

## THE GRADUAL EVOLUTION OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS FROM PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA TO THE MADANI PERIOD: A LITERARY AND ANALYTICAL STUDY OF PROPHETIC TRADITIONS

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### Abstract:

*The article critically examines misconceptions about pre-Islamic Arab society and the gradual evolution of Islamic teachings. It highlights that Allah's favor upon humanity was manifested by sending Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, who came from the noblest lineage and was placed in Makkah — a city blessed with strategic, geographical, and economic significance, chosen long before his birth. The Prophet ﷺ's ancestry, known for honor and virtue, was essential in a society where leadership was linked to noble lineage.*

*Pre-Islamic Arabia, while often portrayed as morally bankrupt, did possess remnants of the Abrahamic tradition, preserved by a few monotheists who rejected idolatry and vice. Influences from Persia, Rome, and other civilizations shaped Arabian culture through trade. The article also corrects the misconception that Islam emerged abruptly; rather, it evolved gradually through successive prophets, culminating in Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The Qur'an repeatedly references earlier prophets, urging Muslims to follow their guidance.*

*Another misconception addressed is that Islam's complete legal system was established in Makkah. In reality, only core beliefs and prayers were introduced then. Other pillars fasting, zakāh, and hajj were formalized later in Madinah. Classical scholars noted that Makkan revelations focused on theology and ethics, while legal rulings appeared in the Madinan period, a view recorded by figures like Imam al-Zarkashī. This understanding contextualizes hadith like "Islam is built on five pillars" and underscores the wisdom in Islam's gradual legislative evolution, tailored to social readiness and divine planning.*

*The text traces the evolution of Islamic practices like fasting, charity, Hajj, and social dealings. It describes tahannuth, a pre-Islamic tradition of seclusion and worship, which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ practiced before prophethood. Fasting in Ramadan gained significance in Makkah, while 'Ashura fasting predated Islam and remained Sunnah after Ramadan's obligation. Hajj's origins link to Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.), with rituals like tawaf and talbiyah preserved. The Qur'an progressively revealed Hajj's rulings. Islam emphasized ethical mu'amalat (social dealings), reforming pre-Islamic practices and organizing them into five legal categories, connecting worldly affairs to faith, character, and community welfare.*

**Keywords:** 'Ashura Fasting, Abrahamic Traditions, Classical Scholars, Divine Wisdom in Legislation, , Gradual Legislation, Islamic Evolution, Islamic Pillars, Makkah's Significance, Makkan and Madinan Revelations, Noble Lineage, Social Dealings.

### Introduction:

The article highlights the significant favor of Allah upon humanity by sending Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, a perfect and noble guide. This divine selection was part of Allah's supreme plan, placing the Prophet ﷺ in the best lineage, tribe, and environment. Pre-Islamic Arabia is often portrayed as entirely ignorant and morally corrupt, but the narrative here challenges that simplistic depiction. While Arab society faced moral and political decline due to tribal wars and idolatry, it had also absorbed civilizational influences through trade with Rome, Persia, Yemen, and beyond. Some individuals retained monotheistic beliefs and moral virtues, such as Waraqah ibn Nawfal and Salman al-Farsi (RA).

The piece also corrects a common misconception — that Islam emerged suddenly without ties to earlier Prophets. The Qur'an evidences a continuous religious evolution, commanding followers to seek guidance from previous Messengers. The Prophet ﷺ reformed existing practices: preserving the good, amending the flawed, and abolishing harmful customs.

Additionally, the text addresses an incomplete understanding of the Makkan Prophetic period. It clarifies that while core beliefs and prayer were established in Makkah, other pillars like fasting, zakāh, and Hajj were instituted later in Madinah. This gradual revelation reflected divine wisdom, ensuring the community's readiness. The widely narrated hadith about Islam's five pillars must thus be understood in the context of the religion's progressive establishment. Scholars have long differentiated Makkan and Madinan revelations accordingly, emphasizing the importance of context when interpreting Islamic law and tradition.

### **The importance of Pre-Islamic Arab Society:**

The significant importance of pre-Islamic Arab Society is illustrated by this fact that Modern Europeans are showing their interest to rediscover the Pre-Islamic Arab Society. They Had started their journey in eighteenth century.

Will Durant narrates in his book “ The Story Of Civilisation” about this journey :

“It began in 1761-4, when Carsten Niebuhr traveled through the peninsula under the auspices of the Danish government; his published account (1772) was the first comprehensive description of Arabia.”<sup>1</sup>

Will Durant wrote about six researchers including the above mentioned. Their short details are given as under:

1. In 1761-4, Carsten Neibuhr – a Danish
2. In 1807, Domingo Badia – a Spaniard
3. In 1814-15, John Ludwig Burckhardt – a Swiss
4. In 1853, Richard Burton – an Englishman
5. In 1875, Charles Montagu Doughty – an Englishman
6. In 1882-8, E. Glaser – an Austrian

Will Durant says that their findings are now their chief source for the history of Pre- Islamic Arabia.

### **A Flawed Portrayal of Pre-Islamic Arab Society**

It is a great favor of Allah, the Lord of Glory, upon humanity that He sent a perfect and complete personality to guide mankind, making each moment of human life meaningful and valuable. As the Qur'an states:

*"Indeed, Allah has conferred a great favor upon the believers when He raised among them a Messenger from among themselves, reciting to them His verses, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had previously been in clear misguidance."*<sup>2</sup>

This magnificent favor did not come into existence suddenly; rather, it was part of the supreme and perfect plan of Allah Almighty, the Best of Planners, as declared in the Qur'an:

*"And Allah is the Best of Planners."*<sup>3</sup>

According to His perfect wisdom and decree (and Allah knows best), Allah Almighty chose not only the finest family and tribe for His beloved Prophet ﷺ, but also selected the most blessed and appropriate place on earth — a location superior in terms of geography, natural features, economy, and society. Moreover, this selection was made long before the advent of the Prophet ﷺ when the forefathers of the Prophet were settled in this land, which later came to be known as “Arabia.” It was in this barren valley that Allah made the blessed water of Zamzam flow.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself said:

*"Al- 'Abbās (RA) reported: When the Prophet ﷺ heard some of what the people were saying, he ascended the pulpit and said: 'Who am I?' They replied: 'You are the Messenger of Allah.' He said: 'I am Muhammad,*

*the son of ‘Abdullah, the son of ‘Abd al-Muttalib. Indeed, Allah created His creation, and placed me in the best of them. Then He made them into two groups and placed me in the best group. Then He created tribes and placed me in the best tribe. Then He created households and placed me in the best household. Thus, I am the best among you in lineage and the finest in person.’”<sup>4</sup>*

Similarly, it is narrated:

*‘Abdullah ibn ‘Ubaydullah ibn ‘Umayr reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, ‘Indeed, Allah selected the Arabs, and from among them He chose Kinānah, and from Kinānah He chose Quraysh, and from Quraysh He chose Banū Hāshim, and from Banū Hāshim He chose me.’”<sup>5</sup>*

These narrations reflect that all the forefathers of the Prophet ﷺ, in their respective times, were the most distinguished in character, virtue, and honor among their tribes. It was the custom of the Arabs that whoever claimed any leadership or authority was first required to present their lineage, so people could judge their qualities and weaknesses. When the Prophet ﷺ proclaimed Prophethood, he himself openly declared his noble lineage, which is preserved in books of Hadīth and Sīrah.

As for the nobility and honor of the Prophet ﷺ’s lineage — it was acknowledged not only by the Arabs but even by his opponents.

Now, as for the state of the society at the time of the Prophet’s birth and Prophethood — to understand it, one must study the historical conditions of pre-Islamic Arabia.

Most historians agree that pre-Islamic Arab society was in moral, social, and political decline. Tribal wars, idolatry, and internal strife were the primary reasons for their weakness. The society in which the Prophet ﷺ appeared has a deep connection with his blessed life.

The selection of the Arabian Peninsula for the final Prophet, and specifically the city of Makkah, along with his birth in the most honorable tribe and family, was not a mere coincidence. Rather, it was a choice made by Allah, the Lord of Glory, for His beloved ﷺ.

The civilization and culture of Makkah had begun with the miraculous emergence of Zamzam. This culture developed through various stages, and by the time it reached the era of the Prophet’s forefathers, it had advanced considerably. The influence of non-Arab cultures had also blended into it through the foreign traders who came to the Arab markets.

Due to frequent trade journeys, not only Makkah but also the coastal and inland Arabs had adopted elements of civilization from the established nations of that time — Rome, Persia, Yemen, Africa, and India. Allah Almighty even mentions these journeys in the Qur’an:

*“For their accustomed journeys in winter and summer.”<sup>6</sup>*

### **Another Misconception Regarding the Evolution of Islam**

A significant misconception about the evolution of Islam is the belief that all of Islam’s teachings were revealed entirely anew. Those who fall prey to this misunderstanding imagine that the final Prophet ﷺ had no connection to the preceding links in the chain of Islam. However, in numerous verses of the Qur’an, the gradual progression and evolution of Islam are clearly mentioned. It is a law of the universe that nothing in this world reaches completion suddenly; rather, everything journeys from inception to conclusion through gradual stages of development.

Allah Almighty narrates the progression, completion, and perfection of Islam from the first Prophet to the final Prophet ﷺ. Alongside this, the Qur’an also instructs following the guidance of previous Prophets. If one carefully studies verses 82–90 of Surah Al-An’am, it becomes clear that, besides Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) (peace be upon him), fifteen other Prophets and Messengers are mentioned by name — including Nuh (Noah), Dawud (David), Sulaiman (Solomon), Ayyub (Job), Yusuf (Joseph), Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Zakariya (Zachariah), Yahya (John the Baptist), Isa (Jesus), Ilyas (Elijah), Isma’il (Ishmael), Al-Yasa’ (Elisha), Yunus (Jonah), and Lut (Lot) — peace be upon them all. Furthermore, it

refers to the rightly guided among their ancestors, descendants, and brethren, and states that they were granted the Book, wisdom, and Prophethood. It is also commanded to follow their guidance:

*"Those are the ones whom Allah has guided, so from their guidance, take example."*<sup>7</sup>

Besides this, similar themes are present in other Makkan chapters such as Surah An-Nahl (16:123), Yunus (10:105), and Ar-Rum (30:30), and in Madinan chapters such as Al-Baqarah (2:135), Aal-e-Imran (3:95), and An-Nisa (4:125). These details serve as evidence for the continuous evolution of Islam.

The people of Arabia claimed that they followed the pure religion of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), but in reality, they had deviated from monotheism and fallen into idolatry. The cultural influence of non-Arabs had also affected their religious values. According to books of Seerah and history, there remained among them some adherents to the Abrahamic faith, who despised idolatry, upheld belief in the oneness of God, possessed virtuous character, avoided superstition, and remained distant from vices like alcohol, gambling, and immorality.

Among the ancestors of the Prophet ﷺ was 'Ibn Abi Kabsha,' while contemporaries of the Prophet ﷺ in Makkah and other Arab lands included individuals like Umayyah ibn Abi Salt al-Thaqafi, Uthman ibn Huwairith al-Asadi, Waraqah ibn Nawfal al-Asadi (may Allah be pleased with him), Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari (may Allah be pleased with him), and Salman al-Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him), among others.

According to Ibn Khaldun,

*"Civilization is a collective gift of many nations and communities — a distillation of united human efforts and centuries of experience."*<sup>8</sup>

Shah Waliullah (may Allah have mercy on him), in his renowned and unique work *Hujjatullah al-Baligha*, has discussed the deeds, religious conditions, and social reforms of the Arabs during the Age of Ignorance, as well as the role of Prophetic guidance and its transformative effect on Arab civilization.

Shah Waliullah wrote regarding the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the implementation of Islamic teachings and social reforms that the Prophet ﷺ did not present an entirely new religion by completely altering all existing affairs. Rather, he maintained those practices which were correct, reformed what was defective, encouraged and advocated for those aspects consistent with the principles of religious governance, and abolished those matters that had been entirely corrupted — replacing them with new teachings.

He said:

*"Then comes another Prophethood, to correct what has become crooked, to repair what has become corrupted after the mixture and distortion of the teachings of the previous Prophet. It examines the well-known rulings among them — whatever is correct and consistent with the principles of religious politics is not altered; rather, it is endorsed and promoted. And whatever has become unsound or adulterated is changed according to necessity."*<sup>9</sup>

### **Incomplete Understanding of the Makkan Prophetic Era ﷺ**

If we assess the gradual revelation and development of Islamic commandments in light of the general views held by scholars, it becomes an accepted and evident reality that the foundational laws and pillars of Islamic Shari'ah — which claims a universal and global significance — did not begin nor were enforced during the Makkan prophetic era ﷺ. Only beliefs ('Aqā'id) and, among the pillars of Islam, **Salah (prayer)** were established in Makkah, while fasting, zakāh, Hajj, and other legal rulings and social regulations were introduced later during the Madinan period.

This means that fasting was made obligatory in **2 AH** during the Madinan era, and zakāh even later in **3 AH**. As for Hajj, it was only prescribed towards the very end of the Madinan period. From this it apparently follows that Islam remained incomplete even up to **10 AH**, with its essential pillars still unfinished. Here



lies the question — how can Islam claim to be a universal and timeless religion, the preferred way of life according to Allah Almighty, if it had not even established its foundational framework in its earliest years? This issue particularly arises when one considers the famous and widely recognized hadith:

*“Islam is built upon five (pillars)... etc.”*

This hadith is narrated by a Makkan Companion, ‘**Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (RA)**, and recorded in:

- Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Hadith No.8, 4514)
- Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim (Hadith No.111-114)
- Sunan al-Nasā’ī (Hadith No.5004)
- Jāmi‘ al-Tirmidhī (Hadith No.2609)
- Musnad al-Ḥumaydī (Hadith No.720)

What then is the status of this hadith, and in which era should its context be understood?

Many scholars and intellectuals also hold the belief that the Makkan chapters (Sūrahs) of the Qur’ān only addressed the core tenets of faith and moral teachings, having no connection with laws, boundaries, legal rulings, or obligatory religious duties (farā’id). So much so that **Imām al-Zarkashī (d. 794 AH)**, while discussing the categorization of Makkan and Madinan revelations in his work *al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, quotes the saying of ‘**Urwah ibn al-Zubayr al-Asadī (d. 94 AH)**:

*“Whatever pertains to legal boundaries or obligatory duties was revealed in Madinah, and whatever relates to stories of past nations and punishments was revealed in Makkah.”<sup>10</sup>*

Imām al-Zarkashī neither critiqued nor objected to this statement, implying his acceptance of this view. Over time, this opinion gradually transformed from a scholarly observation into a widely held belief — that Makkan Sūrahs only deal with ethical teachings, while legal rulings and laws were granted later in the Madinan chapters, on the rationale that in the Makkan phase, circumstances were not yet suitable for their implementation.

When it comes to the Qur’an’s revelation, ‘**Allāmah al-Suyūṭī (d. 911 AH)**, in *al-Itqān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, quotes a statement from **Ibn al-‘Arabī** in his work *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh*:

*“What we have learned in general about the Qur’an is that it includes Makkan, Madinan, those revealed while traveling or residing, during the day or night, from the heavens, from the earth, some revealed between the heavens and the earth, and some even revealed beneath the earth in a cave.”<sup>11</sup>*

From this, **al-Suyūṭī** develops a principle for Qur’anic commentators, emphasizing that there are **twenty-five aspects regarding the revelation of the Qur’an** which a competent interpreter must be thoroughly acquainted with. Should a commentator be ignorant of these or unable to distinguish among them, he is not permitted to speak on the matter of Allah’s Book.

Al-Suyūṭī states:

*“These are twenty-five categories; whoever does not know them and cannot distinguish between them, it is not permissible for him to comment on the Book of Allah Most High.”<sup>12</sup>*

### **Purpose of Understanding the Makkan and Madinan Ḥadīth Narratives**

As a preface, the principles for determining Makkan and Madinan aḥādīth are briefly presented, so that there remains no ambiguity in classifying these narrations.

A study of the ḥadīth reveals that — like the Prophetic era in Makkah (both pre- and post-Prophethood) — the narrators of aḥādīth belong to both Makkan and Madinan periods. Similarly, narrators of Madinan ḥadīth include both Makkan and Madinan Companions.

**Makkan narrators** refer to all those Companions (رضي الله عنهم) who embraced Islam during the Prophet’s (ﷺ) time in Makkah — whether they were originally from Makkah or other regions — if they accepted Islam before the Hijrah, they are termed Makkan Companions.

**Madinan narrators** are those Companions who embraced Islam after the Prophet's (ﷺ) migration to Madinah, regardless of whether they were originally from Makkah, Madinah, or any other city, country, or region — they will be categorized as Madinan Companions.

The following principles will assist in classifying the aḥādīth accordingly:

### **Fundamental Categories of Ḥadīth**

Aḥādīth are divided into two fundamental categories:

1. **Makkan Ḥadīth**
2. **Madinan Ḥadīth**

Each of these primary categories is further divided into three types:

#### **1. Types of Makkan Ḥadīth:**

1. **Makkan Narrator – Makkan Ḥadīth:**

Aḥādīth related to events from the Makkan period of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life, narrated by Makkan Companions (رضي الله عنهم) as per the defined criteria.

2. **Madinan Narrator – Makkan Ḥadīth:**

Aḥādīth concerning the Makkan period, but narrated by Madinan Companions.

3. **Makkan Narrator – Ḥadīth on General Rulings:**

Aḥādīth that cover general legal rulings, where circumstances or evidence do not clarify whether they belong to the Makkan or Madinan period. In such cases, their classification will rely on the narrator's identity. If narrated by a Makkan Companion, it will be considered a Makkan ḥadīth.

#### **2. Types of Madinan Ḥadīth:**

1. **Madinan Narrator – Madinan Ḥadīth:**

Aḥādīth concerning the Madinan period of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life, narrated by Madinan Companions (رضي الله عنهم).

2. **Makkan Narrator – Madinan Ḥadīth:**

Aḥādīth concerning the Madinan period, but narrated by Makkan Companions.

3. **Madinan Narrator – Ḥadīth on General Rulings:**

Aḥādīth that involve general rulings where circumstances or evidence do not clarify their period. In such cases, the classification depends on the narrator. If a Madinan Companion narrates it, it will be considered a Madinan ḥadīth.

### **The Three Core Themes of the Qur'ān:**

1. **Beliefs ('Aqā'id)**
2. **Acts of Worship ('Ibādāt)**
3. **Social Transactions and Dealings (Mu'āmalāt)**

### **The Relationship Between the Heart and Intention:**

In the study of faith, topics concerning the heart and mind are addressed before beliefs themselves, as they are of great importance for nurturing the heart and intellect. Every action begins with an intention, and for intention to form, it is essential that the heart is inclined towards the act. In the Holy Qur'an, the word "**Qalb**" (heart) is used to denote both the heart and the mind. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has defined the concept of "Qalb":

*"Beware! There is a piece of flesh in the body; when it is sound, the whole body is sound, and when it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Beware! That piece of flesh is the heart."*<sup>13</sup>

According to this Ḥadīth, the heart is responsible for both the correction and corruption of the human body. Within the human body, **the soul (Ruh)** and **the self (Nafs)** are two distinct entities. The soul is the essential element that sustains life in any living being, and no creature has control over it. The Qur'an states:

*"And they ask you [O Prophet] concerning the soul. Say, 'The soul is by the command of my Lord, and you have been given only a little knowledge of it.'"*<sup>14</sup>

The **Nafs (self)**, on the other hand, is the manifestation of the soul in the physical world — it represents the personality or individuality of a person. It is mentioned in the Qur'an as: "**a Messenger from among yourselves**", referring to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. All human actions are dependent on the body, and the body, being the seat of the Nafs, has the ability to choose either obedience to Allah and His Messenger or to indulge in disobedience and sin. Human intention compels the body to act upon the decisions of the mind. The mind reaches decisions through its observations of the environment, personal likes and dislikes, joys and displeasures, and understanding and perception. The intention drives a person toward action, and ultimately the body enacts these decisions. Thus, it becomes clear that it is **human will** which lies behind every action, and this will is shaped by one's environment, heart, and intellect. Islam recommends righteous company for the refinement of these influences. The Prophet ﷺ said:

*"A person follows the religion of his friend, so you should be careful about whom you befriend."*<sup>15</sup>

Before addressing human autonomy in Islam, it is appropriate to briefly review the views of philosophers related to thought and philosophy. Some philosophers hold that while a person is free in their actions, they do not have control over their intentions. Others believe that humans are neither free in their actions nor their intentions, being instead bound by their environment, traditions, and heritage.

In philosophy, three main theories exist regarding human will, freedom, and authority:

1. **Determinism (Jabariyyah)**
2. **Libertarianism (Ikhtiyariyyah)**
3. **Self-Determination (Khud Iraadatīyat)**

The theory of determinism aligns with two laws of physics — the **law of cause and effect** and the **law of uniformity of nature**. The law of conservation of energy also supports this theory. Proponents of determinism apply physical principles to human life as they apply to nature. According to the law of cause and effect, every event must have a cause, and no event can occur without one. Even if the cause is unknown, it certainly exists. The law of uniformity suggests that nature always operates in a consistent manner. According to the law of conservation of energy, the total amount of energy in the universe remains constant; it can neither be created nor destroyed, only transformed. Human intention, therefore, must also be driven by some force or cause, making intention the effect of that cause. Since no new force can come into being according to the conservation of energy, intention too must be determined by existing forces, leaving no room for personal control, thus supporting the deterministic viewpoint.

Based on these three laws, determinism appears to be the only acceptable theory. Various revealed religions also endorse this view, as they believe in the absolute power of Allah, with everything in the universe, including human actions and intentions, under His knowledge and authority.

Since Greek philosophers did not acknowledge divine revelation, their philosophy was confined to the natural world. The **Stoics**, too, held a materialistic philosophy, dividing their studies into physics, logic, and ethics. They considered the universe to be governed by fixed, unchanging laws, granting freedom to human beings only in the realm of ethics.

By the end of the 19th century, belief in strict determinism waned within philosophy and science. The scientific concept of **energy**, as understood in physics, cannot be applied as a cause for intention, because intention is a mental process stemming from an internal force not derived from material energy.

In the 20th century, the **principle of indeterminacy (uncertainty principle)** was introduced, suggesting that nature does not always operate uniformly, and spontaneous occurrences can take place.

The true source of human will lies in the **Nafs**. While it may be influenced by the environment, it is not without power or choice. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly draws attention to human perception and points to

the presence of free will, affirming that humans have not been created powerless. It states in **Surah Al-Balad**:

*"Have We not made for him two eyes? And a tongue and two lips? And shown him the two ways?"<sup>16</sup>*

There is a similarity between the theories of **self-determination** and **libertarianism**. Thinkers such as **William James(1842-1910)<sup>17</sup>**, **Henri Bergson(1859-1941)<sup>18</sup>**, and **Allama Iqbal(1877-1938)<sup>19</sup>** explained the theory of libertarianism in detail. According to this view, **physical life** and **psychological life** are two different realities. Psychological life is fundamentally based on free will, without which it cannot truly exist. The law of cause and effect applies to the material world, and thus cannot be imposed upon human life.

#### **Human Autonomy and True Freedom:**

Allah, the Creator and Master of the universe, has invited humans to reflect upon their creation. The Holy Qur'an explains the gradual development of human creation — from a clot to birth, infancy, childhood, youth, and eventually old age. In childhood, mental life is subordinate to physical life. As the mind matures, it gains strength and eventually overcomes the dominance of physical life, rendering the person fully autonomous. Allah has granted humanity the power of choice. The purpose of distinguishing between good and evil is to enable humans to exercise this power in choosing the right path. Through knowledge and awareness, a person harnesses this power and turns it into action. Reason also supports this, as a person can only uphold moral values when they possess both free will and autonomy. A person's genuine freedom lies not in being subject to environmental factors and circumstances, but in making decisions under the guidance of a higher self and acting accordingly.

#### **Shariah Rulings in the Medinan Period:**

Islam is a universal religion, and both **revealed and non-revealed inspiration** form the foundation of Islamic Shariah. The two phases of the Prophet's blessed life — the **Makkan and Medinan periods** — hold fundamental significance for Shariah rulings. Many scholars, jurists, and thinkers believe that several essential Shariah injunctions were introduced and implemented during the Makkan period itself. The overarching objectives for which Shariah was revealed have been excellently outlined by **Imam Shatibi (d. 790 AH)** in his work *Al-Muwafaqat*, as follows:

*"Whenever you see a foundational principle in the Medinan period, reflect upon it, and you will find that it was partially addressed earlier or serves as a completion of a previously established principle. The Shariah came to protect five universal objectives: religion, life, intellect, progeny, and wealth."<sup>20</sup>*

Drawing upon Makkan verses and chapters, Imam Shatibi demonstrates that the initial rulings concerning these five objectives were introduced in the Makkan period, while their completion took place during the Medinan period. The essential and foundational development of Islamic rulings began in the Makkan period and gradually reached perfection in the Medinan period.

In matters of faith, the core beliefs were revealed in Makkan verses, while the detailed branches were elaborated upon in Medinan verses. In some cases, Makkan and Medinan rulings overlap, while in others they vary in accordance with time and circumstances.

During the Medinan period, the Arabs of Madinah, like the people of Makkah, were followers of the **Abrahamic tradition** but had introduced deviations and distortions. They acknowledged Allah as the Creator of the universe but also engaged in idol worship. Additionally, the Makkans would often arbitrarily declare what was lawful and unlawful according to their whims and desires, without feeling any shame in doing so. For example, they would alter the sanctity of certain months, which the Qur'an explicitly criticizes.

Allah states:



*"Indeed, the number of months with Allah is twelve months in the register of Allah from the day He created the heavens and the earth; of these, four are sacred. That is the correct religion, so do not wrong yourselves during them. And fight the polytheists collectively as they fight against you collectively. And know that Allah is with the righteous."*<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, concerning provisions, the Qur'an condemns their practice of arbitrarily declaring some lawful and others unlawful:

*"Say: Have you considered what Allah has sent down for you of provision, and you have made some of it unlawful and some lawful? Say, has Allah permitted you, or do you invent something about Allah?"*<sup>22</sup>

### **The Relationship Between Faith and Righteous Deeds:**

The message of guidance for which Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, was sent is founded upon *human salvation*. The world is a testing ground, and for success in the trials and tribulations that arise, two things hold utmost importance: first, **faith (iman)**, and second, **righteous deeds (amal-e-salih)**<sup>23</sup>. Allah, the Almighty, has emphasized this relationship in numerous places in the Holy Qur'an. Deeds performed without faith cannot attain the level of acceptance, and the realization of this truth is a firmly established fact.

The history of humankind testifies that the nations which attained success and prosperity in this world were those who, with firm belief, accepted the laws of their Sovereign Lord — the Lord of Majesty and Honor — and by adopting righteous deeds, abandoned the paths of vice and misguidance. Allah, the Glorious, created man in the best of forms<sup>24</sup> and endowed him with excellent abilities, yet it is his actions that can lower him to the *lowest of the low*.<sup>25</sup> This clarifies that attaining high status in this world<sup>26</sup> and Paradise in the Hereafter is not dependent on noble lineage or ancestry, but rather contingent upon faith and righteous deeds.

Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi (d. 1953), in his renowned work *Seerat-un-Nabi* ﷺ, presents a beautiful analogy for the relationship between faith and righteous deeds:

"The best example of these two is like the postulates and figures of Euclid. The status of faith is akin to Euclid's accepted postulates and definitions, which without being affirmed render the rules for his geometrical figures invalid. But if one merely accepts the postulates and definitions without applying them through figures, then Euclid's art would be of no practical use in construction, engineering, or measurement, and humanity would derive no benefit from the discipline's original purpose."<sup>27</sup>

Thus, faith and righteous deeds are inseparable, and their frequent pairing in the Qur'an is by no means without purpose. The evidence of one's sincerity in faith is seen through righteous actions. Clearly, if deeds lean toward evil and misguidance, it points to a deficiency and weakness in faith itself.

### **The Evolution of Worship in Islamic Rulings:**

Islam is a universal, eternal, and all-encompassing religion. The records of Seerah (Prophetic biography) and Islamic history divide the blessed life of the Prophet ﷺ into two distinct periods: **the Makkan and Madinan eras**. This categorization highlights the different social, civilizational, cultural, economic, and political circumstances of each period. Islamic rulings began to be revealed immediately after the first revelation. Even as the Prophet ﷺ descended from the heights of Mount Hira, by Allah's command, the Angel Jibreel (Gabriel) appeared in human form and taught the Prophet ﷺ the method of performing ablution (wudu) and prayer (salah).<sup>28</sup>

The initiation of non-recited revelation (wahi ghair matlu) had already begun through true dreams, as confirmed by the sources of Islamic law. With the commencement of the recited revelation (wahi matlu) — the Qur'an — the method to show gratitude for this blessing was also taught. The very first command of Islamic worship was the proper performance of ablution and prayer. Though initially it was specific to

the Prophet ﷺ, he then taught it to his family and the early followers of Islam. In this way, Islamic rulings commenced with **physical purification**, while the means for spiritual purification was prayer.

The primary sources of Islamic law — the Qur'an, the sayings of the Prophet ﷺ, his blessed life (Seerah), Islamic history, and Islamic jurisprudence — confirm without doubt that both eras of the Prophet's ﷺ life hold great significance in the evolution of Islamic injunctions. These commands developed gradually with coherence and consistency, without any conflict or contradiction. This gradual development illustrates the universality, eternity, and comprehensiveness of Islam. The terms *Makkan* and *Madinan periods* exist merely to highlight this progressive unfolding and completion of Islamic teachings.

The common belief that all Islamic commands were revealed solely in the Madinan period is incorrect. While each era had its own demands and circumstances, associating the entirety of Islamic law only with the Madinan period and viewing the Makkan period as one of religious weakness and minority status for Muslims is a flawed notion. Islamic injunctions were revealed according to the prevailing conditions of each period — Makkan and Madinan.

Many Islamic scholars have held the view that most fundamental Islamic rulings originated in the Makkan period. Among them are Imam Ibn al-Athir, Imam al-Shatibi, and in the modern era, Dr. Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi.

### **The Significance of Purification (Taharah):**

This article begins the discussion of acts of worship with **purification (taharah)**. A study of Islamic legal texts and jurisprudential rulings shows that purification holds the status of a prerequisite for the performance of Islamic obligations. Therefore, Islamic laws and practices typically begin with *Kitab al-Taharah* (The Book of Purification). There is a deep connection between physical purity and spiritual purity. Self-purification (*tazkiyah al-nafs*) is impossible without bodily cleanliness.

This importance is as evident in the Madinan period as it was in the Makkan period. Like purification, acts of worship such as prayer, fasting, zakat, Hajj, and migration contain complementary commands. Some rulings are specific to the Madinan period, such as the command of dry ablution (tayammum), while the rules for ablution and ritual bathing (ghusl) are common to both periods. Though prayer was made obligatory in Makkah, the verse declaring its obligation was revealed in Madinah. Similarly, commandments like changing the Qiblah, shortening the prayer during travel (qasr), combining two prayers, congregational prayers in the mosque, mosque etiquette, funeral prayer, prayers for eclipses, prayers during fear, rain-seeking prayers, the obligatory fasts and their rulings, zakat, and pilgrimage came in Madinah.

Nonetheless, the basic rulings for fasting, zakat, and Hajj were established during the Makkan period and completed in the Madinan era. The first Friday prayer was performed in Madinah prior to the Prophet's ﷺ arrival, but the Prophet ﷺ himself led it after migration. The funeral prayer was instituted in the first year of Hijrah, with either Bara ibn Ma'rur or As'ad ibn Zurarah being the first to have their funeral prayers offered.

### **The Gradual Development of Prayer (Salah):**

The evolution of **prayer** took place progressively. It began immediately after the first revelation. Historical sources confirm that prayer was the first obligatory act following the descent of revelation — likely on the morning after that sacred night. Angel Jibreel taught the Prophet ﷺ ablution and prayer.

According to a narration by Aisha (RA), the earliest prayer was of two units (rak'at), and according to Ibn Kathir, it consisted of two rak'at with four prostrations. This indicates that the basic form of prayer has remained consistent since the establishment of the five daily prayers. Initially, only the *posture and form* were taught. At this stage, Surah al-Fatihah had not yet been revealed; only the first five verses of the initial revelation were known. Recitation of the Qur'an and other glorifications were introduced later.

At first, one daily prayer was made obligatory, as verified by the hadith of Jibreel's instruction. In those days, the Quraysh and nearby tribes would also perform a morning prayer known as *Duha*. It is possible that this early obligatory prayer coincided with Duha time. After the revelation of the verse:

*"And glorify the praises of your Lord in the evening and the morning."*<sup>29</sup>

two prayers became obligatory — one in the morning (Fajr) and one in the evening (Asr) — each consisting of two rak'at.<sup>30</sup>

According to narrations, Ali (RA) accepted Islam on the second day after the first revelation and prayed with the Prophet ﷺ. Ja'far ibn Abi Talib (RA) also joined in this early prayer.<sup>31</sup>

The command to change the Qiblah<sup>32</sup> was a purely Madinan injunction, although it is evident from the verse that the original Qiblah was Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) and that it had been appointed by Allah's command. Its wisdom is also explained in the same verse: that obedience to the Prophet ﷺ would be demonstrated even against personal preference. The Quraysh of Makkah had the Ka'bah as their Qiblah, so accepting Bayt al-Maqdis as the direction of prayer was difficult for them, yet the Makkan Muslims complied as a testament to their obedience.

Before the Isra and Mi'raj incident, there remained one or two daily prayers, with the night prayer (Tahajjud) being voluntary. It was during the Mi'raj that five daily prayers were made obligatory, with a reward equivalent to fifty, upon which there is consensus.<sup>33</sup>

Initially, all prayers were two rak'at, except Maghrib, which was three due to its status as the day's *Witr*. In the Makkan period, therefore, Fajr, Zuhr, Asr, and Isha were two rak'at each, and Maghrib three.

In the Madinan period, with the permission to shorten prayers while traveling (Qasr), two rak'at were added to Zuhr, Asr, and Isha while at home. Fajr remained two rak'at due to its lengthy recitations, and Maghrib stayed at three due to its position as the *Witr* of the day.

After the revelation of *"And stand before Allah in devout obedience"*<sup>34</sup>, complete attention and humility during prayer were mandated. Initially, brief greetings and necessary speech were permissible during prayer, and minor movements were tolerated. Gradually, these were prohibited, and full concentration became obligatory after "Hijrat e Habashah."<sup>35</sup>

Friday congregational prayers began before the Prophet's ﷺ arrival in Madinah, led by As'ad ibn Zurarah with forty Muslims at a place called Hazm an-Nabit in the Harrah of Banu Bayadah.<sup>36</sup> The Prophet's ﷺ own first Friday prayer and sermon took place at the Banu Salim ibn 'Awf mosque during his migration journey to Madinah.

If you'd like, I can organize this into sections with headings and subheadings, or modern academic article style as well. Would you prefer that?

### **The Evolution of Fasting and Charity**

According to the tradition of the religion of Abraham, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) would practice *tahannuth*. This practice, rooted in the Abrahamic tradition, existed among the Arabs, who would spend a month each year in *tahannuth* — leaving their homes to live in seclusion in caves or other remote places, engaging in worship. The meaning of *tahannuth* is broad; it did not refer merely to fasting, but encompassed various acts of goodness such as meditation, reflection, seclusion (*i'tikaf*), fasting, prayer, freeing slaves, feeding the poor, supporting the helpless, assisting the needy, and performing *tawaf* around the Ka'bah.<sup>37</sup> The sanctity of the month of Ramadan existed even during the Makkan period of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life because the revelation of the Qur'an began in this blessed month. Every year, Jibreel (A.S.) would review the Qur'an with the Prophet (ﷺ) during Ramadan. However, the obligation to fast in Ramadan was a purely Madinan ruling.

The fast of '*Ashura* was observed even before Islam; the Quraysh of Makkah would fast on this day, as it was the day the covering (*kiswah*) of the Ka'bah was changed. Prior to the obligation of fasting in Ramadan,

the fast of 'Ashura was compulsory. Related hadiths are discussed in their appropriate sections. The Prophet (ﷺ) commanded fasting on this day and, after migrating to Madinah, sent word to those tribes that had entered Islam to do the same. After the Ramadan fasts were made obligatory, the obligation of 'Ashura was lifted.

### **The Evolution of Hajj**

Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) was honored with the title "*Leader of all mankind*."<sup>38</sup> By divine command, he built the Ka'bah for all humanity and, with his noble son Isma'il (A.S.), prayed for his descendants to become a nation and for a Prophet to be raised among them. This prayer was accepted — while countless Prophets were sent to the Children of Israel, only one Prophet, the Seal of Prophets (ﷺ), arose from the progeny of Isma'il (A.S.).

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is the fulfillment of the prayer of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.), and his mission was the completion of Ibrahim's mission.

In the Makkan Qur'anic verses, Hajj is mentioned in connection with Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) using various expressions. In Surah Ibrahim, the term "*Baytika al-Muharram*"<sup>39</sup> signifies the sacred house of Hajj. During the Prophet's (ﷺ) Makkan era, *tawaf*, *umrah*, and *Hajj* as part of the Abrahamic tradition were already practiced among the Arabs. The *Talbiyah* of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) and the wearing of *Ihram* were also prevalent. To this day, the words of the *Talbiyah* remain essentially the same.

In Surah Aal-e-Imran, the obligation of Hajj<sup>40</sup> is declared. In Surah al-Baqarah, the command to complete both Hajj and Umrah is given.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Importance of Social Dealings and the Evolution of Islamic Laws**

The significance of *mu'amalat* (social dealings) is evident from the fact that in the study of religious sciences, it serves as the measure for evaluating beliefs and acts of worship. A believer's thoughts, beliefs, and intentions are practically reflected in his daily dealings. Interaction with society is termed *mu'amalat*, the plural of which is *mu'amalat*. In religious terms, it refers to worldly affairs regulated by Islamic rulings. Islam did not create entirely new forms of social dealings; rather, it reformed the existing practices of pre-Islamic Arabia, addressing flaws and retaining what was sound. It established principles and criteria to evaluate new situations or forms of interaction before adopting them.

Islam provided foundational rules for *mu'amalat*, composed of commands and prohibitions, linking these social dealings to beliefs, righteous actions, and the objectives of Shari'ah. As a result, concerns for public welfare and harm prevention are prominently reflected in Islamic dealings.

According to the jurists, *mu'amalat* are traditionally divided into five categories:

#### **1. Marriage and Family (Munakahat)**

Including marriage, divorce, *khul'*, dowry, waiting period (*iddah*), breastfeeding, and the rights and duties of spouses.

#### **2. Litigation (Mukhassamat)**

Covering disputes, claims, testimonies, oaths, plaintiffs, defendants, evidence, judicial rulings, and legal procedures.

#### **3. Trusts and Safekeeping (Amanat)**

Covering deposits, loans for use ('*ariyah*), responsibilities of trustees, betrayal of trust, guarantees, mortgages, and debts.

#### **4. Inheritance (Tarka'at)**

Pertaining to Islamic inheritance law, covering funeral expenses, debt repayments, wills, types of heirs, inheritance distribution, items included in inheritance, and principles of dividing the estate.



## 5. Commercial Transactions (Mu'awadat)

Including buying and selling, leasing, settlements, sharecropping, advance sales (*bay' salam*), and partnerships.

Islam is the only religion offering a comprehensive social system, beginning with the individual's relationship with the Creator. When this connection is strong, beliefs are sound and reflected in righteous actions. The individual's conduct then extends to others, forming society. Personal conduct influences collective life, and when social relations are established on sound foundations, it is termed *husn al-mu'amalah* (good dealings). Generally, dealings require at least two parties.

In '*Ulum al-Qur'an*', the division of Qur'anic verses and chapters into Makkan and Madinan periods provides a framework for evaluating legal and intellectual issues. Following this methodology, the hadiths are also classified into Makkan and Madinan categories<sup>42</sup>. Among these six categories, work has been done on three types of Madinan hadiths, collecting them along with derived themes, thereby practically demonstrating the Makkan and Madinan classification of hadith.

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