

- **The Universality of Islamic Equality**

Where the laws of our civilization are concerned, every aspect of them is pervaded by man's equality. In prayer they all stand before God in the same capacity (as slaves of God), there being no place of distinction reserved for any monarch, chieftain or a learned person. In fasting too, they all abstain from food alike, there being no distinctive facility for the rich. And on the Hajj pilgrimage, people are all clad alike (in a white shroud), stand alike. And there is no distinction of any kind whatsoever made between (those living) far and (those living) near, the strong and the weak, and the classes and the masses. Then if we look at the civil code, we find that one and all are treated on the basis of the truth and justice. The main objective of legislation is dispensation of justice. The law lifts its banner to check people from injustice, so that all aggrieved and deprived persons may find refuge under its shade. Again, when we come to study the criminal law, we see that all men are equally liable to punishment in case of violation of the legal limits. The murderer gets murdered, the thief gets punished for theft and whoever is guilty of violence is admonished and corrected. The murderer may be a learned person or an ignorant clod and the murdered person may be rich or poor "whoever has been oppressed may be an Arab or a non-Arab, may belong to East or West, they are all equal in the sight of Law." {The free for the free, the slave for the slave, the woman for the woman} (Qur'an 11:178)

- **Magnanimity of Islam**

The Islamic Law is still more magnanimous, and irrespective of faith, race and race faith, and colour, it honours the entire humanity. The Qur'an declares: {We have honoured the sons of Adam}

This honour is the birthright of all persons, and with respect to creed and knowledge and the mode of living provides the same opportunities for all men. It is the duty of the Islamic state to support them all in all these matters without distinction. The Islamic Shari'ah takes man to an even higher plane, and says that decisions shall be taken by God in matters of the rewards and punishments not on their outward appearances and acts but in accordance with their intentions (niyat).

The Prophet says: "Certainly, Allah does not look to your forms and countenances but to your hearts" (Muslim)

Rewards and punishments depend on intentions. So we find the following tradition of the Prophet, which has been reported by all the Traditionalists: "All acts depend on intentions and there is for everybody what he intended"

And along with that Islam has also pointed out that the intention agreeable in the sight of God is that doing good, beneficence and seeking the countenance of God must be intended and no material or commercial objectives must be in sight.

The Qur'an says:

{And adore your Lord; and do good; that yet may prosper}

For this good turn that is done only to seek the countenance of God, it is not right to expect any return from the person benefited. The Qur'an has said: {And they feed, for the love of God, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive, (Saying), "We feed you for the sake of God alone; no reward do we desire from you, nor thanks}

The Wide Scope and Perfection of Magnanimity

Islamic legislation takes its philanthropy to perfection when it brings men, animals, plants, in-animate objects, the earth and the heavens to slavery of God and obedience to the Jaws of nature. The Quran reminds every believer in a beautiful manner in every unit (Rab'at) of the prayer: {Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful} (Al Qur'an I: 1-2)

And in this way it demands of every Muslim that he must always keep it in view that he is a part of the universe which is the creation of the Most Gracious, Most Merciful Creator, Whose Mercy extends to every-one and everything. Therefore every Muslim ought to make himself the manifestation of His attribute of Mercy in this universe of His in which he is living and depends on it too for his needs, although God does not in the least stand in need of his devotion and service.

- **Were these Proclamations a mere Show?**

These were the manifestations of the philanthropy of our civilization, at work in its basic concepts also and manifest in its laws when they were proclaimed for the people. Now the question arises whether it factually behaved like that when it came in power. Or this principle just remained on paper like the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations, whose anniversary is celebrated every year with great pomp and show, but the great powers of the world are trampling them under their feet every days, every hour throughout the year. Again, were these principles confined to the countries in which they had been proclaimed like the principles of the French Revolution that remained limited to the confines of France only, and those in the French dominions, colonies and those under mandatory rule were denied the privileges of liberty, equality and fraternity? Has any statue of liberty been erected anywhere else in the world like the one standing on the sea shore in New York that every one entering that country witnesses? And in the world outside, American policies and activities are practically chiding liberty, and the lovers of peace and liberty are being oppressed and crushed.

No. It was not so with the Islamic civilization. It accomplished what it professed. We ought to ask history since that is the only true witness. We ought to look at the brilliant aspects of the philanthropy of our civilization and see for ourselves what the facts, attitudes and acts of those in authority and ordinary individuals of our civilization, that are deeply impressed on the pages of history, are proclaiming loudly.

For Additional Reading: [Evidences of Equality in Islamic History](#)

**First Evidence:**

Abu Zarr of the Ghifar tribe somehow got angry with the freed slave of Abu Bakr, Bilal of Abyssinia. Both of them were the companions of the Prophet. The altercation became prolonged and Abu Zarr in his fury called Bilal the son of a black skinned mother. Bilal complained to the Prophet, who addressed Abu Zarr saying, "Did you call him a name reviling his mother? It appears you still retain vestiges of Jahiliyah (ignorance period before Islam)" Abu Zarr failed to understand the word Jahiliyah and took it to signify some sort of sexual immorality, and meekly questioned in surprise, "At this ripe age, O Prophet of God?" The Prophet said in reply, "Yes, you are his brother (and should be considerate and kind to him)". Abu Zarr who had by now understood the significance of the Prophet's remark, was ashamed and repentant and out of extreme repentance and humility requested Bilal to trample his face with his feet.

**Second Evidence:**

It happened once during the period of the Prophet that a woman of the Bani Makhzoom tribe, Fatimah, was found guilty of theft. She was brought to the Prophet so that she might receive her due according to the Shari'ah (Islamic Law). The Quraish tribe very much resented it since it involved their tribal prestige and dignity. So they thought of intercession by somebody for the remission of her punishment. It was therefore decided after deliberation to send Usamah bin Zaid for such intercession since he was very much in favour with the Prophet. So he was approached, prompted to intercede and he talked to the Prophet on this issue. The Prophet was very angry and said to Usamah, "You intercede in the matter of the limits prescribed by God?" Then he had the people called and harangued to a big gathering of the believers in a touching manner, saying, "The people before you who met their doom, discriminated between the patricians and the plebians in the dispensation of justice for crimes like theft. The high-placed were spared while the weaker elements of society were readily punished. By God if Fatimah bint-e-Muhammad had committed theft, I would have amputated her hand also"

### Third Evidence

Qais bin-e-Mutatiah, a hypocrite, once came to a gathering where Salman Farsi, Suhaib Rumi, and Bilal Habashi were also present. He remarked tauntingly, "Aus and Khazraj have rendered some service to this person (the Prophet, Muhammad Sal'am), but I fail to understand what have these people (Bilal, Suhaib and Salman) done (to deserve this honour). Mo'az bin-e-Jabal was there in that gathering, and catching hold of him by the scruff of his neck, he dragged him to where the Prophet was seated and told him what he (Qais) had uttered. The face of the Prophet became ruddy with anger, and dragging his sheet after him, he proceeded towards the mosque. The usual summons for the gathering of the believers in the mosque were given and the Prophet harangued to them saying, "O ye people! Always remember that your Lord and Cherisher is one and your supreme ancestor is one, and your faith is also one and the same".

### Fourth Evidence

Adi bin-e-Hatim came to Madinah before embracing Islam and found the companions sitting around the Prophet. They had just returned from some battles and some of them still had the armours and helmets on. 'Adi witnessing the awe of the Prophet and their reverence for him was himself inspired with awe. Meanwhile a humble woman of Madinah came to the Prophet and requested to see him in private. The Prophet readily agreed to talk to her in any street of Madinah named by her. Then he got up and at some distance from the gathering talked to her for a sufficiently long time, and having finished with her came back to the gathering. When 'Adi witnessed this state of affairs, he was very much touched by this inconceivable concept of philanthropy and embraced Islam.

### Fifth Evidence

When after twenty-one years of hard struggle, the Prophet conquered Makkah and those who had falsified him, had driven him out of his home and had been waging a war with him, were brought before him vanquished, even then he called them to the same thing and kept in view those principles which he had preached bare footed in the vales of Makkah or had enforced in Madinah as a ruler when he was laying the foundations of a new civilization in the Islamic history. That day he proclaimed those principles which he had been preaching while he had not yet gained his final victory. Standing at the gate of the Ka'bah he said, "O ye people of Quraish! Allah has, this day, put an end to your pride of the Jahiliyah (ignorance) and also the pride of your ancestry. Keep in mind! All men are the offspring of Adam, and Adam was fashioned out of clay". The Quraish who held an exalted position in the Arabian Society, and had a high opinion of themselves, listened to him in silence with bowed heads. On this occasion he recited the following Quranic verse which he had been reciting off and on: {O Mankind! We created

you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into na-tions and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you}

### **Sixth Evidence**

When it came to the period of the caliphate of Abu Bakr, he came forward as a ruler whose heart was full of sympathy for mankind. Notwithstanding his position as the head of the Muslim state he came to the girls of the locality whose farthers had become martyrs in religious wars. He milked their goats for them and assured them that his new responsibilities would not stand between him and his routine of benevolent acts such as that.

### **Seventh Evidence**

'Umar comes as a glorious caliph. He is sympathetic to the weak, is firm in his stand by the truth, and all are equal in his sight. He goes without food to feed others, and keeps himself deprived to give to others. He goes from door to door asking people about their conditions of living, and is well known for his activities in this behalf. For example, once he saw an old man begging in the market-place. He questioned to ask him about his identity. He said that he was infirm and old (unable to work for his sustenance) and was therefore begging to pay Jizyah and keep something for his daily bread. He was from the Jews living in Madinah. 'Umar said to him, "Old man! We have not done justice to you. In your youth we realized Jizyah from you and have left you to fend for yourself in your old age". Holding him by the hand, he led him to his own house, and preparing food with his own hands fed him and issued orders to the treasurer of the Bait-al-mal that that old man and all others like him, should be regularly doled out a daily allowance which should suffice for them and their dependents.

### **Eighth Evidence**

'Umar was going through a lane in Madinah, when he saw a very lean and thin young girl moving along shakily. He said, "In what a sad plight this child is? Does anyone of you (his companions) know who she is?" Abdullah bin-e-'Umar being closest to him said, "O Amir of the believers! you do not recognize her." 'Umar said, "No, I do not." He told him that she was his own daughter. 'Umar again asked him, "Which of my daughters is she?" Abdullah bin-e-'Umar said in reply, "She is such and such of my daughters (meaning that she was his Umar's own grand-daughter)". 'Umar asked him, "Why then is she in this pitiable condition!" Abdullah said in reply to his father, "Whatever is in your charge, you give us nothing from it. This indigence of mine has brought her this sorry state". 'Umar said in reply to his complaint, "By God! I have nothing for you more than I can give out to the believers in general, whether it meets your needs or not. The Book of God stands to decide just between us."

### **Ninth Evidence**

Once a caravan came to Madinah. It had women and children too with it. 'Umar said to Abdul Rahman bin-e-Auf, "Can you stand guard on them to-night?" So 'Umar, the second caliph, and he, kept awake that night together and kept vigil over the caravan. During that nightly vigil they both offered Tahajjud (late night and early dawn) prayer also. 'Umar on hearing a baby's cry and approaching, said to the mother, "Fear God and do look after your child care-fully." Saying this he came back to his own position. Once again he heard it crying, and going over to her mother once again gave her the same advice. When during the last part of the night the child cried once again, 'Umar came to its mother and said, "Woe to thee! Thou appears not to be a good mother. How is it that thy child could not sleep peacefully during the night." The woman little suspecting that she was speaking to the Amir of the believers, said in reply, "God bless you man, you have pestered me several times during the night. I want to wean it forcefully (before time), but the child is intractable." 'Umar asked her, "And pray, why wean it forcefully?" She said in reply, "Because 'Umar grants allowance only for such children that have been

weaned." Umar asked her, "How old is your child?" And she told him it was only a few months old. And 'Umar asked the woman not to be hasty in weaning her child. And then he led the morning prayer in such a state that his weeping made the recital of the Quran inaudible and unintelligible. At the end of the prayer he said, "Umar is ruined. He killed the children of the believers!" And at this, he ordered the crier to proclaim in the town of Madinah that the mothers should not wean their children only for the sake of the allowance for the children. From now on, every child, suckling or weaned, shall receive a stipend. And it was also proclaimed throughout the length and breadth of the Islamic state.

Unparalleled in the entire History of Mankind, By God! the entire history of mankind is unable to produce such a brilliant and glorious incident. None among the civilizations of the world can present any personage like 'Umar. He kept awake the whole night, keeping guard over the caravan and the caravan slept in peace. And we should keep in mind that he was the head of the Islamic state, and wielded great authority and power that had overrun the then super powers of Rome and Iran. And in spite of all that he did what a petty guard detailed to patrol the vicinity of a caravan in its sojourn would not do. He drew the attention of the crying child's mother to her babe and asked her to quieten her. Is there any one who can mete out that treatment to the children in a passing Caravan, like 'Umar? Who is there among the greatest personages of the history of mankind who can even touch the great human Consciousness of 'Umar?

### **Tenth Evidence**

And this is not all. Our civilization has still more glorious incidents to present. 'Umar's servant Aslam relates that he came out with 'Umar one night, and went far out into the open area outside Madinah. We were out on a fact finding mission to distant hamlets on the outskirts of Madinah. From a distance we observed fire aglow far off. 'Umar said, "I believe the darkness of the night and the cold have compelled some horsemen to sojourn here. Let us go and see." We proceeded at a brisk pace and reached that spot. We saw a woman sitting there with some children around her, a pot boiling on fire, and the children crying. 'Umar greeted her and asked the woman about her condition and also what was going on there. The woman told him that the darkness and cold had forced her to stay there for the night. 'Umar asked her, "Why are these children crying?" And the woman said in reply, "They are hungry". Then 'Umar asked her, "What is there in that pot on fire?" The woman said, "Only water to console the children so that they may remain quiet and go to sleep. And God alone shall judge between us and 'Umar". What the woman wanted to convey was that 'Umar was not fair and just to them. 'Umar said to her, "My good woman I What does 'Umar know about your state of affairs?" To which she retaliated, "Why then should he hold the high office of the Caliph when he is unaware of our condition?" Aslam relates that 'Umar said to him, "Let us go now". And we started from there with all haste, Aslam goes on to say, "and reached the godown of provisions (of the Bait-al-mal) and 'Umar took a bag of flour and container of fat and asked me to load the bag on his back. I offered my services but he angrily brushed aside my offer saying 'Can you relieve me of my burden on the Day of reckoning also?' So I loaded the bag on his back, and then we hastened to-wards our destination at a fast enough pace and soon he placed the bag and taking out some flour from the bag gave it to the woman and asked her to knead it while he himself offered to fan the fire to a flame. So he started blowing the fire below the pot. His beard was thick and I saw smoke percolating through his beard. He went on blowing at it until the food was ready, and he asked the woman to bring some vessel. And when she brought a platter, he poured out the contents of the pot into it and asked the woman to feed the children while he himself fanned to cool it. We sat there until all of them had eaten to their fill. What was left of the flour and fat was handed over to her and then 'Umar got up and I followed suit. The woman said, 'God bless you. You are more deserving of that high office than the Amir of the believers.' 'Umar said to her, 'Say only a good word. When tomorrow you come to see Amir of the believers, you will find me there, God-willing.' After that 'Umar went to some distance and retraced his steps and hid himself

close to their place of stay. I said to him that that was not proper on his part to observe them from the place of his concealment. But he kept quiet. We saw that the children were playing merrily and then they went to sleep. 'Umar thanked God and got up and turning to me said, 'Aslam I Hunger was growing at their stomachs and they were miserable and could not go to sleep. I would not have been at ease until I had seen them happy and comfort-able. So I looked at them from my position of vantage. You have also seen that they have gone to sleep per-fectly at ease."

### **Eleventh Evidence**

One of the unique incidents relating to sympathy and equality in the history of mankind is that 'Umar came by one night. It was usual with him to go out during the nights to see with his own eyes the conditions under which people were living. One night he found himself in one of the many valleys of Madinah. All of a sudden he heard somebody crying in a nearby tent, at whose door was standing a man. 'Umar greeted him in the proper manner and asked him who he was. He said in reply that he was a beduin who had come to Madinah to ask the Amir of the believers for help. Then 'Umar asked him about the crying and wailing inside the tent, which question the beduin tried to evade, saying that since it did not concern him, he should not interest himself in it and go his way. Little he knew that he was talking to the Amir of the believers. However, on the insistence of 'Umar he told him that his wife was in labour pain and has no one to help her with the delivery. 'Umar came back home and asked his wife, Umme-Kulsum bint-e-Ali, whether she was interested in the reward from God which He might have brought her way. And on her asking what was that, he told her in some detail, and asked her to take with her the requisites of a new born and the delivered mother and also some provisions for food. He took all those things from her and started, Umme-Kulsum following him. Soon they came to the Bedouin's tent and 'Umar sending his wife inside, himself sat with the husband, and lighting a fire started cooking food with the provisions he had brought with him. The Bedouin was even now unaware that he was sitting beside a great man of the world. Meanwhile the woman in the tent was delivered of a babe and Umme-Kulsum called him from inside the tent, addressing him as Amir-al Muminin, and asked him to congratulate his friend on the birth of his child. The Bedouin on hearing her words became conscious of the fact that he had been with the head of the Islamic state all this time and had been rude to him, and was awe-struck and began receding from 'Umar. But 'Umar reassured him and asked him to keep sitting where he was, unceremoniously. And when he asked Umme-Kulsum to offer the mother the food that he had cooked. And when she had eaten, he offered food to her husband, saying "Partake of it, you have kept up the whole night and have been inconvenienced. Come to me tomorrow and I shall see to it that your needs are pro-vided." When he came to him ('Umar) the next morning he granted an allowance for his new born babe and he too was liberally helped.

- **Let the World present one Parallel**

So far as my information is concerned, I can say with certainty that there is not a single incident as glorious, outstanding and based on the sentiments of fraternity as the one cited above, anywhere in the lives of the greatest men in the history of mankind. There is an incident connected with George Washington the saviour of Ame-rica that he was once going along the road when he saw that some soldiers were trying to lift a stone but were unable to do so. Their supervisor was standing close by but not lending a helping hand. George asked him to come to their help, but he refused saying that it was below his dignity. Washington kept his sheet on one side of the road and helped them lift the boulder, and said to them when departing that whenever they needed help in a difficulty of that type they could enlist his help at such and such address.

Certainly this is a unique incident and is an example of a high standard of mo-rality. But it stands no corn-parison with the incident of 'Umar cited above. 'Umar sacrificing his sleep and comfort of the night came out to find out the condition of the people, when he

found a woman passing through the pangs of labour, having no one to help her, he came home, took his wife with him and loaded with provisions himself and the wife with the needs of the mother and the new born infant, to go to the tent of a Bedouin far from the town in the darkness of the night. The wife, who, in our present day terminology, was the queen, plays the role of a maid-servant, a mid-wife, and he himself takes upon the role of the cook. Is there a single example of this height of man's psyche? The height which was never attained by any ruler of a state on this globe. This is one of those brilliant incidents that go to make 'Umar so great, and also one of the dazzling aspects of our civilization that it moulded a simple beduin Arab like 'Umar into a personage that even today occupies the highest stand among the great men in the history of mankind, just as our civilization stands out among the civilization of the world, topping the list.

- **Not One but a Multitude Rank after Rank**

Here we must also mention that 'Umar is not an isolated example presented as a perfect and affectionate person by our civilization. The lives of Abu Bakr, Uthman and 'Ali (God be pleased with them all) were also moulded in the mould of perfect humanity, brimming over with mercy and affection. Also the lives of 'Umar bin-e-Abd-al-Aziz, Salahuddin Ayyubi and many other big personages, the 'ulama' the legists, philosophers and leaders also present countless immortal examples, which is a brilliant evidence in favour of our glorious civilization from every aspect.