



SOCIAL ISLAM

SOCIAL ISLAM

LEVEL 5

Objectives >>>

Students should:

- Understand the place and significance of the social rules of Islam
- Understand that these rules are set to ensure the perfection of society
- Understand that social rules extend to all creatures
- Understand that positive social actions are a great way of promoting Islam

The second level, which must be built from the first level of jurisprudential rules, involves acting in accordance to the social rules set by Islam. This is called al-Fiqh al-Kabeer (the Greater Jurisprudence) While al-Fiqh al-Asghar applies to only Muslims and is concerned with their personal relationship with Allah (SWT), al-Fiqh al-Kabeer or social rules applies to everyone and is mainly concerned with our relationship with the people and the environment around us.

Examples of social rules include but are not limited to social justice, personal hygiene, visiting the sick, etiquette of hosting guests and taking care of the environment. The third level which is beyond the scope of this lesson is called al-Fiqh al-Akbar (the greatest jurisprudence or Practical Mysticism). A true aspirant toward Allah (SWT) must endeavour to put all these three levels into practice to be able to achieve his goal.

Social Islam

وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا

“Speak (and do) good to people” (2:83)

In the previous years we were introduced to the importance of living by the social rules of Islam. In this lesson we will continue this discussion in more depth.

Islamic laws can be divided into three levels. The first and lowest level is called al-Fiqh al-Asghar (the Minor Jurisprudence). This level which lays the foundation for the other higher levels, involves all the rules for the obligatory acts of worship such as prayers and fasting.

SOCIAL RULES FROM ALLAH

We should understand that all these rules are set in place by Allah (SWT) who is our creator and knows what is best for us. Divine laws are meant not imprison us but to free us from the clutches of our desires thereby providing a harmonious social environment to live in where individuals are not drive by their own desires and self.

Such laws cannot be man-made. No man’s wisdom can encompass the world and provide universal and timeless laws, unless that man is a vicegerent of God. Man-made laws, which are manifestations of human ideas, are not qualified to bring genuine happiness to mankind; this is because men have a limited thinking capacity.

In today's world, it is not difficult to imagine a society where each individual lives totally for himself and goes to any extent to fulfil his egotistic cravings. Such a self-centred and materialistic approach is what divine social rules are meant to break and this was the purpose of sending down prophets.

“Indeed We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice” (57:25)



Both Sociologists and psychologists attest to the fact that without excellent virtues and spiritual guidance man would wander from the path of justice, and any society that does not abide by the principles of social rules will eventually disintegrate. It is for this reason that the destruction of previous great civilizations did not take place because of political or economic crisis but from a bankruptcy of good social rules and etiquette.

INTERACTING WITH OUR ENVIRONMENT

The beauty of laws from a divine source is that they are created with a holistic outlook i.e. the whole of the universe is taken into account. In addition to attending to human rights, Islam places great emphasis on looking after the flora and fauna around us because these too are the creation of Allah (SWT) and all of them play a part in making this Earth conducive to life. In the future, we will dedicate separate lessons to discuss issues such as animal rights and how to look after our environment.



PROMOTING ISLAM THROUGH SOCIAL GOODNESS

A Muslim who lives by the social rules of justice, equality, kindness and environmental care will easily be able to attract others towards him and rid them of any misunderstandings and misconceptions they have about Islam. Even Allah (SWT) attributes the power of the Prophet (saw) to attract people towards him to his kindness and amicable nature:

“And by the Mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you; so pass over (their faults), and ask (Allah's) Forgiveness for them; and consult them in the affairs....” (3:159)

Our Imams ordered us to treat others well, so that we may be a reflection of the beauty of Islam and the Ahlul Bayt (as):

Mu'awiyah ibn Wahab asked Imam al-Şādiq (as): “How should we interact with our brothers in faith and with other people that we mix with who do not follow our faith?” The Imam (as) said: “Look at your Imams whom you took as guides and do what they do. By Allah, your Imams visit their ill, and attend their funerals, and give testimony for them or against them and fulfil their trusts....once you become very careful about your religion, tell the truth, fulfil the trusts and make your manners with people good, then they will say: ‘this is a Ja’fari...’ and that would please me.”ⁱ

AN EXAMPLE OF SOCIAL GOODNESS

A believer is responsible for maintaining friendships with friends and good relations with neighbours, whether they are Muslims or not. In one story, Mufaḍḍal ibn ‘Umar, one of the close companions of the Imam al-Ṣādiq (as), comes to the Imam after a trip. The Imam (as) asks him about his companions on this trip. Mufaḍḍal says that he had a companion on this trip but that they had parted and he had not heard of or seen him again. The Imam (as) encouraged him to maintain his relation with that person, saying:

“Do you not know that if a person accompanies a believer for forty steps, Allah (SWT) will ask that believer about that person on the Judgment Day?”ⁱⁱ

It is amazing that the Imam (as) emphasised on even such a simple relationship. Many of us may not even give a second thought to someone we met while travelling. In fact, many of us often let friendships with people who we see often disintegrate. However, the Imam (as) orders his companion to not even let such a seemingly simple relationship to break.

This further demonstrates the emphasis the Imams (as) placed on building positive social relations.

ⁱ Al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 464

ⁱⁱ [Wasaelu-Shi’a vol.12, p.12]