



Man and Nature

Environmental futures rest on the definition of Islamic ethics within the creational matrix of God, man and nature, writes **Gulzar Haider**

IT is difficult to imagine a purposeful existence without a stable frame of reference and a 'Criterion' that is neither internally temperamental nor externally manipulable. Values are essential for all human planning, decision-making and choices. Alternate actions, viewpoints, ideas and even wishes are hard to consider without simultaneous concerns of good and bad, beneficial and harmful and pleasant and painful. It is easy to understand how the entire commerce will fall apart if weights and measures changed from shop to shop and how social structures will collapse if the concept of privacy and interpersonal

decency changed from one individual to the next. Life progresses with a semblance of order, purpose and with some justice, however tarnished, because we have some agreed-upon 'universals' across humanity. Among nations, tribes, families and even individuals we have written and unwritten codes of praiseworthy and censurable, desirable and abhorrent and even right and wrong.

But man is tempted to excesses. Operative in him is the perpetual struggle between what his desires dictate and what his conscience illuminates for him as being good for him and others. He devises ever-new

rationalisations for his individual aberrations and collective tyrannies. Individual immorality is masked as personal freedom, collective greed is justified as progress, exploitation of others is defended as the spread of civilisation and offense is paradoxically explained away as pre-emptive defence. Man left to his own devices is forgetful, narcissistic and selfishly tyrannical. Weak in the face of his primal desires, he is quick at silencing the inner voices of purity and divinity. His intellect is forever at his service and weaves complex webs of hypocrisy into which he eventually gets entangled. In spite of all his creative potential, his philosophical sophistication, his inventive skills, man's days are progressively becoming dark nights of existential despair. He denies the Divine, becomes a lawgiver unto himself and ultimately declares God to be either 'irrelevant', 'dead' or a 'neurotic necessity for weak minds'.

There are overwhelming indications that at the root of the crisis of the contemporary man is the blurring, and perhaps even complete blindness, towards the relationship of God to His Creation. For the minds that search for guidance beyond themselves, hearts that wait for a resonant truth beyond stubborn emotion and eyes that seek light beyond mere visibility, the quest is eternal: Who is my Creator? What is my station in this vast Creation? What is my destiny, my rights, responsibilities and my duties? What is right and good against wrong and bad? These questions can be collapsed or expanded to one's heart's desire. This process of self-reflexive wonder is healthy and even essential for a mere biological being to become an architect of his own fate and an active participant in the destiny of man. Perhaps the only conditions are that this process of inquiry be guided by sincerity in the pursuit of truth, apriori acceptance of existence beyond what is visible, requisite humility and freedom from chauvinistic man-centredness. To man searching with such a frame of mind Islam presents itself first as a series of concepts, pure, simple and yet powerful in their universality.

Firstly, there is the concept of the Creator (*Khaliq*) and His Creation (*Makhlūq*). The comprehensivity of this Creation is difficult to fathom as it encompasses the known and the unknown, hidden and the manifest. Mankind, nature, knowledge, wisdom, time, spirit, beauty and all are parts of His creational Benevolence. It will indeed be gross inaccuracy to look at

Creation in an exclusively physical and 'natural' sense. Iqbal points out that the "two words *Khalq* and *Amr* express the two ways in which the creative activity of God reveals itself to us. *Khalq* is creation *Amr* is direction". God's Creation may be looked upon as the intimate composite of man, nature and the Divine wisdom. There is man who is distinguished through his freedom of thought and will and his ability in this life to think, intend and act in his own manner.

"Everyone acts according to his own disposition, But your Lord knows best who it is That is best guided on the Way" (Qur'an, Sura 17, Verse 84)

Iqbal in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* elaborates this idea: "my real personality is not a thing, it is an act. My experience is only a series of acts, mutually referring to one another, and held together by the unity of a directive purpose. My whole reality lies in my directive attitude. You cannot perceive me like a thing in space, or a set of experiences in temporal order; you must interpret, understand and appreciate me in my judgements, in my will-attitudes, aims and aspirations".

And then there is nature as most commonly understood expression of God's creation. For the purpose of this discussion we may say that nature is what is not man. It follows immutable laws and does not, in contrast with man, have any conscious will and choice. Rose does not decide to pose as a daffodil on its own and horses do not assemble to declare that they are the best among the four-legged creatures and therefore must subjugate and rule all others. Nature is systemic and this sense highly interrelated and interdependent. The eco-systems of nature exhibit hierarchical dependencies that are delicate, fragile but adaptive with the ontological imperative to survive and maintain balance. Nothing is created without purpose though the purpose may not yet be known to man. The whole existence is teleological, to everything there is a goal and that goal is God Himself. The Creator is not temperamental and neither is it compatible with His Majesty and Justice to play games with His creation.

"Nor for (idle) sport did We Create the heavens and the earth And all that is between (them). If it had been Our wish to take (just) a pastime We would surely have taken it from The things nearest to Us

If we would do (such a thing)"! (Qur'an, Sura 21, Verses 16-17)

Repeated references in the Qur'an make it quite evident that the creation has three general purposes in the human existence: firstly as portents and signs (*Ayat*) for man to reflect upon and to enhance his faith, secondly as a book of knowledge to be eternally deciphered and thirdly as a benevolent gift whose value is in its utilisation towards the enhancement of the art of life within the coordinates of the Islamic ideal. With such a fundamental dimension as freedom and will distinguishing man and nature they still remain deeply dependent on each other and together on the Mercy, Benevolence and Directive (*Amr*) of their Creator.

The second basic concept necessary for the understanding of the Islamic Scheme of Life is that of Divine Guidance. It is essential that the God of Justice must simultaneously be the God that provides Guidance. There are two mutually dependent media that He uses for guidance to mankind in general. First is Revelation in the form of Qur'an that has completed and engulfed all previous revelations. The second is *Risalat*, the chain of Messengers, Prophets, Guides. The

hood is ephemeral". (Sura 17, Verse 81).

The essential role of *Risalat* (Prophethood) in authenticating and making relevant and humanly credible the Revelation of God, is undisputed among philosophers of Islam though their arguments might be different. Nasir-al-Din Tusi, for example, states, "Conflict of interests coupled with individual liberty results in the disintegration of social life, and this necessitates a divine Code from God for the regulation of human affairs. But God Himself is beyond all sensory apprehension; therefore, He sends Prophets for the guidance of peoples. This, in turn, makes necessary the institution of spiritual leadership after the Prophets to enforce the divine Code. "Al-Ghazali makes a case for the Divine Guidance in his own inimitable way. In presenting the moral ideal of Islam and the means that are to be adopted for its realisation he puts forward a strong caution that "man cannot move a single step forward without the help of God. This help he calls *Taufiq* (the gift of God) and proposes that it manifests itself in various forms":

1. Guidance from God (*Hidayah*): is the very condition of all virtues. It



Prophet is simultaneously the human transmitter of the Revelation and the living prototype of the Qur'anic scheme for human perfection. The Qur'an is the single, essential and eternal source of God's intention for man. It is the Criterion (*Furqan*) between right and wrong, a prescriptive guidance (*Hidayah*) for those who seek with piety (*Taqwa*) and a light (*Nur*) that dispels the darkness of doubt and denial (*Kufr*) and illuminates the way (*Sirat-al-Mustaqem*). The Qur'an introduces itself as "Verily, the Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away: verily, the false-

stands for the telling of the moral from the immoral, the good from the bad and the right from the wrong. Unless these distinctions can be clearly seen, we cannot be supposed to do any good action or avoid evil.

2. Direction (*Rushd*): Mere knowledge of good actions might be necessary but is not sufficient for their performance. We should also have the will to do them. This is 'direction'.

3. Setting Aright (*Tasdid*): It is the power from God which makes the body obey the will in order to realize the end.

4. Confirmation (*Ta'id*): It makes

circumstances congenial for the actualization of the will.

The third basic concept of the Islamic Scheme is the destination of all existence and the Final Judgement. God created man and bestowed on him the gift of life, intellect, knowledge and wisdom. He created in the conscience of man the innate receptiveness for good and helped him with His Divine Guidance. He sent warners, teachers, leaders and bearers of the glad tidings of His Mercy. He repeatedly reminded mankind of its duties to God, to fellow-man to other creation. And all this is to lead to the fulfilment of the final stage of His Divine Scheme:

"Give this warning to those in whose (hearts) is the fear That they will be brought to (Judgement) before their Lord Except for Him they will have no protector, nor intercessor That they may guard (against evil)". (Qur'an, Sura 6, Verse 51)
"The unbelievers think that they will not be Raised up (for Judgement) Say, 'Yes! By my Lord, You shall surely be raised up Then shall you be told (the truth) of all that you did



Unrestrained greed leads to ecological disaster

And that is easy for God." (Qur'an, Sura 64, Verse 7-10)

It is in the recognition of his station in the scheme of creation, in being receptive to and respectful of the guidance that come to him both from within and without, and finally in imposing on himself a discipline and an attitude of answerability to the First Cause and the Final Destination, the All-knowing, the Just and the Merciful God, that man can become a harmonious and creative part of the Divine Scheme.

Where does man fit into this Scheme and what are his responsibilities and duties? How should he proceed from this paradigmatic level to determine his bearings, chalk out his directions and make plans so that he becomes an agent of felicity and harmony in this life and thus worthy of his Creator's Mercy on the Day of Judgement? We proceed to attempt answers to these questions.

In the matrix of God, man and nature one can recognise very significant relationships. Now, what does man owe to God? From Qur'an we know that God is not dependent on His Creation.

"No sustenance do I require of them Nor do I require that they should feed Me" (Qur'an, Sura 51, Verse 57).

God is free of needs and by definition beyond the concerns of whether the man worships or serves Him or not. Man, however, for his own sake, needs to establish a relationship to God. This relationship is that of *Abudiyah* (Servitude):

"I have only created Jinns and men So that they may serve Me" (Qur'an, Sura 51, Verse 56). Hidden in this unique relationship of abject servitude, only to God, is the secret of the ultimate freedom of man from all other bondages. This servant of God, His sincere bondsman, is free of all earthly gods and goddesses, be they of wealth, power, race, colour or beauty. History of *Anbiya* (Prophets), (*Momineen* (Believers), *Ibad-ur-Rahman* (Bondsman of the Beneficent), *Ibad-us Saleheen* (Pious Servants) and *Ibad-ul-Mukhleseen* (Sincere Servants), stands witness to the fact that from the servitude of God springs forth the ultimate moral energy that becomes operative in all spheres of life.

When man turns to his God and asks "What do I owe to the fellow man?" "What is the nature of this relationship and what are my duties and responsibilities?" The answer, based on numerous indications of the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet, is a composite of attitudes and objectives for which a single word cannot be easily found. In the behaviour of the Prophet, Qur'an identifies the concept of *Khulq-al-Azeem* (Most excellent standard of character) and *Uswat-al-Hasanah* (Pattern of conduct that personifies Goodness). From these we can draw the intra-human relational attributes of *Ikhlaq* (Beneficence of character) and *Ihsan* (Social goodness). Qur'an has expressed in the most beautiful way: (Sura 55, Verse 60)

"Is there any reward for Good (*Ihsan*), other than Good (*Ihsan*)? We also note repeated references to *Falah* (Progress towards prosperity) and *Islah* (Progress towards righteous purity) and from the body of Hadith and historic literature one can conclude that *Falah* and *Islah* not only influence the progress of the individual but are, in fact, the key concepts in social responsibility and conduct. Any social action devoid of these two objectives becomes suspect within the overall framework of Islam. It is no mere coincidence that in the formation of Islamic law, *Istislah* (Safeguarding the righteous interests of the fellow-man) and *Istihsan* (Preference for the better of two goods) emerged as important methodological tools. Thus in the 'Presence of God' and in the 'Light of His Guidance', as man relates to the fellow-man, his relationship is founded on *Ikhlaq* and *Ihsan*, *Islah* and *Falah*, and he determines his policies, codes and actions under the principles of *Istislah* and *Istihsan*. It is difficult to encapsulate these spectra of socio-ethical principles into a single word but from the realm of relationships we find *Akuwwah* (Brotherhood) to be a close approximation.

"The Believers are but a single Brotherhood

So make peace and reconciliation between your two brothers

And be mindful of your duties to Allah

That you may receive (His) Mercy". (Qur'an, Sura 48, Verse 10)

This metaphor of brotherhood is beautifully appropriate because it implies an atmosphere of care, love, shared visions and internally balanced controls. Believers are not 'children' of a patriarchal God but brothers in the Presence of a Transcendent God. And it is quite appropriate to extend this concept to humanity because, in the eyes of the Muslims, all human beings must be treated as potential Muslims unless they are engaged in deliberate efforts to obstruct the Path of God.

Returning to the matrix of God, man and nature, we may now raise the question of God's intentions regarding man's relationship to the rest of the creation, his responsibilities and duties towards what surrounds him as his environment. In answer to this question man hears his God reminding him of his exalted status of *Ashraf al-Mukhloqaat* (The Honoured among creations) and the potentiality of becoming His *Khalifah* (Vicegerent, viceroy) on this earth. Man is also reminded how he of his own accord

accepted nature a *Amana* (Trust) and in the words of Parvez Manzoor as a "theatre for his moral struggle". Nasr, in his lectures on the spiritual crisis of modern man, states: "Man therefore occupies a particular position in this world. He is at the axis and centre of the cosmic milieu, at once the master and custodian of nature. By being taught the names of all things he gains dominion over them, but he is given this power only because he is the vicegerent (*Khalifah*) of God on earth and the instrument of His Will. Man is given the right to dominate over nature only by virtue of his theomorphic make-up, not as a rebel against heaven. In fact man is the channel of grace for nature; through his active participation in the spiritual world he casts light into the world of nature. He is the mouth through which nature breathes and lives. Because of the intimate connection between man and nature, the inner state of man is reflected in the external order". As with any distinguished station so with this one of *Khalifah* come the corresponding awesome challenge to man's ethical nature which must be proven through successful acquittal in the tests undertaken in the crucible of this worldly environment. The *raison d'être* of man must be 'to realize this higher destiny, this *Khalifah*, by his actual interference in the flow of nature and history, his diversion of that flow away from value-violation, towards value-realization'.

The constituent concepts of the Islamic scheme have been identified as Creation, Guidance and Judgement. A relational framework within which many may order his life's goals, duties and actions has been proposed as *Abudiyah* (Man to God), *Akhuwwah* (Man to Man) and *Khalifah* (Man to Nature). The question now arises: is there a value system that is comprehensive and general enough so that it can simultaneously encompass the three relational spheres. This comprehensiveness is essential because in the absence of it there is a risk of any one of the three relational spheres becoming exclusively predominant at the expense of the others. *Abudiyah* when pursued exclusively and without regard for the worldly responsibilities of *Akhuwwah* and *Khalifah* can produce individuals to pious hermits. *Khalifah*, when looked upon in isolation and without the humbling regimen of *Abudiyah* and the sobering demands of *Akhuwwah* can lead to false justifications for subjugating nature and other people in the name of Islam. And *Akhuwwah*, without the universality

inherent in *Khalifah* can easily reduce Muslims to an inward oriented, isolationist clans. Thus we are in need of a system of meta-values that can unify and bind together the potentially diverse aspects of life. A Muslim would, under the discipline provided by these meta-values, consider himself simultaneously as an *Abd* (Servant of God), *Khalifah* and *Amin* (Vicegerent and trustee) and an *Akhi* (Brother among the community of believers). The society would be able to relate its social structures with its economic, political and educational structures because all these would be filtered through the same value system.

A system of six meta-values is being proposed and each is described briefly:

1. Purity in Faith: *Iman* (faith) in the Unity of God (*Tawheed*) and its attendant Divine Scheme has to be free and clear of doubts. The distinction between the Creator and the creation has to be understood. Questions with the aim of higher cognisance of God are not the same as doubts about Him. Any semblance of *Kufr* (Denial) and especially *Shirk*, the partitioning or sharing of the sole divinity of God is to be guarded against. All gods and deities, except the One and Only God, figurative, symbolic or mythological, have to be destroyed. *Munafiqat* (Hypocrisy) and internally contradictory dualities of individual behaviour and social conduct have to be removed. In the realm of *Iman* there can be no two Masters. Only the pure and absolutely untarnished acceptance of His Existence, His Attributes, His Wisdom and His Will.

2. Sincerity in Surrender: Man, once having professed faith in God, vows active allegiance to His Purpose. This is a sincere surrender, a conscious acceptance of the trust (*Amana*) of God on this earth, with loyalty and eagerness to dedicate oneself to His Purpose. It is not a passive handing over of one's ego, neither the annihilation of one's will, nor a fatalistic timidity in the face of a temperamental, vengeful and jealous deity. One is to surrender with full trust in both His Wisdom and His Justice. The believer's aim is to put forth the best of his capabilities and then sincerely surrender the outcome to His Divine Will. This attitude, of course, must not lead one to stop asking questions about the casualties of various events. The Qur'an repeatedly reminds that it is the man, who in his forgetfulness and arrogance, unleashes tyranny of all sorts on his own self (*Nafs*) and on his fellow man, and then tries to blame

the consequences on either fate, destiny or 'God's Will'. This outlook is not acceptable under the meta-values of Islam.

3. Steadfastness in Justice: In personal as well as collective affairs of this life perhaps no value is as precious to Islam as Justice. It is the "supreme attribute of God and is also synonymous with Order and Equilibrium. Indeed, Divine perfection, as Muslims perceive it, is manifested in the very harmony and balance of the universe. It is also reflected in God's apportioning to everything its proper measure. In Arabic, the language of the Revelation, metaphysics and philosophy of Islam, the words for justice (*Adl*) and moderation, temperance, balance, equilibrium, harmony (*I'tidal*) are semantically and etymologically kindred. Muslim societal ethics, the very basis of society itself, is but a quest for equilibrium, and hence felicity, with God, nature and history". (Parvez Manzoor in THE TOUCH OF MIDAS).

Like everything precious, justice also has its imitations. There is much tyranny and transgression (*Zulm*, *Fitna* and *Fassad*) that is perpetuated in the guise of necessity to uphold justice. And it all leads to the conclusion that one needs a very fine sense of moral discrimination, with fear of ultimate answerability to God, to distinguish between the honest and hypocritical invocation of justice. Attractions of personal or national gains, self-deception rooted in weak faith and, in many cases, just pure and simple temptations to inflict damage on the others are all widespread failings of the human condition. They demand a steadfastness (*Sabr*) in the pursuit of justice that can, in its own right, be considered a meta-value of Islam.

4. Prudence in Piety: There is a dual challenge in the path of piety (*Taqwa*). It is pursuit of the righteous course with a purpose to be worthy of the Divine Felicity (*Raza-i-Ilahi*). It is also, and perhaps more so, to be prudent and cautious about disobedience of God, and cognisant of the deviations from the Path in the light of Al-Qur'an and *Shariah*. If *Taqwa* is sometimes translated as fear of God, it is to be understood in the sense of perpetual watchfulness in individual and collective affairs and safeguard against all policies and actions whose consequences may impede the Divine Purpose. Piety also encompasses the attitude of elegance, that is aiming for minimality and compactness in matters of life styles, avoidance of excesses and, in general, the pursuit of max-

imum good with minimum expenditure of resources. In man's relationship to nature *Taqwa* is the practice of care and caution such that the environment is nourished rather than indiscriminately exploited, defaced, denuded, and even destroyed. It is in this sense that the Qur'an cautions man about *Shaitan* (the devil), the archenemy of the *Mutaeq*, by quoting his challenge: "I will mislead them, and I will create in them false desires; I will order them to slit the ears of the cattle

And to deface the (Fair) nature created by God".

Whoever, forsaking God, takes *Shaitan* as a friend

Has of surety suffered a loss that is manifest" (Qur'an, Sura 4, Verse 119).

5. Universality in Beneficence: God is *Rahman* (Beneficent, Gracious) and *Rabb* (the Cherisher and the Sustainer) and His Beneficence and Sustenance is universal. His gifts of life, intellect and bountiful nature are available to all, believer and non-believer. The sun does not shine selectively over the crops of the pious and flowers do not hide their beauty from those who rebel against God. Hidden in this universal beneficence is the hope for man to, perchance, return to the path of purity on which he was created to begin with. Now, there is obvious wisdom in man following the Divine example and offer *Ihsan* (Social Good) to all, invite all to the path of progress and prosperity towards Righteousness (*Islah, Falah*) and work towards an atmosphere conducive to the attainment of *Sa'adah* (Happiness) for all. Muslims have to first themselves believe in the universality of Islam and only then can they universalize its ethics and hope for Islam to progress beyond its current status of being a mere religion among many to its inherently rightful claim as the religion for mankind.

6. Elegance in Wisdom: God has gifted man with discursive intellect (*Aql*) and the power of conceptualisation. God has also created nature as orderly and knowable. Man reads the signs (*Ayat*) of God in his surroundings and within himself. Unless he deliberately turns lights off on his spirit and chokes his conscience, he must move towards the cognisance of God. The Qur'an most vehemently suggests the role of *Aql* (intellect) and *Fikr* (Contemplative thought and Inquisitive wonderment) in the recognition of God and the enhancement of Faith (*Iman*). But before *Aql, Fikr* and *Ilm* (Knowledge) can lead to *Hikmah* (Wisdom) there

has to be a synthesis within the framework of a clear set of value and purposes. *Hikmah* is the essence intellect and knowledge and is recognizable by its inherent potential for Good. It cannot evolve unless there is deep respect and reverence (*Adab*) for the source of knowledge, unless there is faith in the good (*Hasanah*) as its prime aim in life, unless, as Imam Jafer Al-Sadiq has said, "There is a fine sense of discrimination to recognise better among two benefits and less harmful among two harmfuls". Wisdom, when it becomes the directly penetrating, beautiful yet simple, compact, irreducible expression of Truth, it becomes *Billagah*: Elegant Wisdom. Antithetic to such wisdom is intellectual sophistry, mazes of logic and aimless inquiry that raises doubts and answers no questions.

It is important to state that within the unifying and integrative conception of *Tawheed*, the very essence of Islamic worldview, the meta-values cannot possibly be mutually exclusive. Struggle for justice shall never contradict pursuit for piety, nor wisdom ever abandon its companionship with the purity of faith. The system of Islamic meta-values has to be internally consistent and supportive of one another. And as the consciousness of the believing individual and the society progresses via Islam, the distinctness of these values will merge into the supreme, single goal of attaining the Divine Felicity with God (*Raza-i-Ilahi*) through fulfilling His purpose within one's self, among fellow men, on this earth and even beyond in the cosmos.

Now, is it possible to subject the relational concepts of *Khilafah, Abudiyah* and *Akhuwwah* to the Islamic meta-values and achieve corresponding ethical principles and directives for policy and programmes? An attempt has been made to face this challenge by examining the concept of *Khilafah* in the light of these meta-values. It is quite revealing how the values take on a special significance in this context:

1. Khilafah and Puré Faith: Man professes, through his faith, that by the very act of creation he has the potential of becoming the *Khalifa* (Vicegerent) and the *Amin* (Trustee) of God on this earth. That it is his minimal duty to recognise this and accept this as a matter of conscious responsibility. Only through the fulfilment of this trust, to the best of his capabilities, can he, in true sense, return the Divine favours of life, intellect, guidance and freedom. It reminds him to reaffirm that the environment is the arena of his moral

action and not a dominion of him to subjugate and exploit at his selfish, arrogant whims. It is this faith in the scheme of creation that reminds man that he is not only the vicegerent of God on earth but in turn is the representative of mankind and all other creations under his influence, before God.

2. Khilafah and Sincere Surrender:

A vicegerent is never the sovereign. Thus the man, in interacting with the environment and the fellow-man is to operate not as a ruler beyond reproach, but as an extension and instrument of God who created all. This, however, is not an extension in a mechanical sense where a 'hidden wizard' sits on a secret switchboard and the robots execute all commands in unthinking obedience. This, instead, is a responsibility where the Sovereign is Hidden but accepted as Ever-Present, is Silent but His Word (the Qur'an) permeates all thought and actions of His vicegerent. Ultimately, in the affairs of the *Khilafah*, it is the man who undertakes that responsibility of ruling and managing, but only in the name of God. The operative value is that of self-reliant and willful responsibility towards the environment on one hand and on the other, an attitude of total subordination to God and a mental disposition of inevitable and complete audit of one's actions before God. This should lead to evolution of the systems for continuous watchfulness and commitment to understanding casualties of human actions and their environmental consequences so that the mistakes are avoided or, at least, not repeated. From the reactive mode to the environmental crisis, man, under the ethic of continuous watchfulness and eventual answerability, is to change to an anticipatory mode by which he avoids the environmental problems altogether and does not let the unavoidable ones grow into catastrophies.

3. Khilafah and Steadfast Justice: As the vicegerent of God, who is the Creator of a perfect, purposeful existence over which He rules with absolute Justice, man must also establish on this earth a just society. In the social sphere, he must enjoy right and deter wrong and to this end he must struggle perpetually. Poverty must be combated, tyranny fought against and social injustice deterred through legal checks and behavioral models. In the natural realm, he must guard the rights of flora and fauna as jealously as he insures the rights of man over them. Use of natural resources and

the rights of property over natural domain must have moral checks that deter greed, hoarding and exploitation through false economics. No one should be deprived of the natural bounties of sun, air, water, sources of food and paths of travel. By the same token it is the right of the sun to reach the earth except when intercepted by the clouds created by nature's own processes. Air and water have the rights to remain clean so that they can be of service to man and other creation as they were destined to be. It is gross tyranny, even genocide, of trees, animals, fish and birds to let their habitat be poisoned in the name of man's manifest destiny towards a 'higher life style'. Damn the development that demands, as its inevitable by-product, social tyranny and ecological murder!

4. *Khilafah and Prudent Piety:* The *Khilafah* of God, though dedicated to the Divine Purpose, and forceful in its pursuit, cannot possibly be crude, ruthless and unmindful of fine details. Its energies cannot be destructive like those of a volcano or a tidal wave. Instead, it is sustained, perseverant and nourishing with wide-ranging and far-reaching consequences. In that sense it is like the sun is to life on earth or the gravitation without which the elegant order of even the earth and the moon will be no more. A prudently pious *Khilafah* will act upon the environment with extreme caution, care, tenderness and will be forever mindful of the delicacy of the ecological harmonies and balances. It will intervene only to enhance the art of life and nature, not to destructively transform it. This vicegerency will definitely not play catastrophic games with nature, like nuclear testing in the Pacific Ocean, because in its ethical framework there is no justification for such adventures. No interpretive genius can draw out of Islam a justification for the development and deployment of weapons of destruction that kill indiscriminately, permanently scar ecologies and play havoc with the genetics of life that a few decades later lead to "jelly-fish" human babies.

5. *Khilafah and Universal Beneficence:* God has created man and gifted him the cosmos as his 'Home'. Earth is the specific domain but man's visionary nature takes him beyond. His *Khilafah* extends to the limits of his own reach and it is expected that he will fulfill this role with beneficence and without prejudice. Man is to nourish, nurture, embellish and positively transform the environment to enhance the art of Islamic life. In Iqbal's *Piyam-e-*

Mashriq this vicegerent of God speaks so eloquently of his role as the beneficent moulder of the virgin nature into the elements of civilized environment. He addresses his Sovereign in a manner of confident and proud vicegerent listing his achievements:

"Thou created the night, I the lamp;
Thou created the clay, I the vase
Thou created the jungle, mountains
and deserts
I created beautiful gardens, orchards
and flower plots.

It is I who make glass out of stone.
It is I who extract elixir out of
poison".

6. *Khilafah and Elegant Wisdom:* God, the Only Sovereign, is Hidden (*Al-Batin*) in that He is beyond time, space, mensuration and description. And yet He is Manifest (*Al-Zahir*) as He encompasses everything and the creation is a book of His Signs (*Ayat*) and Attributes (*Asmaa*) for those who are seeking. His vicegerent, to be worthy of the station must be actively engaged in the effort to know Him, to recognize His Purpose and to attain His *Ma'arifat* (Gnosis). Only then he can understand the intentions and the essence of the Divine Scheme he is to implement and maintain on this earth. The attainment of this knowledge will come through self-reflection and the study of what surrounds us but not in the commonly understood ways of social and physical sciences. Secular paradigms cannot yield enlightenment that brings us closer to understanding the purpose of God on this earth. Speculative philosophy will not lead to cognisance of God. Neither will embryology or numerology of the Qur'an. Nor even the 'Islamisation' of present day knowledge by generous footnoting with Qur'anic verses and *Ahadith*. The secular edifices of knowledge cannot be decorated with Qur'an and become Islamic. The very epistemology and its attendant methods of inquiry, theorizing, any synthesis will all have to be redefined within an Islamic exiological framework. Such is the task ahead for the aspirants of the honoured status of the Vicegerency of God.

Rarely, in the history of mankind, have come times and personalities that not only demolished the existing unnatural and tyrannical structures of thought and behaviour but also established harmonious, just and unified moral systems within which humanity could conduct its affairs. Prophet Muhammad, with the Divine Revelation and his Prophetic Mandate, initiated such a phenomenon in history. In

his message the Islamic scheme of Creation, Guidance and Judgement are succinctly outlined. We find him deeply immersed in the devotions and supplications of *Abudiyah* (Servitude) of God. But we also see him vigorously performing the duties as the Vicegerent of God. He is the teacher, the judge, the helper, the trustee and the leader par excellence, in peace and in war. As he deals with those around him, he is unfolding the principles of *Akhuwwah* and all aspects of social conduct. He is miraculously effective, in fact historically unique in his achievements of twenty three years, because there is no disparity between what he upholds as his mission, what he intends, what he knows, what he says and what he does. This historic Prophet is the most profound proof that the Islamic Scheme is real and realisable.

Faced with the problems of today, we need to rededicate ourselves to the meta-values of Islam. History is there to provide us with confidence and to underscore some timeless casualties in the affairs of nations. But it will not provide us with ready-made solutions. No magic formulae will jump out of the books of *Hadih* and *Fiqh*. However piously motivated, it is futile for Muslims to keep declaring that 'it is all there in the examples of the Companions of the Prophet and the *Tabayeen*'. We must understand that if not the entire nature of the contemporary problems, at least, the magnitude, scale and intensity is totally different from that of a thousand years ago.

We need to systematically subject various relational spheres of life to the meta-values and extract policy guidelines and heuristics. Like it has been demonstrated for *Khilafah* we need to study *Abudiyah* and *Akhuwwah* also via the same value framework. The resulting sets of policy guidelines can then be synthesised in the context of problems being faced by the contemporary Muslims. And only then we would have taken a modest step towards developing a contemporaneously relevant Islamic ethic and a methodology for approaching current problems with timeless principles of Islam.

In this lies the challenge and an invitation to all Muslim 'experts' whose training has imprisoned them in their own tiny worlds. For whom Islam has little to do with their professions, and who lead lives as if Islam has little meaning beyond a few acts of personal piety or a few rituals at birth, marriage and death. ■