

In the Name of Allah, The Most Merciful, The Especially Merciful

بابُ التيسير

### Facilitating of Ease in Religious Duties

Given the array of commitments people have, one of the key roles of religion is to make life easy for them. Allah, the exalted, is most merciful and gentle towards His creation. Hence, His religion does not place undue burden on anyone. Allah, the exalted, says:

*“Allah desires ease for you; He desires not hardship for you.”*<sup>1</sup>

This follows that the Prophet upon whom the revelation was revealed would follow this way. Allah, the exalted, says:

*“It was by the mercy of Allah that you were lenient with them (O Muḥammad), for if you had been stern and fierce of heart they would have dispersed from around you.”*<sup>2</sup>

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to Abū Mūsa al-Aṣḥ'arī and Mu'ādh bin Jabal (May Allah be pleased with both of them), when he sent them to Yemen:

يَسْرًا وَلَا تُعَسِّرًا، وَبَشْرًا وَلَا تُنْفِرًا، وَتَطَاوَعًا لَا تَحْتَلِفًا

*“Be easy (with the people) and don't make things difficult, bring good news and don't estrange (them), accede and don't oppose.”*<sup>3</sup>

And the Messenger of Allah ﷺ also said:

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'ān 2:185.

<sup>2</sup> Qur'ān 3:159.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, ibn Ḥanbal.

فَإِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُمْ مُبَسِّرِينَ، وَلَمْ تُبْعَثُوا مُعَسِّرِينَ

“you have been sent to make things easy (for the people) and not to make things difficult.”<sup>4</sup>

It is clear that great emphasis is placed in Islam on facilitating ease. Something that is all the more pertinent given our demanding lifestyles. The facilitation of ease in religion can be achieved in a number of ways:

1. One ought not to make something which is difficult for people a pillar (*rukṅ*) or condition (*ṣḥart*). For example, the reverence for prayer requires that one should purify their mouth before coming to the mosque, therefore making it compulsory to use the *miswāk* before the prayer. However, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

لَوْلَا أَنِ أَشَقُّ عَلَىٰ أُمَّتِي لِأَمْرَتِهِمْ بِالسُّوَاكِ عِنْدَ كُلِّ صَلَاةٍ

“Were it not that I would have been hard on my community, I would have ordered them to clean their teeth with a *siwāk* before every prayer.”<sup>5</sup>

2. One should make those things which are a part of worship into such conventions which people can take pride in. For example, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ came to Medina and was informed that playing games in those two days was a pre-Islamic practice, he said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَبْدَلَ كُمْ بِهِمَا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمَا يَوْمَ الْأَضْحَىٰ وَيَوْمَ الْفِطْرِ

“Allah has substituted for them something better than them, the day of sacrifice and the day of the breaking of the fast.”<sup>6</sup>

In a similar way, a smaller Eid was made once a week that took into consideration human needs. We all need to take rest and take refresh. Islam recognised this desire and set the Friday congregational prayer. Hence, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

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<sup>4</sup> Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī, Nasā’ī, ibn Ḥanbal, Muwaṭa.

<sup>6</sup> Abū Dāwūd and Nasā’ī.

لِيَعْلَمَ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ أَنَّ فِي دِينِنَا فُسْحَةً

“So the Jews will know that in our religion there is room for pleasure”<sup>7</sup>

3. To make those acts of worship into customary practices which people desire due to their physical nature. So that both nature and reason will combine to motivate them. That is why keeping the mosque clean and fragrant and washing and scenting oneself on Friday was made a customary practice. In a similar way, to recite the Qur’ān in a melodious way was recommended, as the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

مَنْ لَمْ يَتَغَنَّ بِالْقُرْآنِ فَلَيْسَ مِنَّا

“Whoever does not recite the Qur’ān in a melodious voice is not from us.”<sup>8</sup>

The same applies for having a beautiful voice for the call to prayer.<sup>9</sup> Humans love beauty, Islam continued with this tradition of maintaining beauty in our actions and the environment.

4. What people find burdensome should be relieved as well as that which is detested by their nature.<sup>10</sup> That is why the leading of prayers by a slave, bedouin, or someone with an unknown lineage was detested because this would be found to be repugnant to people. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ forbade it and said:

ثَلَاثَةٌ لَا تُجَاوِزُ صَلَاتَهُمْ آذَانَهُمُ الْعَبْدُ الْأَبْقَى حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ وَامْرَأَةٌ بَاتَتْ وَرَوْجُهَا عَلَيْهَا سَاخِطٌ وَإِمَامٌ قَوْمٍ وَهُمْ لَهُ كَارِهُونَ

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<sup>7</sup> Muslim and Aḥmad.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Bukhārī and Abū Dāwūd. There is a difference of opinion as to what the word ‘yatagana’ (melodious voice) actually means.

<sup>9</sup> Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah.

<sup>10</sup> “Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them.” Qur’ān 7:157

“There are three whose *ṣalāh* would not rise up beyond their ears: The runaway slave until he returns, a woman who spends a night while her husband is angry with her, and a people's Imām whom they dislike.”<sup>11</sup>

5. Things should be retained which suit the nature of people and the removal of it would cause them discomfort. For example, the Sultan is most deserving to be the imām, or the owner of the house. And in the case of the one who marries a new wife he should spend seven nights with her, or three if she was previously married and then he should divide time equally among them.<sup>12</sup>
6. A practice should be made of imparting knowledge among people, giving sermons, and ordering good and forbidding evil so that their hearts become filled with it and are willing to follow the divine law without any discomfort. That is why we find Ibn Mas'ūd (may Allah be pleased with him) saying that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would:

كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَتَحَوَّلُنَا بِالْمَوْعِظَةِ فِي الْأَيَّامِ، كَرَاهَةَ السَّامَةِ عَلَيْنَا

“take care of us in preaching by selecting a suitable time, so that we might not get bored” (He abstained from pestering us with sermons and knowledge all the time).<sup>13</sup>

Wisdom dictates that an appropriate time and place should be chosen for imparting knowledge and furnishing good counsel.

7. Though he did not need to, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would act upon religious dispensations (*rukḥsa*) so that people could follow his way; piety and leadership does not always require one to follow the heights of servitude. Show people ease. For example, when the Messenger of Allah ﷺ went out to Mecca in Ramadhān in the year of Victory, he and the people fasted till they came to a place called *Kura' al-Ghamīm* and the

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<sup>11</sup> At-Tirmidhī.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

<sup>13</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

people also fasted. He then called for a cup of water which he raised till the people saw it, and then he drank from it.<sup>14</sup>

8. The fountain of blessings lies with Allah, the exalted. It was for this reason that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ would pray for his Ummah to become refined and perfected. Those in position of leadership and authority should constantly prayer for their flock.
9. Through the blessings of pious people, spiritual tranquility descends (*sakīnah*) by which people accept and act upon the divine laws. This is why the companions (may Allah be pleased with all of them) would become absolutely motionless in the presence of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Sitting with the true friends of Allah, the exalted, creates a desire to serve Him.
10. Ease in religion is facilitated by deterring the one who seeks to acquire something unjustly by being deprived of it. This is done to protect civil society from trials and tribulations. As in the case of a murderer who does not inherit or the one who forces a divorce will find it not legally valid.<sup>15</sup>
11. Something that is difficult should be legislated gradually so that it becomes easier for it to be accepted. It is for this reason, ‘Ā’iṣha (may Allah be pleased with her) said:

إِنَّمَا نَزَلَ أَوَّلَ مَا نَزَلَ مِنْهُ سُورَةٌ مِنَ الْمُفَصَّلِ فِيهَا ذِكْرُ الْجَنَّةِ وَالنَّارِ حَتَّى إِذَا ثَابَ النَّاسُ إِلَى الْإِسْلَامِ نَزَلَ الْحَلَالُ وَالْحَرَامُ، وَلَوْ نَزَلَ أَوَّلَ شَيْءٍ لَأَتَشَرَبُوا الْخَمْرَ. لَقَالُوا لَا نَدْعُ الْخَمْرَ أَبَدًا

“The first thing that was revealed thereof was a chapter from *al-Mufaṣṣal*<sup>16</sup> in which Paradise and Hell were mentioned. Once the people had rallied to Islam the permitted and forbidden were revealed. If the first thing to be revealed had been, ‘Do not drink wine,’ and if

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<sup>14</sup> Muslim.

<sup>15</sup> This is according to the three imāms. As for the ḥanafis, it does occur.

<sup>16</sup> The last part of the Qur’ān.

*‘Do not fornicate,’ has been revealed, they would have said, ‘We will never give up fornication.’*<sup>17</sup>

When advising and assisting people, consideration should be taken of their personal circumstances. Wisdom dictates that compassion and empathy be applied at all times.

12. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not perform any action that may cause peoples hearts to become disunited or entertain doubts such that he even left out some recommended (*mustahab*) things. We have his saying to ‘Ā’iṣha (may Allah be pleased with her):

لَوْلَا حِدْتَانُ قَوْمِكَ بِالْكَفْرِ لَتَقَضْتُ الْبَيْتَ حَتَّى أَزِيدَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْحِجْرِ فَإِنَّ قَوْمَكَ قَصَّرُوا فِي الْبِنَاءِ

*“If your people had not been new converts to Islam, I would have demolished the House and would have added (in it area) from the ḥijr for your people have reduced the area from its foundations.”*<sup>18</sup>

One should avoid anything that may lead to doubts entering peoples hearts or leading to disunity. Unity is of paramount importance.

13. To facilitate ease the Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not describe the finer details of acts of worship precisely. He informed us of pious actions such as the ablution, bath, prayer, alms-giving, fasting and so forth along with their pillars (*arkān*), conditions (*ṣhūrūt*) and proper behaviours (*ādāb*) but did not go into the finer details. He allowed them to reason and to understand from these words (regarding worship) and what they were accustomed to. For example, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ stated that prayer is not valid without reciting the *fātiḥah* but he did not go into the pronunciation of its letters. He explained that facing the Qibla is a condition of prayer but did not delve into how we can work out the direction of prayer. He explained the minimum amount for the alms-giving (*zakāh*) it to be two hundred dirhams but did not explain its

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<sup>17</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Bukhārī.

weight. He continued explaining things to them in ways that can be comprehended and they were familiar with. Thus, he replied when he was asked about the first crescent moon of Ramaḍān, he said:

فَإِنْ غُمَّ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَقْدِرُوا ثَلَاثِينَ

“Then if it is obscured from you, completed the number (of days) of thirty (of Sha’bān)”<sup>19</sup>

The reason for not describing the finer details of acts of worship can be understood by the following:

- Explaining would require another explanation and this would continue *ad infinitum*.
- It would become the source of undue difficulty.
- The divine law was imposed so as to apply to everyone; too much detail would become difficult on everyone.
- Giving too much detail comes at the cost of losing the spiritual aspects of these acts.

14. To speak to people according to the measure of their intelligence which was placed at the basis of their nature so that understanding the religion is easy. This was before people became interested in theosophy (*ḥikma*) theology and foundations of jurisprudence. This explains that when Allah, the exalted, said, ‘the Merciful sits upon the throne’<sup>20</sup> the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said to the black woman, ‘Where is Allah?’ and she pointed to the sky; then he said, ‘she is a believer.’<sup>21</sup> This is because this is how they understood things. Similar to this is the case of facing the Qibla, prayer times and so forth. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ did not require people to memorise formulae of astronomy or geometry and he

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<sup>19</sup> Al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, at-Tirmidhī, Nasā’ī, Ibn Mājah, Muwaṭṭa’

<sup>20</sup> Qur’ān 20:5

<sup>21</sup> At-Tirmidhī, Muwaṭṭa’.

indicated by saying, 'that the Qibla is everywhere between the East and West.'<sup>22</sup> And only Allah knows best.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> At-Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Muwaṭṭa'

<sup>23</sup> Taken and adapted from *Hujjat Allāh al-Bāligha* (The conclusive argument from God) by Ṣhāh Walī Allāh (May Allah show mercy on him).