old message of Islam was accepted and within a very short period Truth dominated entire Arabia and became a victorious faith. The following verse of the Quran has mentioned through a suitable simile the nature of the Truth and the falsehood: 'He sends down water from the skies, and the channels flow, each according to its measure; but the torrent bears away the foam that mounts up to the surface. Even so, from that (ore) which they heat in the fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is a scum likewise. Thus doth God (by parables) show forth Truth and Vanity. For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth. Thus doth God set forth parables'.

To sum up, Islam consists of Iman (faith) and Amal (practice). Amal is related to the various aspects of life i.e. social, economic and political. Islam being a complete system of thought and practice appears in its sources as the truth unchangeable and eternal. This has been called Haq (truth) and what are contrary to it has been called as Batil (falsehood). And Batil like scum has no permanency.

Nature of Knowledge.

Read: In the name of thy Lord who created man from a clot,
Read and thy Lord is the most Bounteous,
who taught by the pen,
taught man that which he knew not.¹

These are the first verses revealed to the Prophet. Some scholars are of the opinion that these must have been revealed in written form because when the angel commanded the Prophet "Read" he protested that he did not know how to read. It is argued that the prophet would not have protested if the angel had only wanted him to repeat the words uttered by him.² Apparently this opinion is not without force and seems to be quite convincing and also shared by some of the earlier exegetists. Now the fact that the very first Quranic revelation is such a forceful exhortation for the acquisition of knowledge and that knowledge is regarded as one of the great bounties of God on human race, is very significant and shows how closely Islam and knowledge identify each other. It is indicative of the extreme importance that the new religion was going to attach to learning and knowledge. At the very outset it pronounces in the most inambiguous and unequivocal terms its attitude towards knowledge and its dissemination which the new community was to take up as a

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1. 'Alaq; 1-5, English tr.by M.Pickthall.

It is interesting to note here in this context that according to a Hadith transmitted by Trimidhi, the first creation of God was pen. See Mishket al-Masabih English tr.by James Robson, Kashmiri Bazar Lahore, 1975, vol.I, p.26.
sacred duty. It was going to prove a turning point in the intellectual history of mankind.

When the Prophet migrated to Madinah and addressed himself to the task of organising the new community in accordance with the teachings of the new religion this aspect was not ignored. It was not a mere chance that at a very early stage at Madinah Quran commanded the believers to commit to writing every transaction concerning credit:

"O ye who believe when ye contract a debt for fixed term, record it in writing...
... and call to witness... and not be averse to writing down this (contract) whether it be small or great, with (record of) the term thereof; this is more equitable in the sight of God and more sure for testimony, and the best way of avoiding doubt between you...."  

Understandably such revelations were instrumental in creating the necessary conditions for the growth of mass-literacy among the Muslims. Besides these open exhortations for the acquisition of knowledge and use of written documents in day to day transactions, there are great many verses in the Quran which invite human beings to use their sense and exercise their reasoning faculties and thereby reach the ultimate truth.

5. For example the following verses may be cited:
   "Lo the worst of the beasts in Allah's sight are the deaf and dumb who have no sense". Anfal: 22.
   "Lo in the creation of the heavens and the earth and (in) the difference of night and day are tokens (of His sovereignty) for men of understanding". Al-i-Imran: 190.
Moreover, Quran constantly encourages observation of the natural phenomena; at various places it stresses the necessity of the study of nature, the moon, the tide, the approaching night, the glittering stars, the dawning day, plants and animal life—all these have been presented in testimony of the law of nature and the power of the Creator. This is calculated to create a balanced and logical attitude which is so essential for the healthy growth of intellectual activity.

Quran says that there is no limit to knowledge that the whole universe is made for and is subservient to man and that it is through acquisition of knowledge and use of reason that it can be conquered and made to serve the interests of mankind. The attitude of Quran to knowledge and its acquisition is very positive and emphatic. Time and again it declares that acquisition of knowledge from any source and at any cost is the ordained duty of the believer. Here are some of the verses on the subject, selected as instances out of a large many scattered

7. Shamsh: 2
9. Lail: 1
11. Fajr: 1
12. Nabaa: 15, An'am: 100
throughout Quran:

(1) "Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks.14

(2) "Are those who know equal with those who know not. But only men of understanding will pay heed."15

(3) "Ask the followers of the Remembrance if ye knew not.16

(4) "And the believers should not all go out to fight, of every troop of them, a party only should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may gain sound knowledge in religion, and that they may warn their folk when they return to them, so that they may beware.17

(5) "My God; increase me in knowledge.18

Quran assigns 3rd place—only next to God and His angels—to those who possess knowledge, and rightly so. For, unless one has a sound knowledge he cannot understand and appreciate the wisdom (Hikmat) of Quran, nor he can be able to follow the tenets of the religion in its true spirit without knowledge. One cannot neither know the commands of God nor be able to call others to the Eternal Truth. It is because of this paramount importance of knowledge in Islam that acquisition of knowledge and its dissemination has been made a sacred duty of

14. Mujadila: 11
15. Zumar: 9
17. Tauba: 122
18. Ta-Ha: 114.
Muslim Community.

Hadith-literature also confirms the same attitude towards knowledge\textsuperscript{19}. As in Quran, learning has been praised lavishly in Hadith also. Learned people are declared and hailed as the best in the human lot and are designated as the successors and inheritors of the prophets\textsuperscript{20}. After quoting a number of Ahadith related to education, Gulick, in his study of the education system of the Prophet's times, makes the following observation:

- Of great importance was this injunction of Muhammad: Let the poor and rich be equal before you in the acquisition of knowledge - It was this statement that led to the establishment of many scholarship at Cairo, Damascus and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{21}

In a study of the history of Muslim education in later times Shalaby has also referred to the above-mentioned Hadith and comes to the conclusion that in the field of education egalitarianism was fully recognised by the Muslims and poverty was never a hindrance in the way of acquisition of

\textsuperscript{19} Tibawi, A.L., Muslim Education in the Golden Age of Caliphate; Islamic Culture, July 1954, p. 419.

\textsuperscript{20} Mishkat al-Masabih, op. cit., p. 63.

\textsuperscript{21} Robert L. Gulick, Muhammad the Educator, Institute of Islamic Culture Lahore, 1961, p. 49.
knowledge. He further asserts that before the establishment of schools, every Muslim had free admission to the lectures in the mosques, the centres of education in those days\textsuperscript{22}. Leon presents a very comprehensive collection of Hadith in his article and evaluates the prophet's contributions to knowledge in various fields. He acknowledges the Prophet as the very distinguished 'world-teacher' of the modern thought\textsuperscript{23}. Waheed feels that it was this approach of the Prophet towards education that inspired the Muslim scholars to conduct extremely valuable researches in various departments of science and enrich the human civilization with their intellectual achievements. At a time when novelty in thought was discouraged and frowned upon in the Christian world, Muslim scholars were engaging in most daring speculations and breaking fresh grounds in Philosophical thoughts\textsuperscript{24}.

Islam presented a system of life built around a body of beliefs and a well defined approach to Man and society. The Islamic social order, built as it was on certain sound principles and practices unknown earlier to mankind, stood up as a unique

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\textsuperscript{22} Ahmad Shalaby: \textit{History of Muslim Education}, Dar Al-Kashaf Beirut, 1954, p. 164.  \\
\textsuperscript{23} Philosophy and Medicine under the Khalifs: \textit{Islamic Culture}, 1927, p. 560.  \\
\textsuperscript{24} Waheed A.: \textit{The Evolution of Muslim Education}, Islamic College Peshawar, Faiz and Sons, Lahore, 1945, p. 20.
\end{flushright}
innovation and experiment in human history.

For proper running of the system, it was necessary that different components of the society were fully aware of their duties and obligations. The onerous responsibility of making the Muslims aware of their duties and educating them about their obligations was shouldered by the Prophet himself. At the same time it was also the enjoined duty of every member of the community to teach the fellow Muslims anything that he happened to learn from the Prophet or from any other Muslim. In this way knowledge was arranged to percolate down. Hadith literature is full of such exhortations where Prophet has made it a bounden duty of the Muslims to teach their fellow brothers whatever they came to learn from him in the form of revealed verses and codes of good conduct. Thus verse after verse they learnt by heart and preserved for posterity. This was how the Sunnah was preserved and transmitted to the succeeding generations in pure form and minutest details. Thus every individual member of the Islamic society was an active participant in the process of expansion of knowledge either as a teacher or a student.

26. Ibid., p. 50.
Quest for knowledge has always been an ideal in the history of Islam. Muslims of early Islamic period undertook long and arduous journeys in search of knowledge. The Prophet is reported to have said that those travelling in search of knowledge are in the path of God till they return to their home. But this knowledge is not acquired through mysterious means. To acquire this knowledge, the student has to go through the process of comprehension, retention and remembrance of the facts; there is no other way to get hold of it.

The high rank which Islam accords to the learned is evident from a hadith which is to the effect that God is most generous; it is his generosity that we get real knowledge from the prophet who is most generous after Him because he transmits the entire divine teachings revealed to him, and after the Prophet man is most generous who acquires knowledge and spreads it. Every sincere effort for acquisition of knowledge is, therefore, highly appreciated in Islam. A man who seeks after knowledge is sure to be rewarded whether or not he succeeds in his efforts; in the event of success, of course, the reward will be greater.

27. Ibid., p. 54.
28. Ibid., p. 60.
This approach towards knowledge encouraged members of the Islamic community to acquire and cultivate knowledge. Search after true knowledge thus became a noble goal of life, a perennial source unlimited bliss to the believers in Islam.\textsuperscript{29} The prophet is reported to have observed that a believer would never be satisfied with good teaching till he reaches the paradise.\textsuperscript{30} In Islam thus knowledge is not regarded as an end in itself but rather as means for something higher and more sublime. At another place the prophet declares that the learned man is also greedy like a worldly man, only their greeds are of two different types- differing vastly in their orientations and results\textsuperscript{31}. The learned man is greedy of knowledge while the worldly man is greedy of wealth; these two are also not alike in their behaviour, the learned man calls others to follow right guidance whereas the worldly man summons the people to follow error\textsuperscript{32}. For a person given to pursuit of knowledge for eternal solace and bliss, the Prophet has the highest praise. For, when the people need him he benefits them and when they ignore him, he enriches himself\textsuperscript{33}.

Through the foregoing, the Islamic approach to learning and learned becomes crystal clear. How much more value the

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 59
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p. 55
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 60
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 42
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p. 58.
Prophet attached to learning than to worshipping becomes evident from the fact that he ranked the learned much higher than the devout. It is reported that once the prophet entered his mosque and found there two groups of Muslims, one engaged in praying and the other busy with acquiring knowledge. He declared that the latter group was superior to the former one. Not only this, he even joined the group of the learned men saying that "I was sent only as a teacher". On another occasion he is reported to have observed: "The superiority of the learned man over the devout man is like mine over the most contemptible among you. God, His angels, the inhabitants of the heaven and the earth, even the ants in their hole and the fish invoke blessing on him who teaches men what is good."

Islam encourages the believers to spread the gospel of knowledge but at the same time it firmly believes in the imperative necessity of utility, honesty and purity in the cultivation and advancement of knowledge; it does not subscribe to the concept of knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Knowledge which brings no good to its possessor or to persons around him is like a treasure from which nothing is spent. Obviously, such a treasure is of no use to anyone. A learned person who knowingly conceals something about the religion

34. Ibid., p. 59.
35. Ibid., p. 54
36. Ibid., p. 61
37. Ibid., p. 63.
has been warned of dire consequences.\(^{38}\)

Knowledge in Islam is viewed so sacred that its acquisition and use for merely worldly gains is regarded highly objectionable. According to a Hadith reciters of Quran who visit princes for gaining worldly advantages are most contemptible in the eyes of God.\(^{39}\) The real use of knowledge lies in seeking the pleasure of God and in teaching and guiding the ignorant. Acquisition of knowledge for ostentation, disputation and attracting people is frowned upon in Islam.\(^{40}\)

To Islam the source and the end of all knowledge is Allah who is all-knowing (al-Aleem). This knowledge has been transmitted to the mankind through His different successive Prophets, as the true teachers and educators, and has finally reached culmination in the teachings of the Prophet of Islam. The teachings of the Prophets of God are eternal and a source of perennial bliss and can never be substituted or altered.\(^{41}\)

Islam is, thus, credited with bringing to the world a concept of knowledge and a system of education and character

\(^{38}\) "Abu Huraira reported God's messenger as saying, he who asked about something he knows and conceals it will have a bridle of fire put on him on the day of resurrection--Ahmad, Abu Dawud and Trimidhi transmitted it and Ibn Maja transmitted it from Anas. Ibid., p. 55.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., p. 60 and 62.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p. 55.

\(^{41}\) Ibid., p. 56.
building the like of which the world had not seen before and has not surpassed since. Contrary to the ill-informed general belief, Islam lays more emphasis on knowledge than on worship and regards the learned superior to the devout. It enjoins every Muslim to seek and impart knowledge, not for its own sake but for a better living in this world and a more blessful and eternal life in the world hereafter.
NATURE OF EDUCAND.
NATURE OF EDUCAND.

To ascertain the nature of educand in the Islamic epistemology the researcher here proposes to go through the sources to study the following points:-

A. The Study of the Natural Phenomena.
B. Revelation a reliable source of knowledge.
C. Educand's behaviour- An Islamic Approach.
D. Talab al-Ilm (Search for knowledge in Islam).
E. Etiquettes for educand.

A. Study of Natural Phenomena:– The Quran motivates its reader to acquire knowledge from the signs scattered throughout the universe. From the Quranic point of view the entire universe appears like a Book wherein we find knowledge in the form of the signs of God. These signs are helpful in the pursuit of knowledge to those, who according to the Quran, pay heed to them. The seeker after truth observes a tree, a mountain, water and air but apart from their physical and materials aspects he takes them as the signs of God and discovers reality in them and, thus, comes to the fact that there is one God and non-else has the attributes of God-head. The Quran argues that if there were Gods more than one, the universe could hardly work smoothly.

1. Yusuf: 10
2. Anbiyaa: 22
It mentions the phenomena of day dawning out of the curtain of night, the creation of living creatures out of the lifeless matter as the signs of God. From this point of view, the observation of the great system of universe indicates that it is being ruled over by the All-powerful and All-wise sovereign. These signs have been made clear, as the Quran mentions, so that the people may turn to the right path.

In the chapter Al-i-Imran, the Quran discusses the attitude of a learner. While he observes the phenomena of Nature, he comes to the conclusion, 'God has not created this universe in vain, for He is free from doing an aimless job.' This thinking leads him to the life after death, when he will be accountable before God for his deeds. We are also informed through the Quran that when the prophet Abraham, as a seeker after truth made an intelligent observation of the phenomena of nature he was led to the reality. The Quran records this story. He first observed a bright star and said, 'This is my Lord,' but when it set, he cried out, 'I can not love that which is not eternal.' The same incident happened with the moon and the sun and at last he declared that 'I have turned my face towards that being who created the heavens and the earth.'

3. Anam: 95-99
5. See verses 190-94.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
The prophet Abraham was born in such a family where idols were worshipped but when he observed the phenomena of Nature and reflected upon them he came to the conclusion that God is one and He bears no partner. Later on his thinking which was based on a careful and unprejudiced observation was confirmed by the God through His Revelation.

B. Revelation:-

Man acquires knowledge through sensation, perception and reasoning but he understands the limitations of his observation and reasoning. So what he gets as a result of his enquiry is not the final result. This is why man is always ready to modify and alter the discoveries of his enquiry. Contrary to this the Quran says that Revelation is the source of guidance for human being. The knowledge acquired through Revelation is considered unalterable, complete and final. This knowledge according to the Muslim belief is preserved in the Quran and the traditions of the prophet. But at the same time Islam does not negate the importance of enquiry which interacts with the physical world and enables man to observe and contemplate upon the phenomena before his eyes. Islam grants man freedom to do what he pleases but within the fold of the Islamic law. The Quran is very emphatic in its description that those who follow other than the revealed instructions indulge in surmises and guess-work, and their intellectual activities are based on speculation and not on reality while the Prophets claim that

9. Ibid., 74.
10. Ibid., 84
they have real knowledge (al-Ilm) which is not based on meditation, contemplation, surmises and guess-work. This revealed knowledge, as the Quran claims, is also supported by natural phenomena or ayat-i-Allah (The signs of Allah). Time and again the Quran urges its readers to observe them and to contemplate over them.

The pursuer of the Quran finds two kinds of verses therein, one is called muhkamat and the other mutashabihat. Muhkamat are those verses of the Quran which are precise in meaning and are free from ambiguity. Their meanings are definite and they can hardly be misinterpreted. They constitute the fundamental principles of Islam. The Quran expects from its learner to turn to these verses for taking guidance, as these alone are sufficient for guidance. On the other hand mutashabihat are those verses of the Quran which deal with objects out of the purview of human senses. They are thus considered ambiguous. Supernatural reality described in these ambiguous verses are far removed from our perception and hence it is difficult to conceive them with precision. Human languages lack appropriate words for their accurate expression. So they are ambiguous and have the possibility of being given more than one meaning. The Quran in this situation presents safe side and suggests its readers not to try to determine the precise meaning of the ambiguous verses; for, the guidance needed by man is contained in the precise verses (Ayat-i-Muhkamat) in quite a sufficient measure. The attempt to determine the meaning of ambiguous verses is a task beyond the human ability. The Quran, therefore, asks its readers to observe and contemplate over the ayat-i-Allah and not to try to determine their precise meaning.
-uous verses might lead the learner away from the Truth\textsuperscript{14} in the region of conjecture.

C. **Educand's behaviour—An Islamic Approach:**

After making a deep study of the natural phenomena occurring in the universe and also in human existence\textsuperscript{15} the seeker after-truth turns towards the Revelation(\textit{Wahy}). He gets it through the means of the Prophets who claim to be guided by God Himself. Revelation as the \textit{Quran} mentions, support the same reality as is inferred from the study of nature. So the seeker after the truth turns towards the revealed Book which itself claims to have clear instructions.\textsuperscript{16}

Before the study of the \textit{Quran} he recites '\textit{Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-Rahim}'\textsuperscript{17}. This shows that he consciously accepts that God is Beneficient and Merciful to His creatures. He fulfils his craving. He has also guided mankind the Truth and has not left them in the darkness of ignorance. The natural result of such a thinking is to focus the attention of and to direct his mind to the way pointed by Islam.

\textit{Al-Fatiah}, the great and the preliminary chapter rather the preface of the \textit{Quran}\textsuperscript{18} is actually a prayer on the part of seeker after-truth. This prayer becomes very significant on account of the fact that it has been taught by God Himself. It has been kept in the very beginning of the \textit{Quran} so that those who want to take guidance

\textsuperscript{14} Al-i-\textit{Imran}:7
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Quran} says that there are signs of God in the universe(\textit{Afag}) as well as in the human existence(\textit{Anfas}) Ham Min Sajda:53
\textsuperscript{16} The \textit{Quran} has been called \textit{Kitab-i-Mubeem}(the book contains clear instructions) \textit{Zukhruf}:2
\textsuperscript{17} In the name of Allah the compassionate, the Merciful.
\textsuperscript{18} The chapter \textit{Al-Fatiah} of the \textit{Quran} is considered the preface of the \textit{Quran} in the sense that Fatiah means to begin a subject or a book or a thing cf. Mawdudi, \textit{Tafhimul Quran}, vol. I, p. 42.
from the Quran should first go through it and after the kind of prayer taught in it. In his prayer, the learner asks for guidance to the straight path. (Sirat-i-Mustageem), the path of those who were blessed and favoured by God and not of those who went astray and became the victims of His wrath. According to the Quran, the only thing for which man should have a strong desire and deep concern is the guidance on which the correct system of thought and practice is based. The learner prays for such a guidance and recognises that God is the source of all knowledge. Scholars are of the opinion that the relation of this chapter to the corpus of the Quran is that of a prayer and the answer to that prayer. While this chapter is a prayer on the part of man, the complete Quran from God almighty is the answer to this request. The man wants and prays for guidance and God grants it in the form of the Quran that guides him in every walk of life and removes him from darkness and uncertainty that overtakes one due to lack of real knowledge. Consequently the learner choses among many paths and ways of life the one which the Quran terms as Al-Islam (the way of obedience to God).

The manner which must be adopted by a learner for seeking knowledge has also been discussed in this chapter. First of all he should confess and admit from the core of his heart the lofty position of the Being whom he requests for guidance. He begins from His praise and then puts his request before Him. It appears from the Quran that learner should not ask for knowledge abruptly but should start his request with a suitable introduction based on God's praise.

This is why some of the chief attributes of God have been mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter. This practice of praising God during the acquisition of knowledge was a common practice among the students and scholars of Islam. The most famous theologian and jurist, Imam Abu Hanifa, whose fiqh (Jurisprudence) is still followed by the predominant majority of the Muslims, is reported as saying: 'Very I acquired knowledge by praising God and by thanking Him. As I understood an item of learning and had grips of a point of law or a piece of wisdom, I said, praise be to God. Thus my knowledge was augmented. In response to the praise of God and to the request for seeking guidance from Him, God grants the learner a type of wisdom which the Quran calls as Hikmat. This makes the learner able to distinguish truth from falsehood. It is considered as the great bounty of God. Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, while delivering a lecture at Madinah, is reported to pronounce that he heard on this very pulpit of this mosque, the discourse of the prophet in which he disclosed that when Allah wants to raise the status of a person He bestows on him an understanding of the religion. This is called Tafakkah-fi-al-deen. The type of wisdom discussed above is specific with the Islamic knowledge only. Ibn wahb quotes Imam Malik's opinion about Hikmat that some people are not very wise in their worldly

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22. Baqara : 269
affairs but they have a fuller comprehension of religion. They, undoubtedly, have the wisdom of the Quran\(^24\). This principle, although accepted by the Muslims and confirmed by the Quran that, the bestowal of every blessing and favour is totally at the mercy of God. Guidance and faith are also the favours of God and He bestows these to whom He wills. But this principle is not applied indiscriminately. The Quran confirms that God bestows these blessings to those only from among His servants who use their common sense in search of knowledge\(^25\). Zarnuji quotes a Hadith of the prophet supporting the same view. It is related that when a man applies his intellect, the limitations of his mind becomes evident to him and, at the same time, the power of God also becomes apparent. So when he recognizes His power he does not think his own intellect enough to lead him to the truth. Hence he asks for knowledge from Him\(^26\), the fountain of all knowledge and truth.

D. Talab-al-Ilm (Search for knowledge in Islam):

The Hadith of the Prophet talab-al-Ilm-i-farizatun\(^27\) is widely quoted to prove that acquiring knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim. In this connection the difference between secular and Islamic knowledge is hardly considered. Whenever the scholars make any study of the educational problem of the Muslims, particularly of their backwardness in modern secular education they refer to this commonly quoted Hadith. Undoubtedly, Islam motivates Muslims to

\(^{24}\) Vide Ibid., p. 58-59.
\(^{25}\) Yunus: 100.
\(^{26}\) Vide Az-Zarnuji, op.cit., p. 52.
\(^{27}\) Acquiring Knowledge is obligatory.
acquire every sort of knowledge but does not make it obligatory on them. What has been made obligatory in this Hadith is best mentioned by the earlier scholars of Islamic knowledge. Some scholars challenge the authenticity of this widely circulated saying of the Prophet, but even they have not the courage to ignore its importance. In this regard all the earlier scholars of Islam are at one that the word 'ilm' used in this Hadith refers only to Islamic knowledge. The renowned scholar, the founder of the Maliki jurisprudence, Imam Malik, was asked whether Islamic knowledge was obligatory for every Muslim and he is reported to have said that it was not so, but everyone should acquire that amount of Islamic knowledge which is necessary for his religion. Abdullah bin Mubarak takes this Hadith quite in a different way. According to him whenever any type of doubt concerning Islam arises in the mind of the believer he must try to remove it by putting questions before the learned. It appears from this interpretation that questioning for removing doubt concerning the tenets of faith is obligatory on every Muslim. They have not been over burdened to acquire the whole of Islamic knowledge. Naturally, it is neither possible nor necessary for a common man to go through the vast literature of the various disciplines of Islamic knowledge. Though the prophet has not made obligatory on every Muslim to acquire the knowledge of the details of Islam but the manner in which he emphasizes the need for knowledge is very forceful and significant from

the point of view of education. He is reported to pronounce that a believer would never be satisfied with the knowledge he possesses till he attains paradise\textsuperscript{31}. At another place he is reported to declare that the word of wisdom is the missing property of the believer so he takes it in his possession whenever he finds it anywhere\textsuperscript{32}.

It appears from the study of the Quran that perseverance, earnestness and assiduousness are the inevitable aids for the path of talab-al-Ilm. The Quran declares that only those persons would be benefited with knowledge who strive for it and show steadfastness\textsuperscript{33}. It is stated that knowledge can not be attained unless its seeker suffers from poverty and starvation,\textsuperscript{34} and faces cheerfully all the vicissitudes and bereavements in love of knowledge. The toil and hardship occurring in the way of seeking knowledge gives the educand a delight which can not be equated to the other delights of the world. The following poem of Imam Nazm ad-Din umar b. Muhammad an Nasafi shows how the seeker after knowledge overlooks the situation that concerns common men: "Farewell greeting to her who enslaved me through her elegance, the splendor of her cheeks, and the furtive glances of her eyes.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Mishkat al-Masabih, Eng. tr. by James Robsen, p. 55.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 54.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Ankabut: 69.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Imam Malik Vide Ibn Abd al-Bar. op. cit. p. 77.
\end{itemize}
A charming young maiden captivated me and filled me with love. Imagination is baffled in describing her charms. But I said to her, 'Leave me alone and excuse me, for indeed I have become enamored of the beauties in the field of knowledge and their unveiling for me seeking learning and reverence for God suffice to keep me from singing of maidens and of their perfumes.'

Journey for the sake of study is also considered a part of Talab al-ilm. In the early days of Islam such journeys were very common amongst the Muslims. People used to make long and arduous journeys for acquiring knowledge of Hadith. This is known in the History of Islam as Ar-Rahila fi talab-al-ilm. A number of the expeditions of such nature are recorded in the sources. It is related that a man came from Madinah to Damascus only for verifying a Hadith from Abu Darda. Abu Darda did not transmit the knowledge except after being confirmed that the expedition was simply for academic purpose and not just for a worldly end.

In this regard the story of Jabir bin Abdullah is more interesting. When he heard that a companion of the prophet used to relate a Hadith which he had heard directly from the prophet, he made a month-long journey to find out the companion of the prophet whose destination had not been known to him. The well-known companion of the prophet Abu Ayub Ansari made a tiresome journey from Madinah to Egypt for listening only one Hadith of the prophet.

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36. Journey for the sake of knowledge.
37. Ibn Abd al-Bar, op. cit., p. 73.
38. Ibid. p. 73.
most significant aspect of this journey was that after listening
the Hadith he did not stay even for a moment but set out for
Madinah at once.\textsuperscript{39} It is also reported that the learners of
Hadith did not care for the difficulties of the journeys. Some
time, they travelled on foot and also carried the heavy load
of the written documents upon their own shoulders, for they
wanted to revise and verify these written materials from the
learned scholars.\textsuperscript{40}

These journeys for seeking the knowledge of the
prophet's traditions became so significant that the majority
of Muslims began to think that \textit{talab-al-ilm} is specific with
the knowledge of Hadith.\textsuperscript{41} This view appears in sharp contrast
to the one inferred from the sources. The Quran records of the
long and tiresome journey of the Prophet Moses\textsuperscript{42}, which he made
for acquiring knowledges\textsuperscript{43}. This story of the prophet Moses shows
that the journey undertaken for the sake of study is a toilsome
and serious affair. So when the prophet Moses met with his edu-
cator, he was first asked to show perseverance,\textsuperscript{44} The Prophet
also made open exhortations praising the journeys made in the
quest of such knowledge which necessarily assigns priority to

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 74.
\textsuperscript{40} Vide. Ahmad Shalaby, \textit{History of Muslim Education}, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{41} Encyclopedi\textit{a of Islam}, Vol. III, p. 1133.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Kahaf}, 61, 62
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid}, 66.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid}, 67.
the knowledge of the Holy Qurah. It is related that if one travels for the sake of knowledge, God clears the way of Paradise to him. And it is also quoted that when one leaves his home and goes out in search of knowledge, his journey is considered a journey in the path of God until he comes back to his home. All this shows that the word ilm used in the term talab-al-ilm is not confined to the knowledge of Hadith only but the knowledge of Quran also.

E. Etiquettes for Educand:
The qualities and attributes a learner is expected to inculcate into his personality are briefly discussed as follows:—

1. In order to maintain the external neatness and the internal purity, the prophet said that neatness and purity are the foundations of Islam. According to this instruction the dress of the learner, the place where he studies the educative material he uses, are not only required to be clean but his heart too should be clean from the evil desires which may disturb him and create negative emotions like anger, lasciviousness, malice, and haughtiness.

The prominent companion of the Prophet, Abdullah Ibn Masood, who was praised by the prophet himself for having insight into the Quran, used to say that due to transgression man loses the knowledge that he had acquired earlier.

46. Ibid., p.55.
The mystic theologians take internal purity in quite a different meaning. Mansur al-Hallas\textsuperscript{49} when requested to advise said: "My advice has to do with your own soul. If you do not keep it occupied it will keep you occupied."\textsuperscript{50} The way these mystics stress on the purity of soul is not in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Islam not only permits but also exhorts to fulfill mundane desires within the bonds of the Shariah.\textsuperscript{51}

2. It is expected that the learner should minimise, as much as possible, his other preoccupations other than those concerned with learning. Al-Ghazali says: knowledge will not surrender itself to the learner unless he wholly entrusts himself to knowledge.\textsuperscript{52} Thus, for him who is engaged in the pursuit of knowledge it is necessary to seek it at all times to do so from the cradle to the grave. The intermission and break in learning is a loss to the learner. Az-Zarnuji quotes the statement of his teacher as follows: "Verily, I became superior to my companions, since neither relaxation nor perturbation interfered with my devotion for knowledge."\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{49} Mystic theologian executed in 922, vide Az-Zarnuji, op.cit.,p.55
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.,p.55.
\textsuperscript{51} cf.Ibid.,p.55,Az-Zarnuji,quotes this Hadith:Verily there are sins whose only excuse is (man's unavoidable) concern with his earthly life.
\textsuperscript{52} Ahyaul uloom, op.cit.,p.125.
\textsuperscript{53} Az-Zarnuji, op.cit.,p.54.
3. The learner should pay high regard to his teacher.

Al-Ghazali says learner is patient and the educator is his physician. The teacher knows the mental level of his students. He decides accordingly as to what should be taught and what should not be taught. Posing unnecessary questions and speaking without permission create difficulties in the pursuit of knowledge. Sometimes the learner even fails in his mission of acquiring knowledge as is evident from the story of prophet Moses. During his educational tour when he has unable to endure and forebear he was separated from his educator. Thus the learner should not make haste but should proceed slowly and patiently. Moreover, he must inclucate in him the attributes of solemnity, mildness and fear of God.

4. Silence has been lavishly praised in Hadith. It is related that one who keeps silence gets salvation. Believers have been asked either to utter good words or to keep silent. It is related that Imam Husain advised his son, "O my son, never interrupt the discourse of the learned, learn the manner of silence. No doubt silence and concentration are necessary conditions for the acquisition of knowledge from the learned. The freedom of expression of views should not however be curtailed. The questions arising in the mind of a

54. Ahyaul uloom, p.126.
55. Kahaf, 78
56. Imam al-Malik vide Ibn Abd al-Bar, op.cit., p.100.
58. Vide. Ibid., p.95.
learner, if not properly answered can not satisfy his passion for knowledge. Thus, it is necessary to question the knowledgeable and seek information from them. It is also related that the learner should join the company of scholars other than his teacher so that he may be aware of his teacher's deficiencies. On the other hand teachers are expected not to encroach into fields not known to them. Abu Darda says that in such situations saying la-adri (I donot know) is equivalent to half of knowledge.

5. It is said that the learned are the physicians of the society and that wealth is the ailment of the society. If physician himself becomes sick who will cure the ailing? It point out to the learner not to hanker after wealth because wealth and its avariciousness create obstacles in the way of knowledge. But we have also the information that some of the learned of the early period of Islam were counted as rich of the society. It is related that Abdullah bin Masood left seventy thousand dirham, at the time of his death. We have also the illustrious example of Mohammad Hasan, whose property was managed by 300 employs but he spent all his wealth in the way of knowledge.

59. Anbiyaa: 7
60. Abu Ayub vide Ibn Abd al-Bar, p. 79.
61. Vide Abid., p. 162.
and learning. Once, when he was seen in a ragged garment, Abu Yusuf presented him some costly dress but he refused to accept it and said: 'To you (good) things are given in advance but for us (good) things are put off (for the future life)'. As a matter of fact wealth is a means of acquiring knowledge. For a true learner it never becomes an end in itself. Wealth is undesirable if it covets the learner otherwise learners and teachers have been enjoined to earn money for their needs. It is reported that Umar used to urge the Qurra to earn their livelihood and not to depend on charity of others. Although Islam does not favour the tagging of education to means of livelihood it appears to favour tagging of professions with specialised education. In Islam knowledge extends from the cradle to the grave. The learners are therefore expected to make their job and professions conducive to the pursuit of knowledge. Abu Hanifa is reported to be cloth merchant when he was studying law. He also used to hold intellectual discussion with his customers. Abu Hafs al-Kabir never lost the opportunity to remember his lessons during the period of his service. Thus it is concluded that the learner should not hanker after wealth but should be devoted to knowledge. He must utilise all the available resources and opportunities for the sake of acquiring more and more knowledge.

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64. Az-Zarnuji, op. cit., p. 52.
65. The reciter of the Quran.
66. Ibn Abd al-Bar, op. cit., p. 139.
68. Vide Ibid., p. 50.
6. It appears from the study of the Quran that the axiom of knowledge for the sake of knowledge and acquisition of knowledge for personal ends is not desirable in Islam. The Quran exhorts to acquire knowledge and to practise it. It is said that there were scholars who were depressed of the attitude of common folk towards knowledge and they urged their students to acquire knowledge for personal benefit. But this view does not appear to be correct in the light of the clear exhortations of the Quran and the Hadith. The Quran says that the persons who conceal Divine knowledge are guilty of gross crime. Such verses forced Abu Huraira and other prominent companions of the prophet to transmit the knowledge that they had acquired through the Book of God or through the Prophet. Thus the educand in Islamic epistemology is expected to transmit his acquired knowledge to those who are ignorant of it.

The study of the natural phenomena leads the believer to the same conclusion. Revelation is considered to be the most reliable source of knowledge. The other sources of knowledge such as sensation, perception and reason, though all of limited value, have not been ignored by Islam. The Quran is the source of that revealed knowledge and contains two types of verse, the

69. Ta'ooos', vide Ibn Abd al-Bar, op.cit., p.100.

70. Baqara: 159 and 174.
the muhkamat and the matashabihat. The learner is urged to follow the Ayat-i-Muhkamat. He is expected to pursue his study with purity of intention. In the start he should recite Bismillah and pray for knowledge and guidance. Praising God and thanking Him in the course of the acquisition of knowledge is considered an important item of the learning process. The learners will is strengthened and his attention focused on knowledge as acquisition of knowledge is considered obligatory (talab al-ilm farizatun). The learner removes every type of doubt by putting to his teacher. In the pursuit of knowledge he is inspired by the idea that the every word of wisdom is the missing property of the believer. He shows, in the path of talab al-ilm, perseverance, assiduity and earnestness. Poverty or prosperity do not hinder his task. Journey for the sake of knowledge (Ar-rahila fi talab-al-ilm) is encouraged. It was the common practice of the learners in the easily Islamic period. The learners are expected to maintain external neatness as well as internal purity. The dress, the place of study, the educative materials and the heart of the learners should all be clear and devoid of negative emotions such as anger, lasciviousness, malice and haughtiness. Learning in Islam is from the cradle to the grave. Intermission and break in learning are harmful. The learner is expected to minimise his pre-occupations other than learning. Keeping silence is praised and posing
unnecessary questions and speaking without the teacher's permission is considered improper rather than dangerous, as is evident from the story of the Prophet Moses. Learner in Islamic epistemology does not appear greedy of wealth. Although Islam does not favour delimiting of education from means of livelihood. Rather it permit tagging of various professions with specialised education.

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