



**THE Religion**  
**OF Truth**

S. ABUL AL'A MAUDUDI

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# THE RELIGION OF TRUTH

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## PREFACE

There has been a long-felt need for introductory literature on Islam in the English language. Islamic Research Academy is presenting a set of twelve pamphlets dealing with different aspects of Islam : its nature and characteristics, articles of faith, concept of life, principles of individual life and social organisation and message for our own times. Each pamphlet deals with any one aspect of Islam, but the set taken together gives a full view of the Islamic ideology. In this series we have avoided all polemical discussions. Instead, an attempt has been made to present the message and teachings of Islam in simple, clear and concise terms. We hope that all those who sincerely seek to understand Islam will benefit from them. Suggestions and criticisms from readers would be most welcomed.

KHURSHID AHMAD  
General Editor

## THE RELIGION OF TRUTH<sup>1</sup>

“Verily, the (true) religion in the sight of Allah is Islam.” (Al-Qur’ān, 3 : 19)

This is how the Qur’ān invites the entire mankind to the system of life it proposes. This is a significant statement and contains the gospel truth. I propose, in the course of this brief discourse, to discuss different aspects of this statement. It would not be possible to cover all the details involved in this inquiry, nonetheless I shall try to throw some light on its meaning, purport and significance, shall enquire as to how far this claim is acceptable; and shall also endeavour to explain the implications and the demands of adherence to this concept.

Generally, this statement is understood to mean that the true religion in the sight of God is Islam and that Islam alone is the way of life acceptable with Allah. And the concept of Islam that is generally held is that it too is a religion among other religions—a religion that came into being some fourteen hundred years ago in Arabia, and which was “founded” by Muhammad (peace be upon him). I am deliberately using the word “founded,” for not only non-Muslims but quite a large

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1. English rendering of a speech delivered by the author before the teachers and students of *Jamia Millia*, Delhi on March 21, 1943. The translation is from the pen of Mr. Misbahul Islam Faruqi. He has partially availed from an earlier translation by Mr. Zaimul Abideen.—*General Editor*.

number of Muslims, many of them even educated ones, also write and speak of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the "founder" of Islam. As if, in their view, Islam originated with Muhammad (peace be upon him), who was its founder ! That is why when a non-Muslim, while going through the Qur'ān, arrives at the verse quoted above he passes over it lightly, assuming that just as every religion sets forth its claims of exclusive access to the fount of Truth and controverts other similar claims, likewise the Qur'ān has put forward a plea on behalf of its proposed religion. When a Muslim comes upon this sentence he does not feel the necessity of pondering over its meaning seriously since he knows that the religion referred to is his own, and what is declared as a true religion is the one he already reposes his faith in. And if at all he chooses to reflect over the matter it usually takes the form of a sort of a comparative study of different religions as Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism with a view to establish the veracity and superiority of Islam. But in fact this is a point which requires deeper study and reflection. Let us apply ourselves to it more seriously and penetratingly.

## I

### THE MEANING OF DEEN AND ISLAM

Let us start our inquiry by understanding, at the very outset, the meanings of the terms "*al-Deen*" and "*al-Islam*."

In Arabic the word "*deen*" is used to convey various meanings. It means

(a) power, suzerainty and control;

- (b) obedience and submission ;
- (c) compensation and atonement ; and
- (d) way of life, rule of conduct and ideology.

And in the verse of the Qur'ān in view the term is used in the fourth sense. That is, "*deen*" implies that way of life or attitude of mind and thought, and mode of behaviour and action which is pursued or followed by an individual or a society. But it should be noted that the Qur'ān says *al-Deen* and not merely "*deen*". That makes a lot of difference in the meaning, quite similar to the one we find between phrases "this is the way" and "this is a way". The claim of the Qur'ān is not that in the eyes of God Islam is a way of life, but that Islam is the only true way of life, the correct attitude of thought and behaviour, ideology of life.

Further, it should also be borne in mind that the word *al-Deen*, as it occurs in the Qur'ān, is not used in any restricted sense. It is not limited to some particular aspect or phase of life but it encompasses the entire human life with all its fulness. It does not refer merely to the personal life of an individual ; it rather covers their collective existence as well, the entire gamut of the society as a whole. Similarly the term is not confined to the way of life of any particular nation or country or one prevalent in a particular period of history, but it comprehends the way of life for the entire mankind, in the individual as well as collective sphere, throughout all the ages. The Qur'ān does not claim that Islam is the true compendium of rites and rituals, and metaphysical beliefs and concepts, or that it is the proper form of religious (as the word religion is now-a-days understood



in Western terminology) attitude of thought and action for the individual. Nor does it say that Islam is the true way of life for the people of Arabia, or for the people of any particular country or for the people preceding any particular age (say the Industrial Revolution). No ! very explicitly, for the entire human race, there is only one way of life which is Right in the eyes of God and that is *al-Islam*.<sup>1</sup>

Now let us consider the word '*Islam*'. In Arabic *Islam* means *to surrender, to yield, to accept bondage, to consign oneself*. But the Qur'ān, in the above verse, does not merely say *Islam*, but *al-Islam*. This again is a specific term used by the Qur'ān. It means to bow down before God ; to submit and obey Him ; to renounce one's own independence ; and surrender before Him completely. This acceptance, obedience, surrender and renunciation do not connote surrender to the Law of Nature, as some people have wrongly understood. Nor does it

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1. The present writer was surprised to learn that in modern Turkey this Qur'ānic term has been interpreted in a novel way by a new commentator. According to his view, "*deen*" is supposed to preclude culture and statecraft etc., and its connotation is confined to the field of personal relationship of the individual with God. It is very surprising indeed how such a meaning could be deduced from the Qur'ān. At least my studies of the Qur'ān extending over a period of eighteen years don't provide me with a clue for such misconceived interpretation of the Qur'ān. This attempt of the modernists to interpret Qur'ān according to their wishful thinking is not tenable at all. The Qur'ānic concept of *al-Deen* is too clear to admit any false interpretation. The Qur'ān does not use the word in any restricted sense, but denotes by it the system of thought and conduct of the whole life of all human beings of all ages.

imply that man should render obedience to something which they purvey as God's will and pleasure on the basis of the use of their own imagination or observation, as some others have mistakenly averred. It means, on the other hand, that man should hold fast to the teachings and guidance towards which God has guided men through His prophets, and not be led away by his own whims and wishes. In other words his attitude of mind and his conduct must be governed by what God and His Apostle have said and not according to what someone would have liked them to say. It is the attitude of submission and surrender which the Qur'ān defines as *al-Islam*. This, in fact, is not some new religion that originated 1400 years ago at the hands of Muhammad (peace be upon him). The truth is that man was told the moment he first appeared on this planet that *al-Islam* was the only true way and right conduct of life for him. And, therefore, in different parts of the world, at different periods, whoever was ordained for the guidance of man, the burden of his message was invariably the same, towards which finally Muhammad (peace be upon him) invited the whole of mankind. Undoubtedly the followers of the Messengers of God distorted their teachings. For example, the so-called believers of Prophet Moses improvised as time wore on a system by compounding various foreign elements under the name of Judaism ; and the followers of Jesus Christ developed another system of thought and practice under the name of Christianity ; and likewise the followers of other prophets in various parts of the world played havoc with the Divine guidance and adulterated it beyond recogni-

tion. But the fact remains that the way of life towards which Moses and Christ, and all other known or unknown prophets (Blessings of Allah be upon them) invited mankind was no other than Islam.

In the light of the above discussion it is submitted that the above quoted claim of the Qur'ān means in clear and unambiguous terms that :

*The only proper course for mankind in this life is to surrender itself before God and to pursue that mode of thought and conduct which He has laid down through His prophets.*

This precisely is what the Qur'ān means. Now we would like to examine this claim and see how far it should be acceptable. We shall no doubt consider the arguments that the Qur'ān advances in favour of its assertion, but I think it would be worthwhile to apply ourselves to a rational appraisal of the problem and see if there is any alternative to the course suggested by the Qur'ān.

## II

### NEED OF A WAY OF LIFE

Obviously to live a meaningful life a man stands in need of some system or way. Being human, it is his imperative need. Like a river his course cannot be determined in accordance with the topography of the land. Nor is he a tree for which the law of nature lays down the rules for growth. Similarly he is not merely an animal who could be guided by his own instincts and habits alone. There is no denying the fact that in a major part of his life, he is subject to the laws of nature; still, there remain many such aspects of life in which he has to

mark out a patch for himself using his discretion. There is no set course for him in these aspects, similar to a course to which animals instinctively adhere. He is endowed with will and volition. He has to make his choice between different errands. He has to select his course out of a set of alternatives. And this is what distinguishes him from the rest of the creation. This being the situation, man has to resolve those manifold problems, his own and of the Universe, which nature sets for his cogitating mind, but whose solution it does not vouchsafe in unequivocal terms. He needs some system of thought to make this resolve. He needs a scheme and a framework of knowledge in which he may organise and co-ordinate the information which nature proffers to his mind through the promptings of the sense organs—a body of information that lacks a naturally systematised form. He stands in need of a pattern of life that may suit him as an individual so that he may fulfil those inherent natural urges which though perfectly valid are yet to be properly organised and defined. He requires for his domestic life, his family relations, his economic affairs, for statecraft and administration, international relations and numerous other aspects of his life, a course which he may follow not merely as an individual but also as a group, a nation and a species; and attain to those ends which nature prompts him to pursue as his destination and goal, but which have neither been instinctively articulated before him nor the means to attain them have been laid bare before him by the forces of nature themselves. The call is there, the push is there, but if man is left to himself, the

path and the destination are shrouded in mystery.

These various aspects of life in which it is indispensable for man to follow some kind of pattern or system are not separate entities, independent of each other. As such it is not possible for man to choose divergent and mutually incompatible modes of behaviour for various fields of his life. He simply cannot afford to tread on different courses in varied activities of his life and pursue objectives that are incoherent, through means and methods that pull in contrary directions. An intelligent attempt to understand man and the problem of his life, is enough to convince one that human life is an indivisible whole and each part and every aspect of it is most intimately inter-related and inseparably inter-linked with each other. Each aspect of his life influences the other and is in return influenced by it. The same vital force moves all the parts and permeates them. All the parts and aspects jointly constitute what is known as human life. Therefore what man requires in fact is not a multiplicity of aims and objects, but a single goal, which embraced the various objects and purposes of life and welds them into a harmonious whole. This is indispensable if the human endeavours to realise the supreme ideal are to prove successful. He does not require many ways and roads but the way that may lead him with all the manifold aspects of his life towards the goal and ideal of his life. He does not stand in need of separate systems and modes of thought and learning, of art and literature, of education and law, of religion and morals, of social life and economy, of politics etc., but a comprehensive system in which all these aspects of human

life find a harmonious place and which are guided by uniform principles for their expression, leading man, in fact the whole mankind, to highest pinnacles of excellence, virtue and greatness. There were times when due to ignorance more or less permanent division of human life in various departments or aspects etc. was considered feasible. If some such people exist even now who sincerely believe in the absurdity that human life could be divided into water-tight compartments they only deserve sympathy. On the other hand, there are those who are consciously trying to deceive others as they want to impose their own system by assuring people that what they hold dear to their hearts—their religion—will be fully protected. This is what the secularists and the nationalists allege to do. They drive a wedge between the private life and the social and collective life. Religion, according to them, can prevail in the personal life of man but should have no say in the collective, particularly, political life. This departmentalisation is an impossibility: it is rationally inconceivable and practically unachievable, and the people who talk in this vein realise this in the heart of their heart. But it is not in their interest to acknowledge the same. It is common knowledge that every dominant system must inevitably bring all aspects of life under its own influence and mould it in accordance with its own principles and spirit; just as every salt mine unfailingly converts into salt anything that enters it.

### **The Futility of the Geographic Principle**

Just as the division of life into distinct departments

of life is absurd, similarly, it is all the more non-sensical to tear life into geographical fragments or crease it in racial categories. Men are spread all over the surface of the earth and are separated by rivers, mountains, forests, oceans and political boundaries. Many different races and nations also exist, who have evolved distinctive features of their own due to historical, psychological and various other reasons. And now on the basis of these differences if someone contends that for every race or clan or geographic region, a separate system of life is required, it is most ridiculous indeed. He is deceived by the apparent differences in forms and appearances, and has failed to realise the essential unity of human beings that underlies this seeming diversity. If these differences are considered to be so important, as to necessitate separate systems of life then I assure you there will be no end to it. The differences that exist to-day among various countries and peoples, however much we may exaggerate them, cannot be as distinct and sharp as those found scientifically speaking between a man and woman or between different persons, even between the two offsprings of the same parents. I shall not be exaggerating if I say that in scientific analysis and classification the latter differences are far more profound than the former. Then why not claim that there should be separate rules of conduct and systems of life for every individual? The simple fact is that when we can discover elements of unity in spite of all diversity among individuals, sexes, families and clans etc., and on the basis of that common element of unity can have different nationalities, races and geographical entities, and find

that a particular way of life or system is most suitable and convenient for these groups, why at all we cannot discover common elements amongst these races and nationalities to have a still wider unity—the common basis of unity and cohesion which could embrace the entire human race and thus make possible the adoption of a system, a way of life, a *deen*, for the entire mankind. Is it not a fact that despite all geographical, racial and national differences the laws of nature that govern life are the same for all human beings? Are not the same biological principles operative in the organisms of different human beings? Similarly the peculiarities that mark man as a distinct species vis-a-vis the rest of the creation. And what about the natural urges and appetites inherent in man, the powers and faculties the aggregate of which we call human 'self', and all those physical, psychological, historical, cultural and economic factors that are at work in human life—aren't these traits and factors essentially the same for all human beings? If it is true that in all these matters there is similarity between all human beings, it is but essential that the laws and principles which vouchsafe human welfare, must necessarily be of universal application. Why at all their efficacy be deemed to be limited to some particular nationality or race or country and not for the rest? Of course it would be perfectly natural for different nations and races to manage in various ways the affairs of their lives according to their own particular traits and requirements but within the limits prescribed by the broad framework of those principles. But the true *deen* or the way and system which man should stand for as man and



which should satisfy his needs should in all cases have universal validity. It does not stand to reason that what is right and good for one nation should become wrong and evil for another and *vice versa*. Goose and gander should be treated alike.

### **The Indivisibility of Life and Time**

Among the sophisticated absurdities of modern times, the one which indeed is the most outrageous but strangely enough which is presented most vociferously with the halls of conviction around it, is about the bifurcation of life on the basis of time, the exclusivity of time, past and present. It is argued that as the problems and affairs of life alter in every age, a system of life that is true and valid for one period of time becomes outdated in another phase of history. As human affairs and problems change from time to time, a system that might have successfully held the stage at a particular time may become obsolete after a certain period is lapsed. A system can be relevant to only a given time, and cannot have eternal validity. This is what these people assert, but in the very next breath they talk of evolution and search for laws at work in human history, and endeavours are made to study past experiences of life to draw lessons for the present and deduce laws for the future, and then they also try to establish that there also exists something as "human nature."

I would like to ask : Does there really exist any criterion for splitting this continuous historical process into different ages or periods? And is it possible that

you could place your finger on any one of these lines of demarcation and say that the problems of life which existed beyond this line completely underwent a change on this side of the line, and the conditions that obtained on that side ceased to exist on this side? If the human adventure is in fact divided into such detached periods in time, then it follows that a period which has passed, becomes for the succeeding periods as unnecessary and meaningless thing. Consequent to its passage every thing that man achieved or accomplished in that period of time has lost all value and validity. The experiences of that periods carry no lessons for the succeeding periods because those conditions and problems have vanished which man experimented and endeavoured and struggled for certain methods, certain principles and values. Then what for this talk of evolution? Why this quest for the laws of life? To what end these historical deductions?

The very idea of evolution pre-supposes that there is *something* which is undergoing evolution and change and which, preserving itself in this process of change is in constant change. When you discuss the laws of life, it is already implied that underlying these changing conditions, these shifting forms, these variable appearances, there exists an indelible and vital reality, alive and permanent, possessing a nature and quality of its own and subject to certain specific laws and regulations. When you undertake to draw historical lessons and influences, does it not signify that on this extended and interminable road of history, the traveller who is traversing long distances, and maintaining his course stage after stage,

possesses a personality and a temperament of his own; of whom it can be convincingly said that he acts in a particular manner under particular circumstances, accepts certain things at a certain time and discards them at another? It is this vital reality, this abiding subject of all change, this perennial traveller on the high road of history, whom you like to call "human". But why is it that when you discuss the stages of the journey, the incidental conditions and the resultant problems, you get so lost in this discussion that you forget the traveller himself? Is it true that with the variations in the stage, problems and circumstances of the journey, the traveller himself undergoes a metamorphosis? What we observe is that from the dawn of the civilisation until now his form has not altered in the least; his constituent elements are the same as they were thousands of years ago; his disposition, his natural urges, his attributes and characteristics, his inclinations and predilections, his powers and capacities, his limitations and capabilities, the rules governing his behaviour, and the factors that prompt him to act; his susceptibilities and modes of behaviour are all the same; even the forces operating upon him and his cosmic surroundings have remained unaltered. In none of these has there occurred the slightest change since the dawn of life. No person can dare contend that during the course of human history with changes in the conditions and problems of life humanity has also undergone a transformation. Or that the fundamental characteristics associated with it have too altered. This being a fact, what validity can there be in the contention that what

was right and true for man yesterday is wrong and false today?

### **The Way of Life that Man Needs**

It is undeniable that man in various periods of history has stumbled and failed to grasp the true nature of human existence and certain fundamental questions concerning it—he exaggerated certain truths beyond their proper proportion while ignored altogether certain basic features of his existence. And thus evolved, at various stages of history, various systems of life that were defective and wanting in many respects, and which the humanity at large discarded as experience proved their hollowness and adopted other ways instead. By a casual observation of this situation it has been surmised that humanity necessarily requires in every age separate systems of life, which should originate in the conditions and problems of that particular age and should be concerned with solving the issues and problems of that era alone. In fact what can appropriately be deduced from the study of history in this respect is that trial and experimentation with these systems of life that existed in particular times and phases of history and the constant repetition of similar trials and errors has been a waste of time and energy of the humanity. It has resulted in nothing but frustration. It places impediments in the fuller realisation of human potential and its evolution on healthy lines towards its goal and destination. What humanity needs, and needs pressingly, is a system that is based on a true perception of man and all the realities that pertain to him, and

which is based on principles that are universal, abiding and eternal—a way of life that may steer forth his course safely through all the vicissitudes of the present and future, resolve the problems originating in them, and advance undaunted towards its goal without much ado.

### III

#### MAN AND THE SEARCH FOR THE WAY OF LIFE

Such is the nature of the way of life that man needs. But the most crucial question is that can human beings themselves evolve and develop such a way or system of life? This we shall examine presently. It is futile to ask whether man, unaided by some superhuman guidance, has so far accomplished such a task. The answer is definitely in the negative. Even those people who are today presenting their systems with belligerent pomposity and who, for the establishment of the supremacy of their ideologies, do not even hesitate to take to arms cannot claim that their proposed system fulfils all the needs which man has as man and which call for an all-embracing way—*al-Deen*. The legion of isms; that contend today some are racial and concerned with the particular classes they eulogise, others do not look beyond the geographic and national boundaries. Still others have sprung up in the exigencies of the era that has only just preceded and of its applicability to conditions and problems of the future nothing can be ventured in advance, because even the historical needs

of the present are yet to be fully assessed. Hence our enquiry is not as to whether man has been successful or not in formulating such a *Deen*. What we want to discuss is whether man *can* ever evolve such a system? Is he really competent enough to formulate *al-Deen* for mankind?

Let me emphasise that this is a very crucial and pertinent question and invites our serious thought and reflection. It is one of the decisive questions of human life and cannot be brushed aside lightly. It would be, therefore, appropriate if we first try to understand what is it that we want to formulate and at the same time we have also to consider the competency or otherwise of the one we suppose would formulate it.

### **The Nature of al-Deen**

*Al-Deen* or the system or way of life, the need of which I have just emphasised, does not refer to any such comprehensive code of conduct that compasses all the minutest details, covering all possible eventualities for all times, and under which man has nothing but to act accordingly. On the other hand, in fact, it signifies basic comprehensive eternal principles that could provide guidance and light in all sorts of conditions, situations and circumstances of life and determine the right course and direction for his thoughts and ideas, his efforts and endeavours, his initiative, and his urge to rise and progress, and protect him from wasting his energies and labour in useless pursuits and experiments.

For this purpose the prime necessity is that man

should have Knowledge—not mere idle conjectures or whims, but true authentic Knowledge—as to what is the reality of himself and the Universe around him and that what is his own position with regard to the creation and the phenomenon of existence?

Then, he needs to know (not just presume) whether life constitutes only this earthly span of existence or is this only the initial stage of a long existence. Either this brief life career on the earth is the be-all and end-all of our existence or is it just a phase in a long journey, a part of a greater career?

Further, he stands in need of a definite object of life which should in reality (and not merely because of our wishes) serve as the objective and goal of human life—an ideal for the attainment of which human beings have been created and with which the objects of all may be an individual, or some society, or the humanity as a whole, should be in complete harmony in all times, in all climes.

Then he needs such consummate and universal principles of morality which should on the one hand be in complete harmony with the innate characteristic of his nature and on the other must be applicable both theoretically and practically over all the circumstances and conditions of life so that on the bed rock of those principles he may build his character and shape his personality and in their light he may solve every problem that may confront him. In the light of such abiding principles there could be no possibility that with the shifting circumstances and ever changing conditions of life, ethical codes and moral values shall

not vacillate and that he would be reduced in consequence to the status of a characterless opportunist.

He also stands in need of such broad and comprehensive principles to serve as foundation of his culture that are formulated with due regard to the basic requirements and purposes of human society and its natural demands. These principles should be fully balanced and moderate and not tend to this extreme or that, and in framing them the interests of human society as a whole are kept in view. These are the principles which satisfy all the requirements of human life in all times for progress and development in all phases of human life.

Then he requires of the proper evolution and conduct of personal character, social behaviour, and individual and collective effort and enterprise such compact and well-defined limits which may safeguard him against digression and keep him steady in his course; which may serve as landmarks on the highway of life and inform him at every cross-road and dangerous turn whither lies his way.

Lastly, he stands in imperative need of such practical measures and rules of conduct which, by their inherent nature, may be worthy of being followed in all times, at all places and may always keep human life closely bound to that end and purpose of life, those moral and cultural principles and those limits of behaviour, which have been defined in that way of life—*al-Deen*.

This in short is what mankind stands in need of.

Let us now ponder if man endowed with the power



and resources by which he would himself frame such "*al-Deen*."

## IV

### WHERE MAN FAILS ?

The ways and means and the faculties and sources at the disposal of man by resort to which he may try to formulate his *Deen* or way of life are viz:

- (a) his desire or wish,
- (b) his reason and intellectual capacity,
- (c) his power of observation and experimentation,  
and
- (d) the records of the past historical experiences.

Probably there could be no other source that may be of help in this respect. We may examine these four sources as thoroughly as we can, but we are forced to the conclusion that none of them can really be useful in formulating *al-Deen* for mankind. I have devoted quite a part of my life to this inquiry and have been led to the conclusion that these sources of knowledge cannot lead man too far in formulating the system of life he needs. However, if through some Divine source a system is made available to us these human sources could certainly be of immense help in comprehending, evaluating and acknowledging it, and in the task of formulating the details and applying the principles to the new problems of life.

#### (a) Wish and Desire

First of all let us consider our wishes and desires. Could these really be a good guide for mankind?

Although they are the main source of human activity and motivation, yet due to man's inherent weaknesses desire could never be trusted as a safe and dependable guide. On the contrary it has often served to mislead reason and becloud the rational approach. However must it be kept under control and discipline, it is likely to err almost invariably. For its natural urge is to decide not fairly, but in a manner in which the objective might be attained apace and amain. This is an inborn weakness of human "desire." Therefore, whether it is the desire of an individual or of a group, or the 'general will' of which Rousseau was the exponent, in all cases, no species of human desire has the ability to be of service in framing *al-Deen*, the system of life. And in so far as the ultimate problems of life, such as the nature of life, its end and purpose etc., are concerned, desire could hardly be of any real service.

### (b) Reason

Now let us consider the faculty of intellect and reason. There is no denying the fact that reason is a treasure: it has excellent capabilities. Its importance in human affairs is very great. It is, beyond doubt, a great guiding force in our lives and it helps and admits and controls us in countless ways. But as far as the question of framing *al-Deen* is concerned, reason does not lead us much far. In the first instance the question arises: Whose intellect one is to rely upon in this respect? Mine or yours or Tom's or Dick's, or of a particular group of men or of all human beings or of

men of the present generation or of the past, or of the future—who is it that is competent to frame *al-Deen* or the way of life? Then the more crucial issue is whether or not human reason is capable of performing this task? Taking into consideration the inherent limitations of human reason would it be proper to depend upon it for providing *al-Deen*.

The judgements and reason rest upon the material that the senses perceive. If the information they give is defective or incomplete or distorted and coloured, its decision would be fallacious. If they provide deficient material it will reach imperfect decisions. The areas about which the sense-organs are at a loss to provide any material, intellect would be in the dark and pronouncements made by it would be in the nature of mere conjectures. More enlightened the mind is less venturesome would it be in taking such a leap in the dark. Then there is the question of prejudice which beclouds intellect and leads reason astray. The influence of feelings and emotions, of pre-conceived notions, of environmental factors can hardly be minimised. In all such situations and many more reason gives way to rationalisation and intellect falters, wittingly or unwittingly. In view of these limitations which are inherent in reason, it would hardly be worthwhile to burden it with the task of formulating the system of life for mankind. And as far as the ultimate problems on the solution of which the formulation of the system of life depends, the senses do not provide any material at all. Then should these problems be resolved by mere imagination, futile conjecture or errant superstition? It is essential for

the formulation of the system of life to have a set of absolute moral values. But in this respect the senses provide but perfunctory material. Then should reason be expected to accomplish comprehensive and absolute values on the basis of this deficient material?

Similarly for none of those constituent elements of the system of life, which I have stated above, do the senses vouchsafe accurate and complete material, on the basis of which an all-inclusive and perfect system might be constructed.

And, added to this is the fact that with reason the element of desire is inextricably associated, which hinders it from delivering purely rational judgements and tends to make it swerve, more or less, from the right path. Even it were assumed that the human intellect may not err in arranging and classifying the material provided by the senses and in inferring conclusions therefrom, other set of weaknesses and limitations come in our way. Due to the weaknesses inherent in it, it would be futile to burden it with a task of such enormous proportions. This would be unfair to it as it would be to ourselves.

### (c) Science

Now let us consider whether science can deliver the goods. Science means a systematised body of knowledge, derived through empirical means of observation and experiment.<sup>1</sup> The importance of such knowledge

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1. Sir Arther Tomson describes science as follows :

“Science is the well-criticised body of empirical knowledge declaring in the simplest and tersest terms available at the

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and of the methods that are employed in procuring it must not be belittled. Their value and utility are immense. But to ignore its limitations and to concede to it a field of operation which is not its, would be doing violence to the very realm of science. It would be not the way to knowledge but product of ignorance.

Whoever has any insight, however meagre, into the nature of human knowledge, will not hesitate to acknowledge that as far as the ultimate problems of life are concerned, science can hardly unravel its mystery. This is so because man does not possess the means to approach the ultimate reality. Neither can he directly observe nor can he reason from the things that come under observation and experiment to form such an opinion about the ultimate problems of life to which the word Knowledge (with a capital K) might correctly be applied. Thus the fundamental problems, whose solution is an indispensable prerequisite in the formation of the system of life, are beyond the range of science. As such, should the task of laying moral values, expounding principles of social and cultural life and setting limits and restraints to man's behaviour be entrusted to it? We shall for the present ignore the question as to whose knowledge (of any particular person's or group's or age's) shall accomplish this. Let us see what are the necessary

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*Continued from Page 23]*

time what can be observed and experimented with, and summing up uniformities of change in formulae which are called laws verifiable by all who can use the methods."

The contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says :

"Science may be defined as ordered knowledge of natural phenomena and of the relations between them." —*Editor.*

requirements for accomplishing the task in a systematic way. The foremost necessity for this is a knowledge of all those natural laws under which man is living on this planet. Secondly, a state of perfection of all sciences related to human life itself. Thirdly a synthesis of both these forms of knowledge, natural sciences and humanities by a mind that should be perfect, impartial and all-knowing. Equipped with this knowledge and information such a mind can propound values, principles of culture and restraining influences, by arranging this knowledge correctly and by reasoning from it accurately.

These conditions have not been fulfilled so far, nor can it be hoped that they shall be fulfilled in another five thousand years. If they are fulfilled, say, when mankind would have reached the limits of the doomsday, of what benefit would it be for others.

#### (d) History

Now let us have a look into all human experience that has accumulated and which we call historical record. There is no dispute over its importance, significance and utility. But a little reflection makes it clear that through it mankind cannot obtain any system of life. I shall not go into the question whether the record handed down from the past is complete and accurate. Also, I don't think I should ask as to whose brain will be assigned the task of formulating an *al-Deen*, on behalf of the entire humanity? Will it be Hegel's or Marx's or Ernst Haeckel's or somebody else's? I would simply like to know what particular period of our history—past, present or future—is considered

adequate for providing guidance and light for the task. Those who are born thereafter would no doubt be fortunate but as to those who have preceded it they would be beyond redemption.

## V

### COMES TO RESCUE

I have not been, I hope, guilty of any logical inconsistency in the brief observations that I have made above. I also don't think that the rationality of my submissions could be challenged. If the analysis of the means at the disposal of human beings that I have just attempted is truthful then we cannot escape the conclusion that man may frame for himself at best a crude and faulty system that could be of some particular region and for a very limited time. But if he should aspire to frame *al-Deen* it is absolutely beyond his power and means. It was so in the past, it is so to-day, and for the future also none could expect any possibility for it.

Now if there is no God to guide us, as the atheists like to suppose, then mankind is utterly doomed. It is futile to carry on and better commit suicide. The situation is like that of a lone traveller who does not know the path and for whom no guide exists, and who is absolutely devoid of all means to know what is his destination and which way to go. He is doomed to despair and frustration. On the other hand, if there is a God but not one who proffers any guidance as some of the atheists like to suppose, it is all the more pitiable state of affairs. Indeed one should ponder over the phenomena of creation all around him. Do

we not see that the Creator has made provision for even conceivable requirement and necessity that is needed for the sustenance, growth and development of everything created on earth? Then how is it thinkable that of all the creation he was negligent in making provision for man in the most important aspect of his life. How he could fail to realise that if no guidance would be available for the most crucial need of man, the life of the entire human species will come to mean nothing and go astray. In the absence of such a light, life would become a burden, a calamity of the greatest magnitude. Why lament the misfortunes of the indigent and the poverty-stricken, the wounded and the incurable, the oppressed and the downtrodden, rather bemoan the lot of the entire species, abandoned and helpless, that blunders, again and again in vain efforts, falters and stumbles and then rises to fall again. In spite of all the efforts to search out a balanced system whole countries and nations meet with disaster. Indeed the poor thing does not even know the purpose and objective of life, nor the ends it must strive for and neither fully knowing even the object of all the quest. Most assuredly the One Who has created us knows all our frailties and limitations and yet it is supposed that He is just a silent spectator and is intent only in creating and cares not to guide and show light.

In contrast to the above assumption, Qur'an presents us with a totally different prospect. According to it, God is not merely the Creator but a Guide too. For everything created He has made provision for light and guidance that was the most appropriate and suitable



for its particular needs and requirements. Qur'ān says: "He Who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright." If you want to bear this out observe any ant, any spider, any fly. To we humans also he proffers guidance. The proper course for man, therefore, is to forsake his own arrogance and conceit and submit to Him, and live according to the complete and comprehensive system of life—*al-Deen*, which He in His Infinite Mercy has bestowed upon mankind through His prophets.

We should now be able to appreciate the position we are in. We have already probed into the powers and capacities of human beings and a dispassionate study of all his faculties and aptitudes leads us to the conclusion that they are wholly inadequate to provide *al-Deen* for humanity. We have also learnt the claim of the Qur'ān in this regard. And now there seems to be no alternative but to accept the Qur'ānic claim unless we decide to grope in darkness and be victim of utter disappointment and despair.

As a matter of fact, the position is not that there exist ways to attain *al-Deen* and we are faced to exercise our choice to adopt anyone of them. In fact the situation is that the source we can obtain *al-Deen* from is just one and the question of any choice arises as to whether we seek guidance of this single source or prefer to welter in the dark.

The foregoing discussion leads us to the conclusion that it is in our own best interests that we accept the claim of the Qur'ān. Indeed if we want our welfare there is no alternative at all but to submit and act as the Qur'ān wants us to behave. In fact there is no way

out. Yet the Qur'ānic attitude in this respect is highly exalted. It does not call for just blind adherence (although it could, since there was absolutely no alternative) but tries to convince our intellect and through a rational discussion make us realise the wisdom behind it. The Book of God does not want us to believe in its claims without applying our minds to it, rather its approach is highly rational, and it appeals to our faculties of thinking and reasoning. The Qur'ān wants that the viewpoint presented by it should be accepted on its own merit with good cheer, voluntarily. Out of the many arguments advanced by the Qur'ān the four most important and weighty are :

1. Islam is the only true way of life for man, for it alone conforms to the essence of reality and excepting this every other attitude is false.

“Seek they other than the religion of Allah, when unto Him submitteth whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly and unto Him they will be returned.”

(3 : 83)

2. This is the only true way of life, because this alone is right and excepting this no other attitude can really be called correct.

“Verily, your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then mounted He the Throne. He covereth the night with the day, which is in haste to follow it, and hath made the sun and the moon and the stars subservient by His Command. His verily is all creation and commandment. Blessed be Allah,

the Lord of the Worlds.” (7 : 54)

3. This attitude alone is right for man, because only God has the true knowledge of all reality and He alone can guide infallibly.

“Lo! nothing in the earth or in the heaven is hidden from Allah ” (3 : 5)

“He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind them, while they encompass nothing of His knowledge save what He will.” (2 : 255)

“Say, verily, the guidance of Allah (Himself) is the only guidance.” (2 : 120)

4. This alone is the right path for man because with out it justice is not possible. Other than this whichever course man may adopt would inevitably lead to inequity.

“And whosoever transgresseth Allah’s limits, he verily wrongeth.” (65 : 1)

“Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed : such are wrong-doers.” (5 : 45)

## VI

### THE DIVINE GUIDANCE : ITS CRITERION AND PROOF

Before proceeding further, I deem it necessary to analyse and study a question that necessarily arises at this juncture in every one’s mind: and in the process of investigation arose in my mind also. The question is: Should we believe the word of every man who presents us with a system with the claim that it is Divinely ordained? If this is not so, what is the standard

by which we could differentiate between a system of human fabrication and one of Divine origin?

This question requires a detailed study and analysis but I shall here mention only four salient features which distinguish Divine thought from human thought.

The first notable feature of human thought is that it invariably manifests the limitations and lack of true knowledge. On the other hand the Divine knowledge is at the face of it the embodiment of true knowledge with a limitless horizon. In that which is from God you could never in any age discover anything which conflicts with any proved scientific fact, or that against which it could legitimately be deposed that any particular aspect of reality had escaped the vision of its Author. But in applying this standard of judgement we should not overlook the fact that there exists a vast difference between a fact and a hypothesis or just a theory. Those scientific hypotheses and scientific theories that capture the imagination of an age are often mistakenly taken for granted as laws and facts although of their being wrong is as great as the possibility of their being true. In the history of science very few hypotheses and theories can be underlined which eventually proved to be scientific laws and facts, true knowledge.

The second major weakness of human thought is its restricted view-point. Divine thought on the contrary bears proof of an incomparably broader field of view. Emanating from Divine thought bears evidence of the eternal, all-embracing vision of its Author, Who seems to have taken in all the reality and

the entire universe in His ken. As compared to it the thoughts of even the greatest philosophers and thinkers appear puerile.

The third characteristic of human thought is that in some form or the other its judgement at times does become blurred and overshadowed by his own sentiments, wishes and desires. In Divine thought, on the contrary, pure wisdom and detached rationality is so indubitably evident that in the commandments originating therefrom an emotional penchant could possibly be detected.

Another weakness of human thought is that in the system of life which it formulates, the elements of partiality and prejudice, irrational discrimination between man and man, and on that basis the unjustified preference of one group or section over the other is most conspicuous. For, every individual has his own personal interests with some of his fellowbeings and he may not have the same feelings for the rest. In quite distinction to this the system of life emanating from Divine source is free from all such drawbacks.

So this provides a touchstone on which we could very easily test the claim of various systems whether they are man-made or of Divine origin. If one is free from all such weaknesses and at the same time possesses the hall-mark of universality, comprehensiveness and completeness which I have pointed out in the preceding pages while emphasising the need and necessity of *al-Deen* any hesitation to adopt it is uncalled for.

## VII

## FAITH : ITS REQUISITES AND DEMANDS

Now I propose to consider the last of the basic question discussed during this discourse. Quite naturally, the question arises that when one has accepted the claim of the Qur'ān and is thoroughly satisfied about the faith in *al-Deen* emanating from the Almighty, what are the implications thereof and its requisites on our person?

I have stated in the beginning that the word Islam connotes complete surrender and submission, and it has no compatibility whatsoever with notions such as of self-conceit, unrestricted power and unanswerable authority and a liberative attitude in thought and needs. No matter what way of life you chose for yourself it calls forth for complete surrender and submission and you cannot withhold any aspect of your life and personality from its way. Faith in any system demands that it should surcharge the very fabric of our beings—our minds and hearts, ears, tongues, hands and feet—indeed our every organ must respond and reflect the faith we profess in. All our capacities and capabilities, all the powers we have—physical or intellectual—must be motivated to serve the supreme end in view. Indeed our faith must reflect in our attitude and behaviour, our likes and dislikes, our love and hatred for things and persons, and it must decide our social relations with others, our friendships and enmities. In short it must decide everything we think or act. No minutest detail of

our life must be outside the purview of its influence. And the extent we believe in exceptions and exemptions in this regard to that extent we are not true to the profession of our faith and are liars in our claims to it. And is it not the duty of every man to keep his life unblemished from the stigma of falsehood and lie?

It may be recalled that I have stated in the beginning that human life is a unity, a composite whole, which cannot be bifurcated into separate compartments. It is, therefore, quite natural that we should have only one system for the whole life. The simultaneous pursuit of dual and triple patterns of life (*deen*) is an evidence of the infirmity of faith and of volatile rational judgement. Indeed the most rational attitude in this regard would be to adhere to one thing only and not waiver and oscillate. Quite naturally if a particular system of life is adopted then it must cover all aspects of our being. If it is a *deen* of our lives as an individual, it should also be *deen* of our social relationships, our home and household affairs, the training and education of our children. It should be the *deen* of our schools, our business, our vocational pursuits, our national conduct and behaviour, our cultural pursuits, our socio-political affairs, our art and literature, and our State. When we as individuals profess a particular *deen*, will it not be appropriate that we organise ourselves as a social organism and all the aspects of our collective life must adhere to the same *deen*.

And lastly when we have adopted a particular way or system of life as the way of our lives, it natur-

ally follows that we should strive to extend to our fellow beings the blessing of this system and should endeavour that it should become *al-deen* for the entire humanity. Since the very nature of truth demands that it must prevail, naturally everyone who professes to be the upholder of truth must bent down all the energies to subdue the forces of evil and makes truth and righteousness dominant in this world. Indeed when one becomes truly conscious of the truth he can't rest unless he endeavours his best to bring the environment under its sway. And if one feels no restlessness, the pain, and the compelling urge to wipe out wrong and establish the right it is an indication that his soul is dead.