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Title of the Thesis

ASPECTS OF QUR’ĀNIC EXEGETICAL
CONCEPT OF
‘SELF’ AND ‘HUMAN NATURE’
PAST AND PRESENT

by

Mahmood Yoosuf Abdulla.

Doctoral Thesis approved by the Loughborough University

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD.)

Department

Politics, International Relations & European Studies

Loughborough University

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Ten key words for the purposes of University Library and British Library cataloguing
Qur'an, Islam, Extremism, Terrorism, Exegesis, Self, Soul, Human nature, Qutb, Ibn Kathir.

**ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores paradigms of the Qur'anic concept of 'self' and 'human nature' in the ontological and hermeneutic works of selected contemporary and medieval writers and in the Islamic thought. Among the main themes of the thesis are: (i) the contrast between the humanitarian values projected in the Qur'an and the enigmatic interpretation of the Qur'an which tends to vitiate these values; (ii) the contrast between the respect for human life and human dignity, commensurate with human disposition recognised by Islam, and the radicalised ideology; (iii) the contrast between the code of living devised by Islam at the individual and social levels and the parochial juristic-political outlook.

The thesis investigates the distortions concerning the Islamic concepts of Jihad, democracy and tolerance of other faiths. It traces the historic roots of the insurgent groups, evolving into violent extremism, which threatens in modern world the global security through indiscriminate bloodshed and terrorism in the name of Jihad. The treatment of women in Muslim societies has attracted in recent years a barrage of criticism against Islam. This is examined from the exegetical and extra-exegetical sources. The thesis probes into the conflict between the Muslim rationalists and the traditionalists and between the philosophers and the traditionalists on the controversy over emanation and responsibility for human actions.

This research is topical in the wake of the 9/11 and 7/7 catastrophes and in the light of the dilemma facing the Muslims in the West. The juristic dictum over the qualification of religio-political leadership of the community and the implementation of the Shari'ah are investigated; and the attitude in the West in fomenting extremism among Muslims is explored. This research, for the first time in a Western University, examines two major Qur'anic exegeses, and correlates these writings to the exceptional, contemporary, burning issues of the day.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In order to embark on my PhD. programme on a major Islamic subject, outside my accountancy profession, I had to complete my MA in Islamic studies, which I did through Markfield Institute of Higher Education in association with Portsmouth University. The proposal for PhD. research on the Qur'anic hermeneutic study, together with the primary sources to be used, were appraised by MIHE and approved by Loughborough University. Accordingly, this research reached its completion, under the joint supervision of MIHE and Loughborough University.

I therefore, acknowledge with many thanks the role played at the inception by Dr. Ataullah Siddiqui, the Director of Studies at MIHE and Professor Abdur Raheem Kidwai of Aligarh Muslim University for vetting the proposal and to Professor David Allen, the Head of the Department of Politics, International Relations and European Studies for approving it.

With very useful contribution by my direct supervisors, Dr. Fareed Shayyal and Dr. Ruth Kinna and the constructive criticism in each annual panel meeting by the Directors of Research at Pires, Dr. Helen Drake and Dr. Moya Lloyd, and the panel members Dr. Martin Farrell and Dr. David Berry, this research was completed. I am grateful to all of them.

My gratitude is due to the librarians at the Pilkington Library of Loughborough University; and Mr. Abdul Hayee the Senior Library Assistant, the ex-librarian Mrs. Jasmine Ansari and the present and past library staff, Mr. Mohammed R. Mousoon, Ms. Humeyra Ceylan and Ms. Amina Siddat for all the assistance they rendered during the course of my research.

I am grateful for all the support and patience of my wife and household and family members. This research would never have seen the light of the day without their moral support. My gratitude to them is beyond the expression of words.
Transliteration used in this work

Arabic letter and corresponding transliteration (consonants)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Arabic Letter</th>
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Short Vowel Signs

1. Fathah sign: which represents "a" sound
2. Kasra sign: which represents "i" sound and
3. Damma sign: which represents "u" sound

Long Vowel Signs

"aa" (or ā), "ii" (or ī), and "uu" (or ū), their function is to slightly lengthen the short vowels.

Diphthongs

'Alif and Ya "ay"

'Alif and Waw "aw"
### Abbreviations used in this thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAIR</td>
<td>Council of American-Islamic Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>EB</td>
<td>The Encyclopaedia Britannica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EI²</td>
<td>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ER</td>
<td>The Encyclopedia of Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQ</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IK</td>
<td>Ibn Kathir, Abridged Tafsir (English translation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKT</td>
<td>Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azīm (Exegesis of the Great Qur'an)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MWBR</td>
<td>Muslim World Book Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBK</td>
<td>The New Book of Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEB</td>
<td>The New Encyclopaedia Britannica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OXE</td>
<td>The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQ</td>
<td>Sayyid Qutb, In the Shade of the Qur'an (English translation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SQT</td>
<td>Sayyid Qutb, Fī Ṣalāl al-Qur'ān (Arabic)</td>
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CONCLUSION

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INTRODUCTION

Theme of the Research

The Qur'ān defines a comprehensive set of human values built around the quiddity of the human entity: 'self' and 'human nature'. The primary aim of this research is to explore different paradigms and the inherent essence of the 'self' and 'human nature' in Islām. The discussion on the responsibilities for human actions in Islāmic thought is presented as a conflict between the rationalists and the traditionalists and between the traditionalists and the philosophers.

The terms applied in the context of this research are *nafs* for 'self' or 'soul', and *rūḥ* for 'spirit'. By 'soul' is meant 'deep inner self', which maintains a person's identity in the material and spiritual world. By 'human nature' is meant 'inner essence and disposition', which moulds human behaviour and is subject to internal and external influences from the time of birth until death. By *fiṭrāh* is meant untainted or uncorrupted human nature. 'Spirit' can be comprehended to mean 'Command of the Lord' - the Supreme Sustainer and Cherisher.

The method selected for attaining the primary objective is the Qur'ānic exegetical or hermeneutical works of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1372-3) and Sayyid Qūṭb (d. 1380/1966), aided by the traditions and practices of the Prophet Muhammad and Islāmic thought in this field.

Compared to other major exegeses, the work of Ibn Kathīr is wholly available in English in abridged form; and a substantial part of Qūṭb's work also is available in English in complete form. Researchers conducting their research in Western Universities will find the impressive style in the standard of English translation in both works of great assistance. Hopefully, other higher education institutes will make available long overdue translations of other renowned exegetes, from Arabic into English.

Ibn Kathīr and Qūṭb's Qur'ānic interpretations have been chosen as primary sources because (i) they are widely read and referred to in academic literature, (ii) they adopt an investigative approach to the study of the Qur'ān, which is conducive to academic study.
and (iii) they represent past and present approaches to the subject of interpretation. The choice of these works does not mean the rejection of the authority of other exegeses. In order to curb the research becoming unwieldy, this dissertation has not undertaken intra-comparison between different exegeses.

Quṭb’s thoughts have recently attracted attention of non-Muslim critics.¹ His works, explored in this study, provide an important insight into his theological and political commitments and his worldview of Islām.

The secondary aim of this research is to explore the exceptional contemporary challenges presented by the radical thought. In this context, the research critically examines the traditional and historical issues that paved way for radical approaches in the juristic-political arena, discussed in Chapter 6.

This researcher does not subscribe to descriptions such as “radical Islām” or “militant Islām” which have been frivolously used by politicians and media in recent years. The dissertation argues that it is the outlook and attitude of certain ideologues that have diverted the universal teachings of Islām towards extremism², not the Qur’ān itself. This study highlights the negativities that have culminated into extremism. Consequently, the sanctity attributed by Islām to human life has been distorted, and the Islāmic exhortations for tolerance and moderation have been neglected by the extremists. Historically, a number of theological and political factors have given rise to a real division in the Muslim community. This dichotomy is traced to its historic roots in Chapters 6 and 7.

**Hypothesis of the research**

The ‘soul’ and ‘human nature’ are intrinsically identified with human entity. Therefore, as a prelude to the research, the concept of ‘human being’ has to be defined. One of the

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² defined as “any political theory favouring immoderate uncompromising policies”, http://www.thefreedictionary.com/extremism.
most succinct and yet, comprehensive definitions in Islāmic thought, has been attempted by Qūṭb. He writes:

"Man is a unique being, neither animal nor inanimate, neither angelic nor Satanic. Islām takes a holistic, rather than fragmented, view of man. It allows for his weaknesses as well as his strengths, treating him as an integrated being comprising a physical aspect with instincts, impulses and natural drives, and a discerning intellectual power, and a soul with spiritual passions and yearnings."

As regards human being’s mission in the earthly life, towards which, the Qur‘ānic direction is focused, Qūṭb continues:

"It [Islām] requires of man only such tasks as he is able to fulfil, maintaining that delicate balance between obligations and abilities, with fairness and without duress, satisfying the needs of body, mind and soul in perfect harmony. The corollary to that concept is man’s freedom to choose and bear full responsibility for the choice."

Qūṭb’s definition takes a philosophical view, identifying a comprehensive role of man with the power and potential to act and to bear the consequences of his actions. This research will prove the stated hypothesis in compliance with the defined primary aim.

Directly related to the human entity is the status, dignity and honour granted to human life in Islām. Therefore, the hypothesis of the secondary aim is that, cruelty towards God’s creatures and creation is the worst form of fasād (evildoing) and fitnah (spreading mischief on earth). In this context, Professor Khaled Abou El Fadl (whose several works are referred to and discussed in this thesis) writes that the heart that lacks love towards human beings is void of any love for God. He states that the true meaning of the Prophet’s tradition that, the one who knows himself (herself) knows God, can be realised through self-criticism and inner struggle of the ‘self’. This process enables the

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3 His definition is selected because it provides a gist of some topics crucial to the primary research area, discussed in detail in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.
4 SQ:1:484.
5 SQ:1:484.
6 A prolific modern writer in the U.S. and legal expert at the UCLA School of Law in California.
7 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 134.
individuals to discover whether they obey God or their own ego and hence, indulge in self-idolatry. This research will prove the stated hypothesis by critically analysing the factors which have led to violent extremism.

**Dilemma of the Muslims addressed in this thesis**

Most Muslims find it very offensive to hear non-Muslim critics argue that Islam approves of taking hostages and beheading them, mass-murder of innocent bystanders and travellers in suicide bombings, and brutalising of civilians. Such gesticulations are ill-conceived, and they are misused as weapons to promote Islamophobia. Nevertheless the fact remains that the ideological complacency of some radical groups encourages such despicable misconceptions. These have become a matter of anxiety for conscientious Muslims who feel that their religion is being blasphemed and that they are being subjected to collective punishment because of a tiny minority of militant extremists.

The views of the silent majority of Muslims have been expressed by the reputable organisations such as The Muslim Council of Britain and the Council of American-Islamic Relations in many articles on their websites condemning violence. Hence, the secondary aim of this study adopts a critical approach to trace the sources from which the violent extremism finds its inspiration, and the contributory domestic and external factors fomenting extremism in Muslim societies. Extremism has different facets and these are discussed in this work. But its evolution into terrorism, with an agonising effect on human life - one of the most sacred entities in Islam - is an affront to humanity and civilisation. For the purpose of this research, ‘terrorism’ (emanating from whichever group) is defined as “the calculated use of violence (or threat of violence) against civilians in order to attain goals that are political or religious or ideological in nature; this is done through intimidation or coercion or instilling fear.”

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8 Ibid. 135-136.  
9 See “Islamophobia defined” and “France: 50,000 sign up against Islamophobia”, http://www.islamophobia.org/news.php.  
Motivation for conducting this research

In the aftermath of 9/11, prominent Muslim scholars and leaders expressed outrage at what they saw as bin Laden and his movement’s misguided views on *Jihād*, taken as a continuous armed struggle against *Kuffār* (infidels), including Muslims who do not subscribe to their views. These scholars felt that the Islāmic humanitarian values were being distorted by the militants who consider all the means, including targeting the civilians, as justified to reach their end of establishing the rule of God on earth, as they see it.

Sulayman Nyang of Howard University in Washington, D.C. wrote that the Qur’ān directs the humans to create a civil society where they can “live in peace with one another”; and that the nature of human struggle is to achieve peace by controlling base instincts like cruelty, and seeking spiritual purity, which is a “greater *Jihād*”. In concurrence with these statements, this research is motivated to analyse the positive and constructive Islāmic human values at individual and communal levels, and to contrast them with the negative and destructive impediments manifested in extremism, which tend to misrepresent these values.

Whilst defining the motivating factors of this research, it is pertinent to refer to the speech delivered at the Second ‘Parliament of World’s Religions’ by Tan Sri Dato’ bin Abdul Hamid, Chairman of Institute of Islāmic Understanding in Malaysia, in which he said that in line with human nature is a “right to lead a comfortable and honourable life with untarnished honour and dignity” based on “equality, justice and truth”. To illustrate this principle he quoted the Qur’ān: “We have honoured the sons of Ādam...” (Q.17:70) and the tradition of the Prophet: “All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action.”

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17 http://www.islamicity.com/Mosque/lastsernm.HTM
It therefore follows that human dignity and honour bestowed on man in the eyes of God are not determined by race, colour or ethnicity, but by piety. Hence, the approach adopted in this research is two-fold: (a) to present an Islamic personal and social code of ethics and spirituality as portrayed in the primary sources on which this research is based, in order to counter the present trend of stereotyping all Muslims in a negative way; and (b) to demonstrate how radical thought and extremism are violating human dignity, propounded in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah and distorting the focal point of justice, associated with piety in the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.

Relevance of this research to the contemporary world

The backlash that the Muslim community suffered in the wake of the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks in the United States and the United Kingdom and the Madrid bombings, has been covered by many conferences, held locally and internationally. Both the electronic and print media have given coverage to the sense of insecurity now felt by the Muslims in the West, with the rise of Islamophobia and racist attacks on individuals and mosques. The rise in racism and xenophobia is not confined to Muslims; and it is being tackled at local and national government levels by the Commission for Racial Equality.18

Searches of the COPAC database, produced at the University of Manchester, comprising records from Consortium of University Research Libraries and Islamic libraries, suggest that this research is original in UK universities. This thesis for the first time examines two major exegeses, and correlates these writings to contemporary, burning issues of the day.

The treatment of women in Muslim societies has attracted in recent years a barrage of criticism against Islām. This is examined from the exegetical and extra-exegetical sources in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. This research distinguishes the cultural impediments of certain Muslim societies compared to the Qur’ānic hypothesis, according to which, men and women share the same soul and common human nature as equals, and share identical rights.

Contribution to knowledge

This research will contribute to knowledge by investigating how the Qur'anic system diagnoses the factors which lead to the purity and impurity of the soul (see Chapter 3), and to the virtues and vices that respectively strengthen and weaken human nature. (See Chapter 4). In brief, the cognition of the research is based on an inquiry into free-will, the relation between good and evil and the positive and negative traits in human behaviour. Each is divided into sub-topics. The object is to portray the range of views in Islam to counter the generalised criticisms and misrepresentations, and to provide evidence from the sources, demonstrating that extremism is adversely affecting the Muslim community, and that Muslims must address this predicament that has flourished as a result of the impunity and complicity of certain juristic-political groupings within the Muslim community.

This is not a political study but the thesis highlights the political ramifications of radical thought, demonstrated from the past and present religio-political life of the Muslims. Therefore, this work will not incorporate political theories of Islamic movements, parties or groups in any detail, which fall under the ambit of the discipline called Political Thought in Islam, not the Qur'anic studies. But it has discussed juristic-political issues in Chapter 6.

Methodology of the research

The methodology employed is qualitative. It does not involve any quantitative methods, field study or questionnaires. The research is mainly text-based. The examples and case studies cited are meant to illustrate the points under discussion. In the light of the three main methods of exegeses - traditional, rational and allegorical - a major part of this thesis is concerned with the interpretative frameworks of the Qur'an. Ibn Kathir's hermeneutic work covers the traditional and narrative reports. In contrast, Qutb's hermeneutic work covers rational arguments based on informed opinion.

Ten volumes of the abridged English translation of Ibn Kathir's exegesis, and Vol. I to Vol. XII and Vol. XVIII of the complete English translation of Qutb's exegesis form the central part of the analysis. As Vol. XIII to Vol. XVII of Qutb's exegesis are yet to be
published, the gap has been filled by referring to his work in Arabic. Both the primary sources are used to construct the strata of the soul and its journey from the preexistential to the existential world into the World of the Unseen. The relationship of the soul to the human entity is established. The evolution and development of human nature and the causes of its success or failure are constructed.

The parlance of the Scriptural text might sound unfamiliar to the modern lingual style. But the analysis encapsulates expressions used in modern English. The phraseology of the liturgical dialect like, thou, thy, thee and thine, have been avoided and replaced with vocabulary in everyday usage.

The method adopted for the primary research-area was to select more than 700 verses of the Qur'ān which refer to 'human being': *ins* or *insān* for singular\(^\text{19}\) and *nās*, multiple for 'humankind'; *nafs* for 'self' or 'soul', and *rūh* for 'spirit'. There are certain verses that are repeated in the Qur'ān in different contexts with subtle differences, in which case, duplication in the commentary of the interpreters is inevitable.

Recurring topics were studied for any exceptional points. In this way, a comprehensive list of the Qur'ānic verses was drawn and the interpretative works of both Ibn Kathīr and Quṭb were referred and studied against each verse selected from the Qur'ān. If there was little of substance in their interpretation, then the verses of the Qur'ān alone were relied upon to support the topic under deliberation. The Qur'ānic verses have also been referred by way of illustration and to demonstrate a contrast between them and certain aspects of the interpretation. The function of the interpretation is to give explanation from different perspectives, including at times, the progress in the modern scientific knowledge in relation to the verses under discussion.

Apart from the selected verses, there are other verses in which none of the stated terms are used. Yet, these are directly relevant to the defined subject of this research. In order to ensure that the inquiry does not miss any relevant topic, the ten abridged volumes of Ibn Kathīr have been studied in full. A major part of this research is focused around the two stated hermeneutic sources. During the course of this study, the present researcher

\(^{19}\) plural *Unās*, but this term is not used in the Qur'ān.
INTRODUCTION

has listened to more than five-hundred Friday sermons on the satellite TVs from several countries including Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This was possible due to time difference. In order to illustrate the points under deliberation, occasional reference is made to these sermons by way of examples.

Referencing procedure

References related to the primary sources, referred to frequently in the course of deliberations, are shown in the body of the text as follows:

(1) Quotation from the Qur'ān is referred as: Q.ChapterNo:VerseNo (where Q. stands for the Qur'ānic text, and the chapter and verse numbers are separated by colon).

(2) Qūṭb’s explanation or interpretation is referred as: SQ:VolumeNo:PageNo. (in reference to the translated work) or SQT:VolumeNo:PageNo. (in reference to the original Arabic work).

(3) Ibn Kathīr’s explanation or interpretation is referred as: IK:VolumeNo:PageNo. (in reference to the translated work) or IKT:VolumeNo:PageNo. (in reference to the original Arabic work).

(4) When emphasis is to be placed on the point under discussion, a phrase such as, “Qūṭb writes” or “Qūṭb comments” or “Ibn Kathīr writes” or “Ibn Kathīr comments” is added.

(5) When this researcher is criticising or discussing or commenting on the preceding thoughts or passages, it is not followed by any reference. To make a distinction, at times, the phrase like, “it is observed” or “it is noteworthy” or “notably” or “conspicuously” is added.

(6) When any work is being reviewed at length, page-numbers are shown in the body of the text.

(7) All other references are shown by way of footnotes to avoid the text becoming cumbersome.

(8) Use of certain essential Arabic terminology and technical words was unavoidable. The meaning of Arabic terms in this work is separated by commas or brackets. The explanatory glossary appears at the end.
(9) In the footnote references, the works of the same author are differentiated by adding the year of publication in brackets. But if two or more works are published in the same year, then the title of the book is added in brief.

**Transliterations**

In order to avoid variation in transliteration of the same word, some have been altered in the text to reflect long vowel signs. For example, ‘Allah’ and ‘Islam’ are commonly spelled as stated, including in many books and articles cited in this work. However, to maintain consistency in the text, these have been changed to appear as ‘Allāh’ and ‘Islām’, to reflect their correct transliterations. The authors’ names, the titles of the books and articles, and the website addresses are spelled as published in the foot-note references and bibliography.

At times, the name of the same author is spelled differently by different publishers. In order to avoid confusion, the correct transliterations on that names are used in the text; but in the foot-note references and bibliography, exact spellings are maintained as published. There are some names that appear frequently in the popular press and literature. In this case, their common spellings are retained without transliterations.

**Preamble to the Thesis**

This and the subsequent sections define the main terms employed in hermeneutical literature, investigate the ongoing scholarly debate on its essential aspects and present an overview of the renowned classical and modern exegetical works of different schools of thoughts. The literary genre of exegeses has contributed many voluminous works to the study of the Qurʾān, with a number of dimensions - traditional, dialectical, legal, theological, mystical, philosophical and rational. The methods for interpreting the Qurʾān are analysed, and the major exegeses used in this research and the credentials of their authors are examined.
According to the universal belief of the Muslims, the Qur'ān\(^{20}\) is the revealed Word of Allāh\(^{21}\) to the Prophet Muḥammad\(^{22}\) over 23 years, 610-632\(^{23}\). Islām literally means, ‘surrender to the Will of God’. It also means ‘peace’. Hence, ‘peace be upon you’ has become a customary popular greeting under the Islāmic ethics. Arberry, a prominent Orientalist and Professor of Arabic and Persian at the Universities of London and Cambridge, asserts that the Qur'ān’s message and rhythm “rank amongst the greatest literary masterpieces of mankind”\(^{24}\).

McAuliff says that the Qur'ān offers “some of its most original and distinctive arguments, which are incomprehensible without some knowledge of the Arab milieu in which the Qur'ān arose”.\(^{25}\) The learning of the Qur'ān, a customary practice among Muslims, involves reading and memorising the text, with or without knowing its meaning. When the Qur'ān is studied at an advanced stage, it is supported by tafsīr which means, to “explain, expound and interpret”\(^{26}\). This includes the explanation of asbāb al-nuzūl - the causes or occasions for the revelation of the āyāt \(^{27}\) (verses) and suwar\(^{28}\) (chapters). The work of al-Waḥīdī (d. 468/1076) is one of the comprehensive studies, dealing with the causes of revelation of verses.\(^{29}\)

The terms tafsīr and ta‘wīl are interchangeable, though the latter refers to explaining that which is concealed.\(^{30}\) More precisely, the textual interpretation or exegesis of the

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\(^{20}\) from the root qirā'ah, meaning, recitation or reading.

\(^{21}\) ‘Allāh’ is used synonymously with ‘God’. Under the Qur'ānic sense, He is One, the Everlasting Refuge, He begets not nor is He begotten, there is none like Him (Q.112:1-4). He is the Giver of life and death (Q.3:156), Knower of secret and manifest (Q.6:3), Creator of everything (Q.6:102). He has no partners (Q.27:63). This constitutes the faith in Tawḥīd (Unity) in the Unique Supreme Being, appropriately known as the Islāmic core belief in absolute Monotheism. The use of the name ‘God’ throughout this study would imply the Qur'ānic perception.

\(^{22}\) Muhammad bin ‘Abdullāh was born in Makkah fifty-three years before the Hijrah (migration from Makkah to Madīnah) that occurred on 20 June 622 (Pickthall, xv). This migration marks the commencement of the Islāmic lunar Hijrī calendar. He died in Madīnah in 632 CE.

\(^{23}\) Arberry, (1964), ix.

\(^{24}\) Ibid. x. Arberry was a non-Muslim. His English translation, in contrast with Pickthall’s, aims to maintain the Qur'ānic rhythmic harmony. But it is not free from errors, as identified by Kidwai in - “Translating the Untranslatable – A survey of English Translation of the Qur’ān”, MWBR, 7:4, 1987. Pickthall’s translation is favoured by English speaking Muslims due to his close adherence to the literal meaning and it was the work of a native Englishman who converted to Islām. In several instances, his literalism vitiates the contextual sense. This is observed by comparing his translation with Yūsuf ‘Alī’s.

\(^{25}\) McAuliff, EQ, 11:57.

\(^{26}\) Lane, VI:2397.

\(^{27}\) Singular, āyah, also means sign of God.

\(^{28}\) Singular, sūra, also means a fence or wall.

\(^{29}\) Ayoub, 4.

\(^{30}\) Von Denffer, 122.
Qur‘ān is called *tafsīr* (plural, *tafṣīr*) whereas esoteric interpretation is referred to as *ta’wil*.

The objective of philological discourse is to decipher the substance of the message conveying the “original meaning” and the “author’s intention” as explained by the Prophet. *Tafsīr* is mentioned only once in the Qur‘ān; whereas *ta’wil* is mentioned seventeen times. Ibn Qūṭaybā (d. 276/889) differentiates between the two terms. The relationship between *tafsīr* and *ta’wil* is not only contested among different Schools but within the same School. As long as *ta’wil* was compliant with the “literal meaning” of the Qur‘ān or ḥadīth, the Sunnī36 Schools did not have any qualms with it.

With the Shi‘īs, *ta’wil* is an inner dimension “directly derived from the Imāms, the ultimate authority in matters of interpretation” of the Qur‘ān. According to the Ṣūfī, Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 231/845-6) *ta’wil* is *ma’rifat-al-ḥaqā‘iq*, knowledge of the true state of affairs. Rippin believes that *ta’wil* in the sense of resorting to the original interpretation, was introduced perhaps in the third century notwithstanding the fact that the term itself originates in the Qur’ān.

The general method and approach to the study of any *tafsīr* entails deliberations on the *lughā* (language), *ma’nā* (meaning, plural *ma‘ānī*), *i‘rāb* (syntax) and *qirā‘āt* (various styles of readings) of the Qur‘ān. The *lughā* and *i‘rāb* fall within the domain of grammatical interpretation, but both the aspects form part of the commentary in major

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31 Ayoub, p. 1.
32 Ibid. p. 6.
34 Q.25:33.
35 Q.3:7 (twice); Q.4:59; Q.7:53 (twice); Q.10:39; Q.12:6, 21, 36, 37, 44, 45, 100, 101; Q.17:35; Q.18:78, 82.
36 This is the short form for *Ahl al-Sunnah wa’l-Jamā‘ah* - People of the Tradition and the Community. They are in vast majority among Muslims and are divided into four jurisprudential Schools, each one named after its founder - Ḥanāfī, Malikī, Ṣafī‘ī and Ḥanbalī (identified later in this work).
37 This is the short form for *Shi‘a‘ Alī* - friends or followers of Alī, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, who, according to the Shi‘a faith, was the testamentary successor of the Prophet and the first Imām. They are divided into four Schools, called *Ikhnāṣ ashariyyah* - Twelvers, Zaidiyyah, and *Ismā‘iliyyah*. The latter are divided into two different branches – *Nizārīs* (also called Agā Khānīs) and *Dawūdīs*. The jurisprudential School of the *Ikhnāṣ ashariyyah* is called *Ja‘farīyyah*, derived from the name of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d.148/765), the sixth Imām of the Shi‘a.
38 Tabātabā’ī, p.33, p.39, pp.75-78, pp.81-84.
INTRODUCTION

exegeses. The vital paradigm in any commentary concerns the authenticity of the Qur’ān. To quote Von Denffer, the Qur’ān was “revealed in its precise meaning and wording ... protected by Allāh Himself against any corruption”\textsuperscript{40}. Ancient and modern exegetes have long argued that Divine protection precludes any possibility of 

\textit{iḥrīf} (addition or omission) in the text. The 
\textit{mufassirūn} (exegetes) from the first Islamic century onwards, have produced studies on \textit{iʿjāz al-Qurʾān} (inimitability of the Qur’ān). The inquiry into the inimitability and sciences of the Qur’ān, its variant readings and compilation, are outside the scope of the present research.

There are three principal methods of interpreting the Qur’ān: \textit{Tafsīr biʿl-maʿthūr} (exegesis by transmission); it is also called \textit{tafsīr biʿl-riwāyah} (exegesis by narration of tradition). \textit{Tafsīr biʿl-raʿyah} (exegesis by opinion); it is also called \textit{tafsīr biʿl-dirāyah} (exegesis by derived knowledge). \textit{Tafsīr biʿl-ışhārāt} (exegesis by sign or hint or allusion); this is popular in Şūfī (mystical) interpretation.\textsuperscript{41}

Within the ambit of \textit{tafsīr biʿl-maʿthūr}, there is a wide choice of material to be cited. Exegesis by transmission depends on the \textit{idāh} (independent reasoning) of the exegete, and indicates a choice in citation as to what he chooses to cite and what he decides to ignore. This is one of the principal measures of distinction between various exegeses. Regarding \textit{tafsīr biʿl-raʿyah}, ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 678/686-8) cousin and Companion of the Prophet and one of the earliest interpreters of the Qur’ān, narrates that the Prophet said: “Whoever explains the Qur’ān with his opinion or with what he has no knowledge of, then let him assume his seat in the fire (of hell).”\textsuperscript{42} However, the scholars argued that this prohibition applied only to those who interpreted the Qur’ān using imagination, and who had no background knowledge. The next section defines and explains the principal terms used in the Qur’ānic studies.

\textsuperscript{40} Von Denffer, 21. However, he contradicts himself by an earlier statement in the same work on the initial compilation of the verses of the Qur’ān. He claims: “Some loss is inevitable in such a process” (p.5), without supporting his claim with any reference. But there is an indication later on in his work as to what he might have meant. He cites two solitary reports: ‘Umar, the second Caliph reported that stoning of adulteress was part of the recitation, but not included in the Qur’ānic text. ‘Ā’ishah (d. 588/678) the wife of the Prophet reported that 10 or 5 sucklings (the right of the infant) were part of the recitation, but excluded in the Qur’ānic text (p.110).

\textsuperscript{41} Rippin, “Tafsīr”, EI\textsuperscript{1}, X:84 and ER, XIV:236-240 and Von Denffer, 124.

\textsuperscript{42} IK, 32-33, quoting Al-Tirmidhī, Al-Nasā’ī and Abū Dāwūd.
Scholars' differences in defining the terms *tafsîr* and *ta’wîl*

Although both terms are sometimes used synonymously to mean ‘interpretation’ some scholars believed that *ta’wîl* “dispensed with tradition and was founded upon reason, personal opinion, individual research, or expertise...” But the Qur’ânic view segregates the knowledge of *ta’wîl* from any personal endeavour. *Ta’wil* has been mentioned in one verse twice (Q.3:7), introducing two additional terms that have triggered further scholarly debate.

The Qur’ânic verse on the criteria of interpretation can be assimilated in segments: “He it is Who has sent down to you the Book, in it are *Muḥkamât* that are the essence of the Book, and others that are *Mutashâbihât*...” *Muḥkamât* are the fundamental verses of clear or established meaning. They carry distinct injunctions in the matter of Islamic Law. *Mutashâbihât* are the verses of hidden or ambiguous meaning. The verse continues: “But those in whose hearts is perversity, they follow the resembling part desiring dissention and desiring its *ta’wil*...”

Yûsuf ‘Alî explains the two terms referred in this verse: (a) *ummul kitiib* (mother of the Book) is the essence and nucleus of the Qur’ân; and (b) the resembling verses are allegorical, metaphorical and figurative. The verse then continues: “But no one knows its *ta’wil* except Allâh. And those firm in knowledge say: ‘We believe in it; all is from our Lord’. And none will grasp the Message except those who understand” (Q.3:7).

Though the Qur’ân draws a clear distinction between *tafsîr* and *ta’wil*, the classical traditional exegete, Muḥammad b. Ja‘rîr al-Ţabarî (d. 311/923) gave the name of *ta’wil* to what was essentially a *tafsîr*. Perhaps al-Ţabarî believed that both carried the same meaning, in which case, the Qur’ân would not have used two distinct terms.

In contrast with al-Ţabarî, another classical exegete, al-Maturîdî (d. 333/944) differentiated between the two terms. He based his argument on the Qur’ânic reference to *ta’wil* al-‘ahâdîth (Q.12:21) - understanding the inner meaning of happenings.
Ibn 'Abbās defines the function of the Qur'ān: "The Qur'ān has four aspects: tafsīr, which the scholars know, and 'arabiyyā [Arabic], which the Arabs know, and ḥalāl wa-ḥarām (permitted and prohibited), the knowledge of which is indispensable to the people, and ta'wil, which only God knows". Ibn 'Abbās is also quoted to have said, "learn the [true] ta'wil, before other people will come who will interpret it according to the wrong ta'wil." Apparently there is a contradiction in the two versions narrated in the name of Ibn 'Abbās.

Muqātil b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767) attaches his own meaning to ta'wil defining it as an application of the Qur'ān rather than mere recitation. In his lifetime, the Prophet himself explained and interpreted the Qur'ānic verses, including ta'wil, which pertains to dirāyā (deeper meaning). The dilemma of the scholars is that knowledge of ta'wil is either the exclusive prerogative of God or, as a grace of God it can be imparted to whomsoever God wills. If the first premise is accepted, then a number of verses of the Qur'ān might appear to be merely for recitation purposes and not for understanding. This premise contradicts the explanation of Ibn 'Abbās. If the second premise is accepted, then the inference is that the Qur'ān does not waste its words when it employs two different terms.

Reviewing al-Ṭabarī’s exegesis, McAuliff reiterates the contention of the author that the Qur'ān is free from spurious information. It contains everything that people need and nothing of which they have no need “but whose interpretation they have no way of understanding”.

Reverting to the crucial verse quoted at the commencement of this section (Q.3:7), two phrases are joined by the conjunction waw (and) between “no one knows its inner interpretation except God” and “those firm in knowledge”. McAuliff writes that “under the rules of Arabic grammar [the phrase, al-rāsikhūn fi'l-ʿilm]...those firmly-rooted (in

47 Reference to 'Arabs dates back to 800 B.C. The name was initially used for the inhabitants of Arabian Peninsula. With Muslim conquests and migration, they formed a majority in some Afro-Asian countries. NBK, Vol. 1:344.
48 Versteegh, 64, quoting Muqātil, Tafsīr, 1:27.
49 Ibid, 64, f.26.10F.
50 Ayoub, 21.
knowledge) – can function as one of the subjects either of the preceding phrase or of the clause which follows”.

The point of historical fact, as discussed in the exposé of Rippin, demonstrates that the original Arabic text of the Qur'ān, compared to the later printed formats, did not bear any punctuation marks within the text. Consequently, the earliest reading might well have been: “But no one knows its [inner] interpretation except God and those firm in knowledge who say: ‘We believe in it; all is from our Lord’.” Under this reading, taʾwil also becomes subject to tafsīr, but not every muḥfassīr (interpreter) ventured into this area. As a result, Tafsīr maintained its methodology based on set rules, which have developed over centuries.

The other two terms mentioned in the same verse are muḥkamāt (singular, muhkam) and mutashābiḥāt (singular, mutashābiḥ). They add more limitations to the process of tafsīr and taʾwil. Al-Ṭabarī categorised a very small portion of the Qur'ānic verses as the resembling ones. Hence, any verses that were not considered muḥkamāt were construed to be mutashābiḥāt. The former are the verses in which the Qur'ān identifies ḥalāl (permitted) and ḥarām (prohibited) with certitude. They are the embodiment of aḥkām (legal precepts). The latter are the verses which, despite variations in wordings, are similar in meaning.

It is essential for the interpreter to be conversant with the nāsikh (abrogating) and mansūkh (abrogated) verses. The Qur'ān asserts: “Such of Our revelation as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring (in place) one better or the like thereof” (Q.2:106). The naskh (abrogation) takes the form of an injunction replaced by another, in which case, though the verse forms part of the Qur'ānic recitation, it does not have the legal force of implementation. “Some scholars have identified the abrogating verses with muhkam [clear] verses and the abrogated verses with the mutashābiḥ [ambiguous] ones.”

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52 Ibid, 54.
54 McAuliffe, op. cit., 52.
55 Ayoub, 19-20.
Controversy over the role of the Hadiths

Hadiths – sayings of the Prophet Muhammad as narrated by his Companions and Household members are imperative to the exegesis. They form an inseparable part of the Sunnah – traditions, practices and examples of the Prophet and the precedents set by him. Qur'an and Sunnah are two cornerstones on which the Divine Law of Shar'ah is based. The scholars concur that the Sunnah abrogates nothing in the Qur'an.57

The related key terms used in the study of hadith are isnad (chain of narrators), and matn (the text) of the hadith. The scholars of hadith scrutinise the narrators and their background to decide which hadith is to be classified as Sahih (right or reliable), Hasan (good), Mawthiq (authentic) or Da'if (weak). The scholars believed that the traditions of the Prophet had been subjected to abuse by the narrators on large scale, leading to gross exaggeration and distortion. This is a specialised branch of study. The predicament of the scholars was to sift through the chain of narrations during the course of almost three centuries, until the traditions were finally compiled in multi-voluminous collections. Parallel genre had been developed by both the Sunnī and Shi'ī scholars, who compiled the corpus of weak and fabricated hadiths for further research.

The Sunnī Schools considered the Sahabah, Companions of the Prophet, as the most reliable source. The Shi'ī Schools considered the Ahlu'l Bayt, the immediate Household members of the Prophet, as the most reliable narrators. Therefore, both of them devised their own rules for vetting the acceptability of the traditions. Within the ambit of the study of hadith, 'ilm-al-rijāl (knowledge of the men) developed leading to the specialised and rigorous study of the personalities and historical stances of the narrators. Nevertheless, political and sectarian rivalry played a critical role in the acceptance or rejection of hadiths. But as hadiths are crucial to any interpretation of the Qur'an and Islamic Law, they cannot be dispensed with. For the purpose of the present research, the ongoing controversy among the scholars concerning hadiths is critically appraised. The views of a number of antagonist and protagonist scholars are outlined.

56 The Arabic plural is aḥādīth, but the English equivalent hadiths is used in this work. Muhaddith is transmitter of hadith.
Islamic branches of knowledge have flourished around the Qur’an and the traditions of the Prophet. Both dealt with the ancient stories of the past Prophets (called *Qasas-al-Ambiya*), the events when Qur’an was being revealed and prophesies about the future, including eschatological information. The importance of *Sunnah* has been laid down in the Qur’an: “There is for you in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful model [the example to follow]” (Q.33:21). “Obey Allah and the Messenger so that you might be shown mercy” (Q.3:132). One of the precise verses indicating that the Messenger manifests the Will of God is: “Whoso obeys the Messenger obeys Allah, and whoso turns away, We have not sent you as a warder over them” (Q.4:80). The verse clarifies that it was not the responsibility of the Prophet to hunt down those who turn away from the faith. These types of verses imply that the Qur’anic scripture has necessarily to be supported by the tradition for its interpretation. Yet, those who opposed the process of interpretation were instrumental in transmitting much of the interpretative material in the first place.\(^58\)

In Europe, a major critical study on exegesis, conducted by Ignaz Goldziher was published in 1920. He divided his study of the development of exegesis into “the origin of the *tafsir* material and ... its traditional, dogmatic, mystical, sectarian, and modern tendencies.”\(^59\) But the study was neither comprehensive nor adequate in the field of modern scholarly quest.\(^60\) Therefore, to base conclusions on his work carries the risk of misjudgement.

Berg classified the Western critics of *hadith* literature as sceptics and defensive and he ranked Goldziher as sceptic.\(^61\) Among the Muslim critics of the process of *hadith* transmission and collection were some renowned scholars: Rashid Riḍa (1865 – 1935), AlMuamad Amīn (1886 – 1954), Isma‘īl AlMuamad Adham (1911 – 1940) and Maḥmoud Abū Rayyah (1889 – 1970). The latter presented his discourse in his book *Aḍwā’ alā as-Sunnah al-Muḥammadiyyah* (Lights on the Muḥammadan Traditions).\(^62\) This book,
critical on the subject, is on the reading list of London University’s School of Oriental and African Studies for the graduation studies in Islām.

According to Goldziher in his *Muslim Studies*, all the subsequent legal Schools in Islām found justification and legitimacy for their thoughts and juridical position in *hadīths*. He concluded that the written canonical collections of the *hadīths* owed their origin to the emergence of *madhāhib* (legal Schools), in the middle of the third century (second half of the ninth century C.E.). In his view, the Schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) preceded the appearance of *hadīths*.

Another leading Orientalist Joseph Schacht shared Goldziher’s scepticism. In his *Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Schacht alleged that vast number of legal *hadīths*, bearing the name of the Prophet, were initiated during and after the School of Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Shafi‘ī (d. 204-205/819-820). He believed that this was a departure from the prevailing norm, two generations before al-Shafi‘ī, where reference to the deeds and opinions of the Companions and Successors [tābi‘ūn] “was the rule”. He concluded that attaching the name of the Prophet to the *hadīths* was a product of later development and an attempt to gain authority for the legal Schools.

Berg cites the study of Nabia Abbott, outlining the historical evidence that ‘Umar ordered the burning of *hadīth* manuscripts and punished those who possessed them, lest they be mixed up with the Qur’ān. Hence, evidence is established according to Abbott, that written record existed through the first century. Her contention is based on the practice prevailing in those days that *hadīths* were widely taught in the seminaries, indicating a measure of continuity. This argument is supported by the research of Fuat Sezgin who believes that *hadīth* literature was a precursor of legal Schools.

The authenticity of the *isnād* of *hadīths* is supported by Muḥammad Mustafa Azami in his book *Studies in Early Hadīth Literature* and *On Schacht’s Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*. He argues that study of the chain of narration developed into the science
of rijāl (analysis of the biography of the narrators) by the end of the first century.\(^6^9\) According to Azami, Goldziher and Schacht were working on incorrect assumptions.

As a compromise between the sceptics, who doubted the authenticity of the chain of narrations of the ḥadīths, and the apologetics, who supported them unreservedly, Fazlur Rahman presents his hypothesis. He writes: “While the isnād of a ḥadīth may well be fabricated and perhaps even the wording of the matn, the gist of the matn is still prophetic...”\(^7^0\) He believes that the Sunnah differed from one place to another.\(^7^1\)

Notably, due to the impediments of the primitive communication, this might have been true. There was a time lag in conveying messages and information from one part of the Islamic State to another, and in getting them assimilated in public practice. Within a few years after the Prophet’s death, the Islamic State had already spread into what were the Byzantine and Persian empires, and journeys from one part of the State to another took months. According to the findings of Fazlur Rahman, the isnād were of later development but the “silent” Sunnah prevailed as a norm.\(^7^2\) He includes in the Sunnah, the practices in the daily life of the Companions.

In the collection of ḥadīth books, the Companions are quoted in giving their own opinion “without claiming that they are quoting the prophet”.\(^7^3\) The controversy that has continued on ḥadīth collections is wrought with presuppositions on both sides of the divide. Berg’s survey covers the debate on the transmission process. The opponents seek to discredit the isnād, and the proponents put all their energy into defending them.

An interesting argument is presented by Haykal in his biography of the Prophet. He quotes the Shafi‘i jurist, al-Nawawi (d. 676/1277): “A number of scholars discovered many ḥadīths in the collection of Muslim\(^7^4\) and Bukhārī\(^7^5\) which do not fulfil the conditions of verification assumed by these men.” In his view, restricting the debate to

\(^{6^9}\) Ibid. 24.  
\(^{7^0}\) Ibid. 32.  
\(^{7^1}\) Ibid. 33.  
\(^{7^2}\) Ibid. 34.  
\(^{7^3}\) Speight, op. cit., 64-5.  
\(^{7^4}\) Muslim ibn Hajjāj, Abū al-Ḥusayn, Al-Jam‘i al-Saḥīh (d. 261/875).  
\(^{7^5}\) Al-Bukhari, Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Muḥammad ibn Isma‘īl, Al-Jami‘ al-Ṣaḥīh (d. 256/870)
the chains of transmission was inadequate.\textsuperscript{76} He emphasised the recourse to the method
enunciated by the Prophet himself, who had foretold that serious differences would arise
after his departure. Therefore, he laid down the criterion for accepting or rejecting
anything that was transmitted in his name: That which complies with the Qurʾān may be
accepted as authentic hadīth, and that which contradicts the Qurʾān may be construed as
nothing but fabrication.\textsuperscript{77} Haykal also quotes Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406): “I do not
believe any hadīth or report of a [C]ompanion of the Prophet to be true which differs
from the common sense meaning of the Qurʾān, no matter how trustworthy the narrators
may have been …”\textsuperscript{78} Ibn Khaldūn is said to have believed that even an honest narrator
can be vulnerable to “ulterior motive”.

Ulterior motives apart, the traditions narrated by close Companions had a phrase added
to them, as in the case of Ibn Masʿūd (d. 32/652-3), who used to add “something like
that” or “the Apostle of God approximately said that”.\textsuperscript{79} This is the reason that the text
of the same hadīths had words added or deleted in the course of transmission by
different narrators. Arabic is such a sensitive language that the syntax and vowel signs
may alter the meaning of the same word. For instance, in the verse, “Allāh is free from
obligation to the idolaters, and [so is] His messenger” (Q.9:3), the translation is valid if
rasūlohū (His messenger) is pronounced as spelled in the Qurʾān. But if rasūlehī is
pronounced, then the meaning is transposed grammatically to read, “Allāh is free from
obligation to the idolaters and to His Messenger”.

As regards Ibn Khaldūn’s “common sense meaning of the Qurʾān”, the scholars within
the same Schools, who widely differed with each other, believed that their own
approach did not violate the intended meaning. This created many factions in the
Muslim ummah (community). The masses just followed their scholars, without
verifying the facts for themselves, largely because of very low literacy rates. Yet this
tendency continues even today, where divisive opinions of the scholars are reflected in
popular divisions. The scholars decide, according to their sectarian interest, what to
reveal to the masses and what to conceal. It has become a common feature in the

\textsuperscript{76} The other four hadīth collections considered authentic by Sunnī Muslims are Ibn Mājah (d. 273/886-
887), Abū Dāwūd (d. 275/889), al-Tirmidhi (d. 279/892-893) and al-Nasāʾī (d. 303/915).
\textsuperscript{77} Haykal, lxxii.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid. lxxxiii.
\textsuperscript{79} Ayoub, 23, quoting al-Dhahabi, 1:15.
evolution of legal Schools that what is reliable to one is unreliable to another and vice versa. Even the criteria for vetting the *hadiths* have varied drastically from Ibn Khaldūn's claim, quoted by Haykal, for abiding by "the rules of logic, the evidence of sense, or any self-evident truth".

Within twelve years of the Prophet's death, his close Companions felt an acute need to commit in writing the *hadiths*, and they advised 'Umar accordingly, but he decided otherwise. Copies of the Qur'ānic script were standardised in the time of 'Uthmān throughout the Islamic State within twenty-four years of the Prophet's death. Hence, the fear that *hadiths* would become confused with the Qur'ān was no more valid. Yet, ironically the appearance of the written collection had to wait another sixty-six years, until the final years of the short reign of 'Umar Ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 101/720), by which time the second generation of Muslims who had relied on oral transmissions, passed away.

The completion of the task had to wait until the times of al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833) another one hundred and seventeen years, during the third generation. Haykal quotes his primary source of Dārquṭnā (d. 385/995) that, "the true *hadith* was as discernable from the false as a white hair is in the fur of a black bull".80 Ironically, before the time of Dārquṭnā the scholars of *hadiths* had already felt the need to classify the corpus of *hadiths* into reliable, good, authentic or weak. Twelve centuries after the death of al-Ma'mūn, the debate still continues on the authenticity and inauthenticity of *hadiths*.

There have been counter-assumptions that *hadiths* had been written since the time of the Prophet, on a non-formal basis, on the initiative of various Companions. Al-Zuhri (d. 124/742) was assigned the formal duty by the Caliph to streamline the writing of *hadiths* and to get these books circulated throughout the State.81 "Al-Zuhri collected so many *hadiths* that after his death his manuscripts needed several riding-beasts to transport them."82

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80 Haykal, Ixxxii.
81 Siddiqi, 6.
82 Ibid. 7, quoting Ibn Sa'd.
The Shi'ā adopted their own independent process of critically vetting the narrations which resulted in the four canonical collections of hadīths of the Prophet and the Imāms from his progeny.83 A rich literature of hadīths was available to the scholars of different schools of thought for interpreting the Qurʾān. The next section examines briefly a wide cross-section of exegetical works developed in a number of Islamic theological and legal Schools. The purpose is to provide a collated reference for further scholarly research in this area.

Overview of the main classical and modern exegetical works

The evolution of the hermeneutic works has been commensurate with the evolution of the schools of thought in Islām from the earliest time until now. As elaborated in the preceding section, the protracted arguments and counter-arguments among the scholars, on the chains of transmission, have been made at the cost of credible research on the contents and texts of the hadīths. Exegetical hadīths have generally been spared from the criticism directed at the isnād of legal hadīths.84 The present research is conducted with no deliberation on the technicalities of the chain of narrations. Hadīths relevant to the defined subject of the thesis are cited to assist in the inquiry.

The tutors of the Qurʾān, appointed by the Prophet were ‘Abdullah Ibn ‘Abbās, ‘Abdullah Ibn Mas‘ūd, ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalib and Ubay Ibn Ka'b.85 They were also the scribes appointed by the Prophet to commit the verses in writing, as and when they were revealed. Ibn ‘Abbās, known by the title, tarjumān al-Qurʾān (interpreter of the Qurʾān) said: “What I took from the interpretation of the Qurʾān is from ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalib”. Ibn Mas‘ūd testified that ‘Alī knew the outward and the inward meaning of the Qurʾān.86 ‘Alī “also known for his piety, his profound knowledge of the Qurʾān and the sunna... he figures prominently in several esoteric traditions in Islām including Şūfism.”87

83 These are al-Kāfi of Muḥammad bin Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/940-1), al-Istibdār and Tahdīhib al-ashkām of Muḥammad bin al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) and Man lā yahduruhū al-faqīh of Ibn Bābūya al-Qummī, known as Shaykh Ṣadūq (d. 381/991-2).
84 Haykal, 50.
87 McAuliffe, EQ, 1:62.
In his brief but lucid survey, Surty mentions the name of the exegesis of al-Ṭabarî as Ḫāmi' al-Bayān fi Taṣfīr al-Qurʾān (sic). The title of this exegesis is Ḫāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wil Ayāt al-Qurʾān (The Gathering of the Explanation of the [inner] Interpretation of the Verses of the Qurʾān).  

Al-Ṭabarî selected 38,397 hadiths, including those with multiple transmitters. He also wrote detailed historical chronicles. The significant feature of his exegesis is that he frequently quoted Isrāʾ ʿilāyāʾ (Biblical stories), for which he was criticised by another major traditional exegete, Ibn Kathîr, some four centuries later. But the work earlier than the third century exegesis of al-Ṭabarî is rarely mentioned - taṣfīr of Abî l-Jârîd (d. after 140/757-758) was contributed by the Shiʿâ Zaidî School. Though al-Ṭabarî’s work was deeply rooted in traditional modes, he took the liberty of expressing his opinion and of evaluating and analysing certain traditions critically. From the statements in which he assessed his own work, it is obvious that he failed to visualise the rapid pace at which Islamic thought and Qurʾānic sciences were to develop. He wrote: “It [his exegesis] is so comprehensive that with it there is no need to have recourse to other books” (!)

Sahl al-Tūṣṭārî (d. 283/896) presented his exegesis Taṣfīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzîm (Exegesis of the Great Qurʾān) in Ṣūfî outlook of kashf (illumination) through meditation. The Ṣûfîs maintain that it is not possible to understand the meaning of the entire Qurʾān, the complete knowledge of which is with God alone. One has to reach the level of ʿirfān (gnosis), to be enlightened with the esoteric meaning of the Qurʾān. A central theme that revolves around Ṣûfî interpretation is that God communicates with his awliyāʾ (chosen servants), in accordance with the purity of their souls.

Apart from al-Tūṣṭārî, two more Ṣûfî commentaries represent different aspects of Ṣûfî teachings. The work of al-Qummî al-Nîṣâbûrî (d. 728/1327), though based on the works of Zamakhsharî and al-Râzî (see Chapter 1), depicts popular Ṣûfî piety. Muhy-al-Dîn

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88 ER, XIV:236.
89 Berg, 2.
90 The term was first used by Ibn Taymiyyah in the context of exegesis. See EI 2, X:85.
91 Ayoub, 3.
92 Ibid. 4, quoting al-Ṭabarî, 1:6-7.
93 Surty, op. cit., 53.
Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240) makes no secret of his theme which is deeply rooted in the esoteric approach. Rippin writes that this exegesis is wrongly attributed to Ibn 'Arabī. It was written by his student 'Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 731/1330).

The exegesis of al-Jassās (d. 370/981) is based on the jurisprudence of al-Nu‘mān Ibn Thābit, known as Abū Ḥanīfā (d. 150/c.767), often in conflict both with the Shafi‘ī School and the “corrupt political system of the Umayyāds and the ‘Abbāsids.”

Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhshari (d. 538/1143) produced a major exegesis called al-Kashshaf ‘an Ḥaqā‘iq Ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl (The Unveiler of the Realities of the Secrets of the Revelation). His work is perhaps the most profound contribution of the Mu‘tazilī School of the rationalists. He supported the majāżī (metaphorical) interpretation of certain verses.

Abū ‘Alī al-Ṭabarṣī (d. 548/1153) wrote a voluminous Shi‘ī exegesis of the Ja‘farī School in the classical period, called Majma‘ al-Bayān fi Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān (Collection of Explanation in Exegesis of the Qur‘ān). He was the disciple of Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067), the author of one of the oldest Shi‘ī exegesis called al-Tībīyān fi tafsīr al-Qur‘ān (The Illustration in the Exegesis of the Qur‘ān); but Tafsīr al-‘Ayyāshī (d. ca 320/932) is perhaps the oldest among those contributed by the Ja‘farī School.

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) wrote Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb (The Keys of the Unknown) from philosophical and metaphysical perspective. He refuted the Mu‘tazilī position and defended the theory of predestination. Al-Rāzī believed that nothing in the Qur‘ān was in conflict with scientific progress. His discourse was so loaded with complex arguments that it was claimed that his exegesis contains everything except exegesis!

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94 Ibid. 63. This date complies with Freeman-Grenville conversion tables, which means 628/1240 in EI 3, X:87 is incorrect.
95 Ayoub, 6.
96 ER, XIV:242 and EI 3, X:87.
97 Suryi, op. cit., 54.
98 ER, XIV:240.
99 Suryi, op. cit., 55.
100 Ayoub, 6. Also see the comprehensive sites on the web on exegeses: http://www.altafsir.com/Tafsir.asp and http://www.quran.org.uk/.
101 Ayoub, 5, quoting al-Suyūṭī, II:191.
Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1273) presented his commentary from the viewpoint of Mālikī jurisprudence. Abū Ḥayyān (d. 775/1373) named his exegesis al-Bahṛ al-Muḥīt (The Surrounding Sea). It represents nahlī (grammatical and morphological) exposition. Al-Baydāwī (d. 691/1291) in his Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Ta’wil (Lights of the Revelation and Secrets of the Interpretation) combined the exegesis of Zamakhshārī and al-Rāzī, avoiding all controversial matters.

Concise commentary, popularly used, is Tafsīr al-Jalālayn (Exegesis of the Two Glories) derived from the name of its authors – Jalāl al-Dīn al-Mahdallī (d. 791/1388) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). Surty's survey also includes the work of Sayyid Maḥmūd Afandī Alūsī (d. 1270/1854) called Rūh al-Maʿānī fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAzīm wa al-sabʿ al-Mathānī (The Soul of Meanings in Exegesis of the Great Qurʾān and Seven of the Oft-repeated Verses).

The reformer Muḥammad ʿAbdū (d. 1323/1905) believed that the Qurʾān should be regarded as a book of guidance and not a debating platform for various interpreters. His incomplete exegesis was partly completed by his student Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1354/1935) under the title Tafsīr al-Manār (The Illuminating Exegesis). Ṭanṭāwī Jawharī (d. 1358/1940) produced a twenty-six volume work called al-Jawāhir fi tafsīr al-Qurʾān (The Jewels in the Interpretation of the Qurʾān) identifying the inimitability of the Qurʾān from philological and natural sciences.

Major Urdu interpretations are Tarjumān al-Qurʾān (The Translation of the Qurʾān) of Abū al-Kalām Āzād (d. 1379/1959) and Tafhim al-Qurʾān (Understanding the Qurʾān) of Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979). A voluminous Urdu exegesis from the perspective of Shiʿī Jaʿfari Schools is the translated work from Persian called Tafsīr-e-Namūnā (The Model Exegesis) by the present-day scholar, Nasser Makārim Shirāzī, who co-authored the work with other scholars in Iran.

A widely used major Shiʿī exegesis of al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabaʾī (d. 1402/1981) called al-Mizān fi Tafsīr al-Qurʾān (The Balance in the Exegesis of the Qurʾān) of Abū al-Kalām Āzād (d. 1379/1959) and Tafhim al-Qurʾān (Understanding the Qurʾān) of Abū al-Aʿlā Mawdūdī (d. 1400/1979). A voluminous Urdu exegesis from the perspective of Shiʿī Jaʿfari Schools is the translated work from Persian called Tafsīr-e-Namūnā (The Model Exegesis) by the present-day scholar, Nasser Makārim Shirāzī, who co-authored the work with other scholars in Iran.

\[102\] Ayoub, 4-5.
\[103\] Surty, op. cit., 56-7, and ER, XIV:240.
\[104\] EI 2, 1:425 and ER, XIV:240.
\[105\] ER, XIV:243.
Qur'an) comprises 20 volumes (partly translated into English). It is based on the traditions of the Prophet and of the twelve Imams, whose spiritual leadership was foretold by the Prophet, according to the faith of the Twelver Shi'is. A brief English commentary with notes by Mir Ahmed Ali under the guidance of Mehdi Mirzä Pooya was first published in 1964 in Pakistan.

A detailed commentary in English by a group of Muslim scholars, called An Enlightening Commentary into the Light of the Holy Qur'an is currently in progress in Iran and is being published in stages, starting from 1994. A fourteen-volume thematic commentary by Ja'far Subhānī, one of the most prominent present scholars in Qum and the author of 200 books, is published in Arabic and Persian. It is called Manshūr-e-Jāwīd-e-Qur'an (The Everlasting Charter of the Qur'an) and Mafāhimul Qur'an (The Understandings of the Qur'an) which is partly published. The benefit of the thematic exegesis, as mentioned, becomes manifest when verses are brought together by subject, showing their contextual harmony.  

A comprehensive reference work such as the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* is expected to be updated with the entries on major voluminous hermeneutical studies, already in publication. One would have expected to see fair amount of coverage to some of the major classical and modern works including: (i) *Al-Burhān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (The Proofs in the Exegesis of the Qur’an) of Ḥāshim al-Baḥrānī (d. 1107/1696); (ii) *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Exegesis of the Honourable Qur'an) of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shirāzī (Mullā Ṣadrā) (d. 1050/1640) who represents “nine hundred years of Islāmic philosophical thought and the final synthesis of various schools of Islāmic philosophy and theology”107; (iii) *Tafsīr al-Sāfi (The Pure Exegesis)* of Mullā Muḥṣin al-Faḍl Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680); (iv) *Mawahib al-Rahmānī fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* (Gift of the Most Compassionate in the Exegesis of the Qur'an) of ‘Abdul Aʿlā al-Sabzwārī (d. 1414/1994); (v) *Nūr al-Thaqālān* (Light of the two weights) as well as (vi) *Tafsīr al-Kāshīf (The Revealing Exegesis)* of Muhammad Jawād Mughneyah (d. 1400/1980), a popular writer of the 20th century, who has to his credit a wide range of exegetical, literary and comparative jurisprudential works.

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106 Subhānī, 35-36 & 40.
107 Nasr (1994), 82-83.
Constraints facing the translators and interpreters

Even with the best of intentions, experts well versed in Oriental languages may face constraints. The Qurʾān is closely affiliated with the events of the Prophet’s life, the history of past nations and eschatology, which is ingrained in the Islamic faith. If an interpreter eschews these realities, his linguistic expertise may not be adequate to present the Qurʾānic study fairly and adequately.

To illustrate this point from another angle, although Arberry was proficient in Arabic and Persian, he had no first hand knowledge of Urdu. Despite this limitation he went ahead in translating the works of the renowned poet and philosopher Sir Muḥammad Ḥasīn Iqbal (d. 1357/1938) from Urdu into English, by relying on his Urdu speaking friends. Consequently, he failed to convey the spiritual and historical implications in Iqbal’s poetry. Iqbal himself was comfortable in writing his philosophical discourses (but not his poetry) in English, due to his training in the West. Khushwant Singh, an expert in Urdu language and culture, stepped in to fill the deficiency left by Arberry’s translation. It is difficult to convey the underlying message contained in the original language of the poetry or prose into the translated work, especially, “when it comes to translating Oriental verse into a European language.”

It may be concluded that the sagacity of the Qurʾānic Arabic, which is neither prose nor poetry and which acted as the principal challenge to the eloquence and oratory of the Arabs, has to be understood in the context of Islamic pedagogy. Hence, the predicament of the translators and interpreters is two-fold: (i) to be versed with the Arabic of the Qurʾān and (ii) to be familiar with the epoch, the ethos and the universality of the Qurʾān’s Message.

The Exegetes - Ibn Kathīr and Sayyid Qūṭb

For the purpose of this research the complete exegetical works of Ibn Kathīr and Sayyid Qūṭb are used as primary sources. Their methodologies and a brief biography are examined. The variety of the Qurʾānic literature is a positive and constructive sign in

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108 Singh, 15.
the evolution and renaissance of Islamic knowledge, commensurate with the
development of scientific knowledge. The present researcher believes that knowledge is
a common heritage of mankind because it is the greatest blessing, bounty and gift of
God to His creatures.

Both Ibn Kathir and Sayyid Qutb were acquainted with the linguistic style of the
Qur'ān. Ibn Kathir also specialised in hadith and jurisprudence. He studied in Damascus
under Taqiyy al-Dīn Ahmad Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) and under the historian al-
Dhahabī (d. 748/1348). The former’s al-Muqaddimāt fi usūl al-tafsīr (The Introduction
to the principles of exegesis) was accessible to him.109 He used to issue fatwās (religious
edicts) and held several official posts; and throughout his career, he was closely
associated with the ruling elites.110

Ibn Kathir identifies four steps to interpret the Qur'ān. His methodology is based on
interpreting ‘the Qur'ān from the Qur'ān’. This implies that there has to be a wholesome
rather than piecemeal comprehension of the Qur'ān. If anything remains unclear, then
the second step is to refer to the traditions of the Prophet. He argues that the Sunnah was
revealed like the Qur'ān but only through inspiration, not through the medium of the
Archangel Gabriel. If anything remains obscure, then the third step is to refer to the
Companions. The fourth step is to refer to the next generation after the Companions. He
asserts that the Companions had “complete understanding, sound knowledge and
righteous action”.111 Such generalisation cannot withstand the scrutiny of historic
evidence and differences in juristic views.

The founder of Mālikī School attached prime importance to the law, traditions and
practices by ijmāʿ (consensus) of the Sunnah prevalent in Madīnah.112 He did not give
precedence to the close Companions living in other territories. Ibn Kathir too gives
accreditation to the four Caliphs and to Ibn Mas‘ūd and Ibn ‘Abbās, without any
reservation. Yet it is well-documented in history that differences arose between Abū
Bakr Ibn Abī Ḥaḍīfa (caliphate 11/632 – 13/634) and ‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (caliphate
13/634 – 23/644) and between the three Caliphs and ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalib (caliphate

109 EI ², X:87.
110 For his biographical data and the positions he held, see EI ², III:817-8.
111 ‘IK, 1:7-8.
112 Siddiqi, 8.
35/656 – 40/661) on matters of interpretation and legal judgements. The dispute that surfaced between ‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān (caliphate 23/644 – 35/656) and Ibn Mas‘ūd, warranted the latter’s arrest to dispossess him of his copy of the Qur’ānic script\textsuperscript{113} as the Caliph sought to standardise it.

When the Prophet used to recite the revealed verses in the presence of Gabriel, Ibn Mas‘ūd was present, and the Prophet praised his recitation of the Qur’ān as “authentic”.\textsuperscript{114} He was among the earliest protagonist who risked his life by reciting it in public in a hostile environment.\textsuperscript{115} As regards the Qur’ān in its present format, Sayyid Qūb, quoting Bukhārī and Tirmidhī, writes that its arrangement was “Divinely fixed” under the direct surveillance of the Prophet,\textsuperscript{116} who also supervised the placement of āyāt (verses)\textsuperscript{117} in different sūwar (chapters)\textsuperscript{118}. This signifies, according to these sources, that the Qur’ān had been committed in writing before the Prophet’s death. Therefore, the variation between the copy that was standardised throughout the State and the copy that was in the possession of Ibn Mas‘ūd pertained to differences in reading style and not difference in text.

It is said that Ibn Kathīr was known for his precision\textsuperscript{119} and the authenticity of the narrators.\textsuperscript{120} Nevertheless, modern scholars in Saudi Arabia have identified certain chains of narrations in his exegesis whose authenticity, they argue, is doubtful according to their criterion of verification\textsuperscript{121} (but not according to Ibn Kathīr). This demonstrates that Islamic knowledge and law is in a state of evolution and it cannot be considered as static.

In sharp contrast to Ibn Kathīr, Qūb\textsuperscript{122} never held high profile official positions. He worked for Ministry of Education in Egypt for 19 years. He was a well-known leader of Ikhwān al-Muslimīn (Muslim Brotherhood) movement, whose founder leader was

\textsuperscript{113} Vadet, J. C. “Ibn Mas‘ūd”, \textit{EI} 2, III:874.
\textsuperscript{114} Ayoub, quoting \textit{Tabaqāt Ibn Sa‘ād}, II:342.
\textsuperscript{115} Vadet, \textit{EI} 2, III:873.
\textsuperscript{116} SQ, I:9-10.
\textsuperscript{117} Sing. āyāt
\textsuperscript{118} Sing. sūrā
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{IK}, I:22.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. 23
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid. 19-20.
\textsuperscript{122} Full name, Sayyid Qūb Ibrāhīm Ḥusayn Shādhillī.
Hasan al-Banna (d. 1367/1949). The latter had mobilised the masses from coffee houses. In a short period, this movement grew all over the Muslim world. Quṭb served long prison sentences and was persecuted because of his ideological differences with the military rulers. He became a popular literary writer, journalist and outspoken critic of the Egyptian regime.

Due to Quṭb's passionate commitment to the absolute need for enforcement of the Shari'ah, his beliefs have been subjected to scrutiny. He is known for introducing the notorious Jahili theory (that all modern nation-states, not implementing Islām in totality, are emulating the pre-Islāmic era of Ignorance) which prominently features throughout his work. Western, Communist and Muslim societies which did not practise Islām in totality were to be reprehended. "...The nature of Jahili societies is such that they cannot be replaced without violence... [this] has inspired many militants since his death." His writings reflect an acute anxiety about the social, economic and political corruption that had plagued the Muslim world in the 20th century. Accused of treason, he was executed on 29 August 1966. However, his legacy lives on in his widely read books. (See Chapter 2).

Summary

This introduction has three main purposes: to identify the primary and secondary aims of the thesis, to highlight the significance of the two chosen exegetes, whose works are scrutinised in this research, and to examine some key debates about the Qur'ānic interpretation. In particular, the introduction has discussed some primary sources used in the research, and has indicated the constraints imposed by hermeneutic study. Three interpretative frameworks - traditional, informed opinion and allegorical - have been examined, together with related concepts affecting them. Finally, the ongoing debate on the role of the hadiths has also been analysed.

123 For his biographical data, see EI 7, IX:117-118.
124 E.g. see Robert Irwin, "Is this the man who inspired bin Laden", http://www.guardian.co.uk/g2/story/0,3604,584478,00.html, 1 November 2001. In sharp contrast, see the entry, "Sayyid Quṭb", in Encyclopaedia of the Orient: "Quṭb was all his life the believer in conservative Islamic values, but it was his experiences in the USA that formed the ideology that he is now remembered for...” http://lexicorient.com/e.o/quṭb_s.htm.
125 McAuliffe, EQ, I:39.
126 ER, XIV:242 incorrectly gives his date of death as 1959.
In what follows, Chapters 1 - 4 will look at the paradigms of 'self', 'human nature' and \( \text{fitrah} \) in the Islāmic thought and in the ontological and hermeneutic works. The concept of \( \text{fitrah} \) is further analysed in Chapter 5 in the context of the examination of other human dispositions. Chapter 6 considers the enigmatic interpretations of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions, identifying the areas which are causing division in the Muslim community. The negative consequences of this division are discussed in Chapter 7. The argument here is that groups within the Muslim community – violent extremist groups – are acting in gross violation of Islāmic values and Islāmic concept of human dignity in a manner which distorts the \( \text{fitrah} \) on which the human nature was created. The next chapter analyses the central ideas of the 'self', 'spirit' and 'natural disposition' of human entity in the Islāmic thought.
CHAPTER ONE

PARADIGMS OF NAFS ('SELF' OR 'SOUL')
AND FITRAH ('NATURAL DISPOSITION')

Introduction

With conception of debates about the interpretation of the Qurʾān, as examined in the Introduction to the thesis, this chapter explores the literary and Qurʾānic usage of the key terms nafs, ruḥ, and fitrah. It examines the viewpoints of the mystics, theologians, philosophers and rationalists on the propensities and faculties of the soul and highlights the issues of free-will.

Al-Rāzī defines the soul as an indivisible single entity of “seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching...characterised with having imagination, thinking, remembering, administration of the body and maintaining its welfare.” To avoid confusing ‘soul’ with ‘spirit’, he writes: “The essence of the soul is a substance different from the soul [nafs]...” The soul is the driving force, inducing each part of the body to perform its function. “The first object to be connected with the soul is the spirit [ruḥ].” The identity of the soul is constant, whereas there is a continuous change in the physique and its components. Hence, that which is reduced from the substance of the body has to be substituted. Al-Rāzī states that the disposition of human soul differs in nobility and meanness, sanctity and debasement. “Some are kind and tender and some despotic and dominating; some do not like the body and some desire to rule...”

Paradigms of the ‘soul’

The hermeneutic study of the Qurʾānic text inevitably involves defining the terms relevant to the research. Evidently, the linguists and exegetes attach different meanings to the same terms. Moreover, meanings change over time and in different contexts. The

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1 Maʿṣūmī, (1985), 90.
2 Ibid. 92.
3 Ibid. 127.
4 Ibid. 97.
5 Ibid. 85.
noun nafs (plural anfus, multiple nufūs) is interpreted as self, soul, spirit, vital principle. The concept of rūḥ differs from nafs. Grammatically, the masculine gender is used for rūḥ and the feminine for nafs. In the Qur’anic Arabic and post-Qur’ān literature, the meaning of nafs is interchanged with rūḥ, but the perception of rūḥ is never interchanged with nafs. Rūḥ has no plural in the Qur’ān. But its plural (arwāḥ) has been used in the hadīths and in Arabic language. Rūḥ also refers to the Divine prerogative. The Qur’ān refers to the Archangel Gabriel as rūḥ-ul-Amīn — the trusted Spirit (Q.26:193). Nafs means intellect, reason, power of expression, whereas rūḥ means the essence of life. Nafs leaves the body when a person sleeps, but rūḥ departs only on death (Q.39:42). “…Rūḥ is not called Nafs except when it joins the body and is affected by it” (IK:VI:78).

In verses Q.16:2, Q.40:15 and Q.43:52, rūḥ refers to the Revelation of or by God’s Command (IK:V:430-431). The Qur’ān addresses the Prophet: “They will ask you concerning rūḥ. Say: Rūḥ is by command of my Lord, and you have been given of knowledge nothing but a little” (Q.17:85). The term Rūḥ-ul-Qudus (the holy Spirit) used in verse Q.16:102, refers to Gabriel.

The term ‘Spirit’ has limited usage. The Qur’ān gives the background. Mary being blessed with the purity of mind, heart and soul, was given tidings that she would bear Jesus whose conception and birth were miraculous. His birth manifested one of the greatest mysteries of the power of God (SQ:II:85). He spoke in the cradle, testifying to the chastity of Mary (Q.3:46) - the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur’ān. Jesus was given the power of miracles to testify to the truthfulness of his Message, and was granted the support of “the holy Spirit” (Q.5:110). But in the words of Jesus, only God “knows all that lies beyond the reach of human perception” (Q.5:116).

A similarity is depicted between the birth of Jesus and that of Adam, who was created without a mother and a father (Q.3:61). Verse Q.19:21 describes Mary’s awe when God’s messenger brought the news that her son was to become “a sign for mankind and an act of grace” from God. The angel who spoke to her is referred as “the Spirit”. The same term is used in verses Q.19:17 and Q.66:12. In the first verse, it refers to Gabriel.

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6 Lane, VIII:2827.
who came to Mary. In the second verse, it refers to the blowing of the Divine Spirit into Mary as it was blown into Adam to give him and his progeny human characteristic (SQ: XI:338-339). The Divine Command of ‘Be’ and it becomes, is another mystery in the realm of creation (SQ: II:100) and cannot be understood in material terms.

Every human has nafsul ‘aql, the mind, and al-nafsu’l natiq, the communicative self. The latter is also termed nafsul tamyeex, the distinguishing self, which performs dual function of commanding and forbidding, and distinguishing between good and evil. Nafsul hayah, soul of life, breaks its link with the body when it stops breathing. In lexical usage, God is not portrayed as nafs or soul or even Spirit. But in humans, the existence and functionalities of nafs and rugh, though invisible, are crystallised. Their introvert and extrovert influences on human action have been the subject of hermeneutical discourses.

The distinction between nafs and rugh is demonstrated by the Qur'an: “And I have blown unto him [Adam] rugh (my spirit)” (Q.15:29 and Q.38:72). In this context, nafs is not used in lieu of rugh. In the dialogue with God, Jesus says: “You know what is in nafs (my ‘self’) and I know not what is in Yourself” (Q.5:116). In this context, rugh is not used instead of nafs. Here ‘self’ means essence including hidden knowledge. This is illustrated in the same verse where Jesus refers to God as “ ‘Allamul ghuyub” — “Knower of the hidden things”. Nafs is interpreted differently in metaphorical, idiomatic and figurative speech but rugh is not. From the concept of nafs has evolved a technical term, ‘Ilm al-nafs (knowledge of the self).

Closely allied to nafs and rugh is the noun fitrah (explored in Chapter 5), denoting ‘creation’. It signifies the natural formation of the foetus in the womb. The tradition of the Prophet explains it in terms of the natural inborn propensity to know God. It signifies the Divine act of moulding the human condition, distinct from external factors. Another usage is al-imamul fitriyy – the faith to which one is naturally orientated. Fatir is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. In this research, fitrah indicates the natural and inherent disposition of ‘humankind’, called insiyy or insan. This is to be

7 El, VII:880-881.
8 Lane, VIII:2829.
9 from the verb fa!arah, meaning to create, to originate, to split open.
10 Lane, VI: 2417.
distinguished from ‘humanity’ (*insāniyyah*).\(^{11}\) The noun *ins* or *insān* is a short form for the ancient Arabic term *onaysiyān*. Ibn ‘Abbās narrated that the name *insān*, human being, is derived from *nisyān* – forgetfulness.\(^{12}\) This indicates that forgetfulness is an innate part of human nature.

The Qur’ān divides the ‘self’ into three categories, each identified in separate verses. The first verse appears in the story of Yūsuf (Joseph): “And I free not myself (from the blame). Verily the self is inclined to evil, except when my Lord bestows His mercy (upon whom He wills). Verily my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful” (Q.12:53). The scene is set when the wife of ‘Azīz, the Minister, confessed that although she seduced Yūsuf to commit adultery, the act never occurred. Yūsuf was able to overcome his desire through self-control. Though there was a lapse in carnal desire on her part, she sought forgiveness, pleading that this was due to a weakness in human feelings. If left unchecked, the ‘self’ is susceptible to evil inclinations, and it would have led the wife of ‘Azīz to betray her husband (IK:V:177-8). This confession was made in the absence of Yūsuf and it paved way for his release from captivity. Out of modesty, Yūsuf refrained from exposing the wife of ‘Azīz and preferred instead to suffer in captivity (SQT:IV:2004). He wanted the truth to come out through the king’s inquiry. The moral drawn is that, treachery is one of the pollutants of ‘self’. Hence, the function of *al-naft al-ammarah bi’l sū*, the evil-inclining self, is illustrated in this story.

The second type of ‘self’ is mentioned in the verse: “And nay! I swear by *al-naf-al-lawwāmah*” (Q.75:2). This is called the critical or self-blaming ‘self’. Every believer is engaged in this type of criticism as regards what he says and eats. But this type of ‘pricking of conscience’ is subdued in sinners, who are not bothered that they might have missed the opportunity of enhancing their virtues (IK:X:262-3). The sinner who is adamant about his (or her) transgression, not only weakens his ‘self’ but also his faith. The chance of attaining purity of self is strong in the person who is able to save himself from a sinful life when he remembers death and the Day of Resurrection and its grim consequences (SQT:VI:3766). There is nobody among the dwellers of heavens and earth, who would not blame themselves in considering good (how much they have failed to do) and evil (how much they have committed) (SQT:VI:3768).

\(^{11}\) Lane, I:115.

\(^{12}\) Ibn al-Manzūr, VI:11-12.
The third type is *al-nafs-al-mutma'innah*, the contented self. This type is revealed through the verse. “O tranquil soul! Come back to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing! Enter then among My servants, and enter My Paradise” (Q.89:27). Through self-restraint and hard endeavour, this third type reaches the apex of truth. It is pleased with itself and it gains reciprocity in God’s pleasure (J.K.X:480). The rewards awaiting it on the Day of Judgement are the eternal bounties, which are reserved for those who are in close proximity with God, in the sense of spiritual elevation. They are triumphant in attaining eternal bliss because they choose the path of God with confidence and contentment, in adversity and happiness and in poverty and abundance (SQ:T:VI:3907).

It may be concluded that when man commits an evil act, he is under the influence of his lower self or *al-nafs-al-ammiirah*. When he feels guilty and resorts to repenting, he is motivated by *al-nafs-al-lawwâmah*. When he devotes himself selflessly for the good of others and feels peaceful, he qualifies as *al-nafs-al-mutma'innah*.

**The outlook of the Sûfs (mystics) on nafs, rûh and fitrah**

The classical exegete Tustarî presents the Sûfi view that ‘self-consciousness’ of humans has its origin in the primordial covenant that humankind entered into with God, by responding to His Divine Lordship, *rubûbiyyah* (Q.7:172). Quṭb presents a graphical description of this primordial state, when “small atoms in the hand of the Great Creator” were assembled as “countless cells”. As rational beings, these cells were capable of making pledges, even before they appeared in the visible world, for each tiny cell represented a “potential life” (SQ:VI:264). Today’s science, Quṭb argues, affirms that genes record every human quality or characteristic from the time when they lie in the bodies of their ancestors (SQ:VI:265).

Conscious submission to God is achieved through the faculties of ‘*aql* (mind or intellect) and *irâdah* (free-will). Submission under the pre-existential conditions, empowered with intellect, is unwilled. A tumultuous earthly life is the result of permitting inner desires and instincts to serve ends other than God. The Qur’ân condemns this disposition: “Have you seen him who takes his own desires for his God

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14 Ibid. 14.
[?] Could you be a guardian of affairs for him [?]” (Q.25:43). Then extending the enquiry to the society, the verse continues: “Or do you think that most of them listen or understand [?] They are only like cattle – No [!] They are worse astray on path” (Q.25:44). Notably, a clear distinction is drawn between seeing and comprehending, and between hearing and listening. If the faculties of understanding and listening are alert, then man can progress spiritually.

In his *Cosmology of the Self* the approach of Haeri, the Ṣūfī Shaykh (educated in Europe and America), is to demonstrate the interaction between the spirituality and humanity. He speaks of transformation, essentially based on conquering the depths of knowledge within the self. Man can change the society only by first changing his ‘self’. The *Shari'ah* (Law) and *Haqiqah* (transcendent reality) can be discovered through “inner cosmos”. Naft includes an individual’s “genetic predisposition and naturally conditioned behaviour”. The word is derived from *nafs* (precious or valuable), *naffasa* (to achieve, to comfort), *tanaffasa* (to breathe).

The origin of *ruḥ* is in the “realm of non-time and non-space”. Although *ruḥ* originates in the unseen world, when it leaves the body, it is imprinted with the image of the body. *Ruḥ* bore witness to the Divine Lordship before the existence of time and space. Haeri states that “*ruḥ* spans the entire spectrum of existence – the seen as well as the unseen - *Nafs* is restricted to only that which may be experienced in the creational world.”

The existence of *nafs* is possible because of the *ruḥ* “which energises it”. When any calamity befalls an individual, he should investigate the reason – perhaps he might have fallen too much into “emotionalism” or he might have been building his expectations which might prove to be detrimental, if they are realised. The aim of transcendental journey is: (i) to develop the *fitrah* - original self and (ii) to explore the full potential of spirituality, culminating into *al-insān al-kāmil* - the perfect man. Haeri states that

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15 Haeri, 3.
16 Ibid. 57.
17 Ibid. 5.
18 Ibid. 38-39.
19 Ibid. 6.
20 Ibid. 55.
21 Ibid. 8.
the Prophet was the embodiment of fitrah in all its perfection. The fitrah can only achieve its full human potential if the relationship of 'abd (slave) to his Lord (ma'bud) is recognised. In this sense, the status of the slave is not derogatory, but it represents an honest confession that there is a Lord to whom belongs the entire human entity. The Divine programme began without the humans getting involved. The honour of 'ubūdiyyah - servitude or obedience to God – (derived from the root word 'abd) comes with a conscious acceptance that the Lord Who owns the humans, is the most loving in His Lordship.

The Sūfis use three interconnected terms in the context of developing the self: Tariqah - the path to create inner discipline; Shari'ah - the Law that links the individual to society; and Haqiqah - the phase where tranquillity and awareness is achieved after harmonising the inner reality with the outer law and guidance. Haqiqah is not subject to abrogation; while Shari'ah has changed from the times of Adam to Muḥammad.

Haeri writes that the ‘self’ is “the most important element in the cosmology of existence. It contains...the heart, the intellect, the drives and the witnesses...and within it is the far greater reality of the rūḥ”. The only way to defeat the self that misleads and deceives is to spend “time, energy and money in the way of Allāh”, in which case, triumph is achieved. Al-Nafs-al-ammārah – the selfish, egotistical self – is the one that has broken its link with fitrah. The intermediate phase of al-naf-al-lawwāmah – the blaming self – leads to al-nafs-al-mutma’innah – the inspired self. This last is the superior phase which prepares the soul for the final journey when it is freed from the captivity of the body.

Haeri asserts that nafs is related to nafas (breathing) – “inhaling and exhaling”. If the mechanism of alertness within the self is not recognised, then the realisation of what goes wrong in life, will come too late to be rectified. Based on the pioneering thoughts

22 Ibid. 34.
23 Ibid. 43.
24 Ibid. 10-11.
26 Haeri, 12.
27 Ibid. 13.
28 Ibid. 15.
29 Ibid. 16.
30 Ibid. 17-18.
of Miskawayah (d. 421/1030), Haeri goes on to sub-categorise the self as: (i) The Bestial Self. If this remains uncontrolled, it leads to indulgence which is the opposite of moderation and modesty. Its driving force is the power of attraction. (ii) The Predatory Self. This inculcates courage in all walks of life. Its driving force is the power of repulsion. (iii) The Rational Self. This is the one that takes heed from the Divine guidance and follows the path of wisdom and knowledge. The apex of all virtues is justice, which is attained by the amalgamation of wisdom, courage and modesty. In order to venture into the unseen, the faculty of ‘aql (intellect) has to have a mentor, which is the qalb (heart). But if the heart remains sick, the faculty of reason cannot learn from past experiences, and cannot eradicate undesirable memories.

It may be concluded that the Qur’ān constantly invites mankind to think, ponder and reflect on the creation of God. In this way, if the faculties of the inner and the outer ‘self’ are utilised, then they can unlock many mysteries attached to human life. In the process, mankind has to be consciously aware of the Divine Power that guides and the Shaytān or Satan (literally means, the one cast away from the Mercy of God) that misguides. The first is the source of bliss for the soul and the second is the source of its doom. Therefore, the mystical practices are meant to assume a proximity to God through contemplation and remembrance of God, through His ninety-nine attributes. The next section examines the controversy that erupted among the jurists since the very first century of the Islāmic era on human actions.

**Conflict between the traditionalists and the rationalists**

Having analysed in the previous sections the concept of ‘self’ in the Qur’ān, the next most important concept is to determine the responsibility for human actions. In this section, the views of the traditionalists in contrast with those of the rationalists, on the subject of free-will, are assessed. These demarcations are vital in developing the knowledge of ‘self’ in Islāmic thought. The critical evaluation is based on providing evidences from the Qur’ān which speak profoundly that, (i) if the individual is guided, he only benefits himself; (ii) if he goes astray, he only harms himself and (iii) no one is

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31 Ibid. 19-20.
32 Ibid. 21.
responsible for the deeds of another (Q.17:15). The position of the traditionalists is critically analysed in the specific context of the Qur'ān’s pronouncements. 

The traditional precepts of Abū-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/935-6) are contrasted with the views of the School of Mu'tazilā (generally referred to as rationalists). Historically, in his dispute and subsequent segregation from his Mu'tazilite teacher, Abū ‘Alī al-Jubā'ī (d. 303/915) in Basra, al-Ash'arī pursued a premise which was in sharp contrast with the rationalists’ belief in freedom of human action. He adopted a rigid position that all good and evil is pre-determined by God, who creates all acts in human beings, giving them the power to perform good and bad deeds. To support his hypothesis he claimed that he was inspired by the vision of the Prophet. Later on, in another vision, the Prophet allegedly told him not to give up Kalām (dialectical discussion).

Since then, differences between the Ash'arite School and that of Mutakallimūn (rationalist dialecticians) - both Sunni denominations - have survived where Al-Ash'arī’s creed avoids any discussion regarding the nature of mankind. But the continuous scholarly inquiry since his times is a testimony to the fact that humanities, from the perspective of modern and Qur'ānic sciences, is at the hub of modern scholarship. One of the controversies that erupted was about the nature of the Qur'ān. “Although the Ash‘arī and traditionalist Sunni doctrine of the eternity of the Qur’ān has prevailed down to the present, some modernist Muslims [like Muḥammad ‘Abduh] have challenged the Ash‘arī denial of the Mu'tazilī doctrine of the createdness of the Qur’ān.”

Al-Ash'arī’s theological deduction of predestination can be contrasted with a hadith: “A man might be deprived of a provision (that was written or allocated for him) because of a sin that he commits; only supplication changes Al-Qadar (predestination); and only Birr (righteousness) can increase the life span” (IK:V:300). This tradition of the Prophet clearly indicates that God changes the living conditions and destiny of mankind if the stated steps are followed. In support of predestination, Ibn Kathīr, who followed the

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33 Kamali, (1997), 164.
34 EI², 1:694.
35 EI², VII:881.
36 McAuliffe, EQ, I:471.
Ash'arite School, tells a story about Ādam (Adam) meeting Mūsā (Moses) – when (?) he does not say. Moses charged Adam with making things difficult for mankind through his expulsion from Paradise. After making sure that he was the same Moses to whom the Torah was revealed Adam reminded him that it was “preordained” by God. As Moses confessed this fact, Ibn Kathīr states that Adam defeated him in argument (IK:VI:343).

The Qur'ān emphatically states that everything in existence has been given its form and nature and right guidance by God (Q.20:50). This was clarified to Fir'aun (Pharaoh) by Moses and his brother Hārūn (Aaron). But Pharaoh persisted in his denial and transgression. Ibn Kathīr explains what is meant by guiding every species aright. He writes that God “wrote the deeds, the appointed times of death and the provisions...and compelled the creatures to that which He wanted” (IK:VI:347-349). A critic is bound to question whether Pharaoh too was compelled in his rebellion and transgression against God for which, he and his troops were drowned in the sea as a Divine punishment. The theory of predestination is propounded rigidly by the Ash'arite School by interpreting certain verses in the Qur'ān literally. This had its impact on the life of the Muslim community and on its outlook on life, as identified by prominent scholars.

Ameer Ali discusses the cause of “mental lethargy” which survives to this day among many Muslims. He believes that the rigid theory of predestination barred the progress of Muslims and paralysed their “intellectual energy”. According to him, incorporated in the Ash'arite doctrine are certain maxims which have left negative effect on the Muslim perception of human life. Al-Ash'arī believed that every benefit and loss (good and bad) in human action originates from God’s Will, which can never change. God has the absolute power to destine the virtuous to hell and admit the vicious into heaven, and that would be in compliance with His absolute justice because God cannot be unjust. Al-Ash'arī further emphasised that “the dogmas of the Faith must be accepted by the orthodox, without questioning...” and scrutinising them was the “manifestation of the devil”. Consistent with the Ash'arite thought is Ibn Kathīr's claim that God alone “guides and misguides” (IK:I:90). However, there are many Qur'ānic verses which indicate that Satan’s whisperings and evil temptations misguide mankind.

37 Ibid. 442.
38 Ibid. 441.
Kamali\textsuperscript{39} writes that Caliph 'Umar asked a thief the reason for stealing and he replied, "it was God's Will". So the Caliph ordered an additional number of lashes to the thief's original punishment.\textsuperscript{40} He states: "The Ḥanbalites tax the Ash'arites with unbelief regarding the affirmation of God Most High 'being firmly seated on the throne...' The Ash'arites accuse the Mu'tazilah with unbelief claiming that the latter tax the Apostle with lying regarding the 'possibility of the ocular vision of God Most High'".\textsuperscript{41} This shows at least that the jurists are divided on this vital theological issue.

Additional point of conflict in the thought of the rationalists and the traditionalists was the question of Divine Being. Anthropomorphism, which means attributing corporal form to God, albeit different to humans, featured significantly in al-Ash'arī's teachings.\textsuperscript{42} These were embraced by the Ḥanbalī School, Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn 'Abdul-Wahhab. (See Chapter 6). The Mu'tazilā too had many flaws which contradicted the Qur'ān's explicit eschatological information. For instance, they believed that the resurrection will only be spiritual, whereas the Qur'ān speaks unambiguously in many verses about physical and spiritual resurrection.

The Qur'ānic verdict indicates that whoever does an "atom's weight of good", will be rewarded accordingly, and whoever does an "atom's weight of evil", will be punished accordingly (Q.99:7-8). The expression "atom's weight" in this verse suggests that no matter how infinitesimal the virtuous or evil deed may be, the performer will bear its consequences.\textsuperscript{43} The Qur'ānic verdict is expounded by the Prophet who said that God has prohibited injustice upon Himself and He dislikes men committing injustice against each other (\textit{IK}:IV:338-339). Verse Q.11:113 states: "And incline not towards those who oppress". Ibn 'Abbās interpreted the verse to mean that no compromise should be made with the wrongdoers. Even asking them for assistance should be avoided, lest it be taken as condoning their evil deeds (\textit{IK}:V:121-122).

It is noteworthy that by analysing the Qur'ānic verses, one can notice a clear trend of recurring warnings to humans to protect themselves from the Satanic temptations.

\textsuperscript{39} Professor of Law at the International Islāmic University in Malaysia.
\textsuperscript{40} Kamali, (1997), 194-195.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid. 220, quoting al-Ghazālī.
\textsuperscript{42} McAuliffe, \textit{EQ}, 1:443-444.
\textsuperscript{43} Yūsuf Alt, II:1772.
Injustice is unequivocally abhorred: “Allāh does not intend injustice for any of His creatures” (Q.3:108). One can trace 290 references in the Qur’ān referring to different forms of oppression, oppressors and oppressed. A range of verses stresses the fact that it was not God who oppressed, but they (humans) who oppressed (or wronged) themselves and that God is not at all unjust (Q.3:117, Q.8:51, Q.9:70, Q.29:40, Q.30:9, Q.41:46, Q.43:76). This demonstrates the extent to which oppression is despised by God.

The Shi‘ite perspective of the Ja‘fārī school of jurisprudence on the debate is presented in the discourse of Murtaḍā Muṭahhari⁴⁴ on Divine Justice, which focuses on the “problem of evil”, free-will and predestination. He argues that from the Qur’ānic angle, the issue of Divine Justice is unproblematic if it is accepted that God is the root-source of all good. But the controversy develops from a theological angle.⁴⁵ Evil exists not as a natural phenomenon or as an objective reality, but in a subjective relation to other things.⁴⁶ He outlines the Shi‘i belief of the Ja‘fārī School that man is neither totally free beyond the Divine Will, nor totally predestined and under compulsion. The reality remains between these two positions.⁴⁷

The theological debate primarily concerns man, and by inference, God and nature – has God left any room under the Divine destiny and Decree for man’s freedom of action?⁴⁸ The dispute between the Sunni Schools of Mu’tazilites and Ash‘arites divided the theologians. The former argued in favour of free-will and Divine Justice and the latter in favour of predestination. The Ash‘arites said that no obligation and standards can be set on God – “Whatever He does is just, not that He does what is just”. They believed that the Divine acts are the measures by which justice or injustice is known.

The Mu’tazilites retorted that justice is a reality per se. Whether viewed from God’s creative acts or His commandments, certain acts are just in essence like, rewarding the

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⁴⁴ He was Professor of Theology and Philosophy at University of Tehran and one of the most influential Islamic political thinkers in Iran. http://www.amazon.co.uk/Fundamentals-Islamic-Thought-Contemporary/dp/0933782152/ref=pd_rhf_p_1/203-8846763-7063965?ie=UTF8&qid=1179615374&sr=1-31 and https://people.creighton.edu/~agu10010/New_Folder/Ayatullah%20Murtaza%20Mutahhari.htm.
⁴⁵ Mutahhari, xii.
⁴⁶ Ibid. xiii.
⁴⁷ Ibid. xiv.
⁴⁸ Ibid. 6.
good-doers; and certain acts are unjust in essence like punishing the good-doers. Since God is perfect, wise and just (according to the Qur'ān), acts that are unjust in essence cannot emanate from Him.49

The Ash'arite position appealed to the public because they emphasised that reason is subservient to revelation. They came to be known as “people of the tradition”. The Mu'tazilites were not against traditions. But because they embarked on intellectualism, they were labelled as subjecting the tradition and revelation to human reason. Hence, they started losing the theological battle.50 The Mu'tazilites accused the Ash'arites of polytheism for distinguishing between the Divine essence and the Divine attributes like, knowledge and power. They claimed that such distinctions raised the possibility of many eternals, whereas, the Eternal can only be One.51

In concluding this section, it is self-contradictory to think that God compels His creatures to act in a certain way which He decrees to be most abhorrent. It is also noted that in a very simple verse, which does not justify philosophical or dialectical quagmire, the Qur'ān declares, “Allāh is never unjust in the least degree…” (Q.4:40). Hence, if man chooses out of his own free-will to be unjust, he invites the wrath of God upon himself. It does not befit the justice of God that He compels man to act unjustly and then excruciates him for being unjust.

The danger in the Ash'arite thought was that the sins of mankind and evil are predetermined. Even before a child sees the first ray of daylight on earth, it is already destined to go to Hell or Heaven. If the after-effects of good or bad deeds are divorced from justice, then the conclusion becomes too absurd to contemplate. This means that in present-day notorious prisons, both the torturers and the tortured are translating God's conflicting Will and justice!

In the next section, the impact of traditionalist doctrines are assessed with the aid of historical examples.

49 Ibid. 8.
50 Ibid. 10.
51 Ibid. 17.
The rulers and the Ash'arite thought

During the reign of al-Ma'mūn and his two immediate successors, the Mu'tazilite beliefs were adopted by the State. He persecuted and imprisoned the scholars who did not follow the Mu'tazilite thoughts. They maintained that the Qur'ān was created and hence, the Divine Laws were circumstantial. The Ash'arites maintained that the Qur'ān was uncreated and hence, the Divine Laws were eternal. They strongly believed that all human actions emanated from God's Will, and whatever the rulers did was according to God's Will. Al-Ash'ari had forbidden uprising against the Caliphs.

The violent situation in Baghdad was becoming an arena for rivalry between the rationalists and the traditionalists. Ameer Ali writes: "The pulpits began...to fire against the upholders of reason and the advocates of philosophy and science." Al-Mutawakkil (d. 247/861) reversed al-Ma'mūn's policies and adopted abrupt measures, dismissing the rationalists from all the organs of the State and from all the institutes of learning. The Caliphs were subsequently attracted to the Ash'arite School because, despite their injustice, their rule was protected under the letter of the law.

Al-Ḥakam (d. 206/822) the Umayyād Caliph of Cordova, boasted on his death-bed for killing his enemies' women and children and claimed that it was the will of the destiny (not his personal will). Lack of justice was the main contributory factor for the ultimate collapse of Caliphate from the Islamic world. Both the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites needed political patronage to popularise their thoughts. Eventually, a change of heart at the top of the pyramid enabled the Caliph to enforce his will through his hierarchical officials. The recalcitrant scholars were either killed or imprisoned and beaten up. Eventually, the rationalist School became extinct, according to Ameer Ali's sources.

Ibn Kathīr quotes an episode which shows that the jurists had been bending too much towards the ruling elites: "The Leader of the faithful is on a path that will remain straight even though the other paths are crooked". He strengthens his contention by...
quoting al-Ṭabarî: “There are many evidences to this fact” (IK:I:84). What he does not mention is that there are many historic evidences which expressly negate this claim. By issuing a clean bill of health to “the Leader of the faithful” – the title by which the Caliphs were known – a black page in Muslim history is ignored, where injunctions of the Shari‘ah were boldly breached by the dynastic Caliphs, who openly practised hedonism and nepotism.

Ibn Kathîr claims that the Arabs described the honest person as “straight” and the wicked person as “crooked” (IK:I:84). In ending this section, it may be added that much of turmoil in the life of the community would have been contained had the Muslim historians and jurists applied precisely this criterion to the Caliphs too, in accordance to their level of honesty. They should not have defined the path itself as “straight” or “crooked” depending on which side the Caliph happened to be. Consequently, the mischievous and opportunist rulers took undue advantage of this loophole and the system suffered from asphyxia failing to incorporate measures for the removal of Caliphs, who were submerged in corruption.

The next section discusses the thoughts of a multi-dimensional intellectual who took a pragmatic view of the causes behind the decline of the potency of the Muslim community after the glory it enjoyed once upon a time. He was perhaps the most renowned Muslim philosopher, poet, politician and rationalist, the Indian sub-continent has produced.

Sir Muḥammad Iqbal’s rational thoughts in conflict with the traditionalists

Muḥammad Iqbal’s rationalism, philosophy, unique poetry and educational discourses revolve around his understanding of the ‘self’. Al-Ash‘arî’s theology has an overwhelming influence on the Sunnî jurisprudential Schools. Iqbal’s thoughts have culminated into a discipline called Iqbalîyyît, the reverberations of which are felt among the Muslim reformists.

Iqbal’s dynamic and passionate discourses are elucidated in his concept of khudî (selfhood) or “super-ego”. A person maintaining self-respect is called khuddâr in Urdu. Iqbal believed that it is possible to change one’s fate through untiring struggle, will-
power and moral values for a better life on earth. The driving force should be selflessness and compassionate love for mankind, without the expectation of rewards. He quoted heroic deeds from Islamic history for boosting morale. He used the term faqr, poverty (from the noun faqir, beggar) which he considered to be the symbol of striving to earn a livelihood from hard work. In his view, those who earn their living without effort are worse than beggars. He denied predestination with the conviction that man is capable of changing his destiny, provided he has a just cause. “It is how we act that makes our lives...” Nurturing the ‘self’ brings meaning to life and changes fortunes, without it, he argues, nothing but disaster ensues. Unconventionally, he emphasised the importance of the heart which is the source of love, over the mind which is the source of reason, in helping the individuals realise their potential.

When Iqbal’s poetical masterpiece Shikwā (Complaint), (complaint against God, expressing anguish of Muslims) was published in Urdu, it created agitation among the traditionalist clerics, who accused him of being a disbeliever. The position was reversed when he published Jawāb-i-Shikwā (Answer to the Complaint). He focused on the role of man as vicegerent of God on earth (Q.2:30, Q.27:62). If man betrays this trust, then he can only expect catastrophes.

Iqbal’s thoughts and philosophy were based on the faith in tawḥīd, absolute Oneness of God. Professor Schimmel’s paper on Iqbal considers the relationship between his concept of Mard-i-Mu’min (Believing Man) and the German Philosopher Nietzsche’s godless “superman”. She argues that the two concepts are very different. Nor is there any similitude between his perception of Insān-i-Kāmil, (Ideal Man) to the one portrayed in the Sufi thought. Iqbal juxtaposed ‘ilm (science) and ‘ishq (love). “Science is the son of the Book, but love the Mother of the Book.” Equally poetic is his comparison between intellect and love – “Cunning intellect is from Satan, but love, is from Adam.” His Ideal Man is the one who completes God’s work on earth. His poetical couplets associate God’s creation of night with man’s production of lamps; God’s creation of forests and mountains with man’s production of gardens. These compliments, which many traditionalists find irreligious, are graphically expressed in

58 Singh, 19-20.
60 Ibid. 37.
his poetry. He distanced himself from the radical Sufi philosophy when he wrote: “In great action alone the self of man becomes united with God without losing its own identity”. 61

This was in contrast with the thoughts of Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi on Wahdat-al-Wujūd (Unity of Being or Existence) where everything is subsumed in God. He wrote that the ‘Real’ reveals itself only when human ego-self passes away. Significantly, Ibn ‘Arabi’s works (over 200) are banned in Saudi Arabia. 62 Apart from Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Kathīr and other scholars who passed the fatwahs against Ibn ‘Arabi, one of the radical clerics ‘Alā al-Dīn al-Bukhārī al-Ḥanāfi declared that whoever does not consider him a kāfir is himself a kāfir! 63 Iqbal’s Urdu poems echoed the trauma of the Muslims of the subcontinent, where Iqbal campaigned against colonial rule and attempted to inculcate the fervour of Islamic consciousness in the populace. He expressed his dismay with the traditional clerics, whom he held responsible for the decline of Muslim power. His untiring efforts for unity reflected his conviction that Muslims had a universal message for mankind.

Iqbal campaigned for reformation of the Muslim community. This was reflected in Iqbal’s poetry: “Raise your ‘self’ to the extent, that before every turn of fate, God Himself asks His servant, ‘Tell me, what is your pleasure (or satisfaction)?’” 64 In the context, Al-Rāzī’s thought indicates that by “training and caution they (people) may change their manners and habits”, which is realistic. But al-Rāzī’s statement that “they (the souls) never deviate from their nature and disposition” 65 expresses rigidity.

The theme of Iqbal’s Persian poem Javid-Nama, which he wrote in the name of his son, focuses on the “everlasting conflict of the soul”. It portrays inner struggle to free oneself from the burden of sin in order to gain tranquillity. 66 The work is an expedition of a spiritual journey, where the poet crosses the layers of space and enters the celestial

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61 Ibid. 30.
62 Sells, Michael, A. “Ibn ‘Arabi”, in McGreal (Ed.).
65 Singh’s translation of the couplet has been modified.
world to reach the “presence of God”. His guide on this imaginative journey is the mystic Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273). Iqbal identifies three conditions – ‘life’, ‘death’ or ‘death-in-life’. The dilemma is how each person should determine his own position. The solution he proposes is that individuals should develop abilities to see themselves in the mirror of their own consciousness, then in the mirror of another’s ego and then, in the light of God. The thematic expression of ‘self’ or ‘human ego’ in relation to the outer world is reflected in his poem Rumūz-e-Be Khudi (The Mysteries of Selflessness).

According to Iqbal, realisation of the full potential of ‘self’ and the raison d’être of humankind is two-fold – the internal and the external struggle. The first has to be aimed at purifying oneself from the impurities of evil deeds. The second has to be aimed at discharging humanitarian duties towards the society. When the person is successful in both, he is alive in the perception of the Qur’ān. When the person’s contribution is negative, his life is said to be burdensome to himself and others.

The negative contributions of individuals who do not learn from the experiences in life are depicted in the Qur’ān: “They have hearts, but understand not with them; they have eyes, but perceive not with them; they have ears, but hear not with them. They are like cattle; nay, rather they are further astray. Those - they are the heedless” (Q.7:179). If everything is predestined, then there is no point in taking heed from ordeals in life.

It may be concluded that there are many warnings in the Qur’ān that every individual should guard his actions, so that they are not injurious to others. When a person passes through the phase of death, over which he has no say, the after-effects of his deeds survive him. Therefore, he has to be vigilant to ensure that he does not leave a legacy of destructiveness. This Islamic moral can be comprehended in the context of what Iqbal visualised as weighing one’s actions from the viewpoints of other human beings and God. The inability to do so may render a person ‘dead’ although he may be eating, drinking, reproducing and sleeping as the animals do. Iqbal’s thoughts may be classified as moderate views of an accomplished scholar of the last century, who was proficient in both Western and Muslim philosophical thought.

67 Ibid. 12.
Now the nature of conflict is clear, it has to be understood in the context of the polarised views of the traditionalists and the Muslim philosophers of the classical period. The purpose is to demonstrate how the knowledge on ‘self’ has evolved.

Conflict between the philosophers and the traditionalists

This section introduces the thoughts of pioneering Muslim philosophers and argues that the principal cause of conflict lies in that the traditionalists mistrust the philosophers, and in particular, claim that they have borrowed ideas from the Western thoughts, alien to Islām. On this basis, the philosophers are accused of deviating from the pure teachings of Islām, notwithstanding the fact that they have produced a scholar like al-Rāzī, the famous exegete and interpreter of the Qur’ān.

Starting with the definitions, the generally held view about ‘philosophy’ is that it is a study of “deeply held beliefs about human beings, nature, society and God.”68 A standard definition of ‘psychology’ is that it is the study of the behaviour of human beings and animals. When the psychologists speak about ‘personality’, they refer to “the behavioural characteristics of a person...[which include] perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting.”69 Perception is the process of receiving information by means of senses on outside objects and events and re-arranging them into legible mental images.70

In this section, the main philosophical thoughts of Ibn Bājjah (d. 533/1138) and Fakhruddīn al-Rāzī are examined and analysed. Ma’ṣūmi, the commentator on their works, uses the term “psychology” in the title of the treatise ‘Ilm al-Nafs, which connotes ‘knowledge of the self’. He indicates that the author discusses “excellence of psychology” and “bases his psychology on physics.”71 This statement is anomalous to the modern sense of this discipline. Physics is the branch of knowledge which concerns itself with the comprehensive aspects of nature and the behaviour of objects, recognised by the ancient Greeks as “natural philosophy”.72

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70 Ibid. 499.
71 Ma’ṣūmi, (1992), 125.
72 NEB, IX:414.
Ibn Bājjah was the exponent of Aristotelian philosophy after Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) (d. 428/1037). He also draws on the writings of al-Fārābī (d. 339/950). The discourse on ‘mind’ of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (d. 595/1198) was based on Ibn Bājjah’s theories. After Aristotle, Ibn Bājjah defined the actuality of soul by three principles: (a) the nutritive, (b) the sensitive and (c) the imaginative, while the rational principle was studied by analogy. These were classified as the faculties of the soul.

The nutritive faculty is associated with the faculties of growth and reproduction. When the sperm stops developing, the body merely preserves itself. The sensitive faculty has five senses in general and two in particular: sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, common sense and the faculty of motion. The last has been referred in his other discourses, according to Maʿṣūmī, as “appetitive soul” with three other sub-faculties: (i) imaginative, (ii) intermediate and (iii) rational appetitions. The first two are shared by humans and animals, whilst the third is attributable only to humankind. The movement of bodies, the bringing up of children and love is the consequence of imaginative power. The basic need for food and shelter is the result of intermediate faculty. The power of expression is caused by rational faculty. In a separate treatise, Ibn Bājjah calls rational faculty a “Divine Gift” as it is in communion with the “Active Intellect”.

The faculty of imagination as an organised principle is preceded by sensation and followed by the power of reason, which is the most active of all. The ‘soul of vision’ is activated through the light, which enables the vision to see colour. The faculty of hearing is moved through air when sound is produced by the bodies on interaction of their soul and organ. Sense of taste is activated by the combination of moist and dry objects. Sense of touch affects the entire body. The amalgam of all the five senses is ‘common sense’ through which man recognises various forms. He calls common sense a ‘soul’ that gives the body its distinctive powers. With the exception of common sense, the power of imagination is present in animals too. The climax is reached with the power of reasoning that paves way for the acquisition of knowledge and the

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74 Ibid. 6.
75 Ibid. 7.
76 Ibid. 123.
77 Ibid. 8
78 Ibid. 172.
appreciation of the reality of things. Ibn Bājjah’s contribution is one of many on the interaction between Mind, Prophecy and Revelation, and this is how he has dressed his philosophy in Islāmic garb.

The object of Ibn Bājjah’s treatise on soul is that the knowledge of Metaphysics cannot be derived without exploring the essence of soul and intellect. Aristotle’s definition of the soul on which he relied is: “The first entelechy in a natural organised body”. This science is considered antecedent to physical sciences. He describes the existence of natural and artificial bodies (constituting matter and form) and the way they are put in motion. In the natural body, as opposed to the artificial one, the mover is inherent in the moved.

The present tendency among the ultra-traditionalists is to brand those who relied on Aristotelian philosophy as deviants. Many hidden mysteries of life can reveal themselves as humankind unravels the treasure of knowledge, as it has been constantly doing. This point is often missed. Iqbal has expressed this fact beautifully in one of his letters: “Time is a great blessing... While it kills and destroys it also expands and brings out the hidden possibilities of things.” Iqbal had a great respect for al-Rāzī.

Al-Rāzī, a pioneering philosopher, came under attack by Ibn Taymiyyah, who rebutted his arguments and accused him of preaching “idol and star-worship” on the basis of a book al-Rāzī had written on mysteries of stars. He also charged him of recommending to the Sultan, wine consumption, prohibited in Islām. Ma’ṣūmī denies both the accusations and states that had Ibn Taymiyyah read the book, he would not have defamed a renowned exegete of the Qur’ān.

In the writings of Ibn Bājjah and al-Rāzī, reference to nafs means ‘soul’ and that to rūḥ means ‘spirit’. Al-Rāzī has defined khulq as “an innate habit through which the soul displays its actions with ease and without prior thinking and deliberation.” He compares the characteristics of humans, angels, animals and inanimate beings. Angels

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79 Ibid. 176-192.  
80 Ibid. 125.  
81 Saiyidain, viii.  
82 Ma’ṣūmī, (1985), 12.  
83 Ibid. 40.
have intellect and wisdom, but not nature and appetites. Humans have all four, while animals have only the last two. Inanimate beings have none. He includes plants among inanimate beings.\textsuperscript{84} Human soul exists with a “beginning but no end” just like the life Hereafter.\textsuperscript{85}

In contrast to al-Ash'ari’s views, al-Razi subscribes to a rational argument that if the sustenance is predetermined, then no effort can change it. Thus human effort for progress would come to a standstill because sustenance will be available without working for it.\textsuperscript{86} He believes that ‘good’ materialised essentially by a Divine Decree, whereas, ‘evil’ materialised accidentally.\textsuperscript{87} He explains that evil is the loss of a thing’s “perfect nature”. In his thought, ‘pleasure’ means physically pleasant, whereas, ‘perfection’ means spiritually pleasant. Had it not been so, then wild animals that are stronger than humans in satisfying their lusts would have achieved perfection.\textsuperscript{88} He further argues that pleasure is the removal of pain and inconvenience. Most acts are the product of desire and not intellect. Hence, succumbing to desire may result in displeasure, and man may become aware of this through his intellect.

There is a deep philosophical message in al-Razi’s outlook on the responsiveness to perfection. Human beings differ in their degree of piety and spiritual perfection. Those who have failed to attain high levels cannot comprehend the levels achieved by the devotees. In this regard, he writes: “It is for this reason that the imperfect man plans to try to nullify the perfection of the perfect either by nullifying perfection...or by concealing the perfection from the eyes of the people.”\textsuperscript{89} Notably, this view also conveys the psychological weakness of man, where he tends to judge or misjudge others at his own level of perception, sometimes without allowing for his own errors.

However, al-Razi’s statement that, “wealth is the cause of power which is a perfection”\textsuperscript{90} is contestable. He also shows that there is an inverse relationship between the growth and decline of body and soul. That which makes the body robust weakens

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid. 43.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid. 51.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid. 209.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid. 57.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid. 170.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. 186.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. 202.
the soul; and that which strengthens the soul causes the body to become frail. This is true in many cases. For example, (a) over-eating causes laziness and slumber, and affects physical activity adversely; and (b) patience is the strength of the soul, which makes a person withstand hunger and thirst. He stresses that in a state of submission man "refrains from eating, drinking and mating". Consequently, man succeeds in abandoning the negativity of desires and passion, and "the doors of wisdom open to him..."

This last statement of al-Rāzī needs to be viewed critically. In Islam there is no person more submissive to the Will of God than the Prophet who said: "Adorn yourselves with the attributes of God." These attributes can be attained through moral and spiritual progress. This does not mean that Islam advocates abstention from worldly needs. If the life of asceticism or celibacy was the recommended avenue for the spiritual progress, then the Prophet would have pursued it before anybody else. On the contrary, when non-believers objected to the Prophet's mission that a mortal who eats and walks in markets could not be a Messenger of God (Q.25:7), the Qur'an rebutted their arguments (Q.25:9). The Prophet specifically prohibited devotion in worship at the expense of getting married (IK:X:228).

Al-Rāzī's interpretation of certain Qur'ānic verses focuses on the functionality of the heart and not the mind as the chief organ involved in (a) taking decisions, (b) acquiring knowledge, (c) recognising permissibility and prohibition of actions, (d) becoming aware of reward and punishment and (e) strategising the innermost intention for action. He negates the arguments of the Greek philosophers that the source of reasoning is not the heart but the brain. The nucleus of piety and the source of intellect and righteousness is the heart. He asserts that Revelation is communicated by the True Spirit to the heart, illustrating this matter with the verses addressed to the Prophet. As the function of hearing and sight is only to convey objects to the heart, it is the heart which

91 Ibid. 102.
92 Ibid. 74, quoting Al-Tafsīr Al-Kabīr:IV:504.
93 Ibid. 173.
94 Ibid. 122 (Q.2:10, Q.49:3, Q.100:10 refer).
95 Ibid. 130.
96 Ibid. 120 (Q.2:97, Q.42:193 refer).
will be asked. This is how he interprets the verses which indicate that, the hearing, the sight and the heart will be made answerable.97

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (d. 751/1350), the most prominent student of Ibn Taymiyyah, accused al-Rāzī of heresy for believing that “I” means body and its components. The correct view should have been body and soul. Ma’sūmī writes that Ibn Qayyim misunderstood the philosophy of al-Rāzī.98 In his discourse, the latter has presented proofs from the Qur’ān that the soul is different from the body and survives bodily death. This is further illustrated in the hadīth that whoever recognises his nafs recognises his Lord, which indicates that soul is a separate entity because body is already recognisable. The soul is the micro-cosmos while the universe is the macro-cosmos. Hence, the human being is known as a small universe which has the characteristic of the vast universe.99

Al-Rāzī’s fallout with the Ḥanbalites100 occurred when they accused his son to be a fornicator and his wife an adulterer. The accusations that he faced show that even when the society was predominantly religious in his times, prejudices and rivalries could not be subdued. In this case, the opponents of al-Rāzī were taking revenge for his preaching that God is neither a body nor a shape, and that He is not in need of space, contrary to what they had been preaching.101

Al-Rāzī’s popularity endeared him to the rulers, who were not on good terms with the Ismāʿīlīs. He was on the verge of being killed as he cursed them publicly, but then reluctantly agreed never to criticise them on payment of an annual stipend.102 Herein lies the test for steadfastness of the scholars, when, in order to safeguard their reputation, they are compelled to make compromises which may violate their own commitment. If his mode of cursing the Ismāʿīlīs was right, then to abandon it in return for a stipend was wrong, and tantamount to accepting an illicit payment.

97 Ibid. 123. The translator has committed an error by translating “hearing” as “ears”, and “sight” as “eyes”. With these two terms, the expression used for “hearts” is af’idah (singular fiād) and not qulūb (singular qalb). The former refers to the heart that understands, and the latter refers to the heart which is a lump of flesh in the body. (Q.46:26 refers).
98 Ibid. 104.
99 Ibid. 117-118.
100 Ibid. 17.
101 Ibid. 7-8.
102 Ibid. 13-14.
The antithesis of truthfulness and sincerity in preaching religious values is hypocrisy. Al-Rāzī discusses the intricacies of hypocrisy. He touches on the dilemma that the preachers have faced for centuries. He indicates that there are several signs through which a scholar and a preacher can be recognised to be sincere: (a) when his objective is not to earn praise and not to show-off his knowledge; (b) when in the presence of more knowledgeable and qualified scholars than him, he refrains from being envious; (c) when in the presence of influential elites, he does not change the tone of his speech to impress them. In this way, a scholar can save himself from the stains of hypocrisy that might nullify his good deeds.  

Amīnī writes that Islām does not approve the life of monasticism and segregation from society. Its aim is to prepare human beings in their “spiritual journey from the earthly temporary abode towards the [permanent] Celestial Kingdom”. He denounces the ideology of seclusion from worldly affairs and writes that the Islāmic code of life is opposed to these negative and passive traits.

In this context, the Qurān passes its verdict on those who would be the end losers: “Say, Verily the losers will be those who lose themselves and their house-folk on the Day of Resurrection. That will be the manifest loss” (Q.39:15). The Prophetic guidance complements the Qurān. It exhorts humankind to refrain from a doomed destiny. Amīnī asserts that wherever in the hadīths good tidings are conveyed that the ‘self’ is “noble, precious, source of all virtues and blessings,” it refers to the ‘self’ that is endowed with Divine Spirit. Whereas the warning given that ‘self’ is not to be trusted, and that if left undisciplined it leads to annihilation, refers to the animalistic self. The lower self has to be meticulously trained to control its animal desires and achieve higher ends in life.

In certain circumstances, no matter how vigilant a person is, he is vulnerable to commit errors. Ibn ‘Abbās comments on this in relation to Divine Decree: “When the decree strikes a person, his eyes become blind and he loses all caution” (IK: VII:312). Conspicuously, such a situation arises when the individual cannot resist his impulsive
temptations and succumbs to them. Aminī presents a remedy. He quotes the advice tendered by ‘Ali that, to think about the ultimate consequences before taking actions, saves one from feeling sorry later on.\textsuperscript{107}

Aminī continues that man needs to be always on his guard to diagnose his hidden faults, defects and weaknesses.\textsuperscript{108} He quotes a proverb which indicates that man is prone to see a tiny piece of straw in the eyes of other people and to project it like a mountain; but he cannot see the mountain in his own eyes. Man can find treatment for his contaminated ‘self’ by being as intolerant and critical of his own faults as he is of others; and hence, by avoiding similar misgivings in his own soul.\textsuperscript{109} In the process, one of the factors to consider is that of friendship which plays an important role in moulding man’s character. If he associates with corrupt people, then his ego is likely to be infected with selfish instincts. In this sense, it may be said, “egotism is the mother of all evils”.\textsuperscript{110}

In concluding this section, it may be noted that Ibn Bājjah’s and al-Rāzī’s treatises did not have an impact on the traditionalists, who saw in their writings foreign influence. But the rivalry might well have been caused by other implied factors, such as intolerance in accepting dissenting views. Almost all the thinkers concur that man has to struggle in life and persevere with his ‘self’, which can easily mislead if left without control and restraint.

\textbf{Conclusion}

This chapter analysed the key terms of ‘self’, ‘spirit’ and ‘natural disposition’ employed by the Qur’ān and by the mystical scholars to describe the composition of human entity. It discussed the differences in outlook of the theologians, rationalists and philosophers. The usage of the terms \textit{nafs}, \textit{rūḥ} and \textit{fitrah}, critical to this research, were examined in both, Qur’ānic interpretation and mystical definition, together with the lexical explanations.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid. 92.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid. 96.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid. 98.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid. 141.
In conclusion, the full potential of ‘self’ is achievable through coherence, not conflict, between the inner and outer faculties of ‘self’. Yet, such conflict exists as a matter of reality, and this is the main reason that the vast majority of human beings die without realising their full potential. The issue is aggravated due to lack of understanding at popular level on how the three phases of ‘self’ – evil orientated, self-blaming and contented ‘self’ - function.

Tranquillity stems from the submission of human faculties to the service of God, which is covered at length in the Qur‘ān. Hence, the responsibility for premeditated human actions cannot be blamed on God, otherwise the concept of justice, profoundly proclaimed in the Qur‘ān will be vitiated. The portrayal of human actions in the debate between the theologians, rationalists and philosophers were analysed. The conflict between the Ash‘arites and the Mu‘tazilites was highlighted in the context of predestinarian theory that every single event and every human actions, good and evil, have been pre-determined by God through His Divine Decree which never changes. The outcome of the debate is that the concept of accountability in this life and in the Hereafter would not arise if humans were devoid of thinking for themselves and acting, in right or wrong ways. The power of thinking and acting emanate from free-will. The Qur‘ān is replete with promises of rewards for the virtuous and punishments for the wrongdoers.

The next Chapter reviews the intellectual pursuits of the renowned pioneers on the subject of ‘self’, human nature and Islāmic psychology. Based on the groundwork laid down in this chapter, Chapter 2 demonstrates the views of the specialist scholars regarding the practical application for disciplining the ‘self’ and moulding it towards purification.
CHAPTER TWO

INTELLECTUAL PURSUITS ON ‘SELF’ AND ‘HUMAN NATURE’

Introduction

In the previous chapter, wide spectrum of views of different schools of thought on the paradigms of ‘self’ were surveyed. This chapter investigates the intellectual pursuits and contributions of the renowned scholars who have written extensively on purity and impurity of the soul, virtues and vices, and good and evil, as they affect the concepts of ‘self’ and ‘human nature’, in conformity with the defined primary research area.

Al-Ghazālī, who is one of the most important contributors in this field¹, has been discussed at length. The reason for exploring his intellectual pursuits and his relevant works is that, when one conducts a search on the Islāmic library catalogues, his writings overshadow most of the scholars who have written on the science of the soul and ethics. Hence, his works provide a starting point for discussion on the soul and human nature from theological and moral perspectives, which are pertinent to this research. This is followed by a review of Quṭb’s discourse on utilisation of ‘human nature’ towards implementation of the Shari’ah and the pursuits and contributions of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064), who represents a Zāhīrī School². A review is undertaken of Najāṭī’s book, which represents a modern approach to Islāmic psychology or knowledge of the ‘self’.

The intellectual works covered in this chapter are from the Sunnī Schools. However, other Schools in Islām have also contributed to this dynamic field. To mention a few, al-Narāqī (d.1209/1831), a prominent Shi’ī scholar of the Ja’fārī School has written extensively on ‘self’, its strengths and weaknesses, and its purification and reformation towards spiritual ends, in two volumes titled Collector of the Felicities. The present-day

² It means, apparent or literal sense. This School applies the literal methodology to understand the Qur’ān and Sunnah. Although the School itself has become extinct, the Zāhīrī methodology is followed by the present day Salafis and the followers of Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zahiri.

**Contributions of Abû Ḥāmid al-Ghazâlî (d. 505/1111)**

In this section the pioneering works of al-Ghazâlî are surveyed and selectively reviewed. His works incorporated in the *Revival of Religious Sciences*, not directly relevant to the research field, and his philosophical discourses are excluded from in-depth reviews. There is a renewed interest in his writings amongst Western scholars who have re-translated his works with commentaries, two of which are reviewed in this chapter at length.

Al-Ghazâlî was a theologian who has explored the science of the soul and spirituality. On the subject of virtues, he “leans heavily on Miskawayah...” whose treatises have been recognised as “the most influential” on philosophical ethics.4 Though there is no fundamental difference between al-Ghazâlî and the Ash’arites, some changes are observed in his theological thought written under the influence of philosophy and Şûfîsm.5

Al-Ghazâlî’s intellectual journey can be traced from the entries in the *Encyclopaedia of Islâm* and the website devoted to him.6 He sought to reach the truth through Ash’arite theology, philosophy, Ismâ’îliyyah and Şûfîsm. When he was struggling with his inner self his mental health suffered. He pretended to go to Makkah but instead, went to Syria. In Damascus, he isolated himself in the minaret of the Omayyâd Mosque. He went to Jerusalem and again segregated himself in the precincts of the Dome of the Rock. He visited the grave of the patriarch Abraham, followed by pilgrimage to Makkah and Ziyârah (visitation) to the grave of the Prophet in Madînah. He was critical of the ‘ulamâ of his time. He considered the Şûfîs, *arbâb al-ahwâl* (men of feelings) and not

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3 He had authored 450 books on a wide variety of subjects. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avicenna
4 Goodman, 102.
6 http://www.ghazali.org/
ashâb al-aqwâl (men of words). He studied Neoplatonism of al-Fârâbî and Ibn Sînâ to show the extent to which their doctrines were incompatible with Sunnî Islâm. He was given the honour of Hujjat ul-Islâm (The Proof of Islâm). Some of his followers assured him that he was a mujaddid (reviver) of the sixth century.

He criticised the rational theologians for their excessive presumptions and was critical of the philosophers. He devoted two years to master their doctrines and wrote Maqâṣid al-falâsafah (Intentions of the Philosophers). This was followed by his critique Tahâfut al-falâsafah (Inconsistency of the Philosophers). On seventeen points he considered them to be "heretical" and on three points he regarded them as "infidels".8 He reiterated the Ash'arite view that only God is eternal, all else is created; and refuted the speculative philosophy that the world is a self-subsistent unit.9 The duty of encounter with the Ismâ‘iliyyah was assigned to him by the Caliph al-Muṣâfir (d. 512/1118) to refute their teachings. His greatest work is Ihîya ‘ulûm al-Dîn (Revival of the Religious Sciences).

His Mishkát al-Anwâr (Niche for the Lights) reflects a mystical theory. Critics believe that al-Ghazâlî had borrowed Neoplatonic theories in his esoteric writings, especially in Mishkát al-Anwâr.10 The book opens with the Qur’ânic verse of the Light and divides the deficiency in "the light of the eye" into seven parts.11 He identifies the "Lights Celestial from which are lit the Lamps Terrestrial".12 In his division of the light and dark veils, the Prophets occupy the "lower and terrestrial ranks" whereas, the "Angellic Beings [occupy] the higher and celestial [ranks]".13 His discussion on al-Mûtâ (the Obeyed One) and amr (Word of Command) have Qur’ânic origin.

His book al-Risâlah al-Ladunniyyah comprises the nature of knowledge of Divine things. Critics say that the authenticity of this work is doubtful because of its closeness to the works of Ibn ‘Arabi.14 More than 400 of his works have been preserved. His Iljâm al-‘awâm ‘an ‘ilm al-kalâm (The restraining of the common people from the science

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7 EI², II:1040.
8 ER, V:542.
9 Sharîf, I:596.
11 Gairdner, 83-90.
12 Ibid. 99.
13 Ibid. 36.
14 EI², II:1041.
of theology) was completed a fortnight before his death. He wrote this treatise as a Shafi'i jurist. Before this, he had completed al-Muṣtaṣfā (The choicest part) on principles of jurisprudence. The works attributed to him after his death that contravene his thoughts in Munqidh and Iḥya, are considered inauthentic by his followers.15

His book al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl (The deliverer from error), written five years before his death, provides an intellectual analysis of his spiritual growth. He writes that the seekers of truth can be put in one of four categories: theologians, philosophers, authoritarians and mystics. He questions whether sense-perception can be relied upon.16 He writes that the “Intellectual Judge” supersedes sense-perception such as eye-sight. But beyond that, is the “Supra-intellectual” Who, if He manifests Himself, can prove wrong even the judgement of intellect. Then he examines through the ecstatic experiences of the Sufis, the tradition of the Prophet: “People are asleep; when they die, they become awake”.17 He also examines the concept of a “higher state of consciousness” in the light of the Qur'anic verse: “We have taken off you your covering, and your sight today is sharp” (Q.50:22).

Al-Ghazālī admits that had it not been for the Divine Light which manifested itself from the spring of “Divine generosity”, his scepticism would have seen no cure.18 He criticises the approach of taqlīd (blind imitation) of the theologians and the inconsistent polemic utterances of the philosophers. He classified the latter into Dahriyyūn (Materialists), Ṭabiyyūn (Naturalists) and Ilāhiyyūn (Theists).19 He acknowledges the accomplishment of Ibn Sīnā and al-Fārābī, but believes that they were “heretics”.20

Paradoxically, in his book The Decisive Criterion for distinguishing Islam from Heresy, he writes: “I have presented the grounds for regarding as corrupt the opinion of those who hastily pronounce a man an infidel if he deviates from their own system of doctrine.”21 He cites several examples to demonstrate that the truth expressed by the
infidels or heretics should not be rejected. Yet in his exposition on ethics, he writes that it is necessary that "mankind be kept from reading" the books of heretics. Just as "the boy must be kept from touching the snake, so must the ears be kept from receiving such utterances." These contradictions and inconsistencies prompted his critics – the most renowned of whom was Ibn Rushd – to respond vigorously.

Al-Ghazālī confesses that he was commissioned by "His Majesty the Caliph" to write a book against the heresy of Taʿlimiyah (one of the branches of Ismāʿiliyyah). He speaks about the "disagreement among mankind", and argues that "if they were to give heed to me, I would remove the disagreement among them." It seems he became overconfident after turning to mysticism. He is very critical of the methodology of the group that called itself Ikhwān al-Safā (Brethren of Purity) whose Epistle covered the "Psychological-Intellectual Sciences" and "the Divine Religious Sciences".

In his spiritual struggle, he describes his own experience, which helped him detach his heart from worldly allurements and the abandonment of deception. He confesses that this was only possible by turning away from wealth and ambition. He writes that when he looked deep into himself he discovered that his work was not purely for God but for "influential position and public recognition."

He compares those who mock the spiritual experiences of the mystics with those who falsified the Prophets. In support of his allegation, he cites the Qurʾānic verse: "These are the people on whose hearts God sets a seal and they follow their passions." However, there is no comparison between the two situations. To have no faith in the Prophets is tantamount to rejecting the Revelation. Whereas to doubt the claims of the mystics, does not affect one's faith.

22 Ibid. 42.
23 Ibid. 43-44.
24 Ibid. 51.
25 Members of the religio-political group at about the middle of the tenth century, who deliberately remained anonymous to get a wide publicity for their treatises.
26 ER, VII:92-93.
27 Goodman, 118.
28 Watt, 59.
29 Q.47:18.
To disobey God by following one’s desire is the disease of the heart. "The Prophets are the physicians of the disease of hearts."\(^{30}\) He goes on to elucidate the apologetic attitude of various classes of people who fail to observe acts of worship and transgress religious law. He reiterates the view that God sends someone to revive His religion at the beginning of each century. On the encouragement of his followers, he entertained this ambition for himself. He rightly concludes that "faith in prophecy is to acknowledge the existence of a sphere beyond reason."\(^{31}\) He categorises the seekers of knowledge into three categories: (i) those who aim at winning the countenance of God; (ii) those whose objective is to obtain power, wealth and influence; and (iii) those who are enslaved by Satan. These are the "evil scholars".\(^{32}\)

Seven parts of the body: eyes, ears, tongue, stomach, genitals, hands and feet have to be protected from sin. He explains how this can be achieved in view of the admonition in the hadiths. He asserts that the feet should be stopped from going to the court of a wicked ruler, which he says, is a grave sin.\(^{33}\) He discusses "the sins of the heart", which he names as jealousy, hypocrisy and pride, including arrogance and boastfulness. In explaining one of the attributes of God, Al-Salām (the Flawless), he writes that every individual whose heart is free from "deceit, hatred, envy and evil intent" will come to God with a flawless heart.\(^{34}\) These evil traits of character emanate from love for the world, from which a person has to liberate himself. One way to do this is to avoid "new-fangled sciences of which there was no whisper in the days of the Companions of the Prophet and the Followers".\(^{35}\) Notably, much of his own arguments and "religious exercises" were neither known to the Companions nor to the second generation.

On the nature of souls, his cosmology of 'ālam al-malakūt (the Divine world), 'ālam al-jabarūt (the celestial world) and 'ālam al-mulk wa'l-shahādah (the material and phenomenal world) is similar to Platonic description.\(^{36}\) He compares man’s attributes with God’s attributes in the light of the hadith: "He who knows himself knows his Lord." Hence, he believes that God and man’s soul is "invisible, indivisible, unconfined

\(^{30}\) Ibid. 76.
\(^{31}\) Ibid. 84.
\(^{32}\) Ibid. 97-98.
\(^{33}\) Ibid. 155.
\(^{34}\) Burrell & Daher, 61.
\(^{35}\) Watt, 168.
\(^{36}\) Sharif, 620.
by space and time” and that perfection of the soul can be achieved through intuitive knowledge. On the subject of “Religious Experiences and Moral and Intellectual Values”, he considers that the pure and best life can be attained through the exemplary model of saints and mystics. He has been accused by critics of contributing to the stagnation of Muslim intellectual thought since the sixth/twelfth century.

On the subject of Pantheism, he falsifies the Şûfi experiences of ittiḥād (unification) or wuṣūl (identification) or ḥulūl (indwelling) in God. He distinguishes God from man’s soul in that the attribute of God is al-Qayyûm (the Self-subsistent) and man is not. Critics allege that he has taken a very soft stance towards some of the pantheistic views of the Şûfs although he denies the pantheistic theories by reminding that “He (God) does not resemble anything nor does anything resemble Him”.

His discourse on ethics places great importance on moral-spiritual teachings and the concepts of shukr (gratitude), tawbah (repentance), tawakkul (reliance) and khawf (fear) of God. He considers that celibacy is preferable to marriage, provided one lives in the “presence of God”. It is noteworthy that according to popular Muslim piety, no human being lived more in the “presence of God” than the Prophets. The Qur’ān tells how they prayed to leave behind a righteous progeny through marriage. In connection with man’s control over his desires, he adopts a middle course between determinists and the indeterminists. He writes that tawfiq (gift of God) takes several forms. Doing good and avoiding evil materialises through hidāyah (guidance) from God. This should be substantiated with rushd (direction) to perform good deeds. Tasāq (setting aright) is the aid from God and it motivates the human body to obey the Will of God. Lastly, it is ta’āyd (confirmation) which creates circumstances suitable for obedience of the Divine Will. Notably, these are essential avenues to guide human nature towards fiṭrah.

In al-Ghazâlî’s ethical teachings, the source of evil is love of this world which blots the heart. He gives direction on how to fight evil. Firstly, whilst hunger is a necessity, gluttony results in the weakening of intellect and memory. Secondly, sexual power

37 Ibid. 622.  
38 Ibid. 624.  
39 Burrell & Daher, 34.  
40 Sharif, 625.  
41 Ibid. 627.  
42 Ibid. 628.
needs to be guided and restrained. If a person cannot control his sexual urge, then he has to get married, he recommends. The sins resulting from speech are “indecent words, ridiculing, abusing, cursing”. The most serious of these is lying. Transgression against morals can also be caused by self-assertion, which may give rise to anger, malice, pride and vanity. Thirdly, love of wealth may give rise to avarice and miserliness. Therefore, this vice has to be avoided, together with love of position for its own sake. One who loves position and status may get trapped in the serious vices of hypocrisy and self-deception.\(^{43}\)

Having enumerated the vices, al-Ghazālī lists the virtues as “repentance, abstinence, poverty and patience”. He explains that ḥāhid is the one who, in his love for good, is prepared to renounce worldly gains.\(^{44}\) He classifies truthfulness in words, actions and intentions, as one of the most important components of virtues. He considers fear of God and hope as essential for moral progress. The highest virtue is reliance on God and its last stage is to surrender completely to the Divine Will.\(^{45}\) He believes that after passing through stages of contemplation, a Şūfi is gifted with Divine grace and mercy. Then he divides love into four categories: self-love, love of the benefactor, love of beauty and love resulting from interaction of two souls.\(^{46}\)

The highest manifestation of love is God Himself, as the hadīth says: “God is beautiful and loves beauty.”\(^{47}\) But man can express his love towards God by not fearing death and by remembering God through shawq (longing) for His Vision. This results in uns (affability) and rida (satisfaction). Mutual satisfaction between man and God gives rise to al-nafs al-muṭma'innah (the tranquil soul). He goes on to describe the spiritual progress achieved by gnostics, who “will see God in the next world”.\(^{48}\) He needed to explain how the limited and deficient vision of creatures is able to see the unlimited and perfect Being. Who is beyond time and space and Who is not a material body but is the

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\(^{43}\) Ibid. 630-631.

\(^{44}\) Ibid. 633.

\(^{45}\) Ibid. 634.

\(^{46}\) Ibid. 635.

\(^{47}\) Ibid. 636, quoting Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh.

\(^{48}\) Ibid. 637.
"Light of the heavens and the earth" according to the Qur'an. Only a glimpse of that Divine Light was shown to Moses on Mount Sinai and he fell unconscious.

Al-Ghazālī's book *Tahāfut al-falāṣafah* (Incoherence of the Philosophers) condemns those who give themselves the right to transgress Islamic Law and think that they are superior. These in his views are "heretics" who are over-impressed by the intellectual power of the Greek philosophers. Hence, they start emulating them and accepting "falsehood uncritically". He enumerates twenty objectionable problems in the hypotheses of the Muslim philosophers and discusses them at length in his book. He refutes Plato's contention that the soul is eternal and that it becomes divided into bodies, subsequently reuniting with its origin.

Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Qayyim have branded Al-Ghazālī as "one of the misguided"; and on the force of the edict issued by Ibn Ḥamdīn of Cordova, his works were set on fire and destroyed in Spain. Ibn Rushd wrote *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (Incoherence of the Incoherence) as a critique to his *Tahāfut al-falāṣafah*. Ibn Ṭufail (d. 501/1185) too was his critic, yet his influence and inspiration on Ibn Tufail's work, *Ḥaqq bin Yaqqān* is quite apparent. His critics and supporters are divided into extremes. Some have exaggerated and have ludicrously suggested that his *Ihya* is the second Qur'an.

According to his mystical doctrines, the soul in its ascension passes through seven-fold ways to "Union with Deity". At each stage it unveils 10,000 dark and bright veils. Then it comes "face to face with Absolute Being." His critics have noted that he has categorised the Šūfīs and their mystical experiences over and above the pious believers in his pyramidal hierarchy of 'knowing God'. The Jews and the Christians are not even mentioned among those who seek to know God. The anger of Ibn Rushd fell upon him.
because his idea about Vicegerency was directly borrowed from the philosophers' doctrine of Emanation. Hence, he accuses him of "gravest hypocritical insincerity". 60

In the thought of al-Ghazālī, in his discourse on The Mysteries of the Human Soul, virtues and vices are consequential to the attributes of the soul. Before death, the soul is preoccupied with the direction of the body, giving rise to knowledge and ignorance, cleanliness and ugliness, and good and bad habits. These qualities "generate in the soul those attributes which are called virtues and vices". 61 This explains why the souls are different after death. He believes in the plurality of human soul after death. He asserts that the soul is a "spiritual substance which is not a body...It is not space-filling and is neither connected to body nor disconnected from it, neither inside body, nor outside it." 62 He believes that "the real self is connected with the body through the spirit". However, he describes spirit as "vapour like substance spreading all over the body"," 63 without offering any reference from the Qur'ān or hadīth.

Al-Ghazālī continues emphasising that if the soul has achieved purity, it is detached from the worldly life; but if it is impure, it is attached to the worldly life. 64 In the context of the punishment after death, he writes that the virtues of the evil individual will be credited to the deeds of the oppressed; and the vices of the oppressed will be debited to the deeds of the oppressors. 65 This according to him is the effect of virtues and vices. 66 Strangely, al-Ghazālī does not seem to have any qualms against those who claimed that they saw God's vision, albeit without form. But he seems to have qualms with a scholar who claimed that he saw the Prophet coming out of his grave to visit one of the houses in the vicinity. 67 He calls this type of scholar "ignorant or misguided". He does not mind if somebody claimed that he saw a vision of "the example of the soul of the Prophet" 68 because, spirituality and not physique is the essence of the Prophethood, he stresses.

60 Ibid. 17.
61 Hazarvi, 23.
62 Ibid. 25.
63 Ibid. 27.
64 Ibid. 54.
65 Ibid. 66.
66 Ibid. 67.
67 Ibid. 71.
68 Ibid. 72.
Notably, in the midst of the political intrigues and chaos that characterised Baghdad of his times, reminiscent to the present-day Baghdad, al-Ghazālī emerged as the champion and reviver of the Sunnī School of theology. He was the predecessor of al-Rāzī. The latter relied on his writings, yet there is an obvious disparity in their outlook. Al-Rāzī considers food, clothing, dwelling and marriage as the basic needs, and that the failure to satisfy these needs bars perfection in the “speculative and active faculties”. But wealth is the essential ingredient to satisfy these needs. Hence, al-Rāzī concludes that wealth becomes a medium of “securing spiritual bliss”.

He claims that if these needs remain unsatisfied, a person cannot give due attention to religion.

Concluding this section, al-Ghazālī’s thoughts are more inclined towards self-denial for the purpose of reaching high level of asceticism. In contrast, the Prophet controlled his worldly needs but did not abstain from essential wants. Al-Ghazālī found no connection between ‘cause’ and ‘effect’, in concurrence with the Ash’arite doctrine. The radical Salafis accuse him of being “misguided” and brand him with other derogatory expressions (see Chapter 7), in as much as he labelled other Muslims who differed with him as “heretics” and “infidels”. The next two sections review two complete works of al-Ghazālī, directly related to the concept of ‘self’ and ethics, to mould ‘human nature’ towards the uncorrupted self.

Review of al-Ghazālī’s books Disciplining the Soul (Kitāb Riyāḍat al-nafs) and Breaking the Two Desires (Kitāb kasr al-Shahwatayn) – Books XXII and XXIII of the Revival of the Religious Sciences (Iḥyā’ Ulūm al-Dīn).

In Book XXII al-Ghazālī diagnoses the disease of the heart and the cure for bad character; and in Book XXIII he analyses gluttony and uncontrolled lust. The books are written from the viewpoint of a mystic, endeavouring to balance the “natural impulses of the soul” with an emphasis that moderation is the sign of nobility of character. These books venture on spiritual methods and techniques to reach the inward purity. The evolution in Śūfī thought reflects the pinnacle of riyāḍah (self-discipline)

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69 Maʿṣūmī (1985), 198.
70 Winter, p.v.
71 Ibid. p.vi.
72 Ibid. p.xvi.
which is "slaughtering the soul...contravening its desires". The actualisation of desires ranges between hawā (the condition of desire) and shahwā (the desire itself).

In his prolonged introduction, Winter writes that four practices are accepted in self-discipline: (i) ‘uzlā (solitude), (ii) dhikr (remembrance of God), (iii) fikr (meditation) and (iv) samt (silence). While silence can be a helpful aid in saving an individual from backbiting and false speech, whoever remains silent in the face of injustice is a "dumb devil". Although some preposterous Ṣūfī claims are scattered throughout the books under review, the translator gives a glimpse of these stories. Ḥujwirī claimed that he came across a Ṣūfī who abstained from eating for "eighty consecutive days and nights". It is not stated whether Ḥujwirī supervised him in person, and whether that individual had the urge to answer the call of nature during that period.

It is reported that Sahl al-Tustari used to eat "once every fifteen or even twenty-five days". An incident is told in the life of Qushayri, one of the earliest Ṣūfīs, that once he was late in joining congregational prayers and therefore, had to pray in the back rows. It was then that he suddenly realised how ostentatious he had been in always praying in the front row. Therefore, because of his defective intention, he repeated all the past prayers.

It is noteworthy that there is a difference between missing the obligatory daily prayers altogether and repeating all of them because of some doubts. There is also a difference between piety based on scepticism and the Qur'ānic piety which avails the possibility of forgiveness as soon as the person realises his shortcomings. In order to address these types of situations, the science of Islamic jurisprudence has developed. Without it people might have to spend their whole life repeating all acts of worship which is impracticable.

Winter relates the story of Shah al-Kirmānī (third/ninth century) who "never slept for forty years". Then he slept and saw God. He told God that he searched for Him by remaining awake at nights but found Him in sleep. God allegedly answered that had it

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73 Ibid. xxviii., quoting Qushayri.
74 Ibid. xxx, quoting Qushayri.
75 Ibid. p.xxxi.
76 Ibid. p.xxvi.
not been for the devotee’s nightly vigils, he would not have found Him. These types of Ṣūfī ecstatic experiences depend on solitary reports or personal testimonies. Al-Ghazālī does not subscribe to the pantheist or monist experiences that are very popular with Ibn ‘Arabī and his followers. A researcher on the Qur‘ān cannot fail to notice that when the Scripture speaks about the ever-lasting Hereafter, it speaks about God as the ultimate Judge; the Throne of God; Heaven and Hell, the humans, the angels and the jinns, all as separate entities. It does not liquidate or submerge or subsume any one entity into God.

In compliance with the Islāmic ethos, the Ṣūfī outlook on ḥusn al-khuluq (goodness of character) precedes tahdhib (refining) the character on a path to self-discipline. The end motive is to reach ṭiqlā (full contentment with the Decrees of God). Hence, it is said: “To know God is to have an infinite capacity to endure the wickedness of men.” This leads to ʿawāḍu’ (humility) and ḫār (preferring others over oneself).

Winter writes that there were several examples of celibacy among the well-known Muslims because of the Christian monastic influence of self-denial. The most famous among the celibate theologians were al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyyah and al-Nawawī. A critic is bound to note the contradictions. These scholars taught the Sunnah, and yet, one of the most remarkable admonitions of the Prophet was conveniently ignored. The Prophet said: “Marriage is my Sunnah (practice), and whoever leaves my way is not of me”.

The Ṣūfīs also seem to have adopted a special attitude towards ʿishq (passionate love). This is defined by Diogenes as “the disease of an empty, careless heart”. It is defined by a Christian philosopher Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī as, “among the reprehensible traits, being an extravagant excess of love (ḥubb)”. Comparatively, al-Ghazālī defines it as “utter ignorance of the intended purpose of sexual congress”. In his views, sexual appetite should be balanced and subservient to the intellect and Law.

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77 Ibid. p.xxxii.
78 Ibid. p.xxxii.
79 Ibid. p.xxxiii.
80 Ibid. pp.xlii-xliii.
81 Ibid. p.lxxxii.
82 Ibid. p.xxxvi.
83 Ibid. pp.xliv-xlvi.
Good character is described by the Prophet as the willingness “to seek reconciliation with those who avoid you, give to those who withhold from you, and forgive those who deal with you unjustly” (p.7). The gist of a number of anecdotes that al-Ghazālī quotes is that an irreligious man of good character and little observance of worship is better than a man of bad character with great observance of worship. Many of his narrations are unreferenced and of doubtful authenticity, such as, “...good character is a virtue in the presence of which many sins can do no harm.” But the authentic narrations are referenced, such as, “every building has a foundation, and the foundation of Islām is good character.” The significant point made in the section on “an exposition of merit” is that forbearance, modesty, generosity and good character are four essential components that counter bad character (pp.13-14). What al-Ghazālī has stated about sins contradicts the tradition from which he quotes ‘Alī in which the latter said that good character depends on avoiding what is forbidden (sins), aiming for that which is permitted (in Law) and to be generous to one’s family (p.16).

Character is not the same as action but it pertains to the inner disposition of the soul through which it inclines towards good or evil. Al-Ghazālī identifies four steps in this direction: (a) conducting something beautiful or ugly, (b) ability to act, (c) awareness of the act and (d) condition of the soul (p.18). Character is said to be beautiful when (i) quwwat al-‘ilm (rational faculty), (ii) quwwat al-ghadāb (anger or irascible faculty) and (iii) quwwat al-shahwah (appetitive faculty) are balanced and dictated by wisdom. The traits of good character are Wisdom, Courage, Temperance and Justice (p.19).

Character is improvable and not immutable. In disciplining one’s gharizā (instincts), an individual is responsive to treatment if his desires are not susceptible to pleasures. If a man is subservient to his evil desires, knowing them to be evil, then he has to work harder at replacing his bad habits with the good ones deep inside his soul (p.26). If an individual considers vices to be virtues because of his upbringing, then to reform such a person is almost impossible. If an individual takes pride in corruption and crime, then he cannot be reformed (p.27). Just as there is a need to control desires, there is a need to control anger. Through the faculty of anger, man defends himself and his honour. But in every matter, the Prophet advised moderation and the adoption of “middle course” (pp.28-29).
Al-Ghazālī asserts that some people are born with “sound intellect and good character”, whilst others have to acquire wisdom and virtue by struggling with their soul until the process becomes an integral part of their nature. The end result should be habitually to love beautiful deeds and to abhor ugly ones (pp.31-32). It follows that acts of worship should be pleasant and disobedience to God should be unpleasant (p.32). The way to reach the status of faqīh al-nafs (a jurist or religious expert on reforming the soul) is to emulate the actions of sages until they become submerged in the heart (p.36). Al-Ghazālī’s position is reminiscent to that of the Ash’arites and opposed to that of the Mu’tazilites and the Khārijites in that he believes that one mortal sin would not result in the eternal damnation (p.37). He also believes that the sickness of the heart survives bodily death. Just as the body grows and is afflicted with sickness, so is the soul. Just as a physician administers medicine, so the Sūfi Shaykh treats diseases of the heart. Al-Ghazālī prescribes some concrete steps in this direction.

If the Shaykh discovers that the subject is attached to his wealth, he should dispossess him of his excess wealth and give it in charity. If he discovers that the subject is afflicted with pride, he should discipline him by the humiliation of asking him to beg (pp.40-41). If the subject is attached to nice clothes, then the Shaykh should assign him to clean public toilets or to remain in smoky places until he becomes dirty (p.42). If he is attached to tasty food, he should be ordered to prepare such food for others without tasting it. In order to control his rage, one Sūfi hired a man to insult him in public (p.43). Another Sūfi treated the laziness of his soul by resisting standing on his feet, and stood instead on his head the whole night. In order to detach himself from his wealth, a Sūfi sold everything he owned and threw the proceeds in the sea because giving it in charity would have resulted in contentment or pleasure of the soul (p.44). In the present times, these types of extreme measures might be taken as a sign of psychological disorder.

Al-Ghazālī sees that the heart was created to fulfil certain duties: (a) acquisition of knowledge and wisdom, (b) ma’rifah (gnosis), (c) love of God, His worship and obedience. If it cannot perform these functions over all other desires, then the heart is ill (p.46). If an individual enjoys hoarding of money, then avarice dominates his character, which can be brought into check by spending until he enjoys it (p.48). A person can trace faults in his soul through insight or by counselling (p.51). If insight fails to
decipher the disease of the heart, then learned people “who deserve to be imitated” should be followed (p.55).

The austerity measures of Al-Ghazālī are difficult to justify from the Qur’ānic ethics. He emphasises through several episodes the necessity of depriving and thwarting the soul from its demands. Under his asceticism, if the soul is allowed to enjoy legally permitted things, it will crave for prohibited things (p.63). Logically, if this statement was correct, then the permitted would not have been permitted in the first place. His rationale perhaps explains the reason why he adopted a celibate life. It is equivalent to saying that if he allows himself the permitted avenue of getting married, then the soul might desire the forbidden avenues. Being a theologian, it would not have escaped his attention that the Prophet said: “I (Muḥammad) fast and break the fast, stand in prayer at night and sleep, eat meat and marry women; so whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not of mine” (IK:V:298).

Islam encourages legitimate satisfaction rather than suppression of sexual appetite. Yet al-Ghazālī praises the Ṣūfīs who deprive themselves of the legally barred and permitted things as people would face punishment for the former and accountability for the latter (p.63). He devotes a chapter to the intricate details on how to cultivate good character in children. He writes that the main goal of a murid (aspirant) who seeks to reach the Truth - the ultimate Reality - is to overcome barriers of wealth, status, imitation and sin (p.85). In this context, though he follows the Ash‘arite doctrine and Shāfi‘ī jurisprudence, he recommends renunciation of fanatical adherence to madhhab (legal School).

He then echoes Qushayrī’s commitment that as the Ṣūfī scholars are the most aspirant of all, there is no need to follow any other scholars (pp.86-87). This in itself is a fanatical adherence to one’s school, implying that the Ṣūfīs are filling the gap left by others, which is obvious from his wholesome condemnation of all non-Ṣūfī scholars (p.84). His solution is to follow the Ṣūfī Shaykh as “a blind man might clutch his guide on a river bank…” (p.88). The fortress of refuge that the aspirant would thus build around himself is based on (a) solitude, (b) silence, (c) hunger and (d) sleeplessness. His focus on hunger contradicts the Qur’ānic injunction in Q.7:31: “...Eat and drink but waste not by excess, for Allāh loves not the wasters”. Nevertheless, these Shaykhs suggest some extreme spiritual exercises. For example, if between the two Fridays any
remembrance other than that of God enters the mind then the aspirant is prohibited to visit his Shaykh (p.92). One of the Şūfis, Abū Yazīd even claimed that “it is not remarkable for someone to walk on water [of the sea], as this is a common occurrence (p.97).

In his second book on *Breaking the Two Desires*, al-Ghazālī considers the stomach as the centre of “the will-spring of desires and source of diseases and disorders” both physical and social (pp.106-107). He quotes many traditions which indicate that too much eating, drinking and sleeping are detrimental to the soul (p.108). He quotes the sage Luqāmān: “When the belly is full, then the intellect sleeps, wisdom is silenced” and the individual is slack in worshipping God (p.113). He quotes ‘Abd al-Wāhid ibn Zayd who swore by God that only through hunger can man walk in air and water, and become a saint (p.115). Whether this was supposed to be metaphorical, philosophical or both, is not clear.

Al-Ghazālī attributes ten benefits to hunger: (i) it enlivens the heart and sharpens the memory and insight (p.118); (ii) it softens and purifies the heart to find pleasure in remembering God (p.119); (iii) it subdues the soul and fights “exultation, rejoicing and exuberance” (p.120); (iv) it reminds of the thirst and hunger of the Hereafter and the poor of this world (p.121); (v) it breaks the desire to sin and stops being conquered by the lower self, so that the thoughts, eyes and genitals do not commit fornication (pp.122-123); (vi) it repulses sleep which may cause an unmarried man to have wet dreams and compel an aspirant to miss the *tahajjud* - meritorious night prayers (p.124); (vii) it allows opportunity for lengthy sessions of worship in the mosques and cutting off the time to pay visits for call of nature (p.125); (viii) it preserves physical health (p.126); (ix) it reduces expenses by renouncing the needs (p.128) and (x) it helps in giving priority to the needs of others because when the aspirant eats, he loses, and when he spends, he benefits from it permanently in the Hereafter (p.129). Then he offers guidance as to how to reduce one’s daily diet and how to find out whether the stomach is empty - “if one spits, no flies gather on the spittal…” (p.136).

Sometimes the Şūfī fantasy tries to compete with the miracles and charisma of the Prophets. Al-Ghazālī tells a story of a Christian monk who claimed that the Messiah remained without food or water for forty days. A Şūfī challenged him to convert to
Islam if he did the same, and the monk consented. So the Şūfī sat in front of him not for forty but sixty days. The monk converted after the Şūfī man had overtaken Jesus in his asceticism (pp.138-139). He discusses virtues of self-denial, supported by wonderful stories. For example, when a Şūfī denied his soul rice-bread and fish for twenty years, God compensated him with these dishes abundantly, as his friend confirmed who saw him in a dream after his death (p.153). It seems that he enjoys story telling. But then he realises that these may indicate extremes. So he reminds himself of the Prophet’s tradition that “the best of affairs is the middle course”. Therefore, he suggests that equilibrium is achieved when unlimited human instincts and desires are restrained by the Shari’ah (p.154).

In the Şūfī circles, the spiritual exercises to discipline the soul are achieved by qaḥṭ (Constriction) and baṣṭ (Expansion). The former is consequential to wara‘ (scrupulousness) and the latter is consequential to ma’rifah (gnosis). Hence, exactly the same variety of food that is disallowed in the first state is allowed in the second state. Under Constriction, a Şūfī might spend months in isolation; whereas, under Expansion, he is said to have reached the ecstatic state in gaining nearness to God (p.158).

Al-Ghazālī cautions the aspirants who are prone to renounce ostentatious food in public but not in private, and those who renounce the desire for food but not the detrimental desire for fame. Both scenarios might lead the soul to hypocrisy (pp.162-163). He then diversifies the disciplining of the soul by controlling sexual desires. He acknowledges that marriage has five merits: (i) progeny that prays for the parents; (ii) legitimate outlet for lust; (iii) tranquillity of heart; (iv) relief from domestic work and (v) struggle against the soul (p.165). He goes on to quote a weak tradition that implies misogynous outburst: “Women are the snares of the devil” in the sense that had it not been for sexual desire, women would not have had any control over men (p.166). He cites a bizarre story that Satan advised Moses not to remain alone with a woman who is unlawful to him, never break a vow and never delay a charity (p.167). It is surprising that his mind accepted the tale that a major Prophet of God needed Satan to advise him on matters of morality. His discourse then describes renunciation of marriage to find peace with God, because, according to him, family, property and children are seen as obstructions (p.171).

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84 Nicholson, 374.
He believes that the aspirants should remain celibate until they reach the ranks of Gnostics, otherwise, they should fast (p.172). His half-heartedness to recommend marriage, as a matter of last resort, can be read in his story that David advised his son Solomon to “walk behind a lion or a black cobra, but never walk behind a woman” (p.173). He also considers gazing at adolescent boys with lust, equivalent to committing sodomy (p.176). He seems to be gratifying a Šūfī who married a woman who suffered from smallpox. To stop her family from feeling guilty, he pretended to suffer from blindness for twenty years until she died (p.178). A critic is bound to question, where does the need for honesty and truthfulness between the spouses fit into this type of pretension?

It may be concluded that although in the Šūfī teachings, flattery is seen as a disease of the soul, yet throughout the two books, a critic cannot escape to sense self-flattery. On the whole, the discourses provide a rare insight into their mind and methods for breaking lustful and voluptuous desires. The next section covers the scholarly pursuits of Quṭb.

Quṭb’s intellectual contributions

Quṭb’s book Milestones lays down a plan for action to establish a society based on the Islamic Shari‘ah. Critics accuse this work for fomenting hatred and paranoia which has manifested itself in militancy in recent years, they claim. The contents of this book warranted his re-arrest and he was charged with treason. To date, almost 2000 editions of this book have been published. Quṭb’s (1978), 18. Four chapters therein were adopted from his celebrated commentary on the Qur‘ān.

In discussing what he calls the era of Ignorance today, he writes cynically: “…what we consider to be Islamic culture, Islamic sources [!], Islamic philosophy and Islamic thought, are also constructs of Jahiliyyah!” The first Muslim society was liberated through the Message of the Qur‘ān, which was translated not in words but in their

87 Ibid. 32.
deeds, and the system took birth where “justice was God’s justice…”88 He sees in the concept of Jihād the means to wipe out tyranny and introduce “true freedom”,89 which is to “establish God’s authority in earth”90. He discusses his subject polemically on how other secular and religious systems have failed mankind. The focus is on armed struggle (see Chapter 6), to which he sees no alternative.

Among Qutb’s diverse writings, some of his famous books are Artistic Imagery in the Qur’ān, World Peace and Islām, The Characteristics and Values of Islamic Conduct and Social Justice in Islām.91 In his books on the Qur’ān, the themes discussed are covered in greater detail in his commentary on the Qur’ān. In Social Justice in Islām, he discusses the relations between man and his Creator and between man and universe.92 He writes that Islām liberates man from fear of existence, equates between mankind and establishes a strong welfare system.93 He devotes to each of these components detailed analysis and writes that Islām appeals to the conscience and builds human dignity.94 He discusses the preservation of the rights of private ownership95 and social welfare through charity and alms.96 He draws demonstrative episodes from history and concludes his study by looking at the present state of affair and projecting it to the future with optimism.

The next section reviews one of his widely read studies. The reason for selecting it is that it gives an insight into Qutb’s perception of ‘human nature’.

Review of Qutb’s book The Religion of Islām

Qutb’s stern and revolutionary approach in bringing about changes in the society is visible in his writings. He writes that at no stage does Islām undermine human nature. But when Muslims fail to represent “the nature of the faith of Islām”, they suffer

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88 Ibid. 51.
89 Ibid. 111.
90 Ibid. 127.
91 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sayyid_Qutb
92 Qutb, (1975), 21.
93 Ibid. 35.
94 Ibid. 61.
95 Ibid. 111.
96 Ibid. 146.
setbacks and take for granted that by virtue of being Muslims, the victory has always to be theirs, which is not the case (p.7).

Comparing the secular systems with Islām, Qūṭb writes that the former violate "tranquillity of human nature" (p.35) and through bloodbaths, end up under the "hammerblows of human nature" (p.36). He dedicates a chapter to "The potential of human nature". He writes that when human nature responded to the call of obeying One God, man was liberated from the shackles of worshipping man. In this way, human dignity was restored which was lost to the enslavement of man by man (p.55). In those days, he writes, the pilgrims were forbidden under intimidation to circumambulate the Ka'bah in their own clothes, except in the clothes bought from the Makkans or in a state of complete nudity. He continues that when the people of Arabia responded positively to the voice of inner nature, they broke the manipulation and extortion exercised by the clan of Quraysh. When the Persians responded to that voice, they broke the wedge drawn between the commoners and the ruling class that demanded total obedience (pp.56-57).

Qūṭb then describes the discrimination and slavery that prevailed in the pre-Islāmic societies like, India and Rome, where the human nature was barred from realising its full potential (pp.58-59). In as much as man reacted to the voice of human nature with acceptance, at the dawn of Islām, he could do it again (p.64), referring to what the future holds for the Islāmic system. He goes on to advocate a proactive role similar to the one embraced in the first century to change injustice in society. He sounds optimistic when he stresses that it is relatively easier to bring changes now, as the Muslims can capitalise on the experience obtained through centuries.

Qūṭb distinguishes between "potential of human nature" that was encountered by the first generation and realisation of human nature when it became a full-fledged system (p.67). He sees the influence of Islāmic system on the religious reforms of Luther and Calvin in Europe, the Europeans renaissance, the destruction of feudal system, the fundamental rights protected by Magna Carta in England, the French Revolution, and the "scientific glory of Europe" (p.69). He writes that the concept of a single wider community emerges from a common belief (p.86). Yet, the system of belief was never meant to promote hostility and intolerance among mankind (p.88). Jihād was made
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obligatory not to enforce Islām on people but to embrace “Muslims and non-Muslims in perfect justice” (p.89). All that is required is for the believers to put “their hands in the hands of God and then march forth” towards a promised victory (p.98).

Qutb explains that the concept of international relations introduced under the Realm of Islām has been instrumental in shaping its moral teachings (pp.92-93). He writes that mankind today is tired of materialism, corruption, mental diseases, and intellectual and sexual perversions (p.97). Therefore, he declares his confidence that these impediments will be solved as they were solved at the dawn of Islām, when human nature successfully overcame “the clouds of obstinacy and arrogance” (p.98). The next section explores the intellectual pursuits of Ibn Ḥazm.

Ibn Ḥazm’s intellectual contributions and review of the book In Pursuit of Virtue

In the words of Richard Netton, Ibn Ḥazm was “a jurisprudent, politician, philosopher, poet and scholar of comparative religions” (p.vii) and a rationalist (p.8). Abu Laylah, the translator and commentator on his works, provides biographical information of Ibn Ḥazm who never travelled outside of Andalus (p.17). His works amount to 400 volumes of 8000 pages, written in his own hand (p.19), many of which were destroyed and some were publicly burnt. As he “memorized all his books”, some have survived, including his “encyclopaedic” Al-Fiṣal fi’l-Milal wa’l Ahwā ṭa’l Nihāl (Comparative Religion and History of Religion) (p.20).

Ibn Ḥazm advocated the need to learn science, other languages and logic when it was “not welcomed by orthodox Muslims” (p.23). He was critical of the corrupt rulers and their demagogues, scholars and politicians (p.29). He proclaimed that Mary and Sarah were Prophetess, and believed that women can be rulers but not Caliphs (p.31). He looked keenly into the weak side of human nature and believed that “political ambition is a human weakness” and an individual would even resort to immoral means to retain political power (p.52). He rejected Mālikī and Shāfi‘ī Schools and became the pioneer of the Zāhiriyyah School (p.53).

In Chapter I of his book In Pursuit of Virtue under the title “Ibn Ḥazm’s Milieu”, Abu Laylah writes: “If you were restricted to one person as a source to tell you everything
about Islam, he [Ibn Ḥazm] will be your choice” (p.14). These types of statements may be seen as bordering on hagiography. Then he covers Ibn Ḥazm’s critical discourses on Judaism and Christianity and his pursuits as a psychologist and sociologist.

Book of Morality and Behaviour was his last book which he wrote to “correct the corrupt behaviour of the people and to heal the sickness of their souls” (p.57). Being the son of “second highest man” in Andalus (p.30) and the holder of Ministerial posts thrice (p.18), he must have come across a wide cross-section of people. He describes the psychology of wretched men who believe that everyone else is like them. He writes that there is little hope for their cure (p.59). But he discourages criticism against those who are naturally orientated towards vices. Yet he writes: “a man who seeks virtues is like angels; whereas a man who seeks vices resembles Satan...” (p.60 & p.126). In his perception, a happy man is attracted towards virtues and an unhappy man shuns the virtues (p.126). He asserts that God created in the soul its “understanding and reasoning which help it to find the path of virtues” (p.62). God also gave strength to the mind to uphold justice (p.63). He emphasises the role of the heart to cultivate reasoning and intellectual ability. He covers the role of the Prophethood, and believes that philosophy cannot substitute religion (p.70). He sees the consequences of cardinal sins as the punishment in Hell (p.72).

Abu Laylah gives an impressive coverage to Ibn Ḥazm’s poetry; the vice of telling lies, its remedy, the vice of greed, envy and its remedy. He covers the effect of al-‘Ayn (bad eye) resulting in an object having been looked at “spitefully and malignantly” (p.96). On treatment of the souls and reform of vicious characters, Ibn Ḥazm writes that the worldly ambitions might remain unfulfilled, but striving for God will bear fruits (p.121). Man is bound to encounter anxiety of losing wealth and position; but the only way to overcome it is to turn the “eye to eternity” (pp.122-123). Although man has a tendency to be angry, he should not lose temper (p.127).

He describes the attitude of different categories of people towards knowledge and advises that they should not damage their soul by experimenting on corrupt views (p.131). He emphasises the need to keep good company and writes: “Anyone who is seeking fame, fortune and pleasure will keep company only with people who resemble mad dogs and sly foxes” (p.132). He discusses different stages in exercising patience
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(p.134). He offers wide variety of exhortations on how people should react in hardships (pp.136-137). He bases his advice on personal experiences on how he himself overcame complacency, pride, grudges, repugnance for the company of women (pp.140-142) and biased and hurtful actions by others. He dedicates a section to the exchange of advice with friends in various circumstances; and devotes a section in dealing with different kinds of love (p.157). He talks about child abuse in his times (p.172) and discusses the vice of being proud in greater detail.

In concluding this section, one cannot escape to notice a similarity in his categorisation of virtues and vices and good and evil, with prominent writers who have written on the subject, except that he illustrates his study with episodes, personal experiences and poetry.


Najātī is a professor in Cairo University. He has written several books on ‘self’ and human psychology. The purpose of selecting this work is to give an overview of how Najātī projects the Qur’ānic verses related to this subject in the light of new developments in this field. This will provide an insight into the thinking of modern Muslim psychologists, trying to justify the Islāmic approach.

His discourse is based on the hypothesis that spiritual strength is derived from certainty of faith. The guidance of the Qur’ān is meant to cure ailments of the hearts (Q.10:56) caused by despicable habits. Faith, supported by the knowledge of the revealed Book and wisdom (Q.62:2) qualifies for higher status in the sight of God (Q.58:11). Wisdom is a great Divine bounty (Q.2:269).

The benefits of studying psychology from an Islāmic viewpoint are said to be: (a) to control sub-conscious desires; (b) to save oneself from misguidance and destructive spiritual illness; (c) to release oneself from the instability of doubts and suspicions; (d) to build a strong moral character through virtuous conduct.

Najātī’s discussion diversifies towards the modern theories of psychology in comparison to the Qur’ānic outlook. The former is orientated towards materialistic and
existentialist observations about human behaviour; whereas, the latter adopts spiritual approach. Experts in this science tend to reject any hypothesis that cannot be proved within the spheres of experiment and observation. Hence, the concept of soul and spirit, which is central to the Qur'anic message, is considered outside the scope of their study. This is the reason that the name of the discipline has come to be known as the science of behaviour rather than the science of soul (p.15). The author claims that the theories of psychoanalysis founded by Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), which correlate human behaviour with the sexual urge, have resulted from a neglect of the metaphysical and intangible realities associated with human nature (p.17). Even the ancient writers were emphatic on the metaphysical influences in the universe.

However, psychology has recently branched out into several schools of thought, some of which recognise the spiritual role of healing through Telepathy (Extrasensory perception of obtaining information from another person’s mind)\(^97\) (p.18). Any gap in the knowledge of realities beyond the five senses is filled by the revelation from the earliest times of human existence. There is harmony and perfect balance under which, every element in the universe and inside the human body have been created. Where there is any disequilibrium, it is because of external factors and not innate nature (p.24).

Najâti criticises the modern approach of applying the findings of experiments conducted on animals to humans, as this grossly disregards the religious, spiritual and inspirational forces which characterise human nature. He writes that consciousness of the need to protect the 'self' from hunger, thirst and the vagaries of climate is created in humans and animals alike. But human nature has been endowed with the moral strength of patience, perseverance and contentment to overcome hunger, fear and other tribulations of life. Islam obliges the rich to pay Zakāt (alms) and other poor dues, to promote social justice. He reckons that after a day's work, sleep is a natural treatment for fear and mental tension (p.34). Tension is caused by negative traits such as anger, greed and the misuse of power, all of which can cause pain, if they are not moderated (p.36).

For continuation of posterity, relations between spouses are based on love and compassion (Q.16:72, Q.30:22). Existence of male and female are the phenomenon of

\(^{97}\) NBK, V:428.
every living being (Q.36:36). This is considered normality in the Qur’anic parlance. In contrast, some modern social psychologists believe that all human relations are acquired through experience (p.46). Others assert that the propensities of material progress, social status, love and leadership are natural. But they give scant attention to the activities related to religious tenets and faith. Abraham Maslow, among the renowned psychologists, emphasised the spiritual aspects in human behaviour.

Najatî writes that the instinct of accumulating wealth and wielding power is exploited by Satan. When mankind succumbs to the Satanic temptations, the result is a struggle for power and bloodshed. Islam warns against the monopolisation of wealth and power, as this tends to generate animosity in human relations. The Qur’an is explicit that mankind has been given the power to resist negative emotions. But this power cannot be utilised without recognising the Will of the Creator, to whom all souls are surrendered in their sublime purity before uniting with the body (p.62).

The author claims that 1416 years before Freud analysed the role of (i) unconscious mind, (ii) repression of emotions and (iii) conflict between positive and negative feelings, the Qur’an had shed light on these aspects of analysis (pp.65-69). But Islamic psychology has its own special features, ranging from the permitted dietary habits to the avoidance of unnatural deeds, as they have deep impact on human psyche (p.72). He discusses the regulation and legitimisation of sexual activities under Islamic ethics to counter permissiveness. Moral values based on the Qur’an extend as far as protecting the honour of a woman who is falsely accused of promiscuity. In this way man is expected to control his speech, otherwise, face a prescribed punishment.

Transgression occurs when lust and desires cross the permissible boundaries and when human beings neglect the Hereafter and its everlasting bounties (pp.91-92). Najatî briefly explains modern theories on phobia. He asserts that those who believe in the Laws of God and the Afterlife are freed from fear. The antithesis of this situation is the exploitation of the weak through violent means to promote power politics. The former tend to view death as a transitory phase, whilst the latter capitalise on the fear of losing whatever power and wealth they control.
Love of wealth and children is a blessing that plays a vital role in preservation of ‘self’. When a person is tried with misfortune and poverty, after passing through a period of abundance, he loses hope. (See Chapter 4). His disappointment is interpreted as a psychological condition of ungratefulness, which emanates from weakness in faith (pp.115-116). The enthusiasm to help and cooperate with others depends on a person’s upbringing, his home and family environment.

Hadīths condemn jealousy or envy towards others. But to crave for the good qualities and wealth of others for promoting virtues is approved (pp.138-139). A person’s conscience is activated when he feels guilty for his misdeeds and wishes to rectify his errors. The opposite situation is the egoistic tendency, which may lead the individual to tell lies and which is reflected in his behaviour.

Najātī takes a non-traditional line when he refutes the misconception that God guides whomsoever He likes and misguides whomsoever He likes. This is the conviction of the pre-determinists. He asserts that a person himself has to take the initiative in following the path of God in order to find guidance (p.158). Fear of God may transpire to be the main motivator for seeking guidance. But when fear reaches the level of restlessness or depression, it becomes a mental disorder. Fear of poverty can cause immense mental tension and may lead to crimes. This is why God takes upon Himself to provide men with the means of sustenance. It is stated in the Qur’ān: “In the skies is your sustenance…” (Q.51:22). The author clarifies that the moon-light, the sun-rays and the rain water revitalise the means of sustenance for the benefit of all living beings. Through patience, faith and supplication, some events in life can be averted (p.173) despite the fact that the fateful happenings are written in the Guarded Tablets (Q.57:23).

Among the sensory perceptions, the Qur’ān gives the power of hearing more weight than the power of seeing (pp.181-182). Najātī elucidates the features of para-psychology: (a) Telepathy, through which the individual reads the mind of another without the aid of five senses. (b) Clairvoyance, through which the knowledge of realities is derived. (c) Recognition, through which events are predicted (p.184). He discusses the corruption in human nature, where the person habitually falls prey to vices and visualises them as virtues. People of such a disposition become heedless towards
spiritual guidance and the signs of God. He claims that the Qur’an identifies 2000 different aspects of knowledge (p.195).

A person suffers mental blockage when his heart, which is the recipient of guidance, fails to respond to the Message (pp.207-208). In Qur’anic language, guidance is primarily addressed to the heart. Humans are warned not to venture into issues beyond their comprehension because hearing, sight and heart will be made accountable (Q.17:36). Human judgements based on conjecture are condemned. Decisions based on prejudices and illusions are considered to be faulty (p.215).

Najat briefly enlists four Divine ways of conveying knowledge to humans: (i) Direct dispensation, as in the case of Adam, who was the first human and the first representative of God on earth; (ii) through revelations, as in the case of other Prophets and Messengers; (iii) through inspiration and (iv) through authentic dreams (p.221). The Qur’an keeps the doors of rational discussion open. It draws examples from everyday life, so that the reader can relate the citations of the events to his own observation (p.258). It applies two methods for liberating man from the shackles of immorality – to keep on reminding him of the consequences that befell the past nations; and to prohibit bad habits in stages, and not at once (p.270).

Najat briefly covers miscellaneous issues, such as, dreams and their significance, various types of memories and causes of forgetfulness. Human nature is vulnerable to Satanic interference. Satan inspires forgetfulness which makes a person lose sight of many valuable memories, including remembrance of God (p.299). Then the author enters into a technical discussion of the role of the nervous system and the brain. This aims at proving that as all memories are stored in the brain, the senses will be activated on the Day of Resurrection to give witness against one’s own deeds. He discusses the rapid progress made in the analysis of human personality, intelligence, perception, nervous system, diagnosis of mental conditions and their treatment in the 20th century.

Najat quotes several verses which unambiguously suggest that mankind has been given free-will and freedom of action to select whatever course of action it chooses (p.320). Yet he does not seem to be concerned that this contention is contradicted by a tradition he quotes as follows: During the biological shaping of foetus in the womb, God sends
an angel after forty days. The angel blows the spirit into the foetus, with the pre-ordainment of its sustenance, time of death, deeds and whether it would live to be good or evil (p.349). The last point seems to suggest pre-ordainment. He writes that the Qur'an identifies three categories of people – non-believers, believers and hypocrites (p.326). However, it also mentions two more categories – mushrik (polytheist) and muttaqi (pious or God-fearing). The last one is the highest status that a believer can attain, and it is this category that has been promised salvation (Q.15:45).

The author quotes the experimental deductions of Carl Jung, whose psychoanalysis of his patients illustrated that the cause of their mental disorder was that faith had no place in their life (pp.362-363). He also gives comprehensive coverage to various aspects of faith and collective worship, which he considers to be a natural deterrent to spiritual vacuum. He quotes the American psychologist Alfred Adler who said that a person who segregates himself from society becomes susceptible to depression (p.375).

Cleanliness that precedes prayers in the form of ablution has spiritual significance. The Prophet’s tradition says that anger is from Satan, and Satan is from fire. Fire is extinguished by water. So whenever a person is angry, he should perform ablution (p.386).

It is appropriate to draw a parallel between Najäfi and Ibn Qayyim’s discourse. Ibn Qayyim dedicated a book to the subject of ‘patience and gratitude’. But Najäfi covers this aspect in two pages. In his glossary, Ibn Qayyim identifies the fundamental difference in the creation of humans and Jinns. Humans are the products of clay and Jinns are the products of fire. Yet Ibn Qayyim writes that ‘Umar “wrestled” with Jinn and defeated him, although the Jinn was strong among his specie but weak compared to ‘Umar’s strength. He does not explain how is it possible for a figure of matter and tangible form to “wrestle” with an invisible creature of fire. Neither does he explain the moral of the story, in as much as he seems to be content with narrating other stories, such as: (i) “A believer whips Shaytan the way a person whips his camel...” and (ii) A Satan asked another of his kind, why he was weak, to which he replied that when a human mentions the name of God at the time of eating, the Satan is starved. The first

98 Al-Khattab, 15.
99 Ibid. 16.
tradition suggests that Satan can also bleed as the camel bleeds on whipping. But Satan’s creation is not similar to that of human beings or animals. The next tradition suggests that Satan is in need of the same food as the humans.

In concluding this section, it can be deduced that there is a clear distinction between the concept and approach to the science of psychology and the Islamic concept of soul, which is the ‘centre of gravity’ of human personality. Islam gives much attention to the conflict between soul and sensual desires. The soul is eternal, whereas, desires are perishable with the body. Therefore, if the eternal element wins the control, the Qur’ān promises spiritual bliss in this life and the Hereafter.

Conclusion

A wide cross-section of pioneering classical and modern works on ‘self’ and ‘human nature’ were reviewed in this chapter, with minimal reference to the exegetical literature. There is a consensus among thinkers that perfection of human nature is dependent on the purity of the soul. This is achievable through rigorous discipline, where the faculties of the self are geared towards attaining peace and contentment. The next chapter presents the subject under investigation from the Qur’ānic exegetical perspective, in compliance with the primary aim of this research.
CHAPTER THREE
A QUR'ÂNİC OUTLOOK ON SELF (SOUL)
IN THE HERMENEUTIC FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to build a regime of 'self' from the exegetical sources of Ibn Kathîr and Qûthî. It follows the phase in which some renowned works were explored on the science of self and human nature. This chapter investigates the thematic framework of the Qur‘ân on 'self', which revolves around the concepts of accountability and destiny of human soul, the causes of its salvation or damnation, its inspiration, guidance and illumination, and the consequences of its transgression. The object is to identify the remedial measures for attaining the purity and tranquillity of the soul.

Accountability – hallmark of Divine Justice

This section represents the gist of Islâmīc faith on accountability of mankind. According to the Qur‘ân, a Divine Trust was offered to the heavens, earth and the mountains but they were apprehensive of the Trust and the ensuing duties and responsibilities. Man accepted it despite his weakness and his inability to control his desires, his contentious nature, lack of knowledge, short life and the restraints of time and space (Q.33:72, SQT:V:2884).

In the human body, jugular veins are the blood-streams between the heart and the head. They occupy pivotal position with the soul to keep the body alive. But the Qur‘ân declares that God is even nearer than these veins (Q.50:16) which separate life from death. This brief description reminds men about the fragility of their lives to alert them for accountability (SQT:VI:3362).

Those who patiently persevere in the face of mischief of their soul and mischief of mankind, will not be abandoned and their struggle will not be wasted. God’s guidance is guaranteed to reach them (SQT:V:2752). God never departs from his promise though most men do not understand (Q.30:6) because their knowledge is superfluous
The Qur'an keeps on inviting mankind to think deeply within their own souls to realise the truth of life, which goes far beyond what is apparent (Q.30:8, *SQ*:V:2759).

Verse Q.21:35 declares: "Every soul shall have a taste of death" and that it will be tested with evil and good. This is a thought-provoking call to make mankind ponder over its destiny. Trying man with evil is meant to test his patience, his trust and hopefulness in God. In the phase of affliction, self-esteem is invoked, which enables man to bear the trials of life without fear. Whereas trying man with good enables him to resist the allurements of status, pleasure and wealth. Hardship prepares man mentally and alerts him; but comfort makes him lax, and he loses the stomach to resist temptations. The one who struggles in life saves his soul from humility. Whereas the affluent remains lethargic and relaxed and is unable to withstand hardship (*SQ*:V:2377-2378).

The criteria of rewards and punishment have been explained throughout the Qur'an on the basis of good and evil. In explaining verse Q.4:79, a footnote added by the editors of Qutb's English translation reads: "the Qur'anic view is...everything happens by God's Will and predestination." Yet Qutb accepts the accountability of man and his free-will and action (Q.4:84, *SQ*:III:249). It is beyond the capacity of the human mind to comprehend the metaphysical mysteries. But verse Q.4:79 is crystal clear: "Whatever good happens to you is from God; and whatever evil befalls you is from yourselves." This explains the degree of independence granted to man according to which, he is made accountable.

Free-will is further illustrated in these verses: "Allāh will never change the grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their (own) souls..." (Q.8:53). This is complemented by: "Verily never will Allāh change the condition of a people until they change it themselves..." (Q.13:11). In the first verse, God's favours are showered on a community until it shows signs of ingratitude and its intentions worsen. The second verse clarifies that if man's condition was solely dictated by God, then it is futile to state that until man takes the initiative to change his own condition, he must not expect God to do it for him. The anomaly is obvious. Still, Qutb seems complacent with his comments: "He (man) is indeed an actor who makes his contribution by God's..."
permission. Indeed the working of God’s Will takes place through his deeds and actions” (SQ:VII:170). But then he asserts in several places in his work, that man operates within a certain measure of independence granted to him under the overall Will of God. This view differs with the views of the pre-determinists who believe that man is not independent at all. Quṭb repudiates the materialistic philosophies which say that man does not have any option but to submit to the influences of major trends, including “economy, history and evolution” (SQ:VII:170).

The phases of accountability are vividly described. Scales for weighing good and bad deeds will be raised on the Day of Resurrection when those who will see the penalty will wish that they be given another chance to be with the virtuous (Q.39:58). The soul that neglected its duty towards God will be in deep sorrow (Q.39:56). The soul whose good deeds exceed the bad ones will be triumphant. If the reverse is the case, it will be in the company of those who “lost their own souls” (Q.7:8-9 & Q.11:21). All the invented falsehood will be of no avail (Q.10:30). The souls will be met with their destined end, which is an appointed time for every community; they can neither delay nor hasten it by a moment (Q.10:49 & Q.16:61). “On that day man will clearly remember what he has done” (Q.79:5).

Without prior knowledge about the Last Hour, every man will come face-to-face with its occurrence (SQ:XVIII:29). All routes of escape will be clogged (Q.75:10-11) and he will be informed about “what he sent ahead and left behind” (Q.75:13). He will act as a witness against his own soul (Q.75:14, Q.74:38). The recompense for the actions of every soul will be fulfilled (Q.39:70) without any injustice on that Day, when God will be swift in reckoning (Q.40:17). With each soul there will be a driver and a witness, when the veil blurring the sight will be removed and the sight will become sharp (Q.50:21-22).

When the scales will be drawn for the final judgement, the soul which is at peace, well-pleased with God and well-pleasing to God, will enter Paradise (Q.89:27-30). The assured direction to the absolute tranquil state is in welcoming the soul to the highest ranks of the chosen creatures (SQ:XVIII:208). Islam “moulds individual hearts and souls...to achieve perfect harmony between morality and law, piety and authority”
A QUR'ANIC OUTLOOK ON SELF (SOUL) IN THE HERMENEUTIC FRAMEWORK

(TM:1:475). Whether a person makes known what is in his mind or conceals it, he will be brought to account (Q.2:284).

Every soul functions within its capacity. No soul bears a burden more than it can bear, and the record with God shows that nobody will be wronged (Q.23:62). But no soul will be given respite when its time has expired (Q.63:11). After the transient life, no soul shall benefit another; and “whoever purifies himself does it to the benefit his own soul…” (Q.35:18). This means that every individual represents himself (SQV:V:2938).

As faith and good deeds are closely interconnected, human dignity and integrity is preserved by emphasising that there is no escape from accountability (Q.2:48, SQ:1:85).

Love of God is the spiritual capital of the believers who are alerted about their accountability (Q.5:105). They are reminded that every act of discomfort that they may suffer, like thirst, hunger, stress and tiredness will not be wasted, but will be rewarded (Q.9:120, SQ:VIII:300). The expression, “when people’s souls are paired [like with like]” (Q.81:7) means the re-uniting of body and soul (SQ: XVIII:80). Creation and resurrection applies to a single human soul (Q.31:28).

The stinginess of the stingy is at the expense of their own souls (Q.47:38). Spending in charity benefits the soul (Q.64:16). Breaking pledges harms the soul (Q.48:10). Scales will be drawn for enforcing justice, and even acts of less weight than a mustard seed will be brought up (Q.21:47). The similitude with the mustard seed is meant to convey that even if a deed is invisible and insignificant, it will be taken into account (SQ:IV:2381-2382) and no soul will be unfairly treated (Q.36:54).

When every soul is confronted with its good and evil deeds, it will wish that the Day of Reckoning is delayed or that a barrier is created between itself and its evil deeds (Q.3:30, SQ:II:64). The vindicating record of deeds will be presented and every soul will be deemed sufficient to take its own account (Q.17:14). Man’s actions are tied around his neck, and these will be displayed in a form of open record (Q.17:13). No individual can disown his actions. They are part and parcel of his life and move with him. Their effects survive long after he is dead. He will be able to witness the manifest and the hidden acts of his life, to form the basis of his accountability (SQ:XII:140).
In concluding this section, the vivid description given is indicative of the fact as if the curtain between the conscious and sub-conscious mind will be lifted, and all the memories stored in the sub-conscious since birth will become a conscious reality. It is as if the curtain between the seen and the unseen world will be unveiled and the causes and effects of man’s deeds will become manifest.

The Signs of God remind the human soul of its ultimate destiny

The Qur'ān calls mankind to worship God, who created all creatures and their sources of sustenance (Q.2:21-22). To deny the reality of the power of God that runs through the cosmos, to which all creatures owe their existence, results in the contempt of God and that of His angels and mankind (Q.2:161). Sentience is developed by inviting people to ponder on the Signs of God – the creation of the heavens and earth, the alteration of day and night, the vessels that sail in seas, the rain water that enlivens the earth, the living creatures, the movement of winds and clouds, all of which are for the benefit of mankind (Q.2:164). Deep inside the human soul, God has infused His Signs (QAl:53).

If man is misguided, it is to the detriment of his soul (Q.34:50). This is the predicament of those who ignore the reminders. The verdict of the Qur'ān is that “...those who have squandered their own soul will never have faith” (Q.6:20). No loss is more severe than the loss of faith, the loss of security in the earthly life, and the loss of God’s pleasure and bounties in the Hereafter (Q.46:18, SQT:VI:3264). The rightly-guided, in the Qur'ānic parlance, are those in whose heart faith is endeared and beautified; and disbelief, wickedness and disobedience is abhorred (Q.49:7).

When people react with recklessness to the Signs of God, and neglect the signs that are manifested through natural disasters, this shows that their souls are spiritually diseased. Recklessness results from lack of feelings in the face of the evident realities of life (SQT:IV:2367). Warnings such as, “quake of the Hour [of Judgement]” (Q.22:1) is given to prompt the people of faith towards the greatest event yet to occur. Faith cannot be built on the basis of material gain and loss, or deviation from God’s refuge and remission (SQT:IV:2407). Yet, the warnings issued do not deter people from indulging in arguments against God, whilst lacking knowledge, guidance and the enlightening Book (Q.22:8 & Q.31:20). For these types of people it is not enough that they have
strayed; but they drag others too on the path of misguidance (SQT:IV:2411). Acquiring correct guidance helps the soul, and straying away from it hurts the soul (Q.39:41) in as much as the righteous deeds help the soul and evil deeds damage the soul (Q.41:46, Q.45:15) with the consequential effect on its destiny.

Escape from punishment for crimes committed is a common occurrence in human society. If an innocent party is wrongly accused, then the accuser takes the burden of dual evil – the lies spoken and transgression (Q.4:112, SQ:III:304). A story is told of a person who was slain. The guilty, not only concealed the crime but accused the innocent. The criminal could have escaped justice had it not been for God’s mysterious ways of exposing the crime (Q.2:72, SQ:I:97-98). The moral of the story is that, escaping mundane justice is a temporary respite.

Those who have no faith in the Hereafter are asked to wish for death (Q.2:96). In this case, the life of a thousand years would seem short-lived and all the optimism would be shattered (SQ:I:122). Those who have faith in the Hereafter become courageous because the fear of death is removed from their heart. In all circumstances, man cannot ward off death, which might occur in the battlefield or in the safety of one’s home (Q.3:168).

All possibilities for earning rewards terminate when man dies, except in three cases, as specified by the Prophet: (a) a righteous offspring that supplicates for him, (b) an ongoing charity or (c) the knowledge that benefits others after his death (SQT:VI:3415 & IK:VII:207).

Devout believers are given a special status in the Qur’ān. They covenanted with God to give their souls and properties. In return God promised them Paradise. This is termed a “supreme triumph” (Q.9:111). In contrast, those who committed serious errors, faced turbulence as if the earth was about to “close in upon them, and their own souls had become too constricted…” (Q.9:118). Those who held their values dear to their hearts proceeded in the scorching heat and embarked on long journeys. But those who abandoned their values faced humiliation. When the devotees turned to God, His mercy was showered upon them and they were forgiven and were relieved from agony (SQ:VIII:296-298). The fear of God helps in repelling the soul from greed (SQ:II:214).
and to keep it focused on the ultimate Divine rewards rather than self-glory (SQ:III:148). The purpose is to gain eternal success, as is elaborated in the next section.

**Inspiration of the soul towards salvation**

Humans are constantly reminded about their destined end (elucidated in the precious section) to attain salvation (SQ:V:315). An invisible guardian is appointed to watch over every soul (Q:86:4). Yet, individuals embark on self-deceptive manipulation by pretending that they do not assimilate the guidance given (Q:6:26). The righteous focus on the formula presented for human salvation, which is to control base desires. God-consciousness acts as the saviour of the soul from the violent attacks of impulsive desires.

To succumb to uncontrolled desires is like tarnishing the soul (Q:79:40-41, SQ:XXVIII:42-43). “Every soul shall be repaid in full for what it has earned and none shall be wronged” (Q:2:281 & Q:16:111). Thus, the mind and the heart are given tidings that the ultimate reward will materialise in the Hereafter (SQ:1:468). The insight is to be directed towards the true faith on which the innate nature of mankind was formed (Q:30:30). Faith is the only deterrent to vain desires that follow the lusts of the lower self (SQ:V:2767). The helplessness of the soul is portrayed in verse Q:82:19, when every soul is concerned only about its own salvation, unable to intervene in anybody else’s problems (SQ:XXVIII:102).

When the soul of the wrongdoer is taken out of his body, his deeds will be lost like “scattered floating particles of dust” (Q:25:23), the semblance of which are the tiny particles that are seen passing through a window against the rays of the sun (IK:VII:161). On the Day of Judgement, the Messenger will complain: “O my Lord! Verily, my people deserted this Qur’ān” (Q:25:30). The Prophet will present his case against the disobedient of his own community.

God does not wrong anyone “by as much as a hair’s breadth” (Q:4:49 & Q:10:44). No matter how much a person may have wronged his own soul, he can always turn to God in repentance, the acceptance of which is dependent upon: (i) coming to the Prophet, (ii) praying to God for forgiveness and (iii) the Messenger praying for the penitent’s
forgiveness (Q.4:64). This verse is popularly recited by the pilgrims who visit the burial site of the Prophet. It grieves the Messenger that people should suffer. He is full of concern and compassion for them (Q.9:128).

Every community will be summoned under its leaders whom it followed consciously or blindly. The type of leadership that led the community will decide its fate. Whoever is blind at heart in this world will remain blind and further strayed from the truth in the life to come. Those who remain apathetic and careless in this life will be in a greater state of disarray on the Day of Judgement (Q.17:71-72, SQ:XII:195). The Qur’anic solution to minimise disputes and discords and maximise understanding is to trust those who have been endowed with knowledge by God (Q.16:43). The mission of the Messengers was to provide “clear judgement in their disputes” (Q.16:44) and to pave a clear way towards salvation.

The soul of the believer is inspired by the perfect harmony and working of the universe, including the galaxies, which indicates that the power that controls them is that of One Creator (SQ:I:211). Not everything can be seen with physical sight. Insight is considered as the greatest gift. “...Whoever chooses [not only to look but] to see, does so for his own good; and whoever chooses to remain blind, only himself does he hurt” (Q.6:104). Therefore, a blind person in Qur’anic parlance is not the one who is deprived of physical sight, but the one who has no insight (IK:VI:592). “Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts that are in their chests (Q.22:46).

As the soul is the agent for prompting inner thoughts and actions, the guardian monitors and keeps detailed records, and is not constrained by any barriers of secrecy (SQ:XVIII:150). “Successful is the one who keeps it pure and ruined is the one who corrupts it” (Q.91:7-10 & Q.87:14). This state of consciousness requires moulding the soul and inspiring it with the knowledge of righteousness and wickedness.

Divine oath is taken by the soul and by the order given to it in proportions. The distinction between right and wrong is ingrained in human soul. Triumphant is the one who protects the soul from sins, and the failure is the one who taints it with wrongdoing (Q.38:71-72). This message invigorates what has been conveyed in verse Q.76:3: “We have shown him the right path, be he grateful or ungrateful.”
In conclusion, the inspiration of the soul may be located in the individual’s ability to hear its inner voice. This determines whether man is able to save or ruin himself. The voice might be instantaneous. If it is ignored on the spur of the moment, man might end up misguided in following wrong paths. The epicentre of guidance is the soul through the channel of the heart, as is illustrated in the next section.

**Allegorical guidance of the soul towards a blissful life**

The intrinsic guidance given to the soul is substantiated with the outer guidance of the Prophets. As man is the product of clay and Divine Spirit breathed into him, the clay pulls him towards the earthly life, and the Spirit pulls him towards the heavenly life (SQ:XVIII:228-230).

The heart acts as a medium to guide the soul towards the blissful life. Faith originates in the heart (Q.16:106, Q.49:14, Q.58:22). In this context, verse Q.3:8 records a supplication: “Our Lord, let not our hearts swerve from the truth after You have guided us.” Qutb writes that the Prophet who was immune to sin, used to pray: “Lord, You are the One Who turns hearts over. Let my heart stick firmly to your faith” (SQ:II:33). He comments that man has no power to influence his heart although it beats inside him constantly (SQ:VII:110).

The prayers caution, that hearts can deviate after accepting faith. Whether a person hides what is in his heart or reveals it, God is all-aware. If man thinks that his secrets are secure within him, this is illusionary, for verse Q.3:29 makes him realise that God, the Omnipresent, witnesses what is in the depths of his heart. Hence, when faith is accepted and spiritual awakening is fulfilled (Q.6:122, SQ:V:298), the heart is guided towards eternal bliss.

The substances and constituent elements contained in the earth are found in varying proportions in the human body, which carries the same properties as the earth (SQT:VI:3451). Verse Q.55:14 refers to the means of sustenance that originate from the earth, either directly through agricultural produce or indirectly through the meat of the cattle that graze in the fields. Extraction and expansion of the sustenance recurs in rotation as means of tribulations, according to the Divine plan (SQT:V:2771).
The guidance given to animals forms an integral part of their physique. The focus of human guidance is the soul. Yet, humans can choose or reject guidance (SQ:V:2811). When man commits any wrong, he feels guilty; and when he acts rightly, he feels at peace. An artistic and allegorical picture is drawn comparing a good word to a good tree: “Its roots are firm and its branches reach to the sky. It yields its fruits at all times by its Lord’s leave.” The parable is drawn to exhibit that such a tree bears fruits in all seasons, through day and night (IK:V:341). Healthy and firmly-rooted trees, like good words, bloom and have a healthy effect on the soul. Conversely, “… an evil word is like a rotten tree, torn up on the face of the earth. It cannot have a stable position…” The tree which grows on rugged land grows weeds and no fruits. It can be pulled out easily. It is unstable, like an evil word, which languishes and leaves bad memory (Q.14:24-27, SQ:X:260). But righteousness, like good word, has a lasting effect.

If a person is righteous, then God is most forgiving (Q.17:25). “Know that God comes in between man and his heart” (Q.8:24). From the Qur’anic point-of-view, it is clear that the process of self-reformation and ultimate bliss cannot reach fruition without the energy and strength that stems from God’s power. Verse Q.10:57 indicates that admonition or guidance from God cures all that is in the heart. The importance of reforming the self is stated in the words of Ibn Kathir that the self-reformer will not be affected by the wickedness of the wicked, even if they are his immediate surroundings (IK:III:288-289).

In may be concluded that in view of the connection of the soul to the heart, it is questionable whether what is meant is the mechanistic heart which represents a flesh inside the human body that pumps blood and can be operated upon and transplanted. If it was meant to be the same, then it would have been possible to transfer the emotions, feelings and faith too with the physical heart; but this is not the case. Therefore, what is meant is not the heart which is a fleshy substance in the body, but a spiritual heart with abstract properties, whose affinity is directly connected to the soul and is at the centre of receiving the guidance and achieving bliss. But this is not possible without revelation, which is covered in the next section.

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1 There are exceptions to the rule where for instance, the mass-murderers lose all sense of guilt when crimes against humanity become their second nature.
Illumination of the soul through revelation

A principle is laid down by drawing parables that anything useful to mankind tends to survive and anything of no use withers away. After rainfall, foam is formed on the surface of the water. Foam disappears but water remains. Froth accumulates when gold and silver are melted. Froth is cast out but valuable metal is retained. Similarly, falsehood disintegrates while truth remains firm (Q.13:17, SQ:X:175-176).

Man's quest to know the purpose of creation is his quest for the truth. Man shares his existence with other creatures and forces. The path leading to peaceful survival and harmony with nature illuminates the soul and saves it from sinking into the darkness of fear and superstition. Qutb comments: "Faith is the light of justice, freedom and knowledge" (SQ:X:238-239). Verse Q.51:56 spells out the purpose of creation: "I have not created the Jinn and humans except to worship Me [God]."

Man is inquisitive in what lies beyond the physical world, in the world of ghaiib (unseen), comprising belief in the revelation, in God, His angels, His Books and Messengers. Supplication provides succour and creates hope in God's mercy for the shortcomings beyond man's capacity (SQ:I:479). If humans reject revelation, it is against their own souls that they sin (Q.7:177). Only God has complete knowledge of the marvels of the soul, which mankind has witnessed but not fully appreciated over the ages. Qutb rebuts the attempt of the apologetics who give a scientific projection to the experience of revelation. He affirms that science is nowhere nearer to comprehend the nature of Spirit or human soul. The contention of the believers is contrasted with the discontent of the rejectors, who confuse revelation with sorcery (SQ:IX:35-38).

The human mind cannot be the sole instrument for assimilating the mysteries of existence. Under the Islāmic concept, the soul's mentor is revelation. This is substantiated by a maze of intellectual endeavours that pave way for tranquillity and harmonious living. There cannot be homogeneity in thoughts and understanding, which are subject to perceptible and imperceptible influences. Even on similar issues, human reasoning differs. Qutb comments pragmatically: "There is nothing we may call 'human reason' as an absolute concept" (SQ:III:195). The enlightenment from God influences 'reason' towards the right course.
Verse Q.2:286 is the closing verse of the longest chapter in the Qur’ān. It carries supplication, conceding the helplessness of the human soul, and its hope in the Supreme forgiving power of God. Protection of God is sought from the burden of duties that the soul cannot bear. It has been decreed that “no soul shall be laden with more than it can bear” (Q.2:233, Q.6:164, Q.7:42) “No soul shall be made to bear the burden of another…” (Q.17:15). Life is a vehicle for trials and tribulations brought through fear, hunger and the depletion of wealth and crops (Q.2:156, Q.16:112). The patient ones are triumphant as they declare: “To God we belong, and to Him we shall return”, for which, they qualify for blessings and mercy with a promise that “they shall be rightly guided” (Q.2:155-157). This is one of the most popular chants in Islāmic piety.

Patience has been mentioned time and again as the source of spiritual strength at personal and social levels. Patience and prayers develop the powers of resilience in human conduct and generate peace in turbulent times (SQ:I:196). Ibn Kathīr refutes unequivocally the belief of the Sūfīs that when Ma’rifah (spiritual knowledge) is attained, the person is free from the obligation to pray. He considers this as disbelief and ignorance. The best spiritual knowledge was achieved by the Prophet himself. But he never stopped praying and worshipping God (IK:V:426-427) which means that through constant prayers the soul is illuminated. The opposite situation is the transgression of the soul, which is caused by several factors, analysed in the next section.

**Transgression of the soul**

The sign of transgression of the soul is that man longs for evil as he longs for good. “Truly man is ever hasty” (Q.17:11). At times, man is unable to control his emotions and over-reacts with impulsive instincts, despite the fact that they may generate negative and destructive results. When he equates evil with good, this is bound to be detrimental to his soul (SQ:X:138).

One of the most contemptible acts of the soul is the embezzlement of the property of others or bribing the judges to obtain wrongful judgements (Q.2:188). The Prophet allegedly said that when people come to him for judgement with a piece of evidence, he would be inclined to rule in their favour. He further allegedly stated: “If I give someone
anything which is not rightly his, it would be as if I have given him a brand of fire; it is up to him to take it or leave it” (\textit{SQ}:I:249 & \textit{I}:1;522).

This story needs to be looked at critically. The world is replete with unscrupulous people who manipulate evidence to support their claim. If this narration was attributed to an ordinary judge, other than the Prophet, it would have been understandable. But a critic is bound to weigh the veracity of the statement in the light of the historic view of the Prophet’s integrity of judgement, which is emphatically stated in the Qur’ān. “...They have no faith until they make you judge in all disputes...and find in their souls no resistance against your judgements, but accept them with the fullest conviction” (Q.4:65).

According to the alleged tradition, the Prophet was vulnerable to all the weaknesses that affect an ordinary judge. If so, then the Qur’ān would not have attributed unqualified authority to his judgement. Any doubt would put the parties to the dispute in an awkward position as to which of his judgements to trust and which to reject. The Prophet’s sound integrity is protected by the revelation, which means, any attempt to deceive him is exposed by the revelation, as has been recorded by the earliest biographers and the exegetes of the Qur’ān. Responsibility for discreet judgement entails considering every case on its own merits with insight, and evaluating it impartially in the interest of justice (\textit{SQ}:III:195). Therefore, doubting the judgement of the Prophet is the most serious transgression, according to the Qur’ān. Those who have arguments against the Prophet are seen as those who are bent on wrongdoing (Q.2:150).

Hope is provided for the transgressors who turn to God in remorse (Q.2:54). Breaking the covenant made with God is tantamount to damaging one’s soul and invites retribution. The covenant made with the Children of Israel, which complied with Islām, was to obey One God, to care for the parents and relatives, and to be kind and compassionate to the poor and orphans. The obligation to pray and give alms is also in harmony with Islām (Q.2:84, SQ:I:114).

To hold grudges against others, or not to give anything of value to others, pollutes the soul (\textit{SQ}:I:119 & Q.4:53). The perpetrators tend to suffer from pride. Through vile
practices, they sell their souls (Q.2:102-103). Sorcery, witchcraft and black magic are vile and construed as devil's act (Q.2:102) but they are superseded by God's power.

To commit treachery against others is a betrayal of one's soul and this is an indefensible folly (SQ:III:302). The treacherous are under a false impression that by concealing their deviant nature from other humans, they might succeed in concealing it from God. In the darkness of the night, they might be able to keep their plans secret, but God witnesses whatever they conspire to do (Q.4:108, SQ:III:303). Changing alliances to be always on the winning side is also considered treachery. Treachery is prohibited even when one is strong and powerful (IK:V:519).

Intrigues and plots against people who follow the truth are motivated by prejudice and grudges (Q.3:69, SQ:II:119). This may prove to be counter-productive and the schemer might fall into the trap planted for others. The Divine promise is that God thwarts the evil designs of conspirators against the truth. This has been reflected in verse Q.3:54: "And they planned, and God also planned, and God is the best of planners." Through the knowledge and wisdom of the Prophet, God foiled the plots of the betrayers. Hence, they fell victims to their own intrigues (Q.4:113, SQ:III:305).

The souls of the transgressors are attracted to evil, as a result of which, they incur enormous sufferings (Q.5:79-80). The Prophet said: "God does not punish the whole community for the actions of the section of it, until the community sees evil...and does not speak out against it when its people are able to do so..." (SQ:IV:207). Combating evil is construed as a spiritual and communal duty. The Prophet is reported to have outlined the ways of combating evil – changing it with one’s hand or personally; if this is not possible, then with the tongue or by speaking against it; if this too is not possible, then in the heart. The last mode is named as the “weakest faith” (IK:II:233).

There are several remedies for curing the transgression of the soul: (a) to meditate in prayers in the middle of the night; and sacrifice restful sleep for the sake of being in communion with God (SQT:V:2578); and (b) neither to be spendthrift nor parsimonious, but moderate in spending (SQT:V:2579). Those who transgress against their own souls are given hope that they should not despair from God's mercy
The contrasting scenario is of those who forget God, so He makes them forget their own selves (Q.59:19).

Hadith of a whole page length, detailing the plight of a pure and an impure soul is mentioned by Ibn Kathir. The graphical scene starts from the time of extraction of the soul out of the body, passing through the Heavens (in case of virtuous soul) or rejection of entry into the mercy of God (in case of an evil soul) until the soul is rejoined with the body once again in the grave. The grave of the pure soul expands “as far as his sight can reach” and the grave of the impure soul shrinks “until his bones crush each other” (IK:V:342-347). Hence, the Qur’anic admonitions are concentrated to save the soul from transgression, which can be done by deriving benefit from practical illustrations of the possible solutions, indicated in the next section.

Scenarios of seeking refuge of God and elevating the soul

The whispers of the invisible specie of Jinn and humans enter men’s feelings, thoughts, hearts and mind, to lead them astray. Consequently, mankind is taught to seek refuge in all-encompassing God, who is invoked through His attributes to grant strength and to overcome the evil promptings, which humans cannot resist on their own. That refuge acts as a spiritual sanctuary for the soul (SQ:XVII:400). The apex of God’s Justice is that He does not make man accountable for the evil thoughts that cross his mind, so long as he does not implement them, but abhors them (IK:II:103). A Companion told the Prophet that sometimes he says things to himself that he would rather “fall from the sky than say [aloud openly]”. The Prophet explained, it is the plot of Satan that is reduced to whispers only (IK:X:650). Warning against following the whispers implanted by Satan is given (SQ:1:214-215).

Man’s worst affliction transpires as he strays towards vices and perceives them to be virtues! Many nations have been dilapidated as their companions deceived them with evil whisperings (Q.41:25, SQT:V:3119-3120). In a mere three-line chapter of the Qur’ān, mankind is trained to come under the all-embracing care and shelter of God from every evil that exists; from the inner enemy represented by fear and the outer enemy represented by the pollutants of the soul like jealousy (SQ:XVIII:394). There are among men those who have developed a staunch power of resistance — “…a kind of
man who would willingly sell his soul seeking God’s pleasure…” (SQ:1:300). The verse expressly refers to selfless sacrifice and satisfaction gained by defending the truth (Q.2:207).

The Prophet said that the owner of a blessing or bounty is envied (IK:V:138). A man could fight this negative trait by transposing his envious feelings and by improving his own talents. The story of Yūsuf (Joseph) told in the Qur’ān proves that envy can be a collective crime, as in the case of Joseph’s brothers who jointly decided to remove him from the company of his loving father, Ya’qūb (Jacob). Out of jealousy, Joseph’s brothers threw him into a well (IK:V:145) and produced a blood-stained shirt with the pretension of grief, claiming that a wolf had eaten him. But they “forgot to tear the shirt” (IK:V:146-147). This is a typical example showing that a liar has forgetful memory. Jealousy also leads to intrigues as Joseph’s brothers exercised by telling lies to their own father who protested with the expression: “…your own selves have beguiled you…” (Q.12:83) as they had broken the promise to protect Joseph and his brother Binyamin (Benjamin) (IK:V:198-199). The story of Joseph illustrates that his moral standing and purity of heart protected him from harbouring any grudge against his brothers as they harboured against him (Q.12:77, SQ:X:117).

Jacob’s wisdom and insight enabled him to foresee that through Joseph, the covenant bestowed on Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was to be fulfilled (Q.12:5, SQ:X:40-41). Joseph was known as ‘truthful’ because of the confidence he generated in his ability to interpret the dreams and give good counsel (Q.12:46, SQ:X:81). The dreams of the Prophets cannot be compared to the dreams of ordinary human beings, They essentially emanate from the elevated soul being under the protection of God.

Betrayal is the negative trait in the soul. The Qur’ān draws the examples of the wives of the two Prophets, Nūḥ and Lūṭ. They were treacherous by divulging the secrets of their husbands. The betrayal was in religious matters, not sexual fidelity. In contrast, the examples of the wife of Pharaoh and the mother of Jesus are drawn, who sought the refuge of God from tyrannical people (IK:X:73-74). In the former examples, the faith of the Prophets did not benefit their wives, and in the latter examples, the oppression and disbelief of the tyrants did not affect the faith of the steadfast women, who defeated the seduction and won a high status in Paradise (IK:X:75-76).
It may be concluded that the resistance-power developed to fight jealousy, evil plotting, lies, betrayals and grudges by seeking refuge of God can go a long way in dignifying the soul. The objective is to achieve peace within oneself. The next section examines the importance of gratitude in translating this objective into action.

**Attaining the spiritual purity and tranquillity**

Contentment and thankfulness for God's sustenance and beneficence attracts abundance (Q.14:7). "Eat of the good things We have provided for you..." (Q.2:57 & Q.7:160). Man is taught to be grateful. Ungratefulness for God's bounties harms nobody but the unappreciative person (SQ:1:88 & Q.80:17). The Prophet said that the individual who is not thankful to people is not thankful to God (IK:X:523). Meditation and remembering God within oneself, in the morning and evening - when the day starts and ends - is emphasised in verse Q.7:205. Remembering God has to be complemented with thinking of His greatness, fearing His punishment and hoping for His mercy. This is the measure of attaining spiritual purity.

Changes take place continuously. By taking stock of the day's achievement at night, hearts are reflective (SQ:VI:322). To be patient in the face of calamity, to refrain from prohibitions and to abide by prayers and obedience, expresses a sense of gratitude to God for His bounties (Q.2:45, IK:I;442-443). If anyone strives, he strives for his own soul and will be rewarded accordingly (Q.29:6, Q.20:15). God does not benefit from human struggle, which is the best means for enhancement of virtues and eradication of vices (SQ:T:V:2722). The Prophet said: "Verily, Allāh does not look at your faces and wealth, but He looks at your hearts and actions" (IK:IX:208).

The mechanism of cause and effect and the phenomena of the physical and metaphysical worlds are controlled by God's Will. The function of the fire is to burn. But God has power to render this property ineffective, as in the case of Abraham when he was thrown into the pit of fire by Nimrod. Because of his high spirituality, the fire could not burn him (SQ:1:127) and even in that situation he was at peace with himself.

It is part of human disposition to be intensely attached to worldly desires, which deprives the soul of its spiritual progress. Moderation of wants and self-control in the
face of temptations, lead the soul to serenity and contentment. Verse Q.3:14 does not prohibit love for worldly possessions or carnal desires. But these desires should not overcome the spiritual aspects of human life (SQ:II:38). Suppression of mundane or spiritual desires may cause psychological complications. Specifically mentioned are desires for women, offspring, heaped up treasures of gold and silver (greed for wealth), horses (means of transportation), cattle and plantations (agricultural industry in those days) (SQ:II:39). Hoarding of gold and silver will result in retribution and suffering (Q.9:34). Whoever is saved from “the greed of his own self” will be successful (Q.59:9). The Prophet said that it is greed which made people shed blood and make lawful what was unlawful (IK:IX:564). The soul that consciously moderates its wants and desires, achieves tranquillity. The secret of spiritual purity is in giving and not taking. The ways and means of giving for the benefit of others are explored in the next section.

Moulding the soul with charitable spirit

Sometimes a person faces a perplexing situation when his spending on charity affects his personal wealth. To solve this dilemma, the Qur'an stresses that wealth spent with the purest intention, to help the creatures of God, is not depleted but multiplies manifold. Hence, charitable spending is viewed as an investment, yielding seven-hundred-folds rewards (Q.2:261, SQ:1:436). This is an added motivation for those who are prone to accumulate rather than spend. Accumulation leads to hoarding and hoarding to stinginess, which keeps the soul attached to the transient earthly existence. Whereas, spending brings into focus the goal of purification of soul, and frees it from the earthly temptation of greed. The soul senses pleasure by spending to help the downtrodden. The similarity given to spending on wrong causes is like “a biting, icy wind which smites the tilth of people who have wronged themselves, laying it to waste” (Q.3:117). God did not wrong them but they wronged themselves (Q.16:33 & Q.16:118). This type of spending cannot attract any Divine rewards.

Although man might be tempted to inflict injury on the recipient of charity by taunting or boasting, the spender is reminded that such behaviour nullifies all the virtues associated with charity. When the giver seeks self-aggrandisement, he damages his soul and injures the feelings of the person in need. But as wealth is a trust from God, when
the spender participates in the welfare of others, the wealth spent is seen as a loan given to God, which will have multitudinous good effect (Q.2:262, SQ:I:437-438, IK:I:684-685). Spending without a charitable attitude is pointless. “A kind word with forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury...” (Q.2:263). In verse Q.64:16, the benefit of charity materialises in benefiting the soul and results in abundant wealth.

Two contrasting archetypes are presented – those who spend to show-off and win prestige, and those who spend with certitude of faith. The first type is hidden behind the mask of hypocrisy, like “a smooth rock covered with earth”. The soil is awashed as soon as heavy rain falls. The second type is like “a garden on a hillside”, which blooms when rain or drizzle falls. The soil in this prototype remains well-grounded like the self-confidence of a believer. It depends on his charitable spirit whether the garden yields fruitful results or burns to ashes (Q.2:264-266, SQ:I:439-440). In contrast, the hypocrites are pompous with their wealth and children, which are nothing but ornaments of this life. They face a state of restlessness and “their souls perish” (SQ:VIII:218). Despite witnessing the plight of the past nations and the ruins they have left behind, they remain oblivious to reality (Q.9:70, SQ:VIII:204).

The best charity is the one given: (a) with pure intention from the best earnings and not from those acquired by dishonest means (IK:II:55); (b) in a way that the left hand does not know what the right hand has given (IK:VII:688 & IK:X:88); (c) when the individual is healthy and is in need of his wealth (IK:X:289). The charity which purifies wealth and purifies the self, is the one given without expecting any recompense, except blessings from God (IK:X:513). Verse Q.2:267 invites a reflection on the situation where the spender turns into recipient and vice versa. It asks: Would he then accept a discarded charity for himself? The story behind the revelation says that the believers during the Prophet’s time were also susceptible to the weakness of the soul by offering in charity, un-ripened dates “of the worst quality” by some Helpers to the poor Migrants in the Mosque of the Prophet (SQ:I:441). The reason for deviation is the false belief that charitable spending will lead to poverty. This culminates into selfishness and meanness. For example, the custom of female infanticide in the pre-Islamic era was as a result of the fear of poverty.
Alms are spent openly and privately. The former mode is acceptable but the latter is preferred because it keeps the identity of the needy secret. In return, the giver is promised forgiveness for his sins. But the person who does not show any gratitude for God’s favours and refrains from spending, is considered evil (Q.2:270-271, SQ:I:443). On revelation of verse Q.2:272, the Prophet ordered that charity be given to the needy, irrespective of their faith (SQ:I:445). If disclosing the charitable act can motivate others to imitate the good work, then this option may be adopted. Otherwise, secrecy may be maintained (IK:II:61).

Among the recipient of alms who ought to be helped in private, are men of dignity and self-respect. Despite being in need, they conceal their living conditions. They are engrossed in God’s cause and sustain their esteem by refraining from begging, for which they are praiseworthy. Helping them will attract rewards (Q.2:273, SQ:I:446). Charity without conviction and certainty renders it void. Good intention is valued most because it plays a pivotal role in its acceptability (Q.2:265, SQ:I:439).

The Prophet categorised the writing down of the contract for trade or for lending and borrowing as an act of charity because it assists a weak person like, an illiterate debtor (IK:II:86-87). Qurṭb believes that the socio-economic system in Islām is not based on charity, but on work, the reward for which is commensurate with input. Compulsory charity is operated to run the affairs of the State. Voluntary charity is meant for exceptional eventualities.

Abū Dharr, the Companion of the Prophet, whilst in need, received three hundred dinars. But he remembered the Prophet’s advice that if a person has forty dirhams, he should pay alms. Whereas his family’s wealth was “forty dirhams, a sheep and two servants”, so he disqualified himself. With such conscience, socio-economic justice can spread in society (SQ:I:447-448). To mitigate poverty, creditors are advised to relieve the debtors who are unable to honour their obligation (SQ:I:467-468). Provision is also made from Zakāt (obligatory alms) to pay the debts. This demonstrates the social value of Zakāt in eradicating poverty and hardship in society. Concentration of wealth in the hands of a few is abhorred (Q.59:7).
In conclusion, in a similar way that Zakāt is construed as purifier of wealth, usury is construed as pollutant of wealth. All obligatory and voluntary charities are meant to cleanse voluptuousness and gear the soul towards the needs of the poor. The purpose is to promote social justice and eradicate oppression. Several ingredients culminate in oppression, with an adverse impact on the soul, as is shown in the next section.

**Oppression is the worst pollutant of the soul**

Immediately after dealing with the spiritual values of charity, verses Q.2:278-281 deal with the evil of usury. Qūṭb claims: “No other issue has been condemned and denounced so strongly as has usury” (SQ:1:451). This is a contestable statement. *Shirk* (associating deities with God) and *Zulm* (oppression and injustice) are the two most sternly castigated vices in the Qur’ān. Usury is part of the oppressive measures, under which the poor are exploited by money-lenders and charged exorbitant rates on loans. There are other sins and crimes which constitute ‘oppression’. In verse Q.2:279, a possibility is left open for usurers to repent, in which case, they retain the right over their capital and past gains. If they persist, then a war is declared upon them by God and His Messenger (SQ:1:464-465).

Qūṭb writes that this war will continue against the systems in which usury is practised and against the Muslims who breach the clear injunctions against it, as a result of which usurers will continue to face evil repercussions. Repentance is accepted provided the wrongdoers genuinely mend their ways, turn their evil deeds into virtues, be honest in their pursuits of advocating the truth and have an absolute reliance on God’s mercy and forgiveness (SQ:1:208, IK:V:540, Q.16:119).

In contrast with usury, the verdict of the Qur’ān against the oppressors is far stronger: “Even if the oppressors possessed all that is on the earth, and as much of it besides, they would surely offer it to redeem themselves…” (Q.39:47 & Q.10:54). This means that neither they are likely to possess everything on earth, nor are they likely to redeem their souls from punishment. Hence, it is oppression – the killing of innocent souls and spreading mischief on earth - which have been most strongly denounced. Verse Q.3:87 declares the curse of God, and that of the angels and all men on the oppressors. The Qur’ān further states: “There shall be no hostility except against the oppressors”
This confirms that Islam’s aim is to “lighten the burden of human suffering and eradicate oppression, cruelty and injustice for all mankind” (SQ:I:476). The value of human life is ratified by verse: “Do not kill any soul, for God has forbidden killing, except in [the pursuit of] justice…” (Q.17:33). This indicates that Islam upholds capital punishment for serious crimes in order to protect the society.

The status accorded to the community has to be matched with the responsibility of inviting people towards good and forbidding evil and preserving human life (Q.3:110, SQ:II:171). The community is expected to stand in the face of corruption and tyranny. Islam advocates a proactive role in eradicating evil in society (SQ:IV:278-279).

It may be concluded that if man fails to save his soul from oppression, then he is faced with imminent doom. The next section deals with practical training for the soul, with the goal of moulding human behaviour towards self-reformation to achieve contentment within itself.

Training the soul to overcome flaws in human conduct

The Qur’an advocates an applied discipline, which is presented in the form of the duty to refrain from specific things for purification of the soul. One should avoid major sins and shameful (obscene) acts, and avoid justifying them under any pretext. God who has created (the chromosomes) knows all the secrets (Q.53:32). For God, there is no past, present and future. These time-layers are applicable to human life.

By far the most common directive in the Qur’an is to establish regular prayers and pay alms (purifying dues) which is an integral part of purifying the soul (IK:VI:632). This is termed as doing good for one’s own sake (Q.17:7), the benefits of which will be reserved by God (Q.2:110).

Fasting has been prescribed to the past communities of other Prophets. Similarly, it has been ordained upon the Muslims during the month of Ramadān. The commandment exempts the sick and the travellers until the preventing condition is over (Q.2:185). The Prophet asked the Muslims to take benefit from this exemption (SQ:I:237). (See Chapter 5). Spiritual tenacity, self-restraint, feeling the hardship faced by the poor and above all,
purification of the soul are the principal benefits of fasting. Islam does not look favourably at those who flout the ruling and avoid fasting without a valid reason.

The first house of worship for mankind was established at Bakkah (Q.3:96). Makkah was also called Bakkah (IK:II:217). Like fasting, *Hajj* — pilgrimage to Makkah, once in a lifetime for those who can afford it, aims at developing the spiritual faculties of patience and self-discipline. No offence, wickedness or disputes are allowed during the pilgrimage. The only provision considered best in this spiritual journey is the right conduct and God-consciousness (Q.2:197, SQ:I:277). The purpose of subjecting all the pilgrims in the course of the pilgrimage rites to bear the same hardship is to discipline their ego (SQ:I:290) and to remove distinction between rich and poor.

In order to strengthen confidence between people, special rules are laid down for fulfilment of oaths. Taking oaths to deceive people is condemned (Q.16:92). A distinction is drawn between an unintentional and intentional oath. The former is pardonable but the latter is forgiven by paying expiation — either the feeding of ten poor people with the average food fed to one's own family or clothing them or freeing a slave. If these options are not affordable or are impracticable then the atonement is to keep fast for three days (Q.5:89). Verse Q.2:224 relaxes the rule if the motive is to do good. Atonement is not required for unintentional oaths. But intentional false vows cannot be atoned (SQ:I:353-355) because in this case, a person is deemed to have been lying to God.

The Prophet's rulings on all matters have to be acquiesced with unflinching submission and satisfaction (Q.4:65, SQ:III:206). A distinction is drawn between those believers who are inactive or who pay lip-service to their faith and those who strive with their possessions and lives to benefit others. There is no equality between them. The strivers are granted high ranks (Q.4:95). Only those who are subdued by doubts waver from the duty of struggling in life (Q.9:45). A believer cannot be called a believer until his heart and tongue are coherent with his deeds, and until he refrains from harming his neighbours. In addition, as impurity can only be washed off with purity, charity is not acceptable from impure earnings (JK:VI:662).
Those who are wronged are advised to be magnanimous in forgiving the ones who wrong them, rather than resort to retaliation. The spirit of forgiveness expressed openly and in private, purifies the soul (Q.4:149, SQ:III:371). To be humble and avoid vain talk is the character of the noble souls. To ignore arguments of the argumentative people is preferred (SQT:V:2577-2578) rather than pollute the hearing with useless talk (SQT:V:2580). Notably, this is a congenial snap-shot of wise people. They avoid discussing with those who argue for the sake of argument. Despite lacking basic knowledge and insight, the hagglers think themselves to be knowledgeable. The Qurʿān condemns this tendency (Q.22:3, Q.22:8, Q.31:20).

Mankind is addressed with a parable to help it understand its helplessness. “...Indeed those whom you invoke besides God will never create [even] a fly even if they all rallied to do so”; and if a fly snatches anything from them, they will remain helpless (Q.22:73). Though a fly is insignificant, it carries invisible bacteria which may subdue powerful creatures. Hence, mankind is put in an inept position that even a fly musters more power than the false deities (SQT:IV:2444).

Verse Q.2:177 gives a comprehensive definition of righteousness, listing the virtues associated with worship. Entering the houses by the back door, as had been the practice in the pre-Islamic period, is considered abominable. The etiquette of entering houses with the knowledge of the household members is called a sign of righteousness (Q.2:189). This is reminiscent of facing the enemy on the battlefield from the front rather than take him by surprise from the rear, for “God has no love for aggressors” (Q.2:190).

Intoxication and games of chance are seen as “great evils” (Q.2:219). This was the first verse disapproving these habits. It mentions that they have some benefits, but these are superseded by the harm they cause. This was followed by a stricter injunction, warning people not to approach prayers when drunk (Q.4:43). The final ruling completely prohibited “intoxicants, gambling, idolatrous practices, divining arrows” to allocate fortunes; and categorised them as abominations devised by Satan (Q.5:90). “Satan seeks only to stir up enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance...” Therefore, the Muslims were alerted to the negative effects of these acts. By way of persuasion, they were warned that the demerits of intoxicants exceed the merits
(Q.2:129). Attending the five times daily prayers necessitated sobriety (SQ:IV:246). A final prohibition was revealed when the community was mentally prepared to understand the social harms of these habits.

Incrimination of others may lead to harbouring grudges against them. Anger and ill-feelings might blur vision; but forgiveness liberates a person from the danger of damaging his soul and peace of mind (SQ:II:215). Indecency is forbidden, whether committed openly or secretly (Q.7:33). Even the most gruesome sins are forgivable, provided the sinners repent and “do not knowingly persist in doing the wrong” (Q.3:135 & Q.4:110). The signs of genuine remorse are that a person refrains from publicising his sins and deep inside him, carries a sense of shame (SQ:II:216-217). He has to recognise that the sin he commits is at his own peril (Q.4:111). The self is vulnerable to plots and suspicions. Therefore, the Prophet advised that two out of three individuals should not hold secret counsel in the presence of each other, as this might worry the third person (IK:IX:524-525).

Three habits in human conduct have been denounced as contemptible – niggardliness, miserliness and hiding the bounties of God (Q.4:37). Had man been given charge of God’s infinite grace and mercy, the misers would have restrained it (SQ:XII:221). “Man has always been niggardly” (Q.17:100). An equation between stinginess and squandering is drawn. To be miser is equally condemned as being spendthrift (SQ:XII:154). “Do not be miserly, allowing your hand to remain shackled to your neck, nor stretch it out fully to the utmost limit…” (Q. 17:29). Man is covetous (Q.70:19); he becomes anxious when ill befalls him (Q.70:20) and he becomes miserly when confronted with good (Q.70:21). There are exceptions to the rule, which include those who are modest and who keep their trusts and covenants (Q.70:34) and abide by their testimonies (Q.70:35). Non-fulfilment of promises, contracts and covenants will be made accountable (IK:V:620).

Covetousness appears both in depravity and abundance. In the first condition man loses patience, and in the second condition he becomes a miser. When he loses hope in being saved from his dejected situation, his heart becomes void of faith and he remains in a state of persistent fear. Therefore, man’s soul should feel natural attraction towards remembrance of God to acquire contentment of heart. Spiritual remedy is effective on
those who pray without lethargy and negligence. Covetousness is further remedied by spending willingly on those who ask and those who do not beg out of modesty. In this way, Islam also lays down a social security system (SQ:VI:3699-3700).

There has to be restraint on ‘woeful speech’, except by “someone who has been truly wronged” (Q.4:148). This is to give him space to relieve his grief. Moral etiquette covers the way one should respond to false speech – by withdrawing and by accepting that everyone is responsible for his own deeds (Q.28:55). Rumour mongering or character assassination are despised in the sight of God (SQ:III:369, IK:II:527). Verse Q.7:38 highlights weakness in human behaviour, tending to blame others for its own follies. To diffuse the provocation of hostile acts, the formula presented is brusque – to turn away from the ignorant and not to argue with them (Q.7:199, SQ:VI:308). There is a stern warning in the Qur’an that if a fāsiq (corrupt or wicked) person brings any news, it should not be accepted on face value. Its reliability should be ascertained otherwise, others may be harmed unwittingly and then the harm done might be regretted (Q.6:49, IK:IX:189-190).

Practical solutions against the human disposition to insult, defame, ridicule, mock, scoff or use derogatory nicknames against one’s opponents are given in verse Q.49:11, where these types of acts, whether carried out by men or women are classified as wicked. The verse warns that it may be that those who are defamed might be better than the group defaming them. If the offenders do not repent, then they are declared wrongdoers (IK:IX:197). To belittle people and despise them is equated with slander and backbiting (IK:IX:198) and it emanates from the evil in the human soul.

To deal with others on unfounded suspicions and to spy against each other are prohibited acts. Backbiting is said to be like eating the flesh of one’s dead brother (Q.49:12). It is defined by the Prophet as: “mentioning about your brother in a manner that he dislikes” (IK:IX:202). To shun, ignore, hate and envy one another are also despised (IK:IX:201). Human beings are reminded that their division into races or nations and tribes is for the purpose of recognising each other and not for despising each other (Q.49:13, IK:IX:206).
Presenting vividly how human conduct changes in different environments, verses Q.IX.10-21-23 serialise the scenes: (a) When people taste comfort after hardship, they scheme against the revelation. When men are relieved of misfortunes, they turn to their old ways, forgetting their adverse experiences. But those who remain unperturbed succeed in keeping their self pure and sublime (SQ:IX:57). (b) The messengers among the angels are assigned to keep records of all the deeds as well as the innermost intention under which those deeds are performed. God's scheming is swifter than men's. (c) When they travel, the journey continues with pleasant feelings in favourable winds; but when they encounter stormy winds and death lurks over their head, peace and serenity is shattered and fear takes over. (d) When their soul senses that the end is foreseeable, they call upon God in desperation. But solemnity is short-lived as soon as security returns and they feel that their lives are safe; they retract by transgressing in the land. (e) Every soul is bound to become conscious of self-affliction when material life ends (SQ:IX:58-59).

The purity of intention is pre-eminent. In a tradition narrated by Abū Dharr, three types of people will remain deprived of purity on the Day of Resurrection – “men whose clothes reach below the ankles”; those who sell goods by swearing falsely and those who keep on reminding people about their charity (IK:II:193). Wearing long clothes below the ankles is indicative of wastage and a sign of pride (IK:VII:344 & IK:VII:584). Selling goods by taking false oaths indicates dishonesty. Acts of charity for the sake of fame voids the selfless spirit under which charity is expected to be given. A tradition narrated by Abū Hurayrah also adds among the acts that would earn the wrath of God, depriving the travellers of water and paying allegiance to an Imam only if the Imam gives something in return; “but if the Imam does not give him, he does not fulfil the pledge” (IK:II:194-195, quoting Ahmad, Abū Dawūd and Tirmidhī).

The psychological condition of a person in anguish is described in the postures of restlessness – lying down, sitting and standing (SQ:IX:51). When grace is withdrawn, man reacts with ungratefulness (Q.11:9). In abundance he becomes arrogant and in poverty he despairs (SQ:XI:214) and becomes despondent and rebellious. When abundance returns after scarcity, man becomes “jubilant and boastful” (Q.11:10). If he adopts moderation, then he “derives benefit from both situations”, the Prophet said (SQ:IX:193). Qutb traces the history of human affliction from the time human seed is
settled in the form of blood clot through various stages in pregnancy, child-birth and adulthood. This is followed by struggle in life through soul, mind and muscles, followed by riches and poverty and striving for worldly position, or seeking pleasure of God by being compassionate to others (SQ:XVIII:213-214).

In concluding this section, it is noteworthy that the Qur’ān has devised, at individual and social levels, discipline for the soul through meditation, acts of worship, and combating weaknesses and evil, by identifying what is permitted and what is prohibited. Hence, if the advocated training is pursued, results could be achieved to save the evil-orientated self, and bring it under the domain of contented self, where it can enjoy peace and pleasure within itself and with the outside world.

**Conclusion**

Fortunes and misfortunes that befall human beings in this life and the life to come are seen in many verses of the Qur’ān as part of action and reaction, cause and effect, trial and tribulation, purity and impurity of the soul, and the resultant reward and punishment for the good or evil deeds originating from them. Practical methods are laid down as ways and means for purifying the soul. Additional phenomenon of repentance, followed by Divine forgiveness is added to the jigsaw. Hence, it can be deduced that the concept of accountability is an ever changing prodigy, which can neither be quantified nor comprehended by human mind. Yet sufficient leads are given in the Qur’ān, according to which human life can change its fate with persistent perseverance and disciplining the soul.
CHAPTER FOUR

A QUR'ÂNIC OUTLOOK ON HUMAN NATURE IN THE HERMENEUTIC FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to build a regime of ‘human nature’ based on the Qur'ânic exegetical sources of Ibn Kathîr and Qûthb. Having explored different parameters and stages in the development of the soul, man’s central role in the realm of creation and in his society is investigated in this chapter. A correlation is drawn with man’s destiny by identifying the tests he has to pass through in earthly life for attaining success in the Hereafter. The discussion concentrates on how human nature is nurtured under the personal and social code of Islam as projected in the sources, in line with the defined primary aim of this research. The Mission of Divinely inspired teachings of the Prophets to combat transgression in human nature and to mould it towards righteousness is analysed.

McAuliff writes that if human nature is pulled between two conflicting forces of evil and good, then the motivating factors inducing humans to incline towards good must be identified. The principal justification is the obligation to thank the Benefactor, His obedience and moral behaviour which revolves around the theme of the judgement that forms an “inevitable part of the cosmic order”.¹ The next section investigates the place of man in the cosmic order as a prelude to the inquiry into the paradigms of human nature, and the factors that make it deviate from the fitrah.

Man – his origin and destiny

One of many Signs of God is the creation of spouses from their own type so that they can find peace, tranquillity and contentment in each other’s company; and God also created love and mercy in their hearts for one another (Q.30:21). Thus, the mutual sentiments and attraction are a natural phenomenon in human composition (Q.SQT:V:2764). The Qur'ân presents a majestic scene of the time of the creation of

¹ McAuliff, EQ, II:58.
Adam — the first human being endowed with a mission. God expressed His determination to assign the duty of His representation on earth. The angels objected that man would make mischief and shed blood (Q.2:30). But the bearer of the trust was to excel in ranks because of the knowledge vested in him (Q.2:31).

The earth is the abode from which mankind was created, will be returned into it, and will be raised from it (Q.20:55). “All that is in the heavens and that is in the earth is for the benefit of mankind” (Q.45:13). Generations upon generations of mankind were placed on earth, some given preferences above others in status and ranks. “We indeed have created man in the finest form, then We brought him down to the lowest of the low” (Q.95:4-5). Physically, from being robust in shape to weak and infirm, this is the changing reality of human life. Man can rise spiritually to a level where he is ranked more highly than the angels or lower than the beasts if he violates his nature (SQ:XVIII:256).

If God can bring man into existence from nothing, then he can raise him again after he is reduced to nothing (Q.19:67, SQ:XI:369). As man was born unaware of his environment, he was guided (Q.80:20). Man has no say in the commencement and end of his life (Q.80:81, SQ:XVIII:66). The cycle of man’s life is completed with his resurrection (Q.80:22). Despite the changing phases and transformation in his life, he remains indifferent to his origin and destiny, which lies at the helm of Divine guidance (SQ:XVIII:67).

When man’s wants are satisfied, he rebels (Q.96:6-7). He is reminded of the natural and physical formation under which food is grown for his benefit (Q.80:24, SQ:XVIII:67). Amidst the graphic scenes of the great upheavals marking the end of life on earth, man is reminded that willingly or unwillingly he is moving towards his Creator (Q.84:6). With earthquakes and natural calamities, man is reminded of the final destruction when the earth will be inspired to take out everything buried and concealed under its depths, to which man will react with bewilderment (Q.99:2-3, SQ:XVIII:299).

Man’s haughtiness for not hoping to meet God and his pride for demanding to see God is tantamount to forgetting his own insignificant existence in the realm of all that exists (SQ:XII:400-401). At the stage of reproduction, the intricate biological process takes its
course when an unsophisticated germ-cell is implanted in the womb (Q.96:2). Unique human characteristics are endowed on the foetus when it takes its shape under the infinite wisdom of God. The foetus is formed from an insignificant beginning – a drop of sperm – yet man (forgetting his humble origin) openly challenges God (Q.16:4). His origin is also referred as emanating from “gushing water” (Q.86:6). It comes out in “between the loins and the chest bones” (Q.86:7). The phases of formation of life are described in precise sequence. From the extract of clay, a drop of seminal fluid is lodged in a secure abode, to be converted into a “clinging mass as a fleshy tissue”. Bones are created and clothed with flesh, resulting in an altogether different creature (Q.23:12-16, Q.22:5 & Q.32:7-9). The drop of semen reaches the apex of development with unique and individualised human qualities.

The Spirit which is blown into man is not the product of earth. When it joins with the earthly product, the journey of life progresses to higher horizons because the Spirit is blown from the highest of horizons (SQT:IV:2460 & SQT:IV:2409). Quṭb takes a philosophical view of verse Q.32:7 connecting it with verse Q.23:12 and asserts that there is an enormous potential for further reflection on the stages of developments that this extract of clay passed through, even before it settled as an initial breeding ground for the creation of man (SQT:V:2809).

In the light of scientific discoveries, Quṭb writes that “organic, neurological, mental and psychological” components are involved in the structure of human life. He describes artistically that when the fluid starts its journey, man’s intelligence and rationality cannot determine its course. The fertility cell is looked after and nourished by God and then millions of cells are meticulously guided to assume their exact place in building the body parts. The functionality of cells is determined by genes inside the cells, which form inherited distinctive characteristics (SQT:XVIII:152). The human egg is composed of all the features that unravel themselves on the physique, psyche, nerves and mental composition. After reaching the apex of maturity, these features begin to decline in old age when childhood frailties reappear, as the cycle of human life approaches its end (SQT:IV:2409-2410). Up until his departure from earthly life, man encounters his sworn enemy who attacks him and seduces him from the right path. The next section explores the existence of the entity called Satan, who plays a major part with the evil-orientated self in misguiding mankind.
Satan – the avowed enemy of humankind

The Qur’ān says that Satan, being the rejector of the Divine Command was expelled from Heaven (Q.15:34). He was to accompany man as the evil seducer. He was to share in man’s wealth and children and make deceitful promises (Q.17:64). “Satan is but a traitor to man” (Q.25:29). He traps man into taking disastrous decisions and betrays him at critical junctures (SQ:V:2560).

Human nature is vulnerable to evil thoughts and fantasies. The Prophet said that, Satan reaches wherever the blood reaches in human body (IK:I:520). This suggests that Satan is not in corporeal form but is an evil spirit. A rebellious devil from Jinn and mankind is called a Shaytān. He is called Ar-Rajīm – the cast out from righteousness (IK:I:57-59). He challenged God that he would attack the seekers of truth from all directions (Q.7:17). According to Ibn Kathīr, he would not be able to harm man from above, as the mercy of God is showered from above, such as rain (IK:IV:33). But then Ibn Kathīr adds that the Prophet used to supplicate, seeking God’s protection from Satan from above and from below – from where the earthquakes originate (IK:IV:34). The remedy for evil seductions is to seek refuge of God (ist‘ādha) from Satan (IK:I:54-55) in every situation.

Man was created “out of sounding clay, out of black mud moulded into shape”. The core essence of Jinn, the fire orientated creature, was from the “fire of scorching winds”. The nature of man was shaped by blowing into him the Divine Spirit; whereas, Satan who was known as Iblīs, remained deprived of the Divine Spirit (Q.15:26-27, SQ:X:328). Though the activities allocated to Jinn are unknown, those allocated to humans are known. Yet, both of them are assigned the duty of joining in the worship of God (Q.51:56).

Man is exhorted always to speak in the best way. “Satan tries to sow discord between them. Satan is indeed man’s open foe” (Q.17:53). He makes deceptive promises and arouses false desires (Q.4:120). To foil Satan’s intrigues, man should avoid hard feelings and enmity, resulting from foul speech (SQ:XI:179).
Ibn Kathîr quotes Al-Qurṭûbî regarding the interpretation of the dialogue between God and His angels on the appointment of Caliph (representative of God). Verse Q.2:30 is seen in the light of “the obligation of appointing a Khalîfah to pass judgements...to aid the oppressed...to implement the Islîmî penal code and to forbid evil” (IK:I:185). The verse which emphatically speaks about God’s exclusive prerogative of appointing His representative is interpreted and explained in terms of the obligation on the Muslim community. Ibn Kathîr indicates that the Caliph must be a “responsible adult Muslim male...able to perform Ijtihiîd (independent legal judgements), bodily able, righteous, with knowledge of warfare, politics” (IK:I:186). Then Ibn Kathîr continues with what he calls a “correct view” that even when the Caliph becomes Fâsiq (immoral), he should not be deposed from the office. This contravenes the pre-condition mentioned by him that the Caliph must be a righteous person. It is noteworthy that such political appeasements by the jurists have served in accepting oppressive despots to hold on to their unrepresentative reigns until they die, which is so rampant in the Muslim world today.

The Qur’ân lays down two fundamental conditions for a “Caliph on earth” that he should judge between mankind in truth and justice and should not follow his desires which lead him astray from God’s path; otherwise, he would face severe retribution (Q.38:26). The oppressors are protectors of one another, but the right-doers are under God’s protection (Q.45:19). As has been studied in Chapter 3, oppression is the worst contaminator of human soul and human nature. Therefore, man is constantly in need of right guidance which cannot transpire without knowledge. The next section explores the indispensable importance of knowledge in steering the caravan of life towards righteousness.

The role of knowledge for regulating human nature

God taught man how to read and write, and taught him “what he did not know” (Q.96:4-5). Reading and writing are corner-stones of human development, the importance of which is emphasised in the very first verse revealed in the Qur’ân (SQ:XVIII:267-268).

Pondering over the signs of the Creator and understanding the purpose of His creation are encouraged by the Qur’ân. One of His signs is the creation of day and night. After
the day's work, night has been made a "covering" for people, and therein, sleep has been made "rejuvenation" for body and soul (IK:VII:179). One of the essential ingredients in the creation of man is water, and the structure of his existence is based on the kinship of blood (Q.25:54). But it is in human nature that man is prone to keep the ancestral traditions, good or bad, alive. Blind imitation without correct understanding is condemned (Q.2:170, IK:I:468). Harming the creation of God is considered a digression from norm. The Prophet said that the most beloved to God among the humans are those who render benefit to His creation (IK:IV:258).

The resources of the universe are created to serve man. They are subservient to him and supply him with energy and body cells (SQ:X:278-280). He has been graced with knowledge, guidance, ten-fold rewards for every good deed, and the replacement of bad deeds with virtues (Q.6:12 & Q.6:54, SQ:V:67). The allegorical meaning of God's grace is explained by the Prophet who said that God has divided mercy into a hundred parts, retaining ninety-nine parts for the Day of Judgement and placing only one part on earth. Whatever mercy the humans show towards one another is based only on one portion of mercy (SQ:V:68, IK:III:547-548). The fire of Hell is pictured as having a gravity to pull anyone overwhelmed by temptation to commit sins. Those who are able to keep themselves aloof from this gravity are declared victorious (SQ:II:329).

The parable drawn in verse Q.13:17 about a valley that consumes water according to its capacity is interpreted by Ibn Kathir in terms of knowledge. Some hearts "can retain substantial knowledge while others cannot entertain knowledge", or rather carry a hostile attitude towards knowledge (IK:V:259). Man passes through pain and pleasure in life. When distress touches him, he turns to God with penitence and cries for help. But when "He gives him blessing from Himself, he forgets what he cried and prayed for..." (Q.39:8, Q.41:51) though God is the only One Who removes difficulties (Q.27:62, IK:VII:342). When ill befalls man, he becomes despondent (Q.41:49). When he is relieved of distress, he claims that he won relief by virtue of his knowledge (Q.39:49). To claim that the blessing stems from his own knowledge is nothing but illusion (SQ:V:3056). Man's psychological condition in anxiety is said to be followed by prolonged supplications, but as soon as he gets succour he reverts to arrogance (IK:IV:571).
The Prophet gave practical guidance for getting relief from harm – do not slander anyone; do not consider any good deed, no matter how insignificant, as wasteful, even if it is merely meeting a brother with a smile or serving him with drinking water (IK:VII:343).

The Qur'an deliberates at length on how man views his surroundings, beliefs, emotions and ideas; his behaviour and activity, and his ties and relationships. It nurtures his character, conscience and mind (SQ:I:260-261). He has been given freedom to develop his intellect. Quṭb believes that it is an exercise in futility to be apologetic in attributing every scientific discovery to the Qur'an because scientific knowledge is based on experimentation and ever changing theories like, the theory of evolution. Whereas the Qur'anic knowledge is definitive; its objective is to harmonise man with the physical world and to stimulate his mental and intellectual faculties; and to enable him to understand the Qur'an better in the light of the scientific discoveries (SQ:I:262-263).

Worship of God has to take place with consciousness and awareness. The Prophet said: “Worship God as if you see Him, for even though you cannot see Him, He sees you” (IK:II:370). Muḥammad Ḥṣḥ writes that the word ‘ibādah (worship) has been used in the Qur'an “to cover all aspects of life”. This explains why Islām has formulated a comprehensive social code, which protects human dignity, honour and property. He further stresses that human nature is “accepted with all its weaknesses”, but there is no limit to the moral strengths it can achieve. The real meaning of worship can be attributed to the building and habitation of the earth, which Quṭb constructively says, become a jihād in the way of God, based on patience and hardship (SQT:VI:3387). Through patience and self-control, even an avowed foe can be converted to become a close friend (Q.41:34-35, IK:I:216). The Prophet said: “Victory comes with patience, a way out comes from difficulty and with hardship comes ease” (IK:VIII:393). Man has to seek his livelihood through hardship and suffering (IK:X:484). In this process, human nature is brought in close proximity to the untainted self in which knowledge on important aspects of life plays a pivotal role.

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The perfect knowledge is the one conveyed by those personages commissioned for the task of guiding humanity towards perfection. These were the Prophets and the Messengers, the mentors of humankind. The special features of their Missions are selectively presented in the next section to highlight the underlying moral and spiritual aspects portrayed in the Qur'an for treating the weaknesses in human nature.

Cautioning the human nature through the Divinely commissioned exemplars

Mankind has originated from the family of Adam and Eve (Q.2:213). The family has grown in diversity and complexity in thoughts, outlook and perception. The human propensity to dispute and differ finds solution in a set of values as God commissions the Prophets to guide and solve disputes. Some were falsified and some were killed by their antagonists (Q.5:70). The Prophethood is essentially the representation of God on earth. But the Prophets prophesise about the future events, according to the knowledge bestowed upon them by God.

The rejection of metaphysical realm, as promulgated in the revealed Books, results in the digression in human nature and leads it to superstition. Man is consoled that the angels are constantly praying for his forgiveness (Q.42:5), they are protecting him (Q.82:10), they are writing his works and deeds (Q.82:11), they understand all that he does (Q.82:12) and with each soul, there is an angel to drive and an angel to bear witness (Q.50:21). The pre-requisite of the faith of Muslims is to believe in all the Prophets and Messengers, whose Messages were anti-thesis of superstition. Hence, he is assigned the duty of a custodian of the Message which originates from a common source, to give good tidings to the obedient and to warn the disobedient (Q.4:165). The stories of the Prophets told in the Qur'an are meant to cultivate spirituality and sublime nature.

In order to conquer the hearts of his people, Prophet Noah was straight-forward, unflattering and unpromising of super-human powers. Without judging things that lie beyond comprehension, or judging what lies in the hearts of his adversaries, Noah adopted a practical approach of dealing with what is apparent (Q.11:31, SQ:IX:218-219).
After the times of Noah, the people of ‘Ād were annihilated because they were arrogant and took pride in their might under the illusion that their power will be long lasting, although they were warned otherwise by their Prophet Hūd. Their strong fortresses failed to protect them (IK:VII:259). The people of Thamūd who followed them carved their houses in the mountains with extravagance. But they spread mischief on earth (IK:VII:262). As a result, they faced imminent doom. These two communities lived in Arabia (IK:VII:260). The symptoms of the arrogant are that when the Signs of God are recited, they turn away in pride, and act as if they have not heard them - as if they were afflicted with deafness, and instead prefer idle talk (Q.31:7). Ibn Kathîr also comments that it means, “listening to flutes and singing accompanied by musical instruments” (IK:VII:571).

The stories of the ancient people are related so that mankind may take heed from their plight and avoid repeating the same mistakes. Each story addresses the human psyche with a warning and a moral lesson to enlighten human nature. The lying, sinful people are portrayed as those upon whom Satans (the evil ones) descend (Q.26:221-222). This description is juxtaposed with that of the poets who say things that they themselves do not mean or practice (Q.26:225-226).

The attitude of Abraham, the progenitor of the Jews, Christians and Muslims has left much to aspire. He had a “caring, forbearing and compassionate” nature. He raised the status of those who followed him. As to those who disobeyed him, he left their plight to God. He did not plead with God to destroy them or bring deluge upon them. He saw a vision of a thankful community growing up from his progeny that will attract the hearts of people from every nook and corner of the world (Q.14:36-37, SQ:X:283).

The great Prophets employed psychological approaches to awaken the sleeping consciences of their people, with the purpose of leading them to an untainted fitrah. Abraham’s argument was simple. The Deity Who creates, gives guidance, provides with food and water, cures from illness, causes death and resurrection and has the power to forgive, is the only One entitled to be worshipped (Q.26:78-82, IK:VII:239). Abraham destroyed the small idols and placed the axe in the hand of the big idol to make a point that the idols which his people worshipped were unable even to protect themselves and that the largest among them could not defend the smaller ones. Abraham rendered them
speechless on points of logic but their stubbornness led them to insist blindly on the practices they had inherited from their ancestors (IQ:VI:464-465). They sought to rescue their “gods” by throwing Abraham into the fire. Due to the intensity of flames and blazes, they used a catapult to throw Abraham. But he was saved from the great fire and became father of the righteous progeny (IQ:VI:468).

Lūt (Lot), the nephew of Abraham, exhorted his people to maintain physical and moral purity to prevent human nature from being perverted. Ibn Kathīr comments that they practised “intercourse with males instead of females…” and this, he writes, is a “major sin, whereby men are satisfied with men and women with women” (Q.27:55-58, IQ:VII:336-337). When the time of the Divine decree arrived, Lūt, who persistently warned them, was driven out with his family (Q.26:56, IQ:VII:266) except his wife, who supported what they did (IQ:VII:338). She stayed behind and had to face the same punishment that befell his people (IQ:VII:267). The city of Sādūm (Sodom) was turned upside down (IQ:VII:487), the effects of which still survive in the land of Al-Ghūr - the Jordan Valley (IQ:VII:265).

In the story of Moses, the clash of two forces is illustrated. Moses answered the challenge of the sorcerers and magicians of Pharaoh, who was determined to falsify and defeat the spiritual force supporting the mission of Moses. They “cast a spell upon people’s eyes”. But this was a momentary fear which the magicians were able to inflict on the audience before being overcome by Moses, as the truth always gets an upper hand (Q.7:116, SQ:VI:184). Moses was raised in his mission. “He (God) said: ‘Moses I have chosen you for all mankind…”’ (Q.7:144). His appointment was a deterrent to transgression. Deliberation on Pharaoh’s mentality is presented. In his desperate attempt to escape doom on drowning, Pharaoh shouted that he believed in the Deity of the Children of Israel (Q.10:91). But after a persistent rebellion against God and spreading mischief on earth, his plea was rejected. His corpse was saved intact from drowning. The moral derived is that to delay repentance up to the last moment or as a matter of last resort, is not acceptable (SQ:IX:139-140).

Truth triumphs in the face of many odds. Saul (Ṭālūt) was appointed a king over the Israelites to deliver them from their oppressed state. The preferred criterion for his rule was knowledge and strength rather than wealth (Q.2:247). Being appointed by God,
Saul had an insight into human nature and sought to subject his people to a spiritual test so as to determine their resolve for fighting a powerful army of Goliath (SQ:I:388). Although the majority failed the test, the minority who persevered became formidable fighters against a force greater than theirs. They put their trust in God and thus the small host emerged victorious over the large host (Q.2:249). The moral of the story is that spiritual strength triumphed over the physical strength of a large band, by virtue of patience in adversity (Q.2:250).

David was graced with kingdom, knowledge and wisdom. The grace was not terminated but was extended to Solomon son of David, in the inheritance (SQ:I:389-390). God grants ranks based on knowledge and prowess, and excellence of ancestry and progeny, as illustrated in the case of David and Solomon. They acknowledged that God had chosen them over many of His believing servants (Q.27:15) yet, they were modest in glory. Attributing sorcery and magical power to God's Prophet, like Solomon, is considered an abomination. The Prophets were unique among people through the power exclusively derived from God, which conquers all other powers (SQ:I:126-127).

One of the most vital rites in Islām is pilgrimage. Abraham was ordained to call people for pilgrimage to Makkah and was promised that people will converge from everywhere on every means of transportation available. This prophecy is being pertinently fulfilled (Q.22:27, SQT:IV:2418). Abraham is given the tiding of being appointed Imām (leader over mankind). He implores the same status for his descendants and he is told that God's covenant does not reach the wrongdoers (Q.2:124). This does not mean that the descendants of Abraham were wrongdoers, but rather God's covenant is granted to the righteous among them. Equity and justice are the distinguishing characteristics for leadership, as Quṭb rightly asserts (SQ:I:157). The ignominious envy, which resulted in outright hostilities, was against the high spiritual status bestowed by God to the House of Abraham. God granted the descendants of Abraham "the Book and Wisdom, and conferred upon them a great kingdom" (Q.4:54). God grants distinction and status: "Then We made heirs to the Book those whom We chose..." (Q.35:32).

Muslims who owe their origin to Abrahamic creed are assigned the position of being a middle-path community, free from extremes (Q.2:143). This characteristic qualifies the community to "stand witness over the rest of mankind", whilst the Messenger stands
witness over them. The middle-path community develops a constructive attitude between "spiritual asceticism and materialism". Its social, political and economic system is balanced and conciliatory (SQ:I:175). Conciliation between mankind is considered an act of virtue (IK:II:579). This act has been graded by the Prophet as superior to fasting, praying and acts of charity. Similarly, spoiling of relations between mankind is graded as destructible (IK:II:580).

Verse Q.7:106 gives reason for revealing the Qur'anic message gradually in segments, so that people may assimilate the theoretical aspects and implement the practical aspects over a course of time (SQ:XI:224). The revelation proclaims spiritual truth that maintains the measure of guidance, unity, peace and justice. But out of injustice towards one another, those with selfish natures reject guidance and warnings (SQ:1:313). The essence of the Message is the same based on absolute monotheism. As humanity diversifies, new measures are introduced to tackle resulting problems. The purpose behind revelation of the Book was not to "eliminate or restrict the differences and variety in human talent, ability or inclination", but to act as arbitrator over controversies (SQ:1:315). Unity of purpose for the good of mankind is conveyed in verse Q.8:46: "...Do not dispute with one another, lest you lose heart and your strength is gone". Remarkably, this is how human nature is reciprocally geared towards purpose of unity.

This is further elucidated by exhorting people to follow the faith of Abraham who had been among the most righteous (Q.2:130, SQ:1:150). The religion of Abraham was based on pure monotheism. Qutb writes that rejection of this faith is obstinacy (SQ:1:160-161). Eventually, false deities and wrong leaders will disown their own followers who would then aspire to start afresh and mend their ways (Q.2:66-67, Q.6:24 & Q.7:53). They will testify against themselves (Q.7:37).

The Prophet Muhammad's main task was to purify the soul and to teach the Book and wisdom (Q.62:2). Verse Q.3:159 reflects upon the kind and loving nature of the Prophet. He was aware of his people's rude and rough habits. Yet, he was ever gentle with them and not severe or harsh hearted (Q.3:159) despite the fact that on a critical occasion, one-third of his army withdrew before the commencement of the battle of Uhud (3/625), and most of them absconded in the midst of the pitched battle, leaving him behind with injuries (SQ:II:264). In the most trying circumstance, he did not lose
control on himself. The Prophet was commanded to “consult them in the conduct of public affairs” (Q.3:159). This means that the principle of consultation is entrenched in Islām in managing the community affairs, because through this approach, human nature is consoled and given a sense of direction and participation.

It may be concluded that each Prophet addressed a specific social ill during his time. The religion and creed of Abraham is based on the worship of One God, unity of purpose and love for mankind. If Jews, Christians and Muslims who trace their common ancestry to Abraham had assimilated his Message, the world would have been a much more tolerant place to live in than it is. The next section explores the practical implementation process for building a human being with uncorrupted righteous nature.

**Cultivating righteousness and avoiding pitfalls in human nature**

The growth of human body is dependant on food from agricultural produce or meat of the cattle that graze on earth or sea-food. Physical and mental health is dependant on lawfully or unlawfully acquired food. Ibn Kathīr writes that if man’s food, drink and clothing are obtained from pure sources, this has a positive spiritual value, and his prayers are accepted. But if they are obtained from impure sources, acts of worship are rejected (IK:I:469-470 & IK:VI:659). God does not accept supplications of the people who abandon the vital duty of inviting each other to righteousness and forbidding evil (IK:II:233).

In three brief verses comprising a whole chapter in the Qur’ān, the gist of Islāmic faith is presented in a nutshell. It declares that man is doomed to fail, except those who have faith and do righteous deeds and counsel one another to follow the truth and to be patient. Whenever any two Companions of the Prophet bid each other farewell, they recited this chapter to renew their vows that they stand by its message (Q.103:3, SQ:XVIII:330). In the process of moulding human nature towards righteousness, truth plays a vital role. The Prophet said: “You have to be truthful, for truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise. And be aware of lying, for lying leads to immorality and immorality leads to Hell…” (IK:VII:687).
One of the distinguishing features between good and evil is the intention of man to discharge the trust levied upon him according to its terms and to be on the side of justice, which is akin to faith. Breach of trust and siding with falsehood is disbelief. Betrayal of trust includes persisting in sinful actions and speaking lies (Q.4:107). This has been addressed thus: “God commands you to deliver whatever you have been entrusted with, to their rightful owners, and whenever you judge between people, judge with justice” (Q.4:58).

The story of the people of Madyan illustrates that they were reproached by their Prophet Shu'ayb against fraudulent dealings: “Give full measure and weight, and do not deprive people of what rightfully belongs to them” (Q.7:85). This implies that honesty is part of faith; and usurping the rights and properties of others is breach of faith. Honesty purports to foil the possibility of enmity, jealousy and grudge-becoming (SQ:IX:289). Shu'ayb warned them: “Do not act wickedly on the earth, causing corruption” (Q.26:183). His people were situated on the strategic commercial route, so they targeted the vulnerable and rejected the warning (SQ:V:2615). Organised banditry took shape among his people though they were warned of grim consequences (IK:IV:114-115). Spreading mischief in society unsettles social order. Shu'ayb invited them towards co-existence and tolerance. Qutb adds that the non-believers among his people rejected the offer very much as the present-day tyrants are doing (SQ:VI:146-147).

Human relations are intensified through kindness to parents, next of kin, orphans, the needy, neighbours who are relatives and who are not relatives, friends, wayfarers, and those under servitude (Q.4:36). The Prophet said: “Gabriel kept on reminding me of the neighbour’s rights, until I thought that he was going to give him a share of inheritance” (IK:II:451).

The rights of individuals towards each other are protected by barring scoffing and mockery, against each other, whether male or female; and prohibiting defamation and ill-seeming nicknames as this implies wickedness (Q.49:11). In this way, the freedom and honour of individuals are protected and their privacy is respected (SQ:VI:3336). This is followed by warnings that suspicions (based on unfounded assumptions) are sins. With the same tone, spying against others and backbiting is prohibited (Q.49:12).
The call to justice is unequivocal and the believers have a duty to apply it to all people, irrespective of their faith, colour or race. The Qur'an orders the believers: "...Be just, that is nearer to piety..." (Q.5:8). In this context, Qur'ân asserts that none of the sophistications of the modem day justice system measures up to the simple, God-conscious and uncomplicated system of Islâm (SQ:III:346). The essential corollary to justice is “bearing witness to the truth...” even if it is against one’s own interest, against one’s parents or relatives (Q.4:135). To give false witness or to hide evidence are condemned as major sins because somebody’s rights are at stake (IK:II:95). No bias or emotions should overcome witnesses, although the evidence may be against them or against their next of kin. Whether the parents and relatives are poor or have a high social status, God is Superior to all. Hence, partiality is to be avoided (SQ:III:344-345). It is remarkable that this is how Islâm safeguards the justice system so that it does not fall prey to personal interest and corruption, which is so rampant in the modem world.

Nevertheless, “man is a creature of haste...” (Q.21:37). There is haste in his habit and emotions. He tends to rush into whatever crops up in his mind (SQ:IV:2379) and sometimes, falls victim to his own conjecture and imagination. In this way, human nature becomes vulnerable to the sense of partiality which vitiates sense of justice. Worshipping deities other than God has been classified as a great sin (Q.4:48) and a great injustice (Q.31:13) against one’s soul because it corrupts human nature. In this context, it is included in “seven destructive sins” which the Prophet identified. The other six are: magic, killing innocent human beings, consuming usury, consuming the orphan’s property without right, fleeing from the pitched battle, and accusing chaste women of immorality (IK:II:387).

In case of intrigues, the believers are advised not to retaliate “evil with evil” and to rise above the plots they face against their faith. The faithful should “forgive and forebear” in the face of envious attitude from others (Q.2:109, SQ:1:137). The “benevolent element in human nature” is invoked to encourage forbearance (SQ:IV:125). The Prophet describes what the inherent nature of the believers ought to be: “The example of the believers in the compassion and mercy they have for each other, is the example of one body: if a part of it falls ill, the rest of the body suffers with fever and sleeplessness” (IK:IV:469-470).
Individuals with benevolent nature spend their time voluntarily in charity, day and night, in secret and in public (Q.2:274), in hard times and easy times, in prosperity and adversity; and they control anger and forgive others (Q.3:134, IK:II:270). The Prophet said: "The strong person is not he who is able to physically overcome people...[but] he who overcomes his rage when he is angry" (IK:II:270).

The signs of a poised personality are steadfastness and patience in misfortune (SQ:II:223). As earthly life is the stage on which different patterns in human life emerge, the Qur'an invites mankind to take heed from "the fate of those who described the truth as lies" (Q.3:137). There are people who are aware of the truth but abide by falsehood. Either they are victims of their own passion or they fear the hardship of faith (SQ:II:225). The Prophet said: "Kibr (arrogance) is refusing the truth and degrading people" (IK:II:136). Walking on earth with pride and exultation is condemned (Q.17:38 & Q.31:18). Moderation in walking and speech is desirable, rather than raising the voice to resemble the braying of asses (Q.31:19).

The mental condition of believers with marginal faith is described. They waver between self-confidence and instability, depending on whether they live a life of ease or hardship. They end up losing both worlds when they compromise their faith (Q.22:11). Whereas the faithful remains firm like a rock, even if the world around him becomes tumultuous (SQ:IV:2412). The Qur'an prohibits indecencies. Qutb comments that the term 'shameful indecency' means adultery and fornication, and that the revealing clothes, flirtation, mixing of sexes and long penetrating looks after the casual glance, are also part of indecencies (SQ:V:357). "Never does God enjoin what is indecent" (Q.7:28).

Emphasising the importance of love and compassion in inter-human relations, especially towards children, the Prophet said: "Mercy is not granted to one who is not merciful" (SQ:V:69). Mercy even towards animals is emphasised through an episode told by the Prophet that God forgave the sins of a person when he quenched the thirst of a dog. Qutb quotes the example of some Şûfis who stretched the concept of God's Compassion towards His creatures beyond limits by deliberately committing sins, so as to "enjoy the sweetness of God's forbearance", as they claimed (SQ:V:70-71).
In conclusion, honesty in dealings, honesty in consultation and abiding by the obligations enshrined in the revelation, are components of righteous living, as was demonstrated in this section. Inculcating a sense of justice is paramount to promoting justice, without which human nature remains susceptible to pitfalls. However, if the mind is convinced that life is a battle-ground of trials and tribulations through which everyone has to pass and has to emerge victorious, then human nature can be disciplined, as is discussed in the next section.

Gearing the human nature towards trials and tribulations in life

People are categorised into (a) acceptors of faith (Q.2:2-5), (b) rejectors of faith (Q.2:6-7) and (c) hypocrites (Q.2:8-18). Those who willingly accept faith have to corroborate it with virtuous deeds, without which faith is construed incongruent. Hence, in many verses of the Qur'ān, belief and good deeds are inseparable, in as much as faith in God and the Day of Judgement are considered inseparable.

Verses Q.3:139-140 give consolation against despairing and losing heart in the matter of faith. Fortune and misfortune rotate in life. Injustice is equivalent to disbelief (Q.11:228). The real test of faith comes at the time of grief when a person is bereaved or passes through a calamitous phase, with loss of wealth and/or children. As earthly life will pass, the glamour of “play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting and rivalry in respect of wealth and children” (Q.57:20) will also pass. “Wealth and children are the adornment of the life of this world” (Q.18:46).

A desperate mental state of a traveller at sea is portrayed such that when he faces danger to his life, he turns to God in anguish. But when he is saved from the storm and reaches the shores safely, he is “bereft of all gratitude” (Q.17:67, Q.11:192). Human weakness associated with exuberance is expressed in lack of generosity, devouring the inheritance (of others), greed, and passionate love for wealth. The criterion for passing the test is to be responsive to the needs of the deprived (Q.89:17-20, Q.18:205).

Trials and tribulations are the means through which strong faith can be cultivated in human nature (Q.11:330-332). The more hardship the faithful person endures, the more resolute he becomes (Q.3:186). Affliction is part of trial, which includes poverty,
disease and ailments (IK:I:591). Viewing the matter from another angle, trials are an act 
of mercy from God, meant to jolt a person from his negligent ways, and awaken him to 
the reality of life. If man is carried away by his extravagant life, he may remain adrift. 
Hence, calamity can awaken his conscience and save him from further disasters. If he 
persists, the results can be pernicious (SQ:III:358). Individuals are despaired when faced 
with calamities. They are reminded: "Does mankind think that by just saying, 'We 
believe', they ... will not be tested [?] (Q.29:2). In his elegant style, Quṭḥ describes the 
types of tests the believers may undergo (SQ:V:2720-2721).

When man faces trials with transitory comfort, he believes that he deserves this comfort 
(Q.89:15). When he is tried through limited means, he believes that he is disgraced 
(Q.89:16). When he tastes Divine mercy after adversity, he thinks that it is because of 
his merit (Q.41:50). Quṭḥ asserts that on the Day of Resurrection, man will confess with 
shame his attachment to wealth and sensuous pleasure (SQ:XVIII:346). According to 
another renowned exegete, al-Rāzī, greed is the accumulation of wealth; miserliness is 
the retention of wealth; niggardliness is the excessive love for wealth³ or withholding 
wealth when it is necessary to spend it; and extravagance is wasting wealth when it is 
necessary to hold it.⁴ The Qur'ān admonishes: "And eat and drink but do not waste by 
extravagance" (Q.7:31). A middle path has to be adopted between excessive spending 
and miserliness (IK:III:250). Those who are misers and incite others to behave likewise 
are condemned (Q.57:24).

When the consequences of negligence will crystallise and man will be able to see the 
punishment in its perspective, this will be followed with regrets for failing to employ 
wealth beneficially. "...Man will remember, but how will that remembrance avail 
him[?]” (Q.89:23). The time for regrets will have lapsed (Q.89:24).

Generosity and giving alms before death approaches is commended and considered a 
sign of virtue. The Qur'ān has warned against voracious attachment to wealth (Q.89:19-
20). Strangely, one of the ways al-Rāzī thinks that a person can fight niggardliness, 
apart from limiting his personal wants, is "not attending to his children" because God,

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⁴ Ibid. 217.
having created them, will also provide them with sustenance.\(^5\) He means by this claim, not to leave inheritance for the benefit of the children. However, in Islām a whole regime of Inheritance law exists, based on the Qur‘ān, where children of the deceased fall under the band of the first category *per se*. Al-Rāzī also detaches himself from reality, alleging that the heirs who inherit wealth say: “The wealth was only hoarded by the miser, the cursed.”\(^6\) It seems he is generalising a solitary event or adverse personal experience.

The rights of the next of kin are preserved through the admonition of the Prophet that a person should write a will in order to leave behind wealthy rather than poor heirs, who do not have to beg after him. Hence, a person can bequeath in his lifetime only one-third of his property, the rest has to be left for the legal heirs (*IK*:1:492).

The believers are required to safeguard their faith and stay away from those who, being impressed with the charm of the world, take religion “for a pastime and a sport” (*Q*:6:70). When a believer comes across loose talk, he does not allow its evil to contaminate his dignity, but he passes by it peacefully (*IKVII*:205); in contrast with the one who lends his ear to useless talk in order to misguide others (*Q*:31:6).

Concluding this section, riches are accompanied with the burden of responsibilities although man is prone to covet wealth. Wealth is an essential medium for trial and tribulation in life. Man is most susceptible when it comes to accumulation of wealth, as a result of which, he resorts to deceiving and lying. But these vices have their own negative psychological effect on human nature, which is explored in the next section.

**Combating the dark side of human nature**

There are people who lack confidence in themselves and in their cause, so they resort to lying. This is the sign of cowardice. A liar is a loser both ways. In this life, he faces humiliation and in the Hereafter his secrets are exposed (*SQ*:VIII:181-182). The signs of a liar are that he takes false oaths unnecessarily, instigating rifts between people. He is cruel, rude and harsh (*IK*:X:107-108). One of the defects in human nature is that man

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\(^5\) Ibid. 203.  
\(^6\) Ibid. 205.
concentrates on the shortcomings of others whilst he approves the same defects or even worse in his own character (IK:X:266-267).

Two facets of human nature are illustrated in verses Q.2:204-207. The first type is personified by the man whose speech is attractive to his listeners and who presents himself as righteous and sincere. Yet he harbours malice and hatred towards others. He can easily deceive people through his lies by citing God as witness. He gives the impression of being reliable, but is unreliable. For self-interest, he can easily cause havoc to the life of others. Corruption is his second nature. He does not care that God despises mischief. His double standards lead him to hypocrisy. He attracts the wrath of God for himself by destroying life and the means of livelihood (SQ:l:299-300). In sharp contrast, the other type is that of a sincere and devoted person, who remains selfless and does not care about his comfort when defending the truth. The disparity between the two is represented by the mentality that prevailed in the time of the Prophet. Certain tribal chiefs believed that being older and richer than the Prophet they were more entitled to receive the revelation (SQ:V:302) despite the fact that even his deadliest enemies testified that he was the most truthful and never lied (IK:IV:576).

Qutb states that associating partners with God “murders sound human nature”, and adultery is a “murder of the community” and manslaughter is a “murder of the individual” (SQ:V:358). A person, by worshipping his own desires, slams the door of guidance at his own face. Consequently, his hearing, heart and sight are sealed by God; and only God can deliver him from such a state of gloom (SQ:V:3230-3231).

Because of the pride and arrogance of the people, the Divinely commissioned Messengers always faced hardships (Q.2:87). Qutb comments that Muslims who oppress their own people become “weak, divided and humiliated”. This humiliation will continue until they return to the guidance of God and His Messenger (SQ:I:117). To transgress against the Divine Power is equivalent to sinking into self-disgrace (Q.4:133, SQ:III:336).

Devouring the wealth of one another is considered an evil gain (Q.4:161). The only allowable profit is that arising from trade. Prohibited gains include those derived from “cheating, bribery, gambling, monopoly and hoarding” (Q.4:29). Qutb interprets the
clause “do not kill yourselves” to mean embezzlement of funds and other vile practices, whereby people tend to sell even their own honour for material gain (SQ:III:116).

Fraudulent dealings are castigated. The aristocracy of Makkah was accustomed to cheating in trade. An austere message was passed to them that they should give full measure and weight for the merchandise on sale, as they expect a similar deal from others when they buy their products (Q.83:1-3, SQ:XVII:109-110). People are reminded that on Doom’s Day everything that people earned and accumulated will be melted in front of their eyes (Q.101:4).

In conclusion it may be stated that if the negative side of human nature of lying, deceiving and defrauding others is not checked, it is bound to become part of the hypocrirical character. Hypocrites have other attributes too, and these are analysed from different perspectives in the next section.

**Hypocrisy – the worst trait in human nature**

Ibn Kathir defines hypocrisy as, “to show conformity...and to conceal evil”. He writes that hypocrisy in creed (matters of faith) will cause the hypocrites to burn in Hell forever; and hypocrisy in deeds is a major sin (JK:1:124). The hypocrites endeavour to deceive others, but end up deceiving themselves (Q.2:9 & Q.4:142). They have disease in their heart (Q.2:10); they make mischief on earth and claim to be peacemakers (Q.2:11); they indulge in double talk (Q.2:14) and exchange guidance for misguidance (Q.2:16). They are the most quarrelsome in disputes (JK:1:577 & JK:V:272). They are unreliable and their speech is distorted (JK:1:528). They spread false news (JK:1:130). Their words and actions are in disharmony (Q.2:8). They like to be praised and take credit for things they have not achieved (Q.3:188, SQ:II:332-333). They are portrayed as “deaf, dumb and blind” who will not return to the right path (Q.2:18). They can betray and change colours at any time. They practise more intrigues than the outright rejectors of faith (SQ:1:39-40). When they are invited to be faithful, they mock the believers and call them fools. Their pride leads them to shun the faith (Q.2:13). Honouring the trust is the sign of the faithful, and breach of trust and giving false evidence are the signs of hypocrites (SQ:VI:3702).
The hypocrites, despite being aware that the ordained times of prayers are an opportunity for their souls to be in communion with God, “when they rise to pray they rise reluctantly”. When they do rise, it is more to make a show out of it and less to remember God (Q.4:142). They react with laziness at the time of prayers (Q.9:54). Acts of worship performed unwillingly or half-heartedly are defective in goodness. God is good and pure and He accepts only what is good and pure (IK:IV:447).

The hypocrites are recognisable by “the tone of their speech” (Q.47:30) and their “lying tongue” (IK:IV:463). They invite people towards evil and prohibit good (Q.9:67). They rebel against truth (IK:IV:465) and nullify their own deeds (IK:IV:466). Their essential characteristic oscillates. They are neither on the side of the unbelievers nor on the side of the believers, and they keep on going astray (Q.4:143). In battles, they are cowardly. When the time comes to face the enemy, fear of death encompasses them (IK:IX:109). When they are frightened, the looks in their eyes revolve like that “over whom hovers death”. But as soon as the fear subsides, they attack with their sharp tongues (Q.33:19). They are always on a look out for an excuse to escape duty (IK:IV:498).

The Qur'an unveils their true face: “The Bedouins are the worst in disbelief and hypocrisy...” (Q.9:97) except those that are faithful in belief (Q.9:99). The Prophet described the desert-dwellers as (i) hard-hearted; (ii) hunters of wild animals for sport; (iii) heedless and (iv) people who associate with the rulers and fall into dissention (IK:IV:501).

Generally, there is a conflict within the psyche of the hypocrites because their deeds lack sincerity. They give charity with resentment, though they may be rich (Q.9:53-54, SQ:VIII:187). The Prophet said: (a) when they speak they lie, (b) when they promise, they break it and (c) when they are entrusted, they act treacherously (IK:1:148 & IK:IV:481). A story is told of certain people who travelled to Madinah to declare their Islam. Ibn Kathir writes that “if their wives gave birth to sons and their mares gave birth to foals”, they would take this to be a good omen and give credit to Islam. But as soon as they were inflicted with disease or their wives gave birth to girls, they would turn back. These people were “on the edge” (IK:VI:532-533). Notably, they were double-minded and were on their guard to use the faith for material gain only.
There is a conflict between their superficiality and intention. The Qur'ānic warning is clear: “O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do? Surely it is most unpleasant in Allāh’s sight that you say that which you do not do” (Q.61:2-3). To bid others to be pious and righteous whilst forgetting oneself is like preaching to others what one does not practise (Q.2:44). When mischief is intended, the Qur'ānic verdict is clear: “Indeed the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire [of Hell] and you will never find any helper for them except those who repent and do righteous good deeds” (Q.4:145-146).

The resolve of men is tested at a time of imminent danger when large forces gather to crush them. The example of the battle of Uhud, the second battle in Islam, is drawn. The Muslim forces were defeated because many fighters fled in breach of the Prophet’s specific instructions and were not patient in the battlefield (IK:II:261). Their greed for booty turned victory into defeat. But there were those who defended the Prophet without caring for their own lives. They succeeded through their firm stance to reverse the frightful situation (Q.3:173-174, SQ:II:297-298). Qutb comments that one of the reasons the archers defied the Prophet at a critical time was their doubt that the Prophet would not act honestly in giving them their share of the booty. The weakness of their faith put the entire fledgling community at risk. The Qur'ān describes the psychological inhibition of those who fled from the battle: “...you ran away dreadfully without casting even a side glance at anyone...” (Q.3:153). This indicates that it was not only the greed for booty, but fear for their life which led them to flee. Whilst refuting the accusation against the Prophet with regard to the spoils of war, the Qur'ān emphasises that he cannot breach the trust or act deceitfully (IK:II:307) because this was against his nature.

Some of the hypocrites among the Companions had the audacity of blaming the Prophet for the disappearance of the booty of the first battle of Badr (2/624) (SQ:II:270). Under the guise of Islam, people had carried with them the baggage “from the days of their pagan, ignorant past” (SQ:II:254). There were those who superficially agreed with the Prophet in his presence, but disagreed behind his back; and in matters of war and peace, they spread false rumours (SQ:III:228). When any good befell the believers the hypocrites were displeased, but when any evil befell them the hypocrites were pleased (Q.3:120, IK:II:252). Their state of mind was geared towards spreading sedition and there were people who listened to their gossip and false rumours, meant to promote
discord and weaken the community (IK:IV:440-441). The Qur'anic verdict is specific: "To spread mischief is worse than murder" (Q.2:217) simply because it results in many murders.

At the time of spending, the hypocrites hid themselves (IK:IV:450) but at the time of taking, they eagerly appeared on the scene and even accused the Prophet for being unfair in the distribution of alms (IK:IV:451). Their mental state reflected a guilty feeling, with a fear that the revelation would unmask what was in their heart (IK:IV:461). In order to polish their image, when they came in the presence of the Prophet, they greeted him flatteringly the way that even God has not greeted him (Q.58:8, IK:IV:462). When any ruling was in their favour, they were submissive. But if it was against them, they preferred somebody else's judgement to that of the Prophet, and doubts appeared in their hearts (IK:VII:108).

Warning is given that God is aware of the thoughts that the mind conceives and the feelings that the heart conceals (SQ:I1:256). The Qur'an is explicit that the Prophet was sent to all mankind and that "obeying him is tantamount to obeying God" (Q.4:79-80). The Prophet is ordered that when judging between people, "do not contend with those who betray their trusts..." (Q.4:105).

In concluding this section, it is clear that the hypocrites are considered unreliable in the worldly and religious matters. Not only there is disparity between their words and deeds, but they do more harm than good; so they are not trustworthy. The next section explores the craving of human nature towards organising itself in the social environment, the most important of which is the family life. The family bond is considered a sacred union in Islam, under the shade of which human civilisations have grown and flourished.

Family life – vital propensity of human nature

Muhammad Qutb writes that Islam is Din-ul-Fitrah (religion of pure human nature) because according to Islam: (i) human nature finds coherence, peace, stability and relaxation in family environment; and family life is an inherent part of social structure; (ii) kindness, compassion and love are the essential ingredients for bringing up children;
(iii) kindness can overcome other negativities in human nature like, hatred and hostility; (iv) equality of men and women is outlined in the Qur'ān, “…I will not waste the effort of a worker among you, whether male or female” (Q.3:195). He further states that Islām creates equilibrium between the individual and society, which is akin to human nature. In the Qur'ān, human nature is given judicious training on how to build the nucleus of human relationship. The purpose behind the creation of spouses has been identified as seeking comfort which leads to ṭawaddah (affectionate love) and rahmah (mercy). (Q.30:21). The spouses are garments for one another (Q.2:187). This means that in a similar way that the garments cover parts of the body, spouses are expected to hide and overlook each other's weaknesses, defects and lapses, in order to promote understanding and forbearance between them. The husband is expected to make his appearances attractive to his wife, as he would expect the same from her. The Prophet said: “The best among you is he who is the best with his family…” (IQ:II:409).

Marriage protects the spouses (SQ:I:246). It is viewed as a sacred relationship upon which stability and spiritual purity depends. Marriage with an idolatress or idolater, even though they may be physically attractive, is considered spiritually demeaning. Whereas, marriage with a believing bondswoman or bondsman, though they may be physically unattractive, is considered spiritually exalting (Q.2:221, SQ:I:348-349).

Woman is given an independent right over her dowry, unless she waives it voluntarily (Q.4:4, SQ:III:41). If there is a dispute between spouses, a peaceful solution is the best option (Q.4:128), especially if the woman is in a weak position of fearing “ill-treatment and desertion” from her husband. For those who keep up to four wives, strict pre­conditions of equity are imposed and additional shackles are placed on husbands by way of duties. Hence equity and compassion in everyday dealings (but not in love and feelings) (SQ:III:37) are expected, otherwise, man should suffice with one wife (Q.4:3). But if under certain circumstances, the man opts for polygamy, then he is cautioned about the subtle factors affecting woman’s nature. Man should not show one-sided attraction towards any one of the wives to the exclusion of others, thus leaving them in a

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7 Muhammad Quṭb, op. cit.
state of suspense (Q.4:129). The warning is blunt: “In no way can you maintain equity between your wives, even though you may be keen to do so” (Q.4:129).

Quṭb passes sweeping remarks, without substantiating his claim with empirical evidence, that “it has never been known in history” that the proportion of marriageable women “has ever exceeded the ratio of four to one” (SQ:III:33). He writes that man’s fertility ends at 70 and woman’s at 50 (SQ:III:34). (This does not mean that woman has no carnal desires after 50; and it does not mean either that man continues producing children until 70). Polygamy was practised in most societies before Islām. Islām regulated and restricted it. Outright prohibition would have led to immorality (SQ:III:38). It is noteworthy that Islāmic scholars have long argued that the need for polygamy is felt during wars when the population of women far exceeds that of men.

Islām discourages desiring abundance in this world, but teaches men to strike a balance between the good of this world and the good of the Afterlife (Q.2:200). Some philosophers argue that religious idealism is against human nature; and that to succumb to lustful desires is in compliance with human nature. Quṭb disagrees (SQ:III:208). He interprets verse Q.4:28, “God wants to lighten your burdens, for man has been created weak” in the context of promiscuity in society. He sees in the ruination of ancient Athens, Rome and Persia, uncontrolled permissiveness. Hence, by lightening of burden is meant legitimate sexual relations (SQ:III:107).

Sexual relations are regulated, and cleanliness is emphasised. Mating in an unclean or bleeding condition is prohibited to remove the risk of disease (Q.2:223, SQ:1:352). A waiting period of four months and ten days is laid down for widows, so that if there is pregnancy, it becomes apparent. After the waiting period, the widow is free to contract a marriage. If she happens to be pregnant then she has to wait until she gives birth before re-marrying (Q.2:234-235, SQ:1:370).

Islām regulates social codes against trespassing on other people’s property and person (SQ:IV:2507). The etiquette of entering the houses of other people is to seek permission, and if granted, to enter by bidding peace (Q.24:27-28). The moral of entering the privacy of a person is through establishing a legitimate relation and choosing the virtuous as spouses (Q.24:33), with strict prohibition on forcing the
servants and slaves into prostitution (Q.24:33). The Qur'an prescribes capital punishment against sex offenders and against the gossipers who accuse chaste women (SQT:IV:2518).

The plight of the divorced woman should be resolved amicably. After she completes the three-monthly cycles, the husband should retain or release her without any coercion. The husband is warned against acting out of malice. The marital relationship cannot blossom without good faith. If it is to be terminated, then the parties have to separate without hurting each other (Q.2:231, SQ:I:364). There is no chapter in the Qur'an by the name “Marriage” but there is one by the name “Divorce”. It specifies the right of the divorced woman to live in her husband’s house for three-monthly cycles except in case of serious sexual misconduct (Q.65:6).

In order to deter a man from divorcing his wife and taking her back a number of times, the limit of two separate divorces has been set. After giving a third separate divorce, she cannot be taken back unless she marries another husband, and he divorces her without pressure (Q.2:230, IK:I:635). One of the contagious points that caused debate among the jurists is whether three divorces pronounced by the husband in one sitting (such as, when he is angry or drunk) are valid or not. There was no scope for the controversy when the Prophet in his lifetime had made the matter clear. When it was reported to him that a Companion had pronounced three divorces at one and the same time, he reacted disdainfully and said that the Book of God is subjected to mockery “while I am still among you” (IK:I:640). This indicates that he disapproved the practice.

In case of estrangement between the spouses, reconciliation and peace rather than separation is the priority. Therefore, a trusted arbitrator representing each spouse has to patch up the differences (IK:II:447). Verse Q.2:228 gives mutual rights to the divorced and divorcee and prescribes a cooling-off period, so that anger and emotions subside and the couple have a chance to re-think their situation (SQ:I:357). Divorce has been described by the Prophet, as the most detestable of the allowable things. The financial burden of paying maintenance during the prescribed waiting period falls on the husband.
The widow has a right to stay in her husband's house for one year with the right of maintenance from her husband's estate to alleviate emotional and physical hardship. Out of her own accord, she is free to leave her deceased husband's house after four months and ten days, which is the prescribed waiting period for widows (Q.2:240-241, SQ:1:375). Ibn Majah has narrated a hadith: "The woman does not give away another woman, or herself in marriage, for only the adulteress gives herself away in marriage" (IK:II:426). This comment may give rise to misperception that a woman who has no surviving male relatives has no right to get married.

It may be concluded that if the marital relationship is healthy, the children too can grow up in a healthy family environment. Apart from laying down the rules between husband and wife, the Qur'an lays down the rules for relationship between the parents and children to regulate social side of human nature. This is analysed in the next section.

**Moulding the human nature towards the rights of parents and children**

The rights of parents are entrenched in the Qur'an. Uppermost on the scale of human rights, are the rights of parents. After obedience to God, kindness to parents is emphasised, especially in old age, when childhood is revived in their actions. Even a slightest rebuke whilst addressing the elderly parents is condemned. They have to be treated with respect and tenderness by lowering in front of them the "wing of submission" and by remembering their favours of bringing up the child since its tender age (Q.17:23-24). The reciprocation of care is expected to continue through the third generation when children themselves would have reached old age and would be in need of care. The parents sacrifice their bodies, nerves and lives for their children, without complaint (SQ:V:2788). An incident in the Prophet's life is narrated that a man carried his aged mother on his back and circumambulated the Ka'abah on performing the pilgrimage. He asked the Prophet whether he had fulfilled her rights, to which, the Prophet replied: "No, not even for a single deep sigh [on giving birth]" (SQ:XI:150-151).

The mother's right as compared to that of father is given a three-fold emphasis in a tradition. The mother carried the child "through weakness upon weakness" (Q.31:14). "She bore him in pain and gave him birth in pain" (Q.46:15). The child has to be nursed
for a maximum of two years (Q.2:233 & Q.31:14). The wisdom is that the mother’s milk carries natural properties and physical and psychological benefits. It is preferred that the natural mother undertakes this task once a consensus is reached with the father, who is responsible for the maintenance of the child and the mother. Both are admonished to give priority to the child’s welfare. In case of hardship, where mother is not able to nurse, they are exhorted to engage a wet nurse. The aim is to cultivate warm physical contact between the child and the mother, who is excused in case of disease or other impediments. But in the tender years, the weaning arrangements have to be made by the father even in the case of divorce, and by his heirs, in the case of death (SQ:1:368-369).

The tender years of a person’s life are the first thirty months, in which, he is indebted to mother’s sacrifices that can never be repaid. This he realises when he attains maturity and seeks to leave the legacy of gratitude for God’s grace and a righteous progeny (SQT:VI:3262). Verse Q.7:189 expresses inner feelings of everything good the parents long for and hope for the child, even before it is born (SQT:VI:298). Kindness to parents is correlated with the duty to bring up virtuous children, who in turn, look after them. But if the child is deprived of love in childhood, it will be deprived of compassion (SQ:III:146). One of the rights the children enjoy is that the parents should not pray against them and should not invoke curses against them (IK:IV:570).

Warning is given that though the parents enjoy a right of respect and a right to be served, they have no right to force their child to join other deities in worshipping God, in which case, they have to be disobeyed (Q.29:8). Yet, their company must be kept honourably (Q.31:15). Man is reminded that blood ties will cease but the tie with God is everlasting and has to be nurtured (SQT:V:2722). The Prophet asserts that there is no obedience to creatures in disobedience to God (IK:II:497). On the root-foundation of the parental rights, the pyramid of rights is created. The rights of near of kin, the needy and the stranded travellers are mentioned, with a warning against extravagant spending (Q.17:26, SQ:XI:153).

Verse Q.17:31 discards any connection between poverty and infanticide, which is considered a ghastly crime, as God has promised to provide them their sustenance. Fear of poverty should not spur the parents to adopt this option. The mention of provision for
offspring precedes the mention of provision for parents because the offspring already exists. In comparison, in verse Q.6:151, the sustenance of parents precedes the sustenance for offspring. In this case, the state of poverty already exists, and the birth of children is impeded because of poverty. Hence, parents are reminded that if God is capable of providing for them in destitution, He can also provide for their offspring (SQ:XI:155). In both the cases, infanticide is loathed and will be subject to severe punishment (IK:III:485-486). To strengthen the bond between the parents and the offspring, the benefit and reward of good deeds for the parents is transformed to the children and other relatives, who emulate the best of examples. Hence, the virtues of parents bear fruitful results for the progeny (Q.52:21, IK:III:543-544).

The negative reaction of the people in the pre-Islamic era, to the birth of a female child, is condemned (Q.16:58). This depicts what has been well documented that the birth of a female child was considered shameful and called for reprisal against the child by burying her alive (Q.16:59). By declaring its revulsion against this barbaric practice, Islam brought revolutionary changes in the society by raising the status of a female, from no entity to an honourable entity. In the performance of righteous deeds and rewards, males and females were placed on equal footing (Q.16:97).

Qutb comments that there is a link between killing of children, such as, infanticide and abortion and adultery. Preservation and the sanctity of family life is sought through segregation of sexes, so that men and women are not encouraged to come nearer to adultery (SQ:XI:156). He continues that Islam recommends fasting for controlling sex outside marriage for those who do not afford to marry; and that it condemns large sums being demanded in dowries and recommends financial assistance to those who wish to get married.

In conclusion, it may be stated that Islam sensitively protects the family bond by defining the relationship between the spouses, parents and children and their ongoing duties towards each other. It puts the burden of responsibility for the weak segments of the community like orphans, on the society, as they are deprived of parental love because of no fault of their own. The rights of orphans in the social set-up, is discussed in the next section.
Protection of the rights of orphans

It is reported that the Prophet has said that God will not punish on the Day of Judgement the one who is compassionate to the orphan. The Qur'an meticulously protects the rights of orphans who are weak in the family and in society. Moral and legal safeguards are accorded over the property of minor orphans from being misappropriated by their unscrupulous guardians (Q.4:2-6). At the time of distribution of large inheritance, if poor relatives, orphans and destitute, who have no legal share are present, then out of kindness and compassion, they too should get some share (Q.4:8, IK:II:385). Despite these precautions, legal authorities cannot supervise what is in the minds of the people; but God consciousness can (SQ:III:29). As regards blood relatives, an informal relationship is specified. An individual is permitted to eat from their houses without resorting to excesses (Q.24:61).

The trustees are urged to separate the orphan's property until the age of maturity is reached. The possible digression of human nature is addressed with a stern warning that it is "a great crime" to devour whatever rightfully belongs to the orphans. The guardians who might be tempted to exchange their defective property with the good property of the orphans are warned that God is aware of their intention (SQ:III:28). The onus is placed on the guardians for the custody of the property of the feeble-minded orphans, in which case, the trustees have to adequately provide for their maintenance, even after they come of age (Q.4:5). The test of sound judgement should be applied when the orphans attain puberty. The guardians are warned against wasteful spending. If the trustees are rich, they are expected to restrain themselves; and if they are poor, they should take what is fair by way of remuneration. If they are satisfied that the orphans are fit to manage their property (after puberty), then they should be given the charge without hesitation (Q.4:6). Thus the vulnerable are given protection from the possible misuse and maladministration by the deceptive custodians (SQ:III:43).

Sequential verses Q.4:126-128 commence with an enquiring gesture as to the rulings pertaining to women. "Orphan women" and "helpless children" are the top priority. If the orphaned woman was attractive and rich, the guardian in the pre-Islamic period did

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8 Kamali, (2002), The Dignity...28.
not miss a chance of marrying her, so that he did not have to depart with her estate. If she was unattractive, he would not allow her to get married, lest her husband claimed her property. In both ways, orphan women and children were vulnerable to exploitation. The method of pre-claiming woman, so that nobody dared to marry her later, was that "in ignorant days" (sic) (SQ:III:328) (in the days of Ignorance) a man would throw his dress over an orphan girl under his charge.

In conclusion, it may be stated that marriage for the purpose of usurping the orphan's property is deplored in Islām. The social code for guiding the human nature is meant to protect the weak and place the onus on the society to look after their welfare.

Conclusion

The institution of Prophethood is a medium between the Divine and mankind. Whatever knowledge mankind has about the purpose of creation of man and his seducer Satan, and the end destiny, has been conveyed through revelation. Man passes through the ebbs and tides of time and through abundance and deprivation in life. It is noticed that neither material abundance is a sign of Divine reward nor deprivation is a sign of Divine displeasure. The trial of the rich is in giving and not only receiving. The trial of the poor is in patience and in being contented with whatever he has. If this phenomenon is viewed with the insight of faith, then it may be concluded that God does not allocate comforts of life on the basis of good and evil conduct, as indeed, many evil people are affluent; and many virtuous people are poor and destitute.

Disharmony between words and deeds robs the individual of credibility and confuses others, causing them to lose confidence in that person and in the values he represents. The way to restore lost confidence is through simple but sincere endeavour, translating words and beliefs into practice with commitment; and this is a vital step ahead towards refining the human nature.
CHAPTER FIVE

SALIENT HUMAN DISPOSITIONS

IN THE HERMENEUTIC WORKS OF IBN KATHIR AND QUTB

Introduction

Having established in the last three chapters the regime of 'soul' and 'human nature' in their individual and social phases, this chapter extends the inquiry into fitrah. It also presents discussion and deduction on controversial issues about the responsibility for human actions from the ethos of the Qur'an. The basis of the critique is to show that in the context of other Qur'ānic verses, there is a scope for viewing certain dissenting matters from different perspectives.

Manifestation of fitrah

Internet Encyclopedia of Religion writes that the commonly understood definition of fitrah is derived from the Prophet's tradition that, "God creates children [newborn infants] according to fitrah [natural disposition] and their parents later make them Jews or Christians [or Magians]. As such, every child is born a Muslim [surrenderer to the Will of God]." It is also defined as: "The original healthy constitution of the nature of humans as created by God." This implies that if an individual can protect himself from external factors, then he can revert to the perfect Laws of God, free from social or environmental influences. In this sense, every human being and every creature that functions according to God's obedience and Laws are Muslims. This is further explained in terms of obedience that if all humans are left to pursue their inclination, without any outside coercion, then all will follow Tawhid (monotheism) naturally (Q.30:30).

Encyclopaedia of Islam raises several dilemmas. Macdonald writes that Ibn 'Abbās "did not understand it [the term] until he heard a Bedouin..." However, if Ibn 'Abbās was in

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2 http://www.answers.com/topic/fitra.
need of explanation, he would have asked the Prophet, with whom he was in direct contact. But Macdonald asserts: “This is one of several contradictory traditions on the salvability of the infants of the unbelievers”.

It is noteworthy that the tradition conveys a simple message that the birth of all the infants, without exception, is based on pure and untainted self and on the basis of submissiveness, in as much as other entities like, the sun, the moon, the stars and the trees are all submissive to the perfect nature under which they are created (Q.55:5-6). If the jurists later on saw the matter in the context of inheritance, whether a child that is supposed to be a Muslim could inherit its non-believing parents before attaining the age of discretion or the age of maturity; and whether the parents could inherit a child if it dies before the age of maturity, then this was tantamount to complicating the matter through juristic contests.

But Macdonald raises the issue from the view-point of orthodox theologians, who believe that “the guiding aright and leading astray must come from Allah [H]imself”. He asks whether the said tradition of the Prophet might be seen as interference with the “Sovereign will (mashi‘a) and guidance (hidayâ) of Allah” (7) It follows that the orthodox theologians give the parents only a secondary role in the interpretation of this tradition.⁴

Yasien Mohamed sees a vast gap between the Islāmic concept and secular concepts of human nature, represented by Darwin, Freud and Skinner. He defines fitrah based on “linguistic and positive religious explanation”, which is, “an inborn natural predisposition...”⁵ He categorises four views on fitrah – the predestinarian, the neutral, the positive and dual.⁶ The predestinarian view is that man is either good or evil by Divine Decree.⁷ The neutral view diametrically opposes the predestinarian view and emphasises the free-will of man.⁸ The positive view believes that fitrah is intrinsically associated with Islām.⁹ Commenting on dual or bi-polar human nature, Mohamed

⁴ D. B. Macdonald, EI², II:932.
⁶ Ibid. 36.
⁷ Ibid. 37.
⁸ Ibid. 41.
⁹ Ibid. 43-44.
writes: "Taking this argument a logical step forward, one may conclude that Islam exhorts man to be both good and evil, which is obviously absurd."\textsuperscript{10}

An additional manifestation of fitrah is that, if one is to appreciate the relationship between man and his environment and other species that are dependant just like him on sustenance, then the relationship between man and God has to be understood first.\textsuperscript{11} Although the vastness of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind (Q.40:57), the latter bear far greater responsibility than the former (Q.33:72). Ben Adam writes that man has to behave in a responsible manner even with the animal kingdom and natural habitats.\textsuperscript{12}

The Prophet was questioned whether man gets Divine rewards for being kind to animals, and he replied that there is a reward for being kind to every living being.\textsuperscript{13} According to the tradition of the Prophet, keeping the earth green with plantation and vegetation is considered a virtuous deed, even if it is the last deed a person has just enough time to perform on the face of the earth.\textsuperscript{14}

This disposition can be extended towards natural love for children which manifests itself through compassion implanted in human hearts. The Prophet was seen on many occasions hugging and kissing his grandsons, al-Hasan (d. 50/670) and al-Husayn (d. 61/680). His Companion 'Aqra ibn Ḥabis told him that he has ten children but has never kissed any.\textsuperscript{15} These examples illustrate that in order to maintain equanimity in human character one has to remain consistent with fitrah. Therefore, those who destroy the environment, habitats and human life, whether for material or political or ideological reasons, are the rebels against human nature. To live by the fitrah is "an expression of the highest degree of spiritual awareness...and a fruit of great spiritual struggle".\textsuperscript{16} The next section examines certain phenomena that affect the human dispositions, as reflected in the exegetical literature.

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. 65.
\textsuperscript{15} Helminski, 68.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. 14.
Examination of salient human dispositions in the exegesis of Ibn Kathir

Ibn Kathir records that the Prophet said, “Allāh created creation in darkness, then He showered His light upon them. Whoever was struck by that light is guided, whoever it [the light] missed is astray” (IK:III:455). But in contrast, there are verses in the Qur’ān that speak about the guardianship of God, Who guides from the depth of darkness towards light (Q.2:257). Those who reject the guidance are led astray by their rebellious leaders (IK:III:456). This can be further assessed from other verses of the Qur’ān where the challenge of Satan is identified by leading astray those who succumb to his plots. He promised that he would mislead all, except a few (Q.17:62), arousing in them false desires (Q.4:119). As the natural resistance power is created in the fitrah of human being, it depends on the individual effort, the extent to which he is able to tap on that energy.

Ibn Kathir writes: “Some of the Muslims will come on the Day of Resurrection with sins like mountains, but Allāh will forgive them and put (the burden of their sin) on the Jews and Christians” (IK:VI:634, quoting Muslim)\(^{17}\). This statement does not tally with the Qur’ān which specifically rules that no bearer of burdens (sins) will bear the burden of another (Q.6:164, Q.17:15, Q.35:18, Q.39:7, Q.53:38). Hence, this narration is not compliant with clear Qur’ānic text which depict Divine Justice.

In the story of Mary, the Qur’ān speaks about the exceptionally gifted disposition of Mary. Gabriel approached her in human form to give her tidings of the birth of Jesus. Verse Q.19:18 talks of her reaction before he could introduce himself: “Verily, I seek refuge with the Most Gracious from you...” Whilst interpreting Mary’s reply, Ibn Kathir comments that she “thought that he wanted to rape her”. In response to this, he writes: “Jibril felt apart and returned to his true form” (IK:VI:241).

Notably, in the context of the reverential tone of the Qur’ān, it is inappropriate to attribute such a thought to Mary because the Qur’ān speaks highly about the purity and innocence in her nature, her faith and spirituality. But Ibn Kathir goes on to describe

\(^{17}\) *Muslim* Vol. 4, hadith 6668; *hadiths* 6665 & 6666 also speak on the same subject.
For text of these *hadiths* see,
http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/fundamentals/hadithsunnah/muslim/037.smt.html#037.6668
graphically how Gabriel blew into her private parts, to make her conceive the child (IK:VI:244). The process is not depicted in the Qur'ān. If the Qur'ān safeguards her honour and sanctity, then any interpreter should have been cautious in the use of expressions that may lead others to imagine things offensive to her sanctity. It is noted that the Qur'ān uses its expressions courteously: “And she who guarded her chastity We breathed into her Our Spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for nations” (Q.21:91). Therefore, in the fitrah of Mary there is a noticeable composure of humanity and spirituality.

Another perplexing situation a researcher comes across vis-à-vis certain hadiths is either he is expected to pretend that no turmoil has ever taken place in Islamic history between the nearest Companions of the Prophet, in which case, he will be dishonest to himself. Or else, he has to point out the contradictions, considering that the Companions like all other human beings were subject to human dispositions. The case in point is that Ibn Kathīr narrates from Bukhārī and Muslim that the Prophet is reported to have said: “When two Muslims fight (meet) each other with their swords, both the murderer as well as the murdered will go to Hellfire”. When the Prophet was asked, how can the murdered person end up in the same plight when he was only a victim? He replied: “He surely had the intention to kill his comrade” (IK:III:152-153).

This narration needs to be analysed in the context of the well-documented facts of history. The life of the Muslim community was built around the Message of the Qur'ān and the practices of the Prophet. Yet it is a widely documented in history that not only had the Muslims taken out swords and fought each other in the formative years from the first century onwards, but ever since the times of crusades and the post-colonial era. Many Muslim nation-states have faced each other in cross-border hostilities and bloodshed. But according to the narration quoted by Ibn Kathīr, a substantial number of Muslims will end up in Hell, notwithstanding a simple logic that in any conflict, one party is the aggressor and the other party repulses aggression; or one party is the oppressor and the other party fights oppression.

Moreover, verse Q.49:9 issues specific injunction: “If two parties among the believers fight each other (aqtatalū) then you make peace between both of them. But if one of them exceeds the bounds against the other, then you fight against the one who exceeds
[the limits] until it complies with the Command of Allâh...” This means that the Qur’ân has explicitly left the possibility open that there will be occasions where, because of weakness of human soul and susceptibility of human nature to selfish desires, the believers will fight each other. It has diagnosed the problem and has given a remedial prescription. Whereas the narration quoted by Ibn Kathîr suggests that there is no remedy for this affliction, except the fire of Hell.

The crucial point is that the Qur’ânic injunction concerns itself with the armed conflicts between the believers. Elsewhere in his work, Ibn Kathîr asserts that the expression “those who believe” refers to “Muslims” (IK:III:232). Verse Q.49:9 continues to emphasise the necessity of settling disputes between the adversaries with justice, equity and fairness. This means that the arbitrating party is not expected to remain pacifist but to take an active side against the one who exceeds the limits and behaves treacherously, aggressively and oppressively.

Yet, wherever and whenever the Muslims undermined the cause of justice as the core principle of Islâmic faith, they stood as bystanders to many armed conflicts throughout history between their fellow Muslims. Consequently, the party that crossed the limits in warfare enjoyed free reign of carrying out its intimidation. One has only to look at recent history to notice the stark conflict between theory and practice. For example, Saddam remained a respected member of the Arab League even in the aftermath of gassing thousands of Kurdish civilians, including babies in Halabja on 16 March 1988.¹⁸ Despite a specific command of the Qur’ân, no member of the Arab League stood by the aggrieved party against the aggressor.

Sometimes the narrations quoted raise discrepancies. Ibn Kathîr writes that al-Zubair was asked what brought him to the battle of Jamal, in which the battle-cry was to avenge the blood of ‘Uthmân, when, as the enquirer reminded him, he himself had abandoned the besieged Caliph and then “came asking for revenge for his blood”. He replied: “We (Companions) did not think that this Ayah was about us too, until it reached us as it did” (IK:IV:289). He was referring to verse Q.8:25 in which the Qur’ân warns of the dissention which would afflict “not in particular (only) those of you who

do wrong”. The crucial matter is that the said verse had reached the Companions, “as it did” at least twenty-four years before the battle of Jamal, during the lifetime of the Prophet. Ibn ‘Abbās who narrated that this verse applies to the Companions “in particular”, was considered the pioneering interpreter of the Qurʿān and was like al-Zubair, a close Companion of the Prophet.

Although Ibn Kathīr does not solve the dilemma, it is obvious that the closest Companions of the Prophet did not see the subject of fitnah (dissention) mentioned in verse Q.8:25 eye-to-eye otherwise, they would not have been in the opposing camps on the battlefield. However, Ibn Kathīr concludes that it is true that the stern warning applies to the Companions too (IK:IV:290). Another event is narrated under the context of verse Q.8:42 that two boys employed by the enemy camp were captured and brought to the Prophet. As he was engaged in prayers, some Companions took the initiative of interrogating them. Being unsatisfied with their answers, they “beat the boys vehemently”. On finishing the prayers, the Prophet reprimanded them by saying: “When they tell you the truth you beat them, but when they tell lie you let them go?” (IK:IV:324-325). If anything, this episode too illustrates that all Companions were not at equal level of perception. The Prophet was a tutor in his community and when the matter involved mistreating anybody and accusing them wrongly, be it members of the enemy camp, he did not hesitate to side with the aggrieved. This example illustrates that the nature of the Prophet was akin to fitrah.

Some of the narrations recorded by Ibn Kathīr in his interpretation are astounding and they need to be critically analysed. He writes that Ibn Ḥanbal has recorded that a Companion (unnamed) said that the Prophet led them in the Dawn prayers and recited Chapter 30 of the Qurʿān in which “he made mistakes”. The narration continues that after the prayers the Prophet said that “we sometimes make mistakes in reciting the Qurʿān, there are people among you who attend the prayer with us, but do not perform Waṣūl [ablution] perfectly…” (IK:IV:518). The narrator seems to have joined two separate issues. But Ibn Kathīr justifies it by commenting that the tradition points out that “complete purification helps in the performance of acts of worship”. Notably, some other people praying in the congregation had not performed ritual purity. Yet, the narrator connects somebody else’s impurity with the Prophet’s performance.
Ibn Kathîr’s methodology is to interpret the Qur’ân from the Qur’ân, as he claims. But then the said narration directly clashes with what the Qur’ân itself has to say, that it was brought down on the heart and mind of the Prophet (Q.2:97, Q.26:192-194). This means that the Revelation was implanted on his heart and memory. Another verse of the Qur’ân also negates the quoted narration. Verse Q.10:61 states: “Neither you [Mûlîmammad] do any deed nor recite any portion of the Qur’ân...but We are witness thereof...” The Divine watchfulness and hearing is asserted whilst addressing the Prophet’s recitation (IK:IV:626). The point that seems to have been missed by those who recorded the said narration is that, had it not been for the Prophet’s recitation, precisely as revealed, there was no way that any expert of Arabic language would have spotted what was right and what was wrong in his recitation. It defies rational thinking that those who heard the Qur’ân from the Prophet had a sharper memory to locate his mistakes than he himself, on whose heart the Qur’ân was ingrained (according to the Qur’ân).

Ibn Kathîr gives explanation for verses Q.75:16-17 to read: “We [God] will gather it [the Qur’ân] in your chest [O Mûlîmammad], then you will recite it to the people without forgetting anything of it” (IK:VI:398 & IK:X:448). This also negates completely the narration that the Prophet committed errors in reciting the Qur’ân. Elsewhere, Ibn Kathîr asserts that the first phase of the revelation was “gathering it in his [the Prophet’s] chest [heart]” and the second phase was to recite it as it was revealed (IK:X:269). This means that the Prophet recited the Qur’ân exactly as Gabriel taught him (IK:X:270).

Nevertheless, Ibn Kathîr presents another version of the same tradition, in which the Prophet allegedly said that he had become confused and committed errors in recitation (IKVII:568). He stresses: “It (the tradition) contains amazing information...This indicates that the prayer of the person who is praying in the congregation is connected to the prayers of the Imâm.” This needs to be examined critically in the light of the empirical evidences. In Ibn Kathîr’s interpretation of the second version of the tradition, the prayers of any Imâm (not only the Prophet, this time) leading the congregation is affected, if somebody praying behind him is not in ritual purity. Any pilgrim could notice, as the present researcher has observed time and again during his several visits to Makkah for pilgrimage that, at the time of the dawn congregational prayers in the Grand
Mosque, many people lying fast asleep join the prayers without renewing their ablution or ritual purity which they are required to do. There is a specific hadith about the need of performing ablution for prayers after getting up from sleep, so that the prayers are accepted (IK:IX:303).

It is noteworthy that there are a number of factors that void the ablution, any of which could have possibly occurred during sleep. But many pilgrims, due to unawareness (and this is the strongest probability) or lethargy or difficulties in reaching the washrooms, join the prayers immediately after rising from sleep. Yet, the present researcher has never noticed that because of the deficiency in their ritual purity, the Imam of the congregation gets confused or commits mistakes in recitation. This is one of the situations where observation negates what is narrated. This empirical evidence can be further substantiated by observing the five times daily prayers relayed live from Makkah on the Saudi TVs. Hardly ever can the observer notice mistakes being committed in the recitation by the person leading the prayers; whereas, there can never be any guarantee that thousands of people praying in the congregation are all in perfect ritual purity. However, the strongest testimony that can be relied on is that of the Qur'ân itself that it was implanted on the heart and memory of the Prophet.

Ibn Kathîr has discussed an event in Muslim history, without further elaboration. The status of inviolability, peace and sanctity granted to the Ka'bah is a symbol for all mankind (Q.5:97). In its vicinity, no bloodshed, no killing of animal and plantation is allowed in a state of consecration during the pilgrimage. The Prophet is reported to have said: “No one is allowed to carry weapons in Makkah” (IK:I:382) and shedding of blood therein is prohibited (IK:I:381) because it is a sanctuary designated by God as “House of God” (IK:II:220-221).

Even the people in the pre-Islamic Era of Ignorance used to honour the precincts of the sanctuary as “safe from enemies and armed conflict” (IK:I:372, quoting al-Ṭabarî III:29). But in the third year of the reign of Yazîd bin Mu‘âwiyyah (61/680–64/683), Ibn Kathîr writes, Ka'bah was set on fire as his forces fought his rival ‘Abdullah bin Az-Zubair (d. 73/692), who had declared himself Caliph in Hijâz in Arabia (IK:I:393-394). Although Ibn Kathîr has mentioned the ignominious historic event of the desecration of Ka'bah, there are some missing links in his commentary that need to be analysed. What
he does not mention in his exegesis is that three major historic events in this period are interconnected and caused a permanent rift in the Muslim community. In the first year of Yazid's reign, the massacre of Karbalā in Iraq took place against the grandson of the Prophet, al-Ḥusayn bin 'Alī and his small entourage of seventy-two males, including his children. Within fifty years of the Prophet's death, the nearest members of his family were slaughtered, their bodies mutilated under the hooves of the horses and the ladies of the Prophet's Household taken captives from one city to another, with the severed heads of their loved ones. Qutb writes that the Prophet had forbidden disfigurement of bodies even of the enemy soldiers and prohibited killing of women and children even in a state of war (SQ:VIII:310-311).

The Prophet is reported to have said that as Abraham made the Ka'bah in Makkah a place of refuge, he declares Madinah a "Sacred Area" (IK:I:379, quoting An-Nisāʾī and Muslim). But in the second year of Yazid's reign, the sanctity of Madīnah was violated, with the massacre of the Companions who were scholars of the Qur'ān. The sacred city was then ransacked. These facts are narrated by Jalāluddin al-Suyūṭi, who then quotes the Prophet's hadīth: "Whoever frightens the people of Madīnah, God will frighten him, and upon him is the curse of God and that of His angels and all the people." Al-Suyūṭi then describes how this Caliph, through his brutalities, trampled over the basic ethics and sanctities of Islām (in the name of Islām). The ferocity and ruthlessness in mutilations of the dead bodies and killings of the opponents for political power, survives in the Muslim world regardless of the humanitarian values preached by Islām.

In concluding this section, it was noticed that a variety of human dispositions are reflected in the sources, some of them allied to fitrah and some of them outrageous to human nature. The next section compares differences in interpretation on fasting, so that "...you may learn self-restraint" (Q.2:183), which means that fasting develops a disposition of patience through a spiritual exercise.

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19 Khālid (1986), 147.
20 Masudul Hasan, 160.
21 Al-'Aqqād, 257-259.
22 Moussalli, 44.
23 Al- Suyūṭi, 233.
Differences between Ḍūḥ and Ibn Kathīr’s interpretations on exemption from fasting

As has been observed in Chapter 4, the Qur’ān exempts the sick and the traveller from fasting until these conditions are over. In present times, when certain ailments and modes of travels are not harsh, people fast even in a state of sickness and while travelling. Herein lies a test of faith as to how much a person’s self seduces him to follow his own desires at the cost of clear injunction.

This is not peculiar to modern progressive thinking. Ḍūḥ relates incidents from the Prophet’s life that while on a journey, he publicly broke his fast, yet some Companions did not follow suit. He then stated: “They have disobeyed”. In another incidence, the Prophet declared that those who have broken the fast have earned all the reward. In the face of defiance by some Companions, the Prophet said: “It is not righteous to fast while on a journey.” Ḍūḥ continues quoting narrations from the same sources that permit fasting if the travellers so wish; and that according to Abū al-Dardā, the Prophet fasted on journey and according to Anas, he did not fast in Ramadān before starting a journey. Ḍūḥ narrates eleven separate incidences as they appear in the books of ḥadīths (SQ:I:238-240). But then he derives his own conclusion that, “exemption allowed for fasting ought to be taken unconditionally” (SQ:I:241). There is a disparity between Ḍūḥ’s view and that of Ibn Kathīr although both of them use the same sources. Ibn Kathīr writes that “it is better to fast (on travelling) according to the evidence of other reports (IK:VII:395-396).

Conspicuously, there is a conflict in the versions of the reported traditions. Ḍūḥ is pragmatic when he declares that the circumstances that lessen hardship have to be considered, although “ahādīth referring to the same subject seem to point in different directions” (SQ:I:240). The practical ruling in the Qur’ān (Q:2:183-185) is unambiguous. The sick and the travellers are exempt and have to make up equal number of days later. Others like, the aged and infirm, pregnant women and nursing mothers (IK:I:498) who cannot fast, have to pay an expiation of feeding one poor person for each fast missed.
In conclusion, as fasting is meant to teach patience and as patience is an essential avenue for achieving purity of the soul, fasting with underlying conditions, has been made obligatory in Islām (Q.2:183-185). The next section examines further differences in the interpretations regarding the institution of slavery and the way Islām sought to solve the problem in a dignified humanitarian way, which clashes with certain juristic outlooks.

The institution of slavery in the exegesis of Ibn Kathīr and Qūṭb

Slavery prevailed in all ancient societies as it was a vital economic factor of production, with all its ensuing exploitation and cruelty. Generally, two principal methods were adopted to abolish it - forceful and peaceful. The first method as witnessed on the international arena was adopted much later through the civil war in America, with the ensuing bloodshed.24 The second method meant accepting slavery temporarily and simultaneously, providing necessary conditions for its gradual abolition. Islām adopted the second method, and slavery gradually disappeared after it was inherited from the pre-Islāmic era. Freeing slaves was considered in Islām as the most preferred act of virtue with manifold spiritual rewards; and it acted as atonement for sins.25 All the measures adopted by Islām in this respect were meant to restore human dignity, to perhaps the weakest element in society that contributed most in those days to its welfare.

In verse Q.4:3 the phrase, “those whom your right hands possess” are meant bond-women. Bond-women were integrated into the extended family structure. If they gave birth to a child, it was born free. On the death of their masters, they regained freedom automatically (SQ:III:38-39). To retain slaves was made burdensome, with strict encumbrances. They were to be fed, clothed and looked after as other family members, to maintain human dignity of the slaves. In this way, their human rights were protected. Ibn Kathīr’s version directly contravenes Qūṭb’s version. He writes: “It is better to refrain from marrying slave girls and to observe patience, for otherwise, the offspring will become slaves to the girl’s master” (IK:II:428-429). If the slave girl, whilst still in

24 NBK, III: 334-342.
slavery, gets married to another person and becomes pregnant, then she and her children remain slaves to the master, according to Ibn Kathîr. But according to Qutb, if the master satisfies his lust with the slave girl and she gives birth to a child, the child is born free and she becomes free on the death of the master.

It is difficult to reconcile such juristic differences with the Islâmic concept of equity and equality, and with the Prophet’s endeavour throughout his life, for raising the human status of slaves to be at par with their masters. The earliest converts to Islâm were slaves, weak and poor people in society. This prompted the rich and powerful to object in contempt that if there was any good in Islâm, then the low class would not have found it attractive. The Prophet said: “Allâh does not look at your shapes and colours, but He looks at your heart and actions” (IK:III:356-357). But this human disposition envisaged by Islâm is at times seen differently by the jurists.

The edict of Shaykh Ŝaleh al-Fawzân in this respect is remarkable. He states that slavery ought to be legalised in Saudi Arabia as it is “permitted in Islâm”. This fatwah ignores the historic reality that the institution itself became defunct and dysfunctional due to humane treatment meted to the slaves and a great virtue attributed in Islâm for freeing them.26

Bernard Hayke writes that the institution of slavery, on the basis of ‘aql (reason) and ilhâm (inspiration) does not find support in the law, and “universal consensus [on this issue] proves to be a legal fiction (as all arguments about consensus tend to be)”. Yet certain radicals are recalcitrant in believing that “slavery is a private entitlement that can never be revoked.”27

In conclusion, Islâm places importance to manumission of slaves and their humane treatment in transitory phases, thus solving the abuse of their human rights in stages. It does not see the institution itself as conducive to human nature. That is why it has provided measures for its abolishment. The next section discusses one of the controversial social problems involving the institution of marriage.

26 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 255.
New phenomenon in marital relationship in the exegesis of Qutb

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, the Qur'an views the institution of marriage as vital for safeguarding the pure human disposition and protecting the society from immorality. Qutb introduces a variation in the concept of marriage in the context of verses Q.4:126-128. But the practice that he refers to must have prevailed in Egyptian and other societies. At the time of writing, Qutb could not have foreseen that the concept itself would erupt into controversy between the scholars in the nineties. He writes that if a woman is left in suspense between marital relationship and divorce, then she might like to take the option of waiving certain marital rights in favour of her husband to save the marriage, instead of being left in limbo. As the feelings and attachments change, she might have fallen out of favour. Therefore, some concessions could be made, allowing her husband to visit her in her parent's house, where she may prefer to live. Qutb stresses that this must be a matter of free choice rather than compulsion (SQ:III:331). Verse Q.4:128 talks of settling the disputes peacefully with mutual consent; whereas, the interpreter talks of one-sided surrender of rights, so that the wife may go on desperately, as it sounds, to salvage the relationship.

As a prelude to this variation in marital arrangement, Qutb emphasises that whilst dealing with the human soul, Islam recognises the lofty potential of human nature and disapproves the low-levels to which it can fall (SQ:III:331). This is applicable to both man and woman. The Qur'an says that "avarice is ever-present in human souls" (Q.4:128). Nevertheless, the interpreter expects the woman to be a scapegoat (in the name of free choice) in adverse circumstances, and that she should endeavour to stop her husband from absconding. The argument brusquely suggests that this may be the only avenue open to her if she is to avoid divorce and so satisfy the unlimited avarice in man (SQ:III:332).

This is one of the situations which the theologians have created, and their solution has resulted in an awkward situation. Qutb uses his favourite phrases: "ideal practicality or practical idealism" in the context of saving the marriage from being dissolved. Even if the wife is successful in enticing her husband towards financial incentives, it is open to debate whether the husband can maintain equitable links with all his wives, which is a pre-condition of a polygamous marriage. The only factor that may deter the abuse is
God-consciousness and that too, in a compassionate and humane individual, to which the last part of the verse Q.4:128 refers (SQ:III:332).

The premise of the interpreter is based on the fact that partiality and preferences of emotional attachment between several wives is beyond the control of man, and this is not a sin. But an outward manifestation of partiality is prohibited. If the relationship cannot be rescued despite allurements, then the “practical idealism” for the spouses is to separate (SQ:III:333-334). As in most cases, the initiation of divorce is a male prerogative, so polygamy and divorce rules are widely abused in Muslim societies. By patronising the woman to waive her rights voluntarily, some theological schools advocate the maxim of Misyar marriage, which Qutb has referred in his discussion, without naming it. This type of marriage has attracted publicity recently.

Under Misyar marriage, husband and wife need not live together; the husband need not pay her maintenance, and can divorce or retain her. At the husband’s exclusive will, Misyar can become, though not necessarily, a temporary arrangement. This marriage was specifically permitted under the fatwah of the grand-mufti of Saudi Arabia, Sheikh bin Baz and Sheikh of al-Azhar al-Tantawi in 1999. The latter strongly supported this concept to address the problem of poverty in Egypt. However, the arrangement was open to abuse by the tourists from the oil rich countries. Hence, some scholars opposed the concept.

Sheikh ‘Abdullah bin Men‘ of the Supreme ‘Ulama Council of Saudi Arabia, whilst approving the legality of this marriage, asserted that the wife must agree to her husband’s visit “day or night, at the time convenient to him”. He cited an episode in the Prophet’s life where one of his wives is said to have waived her right to his alternate visits in favour of ‘A’ishah. This episode, if at all reliable, has certainly been read differently by the Saudi scholars opposed to Misyar. One of these scholars commented: “It is the choice of the coward who resorts to marrying secretly.” But Misyar takes place within the family circle, so no question of secrecy arises.

The grim reality of the Muslim society is that sometimes, in violation of Islamic ethics, people carry diverse cultural impediments. Polygamous marriage and its variants tend to address social problems like poverty, where the poor parents cannot afford to pay phenomenal amounts demanded in dowry. In some countries, more disproportionate increases in the female population, the unwillingness of aging widows or divorced women to live all their life without a husband, or where the woman works to support her aged parents, pave way for Misyār. In such a case, she can continue living with her parents and tolerate a visiting husband to come and go at his will. The situation would have been different if the State had succeeded to provide welfare and support-services to the aged. In order to understand the implications of this type of marriage on families, the critics from the rich countries have to look at the matter from the perspective of the poor and low income people, who have to manage joint family structure within their limited means, with no support from the State.

Under the Islamic social code, there is a responsibility on the children to look after their parents who may be in need of financial and physical help. Hence, the difficult position of a woman who accepts Misyār marriage becomes clear if she is the only breadwinner to support her disabled or old parents. If the infirm parents depend on their son (or daughter in this case) then serving them is equivalent to Jihād, according to the tradition of the Prophet.\textsuperscript{30} Qutb asserts that the purpose of Jihād is not to draw swords and “chop off people’s heads” (\textit{SQ:III}:282). It is noteworthy that nowhere in the Qur’ān has the word ‘sword’ been mentioned. Therefore, Jihād in this case is to protect human integrity and honour of parents.

It may be concluded that the social aspect of Misyar marriage has emerged out of need and not in isolation from the social structure of the society. It is not connected merely with the marital bond but with the parental circumstances in poor societies. The next section examines the controversy over the interpretation of the transmitted text. It clearly shows the gap in the evolution of scientific knowledge and some transmitted text.

\textsuperscript{30} http://www.inter-islam.org/RightsDuties/parents.html.
Anomalous clash between science and religion in the exegetical literature

In 1966, Sheikh 'Abdul'aziz bin Bâz, the highest religious authority in Saudi Arabia, claimed that "the sun rotates around the earth". He had his reasons to make such claims on the basis of transmitted text. (It is said that he changed his views later). The point is that as recently as the sixties, some religious authorities were prepared to clash with the proven scientific or astronomical facts.

One of the reasons why this type of anomaly exists is the approach adopted by certain scholars. Ibn Kathîr categorises those who depend on "no correct rational thought, and no clear transmitted text" but rather on "their opinion and whims" as misguided (JK:VI:530). Notably, all transmitted text is not revealed text. Therefore, it may be asked, what happens if there is a conflict between the transmitted text and rational thought? The influence of the thought of Ibn Ibn Kathîr on Salafî clerics was traceable in the Friday sermon relayed from Makkah on 26 May 2006 on the Saudi satellite TV, when Shaykh Sa‘ûd Ibrâhîm al-Shuraym, very emotionally denounced those who give their intellectual or rational thought any priority over the transmitted text.

In contrast, in order to demonstrate that there is coherence between religion and science, an example is presented from the writings of Harun Yahya, one of the most popular modern scholars, who interpret the Qur'anic verses in the light of the modern scientific discoveries. Verses Q.75:3-4 read: "Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones together? Yes! We are able to put together the very tips of his fingers." Yahya explains the reason why the finger-tips are mentioned. He writes that no two persons, not even twins share identical finger-tips. This source of special identity of each individual is formed before his birth and remains until his death. Yahya further writes that such a discovery became an established scientific fact only in the late 19th century, whereas the Qur'ân has given a specific hint fourteen centuries ago, when the recipients of the Message could not have comprehended the secrets which the finger-tips incorporate.

There are many thought-provoking verses in the Qur'ân which give lead to scientific realities. Yet some traditionalist scholars choose to remain oblivious to them. Verse

31 Viorst, 207.
32 http://www.harunyahya.com/miracles_of_the_quran_p1_08.php#8
Q.55:33 is an invitation to the company of Jinn and humans to look beyond the terrestrial existence. “If you can pass through the confines of the heavens and the earth, then do pass through, but you will not pass through except by an authority.” Qutb circumvents any discussion on this verse, which, if deliberated, opens a wide scope in the light of space exploration, progress in astronomy and space travel. He suffices in commenting that only the owner of authority possesses the authority (SQ7:VI:3456).

Nevertheless, the rightful authority is the one that has a grip over knowledge and wisdom and this can emanate from a human disposition which finds coherence and not contradiction between science and religion. This matter can be viewed from another perspective. The Prophet said: “Acquire knowledge from cradle to grave”. He further advised the Muslims to go to China for acquisition of knowledge. Ibrahim B. Sayed, President of Islamic Research Foundation International writes: “The acquisition of knowledge, both religious and scientific is considered an act of religious merit”.

It may be concluded that if the Prophet left the scope open for Muslims to travel as far as China, which was a remote possibility in his days, then the motive could not be only for theological knowledge, but for non-theological knowledge too. Hence, Islam builds human disposition that does not create a rift between science and religion.

The next section investigates the paradigms of human actions that were explored in the thoughts of different Schools under the concept of predestination. (See Chapter 1).

**Critique on the controversies over human actions in the exegeses of Ibn Kathîr and Qutb**

The distinction between good and evil is drawn in the Qur'anic statement that “…We showed him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful” (Q.76:3). This clarifies the issue of guidance that to show the right path is the Divine prerogative, whereas it is man’s exclusive choice to appreciate and act upon the Divine grace or not.

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33 “The need for Islâmic Renaissance”, http://www.irfi.org/articles/articles_101_150/need_for_islamic_renaissance.htm
A tradition has been narrated by Ibn ‘Umar that “everything is predetermined, even laziness and intelligence” (I\$:IX:370). Another tradition has been narrated by Ibn ‘Abbās that those who do not believe in predestination are the worst members of the community; if they fall ill, they should not be visited; and if they die, their funeral prayers should not be prayed. The narrator continues that if he were to come across any of them, he would pluck their eyes out with his two fingers (I\$:IX:369). Then Ibn Kathīr quotes several Companions that those who do not believe in predestination are not believers at all (I\$:IX:371). This explains why al-Ash’ārī adopted an intransigent stance on predestination. Ibn Kathīr curses the Qādāriyyah sect that does not believe in predestination (I\$:IX:495).

Wrongdoing and oppression have been unreservedly condemned in the Qur’ān where it is asserted in many places that God is the source of guidance, but only for those who fulfil the pre-requirements of guidance (the opening verses of the second chapter of the Qur’ān refer). The Qur’ān also declares: “Verily, Allāh guides not the people who are wrongdoers (oppressors)” (Q.28:50). The underlying rationale of such verses has to be examined in the light of certain pre-conditions set out for the individuals to qualify for God’s guidance. If they fail to meet these conditions, then they may remain in misguidance, which they chose for themselves, and because of it, God left them in that state. But then those who believe in predestination, interpret these types of verses to convey the meaning that because God did not wish to guide them (rather than they did not wish to be guided), so it was God’s decision (rather than their own insistence on wrongdoing) which barred them from guidance. The Qur’ān projects its own unique role in guiding people (not all of them): “And We send down of the Qur’ān that which is healing and a mercy to those who believe, and it increases the wrongdoers (oppressors) nothing but loss” (Q.17:82).

The prism through which these types of verses are examined, decides whether the person interpreting them is a believer in pre-ordained Divine destiny (which never changes no matter what) or a believer in free-will. (See Chapter I). Those who proclaim free-will believe that within the parameter drawn by the Divine Will, God can change the final destiny of human beings who strive in life (Q.29:69), supplicate to Him (Q.40:60), repent for their sins (Q.66:8) and obliterate bad deeds with good deeds (Q.11:114). Therefore, it is essential (i) to comprehend from many scattered verses in
the Qurʾān the conditions for gaining guidance; and (ii) to identify intentional violations of these conditions in human actions, despite recurring warnings and threats. If these two paradigms are combined, the result is that God does not misguide anybody except those, who out of their own arrogance, insist on their misguidance, as if it was guidance. Therefore, the categories of people who are entitled and who are not entitled to guidance have to be identified.

The Qurʾān states that it is a guide for those (i) who are pious (God-fearing or God-conscious) (Q.2:2); (ii) who believe in the Unseen, are steadfast in prayers and spend out of the sustenance given to them by God (Q.2:3); (iii) who believe in the Revelations sent to the Prophet and sent before his time, and in whose heart there is an assurance of the Hereafter (Q.2:4).

A number of verses emphatically state that God does not guide: (i) the unjust people (Q.5:51); (ii) the rejectors of faith (Q.5:67, Q.16:107); (iii) the wrongdoers (Q.6:144, Q.28:50); (iv) the treacherers or the betrayers (Q.12:52); (v) the strayed (Q.16:37); (vi) the liar and ungrateful (Q.39:3); (vii) the transgressing liars (Q.40:28); (viii) the people who oppress (Q.46:10); (ix) the rebellious transgressors (Q.63:6). The question arises, how can they carve their way out of this deadlock? The answer is, if persuasions and warnings fail, then punishment can serve as an eye-opener for them and for the succeeding generations. This is the point precisely conveyed in the stories that the Qurʾān tells about the punishments to which the communities of the ancient Prophets were subjected. Through these stories, people may take heed and spare themselves the same disastrous plights.

Among the pre-conditions of guidance some examples are stated in verses Q.28:54-55: (i) exercising patience, (ii) repelling evil with good, (iii) spending for the needy from one’s earnings and wealth, (iv) withdrawing from vain talk (and backbiting) and (v) shunning the ways of the ignorant people. Verse Q.28:77 classifies mischief-making on earth as one of the causes that deprive God’s love. But Ibn Kathir rightly remarks that one has to be conscious of God’s continuous bounties; and appreciate the rights of God, those of oneself, and those of one’s family and visitors (guests) (IK:VII:443).
The sign of self-conceit which entitles the individual to be led astray is his self-gratification, where he is not prepared to acknowledge the blessings and bounties showered upon him by God’s grace. The Qur’ān has illustrated this point in verse Q.28:78: “He said: ‘This has been given to me only because of the knowledge I possess’.” The same verse expresses its amazement at the claimant, who knows for sure that generations were destroyed in the past “who were stronger than him in might and exceeded in the amount (of riches) they had collected”. Yet, he does not take heed.

Therefore, the style of the Qur’ān is to diagnose the lapses and weaknesses in human soul and human nature and to elaborate on the warnings given, before the punishment by the Divine Will. The particular case in point is the rebellious nature and evil disposition of Pharaoh and Qārūn, which is conveyed in Chapter 28 of the Qur’ān. The pomp and glory displayed by these characters created a fallacy in the minds of ordinary people who thought that magnificence gifted to them was because of good luck. They entertained wishful thinking to become like them. But those endowed with true knowledge reacted in a different way: “...The reward of Allāh is better for those who believe and do righteous deeds, and this none shall attain except the patient” (Q.28:80). Hence, through the reaction of wise people, the Qur’ān diverts the tendency found in many simple minded people of living in fantasies.

Ibn Kathir narrates traditions in explanation of the said verse that the reward for the righteous, as opposed to those who were lured towards pomposity is beyond the perception of eye, ear and heart (IK:VII:446). When the same people saw how Qārūn was swallowed by earth (destroyed together with his treasure), without being able to help himself, they came to their senses, realising that they too could have met their destiny the same way had they enjoyed the same magnificence as Qārūn did (Q.28:81-82).

Hence, there was a conscious realisation in their ‘self’ that in whatever measure and proportion God distributes His bounties, or restricts them, it is not without wisdom. In this case, though they were not fortunate to enjoy wealth and power as the proud Qārūn was (the same rationale applies to the story of Pharaoh), but at least, they had a new lease of life, which the Pharaoh and his Minster Hāmān had been deprived of after getting drowned in the sea together with their military power and might (IK:VII:491).
Trials from God acquire many modes. The moral lesson taught to human nature and disposition is that neither the abundance in wealth, children, power or fame, should be understood to manifest pleasure of God; nor should their deprivation be construed to be the wrath of God. At the end of the day, it is the mental state – peace and contentment, or resentment and impatience – that will play a crucial role in guiding human soul away from the sinful life. For example, the single most important act often repeated in the Qurʾān, which is said to open the avenues of guidance from God is the worship and prayers. The promise given is that ʿSalah (the five times daily mandatory prayers) “prevents al-fahshā’ (immoral sins) and al-munkar (evil deeds)” (Q.29:45, IK:VII:493).

God does not force anybody to pray. This depends on the individual’s own initiative and determination. Nevertheless, it raises certain dilemmas. If the prayers are the purifying agents for human soul, then what can be said about those who are regular in prayers and yet their human nature prompts them to commit both immoral sins and evil deeds? In this case, they might have performed a good exercise under the pretext of prayers, but they would not have prayed at all, because prayers demand coherence of mind, soul and action in the remembrance of God.

Verse Q.6:110 establishes the sense of direction for human nature by clarifying the way the Divine Will operates to render human will functional or totally dysfunctional: “And We shall turn their hearts and their eyes away…” This indicates the supremacy of Divine Will, but at the same time, it comes into force on the pre-occurrence of certain human action or inaction. The same verse continues: “as they refused to believe…” Hence, the reason behind turning the human hearts away is identified. This is followed by the end result: “...We shall leave them in their trespass to wander blindly.” Therefore, the matter is three-dimensional and inter-connected with each other. The cause of Divine force is preceded by human neglect, followed by grim consequences. This is further clarified by verse Q.61:5: “So when they turned away, Allāh turned their hearts away.” Notably, it is not the other way round.

Another example may be taken from the same genre of verses: “Then who will guide him whom Allāh has sent astray [?]” This indicates compulsion or enforcement of Divine Will, except that it is preceded by a statement: “…those who do wrong follow their own lust without knowledge” (Q.30:29). Hence, if they are left astray, it is because
they did not fulfill the precondition. But Ibn Kathîr's interpretation is different: “...no one can guide them if Allâh has decreed that they will be misguided...” and “no one can save them...or grant them a way out, for what He (God) wills, happens and what He does not will, does not happen” (IK:VII:543). Such are the frequently repeated clauses in Ibn Kathîr's exegetical work.

The exact prerogatives of the Divine Decree, as opposed to human will, is laid down clearly in the last verses of Chapter 31 called Luqmân: “Definitely Allâh has the knowledge of the Hour [the Day of Judgement], He sends down the rain [it may be cloudy in one region but the same clouds may offload their waters in some other regions], and (He) knows that which is in the wombs [i.e. prior to the period that the scans could show whether the foetus is a male or a female]. No person knows what will he earn tomorrow [i.e. the daily provision is determined by God and no person could for certain determine the expected or unexpected sources from which he may get his livelihood] and no person knows in what land he will die [i.e. in as much as, no one has any say in the matter of his life, he has no say in the matter of his death, which can come all of a sudden, without even the individual falling ill]....” (Q.31:34). These are called the five keys of the Unseen (IK:VII:600). The Qur'ân presents further proof that if God leaves the human being strayed from the Straight Path, then it is consequential to some abhorring acts which cause imbalance: “...when some evil afflicts them because of what their hands have sent forth, behold, they are in despair [!]” (Q.30:36).

When the Qur'ân talks about the absolute justice of God, the message is conveyed in the form of the advice that sage Luqmân gave to his son. Any deed, good or bad, even as light as the weight of a grain of mustard seed, (no matter how infinitesimal) will be brought forth, whether it is in a rock or heavens or earth (so that the justice of God is established) (Q.31:16). If God is responsible for human actions, then such a minute importance would not have been given to resurrecting human deeds with human soul.

It may be deduced from this discussion that if God is to hold man responsible for his actions, then man cannot merely be a pawn in the game or an actor on the scene. If he had not been given an independent will of his own, then this is tantamount to liquidating the effects of all human actions which lead to the Divine rewards or punishments. It has also been illustrated that no question arises of God misleading mankind in the matter of
faith and guidance, simply because he commissioned Prophets and Messengers to represent Him on earth. Ibn Kathir comments on verse Q.30:53 that only those will hear who are “humble and who respond and obey” (IK:VII:563). It logically follows that only those are led astray by the Divine Will who are not humble and those who do not respond to guidance, and are persistent in disobedience.

Verse Q.33:70 reads: “...speak (always) the truth”, which is interpreted to mean, speak “in a straightforward manner” and “with no crookedness or distortion”. This is immediately followed by a promise that as a result, God will “direct you to do righteous good deeds and will forgive you your sins...” (IK:VIII:53). The elaboration clearly shows that the effort has to be initiated by man, the fruition of which is then derived by God’s grace. The Qur’an also clarifies: “But He (God) causes not to stray, except those who forsake the path” (Q.2:26).

The importance of repentance in purifying the stains on the soul and human nature from sinful life is stated in several verses of the Qur’an. Ibn Kathir narrates a story about an Israelite which is reviewed here critically in brief. A man who had killed ninety-nine people (mass-murderer) asked a worshipper whether there was any chance that his repentance would be accepted and he got a negative reply. So he killed the worshipper too. Then a scholar guided him to travel towards a town where people worshipped God. On his way, he died and the angels of mercy and punishment “disputed over him”. So God ordered them to measure the distance between his home town and the town towards which he was migrating. “Allāh commanded the good town to move closer...[to fill the shortage of distance].” Therefore, the dead man came within the domain of the angel of mercy. This is how he was forgiven (IK:VIII:408-409). Ibn Kathir gives an explanation in terms of the Divine Decree. The Prophet is reported to have said that even if the individual was to commit as many sins as would fill “the space between heaven and earth”, God will forgive him on repentance. Then the Prophet is reported to have sworn by God and said: “if you did not commit sin, Allāh would bring other people who would commit sins and then ask Allāh for forgiveness so that He could forgive them” (IK:VIII:411).

It is noteworthy that the contents and tone of this narration support the methodology and thought that man is under compulsion and does not possess any will of his own, even in
the matters of sins, which are explicitly condemned in the Qurʾān and categorised as abhorrent in the sight of God. Yet, it is God’s Will, according to the narration of Ibn Kathir that men must commit sins, otherwise, God will replace them with others who would commit sins and then turn to Him for repentance. If viewed rationally, this provides a valid excuse for sinners, whether they commit theft or murder or rape, that they are only translating God’s Will in action. This means that no legal authority on earth can claim legitimacy by punishing the offenders because at the time of offending, they were merely acting according to the directives from God.

A researcher is bound to ask in the course of his investigation: How can these types of narrations be reconciled (?) with unequivocal statements in the Qurʾān such as, “And when they do anything that is shameful (sinful), they say: ‘We found our fathers doing so’, and ‘Allāh commanded us this’. Say: ‘Nay, Allāh never commands what is shameful: Do you say of Allāh what you do not know?’ ” (Q.7:28). The narrator of the story then adds that one of the Companions who was on his death-bed confessed that he had hitherto concealed this narration, but now he was disclosing it that he heard the Prophet saying: “If you did not commit sins, Allāh would create people who would sin…” (IK:VIII:411). The question arises that if the Companion was convinced that the Prophet had said these words, why did he hide it in the first place? Even today there are many simple-minded, uninformed or misinformed Muslims who believe that if they are sinning, it is because of the Will of God; and that they will repent, only when and if God wills it, which means that the initial effort has to come from God and man will only oblige. These types of dilemmas cannot escape attention of the researcher.

It is worth comparing and contrasting the preceding two narrations with the following two narrations. Ibn Kathir records: (a) “Iblīs (Satan) is the one who calls people to every evil thing, such as Shirk (polytheism) and lesser sins.” (b) The son of Adam who committed the first murder on the face of the earth will bear his share of sin for all murders that will be committed on earth until the Day of Resurrection (IK:VIII:536). The anomalies of the last two traditions with the preceding two traditions are obvious. It is Satan and not God who seduces mankind towards a sinful life. Having committed the first sin on earth, Adam’s son will face an eternal punishment. But if Adam’s son had committed a sin of murder after being compelled by God’s Will and he was not given
an opportunity to repent, again according to God’s Will, then he should not be held responsible at all.

Such are the complications introduced through theological discourses, which inevitably led to different schools of thoughts. But when these schools give vent to their imagination at the expense of clear-cut and simplistic injunctions in the Qur’ānic text, then this leads to a plethora of confusion. To clarify the matter further, verse Q.45:23 is addressed to the Prophet with a gesture of amazement: “Have you seen him who takes his own desires as his god?” This is the premise on which the consequential reaction follows. The same verse then continues. “And Allāh left him astray with knowledge, and sealed his hearing and his heart, and put a cover in his sight...” This means that the individual asked for trouble by worshipping his own desires and whims over and above the guidance departed to him; and only as a result of which, his sense faculties were sealed or became paralysed and he was abandoned in this state that he chose for himself.

There are certain Divine graces directly connected with human actions, as Ibn Kathīr himself records: “Of His (God’s) affairs is that He answers the supplicant, or gives to the one requesting, or removing adversity or cures the one seeking to be cured” (IK:IX:387). But if everything had been pre-programmed and pre-ordained, then what can one make (?) of verse Q.55:29: “Everyday He (God) is (engaged) in some affairs”. This suggests that God is ever active over His creation. The Qur’ān presents the matter succinctly: “No calamity occurs in the earth nor in yourselves but it is inscribed in the Book of Decrees before We bring it into existence...” (Q.57:22). Without doubt, this is beyond the grasp and control of human action otherwise no individual would have allowed any calamity to touch him. Hence, this discussion is centred around things which are within the grasp of human action and not beyond it like, natural calamities. The verse continues: “In order that you may not grieve at the things you fail to get, nor rejoice at that which has been given to you. And Allāh likes not the prideful boasters” (Q.57:23).

In conclusion, a distinction has to be drawn between, (a) giving up without trying or striving, which is not encouraged in Islām (Q.9:105); and (b) failing to achieve the goal despite doing the utmost, which could be a temporary setback. If it is a permanent setback, then the consolation is that at least, the individual would have tried and God
might have chosen to try him in failure. But if he succeeds, he is warned not to become
proud.

Conclusion

Ever since the first Islamic century, the debate continues between the theologians about human action - whether man is compelled by the Divine Will to act in a certain way or he has been given a degree of independence under the will of his own. The debate reaches stalemate when the theologians who believe that man is under compulsion, discourage any logical or rational probe into the matter. It is commensurate to claim that Moses was given the highest rank and honour in his times for acting according to God’s Will; and Pharaoh was destroyed and cursed forever, again for acting according to God’s Will. This is anomalous because it means that it was possible neither for Moses nor for Pharaoh to act otherwise.

It may be deduced that in order to comprehend the issue of free-will, the matter has to be viewed from two different angles exemplified in the Qur’ān. There are certain mysteries in the realm of creation like, life and death, over which mankind has no say and no power. No human expertise and knowledge can de-mystify the secrets of some happenings like the timing of accidents and natural disasters, which happen without or despite human planning and control. In such cases, it is safe to leave the matters classified as Acts of God to God. But then there are many issues in day-to-day life which are directly related to the human will and determination.

One cannot ignore under any pretext, the substantive Qur’ānic Message which revolves around the consequences that mankind will face for its actions. To shift the blame on God’s Will for crimes against humanity committed through pre-meditated genocides and acts of terror, is tantamount to ridicule God’s Justice, which is unambiguously and unequivocally pronounced in the Qur’ān. This leads to the next chapter which investigates the divisive controversies and the radicalisation of juristic-political matters which have acquired prominence in the present-day Muslim world because of certain intransigent dispositions.
Enigmatic Interpretations of the Qur'ān and The Prophet's Traditions Lead to Dichotomy

Introduction

In compliance with the secondary aim of the research, this chapter investigates a range of theological and juristic-political issues. The purpose is to present a contrast between the sublime humanitarian values in Islām, elucidated from Chapters 1 to 4, with the uncompromising projection of some ideologies in the name of reviving or reinvigorating Islām. The intolerance by radical groups and clerics has encouraged some elements of the Western media and politicians to claim that all Muslims are segregationists, that they are not interested in co-existence, and that their belief in Jihād promotes terrorism.

In the present times, the concept of Jihād in Islām is the most distorted concept. The call to Islāmic obligation of Jihād is frivolously used by the zealots to call for armed struggle, without defining the preconditions, the restraints and the strict rules enforced by the Shari'ah. The crucial issues of leadership, democracy and the views of the hard-line jurists on a number of sensitive matters are also investigated. The next section discusses two conflicting views about the compatibility of diversity with the Qur'ān.

The Qur'ānic perspective on diversity

The Prophet said: "Tell the truth even if it be unpleasant."¹ In many respects, secularism is not compatible with the Islāmic system. This does not impede millions of practising Muslims from living, out of free choice, in secular democracies rather than in the present Muslim States. The classical scholars wrote that all human beings have the right to life, religion, intellect, lineage, honour and property. These were considered basic needs.² The rights are defined under two broad categories – the rights of God (huqūq Allāh) and the rights of God's servants (huqūq al-‘Ibād). The rights of people are

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¹ Kamali, (1997), 11, quoting al-Suyūtī.
meticulously guarded in Islām. "The rights of human beings are not forgiven by God unless the human being concerned forgives them first, and the claims for such rights are not dismissed [by God] unless they are dismissed by the person concerned." Whilst the rights of God must not be intentionally breached, yet in case of conflict, the rights of human beings supersede the rights of God in the earthly life, so that justice is maintained by “celebrating human diversity”.

Islāmic Law cannot be studied in parts and in isolation (SQ:III:145). The contextual and historic background of the revelation cannot be ignored. Quṭb convincingly explains that no human value reaches its optimum level in this life. People differ among themselves in the matter of truth and falsehood, right and wrong, and good and evil. The only perfect solution will appear in God’s judgement in the Hereafter (SQ:XI:39). The justice of God warrants that He rewards the doers of good deeds. “...We shall not let the reward die for any who do (even) a (single) righteous deed” (Q.18:30).

The Qurʾān exhorts people to reconcile their differences with charitable attitude (Q.4:114, SQ:III:312). It clarifies beyond doubt that the life of a human being (irrespective of colour, race or belief) is inviolable (Q.5:32). It is blunt in the matter of beliefs: “So let him who pleases believe, and let him who pleases disbelieve” (Q.18:29). But Quṭb adds that “…in a land hostile to Islām, neither their lives nor their properties are protected unless they have concluded a peace treaty with the land of Islām” (SQ:IV:88). During the times of the Caliphate and since its abolition in 1924 by Kamal Attaturk, the land of Islām itself has fallen victim to fierce bloodshed. It is difficult if not impossible to decipher which parts of the Muslim land can enforce “peace treaty” with the countries “hostile to Islām” when they themselves were engaged in cross-border hostilities and intense political rivalries. This may create further difficulties in definition. The present day geo-political realities have seen new alliances between the nations. These cannot be ignored otherwise it would be equivalent to labelling certain Muslim countries as being outside the fold of Islām.

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3 Ibid. 26, quoting Ibn ‘Arabī, ḥām al-Qurʾān.
4 Ibid. 28.
5 http://www.answers.com/topic/mustafa-kemal-atat-rk
The Qur'ānic position is clear. Freedom of choice is identified: "...Whoever chooses to follow the true guidance does so for his own good; and whoever chooses to go astray does so at his own peril..." (Q.10:108). "Do you, then, try to compel people to believe [?]" (Q.10:99). Faith must not be out of compulsion, but out of choice (SQ:IX:146). If human beings make the right choice, then they are assured of guidance. To abhor and detest other people is "the worst type of spiritual impurity" (SQ:IX:146-147). All mankind were "one single community and then they disagreed among themselves". This message is restated in verse Q.5:48 that if God had willed he would have created all mankind as one nation; but He wants to test them through whatever He has given them and wherever He has placed them.

It may be concluded that diversity is recognised by the Qur'ān, but competition in the performance of good deeds is encouraged. It is the vociferous attitude of some ideologues that vitiates the Qur'ānic outlook, as demonstrated in the next section.

Self-conceit incompatible with Islāmic ethos

One of the most challenging issues facing the Muslim world is that of illiteracy and the resultant deprivation of the poor from education in this age of enlightenment. The problem cannot be tackled without recognising the gravity of the problem which adversely affects the awareness of the masses. But the escapist attitude tends to avoid the problem and to pretend that it does not exist. The upheavals that took place in history are overlooked, so there is a remote possibility of learning from past mistakes.

Dr. Khalid Batarfi, the managing editor of the Saudi daily al-Madina and the childhood friend of bin Laden, ironically diagnoses the problem as clustered around "those who misinterpret history in order to serve self-interest". He pinpoints the historic hostilities of Muslims towards Jews, based on factors such as, (a) breach of pledges entered with the Prophet and (b) siding with the Prophet's enemies and the attempt to poison him. The causes of hostilities between Muslims and Christians are diagnosed as, (a) crusades, (b) colonialism and (c) suppression of Muslim minorities. The solution can be sought from three angles: (i) "learn from the ‘rights’ and build on them"; or (ii) "ignore the
lessons of the ‘wrongs’ and repeat them”; or (iii) “get obsessed and live and die for them”.

To resort to a selective reading of the Qur’ān is dangerous and strikes at the root of intellectual discipline. In order to solve the problem that has divided the Muslims into factions, one has to refer to those verses of the Qur’ān, which are partially interpreted for political expediencies; and those that do not serve political convictions and are simply ignored. Batarfi further illustrates these points by saying that the Qur’ān does not condemn all Jews and Christians. He draws his conclusion from several verses. Verse Q.60:7 declares: “It may be that Allāh will grant love between you and those whom you hold as enemies…” In verse Q.60:8, it is emphasised to deal kindly and justly with those who do not fight Muslims on the basis of faith and do not drive them out of their homes.

The question arises, how can these verses be reconciled with other verses where the Qur’ānic command is specific: “And slay them wherever you catch them…for mischief and oppression are worse than slaughter, but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque [in Makkah] unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them…” (Q.2:191). Certain verses were revealed in the pitch of armed hostilities, at a particular time in history, to address specific and not general circumstances.

Therefore, to turn a blind eye towards the cause of revelation is tantamount to reaching a faulty conclusion that, the Qur’ān orders Muslims to kill all Jews and all Christians forever. This might create an irony that the Message of Islām is not universal, because it precludes its applicability in other communities. It might also create permanent hostility between the monotheistic religions, when many historic evidences indicate that the Islāmic State had placed Christian and Jewish minorities under its protection.

It may be concluded that selectivity leads from one quagmire to another. The self-conceit portrayed by dismissing diversity and abiding by rigidity, has already done much damage to the reputation of the Muslims. The most severe damage looms over the

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concept of *Jihād* in Islām where misunderstanding breeds hostility. This concept is investigated at length in the next section.

**The Islāmic concept of Jihād and its humanitarian parameters**

The word *Jihād* is derived from the Arabic root word *jahada* which means “to exert utmost effort” or “to strive”. *Jihād* is classified into two categories: (i) The struggle of inner self against the self’s base desires, in order to overcome the temptation to commit evil acts. The Prophet called it a “greater jihād”, in one of the widely reported authentic tradition. (ii) The armed struggle for self-defence to repel aggression. This type is called *qītal* in the Qur’ān. The Prophet called it a “lesser jihād”.7

The Islāmic concept of *Jihād* has caused hysteria in international relations. Two extreme views are analysed in this section. One is the attitude of the current *Jihādī* movements that have declared war against non-Muslims, and by implication, against the Muslims who do not subscribe to their views, whom they consider to be foes of Islām. Second is the mayhem caused by the ancient Khārijite movement (see Chapter 7), which shares many features with the present-day *takfīrī* extremists. Islāmic ethics of warfare require that even if the adversaries kill and maim civilians, Islām does not permit the Muslims to retaliate. The Prophet did not react ‘like with like’ against his foes. For example, when Hind, the wife of Abī Sufyān, the then chief of the polytheists, disfigured the corpse of Hamzah, the Prophet’s uncle, by cutting out his liver, nose, ears and other parts of the body, and wearing them as necklace after the battle of Uhud,8 the Prophet did not retaliate.

The radical groups are least concerned about the legal and moral aspects of armed struggle, as preached by the Qur’ān and Sunnah. On another extreme is the backlash from some secular Muslims who display apologetic attitudes. They try to undermine one of the most vital facets of *Jihād*, which is, armed struggle. The truth lies in between these two notions. Any warfare in Islām which does not vigilantly guard the life of

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7 The ideas presented in this section are drawn from a paper “Paradigms of Jihād”, presented by the present researcher in a seminar at the Department of Politics, International Relations and European Studies, Loughborough University, 19 January 2005. For extensive definitions, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad.
8 Ameer Ali, 70.
innocent civilians, the places of worship of other religions and the resources of livelihood, and does not treat human life with compassion, cannot be called Jihād. There are many examples in the sources which illustrate these points. Yet, humanitarian values attached to the armed struggle in Islām are conveniently shelved by the radical Muslims and shunned by non-Muslim critics.

'Compassionate' and 'Merciful' are the two attributes of God with which each chapter of the Qurʾān (with the exception of the chapter named the Repentance) commences its message. If a Muslim does not embrace these attributes in his character, then his faith is considered deficient. In a state of war, compassionate treatment of the enemy has been stressed by the Prophet. The enemy has to be forewarned that the purpose is not to grab his wealth or to deprive him of life or freedom. War has to be a matter of last resort and if it is unavoidable, Muslims must not be the aggressors. Peace has to be the main objective of war.

The battle of Badr was fought by the infant Muslim community against the Makkan aggressors after the migration to Madīnah. The captives of this battle were fed by their captors with the best food available. This was in compliance with the Prophet's instructions. Those who were able to pay ransom were released. Those who were unable were set free by pledging not to fight Muslims. Those who could teach ten Muslim children how to read and write were set free. When the Prophet heard the wailing of the prisoners, he became restless and could not sleep until the ropes with which they were tied up were removed. He did not pressurise anybody to release their captives. He took the initiative of freeing them and others followed him.

The Prophet abolished the barbaric practices of the pre-Islāmic era - torture, corporeal mutilation, driving out the eyeballs from their sockets and splitting the bellies of pregnant women. Disfiguring the dead bodies, stealing their captured goods, killing the non-combatants and priests (of any religion) in their monasteries and destroying trees, were all prohibited acts (IK:1:528). Burning crops and destroying cattle were

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9 Azzam, 129.
11 Ibid. 262.
12 Siddiqi, Naeem, 17.
13 Ibid. 20.
14 Mohy-ud-Din, 278.
forbidden. Therefore, if some Muslim powers and extremist groups revived these practices, they were betraying God and the Prophet by misusing the name of Islam. Among those categorised by the Prophet as entitled to receive the most severe torment on the Day of Resurrection are unjust rulers and mutilators of the dead (IK:1:247).

Human life is inviolable, according to the Qur'ān, which asserts: "Take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice" (Q.6:151). The Qur'ān grants human life the same honour as the life of whole mankind, irrespective of religion, colour or race. It asserts: "If anyone kills another person, except as a punishment for murder or for spreading mischief in the land, it is as if he killed the whole mankind. And if anyone saves a life, it is as if he saved the whole mankind" (Q.5:32). The law has to take its normal course and procedure.

The Qur'ān lays down the rule of restraint in hostility: "And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight against you, but do not commit aggression. Allah does not like the aggressors" (Q.2:190). The Qur'ān proclaims self-restraint in the most trying circumstances to uphold respect for human life. Self-control is most difficult in the theatre of war. But this is a pre-requirement of the concept of armed struggle in Islam. A misconception prevails concerning what is known as "a holy war". Nowhere in the Qur'ān has jihihd been named "a Holy War" (in Arabic: al-harb al-muqaddasah). The concept of "Holy War" as such does not exist in Islam.

When the Prophet entered into a truce after a series of battles with the Makkans, the Qur'ān declared it as a manifest victory. On the occasion of the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah, Jihihd was fought through a peace agreement, amidst objections by the Companions against the Prophet's judgement. Yet, preference was given to peace (SQT:VI:3327). Consequently, the conversion to Islam multiplied manifolds.

In contrast with the slogans of the present day Jihihd cum takfiri movements, the Prophet used to issue instructions to the warriors: "Do not kill any old person, any child or any woman." "Do not kill the monks in monasteries ... Do not kill the people who

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15 Quṭb, (1977), 91.
16 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 222.
17 Mawdudi, 40, quoting Abū Dawūd.
are sitting in places of worship."\(^{18}\) After a combatant surrenders or is overcome, he must not be attacked or tortured. The Prophet prohibited assaulting the wounded. In one of the battles, he was informed that some children of the enemies were caught in cross-fire attack and were killed. He expressed displeasure at some Companions who pleaded that after all these were children of the polytheists. He laid strict humanitarian rules for handling the prisoners. He said: "No prisoner should be put to the sword." The killing of captives and the looting of property, farms and cattle were strictly forbidden. The corpses of the enemies were not to be disfigured in revenge for what they did.\(^{19}\)

The sanctity of human life is guarded through the concept of justice which is a central theme in the Qur'ān. Judging with equity and bearing witness only for the sake of God is construed a vital duty (Q.4:135). In the same verse, the Qur'ān warns against the vulnerability of people from being subdued by passion. Under the Islāmic justice, a person cannot be arrested arbitrarily, and is considered innocent until proved guilty. Grudge or hostility towards other people should not be allowed to overpower the sense of justice.

Several verses and traditions also speak of the life being a trust from the Creator. Therefore, committing suicide is ranked as a major sin. The Qur'ān declares unequivocally: "And whoever kills a believer intentionally, his punishment is Hell; he shall abide in it forever, and Allāh will send His wrath on him and curse him and prepare for him a painful chastisement" (Q.4:93). (In sharp contrast, see Chapter 7). There is not an iota of vagueness in the verdict and it leaves no loopholes for manoeuvr. In the verse preceding this one, expiation for the sin of killing a believer, only if he is killed in error, is permitted.

In verse Q.22:39, where armed struggle was sanctioned for the first time (**IK**:VI:582), the conditions and the objectives were clearly laid down: "Permission to fight is given to those who are being fought against, as they are oppressed; and most surely Allāh is able to assist them..." Hence, those fighting *Jihād* were not the ones who started hostilities, but they were fighting in self-defence to repulse aggression. The verse continues to describe their predicament: "Those who have been expelled from their

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\(^{18}\) Ibid. 40, quoting *Musnad Ibn Hanbal*.

\(^{19}\) Ibid. 41, quoting *Bukhārī* and *Abū Dawūd*. 
homes without a just cause, only because they said: ‘Our Lord is Allāh’…” This indicates that the persecution endured by the oppressed was for the sake of faith.

The Muslim community at the dawn of the Prophet’s mission was uprooted from its land and possessions. The believers were separated from their nearest of kin and suffered physical and mental torture. In sanctioning the armed struggle, humanitarian objectives were spelled out. The verse continues: “And had there not been Allāh’s repelling some people by others, certainly there would have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques in which Allāh’s name is much remembered…” (Q.22:40). Therefore, the aim of armed Jihād was to protect the rights of people of other religions also to practise their faith in peace and without any compulsion. Qūṭb writes: “And all of these were liable to destruction [by the non-believers] despite their sacredness and designation for worship of God” (SQT:IV:2425).

Therefore, the believers were fighting the polytheist aggressors and the non-believers who were adamant at usurping the rights of the religious communities. This explains why Islām gives protection to all places of worship, and exhorts the Muslims to honour this pledge. ‘Abd-al-Rahmān ‘Azzām writes: “Another principle stressed in the Message of Muḥammad and extremely important in our times is that a pledge may never be betrayed. Islām forbids the betrayal of a pledge, secretly or openly…”

It is noteworthy, that in this particular context, the devastation and destruction of the 1000-years old shrine and mosque of Samarrā in Iraq on 23 February 2006, which brought Iraq overnight on the verge of civil war and attracted international condemnation, has to be assessed. This might be seen as a defiance of the pledge in the Qur’ān, by the radicals who make most noises in the name of Islām. This also demonstrates that God and His Messenger have decreed something, and the radicals, out of their own free-will and whims, opt to follow something else, and choose to remain outside the ambit of the rule of law at a dreadful cost to human life.

Whilst commenting on the crime of collaboration to commit murder, Ibn Kathīr gives the ruling of Abū Ḥanīfā that a Muslim could be killed for killing a non-Muslim. He

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20 ‘Azzām, 128.
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substantiates this with the declaration of ‘Umar: “If all the residents of Ṣan‘ā
 collaborated in killing him (an innocent boy), I would kill them all” (IK:I:486). Ibn
Kathir comments that there was a near consensus among the Companions on this
matter. Remarkably, if the rationale of the Caliph is upheld today by the jurists, then all
the members of the group, whose openly declared policy is to kill indiscriminately, are
ettitled to be killed for collaborating to kill one innocent human being. But the Caliph’s
intent was ignored because the Ḥanbalite jurists, according to the same source, had a
different ruling, so they overruled the “near consensus” of the Companions.

The most important aspect of Jihād which is shelved by the public because of
unawareness, and by the rulers because of shielding their own interest, has been
succinctly described by the Prophet. He said that the highest form of Jihād is “to
confront a despotic ruler with the word of truth” (IK:III:242 & SQ:II:173, quoting Abū
Dāwūd and Al-Tirmidhī). Qūtb says that those who kill the advocates of justice, invite
the wrath of God and face disgrace in life (SQ:II:175).

Concluding this section, it was established that the concept of Jihād is not an outright
war against non-Muslims as the radicals portray through their rhetoric and polemics.
The next section investigates the juristic-political controversies that have rocked the
Muslim community. The issues are later presented in the form of case scenarios.

Juristic rulings of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn ʿAbdul Wahhāb

Ibn Taymiyyah is considered as the precursor of the movement of Muḥammad Ibn
ʿAbdul Wahhāb (d. 1206/1792) whose teachings were adopted officially by the State of
Saudi Arabia and by the modern Salafi movements, both moderates and hardliners. The
Salafīs preach in their sermons and literature that their school is the model
representative of the traditionalists. The subscribers to the ideology of Ibn ʿAbdul
Wahhāb, consider it derogatory if they are referred as Wahhābīs. They prefer the name
Salafīs for themselves, which means the followers of the righteous predecessors.
However, in the context of the academic research, it is of paramount importance to
make a distinction. In the nineteenth century, the liberal reformers were known as
Salafīs. The name was borrowed by the Wahhābīs since the early twentieth century to
give the movement an "Islamic authenticity".21 A common denominator between the two was that both of them rejected "critical historical inquiry".22 The author of the Thematic Commentary on the Qur'ân, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1416/1996) criticised the Wahhābī movement for sifting through thousands of hadiths to trace those that fit into their preconceived notions23.

Stanley writes that 'true' Salafism is fighting for its identity. There is an intense competition between the scholars who are pro and anti-Saudi regime, with the former attacking the extremist groups such as al-Qaeda as "Quṭḥists or takfīris (excommunicators)". The former prefer the da'wah or propagation approach, whereas the latter prefer a violent approach. He further writes that Salafism was an intellectual movement initiated at al-Azhar University. The promoters of Quṭb's thought were 'Abdullāh 'Azzām, (a proponent of the global jihādī movement, assassinated in 1989), 'Omar 'Abd al-Raḥmān (serving life prison sentence in New York) and Muḥammad Quṭb (Sayyid Quṭb's brother) who became academics in Saudi universities.24

Notably, throughout his exegesis, wherever Ibn Kathir seeks to authenticate his narrations without naming specific narrators, he states that Salaf have said, referring to the predecessors. This indicates that the noun Salaf was in use centuries before the present Salafis could institutionally monopolise its usage. It never referred in the past to an organised group or ideology. Yet under the banner of the Salafis, there came a time when this ideology preached that the non-Muslims in an Islamic State must wear a "distinctive insignia" to stand out from the rest of the population of Muslims. This strange view was initiated by Ibn Taymiyyah who lived through tumultuous political events.25 The following case studies illuminate the extent to which polarised rulings of the jurists, derived from the same-self root sources, are having divisive effect on the community at large.

21 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 75.
22 Ibid. 79.
23 Ibid. 90.
25 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 205.
First case scenario: Paying homage to the graves of the Prophets and Saints

Ibn Taymiyyah was affiliated to the traditionalist Ḥanbalī School of Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). He wrote treatises against the “philosophical theology” of the Ashʿarīyah of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī (see Chapter 1), the founder of the traditionalist School of Theology. He rejected Greek and Islamic philosophy, rational theology, and the Sīfī and Shiʿī practices of paying respects to the burial places of the Prophets and saints.27

He lived through the Mongol crisis (1291–1303) and witnessed the first destruction of Baghdad. He put up resistance to the Mongol invasion.28 This had a deep impact on his thoughts. During his polemical arguments with several groups, he alleged that they “worship” saints. All the sects and Schools in Islam make it abundantly clear that they worship no deity except God. His claim, which has been widely refuted by different schools of theology from his time up to the present day, should have been qualified in the entry in The Encyclopaedia Britannica as his personal allegation, rather than a statement of fact.29

Paradoxically Ibn Taymiyyah’s grave in the Sīfī cemetery in Damascus is “widely venerated” according to the same source on the same page.30 As he was inordinately opposed to paying respects to the dead to the point of declaring those who abided by this practice were “unbelievers”, the least he could have done was to ensure that his own burial place was not venerated after his death. This was possible by leaving an oral or written will, expressing his intention to be buried in an unmarked grave; and his followers would have been religiously obliged to honour his wishes.

Theologically, he was an authority in Shafiʿī doctrine. The traditionalist Shafiʿīs do not prohibit visitation to the grave of the Prophet in Madinah. They and the overwhelming majority of Muslims, by relying on the authentic traditions, consider this as an act of virtue. Ibn Taymiyyah passed a fatwah (edict) titled, “Travel to the tomb of the Prophets and Saints”, declaring such practice as “ḥarām” (prohibited). Consequently, eighteen

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28 Goodman, 64.
29 EB (1975), IX:151.
30 Ibid.
jurist consultants from the traditionalist Mālikī School of Mālik Ibn Anas (d. 179/795) condemned Ibn Taymiyyah, and four Chief Justices of Cairo got him imprisoned. He died in prison two years later.31

'Alī ibn Abdul Kāfi Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī al-Shafi‘ī (d. 756/1355) dedicated his entire book to this subject. He collected many authentic hadīths from different chains of narrations and the historic incidents from the life of the Companions, to prove that they left an undeniable precedence of visiting and advising others to visit the Prophet’s grave to pay homage to him. They relied on the Prophet’s exhortation: “Whoever performs pilgrimage, then visits my grave after my death, it is as if he has visited me in my lifetime.”32 In another hadīth he says: “Whoever performs pilgrimage and does not visit me, he has shunned me.”33

Al-Subkī al-Shafi‘ī writes that anyone who considers the consensus of the earlier and later scholars and the masses who visit the burial place of the Prophet, from all parts of the world, to be in error, is himself in gross error.34 In his last illness, the Prophet himself visited the old cemetery of al-Baqī‘. His wife, ‘Ā’ishah reported that he taught her the way of sending salutations to the dead.35 The author rebukes the excuse given by the opponents that people might start “worshipping the Prophet’s grave”. He asserts that if he did not fear that the ill-informed people would be lured towards this type of lame excuse, then he would not even have bothered to mention it because the claim is based on sheer imagination and is in violation of the proofs of the Shari‘ah.36

This is one of the issues that has created bitterness among Islāmic Schools, which reached its climax when the School of Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb adopted an intolerant attitude. “Wahhābi zealots even tried to destroy the tomb of the Prophet in Medina and were narrowly prevented from doing so...”37 But they succeeded in destroying the tombs in the oldest cemeteries in Makkah and Madinah in 1926. The Muslim world felt

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31 Makdisi, op. cit., 573.
33 Ibid. 27.
34 Ibid. 102.
35 Ibid. 84.
36 Ibid. 85.
ENIGMATIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE QUR'ĀN AND THE PROPHET'S TRADITIONS LEAD TO DICHOTOMY

the offence as there were 10,000 Companions and the nearest members of the Prophet's family buried therein, whose graves were bulldozed and desecrated.

Like Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn 'Abdul Wahhāb opposed taqlīd (imitation in jurisprudential matters), recognised by the four Sunnī Schools and the Shi'i Ja'fari School. His view was vehemently rejected by the scholars, including his own father who was a jurist. He revived the stoning of adulterous woman to death.38 By 1746 Ibn Sa'ūd and Ibn 'Abdul Wahhāb declared jihād on anybody opposed to the Wahhābi doctrine. When Makkah and Madīnah fell to them in 1805 and 1806, the first Sa'ūdi-Wahhābi state dawned in Arabia.39

A sharp contrast with the attitude of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn 'Abdul Wahhāb, in relation to the visitations to the tomb of the Prophet and the saints, is that of al-Ghazālī who writes: "There are several traditions showing that those who love the Prophet...pray for Divine blessings on him or visit his tomb..." They, according to al-Ghazālī, deserve the intercession of the Prophet on the Day of Judgement.40

Concluding this section, notably, a traveller to the Muslim countries cannot escape to observe the polarisation on the issue of visitations to the graves. There is a contrasting scenario between Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the most populous Arab country, where the majority follow the Shafi'i School. In Egypt, tombs are built and preserved over the graves of the saints and the Sūfis, where their birth and death anniversaries are commemorated. But in Saudi Arabia, graves have been razed to the ground and not even the birth of the Prophet is commemorated.

Second case scenario: Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism – attributing corporal shape to God - was part of al-Ash'āri's doctrine which was rigidly adopted by Ibn Taymiyyah. As most of the hardliners among the present day Islāmic movements take their inspiration from the juristic-political beliefs of Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn 'Abdul Wahhāb, their thoughts have attracted

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39 Ibid. II:160.
40 Hazarvi, 50.
scholarly debate. Ibn Battūta (d. c770/1368 or 1369) was a legendary traveller from Morocco - “the only medieval traveller to have visited the lands of every Muhammadan [Muslim] ruler of his time...” To undertake a journey of 75,000 miles in those days presupposes a strong financial backing, which he had mustered from the rulers in his country. He acted as an envoy for them and later as a Qaḍī (judge). Being a theologian himself, Ibn Battūta writes in his chronicles that he met Ibn Taymiyyah in person. He discusses the conflict between the theologians and the Sūfis, whose practices were seen as heretical and “to trespass into polytheism”.

The Sūfis nevertheless gained an upper hand with the advent of the Turks on the political scene. Ibn Taymiyyah strongly believed in anthropomorphism, the doctrine which even al-Ghazālī had condemned in his times and wrote that God is not in need of ears to hear and limbs to act and eyes to see and a tongue to speak. Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb also believed in anthropomorphism. Ibn Battūta attended one of Ibn Taymiyyah’s Friday sermons in Damascus, where people “idolized” him. He said from the pulpit: “Verily God descends to the sky over our world [from Heaven] in the same bodily fashion that I make the descent.” He illustrated his claim by taking a step down from the pulpit. His understanding of the Deity was figurative. This belief needs to be examined.

The senses and mental faculties are by nature imperfect. The imperfect and deficient cannot comprehend and visualise the uncreated, most perfect immortal Being (SQ:V:267). The Qur’ān leaves no room for misunderstanding: “No power of vision can encompass Him, whereas He encompasses all vision; He is above all comprehension, yet is all-aware” (Q.6:103). It declares: “There is nothing whatsoever like Him” (Q.42:11); which means that God is transcendental and cannot be confined to time, space and image.

A Mālikite doctor objected to figurative semblance of God, but was beaten up with shoes by the supporters of Ibn Taymiyyah. They brought the aggrieved person who had sustained severe injuries in front of an Ḥanbalite judge, who sentenced him to
imprisonment and a further beating. Other theological doctors appealed to the higher authority, and this resulted in solitary confinement of Ibn Taymiyyah for "heretical pronouncements". Al-Nabahînî said in *Shawâhid al-Ḥaqq*: "He refuted the Christians, the Shi‘îs, the logicians, then the Ash‘arîs and Ahl al-Sunnâ, in short, sparing no one whether Muslim or non-Muslim, Sunni or otherwise."46

**Third case scenario: The faith of the Prophet’s parents**

A researcher is flabbergasted when he comes across certain strange narrations in the exegetical literature. A man is said to have come to the Prophet and asked where his father was, to which the Prophet replied: "In the Fire (of Hell)". The man walked away. The Prophet called him back and said: "Verily, my father and your father are in the Fire" (*IK*:IX:588-589). Through such narrations, the narrator might have a motive to prove that whoever died before the advent of the Prophet will burn in Hell. The Prophet’s mother was pregnant when his father died. This would imply that he would be punished for dying before the Prophet declared his Prophethood. Then the same sources record that the Prophet gave good tidings that he was the product of the invocation of Abraham and of the prophecy of Jesus; and that when his mother was pregnant, she dreamt of a light emanating from her (*IK*:IX:618). Yet, neither the supplications of Abraham and Jesus nor the miracle that the Prophet’s mother felt could possibly have materialised without the medium of his father.

Another narration is also mind-boggling. The Prophet is said to have sat beside a grave in the cemetery of Makka. He got up in tears, the like of which his Companions had not noticed before. When he was asked the reason, he replied that he sought God’s permission to visit the grave of his mother which was granted. But when he sought permission to ask forgiveness of God for her, it was rejected (*IK*:IV:524-525). The implication is obvious that the Prophet’s mother, Āmenäh, was to remain deprived of God’s forgiveness just because she happened to die before he proclaimed his Prophethood, and that too for no fault of hers. But then Ibn Kathîr has simply overlooked that in dozens of places throughout his work, he has repeated that Islam was

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45 Ibn Battûta, 67-68.
in existence before the advent of Muḥammad, and it was the religion of all the previous Prophets. He has also stated in several places that the forefathers of the Prophet were Ḥunafāʾ (monotheists).

A researcher is bound to ask where the absolute justice of God, so emphatically stated in the Qurʾān, fits into this stark contradiction? The Prophet’s mother allegedly suffers, because she died before the Prophet announced his Mission. According to these narrations, she died a non-believer, for whom even the Prophet’s supplication to God was rejected.

In conclusion, it may be stated that there is always a risk in quoting narrations in the Qurʾānic exegesis that do not meet the criterion of rational thinking. The next section explores the juristic rulings over the institution of the Caliphate which, certain Islāmic movements are committed at restoring.

**Juristic dictum over the qualification and disqualification of a Caliph**

The discourse on leadership has religious ramifications because it is built on the premise that the Muslim community is primarily a religious and not a secular community, and its state of affairs is guided by revelation. Hence, the rulers assume their status and power in the name of Islām as the defenders of the faith.

In his detailed exposition on the subject and its legal paradigms, Abou El Fadl states that criteria of piety and justice for the acceptance or removal of a Caliph remained a “pious ideal”. In response to the “fanatical revolts” and troubles generated by the Khārijites, the jurists were “forced” to compromise and reject rebellion even against the unjust rulers. The jurists reversed the principle by demanding unflinching obedience and allegiance to the Caliph, whether just or unjust. They “ignored the moral imperatives and focused solely on the element of power” according to Gibb. He continues that Al-Māwārī (d. 450/1058) justified a “legal fiction” that a usurper can claim legitimacy as the Caliph’s representative if the Caliph is politically impotent.\(^47\)

Gibb also wrote: "Al-Mawardi did not realize that he had undermined the foundations of all law." 48

The disintegration of the Islāmic, as opposed to Muslim political order, was caused by abdication of responsibilities. The jurists were happy to be in charge of religious law and jurisprudence and swore allegiance even to the most corrupt Caliphs. 49 The exceptions were rare and those who protested were almost certainly subjected to violent deaths. Abou El Fadl argues that legalised compulsion and usurpation predates al-Mawardi. 50 Analysing the intricacies of the law of rebellion in Islām, he writes that its main source was the Qurʾān and ʿAlī because his times witnessed the first extremist insurgency. (See Chapter 7). He quotes several prominent classical sources testifying that ʿAlī set certain precedents vis-à-vis the rebels. He adhered to his principles: not to start a battle, not to pursue the wounded and fugitive, not to harm women and children, not to enslave prisoners but to spare their lives and property, 51 contrary to what the rebels did.

Some jurists stretched their imagination to claim that the reason “God made the Companions fight each other was to teach the Muslims the law of rebellion”. 52 Abou El Fadl raises the perplexing questions: If all the Companions were considered right (whether they killed or got killed), what happened to those who emulated their example later on in succeeding generations and fought each other? Were they also equally right? 53 Some jurists argued that ʿAlī should not have fought the insurgents and should have sat at home “allowing himself to be killed.” 54 But the historian al-Ṭabari argued that if in every dispute one was to retreat from duty or withdraw from battle and stay at home, then “no divine law would be upheld, and no injustice would be negated”. 55 In our times, by the same token of logic, it means that Mulla ʿUmar, the “Commander of the Believers” (as he was called) and the Caliph of the Taliban should have stayed at home and allowed himself to be killed, instead of fighting those who took up arms against him.

48 Ibid. 10.
49 Ibid. 14.
50 Ibid. 17.
51 Ibid. 34-35.
52 Ibid. 44.
53 Ibid. 46.
54 Ibid. 43.
55 Ibid. 47.
The jurists also mention that the Prophet out plucked the eyes of the rebels; whereas, several exegetes emphatically state that "the Prophet never crucified or blinded anyone."\(^{56}\) Abou El Fadl argues that this incident, known as the ‘Urayna incident, could have been concocted by the Umayyāds to provide a legal cover for their own brutal amputations and crucifixions. The times of the Umayyāds and the ‘Abbāsids witnessed frequent mutilations of the dead-bodies of their enemies.\(^{57}\) It thus became a matter of convenience for the Caliphs and their governors like al-Ḥajjāj to justify their cruelty by claiming in their Friday sermons that after all, the Prophet himself had behaved in a similar way.\(^{58}\)

Ibn Taymiyyah accused the legal Schools of Ḥanafīs, Shāfi‘is and Ḥanbalīs of inventing the law of fighting the rebels that revolted against a just ruler. He even accused al-Shāfi‘i of spreading fitnah (mischief).\(^{59}\) Based on his criteria, fighting the unjust rulers was unjustified.\(^{60}\) It seems that he aimed at barring value judgement in relation to the fierce civil wars in the first three centuries of the Islamic era, because the first three centuries were portrayed as the best model in the Islamic history. However, this era was full of bloodshed.

Ibn Taymiyyah alleged that nothing had been reported from the Prophet on fighting the rebels. He simply wrote off the legal deductions arrived at by other legal Schools. Abou El Fadl quotes Sunnite theological sources that supported ‘Ali\(^{61}\) and all the major Sunnite historic sources that sympathised with al-Ḥusayn\(^{62}\) against the Umayyāds. But Ibn Taymiyyah turned the tables to portray the victims as guilty. Many revolts against the Umayyāds followed the massacre of Karbalā; and the unjust Caliphs resorted to bizarre excuse that their opponents “waged war against God and His Prophet”.\(^{63}\) Had it not been for the connivance of the court-jurists, the unjust rulers would not have succeeded in their profanity. The prominent jurists were aware of the dangers facing the Muslim community at the hands of the tyrannical rulers. For example, Abū Ḥanīfā supported the revolt of Zayd, the great-grandson of the Prophet, with finance. He claimed that had he

\(^{56}\) Ibid. 50.
\(^{57}\) Ibid. 53.
\(^{58}\) Ibid. 59.
\(^{59}\) Ibid. 98.
\(^{60}\) Ibid. 62.
\(^{61}\) Ibid. 65.
\(^{62}\) Ibid. 69.
\(^{63}\) Ibid. 70-72.
lived in the times of 'Ali, he would have supported him against Mu‘awiyyah (d. 60/680). Mālik supported and financed the revolt of al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, another great-grandson of the Prophet.

During the ‘Abbāsid era, the jurists reportedly conspired against each other to gain favour with the Caliph. Al-Shāfī‘ī was brought in chains with nine others in front of al-Rashid (d. 193/809), accused of being Shi‘ās. Al-Shaybānī, the Ḥanafi jurist was in the court as the nine were executed. He mediated on behalf of al-Shāfī‘ī. By the time of al-Ma‘mūn (d. 218/833), the jurists were accused of dishonesty and hypocrisy by the same Caliphs whose legitimacy they sought to protect.

The founder of the Ḥanbalī School to whom Ibn Taymiyyah was affiliated, totally prohibited armed rebellion and demanded allegiance even to the corrupt rulers, unless one was ordered to commit grave sins. Notably, the rulers had a free reign to commit the gravest of all sins - injustice. This political theory perfectly suited the rulers who abhorred accountability for the flagrant abuse of power and resources. Consequently, some dangerous and brutal splinter groups like Zanj (255/869) and Qaramita (278/891) and the Assassins (fifth/eleventh century) later emerged. ‘Ali’s fight against the Khārijites in the first century, availed legal precedents for the jurists to deal with these classical terror groups. This matter is discussed at length in his legal discourse by Abou El Fadl.

The jurists like Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Nawawī and al-Shaybānī reported that the Prophet said that the rulers must be obeyed “even if they usurp your wealth and strike your backs”. Abou El Fadl quotes a thought-provoking episode regarding the traditions narrated that whoever does not remain within the orbit of jama‘a (community) dies the death of ignorance. Ibn Qayyim reached the conclusion that during the inquisition in the time of al-Ma‘mūn, almost all Muslims were anti-jama‘ah and only Ibn Ḥanbal was on the right path. “Hence, he alone became the jama‘ah and the rest of the people deviated

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64 Ibid. 73, quoting al-Makki in Manāqib.
65 Ibid. 76.
66 Ibid. 83, quoting al-Dhahabi.
67 Ibid. 90.
68 Ibid. 91.
69 Ibid. 112.
70 Ibid. 114.
from the *jamāʿah*.71 This genre of traditions also strangely emphasise the duty of obeying Caliphs “even if they do not follow the Guidance or Sunnah of the Prophet”.72

On the other hand, scores of traditions can be quoted that pronounce that there is no obedience in disobedience to God, which by implication is the disobedience to the Prophet. If the community reaches an agreement to install someone in power who does not follow the guidance of the Prophet, can that community be called a community of believers, especially, as it claims its adherence to the Islamic *Shariʿah*? One way to overcome this quagmire is to ponder on the statement of Abou El Fadl that “the obedience traditions were part of the Umayyād campaign against their opponents.” The same weapon was used by the ‘Abbāsids against the Umayyāds. Both of them saw the descendants of the Prophet and especially, the progeny of ‘Alī as their rivals and arch-enemies. They relied on the tradition reported that advised Muslims not to oppose Yazīd despite the fact that he was known as “the epitome of injustice, impiety and corruption”.73 The Umayyāds and the early ‘Abbāsids saw themselves as “God’s shadow on earth”.74 They also depended on juristic rulings legitimising their oppressive rule.

Al-Shaybānī, the court-cleric at the time of al-Rashīd reported that the Prophet called upon all Muslims to fight Rāfiʿa.75 The derogatory term Rāfiʿa (rejectionists) was used much later than the time of the Prophet for the Shiʿās.76 But this tradition has to be analysed in the light of well-documented facts. Al-Shaybānī’s own mentor, Abū ʿAbbās studied the science of jurisprudence under Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the sixth Imām of the Shiʿ ās. Al-Jundi, a high profile civil servant and chairman of the Committee on Islamc Thought in Egypt devotes a book to the contribution of al-Ṣādiq to several branches of knowledge. He writes that the founders of Mālikī and Ḥanafi Sunni Schools were his students.77

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71 Ibid. 115.
72 Ibid. 116.
73 Ibid. 117.
74 Ibid. 133, quoting Crone and Hinds.
75 Ibid. 117.
76 See al-Jundi, 213.
77 Ibid. 3.
Therefore, if the tradition quoted by al-Shaybānī is upheld, then the Imāms of the Mālikī and Ḥanafī Schools should have fought al-Ṣādiq or should have boycotted his seminary. Either they were in breach of the specific instructions of the Prophet as quoted by al-Shaybānī or the narration had some political motivations due to the narrator’s favourable position with the arch-opponents of the Shi‘ās. But this does not mean that the traditions of this genre went unheeded. The founder of the Mālikī School gave a ruling under the category of “heretics” that “the moderate Shi‘īs should be beaten and ostracised until they repent, and extreme Shi‘īs should be killed”. It is noteworthy that if this fatwāh is applied in the present times, then the political climate in Iraq speaks for itself. This might lead the observer to deduce that the declared policy of indiscriminate killings by the foreign insurgents is ideologically motivated.

The court-jurists legitimised a repressive hereditary Caliphate, which saw the son poisoning his father (in case of Mutawakkil) or brother fighting brother (in case of Amin and Ma‘mūn) for Caliphate. The last Umayyād Caliph, Marwān al-Ḥimār (d. 132/750), was given the title of “Donkey” by history. Ibn Taymiyyah considers any revolt even against Marwān the Donkey, as wars of fitnāh (discord). Had the jurists practised the authentic tradition of the Prophet which says that a believer is the one who resists the unjust ruler with hand, tongue and heart then this formula would have acted as a deterrent to abuse of power.

But Ibn Taymiyyah went even further. He said that a ruler may “convert to Islām but continue to drink alcohol and commit other sins”. In this case, despite advising him, if there is any likelihood that he will leave Islām, then one should not try to reform him and should leave him alone. There is a need to analyse this matter in view of the fact that the underlying assumption is that the Muslim community is governed by its religion. Having compromised on the fundamental concept of justice, the juristic guideline said that a ruler must be followed, provided he does not force the public to disobey God. Ostensibly, to surrender to the ruler who himself disobeys God is in itself a disobedience to God, according to the traditions of the Prophet.

78 Abou El Fadl, Rebellion and Violence..., 136.
79 Ibid. 123.
80 Ibid. 274.
81 Ibid. 275.
The approach of Ibn Taymiyyah was focused on accommodating the suppressive rulers. This explains why it was difficult for him to comprehend the stance that al-Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet, had taken by refusing to pay an oath of allegiance to a ruler like Yazīd. Unsurprisingly, Ibn Taymiyyah supported Muʿāwiyyah against ‘Alī and Yazīd against al-Ḥusayn. On a number of theological and historic issues, he had qualms against all the four Schools of the Sunnīs, especially, the Ḥanafīs and the Shāfīʿīs, according to the same source.

It is observed that in today’s world, most Muslims have become lame ducks in their own countries. Their frustration is expressed in radical thought and the radical interpretation of Islam, which is gaining momentum. Today, the average ruler has become bold and daring in not only flouting the Islamic prohibitions, but also in forcing it on others. Ibn Taymiyyah’s thoughts were inherited by the Wahhābī ideology. Abou El Fadl writes: “Wahhābism is an ideology of political pacifism...” It does not approve of uprising. He continues: “Rebellion against a government that implements the positive law of Islam is forbidden even if this government perpetuates social and economic injustice.”

In regard to the uprising against unjust rulers, the remarks of the founder of the Mālikī School are still echoed that, “sixty years of oppression is better than one moment of anarchy where tribulations (fitnah) reigns.” This statement needs to be examined pragmatically. It is tantamount to telling those who suffered oppression under slavery that their plight was far better than a moment of civil war fought by Abraham Lincoln to abolish slavery, notwithstanding the fact that the cause of the ensuing tribulations and chaos was the oppressive system in the first place. The Qurʾān does not condone oppression at any level, least of all when it is committed by those in authority; and any violation is construed as the breach of trust with God.

In his interpretation of the Qurʾān, Qutb adopts a strict attitude to this predicament. He writes that a Muslim has the duty to oppose “chauvinistic, oppressive and totalitarian ideologies...anywhere in the world”. Those who do not partake in this mission live in

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82 Ibid. 274.
83 Abou El Fadl, And God knows..., 9, quoting the edict of Salīh b. Fawzān of the permanent Committee for Research and al-ʾiftā (edicts).
84 Malik, xxix.
"scepticism, cynicism, unhappiness, spiritual suffering and deprivation" (SQ:I:482). He further states that regardless of personal sufferings, the Muslim has to struggle on the path of truth to uphold his faith (SQ:I:484). He asserts that the rebellious oppressors and the deviants are those who clash with the Great Power that rules the cosmos (SQ:T:V:3019).

In concluding this section, it has to be stated that instead of supporting oppressive rulers, if the court-jurists had supported with the same fervour and enthusiasm certain personalities whose piety, bravery, integrity, knowledge and commitment to Islām were not questioned by history, then many of the upheavals in the community would have been averted. The backlash for espousing the course of the corrupt rulers has left its indelible mark. Today, the system in the Muslim land is replete with corruption. Had the jurists not compromised on the question of justice, piety and knowledge as the core qualifications of a ruler, then the community would have been saved from many disasters. The exponent of the political theory of Caliphate, al-Māwardi’s main concern was to save the Abbāsid Caliphate which was on the brink of collapse. But the damage was already done. The jurists justified their stance under the guise of a strong government and unity. Yet, such political expediency has since caused sharp disunity and conflict of interest in the Muslim world resulting in the abolishment of the Caliphate altogether.

The history of nations suggests that power obtained through usurpation lacks stability, except through repression, and that too cannot survive for long. One of the core principles of Islām is to abide by justice and to adopt moderation. This is why the epithet of the Islāmic community is the “middle nation” (Q.2:143) free from extremes. Apart from the concept of Jihād and political theory, criticism has been levied against Islām in recent years that it suppresses the rights of woman. This controversy is dealt with in the next section.

Critical analysis of the radical juristic views on the status of woman in Islām

Having analysed in Chapter 4 the rights and respect granted to woman in the Qur’ān in her capacity as a spouse and a mother, the purpose of this analysis is to demonstrate that cultural and customary impediments are degrading the honour bestowed upon woman in
Islām. Because of these impediments, people in the West think that Islām is exploiting the woman. Humans are created “from a single soul” (Q.6:98, Q.39:6). But as they have different roles to play, they are treated differently in view of their emotional and mental condition (SQ:III:325). Qutb opines that the degree of advantage of man over woman is relative and not absolute (SQ:I:358). Islām does not adopt the view that woman is the “root of human misery”. Man and woman are seen as the source of love and affection (SQ:VI:297).

Human society is a male dominated chauvinistic phenomenon in Muslim and non-Muslim cultures. In the pre-Islāmic Arabia, females were considered chattels with no basic human rights, and treated as mere objects of sex. Under Islāmic Laws, they emerged as co-partners with males, and were accorded unprecedented rights and status. Briefly, woman was given the right of inheritance from the side of her parents and husband. Functional roles were distinguished on the basis of physical and emotional formation. Respect was regenerated. The Prophet said that Paradise lies at the feet of the mothers.

Humans came into existence without their own will and power. The Omnipotent power determined for them their attributes, potential and abilities; and supported and guided them with values (SQ:III:22-23). The ties of “universal kinship” and family are derived from the ties with God (SQ:III:25). The Prophet said: “The tyrannical aggression and the severance of the ties of kinship are punishable in this life and the Hereafter (IK:V:514). Maintaining ties of kinship is the cause of prolonged life and increases sustenance (IK:IX:110). In view of what has been stated, neither the role of man nor the role of woman is dispensable. Their nature makes them mutually complimentary. Ibn Kathir comments on part of the Verse Q.2:228 that men have an advantageous position over women “taking care of the affairs...in this life and in the Hereafter” (IK:I:634). This is a strange gesture because it assumes that men will maintain the same relationship of responsibility for looking after their women even in the Hereafter, when

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85 Haykal, 318-319 & Ansarian, 47.
86 Osman, 853 & 858.
87 Mutahhery, 157 & Osman, 850-852.
88 Mutahhery, 64-67.
89 Afzaiur Rahman 394 & Rizvi, 254.
the Qur'ān is explicit, "...there will be no more relationships between them that Day, nor will one ask after another (Q.23:101).

Abou El Fadl criticises the views of the radicals that "women will constitute the vast majority of the residents of Hell", and that "most men in Hell will be there because of women". These types of narrations vitiate the respect accorded to women in Islām. The motive of every single injunction on women in the Qur'ān was "to protect women from exploitative situations". In verse Q.4:34, the word qawwāmūn has attracted much controversy because it is indicative of a "degree of authority" that men enjoy over women. Abou El Fadl asserts that the word connotes several meanings, such as, guardians, supporters, masters or servants. In the same verse the word fāḍl has been interpreted as preference or superiority (of men over women). Whereas, in many Qur'ānic verses fāḍl refers to God's grace and blessings. A simplified translation clears the mist: "Men are the protectors of women because Allāh has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them (women) from their means. ..."

To highlight the importance of the role of women in society, the story of Prophet Ayyūb is told in the Qur'ān and traditions. For eighteen years, Ayyūb had to pass through affliction in health and loss of wealth and children. His friends deserted him. But his wife remained devoted and became the breadwinner of the household (IK:VIII:335-336). The moral of the story is that when the individual is well-off, people like to associate with him. But when his fortunes change for the worse, people pretend as if they have never known him. This reflects a flaw in human nature. In a clash between affluence and righteousness, human beings are lured towards the riches. But the story of Ayyūb reaches its pinnacle through the sacrifices of his wife who helped her husband to overcome the hardships. This means that if need be, even the wife of the Prophet has shown by example that she can work and earn a living.

If this matter is examined in relation to the recalcitrant attitude of the radicals, then the wide disparity becomes obvious. Putting a ban on women's education and work simply does not comply with the Islāmic human dignity and values. The traditions of the

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90 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 262.
91 Ibid. 267-268.
Prophet emphasise the need for women to acquire knowledge. Yet, these specific instructions did not deter the destruction of girls’ schools by the Taliban92 after their downfall. During their reign they had closed sixty-three girls’ schools.93 Their brutality defied human values.94 This is one of many situations where the radicals behave as if the Qur’ān and Sunnah have to surrender to their whims and unfounded desires.

The Qur’ān draws an unequivocal equality (but not similarity in physical structure) between men and women in the matters of righteousness, uprightness, faith, truthfulness, dignity, steadfastness, worship, obedience, forgiveness and rewards (Q.33:35, IK:VII:685-691). The nature of men and women is nurtured around these characteristics. In disparity with the attitude of the Qur’ān and the Prophet’s attitude towards women, there is a male-chauvinistic bias in the juristic attitude. A few examples are quoted to demonstrate this fact:

(i) Some weak traditions exist which have found legitimacy in a juristic ruling that says that man must refrain from sitting where woman once sat, lest he is sexually aroused, until woman’s bodily heat fans away in the air.95

(ii) The Prophet is widely reported to have stood up for the funeral of a Jewish woman. When his Companions objected, he reminded them that she is after all, a human soul. Among the hadith compilers, al-Tirmidhi and al-Nasā’ī concurred on the Prophet’s practice of standing up on such occasions as a sign of respect. Mālik, Abū Ḥanifah and Shāfi‘i believed that the practice was abrogated. Ibn Ḥanbal and Ibn Ishāq (d. 282/896) believed that this was a matter of individual preference. Al-Nawawī believed that standing for a funeral is not preferred, whereas, others said that it is recommended. “Al-Sanadī said that sitting down is permissible but standing is preferred.”96 Prominent jurists differed among themselves between standing or sitting, and between permissibility or prohibition of standing in honour of anyone at all.97 Mālikī jurist, al-
Shā'ībī (d. 790/1388) adopted a pragmatic approach and declared that the practice of standing out of respect for someone is lawful. This shows that a very simple ethical issue was transformed into a juristic contest.

(iii) Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) rules that woman is a slave of her husband; she cannot refuse sex even if her husband demands it on the saddle of a moving camel; and that she should “lick his puss-filled ulcers if need be”. Abou El Fadl writes that these types of opinions are based on fabricated traditions, meant to degrade the status of woman in Islam. The jurists tend to abide by the text of the tradition if it is quoted in the authentic sources. For example, *Ṣāḥīḥ Muslim* reports that the majority of the dwellers of Hell will be women and that harm done to men will be because of women.

(iv) Al-Bukhārī narrates that ‘Umar’s wife reported to him that the Prophet’s wives were argumentative with him and one of them abandoned him from morning till night. Ibn Ḥajar narrates that one of the Prophet’s wives would even anger him through her arguments. But the Prophet never abandoned his lenient and compassionate disposition towards them. Hence, it is difficult to reconcile the episodes of the life of the Prophet with what is reported in his name. For example, Ibn Ḥanbal writes that the Prophet said: “Beware of this world and beware of women, for the first affliction that Children of Israel suffered from was that of women” (*IK*:VI:116).

(v) Ibn Kathīr quotes his sources that if the wife declines to come to bed when her husband requires her, “the angels will keep cursing her until morning”. She will qualify for similar curse if she goes to sleep avoiding her husband’s bed (*IK*:II:445). As a result, a radical supremacist ego vis-à-vis the status of woman is developed in Muslim societies. This seems to suggest that women, though living beings, have no feelings of their own, even in intimate relationships involving their own body and inner urge. This is not what the Prophet has taught through his kind actions. The contrast is obvious.

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98 Ibid. 60.
99 Ibid. 66.
100 Ibid. 67.
102 Abou El Fadl, *And God knows...*, 68.
(vi) Abou El Fadl produces a long list of bibliographical references which claim that the husband must be obeyed even if he is "unjust and oppressive". He expresses his concern that Islamic discourse is falling prey to certain ideologies that tend to interpret the text as if they enjoy the exclusive right to reach the Divine authority. Whereas, a conviction on any issue is normally formed around "textual evidence, empirical experience, emotional inclinations, intellectual intuitions, a rigorous rational process, social habit, an irrational belief...a [perceived] bad omen..." He believes that the specific points of law should be evaluated in the light of the universals in the scripture. Human lethargy and scepticism towards intellectual challenges should not be construed as "God’s Will". Commitment of ugly acts should not be blamed on God’s intent. Instead of indulging in fantasies, one should have the guts to face the ugliness within oneself. Human interpretation is fallible. When it acquires "ugly authoritarianism", it tends to act as the antithesis to everything that is represented by God’s beauty and morality in the scripture.

It may be concluded that anybody forming strong convictions may not even be able to distinguish which factors have led him to authoritarianism and exclusivity in his interpretation of the text. If unchecked, this may lead to despotism of ideology. When stretched to the extremes, it might stifle tolerance. The next section extends the inquiry by critically examining the conceptualisation of democracy in the Muslim circles.

**Radicalised portrayal of democracy**

In his elaborate study, Kamali writes that the essence of democracy is based on freedom of self-expression (but not freedom to offend) where Islam associates this right with human dignity. An individual’s right to voice his opinion and feelings on matters pertinent to him is guaranteed in Islam. He further states that hisbah (calling towards right and preventing evil) is a collective obligation of the community. He discusses

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103 Ibid. 74.
104 Ibid. 106.
105 Ibid. 152.
106 Ibid. 154.
107 Ibid. 155.
109 Ibid. 28, quoting al-Ghazâlî and Ibn Qayyim.
the central role this concept plays in keeping the authorities in check. This is allied with the right of consultation in the affairs of the community.

Noorani quotes V. A. Syed Muhammad, a distinguished lawyer, who summarises the principles of democracy in Islam as the right of “life, liberty and security...freedom of religion, thought and expression; freedom of movement; right of education...” quoting the Prophet’s tradition: “He who knowingly lends support to tyranny is outside the pale of Islam.”

On the Islamic political order, Muqtedar Khan claims that: “In an Islamic democracy every individual is a vicegerent of God and therefore has the legitimate authority to act in God’s name.” Conspicuously, the historical experience of the community sheds doubts on such claims, which need to be examined further. For example, the Prophet’s wife, ‘A’isha, the daughter of the first Caliph, participated in the Battle of Jamal - Camel, (35/656) against the newly elected Caliph, ‘Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, Talha and al-Zubair. In this battle 13,000 people were killed. According to Ibn Kathir, the times of the Companions were the golden age, never to be repeated again (IK:IV:331). Al-Suyuti writes that the Companions had sworn an oath of allegiance to ‘Ali, including Talha and al-Zubair. In view of these historic facts, if every individual in an Islamic democracy has “legitimate authority to act in God’s name”, then one would end up in a conflicting situation. Nonetheless, Muqtedar Khan continues that, “every citizen has the right to interpret and claim what is law...” If so, then the Islamic democracy might get entangled in cobwebs and never come out of the quagmire of dilemmas.

In the aftermath of claims and counter-claims on the legality of their actions, it is an established fact that Muslims have fought each other in fierce battles. To suggest that

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110 Ibid. 31.
111 Ibid. 41.
112 Noorani, 100.
114 For succinct account of the civil wars during the Caliphate of ‘Ali, their political causes and consequences, see Ameer Ali, 293-303 based on his classical and modern sources.
115 Al-Suyuti, 194.
116 Muqtedar Khan, op. cit., 65.
every individual has the right to interpret the law in an Islamic democracy, gives a fictitious impression that all the citizens in an Islamic democracy are at the same level of knowledge and understand the intricate points of law correctly. This defies logic and rationality.

Today debate in the Muslim world is focused on the need to reform antiquated political systems and democratise the political order. Political inquisitiveness has led into questioning whether Islam and democracy are compatible at all; and whether universal suffrage of men and women can be implemented in all Muslim countries.

Abou El Fadl has deliberated at length on pre-modern juristic legal discourses based on revelation and intellectual pursuits to prove that the Islamic order is quite compatible with democracy. However, there are constraints which cannot be overlooked. Secularists believe that Islam should be separated from politics. The Islamists, whilst insisting that religion is part of politics also pronounce the verdict of kufr on whoever dares to advocate democracy, which they obstinately insist, is against Islam.

In the midst of the polarised views, it is worth examining what is the most conservative view in the Muslim world. This is summarised by the late King Fahd of Saudi Arabia: “The election system (sic) has no place in the Islamic creed, which calls for a government of advice and consultation...and holds the ruler fully responsible before his people.”117 However, consultation is more easily said than done. In the modern Muslim world, hardly any ruler who grossly violated the consultative rule, ranging from grabbing power through the barrel of the tank, or military revolution to mass-murder and genocide, has been made accountable to the people. The exception is the past dictator of Iraq, and that too required an external interference but not internal checks and deterrence. Yet, the Arab nationalist media, controlled and financed by the rich elites, reacted with resentment throughout the trials of Saddam, as if Pan-Arab nationalism was on trial, notwithstanding the fact that nationalist sentiments have no place in the Islamic political order.118

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It is further observed by monitoring the media in the Muslim countries that no rulers, including those that are notorious in their human rights abuses, claim that they are ruling against the will of the people. Almost all of them claim that their political order is truly representative, despite the fact that there is a minimal emphasis on accountability. What Islam and the Sunnah advocate is a different matter from what the Muslims are inclined to do.

The Islamic values of governance, according to the practices of the Prophet, can only be implemented by eradicating corruption, which has already spread in the body-politic of Muslims due to the past and present political factors. A few examples will clarify the point. A Concept Paper presented at the UNDP XI International Anti-Corruption Conference states: "As one form of abuse of public power, corruption has flourished...[P]etty corruption is usually embedded in the context of large-scale corruption at the high civil service or ministerial level..."  

Commenting on Gallup World Poll, Professor Esposito writes: "Muslims were also critical of their own countries, citing ‘extremism, radicalism, terrorism and fanaticism, lack of political freedom and political corruption’. As regards complicity in politics, continuous distortion of the facts in political arena is so rampant that it has paved way for unstable mob thinking. Concerning the chaotic situation in Iraq, al-Râshid writes that it is not possible to comprehend the collaboration of those who are determined to see the failure of the Iraqi political experiment, unless it is viewed in the context of the Palestinian situation, which suffered because of inter-Arab and regional rivalries.

Rights of citizenry in democracy presuppose a genuine attempt at fighting corruption (a long way to go) and giving the defined rights to the minorities. On this subject, the issue of Jizyah (protection tax) has been discussed by the jurists in relation to the non-Muslim minorities. There is a specific mention of Jizyah in verse Q.9:29. During the time of the Prophet, the Christians of Najrân were the first to pay it (IK:II:182). It was levied in lieu of military service from which the minorities were exempted; and the State took the

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122 Moussalli, 148.
responsibility to protect their person and properties (IK:II:191 & IK:IV:365). Ibn Kathir writes that Jizyah will be annulled only by Jesus after his promised return to the earth (IK:II:170), as if to say that until then, it will continue, whether the Christians living in the Muslim land like it or not.

A contrasting view is presented by Abou El Fadl who believes that Jizyah levied in medieval times on the minorities by the Islamic State defeats the objective of justice in the modern times. In those days it was a matter of reciprocal arrangement which was prevalent between Muslim and non-Muslim nations, as for instance, the Muslims were charged poll tax by the Crusaders. He also refutes the polarisation of Muslim and non-Muslim states into Dār al-Islām (the abode of Islam) and Dār al-barb (the abode of war). He writes that these are jurisprudential concepts, which do not find any justification in the Qur’ān and Sunnah. In Islam, the Qur’ān and the traditions guarantee all the rights. But in practice, many new encumbrances are added.

It may be concluded that there is a genuine concern among the ruling elites that the call for democratisation may threaten the privileged position they have commanded for decades. Psychologically, the official resentment to democracy emanates form the phobia that they might have to relinquish control over the affairs of the State. There is no consensus in defining the democratic values and the rights of minorities, which need to be updated with the terminology applicable to the modern world. At a time when Muslims are emerging as the largest minority in the West, the reciprocal arrangement and constitutional rights of the non-Muslim minorities in the Muslim world have to be defined and streamlined with the international norms.

Conclusion

To commit oneself to the selective reading of the scriptural text, and to interpret it according to one’s pre-conceived ideas is tantamount to dismissing the viewpoints and beliefs of others. This has caused irreconcilable polarisation among Muslims on major topical issues like, diversity, the qualification and accountability of the rulers and the

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123 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 214.
124 Ibid. 224.
125 Ibid. 226.
126 Noorani, 24.
role of women. These have to be rationalised with the Islamic teachings and Islam’s system of governance. At present, in order to appease public sentiments, most Muslim countries spell out in their constitution that the source of legislation is Islamic Shari‘ah, and then go on tolerating injustice and corruption within the system. This frustrates and radicalises many members of the public, with undesirable consequences. It also results in denigrating the views that non-Muslims carry about the Shari‘ah. Therefore, no reformation can be contemplated until corruption is eradicated and education is made available on the basis of merit and not on the basis of affluence.

In relation to the democratic values, when slogans are raised in the West for the need to implement democracy in the Muslim world, what is not realised is that the Western concept of democracy differs from the perception prevailing in the Muslim world. In the West, written or unwritten constitution and Bills of Rights guarantee the basic freedom for the citizens. In the Muslim world, these aspects are subject to abuse, whether the State is secular or presumed to be Islamic. The main factors responsible for the confusion are the theological and juristic-political issues, which tend to be manoeuvred by the powerful elites, leaving the matter in limbo, between Islamisation and secularisation.

Chapter 7 probes into the reverberations of the radicalised thoughts, and analyses the evolution of this ideology into extremism from its historic roots into its present violent facet.
CHAPTER SEVEN
HISTORIC BACKGROUND AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF EXTREMISM

Introduction

It has been established in this study that the concepts of 'self', 'human nature' and fitrah (original human nature designed by God) are intrinsically interlinked. Human life is associated with human dignity, which is sensitively preserved and protected in Islam. Qutb states that dignity is the natural right of every individual.\(^1\)

As a prelude to this chapter which discusses violations of the Islamic human values, the concept of dignity has to be viewed in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an declares: "We have bestowed dignity on the progeny of Ādam... and conferred on them special favours, above a great part of our creation" (Q.17:70). Whilst addressing the Ka'bah, the Prophet is reported to have said: "You are most pure and most dignified, but by the One in whose hands Muhammad's life reposes, the sanctity and honour of a believer, his life and his property, is far greater than yours in the eyes of God."\(^2\)

The progression of radical thought culminating into exclusivity and intolerance is investigated in this chapter, by analysing its historic roots and the legacy of extremism it has left behind. Several religio-political and socio-economic factors have amalgamated in augmenting this problem. Whilst the latter are outside the scope of this research, the religio-political paradigms were investigated from different perspectives in Chapter 6.

This chapter widens the inquiry by probing into the contributory factors in the contemporary world that have caused infringement of human dignity, which is inseparable from the concept of human nature. Among the topics discussed are the role of the West, the present political order in the Muslim world and the recalcitrant takfirī.

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\(^2\) Ibid. 3-4, quoting Al-Tabrīzī, Mishkāt Vol. II, *hadith* 2724.
ideology. This chapter concludes the secondary goal spelled out at the inception in the defined field of this research.

**Historic roots of violent extremism**

This section probes into the historical facts to trace the armed insurgency among Muslims against the State, a mere twenty-five years after the Prophet's death. Ibn Kathīr, the student of Ibn Taymiyyah writes: “The beginning of the bid‘ā [innovative acts] in Islām occurred with the fitnā [mischief to divide the community] of the Khawārij [the Seceders]”.3 They called themselves “mu’mīnūn [believers] while applying the term kuffār to all others.”4 A modern prolific writer, Khālid Muhammad Khālid, has exposed heinous crimes committed by the Khārijites5 against innocent members of the public, by branding other Muslims, who did not conform to their narrow-minded interpretation of the Qur’ān, as “unbelievers”.

Ameer Ali’s account of these “insurgents or deserters”6 is based on the famous classical historian Shahristānī’s sources, from which, he concludes: “Their doctrines are gloomy and morose, hard and fanatical.”7 They are devoid of mercy towards others, and one of their groups believes that even the infants of non-believers will burn in Hell.8 They were described as “the worst dead people under the cover of the sky” (IK:II:235, quoting al-Tirmidhī & IK:IV:452). According to the same source, the Prophet had issued instructions that if they rise, their rebellion should be quashed. It is noteworthy that if this is how this murdering clique were viewed, then those who are engaged today in similar acts of causing havoc to non-combatant human life, cannot be called mujāhidīn (fighters in the way of God).

Al-Misri analyses a number of hadīths in Bukhārī whereby the Prophet prophesied that the future generations of these people would be mischievous. ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar (d. 73/693) narrated that the Prophet said that “they are the worst of Allāh’s creatures...”9

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3 McAuliffe, in Rippin (1988), 60.
4 McAuliffe, EQ, 1:221.
5 Khālid, 175-8.
6 Ameer Ali, 314.
7 Ibid. 355.
8 Ibid. 356 and Al-Misri, 51-52.
9 Al-Misri, 16.
and that they will “recite the Qur’ān but it will not go past their throats...”\textsuperscript{10} Their progenitors misbehaved even in their dealings with the Prophet\textsuperscript{11} and he had expressed his displeasure with them. Al-Misri is very critical of the present-day extremist Salafis. But then he passionately supports the Taliban, the most radical of the lot.

The factors that have historically bred violent extremism among Muslims are examined critically. When the Khārijites rebelled against ‘Alī, they raised a slogan: “Lā ḥukm illā lillāh” (“there is no rule except that of God”). They derived their slogan from the Qur’ānic verse: “Certainly the rule only belongs to Allāh...” (Q.12:40). Here the ‘rule’ means ‘judgement’ because the ultimate prerogative to judge belongs to God. But as far as earthly rule is concerned, God has appointed His representatives on earth as the Qur’ān has specified. A legitimate authority among humans has to rule with justice. ‘Alī responded that this is “a true word, with mischievous intention.”\textsuperscript{12} The Khārijites misinterpreted the Qur’ānic verse and gave themselves the right to judge who among Muslims is guided or misguided, and who is a believer or a polytheist.

Mawdūdī describes the ideology of various Khārijite groups in his famous book \textit{Khilafat-o-Mulukiyat (Caliphate and Kingdom)}.\textsuperscript{13} Anyone who disagreed with their dogma was declared a heretic, to be ex-communicated and killed. ‘Alī sought to expose their fanaticism and irrational interpretation of hākimiyah (judgement and dominion) that they espoused. So he requested a copy of the Qur’ān to be brought. He touched it, asking it to speak to the people. But the Qur’ān cannot speak, they quickly retorted, for “it is not a human being”. This is precisely what he wanted to prove that the Qur’ān is ink on paper; it has to have human beings who can explain its Law.\textsuperscript{14} ‘Alī illustrated that “God’s sovereignty provides no escape from the burdens of human agency.”\textsuperscript{15}

It is noteworthy that those who adhere to the narrow interpretation of hākimiyah of God take for granted that their contact with the Divine Will is the most authentic. But this perception in itself is dependent on the employment of the human factor, for there is no reciprocal communication from the Divine, confirming that such perception

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{10} Ibid. 20.
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Ibid. 17-19.
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Moussalli, 40.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Mawdūdī, (1979), 213-215.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Abou El Fadl, (2004), 8, quoting Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī in \textit{Fath al-Bārī}, 14:303.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid. 9.
\end{itemize}
complies with the Divine Judgement. This perfectionist attitude is responsible for the intellectual stagnation of the Muslim societies because it does not leave a space for self-reflection and self-criticism that it may have gone astray. It has been an appalling scene, for instance, to witness the beheading of helpless hostages in Iraq on the websites of the takfiri groups. These scenes can be compared with similar callousness documented about the Khārijites in history although the Prophet has said: "The dignity of a deceased person is the same as if he or she were alive."16

‘Abdullah ibn Khabbāb was the son of the veteran Companion of the Prophet. He was travelling with his wife who was pregnant. The Khārijites detained him after he spoke well of ‘Alī. On their way, a piece of date fell from the palm tree. One of them put it in his mouth. Another one objected that it is not halāl for him to consume it without its owner’s consent. So he repented and prayed for God’s forgiveness. A few steps ahead, the same individuals who were so sensitive about the permissibility or prohibition for eating a piece of date, killed the husband in front of his wife. Then they split open the belly of the pregnant woman as she screamed for mercy.17 Through such incidences, they created mayhem in the lives of civilians by committing atrocities. Therefore, to make life safer for others, ‘Alī fought them in the battle of Nahrawān (38/658), where they were defeated. He sought to end a dangerous precedent that was taking shape. The risk was too high; he was killed by treachery in the Kūfā Mosque.

The similarity between the past and present takfiri groups is striking. Kamali writes that “takfir is a grave sin and an offence” in Islām. The offender is liable to punishment which can be adjudicated by a competent judge.18

The entry in The Encyclopaedia of Islām is sympathetic to the Khārijite insurrectionists. Regarding the face-to-face battle of Nahrawān between them and ‘Alī’s forces,19 it reads: “It was a massacre rather than a battle...”20 without supporting this allegation with a reference. The entry also says that many pious people had lost their life on the side of the Khārijites. Ironically in the same Encyclopaedia, the description of the

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16 Kamali, (2002), The Dignity... 87, quoting al-Siba'i.
17 Khālid, 178.
19 Ibid. 199-200.
background of the Khārijites reads: "The principal part they played was disturbing by means of continual insurrections..." The writer of the entry refers to them as "rebels" whose "extreme fanaticism...at once manifested itself in a series of extremist proclamations and terrorist actions..." 21 The editors of The Encyclopaedia of Islām could have been vigilant not to allow such stark contradiction in the entries to pass through. The Qur'ānic sense of piety has yet to be comprehended. If the Khārijites were "pious" just because they memorised the Qur'ān, then undoubtedly, bin Laden and his group memorise the Qur'ān better than most. The crux of the matter is how much of the Qur'ān and Sunnah they implement without overruling them through their parochial interpretation and brutalities.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the Sharī'ah was the only Law recognised by the State before colonisation of the Muslim land. However, as seen in this section, the problem of interpretation was as challenging in the first century as it is now. The next section probes into aspects of the polarised views on this subject.

Implementation of the Sharī'ah

To understand the Qur'ān and its underlying Laws, there are certain specific avenues which cannot be taken lightly. The Qur'ān does not approve of superficial treatment of solemn issues. Kamali writes that throughout its text, the Qur'ān emphasises the need to observe and investigate (yanzurūn), to think (yatafakkarūn), to reflect (yatadabbarūn), to exercise rational judgement (ya'qilūn), to understand (yatafaqqahūn) and to know (ya'lamūn). "These are among the major themes of the Qur'ān." 22

Practical implementation of the Islāmic Sharī'ah remains the objective of almost all the Islāmic movements in the world. They believe that this goal provides a panacea in the face of political corruption and abuse of power. The Sharī'ah incorporates a "set of normative principles, methodologies for the production of legal injunctions, and a set of positive legal rules". 23 A vital distinction has to be drawn between the Sharī'ah as conceived by God, which is infallible and the Sharī'ah as enforced by the State, which

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22 Kamali, (2002), Freedom...22.
is fallible and flawed. In the latter sense, *Sharī'ah* is a work-in-progress. Hence, failure of the State law, adopted with all its dynamic mechanism, is not a failure of God's Laws.\(^{24}\)

If this is viewed in the light of modern day tendency where certain States prematurely claim that the law of the state is *Sharī'ah*, the paradox becomes visible. For example, in the civil war in Somalia, where the damage to the infrastructure is visible and the population is facing starvation and forced migration, the Islamic party is fighting to enforce the *Sharī'ah*. Conspicuously, if *Sharī'ah* is implemented, without making mockery of the law, then the first to stand trial should be the war-lords on both the sides and those supplying them with arms to fight, at a time when their children have no food to eat. If not, then this means that the mentality is not yet geared to enforce the law equally between the war-lords and the populace.

When the organs of the State, lacking rudimentary discipline and sense of organisation claim that *Sharī'ah* is the supreme order, and they fail to lead by example, such claims are bound to face credibility problems. For instance, it is easy to attract media furore towards cutting the hand of a small thief, whilst permitting the state officials and Ministers to walk free with colossal bribes earned on defence contracts. This is the grim reality of the Muslim world today. In the formative years, when *Sharī'ah* was fully and not partially implemented, it was enforced on the leaders and the led alike. In modern world, leaders claim immunity and consider themselves above the law in spite of the fact that the Prophet had given a stern warning: "Those who were before you were destroyed because when an honourable person among them would steal, they would leave him. But when a weak man among them stole, they implemented the prescribed punishment..." (*IK*:III:176).

On the other side of the spectrum, the so-called Islāmist groups today, with the loudest rallying-cries in the name of the *Sharī'ah*, are the worst offenders, as shown in the following illustrations:

\(^{24}\)Ibid. 34.
(1) The writings of al-Ghazālī prove that he was a proponent of the *Sharī'ah*. (See Chapter 2). Despite this fact, there is a campaign being orchestrated by the Salafis, who brand al-Ghazālī as confused and misguided. They accuse the Sufis of adopting “many deviated and un-Islamic concepts” from “Pagan religions”. Such allegations appear on Allaahuakbar.net. This website has a section, exposing what it calls the “heresies” of Qutb by quoting the writings of the late mufti of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Bāz and other prominent Salafi scholars. Needless to say that Qutb is reputed for his passionate campaign for implementation of the *Sharī'ah*. Yet this website treats in a hostile manner, most of the Schools in Islam, and brands its own approach as “true Islam”. By studying its contents, one can deduce that it does not subscribe to revolutionary ideas and is supposed to be in the conservative camp; yet it is intolerant and judgemental against other Schools.

(2) Another website of the Salafis indulges in frivolous accusations against Islamic intellectuals. Regarding Qutb’s exegetical literature, it passes its verdict: “Because of his ignorance of the orthodox system of Islamic belief, Qutb came up with a hodgepodge (...) under the influence of the Mu’tazilī and Sufis. They accuse Qutb of abandoning the teachings of the Prophet and his Companions. They also enlist Mawdūdī, the leader of Jamā‘at-e-Islāmi (the Islamic Party) and Ḥasan al-Banna, the founder leader of Muslim Brotherhood, among the thinkers to be avoided.

(3) The Salafis quote the writings of Mawdūdī and Qutb, the world-renowned Sunni thinkers of the twentieth century, and accuse them of giving new lease of life to the “Revolutionary Takfiris and Neo-Kharijites”, and for being the exponents of the innovative *ḥakimiyyah* (judgement of God) theory. They claim that Qutb had reviled the third Caliph ‘Uthmān for embezzlement of funds of *Bayt al-Māl* (public treasury) and for nepotism. They allege that both Mawdūdī and Qutb committed the words of *kufr*

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26 http://www.allahuakbar.in/article_showall.asp?page=2&order=article%5FId&cat_id=30&parent_id=5&parent_name=Guard%20Your%20Faith&sub_name=Sufism


and apostasy, and therefore, were “Heretical Rafidees” (sic) (referring to Shi‘ās). Then they go on accusing the scholars who defend the writings of Mawdūdī and Qutb as “extremists”. (!) It would seem that this type of mindset starts with the pre-conceived notion that it has always to be right and anyone daring to have a different opinion has to be an apostate!

Their sweeping generalisations defy intellectual ethics and betray the moral standards preached by Islām. Such an attitude generates intolerance in society. The austerity of the rule of Taliban is a case in point. In their own peculiar ways of implementing the Sharī‘ah, they deprived women of education. They were quite happy enforcing the Sharī‘ah on others but not on themselves. Under the Islāmic polity, the rulers cannot escape the duty of providing basic necessities of life – food, shelter and clothing. If they fail, as the Taliban had flagrantly failed, then they are in fundamental breach of the Sharī‘ah.

One can contrast the attitude of the extremists today, identified in the aforesaid three illustrations, with the Qur’ānic moral conduct which requires a believer to present one’s beliefs in a positive and constructive manner without name-calling, which is explicitly prohibited in the Qur’ān: “...Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by offensive nick names...” (Q.49:11). The Prophet was ordered to adopt a lenient and compassionate approach in dealing and discussing with the Jews and the Christians: “Call unto the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the best way...” (Q.16:125). In this age of enlightenment, dealing with people of other faiths requires sense of justice. But the extremists seem to have neglected these exhortations and lost the sense of proportion even in dealing with fellow-Muslims. This again contradicts the Qur’ānic warning: “...Let not hatred of any people seduce you [to an extent] that you deal not justly. Be just, that is nearer to your duty (towards God)...” (Q.5:8). This explains to what extent the psyche of the extremist Muslim groups is divorced from fitrah.

It may be concluded that in the present times, some radicals who are calling for the implementation of the Sharī‘ah lack qualification and credibility. This task requires knowledge and self-reformation before attempting to reform others. This section discussed the internal constraints responsible for fanning extremism. It also
demonstrated by reference to the Salafi websites, the stark contradiction which allows them to condemn in theory the Takfiri movements, but in practice, to give themselves a free reign to accuse prominent Islamic scholars of kufr. The next section deals with the external constraints seen in terms of Western prejudice against the Muslims, thus providing grounds for generating vindictiveness in the Muslim communities.

**Contribution of the West in breeding Muslim extremism**

Karen Armstrong, a modern British writer and ex-nun, has written extensively about Islam, and discussed the issue of “fundamentalism”. She defines this term as “a form of nationalism in religious disguise”. She writes that rarely has IRA militancy been branded as “Catholic terrorism”, nor has such a description been given to Zionist fundamentalism in Israel or to the Christian right in the U.S. As a result, she dismisses the terms Islamic or Jihadist “terrorism”. Armstrong rightly asserts that the Muslims take offence at the distorted representation of their faith. She is pragmatic in her observation that Qutb entered Nasser’s prison as a moderate and that physical and mental torture converted him into a hardliner.31

Salahi, the translator of Qutb’s exegesis, questions: Can Qutb’s approach be called extremism? He answers that even his jailers, torturers and executioners did not classify him as such. After ten years’ imprisonment, he accepted the leadership of Muslim Brotherhood movement, only if his followers undertook not to seek revenge or to overthrow the Egyptian government. Salahi continues that extremism cannot be separated from its deep underlying political causes and grievances which have continued for long, resulting in injustices on Muslims with no international resolve to put things right (SQ:XII:xviii-xix).

The distortions against Islam to which Armstrong briefly refers, have played their part in instigating extremism in Muslim societies. The Prophet, the Qur’an and Islam have come under persistent attacks in the writings of many Orientalists. In his elaborate book, Jabal Buaben of Birmingham University, critically analyses medieval and twentieth

century Orientalist writings. He quotes Norman Daniel that these distortions were looked at by the succeeding generations “through the eyes of their predecessors”.32 In this way, the legacy continued.

The worst assault in living memory on the Muslim-Western relations was the Salman Rushdie saga, the damaging after-effects of which have been researched by Professor Kidwai and Manazar Ahsan, the Director General of the Islāmic Foundation. They show how double standards were applied in the West. The overwhelming majority of Muslims saw Rushdie’s book as a premeditated attempt to blaspheme the most revered personages of Islām. The West stood united against withdrawing the book despite the testimony of Chief Rabbi,33 the Bishops,34 Lord Shawcross QC,35 and several other dignitaries that the book was very offensive and provocative. President Jimmy Carter wrote: “The Satanic Verses goes much further in vilifying the Prophet Muḥammad and defaming the Holy Korān.”36 Ahsan and Kidwai illustrate several events on self-censorship prevailing in the West and at times, withdrawing and pulping the offensive books37. They write that in this case, the offences on the Qur’ān and the Prophet were justified under the pretext of freedom of speech amidst many objections in the West.

The approach to Islāmic scholarship has witnessed significant changes. There are several scholars whose writings portray objectivity. Professor John Esposito of Georgetown University wrote impressive books: *Islam the Straight Path*38 and *The Islamic Threat – Myth or Reality*.39 In these books he has given fair coverage to the modern Islāmic revivalist movements. In regard to the development in recent years on Muslim-Western relations, Esposito observes: “Anti-Americanism is also fed by leaders of the Christian Right such as, Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, and Franklin Graham (who offered prayers at President Bush’s inauguration), who denounced Islām as an “evil religion” and labelled Muḥammad a “terrorist” and “paedophile”.”40 The antagonistic

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32 Buaben, 304.
33 Ahsan & Kidwai, 123.
34 Ibid. 86 & 125.
35 Ibid. 89.
36 Ibid. 90.
37 Ibid. 40.
39 Esposito (1999).
40 Esposito, (2002), ix.
and resentful policies adopted by the neoconservatives are represented in the writings of Daniel Pipes. When he emerged as the most favoured candidate of President Bush to head the US Institute of Peace, not only did several professors in the United States object, but Senator Edward Kennedy too declared his writings, very offensive to Islām and Muslims. 41

From another angle, the communiqués of the Human Rights groups are replete with records of torture of political prisoners in some Muslim countries. But if the dictatorial and repressive regimes are friends of the West, they face very little or no condemnation. 42 These are the factors that convert the moderates into extremists and motivate them to take the law into their hands. The societies that systematically practise torture are the ones that produce the largest number of fanatics and violent extremists. 43 The undesirable backlash combined with sensational media coverage, are responsible for what is called, "Islāmic terrorism". But Mamdani observes that there is a common denominator between genocides in the last and this century and terrorism – both deliberately target civilians. 44

However, this issue is attracting serious attention at the European Union level. In a new non-binding guideline to its 25 member-states, the EU recommends replacement of the phrase “Islāmic terrorism” in favour of “terrorists who abusively invoke Islām.” Parvez Ahmed writes: “A word search on news stories published in major newspapers over the past decade shows that reporters are hundred times more likely to associate Islām with terrorism or militancy than all other faiths combined,” 45 despite the fact that neither all Muslims are terrorists nor all terrorists are Muslims, he asserts.

It is noteworthy that a new offensive term “Islamofascism” has been coined and used by the neoconservatives in the U.S. In the wake of the foiled aviation terrorist plot, President Bush himself said that the nation is at war with “Islāmic fascists”. Despite protests from the Muslim community worldwide, the U.S. Defence Secretary reiterated the same expressions two weeks later. The counter-reaction came from the closest ally

43 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 166.
44 Mamdani, 11.
of the U.S. in the Middle-East in the Friday sermon from Makkah on 1 September 2006, where the congregation was told that these types of descriptions and defamation of Islam encourage extremism and terrorism. Notably, the U.S. establishment is not interested to know that it is inciting the sentiments which strongly suggest that the war on terrorism is in fact a war against Islam and Muslims.

Another case in point is the scandal of the Dutch lawmaker, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, of Somali origin, who had lied and committed forgeries on her asylum application to the Netherlands. Still, within a short period, she was awarded nationality and elected to the Parliament. She had been preaching what certain political parties were vying to hear – hostility towards Islam. But the lies she spoke to obtain asylum were public knowledge before she was elected; and her forgeries had been exposed before the Immigration Minister faced resistance from political parties to revoke her nationality. Yet she won an offer of employment from the neoconservative think-tank, the American Enterprise Institute, as she contemplated leaving the Netherlands. On 30 June 2006, the Netherlands government was brought down because of this episode.

The dilemma of the Dutch people was: As this lady was motivated by fame and material gain (cf. Rushdie affair) even at the cost of breaking the law by committing forgeries, was the Hirsi affair worth the scandal and political crisis in their country? At the same time, the question that was asked in many Muslim circles was: Would she have been given such a special treatment if she had not been hostile to Islam or if she had been against Israel?

Servier had long come up with a solution to what he saw as the problem of “two civilisations” that are totally different from each other. If it is to be assimilated into modern Europe, then Islam must disclaim “in toto its historic past”. His vision was reminiscent to the hypothesis of Samuel Huntington of Harvard University, who later presented his paper The Clash of Civilizations amidst controversy. Professor Mamdani of Columbia University observes that Huntington was linked to U.S. foreign policy.

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49 Servier, 252.
since the Vietnam War. After the cold-war, he turned to Islamophobia, classifying Islām as an "enemy civilization".\footnote{Mamdani, 20-21.}

It may be concluded that apart from domestic historical factors, there are external contributory factors and deep-seated prejudices that are breeding extremism and creating a rift between the Muslim and the Western world, with detrimental effects on both. In recent years, due to various factors, Wahhābī Islām has come into lime-light. Politicians and academic researchers are endeavouring to trace the resurgence of Muslim extremism which is now threatening the security of the West. The next section looks into the in-depth studies conducted lately in this area.

**Reflections on Delong-Bas's research on Wahhābī Islām**

In modern Western scholarship, this is perhaps the most sympathetic and elaborate research on the theological aspects of Wahhābī Islām, conducted with the bulk of information and "financial support" from King 'Abd al-'Azīz Foundation for Research and Archives in Riyadh. Before the contrasting side of the picture is presented in the next section, it is appropriate to look critically at the salient features of this movement. Delong-Bas has carried out her research with the aim of rebutting the illusion that Wahhābisim is a threat to the West (p.3) and to disassociate Wahhābisim from the post-9/11 bin Laden (p.5).

She rightly claims that this movement has established philanthropic projects like building mosques around the world (p.4). But she does not mention that they appoint *imāms* therein, which has attracted criticism.\footnote{See Schwartz, 124 & 239.} She writes that the Wahhābis travelled around the world in search of *hadith* collections (p.11). In fact, the six major corpus of *hadiths* on which they rely, and the *Musnad* (supported *hadiths*) of Ibn Hanbal to whom their School claims affinity, were already completed and existed in published format. Most of the Sunni Schools sealed the doors of *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) by the tenth century.\footnote{http://www.answers.com/ijtihad} So it is not clear what was there to collect.
DeLong-Bas claims that Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb believed that “women had rights in balance with the rights of men in both private and public life...” (pp.17 & 123-124). However, she does not rebut the claims that under the present Wahhābī system in Saudi Arabia, women are not allowed to vote or hold public positions. Ibn Bāz had even issued fatwah, prohibiting women from driving cars.

She writes that the writings of Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb do not support the view that he admired Ibn Taymiyyah (p.21). This is anomalous as the latter’s teachings were adopted by the Wahhābī movement, including his very hostile attitude towards building graves and tombs. On the practice of destroying tombs, she alleges: “The hadith record Muḥammad’s command to destroy tombs and shrines...” (p.25). She gives no reference of the source of such a hadith. Had such a “command” existed, then leaving the Prophet’s tomb intact would have been a flagrant violation. She over-emphasises that Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb was merely following the footsteps of the Prophet. Yet, the source she quotes has not given a credible narration or historical incident that this practice “stemmed from Muḥammad’s similar actions”, as she puts it (p.67).

There seems to be confusion between wiping out idols which were the object of worship and wiping out graves. Despite this confusion, the Wahhābī scholars sustained the “death penalty” and, “shedding the blood and confiscating the property” of anybody paying respects to the tombs, as she claims. She writes apologetically that Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb condemned these actions because, as she consistently maintains, his teachings were peaceful and non-violent. However, she does not deny that he destroyed some tombs with his own hands (p.25). This means that he laid down the precedent and his followers imitated him.

Whilst covering various teachings of Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb, DeLong-Bas writes that he insisted that people must have personal access to the scripture and must derive knowledge directly from the sources (p.81). It is observed that two centuries since his times if the literacy rate in the Muslim world is appallingly low, his vision was prudent neither in his days nor ours.

54 Schwartz, 118.
Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb argued that “the old methodology of memorization [of the Qurʾān] was itself an innovation” (p.43). This is doubtful as memorisation forms one of the vital elements in the Islamic studies curriculum in Saudi seminaries. Notably, every exegesis one lays his hands on, claim that the earliest Muslims from the Prophet’s time onwards memorised the Qurʾān. She covers widely his qualms with the scholars of other legal Schools as he branded others for committing shirk (worshipping other deities) which she rightly calls “the worst of all sins in Islam” (p.48). Regarding the oath of allegiance exchanged between him and Ibn Saʿūd, she writes that the division of duties was shaped between amīr (political leader) and imām (religious leader) (pp.34-35). Ostensibly, this is not how the present Wahhābī establishment views the matter. During the Friday sermons and especially in the Tarāwīḥ prayers in Ramaḍān, supplications are offered for the King (political wing) who is popularly referred as “imām”, which indicates that the religious wing has to succumb to the political wing, at least in practice if not in theory.

Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb was in stark dissention with the other four Sunni legal Schools, as he believed that at times “the Rightly Guided Caliphs themselves introduced innovations [bid‘ah] that deviated from the Qurʾān and the Sunnah”; and he rejected diversity of opinion as a “source of chaos (jitnah)” (p.54). He described Abū Bakr’s decision that the Caliph is a paid official of the State as “the most astonishing part of his ignorance” (p.55). He rejected ‘Umar’s ruling on three divorces in one sitting (p.303). He accused Abū Bakr of using Zakāt (alms) “for his own private and personal use” (p.55). He stressed that Abū Bakr’s precedent on this matter should not have been followed by the latter Caliphs (p.56).

DeLong-Bas claims that nowhere in his corpus of literature does he encourage the Muslims to seek martyrdom (p.59). If so, then this is bound to contradict his faith in jihād. But then she continues that he believed that the only way to face those who violate monotheism was “to fight such people until they adhere to monotheism” (p.63). She writes that he considered abiding by the “past juridical rulings...” equivalent to associating partners with God (p.62). As he had used the term qiṭāl (fighting) for jihād (p.64), this does not change the reality on the ground, as she would like her readers to believe. No matter what term he used, his followers fought the adversaries of their
ideology. She however, alleges that the process of “fighting” was not to kill or annihilate people. This is amazing as the resultant bloodshed disproves this premise.

DeLong-Bas writes that Ibn 'Abdul Wahhab distinguished between mushrikün (associationists or polytheists) and kuffār (non-believers), with the latter “being more serious” (p.82). Notably, this contention neither complies with the Qur'an and Sunnah nor with what she has stated earlier that associationism is the “worst of all sins” (p.48). Her plea that Ibn 'Abdul Wahhab rarely charged other Muslims of apostasy could not obliterate her frequent references that he categorised many of their deeds as “associationism”. Having labelled Muslims fighting Muslims as “apostates”, he abhorred “people who claimed to be Muslims but did not share his interpretation of Islam” (p.83). This in itself is an indication of intolerance. It means that he considered only those who subscribed to his interpretation as Muslims. In her work, she keeps on referring to “the extremist Rafidah sect of the Shias”, as she puts it. She writes that he believed that “they had rejected Islam altogether” (p.84) and that they are at par with the Christians, Jews and Magis (p.85). Nowhere does she mention that this is the mainstream branch of the Shi'as. They share “most basic religious tenets” with the mainstream Sunnis.

She speaks of a prominent hadith that “Muhammad debated with God the wisdom of appointing a caliph after his death...” attributing it to the Shi'as (p.86). She did not quest for the source-reference of this so-called hadith. She alleges again without giving a reference, that 'Ali accused 'A'ishah, the Prophet’s wife, of “adultery and whoredom” (!) (p.88), thus accepting Ibn 'Abdul Wahhab’s version at face value. Based on his allegations that the Shi'as accuse 'A'ishah of “prostitution” (!) he justified “fighting and even killing” them because of their “defamation of God and Muhammad”, according to him (p.90). Since this is an extremely serious accusation in view of the fact that the Qur'an absolves 'A'ishah from marital infidelity, the least an impartial researcher could have done is to give references from the Shi'ite sources. (This was tantamount to saying that as Salman Rushdie had abused 'A'ishah, and as he was born into a Sunni family, so all Sunnis are guilty!)

Paradoxically, DeLong-Bas writes at the bottom of the same page: “At no point did he ever suggest that violence of any sort should be used against the Rafidah or Shias” (p.90). It is noteworthy, that he had already dropped a bombshell through his words which proved to be a lethal weapon for igniting hatred in the hearts of masses. The reason for hatred might have been more to do with politics rather than religion. Professor Esposito writes: “Like the Kharijites, the Wahhabi viewed all Muslims who resisted as unbelievers (who could be fought and killed).”

Under the discussion on legal and jurisprudential matters, DeLong-Bas writes that he sharply differed with the Sunni Maliki School for giving precedence to the Companions’ consensus in Madinah (p.100) on the basis that Abul Bakr had authorised “unlawful spending of Zakat for the purpose of bribery” in public interest. He charged Abul Bakr’s stance as an “awesome lie” (p.102, quoting his work Fatawa wa-Mas’il, p.40). This charge did not deter Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhab himself to rule that a simple choice should be given in public interest to the male captives of the non-believers: either an imminent death or payment of poll tax (p.102 & p.207). She writes that he was so concerned about the rights of women that he even preferred the hadiths transmitted through ‘A’ishah to those transmitted by Abul Hurayrah, whom he did not count “at all authoritative” in the matter of women’s rights. She considers Abul Hurayrah to be the “most misogynistic of all hadith transmitters”. Hence, she supports Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhab’s attitude as indicative that he “showed preference for hadith transmitted by a woman” instead of man (p.126).

On the issue of jihad, Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhab exhorted his followers “to carry out the duty of jihad at least once a year…” (p.201). She writes that the contemporary extremists consider jihad as an individual duty, when he considered it as a joint duty. Yet she writes that he excused “no individual” from this duty. He believed that jihad must be declared by the imam (religious leader) and must be defensive (pp.202-203). The opponents must be given a fair chance to convert to Islam (p.204). She thus summarises her findings that “the Godfather of the Wahhabis did not call for the annihilation of Jews and Christians” (p.205). He neither called for an offensive warfare against foreign occupation (p.238) nor for the restoration of Muslim power (p.242).

She concludes that bin Laden owes his violent ways to the teachings of Ibn Taymiyyah and his student Ibn Qayyim, and Qutb, but not to Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb (p.273). Notably, this assessment is unjust to Qutb as he never advocated use of violence by killing civilians of the adversaries, to which bin Laden and his followers are zealously committed. She is right that the missionary goal is totally absent in al-Qaeda’s approach (p.268 & p.277). Amazingly, she claims that the classification of Saudi monarchy as “not truly Muslims” was a “prominent theme in Ibn Taymiyyah’s works” and not in Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb’s (p.273). (The Saudi monarchy did not even exist in the times of Ibn Taymiyyah!). DeLong-Bas rightly confesses in her notes that many scholars believe that the allegations made of un-Islamic superstitious practices prevalent in the times of Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb, are blown out of proportion, in order to distinguish his teachings from his predecessors (p.306).

It may be concluded that his movement capitalised on the phobia that was implanted in the mind of uneducated masses, legitimising his rallying-cry in the name of Tawhīd – absolute monotheism. Whether this rallying point was viable or not can be assessed in the next section which looks at the critical research on the violent methods of the Wahhābī movement.

**Reflections on Abou El Fadl’s book The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists**

At a risk of being accused of causing divisiveness between the Muslims, Abou El Fadl, in his heavily referenced analytical study, chooses to diagnose the predicament facing the global Muslim community in terms of a conflict between the ‘moderates’ and the ‘puritans’.

The present researcher has reservations against presenting the moderates and the puritans as separate homogeneous entities, because within the moderates and puritans, there is a notable projection towards heterogeneity. In the moderate camp, there are many who hold uncompromising attitudes on a number of juristic-political issues; and within the puritan camp, there are extremists who support militancy morally and

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59 Ruthven, 37.
financially and there are conservatives who apparently do not support militancy but are intolerant of other faiths. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on the Saudi soil, this researcher has heard in several Friday sermons from Makkah, an unprecedented condemnation of the violent groups. Yet, as disclosed on Channel 4 (19 April 2006), 60% of all foreign insurgents killed in Iraq are Saudi nationals.

Abou El Fadl identifies a common feature between the Taliban and al-Qaeda that they are heavily influenced by the Wahhabi thought (p.45) which labelled anything that did not originate from the Arabian Bedouin life as “innovation”. The adherents of this School viewed with resentment “all forms of intellectualism, mysticism and sectarianism....” Despite overwhelming evidence that the earliest Sufis were Arabs, they branded Sufism as a Persian innovation; the belief in intercession and visiting the graves as a Turkish innovation; and rational philosophical discourse as originating from un-Islamic Greek thought. The jurists who disagreed with such enigmatical assessments were branded as “infidels” (p.50).

Irrespective of Islam’s universal brotherhood, Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhab’s avowed enemies were the Ottoman Turks whose Caliphate was “a heretical nation” (p.51). There was a clear British colonialist interest in backing the Wahhabis to revolt against the Ottomans (p.53). He justified cruelty and torture against his foes by citing narrations long dismissed by the scholars of hadiths as weak and fabricated. The jurists who disagreed were called “the spawns of Satan” (pp.46-47).

Any jurists who did not follow the methodology of Ibn Taymiyyah for interpreting the law literally and without the tool of reason, logic or rational argument, were considered misguided. “All Shi‘is…and all jurists suspected of…Shi‘i sympathies were also considered heretics...to be treated as apostate[s], and thus killing or executing [them] was considered lawful” (p.48, citing the work of Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhab’s son in Majmu‘at al-Tawhid, 466-93). These justifications were employed in later years in taking and beheading the hostages by the violent fringe groups (p.55).

Art and non-religious poetry were treated as appointing co-partners with God. A Muslim guilty of these offences was “infidel” (p.49). If a Muslim participated in non-Muslim holiday or festivities or used any of their titles, he became “infidel” (p.50).
Apart from the Shi‘a scholars, one of the most influential Sunni classical scholars, Fakhruddin al-Razı was declared kāfīr (p.48). Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb’s father and brother opposed him and criticised him for his disregard for Islamic sanctities (p.56).

Whilst rejecting taqlid or adherence to a particular jurisprudential school, the early Wahhābīs advocated that those who did not follow al-Muslimūn (the Muslims i.e. themselves) or al-Muwahhidūn (the monotheists i.e. themselves) were neither of the two. This argument was strongly rebutted by Sulaymān, the brother of Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb (p.57). The “jihād” they declared on non-Wahhābī Muslims was to re-convert them into Islām by demanding that they pay allegiance to their beliefs or face an imminent death (p.58).

The history of Arabian Peninsula is replete with tales of bloodbaths in the formative years of the movement. Sulaymān’s treatises, which are banned in Saudi Arabia, express shock and dismay, that all these centuries, as if the pious and pioneering Muslims had been following a wrong Islām until the correct one was discovered by Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb. Sulaymān considers this attitude an insult to the dignity of the predecessors. He emphasised that to indulge in accusing other Muslims of takfīr was a great sin; and the prominent jurists in the nineteenth century called these takfīrūs “modern day Khārijites” (p.59).

The marital bond between the progeny of Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb (popularly known as Āl al-Shaykh) and the progeny of Sa‘ūd was strengthened with the House of Sa‘ūd being in charge of “temporal fortunes” and Āl al-Shaykh being in charge as “spiritual advisers”, although officially, the Wahhābī School does not recognise any division between the temporal and spiritual life.60 Under this alliance, the Wahhābīs controlled Arabia, and extended their conquering “raids” to Oman, Damascus, Baghdad61 and Yemen62.

An agreement of convenience was formed between the Saudi family and the British for winning oil-mining rights (p.62). The battle of dominance over Arabia followed. Tens of thousands of unyielding people were massacred, especially the Sūfīs and the Shi‘īs.

60 Holden and Johns, 21.
61 Ibid. 22.
62 Schwartz, 261.
There followed raids of lootings of the Shi'ite sacred places in Karbalā and Najaf in Iraq from 1801, when 2000 civilians were slaughtered in Karbalā.63 In 1802, they took over Ṭā'if and "killed every woman, man, and child..." Many Sunnis were massacred in cold-blood in the following years in Makkah and Madinah. Under the Saudi-Wahhabī alliance, "40,000 public executions and 350,000 amputations" were carried out (p.64). This can hardly be construed as an avenue for enforcing the faith in Tawhīd.

In the sixties, as Saudi Arabia emerged as one of the wealthiest nations, strict precepts were enforced where "summary whippings" were carried out on the shopkeepers who did not close their shops at the times of prayers or smoked in public.65 The Society for Enjoinment of Good and Prevention of Evil (similar to the one that unleashed havoc in the nineties in Afghanistan under Taliban) enforced strict supervision over the common men in the streets, but did not interfere in the widespread corruption and kickbacks practised during the same period in the Kingdom.66

The modern worldview of the movement considers the study of social sciences and humanities (but not the physical sciences) as an avenue to Westernisation (p.171). In the military field, despite non-belligerent treaty between the U.S. and Saudi Arabia (p.228), if Western military bases are established on Muslim land, the "puritan militant" groups believe that these agreements are null and void (p.232). The West is still the aggressor and under the defensive war being fought, the militants can attack "anytime anywhere" (p.231). Nevertheless, terrorising innocent people falls under the crime of hirābah (in Islamic Law: waging war against society) and muḥāribūn (those who wage war against society) were considered enemies of humankind (p.242).

It is noteworthy that in most of the video messages of Zawahiri televised on al-Jazeera TV network in 2005 and 2006, he encourages attacks on U.S. personnel and interests. He is apathetic to the fact that almost six million Muslims live in the U.S. and own commercial and industrial properties, which are legally classified as "American interest".

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63 Mamdani, 220.
64 Schwartz, 77.
65 Holden & Johns, 87.
66 Ibid. 270.
In concluding this section, the evidence suggests that the emergence of extremist ideology in modern times cannot be segregated from the juristic-political issues investigated in Chapter 6. The next section will establish a clear link between the two which is one of the main points of contention between the Wahhābis and the adherents of other Schools.

**Obsession against tombstones and historical sites**

The obsession against raising the graves or building tomb-stones is that it may lead to grave-worship! This researcher has come across posters displayed in the largest mosque in Leicester City with strongly-worded condemnation against the Saudi authorities for desecrating the grave of the Prophet’s mother through excavations. This means that at least subconsciously there is a feeling in the heart of many Muslims that she died a believer otherwise, why bother? It may be noted that if Israel had attempted anything similar, there would have been uproar and violent upheavals in Muslim capitals, suggesting that as long as the desecration takes place by the Muslims themselves, it is condonable.

The *hadith* frequently recited in the sermons broadcast from Saudi Arabia is recorded by Ibn Kathīr from his sources: “Allāh has cursed the Jews and the Christians who took the graves of their Prophets and righteous-people as places of worship” (*IK*:VI:135). What is conveniently overlooked is that the grave of the Prophet Muḥammad has become an integral part of the Grand Mosque in Madīnah. Millions of Muslims, throughout the year, pray and worship God around his burial place. At the Grand Mosque in Makkah, the pilgrims and anyone who watches five times’ daily congregational prayers on TV can observe that although the graves of Ismā‘īl (Ishmael) and his mother Hagar are situated in the immediate vicinity of the Ka‘bah, in *Ḥijr Ismā‘īl*⁶⁷, the pilgrims do pray around these graves constantly. But the demagogues do not seem to be bothered by such stark contradictions.

It is noteworthy that there are thousands of mosques in Egypt, Iraq, Indo-Pak and other countries, built on the graves of saints and scholars, and in Jerusalem, on the graves of

⁶⁷ [http://www.al-islam.org/ziyarat/saudi.htm](http://www.al-islam.org/ziyarat/saudi.htm)
One of the most famous figures from the School of Ibn Taymiyyah was Ibn Qayyim who commences his book, *Al-Rūḥ - The Spirit*, with a tradition that when a Muslim passes by the grave of his brother (in faith) whom he knew in the world, and sends salutations to him, God returns his soul to answer back the greetings.\(^{68}\) The dilemma arises that if all marks of the graves are obliterated to the ground-level, then no question arises of implementing this tradition. Ibn Qayyim further states that the dead man recognises the one who visits his grave, and that there is a consensus among the Salaf (predecessors) on this point. He quotes a tradition through Ibn Qayyim that when a man visits and sits near the grave of his brother, the dead man becomes pleased.\(^{69}\) Notably, in this case, the opinion of the jurists in contravention of this *hadith* is in breach of the Sunnah. A group or a sect or a community is free to believe in whatever it thinks is right. But to force one’s beliefs on others, who may have equally valid counter-arguments, based on the same-self primary sources, causes enmity between Muslims.

*The Independent* daily summarises this contagious issue in its exploratory article: “Previously unseen photographs reveal how religious zealots obsessed with idolatry have colluded with developers to destroy Islam’s diverse heritage.”\(^{70}\) In the past 50 years, “300 historical sites have been levelled systematically” in Makkah and Madinah.\(^{71}\)

Yvonne Ridley, the ex-Taliban hostage and an ex-broadcaster on Islam television channel, writing about the destruction of the Prophet’s birth-place in Makkah, quotes a Saudi critic, Dr. Sami Angawi, the architect who has dedicated himself in preserving the historic heritage, that there may be merely twenty structures left going back to the days of the Prophet.\(^{72}\) The rest have been wiped out. In his book, under the chapter “Global

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68 Al-Jawziyah, 11.
69 Ibid, 12.
Gamblers”, Schwartz gives account of systematic destruction of historic architectural achievements, with looting of the Prophet’s shrine and carnage caused to the historic cemeteries in Makkah and Madinah.\textsuperscript{73}

In conclusion, it may be stated that the same ideologues who have been destroying places of historical importance have now exported their hostile ideology against tombs and shrines in Iraq by systematically targeting the places of worship sacred to other faiths. Islam has made its directives crystal clear in the Qur'an and the Sunnah as regards the protection given to the places of worship of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The negativity attached to paying respect to the dead, if stretched too far, would mean that the Palestinians who lay wreath at the grave of Yassir Arafat are worshipping him! Having identified the inhibition that the radicalised ideology has used to ostracise other Muslims, the next section inquires into other factors that sow the seeds of hatred and extremism among Muslims by diagnosing the problem through the prism of class-structure, resulting in gross violation of human dignity.

**The Muslim elites and grassroots live in two different worlds**

Success is promised to those who can save themselves from the selfishness of their souls (Q.59:9). This verse refers to the mental state of the natives of Madinah who welcomed the refugees from Makkah. In spite of their poverty, they shared with the strangers their city, homes and possessions. Later, the distribution of booty was ordained equitably so that wealth does not remain concentrated in the hands of the rich, but gets a wider circulation (SQT:VI:3526-3527). The purpose was to bar the connivance of the rich from forming a class structure and hierarchy in the midst of the community, and thus becoming power brokers.

Experimentation with the Islamic State for centuries, still leaves in the midst of the community substantive poor class, despite the discovery of large reservoirs of natural resources. The statistical data paints a bleak picture. In the Arab countries, 70 million are illiterate\textsuperscript{74} out of 299.32 million\textsuperscript{75} because the education system is deeply rooted on

\textsuperscript{73} Schwartz, 92-93.

\textsuperscript{74} http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=12435

\textsuperscript{75}
disparity between rich and poor. According to the UNESCO report, literacy rate in Pakistan remains 40-50 percent because the country spends only 1-2 percent of its GNP in the promotion of education, although the country is a nuclear power. The very first word of the first revelation in the Qur’ān was: “Read!” (Q.96:1). But the Muslims have yet to do justice to this Divine commandment.

In a concept paper presented by Salem on corruption of the elites, it is stated that “with most political systems in the Arab world dominated and driven by the interests of the ruling individual or group rather than interests of the public”, it opens up “opportunities and choices for the ruling elite…” This shows that the prevalent oligarchic political order leads to the sufferings of the masses. Corruption is identified as the main factor for the failure of Civil Society in Muslim countries. Notably, in the course of this collaboration, human dignity guaranteed by Islam to individuals is treated as relic of the past.

In recent years, there has been hue and cry on the need to reform Muslim countries. But nepotism in the political arena is pandemic, and yet considered a norm. For instance, despite thirty-five years of Saddam’s tribal rule built on human rights violations, genocide and atrocities, which were extensively covered in the world press and media, some of the intellectuals in the Arab world believe that deposing the de facto ruler of Iraq was unjustified. Deep into the psyche of ordinary people, it has been implanted through centuries that the standards of accountability which apply to the leaders, have to be different from those applied to others. The Muslim community is bound to suffer if two different standards are applied – one for the rich and influential and the other for the poor. When Saddam was to face trial for crimes against humanity, Jordan’s Bar Association raised this matter with the Arab Lawyers’ Union in Cairo, and the lawyers

76 http://www.itu.int/ITU-D/arb/arab_country_data.html
77 "Literacy Trends in Pakistan-2004" http://www.pakistanlink.com/headlines/April04/02/03.html.
opined that “a head of state is immune from prosecution”. The Prophet said: “When you see my community afraid of calling a tyrant ‘tyrant’ then take leave of it.” It did not matter in this case, what the Qur’an and the Sunnah had to say. The Prophet had not exempted even himself from accountability.

In conclusion, class-structure is causing incongruity not only in matters of education (executive failure), but also in matters of justice (judiciary failure). In the Muslim world today, even judiciary is not free from corruption. If the aggrieved are of poor class, they are left with no other option but to seek redress through radical measures. The next section looks into the political factors in the aftermath of the wars and conflicts in the Muslim world, where, not only the public opinion but also the scholarly opinion is taking a controversial stance.

**Where armed conflicts turn Muslim public opinion towards extremism**

As a prelude to the discussion, it is widely reported in the media that full scale wars on Muslim land, spearheaded by the U.S. and the coalition forces, with daily graphic scenes of mass casualties, has radicalised Muslim public opinion. Both Saddam and bin Laden were the former allies of the U.S. enjoying military and logistic support of the U.S. Apart from the wars on Afghanistan and Iraq, the Palestinian crisis has alienated the Muslim public opinion against the West.

There is a school of thought that believes that in order to fight the occupation forces that possess the most sophisticated deadly arsenal in the world, and have a long history of using them against the civilians, the resistance movements have no other option but to resort to “martyrdom operations”. One of the most prominent protagonists of this school is the world-renowned leading authority in Sharī'ah Law, Shaykh Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī. On his visit to London in 2004, he made his views known that there is no match between the high-tech heavy weaponry used by the Israeli forces and the Palestinian youths who have only their bodies to sacrifice. Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London,

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81 Kamali, (1997), 38, quoting Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Suyūṭī.
endorsed many of al-Qaraḍāwī's views on Israel. In a show of solidarity, the anti-Zionist Orthodox Jews received him at the beginning and end of his visit.

A major point of difference between the thoughts of al-Qaraḍāwī, a moderate Salafi scholar, and the Wahhābī scholars is that the former believes that the "enmity between the Muslims and Jews" is for the land and not religion; whereas, the latter believe that it is over religion; notwithstanding the fact that the Israeli society is not entirely religious. According to the same source, al-Qaraḍāwī believes that as the Israeli society is militarised, there is no civilian Israeli target on the occupied Palestinian land. He argues that the "unjustified destruction" by Israel would never have been possible without "American money, American weapons and American veto". Therefore, he issued a fatwah for the boycott of Israeli and American goods as part of the resistance. Under this context, he considers fighting the American occupation in Iraq as Jihad and those killed fighting the American troops as martyrs. But he is against al-Qaeda's attacks on civilian targets. As a backlash to an incidence of a car-bomb in Qatar, where he lives, he issued an exceptionally strong statement: "Such crimes are committed by insane persons who have no religious affiliation..."

Another School is represented by the ex-Iranian President Khātāmī and the current President of International Foundation for Dialogue between Civilisations. He believes that "vicious terrorists who concoct weapons out of religion...are turning religion into the handmaiden of the most decadent ideologies." He warns that in the prevailing violence in the world, if combatants cannot be distinguished from non-combatants, then this situation is not acceptable in Islām.

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82 "London Mayor Rejects Attack On Qaradawi", http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2004-07/08/article03.shtml
84 Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yusuf_al-Qaradawi#Qaradawi.27s_opinion_on_the_Israeli-Palestinian_conflict
85 "Qaradawi Rejects Al-Qaeda's Killing of Innocents", http://www.islamonline.net/English/News/2002-06/23/article02.shtml
87 Noorani, 58.
88 Ibid. 59.
In conclusion, the sensibilities of Islam are offended if innocent people are used as scapegoats in the conflicts over which they have no control or say. Yet, apparently on the Palestinian issue, wars in Chechnya, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Iraq, the hard-line Salafi scholars seem to support “martyrdom operations” of indiscriminate killings. The next section extends the inquiry by investigating the challenge posed by the violent groups operating in the name of Islam.

**The challenge of the violent Takfiri extremists**

The extremist group *Takfir wal-Hijrah – Unbelief and Migration* was founded in Egypt in the sixties. Its leader Shukri Ahmad Mustafa was executed in 1978. He believed that it is not only permissible but obligatory to wage war against Muslims (other than the followers of his ideology) and to kill their men and take their women and children as slaves and to usurp their properties. He proclaimed that all the modern societies, except members of his group are unbelievers. He rejected principles of jurisprudence and hadith, Islamic history and traditional Islamic Law. What remains of this movement is a cult that has resorted to militancy. Likewise, the organisations, Martyrs of Morocco in Spain, and GIA (Armed Islamic Group) in Algeria, share the intolerant ideology of takfir (declaring others non-believers). The most extremist groups to emerge in modern times were the Taliban and al-Qaeda. They inspired their supporters to indulge in indiscriminate sectarian bloodbaths. When such an ideology penetrated the radical groups in Pakistan, the masses were provoked emotionally and the country witnessed suicide bombings inside the mosques of the rival sects, in which copies of the Qur'an were desecrated. But the contrast can be observed by the following example.

An eye-witness account of torture at Guantanamo Bay was posted on al-Jazeera website. When copies of the Qur'an were reported to have been desecrated by the American interrogators at Guantanamo (Newsweek, 9 May 2005, the claim was later retracted), violent protests in Muslims countries resulted in many deaths and casualties.

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89 Abou El Fadl, (2005), 299.
91 http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Takfir
92 derived from kāfir (plural kuffār).
It is observed that when the same copies of the Qur’ān are blown up into pieces and set on fire in suicide bombings by the groups using Jihādī slogans, the masses in the Muslim world react with a deafening silence. It is difficult to understand this apathy, except in terms of dual standards.

Quṭb writes that when the individual avoids self-criticism and does not tolerate anyone else criticising him, he remains submerged in darkness (*SQT*: V:2926-2927). If his comments are applied to the mind-frame of the self-confessed indiscriminate killers, then the inconsistency becomes obvious. The London Arabic Daily *Alhayāt*, published a document authored by Abu Mas‘ab al-Zarqawi, the then agent of al-Qaeda in Iraq. It carried a blueprint for triggering a civil war and unveiled the extreme hatred that his group sought to implant among the masses in an effort to ignite sectarian warfare in Iraq⁹⁶, which since then has claimed lives of thousands of non-combatants.

In almost all of al-Qaeda’s audio/video tapes screened on *al-Jazeera* since 2001, bin Laden and Zawahiri have acted as self-appointed spokesmen of Islām, irrespective of the fact that most of their victims are Muslim civilians. Bin Laden eulogised in his recordings the 9/11 hijackers and appealed to the Muslim youths to emulate them. In his audio broadcast on *al-Jazeera* on 24 May 2006, he bluntly confessed that he had personally assigned this duty to the hijackers of 9/11.⁹⁷ What is significant is that the confession this time came directly from the horse’s mouth, but it has not affected the bizarre conspiracy theories circulating on the cyberspace, acquitting him from any responsibility for the 9/11 attacks.

Even an intellectual and respected personality like, Shaykh Ḥamīd Zakī Yaḥmānī, the powerful ex-Oil Minister of Saudi Arabia for twenty-five years, dismissed bin Laden’s involvement and said that the evidence suggest that the Israelis were involved.⁹⁸ However, if the CIA and Mossad planned the 9/11 attacks and are behind terrorism in Iraq, as is widely claimed by the proponents of the conspiracy theory, then this carries a grim implication for bin Laden and Zawahiri simply because the world has seen them appear in pictures and broadcasts, encouraging these crimes. Without strong financial

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⁹⁸ This claim was made on *al-Jazeera* under the serialised programme *Special Visit* showing interviews of Yaḥmānī in September 2006.
backing, none of the militancy anywhere stands any chance of succeeding. Schwartz dedicates a chapter in his book in which he exposes how the extremist groups were financed with the Saudi money. He writes: “...until September 11 one of the most significant Wahhabi war fronts was located in the United States...”

In the first ever video tape of Zarqawi, shown on the internet websites and on al-Jazeera on 25 April 2006, he employed the best of Islamic rhetoric. He appealed to his fellow militants that jihad must continue against whom he saw as the avowed foes of the Muslims – “the Jews”, the “cross-worshippers” (whom he called “the crusaders”), the “apostate Shi‘as” and the “Zionised Kurds”. In a video released on the eve of the first anniversary of the 7/7 attacks, the spokesman of al-Qaeda blames the U.S. and the U.K. for the civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq. But he conveniently turns a blind eye to the fact that the overwhelming majority killed by his group are civilians. He justifies collective punishment on the premise that the people killed in the 9/11 and 7/7 attacks were legitimate targets, having voted their governments into power. But the victims of terror might not have voted at all in the elections, and some were children and non-nationals. Moreover, what justification can there be for killing the Africans in Kenya and Tanzania suicide bombings in 1998 (before Afghanistan and Iraq wars were even conceived)? It is not credible that these Africans might have had any influence in shaping the American or British policies.

The roots of these extremists are outstretched in history. Ziauddin Sardar writes: “To deny that they are product of Islamic history and tradition is more than complacency...It is a refusal to live in the real world.” In the course of their perfectionist psychological mind-set, they write off history and the human element associated therewith. One cannot be more perfect than perfect. Therefore, any injustice and bloodshed that

and “Two Saudi Nationals named as terrorist financiers”, USINFO.STATE.GOV http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/Archive/2004/Dec/22-862859.html

100 Schwartz, 225.

emanates from their action is justified under their ideological commitment. Sardar continues: "Their thought has recurred in Islamic history with cyclical regularity."  

In regard to the crude strategy of bin Laden, Noorani writes that he capitalises on the emotions and frustrations of the masses. He preaches vengeance, but gives "neither hope nor alternative". In his ideology of hate, there is "no specific political project, no brighter future". No mass-protests have so far been witnessed against the violent extremists for loss of civilian life. In Friday sermons, the Saudi clerics are now using the pseudonym "deviants" for the terrorists, as and when they threaten the national security of their own country.

The extremists, despite benefiting from all the facilities of the modern world, have the audacity of claiming that accepting "any measure" of man-made law is a denial of the belief in God. The impasse between them and the majority of peace-loving Muslims is quite manifest. There are many measures of man-made law that are inevitably followed even by the opponents of the system. The suicide bombers of 9/11 and 7/7 had to abide by man-made law of purchasing the plane and train tickets and paying the taxes imposed thereon, without which they would not have been able to embark on their deadly mission. A further proof of their succumbing to a number of measures of man-made law is the recorded message of the ring-leader of the London suicide bombers, urging the British Muslims not to work with the government, and appealing to the Islamic scholars to disobey the British Laws, notwithstanding the fact that he himself was an employee of a local school, with a contract of employment drawn according to the English Law.

Historically, the extremists have exhibited in their actions regularity in praying, fasting, memorising the Qur'an and performing other acts of worship ordained by Islam. They have been very successful in impressing the masses with their semblance of piety. The videotaped messages of 9/11 hijackers, televised on al-Jazeera, were exceptionally eloquent and emotionally appealing. Because of their ideological brainwashing, they

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103 Noorani, 88.
give themselves the right to pass judgements in deciding who is a true believer, who is an infidel and who will be doomed in Hell. Hence, it seems that they absolve themselves from any sense of guilt in destroying innocent human life. If only the clerics could take the lead in denouncing the takfīrī groups loudly and clearly from the pulpits, much of the misunderstanding prevailing among the masses could be solved and tens of thousands of innocent lives could be saved.

There are many websites on the cyberspace accusing the West of double standards on the basis that if civilians get killed and brutalised by the Muslim militant groups, then this is called ‘terrorism’. If they get killed by the occupation forces, then this is called “collateral damage”. But then the same websites remain oblivious in the face of innocent civilians getting killed in cold-blood by the takfīris in what they call jihād. Yet they do not perceive this to be double standards! Four members of the Jordanian Parliament paid condolences on the death of Zarqawi\textsuperscript{106} although he had killed their own fellow citizens in triple suicide attacks.\textsuperscript{107} But this was not considered double standards! These MPs declared that those killed in the Jordan suicide bombings (i.e. the victims, not the terrorists) will burn in Hell, as disclosed by King Abdullah of Jordan in his interview on the CNN on 22 June 2006. The insensitive MPs were jailed for the offence caused in this particular case; otherwise, Jordan has tolerated “bridal parties” held in public by the families of the “martyrs” (killed in Iraq) whereby, they are supposed to have been united with the Houris (heavenly brides) in Paradise. It is observed that these celebrations have been given coverage on Arabic satellite TVs, which may have been used by the extremists as incentives for the new recruits of insurgents.

In an academic paper presented at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, the history of extremism in Jordan, like anywhere else in the Middle East, is traced back to the humiliating defeat of the Arab armies in the 1967 six-day Arab-Israeli war, followed by the lavish contributions of the Saudis to prop up certain groups in the wake of the soaring oil prices after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. This was followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the influx of the Jihādīsts. When the


Jihādists returned to their respective countries after the war, they brought a rigid ideology with a commitment to enforce it on the “infidel” societies.

This academic paper also analyses different layers among the Salafis, some of whom advocate non-violent participation in the political process. Zarqawi, was released from prison in 1999 under the amnesty granted by King Abdullah of Jordan. He believed in waging war against society at large, including the Jordanian society. This had become a public knowledge in the wake of his rebellion in prison against his own mentor, al-Maqdisi.108 Jordan reacted in exasperation when Zarqawi sabotaged its national interest and internal security. The Iraqi government published the names of forty-one of the most wanted collaborators and financiers of suicide bombings on its territories.109 Taheri analyses the role played by some neighbouring countries in harbouring Takfīrī and Saddami insurgents, including the ex-Ba’thist top officials who had absconded with 500 million dollars.110

The inspiration provided by the Prophet can still act as a guiding principle for the community to remain equitable in its outlook, free from extremes. He instructed his emissaries sent to Yemen: “Bring glad tidings and do not drive people away, make things easy and do not make them difficult, obey each other and do not differ among yourselves” (IK:IV:181). This speaks volumes about the expectations of the Prophet from anyone who dares to speak in the name of Islam. The ways in which the takfīrīs have breached the historic pledge of the Prophet who placed all places of worship under his protection, is noticeable in the suicide bombings inside the mosques right at the time of Friday prayers so as to cause the highest possible mayhem among the worshippers. In one of the suicide attacks, 35 school children were blown up into pieces in Baghdad.111

The present researcher monitored Friday sermons from several countries on Friday following the attack. There was not a word of condemnation. One can contrast this situation with the Prophet’s tradition: “He who is not kind to [our] children is not of

The Prophet is reported to have said: “There will come a time for men when the one who kills will not know why he has killed, and his victim will not know why he has been killed.” The apathy towards the value of human life is the apathy towards Islamic values.

Much of the ambiguity can be solved if viewed in terms of cause and effect. The consequences of evil plots against others come back to the plotters and they themselves suffer as a result (Q.35:43, IK:VIII:163). Every act – good or evil – leaves its landmark in the lives of the people. This can best be perceived through the Prophet’s tradition, the gist of which is: Whoever starts a spiral of good or evil will get its reward or punishment together with the proportionate reward or punishment of others who act upon it (IK:VIII:174).

This hadith shows that not only the perpetrators, but also those who encourage or remain indifferent and turn cold shoulder towards these crimes, will be co-partners in facing the Divine wrath. The world press and internet are replete with headlines and news-items of suicide bombings in Iraq (illustrated by a sample references), each more severe in brutality than another, targeting the passenger buses, funeral processions, hospitals, mosques, crowded markets and the gatherings of labourers, who queue up to earn their daily bread from hand to mouth. “Gatherings of poor laborers in crowded markets have become a favorite target of...al Qaeda insurgents...” These indiscriminate mass killings have become a common scenario throughout 2006 and in 2007 so far, with the highest casualty of civilians.

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113 Ibn Ijazm, 140.
118 Mark Oliver, op. cit.
Conclusion

In discussing some of the burning issues of our time, including the penetration of violence in the Muslim community, this chapter has highlighted the extent to which human dignity and human values have been breached. The striking similarity between the ancient Khārijites and members of the present-day violent extremist groups is their ability to impress the masses through their frequent use of the Qur'ānic verses which they seem to memorise proficiently. These groups have sympathisers in the powerful Arab media, on the streets and among some popular clerics who are playing a dual role by calling the terrorists “misguided” and also providing them food for thought by passing the edicts of kufr against whoever dares to oppose their parochialism. Their backbone is a strong financial support which has made “heroes” and “martyrs” out of the mass-murderers of babies and children. Their ability to spill the blood of innocent civilians in non-Muslim countries and of the Muslims whom they brand as “apostates” and “heretics” has been boosted because of lack of mass-movement against them.

The attitude of the extremist groups towards human life is motivated by power-politics in the name of Islām. Generally, as Muslim masses are emotionally attached to their religion, any political group that does not use religious slogans might not succeed in its political motives. It is a grim reality of the present day media revolution that the masses are impressed by sensationalism and propaganda, motivated by the interest of the media barons, who represent the political interest of the elites or that of the oligarchic reign or that of the violent extremists.
It has been established in this research that the Qur'ān has discussed various paradigms of human entity and has conferred upon humankind dignity, rights and honour, but not without duties and responsibilities. Although the regime on soul and human nature is dynamic and still developing in the Islāmic thought, the intolerant ideologues came headlong in clash with the moral, humane, compassionate and altruistic values propounded by the Qur'ān and the practices of the Prophet.

This research discussed that the tendency to be evil is due to extrinsic influences that impact on the lower ‘self’. God exhorts mankind to be good and to fight evil within and evil without. To assist the ‘self’ in achieving higher and spiritual ends in life, Islām has devised personal and social code for human nature, the prototype of which was presented in this research from the ontological and hermeneutic sources.

Using the same sources, it was proved that enigmatic interpretations of the revealed and transmitted text are causing a division in the Muslim community, where there is no justification for anathemising others who hold different views or beliefs.

It has been shown that there is an attempt at demonising Quṭb because of his strong recalcitrance against social, political and economic endemic corruption and tyranny in the Muslim world. His thought per se is not the cause of violent extremism. Yet he is used as a scapegoat to divert the attention away from the intolerance propounded by the conservative establishment in the Muslim world, which has been responsible for espousing radical ideology centuries before Quṭb was born. The grudge that some radical groups are holding against Quṭb and Mawdūdi is because both of them have criticised some Companions of the Prophet in their writings. The problem arises when these groups, out of ideological commitment rather than rationality, reject critical study of history and expect all others to follow suit and succumb to their way of thinking. This explains why they have unleashed their propaganda machinery against the renowned scholars.

It was demonstrated that kindness towards children and especially the orphans is a vital aspect of untainted human nature. The Qur'ān commands: “Treat not the orphans with
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harshness” (Q.93:9). It is remarkable that there is no implication in this verse as to the race, colour or religion of the orphans. Therefore, those whose policies are instrumental in augmenting the calamity and sufferings of innocent children and orphans, and those who use the lives of children as a weapon for political expediencies are in rebellion against the Qur'ānic values. It has been variedly reported in the media that the present population of orphans in Iraq is seven millions due to violence (from whichever side); and this is one of the highest figures in the world.

Even a superficial reader of the Qur’ān cannot escape to notice that the Qur’ān praises the Jews, Christians and Sabeans who do good and practise honesty (Q.2:62, Q.5:82-85). Therefore, morality is the core code of conduct in the Islāmic worldview, as has been established in this study.

It has been illustrated that multifarious rights and duties bestowed upon mankind under the Qur'ānic ethos annul the ways in which the violent extremists misrepresent and misinterpret Islām. In none of their audio/video messages televised on al-Jazeera TV and several websites, there is a mention of the Qur'ānic exhortations for the need to build human life based on spiritual and material well-being; and to inhabit the earth and to protect its resources which are a Divine trust. If walking into Paradise was possible through suicide bombings, then their leaders would have tried their luck long time ago instead of taking refuge in their hide-outs. If they were sincere in their parochial causes, then they would have come out in open and fought their battle with their own lives, instead of ruining the lives of thousands of misinformed and misguided young people.

A strange guilt syndrome is developing among Muslims, where the gravity of crimes committed by the violent extremists is so incriminating that the masses are misled into believing that these crimes could not have been committed by “pious” personalities, who know the Qur’ān at least, better than the ruling elites. This has given rise to a wave of grotesque conspiracy theories hovering around the 9/11 and 7/7 catastrophes. Consequently, the Muslim psyche is on the lookout to deposit the blame on somebody else’s doorstep instead of setting its own house in order. This apologetic attitude in favour of the violent extremists cannot continue for long. Sooner than later, the Muslim community will have to face the reality on international scene that in order to live as peaceful citizens in the West and elsewhere, it will have to start with soul-searching and
grooming the clerics in the mosques to speak against extremism from the pulpit in loud and legible words, and not by beating behind the bush.

There is a deep-rooted mistrust among Muslims against the Western policies. The reasons are a combination of several factors, which are mentioned briefly to pave the way for further research in this area:

(i) Continuous wars on the Muslim land: The ensuing consequences of these wars are the growing civilian casualties, promotion of arms trade and awarding of lucrative contracts to foreign experts and consultants, in the face of redundancy of local expertise.

(ii) Torture of political prisoners and their human rights violations: These meet with tight-lipped reaction if the offending countries in the Muslim world are allies of the West.

(iii) The unrepresentative Muslim regimes that misappropriate national resources: These regimes are seen, rightly or wrongly (depending on the individual's political orientation), as pawns of the West.

(iv) The rising unemployment and a widening gap in the standards of living and education between the rich and the poor in the Muslim countries: These are seen, rightly or wrongly, as consequential to the Western economic policies being promoted through globalisation.

(v) Growing numbers of private security firms in Iraq: As disclosed on 10 July 2006 on al-Mustakilla (The Independent) Arabic TV from London, which calls itself al-Democratiyya (The Democracy), when discussing the Iraqi affairs, there are 500 private security firms working in Iraq. There is an underlying implication here to mean that foreign interest groups are involved on the ground to keep instability in Iraq buoyant, as long as the country possesses a huge reservoir of oil to foot the bill.

Solutions to these problems will go a long way in restoring confidence among Muslim masses and creating a barrier between the ordinary man in the street and the extremists who are bent on negative and destructive approach.
One of the most challenging predicaments in the modern world, facing the Muslim and international community is that of the violent Takfiris. They seem to have given themselves an almighty right to decide the fate and destiny of the people, Muslims and non-Muslims, on whom they pass the verdict of kufr (non-belief). Hence, if according to their mindset, they are right and all others are wrong, then they can pardon themselves from the most horrendous crimes, like indiscriminate brutal killings and massacres. It has been established in this research that this type of attitude has evolved over the centuries. Rather than being a remnant of the past, it has been revived with vigorous force, capitalising on the grievances and emotions of educated and uneducated young people.

It has been established that for any reformation to be productive and successful, it has to start with the reformation of the ‘self’ towards everything good and God-consciousness, followed by the reformation of the families, then that of the communities and then only, that of the society at large. This is the Message of the Qur’ān and this is the method of the Prophet. Those who are trying to impose a reverse order are bound to face credibility crisis once the masses become fully aware that the elements who are trampling over the basic Islamic values and whose hands are drenched in the blood of innocent civilians - aged, disabled, women and children - are void of any integrity to speak in the name of Islam or to address the Muslims.
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The second hereditary ruling dynasty of the Muslim empire after the Umayyāds. Its base was Baghdad (132/750 to 656/1258).

‘abd
servant or slave of God

Abū Bakr
Abū Bakr ibn Abī Qaḥāfā, the Caliph whose period of Caliphate was 11/632–13/634 after the death of the Prophet.

ahādīth (sing. ḥadīth).
Traditions and sayings narrated in the name of the Prophet.

ahkām (sing. ḥukm)
rules of law, positive commandments. See ḥukm

Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jamā’ah
People of the traditions and practices of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. They are in vast majority in the community, known as Sunnis, in short form.

akhlāq (sing. khuluq)
good manners or upright conduct.

Al-Azhar
University in Cairo, Egypt, which was founded by the Fatimid dynasty in 360/970.

Al-Ḥasan
Al-Ḥasan bin ‘Alī the eldest grandson of the Prophet (d. 50/670)

Al-Ḥusayn
Al-Ḥusayn bin ‘Alī the younger grandson of the Prophet (d. 61/680)

‘Alī
‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭalib, the Caliph whose period of Caliphate was 35/656 – 40/661 after the death of ‘Uthmān. According to the beliefs of the Shi‘ās, his period of Imamate was 11/632 – 40/661.

al-insān al-kāmil
the perfect man

al-nafs al ammārah bi’l sūr
the evil-orientating ‘self’
al-nafs al lawwāmah
the critical or self-blaming ‘self’

al-nafs al mutmainnah
the contented ‘self’

al-nafsu’l naṭiqā
the communicative ‘self’

‘Allāmu’l ghuyūb
Knower of the hidden things (one of the titles of God)

al-rasikhūn fī’l ‘ilm
those firmly rooted in knowledge

Al-Rāzi,
Fakhr al-dīn al-Rāzī, philosopher and exegete of the Qur‘ān (d. 606/1209)

Al-Ṭabarī
Classical historian and traditional exegete of the Qur‘ān (d. 311/923).

‘aql
mind, intellect, reason, rationality

asbāb al-nuzūl
causes or occasions for the revelation

Ash‘ari (Ash‘arīyah or Ash‘arites)
Adherents to the main Sunni theological school of Abū Ḥasan al-Ash‘ari (d. 324/936). It became prominent during the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate.

Āyat
Verse of the Qur‘ān or Sign of God.

Āyāt
Plural of Āyat

‘Ā’ishā
The wife of the Prophet (d. 59/678) and daughter of Abū Bakr

Awliyā’
Chosen servants or friends of God

Battle of Badr
The first battle fought between the Makkan forces and the infant Muslim community in the outskirts of Madinah after the migration, at the oasis of Badr in 2/624. In this battle the idolaters of Makkah were badly defeated despite overpowering the Muslims by 3:1.
Battle of Jamal (Camel)
Battle fought in 35/656 between 'A'ishah, the wife of the Prophet and 'Alī and Zubair, the close Companions of the Prophet, against 'All ibn Abī Ṭālib, the newly elected Caliph.

Battle of Uḥud
The second battle fought in 3/625 between well-equipped Makkan forces, in revenge for their defeat at the Battle of Badr, and the Muslims, outside Madinah, in which the Muslim forces were defeated for violating the specific instructions of the Prophet.

bid‘ah (pl. bid‘ā‘)
innovation in religion.

dār al-ḥarb
abode of war

dār al-Islām
abode of Islām

da‘if
weak hadith or tradition attributed to the Prophet whose authenticity is suspected

faqīh (pl. fuqahā‘)
jurist or expert in Islamic Law.

Fāṭir
Originator of the heavens and the earth (one of the titles of God)

fasād
evildoing or spreading mischief on earth

fāsiq
corrupt or wicked or immoral

fatwah or fatwā (pl. fatāwā)
edict or legal opinion issued by a jurist.

fiqh
jurisprudence by which the rules of Islamic Law are derived.

fitnah or fitnā (pl. fitan)
mischief, seduction, corruption, enticement.

fiṭrah or fiṭrā
natural disposition

gharīb
instincts
hadith (pl. ahādīth)
saying or tradition of the Prophet transmitted through a chain of narrators

Hajj
The obligatory pilgrimage to Makkah in the pilgrimage season which is in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.

hākimīyyah
judgement and dominion

ḥalāl
permitted or allowed in the Shari‘ah.

Hanafi
One of the four main Sunnī jurisprudential schools of thought, named after its founder Abu Ḥanīfah al-‘Uṣmān (d. 150/767). It is predominant in Indo-Pak subcontinent and Iraq.

Hanafīyyah
An early monotheistic faith in the Arabian Peninsula prior to the advent of the Prophet Muḥammad.

Ḥanbaṇi
One of the four main Sunnī jurisprudential schools of thought, named after its founder Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). Its adherents are found mainly in Saudi Arabia.

Ḥaqīqah
the phase where tranquillity and awareness is achieved after harmonising the inner reality with the outer law and guidance

ḥarām
forbidden or prohibited in the Shari‘ah.

ḥasan
tradition attributed to the Prophet whose authenticity is considered good.

ḥijāb
protection, cover, screen; the veil with which a Muslim woman covers her head, except her face and hands.

Hijrah or Hijrā
Migration from Makkah to Madinah that occurred on 20 June 622. It marks the commencement of Hijrī date.

Hijrī
Islamic lunar calendar.

ḥirābā
waging war against society
GLOSSARY OF NAMES AND TERMS

\(\text{ḥukm (pl. \text{ḥākām})}\)
Decree of God; a legally binding judgement or ruling. See \(\text{ḥākām}\).

\(\text{ḥuqūq al-‘Ībād}\)
rights of the people

\(\text{ḥuqūq Allāh}\)
rights of God

‘ibādah
servitude and submission; an act of worship.

‘ibādāt
laws of worship regulating the relationship between humans and God

Ibn ‘Abbās
Companion and cousin of the Prophet and one of the earliest interpreters of the Qur’ān and narrator of hadiths (d. 67/686-8)

Ibn ‘Abdul Wahhāb
Founder of the Wahhābī movement (d. 1207/1792)

Ibn Bājjah
Philosopher (d. 533/1138)

Ibn Kathīr
Exegete of the Qur’ān (d. 774/1372-3)

Ibn Mas‘ūd
Companion of the Prophet and one of the earliest interpreters of the Qur’ān and narrator of hadiths (d. 32/652-3)

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah
Prominent student of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 751/11350)

Ibn Taymiyyah
Theologian affiliated to the Ḥanbalī School (d. 728/1328)

I‘ijāz al-Qur’ān
inimitability of the Qur’ān

ijmā‘
consensus, agreement of legal opinion among the jurists.

ijtihād
effort of a jurist to deduce the correct law from its sources; the process of independent reasoning.
ilhām
inspiration

‘ilm al-rijāl
knowledge of the men, to vet the reliability of the transmitters of the hadīth

‘ilm al-nafs
knowledge of the self

Imām
Religious leader or leader of the State or a person leading the prayers in congregation.

ins or insan
human being.

irādah
will or determination

‘irfān
gnosis

Ismā‘īli (Ismā‘iliyyah)
One of the branches of Shi‘a Islam that branched out after the Imamate of Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765).

isnād (sing. sanad)
chain of transmission for a report or tradition of the Prophet.

Ithnā‘ashari (Ithnā‘ashariyyah)
The mainstream school in Shi‘a Islam which believes in the religious leadership of the twelve Imāms from the House of the Prophet, starting with ‘Ali ibn Abi Taʿlib. They are predominant in Iran, Iraq, Bahrain and South Lebanon.

Ist‘ādha
to seek refuge of God

Ja‘farī (Ja‘fariyyah)
Followers of the Shi‘i jurisprudential school of thought named after the sixth Imām of the Shi‘ās, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq. This was the jurisprudential school founded in Madinah.

Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq
The sixth Imām of the mainstream Shi‘ās (d.148/765)

jihād
inner struggle with the self or engaging in a warfare for self-defence and to repel aggression.
kāfir (pl. kuffār)
non-believer or rejector of faith.

kalām
dialectical discussion

khuṭbah
religious sermon, most often delivered during Friday congregational prayers.

kibr
arrogance or pride

ma‘rifah
spiritual knowledge

ma‘rifat al ḥaqāiq
knowledge of the true state of affairs.

madhhab (pl. madhāhib)
school of thought or legal school

Mālikī
One of the four main Sunni jurisprudential schools of thought, named after its founder Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795) and distinguished for its emphasis on the practice of the inhabitants of Madinah. It later dominated in Muslim Spain and North Africa.

mansūkh
abrogated verses of the Qur‘ān

mawaddah
affectionate love

mawṭūq
tradition attributed to the Prophet which is considered authentic

matn
textual content of a hadīth.

Mu‘āmlāt
laws that pertain to human inter-relationship and inter-dealings

Mu‘āwiyyah
Mu‘āwiyyah ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680), the first Umayyad dynastic ruler who introduced hereditary system of Caliphate

mubāh
allowed in the Sharī‘ah
mufassir
exegete or interpreter of the Qur'ān

muftī
jurist who issues legal edicts.

muḥaddith
scholar who memorises ḥadīths with their chain of transmission and transmits them.

Muḥammad
The last of the Prophets and Messengers of God, according to the Islamic faith. He lived for 63 years (d. 11/632)

muḥāribūn
those who wage war against society

muḥkamāt (sing. muḥkam)
fundamental verses of the Qur'ān of clear or established meaning.

mujāhid
person who performs Jihād.

mujtahid
jurist who performs ʿijtiḥād or independent reasoning to extract a law from its sources.

mutakallimūn
rationalist dialecticians

mutashābihāt (sing. mutashābih)
verses of the Qur'ān of hidden or ambiguous meaning.

mutawātir
ḥadīth reported by a large number of people. Such reports are considered authentic beyond doubt.

Muʿtazilah or Muʿtazilī or Muʿtazilite
Rationalist school of Islamic theology that emphasised the role of reason and the belief in the absolute necessity of God’s justice and human free-will. It also emphasised that the Qur’ān was created and the physical attributes of God mentioned in the Qur’ān are allegorical.

nafs
self or soul

nafsuʾl ʿaql
the mind
Nafsu'1 hayāt
   soul of life

nafsu'l tamyeez
   distinguishing self

nasikh,
   abrogating verses of the Qur'ān

naskh
   abrogation

nās
   human beings

naṣṣ (pl. nuṣṣūṣ)
   text from which the law is derived.

qawwāmūna
   those who provide support, maintenance, protection, guardianship; refers to the duties of men towards women.

Qiṣāṣ
   Law of equality in punishment or retribution

qiyyās
   juristic methodology of deduction by analogy.

Qur'ān
   The revealed Book of Islām, derived from the root word qirā‘ah, meaning recitation or reading.

Quṭb, Sayyid
   Modern exegete of the Qur'ān and a prominent leader of Muslim Brotherhood movement, the Islāmic revivalist group (d. 1380/1966).

quwwat al-ghaḍab
   faculty of anger

quwwat al-‘ilm
   rational faculty

quwwat al-shahwah
   appetitive faculty

raḥmah
   mercy
**Ramadān**
Ninth month of the Islamic calendar, in which Qur’ān was revealed and the obligatory fasting is prescribed.

**Rubūbiyyah**
Divine Lordship

**Rūḥ**
Spirit

**Rūḥ-ul-Amin**
The Trusted Spirit referring to Archangel Gabriel

**Rūḥ-ul-Qudus**
The Holy Spirit, referring to Archangel Gabriel

**ṣaḥīḥ**
Valid, true, correct.

**Salafīs**
Those who advocate the return to the ways of the predecessors, which refers to the Prophet and his Companions and the next generation after them.

**Shaṣī’i**
One of the four main Sunni jurisprudential school of thought named after its founder Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shaṣī’ī (d. 204/820). It is predominant in Egypt, Yemen and South East Asia.

**Shari’ah or Shari’a**
The Law given by God to human beings, commonly known as Islamic Law or Divine Law.

**Shi’at ‘Alī**
The friends and followers of ‘Alī.

**Ši’i or Shi‘a or Shi‘ah**
The followers of ‘Alī as the testamentary successor of the Prophet and the Imāms in the progeny of ‘Alī and the Prophet’s daughter Faṭimā

**Sirah**
Biography of the Prophet.

**Ṣūfī**
Those who pursue Islamic mysticism or belong to mystical order.

**Sunnah or Sunnā**
The example of the Prophet embodied in his sayings, actions, and those matters that he silently approved or disapproved, as reported in the narrations.
Sunni
The followers of Sunnah. Short form for Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā’ah

sūrā
chapter of the Qur’ān.

suwar
plural of sūrā

Tabi’ūn
Next generation after the Companions of the Prophet.

tafsīr
explanation or interpretation.

tafāsīr
Plural of tafsīr

tafsīr bi’l-dirāyā
exegesis by derived knowledge

tafsīr bi’l-ishārā
exegesis by sign or hint or allusion

tafsīr bi’l-ma’thūr
exegesis by transmission

tafsīr bi’l-ra’y
exegesis by opinion

tafsīr bi’l-riwāyā
exegesis by narration of tradition

tahrīf
addition or omission

taqlīd
imitation of more knowledgeable scholar and expert in Islamic Law, within a particular school of thought.

ṭariqah
the path to create inner discipline

ta’wil
explanation of the hidden meaning

‘ubūdiyyah
servitude or obedience to God
‘Umar
‘Umar Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the Caliph whose period of Caliphate was 13/634–23/644 after the death of Abī Bakr

Umayyād
First hereditary dynasty established by Mu‘āwiya ibn Abī Sufyān (d. 60/680) upon the assassination of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661). It lasted from 41/661 to 132/750.

Ummah or ummā
community of Muslims; the Muslim nation.

Ummul kitāb
Mother of the Book - is the essence and nucleus of the Qur’ān

‘Uthmān
‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān, the Caliph whose period of Caliphate was 23/644 – 35/656 after the death of ‘Umar

Tawḥīd
The root of Islamic faith on Unity and Uniqueness of God or absolute Monotheism.

uṣūl al-fiqh
the jurisprudential methods of Islamic Law.

Wahhābīs (Wahhābiyyah)
Followers of the teachings of Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (d. 1207/1792)

zakāh or zakāt
The obligatory poor-due or alms that purify the wealth or property of the payer

Zaydī (Zaidiyyah)
The Shi‘ī school of thought that predominates in Yemen, founded on the jurisprudential school of thought of Zaid bin ‘Alī Zaynul Ābidīn (d. 122/740)