



IOS NEWSLETTER

Vol. 20 No. 06

June 2013/Rajjab-Shabaan 1434 H

Thought for the Month

O mankind! We created
You from a single (pair)
Of a male and a female,
And made you into
Nations and tribes, that
Ye may know each other
(Not that ye may despise
(Each other). Verily
The most honoured of you
In the sight of Allah
Is (he who is) the most
Righteous of you.
And Allah has full knowledge
And is well acquainted
(With all things).

Al-Quran- 49:13

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FOCUS

The nature of Shariah has been variously conceived. Is it divinely revealed or socially grounded? Positive or supernatural? Immutable or adaptive?

Disagreements and controversies seem to stem from uncritical use of two equivocal Islamic concepts that is Shariah and Fiqh. But what is SHARIAH?

The answer varies from one school of thought to another. There is disagreement both in its elements and the method of realising it on earth. This diversity of thought enriches Islamic experiences with the means of resettling problems equitably notwithstanding that it may also breed dissension and conflict.

Few subjects have caused greater concern and conflict among traditional Ulamas and modern Muslim lawyers than the question of what is Shariah? Yet, Shariah may be defined in a wider circle as it embraces in its orbit all human actions. It is a revelation and it contains knowledge which no one could have possessed except through revelation, to the Muslim through the Qur'an and Sunnah. It is only God and His Prophet that lay down the rules on the party of Shariah.

But, what is Shariah? Notwithstanding all the controversies this question has generated among the Ulamas, (modern Muslim Lawyers) and non-Muslim, Shariah is very simple to define. Shariah may be defined as the expressed or implied provision of the Holy Qur'an and the accepted Sunnah. Shariah is usually defined by Muslim scholar as:-

“the body of those institutions which Allah has ordained in full or in essence to guide the individual in his relationship with God, his fellow Muslims, his fellow men and the rest of the universe.”

Shariah, particularly the general legal principle in Qur'an may be compared in certain respects to some denotations of the Western concepts of natural laws.

According to the European classical view, natural law is the basis for which moral judgement of an action as good or bad and thus it can come only from God.

All Muslims subscribe to the divine origin and unchangeable essence of the Shariah. In its strict and pure sense, Shariah is the source on which Islamic law, that it “Fiqh” is derived through speculative reasoning, of the community, Ulama or Parliament, termed ijtihaad, to meet the ever-changing condition of man.

It should be noted and understood that the term Shariah refers exclusively to the expressed or implied word in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah and this is the primary and fundamental sources of anything Islamic. Hence, all Muslims must judge their action by Shariah (Quran 5: 50).

“It is only the Shariah (Quran and Sunnah) that initiates the very essence of law or any other thing in Islam (Fiqh) and demonstrates its legal bearing.”

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Activities of the IOS Headquarters

Governing Council Meet

The six-monthly meeting of the Governing Council (G.C.) was held on 25.05.2013 (Saturday) at 10.00 a.m. in the Committee Room of the IOS, 162, Jogabai Main Road, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-25.

The following were present:

1. Dr. M. Manzoor Alam
2. Prof. Manzoor Ahmad
3. Prof. Z.M. Khan
4. Prof. Ishtiyaque Danish
5. Dr. Ausaf Ahmad
6. Prof. A.R. Momin
7. Prof. Sanghasen Singh
8. Prof. M. Afzal Wani
9. Prof. Refaat Ali Khan
10. Prof. (Ms.) Haseena Hashia
11. Prof. P. Koya
12. Prof. Shamim Ansari
13. Dr. Major Zahid Hussain
14. Prof. M. Ishtiaq
15. Dr. Arshi Khan
16. Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad Advocate
17. Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad Architect
18. Dr. Eqbal Hussain
19. Mr. M. Zeyaul Haque
20. Mr. Mohd. Alam
21. Dr. (Ms.) Farhat Azad

Recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an.

The meeting started with the recitation of verses from the Holy Qur'an by Prof. Ishtiyaque Danish, who also explained the meaning and context of the verses for the benefit of all.

Adoption of condolence resolutions.

Condolence resolutions on the sad demise of Mr. Saleh Al-Husayyan, Secretary General, Al-Harmain

Sharifain & Member Kibarul Ulema, Saudi Arabia, MI. Abdullah Al-Husaini of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema, Lucknow, MI. Sulaiman Sikandar of Hyderabad and all those associated with the IOS, who passed away during the period, were adopted and *dua* for their *maghfirat* was made by the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS).

Before taking up the agenda items and starting the business, Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, Chairman, IOS welcomed the members and special invitees for attending the meeting and briefly outlined his impressions about



A view of the Governing Council (G.C.) meeting

the working of the Institute and its Chapters. Further, he emphasized the need for highlighting the ideological dimensions of the Muslim community with intellectual input by the IOS.

Thereafter the agenda of the meeting was taken up.

Confirmation of the minutes.

The minutes of the Governing Council (G.C.) meeting dated 8th December, 2012 were presented and confirmed.

Consideration of the Follow-up Report.

The follow-up Report (Action taken Report) on the last G.C. meeting dated 8th December 2012 was

presented before the Governing Council. The same was considered and after deliberations, got approved.

Report and discussion about the project on "14 Centuries of a Glorious Legacy: Biographical Sketches of 1400 Outstanding Muslims who enriched Humanity."

In regard to the mega project on "14 Centuries of a Glorious Legacy: Biographical Sketches of 1400 Outstanding Muslims who enriched Humanity" the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees were informed that the Core Committee (constituted for

this project) is working for finalizing the field-wise names of the outstanding Muslims to be included in the volume (consisting of 1400-1500 pages) followed by the identification of the scholars who shall write on those personalities.

The members and the special invitees appreciated the efforts and wished that this project might also get a concrete shape like that of "The 100 Great

Muslim Leaders of the 20th Century" undertaken by the IOS.

Discussion about holding an International Conference on "Revisiting Abul Qasim Al-Zahrawi's Legacy in Medicine and Surgery".

In regard to holding the International Conference on "Revisiting Abul Qasim Al-Zahrawi's Legacy in Medicine and Surgery" the members and the special invitees discussed in detail and after deliberations agreed upon that the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS), in order to highlight the wide-ranging contribution of Abul Qasim Al-Zahrawi to medicine and surgery, will

organize a three-day international conference on December 13-15, 2013 at New Delhi to mark the 1000th death anniversary of the pioneer physician and surgeon.

Satellite programmes, in this context, may also be organised at Hyderabad, Patna and Aligarh, which may supplement to the conference at New Delhi.

The inaugural session may be held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi and that for the inaugural session Hon'ble Prime Minister/President or Vice-President of India may be invited.

The other sessions may be held at India Islamic Cultural Centre/Constitution Club, New Delhi.

It was further reported that necessary preparations in this regard will start from June end.

Prof. Manzoor Ahmad, Vice-Chancellor of Subharti University (Meerut) informed that Subharti University was keen to organize a satellite programme on Al-Zahrawi. The members requested him to seek collaboration with the university and work out the modalities, if possible.

Discussion about the membership of the IOS with the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW), Istanbul, Turkey.

The members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees discussed the matter in length and after deliberations decided that the IOS may apply for the membership of the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (UNIW). However, it was suggested that the matter be examined

through concerned department of the Government of India from the point of view of its policy towards such organizations and a final decision in the matter could be taken accordingly.

Discussion and report about the IOS Shah Waliullah Award for the year 2012 and Essay Writing Competition (Junior Category).

The IOS Shah Waliullah Award for the year 2012 on the theme "Islamic Mysticism (*Tasawwuf*)" and the Essay Writing Competition (Junior Category) on the theme "Tasawwuf and Purification of Self (*Tasawwuf aur Tazkiya-e-Nafs*)", as decided by the Board Administering the Shah Waliullah Award, was discussed by the members and special invitees and



after deliberations it was desired that the process for getting the nominations etc. should be started as early as possible.

Report about the International Conference on "India and Muslim World in the 21st Century".

The report of the International Conference on "India and Muslim World in the 21st Century", organized by the IOS on February 15-16 at New Delhi, was presented before the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees,

who, after going through the report, expressed their whole-hearted appreciation for holding such a conference with grand success.

Further, taking note about the resolutions adopted in the conference, the Chairman particularly discussed three resolutions, which are as under:

Res. No. 6. The Institute of Objective Studies may constitute a committee to work on finding ways and means to foster meaningful cooperation and linkages of India with the Muslim world.

Res. No. 7. The Minister of Water Resources of India has suggested to work for cooperation in areas of water resources between India and Muslim countries. The opportunity should be worked out at all possible levels.

Res. No. 9. Cooperation in the field of education and research should be worked out in view of present needs and capabilities of India and the Muslim world.

In regard to resolution nos. 6 & 9 the Chairman urged upon the need to work with all efforts on finding ways and means for meaningful

cooperation and linkages of India with the Muslim world, as well as cooperation in the field of education and research in view of present needs and capabilities of India and Muslim world.

As regards the resolution no. 7, after a meaningful and thorough discussion, a committee, consisting of the following persons, was formed to look into all the matters related to water resources management between India and Muslim world and opportunity should be worked out at all possible levels:

1. Mr. M. Zeyaul Haque Coordinator
2. Prof. Refaat Ali Khan Member
3. Dr. (Ms.) Farhat Azad Member

Dr (Ms.) Farhat Azad was requested to prepare a **Note** on Water Resources Management so that the same could be discussed with concerned Minister of the Government of India and a joint programme could be initiated.

Prof. A.R. Momin was of the view to prepare a **Note** on “Water Harvesting in Muslim countries: Past and Present” so that the proposal could be submitted with the Ministry of Water Resources.

Dr. Arshi Khan proposed to organize a symposium in Water Resources Management in collaboration with the Department of Geology of Aligarh Muslim University. He was requested to send names of few experts on the subject so that the matter may be discussed and pursued accordingly.

Report about the conferment of 5th IOS Lifetime Achievement Award.

The members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees, after going through the report of the 5th IOS Lifetime Achievement Award, which was conferred on Dr. Saeed al-Azmi al-Nadwi (Chancellor of the Integral University, and Principal of Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulema, both at Lucknow) on February 15, 2013 at New Delhi, expressed their appreciation for organizing an impressive function for this award and conferring the Lifetime Achievement Award to such a renowned personality of India and the Arab world.

Report about the 5th Qazi Mujahidul Islam Qasmi Memorial Lecture.

The report of the 5th Qazi Mujahidul Islam Qasmi Memorial Lecture on the theme “Universality of Islamic Thought (*Fikr-e-Islami ki Alamgiriati*)” delivered by Dr Syed Abdul Bari at the IOS on May 18, 2013, was presented before the members of G.C. of the IOS and special invitees, who, after going through the report, expressed their satisfaction.

Discussion about the major areas/fields for awarding scholarships.

In regard to the major areas/fields for awarding the scholarships (on loan basis) by the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) to deserving students, The members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees discussed the matter in length and after deliberations resolved that

As regards the special volumes (eight in numbers) based on the IOS Silver Jubilee Celebration Programmes, the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees were informed that the volume entitled “Media in a Globalizing World” will be completed by the end of June, 2013.

The work on other seven volumes (i.e. ‘Knowledge, Development and Peace’; ‘Islamic Finance and Venture Capital’; ‘Education, Youth, and Women’s Empowerment’; ‘Governance’; ‘Judiciary and Ethics’; ‘Peace, Progress, and Development’; and ‘Minority Rights and Identities’) will start soon after finalizing the names of ‘Chief Editors’ and ‘Editors’ for the aforesaid volumes.

Report about progress on establishing the 'International Objective University'.

In regard to the progress on establishing the ‘International Objective University’ at Palwal (Haryana), the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees were apprised about the progress made in this respect.

The process of change of land use was in advanced stage. The drawing work too has already been completed. The Chairman informed that sponsorship is being sought for different segments of the proposed International Objective University. After getting sponsorships the construction will be started.

Report about progress in regard to digitization of the IOS publications.



the Scholarship Committee of the IOS may take initiative to decide the areas/fields of scholarships and the amount per month as well as the mechanism for getting back the loan. The Committee will also chalk out suitable work plan to implement it. The same will be reported in the next G.C. meeting.

Report about the progress in regard to special volumes.

The members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees were informed about the digitization of the IOS publications. The work on it has already been started and taking in view the large number of publications of the IOS, it is expected that this work will finally be completed in due course of time.

Report about progress in regard to preparation of textbooks, translation, adaption, review and editing of books.

In regard to preparation of text books and reference books the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees present were informed about the progress of the two text books entitled "Introduction to Sociology: An Islamic Perspective" and "Sociology in Islamic Perspective: Selected Readings" under Reading Series, being written by Prof. A.R. Momin and it is expected that both the text books will be completed and submitted by the end of this year.

The manuscript of the third book "A Course on Muslim Women's Rights in the Holy Qur'an and the Constitution of India" written by Dr. Syraiya Tabassum Rehman was being reviewed by the author after which it will be published by the IOS.

Moreover, in view of dearth of literature in different disciplines in Islamic perspective, it was proposed to prepare such literature by the IOS. A meeting of the persons, who initially are to be assigned the work for the production

of text books / reference books, may be called as early as possible. They are as under:

1. Dr. Arshi Khan – Political Science
2. Prof. M. Afzal Wani, Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad, Advocate, and Dr. Eqbal Hussain – Law
3. Prof. Shamim A. Ansari– Psychology
4. Prof. P. Koya – Lang. & Humanities
5. Dr. Ausaf Ahmad – Economics

Further, Criminal Law, Cyber Law, Space Law and Islamic Refugees Law were considered to be some areas on which the IOS may take some initiatives.

Prof. M. Afzal Wani along with Dr Eqbal Hussain and Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad, Advocate will prepare **an outline**.

As regards the translation, adaption, review and editing of books, it was reported that the work on it was going on.

Any other item(s)

Kundu, Chairperson of the Committee (comprising various members along with Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, Chairman of the Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi) on the Review of the Implementation of the Sachar Report (CRISR) constituted by the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MMA), Govt. of India was presented before the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of the Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees with the request to go through the DRAFT TOR and submit their comments (including amendments and additions) as early as possible so that the same may be sent to the aforesaid Committee for consideration.

(ii) Draft MoU – IIIT and SOASCIS.

A Draft of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of Academic Cooperation and Exchange *between* Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddin Centre for Islamic Studies, Universiti Brunei Darussalam (SOASCIS) *and* International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) of Herndon, U.S.A. was presented before the members and special invitees present with the

request to go through it and give their opinion in regard to look into the possibility to develop such an MoU between IOS and other institutions/ organizations.

The members, after going through the Draft of MoU, appreciated this idea and resolved that such MoU may be developed by the IOS also for the like-minded institutions/ organizations of the country and abroad.

(iii) Consideration on the proposal for undertaking the project on "Leadership Development of Minority Women".

In regard to the proposal for undertaking the project on "Leadership



Mr. Mushtaq Ahmad, Architect explaining the design of proposed Objective University

(i) Consideration on the DRAFT TOR.

A Draft of Terms of Reference (DRAFT TOR) from Prof. Amitabh

Development of Minority Women” from Union Ministry of Minority Affairs-Department of Women Leadership Development, the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) of Institute of Objective Studies (IOS) and special invitees, appreciating the idea, resolved that the IOS should apply for and undertake the said project.

In the end Prof. Z.M. Khan, Secretary General of the IOS, acknowledging the full cooperation and active support by all the members of the Governing Council (G.C.) and special invitees thanked to all of them.

The meeting got concluded at 2:35 p.m. with *dua* by Prof. M. Afzal Wani.

Book Review

Imam Shafi: Scholar and Saint by Kecia Ali, Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2011, 160 pages. Kecia Ali has performed a great service for Islamic studies by harmonizing early sources with the most compelling recent scholarship to produce a biography of Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi‘i (d. 204/820), one of Islam’s most important figures. His life is presented in a tightly organized and lucid way, accessible to non-specialists or undergraduates, useful for graduate students, and a fine source of reference for scholars.

This book consists of an introduction and six chapters. The first chapter covers his early years in Arabia, and the second discusses his transformation from “Student to Shaykh.” Chapters 3 through 5 present al-Shafi‘i’s legal theories and methodologies, and chapter 6, the final chapter, studies the popular cult that has grown up around him, thus delivering on the title’s promise. Also included are three pages of suggested “Further Reading,” along with why these works are pertinent, an invaluable extra measure that students will find particularly helpful. Needless to say, the bibliography is long and

rich, giving a final affirmation to the author’s mastery of her subject.

Throughout her study, Ali exhibits an acute awareness of the ideological agendas of the early biographers who have shaped perceptions of the imam. Her critical approach to traditional reports concerning his formative years (the oft-referenced Bedouin years, for example) allows her to question without discarding altogether some of the more famous episodes in his life. She ultimately suggests that what is most crucial for our understanding of al-Shafi‘i’s development was his encounter with Malik and his thought, an engagement so deep that he almost certainly had to have spent at least ten years under the elder scholar’s tutelage. These critical years laid the groundwork for the scholar he would become.

Ali discussion of the imam’s early years allows for insights into his intellectual development that are useful to students, who usually encounter him as a full-blown authority. Al-Shafi‘i’s constant engagement in debate and disputation with Malik, and later with other Hanafi authorities like Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Shaybani (d. 189/805), caused him to emerge as a master of argumentation who was, as Ali astutely highlights, deeply concerned with harmonizing any possible contradiction in the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

With regard to al-Shafi‘i’s legal thought, Ali has provided a concise and accessible yet nuanced presentation. She relies on newer scholarship, such as that of Ahmed El Shamsy and Joseph Lowry, to contest assumptions about the imam’s work. One of these assumptions is the assertion that he could not possibly have authored the *Risalah* and the *Umm*; another is his “invention” of the Four Sources. El Shamsy has traced the *Risalah* through quotations in early works, showing it to date very closely to al-Shafi‘i’s lifetime. As for the *Umm*, El Shamsy had found ample

evidence for its compilation from lecture notes taken by Rabi‘ (d. 270/883) and his students.

Meanwhile, Lowry has provided the basis for a fundamental rethinking of al-Shafi‘i’s role in elaborating the Four Sources methodology that characterizes “mature” Sunni jurisprudence: reliance on (in descending order) the Qur’an, the Sunnah, consensus, and analogy. *Bayan* (the normative statement constituting God’s communication to humanity) is actually the center-piece of the imam’s theory, and he refused to grant authoritativeness to anything other than revealed texts. Since he considered the prophetic hadith to be part and parcel of the revelation, he insisted that the Sunnah be valued as a source of law “co-equal to the Qur’an” (p. 54). This was his most enduring innovation, one that had radical implications for the entirety of Islamic intellectual history, for this climate of sacralizing the hadith led to its enshrinement by the pen. Ali contends that the veneration for even weak reports over non-revealed sources assured al-Shafi‘i’s role in the hadith canonization movement:

Canonization and writing... constitute a mutually generating complex in the history of early Islamic law: the former endows the revelatory sources with authority and meaning, and the latter encases them in a stable form that lends itself to systematic analysis. (p. 115)

A major tool in al-Shafi‘i’s arsenal was his expertise in the Arabic language. His extreme interest in notions of the general and unrestricted, the apparent and ambiguous, enabled him to place grammatical terms at the service of jurisprudence. Ali cogently describes how all of these became tools for elaborating the *bayan*, and how al-Shafi‘i took full advantage of any ambiguity in the language of revelation to widen his ability to interpret it with flexibility. This point is key due to its importance in contextualizing both modern

hermeneutics and debates on the role of the early articulators of Islamic law. Ali is subtle yet firm in depicting al-Shafi'i's role as interpreter.

The imam's love for Arabic would seem to have had ideological implications as well, for his belief in its superiority translated into what may well have been a deep-seated belief in the Arabs' superiority generally. One interesting section details the contents of his will. The author presents this document for what it is: an invaluable social artifact that provides fascinating glimpses of his personal life. In al-Shafi'i's careful designation of funds and arrangements for his slaves, including an Andalusian wet-nurse and a concubine, we encounter first hand "someone utterly at ease with the social inequalities of his era" (p. 41). Although he is clear about his beliefs with regard to his superior social status (and his distaste for free Arab women marrying non-Arabs), he is unconflicted about his own (ongoing) sexual relationship with a slave girl who would have been deemed wholly inferior in status.

To its credit, this work deals with the "saint" status of al-Shafi'i in popular Muslim consciousness, a factor rarely addressed in scholarly works on this subject. It is here that we come to understand, to some extent, the deep-seated affection for the imam that many Muslims retain, as well as the historical factors that contributed to his status, including the desire of various rulers to attain blessings and renown by building his tomb complex. Ali offers readers a glimpse into that tomb as she discusses the intercessory requests, both spoken prayers and written entreaties, that earnest believers have addressed to him. She alludes as well to the popular pairing of al-Shafi'i with the renunciant Sayyida Nafisa (d. 208/824) and lucidly explores how particular biographical events become pertinent to the debates of a given era: Modern proponents of female-led prayer accentuate reports that the Sayyida

Nafisa led the imam's funeral prayer, while medieval biographers, concerned more with spiritual authority, were keen to point out her mentorship of the scholar. In highlighting these strategies, the author accentuates the subjectivity of the act of biography, bringing home her own awareness of the fraught nature of her task.

My criticisms of this book are few and minor. First, Ali has chosen to use the translation for certain book titles in a rather inconsistent way: *Risalah* vs. *Summation of Knowledge* vs. *Kitab al-Tarikh al-Kabir* vs. *Shafi'is Virtues*. It seems that it should perhaps be all or nothing on this front; non-specialists who are unfamiliar with the early corpus may be distracted, while scholars who are intimate with only Arabic titles might question certain word choices, particularly for those works that have yet to be translated and have not acquired a static and accepted title. Additionally, there are a few almost negligible errata (pp. 33, 35 and 55) and an incorrectly transliterated Qur'anic term on p. 63: *muhsinat* should read *muhsanat*.

Finally, I have what is certainly a serious issue (as opposed to a quarrel) with the author, for there are many instances when a citation would have been welcome. Ali, for her part, goes above and beyond, offering to respond to inquiries for sources personally. But this is a task no busy scholar should be forced to take on, for it could easily have been solved by tucking a set of endnotes into the back.

Imam Shafi'i: Scholar and Saint would enrich any undergraduate syllabus for an Introduction to Islam, an Islamic Law, or even a world religions class. Designed to be accessible to non-specialists, it should make its way speedily into library collections worldwide, from the public library to the local mosque to the private collection of the curious layperson. That said, it is due to Ali's deep erudition and mastery of her subject that the work proves to be of

immeasurable worth for scholars as well.

Reviewed by Carolyn Baugh

Contd. from page-1

By the exclusion of every authority other than that of the Shariah, we are releasing it both in its concepts and its applicability from the accumulated heritage of different influences introduced by various Jurists and their schools of laws. We come face to face with what all Muslims believe to be the word of God in the Quran and with its human interpretation by the Prophet in his Sunnah.

In other words, we come face to face with revelation and Prophethood, or in other words, with the law which is the constitution of the Muslim community. The constitution of the community cannot be other than the will of God, revealed through the Holy Prophet. (Quran 5; 2-4 and Sunnah).

To the Muslim, Shariah is one comprehensive system of law that is divine in origin, religious in essence, and moral in scope. It does not exclude Fiqh, but it is not identical with it. In contrast, Fiqh is a human product, the intellectual systematical endeavour to interpret and apply the principle of Shariah to meet the problems of the day by jurists. It may even be called applied SHARIAH. The two concepts are readily distinguishable analytically.

From *What Is Shariah* by Al-Haj A.D. Ajijola, pp. 13-15

Contd. from page-8

God has, therefore, ordained that the Muslims should find out such self-respecting believers and help them in a manner that will not hurt their pride.

Muslims are required to help the needy all through the year. However, many believers prefer to pay their poordue during the month of Ramdhan. This is understandable. In several sayings of the Prophet (Pbuh) it has been emphasized that good



deeds are rewarded manyfold in this holy month.

Fasting, prayer and paying the poordue are noble deeds that Muslims are obliged to do. Fasting is not a sort of physical exercise; it is a form of prayer. One has to fast for Allah (SWT) and not to attain physical fitness which might be an added value. However, seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT) should be the sole purpose of fasting. Similarly, seeking the pleasure of Allah (SWT) should be our only purpose when we pray and pay the poordue. May God accept our prayer and fasting and reward us here and in the Hereafter.

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Fasting and Poordue by Ishtiyaque Danish

The views expressed in the article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of the Newsletter (editor)

The holy month of Ramadhan will start in early July. Muslims all over the world will be fasting, praying and paying the poordue. There are economic and political problems in parts of the Islamic world and in some countries Muslim minorities are confronted with difficulties including ethnic genocide. And yet braving all kinds of problems they will be trying to fulfil their obligatory duties including prayer, fast and paying of the poordue.

Islam is a unique religion which seeks to maintain a balance between the spiritual and the material. It urges its followers to maintain balance in both religious and worldly matters. Torturing one's body for spiritual attainment is not Islam; similarly ignoring the spiritual demands of life and being always busy with fulfilling material desires is not Islam. Extremism of any kind, spiritual or material is not Islam.

Islam is to be true to God and to fellow human beings. We owe rights to God which we try to fulfil by offering prayer. Similarly, fellow believers and other human beings have rights on us which we seek to fulfil through Zakat. We also fulfil the second sets of rights by being good neighbours and adopting good manners in other aspects of human relationship.

Islam is a social religion in that it feels for fellow believers and human beings. As men and women we have families, parents, wives and children to look after; we have friends, neighbours and strangers to care for. Most people we meet during our life span are capable of taking care of themselves but there are some who are left behind in the race of life due to one or another reason. There are handicaps who suffer from mental or physical disadvantages, there are unfortunate persons who sincerely work hard but some misfortune renders them incapable and there are those who can not meet all their requirements despite their hard works. And of course there are people who are being oppressed in parts of the world. There are people amid us who have falsely been implicated and thrown behind the bars. As some of them were the sole bread-earners of their families, their kith and kin are facing poverty, deprivation even privation. All these people have a right on us.

Islam has given us a solution. The capable among us, the wealthy or the Sahib-e-Nisab is obliged by the Quran to pay the poor due. That as per rules of the Shariah it is obligatory on wealthy Muslims to pay 2.5% of his wealth to the needy poor. The purpose is obvious. That no one in the society

should be left alone to face poverty and privation and that it's duty of the well to do persons to take care of them.

Beside paying Zakat Muslims have also been urged and encouraged to do Sadaqah, the work of charity that we do in addition to the obligatory poordue. That out of our free will and pleasure we pay more from our pockets to help the needy and the poor. There is also the noble concept of Fitrah, a certain amount of our income that we give to the poor fellow believers in order to enable them to celebrate Eid and enjoy its blessings. Sadaqah and Fitrah are the ways to fulfil the Quranic injunction: "And in their wealth there is the right of the beggar and the deprived.

Among the people there are ones who open their mouth, narrate their needs and request the wealthy to fulfil them. This is not like begging on the street or going from door to door and asking people to do favour. In fact this kind of begging should be discouraged. Instead the Muslim society should make an effective system through which Zakat and Sadaqat will reach the deserving.

Among the poor and the needy there are also the people who are self-respecting; they suffer in silence and do not open their mouth for favour.

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RNI NO. 59369/94

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