



TOWARDS  
UNDERSTANDING

# Islām

By  
ABUL A'LA  
MAUDUDI

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# **TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING ISLAM**

By  
**ABUL A'LA  
MAUDUDI**

**Published in East Africa By  
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# بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## PUBLISHERS NOTE

ISLAMIC FOUNDATION is a non-political and non-sectarian body working for the dissemination of the teachings of Islam all over the world. It is an educational and missionary organisation and is feeding Islamic missionary work in Asia, Africa, Europe and America. We, the Islamic Foundation, Nairobi, as an off-shoot of the parent body in London, work in unison with it to promote the understanding of the Islamic faith.

In pursuance of this object during the last few years we distributed free '*Towards Understanding Islam*' by Maulana Abul A'la Maududi in large numbers. Still, the great demand for it was constantly felt by us. It has already been printed in twenty three main languages of the world, the latest one being Sinhali, the common language of Ceylon; and now, by God's Grace, its Kiswahili translation is with the printers. It is available in practically every country of the world and in many Islamic countries is prescribed as a standard text-book on Islam for their secondary schools and colleges. It was first written in Urdu by Maulana Abul A'la Maududi in 1937 A.D., and thirty one editions of it have come out in Pakistan alone.

In view of its rational presentation and elucidation of the basic tenets and principles of Islam and the collective aspects of the Islamic way of life, and its usefulness in teaching the fundamentals of Islam, and moreover, as a recommended text-book for secondary schools in Kenya, we decided to publish it locally in a much improved *format*. We are very grateful to the very learned and venerable author and the eminently able translator for their kind permission to publish this popular book in Kenya.

General Secretary  
The Islamic Foundation

Quran House,  
Nairobi,  
May, 1973.

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## Foreword

THE PRESENT edition of *Towards Understanding Islam* is not only a new translation of my book *Risala-e-Dinyat* but is also an entirely new and revised edition of it. The first edition of the book which was rendered into English by the late Dr. Abdul Ghani (Director of Public Instruction, Afghanistan), was very brief and sketchy. Unfortunately, Dr. Abdul Ghani passed away immediately after the completion of the translation and thus he did not live to improve and revise it. Later on, I revised the original book and made substantial additions to it. Now Mr. Khurshid Ahmad has very ably and skilfully rendered a new translation of the revised edition of *Risala-e-Diniyat* and my heartfelt thanks are due to him for this labour of love. I am confident that in this new form the book will be much more useful for the purpose for which it has been written.

My purpose in writing this book has been to provide all those persons — Muslims and non-Muslims — who have no access to the original sources of Islam with a brief treatise giving a lucid, comprehensive and all-embracing view of Islam. That is why I have avoided discussion over the minute details and have endeavoured to portray the entire picture of Islam in one perspective. Moreover, I have not confined myself to stating what we Muslims believe in and stand for, but have also tried to explain the rational bases of our beliefs. Similarly, I have not only presented the Islamic modes of worship and the outlines of the Islamic way of life but have also tried to unveil the wisdom behind them. I hope this small treatise will go a long way to satisfy the intellectual cravings of the Muslim youth and will help the non-Muslims in understanding our real position.

ABUL A'LA.

Lahore,  
11th September, 1960.

## *Editor's Preface*

OURS IS an age of anxiety and restlessness. A change is imperceptibly overtaking the world. The old order is distintegrating; the new one is, however, yet to come. And history tells us that such ages of restlessness have also been periods of birth for new movements and cultures. The world is in the grip of a tension and awaits a twentieth-century renaissance of man.

A significant feature of the present century is the new and widespread trend of Islamic revival. After a long period of stagnation the world of Islam is rising from its stupor. A new awakening has appeared on the horizon, a new life is being infused into the community of Islam. This trend is visible in every country and at every place and has within it the possibilities of its becoming the harbinger of a new age.

But this revivalist trend can become the messenger of a New Age only if it is accompanied by an intellectual revolution — a thorough appraisal of the intellectual and cultural heritage of Islam and its representation to the world in the language of today. Thus the importance of Dr. Muhammad Iqbal and Maulana Maududi as the authors of this new intellectual awakening is immense. Maulana Maududi is the author of more than eighty books and pamphlets on Islam and has written more or less on each and every aspect of Islamic culture. His writings have provided the present-day revival of Islam with its intellectual foundations.

*Towards Understanding Islam* also is one of his important books. It is an elementary study of Islam and a simple, understandable and unsophisticated interpretation of that religion for the younger folk. It has not been written in the brow-beaten style of theology books, through which the reader gets enmeshed in a quagmire of legal quibblings and is unable to understand the real spirit and message of Islam. The work is simple exposition of Islam, its approach to life, the articles of its faith, its worships and prayers and the scheme of life which it envisages. The method of exposition used in the book is the same as adopted in the Qur'an itself and an attempt has been made to present in it a summary of the teachings of Islam. And as the book is primarily meant for the students and younger people, the discussion has been kept simple, rational and intelligible and no attempt has been made to burden the mind of the reader with difficult or philosophic dissertations.

Originally the book was written in 1932 in Urdu and was



intended as a text-book for students of the higher classes and the general public. It filled an important gap and became a primer of Islam. Most of the schools and colleges of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent adopted it as a text-book in theology and made its study a part of their curricula. It has been translated into Arabic, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Sindhi, Tamil, Turkish, Japanese, French and German languages. Realising its importance for the English-reading public, the late Dr. Abdul Ghani translated it into English in 1940. But for a number of reasons, including the fact that in the latest editions of the Urdu text the author had made certain additions and alterations, the need has long been felt for a new translation. I have made an attempt to fulfil this need. The present translation is altogether a new one and only a few pages of the earlier translation have been embodied in it, and these too with necessary changes and alterations. The text on which it is based is that of the sixteenth (revised) edition of the *Risala-e-Diniyat*.

Strictly speaking it is not a literal word-for-word translation of the original text. I have tried to follow the original as faithfully as possible, but have departed from a strictly literal rendering wherever necessary in the interest of the language. I have also added explanatory notes wherever necessary.

The learned author has, however, been kind enough to go through the translation, which therefore has his approval and the reader can rest assured that the translation is a faithful one.

I am grateful to all those friends who have kindly helped me in the preparation of this book. I am particularly grateful to Khwaja Abdul Wahid who went through the manuscript and gave me very helpful suggestions and to my friend Mr. Ansar Azam who assisted me in the translation of Chapters 5 and 6. My thanks are also due to Mr. Shahzad Muhammad who ungrudgingly typed from my badly written manuscript again and again.

KHURSHID AHMAD.

1, New Queens Road,  
Karachi,  
23rd March, 1959.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

CHAPTER ONE

**THE MEANING OF  
ISLAM**

## THE MEANING OF ISLAM

EVERY religion of the world has been named either after the name of its founder or after the community and nation in which that religion took its birth. For instance, Christianity takes its appellation from the name of its prophet Jesus Christ; Buddhism from its founder Gautama Buddha; Zoroastrianism from its founder Zoroaster; and Judaism, the religion of the Jews, from the name of the tribe Judah (of the country of Judea) wherein it took its birth. Similar is the case with other religions. But not so with Islam. This religion enjoys the unique distinction of having no such association with any particular person or people. The word 'Islam' does not convey any such relationship — for it does not belong to any particular person, people, or country. It is neither the product of any human mind nor it is confined to any particular community. It is a universal religion and its objective is to create and cultivate in man the quality and attitude of *Islam*.

'Islam', as a matter of fact, is an attributive title. Whosoever possesses this attribute, may he belong to any race, community, country, or clan, is a Muslim. According to the Qur'an (the Holy Book of the Muslims), among every people and in all ages there have been good and righteous people who possessed this attribute — and all of them were and are Muslims.

This automatically brings us to the question: What does Islam mean? And who is a Muslim?

### ISLAM — What does it mean?

'Islam' is an Arabic word and connotes *submission, surrender, and obedience*. As a religion, Islam stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah — and that is why it is called 'ISLAM'.<sup>1</sup>

Everyone can see that the universe we live in is an orderly universe. There is law and order among all the units that comprise this universe. Everything is assigned a place in a grand

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1. Another literal meaning of the word 'Islam' is 'peace' and this signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and of mind only through submission and obedience to Allah. Such life of obedience brings in peace of the heart and establishes real peace in the society at large.—*Editor*.

scheme which is working in a magnificent and superb way. The sun, the moon, the stars and in fact all the heavenly bodies are knit together in a splendid system. They follow an unalterable law and do not make even the slightest deviation from their ordained course. The earth rotates on its own axis and in its revolution round the sun scrupulously follows the path laid down for it. Similarly, everything in the world, from the little whirling electron to the mighty nebulae, invariably follows its own laws. Matter, energy, and life — all obey their laws and grow and change and live and die in accordance with those laws. Even in the human world the laws of nature are quite manifest. Man's birth, growth, and life are all regulated by a set of biological laws. He derives sustenance from nature in accordance with an unalterable law. All the organs of his body from the small tissues to the heart and the brain are governed by the laws prescribed for them. In short, ours is a law-governed universe and everything in it is following the course that has been ordained for it.

This powerful, all-pervasive law, which governs all that comprises the universe, from the tiniest specks of dust to the magnificent galaxies in high heavens, is the law of God, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. As the entire creation obeys the law of God, the whole universe, therefore, literally follows the religion of Islam—for Islam signifies nothing but obedience and submission of Allah, the Lord of the Universe. The sun, the moon, the earth, and all other heavenly bodies are thus 'Muslim'. So is the case with air, water, and heat, stones, trees, and animals. Everything in the universe is 'Muslim' for it obeys God by submission to His laws. Even a man who refuses to believe in God, or offers his worship to someone other than Allah, has perforce to be a 'Muslim' as far as his bodily existence is concerned. For his entire life, from the embryonic stage to the body's dissolution into dust after death, and every tissues of his muscles and every limb of his body follow the course prescribed for each by God's law. His very tongue which, on account of his ignorance advocates the denial of God or professes multiple deities, is in its very nature a 'Muslim'. His head which he wantonly bows to others besides Allah is a *born Muslim*. His heart wherein, through his lack of true knowledge, he cherishes love and reverence for others, is 'Muslim' by intuition. These are all obedient to the Divine Law, and their functions and movements are governed by the injunctions of that law alone.

This, in short, is the real position of man and the universe. Let us now examine the problem in a different light. Man is so constituted that there are two aspects of his life: two distinct spheres of his activity. One is the sphere in which he finds himself totally regulated by the Divine Law. He cannot budge an inch or move a step away from it. Nor can he evade it in any way or form. In fact, like other creatures, he is completely caught in the grip of the law of nature and is bound to follow it. But there is another sphere of his activity as well. He has been endowed with reason and intellect. He has the power to think and form judgments, to choose and reject, and to adopt and spurn. He is free to adopt whatever course of life he chooses. He can embrace any faith, adopt any way of life and formulate his living according to whatever ideologies he likes. He may prepare his own code of conduct or accept one formulated by others. He has been bestowed with *free-will* and can chalk out his own course of behaviour. In this latter aspect, he, unlike the other creatures, has been given freedom of thought, choice, and action.

Both these aspects distinctly co-exist in man's life.

In the first he, like all other creatures, is a born Muslim, invariably obeys the injunctions of God, and is bound to remain so. As far as the second aspect is concerned, he is free to become or not to become a Muslim. Here he has been given the freedom of choice — and it is the way a person exercises this freedom which divides mankind into two groups; believers and non-believers. An individual who chooses to acknowledge his Creator, accepts Him as his real Master, honestly and scrupulously submits to His laws and injunctions and follows the code. He has revealed unto man for his individual and social life thereby becomes a perfect Muslim. He has, so to say, achieved completeness in his Islam by consciously deciding to obey God in the domain in which he was endowed with freedom and choice. Now his entire life has become one of submission to God and there is no conflict in his personality. He is a perfect Muslim and his Islam is complete — for his submission of his entire self to the will of Allah is Islam and nothing but Islam.

He has now consciously submitted to Him Whom he had already been unconsciously obeying. He has now willingly offered obedience to the Master Whom he already owed obedience unintentionally. His knowledge is now real for he has acknowledged the Being Who endowed him with the power

to learn and to know. Now his reason and judgment are set on an even keel — for he has rightly decided to obey the Being Who bestowed upon him the faculty of thinking and judging. His tongue also is truthful for it expresses with conviction its confession of the Lord Who gave it the faculty of speech. Now the whole of his existence is an embodiment of truth for, in all spheres of life, he voluntarily as well as involuntarily obeys the laws of the same One God — the Lord of the Universe. Now he is at peace with the whole universe for he worships Him Whom the whole universe worships. Such a man is God's vicegerent on earth. The whole world is for him and he is for God.

### The Nature of 'Kufr'

In contrast to the man described above, there is the man who, although a born Muslim and unconsciously remaining one throughout his life, does not exercise his faculties of reason, intellect, and intuition for recognising his Lord and Creator and misuses his freedom of choice by *choosing* to deny Him. Such a man becomes an unbeliever — in the language of Islam a *Kafir*.

*Kufr* literally means 'to cover' or 'to conceal'. The man who denies God is called *Kafir* (concealer) because he conceals by his *disbelief* what is inherent in his nature and embalmed in his own soul — for, indeed, his nature is instinctively imbued with 'Islam'. His whole body, every sinew and every fibre, functions in obedience to that instinct. Each and every particle of existence — living or lifeless — functions in accordance with 'Islam' and is fulfilling the duty that has been assigned to it. But the vision of this man has been blurred, his intellect has been befogged, and he is unable to see the manifest. His own nature has become concealed from his eyes and he thinks and acts in utter disregard of it. The reality becomes estranged from him and he gropes in the dark — such is the nature of *Kufr*.

*Kufr* is a form of ignorance, rather it *is* ignorance, pure and simple. What ignorance can be greater than to be ignorant of God, the Creator, the Lord of the Universe? A man observes the vast panorama of nature, the superb mechanism that is ceaselessly working, the grand design that is manifest in every nook and corner of the creation — he observes this vast machine, but he does not know how is its Maker and Director. He looks

to his own body, the wonderful organism that works in the most superb way, and uses it to achieve his own ends but is unable to comprehend the Force that brought it into existence, the Engineer Who designed and produced this machine, the Creator Who made the unique living being out of lifeless stuff: carbon, calcium, sodium, and the like. He witnesses a superb plan in the universe — but fails to see the Planner behind it. He sees great beauty and harmony in its working — but not the Creator of this all. He observes wonderful design in nature — but not the Designer! In the universe all around him he observes the choicest demonstrations of skill in science and wisdom, mathematics and engineering, design and purpose, but he blinds himself to the Being Who brought all this vast incomprehensible universe into existence. How can a man, who has blinded himself to this great and significant reality, approach the true perspectives of knowledge? How can the vistas of truth and knowledge be opened to such a man? How can one who has made the wrong beginning reach the right destination? He will fail to find the clue to Reality. The Right Path will remain concealed for him and whatever be his endeavours in sciences and arts, he will never be able to avail himself of the lights of truth and wisdom. He would be groping in the dark, and stumbling in the gloom of ignorance.

Not only that; *Kufr* is also a tyranny, nay, the worst of tyrannies. And what is 'tyranny'? It is an act of cruel and unjust use of any force or power. If you force a thing to act unjustly or to act against its true nature, its real will and its inherent attitude — that is tyranny, root and branch.

We have seen that all that is in the universe is obedient to God, the Creator. To obey, to live in accordance with His Will and His Law or (to put it more precisely) *to be a Muslim* is ingrained in their very nature. God has given man power over these things, but it is incumbent in the very nature of these things that they should be used for the fulfilment of His Will and not otherwise. But one who disobeys God and resorts to *Kufr* is the person who perpetrates the greatest injustice, for he uses all these powers of body and mind to rebel against the course of nature and becomes an unwilling instrument in the drama of disobedience. He forces his head to bow down before deities other than God and cherishes in his heart the love, reverence, and fear of other powers in utter disregard to the instinctive urge of these organs. He uses his own powers and all those things upon which he has authority against the explicit



Will of God and thus establishes a reign of tyranny. Can there be any greater injustice, tyranny, and cruelty than that exhibited by this man who exploits and misuses everything under the sun and unscrupulously forces them to a course which affronts nature and justice?

*Kufr* is not mere tyranny; it is, to say the least, sheer rebellion, ingratitude, and infidelity. After all, what is the reality of man? What is his power and authority? Is he himself the creator of his mind, his heart, his soul, and other organs of his body — or have they been created by God? Has he himself created the universe and all that is within her — or has it been created by God? Who has harnessed all the powers and energies for the service of man — man or God? If everything has been created by God and God alone, then to whom do they belong? Who is their real owner? Who is their rightful sovereign? Verily, it is God and none else. And if God is the Creator, the Master, and the Sovereign, then who would be a greater rebel than the man who uses God's creation against His injunctions — who makes his mind think against God, harbours in his heart thoughts against Him, and uses his various faculties against the Sovereign's Will. If a servant betrays his master you denounce him as faithless. If an officer becomes disloyal to the state you dub him as a traitor and renegade. If a person cheats his benefactor you have no hesitation in condemning him as ingrate. But what match can this betrayal, this ingratitude, and this rebellion have to the one which the disbeliever commits by his *Kufr*? After all, who is the real mainspring of all power and authority? Who gave man command over the resources? Who elevated people to positions of high authority and power? All that a man has and all that he uses for the benefit of others is a bestowal of God. The greatest obligation that a man owes on this earth is to his parents. But who has implanted the love of children in the parents' hearts? Who endowed the mother with the will and power to nurture, nourish, and feed her children? Who inspired the parents with the passion to spend everything in their possession for the well-being of their children? A little reflection would reveal that God is the greatest benefactor of man. He is his Creator, Lord, Nourisher, Sustainer, as well as his real King and Sovereign. And this being the position of God *vis-a-vis* man, what can be greater betrayal, ingratitude, rebellion, and treason than *Kufr*, through which a man denies and disobeys his real Lord and Sovereign?

Don't think that by committing *Kufr* man does or can do

any harm to God Almighty. No, not the least. An insignificant speck on the face of a tiny ball in this limitless universe that man is, what harm can he do to the Lord of the universe Whose dominions are so infinitely vast that we have not yet been able to explore their boundaries even with the help of the most powerful telescope; Whose power is so great that myriads of heavenly bodies, like the Earth, the Moon, the Sun and the Stars are, at His bidding, whirling like tiny balls; Whose wealth is so boundless that He is the sole Master of the whole universe; and Who provides for all and needs none to provide for Him? Man's revolt against Him can do Him no harm; on the other hand, by his disobedience, man treads the path of utter ruin and disgrace.

The inevitable consequence of this revolt and denial of Reality is a failure in the ultimate ideals of life. Such a rebel will never find the thread of real knowledge and vision; for the knowledge that fails to reveal its own Creator can reveal no truth. Such a man's intellect and reason always run astray; for reason which errs in knowing its own Creator cannot illumine the paths of life. Such a man will meet with failures in all the affairs of his life. His morality, his civic and social life, his struggle for livelihood and his family life, in short, his entire living, will be upset. He will spread confusion and disorder on the earth. He will, without the least compunction, shed blood, violate other men's rights, be cruel to them, and create disorder and destruction in the world. His perverted thoughts and ambitions, his blurred vision and disturbed scale of values, and his evil-spelling activities would make life bitter for him and for all around him. Such a man would destroy the calm and poise of life on earth. And in the life hereafter he would be held guilty for the crimes he committed upon his nature, his powers, and resources. Every organ of his body — his very brain, eyes, nose, hands, and feet — will complain against the injustice and cruelty he had done unto them. Every tissue of his being will decry him before God Who, as the very fountain of justice, will award him for the fullest punishment he deserves. This is the inglorious consequence of *Kufr*. It leads to the blind alleys of utter failure, here and hereafter.

### **The Blessings of Islam**

After suveying the evils and disadvantages of *Kufr*, let us now cast a glance over the blessings of Islam.

You find in the world around you and in the small kingdom of your own self innumerable manifestations of God's divine power. This grand universe, which ceaselessly works with matchless order and in accordance with an unalterable law, is in itself a witness to the fact that its Designer, Creator, and Governor is an Omnipotent, All-Powerful Being with infinite, all-embracing, and limitless power, knowledge, and resources, Whose wisdom is the most perfect; and Whom nothing in the universe dare disobey. It is in the very nature of man, as it is with every other thing in this universe to obey Him. As a matter of fact, he is unconsciously obeying His Law day in and day out, because the moment he goes against this Law, he is exposed to death and destruction. This is the law of nature, our everyday observance.

Besides endowing man with the capacity to acquire knowledge, the faculty to think and ponder, and the sense of distinguishing right from wrong, God has granted him with a certain amount of freedom of will and action. In this freedom lies man's real trial; his knowledge, his wisdom, his power of discrimination, and his freedom of will and action are all being tried and tested. In this trial and test man has not been obliged to adopt any particular course, for by compulsion the very object of the trial would have been defeated. Evidently, if in an examination you are compelled to write a certain answer to a question, the examination will be of no use. Your merit can be properly judged only if you are allowed to answer the questions freely, according to your own knowledge and understanding. If your answer is correct you will succeed, and will get access to future progress; and if your answer is wrong, you will fail, and your failure will bar the way to further progress. Similar is the situation which man faces in the world. God has given him freedom of will and action so that he may remain free to choose whatever attitude in life he likes and considers proper for himself — Islam or *Kufr*.

On the other hand, there is another man who emerges successful from this trial. By the correct use of his knowledge and intellect he recognises his Creator, reposes belief in Him, and, in spite of being under no compulsion to do so, chooses the path of obedience to Him. He does not err in distinguishing the right from the wrong and chooses to follow the right despite the fact that he had the power to lean towards evil. He understands his own nature, and realises the laws and realities of

nature and, despite the power and freedom of adopting any course, adopts the way of obedience and loyalty to God, the Creator. He is successful in his trial because he has used his intellect and all other faculties properly. He uses his eyes to see the Reality, his ears to listen to the Truth, his mind to form right opinions and puts all his heart and soul in following the right way he has so chosen. He chooses Truth, sees the reality, and willingly and joyfully submits to his Lord and Master. He is intelligent, truthful, and dutiful, for he has chosen light over darkness, and after seeing the light of reality has responded to its call willingly and enthusiastically. Thus he has proved by his conduct that he is not only a seeker after Truth but is its knower and worshipper as well. Verily, he is on the Right Path, and such a man is destined to succeed in this world and in the world to come.

Such a man will always choose the Right Path in every field of knowledge and action. The man who knows God with all His attributes knows the beginning as well as the ultimate end of Reality. He can never be led astray, for his first step is on the right path, and he is sure of the direction and destination of his journey in life. In philosophy he will ponder over the secrets of the universe, and will try to fathom the mysteries of nature, but, unlike an unbelieving philosophy, he will not lose his way in the mazes of doubt and scepticism. His path being illumined with Divine Vision, his every step would fall in the right direction. In science, he will endeavour to know the laws of nature, uncover the hidden treasures of earth, and direct all the hitherto unknown forces of mind and matter — all for the betterment of humanity. He will try his level best to explore all avenues of knowledge and power and to harness all that exists in earth and heavens in the interests of mankind. At every stage of his inquiry his God-consciousness will save him from making evil and destructive uses of science and scientific method. He will never conceive himself claiming to be the master of all these objects, boasting to be the conqueror of nature, arrogating to himself the godly and sovereign powers and nourishing the ambition of subverting the world, subduing the human race and establishing his supremacy over all and sundry by means fair and foul. Such an attitude of revolt and defiance can never be entertained by a Muslim scientist — only a *Kafir* scientist can fall a prey to such illusions and by submitting to them expose the entire human race to dangers of total destruction and

annihilation.<sup>2</sup> A Muslim scientist, on the other hand, will behave in an altogether different way. The deeper his insight into the world of science, the stronger will be his faith in God. His head will bow down before Him in gratitude. His feelings will be that as his Master has blessed him with greater power and knowledge so he must exert himself for his own good and for the good of humanity. Instead of arrogance there will be humility. Instead of power-drunkenness there will be strong realisation to serve humanity. His freedom will not be unbridled. He will be guided by the tenets of morality and Divine Revelation. Thus science would in his hands, instead of becoming an instrument of destruction, become an agency for human welfare and moral regeneration. And this is the way in which he will express his gratitude to his Master for the gifts and blessings He has bestowed upon man.

Similarly, in history, economics, politics, law, and other branches of arts and science, a Muslim will nowhere lag behind a *Kafir* in the fields of inquiry and struggle, but their angles of view and consequently their *modus operandi* will be widely different. A Muslim will study every branch of knowledge in its right perspective, will strive for the right objective, and will arrive at right conclusions. In history he will draw correct lessons from the past experiences of man, and will find out true causes of the rise and fall of civilisations. He will try to benefit from all that was good and right in the past and will scrupulously avoid all that had led to the decline and fall of nations. In politics his sole objective will be to strive for the establishment of a polity wherein peace, justice, fraternity, and goodness reign,

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2. Similar is the situation which confronts the modern man today. Dr. Joad says, "Science has given us power fit for the gods, and to their use we bring the mentality of school boys and savages." The leading philosopher Bertrand Russell writes: "Broadly speaking, we are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends, every increase in the skill required to achieve them is to the bad. The human race has survived hitherto owing to ignorance and incompetence; but, given knowledge and competence combined with folly, there can be no certainty of survival. Knowledge is power, but it is power for evil just as much as for good. It follows that unless man increases in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow." (*Impact of Science on Society*, pp. 120-21).

Another leading thinker has put the paradox in these words: "We are taught to fly in the air like birds, and to swim in the water like fishes: *but how to live on the earth we do not know.*" (quoted by Joad in *Counter Attack From the East*, p. 28).

where man is a brother of man and respects his humanity, where no form of exploitation or slavery is rampant, where rights of the individual are respectfully upheld, and where the powers of the state are considered as a sacred trust from God and are used for the common welfare of all. In the field of law, the endeavour of a Muslim will be to make it the true embodiment of justice and the real protector of the rights of all — particularly of the weak. He will see that everybody gets his due share and no injustice or oppression is inflicted upon anyone. He will respect the law, make others respect it, and will see that it is administered justly, fairly, and equitably.

Now, on the one hand, there is a man who understands neither his own nature nor that of the universe. He errs in recognising his real Master and in knowing His attributes, and misuses his freedom by pursuing the path of disobedience and revolt. Such a man has failed in the trial of his knowledge, intelligence, and duty-consciousness. He has failed to come up to the standard and does not deserve a better destiny than the one discussed above..

The mortal life of a Muslim will always be filled with godliness, piety, righteousness and truthfulness. He will live in the world with the belief that God alone is the Master of all, that whatever he and other men possess has been given by God, that the powers he wields are only a trust from God, that the freedom he has been endowed with is not to be used indiscriminately, and that it is in his own interest to use it in accordance with God's Will. He will constantly keep in view that one day he will have to return to the Lord and submit an account of his entire life. The sense of accountability will always remain firmly implanted in his mind and he will never behave in a care-free and irresponsible way.

Think of the moral excellence of the man who lives with this mental attitude — his will be a life of purity and piety and love and altruism. He will be a blessing unto mankind. His thinking would not be polluted with evil thoughts and perverted ambitions. He will abstain from seeing evil, hearing evil, and doing evil. He will guard his tongue and will never utter a word of lie. He will earn his living through just and fair means and will prefer hunger to a food acquired unfairly through exploitation or injustice. He will never be a party to oppression or violation of human life and honour, whatever be their form or colour. He will never yield to evil, however high the defiance cost him. He



will be an embodiment of goodness and nobility and will uphold right and truth even at the cost of his life. He will abhor all shades of injustice and will stand firm for truth, undaunted by the tempests of adversity. Such a man will be a power to be reckoned with. He is bound to succeed. Nothing on earth can deter him or impede his way.

He will be the most honoured and the most respected one. No one can excel him in this respect. How can humiliation ever visit a person who is not prepared to bow his head or ever spread his hand for any favour before anyone except God the Almighty, the Sovereign of the universe?

He will be most powerful and effective. No one can be more powerful than he — for he fears none but God and seeks blessings from none but Him. What power can make him deviate from the Right Path? What wealth can buy his faith? What force can mould his conscience? What power can coerce his behaviour?

He will be the most wealthy and rich. No one in the world can be richer or more independent than he — for he will live a life of austerity, satiety, and contentment. He will be neither sensualist, nor indulgent, nor greedy. He will be contented with whatever he earns fairly and honestly and even if heaps of ill-gotten wealth are put before him he will not even like to look at them, to say the least of availing them. He will have the peace and contentment of heart — and what can be a greater wealth than this?

He will be the most revered, popular, and the loved one. No one can be more lovable than he, — for he lives a life of charity and benevolence. He will do justice to all and sundry, discharge his duties honestly, and work for the good of others sincerely. People's hearts would be naturally drawn towards him and they would like him, love him, and revere him.

He will be the most trusted and honoured one. No one can be more trustworthy than he — for he will not betray his trust, nor will he go astray from righteousness: he will be true to his word, and straightforward and honest in his dealings. He will be fair and just in all his affairs, for he is sure that God is ever-present, ever-vigilant. Words fail to describe the credit and goodwill which such a man commands. Can there be anyone who will not trust him? — Such is the life and character of a Muslim.

If you understand the true character of a Muslim, you will be convinced that he cannot live in humiliation abasement, or

subjugation. He is bound to prevail and no power on earth can overwhelm him or subdue him. For Islam inculcates in him the qualities which cannot be overshadowed by any charm or illusion.

And after living a respectable and honourable life on this earth, he will return to his Creator who will shower upon him the choicest of His blessings — for he discharged his duty ably, fulfilled his mission successfully, and emerged from the trial triumphantly. He is successful in life in this world and in the hereafter will live in eternal peace, joy, and bliss.

This is Islam, the natural religion of man, the religion which is not associated with any person, people, period, or place. It is the way of nature, the religion of *man*. In every age, in every country, and among every people, all God-knowing and truth-loving men have believed and lived this very religion. They were all Muslims, irrespective of the fact whether they called that way Islam or anything else. Whatever its name was, it signified Islam and nothing but Islam.



CHAPTER TWO

# **FAITH AND OBEDIENCE**

## FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

**I**SLAM means obedience to God. And it is a matter of common sense that this obedience cannot ensue in full measure unless man knows certain basic facts of life and reposes firm faith in them. What are those facts? And what are the primary essentials which a man must know to fashion his life, in accordance with the Divine Way? This we propose to discuss in the present chapter.

First of all, one should have unshakable belief in the existence of God, for unless a man has a firm and unalloyed faith in God's existence, how can he render obedience to Him?

Then, one must know the attributes of God. It is the knowledge of the attributes of God which enables man to cultivate in him the noblest of human qualities and to fashion his life in virtue and godliness. If a man does not know that there is One and only One God who is the Creator, the Ruler, and the Sustainer of the Universe and there is none else to share with Him even a shred of the Divine power and authority, he may fall a prey to false gods, and offer his homage to them to solicit their favour. But if he knows the divine attribute of *tawheed* (oneness of God), there is not the least possibility of his falling a prey to this illusion. Similarly, if a man knows that God is Omnipresent and Omniscient and He sees, hears and knows everything that we do in public or in private — nay, even our unexpressed thoughts! — then how can he afford to be indulgent and disobedient to God? He will feel that he is under eternal vigil and will, therefore, behave in the most appropriate way. But he who is not aware of these attributes of God may be misled, because of his ignorance, into God's disobedience. So is the case with all other attributes of God. The fact is that the qualities and attributes which a man must possess, if he wants to pursue the way of Islam, can be cultivated and developed only out of profound knowledge of the attributes of God. It is the knowledge of God's attributes which purifies a man's mind and soul, his beliefs, morals and actions. And a mere cursory acquaintance with or just an academic knowledge of these attributes is not sufficient for the task ahead — there must be an unflinching conviction firmly rooted in the mind and heart of man so that he may remain immune from insidious doubts and perversions.

Moreover, one must know in detail *the way of living* by following which one can seek the pleasure of God. Unless a man knows the likes and dislikes of God, how can he choose and adopt the one and reject the other? If a man has no knowledge of the Divine Law, how can he follow it? Thus the knowledge of the Divine Law and the Revealed Code of Life is also extremely essential in this respect.

But here, again, mere knowledge will not suffice. Man must have full confidence and conviction that *it is the Divine Law* and that *his salvation lies in following* this code alone. For knowledge without this conviction will fail to spur man to the Right Path and he may be lost in the blind alley of disobedience.

Finally, one must also know the consequences of belief and obedience and those of disbelief and disobedience. He must know what blessings would be showered upon him if he chooses God's way and leads a life of purity, virtue and obedience. And he must also know what evil and harrowing consequences would follow if he adopts the way of disobedience and revolt. Thus the knowledge of life after death is absolutely essential for this purpose. Man must have an unwavering belief in the fact that death does not mean the end of life; that there will be resurrection and he will be brought to the highest court of justice, to be presided over by God Himself; that on the Day of Judgment complete justice will prevail; and that good deeds will be rewarded and misdeeds punished. Everybody will get his due and there is no escape. This is bound to happen. This sense of responsibility and accountability is quite essential for the full-fledged obedience of the Law of God.

A man who has no knowledge of the world to come may consider obedience and disobedience quite immaterial. He may think that obedient and the disobedient will both meet a similar end: for, after death, both will be reduced to mere dust. With this attitude of mind, how can he be expected to submit to all the inconveniences and troubles that are inextricably associated with the life of active obedience, and shun those sins the commission of which does not apparently bring to him any moral or material loss in this world? With this mental attitude a man cannot acknowledge and submit to God's Law. Nor can a man, who lacks *firm belief* in the life hereafter and in the Divine Court of Judgment, remain firm and steadfast in the turbulent waters of life with its attraction for sin, crime, and evil; for doubt and hesitancy rob a man of his will to

action. You can remain firm in your behaviour only if you are firm in your beliefs. If you carry a wavering mind you cannot remain firm and steadfast. You can whole-heartedly follow a course only if you are sure of the benefits that will accrue to you by following it and of the losses and grievances that will engulf you if you disobey it. Thus, a profound knowledge of the consequences of belief and disbelief and of the life after death is extremely necessary for canalising life into God's obedience.

These are the essential facts which one must know if one wants to live the life of obedience, i.e., Islam.

### FAITH — What does it mean ?

Faith is what we have described in the foregoing discussion as 'Knowledge and Belief'. The Arabic word *Iman*, which we have rendered in English as faith, literally means 'to know', 'to believe' and 'to be convinced beyond the least shadow of doubt'. Faith, thus, is firm belief arising out of knowledge and conviction. And the man who *knows* and reposes unshakable belief in the Unity of God, in His Attributes, in His Law and the Revealed Guidance, and in the Divine Code of Reward and Punishment is called *Mo'min* (faithful). This faith invariably leads man to a life of obedience and submission to the Will of God. And one who lives this life of submission is known as *Muslim*.

This should clearly bring home the fact that without faith (*Iman*) no man can be a true Muslim. It is the indispensable essential; rather, the very starting point, without which no beginning can be made. The relation of Islam to *Iman* is the same as of a tree to its seed. As a tree cannot sprout forth without its seed, in the same way it is not possible for a man, who has no belief to start with, to become a 'Muslim'. On the other hand, just as it can happen that, in spite of sowing the seed, the tree may not grow for a multiple of reasons, or if it sprouts, its growth may be impaired or retarded, in the same way, a man may have faith, but due to a number of weaknesses, he may not become a true and staunch Muslim. Thus we find that faith is the starting point and leads man to the life of submission to God, and that a man cannot become a Muslim without faith. On the contrary, it is possible that a man may have faith but, because of the weakness of his will-power, poor training or bad company, he may not be living the life of a

true Muslim. As such, from the viewpoint of Islam and *Iman*, all men may be classified into four categories.

1. Those who have firm faith—a faith that makes them absolutely and whole-heartedly submit to God. They follow the way of God and devote themselves heart and soul to seek His pleasure by doing all that He likes and by avoiding all that He dislikes. In their devotion they are even more fervent than is the common man in pursuit of wealth and glory. Such men are true Muslims.

2. Those who do have faith, who believe in God, His Law and the Day of Judgment, but whose faith is not deep and strong enough to make them totally submit to God. They are far below the rank of true Muslims, deserve punishment for their defaults and misdeeds, but still they are Muslims. They are defaulters and wrongdoers but not rebels. They acknowledge the Sovereign and His Law and, although they are violating the Law, they have not revolted against the Sovereign. They admit its supremacy and their own guilt. Thus they are guilty and deserve punishment, but Muslims they remain.

3. Those who do not possess faith at all. These people refuse to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and are rebels. Even if their conduct is not bad and even if they are not spreading corruption and violence, they remain rebels and their apparent good deeds are of little value. Such men are like the outlaws. And as, even if any action of an outlaw is in consonance with the law of the land, he does not become a loyal and obedient citizen, in the same way the apparent good of those who revolt against God cannot compensate for the gravity of the real wrong, revolt, and disobedience.

4. Those who neither possess faith nor do good deeds. They spread disorder in the world and perpetrate all kinds of violence and oppression. They are the worst of the people; for they are rebels as well as the wrongdoers and criminals.

The above classification of mankind clearly shows that the real success and salvation of man depends on faith (*Iman*). The life of obedience (*Islam*) takes its birth from the seed of *Iman*. This Islam of a person may be flawless or defective. But without *Iman* there can be no Islam. Where there is no *Iman* there is no Islam. Where there is no Islam there is *Kufr*. Its form and nature may be different, but in any way it would be *Kufr* and nothing but *Kufr*.

This brings home the importance of *Iman vis-a-vis* a life of true and total submission to God.

### How to acquire the knowledge of God?

Now the question arises: How to acquire the knowledge and belief in God, His Attributes, His Law, and the Day of Judgment?

We have already referred to the countless manifestations of God around us and in our own selves, which bear witness to the fact that there is One and only One Creator and Governor of this Universe and it is He Who controls and directs it. These witnesses reflect the divine attributes of the Creator: His great wisdom, His all-embracing knowledge, His omnipotence, His mercy, His all-sustaining power, His *force majeure* — in short, His attributes can be traced everywhere in His works. But man's intellect and his capacity to attain knowledge have erred in observing and understanding them. These are all manifest and clear and our eyes are open to read what is writ large on the creation. But here men have erred. Some have declared that there are two gods, others began to profess belief in trinity, and still others succumbed to polytheism. Some began nature-worship and others divided divinity into multifarious deities: gods of rain, air, fire, life, death, etc. As such, although the manifestations of God were quite clear, human reason has faltered on various counts and failed to see the reality in its true perspective. It met deception after deception and resulted in nothing but confusion of thought. We hardly need dilate here on these errors of human judgment.

Similarly, with regard to life after death men have put forward many erroneous notions; for instance, that man is reduced to dust after death and will not rise to life again; or that man is subject to a process of continuous regeneration in this very world and is punished or rewarded in the oncoming cycles of life.

Even greater difficulty arises when we come to the question of the code of life. To formulate a complete and balanced code of life that should conform to God's pleasure merely with the help of human reason, is an extremely difficult task. If a man is equipped with the highest faculties of reason and intellect and he possesses matchless wisdom and experience of many years of deliberation, even then the chances of his formulating right views on life and existence are not very promising. And even if, after a lifelong deliberation, he succeeds in that he will

still lack in the confidence that he has really discovered the truth and adopted the right path.

Although the fullest and fairest test of man's wisdom, reason, and knowledge might have been to leave him to his own resources without any external guidance so that he might find out the right way of living in this world, those who, through their own sagacious siftings and strivings, might have reached truth and righteousness would have won success and salvation, while those not reaching them would have failed. God, however, spared His human creatures such a hard test. Through His Grace and Benevolence He raised for mankind men from among themselves to whom He imparted the true knowledge of His attributes, revealed to them His Law and the Right Code of Living, gave them the knowledge of the meaning and purpose of life and of the life after death and thus showed them the way by pursuing which man can achieve success and eternal bliss. These chosen men are the Messengers of God—His Prophets. God has communicated knowledge and wisdom to them by means of revelation (*Wahy*), and the book containing the Divine Communications is called the Book of God, or the Word of God. Now the test of man's wisdom and intellect lies in this: does he recognise God's Messenger after thoroughly observing his pure and pious life and carefully studying his noble and flawless teachings? The man who possesses right wisdom and sound common sense would verify truth and accept the instructions given by the Messenger of truth. If he denies the Messenger of God and his teachings, his denial would signify that he was devoid of the capacity to find out truth and righteousness. On account of this denial he would fail in his test. Such a man will never be able to discover the truth about God and His Law and the life after death.

### **Faith in the Unknown**

It is an everyday experience that when you do not know a thing, you look for somebody who knows it and you repose faith in his word and follow him. If you get ill and you cannot treat and cure yourself, you look for the doctor and accept and follow his instructions without question. Why? Because he is properly qualified to give medical advice, possesses experience and has treated and cured a number of patients. You, therefore, stick to his advice, do whatever he asks you to do and avoid whatever he forbids. Similarly, in matters of Law you believe in whatever your legal adviser says and act accordingly.



In educational matters you have faith in your teacher or instructor and you accept his instructions as true. When you want to go to some place and do not happen to know the way to it, you ask somebody who knows it, and follow the way he points out. In short, the reasonable course that you adopt in the whole of your life about matters which you do not or cannot know is that you approach one who knows them, accept his advice, and act accordingly. As your own knowledge of that matter or problem is inadequate, you carefully search for one who knows that and then silently accept his word. You take every pain to select the proper person. But after selecting the right man, you accept his advice unquestioningly. This kind of belief is called 'belief in the unknown'. For here you have relied upon one who knows, in matters you do not know. This exactly is *Iman-bil-ghaib*. Thus believing or having faith in what was previously unknown to you is called 'faith in the unknown' (*Iman-bil-ghaib*).

*Iman-bil-ghaib*, therefore, signifies that you achieve the knowledge of what was not known to you from one who knows. You do not know God and His real attributes. You are not aware that His angels are directing the machinery of the whole Universe according to His orders, and that they surround you on all sides. You have not the proper knowledge of the way of life through which you can seek the pleasure of your Creator. And you are in the dark about the life that is to come. The knowledge of all these matters is given to you by the Prophets, who had direct contact with the Divine Being and had been endowed with the correct knowledge. And they are the persons whose sincerity, integrity, trustworthiness, godliness and the absolute purity of whose lives stand as irrevocable witnesses to the truth of their claim to knowledge. And above all, the very wisdom and force of their message makes you admit that they speak the truth and their preachings deserve to be believed and followed. This conviction of yours is *Iman-bil-ghaib*. Such truth-discerning and truth-acknowledging attitude (i.e., *Iman-bil-ghaib*) is essential for obedience to God and for acting in accordance with His pleasure, for you have no other medium than God's Messenger for the achievement of true knowledge, and without accurate and true knowledge you cannot proceed rightly on the path of Islam.



CHAPTER THREE

# THE PROPHEHOOD

## THE PROPHETHOOD

**O**UR earlier discussion brings home the following points.

1. The right course for man is to live in obedience to God, and for the obedience of such a life of obedience knowledge and faith are absolutely essential; knowledge of God and His attributes, His likes and dislikes, His chosen way and of the Day of Judgment; and unflinching faith in the truth and veracity of this knowledge; this is *Iman*.

2. Secondly, God has graciously spared man the arduous task of acquiring this knowledge through his personal effort alone. He has not put man to this difficult trial. Instead, He revealed this knowledge to the Prophets chosen from amongst men, commanding them to convey the Will of God to other human beings and show them the right path. This has saved man from formidable misfortunes.

3. Lastly, the duty of the common men and women is to recognise a prophet and, after ascertaining that one is the true prophet of God, to have faith in him and his teachings and to scrupulously obey him and follow in his footsteps. This is the road to salvation.

In this chapter we shall discuss the nature, history, and other aspects of prophethood.

### I. PROPHETHOOD: ITS NATURE AND NECESSITY

You can see that God has most graciously provided man all that he needs in this Universe. Every new-born child arrives in the world endowed with eyes to see, ears to hear, nose to smell and breathe, hands to touch, feet to walk, and mind to think and ponder. All those potentialities, powers, and faculties that a man needs or can need are most carefully provided and marvellously set in his tiny body. Every minute requirement is foreseen and provided for. Nothing which he needs is left out.

Similar is the case with the world he lives in. Everything essential for his life is provided here in abundance — air, light, heat, water, etc. The child, on opening his eyes, finds his food in the mother's breast. Parents love him instinctively and in their heart has been implanted an irresistible urge to look after him, to bring him up and to sacrifice their all for his welfare.

Under the sheltering care of His system of sustenance the child grows to maturity and in every stage of his life obtains from nature all that he needs. All the material conditions of survival and growth are provided for and he finds that the whole Universe is at his service and is serving him on every turn and pass.

Furthermore, man is blessed with all those powers, capacities, and faculties—physical, mental and moral—which he requires in his struggle for life. Here God has made a wonderful disposition. He has not distributed these gifts to men strictly equally. Their equal distribution would have made men totally independent of each other and marred the possibilities of mutual care and co-operation. Thus although mankind as a whole possesses all that is needed, yet in between men capacities are distributed unequally and sparingly. Some possess physical strength and prowess, others distinguish themselves for their mental talents. Some are born with greater aptitude for arts, poetry, and philosophy, some possess sharpness of tongue, some others military acumen, commercial intelligence, mathematical keenness, scientific curiosity, literary observation, philosophic disposition, etc. These special aptitudes make a man distinct and enable him to grasp even those intricacies which elude the grip of the common man. These insights, aptitudes, and talents are the gifts of God. They are incarnated in the nature of those men whom God has destined to be thus distinguished. They are mostly inborn and cannot be acquired merely by education and training.

Careful reflection upon this disposition of God's gifts also reveals that the talents have been distributed amongst men in a marvellous way. Those capacities which are essential for the general maintenance of human culture have been endowed to the average human beings, while those extraordinary talents which are required only to a limited extent are given only to a small number of people. The number of soldiers, peasants, artisans and workers is large; but military generals, scholars, statesmen and intellectuals are comparatively few. Similar is the case with all professions, with all the arts and crafts of culture. The general rule seems to be: the higher the capacity and greater the genius, the lesser the number of people who possess them. Supergeniuses, who leave an indelible mark on human history and whose achievements guide humanity for ages, are few and far between. Their number is still less.

Here we are faced with another question: Is the fundamental need of human culture confined to the need of experts and

specialists in the field of law and politics, science and mathematics, engineering and mechanics, finance and economics and the like, or does it also need men who may show man the Right Path—the way to God and salvation? Other experts provide man with the knowledge of all that is in the world and of the ways and means to use that, but there must be someone to tell man the purpose of creation and the meaning of life itself. What man himself is and why has he been created? Who has provided him with all the powers and resources and why? What are proper ends of life and how are they to be achieved? What are the proper values of life and how can they be attained? This is the most cardinal need of man and unless he knows this he cannot erect the edifice of culture on sound foundations and cannot succeed in life here and hereafter. And our reason refuses to believe that God Who has provided man with even the most trivial of his requirements would ignore to provide for this greatest, most paramount and most vital need. Nay, it can never be so. *And it is not so.* While God has produced men of distinction in arts and science, He has also raised men with deep vision, pure intuition, and highest faculties to know and understand Him. To them, He Himself revealed the way of godliness, piety, and righteousness. He gave them the knowledge of the ends of life and values of morality and entrusted them with the duty to communicate the Divine Revelation to other human beings and to show them the Right Path. These men are the Prophets and Messengers of God.

The prophets distinguish themselves in the human society by their special aptitudes, natural bents of mind and a pious and meaningful living, more or less in the same way as other geniuses in art and science distinguish themselves by their extraordinary capacities and natural aptitudes. The genius in man is its own advertisement and automatically persuades others to recognise and acknowledge it. For instance, when we listen to a born poet, we at once discern his extraordinary genius. If those not endowed with this natural talent try even their level best to achieve that excellence in poetry, they cannot succeed. Similar is the case with a born orator, writer, leader, or inventor. Every such talent distinguishes itself by its remarkable power and extraordinary achievements. Others cannot stand a match to it. The same is true of a prophet. His mind grasps problems which defy other minds; he speaks and throws rare lights on subjects on which no one else can speak; he gets insight into such subtle and intricate questions that none else would have

even understood after years of deep thought and meditation. Reason accepts whatever he says; the heart feels its truth; and the experiences of worldly affairs and observations of the world phenomena all go to testify to the truth of every word that flows from his mouth. If, however, we ourselves try to produce the same or a similar work, nothing but failure meets us. His nature and disposition are so good and pure that in all affairs his attitude is that of truthfulness, straightforwardness, and nobility. He never does or utters wrong, nor does he commit any evil. He always inculcates virtue and righteousness, and practises himself what he preaches to others. No incident of his life shows that his life is not in accordance with his ideal. Neither his word nor his deed is prompted by any self-interest. He suffers for the good of others, and never makes others suffer for his own good. His whole life is an example of truth, nobleness, purity of nature, high thinking, and the most exalted form of humanity. His character is without any blemish and even the minutest scrutiny fails to reveal any flaw in his life. And all these facts, all these attributes, make it evident that he is the Prophet of God and faith must be reposed in him.

When it becomes quite clear that such and such a person is the true Prophet of God, the natural dictate of this realisation is that his words should be accepted, his instructions followed, and his orders obeyed. It is quite unreasonable to accept a man as God's true Prophet and yet not to believe in what he says or not to follow what he ordains; for your very acceptance of him as God's Prophet means that you have acknowledged that what he says is from God, and that whatever he does is in accordance with God's Will and Pleasure. Now, disobedience of him is the disobedience of God — and disobedience of God leads to nothing but ruin and devastation. Therefore, the very acceptance of the Prophet makes it incumbent on you to bow to his instructions and accept them without any demur whatsoever. You may not be able fully to grasp the wisdom and usefulness of this or that order, but the very fact that an instruction has emanated from the Prophet is sufficient guarantee for its truth, and there can be no room for doubt or suspicion. Your inability to understand it is no reason for its having flaw or defect; for a common man's understanding is not flawless. It has its own limitations and they cannot be ignored altogether. It is evident that one who does not know some art thoroughly cannot understand its subtleties, but such a person would be a fool to reject what an expert says, merely on the plea that

he himself does not fully understand the expert. It is noteworthy that in every important worldly affair an expert is needed for advice, and when you turn to the expert you thereafter trust his advice and entirely depend upon it. You rather surrender your own right of judgment and inference and follow him gracefully. Every ordinary man cannot be a master in all arts and crafts of the world. The proper way for an average human being is to do what he can and, in respect of things he cannot do, to use all his wisdom and shrewdness in finding out the proper man to guide and help him, and after finding out such a man to accept his advice and follow him. When you are sure that a certain person is the best man available for your purpose, you solicit his advice and guidance, and have complete trust in him. To interfere with him at every step and say, "Make me understand it before you proceed any further," is evidently imprudent. When you engage a solicitor in any legal case, you do not interfere with him on every turn and pass. You rather have faith in him and follow his advice. For your medical treatment you go to the doctor and follow his instructions. You neither poke your nose in medical matters nor test your skill in logic by debating with the doctor. This is the proper attitude in life. So must be done in the case of religion. You need the knowledge of God; you require to know the mode of life according to God's pleasure; and you possess no means for obtaining this knowledge. It is incumbent upon you, therefore, to look for a True Prophet of God; and you will have to use utmost care, discernment and sagacity in your search for him, for if you choose a wrong man for a true Prophet, he will put you on the wrong track. If, however, after properly weighing and measuring all considerations, you decide definitely that a certain person is really God's Prophet, then you must trust him completely and obey all his instructions faithfully.

Now it is clear that the Right Path for man is that and that alone which the Prophet declares to be so and the correct way of life that only which he informs us to be from God. From this one can easily understand that to have faith in the Prophet and to obey and follow him is absolutely necessary for all men, and that a man who puts aside the Prophet's instructions and himself tries to carve out a way for himself, deviates from the Right Path, and surely goes astray.

In this matter men are guilty of strange errors. There are men who admit the integrity and truthfulness of the Prophet, but do not repose faith (*Iman*) in him, nor do they follow him

in the affairs of their life. Such men are not only *Kafirs*, but also behave in an imprudent and unnatural way: for not to follow the Prophet after admitting him to be true means that one knowingly follows untruth. And what folly can be greater than that!

Some people declare, "We do not need a prophet for our guidance and we can ourselves find out the way to truth". This too is a faulty view. You have probably learnt geometry, and you know that between two points there can be only one straight line, and all other lines must be crooked or will fail to touch the points in view. The same is the case with the way to truth, which, in the language of Islam, is called the Straight Path (*Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*). This path begins from man and goes straight up to God, and this path can evidently be one and only one; all other paths would be aberrations and will lead astray. Now this Straight Path has been indicated by the Prophet, and there is and can be no straight path besides that. The man who ignores that path and seeks other errands is only a dupe of his own imagination. He chooses a way and imagines it to be right, but he soon finds himself entangled and is lost in the mazes and meanderings created by his own fancy. What can you think of a person who has lost his way and when a good man shows him the right one, he defiantly ignores the guidance, declaring, "I will not take your guidance nor accept the way you have shown to me, but I will myself grope in this unknown region and try to reach the object of my search, in my own way?" This, in the presence of the clear guidance of the Prophets, is sheer stupidity. If everybody tries to start up again from the scratch, it would be gross waste of time and energy. We never do so in the field of sciences and arts: why here?

This is a common error, and even a little reflection reveals its flaws and weaknesses. But if you go a little deeper into the matter, you will notice that a person who denies to have faith in the true Prophet cannot at all find any way straight or otherwise to reach God. This is so because a man who refuses to believe the advice of a truthful man adopts such a perverse attitude that the vistas of truth become estranged from him and he becomes a victim of his own obstinacy, arrogance, bias and perversity? Often this refusal is because of false arrogance, or blind conservatism and obstinate adherence to the way of the forefathers, or slavery of the lower desires of the self, whose gratification becomes impossible by submission to the teachings of the Prophets. If a man is engrossed in any of the above con-



ditions, the path to truth becomes closed to him. He like a jaundiced person cannot look upon things in the uncoloured light of reality. Such a man cannot find out any road to salvation. On the other hand, if a man is sincere and truth-loving and if he is not slave to any of the above complexes, the road to reality becomes paved for him, and there is absolutely no ground for him to refuse to believe in the Prophet. Nay, he finds in the teachings of the Prophet the very echo of his own soul and discovers himself by discovering the Prophet.

And, above all, the true Prophet is raised by God Himself. It is He Who has sent him up to mankind to convey His message to His people. It is His Command to repose faith in the Prophet and to follow him. Thus, one who refuses to believe in God's Messenger actually refuses to follow God's Commandment and becomes a rebel. There is no denying the fact that one who refuses to acknowledge the authority of the viceroy of a sovereign actually refuses the authority of the sovereign himself. This disobedience turns him into a rebel. God is the Lord of the Universe, the true Sovereign, the King of kings, and it is the bounden duty of every man to acknowledge the authority of His Messengers and Apostles and to obey them as His accredited prophets. And one who turns away from the Prophet of God is surely a *Kafir*, be he a believer in God or a disbeliever.

## II. BRIEF HISTORY OF PROPHETHOOD

Now let us cast a cursory glance at the history of prophethood. Let us see how this long chain began, how it gradually unfolded itself and finally culminated in the prophethood of the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (peace be upon him).

The human race began from one man: Adam. It was from him that the family of man grew and the human race multiplied. All human beings born in this world have descended from that earliest pair: Adam and Eve.<sup>1</sup> History and religion

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1. This is a very important and revolutionary concept. Its logical outcome is unity of mankind and equality of human beings. It is stupid to distinguish and discriminate between men on grounds of class, colour, race or territory. In an age when nationalism, narrow racialism and bloodthirsty anti-semitism have torn the world into shreds, this creed of the unity of mankind is a powerful ray of hope for the future.—*Editor*.



are agreed on this point. Scientific investigations about the origin of man too do not show that originally different men came into being, simultaneously or at different points of time, in different parts of the world. Most of the scientists also conjecture that one man would have been brought into existence first and the entire human race might have descended from the same one man.

Adam, the first man on earth, was also appointed as the first Prophet of God. He revealed His religion — Islam — to him and enjoined him to convey and communicate it to his descendants: to teach them that Allah is One, the Creator, the Sustainer of the world; that He is the Lord of the Universe and He alone should be worshipped and obeyed; that to Him they will have to return one day and to Him alone they should appeal for help; that they should live good, pious, and righteous life in accordance with God's pleasure and that if they did so they would be blessed by God with goodly reward, and if they turned away from Him and disobeyed Him they would be losers here and in the hereafter and would be severely punished for this disbelief and disobedience.

Those of Adam's descendants who were good trod the right path shown to them by him, but those who were bad abandoned their father's teachings, and gradually drifted away into devious ways. Some began to worship the sun, the moon, and the stars; others took to the worship of trees, animals and rivers. Some believed that air, water, fire, health, and all the blessings and forces of Nature were each under the control of a different god and that each one of them should be propitiated by means of worship. In this way ignorance gave rise to many forms of polytheism and idolatry, and scores of religions were formulated. This was the age when Adam's progeny had spread fairly over the globe, and formed different races and nations. Every nation had made a different religion for itself, each with formalities and rituals of its own. God — the one Lord and Creator of mankind and the universe — was altogether forgotten. Not only that; Adam's descendants forgot even the way of life which God had revealed for them and which their great progenitor had taught them. They had followed their own devices. Every kind of evil custom grew, and all sorts of notions of ignorance spread among them. They began to err in discerning right from wrong: many evils began to be considered right and many right things were not only ignored but dubbed as

wrong.<sup>2</sup>

At this stage God began to raise prophets among every people, who preached Islam to them. Each one reminded his people of the lesson they had forgotten. They taught them God-worship, put an end to idol-worship and the practice of associating other deities with God (*shirk*), did away with all customs of ignorance, taught them the right way of living in accordance with God's pleasure, and gave them life-giving laws to be followed and enforced in society. God's true Prophets were raised in all countries: in every land and people. They all possessed one and the same religion — the religion of Islam.<sup>3</sup> No doubt, the methods of teaching and the legal codes of different Prophets were a little different in accordance with the needs and the stage of culture of the people among whom they were raised. The particular teachings of each Prophet were determined by the kinds of evils which he faced and endeavoured to eradicate. The methods of reform differed as it suited to fight different notions and ideas. When the people were in the primitive stages of society, civilisation and intellectual development, their laws and regulations were simple; they were modified and improved as the society evolved and progressed. These differences were, however, only superficial and apparent. The fundamental teachings of all the religions were the same, i.e. belief in the unity of God, adherence to a life of piety, goodness and peace, and belief in the life after death with its just mechanism for reward and punishment.

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2. This view of the history of religions is diametrically opposed to the so-called evolutionary view of religion which regards nature-worship as the first stage. These peoples stop at the manifestations of nature-worship in earlier societies but do not try to explore the still earlier form of which they were mere perversions and corruptions. Later scientific studies are confirming the view that worship of one God (*Tawheed*) was the earliest form of worship and all other forms are later perversions of that original religion. Those who want to pursue the topic may refer to Prof. W. Schmidt's valuable research treatise, *The Origin and Growth of Religions*, English translation by H. J. Rose (London, Methuen).—*Editor*.

3. There is a common misconception, mostly among the Western writers, that Islam owes its origin to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and some of the writers even go to the extent of calling him 'the founder of Islam'. This is a travesty of truth. Islam has been the religion of all the Prophets of God and all of them have brought the same message from Him. Prophets have not been the founders of Islam; they have only been the messengers of it. Islam consists of the Divine Revelation conveyed to mankind by the truthful Prophets.—*Editor*.

Man's attitude towards God's prophets has been strange. First he maltreated the prophets and refused to listen and accept their teachings. Some of the prophets were expelled from their lands; some were assassinated; some, in face of the people's indifference, continued preaching the whole of their lives, and hardly won more than a few followers. In the midst of harassing opposition, derision, and indignity to which they were perpetually subjected, these Apostles of God, however, did not cease to preach. Their patient determination at last succeeded: their teachings did not remain without effect. Large groups of people and nations accepted their message and were converted to their creed. The erring tendencies of the people, born of centuries of persistence in deviation, ignorance and malpractices, now took another form. Though during the lives of their prophets they accepted and practised their teachings, yet after their death they introduced their distorted notions into their religions, and altered the prophets' teachings. They adopted quite novel method of worshipping God; some even took to the worship of their prophets. Some made the prophets the incarnations of God; some made their prophets the sons of God; some associated their prophets with God in His Divinity. In short, man's varied attitudes in this respect were a travesty of his reason and a mockery of himself; he made idols of those very persons whose holy mission was to smash idols to pieces. By intermixing religion, custom and rituals of ignorance, baseless and false anecdotes and man-made laws, men so changed and perverted the ideology of the prophets that after the lapse of centuries it became a hotch-potch of the real and the fictitious and the teachings of the prophets were lost in a conglomeration of fictions and perversities so much so that it became impossible to distinguish the grain from the chaff. And, not content with this corruption of teachings of the prophets, they further attached fictitious anecdotes and unworthy traditions to the lives of their prophets and so polluted their life-histories that a real and reliable account of their lives became impossible to be discerned. Despite these corruptions by the followers, the work of the prophets has not been altogether in vain. Among all nations, in spite of all interpolations and alterations, some traces of truth have survived. The idea of God and of the life after death was definitely assimilated in some form or other. A few principles of goodness, truthfulness and morality were commonly admitted throughout the whole world. The prophets, thus, prepared the mental attitude of their respective people in

such a way that a universal religion could be safely introduced — a religion which is quite in consonance with the nature of man, which embodies all that was good in all other creeds and societies, and which is naturally and commonly acceptable to the entire mankind.

As we have said above, in the beginning separate prophets used to appear among different nations or groups of people, and the teaching of each prophet was meant specially and specifically for his people. The reason was that at that stage of history, nations were situated separately and were so cut off from each other that one was bound up within the geographical limits of its own territories and the facilities for mutual intercourse were just non-existent. In such circumstances, it was very difficult to propagate a common World Faith with its accompanying system of law for the life of this world. Besides, the general conditions of the early nations were widely different from one another. Their ignorance was great, and among the different peoples it had given different forms to their moral aberrations and distortions of Faith. It was, therefore, necessary that different prophets be raised to preach the Truth to them and win them over to God's way; to gradually eradicate evils and aberrations; to root out the ways and modes of ignorance and teach them to practise the noblest principles of simple, pious and righteous life, and thus train and bring them up in the arts and crafts of life. God alone knows how many thousands of years were spent in thus educating man, and developing him mentally, morally, and spiritually. Anyhow, man continued to make progress and at last the time came when he grew from his infancy, and entered the age of maturity.

With the progress and spread of commerce, industry, and arts, intercourse was established between nations. From China and Japan, as far as the distant lands of Europe and Africa, regular routes were opened both by sea and land. Many people learnt the art of writing; knowledge spread. Ideas began to be communicated from one country to the other and learning and scholarship began to be exchanged. Great conquerors appeared, extended their conquests far and wide, established vast empires, and knit many different nations under one political system. Thus nations came closer and closer to one another, and their differences became less and less.

It became possible under these circumstances that one and the same faith, envisaging a comprehensive and all-embracing

way of life, catering to the moral, spiritual, social, cultural, political, economic, and all other needs of men and embodying both religious and secular elements be sent by God for the entire mankind. More than two thousand years ago mankind had attained a mental calibre that it all seemed to crave for a universal religion. Buddhism, though it consisted only of some moral principles and was not a complete system of life, emerged from India, and spread as far as Japan and Mongolia on one side, and to Afghanistan and Bokhara on the other. Its missionaries travelled far and wide in the world. A few centuries later, Christianity appeared. Although the religion taught by Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) was none but *Islam*, his followers reduced it into a hotch-potch called Christianity, and even this overt and Israelised religion was spread in the far-off places of Persia and Asia Minor and into the distant climes of Europe and Africa. From these events it is clearly inferred that the conditions of mankind in that age demanded a common religion for the whole human race and they were so prepared for it that when they found no complete and true religion in existence they began to propagate among the nations the prevalent religions, howsoever defective, incomplete, or unsatisfying they might be.

At such a crucial stage of human civilisation, when the mind of man was itself craving for a world religion, a prophet was raised in Arabia for the whole world and for all nations. The religion he was given to propagate was again *Islam* — but now in the form of a complete and full fledged system, covering all aspects of individual and material life of man. He was made a prophet for the entire human race and was deputed to propagate his mission to the whole world. He was Muhammad, the Prophet of *Islam* (peace be upon him)!

### **The Prophethood of Muhammad**

If we cast a glance at the world atlas, we find that no other country could have been more suitable for the much-needed world religion than Arabia. It is situated right in the middle of Asia and Africa and Europe is not far away from it. At the time of Muhammad's appearance the central part of Europe was inhabited by civilised and culturally advanced nations; and thus these people were more or less at about the same distance from Arabia as were the people of India. This fact gave Arabia a central position.

And look at the history of that era and you will find that

no other people were more suited for the endowment of this prophet than the Arabs.

Great nations of the world had been struggling hard for world supremacy, and in this long struggle and incessant strife, they had exhausted all their resources and vitality. The Arabs were a fresh and virile people. The so-called social progress had produced bad habits among the advanced nations, while among the Arabs no such social organisation existed, and they were, therefore, free from the inactivity, debasement and indulgencies arising out of luxury and sensual satiety. The pagan Arabs of the fifth century had not been affected by the evil influence of the artificial social systems and civilisation of the great nations of the world. They possessed all the good human qualities which a people untouched by the 'social progress' of the time ought to possess. They were brave, fearless, generous, faithful to their promises, lovers of freedom, and were politically independent — not subject to the hegemony of any of the imperial powers. They lived a very simple life, and were strangers to the life of luxury and indulgence. No doubt, there were certain undesirable aspects of their life as well, as we shall mention later on, but the reason for the existence of such aspects was that for thousands of years no prophet had risen among them, nor had there appeared a reformer who might have civilised them and purged their moral life of all evil impurities. Centuries of free and independent life in sandy deserts had bred and nourished extreme ignorance among them. They had, therefore, become so hard-hearted and firm in their traditions of ignorance that to make them human was not the task of an ordinary man. At the same time, however, they did possess a capacity that if some person of extraordinary powers were to invite them for reform and gave them a noble ideal and a complete programme, they would accept his call and readily rise to act effectively for the achievement of such a goal, and spare no strife or sacrifice in the cause. They would be prepared to face without the least scruple even the hostility of the entire world in the cause of their mission. And verily it was such a young, forceful, and virile people that were needed for disseminating the teachings of the World Prophet: Muhammad (peace be upon him).

And then take to the Arabic language. If you study that language and fathom deep into its literature, you will be convinced that there is no other language than Arabic which is more suited to give expression to high ideals, to explain the



most delicate and subtle problems of Divine knowledge, and to impress the heart of man and mould it into God's submission. Small phrases and brief sentences express a world of ideas, and at the same time they are so forceful that they steal into the heart, their very sound moves men to tears and ecstasy. They are so sweet that it is felt as if honey were being poured into the ears; they are so full of harmony that every fibre of the listener's body is moved by their symphony. It is such a rich and powerful language that was needed for the Qur'an, the Great Word of God.

It was, therefore, the manifestation of God's great wisdom that He chose the land of Arabia for the birth-place of the World Prophet. Let us now see how unique and extraordinary was the blessed personality chosen by God for the mission of the World Prophet.

### III. MUHAMMAD'S PROPHETHOOD : A RATIONAL VINDICATION

If one were to close one's eyes and imagine oneself in the world of 1400 years ago, one would find that it was a world completely different from ours, having not even the least semblance to the rough and tumble that we find around ourselves. How few and far between were the opportunities for exchange of ideas! How limited and undeveloped were the means of communication! How little and meagre was man's knowledge! How narrow was his outlook! How enveloped was he in superstition and wild and sophisticated ideas!

Darkness held the sway. There was only a faint glimmer of learning which could hardly illumine the horizon of human knowledge. There was neither wireless nor telephone, neither television nor cinematograph. Railways and motor cars and aeroplanes were undreamt of, and printing presses and publishing concerns were unknown. Hand-written books or copyists alone supplied whatever scanty literary material was there to be transmitted from generation to generation. Education was a luxury, meant only for the most fortunate, and educational institutions were very few and far between.

The store of human knowledge was scanty, man's outlook was narrow, and his ideas of men and things were confined to his limited surroundings. Even a scholar of that age lacked in certain respects the knowledge possessed by a layman of today, and the most cultured person was less refined than our own man in the street.

Indeed, humanity was steeped in ignorance and superstition. Whatever light of learning there was seemed to be fighting a losing battle against the darkness prevailing all around. What are considered to be matters of common knowledge today could hardly be acquired in those days even after years of calculated thought and patient research. People used to undertake hazardous journeys and spend a whole lifetime in acquiring that modest information which is everybody's heritage in the present age of learning. Things which are classed as 'myth' and 'superstition' today were the unquestionable truths of that age. Acts which we now regard as heinous and barbarous were then the order of the day. Methods which appear obnoxious to our moral sense today constituted the very soul of morality, and one could hardly imagine in those days that there could be a different way of life also. Incredulity had assumed such mighty proportions and had become so widespread that people refused to consider anything as lofty and sublime unless it appeared in the garb of the supernatural, the extraordinary, the uncanny, and even the untenable. They had developed such an inferiority complex that they could never imagine a human being to possess a godly soul and the saint to be human.

### **ARABIA — The Abyss of Darkness**

In that benighted era, there was a territory where darkness lay heavier and thicker. The neighbouring countries of Persia, Byzantium and Egypt possessed a glimmer of civilisation and a faint light of learning. But Arabia could receive no share from their cultural influences. It stood isolated, cut off by vast oceans of sand. Arab traders plodding great distances, which took them months, carried their wares to and from these countries, but they could hardly acquire any grain of knowledge on their journeys. In their own country, they did not have a single educational institution or library. None seemed to be interested in the cultivation and advancement of knowledge. The few who were literate were not educated enough to have anything to do with the existing arts and sciences. They did possess a highly developed language capable of expressing the finest shades of human thought in a remarkable manner. They also possessed a literary taste of a high order. But the study of the remnants of their literature reveals how limited was their knowledge, how low was their standard of culture and civilisation, how saturated were their minds with superstitions, how barbarous and ferocious were their thoughts and customs, and



how uncouth and degraded were their moral standards and conceptions.

It was a country without a government. Every tribe claimed sovereignty and considered itself to be an independent unit. There was no law except the law of the jungle. Loot, arson, and murder of innocent and weak people was the order of the day. Life, property, and honour were constantly at stake. Different tribes were always at daggers drawn with one another. Any trivial incident was enough to cause a war to blaze out in ferocious fury, which sometimes even developed into a country-wide conflagration ceaselessly continuing for several decades. Indeed, a Bedouin could not understand why he should let off a person of another tribe, whom, he thought, he had every right to kill and plunder.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever notions they had of morals, culture, and civilisation, were primitive and uncouth. They could hardly discriminate between pure and impure, lawful and unlawful, civil and uncivil. Their life was wild. Their methods were barbaric. They revelled in adultery, gambling and drinking. Loot and plunder was their motto, murder and rapine their very habits. They would stand stark naked before each other without any qualms of conscience. Even their women-folk would become nude at the ceremony of circumambulating the Ka'ba. Out of sheer foolish notions of prestige, they would bury their daughters alive lest anyone should become their son-in-law. They would marry their step-mothers after the death of their fathers. They were ignorant of even the rudiments of everyday routine of eating, dressing, and washing.

As regards their religious beliefs, they suffered from the same evils which were playing havoc with the rest of the world.

They worshipped stones, trees, idols, stars, and spirits in short, everything conceivable except God. They did not know anything about the teachings of the prophets of old. They had an idea that Abraham and Ishmael were their forefathers, but they knew next to nothing about their religious preachings and about the God Whom they worshipped. The stories of 'Ad and Thamud were to be found in their folklore, but they contained no traces of the teachings of prophets Hud and Salih. The

4. Prof. Joseph Hell writes in *The Arab Civilisation* (p. 10): "These struggles destroyed the sense of national unity and developed an incurable *particularism*; each tribe deeming itself self-sufficient and regarding the rest as its legitimate victims for murder, robbery and plunder."

Jews and the Christians had transmitted to them certain legendary folktales relating to the Israelite prophets. They presented a harrowing picture of those noble souls. Their teachings were adulterated with the figments of their own imagination and their lives were tarred black. Even today, an idea can be had of the religious conceptions of those people by casting a cursory glance at those Israelite traditions which Muslim commentators of the Qur'an have conveyed to us. Indeed, the picture which has been presented there of the institution of prophethood and of the character of the Israelite prophets is the very antithesis of all that those noble followers of truth had stood for.

### **The Saviour is Born**

In such a dark age and in such a benighted country a man is born. In his very childhood his parents die and a few years later, the sad demise of his grandfather also occurs. Consequently, he is deprived even of that scant training and upbringing which an Arab child of his time could get. In his boyhood he tends the flocks of sheep and goats in the company of Bedouin boys. When of age, he takes to commerce. All his associations and all his dealings are with the Arabs alone, whose condition has just been described. Education has not even touched him; he is completely unlettered and unschooled. He never gets a chance to sit in the company of learned men, for such men were totally non-existent in Arabia. He does have a few opportunities to go out of his country, but those journeys are confined to Syria and are nothing more than the usual business trips undertaken by Arab trade caravans. If he meets any learned men there or has the occasion to observe any aspects of culture and civilisation, those random meetings and stray observations cannot be given any place in the making of his personality. For such things can never have on anyone or him that profound influence which may lift him totally out of his environment transform him completely, and raise him to such heights of originality and glory that there remains no affinity between him and the society in which he is born. Nor can they be the means of the acquisition of that profound and vast knowledge which may transform an unlettered Bedouin into a leader not only of his own country and age but of the world at large and of all ages to come. Indeed, whatsoever the measure of the intellectual and cultural influence of those journeys one might suppose, the fact remains that they could in no case impart to him those conceptions and principles of religion, ethics, culture

and civilisation which were totally non-existent in the world of those days, and they could in no way create that sublime and perfect pattern of human character which was nowhere to be found in those days.

### Diamond in a Heap of Stones

We may now look at the life and work of this noble man in the context not only of the Arabian society but also of the entire world as it stood in that period.

He is totally different from the people among whom he is born and among whom he passes his youth and early manhood, attains finally his full stature. He never tells a lie. His whole nation is unanimous in testifying to his truthfulness. Even his worst enemies never accuse him of telling a lie on any occasion whatsoever during his entire life. He talks politely and never uses obscene and abusive language. He has a charming personality and winsome manners with which he captivates the hearts of those who come into contact with him. In his dealings with the people he always follows the principles of justice and fairplay. He remains engaged in trade and commerce for years, but he never enters into any dishonest transaction. Those who deal with him in business have full confidence in his integrity. The entire nation calls him *Al-Ameen* (the Truthful and the Trustworthy). Even his enemies deposit their costly belongings with him for safe custody and he scrupulously fulfils their trust. He is the very embodiment of modesty in the midst of a society which is immodest to the core. Born and bred among a people who regard drunkenness and gambling as virtues, he never touches alcohol and never indulges in gambling. His people are uncouth, uncultured and unclean, but he personifies in himself the highest culture and the most refined aesthetic outlook. Surrounded on all sides by heartless people, he himself has a heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness. He helps the orphans and widows. He is hospitable to travellers. He harms no one; rather, he goes all out to suffer hardships for others' sake. Living among those for whom war is bread and butter, he is such a lover of peace that his heart melts for them when they take up arms and cut each other's throats. He keeps aloof from the feuds of his tribe, and is foremost in bringing about reconciliation. Bred up in an idolatrous race, he is so clear-minded and possesses such a pure soul that he regards nothing in the heavens and the earth worth worshipping except the One True God. He does not bow before any created

thing and does not partake of the offerings made to idols, even in his childhood. Instinctively he hates all kinds of worship of all creatures and beings besides God. In brief, the towering and radiant personality of *this man*, in the midst of such a benighted and dark environment, may be likened to a beacon-light illumining a pitch-dark night or to a diamond shining in a heap of dead stones.

### **A Revolution Comes**

After spending a great part of his life in such a chaste, pure, and civilised manner there comes a revolution in his being. He feels fed up with the darkness and ignorance massed around him. He wants to swim clear of the horrible sea of ignorance, corruption, immorality, idolatry and disorder which surround him on all sides. He finds everything around him out of harmony with his soul. He retires to the hills, away from the hum and drum of habitation. He spends days and nights in perfect seclusion and meditation. He fasts so that his soul and his heart may become purer and nobler still.

He muses and ponders deep. He is in search of a light which might melt away the encompassing darkness. He wants to get hold of that power with which he might bring about the downfall of the corrupt and disorderly world of his day and lay the foundations of a new and better world.

Lo! A remarkable revolution comes over his person. All of a sudden his heart is illuminated with the Divine Light, giving him the power he had yearned for. He comes out of the confinement of his cave, goes to the people, and addresses them in the following strain:

“The idols which you worship are a mere sham. Cease to worship them from now onward. No mortal being, no star, no tree, no stone, no spirit, is worthy of human worship. Therefore, bow not your heads in worship before them. The entire universe with everything that it contains belong to God Almighty alone. He alone is the Creator, the Nourisher, the Sustainer, and, consequently, the real Sovereign before Whom all should bow down and to Whom all should pray and render obedience. Thus worship Him alone and obey only His commands. Loot and plunder, murder and rapine, injustice and cruelty—all the vices in which you indulge are crimes in the eyes of God. Leave your evil ways. He hates them all. Speak the truth. Be just. Do not kill anyone. Do not rob anyone. Take your lawful share. Give that

is due to others in a just manner. You are human beings and all human beings are equal in the eyes of God. None is born with the slur of shame on his face; nor anyone has come into the world with the mantle of honour hung around his neck. He alone is high and honoured who is God-fearing and pious, true in words and deeds. Distinctions of birth and glory of race are no criteria of greatness and honour. One who fears God and does good deeds is the noblest of human beings. One who is shorn of love of God and is steeped in bad manners is doomed. There is an appointed day after your death when you shall have to appear before your Lord. You shall be called to account for all your deeds, good or bad, and you shall not be able then to hide anything. The whole record of your life shall be an open book to Him. Your fate shall be determined by your good or bad actions.

In the court of the True Judge — the Omniscient God — the question of unfair recommendation and favouritism does not arise. You shall not be able to bribe Him. No consideration will be given to your pedigree or parentage. *True faith and good deeds alone will stand you in good stead at that time.* He who will be fully equipped with them shall take his abode in the Heaven of eternal happiness, while one devoid of them shall be cast in the fire of Hell.”

This is the message with which he comes. The ignorant nation turns against him. Abuses and stones are showered at his august person. Every conceivable torture and cruelty is perpetrated on him; and this continues not for a day or two but uninterruptedly for thirteen long troublesome years. At last he is exiled. But he is not given respite even there. He is tormented in various ways in his abode of refuge. The whole of Arabia is incited against him. He is persecuted and hounded down continuously for full eight years there. He suffers it all, but does not budge an inch from the stand he has taken. He is resolute, firm and inflexible in his purpose and stand.

### **Why all that Enmity ?**

One might inquire: how is it that his nation became his sworn enemy? Was there any dispute about gold and silver or other worldly possessions? Was it due to any blood-feud? Did he ask for anything from them? No! The whole enmity was based on the fact that he had asked them to worship the One True God and to lead a life of righteousness, piety and goodness. He had preached against idolatry and the worship

of other beings besides God and had denounced their wrong ways of life. He had cut at the roots of priestcraft. He had inveighed against all distinctions of high and low between human beings, and had condemned the prejudices of clan and race as sheer ignorance; and he wanted to change the whole structure of society which had been handed down to them from time immemorial. In their turn, his countrymen told him that the principles of his mission were hostile to their ancestral traditions and asked him either to give them up or to bear the worst consequences.

One might ask: what for did he suffer all those hardships? His nation offered to accept him as their king and to lay all the riches of the land at his feet if only he would leave preaching his religion and spreading his message.<sup>5</sup> But he chose to refuse the tempting offers and to suffer for his cause, instead.

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5. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had to face tempests of adversity in the way of truth. He braced all the opposition and oppression with a smile on his lips. He stood firm, undeterred by criticism and coercion. When the natives felt that the threats failed to frighten this man and the severest tribulations heaped upon his person and his followers not even made them move an inch, they played the other trick—but that too was destined to doom!

A deputation of the leading *Quraish* called upon the Holy Prophet and tried to bribe him by offering all the worldly glory they could imagine. They said: "If you want to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much as you wish; if you aspire to win honour and power we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you have a fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the most beautiful maiden of your choice."

But they wanted that he should abandon his mission. The terms were extremely tempting for any human mortal. But they had no significance in the eyes of the Great Prophet. His reply fell like a bomb-shell upon the deputation of the leaders of Arabia. They thought they had played the trump. But they were disappointed.

The Holy Prophet said: "Pray! I want neither pelf nor power. I have been commissioned by God as a warner to mankind. I deliver His message to you. Should you accept it, you shall have felicity and joy in this life and eternal bliss in the life hereafter; should you reject the Word of God, surely God will decide between you and me."

On another occasion he said to his uncle, who, on the pressure from the leaders of Arabia, was trying to persuade him to abandon his mission: "O Uncle! Should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, in order to make me renounce this mission, it shall not be. I will never give it up till it should please God to make it a triumph or I perish in this attempt."

This was the character of the Prophet of Islam!—*Editor.*



Why? Was he to gain in any way if those people became pious and righteous?

Why was it that he cared not a jot for riches and luxury, kingship and glory, and ease and plenty? Was he playing for some higher material gains so that these blessings sank into insignificance in comparison with them? Were those gains so tempting that he could elect to go through fire and sword and bear tortures of the soul and torments of the body with equanimity for years? One has to ponder over it deeply to find an answer.

Can anyone ever imagine a higher example of self-sacrifice, fellow-feeling and kind-heartedness towards his fellow-beings than that a man may ruin his own happiness for the good of others, while those very people for whose betterment he is striving his utmost should stone him, abuse him, banish him and give him no quarter even in his exile, and that, in spite of this all, he should refuse to refrain from striving for their well-being?

Can any insincere person undergo so much suffering for a false cause? Can any dishonest speculator and visionary exhibit such firmness and determination for his ideal as to stick to his guns to the very last and remain unruffled and unperturbed in the face of dangers and tortures of every conceivable description when a whole country rises up in arms against him?

This faith, this perseverance, and this resolution, with which he led his movement to ultimate success is, therefore, an eloquent proof of the supreme truth of his cause. Had there been the slightest touch of doubt and uncertainty in his heart, he could never have been able to brave the storm which continued in all its fury for twenty-one long years.

This is one side of the revolution wrought in his being. The other is even more wonderful and remarkable.

### **A Changed Man at Forty — Why?**

For forty years he lived as an Arab among Arabs. In that long period he was not known as a statesman, a preacher, or an orator. None had heard him imparting gems of wisdom and knowledge as he began to do hereafter. He was never seen discoursing upon the principles of metaphysics, ethics, law, politics, economics and sociology. Not to speak of being a great general, he was not even known as an ordinary soldier. He had uttered no word about God, the Angels, the Revealed Books, the early Prophets, the bygone nations, the Day of



Judgment, the Life after Death, Hell and Heaven. No doubt he possessed an excellent character and charming manners, and was highly cultured, yet there was nothing so deeply striking and so radically extraordinary in him which could make men expect something great and revolutionary from him in future. He was known among his acquaintances as a sober, calm, gentle, law-abiding citizen of good nature. But when he came out of the cave with a new message he was completely transformed.

When he began preaching his Message the whole of Arabia stood in awe and wonder and was bewitched by his wonderful eloquence and oratory. It was so impressive and captivating that his worst enemies were afraid of hearing it, lest it should penetrate deep into the recesses of their hearts or the very marrow of their beings and carry them off their feet and make them bid goodbye to their old religion and culture. It was so matchless that the whole legion of Arab poets, preachers and orators of the highest calibre failed to bring forth its equivalent in beauty of language and splendour of diction when he threw the challenge to his opponents to put their heads together and produce even a single line like the one he recited.

### **His All-embracing Message**

Along with this, he now appeared before his people as a unique philosopher, a wonderful reformer, a renowned moulder of culture and civilisation, an illustrious politician, a great leader, a judge of the highest eminence, and an incomparable general. This unlettered Bedouin, this dweller of the desert, spoke with such learning and wisdom the like of which none had said before and none could say after him. He expounded the intricate problems of metaphysics and theology. He delivered speeches on the principles of the decline and fall of nations and empires, supporting his thesis by the historical data of the past. He reviewed the achievements of the old reformers, passed judgments on the various religions of the world, and gave verdicts on the differences and disputes between nations. He taught ethical canons and principles of culture. He formulated such laws of social culture, economic organisation, group conduct, and international relations that even eminent thinkers and scholars can grasp their true wisdom only after life-long research and vast experience of men and things. Their beauties, indeed, unfold themselves progressively as man advances in theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

This silent and peace-loving trader who had never handled a sword before, who had no military training, who had once participated in a battle and that also just as a spectator, turned suddenly into such a brave soldier that he did not even once retreat in the fiercest battles. He became such a great general that he conquered the whole of Arabia in nine years, at a time when the weapons of war were primitive and the means of communication poorest. His military acumen and efficiency developed to such a high pitch and the military spirit which he infused and the military training which he imparted to a motley crowd of Arabs (who had no equipment worth the name) wrought such a miracle that within a few years they overthrew the two most formidable military powers of the day and became the masters of the greater part of the then known world.

This reserved and quiet man who, for full forty years, never gave indication of any political interest or activity, appeared suddenly on the stage of the world as such a great political reformer and statesman that, without the aid of radio and wireless and press, he brought together the scattered inhabitants of a desert of twelve hundred thousand square miles—a people who were warlike, ignorant, unruly, uncultured and plunged in internecine tribal warfare—under one banner, one law, one religion, one culture, one civilisation, and one form of government.

He changed their modes of thought, their very habits and their morals. He turned the uncouth into the cultured, the barbarous into the civilised, the evil-doers and bad characters into pious, God-fearing and righteous persons. Their unruly and stiff-necked natures were transformed into models of obedience and submission to law and order. A nation which

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6 Sir William Muir, a staunch adverse critic of Islam, admits in his book, *Life of Muhammad*: "The first peculiarity, then, which attracts our attention is the subdivision of the Arabs into innumerable bodies . . . each independent of the others: restless and often at war amongst themselves; and even when united by blood or by interest, ever ready on some insignificant cause to separate and give way to an implacable hostility. Thus at the era of Islam the retrospect of Arabian history exhibits, as in the Kaleidoscope, an ever-varying state of combination and repulsion, such as had hitherto rendered abortive any attempt at a general union . . . The problem had yet to be solved, by what force these tribes could be subdued or drawn to one common centre; and it was solved by Muhammad" (emphasis ours).

had not produced a single great man worth the name for centuries gave birth, under his influence and guidance, to thousands of noble souls who went forth to far-off corners of the world to preach and teach the principles of religion, morals and civilisation.<sup>7</sup>

He accomplished this feat not through any worldly lure, oppression or cruelty, but by his captivating manners, his endearing moral personality, and his convincing teaching. With his noble and gentle behaviour he befriended even his enemies. He captured the hearts of the people with his unbounded sympathy and the milk of human kindness. He ruled justly. He did not swerve from truth and righteousness. He did not oppress even his deadly enemies who were after his life, who had pelted him with stones, who had turned him out of his native place, who had pitched the whole of Arabia against him — nay, not even those who had chewed raw the liver of his dead uncle in a frenzy of vengeance.<sup>8</sup> He forgave them all when he triumphed over them. He never took revenge from anyone for his personal grievances or the wrongs perpetrated on his person.

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7. It would be instructive to refer here to an important speech of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib. When the oppression upon the Muslims of Mecca reached its limits, Prophet Muhammad asked some of them to migrate to the adjoining state of Abyssinia. A group of Muslims migrated to that country. But the Quraish who were perpetrating every conceivable oppression upon the Muslims did not sit idle. They pursued the emigrants, asked King Negus of Abyssinia to forcefully return his immigrants. In the court of King Negus, Ja'far made a speech and threw light on the revolution that the Holy Prophet had brought about. An extract from his speech is given below:

“O King! We were ignorant people, given to idolatry. We were used to eat corpses even of dead animals, and to do all kinds of disgraceful things. We did not make good our obligations to our relations, and ill-treated our neighbours. The strong among us would thrive at the expense of the weak, till, at last, God raised a prophet for our reformation. His descent, his righteousness, his integrity and his piety are well known to us all. He called us to the worship of God, and exhorted us to give up idolatry and stone-worship. He enjoined us to speak the truth, to make good our trusts, to respect ties of kinship, and to do good to our neighbours. He taught us to shun everything foul and to avoid bloodshed. He forbade all manner of indecent things: telling lies, misappropriating orphans' belongings, and bringing false accusation against the chastity of women. So we believed in him, followed him, and acted upon his teaching. . . .”

8. On the occasion of the Battle of Uhud, Hinda, the wife of the chief of the pagan Arabs, actually chewed the raw liver of the Prophet's uncle, Hamza.

In spite of the fact that he became the ruler of his country, he was so selfless and modest that he remained very simple and sparing in his habits. He lived poorly, as before, in his humble thatched mud-cottage. He slept on a mattress, wore coarse clothes, ate the simplest food of the poor, and sometimes went without any food at all. He used to spend whole nights standing in prayer before his Lord. He came to the rescue of the destitute and the penniless.<sup>9</sup> He felt not the least insult in working like a labourer. Till his last moments there was not the slightest tinge of royal pomp and show or hauteur of the high and the rich in him. Like an ordinary man he would sit and talk with people and share their joys and sorrows. He would so mix up and mingle with the crowd that a stranger, an outsider, would find it difficult to single out the leader of the people and the ruler of the nation from the rest of the company.

In spite of his greatness, his behaviour with the humblest person was that of an ordinary human being. In the struggles and endeavours of his whole life he did not seek any reward or profit for his own person, nor left any property for his heirs. He dedicated his all to his *Millat*. He did not ask his adherents to earmark anything for him or his descendants, so much so that he forbade his progeny from receiving the benefit of poor-tax (*Zakat*), lest his followers at any future time may dole out the whole share of *Zakat* to them.

### His Contribution to Human Thought

The achievements of this great man do not end here. In order to arrive at a correct appraisal of his true worth one has to view it in the background of the history of the world as a whole. That would reveal that this unlettered dweller of the desert of Arabia, who was born in the 'dark ages' some 1400 years ago, was the real pioneer of the modern age and true leader of humanity. He is not only the leader of those who accept his leadership but of those also who do not acclaim him as such: even of those who denounce him!—the only difference being that the latter are unaware of the fact that his guidance is still imperceptibly influencing their thoughts

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9. The Prophet said: "Anyone who dies in debt or leaves behind dependants who are in danger of becoming destitutes, they should come to me because I am their guardian." His whole life bears ample testimony to this.

and their actions and is the governing principle of their lives and the very spirit of the modern times.<sup>10</sup>

It was he who turned the course of human thought from superstition-mongering, love for the unnatural and the inexplicable, and monasticism towards rational approach, love for reality, and a pious, balanced worldly life. It was he who, in a world which regarded only super-natural happenings as miracles and demanded them for the verification of the truth of a religious mission, inspired the urge for rational proof and the faith in them as the criterion of truth. It was he who opened the eyes of those who had been accustomed till then to look for the signs of God in the natural phenomena. It was he who,

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10. Arthur Leonard says: "Islam, in fact, has done a work. She has left a mark on the pages of human history, which is so indelible that it can never be effaced . . . that only when the world grows will be acknowledged in full."

John Devenport, a leading scientist, observed: "It must be owned that all the knowledge whether of physics, astronomy, philosophy or mathematics, which flourished in Europe from the 10th century, was originally derived from the Arabian schools, and the Spanish Saracen may be looked upon as the father of European philosophy."—Quoted by A. Karim in *Islam's Contribution to Science and Civilization*.

Bertrand Russell, the famous British philosopher, writes: "The supremacy of the East was not only military. Science, philosophy, poetry and the arts, all flourished . . . in the Muhammedan world at a time when Europe was sunk in barbarism. Europeans, with unpardonable insularity, call this period 'The Dark Ages': but it was only in Europe that it was dark—indeed only in Christian Europe, for Spain, which was Muhammedan, had a brilliant culture." — *Pakistan Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 3, (emphasis ours).

Robert Briffault the renowned historian, acknowledges in his book *The Making of Humanity*: "It is highly probable that but for the Arabs, modern European Civilization would never have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of human growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world and the supreme source of its victory—natural sciences and the scientific spirit . . . What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry: of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs."

Stanwood Cobb, founder of the Progressive Education Association says: "Islam . . . was the virtual creator of the Renaissance in Europe."—Quoted by Robert L. Gullick, Jr. in *Muhammad the Educator*.

in place of baseless speculation, led human being to the path of rational understanding and sound reasoning on the basis of observation, experiment, and research. It was he who clearly defined the limits and functions of sense-perception, reason and intuition. It was he who brought about a *rapprochement* between the spiritual and the material values. It was he who harmonised Faith with Knowledge and Action. It was he who created the scientific spirit with the power of religion and who evolved true religiosity on the basis of the scientific spirit.

It was he who eradicated idolatry, man-worship and polytheism in all forms so thoroughly and created such a firm faith in the Unity of God that even those religions which were based entirely on superstitions and idolatry were compelled to adopt a monotheistic theme. It was he who changed the basic concepts of ethics and spirituality. To those who believed that asceticism and self-annihilation alone formed the standard of moral and spiritual purity — that purity could not be achieved except by running away from worldly life, disregarding all the urges of the flesh and subjecting the body to all types of tortures — it was he who showed the path of spiritual evolution, moral emancipation and attainment of salvation through active participation in the practical affairs of the world around them.

It was he who brought home to man his true worth and position; those who acknowledged only a God-incarnate or a son of God as their moral preceptor or spiritual guide were told that a human being like them having no pretensions to Godhead could become the vicegerent of God on earth; those who proclaimed and worshipped powerful personages as their gods were made to understand that their false lords were mere ordinary human beings and nothing more. It was he who stressed the point that no person could claim holiness, authority, and overlordship as his birthright and that none was born with the stigma of untouchability, slavery, or serfdom on his person. It was he and his teaching which inspired the thoughts of the unity of mankind, equality of human beings, true democracy and real freedom in the world.

Leaving aside this realm of thought and moving a bit further one will find countless practical results of the leadership of this unlettered person firmly impressed on the laws and ways of the world. So many principles of good behaviour, culture and civilisation, purity of thought and deed, which are prevalent in the world today, owe their origin to him. The social



laws which he gave have infiltrated deep into the structure of human social life, and this process continues up to this day. The basic principles of economics which he taught have ushered in many a movement in world history and hold out the same promise for the future. The laws of governance which he formulated brought about many an upheaval in the political notions and theories of the world and continue to assert their influence even today. The fundamental principles of law and justice which bear the stamp of his genius have influenced to a remarkable degree the administration of justice in the courts of nations, and form a perpetual source of guidance for all legists to come. This unlettered Arab was the first person who set on foot for the first time practically the whole framework of international relations, and regulated the laws of war and peace. For no one had previously even the remotest idea that there could be an ethical code of war also and that relations between different nations could be regulated on the ground of common humanity.<sup>11</sup>

### The Greatest Revolutionary

In the cavalcade of world history the sublime figure in this wonderful person towers so high above all the great men of all times who are famous as heroes of nations, that they appear to be dwarfs when contrasted with him. None of them possessed a genius capable of making any deep impression on more than one or two aspects of human life. Some are the exponents of theories and ideas but are deficient in practical action. Some others are men of action but suffer from paucity of knowledge. Some are renowned as statesmen only, others are masters of strategy and manoeuvring. Some have concentrated on one aspect of social life in a manner that other aspects have been overlooked. Some others have devoted their energies to ethical and spiritual verities but have ignored economics and politics. Some others have taken to economics and politics, but neglect morals and the spiritual side of life. In short, one comes across heroes who are adepts and experts in one walk of life only. His is the only example where all the excellences have been blended into one personality. He is a philosopher and a seer and also a living embodiment of his own teachings. He is a great statesman as well as a military genius. He is a legislator and also a teacher of morals. He is

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11. For details, see Abul A'la Maudoodi's *Al-Fihad fil-Islam*.



a spiritual luminary as well as a religious guide. His vision penetrates every aspect of life and there is nothing which he touches and does not adorn. His orders and commandments cover a vast field from the regulation of international relations down to the habits of everyday life like eating, drinking and cleanliness of the body. On the foundations of his theories he established a civilisation and a culture and produced such a fine equilibrium in the conflicting aspects of life that there is to be found not even the slightest trace of any flaw, deficiency, or incompleteness. Can anyone point out any other example of such a perfect and all-round personality?

Most of the famous personalities of the world are said to be the products of their environment. But his case is unique. His environment seems to have played no part in the making of his personality. It also cannot be proved that historically his birth synchronised with the order of things in Arabia at that time. What one can say at the most is that the circumstances in Arabia cried aloud for the appearance of such a person who could weld together the warring tribes into one nation and lay the foundation of their economic solidarity and well-being by bringing other countries under their sway — in short, a national leader who would have all the traits of an Arab of those days and, through cruelty, oppression, bloodshed, deceit and hypocrisy, or by any other fair or foul means, could have enriched his own people, and left a kingdom as a heritage for his successors. One cannot prove any other crying need of the history of Arabia of that time.

What one can say at the most in the light of Hegel's philosophy of history or Marx's historical materialism is that the time and environment demanded the emergence of a leader who could create a nation and build up an empire. But the Hegelian or Marxian philosophy cannot explain how such an environment could produce a man whose mission was to teach the best morals, to purify humanity of all dross, and to wipe out the prejudices and superstitions of the days of ignorance and darkness, who looked beyond the watertight compartments of race, nation and country, who laid the foundations of a moral, spiritual, cultural and political superstructure for the good of the world and not for his country alone, who practically, not theoretically, placed business transactions, civics, politics and international relations on moral grounds and produced such a balanced and temperate synthesis between worldly

life and spiritual advancement that even to this day it is considered a masterpiece of wisdom and foresight exactly in the same way as it was considered in his lifetime. Can anyone honestly call such a person as the product of the all-pervading darkness of Arabia?

He does not only appear to be independent of his environment. Rather, when we look at his achievements we are irresistibly drawn to the conclusion that he actually transcends all limitations of time and space. His vision breaks through all temporal and physical barriers, passes beyond centuries and millenniums and comprehends within itself entire human activity and the whole of human history.

He is not one of those whom history has cast into oblivion, and he is not praised only because he was just a good leader in his own time. He is that unique and incomparable leader of humanity who marches with the time, who is modern in every age and in every era, as he was in his own age of history. Truly, his teachings are as modern as tomorrow morn.

Those whom people style as 'makers of history' are only 'creatures of history'. In fact, in the whole history of mankind, he is the unique example of a 'maker of history'. One may scan the lives and circumstances of the great leaders of the world who brought about revolutions and one will find that on each such occasion the forces of revolution were gathering momentum for the destined upheaval, were taking their course in certain directions and were only waiting for a propitious moment to burst out. In harnessing these forces in time for action the revolutionary leader played the part of an actor for whom the stage and the role is set beforehand. On the other hand, amidst all 'makers of history' and revolutionary figures of all times, he is the only person who had to find ways and means to bring together the wherewithal of revolution who had to mould and produce the kind of men he wanted for his purpose because the very spirit of revolution and its requisite paraphernalia were non-existent in those people among whom his lot was cast.

He made an indelible impression on the hearts of thousands of his disciples by his forceful personality and moulded them according to his liking. By his iron will he prepared the ground for revolution, moulded its shape and features, and

directed the currents of events into a channel as he wished and desired. Can anyone cite another example of a maker of history of such distinction, another revolutionary of such brilliance and splendour?

### **The Final Testimony**

One may ponder over this matter and wonder how, in the dark ages 1400 years back in a benighted region of the earth like Arabia, an unlettered Arab trader and herdsman came to possess such light, such knowledge, such power, such capabilities, and such finely-developed moral virtues?

One may say that there is nothing peculiar about his Message. It is the product of his own mind. If it is so, then he should have proclaimed himself as God. And if he had made such an assertion at that time, the peoples of the earth who did not hesitate in calling Krishna and Buddha as gods and Jesus as the Son of God, just out of their own fancy, and who could without compunction worship even the forces of nature like fire, water, and air — would have readily acknowledged such a wonderful person as the Lord God Himself.

But lo! His assertion is just to the contrary. For he proclaimed that: I am a human being like yourselves. I have not brought anything to you of my own accord. It has all been revealed to me by God. Whatever I possess belongs to Him. This message the like of which the whole humanity is not able to produce, is the message of God. It is not the product of my own mind. Every word of it has been sent down by Him, and all glory to Him Whose Message it is. All the wonderful achievements which stand to my credit in your eyes, all the laws which I have given, all the principles which I have enunciated and taught — none of them is from me. I find myself thoroughly incompetent in producing such things out of my sheer personal ability and capabilities. I look to Divine Guidance in all matters. Whatever He wills I do, what He directs I proclaim.

Hearken! What a wonderful and inspiring example of honesty, integrity, truth and honour it is! A liar and a hypocrite generally tries to ascribe to himself all the credit for the deeds of others also, even when the falsehood of his statement can be easily proved. But this great man does not appropriate the credit of any of these achievements to his

own person even when none could contradict him as there was no method of finding out the source of his inspiration.

What more proof of perfect honesty of purpose, uprightness of character, and sublimity of soul can there be! Who else can be more truthful person than he who received such unique gifts and embellishments through a secret channel and still he outrightly points out the source of all his enlightenment and inspiration? All these factors lead to the irresistible conclusion that such a man was the true Messenger of God.

Such was our holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He was a prodigy of extraordinary merits, a paragon of virtue and goodness, a symbol of truth and veracity, a great apostle of God and His Messenger to the entire world. His life and thought, his truth and straightforwardness, his piety and goodness, his character and morals, his ideology and achievements—all stand as unimpeachable proofs of his prophethood. Any human being who studies his life and teachings without bias will testify that verily he was the true Prophet of God and the Qur'an—the Book he gave to mankind—the true Book of God. No unbiased and serious seeker after truth can escape this conclusion.

Furthermore, this must also be clearly understood that now, through Muhammad (peace be upon him) alone can we know the straight path of Islam. The Qur'an and the life-example of Muhammad (peace be upon him) are the only reliable sources that are available to mankind to learn God's Will in its totality. Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of God for the whole of mankind and the long chain of Prophets has come to an end with him. He was the last of the Prophets and all the instructions which it was God's Will to impart to mankind through direct revelation were sent by Him through Muhammad (peace be upon him) and are enshrined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Now, whoever be a seeker of truth and anxious to become an honest Muslim, a sincere follower of the way of God, it is incumbent upon him to have faith in God's last Prophet, accept his teachings, and follow the way he has pointed out to man. This is the real road to success and salvation.

#### IV. THE FINALITY OF PROPHETHOOD

This brings us to the question of the finality of prophethood. Let us now consider this aspect of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him).

We have already discussed the nature of prophethood and this discussion makes it clear that the advent of a prophet is not an everyday occurrence. Nor is the presence *in person* of the Prophet essential for every land, people and period. The life and teachings of the Prophet are the beacon-light to guide a people to the Right path and as long as his teachings and his guidance are alive he is, as it were, himself alive. The real death of a Prophet consists not in his physical demise but in the mitigation of his teachings and the interpolation of his guidance. The earlier Prophets have died because their followers have adulterated their teachings, interpolated their instructions, and besmirched their life-examples by attaching fictitious events to them. Not one of the earlier books — *Torah*, *Zabur* (Psalms of David), *Injeel* (Gospel of Jesus), etc.—exists today in its original text and even the followers of these books confess that they do not possess the *original* books. The life-histories of the earlier Prophets have been so mixed up with fiction that an accurate and authentic account of their lives has become impossible. Their lives have become tales and legends and no trustworthy record is available anywhere. Not only that the records have been lost and their life-precepts forgotten but even this cannot be said with certainty as to when and where a certain Prophet was born and bred, how he lived and what code he gave to mankind. In fact, the real death of a Prophet consists in the death of his teachings.

Judging the facts on this criterion no one can deny that Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his teachings are alive. His teachings stand uncorrupted and are uncorruptible. The Qur'an — the book he gave to mankind — exists in its original text, without the slightest difference of letter, syllable, jot, or tittle. The entire account of his life — his sayings, instructions and actions — is preserved with complete accuracy, so much so that even after the lapse of thirteen centuries its delineation in history is so clear and complete that it seems as if we are seeing him with the eyes under our brows. The biography of no other human being is so well preserved as that of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him). In each and every matter of our life we can seek the

guidance of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and take a lesson from his life-example. That is why there is no need of any other prophet after Muhammad, the last Prophet (peace be upon him).

Furthermore, there are three things which necessitate the advent of a new Prophet; it is not just the replacement of a deceased prophet. These may be summed up as follows:

1. That the teachings of the earlier Prophets have been interpolated or corrupted or they have died and their revival is needed. In such a case a new Prophet is raised so that he may purge the impurities from the lives of the people and restore religion to its pristine form and purity, or
2. That the teachings of the Prophet who has passed away were incomplete and it is necessary to amend them, improve upon them, or add something to them, when a new Prophet is sent to effect these improvements, or
3. That the earlier Prophet was raised particularly for a certain nation or territory and a Prophet for another nation, people, or country be required.<sup>12</sup>

These are the three fundamental conditions which necessitate the raising of a new Prophet. A careful perusal of the facts shows that none of these conditions exists today. The teachings of the last Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him), are alive, have been fully preserved, and made immortal. The guidance he has shown unto mankind is complete and flawless, and is enshrined in the Holy Qur'an. All the sources of Islam are fully intact and each and every instruction or action of the Holy Prophet can be ascertained without the least shadow of doubt. Thus, as his teachings are totally intact, there is no need of any new Prophet on this count.

Secondly, God has completed His revealed guidance through Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Islam is a complete religion for mankind. God has said that, "Today I have perfected your Faith—religion—for you, and have completed My bounty upon you," and a thorough study of Islam as a complete way of life proves the truth of these Qur'anic words. Islam gives guidance for life in this world

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12. Another may be the situation when a Prophet is raised to help and assist another Prophet, but as the instances of such Prophets are very few—in the Qur'an only two such instances are given—and as this kind of prophethood seems to be an exception and not the general rule, we have not added this as the fourth condition.—



and in the hereafter and nothing essential for human guidance has been left out. The religion has now been perfected and there is no ground for new prophethood on the plea of imperfection.<sup>13</sup>

Lastly, the Message of Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not meant for any particular people, place, or period. He was raised as the World Prophet—the messenger of the truth for the entire mankind. The Qur'an has commanded Muhammad (peace be upon him) to declare: "O mankind, I am God's Messenger to all of you." He has been described as "a blessing for all (the people of) the worlds" and his

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13. Some people say that the passage of time itself is a sufficient ground for the need of new guidance and a religion which was revealed some thirteen centuries ago must necessarily grow obsolete and become a thing of the past, not suited to the needs of the new age. The objection is totally unfounded. The reasons may be briefly stated as follows:—

(a) Islam's teachings are eternal, because they have been revealed by Allah Who knows all about the past, present, and future and Who Himself is eternal. It is the human knowledge that is limited. It is the human eye which cannot see into the dim vista of future, not God Whose knowledge is above all the limitations of time and space.

(b) Islam is based on human nature, and the nature of man has remained the same in all times and epochs. All men are cast in the moulds of the earliest men and the fundamental human nature remains unchanged.

(c) In human life there is a beautiful balance between elements of permanence and change. Neither everything is permanent, nor is everything changeable. The fundamental principles, the basic values, do not invite change. It is the outward forms which change with the passage of time and which are changed keeping in view certain principles which are to be observed. And Islam has catered for the needs of both permanence and change. The Qur'an and the *Sunnah* propounded the eternal principles of Islam, while through *Ijtihad* they are applied to every age according to its own needs. Islam is the only religion which has established a machinery for the perennial evolution of human society in accordance with the fundamental principles and permanent values of life.

(d) Scientifically also, the human race is living in the age which was inaugurated by the advent of man on earth and no fundamental evolutionary change has occurred in this phase of existence. Civilisations have arisen and died, cultures have grown and withered, empires have emerged and disintegrated, but the age in the great chain of cosmic evolution remains the same. Therefore the view that guidance given some centuries back automatically becomes obsolete with the passage of time is unfounded and superficial.—  
*Editor.*



approach has been universal and human. That is why after him there remains no need for new prophethood and he has been described by the Qur'an as *Khatam-un-Nabiyyin* (the last of the chain of the true prophets).<sup>14</sup>

Now, therefore, the only source for the knowledge of God and His Way is Muhammad (peace be upon him). We can know of Islam only through his teachings which are so complete and so comprehensive that they can guide men for all times to come. Now the world does not need any new prophet; it needs only such people as have full faith in Muhammad (peace be upon him), who become the standard-bearers of his message, propagate it to the world at large, and endeavour to establish the culture which Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave to Man. The world needs such men of character as can translate his teachings into practice and establish a society which is governed by Divine Law, whose supremacy Muhammad (peace be upon him) came to establish. This is the mission of Muhammed (peace be upon him) and on its success hinges the success of Man.

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14. The Qur'an and Hadith are very explicit on this point.

The Qur'an says: "Muhammad is the Messenger of God and last of the Prophets" (xxxiii. 40).

The Holy Prophet himself has said: "There will be no prophet after me." On another occasion he said: "My relation to the (long chain of the) Prophets can be understood by the parable of a palace: the palace was most beautifully built. Everything was complete therein except the place for one brick. I have filled in that place and now the castle has been completed" (*vide* Bokhari and Muslim).—*Editor*.

CHAPTER FOUR

**THE ARTICLES OF  
FAITH**

## THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

**B**EFORE we proceed further, it would be advisable to recapitulate the former discussions and sum up their substance. We can summarise them as follows:

1. Although Islam consists of submission and obedience to Allah, the Lord of the Universe, yet as the only authentic and reliable source of knowing Him and His Will and Law is the teachings of the true prophet, we may define Islam as that religion which stands for complete faith in the teachings of the prophet and unflinching obedience to his ways of life. Consequently, one who ignores the medium of the prophet and claims to follow God directly is not a 'Muslim'.

2. In the earlier epochs there had been separate prophets for different nations, and the history of prophethood shows that even in one and the same nation several prophets appeared one after the other. In that age Islam was the name of that religion which was taught to a nation by its own prophet or prophets. Though the nature and substance of Islam was the same in every age and country, the modes of worship, codes of law and other detailed rules and regulations of life were a bit different according to the local and particular conditions of every people. It was not, therefore, necessary for any nation to follow another nation's prophet and its responsibility was confined only to following the guidance given by its own prophet.

3. This period of poly-prophethood came to an end with the advent of Muhammad (peace be upon him). The teachings of Islam were made complete through him; one basic law was formulated for the whole world and he was made a Prophet unto the entire humanity. His prophethood was not meant for any particular nation or country or period; his message is for all peoples and for all ages. The earlier codes were abrogated by the advent of Muhammad (peace be upon him) who gave the world a complete code of life. Now, neither any prophet is to appear in the future nor is any new religious code going to be revealed till the Last Day. Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teachings are meant for all the children of Adam, the entire human race. Now Islam consists in following Muhammad, *viz.* to acknowledge his prophethood, to believe in all that he

has asked to believe in, to follow him in letter and spirit, and to submit to all his commands and injunctions as the command *La ilaha illallah* "There is no deity but Allah"

This automatically brings us to the question: What has Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked us to believe in? What are the articles of Islamic faith? Now we shall try to discuss these articles and see how simple, how true, how lovable and how valuable they are and to what high pinnacle they raise the status of Man in this world and the world to come.

## I. TAWHEED FAITH IN THE UNITY OF GOD

The most fundamental and the most important teaching of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is faith in the unity of God. This is expressed in the primary *Kalima* of Islam as "There is no deity but Allah" (*La ilaha illallah* لا اله الا الله). This beautiful phrase is the bedrock of Islam, its foundation and its essence. It is the expression of this belief which differentiates a true Muslim from a *kafir* (unbeliever), *mushrik* (one who associates others with God in His Divinity), or *dahriya* (an atheist). The acceptance or denial of this phrase produces a world of difference between man and man. The believers in it become one single community and those who do not believe in it form the opposite group. For the believers there is unhampered progress and resounding success in this world and in the hereafter, while failure and ignominy are the ultimate lot of those who refuse to believe in it.

But the difference which occurs between the believers and the unbelievers is not the result of mere chanting of a few words. Evidently the mere utterance of a phrase or two cannot bring about such a mighty difference. The real force lies in the conscious acceptance of this doctrine and its stipulations and complete adherence to it in practical life. Unless you know the real meaning of the phrase "There is no deity but Allah" and the bearing of its acceptance on human life, you cannot realise the real importance of this doctrine. It would never become effective unless these essentials are achieved. Mere repeating of the word 'food' cannot dull the edge of hunger; mere chanting of a medical prescription cannot heal the disease. In the same way if the *Kalima* is repeated without any understanding of its meanings and dictates, it cannot work the

revolution which it is meant to bring about. The revolution in thought and life can occur only if a person grasps the full meaning of the doctrine, realises its significance, reposes true belief in it, and accepts and follows it in letter and spirit. Unless this grasp of the *Kalima* is developed it cannot become fully effective. We avoid fire because we have a realisation that it burns; we keep away from poison because we believe that its use kills a man. Similarly, if the real meanings of *Tawheed* are fully grasped, it should necessarily make us avoid, in belief as well as in action, every form and shade of disbelief, atheism, and polytheism. This is the natural dictate of belief in the Unity of God.

### The Meaning of the 'Kalima'

In the Arabic language the word *ilah* means 'one who is worshipped', i.e. a being which on account of its greatness and power be considered worthy to be worshipped: to be bowed to in humility and submission. Anything or any being possessing power too great to be comprehended by man is also called *ilah*. The conception *ilah* also includes the possession of infinite powers: powers that may astonish others. It also conveys the sense that others are dependent upon *ilah* and that he is not dependent upon anyone else. The word *ilah* also carried a sense of concealment and mystery, that is, *ilah* would be a being unseen and unperceptible. The word *Khuda* in Persian, *Deva* in Hindi, and *God* in English bear, more or less, similar signification. Other languages of the world also contain words with a like sense.<sup>1</sup>

The word *Allah*, on the other hand, is the essential personal name of God. *La ilaha illallah* would literally mean "There is no *ilah* other than the One Great Being known by the name *Allah*". It means that in the whole of the universe, there is absolutely no being worthy to be worshipped other than Allah, that it is only to Him that heads should bow in submission and adoration, that He is the only Being possessing all powers, that all are in need of His favour, and that all are obliged to solicit His help. He is concealed from our senses, and our intellect fails to perceive what He is.

Having known the meanings of these words, let us now find out their real significance.

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1. For instance, in Greek it is *Oeo's*, in Latin *Deus*, in Gothic *Guth*, in German *Gott*, etc. For reference, see *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Chicago, 1956) Vol. X, p. 460.—*Ediior.*

From the most ancient known history of man as well as from the oldest relics of antiquity that we have been able to obtain, it appears that in every age man had recognised some deity or deities and had worshipped them. Even in the present age every nation on the face of the earth, from the most primitive to the most civilised, does believe in and worship some deity. It shows that the idea of having a deity and of worshipping him is ingrained in human nature. There is something within man's soul which forces him to do so.

But the question is: What that thing is and why man feels impelled to do so? The answer to this question can be discovered if we try to look into the position of man in this huge universe. A perusal of man and his nature from this viewpoint shows that he is not omnipotent. Neither he is self-sufficient and self-existing nor are his powers without limitations. In fact, he is weak, frail, needy, and destitute. He is dependent upon a multitude of forces and without their assistance he cannot make a headway. There are countless things necessary to maintain his existence, but all of them are not essentially and totally within his powers. Sometimes they come to his possession in a simple and natural way, and at times he finds himself deprived of them. There are many important and valuable things which he endeavours to get, but sometimes he succeeds in getting them, while sometimes he does not, for it is not completely in his own power to obtain them. There are many things injurious to him; accidents destroy all his life-work in a single moment; chances bring his hopes to a sudden end; disease, worries, and calamities, always threaten him and mar his way to happiness. He attempts to get rid of them, and success and failure both visit him in this quest. There are many things whose greatness and grandeur overawe him: mountains and rivers, gigantic animals and ferocious beasts. He experiences earthquakes, storms, and other natural calamities. He observes clouds over his head and sees them becoming thick and dark, with peals of thunder, flashes of lightning, and continuous fall of heavy rain. He sees the sun, the moon and the stars in their constant motions. He reflects how great, powerful and grand these bodies are, and, in contrast to them, how frail and insignificant he himself is! The vast phenomena, on the one hand, and the consciousness of his own frailty, on the other, impress him with a deep sense of his own weakness, humbleness, and helplessness. And it is quite natural that the preliminary idea of divinity coincides

with this sense. He thinks of those hands which are wielding these great forces. The sense of their greatness makes him bow in humility. The sense of their powerfulness makes him seek their help. He tries to please them so that they may be beneficent to him, and he dreads them and tries to escape their wrath so that he may not be destroyed by them.

In the most primitive stage of ignorance, man thinks that the great objects of nature whose grandeur and glory are visible, and which appear to be injurious or beneficent to him, hold in themselves the real power and authority, and, therefore, they are divine. Thus he worships trees, animals, rivers, mountains, fire, rain, air, heavenly bodies, and numerous other objects. This is the worst form of ignorance.

When his ignorance dissipates to some extent and some glimmers of light and knowledge appear on his intellectual horizon, he comes to know that these great and powerful objects are in themselves quite helpless and dependent and are in no way better placed than man — rather they are still more dependent and helpless. The biggest and the strongest animal dies like a tiny germ, and loses all his power; great rivers rise and fall and become dry; the high mountains are blasted and shattered by man himself; the productiveness of the earth is not under earth's control — water makes it prosperous and lack of water makes it barren. Even water is not independent. It depends on air which brings the clouds. Air too is powerless and its usefulness depends on other causes. The moon, the sun, and the stars also are bound up by a powerful law outside whose dictates they cannot make the slightest movement. After these considerations his mind turns to the possibility of some great mysterious power of divine nature which controls the objects he sees and which may be the repositories of all authority. These reflections give rise to belief in mysterious powers behind the natural phenomena, numberless gods are supposed to be governing various parts and aspects of nature such as air, light, water, etc., and some suggestive material forms or symbols are constructed to represent them. And he begins to worship those forms and symbols. This too is a form of ignorance, and reality remains hidden to the human eye even at this stage of intellectual and cultural pilgrimage.

As man progresses still further in knowledge and learning, and as he reflects more and more deeply on the fundamental problems of life and existence, he finds an all-powerful law



and all-encompassing control in the universe. What a complete regularity is observed in sunrise and sunset, in winds and rains, in the motions of stars and the changes of seasons! How in a wonderfully harmonious way countless different forces are working jointly, and what a highly potent and supremely Wise Law it is, according to which all the various causes in the universe are made to work together at an appointed time to produce an appointed event! Observing this uniformity, regularity and complete obedience to a firm law in all fields of Nature, even a polytheist finds himself obliged to believe that there must be a deity greater than all others, exercising supreme authority. For, if there were separate, independent deities, the whole machinery of the universe would be upset. He calls this greatest deity by different names, such as *Allah*, *Permeshwar*, *God*, *Khuda-i-Khudaigan*, etc. But as the darkness of ignorance still persists, he continues worshipping minor deities along with the Supreme One. He imagines that the Divine Kingdom of God may not be different from earthly kingdoms. Just as a ruler has many ministers, trusted associates, governors, and other responsible officers, so the minor deities are like so many responsible officers under the Great God Who could not be approached without pleasing and propitiating the officers under Him. So they must also be worshipped and appealed to for help, and should in no case be offended. Thus they are taken as agents through whom an approach can be made to the Great God.

The more a man increases in knowledge, the greater becomes his dissatisfaction with the multiplicity of deities. So the number of minor deities begins to decrease. More enlightened men bring each one of them under the searchlight of scrutiny and ultimately find that none of these man-made deities has any divine character; they themselves are creatures like man, rather more helpless. They are thus dropped out one by one until only one God remains. But the concept of one God still contains some remnants of the elements of ignorance. Some people imagine that He has a body as men have, and is settled in a particular place. Some believe that God came down to the earth in human form; others think that God after settling the affairs of the universe has retired and is now taking rest. Some believe that it is necessary to approach God through the media of saints and spirits, and nothing can be achieved without their intercession. Some imagine God to have a certain form or image, and they regard

it necessary to keep that image before them for the purposes of worship. Such distorted notions of godhead have persisted and lingered, and many of them are prevalent among different people even in the present age.

*Tawheed* is the highest conception of godhead, the knowledge of which God has sent to mankind in all ages through His Prophets. It was this knowledge with which, in the beginning, Adam had been sent down to the earth; it was the same knowledge that had been revealed to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (God's blessings be upon them all). It was this very knowledge which Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him) brought to mankind. It is The Knowledge, pure and absolute, without the least shade of ignorance. Man became guilty of *shirk*, idol-worship and *kufur*, only because he turned away from the teachings of the Prophets and depended upon his own faulty reasoning, false perceptions, or biased interpretations. *Tawheed* dispels all the clouds of ignorance and illumines the horizon with the light of reality. Let us see what significant realities this concept of *Tawheed*—this little phrase: '*la ilaha illallah*'—points out: what truth it conveys and what beliefs it fosters. This we can grasp if we ponder over the following points:

First of all we are faced with the question of universe. We are face to face with a grand, limitless universe. Man's mind fails to discern its beginning and visualise its end. It is moving on in its chartered course from time immemorial and is continuing its journey in the vast vista of the future. Creatures beyond number have appeared in it—and go on appearing every day. The phenomena are so bewildering that a thinking mind finds itself aghast and wonderstruck. Man is unable to understand and grasp the reality by his unaided vision. He cannot believe that all this has appeared just by chance or accident. The universe is not a fortuitous mass of matter. It is not a jumble of uncoordinated objects. It is not a conglomeration of things chaotic and meaningless. All this cannot be without a Creator, a Designer, a Controller, a Governor. But who can create and control this majestic universe? Only He can do so Who is master of all; Who is infinite and eternal; Who is all-powerful, all-wise, omnipotent and omniscient; Who is all-knowing and all-seeing. He must have supreme authority over all that exists in the universe. He must possess limitless powers, must be the lord of the universe and all that it contains, must be free from every flaw and weakness and

none may have the power to interfere with His work. Only such a Being can be the Creator, the Controller and the Governor of the universe.

Secondly, it is essential that all these divine attributes and powers must vest in One Being — it is virtually impossible for two or more personalities having all the powers and attributes equally to co-exist. They are bound to collide. Therefore, there must be one and only one Supreme Being having control over all others. You cannot think of two governors for the same province or two supreme commanders of the army! Similarly, the distribution of these powers among different deities, for instance, that one of them is all-knowledge, the other all providence and still another life-giver — and each having independent domain in his own field — is also unthinkable. The universe is an indivisible whole and each one of such deities will be dependent upon others in the execution of his task. Lack of co-ordination is bound to occur. And if this happens, the world is destined to go to pieces. These attributes are also untransferable. It is not possible that a certain attribute might be present in a certain deity at one time and at another time it be found in another deity. A divine being who is incapable of remaining alive himself cannot give life to others. The one who cannot protect his own divine power is definitely unsuited to govern the vast limitless universe. Thus the greater you reflect upon the problem, the firmer would be your conviction that all these divine powers and attributes must exist in one and the same Being alone. Thus polytheism is a form of ignorance and cannot stand rational scrutiny. It is a practical impossibility. The facts of life and nature do not fit into that explanation. They automatically bring man to Reality, i.e. *Tawheed* (the Unity of God).

Now keeping in view this correct and perfect conception of God, cast a searching glance at this vast universe. Exert yourself to the utmost and say if you find among all the objects that you see, among all the things that you perceive, among all that you can think, feel, or imagine — all that your knowledge can comprehend — anyone possessing these attributes. The sun, the moon, the stars, animals, birds or fishes, matter, money, any man or a group of men — does any of them possess these attributes? Certainly none! For everything in the universe is created, is controlled and regulated, is dependent on others, is mortal and transitory, is not self-acting and self-propelling — its slightest movements are controlled

by an inexorable law and it cannot deviate from that law. Their helpless condition proves that the attire of divinity cannot fit their body. They do not possess the slightest trace of divinity and have absolutely nothing to do with it. They are simply without the godly powers and it is a travesty of truth and a folly of the highest magnitude to attribute to them the divine status. This is the meaning of '*La ilaha*', i.e. there is no god; no human and material object possesses the divine power and authority deserving worship and obedience.

But this is not the end of our quest. We have found that divinity does not vest in any material or human element of the universe, and that none of them possesses even the slightest trace of it. This very inquiry leads us to the conclusion that there is a Supreme Being, over and above all that our unwary eyes see in the universe, Who possesses the Divine attributes, Who is the Will behind all phenomena, the Creator of this grand universe, the Controller of its superb Law, the Governor of its serene rhythm, the Administrator of all its workings: He is Allah, the Lord of the Universe and has none as associate in His Divinity. This is what '*illallah*' (but Allah) means.

This knowledge is superior to all other kinds of knowledge and the greater you exert, the deeper will be your conviction that this is the starting-point of all knowledge. In every field of inquiry — may it be that of physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology, zoology, economics, politics, sociology, or humanities, you will find that the deeper you probe, the clearer become the indications of the truth of *La ilaha illallah*, in every field of knowledge and inquiry. It is this concept which opens up the doors of inquiry and investigation and illumines the pathways of knowledge with the light of reality. And if you deny or disregard this reality, you will find that at every step you meet disillusionment, for the denial of this primary truth robs everything in the universe of its real meaning and true significance. The universe becomes meaningless and the vistas of progress get blurred and confused.

### **The Effects of Tawheed on Human Life**

Now let us study the effects which the belief in *La ilaha illallah* brings forth upon the life of a man and see why he should always be a success in life and why one who denies

it becomes a failure in life, here and in the hereafter.

1. A believer in this *Kalima* can never be narrow-minded or shrivelled in outlook. He believes in a God Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Master of the East and the West and Sustainer of the entire universe. After this belief he does not regard anything in the world as a stranger to himself. He looks upon everything in the universe as belonging to the same Lord Whom he himself belongs to. He is not partisan in his thinking and behaviour. His sympathy, love, and service do not remain confined to any particular sphere or group. His vision is enlarged, his intellectual horizon widens, and his outlook becomes liberal and as boundless as is the Kingdom of God. How can this width of vision and breadth of mind be achieved by an atheist, a polytheist, or one who believes in a deity supposed to possess limited and defective powers like a man?

2. This belief produces in man highest degree of self-respect and self-esteem. The believer knows that Allah alone is the Possessor of all power, and that none besides Him can benefit or harm a person, or provide for his needs, or give and take away life, or wield authority or influence. This conviction makes him indifferent to, and independent and fearless of, all powers other than those of God. He never bows his head in homage to any of God's creatures, nor does he stretch his hand before anyone else. He is not overawed by anybody's greatness. This quality or attitude of mind cannot be produced by any other belief. For it is necessary that those who associate other being with God, or who deny God, should bow in homage to some creatures, regard them able to benefit or harm them, fear them and repose all their hopes in them.

3. Along with self-respect this belief also generates in man a sense of modesty and humbleness. It makes him unostentatious and unpretending. A believer never becomes proud, haughty or arrogant. The boisterous pride of power, wealth and worth can have no room in his heart, because he knows that whatever he possesses has been given to him by God, and that God can take away just as He can give. In contrast to this, an unbeliever, when he achieves some worldly merit, becomes proud and conceited because he believes that his merit is due to his own worth. In the same way pride and self-conceit are a necessary outcome and concomitant of *shirk*

(association of others with God in His divinity), because a *mushrik* believes that he has a particular relation with the deities which does not exist between them and other people.

4. This belief makes man virtuous and upright. He has the conviction that there is no other means of success and salvation for him except purity of soul and righteousness of behaviour. He has perfect faith in God Who is above all need, is related to none, is absolutely just, and none has any hand or influence in the exercise of His divine powers. This belief creates in him the consciousness that, unless he lives rightly and acts justly he cannot succeed. No influence or underhand activity can save him from ruin. As against this, the *kafirs* and the *mushriks* always live on false hopes. Some of them believe that God's son has atoned for their sins; some think that they are God's favourites, and will not be punished; others believe that their saints will intercede with God on their behalf; while others make offerings to their deities and believe that by so bribing the deities they have acquired a licence for all frivolities and ill-deeds and can do whatever they like. Such false beliefs keep them always entangled in the meshes of sin and evil deeds, and depending upon their deities they neglect to purify their souls and live pure and good lives. As to the atheists, they do not believe that there is any Being having power over them, to Whom they would be responsible for their good or bad actions; therefore they consider themselves altogether independent to act in whatever way they like in this world. Their own fancies become their gods and they live like slaves of their wishes and desires.

5. The believer does not become despondent and broken-hearted under any circumstances. He has firm faith in God Who is the Master of all the treasures of the earth and the heavens, Whose grace and bounty have no limit and Whose powers are infinite. This faith imparts to his heart extraordinary consolation, fills it with satisfaction and keeps it filled with hope. In this world he might meet with rejection from all doors, nothing herein might serve his ends, all means might, one after another, desert him; but faith in and dependence on God never leave him, and upon their strength he goes on struggling. Such a profound confidence can result from no other belief than belief in one God. *Mushriks*, *kafirs* and atheists have small hearts; they depend upon limited powers; therefore in hours of trouble they are soon over-



whelmed by despair and, frequently, they commit suicide.<sup>3</sup>

6. This belief produces in man a very strong degree of determination, patient perseverance, and trust in God. When he makes up his mind and devotes his resources to fulfil the Divine Commands in order to secure God's pleasure, he is sure that he has the support and backing of the Lord of the universe. This certainty makes him firm and strong like a mountain, and no amount of difficulties, impediments, and hostile opposition can make him give up his resolution. *Shirk*, *kufr* and atheism have no such effect.

7. This declaration inspires bravery in man. There are two things which make a man cowardly: (i) fear of death and love of safety, and (ii) the idea that there is someone else besides God who can take away life and that man, by adopting certain devices, can ward off death. Belief in *La ilaha illallah* purges the mind of both these ideas. The first idea goes out of his mind because he knows that his life and his property and everything else really belong to God, and he becomes ready to sacrifice his all for His pleasure. He gets rid of the second idea because he knows that no weapon, no man or animal has the power of taking away his life; God alone has the power to do so. A time has been ordained for him, and even all the forces of the world combined cannot take away anyone's life a moment before the appointed time. It is for this reason that no one is braver than the one who

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2. To have an idea of what harrowing situation this despair of heart can create, the reader is referred to the thought-provoking study of modern life by Mr. Collin Wilson: *The Outsider* (11th impression, London, 1957).

The testimony of Prof. Joad is also very explicit on this point. He writes about the West: "For the first time in history there is coming to maturity a generation of men and women who have no religion, and feel no need for one. They are content to ignore it. *Also they are very unhappy, and the suicide rate is abnormally high.*" (C.E.M. Joad, *The Present and Future of Religion*, quoted by Sir Arnold Lunn, *And Yet So New*, London, 1958, p. 228).

As to the world of Islam, let the views of a non-Muslim historian not in any way sympathetic to the creed of Islam, be read with profit: "In this uncompromising monotheism, with its simple, enthusiastic faith in the supreme rule of a transcendent being, lies the chief strength of Islam. Its adherents enjoy a consciousness of contentment and resignation unknown among followers of most creeds." "*Suicide is Rare in Muslim Lands*" (Phillip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, 1951, p. 129).



has faith in God. Nothing can daunt him: even the tempests of adversity, the storms of opposition, and the mightiest of armies cannot overcome him. When he comes out to fight for God he overwhelms even a force of ten times stronger than his own. Whence can the *mushriks*, the *kafirs* and the atheists obtain such great determination, force and power? They hold life the dearest of all in the world, and they believe that death is brought about by the enemy and can be warded off by running away from him!

8. The belief in *La ilaha illallah* creates an attitude of peace and contentment, purges the mind of the subtle passions of jealousy, envy and greed and keeps away the ideas of resorting to base and unfair means for achieving success. The believer understands that wealth is in God's hands, and He doles it out more or less as He likes; that honour, power, reputation and authority — everything — is subjected to His will, and He bestows them as He wills; and that man's duty is only to endeavour and struggle fairly. He knows that success and failure depend upon God's grace; if He wills to give, no power in the world can prevent Him from doing so; and if He does not will it, no power can force Him to give. On the other hand, the *mushriks*, the *kafirs* and the atheists consider success and failure as dependent upon their own efforts alone and upon the help or opposition of earthly powers. Therefore, they always remain slaves to cupidity and envy. For achieving success, they never hesitate in having recourse to bribery, flattery, conspiracy and other kinds of base and unfair means. The jealousy and envy of others' success eats them away, and they leave no stone unturned in resorting to the worst possible measures in bringing about the downfall of their successful rival.

9. The most important effect of *La ilaha illallah* is that it makes man obey and observe God's Law. One who has belief in it is sure that God knows everything hidden or open and is nearer to him than his own jugular vein. If he commits a sin in a secluded corner and in the darkness of night, He knows it; He even knows our thoughts and intentions, bad or good. We can hide from everyone, but we cannot hide anything from God; we can evade everyone, but it is impossible to evade God's grip. The firmer a man's belief in this respect, the more observant will he be of God's commands; he will shun what God has forbidden and he will carry out His behests

even in solitude and in darkness, because he knows that God's 'police' never leaves him alone, and he dreads the Court whose warrant he can never avoid. It is for this reason that the first and the most important condition for being a Muslim is to have faith in *La ilaha illallah*. 'Muslim', as you have already been told, means one 'obedient to God' and obedience to God is impossible unless one firmly believes in *La ilaha ilaalah*, i.e. there is none worthy to be worshipped but Allah.

In the teachings of Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him) faith in One God is the most important and fundamental principle. It is the bedrock of Islam and the mainspring of its power. All other beliefs, commands and laws of Islam stand firm on this very foundation. All of them receive strength from this source. Take it away, and there is nothing left in Islam.

## II. BELIEF IN GOD'S ANGELS

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has further instructed us to have faith in the existence of God's angels. This is the second article of Islamic faith and is very important, because it absolves the concept of *Tawheed* from all probable impurities and makes it pure, simple and free from the danger of every conceivable shadow of *shirk* (polytheism).

The polytheists have associated two kinds of creatures with God:

(a) Those which have material existence and are perceptible to the human eye, such as sun, moon, stars, fire, water, animals, great men, etc.

(b) Those who have no material existence and are not perceptible to the human eye: the unseen beings who are believed to be engaged in the administration of the universe; for instance, one controls the air, another imparts light, another brings rains, and so on and so forth.

The alleged deities of the first kind have material existence and are before man's eye. The falsity of their claim has been fully exposed by the *Kalima* — *La ilaha illallah*. This is sufficient to dispose of the idea that they enjoy any share in divinity or deserve any reverence at all. The second kind of things, being immaterial as they are, are hidden from the human eye and are mysterious; the polytheists are more inclined to pin their faith in them. They consider them to be deities, gods and God's children. They make their images and render offerings to them. In order to purify the belief in the

unity of God, and to clear it from the admixture of this second kind of unseen creatures, this particular article of faith has been expounded.

Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him) has informed us that these imperceptible spiritual beings, whom people believe to be deities of gods or God's children, are really His angels. They have no share in God's divinity; they cannot deviate from His commands even to the extent of the slightest fraction of an inch. God employs them to administer His Kingdom, and they carry out His orders exactly and accurately. They have no authority to do anything of their own accord; they cannot present to God any scheme conceived by themselves, they are not authorised even to intercede with God for any man. To worship them and to solicit their help is degrading and debasing for man. For, on the very first day of man's creation, God had made them prostrate before Adam, granted to him greater knowledge than they possessed and passing over them bestowed upon Adam His own vicegerency on this earth.<sup>3</sup> What debasement can, therefore, be greater for man than prostrating before and soliciting favour of those who had prostrated before him!

Muhammad (God's blessing be upon him) forbade us to worship angels, and to associate them with God in His divinity, but along with it he informed us that they were the chosen creatures of God, free from sin, from their very nature unable to disobey God, and ever engaged in carrying out His orders. Moreover, he informed us that these angels of God surround us from all sides, are attached to us, and are always in our company. They observe and note all our actions, good or bad. They preserve a complete record of every man's life. After death when we shall be brought before God, they will present a full report of our life-work on earth, wherein we shall find everything correctly recorded, not a single movement left out, however insignificant and howsoever carefully concealed it may be.

We have not been informed of the intrinsic nature of the angels. Only some of their virtues or attributes have been mentioned to us, and we have been asked to believe in their existence. We have no other means of knowing their nature, their attributes, and their qualities. It would be, therefore, sheer folly on our part to attribute any form or quality to

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3. See *Al-Qur'an*, ii, 34 and vii. 11.

them on our own accord. We must believe in them exactly as we have been asked to do. To deny their existence is *kufur* for, firstly, we have no reason for such a denial, and, secondly, our denial of them would be tantamount to attributing untruth to Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him). We believe in their existence only because God's true Messenger has informed us of it.

### III. FAITH IN THE BOOKS OF GOD

The third article of Faith which Muhammad (God's peace be upon him) has commanded us to believe is faith in the Books of God; Books which He has sent down to mankind through His Prophets from time to time.

God had revealed His Books to His Prophets before Muhammad and these books were sent down in the same way as He sent down the Qur'an to Muhammad (peace be upon him). We have been informed of the names of some of these books, viz. Books of Abraham, the Torah of Moses, Zaboor (Psalms) of David, and the Injeel (Gospel) of Jesus Christ. We have not been informed of the names of Books which had been given to other Prophets. Therefore with regard to other existing religious books, we are not in a position to say with certainty whether they were originally revealed books or not.

But we tacitly believe that whatever books had been sent down by God were all true.

Of the books we have been told, the Books of Abraham are extinct and not traceable in the existing world literature. David's Zaboor (Psalms), the Torah, and the Injeel exist with the Jews and the Christians, but the Qur'an informs us that people have changed and interpolated these books, and God's words have been mixed up with texts of their own making. This business of corruption and pollution of the Books has been so large and so evident that even the Jews and the Christians themselves admit that they do not possess their original Texts, and have only their translations, wherein for many centuries many alterations have been made and are still being made. On studying these Books we find many passages and accounts which evidently cannot be from God. God's words and those of man are mixed together in these books, and we have no means of knowing what portion of it is from God and what portion from man. We have been commanded to believe in previous revealed Books only in the sense to admit that, before the Qur'an, God had also sent

down Books through His Prophets, that they were all from one and the same God: the same God Who sent the Qur'an, and the sending of the Qur'an, as a Divine Book is not a new and strange event, but only to confirm, restate, and complete those divine instructions which people had mutilated or lost in antiquity.<sup>4</sup>

The Qur'an is the last of the Divine Book sent down by God and there are some very pertinent differences between it and the previous Books. These differences may briefly be stated as follows:

1. The original texts of most of the former Divine Books were lost altogether, and only their translations exist today. The Qur'an, on the other hand, exists exactly as it had been revealed to the Prophet; not a word—nay, not a dot of it—has been changed. It is available in its original text and the Word of God has now been preserved for all times to come.

2. In the former Divine Books man mixed his words with God's words, but in the Qur'an we find only the words of God—and in their pristine purity. This is admitted even by the opponents of Islam.

3. In respect of no other sacred Book possessed by the different peoples it can be said on the basis of authentic historical evidence that it really belongs to the same prophet to whom it is attributed. In the case of some of them even this is not known in what age and to which prophet they had been revealed. As for the Qur'an, the evidence that it was

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4. Even a cursory study of the first books of the Old Testament and the four Gospels of the New Testament reveals that they are the pen-productions of men and in these writings some parts of the original Psalms of David and the Gospels of Christ have been incorporated. The first five books of the Old Testament do not constitute the original Torah, but parts of the Torah have been mingled up with other narrative written by human beings and the original guidance of the Lord is lost in that quagmire. Similarly, the four Gospels of Christ are not the original Gospels as they came from Prophet Christ (peace be upon him). They, in fact, are the life-histories of Christ compiled by four different persons on the basis of knowledge and hearsay and certain parts of the original Gospel also fell into them. But the original and the fictitious, the Divine and the human, are so intermingled that the grain cannot be separated from the chaff. The fact is that the original Word of God is preserved neither with the Jews nor with the Christians. The Qur'an on the other hand, is fully preserved and not a jot or tittle has been changed or left out of it.

revealed to Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him) is so voluminous, so convincing, strong and so compelling that even the worst critics of Islam cannot cast doubt over it. This evidence is so vast and detailed that, about many verses and injunctions of the Qur'an, even the occasion and place of their revelation can be known with certainty.

4. The former Divine Books had been sent down in languages which have been dead long ago. In the present era no nation or community speaks those languages and there are only a few people who claim to understand them. Thus, even if the Books had existed today in their original and unadulterated form, it would be virtually impossible in our age to correctly understand and interpret their injunctions and put them into practice in their required form. The language of the Qur'an, on the other hand, is a living language; millions of people speak it, and millions more know and understand it. It is being taught and learnt nearly in every university of the world; every man can learn it, and he who has no time to learn it can find everywhere men who know this language and can explain to him the meaning of the Qur'an.

5. Each one of the existing sacred Books found among different nations of the world has been addressed to a particular people. Every one of them contains a number of commands which seem to have been meant for a particular period of history and which catered to the needs of that age only. They are neither needed today, nor can they now be smoothly and properly translated into practice. It is evident from this that these Books were particularly meant for those very people and none of them was meant for the world. Furthermore, they had not been sent to be followed permanently by even the people to whom they had been sent; they were meant to be acted upon only for a certain period. In contrast to this the Qur'an has been addressed to all mankind; not a single injunction of it can be suspected as having been addressed to a particular people. In the same manner, all the commands and injunctions in the Qur'an are such as can be acted upon at every place and in every age. This fact proves that the Qur'an is meant for the whole world, and is an eternal code for human life.

6. There is no denying the fact that the previous divine Books also enshrined good and virtue; they also taught the principles of morality and truthfulness and presented the



mode of living which was to God's pleasure, but none of them was comprehensive enough to embrace all that is necessary for a virtuous human life, nothing superfluous, nothing lacking. Some of them excelled in one respect, others in some other. It is the Qur'an and Qur'an alone which enshrines not only all that was good in the former Books but also perfects the way of Allah and presents it in its entirety and outlines that code of life which comprehends all that is necessary for man on this earth.

7. On account of man's interference and interpolation, many things have been inserted in those Books which are against reality, revolting to reason, and affronting to every instinct of justice. There are things which are cruel and unjust and vitiate man's beliefs and actions. Furthermore, unfortunately, things have been inserted that are obscene, indecent and potently immoral. The Qur'an is free from all such rubbish. It contains nothing against reason, and nothing that can be proved wrong. None of its injunctions is unjust; nothing in it is misleading. Of indecency and immorality not a trace can be found in it. From the beginning to the end of the whole Book is full of wisdom and truth. It contains the best of philosophy and the choicest of law for human civilisation. It points out the right path and guides man to success and salvation.

It is on account of these special features of the Qur'an that all the peoples of the world have been directed to have faith in it, to give up all other Books, and to follow it alone because it contains all that is essential for living in accordance with God's pleasure, and after it there remains absolutely no need for any other divine book.

The study of the difference between the Qur'an and other divine Books makes one easily understand that the nature of faith in the Qur'an and that of belief in the former Books is not similar.

Faith in the former divine Books should be limited to the confirmation that they were all from God, were true, and had been sent down to fulfil, in their time, the same purpose for which the Qur'an has been sent. On the other hand, belief in the Qur'an should be of the nature that *it is purely and absolutely God's own words*, that *it is perfectly true*, that *every word of it is preserved*, that *everything mentioned therein is right*, that *it is the bounden duty of man to carry out in his*



life each and every command of it and that whatever be against it must be rejected.

#### IV. FAITH IN GOD'S PROPHETS

In the last chapter we discussed that God's Messengers had been raised among every people, and that they all brought essentially that very religion — Islam — which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) propagated. In this respect all the Messengers of God belong to the same category and stand on a par with each other. If a man beliees anyone of them, he, as it were, beliees all, and if a man confirms and believes in one of them, he must and ought to confirm all. The reason is quite simple. Suppose ten men make one and the same statement; if you admit one of them to be true, you *ipso facto* admit the remaining nine of them as true, and if you belie anyone of them, by implication you belie all of them. It is for this reason that in Islam it is necessary to have implicit faith in all the Prophets of God. One who does not believe in anyone of the Prophets would be a *kafir*, though he might profess faith in all the other Prophets.

It occurs in traditions that the total number of all the Prophets sent to different peoples at different times is 124,000. If you consider the life of the world since it was first inhabited and the number of different peoples and nations that have passed on it, this number will not appear too great. We have to positively believe in those of the Prophets whose names have been mentioned in the Qur'an. Regarding the rest we are instructed to believe that all Prophets sent by God for the guidance of mankind were true. Thus we believe in all the Prophets raised in India, China, Persia, Egypt, Africa, Europe and other countries of the world, but we are not in a position to be definite about a particular person outside the list of Prophets named in the Qur'an, whether or not he was a Prophet, for we have not been told anything definite about him. Nor are we permitted to say anything against the holy men of other religions. It is quite possible that some of them might have been God's Prophets, and their followers corrupted their teachings after their demise, just as the followers of Moses and Jesus (God's blessings be upon them) have done. Therefore, whenever we express any opinion about them, it would be about the tenets and rituals of their religions; as for the founders of those religions, we will remain scrupulously

silent, lest we should become guilty of irreverence towards a Prophet.

As for the fact of being Prophets of God and having been deputed by Him for teaching the same straight path of 'Islam' there is no difference between Muhammad and other Prophets (God's blessings be upon them all), we have been ordered to believe in all of them alike. But in spite of their equality in this respect, there are the following three differences between Muhammad and other Prophets (God's blessing be upon them all):

1. The Prophets of the past had come to certain people for certain periods of time, while Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him) has been sent for the whole world and for all times to come.<sup>5</sup>

2. The teachings of those Prophets have either disappeared altogether from the world, or whatever of them remains is not pure, and is found intermingled with many erroneous and fictitious statements. For this reason even if anyone wishes to follow their teachings, he cannot do so. In contrast to this, the teachings of Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him), his biography, his discourses, his ways of living, his morals, habits and virtues, in short, all the details of his life and work, are preserved. Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him), therefore, is the only one of the whole line of Prophets who is a living personality, and in whose footsteps it is possible to follow correctly and confidently.

3. The guidance imparted through the Prophets of the past was not complete and all-embracing. Every Prophet was followed by another who effected alterations and additions in the teachings and injunctions of his predecessors and, in this way, the chain of reform and progress continued. That is why the teachings of the earlier Prophets, after the lapse of a certain period of time, were lost in oblivion. Obviously there was no need of preserving former teachings when amended and improved guidance had taken their place. At last the most perfect code of guidance was imparted to mankind through Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him) and all previous codes were automatically abrogated, for it is futile and imprudent to follow an incomplete code while the complete code exists. He who follows Muhammad (God's blessings

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5. This point has been discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

be upon him) follows all the Prophets, for whatever was good and eternally workable in their teachings has been embodied in his teachings. Whoever, therefore, rejects and refuses to follow Muhammad's teachings, and chooses to follow some other Prophet, only deprives himself of that vast amount of useful and valuable instruction and guidance which is embodied in Muhammad's teachings, which never existed in the books of the earlier Prophets and which was revealed only through the Last of the Prophets.

This is why it is now incumbent upon each and every human being to have faith in Muhammad (peace be upon him) and follow him alone. To become a true Muslim (a follower of the Prophet's way of life) it is necessary to have complete faith in Muhammad (peace be upon him) and to affirm that:

- (a) He is a true Prophet of God;
- (b) His teachings are absolutely perfect, free from any defect or error; and
- (c) He is the Last Prophet of God. After him no Prophet will appear among any people till the Day of Judgment, nor is any such personage going to appear in whom it would be essential for a Muslim to believe.

## V. BELIEF IN LIFE AFTER DEATH

The fifth article of Islamic Faith is belief in life after death. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has directed us to believe in resurrection after death and in the Day of Judgment. The essential ingredients of this belief, as taught to us by him, are as follows:

That the life of this world and of all that is in it will come to an end on an appointed day. Everything will be annihilated. That day is called *Qayamah*, i.e. the Last Day.

That all the human beings who had lived in the world since its inception will then be restored to life and will be presented before God Who will sit in court on that day. This is called *Hashr* (Resurrection).

That the entire record of every man and woman — of all their doings and misdoings — will be presented before God for final judgment.

That God shall finally adjudge the reward of every person. He shall weigh everyone's good and bad deeds. One who excels in goodness will be rewarded a godly reward; one whose evils and wrongs outweigh his good deeds, will be punished.

That the reward and punishment will be administered judiciously. Those who emerge successful in this judgment will go to Paradise and the doors of eternal bliss will be opened upon them; those who are condemned and deserve punishment will be sent to Hell—the abode of fire and torture.

These are essential constituents of belief in life after death.

### **The Need of this Belief**

Belief in the life after death has always been a part and parcel of the teachings of the Prophets. Every Prophet asked his followers to believe in it, in the same way as the last of the Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him), has asked us to do. This has always been an essential condition of being a Muslim. All Prophets have categorically declared that one who disbelieves in it, or casts doubts on it, is a *kafir*. This is so, because denial of life after death makes all other beliefs meaningless. This denial also destroys the very sanction for good life and man is driven to a life of ignorance and disbelief. A little reflection would make this quite clear.

In your everyday life, whenever you are asked to do anything, you immediately think: what is the utility of doing it and what harm is involved in not doing it? This is the very nature of man. He instinctively regards a useless action as totally unnecessary. You will never be willing to waste your time and energy in useless, wasteful and unproductive jobs. Similarly, you won't be very eager to avoid a thing that is harmless. And the general rule is that the deeper your conviction about the utility of a thing, the firmer would be your response to it; and the more doubtful you are about its efficacy, the more wavering and shaky would be your attitude. After all why does a child put his hand in fire? Because he is not sure that fire burns. Why does he evade studying? Because he does not fully grasp the importance and benefits of education and does not believe in what his elders try to impress upon his mind.

Now think of the man who does not believe in the Day of Judgment. Would he not consider belief in God and a life in accordance with His code of no consequence? What value will he attach to a life in pursuit of His pleasure? To him neither obedience to God is of any advantage, nor disobedience to Him of any harm. How, then, would it be possible for him to scrupulously follow the injunctions of God, His Prophet,

and His Book? What incentive would remain there for him to undergo trials and sacrifices and to avoid worldly pleasures? And if a man does not follow the code of God and lives according to his own likes and dislikes, of what use is his belief in the existence of God, if any such belief he has?

That is not all. If you reflect still deeper, you will come to the conclusion that belief in life after death is the greatest deciding factor in the life of a man. Its acceptance or rejection determines the very course of his life and behaviour.

A man who has in view the success or failure of this world alone will be concerned with the benefits and harms that accrue to him in this life only. He will not be prepared to undertake any good act if he has no hope of gaining thereby some worldly interest, nor will he be keen to avoid any wrong act if that is not injurious to his interests in this world.

But a man who believes in the next world as well and has a firm conviction of the final consequence of his acts would look upon all worldly gains and losses as temporary and transitory and would not stake his eternal bliss for a transitory gain. He will look upon things in their wider perspective and will always keep the everlasting benefit or harm in view. He will do the good, however costly it may be to him in terms of worldly gains, or however injurious it may be to his immediate interests; and he will avoid the wrong, however charming it may look. He will judge the things from the viewpoint of their eternal consequences and would not submit to his whims and caprices.

Thus there is a radical difference between the beliefs, approaches, and lives of the two persons. One's idea of a good act is limited to its beneficence in this brief temporary life as a gain in the shape of money, property, public applause and similar other things which give him position, power, reputation and worldly happiness. Such things become his objectives in life. Fulfilment of his own wishes and self-aggrandizement become the be-all and end-all of his life. And he does not deter even from cruel and unjust means in their achievement. Similarly, his conception of a wrong act is that which may involve a risk or injury to his interests in this world like loss of property and life, spoiling of health, besmirching of reputation, or some other unpleasant consequence. In contrast to this man, the believer's concept of good and evil would be quite different. To him all that pleases God is good and all that invokes His displeasure and wrath is evil. A good act,

according to him, will remain good even if it brings no benefit to him in this world, or even entails loss of some worldly possession or injury to his personal interests. He will be confident that God will reward him in the eternal life and that would be the real success. Similarly, he will not fall a prey to evil deeds merely for some worldly gain, for he knows that even if he escapes punishment in his short worldly life, in the end he would be the loser and would not be able to escape punishment from the court of God. He does not believe in the relativity of morals but sticks to the absolute standards revealed by God and lives according to them irrespective of gain or injury in this world.

Thus it is the belief or disbelief in life after death which makes man adopt different courses in life. For one who does not believe in the Day of Judgment it is absolutely impossible to fashion his life as suggested by Islam. Islam says: "In the way of God give charity (*zakat*) to the poor". His answer is: "No, *zakat* will lessen my wealth; I will, instead, take interest on my money." And in its collection he would not hesitate to get attached each and everything belonging to the debtors though they be poor or hunger-stricken. Islam says: "Always speak the truth and shun lying, though, you may gain ever so much by lying and lose ever so much by speaking the truth." But his reply would be: "Well, what shall I do with a truth which is of no use to me here, and which instead brings loss to me; and why should I avoid lying where it can bring benefit to me without any risk, even, that of a bad name?" He visits a lonely place and finds a precious metal lying there; in such a situation Islam says: "This is not your property, do not take it"; but he would say: "This is a thing I have come by without any cost or trouble; why should I not have it? There is no one to see this pick-up, who might report it to the police or give evidence against me in a court of law, or give me a bad name among the people. Why should I not make use of this valuable?" Someone secretly keeps a deposit with this man, and after that he dies. Islam says: "Be honest with the property deposited with you and give it over to the heirs of the deceased." He says: "Why? There is no evidence of his property being with me; his children also have no knowledge about it. When I can appropriate it without any difficulty, without any fear of legal claim, or stain on my reputation, why should I not do so?" In short, at every step in life, Islam will direct him to walk in a certain direction and adopt



a certain attitude and course of behaviour; but he will take recourse to the opposite direction. For Islam measures and values everything from the viewpoint of its everlasting consequence; while such a person always has in view only the immediate and earthly outcome. Now, you can understand why a man cannot be a Muslim without belief in the Day of Judgment. To be a Muslim is a very great thing; the fact is that one cannot even become a good man without this belief, for the denial of the Day of Judgment degrades man from humanity to a place even lower than that of the lowest of animals.

### **Life After Death: A Rational Vindication**

So far we have discussed the need and importance of belief in the Day of Judgment. Now let us consider how far the constituents of the belief are rationally understandable. The fact is that whatever Muhammad (peace be upon him) has told us about life after death is clearly borne out by reason. Although our belief in that Day is based upon our implicit trust in the Messenger of God, rational reflection not only confirms this belief but also reveals that Muhammad's (peace be upon him) teachings in this respect are much more reasonable and understandable than all other viewpoints about life after death.

About life after death the following viewpoints are found in the world:

1. A section of the people says that there is nothing left of man after death, and that after this life-ending event, there is no other life. According to these people, this belief has no reality. They say that there is no possibility of it and such a belief is quite unscientific. This is the view of the atheists who also claim to be scientific in their approach and bring in Western science in their support.
2. Another section of the people maintains that man, in order to bear the consequences of his deeds, is repeatedly regenerated in this very world. If he lives a bad life, in the next generation he will assume the shape of an animal, like a dog or a cat, etc., or some tree or some lower kind of man. If his acts have been good, he will be reborn as a man into a higher class. This viewpoint is found in some Eastern religions.
3. There is a third viewpoint which calls for belief in the Day of Judgment, the Resurrection, man's presence in the



Divine Court, and the administration of reward and punishment. This is the common belief of all the Prophets.

Now let us consider these viewpoints one by one.

The first section, which arrogates to itself the authority and support of science, alleges that there is no reality in life after death. They say that they have never seen anybody coming back after his death. There is not a single case of revival. We see that after death a man is reduced to dust. Therefore, death is the end of life and there is no life after death. But just think over this reasoning: is this really a scientific argument? Is the claim really founded on reason? If they have not seen any case of revival after death, they can only say that *they do not know what will happen after death*. But, instead of remaining within this limit, they declare that *nothing will happen after death* at the same time alleging that they speak out of knowledge! In fact they merely generalise on ignorance. Science tells us nothing — negative or positive — in this respect and their assertion that life after death has no existence is totally unfounded. Their claim is not dissimilar to the claim of an ignoramus who has not seen an aeroplane and on that “knowledge” proclaims that aeroplanes have no existence at all! If anybody has not seen a thing, it does not mean that that thing has no existence. No man, not even the entire humanity, if it has not seen a thing, can claim that such a thing does not, or cannot, exist. This claim is illusionary and is out and out unscientific. No reasonable man can give it any weight.

Now look to the belief of the second group. According to them, a human being is a human being because in his previous animal form he had done good deeds; and an animal is an animal because previously as a human being he had behaved badly. In other words, to be a man or an animal is the consequence of one's deeds in one's former form. One may well ask: “Which of them existed first, man or animal?” If they say man preceded animal, then they will have to accept that he must have been an animal before that, and was given a human form for its good deeds. If they say it was animal they will have to concede that there must have been before that a man who was transformed into an animal for his bad deeds. This puts us into a vicious circle and the advocates of this belief cannot settle any form for the first creature, for every generation implies a preceding generation so that the succeed-

ing generation may be considered as the consequence of the former. This is simply absurd.

Now consider the third viewpoint. Its first proposition is: "This world will one day come to an end. God will destroy and annihilate the universe, and in its place will evolve another higher and far superior cosmos."

This statement is undeniably true. No doubt can be cast upon its veracity. The more we reflect on the nature of the cosmos, the more clearly it is proved that the existing system is not permanent and everlasting, for all the forces working in it are limited in their nature, and it becomes a certainty that one day they will be completely exhausted. That is why the scientists agree that one day the sun will become cold and will give up all its energy, the stars will collide with one another, and the whole system of the universe will be upset and destroyed. Moreover, if evolution is true in the case of the constituents of this universe, why it may not be true for the whole of it? To think of the universe becoming totally non-existent is more improbable than that it will pass into another evolutionary stage and another order of things will emerge in a much more improved and ideal order.

The second proposition of this belief that "man will again be given life". It is impossible? If so, how did the present life of man become possible? It is evident that God Who created man in this world can do so in the next. Not only is it a possibility, it is also a positive necessity, as will be shown later.

The third proposition is that "the record of all the actions of man in this world is preserved and will be presented on the Day of Resurrection". The proof of the truth of this proposition is provided here in these days by science itself. It was first understood that the sounds which we make produce slight waves in the air and die out. Now, it has been discovered that the sound leaves its impression on its surrounding objects and can be reproduced. Gramophone records are made on the same principle. From this it can be understood that the record of every movement of man is being impressed on all things which come into contact with the waves produced by the movements. This shows that the record of all our deeds is completely preserved and can be reproduced.

The fourth proposition is that "on the Day of Resurrection, God will hold His Court and, with just judgment, reward or punish man for his good and bad deeds". What is unreasonable about it? Reason itself demands that God should hold

His Court and pronounce just judgment. We see here that a man does a good deed and thereby gains nothing in this world. We see another man who does a bad deed and does not suffer for it here. Not only this, we see thousands of cases of a good act bringing trouble on the doer, and of a bad deed resulting in the happiness and gratification of the guilty person. When we notice these events happening every day, our reason and sense of justice demand that a time must come when the man who does good must be rewarded and the one who does evil must be punished. The present order of things, as you can see yourself, is subject to physical law, according to which it is quite natural that a man who has got the means to do evil can do so if he chooses and it is not necessary that its evil consequences should react upon him wholly or partly. If you have a tin of petrol and a match-box you can set fire to the house of your opponent, and you can escape every consequence of this deed if the worldly forces are in your favour. Does it mean that such an offence has got no consequence at all? Certainly not! It means only that its physical result has appeared, and the moral result is reserved. Do you really think it reasonable that it should never appear? If you say it should, the question is, where? Certainly not in this world, because in this physical world only physical consequences of actions manifest themselves fully, while rational and moral consequences do not come forth. Results and consequences of this higher category can appear only if there comes into existence another order of things wherein rational and moral laws reign supreme and occupy the governing position and where the physical laws are made subject to them. That is the next world which, as we have said before, is the next evolutionary stage of the universe. It is evolutionary in this sense that it will be governed by moral laws rather than by physical laws. The rational consequences of man's actions, which are reserved wholly or partly in this world will appear therein. Man's status will be determined by his rational and moral worth adjudged in accordance with his conduct in this life of test and trial. There you will not find a worthy man serving under a fool, or a morally superior man in a position inferior to a wretch, as is the case in this world.

The last proposition of this belief is the existence of Paradise and Hell, which is also not impossible. If God can make the sun, the moon, the stars, and the earth, why should He not be able to make Paradise and Hell? When He holds His

Court, and pronounces just judgments, rewarding the meritorious and punishing the guilty, there must be a place where the meritorious might enjoy their reward — honour, happiness and gratification of all kinds — and another place where the condemned might feel debasement, pain and misery.

After considering all these questions, no reasonable person can escape the conclusion that the belief in life after death is the most acceptable to reason and commonsense, and that there is nothing in it which can be said to be unreasonable or impossible. Moreover, when a true Prophet like Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him) has stated this to be a fact, and it involves nothing but what is good for us, wisdom lies in believing in it implicitly and not in rejecting it without any sound reasons.

The above are the five articles of Faith which form the foundation for the superstructure of Islam. Their gist is contained in the short sentence known as *Kalima-e-tayyibah*. When you declare *La ilaha illallah*<sup>6</sup> (there is no deity but Allah), you give up all false deities, and profess that you are a creature of the One God; and when you add to these words *Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah*<sup>6</sup> (Muhammad is Allah's Messenger) you confirm and admit the Prophethood of Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him). With the admission of his Prophethood it becomes obligatory that you should believe in the divine nature and attributes of God in His angels, in His Revealed Books, and in life after death, and earnestly follow that method of obeying God and worshipping Him which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has asked us to follow. Herein lies the road to success and salvation.

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6. لا اله الا الله محمد الرسول الله

CHAPTER FIVE

# PRAYER AND WORSHIP

## PRAYER AND WORSHIP

**T**HE earlier discussion has made it clear that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has enjoined us to believe in five articles of faith:

1. Belief in one God Who has absolutely no associate with Him in His divinity;
2. Belief in God's Angels;
3. Belief in God's Books, and in the Holy Qur'an as His Last Book.
4. Belief in God's Prophets, and in Muhammad (God's blessings be upon him) as His Last and Final Messenger; and
5. Belief in life after death.

These five articles make up the bedrock of Islam. One who believes in them enters the fold of Islam and becomes a member of the Muslim community. But by a mere vocal profession alone, one does not become a complete Muslim. To become a complete Muslim one has to fully carry out in practice the instructions given by Muhammad (peace be upon him) as ordained by God. For belief in God makes practical obedience to Him incumbent; and it is obedience to God which constitutes the religion of Islam. By this belief you profess that Allah, the One God, alone is your God, and this means that He is your Creator and you are His creature; that He is your Master; and you are His slave; that He is your Ruler, and you are His subject. After having acknowledged Him as your Master and Ruler, if you refuse to obey Him you are a rebel on your own admission. Along with faith in God, you believe that the Qur'an is God's Book. This means that you have admitted all the contents of the Qur'an to be from God. Thus it becomes your bounden duty to accept and obey whatever is contained in it. Along with that, you have admitted Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be God's Messenger, which means that you have admitted that each and every one of his orders and prohibitions are from God. After this admission, obedience to him becomes your duty. Therefore, you will be a full-fledged Muslim only when your practice is consistent with your profession, otherwise your Islam will remain incomplete.

Now let us see what code of conduct Muhammad (peace be upon him) has taught as ordained by God Almighty. The

first and foremost things in this respect are the *'Ibadat* — the *Primary Duties which must be observed by each and every person professing to belong to the Muslim community.*

### **The Spirit of 'Ibadat' or Worship**

*'Ibadat* is an Arabic word derived from *'Abd* (a slave) and it means submission. It portrays that Allah is your Master and you are His slave and whatever a slave does in obedience to and for the pleasure of his Master is *'Ibadat*. The Islamic concept of *'Ibadat* is very wide. If you free your speech from filth, falsehood, malice, abuse and speak the truth and talk goodly things and do all these only because God has so ordained to do, they constitute *'Ibadat*, however secular they may look in semblance. If you obey the law of God in letter and spirit in your commercial and economic affairs and abide by it in your dealings with your parents, relatives, friends and all those who come in contact with you, verily all these activities of yours are *'Ibadat*. If you help the poor and the destitute, give food to the hungry and serve the pining and the afflicted persons and do all this not for any personal gain of yours but only to seek the pleasure of God, they are nothing short of *'Ibadat*. Even your economic activities — the activities you undertake to earn your living and to feed your dependants — are *'Ibadat* if you remain honest and truthful in them, and observe the law of God. In short, all your activities and your entire life are *'Ibadat* if they are in accordance with the law of God and your heart is filled with His fear and your ultimate objective in undertaking all these activities is to seek the pleasure of God. Thus whenever you do good or avoid evil for fear of God, in whatever sphere of life and field of activity, you are discharging your Islamic obligations. This is the true significance of *'Ibadat*, viz. total submission to the pleasure of Allah, the moulding into the patterns of Islam one's entire life, leaving out not even the most insignificant part thereof. To help achieve this aim, a set of formal *'Ibadat* (worships) has been constituted which serves as a course of training. The more assiduously we follow the training, the better equipped we are for bringing harmony between our ideals and practices. The *'Ibadat* are thus the pillars on which the edifice of Islam rests.

### **Salat**

*Salat* is the most primary and the most important of these obligations. And what is *salat*? It is the prescribed daily



prayers which consist in repeating and refreshing five times a day the belief in which you repose your faith. You get up early in the morning, cleanse yourself, and present yourself before your Lord for prayer. The various poses that you assume during your prayers are the very embodiment of the spirit of submission; the various recitals remind you of your commitments to your God. You seek His guidance and ask Him again and again to enable you to avoid His Wrath and follow His Chosen Path. You read out from the Book of the Lord and express witness to the truth of the Prophets and also refresh your belief in the Day of Judgment and enliven in your memory the fact that you have to appear before your Lord and give an account of your entire life. This is how your day starts. Then after a few hours the *Muezzin* calls you to prayers and you again submit to your God and refresh your covenant with Him. You dissociate yourself from your worldly engagements for a few moments and seek audience before God. This once again brings to the fore of your mind your real role in life. After this rededication you revert to your occupations and again present yourself to the Lord after a few hours. This again acts as a reminder to you and you once more refocus your attention on the stipulations of your Faith. When the sun sets and the darkness of the night begins to shroud you, you again submit yourself to God in prayers so that you may not forget your duties and obligations in the midst of the approaching shadows of the night. And then after a few hours you again appear before your Lord and this is your last prayer of the day. Thus before going to bed you once again refresh your Faith and prostrate before your God. And this is how you complete your day. The frequency and timings of the prayers never let the object and mission of life be lost sight of in the maze of worldly activities.

It is but easy to understand how the daily prayers strengthen the foundations of your Faith, prepare you for the observance of a life of virtue and obedience to God, and refresh that belief from which spring courage, sincerity, purposefulness, purity of heart, advancement of the soul, and enrichment of morals.

Now see how this is achieved. You perform ablution and perform it in the way prescribed by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). You also say your prayers according to the instructions of the Prophet. Why do you do so? Simply because you believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (peace

be upon him) and deem it your bounden duty to follow him ungrudgingly. Why don't you intentionally misrecite the Qur'an? Isn't it so because you regard the Book as the Word of God and deem it a sin to deviate from its letter? In the prayers you recite many a thing quietly and if you do not recite them and make any deviation therefrom there is no one to check you. But you never do so intentionally. Why? Because you believe that God is ever watchful and He listens all that you recite and is aware of things open and hidden. What makes you say your prayers at places where there is no one to ask you to offer them or even to see you offering them? Isn't it so because of your belief that God is ever looking at you? What makes you leave your important business and other occupations and rush towards the mosque for prayers? What makes you terminate your sweet sleep in the early hours of the morning, to come to the mosque in the heat of the noon and to leave your evening entertainments for the sake of prayers? Is it anything other than your sense of duty—your realisation that you must fulfil your responsibility to the Lord, come what may? And why are you afraid of any mistake in prayer? Because your heart is filled with the fear of God and you know that you have to appear before Him on the Day of Judgment and give an account of your entire life. Now look! Can there be a better course of moral and spiritual training than prayers? It is this training which makes a man a perfect Muslim. It reminds him of his covenant with God, refreshes his faith in Him, and keeps the belief in the Day of Judgment alive and ever-present before his mind's eye. It makes him follow the Prophet and trains him in the observance of his duties. This is indeed a strict training for conforming one's practice to one's ideals. Obviously if a man's consciousness of his duties towards his Creator is so acute that he prizes it above all worldly gains and he keeps it refreshing through prayers, he would certainly keep clean in all his dealings for, otherwise, he would certainly be inviting the displeasure of God which he had all along striven to avoid. He will abide by the law of God in the entire gamut of life in the same way as he follows it in the five prayers every day. This man can be relied upon in other fields of activity as well, for if the shadows of sin or deceit approach him, he will try to avoid them for fear of the Lord which would be ever present in his heart. And if even after such a vital training, a man misbehaves himself in other fields of life and disobeys

the law of God, it can only be because of some intrinsic depravity of his self.

Then, again, you must say your prayers in congregation and especially so the Friday prayers. This creates among the Muslims a bond of love and mutual understanding. This arouses in them the sense of their collective unity and fosters among them national fraternity. All of them say their prayers in one congregation and this inculcates in them a deep feeling of brotherhood. Prayers are also a symbol of equality, for the poor and the rich, the low and the high, the rulers and the ruled, the educated and the unlettered, the black and the white, all stand in one row and prostrate before their Lord. They also inculcate in them a strong sense of discipline and obedience to the elected leader. In short, prayers train them in all those virtues which make possible the development of a rich individual and collective life.

These are a few of the myriads of benefits we can derive from the daily prayers.<sup>1</sup> If we refuse to avail ourselves of them we, and only we, are the losers. Our shirking the prayers can only mean one of the two things. Either we do not recognise prayers as our duty or we recognise them as our duty and still shirk them. In the first case, our claim to Faith shall be a shameless lie, for if we refuse to take orders, we no longer acknowledge the Authority. In the second case, if we recognise the Authority and still flout His Commands, then we are the most unreliable of the creatures that ever tread the earth. For if we can do this to the highest authority in the universe, what guarantee is there that we shall not do the same in our dealings with other human beings? And if double play overwhelms a society, what a hell of discord it is bound to become!

### Fasting

What the prayers seek to serve five times a day, fasting in the month of Ramadhan (ninth month of the lunar year) does once a year. During this period from dawn to dusk we eat not a grain of food nor drink a drop of water, no matter how delicious the dish or how hungry or thirsty we feel. What is it that makes us voluntarily undergo such rigours? It is nothing but faith in God and the fear of Him and of the Day of Judgment. Each and every moment during our fast we suppress

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1. For a detailed discussion of the nature and significance of *salat*, see Maulana Maududi's book: *Islami Ibaadat Par Tahqiqi Nazar* (A Treatise on Islamic Worships).—Editor.

our passions and desires and proclaim, by our doing so, the supremacy of the Law of God. This consciousness of duty and the spirit of patience that incessant fasting for full one month inculcates in us help us strengthen our faith. Rigour and discipline during this month bring us face to face with the realities of life and help us make our life, during the rest of the year, a life of true subservience to His Will.

From yet another point of view fasting has an immense impact on society, for all the Muslims irrespective of their status must observe fast during the same month. This brings to prominence the essential equality of men and thus goes a long way towards creating in them sentiments of love and brotherhood. During Ramadhan evil conceals itself while good comes to the fore and the whole atmosphere is filled with piety and purity.

This discipline has been imposed on us to our own advantage. Those who do not fulfil this primary duty imposed on them cannot be safely relied upon in the discharge of their other duties. But the worst are those who during this holy month do not hesitate to eat or drink in public. They are the people who by their conduct show that they care not a trifle for the commands of Allah in Whom they profess their belief as their Creator and Sustainer. Not only this, they also show that they are not loyal members of the Muslim community — rather they have nothing to do with it. It is evident that, in so far as obedience to law and regard for a trust reposed in them goes, only the worst could be expected of such hypocrites.

### **Zakat**

The third obligation is *Zakat*. Every Muslim, whose financial conditions are above a certain specified minimum, must pay annually  $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of his cash balance<sup>2</sup> to a deserving fellow-being, a new convert to Islam, a traveller, or one involved in debts<sup>3</sup>. This is the minimum. The more you pay, the greater

2. *Zakat* is not merely on the cash balance. It is also charged on gold, silver, merchandise, cattle and other valuables. The rate of *zakat* for all these commodities can be known from the books on *Fiqh* and is not being given here for the sake of economy of space. That is why only money-rate has been mentioned here.

3. It serves to be noted that the Holy Prophet has forbidden his own kith and kin from taking *zakat*. Though it is obligatory upon the Hashimites to pay the *zakat*, they cannot receive it even if they are poor and needy. If anybody wants to help a poor Hashimite, he may give him a gift. He cannot be helped out of *zakat*.

the reward that Allah shall bestow on you.

The money that we pay as *Zakat* is not something Allah needs or receives. He is above any want and desire. He, in His benign Mercy, promises us rewards manifold if we help our brethren. But there is one basic condition for being thus rewarded. And it is this that when we pay in the name of Allah, we shall neither expect nor demand any worldly gains from the beneficiaries nor aim at making our names as philanthropists.

*Zakat* is as basic to Islam as other forms of *'Ibadat*: *Salat* (prayer) and *Saum* (fasting). Its fundamental importance lies in the fact that it fosters in us the qualities of sacrifice and rids us of selfishness and plutolatriy. Islam accepts within its fold only those who are ready to give away in God's way from their hard-earned wealth willingly and without any temporal or personal gain. It has nothing to do with misers. A true Muslim shall, when the call comes, sacrifice all his belongings in the way of Allah, for *Zakat* has already trained him for such.

The Muslim society has immensely to gain from the institution of *Zakat*. It is the bounden duty of every well-to-do Muslim to help his lowly-placed, poor brethren. His wealth is not to be spent solely for his own comfort and luxury — there are rightful claimants on his wealth, and they are the nation's widows and orphans, the poor and the invalid; those who have ability but lack the means by which they could seek useful employment, those who have the faculties and brilliance but not the money with which they could acquire knowledge and become useful members of the community. He who does not recognise the right on his wealth of such members of his own community is indeed cruel. For there could be no greater cruelty than to fill one's own coffers while thousands die of hunger or suffer the agonies of unemployment. Islam is a sworn enemy of such selfishness, greed, and acquisitiveness. Disbelievers, devoid of sentiments of universal love, know only to preserve wealth and to add to it by lending it out on interest. Islam's teachings are the very antithesis of this attitude. Here one shares one's wealth with others and helps them stand on their own legs and become productive members of the society.

### **Hajj or Pilgrimage**

*Hajj*, or the Pilgrimage to Mecca, is the fourth basic

*'Ibadat*. It is obligatory only on those who can afford it and that too only once in a lifetime.

Mecca today stands at the site of a small house that the Prophet Abraham (God's blessings be upon him) built for the worship of Allah. Allah rewarded him by calling it His own House and by making it the centre towards which all must face when saying prayers. He also made it incumbent on those who can afford to visit this place at least once in lifetime. This visit is not merely to be a courtesy call. Even this pilgrimage has its rites and conditions to be fulfilled which inculcate in us piety and goodness. When we undertake the pilgrimage, we are required to suppress our passions, refrain from bloodshed, and be pure in word and deed. God promises rewards for our sincerity and submissiveness.

The Pilgrimage is, in a way, the biggest of all *'Ibadat*. For unless a man really loves God he would never undertake such a long journey leaving all his near and dear ones behind him. Then this pilgrimage is unlike any other journey. Here his thoughts are concentrated on Allah, his very being vibrates with the spirit of intense devotion. When he reaches the holy place, he finds the atmosphere laden with piety and godliness; he visits places which bear witness to the glory of Islam, and all this leaves an indelible impression on his mind, which he carries to his last breath.

Then there are, as in other *'Ibadat*, many benefits that the Muslims can enjoy from this pilgrimage. Mecca is the centre towards which the Muslims must converge once a year, meet and discuss topics of common interest, and in general create and refresh in themselves the faith that all Muslims are equal and deserve the love and sympathy of others, irrespective of their geographical or cultural origin. Thus the pilgrimage unites the Muslims of the world into one international fraternity.

### **Defence of Islam**

Though the defence of Islam is not a fundamental tenet but its need and importance have been repeatedly emphasised in the Qur'an and the Hadith. It is in essence a test of our sincerity and truthfulness as believers in Islam. If we do not defend one whom we call our friend against intrigues or open assaults from his foes, nor care for his interest and are guided solely by selfishness, we are indeed false pretenders of friendship. Similarly, if we profess belief in Islam, we must jealously guard and uphold the prestige of Islam. Our sole guide in



our conduct must be the interest of Muslims at large and the service of Islam in the face of which all our personal considerations must sink low.

### Jihad

*Jihad* is a part of this overall defence of Islam. *Jihad* means struggle to the utmost of one's capacity. A man who exerts himself physically or mentally or spends his wealth *in the way of Allah* is indeed engaged in *Jihad*. But in the language of the *Shari'ah* this word is used particularly for the war that is waged solely in the name of Allah and against those who perpetrate oppression as enemies of Islam. This supreme sacrifice of lives devolves on all Muslims. If, however, a section of the Muslims offer themselves for participating in the *Jihad*, the whole community is absolved of its responsibility. But if none comes forward, everybody is guilty. This concession vanishes for the citizens of an Islamic State when it is attacked by a non-Muslim power. In that case everybody must come forward for the *Jihad*. If the country attacked has not strength enough to fight back, then it is the religious duty of the neighbouring Muslim countries to help her; if even they fail, then the Muslims of the whole world must fight the common enemy. In all these cases, *Jihad* is as much a primary duty of the Muslims concerned as are the daily prayers or fasting. One who shirks it is a sinner. His very claim to being a Muslim is doubtful. He is plainly a hypocrite who fails in the test of sincerity and all his *'Ibadat* and prayers are a sham, a worthless hollow show of devotion.



CHAPTER SIX

# DIN AND SHARI'AH

## DIN AND SHARI'AH

UP till now we have been dealing with *Din* or Faith. We now come to a discussion of the *Shari'ah* of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). But let us first be clear about the difference between *Din* and *Shari'ah*.

### Distinction Between *Din* and *Shari'ah*

In the foregoing chapters we have said that all the Prophets who made their appearance from time to time propagated Islam. This is a very basic fact. They propagated Islam, that is, a faith in God with all His attributes, faith in the Day of Judgment, faith in the Prophets and the Books, and asked people consequently to live a life of obedience and submission to their Lord. This is what constitutes *al-Din* and it was common to the teachings of all the Prophets.

Apart from this *Din* there is the *Shari'ah* or the detailed code of conduct or the canons comprising ways and modes of worship, standards of morals and life, laws that allow and prescribe, that judge between right and wrong. Such canon law has been undergoing amendments from time to time and though each Prophet had the same *Din*, he brought with him a different *Shari'ah* that would suit the conditions of his own people and time. This served the purpose of training different people over all ages for a better civilisation and equipping them with better morals. The process ended with the advent of Muhammad, the last Prophet (peace be upon him) who brought with him the final code which was to apply to all mankind for all times to come. *Din* has undergone no change, but now all the previous *Shari'ahs* stand abrogated in view of the comprehensive *Shari'ah* that Muhammad (peace be upon him) has brought with him. This is the climax or the final of the great process of training that was started at the dawn of the human era.

### The Sources of the *Shari'ah*

We draw upon two major sources in order to acquaint ourselves with the *Shari'ah* of Muhammad (peace be upon him), *viz.* the Qur'an and the Hadith. The Qur'an is a divine revelation — each and every word of it is from Allah. The Hadith is a collection of the instructions issued or the memoirs of

the last Prophet's conduct and behaviour, as preserved by those who were present in his company or those to whom these were handed down by the first witnesses. These were later sifted and collected by divines and compiled in the form of books among which the collections made by Malik, Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmizi, Abu Dawud, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah are considered to be the most authentic.

### Fiqh

Detailed law derived from the Qur'an and the *Ahadith* covering the myriads of problems that arise in the course of man's life have been compiled by some of the leading legists in the past. Thus the Muslim peoples shall forever be grateful to those men of learning and vision who devoted their lives to gaining a mastery of the Qur'an and the *Ahadith*, who made it easy for every Muslim to fashion his everyday affairs according to the requirements of the *Shari'ah*. It is due to them alone that the Muslims all over the world can follow the *Shari'ah* easily even though their attainments in religion are never such that they could themselves give a correct and authentic interpretation to the Qur'an or the *Ahadith*.

Though in the beginning a large number of religious leaders applied themselves to the task, now only four major schools of thought remain. They are<sup>1</sup>:

1. *Fiqh-e-Hanafī*: This is the *Fiqh* compiled by Abu Hanifa Nu'man bin Thabit with the assistance and co-operation of Abu Yusuf Muhammad, Zufar and others, all of whom

1. The periods and present position of the respective Fiqhs are as follows:

Abu Hanifa Nu'man bin Thabit was born in 80 A.H. (699 A.D.) and died in 150 A.H. (767 A.D.). There are approximately 340 million followers of this Fiqh in the world mostly concentrated in Turkey, Pakistan, Bharat, Afghanistan, Transjordan, Indo-China, China and Soviet Russia.

Malik bin Anas Asbahi was born in 93 A.H. (714 A.D.) and died in 179 A.H. (798 A.D.). There are approximately 45 million followers of this Fiqh in the world mainly concentrated in Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Sudan, Kuwait and Bahrein.

Muhammad bin Idrees al-Shafi'i was born in 150 A.H. (767 A.D.) and died in 240 A.H. (854 A.D.). His followers are approximately 100 million and concentrated mainly in Palestine, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Indonesia.

Ahmad bin Hanbal was born in 164 A.H. (780 A.D.) and died in 241 A.H. (855 A.D.). There are some 3 million followers of this Fiqh mainly concentrated in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Syria.

had high religious attainments to their credit. This is known as the Hanafi School of *Fiqh*.

2. *Fiqh-e-Maliki*: This *Fiqh* was derived by Malik bin Anas Asbahi.

3. *Fiqh-e-Shafi'i*: Founded by Muhammad bin Idrees al-Shafi'i.

4. *Fiqh-e-Hanbali*: Founded by Ahmad bin Hanbal.

All of these were given the final form within two hundred years of the time of the Prophet. The differences that appear in the four schools are but the natural outcome of the fact that truth is many-sided. When different persons employ themselves in interpreting a given event, they come out with explanations according to their own lights. What gives these various schools of thought the authenticity that is associated with them is the unimpeachable integrity of their respective founders and the authenticity of the method they adopted. That's why all Muslims, whatever school they may belong to, regard all the four schools of thought as correct and true. Though the authenticity of all the four schools of *Fiqh* goes unchallenged, one can follow only one of them in one's life, though there is the group of *Ahl-i-Hadith* who believe that those who have the required knowledge and learning should directly approach the Qur'an and the Hadith for guidance and those who are not bestowed with such knowledge and faculties should follow whomsoever they may choose in a particular matter.<sup>2</sup>

### Tasawwuf

*Fiqh* deals with the apparent and the observable conduct, the fulfilling of a duty in letter. What concerns itself with the spirit of conduct is known as *Tasawwuf*. For example, when we say our prayers, *Fiqh* will judge us only by the fulfilment of the outward requirements such as ablution, facing towards the Ka'ba, the timing and the number of *Rak'ats*, while *Tasawwuf* will judge our prayers by our concentration, devotion, purification of our souls, and the effect of our prayers on our morals and manners. Thus, the true Islamic *Tasawwuf* is the measure of our spirit of obedience and sincerity, while *Fiqh* governs our carrying our commands to the last detail. An *'Ibadat* devoid of spirit, though correct in procedure, is like a man handsome in appearance but lacking in character

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2. Another major school of thought is that of the *Shi'ah* who have derived their own *Fiqh*.—Editor.

and an *'Ibadat* full of spirit but defective in execution is like a man noble in character but deformed in appearance.

The above example makes clear the relation between *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*. But it is to the misfortune of the Muslims that as they sank in knowledge and character with the passage of time, they also succumbed to the misguided philosophies of nations which were then dominant, partook of them and patched Islam with their perverted dogmas.

They polluted the pure spring of Islamic *Tasawwuf* with absurdities that could not be justified by any stretch of imagination on the basis of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Gradually a section of Muslims appeared who thought and proclaimed themselves immune to and above the requirements of the *Shari'ah*. These people are totally ignorant of Islam, for Islam cannot admit of *Tasawwuf* that loosens itself out of the *Shari'ah* and takes liberties with it. No *Sufi* has the right to transgress the limits of the *Shari'ah* or treat lightly the primary obligations (*Fara'iz*) such as daily prayers, fasting, *zakat* and the *hujj*. *Tasawwuf*, in the true sense, is but an intense love of Allah and Muhammad (peace be upon him) and such love requires a strict obedience to their commands as embodied in the Book of God and the Sunnah of His Prophet. Anyone who deviates from the divine commands makes a false claim of his love for Allah and His Apostle.

CHAPTER SEVEN

**THE PRINCIPLES OF  
THE SHARI'AH**

## THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SHARI'AH

**O**UR discussion of the fundamentals of Islam will remain incomplete if we do not cast a glance over the law of Islam, study its basic principles, and try to visualise the type of man and society which Islam wants to produce. In this last chapter we propose to undertake a study of the principles of the *Shari'ah* so that our picture of Islam may become complete and we may be able to appreciate the superiority of the Islamic way of life.

### THE SHARI'AH — Its Nature and Purport

Man has been endowed with countless powers and faculties and Providence has been very bountiful to him in this respect. He possesses intellect and wisdom, will and volition, faculties of sight, speech, taste, touch, and hearing, powers of hand and feet, passions of love, fear, and anger, and so on. All these are of extreme use to him and none of them is unnecessary or superfluous. These faculties have been bestowed upon him because he needs them badly. They are indispensable to him. His very life and success depend upon the proper use of these powers for the fulfilment of his needs and requirements. These God-given powers are meant for his service and unless they are used in full measure life cannot become worth living.

God has also provided man with all those means and resources which were provided to put his natural faculties to function and to achieve the fulfilment of his needs. The human body has been so made that it has become man's greatest instrument in his struggle for the fulfilment of his life-goal. Then there is the world in which man lives. His environment and surroundings contain resources of every description: resources which he uses as means for the achievement of his ends. Nature and all that belongs to it have been harnessed for him and he can make every conceivable use of them. And there are other men of his own kind, so that they may co-operate with each other in the reconstruction of a better and prosperous life.



Now, reflect a little deeply over this phenomenon. These powers and resources have been conferred upon you so that they may be used for the good of others. They have been created for your good and are not meant to harm and destroy you. Their function is to enrich with good and virtue and not to throw it into jeopardy. Thus the proper use of these powers is that which makes them beneficial to you; and even if there be some harm, it must not exceed the unavoidable minimum. That alone would amount to the proper utilisation of these powers. Every other use which results in waste or destruction would be wrong, unreasonable and uncalled for. For instance, if you do something that causes you harm or injury, that would be a mistake, pure and simple. Or if your actions harm others and make you a nuisance to them, that would be a sheer folly and an utter misuse of God-given powers. Or if you waste the resources, spoil them for nothing or destroy them, that too would be a gross mistake. Such activities would be flagrantly unreasonable, for it is the human reason which suggests that destruction and injury must be avoided and the path of gain and profit be pursued. And if any harm be courted, it must be only in such cases where it is just unavoidable and where it is bound to yield a greater benefit. Any deviation from this would be evidently a wrong course.

Keeping this basic consideration in view, when we look to the human-folk, we find that there are two kinds of people: *first*, those who knowingly misuse their powers and resources and through this misuse waste the resources, injure their own vital interests, and cause harm to the other people; and, *secondly*, those who are sincere and earnest but err because of ignorance. Those who intentionally misuse their powers are wicked and evil-mongers and deserve the powerful club of law for their control and reform. Those who err because of ignorance, need proper knowledge and guidance so that they see the Right Path and make the best use of their powers and resources. And the code of behaviour — the *Shari'ah* — which God has revealed to man fulfils this very need.

The *Shari'ah* stipulates the law of God and provides guidance for the regulation of life in the best interests of man. Its objective is to show the *best way* to man and provide him with the ways and means to fulfil his needs in the most successful and most beneficial way. The law of God is out and out for your benefit. There is nothing in it which tends

to waste your powers, or to suppress your natural need and desires, or to kill your normal urges and emotions. It does not plead for asceticism. It does not say: Abandon the world, give up all ease and comfort of life, quit your homes and wander about in plains and mountains and jungles without bread or cloth, putting yourself to inconvenience and self-annihilation. No, certainly not. This viewpoint has no relevance to the law of Islam, a law that has been formulated by God Who has created this world for the benefit of mankind. The *Shari'ah* has been revealed by that very God Who has harnessed everything for man. He would not like to ruin His creation. He has not given man any power that is useless or unnecessary, nor has He created anything in the heavens and the earth which may not be of service to man. It is His explicit Will that the universe — this grand workshop with its multifarious activities — should go on functioning smoothly and graciously so that man — the prize of creation — should make the best and most productive use of all his powers and resources, of everything that has been harnessed for him in the earth and in the high heavens. He should use them in such a way that he and his fellow human beings may reap handsome prizes from them and should never, intentionally or unintentionally, be of any harm to God's creation. The *Shari'ah* is meant to guide the step of man in this respect. It forbids all that is harmful to man, and allows or ordains all that is useful and beneficial to him.

The fundamental principle of the Law is that man has the right, and in some cases it is his bounden duty, to fulfil all his genuine needs and desires and make every conceivable effort to promote his interests and achieve success and happiness — but (and it is an important 'but') he should do all this in such a way that not only the interests of other people are not jeopardised and no harm is caused to their strivings towards the fulfilment of their rights and duties, but there should be all possible social cohesion, mutual assistance and co-operation among human beings in the achievement of their objectives. In respect of those things in which good and evil, gain and loss are inextricably mixed up, the tenet of this law is to choose little harm for the sake of greater benefit and sacrifice a little benefit for avoiding a greater harm. This is the basic approach of the *Shari'ah*.

Now we know that man's knowledge is limited. Every man in every age does not, by himself, know what is good and

what is evil, what is beneficial and what is harmful to him. The sources of human knowledge are too limited to provide him the unalloyed truth. That is why God has spared man the risks of trial and error and revealed to him the Law which is the right and complete code of life for the entire human race.<sup>1</sup> The merits and the truths of this code are

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1. It would be instructive to refer here to an example. Look to the colour problem. The world has not yet been able to adopt a rational and human approach towards the coloured people. Biology, for a time, was used to sanction colour discrimination. In the United States for the last two centuries the courts upheld the differentiation. Thousands of human beings were coerced, gagged and tortured for the 'crime' that their skin was black. Separate laws were administered to the whites and the blacks. They could not even study under the same roof in the same school or college. It was only on May 17, 1954 that the U.S. Supreme Court gave a ruling to the effect that colour discrimination in universities was unjust and against the principle of equality of man. After committing heinous blunders for a number of centuries man came to the view that such discriminations are unjust and should be abolished. And even now there are many who have not realised the truth of this assertion and still stand for segregation, for instance, the Government of the Union of South Africa and the Western population of the African Continent. Even in the United States a large number of 'civilised' people have not as yet submitted to degradation. This is how the human mind has dealt with this problem. The *Shari'ah*, on the other hand, declared this discrimination unjust from the very first day. It showed the right path, the noble course and saved man from the abysmal pits of error and blunder. The Holy Qur'an says: "We have made all the children of Adam, i.e. all human beings, respectable and dignified." The Qur'an again declares: "O ye people! surely We have created you of a male and a female and made you tribes and families so that ye may identify each other. Surely the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is one who is most pious, most mindful of his duty." Similarly, the Holy Prophet says: "O people, verily your Lord is one and your Father is one. All of you belong to Adam and Adam was made of clay. There is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab nor for a non-Arab over an Arab; nor for a white-coloured over a black-coloured nor for a black-skinned over a white-skinned except in piety. Verily the noblest among you is he who is the most pious" (*vide* Oration of the Prophet on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage).

Now, look! This is the clear truth which the *Shari'ah* has told to man *more than thirteen centuries ago*, but the unguided reason has succeeded only in touching the fringe of it after centuries of wastes, losses and blunders, after subjecting hundreds of thousands of people to indiscreet segregation and after degrading men and corrupting human society for centuries. The *Shari'ah* gives the simplest and the shortest approach to reality and its disregard leads to utter waste and failure.—*Editor*.

becoming more and more clear to man with the passage of time. A few centuries ago, many of its advantages were hidden from their eye — they have now become clear with the increase of knowledge. Even today some of the people do not appreciate all the merits of this code, but further progress of knowledge would throw new lights on them and bring their superiority into clear perspective. The world is willy-nilly drifting towards the Divine Code — many of those people who refused to accept are now, after centuries of gropings and trials and errors, being obliged to adopt some of the provisions of this law. Those who denied the truth of the revelation and pinned all faith to unguided human reason, after committing blunders and courting bitter experience, are adopting in one way or the other the injunctions of *Shari'ah*. But after what a loss! And even then not in its entirety! On the other hand, there are people who repose faith in God's Prophets, accept their word and adopt the *Shari'ah* with full knowledge and understanding. They may not be aware of all the merits of a certain instruction, but on the whole they accept a code which is the outcome of true knowledge and which saves them from the evils and blunders of ignorance and of trial and error. Such are the people who are on the right path and are bound to succeed.

### **THE SHARI'AH — Rights and Obligations**

The scheme of life which Islam envisages consists of a set of rights and obligations, and every human being, everyone who accepts this religion, is enjoined to live up to them. Broadly speaking, the law of Islam imposes four kinds of rights and obligations upon every man, *viz.* (i) the rights of God which every man is obliged to fulfil, (ii) his own rights upon his own self, (iii) the rights of other people over him, and (iv) the rights of those powers and resources which God has placed in his service and has empowered him to use for his benefit.

These rights and obligations constitute the corner-stone of Islam and it is the bounden duty of every true Muslim to understand them and obey them earnestly and carefully. The *Shari'ah* clearly discusses each and every kind of right and deals with it in detail. It also throws light on the ways and means through which the obligations can be discharged — so that all of them may be simultaneously implemented and none of them gets violated or trampled underfoot. Now we shall

briefly discuss these rights and obligations so that an idea of the Islamic way of life and its fundamental values may be formed.

## 1. THE RIGHTS OF GOD

First of all we must study the grounds on which Islam bases the relationship of man to his Creator. The most primary and foremost right of God is that man should have faith in Him alone. He should acknowledge his authority and associate none with Him. This is epitomised in the Kalima: *La ilaha illallah* (there is no god but Allah).<sup>2</sup>

The second right of God on us is to accept wholeheartedly and follow His guidance (*Hidayat*)—the code He has revealed for man—and to seek His pleasure with all the biddings of the mind and soul. We fulfil the dictates of this right by reposing belief in God's Prophet and by accepting his guidance and leadership.<sup>3</sup>

The third right of God on us is that we should obey Him honestly and unreservedly. We fulfil the needs of this right by following God's Law as contained in the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The fourth right of God on us is to worship Him. This is rendered by offering of prayers and other *'Ibadat* as described earlier.<sup>5</sup>

These rights and obligations precede all other rights and as such they are discharged even at the cost of some sacrifice of other rights and duties. For instance, in offering prayers and keeping fasts one has to sacrifice many of one's personal rights. A man has to undergo hardships and offer sacrifices in the proper discharge of these duties to God. He has to get up early in the morning for his prayers and he, therefore, sacrifices his sleep and rest for it. During the day he often puts off many of his important works and gives up his recreations only to worship his Creator. In the month of Ramadhan (the month of fasts) he braces hunger and inconvenience merely to please his Lord. By paying *zakat* he loses his wealth and demonstrates that the love of God is over and above everything else and that the love of wealth cannot come in its way.

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2. This point has already been discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

3. This has been discussed in Chapter Three.

4. See Chapter Four.

5. See Chapter Five.

In the *Pilgrimage* he undergoes sacrifices of wealth and troubles of travel. And in *Jihad* he sacrifices money, material and all that he has — *even his own life*.

Similarly, in the discharge of these obligations one has to sacrifice, more or less, some of the ordinary rights of others and thus injure his own interests at large. A servant has to leave his work and attend to the worship of his Lord. A business man has to stop his business and undertake the Pilgrimage to Mecca. In *Jihad* a man takes away life and gives it away solely in the cause of Allah. In the same way, in rendering God's rights one has to sacrifice many of those things which man has in his control, like animals, wealth etc. But God has so formulated the *Shari'ah* that harmony and equilibrium are established in the different fields of life and the sacrifice of others' rights is reduced to the barest minimum. This is achieved by the limits prescribed by God. He has allowed us every facility in the fulfilment of the obligation of *Salat*. If you cannot get water for ablution, or you are sick, you can perform *tayammum* (dry ablution). If you are on a journey, you can cut short the *Salat*. If you are ill and cannot stand in the prayer, you can offer it while sitting or lying. Then the recitation in the prayer is so manageable that the prayers can be shortened or enlarged as one may wish: at times of rest and ease we may recite a long chapter of the *Qur'an*, at busy hours of life we may recite a few verses only. Rather, the instruction is that in the congregational prayers and in those prayers which occur in the business hours, the recitation should be short. God is pleased with the optional devotions (*Navafil*), but He disapproves our denying ourselves sleep and rest and the sacrifice of the rights of our children and of the household. Islam wants us to strike a balance between the various activities of life.

Similar is the case with fasts. In the whole year there is only one month for the obligatory fasts. During journey or sickness you can omit them, and then keep them at some other convenient time of the year. The women are exempted from fasting when they are pregnant or in their menses or suckling period. The fast is to break at the appointed time and any delay in it is disapproved. And there is permission to eat and drink from the sunset up to the break of the dawn. Optional fasts are highly valued and God is pleased at them, but He does not like you to keep fasts continuously and make your-



self weak to perform your ordinary occupations of life ably and satisfactorily.

Similarly, look to the case of *Zakat*; only the minimum rate has been fixed by God and man has been left free to spend as much more as he likes in the cause of Allah. If one gives the *Zakat*, one fulfils one's duty, but if one spends more in charity, one seeks more and more of God's pleasure. But He does not like us to sacrifice all our belongings in charity or to deny ourselves and our relatives those rights and comforts which they must enjoy. He does not want us to impoverish ourselves. We are commanded to be moderate in charity.

Then look to the Pilgrimage. It is obligatory only for those who can afford money for the journey and who are physically fit to bear its hardships. Then, it is obligatory to perform it only once in the whole life, in any convenient year. If there be war or any other situation which poses risks to life, it can be postponed. Moreover, the parents' permission has been made an essential condition, so that the aged parents may not suffer discomfort in your absence. All these things clearly show what importance God has Himself given to the rights of others *vis-a-vis* His own rights.

The greatest sacrifice in the way of God is made in *Jihad*, for in it a man sacrifices not only his own life and property in His cause but destroys those of others also. But, as already stated, one of the Islamic principles is that we should suffer a lesser loss to save ourselves from a greater loss. What comparison can the loss of some lives—even if they are some thousands or more—bear to the calamity that may befall mankind as a result of the victory of evil over good and of aggressive atheism over the religion of God. Decidedly that is a much greater loss and a bigger calamity, for as a result of it not only the religion of God will run down but the world will also become the abode of evil immoralities and perversion, and life will be disrupted from within and without. In order to escape this greater evil God has, therefore, commanded us to sacrifice our lives and property for His pleasure. But at the same time He has forbidden unnecessary bloodshed, injuring the aged, the women, the children, the sick and the wounded. His order is to fight only against those who rise to fight. He enjoins us not to cause unnecessary destruction even in the enemy's lands, and to deal fairly and honourably with the defeated. We are instructed to observe the agreements made with the enemy and to stop fighting when they do so or when



they stop their aggressive and anti-Islamic activities. Thus Islam allows only for the minimum essential sacrifice of life, property and other people's rights in the discharging of God's rights. It is eager to establish a balance in different demands of man and so adjust different rights and obligations that life is enriched with the choicest of merits and achievements.

## 2. THE RIGHTS OF THE SELF

Next come man's personal rights, i.e. the rights of one's own self.

The fact is that man is more cruel and unjust to himself than to any other being. On the face of it it may seem very astonishing: How can a man be unjust to himself, particularly when we find that he loves himself most? How can he be his own enemy? It seems to be quite unintelligible. But deeper reflection would show that it contains a large grain of truth.

The greatest weakness of man is that when he feels an overpowering desire, he, instead of resisting it, succumbs to it, and in its gratification knowingly causes great harm to himself. There is a man who gets to drinking: he becomes mad after it and carries it on at the cost of money, health, reputation and everything that he has. Another person is so fond of eating that in his eating cruises he spoils his health and endangers his life. Another person becomes a slave of his sexual appetites and ruins himself in over-indulgence. Still another gets enamoured of spiritual elevations: he suppresses his genuine desires, refuses to fulfil his physical needs and requirements, controls his appetite, does away with clothes, leaves the home and retires into mountains and jungles. He believes that the world is not meant for him and abhors it in all its forms and manifestations. These are a few of the instances of man's tendency to go to the extremes and get lost in any one field. One comes across a number of such instances of maladjustment and disequilibrium in one's everyday life and there is no need to multiply them here.

Islam stands for human welfare and its avowed objective is to establish poise and balance in life. That is why the *Shari'ah* clearly declares that your own self also has certain rights upon you. A fundamental principle of it is "there are rights upon you of your own person".

The *Shari'ah* forbids the use of all those things which are injurious to man's physical, mental or moral existence. It

forbids the consumption of blood, intoxicating drugs, flesh of pig, beasts of prey and poisonous and unclean animals, and the carcass; for all these have undesirable effects upon the physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual life of man. While forbidding these things, Islam enjoins upon man the use of all clean, healthy and useful things and asks him not to deprive his body of clean food, for man's body too has a right upon him. The law of Islam forbids nudity and orders man to use decent and dignified dress. It exhorts him to work for a living and strongly disapproves of one's remaining idle and jobless. The spirit of the *Shari'ah* is that man should use for his comfort and welfare the powers God has bestowed upon him and the resources that He has spread in the earth and the heavens.

Islam does not believe in the suppression of even the sexual desires; it enjoins man to control and regulate it and seek its fulfilment in marriage. It forbids him to resort to self-persecution and total self-denial and permits him, nay, bids him to enjoy the rightful comforts and pleasures of life and remain pious and steadfast in the midst of life and its problems. To seek spiritual elevation, moral purity, nearness to God, and salvation in the life to come, it is not necessary to abandon this world. Instead, the trial of man lies in this world and he should remain in its midst and follow the way of Allah here in it. The road to success lies in following the Divine Law in the midst of life's complexities, and not outside it.

Islam totally forbids suicide and impresses upon man that life belongs to God. It is like a trust which God has bestowed upon you for a certain period of time so that you may make the best use of it — it is not meant to be spoiled and destroyed in a frivolous way.

This is how Islam instils in the mind of man that his own person, his own self, possesses certain rights and it is his obligation to discharge them as best as he can, in the ways that have been suggested by the *Shari'ah*. This is how he can be true to his own self.

### 3. THE RIGHTS OF OTHER MEN

On the one hand the *Shari'ah* has enjoined man to fulfil his personal rights and be just to his own self, and on the other hand, it has asked him to seek their fulfilment in such a way that the rights of other people are not violated. The

*Shari'ah* has tried to strike a balance in the rights of man and the rights of the society so that no conflict may arise between the two and all must cooperate in establishing the law of God.

Islam has strongly forbidden the telling of a lie in every form and shape, for it sullies the liar, causes harm to other people, and becomes a source of menace to society. It has totally forbidden theft, robbery, bribery, forgery, cheating, interest, usury, for whatever man gains by these means is really obtained by causing loss and injury to others. Back-biting, tale-bearing, slandering and calumny have been forbidden. Gambling, lottery, speculation, and all games of chance have been prohibited, for in all of them one gains at the cost of thousands of other losing people. All those forms of exploitative commerce have been prohibited in which one party alone is to be the loser. Monopoly, hoarding, blackmarketing, holding of land from cultivation and all other forms of individual and social aggrandizement have been prohibited. Murder, blood-spilling and spreading of mischief, disorder and destruction have been made crimes, for no one has a right to take away the life or property of other people merely for his personal gain or gratification. Adultery, fornication and unnatural sexual indulgence have been strictly prohibited for they not only vitiate the morality and impair the health of the perpetrator of these crimes but also spread corruption and immorality in society, cause venereal disease, ruin public health, degenerate the health and morals of the coming generations, upset the relations between man and man and cut asunder the very fabric of cultural and social structure of the community. Islam wants to eliminate, root and branch, such abominable crimes.

All these limits and restrictions have been imposed by the law of Islam to prevent a man from encroaching upon the rights of others. Islam does not want a man to become so selfish and self-centred that for the attainment of a few charms of the mind and body he unashamedly assails the rights of others and violates all sanctions of morality. Nor does it allow him to crucify the interests of others for the attainment of his own personal rights. The law of Islam so regulates life that the welfare of one and all may be achieved. But for the attainment of human welfare and cultural advancement, some negative restrictions alone are not sufficient. In a really peaceful and prosperous society people should not only not violate the rights of others and injure their interests but should positively

cooperate with each other and establish such mutual relations and social institutions that contribute towards the welfare of all and the establishment of an ideal human society. The *Shari'ah* has guided us in this respect as well. We, therefore, propose to give here a brief summary of those injunctions of Islamic law which throw light on this aspect of life and society.

Family is the first cradle of man. It is here that the primary character-traits of man are set. As such it is not only the cradle of man but also the cradle of civilisation. Therefore, let us first of all consider the injunctions of the *Shari'ah* relating to the family. A family consists of the husband, the wife, and their children. The Islamic injunctions about the family are very explicit. It assigns to man the responsibility of earning and providing the necessities of his wife and children and to protect them from all the vicissitudes of life. To the woman it assigns the duty of managing the household, training and bringing up children in the best possible way, and of providing to her husband and children the greatest possible comfort and contentment. The duty of the children is to respect and obey their parents, and, when they are grown up, to serve them and provide for their needs. To make the household a well-managed and well-disciplined institution, Islam has adopted the following two measures:

(a) The husband has been given the position of the head of the family. No institution can work smoothly unless there is a chief administrator in it. You cannot think of a school without a headmaster or a city without an administrator. If there is nobody to control an institution, nothing but chaos would result. If everybody in the family goes his own way, nothing but confusion would prevail. If the husband goes one way and the wife the other, the future of the children would be ruined. There must be someone as the head of the family so that discipline may be maintained therein and the family becomes an ideal institution of society. Islam gives this position to the husband and in this way makes the family a well-disciplined primary unit of civilisation: a model for the society at large.

(b) This head of the family has further been burdened with some responsibilities. It is his duty to earn the living, and carry on all those tasks which are performed outside the household. It has freed woman from all the extra household activities and assigned them all to the shoulders of the husband.

She has been relieved from the outdoor duties of the house, so that she might devote herself fully to the indoor duties and put all her energies in the maintenance of the household and in the rearing of the children—the future guardians of the nation. The women have been ordered to remain in their houses and discharge the responsibilities assigned to them. Islam does not want to tax them doubly: to rear the children and maintain the household, and to earn a living and do the outdoor jobs also. That would be evidently sheer injustice. Islam, therefore, effects a functional distribution between the sexes.<sup>6</sup>

But this does not mean that the woman is not allowed to

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6 After tasting the bitter consequences of destroying this functional distribution, even some Western thinkers are talking in terms of women's going back to their homes. Here are the views of two leading thinkers:

Dr. Fulton J. Sheen writes in *Communism and the Conscience of the West*: "The disturbance of family life in America is more desperate than at any other period in our history. The family is the barometer of the nation. What the average home is that is America: if the average home is living on credit, spending money lavishly, running into debt, then America will be a nation which will pile national debt on national debt until the day of the Great Collapse. If the average husband and wife are not faithful to their marriage vows, then America will not insist on fidelity to the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms. If there is a deliberate frustration of the fruits of love, then the nation will develop economic policies of flowing undue cotton, throwing coffee into the sea and frustrating nature for the sake of economic prices. If the husband and wife live only for self and not for each other, if they fail to see that their individual happiness is conditioned on mutuality, then we shall have a country where capital and labour fight like husband and wife, both making social life barren and economic peace impossible. If the husband or wife permits outside solicitations to woo one away from the other, then we shall become a nation where alien philosophies will infiltrate, as Communism sweeps away that basic loyalty which was known as patriotism. If husband and wife live as if there is no God, then America shall have bureaucrats' pleading for atheism as a national policy repudiating the Declaration of Independence and denying that all our rights and liberties come to us from God. It is the home which decides the nation. What happens in the family will happen later in the Congress, the White House and the Supreme Court. Every country gets the kind of Government it deserves. As we live in the house, so shall the nation live."

Professor Cyril Joad goes to the extent of clearly saying that: "I believe the world would be a happier place if women were content to look after their homes and their children, even if some slight lowering of the standards of living were involved thereby." (*Variety*, December 1, 1952).

step out of the house at all. This is not the case. She is allowed to go out when necessary. The law has specified the home as her special field of work and has stressed that women should attend to the improvement of the home life. And whenever they have to go out, they can go after observing certain necessary formalities.

It is a general rule that the sphere of the family widens through blood-relations and marriage connections. To bind together the members of the family into one unity, to keep their mutual relations close and healthy, and to make each one of them a source of support, strength, and contentment to the other, the law of Islam has formulated certain basic laws and rules which embody the wisdom of the ages. They may be summed up as follows:

1. Marriage between those persons who have naturally and circumstantially the closest association and affiliations with each other have been prohibited. Such relations between whom marriage is forbidden are: mother and son, father and daughter, step-father and step-daughter, step-mother and step-son, brother and sister, foster-brother and foster-sister, paternal uncle and his niece, aunt (father's or mother's sister) and her nephew, maternal uncle and his niece, mother-in-law and her son-in-law, and father-in-law and his daughter-in-law. This prohibition strengthens the bonds of family and make relations between these relatives absolutely pure and unalloyed and they can mix up with each other without any restraint and with sincere affection.

2. Beyond the limits of the forbidden marriage relations given above, matrimonial relations can be effected between the members of kindred families, so that such relationship may bind them still closer. Marriage connections between two families which are freely associated with each other, and which therefore know each other's habits, customs, and traditions, are generally successful. Therefore the *Shari'ah* has not only permitted them but also encouraged and preferred relations with kindred families to those of entirely strange families (though this is not forbidden).

3. In a group of kindred families, usually there co-exist the rich and the poor, the prosperous and the destitute. The Islamic principle is that a man's relatives have the greatest right on him. The respect for the tie between relatives is technically called *silla-i-rehm*. The Muslims are enjoined to respect this bond in every possible way. To be disloyal to



one's relatives and to be negligent of their rights is a great sin and God has disapproved of it. If a relative becomes poor, or is beset with some trouble, it is the duty of his rich and prosperous relatives to help him. In *Zakat* and other charities also special regard for the rights of relatives has been enjoined.

4. The law of inheritance is so formulated in Islam that the property left by the deceased cannot become concentrated at one place. It is distributed in such a way that all near relatives get their shares. Son, daughter, wife, husband, father, mother, brother and sister are the nearest relatives and their share in the inheritance comes first. They get the first priority. In the case of absence of these near relatives, shares are given to the next nearest relatives. Therefore after the death of a man his wealth is distributed amongst his kith and kin and a fatal blow is struck to the capitalistic concentration of wealth. This law of Islam is of unique excellence, and other nations are now taking leaves out of it. But the sad irony is that the Muslims themselves are not fully aware of its revolutionary potentialities and in ignorance some of them are even avoiding it in practice. In several parts of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent daughters are being deprived of their share in inheritance and this is a palpable injustice and a flagrant violation of the Qur'an's clear injunctions.

After the family and its connections come man's relations with his friends, neighbours, dwellers of his own locality, village or city, and persons with whom he comes in constant contact. Islam recognises these relations and enjoins a Muslim to treat them all honestly, truthfully, equitably and courteously. It bids the believers to take care of others' feelings, to avoid indecent and abusive language, to help each other, to attend to the sick, to support the destitute, to assist the needy and the crippled, to sympathise with the trouble-stricken, to look after the orphans and the widows, to feed the hungry, to clothe the under-clad and to help the unemployed in seeking employment. Islam says that if God has bestowed upon you wealth and riches, don't squander it on luxurious frivolities. It has prohibited the use of gold and silver vessels, to wear costly silken dresses, and to waste money on useless ventures and extravagant luxuries. This injunction of the *Shari'ah* is based upon the principle that no man should be allowed to squander upon himself a wealth that can maintain thousands of human beings. It is cruel and unjust that money which can be used to feed the teeming starving humanity be frittered



away in useless or extravagant decorations, exhibitions, and fireworks. Islam does not want to deprive a man of his wealth and belongings. What one has earned or inherited is beyond doubt his own property. Islam recognises his right and allows him to enjoy it and make the best use of it. It also suggests that if you are wealthy, you should have better dress and good accommodation and a decent living. But Islam wants that in all the activities of man the human element must not be lost sight of. What Islam totally disapproves of is conceited self-centredness, which neglects the welfare and well-being of others and gives birth to an exaggerated individualism. It wants that the entire human society should prosper, and not merely a few, stray individuals. It instils in the minds of its followers the social consciousness and suggests them to live a simple and frugal life, to avoid multiplying their needs to extreme excesses and, while fulfilling their own needs, to keep in view the needs and requirements of their kith and kin, their near and remote relatives, their friends and associates, their neighbours and fellow-citizens.<sup>7</sup> This is what Islam wants to achieve.

So far we have discussed the nature of man's relations with his nearer and close circles. Now look at the wider perspective and see what kind of community Islam wants to establish. Everyone who embraces Islam, not only enters the fold of the religion but also becomes a member of the Islamic community. The *Shari'ah* has formulated certain rules of behaviour for wider fraternity as well. These rules oblige the Muslims to help each other, to bid the good and forbid the evil, and to see that no wrong creeps into their society. Some of the injunctions of the law of Islam, in this respect, are as follows:

1. To preserve the moral life of the nation and to safeguard the evolution of society on healthy lines, free mingling of both the sexes has been prohibited. Islam effects a functional distribution between the sexes and sets different spheres of activity for both of them. Women should in the main devote themselves to household duties in their homes and men should attend to their jobs in the socio-economic spheres. Outside the pale of the nearest relations between whom marriage is forbidden men and women have been asked not to mix freely

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7. The Qur'an says:

"In their wealth the needy, the beggar, and the destitute have their due." (li, 19).—*Editor*.

with each other and even if they have to contact each other they should do so with *purdah*. When women have to go out of their homes, they should use simple dress and go out properly veiled. They should also cover their faces and hands as a normal course. Only in genuine necessity can they unveil, and there too they must re-cover when the necessity has expired. Along with this, men have been asked to keep down their eyes and not to look upon women. And if someone accidentally happens to look upon some woman, he should turn away the eye. To try to see them is wrong and to try to seek their acquaintance is worse. It is the duty of both men and women to look after their personal morality and purge their souls of all impurities. Marriage is the proper form of sexual relationship and no one should attempt to overstep this limit or even think of any sexual licence; the very thought and imagination of man should be purified from such perverse ideas.

2. For the same purpose it has been enjoined that proper dress should always be worn and no man should expose his body from the knees to the navel, nor should a woman expose any part of her body except her face and hands to any person other than her husband, however closely related to her he might be. This is technically called *satr* (cover) and to keep these parts covered is the religious duty of every man and woman. Through this directive Islam wants to cultivate in its followers a deep sense of modesty and purity and to suppress all forms and manifestations of immodesty and moral deviation.

3. Islam does not approve of such pastimes, entertainments, and recreations as tend to stimulate sensual passions and vitiate the canons of morality. Such pastimes are sheer waste of time, money, and energy, and destroy the moral fibre of society. Recreation in itself is no doubt a necessity. It acts as a spur to activity and quickens the spirit of life and adventure. It is as important to life as water and air; particularly after hard work one does require rest and recreation. But the recreation must be such as refreshes the mind and enlivens the spirit, and not of a type that depresses the spirit and depraves the passions. The absurd and wasteful entertainments wherein thousands of people witness depraving scenes of crime and immorality are the very antithesis of healthy recreation. Although they may be gratifying to the senses, their effect

upon the minds and morals of the people is horrifying. They spoil their habits and morality and can have no place in an Islamic society and culture.

4. To safeguard the unity and solidarity of the nation and to achieve the welfare and well-being of the Muslim community, the believers have been enjoined to avoid mutual hostility, social dissensions and sectarianism of all hue and colour. They have been exhorted to settle their differences and disputes in accordance with the principles laid down in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. And if the parties fail to reach any settlement, instead of fighting and quarrelling amongst themselves, they should bury the differences in the name of Allah and leave the decision unto Him. In matters of common national welfare they should help each other, keep away from quarrel-mongering, obey their leaders, and avoid wasting their energies in bickerings over trivial things. Such feuds and schisms are a disgrace to the Muslim community and a potential source of national weakness, and must be shunned at all costs.

5. Islam regards knowledge and science as the common heritage of mankind and the Muslims have perfect liberty to learn them and their practical uses from whatever quarter they can. But as far as the question of culture and the way of life is concerned, it forbids them to imitate the modes of living of other peoples. The psychology of imitation suggests that it springs from a sense of inferiority and abasement and its net result is the cultivation of a defeatist mentality. Cultural aping of others has very disastrous consequences upon a nation; it destroys its inner vitality, blurs its vision, befogs its critical faculties, breeds inferiority complex, and gradually but assuredly saps all the springs of culture and sounds its death-knell. This is why the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) has positively and forcefully forbidden the Muslims to assume the culture and mode of life of the non-Muslims. The strength of a nation does not lie in its dress, etiquette, or fine arts; its power and growth owe themselves to right knowledge, science, discipline, organisation and energy for action. If you want to learn from others, take lessons from their will to action and social discipline, avail yourselves of the knowledge and technical accomplishments and do not lean towards those arts and crafts which breed cultural slavery and national inferiority. The Muslims have been enjoined to guard against such influence.

Now we come to the relationship of the Muslims with the non-Muslims. In dealing with them, the believers have been instructed not to be intolerant or narrow-minded. They have been commanded not to abuse or speak ill of their religious leaders or saints, nor to say anything insulting to their religion. They have been instructed not to seek dissensions with them unnecessarily but to live in peace and amity. If the non-Muslims observe peace and conciliatory attitude towards the Muslims, and do not violate their territories and other rights, they should also keep congenial and friendly relations with them and deal with them fairly and justly. It is the very dictate of our religion that we possess greater human sympathy and politeness than any other people, and behave in most noble and modest ways. Bad manners, ill-behaviour, oppression and narrow-mindedness are against the very spirit of Islam. A Muslim is born in the world to become a living symbol of goodness, nobility and humanity. He should win the hearts of people by his character and example. Then alone he can become the true ambassador of Islam.

#### 4. THE RIGHTS OF ALL CREATURES

Now we come to the last kind of rights. God has honoured man with authority over His countless creatures. Everything has been harnessed for him. He has been endowed with the power to subdue them and make them serve his objectives. This superior position gives man an authority over them and he enjoys the right to use them as he likes. But that does not mean that God has given him unbridled liberty. Islam says that all the creation has certain rights upon man. They are: he should not waste them on fruitless ventures nor should he unnecessarily hurt them or harm them. When he uses them for his service he should cause them the least possible harm, and should employ the best and the least injurious methods of using them.

The law of Islam embodies many injunctions about these rights. For instance, we are allowed to slaughter animals for food and have been forbidden to kill them merely for fun or sport and deprive them of their lives without necessity. To slaughter them, the method of *zabih* (slaughtering) has been fixed, the best possible method of obtaining meat from the animals. Other methods are either more painful or spoil the meat and deprive it of some of its useful properties. Islam

avoids both these difficulties and suggests a method which, on the one hand, is less painful to the animal and on the other preserves all the healthy and useful properties of meat. Similarly, killing an animal by causing continuous pain and injury is considered abominable in Islam. Islam allows the killing of dangerous and venomous animals and of beasts of prey only because it values man's life more than theirs. But here too it does not allow their killing by resort to prolonged painful methods.

Regarding the beasts of burden and animals used for riding and transport, Islam distinctly forbids man to keep them hungry, to take hard and intolerable work from them and to beat them cruelly. To catch birds and imprison them in cages without any special purpose is considered abominable. What to say of animals: Islam does not approve even of the useless cutting of trees and bushes. Man can use their fruits and other produce, but he has no right to destroy them. Vegetables, after all, possess life, but Islam does not allow the waste of even lifeless things; so much so that it disapproves of the wasteful flow of too much water. Its avowed purpose is to avoid waste in every conceivable form and to make the best use of all resources — living and lifeless.

### **SHARI'AH — The Universal and Eternal Law**

In the foregoing pages we have given a very brief *resume* of the law of Islam — the law which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) delivered unto mankind for all times to come. This law admits of no difference between man and man except in faith and religion. Those religious and social systems and political and cultural ideologies which differentiate between men on grounds of race, country or colour can never become universal creeds or world ideologies for the simple reason that one belonging to a certain race cannot get transformed into another race, one born in a certain country cannot tear asunder his entity from that place, nor can the whole world condense into one country, and the colour of a negro, a Chinese, and a white man cannot be changed. Such ideologies and social systems must remain confined to one race, country or community. They are bound to be narrow, limited and nationalistic, and cannot become universal. Islam, on the other hand, is a universal ideology. Any person who declares belief in *La ilaha illallah Muhammad-ur-Rasulullah* (there is no other god worthy of worship than Allah, and Muhammad is

His Prophet) enters the pale of Islam and entitles himself to the same rights as those of other Muslims. Islam makes no discrimination on the basis of race, country, colour, language or the like. Its appeal is to the entire humanity and it admits of no narrow-minded discrimination.

Then this law is also eternal. It is not based on the customs or traditions of any particular people and is not meant for any particular period of human history. It is based on the same principles of nature on which man has been created. And as that nature remains the same in all periods and under all circumstances, the law based on its unalloyed principles should also be applicable to every period and under all circumstances. And this universal and eternal religion is *Islam*.

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