

Is Islam a Religion of Ease or Hardship? An Analysis of the Muslim Scripture and Patterns of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him)

Thameem Ushama¹

¹ Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge & Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Correspondence: Thameem Ushama, Jalan Sungai Pusu, 53100 Gombak, P. O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Malaysia. Tel: 60-36-196-5550. E-mail: ushama_thameem@yahoo.co.uk; thameem@iiium.edu.my

Received: September 7, 2014 Accepted: September 23, 2014 Online Published: December 2, 2014

doi:10.5539/ass.v11n1p51

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n1p51>

Abstract

This paper analyses whether Islam is a religion of ease or hardship. It defines the Arabic terms used in the Scripture and Prophetic Traditions. It employs the method of content analysis of relevant verses of the Scripture and statements of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that refer to the feature of ease and removal of hardship in religion and its legal injunctions. It highlights scholars' classification of hardship. It explores theoretical evidence for ease and removal of hardship in the Scripture and Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It also focuses on applied evidence by highlighting the methodology of conveying God's Message and the methodology of applying the Divine injunctions in real life, including the Prophet's engagement with ease and facilitation and his dispositions in interpreting the revealed texts along with his verdicts manifesting flexibility. This is followed by the stands of the Prophet's Companions and the Successors in relation to ease and removal of hardship.

Keywords: concession, ease, flexibility, hardship, rigidity, ruling, religion

1. Introduction

Currently, due to the remarkable advancement of information and communication technology, people have unlimited access to all sorts of information: positive, negative and neutral, objective and non-objective, religious and non-religious, irreligious and anti-religious. As diversified transmission of information in the social media is on the rise, it is natural to raise questions about its validity, reliability and authenticity. Since information is also conveniently available without incurring cost, people not only read but cite it in their daily discourses or transmit it to others without first verifying its truthfulness and ideological as well as philosophical origins. Some are interested in information in relation to religions while others are inclined to political or cultural or recreational analyses. Those who are interested in information on religions and their role in human and civilisation development pose questions and make comments due to the influx of liberal, secular and atheistic interpretations of human life.

Often, a human being is projected as a social or economic or intellectual animal or vegetable. Not only the social media, the global entertainment industry too plays its role in diverting the attention of people, especially the youth, from their priorities; despite so-called benefits, there is still some loss of their precious time. Most of the world's religions face challenges from post-modernists, secularists and free thinkers due to their liberal interpretations which are not only non-religious compliant but anti-religious. Contrary to this, the worldviews of religions are absolutely different from the views of people and scholars with vested interests who have little or no sympathy for religions and their worldviews.

As people raise questions about the authenticity of information including of religions, they also put forward questions about Islam - the religion or the way of life and its essentials, principles, characteristics and features. Both the educated and the illiterate sections of various societies are suspicious and sceptical about Islam's features and characteristics and its positive contributions to world civilisations and communities. Though some may not agree, there are signs that the worldview of Islam is misunderstood to the extent that it is alleged to be narrow, hard, inflexible, rigid and impractical, whereas the key sources of religion portray Islam as containing several features including the feature of ease, facilitation and elimination of hardship.

Is it true that the worldview of Islam is incompatible to human nature? Is it true that it is a religion of irrational beliefs? Is it true that it is a religion of complicated rituals? Is it true that it makes its adherents suffer and become frustrated due to its obligatory acts? Is it true that it is incomprehensible? Is it true that it is harsh and punishes people without alternatives? Is it true that it does not consider realistic situations and circumstances? Is it true that its teachings are hard and non-implementable, either individually or socially? As many questions are hurled onto Islam, its flexibility and practicability, it is appropriate to explore answers from the Scripture and Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to see whether they provide convincing responses, for these are the authentic revealed sources of Islam.

Ethically, considering questions raised by people or scholars of different trends or orientations or denominations should be responded with evidence. If necessary, an intellectual discourse or debate should be held to enable questioners to understand the true phenomenon. The responses should be drawn from authentic scriptural sources, not hearsays or speculations. The authentic sources of Muslims are the Qur'an - the Muslim Scripture (henceforth, the Scripture), a verbatim revelation from God and Patterns of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (henceforth, the Prophet) which are regarded as Prophetic practices and demonstrations which were followed by his Companions, the Successors and their Followers. Muslims not only emulate but actualise them and this is comprehensive, addressing all issues in relation to various aspects of life.

Thus, this paper analyses the Scripture and Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It draws the attention of readers to some of the verdicts of the Companions as well as the Successors that reflect removal of hardship in religion and its injunctions. It aims to awaken Muslims in particular and others in general towards realisation of the true state of Islam and its worldview and activate their reasoning and kindle their consciousness to realise the truth about Islamic concepts, rulings, rituals, systems, etc. It attempts to eliminate misconceptions (if any) about the religion that it is hard to practise in real life.

The methodology applied is qualitative. As such, it employs content analysis of relevant verses of the Scripture and statements of the Prophet (peace be upon him) that refer to the feature of ease and removal of hardship in religion, followed by the stands of the Companions and the Successors in addition to explanations of selected Qur'anic exegetes, both classical and contemporary. Considering the limitations, this study provides a few examples from early Islamic sources.

It is recorded in Islamic traditions that God has ennobled the Muslim community and gifted it with privileges and concessions. According to Muslim scholars, facilitations are specific to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his community but earlier communities were not privileged to enjoy such concessions. In relation to this claim, al-Ṭabarī has recorded a Tradition on the authority of Qatādah who said that this community had been gifted with three things. They are [1] God has not made any hardship in religion (*Al-Ḥajj*, verse no. 78), [2] God has made Muhammad (peace be upon him) as a witness for this community (*Al-Baqarah*, verse no. 143) and [3] God has offered human beings the right to call Him without any intercessor(s) for which there will be response from Him, immediately or later (*Ghāfir*, verse no. 60).

Commencing with an introduction in Section One, the second section defines the Arabic terms used in the Scripture, the Traditions and interpretations of the exegetes. The third section highlights classification of hardship. Introducing removal of hardship in religion, the fourth section explores theoretical evidence for ease and removal of hardship in the Scripture and Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him). It also focuses on applied evidence by referring to the methodology of conveying God's Message and the methodology of applying the Divine injunctions in life where concentration is made to articulate the Prophet's engagement with ease and facilitation and his dispositions in interpreting the revealed texts, including his verdicts. As the stands of the Companions and the Successors are extremely important, the fifth section discusses their verdicts. Lastly, it provides a conclusion and recommendations.

It has been implanted in the hearts of Muslim people right from the first generation till today that God has provided ease for His devotees, lightened the injunctions and eliminated hardship in religious matters. This feature of removal of hardship is reflected in the spirit of legislation of rulings and the highest of distinction and excellence. In spite of several evidence for the removal of hardship (*raf' al-ḥaraj*), this Arabic expression does not exactly appear in the Scripture or Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him).

The Chapters *al-Ḥajj*, verse no. 78, *al-Mā'idah*, verse no. 6, *al-Tawbah*, verse no. 91, *al-Aḥzāb*, verse no. 38 and *al-Nūr*, verse no. 61 are evidence to the phenomenon that God has removed hardship from the Muslim community and does not impose burden on a human being in implementing legal rulings. The religion considers the human being's psychology and nature. It aims to satisfy human nature and acknowledges the human's abilities in order for him to use them constructively so that religious injunctions are put into practice without

burden or frustrations. Human nature is neither suppressed nor left uncontrolled or unguided. Whenever legal rulings are seemingly rigid or hard to perform, justifications are given. Ease and removal of hardship in legal rulings and obligatory acts are quite clear. Any ruling or command that seems to impose hardship has proper validation. Overall, no imposition against human ability or nature is observed in Islamic injunctions or requirements (Ushama, 2014).

2. Arabic Terms Used in the Scripture

Deriving from the trilateral word *yasara*, the Scripture uses the term *yusr* which refers to ease, relief, tenderness, flexibility, compliance and submission. Technically, the term *yusr* refers to an action that a person does without any restriction or oppression or hardship. It is explicit from the Scripture that God does not place burden on any soul except what it can bear in terms of capability without distancing the goal of ability. A human being has the ability to pray more than five times a day, to observe fasting more than a month in a year and to perform pilgrimage more than once in life but God prescribes neither maximum nor minimum but what is possible by everyone, whether it is in acts of devotion or worldly matters (Al-Zamakhsharī, n. d., Vol. 1, p. 408). It is also mentioned that the term *yusr* refers to an action that a soul is able to perform without fatigue or exhaustion or causing heaviness to body (Al-Qāsimī, 1957, Vol. 2, p. 427); it refers to what man does without being afflicted by hardship and additional burden, without sacrificing his ability and effort and without pain (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 46).

Deriving from the trilateral word *ḥaraja*, the Scripture uses the term *ḥaraj* which literally means narrowness, tightness, closeness, restriction, limitation and dejectedness (Cowan, 1980). Technically, it refers to every action that places additional burden or hardship or disturbs body or soul or wealth or affects one's finances (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 47). Even though the term *ḥaraj* has several meanings, it does not deviate from the meaning of narrowness. Ibn Athīr says that *ḥaraj* essentially refers to narrowness or tightness and it stands for sin and unlawful activities (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 47). The nearest meaning of *rafʿ* is abolition or elimination or lifting or removal of something from its place.

The expression *rafʿ al-ḥaraj* is used in the discourses of jurists. Other expressions such as *dafʿ al-ḥaraj*, *waqf al-ḥaraj* and *naft al-ḥaraj* are frequent with the same meaning. Often, these expressions are used interchangeably. Literally, *rafʿ al-ḥaraj* refers to removing tightness or narrowness or pressure or sin or the unlawful. The term *ḥaraj* appears fifteen times in the Scripture. It is used with the meaning of *ithm* (sin) in Chapters *al-Nūr*, *al-Tawbah*, *al-Nisā'* and *al-Anʿām*, referring to partial issues while explaining excuses for leaving *jihād* or permitting marriages of wives. The term also appears with the meaning of narrowness or tightness or severity in Chapters *al-Nisā'*, *al-Mā'idah*, *al-Anʿām*, *al-Aʿrāf*, *al-Ḥajj*, *al-Nūr* and *al-Aḥzāb*. The term *ḥaraj* is used in Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the meaning of sin, unlawfulness and narrowness. The consensus of the scholars is that the term refers to elimination or removal of hardship in religion.

3. Classification of Hardship

In religious discourses, hardship is classified into two kinds. The first is genuine or real hardship; it refers to something which has a real cause or is felt due to external obstacles, like hardship of journey or disease. The second is assumed or imaginative hardship; it refers to something for which no specific cause is found and there is no external trouble connected to it. This kind of hardship does not have an impact on lightening or providing concessions because legal rulings are not developed based on assumptions or imaginations or fantasies. Therefore, this discourse focuses on genuine hardship only. Regardless of the impact, it briefly discusses [1] physical hardship, [2] psychological hardship, [3] instant hardship, [4] consequential hardship, [5] characteristic hardship, [6] personal hardship, [7] general hardship and [8] particular hardship.

3.1 Physical Hardship

Physical hardship has an impact on body in action or wealth, like engaging in hard actions that have direct impact on the strength of an external body such as fasting of sick persons, forceful eating of the dead, continuation of fasting, perpetuity of night worship and other similar forms of deeds (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 49).

3.2 Psychological Hardship

Psychological hardship has an impact on the soul. For example, those who perpetuate a sin or crime or unlawful deed which causes pain to the hearts or commit evil deeds then regret for perpetuation or possess wrong or negative attributes which are punishable, or enter the religion of Islam and continue to do deeds done by them before embracing the religion. These matters cause human beings to come to realization from what has happened

as a result of psychological unrest. This inherited hardship of tightening the chest and anxiety or apprehension for everything one has received is due to weakness of faith, repose and confirmation (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 49).

God says in the Scripture, “And those Whom He willeth to leave straying, He maketh their breast close and constricted as if they had to climb up to the skies” (*Al-An ʿām*, verse no. 125). From this, frustration of hope or failure surfaces in realising the required results for deeds and obtaining what man does not satisfy God as stated in the Scripture which reads, “But no, by thy Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction” (*Al-Nisāʾ*, verse no. 65). From this, an individual feels pain and disheartened regarding the position of his community which wishes for change and transformation, but he is disappointed due to lack of responses as what had happened to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) about which God says, “We do indeed know how thy heart is distressed at what they say” (*Al-Hujurāt*, verse no. 97).

There is another verse in the Scripture which has the same message, “It may be thou frettest thy soul with grief that they do not become Believers” (*Al-Sha ʿrāʾ*, verse no. 3). In this verse, God explained to His Prophet (peace be upon him) that it was not for him to make people believers, rather it was for him to explain only and thus he conveyed the message of his Lord and it was not desirable to tighten or harden his chest or cause pain or suffering as stated in the Scripture which says, “So let thy heart be oppressed no more by any difficulty on that account” (*Al-A ʿrāf*, verse no. 2). These two decisions on hardship are rejected. As for the first, the definite evidence is clear on rejection of hardship. As for the second, it is up to the individuals facing hardship. For them, there are ways and means that God made available to get rid of the burden; either through repentance or ransom.

3.3 Instant Hardship

Instant hardship refers to trouble experienced at once or instantly, i.e. during the beginning of arduous or tiresome acts of devotion like the occurrence of hardship for a sick person while using water for ablution or establishing obligatory prayer or performing pilgrimage or throwing stones on the Devils in Mināʾ (a place near Mecca where Muslims stay for two or three days during the pilgrimage and perform the ritual of throwing stones on the Devils) or the outcome of distancing from some forms of risk, such as selling pistachios, pomegranates and hazelnuts with shells (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 51).

3.4 Consequential Hardship

Consequential hardship is that which affects a person as a result of using something constantly which brings no suffering or pain immediately but only later on. An example is that which ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr experienced when he took an oath that he would pray the whole night and observe fasting as long as he was alive. This caused fatigue and exerted utmost pressure on him well into his old age. He regretted it. It has been narrated from him as saying, “I wish I could have accepted the concession offered by the Prophet (peace be upon him).” This utterance exhibits that it is important to consider and avail oneself to concessions instead of constant observance of acts of devotion or other actions, though they are lawful and bring commendable results. One shall not put himself in hardship as a result of zeal or obsession (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 53).

3.5 Characteristic Hardship

Characteristic hardship is that which emphasises on the characteristic of an action, regardless of the individuals. In other words, in characteristic hardship, the cause for hardship is on action and not individuals, in spite of late realisation of the effect of an action. An example is fraud sale. In this case, the cause for hardship is deception. Thereupon to avoid hardship, a seller has the right or option whether to continue selling or not. Most probably, damage is inevitable in this kind of sale but there is also a possibility of no damage in some circumstances. For example, when no one is interested in selling while at the same time, preservation is harmful for the seller because of its exposition to damage (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 54).

3.6 Personal Hardship

Personal hardship is that which may cause external hardship or damage to any person, although it may not be harmful to others or to the same person through other means. The difference between these two kinds of hardship is that personal hardship may fulfil the connotations of characteristic hardship in which unease is found by default. So whatsoever is mentioned, for instance, regarding the fraud sale, it can be true for all kinds of fraud contracts because of its containment, even though all components are not one and the same. In terms of components and their underlying meanings, some may have uneasiness if damage that happens to be for a buyer or a seller is because of the nature of the contract and not because of any other cause. So, it may be considered as personal hardship (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 53).

3.7 General Hardship

General hardship is that which a person has no ability to get rid of. An example is an unavoidable alteration of water due to mud, algae, etc. in it. By and large, this alteration will occur in all kinds of water and there is no way to discard it. In such a case, hardship is general and everyone will be affected by it (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 55).

3.8 Particular Hardship

Particular hardship is that which a person has the ability to get rid of. An example is specific alteration of some particular and certain kinds of water by vinegar or saffron or by crumbled leaves. The difference between general hardship and particular hardship lies in its ability of isolation or attachment. It can be understood that general hardship affects all people like alteration of water by mud or algae and it can also be of one person (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 55).

4. Removal of Hardship in Religion

This section explores evidence from the authentic sources to show whether Islam is flexible or inflexible, easy or uneasy. For the purpose of clarity, the discourse is divided into three sections. The first is theoretical evidence with special reference to the Scripture and Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him). The second is applied evidence from the Scripture with reference to the methodology of conveying God's Message and applying it in daily life. The third is evidence from the life and practices of the Companions and the Successors who manifested concerns for simplifying legal rulings to enable people to practise without hardship or frustration, instead with full of zeal, enthusiasm and contentment, physically, mentally and psychologically.

4.1 Theoretical Evidence

Providing theoretical evidence is useful to people so that it will help them comprehend to what extent the religion is flexible. In this section, the evidence for removal of hardship is advanced from a theoretical perspective. This implies that it is isolated from the real happenings of the rulings from God, regardless of the way of conveying the legislation in relation to removal of hardship or His will for ease and facilitation or the way that He commanded people to follow this methodology.

4.1.1 Evidence from the Scripture

As stated in the foregoing pages, the evidence for removal of hardship is numerous in the Scripture. The first focus is in relation to Scriptural verses rejecting hardship. This is of two types. One benefits people with general rejection of hardship. The other is related to partial problems. An example for general rejection of hardship is addressed in the Scripture that states, "... And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline): He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion" (*Al-Ḥajj*, verse no. 78). In his commentary to the verse, Ibn ʿAbbās establishes that God has made Islam flexible (Al-Ṭabarī, 1373AH, Vol. 17, p. 206). Al-Daḥḥāk holds the opinion that God has made Islam flexible and does not impose any hardship (Al-ʿAsqalānī, 1325AH, Vol. 4, p. 453).

Muqātil ibn Ḥayyān remarks that God does not restrict religion but makes it flexible for those who wish to embrace it. God does not declare anything obligatory except when He makes something required; He provides concessions (under extra-ordinary circumstances). The evidence in this universe is that God rejects hardship from religion. The verse (*Al-Ḥajj*, verse no. 78) appears with a common noun in the context of religion and thus it is applied in general. Even though the context of revelation of the verse was in relation to striving in the cause of God, the methodology of generalisation of ruling is applied. The verse interpreted with slight variations by contemporary exegetes is given below.

Muhammad Asad says that "the absence of any "hardship" in the religion of Islam is due to several factors: [1] it is free of any dogma or mystical proposition which might make the Qur'anic doctrine difficult to understand or might even conflict with man's innate reason; [2] it avoids all complicated rituals or system of taboos which would impose undue restrictions on man's everyday life and [3] it rejects all self-mortification and exaggerated asceticism which must unavoidably conflict with man's true nature" (Asad, 1984, pp. 517-518).

Sayyid Qutb argues that "the assigned task is entwined with God's grace: *He has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to] religion*. Indeed, the religion of Islam, with all its duties, worship and laws always observes man's nature and abilities. It aims to satisfy human nature and release man's abilities so that they are used constructively. Human nature must neither be suppressed nor left without control" (Qutb, n. d., Vol. 12, p. 141).

Maududi remarks that “the creed you have been given is very simple and straight-forward and the laws and regulations you have to obey are practicable. You are free within its bounds to make as much as you can. This was to impress that the lives of Muslims were free from all those useless and unnatural restrictions which had been imposed upon the former communities by their priests and law-givers. He (God) relieves them of their burdens from the shackles that bound them” (Maududi, 1983, Vol. 7, p. 227).

In another verse of the Scripture, God conveys in relation to general rejection of hardship, “On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns. (Pray), Our Lord! Condemn us not if we forget or fall into error” (*Al-Baqarah*, verse no. 286). The verse refers to burden that man cannot bear; neither God puts pressure on him nor cause hardship. In other words, God does not place on man any burden except that he can bear in limited ability or power and within his reach. The evidence implied in the verse is that it is information on God’s Justice and His Mercy.

The obviousness of the verse (*Al-Baqarah*, verse no. 286) is that it is the beginning of the message from God but the exegetes hold the opinion that this verse as a whole was aimed at calling the previous believers. Maududi establishes that God will not call to account anyone for not doing something he could not possibly do nor will He punish him because he did not abstain from doing a thing, when he could not possibly abstain from it (Maududi, 1984, Vol. 2, p. 209). Daryabadi argues that “no one shall be held answerable for such thoughts and feelings as intrude themselves on one’s mind. All non-deliberate, non-voluntary states of minds are excluded from accountability. Each one is responsible for what he requires, earns” (Daryabadi, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 47-A).

Among the overall principles for ease and removal of hardship is that an incapable or disabled person is excused. Every duty or obligation assigned by God to human, if it is possible by him, He made it imperative and if he is incapable, it is not. The essence is that God never wishes to place burden on a human or to declare an act as obligatory without considering his capabilities, possibilities, potentialities or strengths. Another verse of the Scripture that supports the theory along the same line of thought is, “But those who believe and work righteousness, no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear, they will be companions of the garden, therein to dwell (forever)” (*Al-A ʿāf*, verse no. 42). In summary, the Arabic term *la nukallif* used in the verse is parenthetical clause. It refers to success with Paradise as a result of faith and righteous deeds.

Partial rejection of hardship is found in a verse of the Scripture that says, “The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child nor father on account of his child” (*Al-Baqarah*, verse no. 233). The import of the act of suckling of mothers and spending of the spouses for their children are based on one’s ability according to range and scope; it is not attached to any detriment or loss. Al-Ṭabarī says that God does not make it obligatory on human beings to spend on suckling of their offspring from their divorced women except they are capable and there are means available for it.

God states, “And come not nigh to the orphan's property, except to improve it, until he attains the age of full strength; give measure and weight with (full) justice; no burden do We place on any soul, but that which it can bear ...” (*Al-An ʿām*, verse no. 152). This verse was revealed in relation to the matter that will not affect human beings with hardship. Qutb explains that this applies to commercial transactions and requires people to do their best to ensure that everyone gets his due share. According to him, “there is a direct link between these transactions and faith (in God), because this is the Islamic attitude. It is God who gives this directive and who urges people to give just weight and full measure. Commercial transactions thus have a very real link with the question of Godhead and servitude. They are mentioned here in a context which clarifies that faith has a direct relationship with all aspects of life” (Qutb, n. d., Vol. 5, p. 307).

God states, “Ramadan is the (month) in which was sent down the Scripture, as a guide to mankind, also clear (Signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill or on a journey, the prescribed period, (should be made up) by days later. Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful” (*Al-Baqarah*, verse no. 185). In interpreting the verse, Ibn Kathīr quotes a Tradition that Aḥmad had recorded from Anas ibn Mālik as saying that God’s Messenger had said to treat people with ease and not to be hard on them; give them glad tidings and not fill them with aversion.

In relation to this verse (*Al-Baqarah*, verse no. 185), Maududi points out that “God is so bountiful that He does not deprive His servants of the blessings of fasting. Therefore, He has not confined it to the month of Ramadan alone but has opened another way for its completion for those who fail to complete it during this month for good

reasons. They should make up the deficiency by observing fast on other days in order to show their gratitude for the revelation of the Scripture during the month of Ramadan” (Maududi, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 140). Although there is a difference of opinion as to the postponement of the fasts for the residents of a place which is attacked by an enemy, Ibn Taymiyyah maintains with strong arguments that the postponement of the fasts under such circumstance is permissible (Maududi, 1986, Vol. 1, p. 140).

Qutb states that verse 185 of Chapter *al-Baqarah* “encapsulates the fundamental principle on which all Islamic religious duties are founded. They are intended to be easy, not arduous. This indicates a generous and realistic outlook on life as a whole. It instills in the Muslim heart a tolerant, easy and agreeable attitude. Religious and social activities and responsibilities are discharged with ease, confidence and assurance, in the happy knowledge that God’s purpose is to enable man to go through life with the minimum of hardship or discomfort” (Qutb, n. d., Vol. 1, p. 206).

The essence is that God wishes ease for people and does not intend to put burden or hardship on whatever He has legislated for people in terms of concession for fasting. Ease is an action upon which a soul does not put any effort and does not make the body heavy or unbearable. The difficulty is something a soul puts into effort in affecting the body (Al-Qāsimī, 1957, Vol. 1, p. 427). At the end, the import on the matter of the concession for fasting is to be treated as a general guideline.

God states, “Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): for man was created weak (in flesh)” (*Al-Nisā’*, verse no. 28). This verse was revealed along with other verses pertaining to the culture of permitting marriage at a time of the absence or non-existence of freed women. On account of this, some Muslim scholars hold the opinion that lightening in this context refers to the permissibility of marriage of a slave girl or bonded maid upon necessity or emergency as has been narrated on the authority of Mujāhid and Muqātil. However, the majority of Muslim scholars argue that it is common in every legal ruling and in all that God has made easy and has facilitated, and made it convenient for people.

In interpreting this verse (*Al-Nisā’*, verse no. 28), Qutb says that “God neither charges His servants with an unreasonable suppression of desires, nor does He allow them to run loose after their pleasure without checks and controls. More generally, God’s wish to make things easy for man appears very clearly in the constitution He has laid down for human life which takes into consideration man’s nature, ability and real needs. It taps all of man’s constructive energy, protecting it against wasteful use” (Qutb, n. d., Vol. 3, p. 89). Qutb also says that “many people assume that adherence to the Divine method, especially in connection with the relationships between men and women, constitutes a heavy burden. They further claim that shedding all inhibitions to satisfy desires freely ensures ease and comfort. This is utter delusion. Seeking only one’s own pleasure in every pursuit and removing the element of duty altogether, confining the objective of human sexual relations to that of its equivalent in the animal world, and removing all moral checks and social duties which influence relations between men and women may appear to give man ease and comfort. In reality, however, they weigh heavily upon man and increase his burden. Their consequences on society, and indeed on every individual, are harmful, wasteful, and destructive” (Qutb, n. d., Vol. 3, p. 89).

Likewise, the Scripture comprises verses explaining Islam as a religion of flexibility and ease. God has removed hardship from this community and does not cause harm or place on human being any burden except what he can bear (*Al-A’lā*, verse no. 8, *al-Inshirāḥ*, verses no. 5-6 and *al-Ṭalāq*, verses no. 4-5). The exegetes interpret that the abovementioned verses are explicit that God wishes for this community ease and flexibility, not hardship, suffering or pain (Ibn Kathīr, n. d., Vol. 1, p. 217).

4.1.2 Evidence from Patterns of the Prophet (Peace Be upon Him)

Having explored evidence from the Scripture for the feature of ease and removal of hardship, we cite evidence from Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which reflects his concerns. An example is that Jābir ibn^c Abd Allāh reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying that he was sent to mankind with true religion of magnanimity or kindness or munificence or tolerance (Al-Suyūṭī, n. d., p. 84). In another narration, it is reported from the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying that the most beloved religion to God is the religion of tolerance (Al-Bukhārī, Vol. 1., p. 34). It is narrated on the authority of Ibn^c Abbās who asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) about true religion. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was reported as saying the true religion most liked by God is the religion of tolerance or generosity or magnanimity. In these Traditions, the Arabic term *al-ḥanīfiyyah* is employed which, according to scholars, implies moving forward from falsehood to truth (Al-Suyūṭī, n. d., p. 84). The inference that can be drawn from the Traditions is that if the existence of hardship in Islamic injunctions is affirmed, then the religion is not regarded as magnanimous, tolerant and flexible with ease.

Al-Ṭabarānī recorded a Tradition from Ibn ʿAbbās as saying that God devised the religion, made it flexible and magnanimous and did not restrict or limit or cramp it (Al-Ṭabarānī, 2006, Vol. 11, p. 213). This notifies that it is based on the modality (of flexibility); a modality opposed to severity of religion (Al-Bāḥisīn, 2001, p. 67). This Tradition leads to an inference that the evidence the Prophet (peace be upon him) had given was that the religion of God is flexible and everything disseminated (negatively) about it, in particular, is an utter lie and fabrication as well as a rumour against the mission of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Instead, it confirms that there is no hardship in the legislation of Islamic injunctions and their enforcement. The Prophet (peace be upon him) commanded the believers to subscribe to this supreme principle that the religion of God is flexible which is obvious from the Tradition that states that “the best of your religion is the easiest of it; the best of your religion is the easiest of it” (Aḥmad, 2001, Vol. 25, p. 284).

4.2 Applied Evidence

It is the belief of Muslims that God revealed His commands to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). The primary objective of Islamic Revealed Law is to facilitate people to apply it without any hardship in life. God designed laws on the basis of the principle of facilitation and removal of hardship, manifesting His magnanimity, mercy and kindness upon his devotees to enable them to apply His injunctions in accordance with His commands. Wherever His injunctions are explained in the Scripture and Prophet’s Patterns, they are in conformity with His commands and establish evidence for removal of hardship. In the forthcoming section, two methods applied by God to prove that Islam is a religion of ease are focused. The first is the method through which God’s commands have been conveyed and the second is the method of applying His rulings.

4.2.1 Method of Conveying God’s Commands

This method comprises significant aspects which are [1] revelation of the Scripture in stages, [2] gradual and systematic development of laws and [3] abrogation of some of the rulings revealed earlier by latter revelations in reference to some rulings. All three depict ease and removal of hardship in religion.

4.2.1.1 Revelation of the Scripture in Stages

God asserts that the Scripture was a revelation from Him. He states that the Archangel Jibril brought it, strengthened the hearts of those who believed in it, guided and provided them with glad tidings. God refers to the revelation in verses 23 and 97 of Chapter *al-Baqarah* and verse 2 of Chapter *al-Jāthiyah*. These verses indicate that the Scripture is the Word of God. Jibrīl descended with it upon the heart of the Prophet (peace be upon him). These verses refer to its revelation in stages to the Prophet (peace be upon him) according to needs, events, circumstances and occurrences, since he was chosen as God’s Messenger to humanity. Ibn ʿAbbās narrates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was chosen as God’s Messenger when he was forty; he spent thirteen years in Mecca receiving revelations and then migrated to Medina where he lived for ten years with the same experience.

Thus, in light of the verses, exegetes conclude that the Scripture was revealed gradually over a period of twenty-three years. Another that refers to this gradual revelation is verse 106 of Chapter *Banī Isrāʾīl*. It refers to the fact that the Scripture was revealed at different times and under different circumstances, so that it should fit together as closely as it did. All revelations were progressive. Each revelation marked a stage in the world’s spiritual history. The human’s mind could not take in more than what his spiritual state had prepared him for. God’s revelation came as a light to illuminate man’s difficulties and show him the way in actual situations that arose.

The Scripture mentions that other heavenly scriptures such as the Torah, Evangel and Psalms were revealed at once (*Al-Furqān*, verse no. 32). In relation to this, Yūsuf ʿAlī conveys three reasons for gradual revelation of the Scripture: [1] “to strengthen the heart of the Prophet (peace be upon him), [2] slow well-arranged stages and [3] questions put and answers given: Divine knowledge is a fathomless ocean but glimpses of it can be obtained by any individual sincerely searching for the truth. If they ask questions, answers are then furnished to them and they are more likely to apprehend the truth as they have already explored the part of the territory in which they are interested. In the same way when concrete questions arise by logic of events and they are answered not only for the occasion but also from a general stand point, the reaching has a far greater chance of penetrating the human intelligence and taking shape in practical conduct. This is the usual way of instruction” (Yūsuf ʿAlī, 1989, p. 896).

In fact, gradual revelation served as a consolation for the Prophet (peace be upon him); it was a way of admonishing and challenging the fabricators and slanderers of his time; it was to show them that God knew their secret plots and conspiracies. God has decreed in verse 65 of Chapter *Yūnus* and verse 21 of Chapter *al-Mujādalah*. Thus, “the verses were revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in succession, consolation

after consolation, so that he would not be carried away by sorrows and afflictions and frustrated by distress. He was reassured by narrating the stories of previous Prophets as a model and the destiny of fabricators in both this World and Hereafter was made known. On several occasions, he was signalled about his victory; his impediments were removed by repeating solace; his heart was strengthened to meet the challenges on his way to calling the people to Islam and finally victory was ensured” (Ushama, 2013). Gradual revelation of the Scripture was one of the strategies or wisdom adopted by God as an answer to false propaganda of the unbelievers regarding the truth of the Message. This process of gradual revelation proves that God truly wished for ease and not hardship for His Prophet (peace be upon him) and his Companions.

4.2.1.2 Gradual Progress in the Development of Laws

The abovementioned discourse refers to the gradual revelation of the Scripture. It has facilitated gradual progress in legislation of laws which was one of the wisdom applied by God to provide ease. The Scripture discloses that the rulings were not instantly made obligatory, rather in stages. Even in spiritual and devotional dimensions, gradual process of legislation was adopted, assisting smooth implementation. One such example is that the five-time ritual of Muslim prayer was made obligatory in Mecca and the general foundations for poor-due were introduced in verses 38-39 of Chapter *al-Rūm* in Medina. An interval of a few years was given between enforcement of the rituals of prayer and poor-due. Likewise, the Chapter *al-An‘ām* was revealed in Mecca, illustrating the principles of faith and Oneness of God, criticising polytheism and polytheists, elucidating and clarifying the lawful and the prohibited among food items and calling upon people to prohibit squandering of wealth, homicide and manifestation of disease (accident) as stated in verses 151-152 of Chapter *al-An‘ām*.

One of the wisdom for gradual revelation is explicitly noticed in the prohibition of wine. In prohibiting wine or other intoxicants, God did not impose hardship but applied the mode of ease to enable people to realise the need for abandoning it. At the outset, God revealed a verse in which He proclaimed that from the fruit of the date and the vine, man gets wholesome drink and food. It was a sign of God for those who are wise according to verse 67 of Chapter *al-Nahl*. Here, God’s bounty and favour for human beings are stated and from these two trees people could benefit from taking their fruits. Then, God revealed another verse in which He referred to the question posed by the people. The Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked about gambling and wine. He answered after receiving revelation from God that there was a great sin but he did not rule out the possibility of some profits as stated in verse 219 of Chapter *al-Baqarah*. This verse compares the benefit of wine while drinking it as a pleasure and amusement and intoxication so as to attain a state of frenzy or trade it for gain and its disadvantage for causing harm and damage to the body. Its erosion of intellect and loss of wealth have also been described implicitly. This verse neither condemns nor prohibits, rather it educates people to realise both good and evil.

Furthermore, God revealed verse 43 of Chapter *al-Nisā’* in which He prohibited praying with a mind befogged for people would not understand the recitation of verses from the Scripture in the prayers. This abstention of drinking wine at the time of prayer continued till the final command was communicated absolutely prohibiting intoxicants at all times. God prohibited intoxicants and gambling along with others in verses 90-91 of Chapter *al-Mā’idah*. As soon as this verse was revealed, the people abstained from drinking wine. It becomes clear from the verses that God prohibited the use of intoxicants in four stages through explanations. It is pertinent to note that verse 219 of Chapter *al-Baqarah* which refers to the question posed by the people about the ruling on wine and gambling was revealed in the first two years of Islam in Medina. Then verse 43 of Chapter *al-Nisā’*, which refers to the issue of praying in the state of intoxication was revealed in the fourth year of Islamic calendar, while the final command made through verses 90-91 of Chapter *al-Mā’idah*, totally prohibiting wine came down in the tenth year of the Islamic calendar. The interval between the revelations shows that God adopted certain wisdom or strategy to educate, train and transform people from evil to good. This reflects that God provided ease for people to practise the rulings.

Another example of ease in religion is gradual prohibition of usury. In this regard, God revealed verse 39 of Chapter *al-Rūm*, describing that usury would not cause any increase in wealth, instead an advice was given to spend it in the cause of God. Then, God revealed verse 130 of Chapter *Al Imrān* in the third year of the Islamic calendar commanding the believers to abstain from usury-based transactions. In the fourth year of the Islamic calendar, verse 161 of Chapter *al-Nisā’* was revealed explaining the consequences of usury-based transactions. Finally, God revealed verses 275-279 of Chapter *al-Baqarah* a few months before the death of the Prophet (peace be upon him). These verses have categorically declared usury as unlawful.

Likewise, the concept of gradual revelation was applied to impart clear and intensive education and training for the community of believers, so that they would be able to apply the laws without much difficulty, as they had

never experienced such a regulated life before Islam. When Islam came, it enforced the feature of ease in transforming people from paganism to monotheism or from barbarism to civilisation.

4.2.1.3 Abrogation and Gradual Development

According to several Muslim jurists, the knowledge of abrogation has a number of benefits and without it, it is impossible to understand the real meaning or ruling of some of the verses of the Scripture. Despite differences among Muslim scholars, many affirm that the concept of abrogation contributes to proper understanding of the laws inherent in the Scripture and their proper application. They also hold the view that it helps to understand the closest meaning of the verses, comprehend the historical development of the legal code in Islamic legal history and proper explanation of the text.

Four wisdom of God for abrogation in the Scripture are highlighted. They are (1) considering the welfare of the servants of God, (2) development of laws in an organised manner for the establishment of Islamic Call and evolution of the status of people, (3) as trials and tribulations from God and His test on human beings' obedience and (4) consent and goodwill for the Muslim community and its facilitation because when abrogation is burdensome, then its reward will be handsome. Abrogation occurred in those verses which are related to the commandments and the prohibitions. It occurred mainly in Medina, since it was a divine necessity and wisdom to facilitate and ease the legal rulings.

4.3 Method of Applying Ease and Removal of Hardship

In relation to the implementation of the feature of removal of hardship, we refer to two things in the disposition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) which disclose facilitation and ease. The first is that he was firmly devoted to his dispositions, measures, regulations and legal rulings. The second is that he interpreted the revealed texts and applied them by considering beneficence, interest and welfare of the people and removing hardship from them.

4.3.1 The Prophet's Engagement with Ease

In relation to this, evidence is found in what has been narrated on the authority of ʿĀ'ishah, the wife of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Narrated ʿĀ'ishah, "Whenever the Prophet (peace be upon him) was given an option between two things, he used to select the easier of the two as long as it was not sinful; but if it was sinful, he would remain far from it" (Al-Bukhārī, 1986, Vol. 8, p. 511). The Prophet (peace be upon him) advised his envoys and preachers to apply ease and facilitation in their dealings, human relations and approaches. He instructed them to treat people in the most agreeable way. To quote a Tradition from him: Narrated Abū Mūsā that when God's Apostle sent him and Muʿādh ibn Jabal to Yemen, he said to them, "Facilitate things for the people (treat the people in the most agreeable way) and do not make things difficult for them and give them glad tidings and let them not have aversion, (i.e. to make the people hate good deeds) and you should both work in co-operation and mutual understanding, obey each other" (Al-Bukhārī, 1986, Vol. 8, p. 92). This Tradition conveys that people must be treated with ease. People should give glad tidings to one another and not fill with aversion and they should love each other and not differ. Of course, God intends ease for people and does not want to make things hard.

Ismāʿīl ibn Ḥakīm learnt that "the Apostle of Allah heard of a woman who said her prayers all the night and asked who she was. They said she was Ḥaulā', daughter of Tuwait who did not sleep during the night. The Apostle of Allah felt displeased and his displeasure became apparent from his countenance. He said: The Lord does not get disgusted until you are disgusted. Act as far as your strength allows you" (Mālik, 1985, p. 54). The inference of the Tradition is that it is not proper to over burden by establishing prayers throughout the night, particularly when a person does not have enough strength or energy. It implies that one's commitment to acts of devotion is subject to his natural strength; one is not expected to cause pain to his body, if he is weak, feeble or unable, simply because he likes to come nearer to God.

In another context, ease and facilitation are highly emphasised. In this regard, Anas ibn Mālik narrated a Tradition from the Prophet (peace be upon him) who said, "Facilitate things to people (concerning religious matters) and do not make it hard for them and give them good tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam)" (Mālik, 1985, p. 60). As an example of ease, the Prophet's verdict had been quite obvious and it offered a lesson for his Successors to be simple, forgiving and not to punish. Narrated Abū Huraira, "A Bedouin stood up and started passing urine in the mosque. The people caught him but the Prophet (peace be upon him) ordered them to leave him and to pour a bucket or a tumbler of water over the place where he had passed urine. The Prophet (peace be upon him) then said, "You have been sent to make things easy and not to make them difficult" (Al-Bukhārī, Vol. 1, p. 143). The Tradition discloses that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not wish to punish the Bedouin. Probably, the Bedouin was illiterate and thus he was unaware of the sacredness of the mosque.

Perhaps, the Prophet (peace be upon him) sensed it; hence, he allowed him to urinate and instructed his Companions to wash the place. This is one of the manifestations of tolerance and magnanimity of the Prophet (peace be upon him) whom the Muslims regard as their role-model. Thus, it is for the Muslims to take heed of such occasions and avoid complicating issues. Instead, they should cultivate the culture of forgiving others' mistakes or sins and tolerate the misdeeds.

Another example in relation to ease and removal of hardship is evident in the mode of prescribing an alternative to obligatory congregational prayer in the mosque. This is one of the matters that people should ponder regarding the concessions available in religion. To cite a Tradition of the Prophet (peace be upon him) where it has been said that Nāfi^c reported the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying, “‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar called out for *adhān* for prayer during a night of fierce wind and intense cold and said to the people: Say your prayers in your houses. He then said: On a cold night when it would also be raining, the Messenger of God (May peace be upon him) would ask the *mu’addhin* (caller for prayer) to announce to the people to say their prayer at their homes” (Mālik, 1985, p. 33). Under normal circumstances, the ruling in relation to prayer is that it should be performed in congregation in the mosque. But the Prophet (peace be upon him) relegated its performance to at home only during heavy wind or cold or rain. Indeed, this special provision inspired people to fulfil their obligatory acts. Considering this concession, nowadays people can exercise their independent reasoning to apply the same ruling, if the situation is similar to it. Muslim jurists should assist people living in severe winter or rainy areas by issuing verdicts like this in light of the Prophet’s practices of facilitating people who are in the state of confusion due to extreme interpretations.

Indeed, there are instances where the Prophet (peace be upon him) had manifested his magnanimity and simplified the rulings in order for people to fulfil their duties without any procrastination or lethargy. In relation to this, a Tradition is cited to contemplate on the practicability of the religion. Ibn ‘Abbās reported, “The Apostle of Allah said to us to combine *Zuhr* and *‘Ashr* prayers, together and *Maghrib* and *‘Ishā’* prayers together without any cause of fear or occasion of travel. Yaḥyā said: Imām Mālik said that perhaps it happened during the rains” (Mālik, 1985, p. 67). Muslims are provided with ease to perform their prayers by combining two prayers during a journey. From the Tradition, it is apparent that it can also be done during heavy rains. This is an alternative that facilitates people to carry out their religious duties. The religion is keen on people’s performance of obligatory acts; hence, concessions are provided so that consistency is maintained in religious activities, particularly in acts of devotion.

4.3.2 The Prophet’s Disposition in Interpreting the Texts

Evidence is found in the practices of the Prophet (peace be upon him) in relation to ease and removal of hardship. This section refers to instances where the Prophet’s magnanimity and forgiving attribute are obvious, conveying Islam as neither hard nor harsh; rather, it is full of ease. It presents examples for smooth life. One such example from the life of Prophet’s companion is cited for reflection. It exhibits that Islam is simple in its teachings in relation to the principle of removal of hardship in religion and its injunctions.

Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyib reported that “a rustic came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) of God beating his breast and pulling his hair and he was saying: Death to him who is far from righteousness! The Prophet (peace be upon him) of God asked him what the matter was. He said: I had intercourse with my wife during the fast of Ramadān. The Prophet (peace be upon him) of God asked him whether he could free a slave. He said: No. He asked whether he could send a camel or a cow for sacrifice at the pilgrimage. He said: No. He (the Prophet, peace be upon him) asked him to sit. Just then a basket of dates came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) of God. He said: Take these and give them away in charity. He answered: Prophet (peace be upon him) of God, there is none needier than me. He (the Prophet, peace be upon him) asked him to eat them himself and observe fast for a day in lieu of what he had done” (Mālik, 1985, p. 122).

The Tradition conveys the Prophet’s kindness in his verdict to the extent that he did not wish to punish the rustic, although a prohibited act was committed. The Prophet (peace be upon him) wished to help him and made him feel that the religion was not hard. It also discloses that after seeing the condition of the rustic, the Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted him to eat the dates which was a donation for him. Three lessons are drawn from this Tradition. The first is the Prophet’s magnanimity, generosity, tolerance and compassion. The second is that the religion is simple and easy. The third is though the rustic committed a forbidden act, the Prophet (peace be upon him) provided an alternative. Therefore, it is recommendatory for believers to develop a positive attitude as a result of the verdict. Throughout the Prophet’s dealing with his people or others, acts manifesting compassion and magnanimity and the characteristic of forgiveness were enormous, leading to the fact that there is no hardship in religion.

Among other examples of ease and removal of hardship is the narration in which it is mentioned that the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not separate Ṣafwān ibn Ummayyah and his wife, the daughter of Walīd ibn Muḡīrah, even though he (the husband) was an unbeliever and his wife was a Muslim, and there were roughly two months between Islam of Ṣafwān and his wife. In spite of the evidence which demonstrates separation of the two, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not separate them for the sake of their welfare (Al-Suyūṭī, 1954, Vol. 2, p. 13). This verdict shows that he did not wish to put hurdles between the husband and the wife; he was flexible.

In another example, the Prophet (peace be upon him) had generally forbidden men to wear silk and gold but he made exceptions in some cases to remove hardship from individuals. Ibn Saʿd narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had allowed ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn ʿAwf to wear a silk shirt while travelling as he was suffering from itchiness. In another narration, it is mentioned that it was due to large number of lice. It is also narrated that the Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted Zubayr al-ʿAwwām in this regard (Ibn Saʿd, 1957, Vol. 3, pp. 103, 130). Obviously, silk and gold are unlawful for Muslim men. But having observed the state of itchiness on a Companion, the Prophet (peace be upon him) permitted him to wear a silk shirt. This permission shows though something is unlawful in religion, it can be relaxed during emergency. This is the inference from the Tradition.

Traditions disclose that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had agreed upon some issues in Islam in spite of their void conditions. In relation to this, it is narrated by Naṣr ibn ʿĀṣim al-Laythī that a man among them came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and became a Muslim on condition that he would only pray twice a day and the Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted it (Aḥmad, 2001, Vol. 33 7, p. 407). In another narration, it is reported that he will pray once a day and the Prophet (peace be upon him) accepted it (Al-Shawkānī, 1993, Vol. 7, p. 234). It is narrated by Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh that Wahb said, “I asked Jābir about the condition of Banū Thaḡīf when they took the oath of allegiance. He said: They stipulated to the Prophet (peace be upon him) that there would be no poor-due and striving in the way of God on them. He then heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) as saying: Later, they will give poor-due and will strive in the way of God when they embrace Islam” (Abū Dāwūd, 2000, Vol. 4, p. 637). This Tradition depicts that the Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed the newcomers to practise whatever was possible and did not insist on them to follow everything from the very beginning. This shows that the religion considers the realistic situations of people and their background. Finally, it leads to infer that Islam is essentially a religion of ease and not hardship.

5. The Stands of the Companions and the Successors

Having analysed both the theoretical and applied evidence for removal of hardship in religion and its injunctions, the stands of the Companions and the Successors on the feature of removal of hardship in religion are articulated. Their stands reflect application of the fundamentals and foundations stipulated in the Scripture and Prophet’s Patterns. Some of the sayings, juristic opinions and rulings that explain their modalities on removal of hardship are referred to in the discourse of this section which is divided into two. The first is the stand of the Companions and the other is that of the Successors.

5.1 The Stand of the Companions

First, the policy of the Companions on the feature of removal of hardship is highlighted. The sayings are traceable to their contemporaries. They witnessed their procedure in their disposition or regulation in relation to words and deeds. Among the sayings is what has been narrated on the authority of ʿUmar ibn Iṣḥāq that he had not seen any community or nation more flexible in matters of religion and its law and there was no severity or hardness or pressure on people (Al-Dārimī, 1349AH, Vol. 1, p. 51). Likewise, Ibn Masʿūd is reported as saying that the Companions were the friends of Muḡammad, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and were the best and superior of this community; they were truthful in hearts, in-depth in knowledge and minimum in unnaturalness of manners or causing constraints or affecting behaviours (Ibn al-Qayyim, n. d., Vol. 1, p. 179).

These matters provide sufficient evidence that the Companions followed the moderate method applied by the Prophet (peace be upon him) who trained them; they were contented with their training and distanced from effectuating, bypassing, dissimulating severity, vehemence, violence and applied the concept of ease, flexibility and removal of hardship in religion. The discourse is obvious and it does not need further elaboration or elucidation.

5.1.1 Verdicts and Deeds of the Companions

The first among these is the text that benefits generalisation of facilitation. Ibn Masʿūd is reported as saying that prohibiting the lawful or legalising or permitting the unlawful is unacceptable (Ibn Saʿd, n. d., Vol. 6, p. 181). In this statement, Ibn Masʿūd did not differentiate between those who prohibited the lawful and inserted hardship

and those who permitted the unlawful and transgressed the limits and from this, his opinion in relation to not permitting severity or hardship over people and prohibiting insertion of hardship is truly clear.

Among them is the legislation of prayer (Al-Shawkānī, 1961, Vol. 3, p. 227). It was first enjoined without any restriction and then enjoined two *rak'ah* (units of prayer) by two *rak'ah*; later the number of *rak'ah* was increased for residents but remained the same two *rak'ah* for travellers. This was one of the modes of assessing people's ability before enforcing a duty or an act of devotion. In relation to this, narrated 'Ā'ishah, the mother of the believers, "Allah enjoined the prayer, when He enjoined it; it was two *rak'ah* only (in every prayer) both when in residence and on journey. Then, the prayer offered during a journey remained the same but (the *rak'ah* of) the prayers for non-travellers were increased" (Al-Bukhārī, Vol. I, p. 214).

Ibn al-Qayyim explains the psychological dimensions of this gradual enforcement of the ruling of prayers. Prayers were enjoined only with two *rak'ah* in the beginning of Islam and there were no conflicting opinions on it. It was enjoined in a manner of lightening or lessening the burden that resulted in the absolute obedience of the people; their hearts were fully contented and satisfied; they were able to realise the taste and goodness of it; they enjoyed sweetness of servitude to God in prayers. The need of a traveller was considered for lightening the burden and the difficulty of the journey. Eventually, this was adopted without hardship. In this manner, every ruling was enjoined in its appropriate time in correspondence with the beneficence or interest of the people (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1939, p. 358). Likewise, when fasting was ordained in the early phase, it was between fasting and eating; then eating was forbidden. Prayer in the beginning was based on facilitation and moving or talking was tolerated during prayer. When the people were accustomed and habituated, it was withdrawn ('Ubādah, 1968, p. 31).

5.2 The Stand of the Successors

In the history of Islam, after the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the Successors and their Followers applied the method of ease and removal of hardship in religious injunctions. In general, their basic guiding principle was to maintain distance from extremism and hardship by adhering to the evidence of Islamic Revealed Law. Prior to mentioning some of their juristic verdicts, dispositions and reasoning in relation to partial problems, it is appropriate to draw the attention to their explicit statements and disclose their methodology and general foundations in relation to ease and removal of hardship. One important example is what al-Sha'bī has reported, "If two different matters are in front of you, the easier (of the two) is closest to the truth" (Al-Qāsimī, n. d., Vol. 3, p. 427). The text explicitly advises the preferred way of ease which is regarded as nearer to the truth.

Another example is that 'Abd Allāh ibn Shubrumah, a Successor, never issued any verdict with strong emphasis except on matters relating to the lawful. He held the view that there was no way for certainty regarding the unlawful except what was firmly established by authentic Prophetic Traditions (Ibn Sa'd, 1957, Vol. 6, p. 244). Likewise, it has been reported on the authority of Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī who said, "If two matters preoccupy your mind and heart, then consider the nearest among them is closer to the truth" (Al-Shaybānī, 1965, p. 465). These opinions of the Successors represent the basic and general foundations in this field, which need no further clarification or elucidation due to their clarity and lucidity.

Thus, in order to make the issue clearer and better understood not only by Muslims but also by those who accuse Islam as a religion of hardship, some of their verdicts are discussed to enable people to understand how the predecessors, particularly the Successors had decided on some matters with the objective of avoiding hardship. As they wished for ease, they followed the methodology of the Companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) by making it easy for people to apply in life and avoid hardship. This approach enhances good faith and confidence in religion; it motivates people to perform religious requirements unflinchingly.

One such example of the verdict is reported by al-Bayhaqī from al-Shāfi'ī as saying, "The judge Shurayḥ held the view that a bleacher shall give guarantee to his customers. Once a bleacher came to Shurayḥ and told him that his house was destroyed in fire and yet he was asked to pay to his customer based on the guarantee. The judge replied, "What about if his (customer) house caught fire? Will you not take your wage?" Ash'ath ibn Abī al-Sha'tha' stated that he witnessed when Shurayḥ issued this verdict of the guarantee to be fulfilled by a bleacher or a dyer (Al-Bayhaqī, 1352AH, Vol. 6, pp. 122-123). This judgment reflects fairness and that the guarantee must be fulfilled regardless of circumstances. This also conveys that there is no burden for a customer or a bleacher.

Another example is that Shu'bah narrated on the authority of Abī al-Ḥaytham that someone brought oil for him from Baṣrah. In other words, he hired a porter to carry it from Baṣrah. The price of the bottle was about three or four hundred *dirham*. On the way, the bottle fell and crashed. Abī al-Ḥaytham asked for compensation from the porter but he refused. Then he complained to Shurayḥ. Shurayḥ ordered the porter to pay the cost of the oil

bottle to Abī al-Ḥaytham and told him that since he gave wage to him, he should fulfil his guarantee. The people did not leave him until the porter had paid compensation for the oil bottle (Al-Bayhaqī, 1352AH, Vol. 6, pp. 122-123). This verdict conveys that the guarantee must be fulfilled, regardless of circumstances. The porter took wage for his job and thus he did not lose much. But the hirer would be at a loss twice, if the guarantee was not fulfilled: wage as well as the cost of the oil bottle. One can notice fairness in the verdict that reminds people that Islam is not hard but easy. In religion, fairness is upheld.

Another significant example for ease and removal of hardship is that Ibn Sa'd reported that Thābit al-Thumālī heard Abū Ja'far as saying that 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn entered a toilet and he was standing at the door and gave water to him to perform ablution. When he came out, he told Abū Ja'far that he saw something in the toilet which doubted him. The latter asked him what that was. He said that he saw a fly (sitting) on filth and then it flew and contacted one's skin of the leg. Hence, he decided to have a special cloth for toilet but it was not proper for him to do so because the people would have difficulty following this (Ibn Sa'd, 1957, Vol. 5, p. 218). The lesson drawn from this incident is that 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn decided to have a special cloth for toilet to ensure purity of body and clothes, which is the command of Islamic Revealed Law but he altered his decision by not doing so because he thought if he did, it would cause hardship for those who followed him as everyone was not capable of doing it. Likewise, many scholars such as Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib, Rabī'ah ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Yaḥyā ibn Sa'īd al-Anṣārī and others allowed price-fixing in order to avert difficulties that people may face (Al-Bājī, 1332AH, Vol. 5, p. 18).

It has been reported that Sālim ibn 'Abd Allāh and Sulaymān ibn Yasār held the view that a widow could darken her eyelids with eyeliner even if it was mixed with perfume or any other medicine, if she was afraid that her eyesight would be affected due to inflammation. This implies that they permitted such act by a widow for the purpose of treatment. It is explicit from this as to how these two Successors took into consideration such situations as they allowed something which was clearly forbidden by Islamic Revealed Law. They wished for ease and not burden for people, as Mālik reported, "If exigency happens, then the religion of God is (established based on) ease" (Al-Bājī, 1332AH, Vol. 4, p. 145).

Another example is that it has been narrated that 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥarmulah asked Sa'īd ibn Musayyib that if a person happens to find a drunkard what should he do? Should he hand him over to the authority? Sa'īd ibn Musayyib replied, "If you can cover him with your clothes, then do it" (Ibn Sa'd, 1957, Vol. 5, p. 134). In another narration, Ibn Ḥarmulah reported, "I went to pray the Morning Prayer and found a drunkard. I carried him to my house. I met Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib and asked him. If a man finds a drunkard, should he hand him over to the authority to punish him legally? Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib told me: If you can cover him with clothes, then do it. Ibn Ḥarmulah said: I returned to my house and found the drunkard in normal condition. When he saw me, I realized that he was ashamed of the act. I asked him. Are you not ashamed? Had I taken you yesterday night to the authority, you would have been given punishment (for drinking wine) and you would have been like a dead person amidst people. The drunkard replied. By God, I will never drink wine forever" (Ibn Sa'd, 1957, Vol. 5, p. 137). This incident conveys lenience, compassion and perspicacity of Sa'īd ibn al-Musayyib who advised 'Abd al-Raḥmān to cover the mistake (of a drunkard). This is one of the examples of Muslim scholars among the Successors who educated people to follow the religious teachings by applying the approach of forgiving and covering the sins and not publicising and humiliating the victims by exposing their sins. The abovementioned verdicts are clear in proving that the early Islamic society adopted and applied the feature of ease. Flexibility in human relations was quite obvious.

It seems that the early Muslim generation was not prejudicial or jealous, rather kind, benevolent, compassionate, merciful, just, trustworthy, reliable, etc. But the contemporary Muslim society is different; it complicates issues and presents the religion differently from its true form, advertently or inadvertently. There is absence of clarity, lack of enthusiasm to search for truth and authenticity. Moreover, individualism or egoism overtakes the collective interest in religious matters. The examples shown by the predecessors are many and if they are truly and honestly considered and taken into account, the Muslim community will be able to establish and sustain peaceful order among and between themselves and export the peaceful and kind approach to others. It also demonstrates their Islamic code of conduct and depicts how far the Successors were from extremism and exaggeration and from throwing people into hardships and difficulties.

6. Conclusion

The discourse leads to the conclusion that the religion of Islam has the feature of ease and elimination of hardship in religion and its injunctions. The study has referred to the evidence from the Scripture as well as Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Most importantly, illustrations provided based on the Scriptural

evidence along with articulations of exegetes offer sufficient logical substantiation for zero hardship in religion. In addition, the Companions who lived with the Prophet (peace be upon him) are not ignored in the study; rather their elucidations, explanations and verdicts are taken into account to strengthen the proposition of the study in relation to ease, facilitation, flexibility and removal of hardship. Another unique generation in Islamic history has been that of the Successors who inherited undistorted understanding of Islam and its injunctions from the Companions and applied flexibility in religion based on the spirit drawn from the Companions. Thus, some of their verdicts and deeds are referred to for clarity. In summary, the key Islamic teachings and sources have been analyzed.

The discourse unveils that indeed Islam recognises man as a unique being. Of course, he is not an animal; he is not an angel; he is not a Satan or Devil or Demon. Islam takes a holistic view of man. It admits his weaknesses as well as his strengths. It looks at the nature of man based on his creation. It treats him as an integrated being. It realises that man has a physical aspect with instincts, impulses and natural drives, a discerning intellectual power and a soul with spiritual passions. It requires man to perform such tasks that he is able to fulfil. It does not impose on him something he cannot do or carry out in his life. It inspires him to maintain the balance between obligations and abilities, with fairness and without stress, satisfying the needs of body, mind and soul in harmony.

The study now forwards some recommendations. The foremost is that people, whether Muslims or others, should be objective in developing the culture of referring to original, early Islamic sources to know the religion and its injunctions in relation to the lawful or the unlawful or the permissible or others. It is pertinent that in the case of lack of true knowledge or realisation of the truth or clarity of religious issues and misunderstandings or ambiguities, reference should be made to qualified scholars of the religion or consult the men of wisdom as the Scripture reminds, "... If you realise this not, ask of those who possess the Message" (Qur'ān, *al-Nahl*, verse no. 43). The spirit of the verse is that people should obtain true knowledge; otherwise, any untoward incident may take place in addition to misunderstanding of the revealed text, misrepresentation of the facts, and manipulation or fabrication of the truth. If secondary or unauthorised translated sources are relied upon, or charismatic orators are trusted, or popular speakers are blindly imitated, or written and electronic materials are used without proper verification, or You-tube and other presentations are regarded as authentic, or pseudo-scholars are given priority without realising the consequences, or astrologers are believed as trustworthy and sorcerers are taken as refuge, there is undoubtedly a possibility of deviation and diversion from the true messages and objectives of Islam. The Scripture declares that if there is any dispute among the believers then they should refer to God and His Messenger, implying to seek guidance from the Scripture and Prophet's Patterns. Therefore, Muslims must develop a positive attitude towards the Scripture and Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him). For any religious differences, no response is accepted unless after referring to the Scripture and Patterns of the Prophet (peace be upon him) for true knowledge.

References

- Abū Dāwūd, S. I. A. I. I. B. I. S. I. °A. S. (2009). *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (1st ed.). Al-Muḥaqqiq: Shu°bah al-Arnaūṭ and Muḥammad Kāmil. Bayrūt: Dār al-Risālah al-°Ālamīyyah,
- Al-Bāḥisīn, Y. °A.W. (2001). *Raf° al-ḥaraj fī al-sharī°ah al-Islāmiyyah: Dirāsah usūliyyah ta°šīlyyah* (4th ed.). Maktabat al-Rushd.
- Al-Bājī, A. W. S. I. K. A. (1332 AH). *Al-Muntaqā sharah Mu°waṭṭā° Mālik*. Al-Qāhirah: Maṭba°at al-Sa°d.
- Al-Bayhaqī, A. B. A. I. Ḥ I. °A. (1352 AH). *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*. Hyderabad: Matba°aṭ Majallat Dā°irat al-Ma°ānī al-°Uthmāniyyah.
- Al-Bukhārī. (1986). *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (6th ed.). (Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Trans.). Lahore: Kazi Publications.
- Al-°Asqalānī, I. H. (1380 AH). *Fatḥ al-bārī Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (1st ed.). Al-Qāhirah: Al-Maṭba°at al-Salafiyyah wa Maktabātuha.
- Al-Dārimī, A. M. °A. A. I. °A. R. (1349 AH). *Sunan al-Dārimī*. Dimashq: Al-Maṭba°at al-ḥadīthah.
- Al-Luwayḥaqī, °A. R. I. M. (1992). *Al-Ghulūw fī al-Dīn fī ḥayāt al-Muslimīn al-mu°āširah* (2nd ed.). Bayrūt: Mu°ssasat al-Risālah.
- Al-Qāsimī, M. J. D. (1957). *Maḥāsīn al-Ta°wīl* (1st ed.). n. p.: n. p.
- Al-Sa°dī °A. R. I. N. I. °A. A. (1999). *Al-Qawā°id al-ḥisān li tafsīr al-Qur°ān* (1st ed.). Riyād: Maktabat al-Rashād li Nashr wa al-Tawzī°.
- Al-Shawkānī, M. I. °A. (1961). *Nayl al-awṭār sharḥ muntaqā al-akḥbār*. Miṣr: Maktabat Muṣṭafā al-Ḥalabī.

- Al-Shawkānī, M. I. °A. I. M. I. °A. A. (1993). *Nayl al-awṭār. Taḥqīq: ʿIṣām al-Dīn al-Sabābaḥ* (1st ed.). Miṣr: Dār al-Ḥadīth.
- Al-Shaybānī, A. °A. A. M. I. Ḥ. (1965). Al-Āthār. Hyderabad al-Dakkan: N.P.
- Al-Suyūṭī, J. D. (1954). *Tanwīr al-ḥawālik sharḥ Mu'waṭṭā' Mālik* (4th ed.). Miṣr: Maṭābi° Sharikat al-I°lānāt al-Sharqiyyah.
- Al-Suyūṭī, J. D. (n. d.). Al-Ashbāh wa al-naẓā'ir fī qawā'id wa furū° fiqh al-Shāfiyyah. Al-Qāhirah: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kubrā.
- Al-Ṭabarānī, S. I. A. I. A. I. M. L. S. A. Q. (2006). *Al-Mu°jam al-kabīr* (2nd ed.). (Muḥaqqiq, Ḥamdī ibn °Abd al-Majīd al-Salaft). Al-Qāhirah: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah.
- Al-Ṭabarī, A. J. M. I. J. (1373 AH). *Jāmi° al-bayān °an tafsīr Āy al-Qur'ān* (2nd ed.). Al-Qāhirah: Sharikat wa Maktabāt wa Maṭba°at Muṣṭafā albānī al-Ḥalabī.
- Al-Zamakhsharī, M. I. (n. d.). *Al-Kashshāf °an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl*. Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma°rifah.
- Asad, M. (1984). *The Message of the Qur'an*. Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus.
- Cowan, J. M. (1980). *Hens WehrA Dictionary of Modern written Arabic*. London: Macdonald and Evans Ltd.
- Daryabadi, A. M. (1971). *Holy Qur'an with English Translation and Commentary* (1st ed.). Lahore: The Taj Company Limited.
- Ibn al-Qayyim, S. A. D. A. °A. A. M. I. A. B. (1939). *Miftāḥ Dār al- Sa°ādah*. Miṣr: Maktab al-Azhar.
- Ibn Ḥanbal, A. °A. A. I. M. A. (Al-Muḥaqqiq, Shu°ayb al-Arnaṭ and °Ādil Murshid. (2001). *Musnad al-Imām ibn Ḥanbal* (1st ed.). Bayrūt: Mu°assasat al-Risālah.
- Ibn Kathīr. (n. d.). *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al- °azīm*. Al-Qāhirah: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-°Arabiyyah °Isā albānī al-Ḥalabī wa Shurakā'uh.
- Ibn Manzūr. (1399 AH). *Lisān al- °Arab*. Bayrūt: Dār Bayrūt, Chapter al-ghayn, Section Ghalā'.
- Ibn Sa°d, A. °A. A. M. I. S. Z. (1957). *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*. Bayrūt: Dār °Imād.
- Maududī, S. A. A°. (1983). *The Meaning of the Qur'an* (7th ed., Vol. 12). Lahore: Islamic Publications Limited.
- Muslim. (1987). *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, Trans.). Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 4 volumes.
- Quṭb, S. (n. d.). *In the Shade of the Qur'ān* (°Ādil Ṣalāḥī, Trans.). Leicester: The Islamic Foundation.
- °Ubādah, M. A. (1969). Al-Fiqh al-Islāmī: Al-°Ibādāt wa taṭawwur tashri°u hafiz amān al-Waḥy. Miṣr: Dār al-ṭibā°ah al-Muḥammadiyyah.
- Ushama, T. (2013). *History and Sciences of the Qur'an*. Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press.
- Ushama, T. (2014). Is Islam a religion of moderation or extremism. *Asian Social Science*.
- Yūsuf °A, °A. (1989). *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*. Brentwood: Amana Corporation.

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).