

RIBA: COMMENTS ON THE VIEW OF DR. RAUF YUSUF

Reference to be provided by Prof. Khurshid

PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



PROF KHURSHID AHMAD (Dawn, Aug 1-2) has made a couple of statements, which are debatable. He says: "Societies with interest system will be devoid of real happiness and joy". One would have thought that the Quranic teaching of recognising God and submitting to Him, and good actions and thoughts and abhorrence of evil were the real bases of happiness and serenity rather than one aspect of economy (even accepting Prof. Sahib's definition of Riba) on which about seven verses are revealed in the Quran compared to many hundred for prayer, zakat and good deeds.

Then he says that consensus has been reached on Riba. Notwithstanding some bodies (including the Shariat Court) have equalled Riba simply with ordinary interest, many people would still disagree and an appeal may well upset the Shariat Court decision.

After all, the Quran is meant to be understood by any person with normal intellect. It goes straight to the point. It does not need intercession of others to understand it.

The Quran is NOT a treatise on economy, finance or business. It is a revelation for the spiritual, moral and social uplift of Man. The Quran has made a very few direct references to business, particularly correct weights and measures and writing down of agreements. The Quran has given no rules or guidelines (except fairplay) for conduct of business. It says nothing about the use of capital, its relation to labour, permissible amount of profit, share of profit/loss, how is labour to be compensated, etc. The Quran does not create controversies. Only man does that. If Riba simply meant ordinary interest, surely Allah would have unequivocally said: "No profit on lending money" — no controversy.

However, Riba was and is a particular social evil which needed eradication. In the Quran (see verses quoted further on), it is described as intentional exploitation (increasing one's wealth through the property of others) and only the poor, the weak and the needy can be exploited. Whenever was a rich and powerful person exploited? Riba is contrasted with charity and good deeds so much so that remitting the loan (principal) entirely as alms is particularly

pleasing to Allah.

Would it not be farcical if the bank loan defaulters claimed write-off on the basis of this verse?

Why have scholars been only discussing and denouncing interest over the past century? Why have they relied on governments to abolish one system and establish another by a stroke of the pen? If they had taken practical steps to establish "Islamic banks", then by today competitive and viable alternative financial system would have been in place and the controversy would have ended. I am sure there is no law/bar against such banks, (apart from safeguards for people's money). Only then can one system be abolished to make way for the other. Otherwise, it would be like digging up the Grand Trunk Road from Karachi to Peshawar because a Motorway is to be constructed.

Prof Khurshid has said that there are Islamic banks in Muslim even in Western countries. Have they abolished the interest system?

To try to understand this question, which is assuming vital importance to possibly our very survival we should go back to the basic that is, what has the Quran said about Riba.

"Do not gorge yourself on usury doubling and redoubling it, but remain conscious of God (and beware of the fire)" (Surah 3:129).

"Whatever you give out in usury so that it might increase through other people's possessions will give you no increase in the sight of God (whereas what you give in charity will be blessed and multiplied) (30:39).

"God has made buying and selling lawful, and riba unlawful" (further, past gains may be retained but persistence dooms one to fire) (2:275).

"God deprives riba gains of blessing, whereas He blesses charitable deeds" (2:276).

"Charity, prayer, good deeds are rewarded by Allah;" (2:277).

"Give up all outstanding gains from riba," (2:278).

"Otherwise know that you are at war with God and His Apostle" (if you repent, you shall be entitled to your principal), (2:279).

"If the debtor is in straitened circumstances, give time and defer until time of ease, and it would be to your own good — if you