

ISLAMIC

WAY OF LIFE

By
A. A. Mawdudi

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Islamic Way of Life

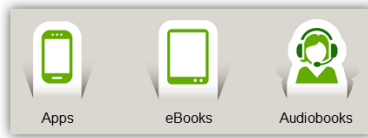
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Preface

The Islamic Way of Life is an introductory book dealing with the most misunderstood and distorted topic in the present age, i.e. Islam and its relationship as a religion to life and its system. Islam advocates that there is no conflict whatsoever between spiritual life and temporal life. It does not merely confine itself to the spiritual aspects of human life. Rather, it invokes itself deeply in all aspects of the life of mankind in general and not only Muslim.

The Message of Muhammad (peace be upon him) was for the whole of mankind. He presented anew the teachings of Islam in their pristine form and provided humanity once again with the Divine Guidance which they had lost in its original form. Through its message, Islam came to be a universal and global system applicable to all races and conducive to all times and places.

The Islamic Way of Life is aimed at making a fresh presentation of Islam to reacquaint Muslims with the truth of Islam and provide them with a spiritual insight into the universe and a moral approach to the human condition. If this is realized, it will make them responsible citizens of their respective countries, honorable members of the human race, and, above all else, God-conscious people.

The Islamic Way of Life is a compilation of a series of five radio talks given by Mawlana Abu al-A`la al-Mawdudi during January-March, 1948, in Urdu, on Radio Pakistan, in which he dealt with the broad and basic principles of the moral, political, economic, social and spiritual teachings of Islam. Furthermore, the book contains an additional chapter, contributed by Khurshid Ahmad, the editor of the book, on the Islamic concept of life compiled from various writings of Sayyid Mawdudi, and providing a concise introduction to the

view of man and universe as given in the Divine Guidance, which forms the basis of the Islamic way of life.

Khurshid Ahmad, the editor, must be commended for his earnest efforts in compiling and translating the works of the author in the form of this book. Also thanks should be extended to Naseema Mall and Ahmad M. Hasan who did the final reading for the script of this edition.

(Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden like that which Thou didst lay on those before us. Our Lord! Lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear. Blot out our sins and grant us forgiveness.)

All praise and thanks are due to Allah,
without Whose Help and Guidance nothing can be
accomplished.

General director
Sheikh Muhammad `Abdu

Chapter One

Islamic Concept of Life¹

The main characteristic of Islamic ideology is that it does not acknowledge a conflict; not even a slight separation between spiritual life and mundane life. It does not confine itself merely to purifying the spiritual and the moral life of man in the limited sense of the word. Its scope extends to the entire aspects of life. It wants to fashion individual life as well as the social order in healthy patterns, so that the Kingdom of God may really be established on the earth and so that peace, contentment and well-being may fill the world as waters fill the oceans. The Islamic way of life is founded on this unparalleled approach to life and a peculiar concept of man's place in the universe. That is why it is necessary that before we move a head to discuss the moral, social, political and economic systems of Islam, we should have a clear idea of the Islamic concept of life.

There are certain basic concepts which should be understood and appreciated at the very beginning. These concepts are as follows:

1- Basic Concepts

1. God, Who is the Creator, the Ruler and the Lord of the universe created man and provided him with a short-lived station in that part of His immense Kingdom (cosmos) which is known as the earth. He has bestowed man with the capacities of thinking and understanding, and has given him the ability to discern right from wrong. Man has also been invested with freedom of will and choice and the ability to use the resources of the world in any way he likes. In short,

man has been given a kind of autonomy while being appointed God's vicegerent on the earth.

2. Before assigning to man vicegerency on the earth, God made it explicitly plain to him that He alone is the Lord, the Ruler and the Deity. As such the whole universe and all the creatures in it (including man) must yield to Him alone. Man must not think himself totally free and should know that this earth is not his everlasting abode. He has been made to live upon it only during the period of his trial, and in due course, he will return to his Lord, to be judged according to the way he has availed the period of trial. The only right course for man is to confess Allah as the only Lord, the Sustainer and the Deity and to pursue His Guidance and His Commands in all spheres of life. Man must live this life with the realization that he is to be judged and his sole objective should be to gain the Pleasure of Allah so as to appear successful in the final test. Action which is contrary to this would lead man astray. If man adopted the way of piety and Godliness (which he is free to choose and follow) he will succeed in this world and in the next: in this world he will lead a life of peace and contentment, and in the Hereafter he will qualify himself for the Heaven of eternal bliss, the Paradise. And if he chooses to adopt the other way, i.e. that of Godlessness and evil (which he is equally free to choose and follow) his life will be one of corruption, disruption and frustration in this world and he will meet a huge disappointment in the life to come - that abode of pain and misery which is called Hell.

3. After giving out this warning, God settled man upon the earth and provided the very first human beings (Adam² and Eve) with His Guidance in conferment with which men were to live on the earth. Thus man's life on this earth did not begin in absolute darkness. The very first man was given a burning torch of light and guidance so that humanity might achieve its glorious destiny. The very first man received revealed knowledge from God Himself. He had

knowledge of the reality and was bestowed the code of life which by following, he could lead a life of bliss and success. This code of life was Islam, the disposition of absolute surrender to Allah, the Creator of man and the entire universe. It was this religion which Adam, the first man, bequeathed to posterity. But later generations gradually deviated from the Right Path and adopted different false paths. Because of negligence, they lost the plain teachings, or due to absurdity or mischief they interpolated and perverted them. They ascribed with God innumerable human beings, non-human objects and imaginary entities as deities and indulged in Shirk (polytheism) of the worst type. They moulded the pure teachings of God with strange superstitions, ideas and philosophies and thus produced a jungle of religions and cults. They threw away the God-given principles of social ethics and collective morality, the Shari`ah, and deprived the human life of peace and tranquility.

4. Although men deviated from the path of truth, neglected and distorted the Shari`ah and some of them even revolted against the code of Divine guidance, yet God did not destroy them or oblige them to the right course. Forced conversion to the Right Path was not in conformity with the autonomy He had given to man. Instead, God chose certain devoted persons from amongst the people themselves, to undertake the responsibility of returning and guiding men to the Right Path during their sojourn on the earth. These men believed in God, and led a life of obedience to Him. He elevated them by His Revelations and bestowed them the knowledge of reality. These men, known as prophets (peace be upon all of them), were charged with the task of communicating the message of truth to mankind and of guiding the people to adopt the Path of the Lord.

5. These prophets were sent in all ages, to all lands and to all nations. Their number surpassed many thousands. All of them came with the same message, all of them defended the

same way of life (Din), i.e. the way which was revealed to man on the first day of his existence. All of them followed the same guidance: the guidance which was prescribed by the Lord for man at the beginning of his charge on the earth. All of them argued for the same mission: they called men to the Religion of Islam, asked those who contented by the Divine guidance to live in conformity with that and arranged them into a movement for the constituting of the Divine law, and for putting an end to all deviations from the Right Path. Every prophet tried to fulfill this mission in the best possible way. But quite a number of people rejected their guidance, and many of those who accepted it gradually drifted away, and after a period of time, lost the guidance or altered it through innovations and perversions.

6. Finally, God sent Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to the land of Arabia and charged him with the completion of the mission for which earlier prophets were ordained. The message of Muhammad (peace be upon him) was for the entire humanity. He presented anew the principles of Islam in their pristine form and provided humanity once again with the Divine guidance which they had lost in its original form. He coordinated all those who accepted his message into one Ummah which was charged with reconstructing its own life in accordance with the teachings of Islam, with calling humanity to the path of righteousness and with establishing the supremacy of the Word of God on the earth. This guidance is embodied in the Glorious Qur'an which represents the only right code of conduct for mankind.³

2- Iman : Its Nature and Character

The Qur'an is the foundation on which man's relationship with Allah is based, and the concept of life emanates from

that relationship. The following verse outlines the entire concept of life,

(Verily Allah hath bought of the believers their lives and their properties for the price that theirs shall be the Paradise; so they fight in the Way of Allah and slay and are slain. It (i.e. the promise of Paradise) is a covenant which is binding on Him in the Turah and the Injil and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful unto his covenant than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph.)

(At-Tawbah:111)

In the above verse the nature of the relationship which comes into existence between man and God because of Iman (the act of reposing Faith in Allah) has been named a 'bargain'. This means that Iman in Allah is not a mere metaphysical concept; it is in the nature of a contract by which man barter his life and his belongings with Allah in exchange for Paradise in the life Hereafter. God purchases a believer's life and property and promises, in return, the reward of Paradise in the life after death. This concept of 'bargain' has important implications and we should, therefore, first of all plainly understand its nature and meaning.

The fact of the matter is that each and every thing in this world belongs to Allah. He is the Real Owner of them all. As such, man's life and riches, which are part of this world, also belong to Him, because it is He Who created them and it is He Who has assigned them to each man for his use. Looking at the problem from this angle, the question of any sale or purchase does not arise at all. God is the Real Owner; there is no question of His purchasing what is already His: Man is not their real owner; he has no right to sell them. But there is one thing which has been conferred on man, and which now belongs totally to him, and that is his free will, the freedom of choice of adopting or not adopting the Path of Allah. As man has been granted with free will in this respect, he is free to admit or deny the reality of things. Although this freedom of will and choice that man enjoys, does not automatically make him the real owner of all the energies and resources on which

he has command, nor does he invest the title to avail them in any way he likes, nor his acknowledgement or rejection of reality as such in any way affect the reality, yet it does mean that he is free to admit the Sovereignty of God and His Overlordship on his own life and belongings or refuse to admit it and to arrogate to himself the position of total independence. He may, if he so likes, consider himself free from all obligations to the Lord and may think that he enjoys full rights and powers over all that he has, and thus may use them according to his own wishes unfolded by any higher command. It is here that the question of bargaining comes in. This bargain does not mean that God is purchasing something which belongs to man. Its real nature is this: All creation belongs to God but He has bestowed certain things on man to be used by him as a trust from God. And man has been given freedom to honestly fulfill the trust or if he so likes, to betray it and misuse it. Now God demands that man should willingly and voluntarily (and not under duress or compulsion) acknowledge those things as His and use them as a trust from God and not as something of his own to be used as he pleases. Thus a man who voluntarily renounces the freedom even to refuse God's Supremacy and instead acknowledges His Sovereignty, so to say, 'sells' his 'autonomy' (which too is a gift from God and not something which man has acquired of his own) to God, and gets in return God's Promise of eternal bliss that is Paradise. A man who makes such a bargain is a Mu'min (believer) and Iman (belief) is the Islamic name for this contract; while the one who chooses not to enter into this contract, or after making such a contract adopts a behavior in contravention thereof amounting to its gross breach, is a Kafir (non-believer) and the attempt to avoid or abrogate this contract is technically known as Kufr (disbelief).

Such is the nature of the contract. Now let us briefly study its various aspects and stipulations.

1. God has put us to serious trial on two things:

(a) He has left man free, but even after giving him that freedom He wishes to see whether or not man realizes his true position; whether he remains honest and steadfast and maintains loyalty and allegiance to the Lord, or loses his head and revolts against his own Creator; whether he behaves like a noble soul, or tramples under foot all values of decency and starts playing such fantastic tricks as make the angels weep.⁴

(b) He wants to see whether man is prepared or has such confidence in God as to offer his life and wealth in return for what is a promise, that is to materialize in the next world and whether he is prepared to surrender his autonomy and all the charms that go with it, in exchange for a promise of the future.

2. It is an agreed principle of Islamic Law that Iman consists in adherence to a certain set of doctrines and whosoever reposes faith in those doctrines becomes a Mu'min. No one has a right to denounce such a man as a non-believer or drive him out of the fold of the Ummah, save when there is explicit proof of falsity or of renunciation of the belief. This is the legal aspect of the problem. But in the eyes of the Lord, only that Iman is valuable which consists in complete surrender of one's will and choice to the Will of Allah. It is a state of thought and action wherein man submits himself fully to Allah, renouncing all claim to his own supremacy. It is something that comes from the heart. It is an attitude of the mind and prepares man for a certain course of action. If a man recites the Shahadah,⁵ enters into the contract and even offers his Prayers and performs other acts of worship, but in his heart he regards himself as the owner and the sovereign dispenser of his physical and mental powers and of his moral and material resources, uses them to his own liking and upholds his freedom of will, then, however much the people may look upon him as Mu'min, in the Eyes of God he will be a non-believer, for he has, in fact, not really entered into the

bargain which according to the Qur'an is the essence of Iman. If a man does not use his powers and resources in the way God has prescribed for him and instead uses them in pursuits which God has prohibited, it clearly shows that either he has not pledged his life and property to Allah, or even after pledging them to Him, he falsifies the pledge by his conduct.

3. This nature of Iman makes the Islamic way of life distinct from, nay, the very opposite of, the non-Islamic way of life. A Muslim, who has real Faith in Allah, makes every aspect of his subservience to the Will of Allah. His entire life is one of obedience and surrender and he never behaves in an arrogant or an autonomous way, save in a moment of forgetfulness. And after such a lapse, as soon as he becomes conscious of it, he again re-addresses himself to his Lord and repents his error. Similarly a group of people or a society which consists of true Muslims can never break away from the Law of their Lord. Its political order, its social organization, its culture, its economic policy, its legal system and its international strategy must all be in tune with the code of guidance revealed by Allah and must, in no way, contravene it. And if ever through error or omission any contravention is committed, they must, on realizing this, correct this immediately and return forthwith to the state of subservience to the Law of God. It is the way of the non-believers to feel free from God's Guidance and to behave as one's own master. Whoever adopts such a policy, even though he may bear a name similar to that of a Muslim is treading the satanic path and is following the way of the non-believers.

4. The Will of God, which is obligatory upon man to follow, is the one which God Himself has revealed for man's guidance. The Will of God is not to be determined by man himself. God has Himself enunciated it clearly and there is no ambiguity about it. Therefore, if a person or society is honest and steadfast in its contract with Allah, it must scrupulously fashion its entire life in accordance with

the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

A little reflection will show that these aspects and stipulations are logically implicit in the bargain and it is also clear from the above discussion why the payment of the 'price' has been postponed to the life after death. Paradise is not the reward for the mere profession of the bargain, it is the reward for the faithful execution of the contract. Unless the contract is fully executed and the actual life-behavior of the 'vendor' complies with the terms of the contract he does not become entitled to the reward. Thus, the final act of the 'sale' is concluded only at the last moment of the vendor's life and as such it is natural that the reward should be given to him in the life-hereafter.

There is another significant point which emerges from the study of the verse quoted above when it is read with reference to its context. In the verses preceding it, reference has been made to the people who professed Iman and promised a life of obedience, but when the hour of trial came they proved unequal to the task. Some neglected the call of the hour and betrayed the cause. Others played tricks of hypocrisy and refused to sacrifice their lives and riches in the Cause of Allah. The Qur'an, after exposing these people and criticizing their insincerity makes it clear that Iman is a contract, a form of pledge between man and God. It does not consist in a mere profession of Belief in Allah. It is an acknowledgement of the fact that Allah alone is our Lord, Sovereign and Ruler and that everything that man has, including his life, belongs to Him and must be used in accordance with His Directives. If a Muslim adopts a different course, he is insincere in his profession of Faith. True believers are only those who have really sold their lives and all that they possess to God and who follow His Dictates in all fields of activity.⁶

3- The Scheme of Life

This discussion makes it clear that Islam begins with laying down the proper lines on which man's relationship with the Lord is to be reared; his entire individual and social life is an exercise in developing and strengthening this relationship. Iman, the starting point of our Religion, consists in the acceptance of this relationship by man's intellect and will and Islam is actual submission, the way of surrender to the Will of God in all aspects of life and behavior. Now, we are in a position to cast a glance over the scheme of life which Islam envisages. This scheme - the code of conduct - is known as the Shari`ah.⁷

Its sources are the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The Final Book of God and the Final Messenger stand today as the repositories of this truth, and they invite the whole of humanity to accept the truth. God, Almighty has endowed man with free-will in the moral domain, and it is to this free-will that this acceptance bears reference. Consequently, it is always an act of volition and not of compulsion. Whosoever agrees that the concept of reality stated by the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Glorious Book is true, it is for him to step forward and surrender his will to the Will of God. It is this submission which is called 'Islam' the fructification of Faith (Iman) in actual life, and those who do so, i.e. those who of their own free-will, accept God as their Sovereign, and surrender to His Divine Will and undertake to regulate their lives in accordance with His Commandments, are called Muslims.

All those persons who thus surrender themselves to the Will of God are welded into a community and that is how the "Muslim Society" comes into being. Thus, this is an ideological society - a society radically different from those which are founded on the basis of race, color or territory.

This society is the result of a deliberate choice and effort; it is the outcome of a 'contract' which takes place between human beings and their Creator. Those who enter into this contract, undertake to recognize God as their Sovereign, His Guidance as supreme, and His Injunctions as absolute law. They also undertake to accept, without question or doubt, His Classifications of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, Permissible and Prohibited. In short, the Islamic Society agrees to limit its volition to the extent prescribed by the All-Knowing God. In other words, it is God and not man Whose Will is the primary source of Law in a Muslim Society.

When such a society comes into existence, the Books and the messenger prescribe for it a code of life called the Shari`ah, and this society is bound to conform to it by virtue of the contract it has entered into. It is, therefore, inconceivable that any Muslim Society worth the name can deliberately adopt a system of life other than the Shari`ah. If it does so, its contract is ipso facto broken and the whole society becomes "un-Islamic."

However, we must clearly distinguish between the everyday sins or violations of the individuals and a deliberate revolt against the Shari`ah. The former may not imply breaking up of the contract, while the latter would mean nothing short of that. The point that should be clearly understood here is that if an Islamic Society consciously resolves not to accept the Shari`ah, and decides to enact its own constitution and laws or borrows them from any other source in utter disregard of the Shari`ah, such a society breaks its contract with God and forfeits its right to be called 'Islamic.'

The objectives and characteristics of the scheme

Let us now proceed to understand the scheme of life envisaged by the Shari`ah. To understand that, it is essential that we should start with a clear conception of the objectives and the fundamentals of Shari`ah.

The main objective of the Shari`ah is to construct human life on the basis of Ma`ruf (virtue) and to cleanse it of the Munkar (vice). The term Ma`ruf denotes all the virtues and good qualities that have always been accepted as "good" by the human conscience. Conversely, the word Munkar denotes all the sins and evils that have always been condemned by human nature as "evil". In short the Ma`ruf is in harmony with human nature and its requirements in general and the Munkar is just the opposite. The Shari`ah gives a clear view of Ma`ruf and Munkar and states them as the norms to which the individual and social behavior should conform.

The Shari`ah does not, however, limit its function to providing us with an inventory of virtues and vices only; it lays down the entire scheme of life in such a manner that virtues may flourish and vices may not pollute and destroy human life.

To achieve this end, the Shari`ah has embraced in its scheme all the factors that encourage the growth of good and has recommended steps for the removal of impediments that might prevent its growth and development. This process gives rise to a subsidiary series of Ma`ruf consisting of the causes and means initiating and nurturing the good, and yet another set of Ma`ruf consisting of prohibitory commands in relation to those things which act as preventives or impediments to good. Similarly, there is a subsidiary list of Munkar which might initiate or allow growth of evil.

The Shari`ah shapes the Islamic Society in a way conducive to the unfettered growth of good, virtue and truth in every sphere of human activity, and gives full play to the forces of good in all directions. And at the same time it removes all impediments in the path of virtue. Along with this, it attempts to eradicate evils from its social scheme by prohibiting vice, by obviating the causes of its appearance and growth, by closing the inlets through which it creeps into a society and by adopting deterrent measures to check its occurrence.

Ma`ruf

The Shari`ah classifies Ma`ruf into three categories: the obligatory (Fard and Wajib), the Recommendatory (Mandub) and the Permissible (Mubah).

The observance of the obligatory (Ma`ruf) is incumbent on a Muslim Society and the Shari`ah has given clear and binding directions about them. The recommendatory Maruf are those which the Shari`ah wants that a Muslim Society should observe and practise. Some of them have been very clearly demanded of us while others have been recommended by implication and inference from the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Besides this, special arrangements have been made for the growth and encouragement of some of them in the scheme of life enunciated by the Shari`ah. Others still have simply been recommended by the Shari`ah leaving it to the society or to its more virtuous elements to look to their promotion.

This leaves us with the permissible Ma`ruf. Strictly speaking, according to the Shari`ah everything which has not been expressly prohibited by it is a permissible Ma`ruf (i.e. Mubah). It is not at all necessary that an express permission should exist about it or that it should have been expressly left to our choice. Consequently the sphere of permissible Ma`ruf is very wide so much so that except for the things specifically prohibited by the Shari`ah, everything is permissible for a Muslim. And this is exactly the sphere where we have been given freedom and where we can legislate according to our own discretion, to suit the requirements of our age and conditions, of course in keeping with the general spirit of the Shari`ah.

Munkar

The Munkar (or the things prohibited in Islam) have been grouped into two categories: Haram, i.e. those things which have been prohibited absolutely and Makruh, i.e. those things

which have been simply disliked. It has been enjoined on Muslims by clear obligatory injunctions to refrain totally from everything that has been declared Haram. As for the Makruh the Shari`ah signifies its dislike in some way or the other, i.e. either expressly or by implication, giving an indication also as to the degree of such dislike. For example, there are some Makruh bordering on Haram, while others bear affinity with the acts which are permissible; of course, their number is very large ranging between the two extremes of prohibitory and permissible actions. Moreover, in some cases explicit measures have been prescribed by the Shari`ah for the prevention of Makruh, while in others such arrangements have been left to the discretion of the society or of the individual.

Some characteristics of Islamic ideology

The Shari`ah, thus, prescribes directives for the regulation of our individual as well as collective life. These directives touch such varied subjects as religious rituals, personal character, morals, habits, family relationships, social and economic affairs, administration, rights and duties of citizens, judicial system, laws of war and peace and international relations. In short, it embraces all the various departments of human life. These directives reveal what is good and bad; what is beneficial and useful and what is injurious and harmful; what are the virtues which we have to cultivate and encourage and what are the evils which we have to suppress and guard against; what is the sphere of our voluntary, untrammelled, personal and social action and what are its limits; and finally, what ways and means we can adopt in establishing such a dynamic order of society and what methods we should avoid. The Shari`ah is a complete scheme of life and an all-embracing social order - nothing superfluous, nothing lacking.

Another remarkable feature of the Shari`ah is that it is an organic whole. The entire scheme of life propounded by