Inter Personal Relations
An Islamic Perspective
Khurram Murad

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In the Name of ALLAH, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Editor's Note

I HAVE GREAT PLEASURE in presenting the English translation of Brother Khurram Murad's popular book, that has attained classic status. It has been in print for the last 37 years, ever since its publication. Tahrik-i-Islami main Karkunu ke Bahmi Ta'aluqat (Inter-personal Relationships among the Workers of the Islamic Movement) was first serialized by Mawlana Mawdudi in his prestigious journal Tarjuman-al-Qur'an. It was published as a book in 1958. It is still prescribed reading for the workers of the Islamic movement in many countries and has been translated into languages of the Sub-Continent.

With his freshness in approach and style, Brother Khurram presented those adorable characteristics, which promote harmony among human beings. He also identified those detestable traits that mar friendships and create discord. Then there are the social obligations prescribed by Allah and His Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), regarding which it is our duty to try to fulfill. Although Brother Khurram's primary

addressees were the workers of the Islamic movement, these duties of brotherhood are the hallmark of Islamic teachings. Hence, the title of this edition has been changed so that all can read it.

Prof. Khurshid Ahmad, a lifelong close friend and colleague, contributed the foreword to this book when it was first published, I am grateful to him to write a new foreword for this English translation despite his heavy commitments. The sincere dedication of this book to Dr Sa'id Ramadan, the renowned Ikhwan leader has been retained in this translation. This indicates Brother Khurram's heart-felt love and affection for him.

In an age when there is so much discord and disharmony among Muslims, the guidance provided by this book should help us improve our inter-personal relationships. I pray that Allah may bless the soul of Brother Khurram and elevate his status in Jannat-al-Firdaws. (Amin)

Leicester Abdur Rashid Siddiqui
24th October 2005

In the Name of ALLAH, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Foreword

IN A WORLD TORN by rivalries and conflicts, polluted by discrimination and dehumanization and tormented by terror and wars the healing touch can come only from re-establishment of the supremacy of the moral values and re-discovering civilization and promotion of compassion, brotherhood, fellow feeling, tolerance and graceful acceptance of each other as members of human fraternity. Hatred can only beget hatred. Love and grace can heal the wounds and mend the fences. Evil can be subdued by evil. It is only good that can replace it. The Qur'an beautifully sums up this milieu in the following words:

Behold! Good and Evil cannot be equal. Repel the evil with something that is better - and lo! he between whom and yourself was enmity (may then become) as though he had (always) been close unto you, a true friend.(Fussilat 41:34)

My dear brother Khurram Murad's small in size but large in content book Inter-Personal Relations is a pioneering effort in spelling out the foundation as well as the

rules of conduct to build a society that approximates towards this ideal. Francis Bacon in his beautiful essay "Of Studies" says: "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested." I have no reservation in saying that Inter-Personal Relations is a book that deserved to be "chewed and digested", to become a part of one's being, and an aspect of one's very identity. Whoever could imbibe its message and spirit would become a better Muslim and a better human being. That is the recipe for making a better society and a better humanity.

This book has a history behind it. It brings me back to our student days when in the Islami Jami'at-e-Talabah Pakistan we, a group of youth dreaming of a glorious Islamic future, were trying to develop an elaborate training programme for our colleagues and ourselves. It was in the pursuit of this objective that brother Khurram whose devotion to the Qur'an and Sunnah was the greatest in our group, was requested to develop course material for inter personal relationships in an Islamic Movement. We tried to avail ourselves of all available sources, particularly the writings of Mawlana Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, Mawlana Amin Ahsan Islahi, Mawlana Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadvi along with the works of Imam Hasan Al-Banna Shahid, Br. Sa'id Ramadan and material used in Nizam al'Usr. This blue-print was developed in 1953-55 and introduced in our training programme. It was a tremendous success. Br. Khurram was asked to write down the lectures be gave and this became part of our training manual. For wider benefit, we thought to publish it in book-form and sent the manuscript to Mawlana Mawdudi, lest the young scholar might have missed some aspects or erred somewhere. We were waiting for a response when Khurram and all of us were wonder-struck to see that Mawlana Mawdudi had decided to print the manuscript in Tarjuman-al-Qur'an, his monthly magazine - an honor and recognition no one had ever dreamt. This is how this book was developed and saw the light of the day. Since then it has been published dozens of times and now al-hamdulillah its English translation is appearing almost fifty years after it was written. It is the truth of its content that makes the book as fresh as tomorrow morning. I had the honour of writing the Foreword to its publication in 1958. Br. Khurram is not with us now; but his love, his remembrances, and his words are the prize of one being even today. I regard myself lucky to contribute this Foreword, which also assimilates most of what I wrote fifty years back.

History bears testimony to the fact that Allah's Messengers have reorganized human society afresh on the basis of eternal values of goodness, virtue and justice. They invited mankind to the perennial teachings emanating from the Divine Call and organized those

who responded positively to that call under a new, unifying banner. Those who had once been divided into groups, tribes and other partisan camps and who were after each other's blood, life and honor, turned into the best and most trusted of friends, thanks to that unifying message. Their union culminated in the emergence of a new, powerful community, whose members, men and women, were kind and affectionate towards each other. They created history afresh and laid the foundation for a new civilization. The Qur'an underscores this truth in its characteristically beautiful style:

"And remember with gratitude Allah's favour unto you; for you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His grace you became brethren; and you were on the brink of the pit of fire, and He saved you from it." (Al-'Imran 3:103)

The Messengers of Allah also exhorted their followers:

"And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves." (Al-'Imran 3:103)

The real and lasting unifying force is holding to the rope of Allah, the Creator, and keeping up the covenant with Him.

This ideal of collective life in Islam is not merely some outward manifestation of unity. It seeks to weld the hearts of believers into unison. Islam transcends any legalistic notion of unity. The fact is that it infuses unity and fraternity into the very fabric of all believers. For it places a premium on the unity of faith and ideology, of sharing values and vision of man, society and destiny. It unites believers on the plank of their aspirations, their objectives and their innermost feelings and emotions. Of course, it unites them outwardly as well. However, more importantly, it unites them intrinsically as part of a single, unified community and fraternity. It goes without saying that real unity can be achieved only if people are united both outwardly and inwardly. Any artificial device cannot hold people together for long. For hearts reeking with hostility and rancour cannot come close. Symbolic gestures of unity cannot produce any genuine cohesion or singleness of purpose. Rather, a coalition prompted by selfish ends ultimately leads to chaos and disintegration. Legal ties alone cannot ensure genuine, abiding companionship. This explains why Islam bases the collective life of believers on the principles of faith, love and self-sacrifice. Relations based on these values have a rock-solid foundation, capable of weathering all storms.

Thus, society established on these ideals promotes mutual cooperation as against a life

of social conflict and survival of the fittest. Every member of society helps and assists others. No one is allowed to fend for himself as is the case in a society based on the premise of "each one for himself and the devil takes the hindmost." On the contrary, a vision of a society based on Islamic values is characterized by a commonality of interest and mutual help, support and succor for one another. Those lagging behind are encouraged to move forward. It trains the members of such a community to face problems together.

It is imperative for believers to assimilate thoroughly these fundamental values and principles, which lie at the core of social relations in Islam. Indeed, they should utilise their energies for strengthening such cordial relations.

As I have explained earlier, our very dear and respectable colleague and brother, Khurram Murad, has written this treatise so as to meet this basic requirement for those particularly associated with the Islamic movement. Notwithstanding his thorough grounding in Western education, Khurram Murad holds the enviable distinction of possessing ample Islamic religious knowledge and deep communion with the ethos of the Qur'an. His work is permeated with this

blend of the traditional and the modern, both in its thought content and style of presentation. The main issues under discussion in this work have the following three dimensions.

I. Islam aims at inculcating certain qualities in the character and conduct of believers with a view to constructing Islamic society, community and polity. As such a true understanding of the message of Islam demands a clear exposition of these essential values so as to have a true vision of the Islamic model-individual life as well as cohesion of society.

II. It is a natural corollary of the objectives detailed above that there should also be a clear appreciation of those weaknesses and failings that weaken the foundation of an Islamic society, of course with a view to avoiding them.

III. It is also a requisite of mankind's development of such a society that is charged with protecting it from negative forces which generates the character traits that they should also be identified and prevented so as to strengthen its foundation.

The learned author has brought out in full these dimensions. We are sure, if those associated with Islamic movement study this work attentively and endeavor to

assimilate the desired qualities, both individually and collectively, their lives would be filled with bliss and contentment. This would also make their social life a perfection of love, mutual support and solidarity. This will enable all of them to taste the true flavour of faith and brotherhood, that makes life meaningful and worthy of divine blessings and grace.

Let me also clarify for the benefit of readers that all the qualities identified in this book cannot be gained by them overnight. Instead, we should first grasp the overall scheme of building excellent conduct and then seek to develop these qualities step by step. It is only through sustained efforts that this vision of life can be translated into reality.

It is reported that it took 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar almost eight years to study Surah al-Baqarah, the second Surah of the Qur'an. On being asked to clarify this, he explained that he tried to develop, one by one, all the qualities mentioned in the Surah. It goes without saying that a gradual, unending effort is essential for character building. Study alone cannot guarantee a result. Instead, results are mainly contingent on constant striving, unceasing effort and uninterrupted self-evaluation. It is also worth-noting that one passes through many stages in the struggle towards self-development. The secret of success, however, consists in one's resolve, perseverance and confidence, first and foremost in God, and then in one's own self, under His Grace. One must be prepared to bear with failures and lapses. They are part of the game. They must not deter us, instead they should prompt us to further effort and struggle. Problems of all sorts will crop up. However, one should act with perseverance. Everyday experience shows that such trials are inevitable, and as such should never demoralize one. It is constant and increasing struggle that ensures ultimate success. Allah is so kind that He has promised reward even for tawbah (repentance) and a new effort. It is one's effort that counts. Effort is its own prize, a stepping stone to the final prize of Allah's good pleasure and Jannah. That is the Prize we are expected to keep our eyes rivetted to. May Allah help us all by making us engaged in an effort which in itself is rewarding. (Amin).

Two more thoughts before I conclude. Men and women are partners in this exercise towards self-development and social solidarity. They are like two legs, wheels in the same vehicle. Islamic guidelines spelled out in these pages are for both; there is no gender deficit in the Islamic milieu. References to 'men' and 'brothers' should not be taken in any exclusivist vein. Women and sisterhood is the other side of the same coin.

The other thought I would like to share relates to relations with non-Muslims. The

Islamic model for relationships with all human being is an extension of this very paradigm of inter-personal relationships within the Muslim community. All human beings belong to, what the Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) described as the one family of God. Allah has honoured all human beings (Laqad karramna bani Adam): We have honoured the entire progeny of Adam. Khilafah (God vice-gerency) has been conferred on all humans-every one is a potential khalifa, and becomes actual khalifa by voluntarily accepting this Divine assignment. A Muslim is related to all human beings through not only blood relationship arising out of common parentage, but also a moral and ideological linkage through da'wah and common destiny. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has made no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims in matters of human and moral obligations relating to matters of life, honour, property and human rights. That is why the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has said that if there is violation of any of the rights of the non-Muslims by Muslims, the Prophet would himself be a complainant for the rights of the afflicted non Muslims against a Muslim who has violated their rights on the Day of Judgment (narrated by Abu Dawud). The model of inter relationships with the Muslim community has outreach for the entire human realm. Sayyidana 'Ali has beautifully put it when he said: "If you are dealing with a Muslim, you are dealing with a brother in faith; if you are dealing with a non-Muslim, you are dealing with a brother in humanity." It is this attitude and this example which would speak volumes about the human society Islam envisions to promote. May Allah guide us in this direction.

I take this opportunity to thank my very dear colleague, Brother Abdur Rashid Siddiqi for his painstaking efforts in bringing out this English translation. May Allah reward him for this highly useful work.
(Amin)

Khurshid Ahmad
Islamabad
14th Ramadan 1426
October 19, 2005

CHAPTER ONE

Mutual Relations Between Believers

THE MUSLIM SOCIETY is organized on the basis of brotherhood. Brotherhood means love, respect, sincerity, sympathy and mercy for those who share our belief. Thus, it is

imperative that we should have and maintain sound social relations. The Qur'an categorizes the relationship among Muslims as that of fraternity: "The believers are but a single brotherhood." (al-Hujurat 49:10) although this statement is brief, it suffices to underscore the basis, depth and importance of mutual relations.

FAITH AND BROTHERHOOD

It indicates on the one hand that mutual relations between believers are based on sharing a faith or a life ideology. For all Muslims are devoted to the same goal. Faith permeates their thoughts and actions. On the other hand, it is not merely a formal, legalistic tie. This bond is characterized by its depth, and overflowing love. This is why it is exemplified by the tie of brotherhood. Fraternity expresses best the essence of this ideological relationship.

In Islam the concept of faith is not restricted to affirming certain metaphysical truths. It is an all-embracing belief which envelops one's heart and is part and parcel of one's being like the blood circulating in one's body. It is ever alive to the demands of faith and transforms altogether one's mind, thought pattern, and life style.

It controls one's body as much as one's soul. Together, this results in bringing about a revolution in both personal and public life. As the concept of faith is so wide-ranging, it does not and cannot neglect such an important issue as that of mutual relations among fellow human beings. This is all the more striking, for in Islam one's whole life has a social dimension, except for a very tiny part of private existence, the entire length and breadth of one's life represents a network of human relationships: family, community, society and humanity. Islam, therefore, instructs believers in developing and maintaining social relations, fulfilling what has been described as Huquq-al-'Ibad (mutual rights and duties in respect of humans) Furthermore, it directs that these be studded with justice and equity which help construct a particular society, culture and civilization. Islam prescribes a comprehensive code of conduct, enabling everyone to perform their obligations. This binds believers together into perfect unity and solidarity. Their mutual relations should be like the one found among brothers. This is both the prerequisite of faith and part of human nature, is endorsed by commonsense, and reason.

Those pledging allegiance to Allah abandon their loyalty to all else and are devoted wholly to Allah. If believers did not have cordial mutual relations, it would be very odd,

for ideological affinity serves as the most important unifying bond. This demands that believers should close ranks in all stages of their struggle for Allah's cause. Once one devotes oneself to the cause of truth, one stands in need of help, support, sympathy, consolation and comfort from all members · of the community of believers. If one fails to get this, it represents a serious loss, which cannot be compensated for in any other way.

The main objective of faith is to bring about the moral and social change on a universal scale. The establishment of Islamic society calls for strong fraternal relations among the Muslim community. It is not, of course, an easy goal to reach. For it involves numerous problems and challenges. Everyone's contribution is of the utmost significance in achieving this ideal. No one is expected to lag behind in delivering what is expected of him. It goes without saying that men with excellent morals and manners have always been few.

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS

No change can be brought about without the emergence of an organized and powerful group. And such a group is formed only when its members are fully united. They are expected to be unified like a solid rock in striving in an organized manner for their objective. This point is eloquently made in verse 4 of Surah al-Saff, where they are described as Bunyanun Marsus (a solid cemented structure). (61:4). The group should not let any divisive tendency raise its head. For proper organization alone is the key to success.

Allah issued the following directive to those at the helm of the fledgling Islamic society of Medina:

"O believers! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance. Strengthen each other and fear Allah that you may prosper." (AI 'lmran 3:200)

At the conclusion of Surah al-Anfal cordial relations among Muslims are set out as an essential condition for Muslims, in accomplishing an Islamic social change. It is specifically mentioned that those professing Islam should give up everything in preference for their faith, devote themselves heart and soul to their faith and display mutual love and friendship. The term wilayah is used in this context:

"Those who believed and adopted exile and fought for the faith with their property and their persons in the cause of Allah, as well as those who gave them refuge and aid - these are all friends and protectors of one another." (Al-Anfal 8:72)

While pointing to the organization and resources of unbelievers, the Qur'an observes that if Muslims do not develop such fraternity, their aspiration to cause a universal Islamic transformation, premised on justice and God-consciousness, will never come true. As a result, the world will continue to reek of mischief and corruption. For without the close tie of fraternity among them, Muslims may not be able to successfully face the forces inimical to Islamic ideals. The Qur'an says:

"The unbelievers are protectors, one of another: unless you do this (protect each other) there will be tumult and oppression on earth, and great mischief."
(Al-Anfal 8:73)

Their constant striving in the cause of Islamic society and Islamic social change is the very criterion of their faith:

"Those who believe and adopt exile and fight for the faith, in the cause of Allah, as well as those who give them asylum and aid - they are (all) in very truth the believers." (Al-Anfal 8:74)

Allah comforted the Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings be upon him) by saying that, apart from His promise of help, He would support him with the Muslim community in his struggle against his foes. For Allah infused unity into the believers and this would ensure the establishment of an Islamic social order:

"He it is that has strengthened you (the Prophet) with His aid and with (the company of) the believers."(Al-Anfal 8:62)

BROTHERHOOD AND FRATERNITY THE HALLMARK OF MUSLIM SOCIETY

Those working for Islamic revival are bound to one another by the bond of fraternity, mutual help and support, and love and mercy. The choice of the term 'fraternity ' in this context is very apt. For it is an all-embracing term. The workers of the Islamic movement . should be as dose to each other as two real brothers are, who are not prepared to let any difference affect their relationship. Rather, they are ever ready to sacrifice all that they have for one another. They are constantly engaged in helping, supporting and reinforcing each other. They share one another's sorrows and happiness and take them into their confidence in mutual affairs. They are drawn towards one another by a strong bond of love, which urges them to cooperate with one another.

Those devoted to the cause of the Islamic movement exhibit similarly close relations. The more they are committed to this, the closer their relationship is. For they maintain this relationship only for the sake of Allah. They are concerned about their fellow workers. If they lack this concern, however, they should reconsider their claim to be committed to the faith.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) speaks of this fraternity as part of the believers' love for Allah. This brings out the purity and captivating nature of this relationship. Since this love is related to Allah, it purges it of all impurities and imperfections. It is both a logical move and an impulse. For believers it serves as a norm for measuring their devotion to the cause.

Faith in and love for Allah go hand in hand. One cannot and does not exist without the other. Rather, one's absence makes the other doubtful. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is on record as having observed:

"You cannot be true believers unless you love one another." (Narrated by Abu Hurairah and cited in Muslim)

One of the prerequisites of faith is that one's love and enmity should only be for Allah's sake:

"One who loves for the sake of Allah and has enmity with someone again for the sake of Allah and gives and forbids anything for Allah is the one to have accomplished faith." (Abu Dawud)

It is borne out by history that friendship and hostility among men have influenced the course of events in world history. If these are linked exclusively with Allah, it amounts to taking a perfectly logical step. Faith has many branches and each of these is equally important in its own right. Love for Allah's sake is essential for a stable society and for its accomplishment. Likewise, an organized community is the prerequisite for bringing about Islamic social change and transformation. It is reported on Abu Dharr's authority.

"Once the Prophet asked us: 'Do you know which deed is the best in Allah's sight?' Some replied: 'Prayer, Zakat and Jihad.' However he clarified: 'It is love and hostility for the sake of Allah which He likes most'." (Abu Dawud)

On another occasion, while addressing Abu Dharr he asked:

"Which is the strongest element of faith?" He pleaded ignorance, saying that Allah and His Messenger know best. The Prophet then said: "It is love and adversary for the sake of Allah." (Bayhaqi)

Love for Allah's sake is the stable support, which enables one to fulfill one's obligations of faith. This support never betrays one. Faith covers each and every aspect of life until one's last breath. One should try to lead one's life in accordance with the dictates of faith. As a believer has relations only for the sake of Allah, it perfects his faith. It goes without saying that friendship plays an important role in life. One's devotion to faith may be measured with reference to one's friendship. Allah therefore directs believers to enter into friendship only with those who are devoted wholly to Allah. Another virtue emphasized in this context is of perseverance. For it keeps the believers on the right track, safeguarding them against distractions. The Qur'an's directive on this count is:

"And keep your soul content with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His face; and let not your eyes pass beyond them, seeking the pomp and glitter of this life." (Al-Kahf 18:28)

In the same vein the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has alerted us to the consequence - positive or negative - which are likely to arise out of one's friendship. One should take the utmost care in selecting one's friends:

"One follows the faith of one's friend. You should, therefore, think twice before you befriend · someone." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and Bayhaqi)

Friendship stands for love and sincerity. The parable of good and bad friends features in hadith in terms of joining the company of a perfume dealer. Even if one does not purchase any perfume, one's heart is freshened by the fragrance permeating the dealer's shop. By contrast, bad friendship is likened to sitting beside an ironsmith whereby one is bound to be affected by the fumes and pollution.

There comes a stage in faith when one starts enjoying the performance of the obligations of faith. The Prophet describes this as the sweetness of faith. One of its features, according to him that one should make a friend only for the sake of Allah. If Allah's servant is blessed with the love for his Master, it is the height of good fortune for him. There is nothing to compare with a believer's love for Allah. For it is his greatest achievement. According to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon hin1), those Muslims who love others only for the sake of Allah will be rewarded amply for this. Mu

'adh Ibn Jabal is on record as stating that the Prophet said:

"Allah says: My love is obligatory for those who love one another for My sake. The same holds true for those who join company, maintain social relations and spend money on others for Allah's sake." (Muwatta of Imam Malik)

In this world one should, therefore, try to develop social relations out of one's concern for faith, as doing so will be profusely rewarded in the Hereafter. Even a minor good deed, such as giving a date in charity or uttering a good word, will bring excellent rewards. We have already taken note of the implications of inter-personal relations in the context of the Islamic revival.

On the Day of Judgment, all human beings will be panic-stricken. So much so that one will flee from one's own parents, brothers, sisters, wives, husbands and children. Each will be more than willing to offer them as ransom for escaping Hellfire. On that day, the worth of friendship will manifest itself in the open. Friends will turn into the worst of foes, including one's bosom friends. However, friendship among the pious will remain unaffected. They will then realize that their good deeds helped them. The Qur'an brings out this truth thus:

"Friends on that Day will be foes, one to another except the righteous. My servants! No fear shall be on you that Day. Nor shall you grieve." (Al-Zukhruf 43:67-68)

One will meet the same fate as the companion with whom one had dose ties. Allah's pious servants who loved each other for His sake will join company there, even though they might be at some distance from each other. (Bukhari and Muslim)

On the Day of Judgment, there will be fire beneath men's feet. On their heads, there will be columns of fire. One will be surrounded by fire. There will be a single shade for man to take refuge under, i.e. the shadow cast by the divine throne. The following seven types of men and women will enjoy shelter there, as is informed by Allah's Messenger. Among them will be those who loved one another for Allah's sake and joined company for the same end. According to the Prophet, Allah will say on the Day of Judgment

"Where are those who loved one another for my glory? I will shelter them today under my shade. Today there is no shade other than my shade." (Narrated by Abu Hurairah and cited in Muslim)

Such will be blessed with exalted rank, as is promised by Allah:

"Those who love one another for My glory will enjoy light in the Hereafter. Even messengers and martyrs will envy them." (Narrated by Mu 'adh Ibn Jabal and cited by Tirmidhi)

Strong relationships for Allah's sake and based on the foundation of faith, are of the utmost importance for the Islamic movement. Any weakness on this count should be taken seriously, as the Qur'an contains severe warnings against those who sever relations. By the same token, it promises immense reward for those who settle disputes and reconcile their difference amicably, for the sake of Allah. We will delve further into this issue later in this work. At this juncture, we should bear in mind the Prophet's saying to the effect that weakness · in mutual relations poses a threat to faith itself. He compared it to a razor, which can shave the entire din. (Narrated by Abu Darda' and reported by Ahmad and Tirmidhi)

One thus realizes that the implications of such mutual relations are deep. Those sincerely devoted to faith are bound to have overflowing love for fellow believers. They are prepared to incur any loss at tl1e expense of maintaining their mutual relationship.

Workers of the Islamic movement stand out for their mutual love and affection. Allah speaks of it as one of His great favors.The Islamic community blessed with this should be proud of this privilege. For it ensures life and warmth in social life. It produces such an ambience whereby the believers help and support one another in pursuing the way of truth. They always seek to guide others to the path of virtue. In the early history of Islam, the Muslim community was fortunate enough to enjoy mutual love and unity and a strong sense of fraternity and solidarity. This point is eloquently made in the Qur'an and is mentioned as a divine favour:

"And remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you. For you were enemies and He joined your hearts in love so that by His grace you became brethren." (Al- 'Imran 3:103)

In Surah al-Anfal (8:63) while addressing the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) Allah makes the point that even if he were to spend all the wealth in the world he could not have united all Muslims. This signifies Allah's power and authority. Not only did He bless Muslims with faith, He enabled them to profess this faith, which produced, in turn, mutual love among them.

CHAPTER TWO

The Main Features of Conduct

ISLAM HAS PRESCRIBED a particular standard of mutual relations and laid down a comprehensive code of conduct for maintaining and sustaining them. By following this code one can come up to the standard prescribed by Islam. This code is based on certain premises. Once one assimilates these, one's character will be adorned with the requisite features. In other words, in abiding by this conduct one is obliged to fulfil certain conditions. Doing so, however, does not require guidance at every step.

ADORABLE QUALITIES

Sincerity

The first and foremost trait is sincerity. Nasihah is the term employed in Haaith corpus which delineates, in a very comprehensive fashion, the concept of sincerity. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) defined faith as nasihah. (Muslim) It is specifically mentioned that one should be sincere towards the whole Muslim community. Once, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) took an oath, invoking sincerity on the part of his Companions. What was meant by this was that mutual relations between Muslims should be free from insincerity. One should always work for the welfare of others and try to do good for them. One should not let any harm touch others. All of one's efforts should be directed towards helping others. One criteria of this is that one should prefer for others what one likes for oneself. For one does not harm oneself. On the contrary, one always strives to seek maximum benefit for oneself. Nor is one ever reconciled to foregoing what is due to one. One freely spends one's time and money on something, which benefits one. So a righteous Muslim does not put up with any harm for others. Nor does he tolerate any disrespect towards him. Rather, he gives him maximum allowance. These connotations of Nasihah should adorn one's cond uct. Accordingly, one prefers for others what one chooses for oneself. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) speaks of this as a pre-requisite of faith. He observes:

"By Him in whose hand is my life, one does not attain faith until one prefers for others what one chooses for oneself." (Bukhari, Muslim)

Sincerity also features in t he mutual obligations of Muslims. The Prophet underlines t he point t hus: "You should be sincere to your brother in faith, be he present or absent." It is a duty for Muslims that they prefer for others what t hey choose for themselves.

This attribute of sincerity is very broad in its range and has many implications for character building.

Sacrifice

This quality is represented by one's giving preference to others in what one likes most for oneself. Sacrificing one's interests for others' welfare is a valuable virtue. A devout Muslim acts sincerely towards fellow Muslims. He defers his own needs in order to help others. Likewise, enduring inconvenience himself he provides comfort to others. While starving himself, he would feed others. He puts up with unpleasantries without hurting the feelings of his brethren. It is indeed an exalted virtue. Everyone cannot be expected to have it. Those possessing it are, however, promised immense reward. This spirit of sacrifice should be reflected first in one's needs and later on in matters related to one's comfort and temperament. As it is, human beings widely differ in their temperaments. If each one of us insists that things should only be done in our way, it would destroy the social fabric. However, as one learns to appreciate the

taste and interests of others, one succeeds in fostering healthy and pleasant social relations. Another manifestation of the spirit of sacrifice is in financial matters. One may be leading a difficult life yet may accord priority to the needs of others. Such incidents mark the illustrious life of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions. The Qur'an states this feature thus:

"They give preference to others over themselves, even though poverty may be their own lot." (Al-Hashr 59:9)

Notwithstanding their meagre resources, the Ansar of Madinah warmly received the Muhajirin and gave them all that they had. The above-quoted Qur'anic verse relates to the following incident involving one of the Ansar, Abu Talhah. It is reported that one day a hungry person called on the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). The latter did not have anything to offer him. The Prophet said: "Whoever provides hospitality to this person tonight will be blessed with divine mercy." Abu Talhah took him to his house. However, on reaching home his wife told him that they had only limited food which would suffice only for the guest. He therefore requested her to put the children to bed and switch off the lamp. In the darkness the guest would not realise that his host and his wife did not share the food. When he met the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) the next morning the latter told him: "Allah is well-pleased with your conduct," and then recounted to him the above Qur'anic verse." (Bukhari and Muslim)

The above incident illustrates the spirit of sacrifice even in the face of financial problems. It is, in a sense, surpassed by the following incident which happened on a battleground. As water was provided to a badly wounded soldier on the battleground, he heard someone groaning nearby seeking water. He then refused to take the water, saying that it be served first to tl1e next person. The same situation arose as the next soldier was approached. This went on until water was circulated among six soldiers. As the last person breathed his last, water was then taken to the next person who had by then died. Thus all of them refused to take any water, insisting that it first be offered to another wounded colleague. Sacrifice thus consists in being content with something inferior while giving what is better to a fellow Muslim. Once the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) went to woodland and got two twigs to serve as tooth brushes from a tree. One of these was straight while the other one was crooked . He gave the better one to his Companion. The latter insisted that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) should keep the better one. However, he replied: "One who enjoys someone's company even for a short period will be asked on the Day of Judgement whether he discharged his obligations of companionship." (Quoted by Imam Ghazzali in Kimiya'-e-Saadat) In other words, one should make generous sacrifices for one's companions.

Justice

If a Muslim assimilates the following two essential features of good conduct, he will not face unhappy social relations. Rather, he will enjoy cordial relations. These qualities are being just and doing good. Allah laid down the command:

"Allah commands that you do justice and good." (Al-Nahl 16:90)

The imperative nature of this directive is worth-considering. The concept of justice has the following two components: striking balance and moderation in mutual relations a nd granting everyone his/her due. Justice also demands that one's moral, social, economic, legal, political, cultural and religious rights be granted to one in all honesty. A Muslim should discharge all the obligations prescribed by the Shari'ah to a fellow Muslim. His dealings should be governed by the dictates of the Shari'ah. Likewise one's behaviour should be in accord with the Shari'ah. For the Shari'ah alone ensures all the implications of justice:

"Assuredly We sent Our messengers with clear signs and sent down with them the Book

and the balance (of right and wrong) that people might observe equity." (Al-Hadid 57:25)

If one seeks to avenge the wrong done to one, one should restrict oneself to the measure of injustice done. Whoever exceeds this limit commits an injustice. The following hadith throws further light on the concept of justice, as directed by Allah: "One should abide by justice, even in a fit of anger or hostility." (Mishkat) Notwithstanding one's mental condition, one should not deviate in the slightest from the path of justice. What this signifies is that, even in the face of rancour towards a fellow Muslim one's dealings with him should be governed by Shari'ah norms. The next feature is Ihsaan which is a degree higher than that of justice.

Ihsaan

Ihsaan is of greater importance than justice in social relations. While justice serves as the basis of cordial relations, Ihsaan (doing good) adds to their beauty and excellence. If justice keeps out hostility in relations, doing good enriches their quality and sweetness. No relationship can be established on measuring constantly whether one has fulfilled one's obligations. One should not be very particular about one's own rights, with a view to ensuring that one gets all that is one's due. Rather, one should be ever-ready to do favours for others. A strictly business-like relationship may work. However, this would be lacking in mutual love, gratitude, sacrifice, sincerity and warmth, which are so important in life. Doing good stands for excellent conduct, generous dealings, a sympathetic attitude, good manners, forgiveness and making allowances. One should be prepared to accept less than one's due and give others more than what they deserve. This point too, is eloquently made in the following Hadith: " OAllah! Let me maintain ties with him who severs these. Let me grant him his due that deprives me of what is due to me. Let me forgive him who wrongs me." (Mishkat) In other words, this character trait demands that one should give others over and above what is their due.

More importantly, one should do good to him who wrongs one. For true believers are those who repulse evil with their good deeds.

Mercy

Another equally important characteristic is mercy, which is known by many other names as well. Allah employs the term rahmah (mercy) in the context of setting forth mutual relations among Muslims. It is a wide ranging term, as is evident from the

following Qur'anic observation:

"Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and those who are wit h him are strong against unbelievers (but) compassionate amongst each other." (al-Fath 48:29)

Mercy may be explained with refere nce to tender feelings and emotions, as a result of which one displays the utmost love, warmth, affection and kindness towards one's brethren. One cannot even think of hurting others. Mercy endears one to everyone and draws people irresistibly towards the merciful. It was one of the outstanding features of the Prophet Muhammad's conduct, as is specified in the Qur'an. It was instrumental in his da'wah and his training the Tarbiyah. For example the Qur'an says:

"Now there has come unto you a Messenger from amongst yourselves. It grieves him that you should perish. He is ardently anxious over you. He is most kind and merciful to the believers." (Al-Tawbah 9:128)

In the same vein, the Qur'an points out that had the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) not been kind-hearted, he would not have been able to draw people around him:

"It is part of the mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. Were you severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you."
(Al-'Imran 3:159)

Faith prompts love for fellow Muslims. As it is, love cannot be reconciled with harsh-heartedness. A true Muslim is, therefore, kind-hearted. The Prophet remarks:

"A believer embodies love and affection. One who neither loves nor is loved does not have any goodness." He is also on record as observing: "Whoever is denied kind-heartedness is deprived of goodness." (Muslim) This may be supplemented with the following Hadith: "One who is granted a portion of kindness would have his share in goodness in both this life and the next." (Sharh al-Sunnah) According to the Prophet one who is kind to his kith and kin and is merciful to every Muslim will enter Paradise. By the same token, the person who does not show mercy to fellow human beings is a wretched person, who is denied divine mercy. It is accordingly mentioned in a Hadith: "One who is a wretched fellow is deprived of mercy." (Ahmad and Tirmidhi) Furthermore, the following Hadith should be taken into account as well: "Those who are merciful are shown mercy by the Most Merciful One. You should be kind towards those

on earth, so that Allah may be merciful to you." (Mishkat) Two aspects of this kindness and mercy are reflected in the following saying of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him): "Those who are not kind to our younger folks and do not respect our elders are not from us." (Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi)

A Muslim displays affection for a fellow Muslim and tries his best to please others and avoid any discomfort for them. Thus, he meets all the conditions of his close relationship. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) describes the believers as forbearing and kind-hearted. For believers are like a trained camel that faithfully follows all commands. (Tirmidhi) The Qur'an, therefore, declares that believers are kind-hearted to one another. Mercy as a feature of conduct infuses new life into social relations. The person enjoying someone's mercy is ever indebted to his benefactor, and will never sever his relation with him.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness includes many features, apart from the fundamental sense of overlooking others' lapses. It also covers self-restraint, patience and forbearance. As two persons foster a relationship, it is natural that they may do something which may cause unpleasantness, bitterness, pain and torment to the other party. It naturally angers them and they may legitimately seek revenge for it. However, the love permeating their relationship will help them overcome their anger. They will be so broad in their outlook as to restrain their anger, which will, in turn, prevent any retaliation. In this way, they would rather exercise self-restraint and forgive one another. This was a valuable feature of the Prophet's conduct. Allah directed him to profess and practise forgiveness. While enumerating the characteristics of pious Muslims the Qur'an points out:

"(They are the ones) who restrain anger and pardon all men." (Al- 'Imran 3:134)

As one feels hurt or is harmed, one is overcome wit h anger. In a fit of anger, one may commit something which may damage mutual relations irreparably. One should, therefore, try first to control one's anger. When one looks at the whole matter coolly, one is likely not to commit any injustice, even if one is unable to pardon the offender. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) alerted Muslims to this danger on several occasions, directing them to suppress their anger:

"Undoubtedly anger spoils the faith, as aloe (a bitter fruit) spoils honey." (Bayhaqi) "Nothing is more pleasing to Allah than controlling anger for Allah's sake." (Ahmad)

Likewise, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) instructed Muslims to exercise patience, urging them to persevere even in the face of hurt and offence. They should maintain relations, rather than sever ties. His observation ran as follows: "A Muslim who maintains ties with people and puts up with the offence caused by them is better than a Muslim who severs ties and is unable to bear with the hurt inflicted on him." (Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)

While instructing Abu Bakr, he said besides other pieces of advice: "One who is wronged yet he is quiet for Allah's sake is reinforced remarkably by Allah." (Bayhaqi) A higher stage above patience is when one generously pardons one's brethren even though one is in a position to retaliate. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) narrated that when the Prophet Moses (peace and blessings be upon him) asked Allah who His favourite servant was He replied: "One who pardons notwithstanding his ability to take revenge." (Bayhaqi) By the same token, one who refuses to accept another's apology is warned thus: "One who does not entertain the apology of his offending brother is as guilty as the one who extorts illegal tax." (Bayhaqi) According to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), such will enjoy immense reward in the Hereafter who exercise self-restraint, though they could have retaliated: "On the Day of Judgement Allah will summon him and authorise him to select a houri of his choice." (Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud) Allah will pardon those who forgive others:

"Let them (believers) forgive and pardon. Do you not wish that Allah should forgive you? Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Al-Nur 24:22)

It is perfectly lawful to take revenge for any wrong done to someone. However, one who pardons is entitled to Allah's special reward:

"The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto in degree; but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah, for Allah does not love those who do wrong." (Al-Shura 42:40)

It is, of course, hard to develop this trait to pardon. Undoubtedly, it calls for firm resolve:

"But indeed if any one show patience and forgive that would truly be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs." (Al-Shura 42: 43)

This certainly improves mutual relations and is reckoned as an important trait.

Trust

The concept of trust is closely related with that of cordial relations among Muslims. The Qur'an employs a wide-ranging term, wilayah for describing such mutual relations. By definition a Wali is someone who is trustworthy, enjoying one's total confidence and to whom one may entrust all of one's affairs. This calls for trust and sharing in each other's anxiety and joy.

Recognising Someone's Value and Worth

This is the last characteristic which one is required to understand in order to appreciate the significance of relationships. For one attaches more value to relationships when one knows their true worth. In this respect, one is t hen never reconciled to severing his ties in any event.

DETESTABLE TRAITS

Allah and His Messenger have blessed us with detailed guidelines for maintaining good social relations along proper lines. Those things which are forbidden help us avoid any dent in our relations. By the same token, positive features lend further strength and sweetness. The following then, are those acts that are strictly forbidden for Muslims.

Usurping Rights

Everyone is entitled to certain rights. Furthermore, inanimate objects also possess rights over which one exercises control in the world. The same holds true for social relations. It is the duty of a Muslim to ensure that he never usurps anyone's rights, be these related to his material possessions or anything else. He should not try to get what does not lawfully belong to him. Nor should he lag behind in discharging any of his obligations towards another person's life, honour and property, as laid down by the Shari'ah. The Qur'an has placed much emphasis on these rights. Regarding inheritance, marriage and divorce and other mutual dealings, Allah has prescribed certain limits and asks men not to transgress them. This point is extensively elaborated in the Hadith. The Qur'an employs very strong language in emphasising the sanctity of these rights and warns severely against their violation and threatens offenders with dire consequences. Take the following Qur'anic passages as illustrative:

"These are the limits ordained by Allah. So do not transgress them. If any transgresses

the limits ordained by Allah, such persons wrong themselves." (Al-Baqarah 2:229)

"These are the limits set by Allah. Those who obey Allah and His Messenger will be admitted to Gardens with rivers flowing beneath to abide therein forever. And that will be a supreme achievement. But those who disobey Allah and His Messenger and transgress the limits will be admitted to Hellfire, to abide therein and they shall have a humiliating punishment." (Al-Nisa' 4:13-14)

The Prophet exhorted Muslims: "Allah has prescribed Hellfire and forbidden Paradise for him who usurps a fellow Muslim's due under an oath." When the Companions asked whether this applied to something of little value, he replied in the affirmative, saying that it held good even for a twig taken from an ordinary tree. Once addressing his Companions he asked them as to who is poor. When they identified a resourceless person as someone poor, he clarified that a poor member of the community is one who appears on the Day of Judgement with lots of good acts of wo rship to his credit, yet he is guilty also of abusing, slandering, hurting, beating and depriving others of their due. His victims will therefore be granted his good deeds. As a result, he will be left with nothing. Then the sins of his victims will be transferred to him. Eventually he will be hurled into Hellfire. (Muslim)

It is imperative to maintain social relations, both for a peaceful social life and for protecting oneself against divine punishment in the Hereafter. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) therefore made a point of exhorting Muslims on this count. He instructed that one should seek forgiveness from fellow Muslims before one's death.

An important point about honouring these rights is that every Muslim's life, belongings and honour should be safe from one's hands and tongue. This is mentioned as one of the features of a Muslim in many a Haidith: "A Muslim is one whose hands and tongue do not hurt other Muslims." (Bukhari and Muslim)

The Sanctity of Life and Body

Life is one's most precious possession. It is expected that no one should harm another. The Qur'an strictly forbids unlawful killing:

"If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein forever and the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him." (Al-Nisa' 4:93)

While delivering his address on his last pilgrimage, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) declared that the lives, property and honour of Muslims are inviolable, adding: "Do not revert to unbelief when I am no more. Do not kill one another." He is reported to have once remarked :"It is wickedness to abuse a Muslim and unbelief to engage in fighting with him." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Restraining one's tongue is more difficult as its misuse leads to great mischief. It causes quite complex problems which cannot be resolved easily. It is, therefore, important that this should be seriously checked. Allah and His Messenger have provided extensive instructions about controlling one's tongue against others. They have identified its root cause and drawn attention to preventive measures:

"Not a word does he utter but there is a sentinel by him ready to note it." (Qaf 50:18)

While giving instructions to Mu'adh, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) held his tongue by the hand and said: "It is incumbent on you to restrain it." When Mu'adh asked whether one would be held accountable for one's utterances, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) told him. "Woe unto you o Mu'adh! lt is on account of their tongue that men will be dragged into Hellfire." (Tirmidhi) Likewise, when Sufyan Ibn 'Abdullah asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) about what he should be most careful of, the Prophet held his tongue and pointed to it.

Speaking Ill

Verbal abuse of others and talking harshly to them is not permissible. Similarly, calling each other names is equally forbidden. The Qur'an asserts:

"Nor call one another by offensive nicknames. Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness to be used of one after he has believed." (Al-Hujurat 49:11)

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is on record as saying: "One guilty of speaking ill and calling nicknames will not enter Paradise." (Abu Dawud and Bayhaqi) In a similar vein is the following Hadith: "On the Day of Judgement the worst men in my sight will be those who talk in a vain and obscene manner, and who blow their own trumpet and make a false claim about their knowledge." (Tirmidhi) He also made the following observation:"A true believer does not reproach. He is also not guilty of cursing, uttering obscenity or talking ill of others." (Tirmidhi) What is important is that one should not attack others' honour.

Back-biting

Another mischievous deed is back-biting. One speaks ill of someone who is not t here to defend himself. The Qur'an uses the following powerful simile for this misdeed:

"Do not speak ill of others behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay you would detest it." (Al-Hu jurat 49:12)

Once the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) explained this offence thus to his Companions: "Back-biting consists in mentioning your brethren in such terms which he would dislike." When he was asked whether this was still valid if the person concerned possessed that particular weakness, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) duly clarified that it still constituted back-biting. Otherwise, if you were to accuse him falsely, it amounts to slander. (Muslim) Hence, part of protecting the honour of a fellow Muslim entails not speaking ill of him in his absence.

Telling Tales

Calumny is another form of back-biting. The Qur'an condemns it thus:

"A slanderer, going about with calumnies." (al-Qalam 68:11)

Hudhaifah ibn al-Yaman says on the Prophet's authority that such a person will not be admitted to Paradise. The Prophet (peace and s blessings be upon him) gave this special directive to his Companions:

"You should not convey to me any report about others for I prefer to have a clear conscience about all of you." (Abu Dawud) Back-biting and calumny may be done with gestures and body language as well and this is also prohibited .

Reproaching

Humiliating someone publicly, by drawing attention to their sins or weaknesses, may cause much discord and bad blood. This leads to the collapse of social relations. For no one puts up with public humiliation. The Qur'an therefore advises that one should not defame others. (Al-Hujurat 49:11) The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) warns that one who reproaches others will not die until he commits the same sin. (Tirmidhi) 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, while pointing out the obligations due to fellow Muslims, instructed that one should not target them for any sin which would discredit

them. (Tirmidhi)

Spying

Spying on others, with a view to detecting their weaknesses, is lt another serious social evil, for it offends the victim. No one likes that his lapses become common knowledge. This also creates bad feelings in the hearts of others. Often spying cannot be conducted through reliable means. Thus one is liable to entertain a poor opinion of others, based on some unreliable report. The Qur'an asks Muslims to avoid suspicion and mistrust. (Al-Hujurat 49:12) The Prophet's directive is of simila r import: "Do not be after the weaknesses of fellow Muslims. For one who spies on others Allah will expose his weaknesses. Such a person who is exposed by Allah is bound to be publicly disgraced, even if he retires from social life." (Tirmidhi)

Ridicule

Another major cause of social discord is ridiculing others, especially in being contemptuous of others. One's superiority complex prompts one to belittle others. The Qur'an alerts against this:

"O Believers! Let not some men among you laugh at others. It may be that the latter are better than the former. Nor let some women laugh at others. It may be that the latter are better than the former." (Al-Hujurat 49:11)

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has provided a graphic account of him who mocks others, as he will face a penalty in the Hereafter: "Those mocking others will be shown a door to Paradise and be asked to enter. As they reach the door, it will be closed and the same will happen again. This will be done so many times that they will lose strength and spirit to approach any door." (Bayhaqi) Some resort to imitating others as a means of mocking them. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) took strong exception to Umm al -Mu'minin 'A'ishah's mimicry of someone, saying: "I do not approve of this, even if I am given any material thing as an incentive for doing so." (Tirmidhi)

Contemptuous Attitudes

Hurting others may take on any of the following forms-abusing, telling tales, back-biting or ridiculing. What lies at the core of this is one's contempt for others. If one thinks

highly of others, one never takes recourse to ridiculing them. The Qur'an brings home the same point in its prohibition of such acts. Muslims are asked to consider that those being ridiculed might be better than them.

A pious person cannot resort to ridicule or look down upon others. For him, piety is the standard of greatness, which will finally be adjudged by Allah. Considering others as inferior means that he does not understand the value of iman. According to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), it is the heart which is permeated with the spirit of piety. He observed: "It is enough to become a mischievous person if one considers a fellow Muslim as inferior." (Muslim) He also directed that a Muslim should not humiliate or ridicule his Muslim brother. He made it plain that one with even an iota of arrogance will not be admitted to Paradise. He defined arrogance thus:"To reject truth disdainfully and to look down upon others." (Muslim) In a Hadith Abu Hurairah mentions the following as one of the reasons which would land one in Hellfire: "To regard oneself as superior. It is a despicable habit."(Bayhaqi) Believers should make it a point to deal fairly with fellow Muslims.

Suspicion

Suspicion is another root cause responsible for the destruction of relations. One should not entertain a view about someone without solid basis. As one thinks evil of others, mutual love is replaced by mistrust and hostility. The Qur'anic directive on this count is as follows: "0 believers! Avoid suspicion as much as possible. For suspicion in some cases is a sin." (al-Hujurat 49:12) In the same vein, is the Prophet's advice to his Companions: "Avoid suspicion, for it is tantamount to falsehood." (Bukhari and Muslim) The best course in this regard is not to doubt the intention of a fellow Muslim. For nothing can be said with certainty about anyone's intention. At most, one can speculate. The following points may be borne in mind to help one overcome this weakness:

1. The first and foremost precaution is not to suspect a fellow Muslim. Nor should one create a situation, which may give rise to any suspicion. One should avoid such actions, which create suspicion. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) shared some telling examples on this count.

Once while in retreat (i'tikaf) one of his wives called on him at night. As he accompanied her in order to see her off, he met two Muslims on the way, who abruptly turned away on seeing him with a woman. Immediately, the Prophet called them back and

introduced his wife to them. When they vowed that they could not entertain any suspicion about him, the Prophet clarified that Satan follows man like the blood circulating in his veins.

2. If suspicion does cross one's mind, one should not attach any importance to it. For this amounts to a treacherous act towards a fellow Muslim. Rather, one should immediately clarify the matter with one's Muslim brother, thus putting an end to the suspicion. One's silence might aggravate the situation further and one would be held accountable for creating suspicion against another person.

Slandering

If one accuses a fellow Muslim of a crime or sin he did not commit, this constitutes slandering him, which is the worst form of lying and acting treacherously. The same holds true if someone tries to implicate others for his own sins. The Qur'an maintains:

"But if anyone earns a fault or a sin and throws it on to one that is innocent, he carries on himself both falsehood and a flagrant sin." (Al-Nisa' 4:112)

Muslims are warned against this:

"And those who annoy believing men and women undeservedly bear on themselves a calumny and a glaring sin." (Al-Ahzab 33:58)

There is no place for slander in a relationship marked by love and trust.

Harming

This is a wide-ranging concept. One should ensure that one does not harm fellow Muslims: physically, emotionally or in any other way. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) forcefully made the point: "Cursed is he who harms or defrauds a Muslim." (Tirmidhi) He also remarked: "Whoever harms a Muslim will be harmed by Allah.

Likewise, one who offends a Muslim will be put to inconvenience by Allah." (Ibn Majah and Tirrnidhi)

Hurting Someone's Feelings

One should try not to hurt the feelings of others. There are many things which may hurt

others' feelings. Temperamental differences in daily life may cause offence. As a matter of principle, every Muslim should try his best not to upset or hurt others. This is the basis of the grave sin of back-biting. For by back-biting one hurts others' feelings. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) directed that in a gathering of three people, two should not whisper among themselves lest it hurt the feelings of the person who is left out. In a large gathering, however, whispering may not cause offence. The Prophet said:"Do not whisper lest it grieve the third person." (Muslim) Reflections on the Islamic moral code makes it clear that the avoidance of hurting the feelings of a Muslim is a fundamental principle. It is a serious offence, as is evident from the Prophet's following observation: "Whoever hurts a Muslim is as guilty as if he hurt Allah." (Tabarani) By the same token, if one pleases a fellow Muslim, it is an act of immense blessing accruing from Allah and His Messenger. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Whoever fulfils the needs of a member of my community and pleases him indeed pleases me. And one doing so pleases Allah, as a result of which he will enter Paradise." (Bayhaqi) This observation by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is worth noting, for it details that a Muslim is one who embodies love. One who is not kind and affectionate towards others and who is not loved by others is not a virtuous person. Even a joke may hurt someone's feelings. One should therefore exercise caution in cracking jokes lest it offend someone.

Once the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was travelling along with his Companions at night.As they camped, one of them took away some belonging of another which annoyed the latter. On observing this the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) remarked: "It is not lawful for a Muslim to harass a fellow Muslim, even for fun." (Abu Dawud) Likewise, when someone concealed a Companion's weapons, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upo n him) forbade this, saying: "It is forbidden to harass a fellow Muslim, even if jokingly.

Nor should he be deprived of his belongings." (Ibn 'Asakir)

Cheating

Muslims are asked not to cheat or defraud their fellow brothers and sisters. Nor should they even tell a lie which may land someone in trouble. Muslims should trust each other. For there cannot be any love or kindness, if the relationship is vitiated by mistrust. Many al:ziidith strongly condemn cheating in any form. The Prophet is on record, asserting. "The worst form of cheating consists in telling a lie to a fellow Muslim

whereas he takes it as truth." (Tirmidhi)

Jealousy

Jealousy is such a disgraceful disease that it vitiates close relations. It even poses a threat to one's faith. Jealously stands for disliking any of Allah's favours being bestowed on someone else, such as knowledge, wealth, beauty or perfection of any kind. Apart from disliking it, one may want that these favours be withdrawn. One is more interested in their loss, rather than in acquiring them.

At times, sheer hostility gives rise to jealousy while in some cases one's superiority complex, lording over others or lust for power accounts for it. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) warned against jealousy thus: "Avoid jealousy. For it devours your good deeds like fire consumes dry wood." (Abu Dawud) Muslims are specifically asked to seek refuge from it. The last verse of Surah al-Falaq instructs:

"(I seek refuge] from the mischief of the envious one as he practises envy." (113:5)

For developing the bond of fraternity, it is essential to avoid jealousy. We have already taken note of other directives in this regard. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) spells out this moral code in the following terms:"Do not look for others' weaknesses. Nor should you spy on them. Do not spoil others' trade deals. Do not be jealous of one another. Nor should you entertain any mutual hostility or rancour. Do not be disregardful of one another. Do not lust for things. Behave like servants of Allah and as brethren in faith." (Bukhari and Muslim) While elucidating the above Hadith, the distinguished hadith scholar, Hafiz Ibn Hajar 'Asqalani brought home the point that if Muslims were to shun all that is forbidden in the above Hadith, they would turn into brothers. On jealousy, in particular the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) made the following observation: "The weaknesses of earlier communities have crept into you as well. These are jealousy and hostility. They are like razors which do not shave hair but shave your faith." (Ahmad and Tirmidhi)

CHAPTER THREE

Social Obligations

RESTRAINING US FROM those acts and deeds that create discord in mutual relations, Allah and His Messenger have identified what promotes better relations and increases mutual love and trust. These directives help develop mutual love among Muslims so that

they become like the fingers of one's hand. Some instructions are obligatory while others are recommended as desirable acts. The Qur'an and Hadith enumerate these virtues which are essential for good conduct, and they are equally important for enhancing mutual love and trust.

Defending Honour

A person's most important asset is his honour and he cannot tolerate any attack on his honour and dignity. Muslims are accordingly asked not to dishonour their fellow Muslims. By the same token, they are urged to defend one another's honour. If a Muslim is being criticised or slandered, it is the duty of those present to defend the honour of the victim. One should feel as much offended by this attack as one would feel if attacked oneself. If one feels assured that one's honour will be defended by fellow Muslin1s even in one's absence, then one has overflowing love for such others and will take them as his genuine friends and protectors. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) pressed home this point in several a 1iidith: "If a Muslim remains a silent spectator as his Muslim brother's honour is being attacked, he is denied divine help when he is in need of such help. He will not receive any help from fellow Muslims. On the contrary, if a Muslim comes to the aid of a Muslim who is being slandered then be is helped by Allah in his need." (Abu Dawud) Allah protects such Muslims against Hellfire, as is clarified by the Prophet: "If one restrains others from molesting the honour of a fellow Muslim, Allah protects him against Hellfire." Then he recited this verse:

"Giving help to Muslims is an obligation upon Us." (al-Rum 30:47) (Abu Dawud)

Back-biting is a fairly common form of disgracing people, and this we have discussed earlier. However, in this respect the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) remarked: "If someone back bites a Muslim in your presence and you are able to help and do so, you will be helped both in this life and the Hereafter. However, if you refuse to help notwithstanding your ability to do so, Allah will seize you in both worlds." (Sharh al-Sunnah) He also advised how to protect a fellow Muslim against evil: "Whoever saves a Muslim from a hypocrite's mischief will be escorted by an angel who will protect him against Hellfire on the Day of Judgement." (Abu Dawud)

A Muslim owes many obligations to fellow Muslims such as help in solving t heir financial problems, resolving their worries and meeting their needs. One is not legally bound to do so. However, one may do so by way of doing good to fellow Muslims. One will be regarded or held accountable for the same on the Day of Judgement. It is not

possible to enact any legislation on such issues. It is rather the obligation of a Muslim to feed, clothe or fulfil the needs of a fellow Muslim by way of offering him financial help or emotional support. If one refuses to do so, notwithstanding one's resourcefulness, Allah will take one to account and ask one about His bounties so bestowed on one, which would have sufficed to meet the needs of fellow Muslims. According to the Prophet, Allah will say to such a person: "I was hungry yet you did not feed me. I was disrobed yet you did not clothe me. I was sick yet you did not call on me." One will have no answer to this line of questioning. For meeting the needs of a Muslim for Allah's sake is such a good deed whose reward cannot be imagined. The spirit of this Islamic moral code is that one should help and support a fellow Muslim i n whatever way one can. This entitles one to Allah's help and support, as is affirmed by the Prophet: "Allah helps His servant as long as he is engaged in helping his fellow Muslim." (Muslim and Tirmidhi) On helping fellow Muslims the Prophet further clarified: "If one resolves tl1e problem of a fellow Muslim, Allah will help one on the Day of Judgement." (Muslim) Some of his other directives are: "Muslims are brethren. A Muslim should not wrong or harm another Muslim. Whoever meets the needs of his brother and helps resolve his problem, Allah will rescue him on the Day of Judgement." (Bukhar'i a nd Muslim)

One of the important ways to help is to offer financial aid. Every indigent person owns a share in the bounty of wealth granted by Allah to affluent ones. The Qur'an has ordained shares for them as part of Zakat and charity. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) states the point:"All creatures are like Allah's family. The best one in the sight of Allah is he who treats this family well." (Bayhaqi) The Qur'an urges believers that the hungry be fed. This instruction recurs in the early Makkan Surahs of the Qur'an. On reaching Madinah the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) delivered his first ser mon in which he laid emphasis on four points which would facilitate Muslims' entry into Paradise. One of these was: "Feed the poor," and another was: "One is not a Muslim who has his belly full while his neighbour goes to bed without food." (Bayhaqi)

When someone mentioned his hard-heartedness to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), the Prophet directed him to: "Be kind towards the orphan a nd feed the poor." (Ahmad) Redressing a victim's grievance also belongs to the same category. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said:"Whoever attends to the complaint of a victim, Allah grants numerous rewards. It leads to the acceptance of his deeds. Such a person will enjoy exalted status on the Day of Judgement." (Bayhaqi)

Recommending the case of a needy person or interceding on his behalf is a praiseworthy

practice, as is specified in the Qur'an:

"Whoever recommends and helps a good cause becomes a partner therein." (Al-Nisa' 4:85)

Whenever a needy person approached the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), the Prophet referred the case to his Companions, telling them that they should recommend the person's case so that they too would get a share of that good reward. Once while speaking to Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, he clarified various ways of helping the needy: "Give part of the sustenance to others, which Allah has granted you, for it reflects both your firm faith and good deed." When Abu Dharr asked as to what he should do if he himself was in need, he was directed to speak good words. If one is unable to do so then one should assist the weak with a word of sympathy. Even if one is unable to do so, he should not, at least, harm others." (Sirat al-Nabi by Shibli Nu'mani)

The following hadith is worth-reiterating: "Whoever fulfils the worldly needs of others pleases me and whoever pleases me pleases Allah and the one who pleases Allah, will be admitted to Paradise by Him." Another hadith worth quoting is related by 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar. Someone called on the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and asked him as to who is best in the sight of Allah. To this he replied: "Among men Allah's favourite is he who benefits people most. The best deed in Allah's sight is to please a fellow Muslim by way of solving his problems and feeding him. One should do all that one can to help a fellow Muslim. I would rather fulfil the need of a Muslim than stay in devotional retreat (i'tikaf) in my mosque for a month. Whoever restrains his anger will be rewarded by Allah on the Day of Judgement. Whoever fulfils the need of a fellow Muslim will be strengthened on the Day when people will collapse, i.e. on the Day of Judgement." (Isfahani)

Sharing Sorrow

Apart from helping fellow Muslims and treating them well, it is part of good social relations to share someone's sorrow. One should also feel the pain that afflicts others. Muslims are likened to a body, of which each part shares the same experience of pain. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) employs many similitude in order to bring home this truth. For example, once he remarked: "You will find all Muslims in their sharing of love, kindness and sorrow like a body. For if one body part is in pain, the entire body suffers." (Bukhari and Muslim) On another occasion he clarified that a

Muslim shares the pain and sorrow of other Muslims. He illustrated the point thus: "A Muslim should be like a structure for a fellow Muslim, lending strength and support to him. It should be akin to a brick holding another brick. Then he joined the fingers of his hand to give a more graphic picture of their bond." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Scrutiny and Advice

It is the duty of a Muslim to keep an eye on the deeds and conduct of fellow Muslims and to try to help them to stay on the straight path. If a Muslim is seen deviating, he should be given good advice and counselling. The performance of this duty, however, often gives rise to unpleasant situations. Nonetheless, if one has firm conviction that the abiding success is only of the Hereafter and that every Muslim should assist his brother in gaining this success, there will not be any bitterness. For accountability in this life is much easier than interrogation in the Hereafter. We should be grateful to he who draws attention to our lapses. We should also, however observe certain etiquette in criticising and counselling others. It is important that this should be done with the utmost sincerity and love, so that it promotes mutual love and understanding. In such situations we should see our critics as our· benefactors. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) enumerated the conditions to be met in the task of advising others: "Each one of you is like a mirror to the other. You should rectify the wrong you note in him." (Tirmidhi) In another hadith the Prophet said: "Every Muslim serves as another Muslim's mirror. He safeguards his rights in his absence as well." (Abu Dawud) The following norms emerge in light of the above a Hadith:

1. One should not look for the lapses and weaknesses of others. For a mirror does not seek defects. Only on coming face to face does a mirror reflect you.

2. One should not be criticised in one's absence. Once again the similitude of the mirror should be kept in mind; it does not reflect someone in absentia.

3. One should not exceed limits in criticising someone else. For a mirror does not magnify or diminish any feature.

4. Criticism should be forthright a nd free of any ulterior motive. For, once again, a mirror does not entertain any revenge or grudge.

5. One should not persist after making one's criticism, just as a mirror does not save the image and safeguards privacy.

6. One's criticism should be made with sincerity, genuine concern, pain and love. This removes any bitterness caused by criticism. Sincerity in this context signifies one's concern for the ultimate accountability in the Hereafter. One should help a fellow Muslim in order to avoid any pw1ishment for him on the Day of Judgement. Nor should one entertain any superiority complex. Rather, one should take oneself as weaker than and inferior to the person criticised by him. Humility and not arrogance makes mutual care and advice effective.

Social Visits

One of the manifestations of love for others is that one loves to have the company of those for whom one has regard and affection. Visits enhance one's love for one's fellow Muslims and, furthermore, it brings people closer together. Love demands that one should see one's brother as often as possible. If the Shari'ah norms we have discussed before are followed then this greatly improves social relations. These social visits should not be an occasion to abuse, slander or hurt others. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) laid much emphasis on social visits and exhorted Muslims to follow this practice. For him, a pious friend's company was better than sitting in solitude. (Bayhaqi) While addressi11g Abu Dharr the Prophet told him: "Did you know that as one sets out to call on one's Muslim brother, one is accompanied by seventy thousand angels who supplicate for the one, invoking Allah thus: 'o our Lord! He joins company for Your sake only. Help him accomplish his visit.'" (Bayahaqi) In the following hadith too, the same point is eloquently made: "Once someone proceeded to meet his brother in another town. Allah directed an angel to intercept him. The angel asked that person about the purpose of his visit. When he said that he was on his way to meet a fellow Muslim, he was asked whether he was going to him to get back anything, which he had lent. He, however, denied it saying that he wanted to see his brother only out of love for Allah. On hearing this the angel said to him: 'Allah has sent me to you with the glad tiding that He loves you as much as you love your friend for Allah's sake'." (Muslim)

Once someone expressed his love for Mu'adh lbn Jabal, stating that he loved him only for the sake of Allah. He then related to him the Prophet's glad tiding that Allah loves those who join company, maintain social relations and spend money on one another for the sake of Allah. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) informs of divine reward in the Hereafter for those who foster and maintain social relations for Allah's sake:"There are structures in Paradise made of precious stones and with bright doors. When the Companions asked as to who would live in these, he clarified that these would

be allotted to those who love one another for Allah's sake, join company and call on one another." (Bayhaqi)

The emphasis on social visits and the promise of immense rewards are in view of the consideration that love increases with prolonged relations. One needs the help and advice of sincere friends during meetings with one's friends. If one does so with a view to pleasing Allah and in remembrance of Him, even one's social relations will play an important role in the development of one's good conduct.

In the light of the above-quoted a ahadith and arguments therein one should try one's best to maintain social relations with other Muslims. For this earns invocations and supplications of forgiveness by seventy thousand angels and Allah's love. Yet one should always bear in mind the objective of these social visits, namely that they are undertaken for the sake of Allah.

Visiting the Sick

One form of social visit especially recommended in Islam is that of visiting the sick. A sick person stands in need of others' help and sympathy due to his physical and psychological condition. One's sympathy and service is of great value to him. Visiting the sick contributes much to strengthening social relations. Visiting the sick is just one form of helping those in distress. Other ways of helping include sharing his anxieties and serving him. To be sure, there is a great reward accruing from helping others.

Visiting the sick is an important obligation which a Muslim owes to others. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) enumerating duties which a Muslim owes to others specifically directed that the sick be visited. While discussing the obligations due to fellow human beings the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) made it plain that these are prescribed by Allah. On the Day of Judgement one will be accountable regarding these duties. As to the command to visit the sick, he specifically mentioned that Allah will say:"O son of Adam! I fell ill yet you did not visit me." To this the bewildered person will reply: "O my Lord! You are the Master of the entire universe. How could I call on you?" Allah will tell him: "One of my servants fell ill but you did not visit him. Had you called on him, you would have found Me beside him." This hadith aims at exhorting people to develop the habit of visiting t he sick. For it brings one closer to Allah. As regards the reward for visiting the sick the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) informed us:"As a Muslim calls on a sick Muslim brother, he gathers the fruits of Paradise during the entire course of his visit." (Ahmad and Tirmidhi) "When a

Muslim visits an ailing Muslim seventy thousand angels pray for him until the evening. If the visit takes place during the evening, the same number of angels pray for him until morning. For such a Muslim there are the fruits of Paradise." (Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud) "Whoever calls on a sick Muslim is blessed with Allah's mercy. He enjoys the same mercy as long as he is in the sick person's company." (Malik and Ahmad) "Visiting the sick involves holding the person's hand, touching his forehead a nd enquiring after his welfare." (Ahmad and Tirmidhi) One important norm is to comfort and console the sick and share the person's suffering, in accordance with the Prophet's instruction: "When you visit the sick you should comfort and console him. This cannot change a divine command. However, your gesture will cheer up the sick." (Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)

When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) visited the sick, he placed his hand on the sick person's forehead and comforted him, saying: "Allah willing, there will be no harm." He then asked whether the sick person would like something in particular. He instructed his Companions in the same practice. (Abu Dawuid) He also directed them not to overstay with an ailing person or to make any noise.

Expressing One's Feelings

If one loves someone, it is expressed by one's emotions. Expressing one's feelings has many advantages. It serves as an outlet for one's emotions which keeps one fresh and active. If one is given to suppressing one's emotions, it has a demoralising effect on one's spirits and one's emotions do not find an outlet. The expression of feelings has a positive effect on social relations. As one sympathises with one's brethren, it indicates one's overflowing love and concern for others, which strengthens mutual relations. For one values a genuine well-wisher even more. Without this Muslims would not have a very stable relationship.

Since a Muslim has love for a fellow Muslim, it is natural that this should be expressed. It helps promote better mutual understanding. It also avoids any action on the part of either of them which could lead to bitterness in future. For avoiding any discord it is therefore essential that their mutual love not be concealed. Rather, it should be expressed, otherwise if someone expresses his love while the other ignores him, this causes misunderstanding and is bound to sow the seeds of mistrust and distance.

As one gives vent to one's feelings, especially of love and concern, this can assume many

forms. Each gesture becomes reflective of one's inner feelings. One may either express oneself verbally or through a variety of deeds. Ot her manifestations of love include treating others well, meeting their needs, counselling them with sincerity, trying to reform them, inviting them to meals, receiving them w ith a smiling face, shaking hands, sharing in their loss and sorrow and taking them into one's confidence in personal matters. We have already discussed some of these points and will take up others later. One's words are the most powerful expression of one's inner feelings. An offensive comment pierces one's heart like an arrow. It is often difficult to heal the hurt caused by the tongue. By the same token, kind words have a lasting effect. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) therefore instructed that one should

exercise the utmost caution in one's speech. For it might lead to the worst type of discord and collapse of relationships altogether. However, if one uses one's words properly and intelligently, it may greatly improve one's relations. Not many people realise this. Often kind words please people beyond their expectations. Even financial help cannot offer such delight as is afforded by pleasant manners and kind words. There are people who act miserly in complimenting others and thus deny themselves an excellent opportunity in winning others' confidence. Let us bear in mind the hadith which declares that one who pleases a fellow Muslim wins the pleasure of Allah and His Messenger. Needless to add, such would be admitted to Paradise. Some people are in the habit of passing offensive remarks and callous observations that hurt. They should better remember the hadith to the effect that one who hurts a Muslim is guilty of hurting Allah.

One's tongue is instrumental in expressing one's feelings in the form of greetings and blessings, using words indicating sincerity, concern and sympathy. The Prophet drew the attention of his Companions to the important role played by the tongue thus: "As men will be surrounded by Hellfire, Allah will take them to account. Men should, therefore, avoid Hellfire as much as is possible even by donating a date or at least speaking a good word." (Bukhari and Muslim)

In view of the above discussion and arguments, we can easily grasp the Prophet's teachings in this regard. He pointedly told his Companions:"As one entertains love for one's brother, one should let him know these feelings." (Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi) Once someone passed by while the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was sitting among his Companions. One of them said that he loved that person for Allah's sake. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) asked him whether he had said this to the

person concerned. When he replied in the negative, the Prophet directed him to go and inform hin1 of his love for Allah's sake, as Allah will love him too for this." (Bayhaqi and Tirmidhi)

Abu Hurairah relates that once the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) kissed Hasan, son of 'Ali, and that Aqra ' Ibn Habis was sitting there. On noting this he sa id that he had ten sons yet he had never kissed any of them. The Prophet remarked: "One who is devoid of mercy is not shown any mercy." (Bukhari and Muslim) In another hadith the Prophet said: "If Allah strips you of affection and mercy, I cannot help you." Of course the expression of one's love and emotion is most evident while meeting with others and we have already pointed to the importance and value of social visits.

Affectionate and Cordial Visits

Besides treating someone well, cordial visits are the most effective means for promoting social relations. Nonetheless, at such visits there should be no incidence of rude talk, reproaching, criticising, or ridiculing others. The visit should be characterised by a display of the utmost love. Numerous ahadith make the above points.

One should take care that there is no harshness, indifference or carelessness that can mar a meeting. About a kind-hearted person, t he Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "I inform you of him for whom Hellfire is forbidden. He is someone kind hearted, mild natured and lenient in attitude." (Ahmad and Tirmidhi) Such a person meets others cheerfully and smiles. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon hi m) instructed Muslims to cultivate t his habit. He stated: "Do not take any virtue lightly. You should courteously meet a fellow Muslim." (Muslim) According to him, it is also an act of charity to meet someone with a smiling face. One should not meet someone with a careless, indifferent attitude. Rather, one should indicate that the meeting has been a pleasure. Many Companions report that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to pay full attention to his visitors. 'Umar Ibn ai-Khattab relates that once while the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was seated, someone arrived and he made a gesture to make room for him. The visitor thanked him, saying that there was enough space for him. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) however, insisted that some gesture of courtesy be shown as a visitor arrives. (Bayhaqi)

Umm al-Mu'minin 'A'ishah reported that when Zayd Ibn Harithah arrived in Madinah and called on the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), he rushed to the door to greet Zayd. She had never seen him before in such an excited state. He hugged Zayd

with overflowing love and kissed him. Likewise, when Ja'far Tayyar returned from Abyssinia, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) embraced him, kissing him on the forehead. When 'Ikrimah Ibn Abi Jahl called on him, he said: "Welcome, to the migrating rider."

Greetings

It is an obligation to greet a Muslim in the prescribed manner. On the one hand it illustrates one's feelings towards that person and on the other, it is indicative of one's sincere wishes for him. When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) delivered his first sermon after arriving in Madinah, he instructed the Muslims as follows:"Introduce among you the practice of Salam (Peace be upon you - the Islamic formula of greeting)." On its importance, the following Hadith sheds more light: "You cannot enter Paradise unless you are believers. And this status you cannot achieve unless you have mutual love. Should I not identify for you something which would infuse mutual love among you? This is to spread greetings amongst you."(Mishkat) While enumerating the obligations due to fellow Muslims the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) clarified that on meeting one another Muslims should say Salam. He urged Muslims to take the lead in offering greetings, stating: "The one initiating Salam is free from pride and arrogance." He also remarked: "Allah's mercy is on those who initiate Salam." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud)

Out of love for one's brother one should supplicate for him and thus express one's feelings for him. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) made a point of greeting others first whenever he passed by them. He would greet everyone, men, women or children. With children he was more particular. He pressed home the point thus: "When you meet your brethren, you should greet them. If you get separated by a tree or a wall, you should again greet as you come face to face again." (Abu Dawud) He exhorted his family members to initiate Salam. He told Anas: "O son, you should say Salam as you enter your house. It will bring blessings to you and your family members." (Tirmidhi)

Greetings can only enhance mutual love, provided they are performed with conscious effort. For greetings signify one's sincere wish for the other person's welfare. The same cannot, however, be said of the ritual Salam, as it is practised now, for it obviously does not contribute to love.

Hand Shakes

After Salam another gesture of expressing one's affection for someone is by shaking hands wit h him. This practice was also recommended by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Anas was once asked whether the Prophet's Companions shook hands with each other. He replied in the affirmative. (Bukhari)

Shaking hands complements and manifests the spirit of Salam. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) explained: "Your mutual greeting is complemented by your shaking hands." He also said that it takes away any ill-feeling between the persons concerned. Here is the Prophet's glad tiding about the practice of shaking hands: "As two Muslims meet and shake hands with each other, they attain the forgiveness of Allah." In another (Hadith it is stated that Muslims should shake hands with one another, praise Allah and seek His forgiveness so that they may attain salvation. (Ahmad, Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Abu Dawud)

Addressing Each Other with Good Names

It is human psychology that people like to be addressed with respect. The more lovingly one is addressed, the more one is moved. Muslims should not display any stinginess in calling people with love and affection. Rather, they should make a point of addressing others in such terms as are expressive of their emotions. All those associated with Syed Al)mad Shahid's revival movement used to address one another using the word "Bhiii" (brother). Such good manners please everyone. One should also avoid using any expression which may offend others. Several n 1iidith commend that one should speak of others highly. On being asked what reinforces friendship, 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab insightfully observed that calling a friend by a good name strengthens the ties of friendship.

Taking Personal Interest

As part of sincere relations, one should take a keen interest in the personal matters of one's brothers. One should enquire after their welfare and express a keen interest in them. This persuades them of one's sincerity and strengthens the bond of fraternity. While instructing his Companions, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) told them:"As you enter a social relationship, you should find out another's name and the names of his father and tribe. This will cement your relationship." (Tirmidhi)

Knowledge of another's personal details promotes close relations. The above Hadith

both underscores and reinforces this rationale.

Exchanging Gifts

An effective means of expressing one's love and sincerity for others and for strengthening social relations is to give gifts. While speaking highly of someone is an oral tribute which greatly pleases the recipient, material gifts also bring people closer to one another. Exchanging gifts facilitates mutual love and affection, it also removes bitterness, if any. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Give presents to one another. It infuses mutual love and puts an end to bad blood." (Mishkat) The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) himself often used to give presents to his Companions. The same practice was followed by his Companions. The following important points emerge from the Prophet's conduct in this regard:

l. Gifts should not be beyond one's means. One should not hesitate to give a present for the simple reason that it is inexpensive. What binds people together is not the value of a gift, but the sincerity and love permeating it.

2. Gifts should be accepted with gratitude.

3. Gifts should be reciprocated and should not necessarily be of the same value. Rather, one should give according to one's means. It was the Prophet's practice both to give and receive gifts. Once when someone declined to accept a present, he expressed his deep displeasure of this.

4. Perfume was often the Prophet's favourite gift. Perhaps now-a days one may give a good book as a present.

Expressing Gratitude

Expressing one's gratitude to someone is a proper way of indicating one's love. As one feels that one's brother appreciates one's good work, it enhances one's relationship with him. On the contrary, this realisation that one's contribution is not acknowledged leads to frustration and sorrow. When a Muslim helps or treats well, or says a good word, or gives a gift to a fellow Muslim, it is the duty of the beneficiary to express his pleasure a nd gratitude. The recipient should indicate his indebtedness. The Companions report that when the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was offered a gift, he thanked the person for it and thereby accepted it. When someone did as he instructed them, he indicated his satisfaction. (Tirmidhi)

Sharing Food

Sharing food and inviting people to meals are examples of one's love and sincerity towards one another. At meal times people are relaxed and talk freely. When one is invited to a meal one feels thankful and appreciates that one's host holds one in high esteem. Such feelings obviously strengthen social relations. The Companions used to invite one another for mea ls and t he Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) as well used to invite them. Whenever the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) had some food or if he received food as a gift, he shared it with everyone there present. One need not throw a very lavish party when inviting others to eat. Instead one can offer what one usually eats. Any special dish, however, adds to the enjoyment of that meal. Whoever is invited should accept what is offered with thanks and gratitude. Like gifts, one should try to reciprocate the favour.

It should be noted that in the early days of Islam people were hesitant about taking food at the homes of their relatives and friends. Allah in Surah al-Nur, however, reassured them, telling them that there was nothing wrong in it. This clarification led to free and frank intermixing at meal times.

Supplication

Supplication encompasses many obligations that we have already discussed. In some way this infuses great love and affection. For in a supplication a Muslim seeks Allah's forgiveness for his brother and prays for his welfare. As we know, every Muslim shares the conviction that all affairs are resolved by Allah. So when a person observes t hat his brother is praying to Allah for him, he is bound to be moved.

One may supplicate for someone in their absence or presence. Greeting is also a kind of supplication, signifying that a Muslim prays for the safety, security, and well-being of his brother in faith. When a Muslim sneezes, the other Muslim is obliged, to supplicate by way of praising Allah. The former is also obliged to thank him for this loving gesture. Again, this is done while invoking Allah's mercy. Visiting the sick also includes supplicating for his welfare. So does attending someone's funeral. These are the rights which Muslims owe to others.

If a supplication is made for someone in their presence, it convinces them of one's sincerity and love. It is aimed at seeking Allah's mercy, hence, this supplication is a

practical step towards this end. As one notes someone mentioning one's needs to Allah in a way oneself would have done, it has a very good effect on one. The same holds true for supplicating forgiveness for others' sins and praying for Allah's pleasure and mercy. This is bound to promote mutual love and respect and such a supplication is generally rewarding. It also lends purity and piety to the relationship. Apart from seeking Allah's forgiveness and fulfilment of one's needs one should also supplicate that one's brother in faith pursues the way of truth steadily. One of the recommended supplications mentioned in many Ahadith is: "O Lord! Increase mutual love in our hearts and help us attain self-development." Some Ahadith recommend supplications that help in the removal of all hostility and enmity as they are serious diseases, which everyone should get rid of. One should therefore supplicate fervently for purging one's social relations of friction and animosity. One such supplication recorded in the Qur'an is as follows: "Our Lord! Forgive us and our brethren who came before us into faith and leave not in our hearts rancour against those who have believed. Our Lord! You are indeed, Most Kind, Most Merciful." (al-Hashr 59:10)

If a supplication is made with pointed reference to someone having one in their thoughts, it is likely to have a greater effect. It is the obligation that a Muslim owes to a fellow Muslim, whereby he supplicates for the other's forgiveness and for improving mutual relations. Such supplication also fosters relations. The Prophet's advice is: "When you visit a sick brother, ask him to supplicate for you as well. For his supplication is more likely to be accepted." When 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab was departing for Hajj, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said something to him. According to 'Umar the Prophet's words were more valuable to him than anything else in the world. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said to him: "O my brother remember me in your prayers."

Gracious Responses

A Muslim should try to reciprocate the love and sincerity of a fellow Muslim with more warmth and fervour. For no relationship can only be one-sided. The other person should respond in a gracious manner to his brother's kind gestures, as this will indicate to the latter that his gestures are well-appreciated. This applies to greetings, reciprocating gifts and saying words of farewell. We should bear in mind the following Hadith: "One should respond to someone's expression of love in a better or at least equal measure." Even the admission of one's lapses also contributes to better social relations.

Reconciliation

One should take account of all the measures that improve inter personal relations as this will also help prevent any deterioration in relations. Needless to add, these will inculcate love and affection among fellow Muslims as no one is perfect and all are liable to committing mistakes. As good inter-personal relationships play an important role in bringing about Islamic social change, Satan makes a point of causing discord among those working for this cause, constantly seeking to sour any relations.

In the light of the foregoing discussion on inter-personal relations, one should, therefore, ensure that one does not cause any physical or emotional hurt to anyone a nd all efforts should be directed at helping fellow Muslims, whether in their worldly life or religious life. One should express one's love for others openly. More importantly, one should respond positively to others' love and sincerity. One's appreciation of others' gestures should be clearly indicated. If these points are strictly followed, Satan will find it hard to make any dent in the social relations of Muslims.

However, even in the face of these precautionary measures if one apprehends any decline in mutual relations, the following norms should be maintained by Muslims. This helps to overcome the problems faced. Generally speaking, some complaints cause discord. There may be many reasons for these complaints. We have already tried to address most of them. Yet common to all complaints is the sense of in jury felt by someone. If it involves something serious, it soon leads to the severing of ties. In case of minor irritants, many such incidents together bring about the same end. Hence, Muslims should not think ill of their brethren.

First of all, one should not give others any cause for complaint. Rather one should try one's best not to hurt someone else's feelings. Moreover, a Muslim should warmly and kindly treat other Muslims while observing the Prophet's teachings on the Islamic moral code. Second, even if one has a complaint, one should try to resolve it amicably. Third, however, if the complaint persists, one should not take it to heart and abandon the noble path of forgiveness. The last course is to discuss it frankly with one's brother in faith, as any rancour aggravates the problem if it remains unresolved. It would be sheer hypocrisy to maintain relations with someone while nursing a grudge against them. Hence, without any delay one should try to restart the conciliation and restore cordial relations with the other person. Fourth, the person against whom there is a complaint should not get angry when he is informed about it. Rather, he should be grateful to his brother for drawing the matter to his attention. For his brother did not betray his trust

but instead brought the matter out into the open, providing him with an opportunity to resolve it.

Fifth, on learning that someone has a complaint, one should try to rectify it at the earliest possible opportunity. The longer it is deferred, the more complicated it becomes. It is always better to nip it in the bud. If one has made a mistake, one should sincerely own it and express one's apology. In this way, one is free to defend oneself. If the whole problem has arisen out of some misunderstanding, this should be allayed. A Muslim's obligation in this regard may be appreciated better in the light of the Prophet Jesus's saying: "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the alter. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23-24) The point made above is very valuable. If one is angry with someone, it is more important to have good relations with them than anything else. One can only please Allah when one's brother in faith is satisfied with one. This alone meets the spirit of the act of worship. It is therefore exhorted that one should first settle the dispute with one's brother before making any offering at the altar.

Sixth, when a Muslim admits his mistake, the best course is to forgive him. One should not deny this right to a fellow Muslim. Likewise, if he presents his defence, his plea should be accepted. This is also his right that one should believe what he says in self defence. The Prophet's advice is worth-remembering: "Whoever does not entertain the plea of his Muslim brother, will be held as a sinner of the category of one who imposes unlawful tax on the innocent."

One can only follow the above guidance when one realises t he immense importance of mutual relations, and when one values maintaining good relations. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) laid much emphasis on this, comparing strained relations to a razor that shaves one's faith. Those who know that abiding success is only to be found in the Hereafter, w ill prefer their faith above all else. They will ensure that their relations are not strained or weakened. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) issued harsh warnings against those who sever ties of friendship. Take the following as illustrative: "It is not lawful for a Muslim to abandon a fellow Muslim in a fit of anger for more than three days. He should not avoid having eye contact with him. A better person is he who takes the lead in greeting others." (Bukhari and Muslim) This saying points to the excellence of resolving disputes amicably. He also made the following point: "People's deeds are presented before Allah twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays and

every believing servant of Allah is granted deliverance. The only exception is the one who is hostile towards a fellow Muslim. It is said: 'let them give time for reconciliation'." (Muslim)

However, as regards the person who abandons his Muslim brother for more than three days the Prophet said: "It is not permissible for a Muslim to cut relations with a fellow Muslim for more than three days. If he does so for more than three days and dies, he will be consigned to Hell." (Ahmad and Abu Dawud) He also remarked: "One who abandons relations with a fellow Muslim for a year is as guilty as if he had killed him." (Abu Dawud)

It is likely that one party in the dispute may give up after having made all efforts towards reconciliation or it may be that he is in the right. In such a case, he is obviously not responsible legally or in Shari'ah for his actions. Yet he is exhorted in the Shari'ah to forgive the guilty brother while acting with generosity and tolerance. One may forego what is one's due. This point comes out sharply in the following hadith: "Whoever avoids a dispute, even though his claim is legitimate, will be granted a palace in the heart of Paradise. Whoever improves his morals will be blessed with a palace at a height in Paradise." (Tirmidhi) This forgiveness is the best manifestation of one's excellent conduct, and as recompense one will be awarded the highest reward in Paradise.

It is the duty of Muslim society to ensure the cordial relations prevail among members of the community, and that remedial steps should be taken wherever these are needed, as the social fabric is dependent upon this. Needless to add, good relations are the very spirit of a happy, peaceful society. The Qur'anic instruction is as follows: "The believers are but a single brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your brothers." (al-Hujurat 49:10) Once the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) asked his Companions whether he should instruct them in a deed which carried more reward than offering prayers, fasting and giving charity? The Companions said: "Yes please." The Prophet said: "Making peace between people. For causing discord among them amounts to striking a blow to faith." (Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi) He further observed, notwithstanding the strict Islamic ruling on telling a Lie:"He is not a liar who tries to make peace among people, speaks a good word and conveys truth." (Bukhari and Muslim) This means that one can convey, as part of one's peace initiative, something which has not actually been said, if it helps the cause of peace. Without telling a lie one may convey the message in such a way as persuades them of each other's love and sincerity.

In the light of these extensive guidelines, Muslims should not leave any room for trouble-makers. They should constantly safeguard and improve their relations. Satan cannot have his way if the Muslim community is on its guard.

Concluding Remarks

Mutual love, fraternity, affection and adoration are the fruits of faith. Rather, they are its prerequisites. The more one is devoted to the cause of Islam, the stronger the ties of brotherhood one will have with fellow Muslims. They share each other's pain and suffering and cheer at each other's happiness. Coupled with mercy and sincerity, which is prompted by faith, these social relations reach their highest point. Such a bond stimulates a community wit h dynamism, warmth and vibrancy which guarantees its all-round success. These blessings accrue when all the above conditions are met. We should, therefore, bear in mind the teachings imparted by Allah and His Messenger. Of course, nothing can be accomplished without Allah's support. It is a special divine favour to enjoy cordial relations. So, besides taking the above steps, one should fervently supplicate to Allah to infuse love and remove discord:

"He has put affection between their (believers') hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have produced that affection. It is Allah Who has accomplished it." (Al-Anfal8:63)

"Our Lord! Forgive us and our brethren who came before us into faith and leave not in our hearts rancour against the believers. Our Lord! You are indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful." (Al-Hashr 59:10)

Inter Personal Relations: An Islamic Perspective explains the Islamic code of conduct which should govern our social relations. Based on the Qur'an and ahadith, it instructs extensively in developing such moral and social traits and behaviour patterns which invest our social life with peace, harmony, love and joy. It presents before us the Islamic i deals of brotherhood and self development, which are the key to constructing a cordial, happy society. It was first published in Urdu in 1958 and attained a classic status and has been in print ever since. It has been translated in to languages of the Sub-Continent. This is the long-awaited first English Translation.

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