**HUMAN RIGHTS IN ISLAM**

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Preface

"Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains"-the paradox is as true in the twentieth century as it was in the eighteenth or earlier ones. All attempts to seek a solution to the problem within a purely secular framework fail after a certain point.

In some respects the contemporary situation is an improvement over that which prevailed three centuries ago; in others, things have deteriorated. Totalitarianism and despotism are today more firmly entrenched in some parts of the world than they ever were in the past and new threats to human freedom and dignity have emerged from the structure of modern technological society.

The need to reappraise the foundations on which the whole concept of human rights rests has therefore never been so pressing as it is today. Mawlana Abul A'lä Mawdūdī, one of the greatest thinkers of the world of Islam and a scholar who has immensely influenced people everywhere, has examined this issue in the context of the Divine guidance contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah, the sources of Islam.

Born in 1903 C.E., Mawdūdī started his public career as early as 1918. He wrote and spoke as editor, scholar, religious thinker and leader of a movement, authoring over a hundred works of varying size and delivering more than a thousand speeches. His death in September 1979 marks the end of an era.

He made his debut in the intellectual life of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent in 1927, at the early age of twenty-four, and created a stir by his voluminous scholarly work Al-Jihad fi al-Islām ("Jihad in Islam") first serialized in a newspaper, and subsequently published in the form of a book in 1930. From the early thirties he was a major, dominating, undaunted figure on the intellectual scene of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. The monthly magazine Tarjumān al-Qur'an, which he edited since 1933, has been a major influence on the minds of the Muslim intellectuals of the subcontinent. Since the forties, when Mawlānā Mawdūdī's writings began to be available in translated versions, especially in Arabic and English, his ideas have attracted an increasing number of people far beyond the confines of the subcontinent. It is no exaggeration to say that by the time of his death he had become the most widely read Muslim author of our time, contributing immensely to the contemporary resurgence of Islamic ideas, feelings and activity all over the world.

Islam, however, was never a merely intellectual concern of Mawlānā Mawdūdī. He consciously tried to live Islam and to live for Islam. As far back as his mid-twenties he had resolved not only to devote all his energy to expounding the teachings of Islam, but also to do all that lay in his power to transform Islamic teachings into practical realities. Mawlānā Mawdūdī was always emphatic in asserting that Islam is not merely a body of metaphysical doctrines, nor merely a bundle of rituals, nor even merely a set of rules of individual conduct. It is indeed a way of life, the bases of which lie rooted in Divine Revelation; a way of life which is permeated with God-consciousness and is oriented to doing God's Will and actualizing good and righteousness in human life. A Muslim is committed to follow this way of life, to bear witness to it by word and deed, and to strive in order to make it prevail in the world. Hence, in addition to his intellectual contribution, in 1941 Mawlānā Mawdūdī founded a movement known as the Jama'at-i Islāmī ("The Islamic Organization"). He led this movement as its chief from its inception till 1972. Even after getting himself relieved of the duties of its formal headship for reasons of health, he continued to be a major source of guidance and inspiration for those associated with the Jama'at-i Islāmi, and indeed for a very large number of men and women across the globe, who do not have any affiliation to that organization. More and more people, particularly Muslims of the younger generation, are coming to appreciate Mawdūdī and even identify with the vision of Islam that he articulated so lucidly and incisively.

Mawlānā Mawdūdī, therefore, was no mere academician; he was also a man of action engaged in a grim struggle for the implementation of the Islamic vision. During this struggle the many sterling qualities of his character came to the surface-notably his magnanimity and tolerance. It is because of his involvement in practical matters, especially since 1948, that Mawlānā Mawdūdī often had to suffer persecution at the hands of the men of authority in Pakistan who failed to perceive the real motives and true character of his movement. Many a time he had to court imprisonment, not unlike some of the great heroes of Islam Abū Hanifah, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ibn Taymīyah, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, and Sayyid Qutb of our own time, to name only a few luminaries. Not only that, in 1953 he narrowly escaped the gallows and, in 1963, the bullets of an assassin. In braving persecution for the sake of his cause, Mawlānā Mawdūdī displayed a serene dignity and heroic fearlessness which won him the abiding love and respect of friends and foe alike.

It is remarkable that despite the exacting tasks laid on Mawlānā Mawdūdī's shoulders as the head of a large movement, he remained prolific as a writer and his writings remained impressive, not only qualitatively, but also quantitatively. His magnum opus, of course, is his translation and Tafsir (exegesis) of the Holy Qur'an, an epitome of his elegant literary style, his erudition, and the clarity and brilliance of his thought. One of the major characteristics of Mawlānā Mawdūdī was his ability to bring out the relevance of Islam to the problems and concerns of man in the present age. World. He wanted the Muslims to appropriate creatively the healthy and beneficial elements from the cumulative treasure of human experience, and to employ them to serve the higher ends of life embodied in the Islamic tradition. It is this aspect of Mawlana Mawdūdī which has attracted many, but at the same time repelled many others, particularly the ultra- conservative and the ultra-westernized elements in Muslim society.

Human Rights in Islam is an English translation of a talk given by Mawlānā Mawdūdī at the invitation of the Civic Rights and Liberties Forum at Flatties Hotel, Lahore, Pakistan, on 16th November, 1975. To put the discussion in perspective, we are including an earlier talk by Mawlānā Mawdūdī on the political system of Islam. These two talks taken together should enable the reader to form a clear idea of the political framework and the nature and concept of human rights in Islam.

Chapter one has been translated by the undersigned, while chapters two to five have been translated by Professor Ahmed Said Khan, Principal, El-Kanemi College of Islamic Theology, Maidugri, Nigeria. Dr. M. M. Ahsan has reviewed and revised these latter chapters in general and the translation of Arabic text from the Qur'an and Sunnah in particular. The translation and editing work has been done under the auspices of the Islamic Foundation. My friend, Mr. Paul Moorman, Editor, Middle East Education, London, and former Foreign Editor, Times Higher Educational Supplement, has helped us in revising the translation for this second edition. Our thanks are also due to Mrs. P. R. Phillips for her useful comments on some parts of the manuscript. I also take this opportunity to place on record my gratitude to Brother Khurram Murad and other colleagues in the Islamic Foundation for seeing this through the press.

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