

Allah Almighty knows and understands His creatures, the Descendants of Adam, best. He Almighty knows their capacities and debilities, their excellences and their shortcomings, and He only expects from them in accordance with what He knows about them.

As our Lord has decreed that, throughout the ages, it should become increasingly difficult for human beings to live in accordance with what is good for them, Allah, their Lord, has lessened His expectations of them. He Almighty knows full well that the people of the last time will not be capable of much obedience or devotion to Him, and therefore He has made the successive Divine Laws revealed through His Prophets progressively easier and less demanding, culminating in the Law revealed to the Last and the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammed, Peace be upon him, the tolerant Law of Islam.

Even during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, Allah Almighty lightened the burdens that He Himself had imposed on believers, knowing that these practices would be too difficult for them to bear. For example, fasting used to commence after the evening meal, or from when a person went to sleep at night, and continue to the next sunset. Then Allah eased fasting for the believers by permitting that they partake of a pre-dawn meal and fast only from the first crack of dawn until sunset.

Although the revealed Law of Islam need never change throughout history, as it is the Law revealed for the people of the Last Time - still, from the time of the revelation of the Holy Qur'an until the end of this world, the level of observance expected of us by our Lord, and the strictness or lenience with which He will judge our actions, is not the same now as it was in the time of the Prophet.

Yes, the complete Divine Law as revealed to our Prophet stands unaltered as the model of perfection to be striven for by believers of high aspiration and degree. But according to the following tradition of our Prophet it is clear that the actions of the people of such a degenerate time as our own will only be judged relative to the conditions they had to endure. According to Tradition, the Holy Prophet once addressed his companions, saying: "Oh my companions, if one of you abandons one Divine Command from among one hundred, he will be in danger of losing his faith, but there will come a time when anyone of my Nation who holds firmly to even one Command from among one hundred, may hope to save himself and his faith".

We must understand the full implications of this prophecy, but generally our Islamic scholars read such a tradition and never pause to reflect on it. Therefore, it is their habit to be too rigid and intolerant in their dealings with new Muslims from Western countries. As soon as a person agrees to become Muslim, those scholars proceed to load them down with instructions on the full level of worship, fasting, etc. required of a fully responsible Muslim, and the complete list of forbidden actions as well - all in all five-hundred orders and eight-hundred prohibitions! What should be the reaction of such new people who, in our times, are not even converting from another religion with practices and prohibitions of a roughly corresponding nature, but often from a completely unregulated way of life? If we are to present Islam in such a way they will certainly think twice before committing themselves to Islam, as they are not prepared to instantly observe the whole of the Law. This is why so many Western people come to me and ask if it is possible to follow a Sufi Way without embracing Islam: because they view Islam as a gigantic mountain which they would be ordered to scale to the peak, immediately, without training, without equipment - so, naturally they are hesitant.

We must be wise and aware of our responsibilities towards people whose hearts incline towards Islam. We must remember that our Lord is the One who Himself stresses His Mercy Oceans above all other Attributes in His Holy Book, and we must learn from our Lord's tolerance towards us to be tolerant with those with whom we want to forge bonds of the heart, with those whom we want to guide toward our Lord's Love and take as our own brothers and sisters.

No one from among the Muslims can dispute the fact that the full command of the Divine Law was revealed to our Prophet gradually over a period of ten years in Medina, and this only after an initial thirteen year preparation period in Mecca, when nothing specific was demanded of the believers except to believe in Allah, the Last Day, His Prophets, and to do good deeds. The Holy Prophet summarises the wisdom of this approach in a famous Tradition: "Seek to make things easy for people, not hard. Bring them good tidings, don't drive them away".....

Taken from □ 'Mercy Oceans of the Heart'