

**INDSET SERIES
ON
ISLAM AND QUR'AN**

No. 1

**ISLAM
AND MODERN SOCIETY**

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(INDSET)
Hyderabad - India

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FOREWORD

It is a distressing fact that most of the Muslims lack proper understanding about the universal relevance of the Qur'anic Message which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) for the guidance of all mankind. There is considerable misapprehension too about Islam and the message of the Qur'an in the minds of Non-Muslims. The **Indian School of Excellence Trust (INDSET)** is making a humble endeavour through a series of monographs on Islam and Qur'an to project the image of Islam in its proper perspective and to explain the significance of the Qur'anic Message in a scientific and systematic way.

This Monograph attempts to present the true teachings of the Qur'an and Islamic values. It reveals the real face of Islam as a value system for all mankind, which stands for peace, prosperity; justice and brotherhood with due respect to life, property and honour for all without discrimination on the basis of faith, caste, colour or creed. Islam is defined in the Qur'an as 'The Divine Message for All'. It should not be judged by the acts of a people, who claim to be Muslims, but do opposite as to what Islam really stands for.

It is in the interest of humanity to understand Islam with open mind and deal with it in the way it deserves and not jump on the bandwagon of its detractors whose motives are anything but pious.

We conclude with a prayer to Allah (SWT) to graciously bless our efforts with success (*Aameen*).

وَآخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

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INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an is the Book revealed by God [Allah (SWT¹)] to the last Prophet, Muhammad (SAWS)². The doctrine propounded by the Qur'an is not a new concept of faith, it was enjoined to *Nuh* (Noah), *Ibrahim* (Abraham) and other Messengers: *"Verily, We have inspired you (O Muhammad), as We inspired Noah and the Prophets after him. We (also) inspired to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and Al-Asbaat (the twelve sons of Jacob), to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron and Solomon, to David we gave the Psalms."* (An-Nisa; 4:163)

The main objective of the Qur'an is to guide human beings towards the path of rectitude, to teach them facts of life, and to preach compassion, mercy and wisdom. The Qur'an guides one to what is more straight forward and reassures believers who act honourably that they shall have great rewards: *"O mankind! There has come to you a good advice from your Lord (i.e., the Qur'an, ordering all that is good and forbidding all that is evil), and healing for that (disease of ignorance, doubt, hypocrisy and differences, etc.) in your hearts, - a guidance and a mercy (explaining lawful and unlawful things, etc.) for the believers."* (Yunus; 10:57)

Every human being is aware of the fact that his birth is a blessing, a miracle. His growth and evolution from a clot into a fine structure - the master creation - is a clear indication of the honour God has bestowed upon him. Therefore, it is the duty of every human being to express a sense of gratitude from the depth of his heart to

¹ 'SWT' stands for 'Subhanahu wo Ta'la', meaning 'Pure and Exalted.

² 'SAWS' stands for 'Sallallahu Alaihi wo Sallam', meaning 'blessings of Allah and Peace be upon him'.

the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe: *"Therefore, remember Me, I will remember you, give thanks to Me, and reject Me not."* (Al-Baqarah; 2:52)

The main purpose of the creation of human beings is to remember Him, to obey Him, and to worship Him: *"And I created not jinns and men except that they should worship Me."* (Adh-Dhaariyaat; 51:56)

Large numbers of Institutes in the west have introduced some courses on Islam. Unfortunately these courses are taught by those non-Muslims, who have hardly studied original sources of Islam. They also write about Islam without referring to original sources. Therefore a large number of books and articles appear in western countries with distortions. This book is a humble attempt to present, particularly for English readers of the East and West, a comprehensive idea about Islam in the light of Qur'an and *Sunnah* (Traditions) of Prophet Mohammed (SAWS). An objective survey of Islamic thought and culture and the code of conduct, based on purified monotheism and concept of righteousness, would help the readers to undertake a comparative study of Religion and find out the truths and facts about Islam as a scientific way of life, relevant for contemporary society; and also the sincere researches who are in need of guidance to attain spiritual bliss.

TAWHEED - (MOTOTHEISM) IN THE LIGHT OF QUR'AN

The Qur'an describes the attributes of God in the first chapter. The first attribute of God is the universes (*Rabb-ul 'Aalameen*). In other words, God gives human beings everything they need by way of sustenance, material and spiritual, so that human beings may be able to protect themselves from evils and move towards complete development.

This attribute of God also makes it clear that God does not belong to any particular part of this world. He is God of the whole universe, God of all the communities, tribes, sects, creeds, and generations. No group, national, racial, or religious, may say that He belongs to it alone. He, with all His grace, blessing and gifts, belongs to all mankind.

The Qur'an uses the word '*Rabb*', which is common in Semitic religions. It has a comprehensive meaning. *Rabb* means one who rears every living being, giving it all and everything, which is needed for its development and completion till it reaches its final stage. The function of *Rabb* does not cease even after its completion. Almost the same word was used in old Egyptian, Hebrew and Chaldean languages for one who reared - the master and the teacher.

The most striking example is that of the newborn baby. There are also creatures, beyond perception, that appear to have none to nourish them, nevertheless, find their nourishment provided for them from the moment they come into existence. Whoever studies Nature comes to the conclusion that Nature is beyond description and

surpasses our knowledge. In other words, "*Rabb-ul 'Aalameen*" has arranged everything in such a perfect order that every being gets his needs without any delay or hindrance in the most appropriate manner and form. It is mentioned in the Qur'an, God provides everything for everyone in right proportion and measure: "*There is no moving creature on earth but its sustenance depends on Allah...*" (Hud; 11:6)

It appears as if the sun, the moon, the earth, the atmosphere, and all the elements are in readiness to help develop life. Every being, which comes into existence, finds that Nature is so merciful that everything is ready for its nourishment in quantity and quality, form manner, required for it.

The most attractive aspect of this Divine law is its universality. It applies equally to human beings, animals, vegetables and even minerals. They are all subject to the same universal cycle of helpless birth, infancy, maturity, decay, and helpless death. In other words, they disintegrate, wither, or die. Reality is the same, but appearance is different.

As this universal process is based on the law of creation, sustenance, fulfilment, and above all continued existence, so God gives proper guidance and has also made certain conditions. He has imposed certain limits on everything. He has imposed certain limits on every being. The Qur'an describes it as *Taqdir* (Fate, Destiny) and *Hidaayat*, (Guidance).

Fate means the correct assessment of a thing and prescribing a certain state or condition of existence for it. This is determined by God, Who is not only a real and wise creator but also benevolent and beneficent to all. So everything moves on its prescribed line or within its limits.

"He created the heavens and the earth in true (proportions)..."
(Az-Zumar; 39:5)

The guidance, which leads not only human beings but also other creatures, may appear to be instinctive in character. But if seen deeper it has the character of Divine inspiration. The Divine inspiration works as a universal law. The so-called instinctive activity of the animals is a mystery for the understanding. This is Divine guidance and God gives in them this knowledge so that life may continue and move towards development. The next stage of Divine guidance is through sense, perception, and understanding.

As animals stand on the lower level of evolution, they lack the power of reasoning and analysis. But they possess inborn tendencies and intuitive insight in such a way as to warrant their preservation and continuity in life. For instance, an ant has a strong sense of smell and an eagle has a strong sight. Nature has given them these two powers and it is according to their nature and needs. These peculiarities of existence vary from creature to creature. The Qur'an states this law: *"Our Lord is He who gave to each (created) thing its form, then gave (it) guidance."* (Taaha; 20: 50)

Again even more explicitly, it says: *"Who has created, and further, given order and proportion; and Who has measured and granted guidance."* (Al-Aa'la; 87:2, 3)

The most convincing argument of the Qur'an is that it indicates that the right path or the path of truth can be discovered through wisdom and reason. The power of reasoning is the greatest blessing of God to human beings. The Qur'an is rich in explications of the nature of truth and reality: *"And on the earth are signs for those who have Faith with certainty; and also in your own selves; will you not then seeing?"* (Adh-Dhaariyaat; 51: 20, 21)

Another verse says: *“And how many a sign in the heavens and the earth they pass by, while they are averse there from?”* (Yusuf; 12:105)

Allamah Sir Mohammad Iqbaal³ also conveys the same thought in a couplet, which means that man who is trying to reach the stars and moon, should try to understand himself first. In other words, he should first understand himself and the purpose of his existence on this planet.

God has created nothing without a purpose behind it. Those who are intelligent and reflect on creation can find out what it is. The order which prevails everywhere on the earth and which is indeed universal clearly shows that the universe is purposive in its direction and evolution. The fact that there is a meaningful relationship between things indicates that the world has been created with a definite purpose. In support of the above statement, the following verses of the Qur’an may be quoted: *“Allah (alone) has created the heavens and the earth with truth (and none shared Him in their creation). Verily! Therein is surely a sign for those who believe.”* (Al-‘Ankabut; 29:44)

In these lines, God explains that in everything there are indications of an underlying purpose, which are understood by believers, though there are many who do not pay attention to these clear and visible signs.

Before the revelation of the Qur’an, the people were victims of irrational dogmas. Wrong notions about God were prevalent everywhere. The Qur’an offered to them an adequate conception of God, a rational faith and simple forms of worship. In the opening chapter, the Qur’an addresses intelligent people and invites them to

³ Allamah Sir Muhammad Iqbaal was a great poet-philosopher of Islam during pre-independent sub-continent.

study everything in the universe. One who studies the universe with an open mind, or one, whose approach is rational, certainly understands that this great factory where we live is not without a particular purpose. It works under a Supreme Being in an orderly and disciplined manner.

Another significant attribute of God is His supreme power. The power and supremacy of this greatest Nourisher and Sustainer is evident in every nook and corner of this universe. Every manifestation of Nature reminds us that unique is the Creator and Administrator of this universe.

The Qur'an repeatedly states, that the presence of order in the universe and the integration of everything in some system is clear proof of Divine providence. God is the only Sustainer of this universe, because without perfect rational supervision this complicated and well-organised universe cannot continue. No rational mind would accept a creation without a creator. In other words, those who deny the existence of God prove themselves irrational. And an irrational and unreasonable man can never understand God. In Islam and all other Semitic religions, the main emphasis is on belief in one God. All the Apostles and Prophets taught their followers to see the manifestation of God in every natural phenomenon. They had to live constantly with the consciousness of Divine presence. In modern days of scientific advancement, people want clear proof for everything; they also want physical evidence for the existence of God. To such people two answers may be given. One is that God Himself is non-material, and therefore, His existence cannot be established by ocular demonstration. Further, it may be noted that it is equally impossible to prove that God does not exist. God can easily be known through His manifestations. According to Spinoza, "**We can have the**

idea of God or the idea of the Ultimate Being just as we can have the knowledge of our own body.”⁴ Some scientists have come to this conclusion through science. All reasonable men may admit the fact that everything in this universe is the manifestation of God. How powerful is the argument of the Qur’an when it asserts: *“This is the Book (the Qur’an), whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who are Al- muttaqun⁵, who believe in the unseen...”* (Al-Baqarah; 2:2, 3).

If some people still think that this universe has come into existence by itself, and that it is without any purpose, and that there is no will behind its creation; will they, then, reject the common sense view that no edifice is possible without an architect, no organisation can exist without an organiser? Then how can a universe of such highly complicated nature, exist without a creator and without any purpose? Men who do not admit this fact are really doing violence to reason and their nature. In this connection, the Qur’an states clearly that the will to worship God is ingrained in human nature. If ever a man forgets the right path, his natural instinct shows it to him: *“...man will be a witness against himself [as his body parts (skin, hands legs etc] will speak about his deed, though he may put forth his excuses (to cover his evil deeds).”* (Al-Qiyamah; 75: 14, 15)

And what is the answer to the following question of God? *“Who created the heavens and the earth, and who sends down for you water (rain) from the sky. Yes with it We cause to grow wonderful gardens full of beauty and delight? It is not in your ability to cause the growth of the trees in them.*

⁴ Spinoza, Short Treatise 1921 quoted from ‘Fundamentals of Philosophy’ page 79 by W.T.Stace, New English Library Press London.

⁵ *Al Muttaqun* means pious and righteous persons who fear God much (abstain formal kind of sins and evil deeds which He has forbidden) and love God much (perform all kind of good deeds which He has ordained).

(Can there be another) god besides Allah? Nay, but they are a people who swerve from justice. Or who has made the earth firm to live in, made rivers in its midst, set thereon mountains immovable, and made a separating barrier between the two seas (of salt and sweet water)? (Can there be another) god besides Allah? Nay, most of them know not." (An-Namal; 27:60, 61)

Who can answer these questions with logical arguments and confidence? "Say: 'Who is it that sustains you from the sky and from the earth? Or who is it that has power over hearing and sight? And who is it that brings out the living from the dead and the dead from the living? And who is it that rules and regulates all affairs?' They will soon say Allah. Say: 'Will you not then show piety (to Him)?'" (Yunus; 10: 31)

No reasonable person could say that everything, which happens in this universe, is the result of matter and electrons. Nobody can be justified in putting forward the feeble argument that lifeless matter and senseless electrons make and move this perfect and organised universe. The Qur'an further raises the following points: "Then let man look at his food, (and how We provided it). For that We pour forth water in abundance, and split the earth in fragments, and produce therein grain, and grapes and fresh vegetation, and Olive and Dates, and enclosed Gardens, dense with lofty trees, and fruits and fodder – a provision for you and your cattle." (At-Takweer; 80: 24~32)

Further, the Qur'an says: "And verily in cattle (too), will you find an instructive Sign. From what is within their bodies, between excretion and blood, We produce, for your drink, milk, pure and agreeable to those who drink. And from the fruits of date palm and vine, you get out strong drink and wholesome food. Behold, in this also is a Sign for those who are wise. And you Lord taught the Bee to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in (men's) habitations. Then to eat of all the produce (of the earth), and follow the ways of your Lord made smooth; there issues from within their bodies a drink (honey) of varying colours, wherein is

a healing for men. Verily in this is a Sign for those who give thought." (An-Nahl; 16: 66~69)

The arguments can go on ad infinitum for His mercy and the signs of truth are infinite. From the concept of an all-pervading providence, the Qur'an proceeds directly to that of the unity of God. It points out: *"O men! Remember the grace of Allah onto you! Is there a creator, other than Allah, to give you sustenance from heavens or earth? There is no god but He. How then are you perverted?"* (Faatir; 35:3)

God, Who is the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Universe, not only provides everything for the development of body but also for the development of soul. It is the will of God that man should develop himself physically and spiritually. For this many-sided development, God provides every opportunity. As providence sends down rain to fulfil man's physical needs, it sends down Divine Messages to satisfy man's spiritual wants. These Messages of God guide and vitalise the spirit by showing it the right path. When people admit that rain falls from the sky and revives the dying earth, why should they not concede the fact that God awakens and revives life in dead souls through Divine Messages through His Messengers? The Qur'an appeals to the unbelievers and says that they are not just and reasonable in their estimation of God. Is there no clue in the fact that God has set stars to guide you in darkness? The Qur'an says: *"The Most Compassionate, Ever Merciful"*. (Al Faatiha; 1:3) And: *"...My mercy embraces all things...."* (Al-A'araaf; 7:156)

These verses clearly show that these two Divine attributes (Most Compassionate and Ever Merciful) are most significant, and that other attributes flow from these.

When we look at the universe we find it reasonable to believe that there is a force which works for the maintenance of all beings. We also feel that besides this preservative force there is another, which is responsible for development and progress. We see that the universe would not have reached the present stage of development if the second type of force had not been operative. But one may ask that why should there be any need for improvement in the universe? Why should there be progress? Scientists and philosophers fail to give any satisfactory answer to these important questions. But the Qur'an gives us a rational answer. It says: **"Providence is merciful, and it is the quality of mercy that it seeks to make things better. It is He, Who has created the heavens and the earth and causes water to descend from the sky, thereby producing fruits for your food. And He has made the ships subject to you, that they may traverse the oceans by His command. And He has subjected to your service the rivers and also the sun and the moon, constantly pursuing their courses, and the night and the day".**⁶

In other words, Allah's (SWT) bounty is unlimited. No human being, in any part of the world, civilised or uncivilised, can say that he does not owe to God whatever makes his life pleasant and happy. For example, a woodcutter, who lives in a thick forest, earns his livelihood by selling the wood, relieves his pain with healing herbs there, and satisfies his hunger with the fruits he plucks from the forest trees. These facts make it plain that God not only gives then necessities of life to a rich man in his home but also provides everything to a poor man in the forest. And ant gets warmth from the sun and moisture from the rain just as a farmer gets the benefits of rain and sun for his crops. No one can deny the benefits of the sun

⁶ S. A. Latif – The Mind that Qur'an Builds. 1956.

and rain to any creature. All are benefited by God's bounty though in different degrees. God mercy embraces everything and His bounty is universe.

Despite these blessings we often see that there is also destruction, disturbance and disorder. But this destruction is only a step towards construction and improvement, just as to build a beautiful house it is essential to destroy the house, which is already there. The trees are cut and rocks are broken to supply material for building a house. A sculptor hews the rocks and then makes a beautiful statue. So is the case with Nature. Often we see that rains play havoc with cultivation and destroy houses. Violent storms destroy useful things. Floods and earthquakes seem to be destructive, but really they all are Nature's steps towards construction, betterment, improvement and new life.

There is beauty in everything which Nature designs, or makes. The high and majestic mountains, deep valleys and slopes, twittering and coloured birds, the waterfalls, the blue sky and the hot sun, the bright moon and the twinkling stars, the black clouds, the glorious dawn and the silent evening; they all indicate Nature's desire to create and spread beauty, to make every nook and corner of the world a feast for the eye, joy for the ear and bliss for the soul. The Qur'an says that everything, in its own way, sings songs of His praise.

Here the question arises as to why should there be beauty, why not only utility? No human being, with all his knowledge and wisdom, could give a satisfactory answer to this important question. God Himself answers this question in the first chapter of the Qur'an.

Nature is not content with spreading beauty externally but it also creates internal beauty. It gives sense

and understanding to animals intellect and wisdom to man. How this comes about is a secret of Nature, which is beyond human comprehension. How does a particular arrangement of matter yield an abstract quality that is beyond matter? How is it, for instance, that the insignificant body of an ant, with a brain hardly larger than the size of a pinpoint, contains within it such enormous powers of perception and understanding, diligence and perseverance, organisation and discipline, arrangement and balance, construction and improvisation? The only reasonable and possible answer is that it is a quality of Divine mercy to create beautifully and to give the creation not only external beauty but also internal excellence. This beauty and excellence with its continuous progress could, however, be lost if it did not possess an irresistible force, which preserves what is good and eliminates what is not. This force is that of natural selection, and we refer to it as "the survival of the fittest". The Qur'an refers to it as "the survival of the most useful". The quality of mercy in Nature demands that what is beneficial should increase and what is harmful should diminish.⁷ This is the real meaning of natural selection: *"He sends down water from the sky, and the channels flow, each according to its measure. But the torrent bears away the foam that mounts up to the surface. Even so, from that (ore) which they heat in the fire in order to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is a scum likewise. Thus does Allah (by parables) show forth Truth and falsehood? For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth. Thus does Allah set forth parables."* (Ar-Ra'd; 13:17)

The law of the survival of the fittest ensures the preservation of both beauty and utility in this world. The Qur'an refers to this as *Haqq* and *Baatil* or truth and

7. S.A. Latif - The Mind that Qur'an Builds, 1956.

falsehood: *“And say: ‘Truth has (now) arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is (by its nature) bound to perish. (Al-Isra; 17:81)*

From this it is quite evident that Divine mercy operates not only externally but also internally. The principle of selection of the fittest for survival is unique. The laws of Nature are not only unalterable but also universal.

The end behind all this operation is nothing but improvement and reform. Besides this the Qur’an says: *“If Allah were to punish men according to what they deserve, He would not leave on the back of the (earth) a single living creature. But He gives them respite for a stated Term: when their Term expires, verily Allah has in his sight all His slaves.” (Faatir; 35:45)*

Another attribute of God is that He is never in haste to punish the wrong doer without giving a warning or prior noticing. But He gives enough time to human beings to repent of their sins and reform themselves. That means the laws of nature operate systematically and gradually. We see that human life is full of responsibilities, hardships, and trials. There is no end to human struggle and advancement. But still man seems to be active and full of zest for life. These qualities of desire, ambition, enthusiasm, keep man active and he does not lose heart in spite of endless trails and hardships. This is another aspect of Divine mercy.

This is true of all mankind, young and old, rich and poor, men and women, educated, and uneducated. Though their pursuits are different, they are equally interested and engrossed in their respective fields of work.

In family environment, capacities for co-operation, mutual understanding, and self-sacrifice, have a chance to develop. Besides, this life is characterised by diversity. Every man is different from every other man. His likes and dislikes are different. Every creature is unique and different from other members of the same species in some respect or other. The phenomena of Nature, in night and day, winter and summer, plains and hills, water and land, reveal a rich diversity.

There is one more aspect of this law of diversity and that is very significant. *Maulana* Abul Kalaam Azaad⁸ says that it is the law of symmetry. God has not created anything single or solitary. For night there is day, for evening there is morning, for masculine there is feminine and even life has its counterpart in death. The Qur'an says: "*And of everything treated pairs, that you may remember (the Grace of God).*" (Adh-Dhaariyaat; 51: 49) And the following verse also tells us more about the same attribute of God: "*Glory be to Him, Who created all the pairs of that which the earth produces, as well as of their own (human) kind (male and female), and that which they know not.*" (Yaaseen; 36: 36)

It is this law of Nature, which has implanted in man and woman attraction for each other and this mutual attraction leads to social life: "*The Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you mates from yourselves, and of the cattle (also) mates, By this means He creates you (in the wombs).*" (Ash-Shoora; 42:11)

⁸ *Maulana* Abdul Kalaam Azaad was a freedom fighter, President of the Indian National Congress Part for two consecutive terms and the first Education Minister of Modern India who conceptualized and implemented the modern Education system in India.

The law of diversity also manifests itself in different stages of human life. It is evident in different stages of human life. It is also evident in different human desires, emotions, and sentiments. The operation of this law in every human activity is the greatest blessing and mercy of God. It enriches human life, and urges human beings to engage in new activities and enterprises. This Divine mercy is evident in every human activity. As the existence of God is evident from these signs, so Divine mercy too can be comprehended through these clear manifestations.

When we realise that in everything there is not only organisation and order but also signs of grace and mercy, then we arrive at the logical conclusion that there must be a benevolent purpose behind all this panorama of Nature. And in many places the Qur'an says that night and day, clouds, winds and rain, the beasts on the earth, all these are clear signs for those who try to understand Him with an open mind.

The creed and the code of conduct which the Qur'an gives to man are based entirely on love and mercy. The emphasis on the quality of mercy is a clear message of God to man, as man is the vicegerent of God. And God wants that he should cultivate in himself the attributes of God. He should develop in himself mercy and a high sense of justice, so that he may be useful and helpful to his fellow beings.

The Qur'an wants to inculcate nothing but love and justice-the fundamental Divine qualities. The Qur'an, however, does not state that you should love your enemies, because that would not be just and would be contrary to human nature. The Qur'an does not forbid retaliation altogether. But it does urge us to temper justice with mercy. This would not only reform the offender but

will also conquer his heart. If you at all retaliate, then retaliate to the same extent that you were injured, but if you can endure patiently, best will it be for those who patiently endure: *“And if you punish, let your punishment be proportionate to the wrong that has been done to you. But if you show patience, that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient.”* (An-Nahl; 16:126)

There is no doubt that religion and laws have prescribed punishment for wrongdoing. For the safety of society this is necessary. But the thought of punishment is entertained or tolerated for the simple reason that a lesser evil should operate as a preventive of a greater evil. That is the object of punishment from a purely religious standpoint. It is a measure of correction.⁹

But the Qur’an gives preference to forgiveness and says that good and evil cannot be equal. Retaliation is also not good. It is a like evil. So those who can master their anger and pardon evildoers will see that these evildoers or enemies would give up evil doing and become friends. Says the Qur’an: *“No can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better. Then will he, between whom and you there was hatred, become as it were your friend and intimate.”* (Fussilaat; 41:34) And: *“But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would truly be an affair of great resolution.”* (As-Shoora; 42:43)

We have already pointed out that the Qur’an does not command that you should love your enemies, because it would be unjust and contrary to human nature. Here one may be troubled with doubt because the teachings of Christ seem to be contradicting Qur’anic teaching: **“You have heard that it hath been said: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, that ye resist not**

⁹. S. A. Latif The Mind that Qur’an Builds. 1956.

evil. But whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” (Sr. Matthew, 5:38,39) And: **“You have heard that it hath been said: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you’.”** (St. Matthew, 5: 43,44)

On the other hand, the Qur’an has also stated clearly that it is nothing but a reiteration of the same Divine message which was given to humankind by different Prophets: *“Say you: ‘We believe in Allah and the given to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between one and another of them, and we have submitted Allah’.”* (Al-Baqarah; 2:136)

It is a matter of regret that not only the followers of the Bible but also its critics have misunderstood these statements of Christ. They thought that these are definite rules and should be literally practised. Later on, they had to concede that they are impracticable.

Tragedy was that they failed to understand the real meaning of this statement. Was the message of Christ really impracticable? Was it repugnant to human nature? The affirmative answer to the questions would knock the bottom out of the Qur’anic assertion that the message of all the Prophets has been one and the same. The trouble with the message of Christ lies in the failure of his followers to understand its true purpose. Christ appeared at a time when the Jewish morality had reached its lowest ebb, and when purity of life had given way to outward ritual passing for devotion to God. The condition of the neighbouring nations - the Romans, was the same. The Egyptians and the Assyrians also failed to appreciate that

Christ's message of love and forgiveness was really meant to arrest the prevailing tendency towards evil life. When Christ said: "**Love your enemies**," his meaning was certainly not that one should grow into a devoted lover of his enemies. On the other hand, his plain meaning was that, instead of creating in oneself the feeling of anger, hatred, or revenge, one should develop the feeling of pity and forgiveness. In a society where one hated one's own kith and kin, the appeal "**love your enemy**" was indeed an appeal for giving up hatred; that is the style of Christ. When he said: "**Turn the other cheek also**", surely Christ never meant that you should literally do so. His clear meaning was that one should develop the feeling of forgiveness or forbearance. To take the literal sense of every figurative expression is not the way of the cultured mind. Should we do so; the entire corpus of inspired or revealed literature will straightway present the spectacle of an incoherent jumble. So there is no contradiction in the teaching of the Prophets.

Summing up, we can say that *Maulana* Azaad agrees with *Allamah* Iqbaal when he depicts God as the most real, final and ultimate being, self-sufficient and self-subsisting, the source of all existence, varied and colourful. He is the dynamic power and creative will, the eternal light and the real beauty. He is the most glorified, celestial and magnificent reality. He is the creator and the lawmaker of the cosmic universe. He is all alone, Merciful, Compassionate, Cherisher, and Nourisher and Nourisher of all. He alone controls and guides His creation.

He is the light of the heavens and earth. All things depend upon Him. He neither begets nor is begotten and none is like Him in His creation. He is not the "**substance**" of Spinoza that is presented as the ultimate necessary self-determined and free cause from whose eternal necessity of Nature, the infinite number of things flow, or continually

flow, in the same way as it flows from the very nature of a triangle, that its three angles are equal to two right angles. According to *Maulana Azaad*, God is the real creative power and is related to the universe. He is close to man, loving, forgiving, and one with Whom, the believer can commune. He is nearer to us than the jugular vein. He is the creative power; and at the same time He is omniscient. The Qur'an views Divine omnipotence as intimately related to Divine wisdom, and finds the infinite power of God revealed not in the arbitrary and capricious, but in the recurrent, regular and the orderly. In other words, He is a purposive Being in Whom creativity, consciousness, wisdom, power and goodness all are harmonised.

God is full of love and He creates in order to be loved and worshipped: *"I have only created the Jinns and men that they should serve Me."* (Adh-Dhaariyaat; 51:56)

Love is the most significant and important attribute of God. Love as a dynamic force brings human beings nearer to each other and also nearer to God. And to attain nearness of God must be the ultimate end of every true love of God.

The attributes of God mentioned in the Qur'an fortify the theory and philosophy of the *Tawheed* i.e., Oneness of God. The Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), said that Allah (SWT) has ninety-nine beautiful names each presenting an attribute. Here only the three last verses of *Surah Al-Hashr* may suffice for those who want to understand the *Tawheed*. Read the verses: *"Allah is He, than Whom there is no other Who knows (all things) both secret and open; He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Allah is He, than Whom there is no other god; the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the justly Proud Glory to Allah! (High is He) above partners they*

attribute to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the originator the Fashioner, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever is in the heavens and on the earth does declare His Praise and Glory; and He is the Exalted, the Wise.” (Al-Hashr; 59:22~24)

From the *Tawheed* emanates another but basic attribute of God. He Alone worthy of worship, He, as Creator, is the Master and Sovereign. In fact, “belief” in the Sovereignty of Allah is an intrinsic and inseparable part of the *Tawheed*. This requires that no human being, individually or collectively with others, should claim rights of over lordship, power of legislation or exercise of authority over others. No one should be allowed to give orders or issue commands in his own right and no one ought to accept the obligation to carry out such commands or obey such orders. None either is entitled to make laws on his own authority and none, if made, is obliged to abide by them. The right to make laws rests in Allah Alone. The Qur’an categorically says: “...the command is for none but Allah. He has commanded that you worship none but Him: that is the right religion,..” (Yusuf; 12:40)

From the various verses of the Qur’an such as 12:40, 16:116, 5:44, 6:50, and, 3:9-80, the following points can be deduced:

- Firstly, that no person, class, or group, not even an entire nation, may lay claim to sovereignty and that God alone is the Sovereign. All others are merely His subjects.
- Secondly, that God is the real Lawgiver, and, as such, the absolute authority to legislate rests in Him.

Tawheed is the essence of Islam and the supreme source of its strength. All other laws, beliefs and

commands of Islam stand firm on this foundation. Take it away, and there is nothing left in Islam.

The declaration of faith in Islam consists of two simple statements: (1) *La Ilaha Illallah* that is there is no deity but God, and (2) *Muhammad-ur-Rasoolullah*, that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. The first statement expresses the concept of *Tawheed* and the second of *Risaalah* or Prophethood. *Tawheed* means that there is absolutely no one worthy of worship other than God. To Him alone all heads must bow in submission and adoration, and He is the Only and Exclusive Possessor of all Powers. All are in need of His favours, and all should solicit His help and guidance. A perfect understanding of the concept of *Tawheed* is given in chapter 112 of the Qur'an, which reads: "*Say: He is Allah, the One; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten. And there is none like unto Him.*" (Al-Ikhlaas; 112:1~4)

Like *Surah Al-Ikhlaas*, verse 255 of *Surah Al Baqarah* (2) also covers the concept of *Tawheed* in the fullest scope of its meaning. Called also '**Verse of the Throne**', it reads: "*Allah! There is no god but He, - the Living, the Self-subsisting, Supporter of all. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there that can intercede in His presence except with His permission? He knows what (appears to His creatures as) Before or After or Behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of His Knowledge except as He wills. His Throne does extend over the heavens and the earth, and He feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for He is the Most High, The Supreme in (in glory).*" (Al-Baqarah; 2:255)

This verse must help clear up many misconceptions and superstitions about God and the Universe which, throughout history, prevailed among many people, and formed part of several philosophies. According to the

Qur'an and in contrast to the misleading beliefs, all qualities of perfection and glory are attributed only to God and He alone is called Divine and above all defects and weaknesses. *"They their priests and their anchorites to be their lords besides Allah, and (they take as their lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but One God: there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him (far is He) from having the partners they associate (with Him)."* (At-Tawbah; 9:31)

THE CONCEPT OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT IN THE LIGHT OF QUR'AN

This Divine law of purposeful creation is applied, among others, to the doctrine of reward and punishment. In other words, everything carries with it a particular effect or result. In scientific language, every action provokes a reaction; if action is good, the reaction will also be good. This is also a natural, eternal and universal law, which no one can escape and which has no exceptions. There is also a law of Nature, which distinguishes between good and bad in everything. As it is also universal, human beings are also subject to it. The Qur'an points out: *"What! Do those who do evil deeds think We shall make them as equal with those who believe and do righteous deeds, - that equal will be their life and their death? Ill is the judgement that they make. Allah created the heavens and the earth for just ends, and in order that each soul may find the recompense what it has earned, and one of them shall be wronged."* (Al-Jatsiya; 45:21,22)

The above verses make it plain that the Almighty would do justice to everyone. All those who do evil will definitely receive punishment, and those who do good deeds will be rewarded according to their deeds. Life after death is the goal of human life. No one can seriously believe that man, who is the finest handiwork of God, will pass through this material world as he came and that there is nothing after his physical death. The Qur'an says: *"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth; behold, in that are signs indeed for those who reflect."* (Al-Jatsiya; 45:13) And: *"He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed; and He is the Exalted in Might, oft-Forgiving."* (Al Mulk; 67:2,3)

Is it possible that man, for whom God has made so many things, and who can utilise them all for his welfare can ever be without any purpose or reason? So it is very essential that there must be a Day of Judgment and the Qur'an says that God is the Lord of the Day of Judgment. But God is not a moody ruler, governed by His passing whims, Who, when He is pleased, pardons everyone, and when displeased, punishes even the innocent. According to the Qur'anic conception, God does not govern the universe with whims and fancies. On the contrary, says *Maulana Azaad*, the Qur'an points out that the Divine law of reward and punishment is a natural law. It may be called another form of the law of cause and effect, which is also universal. In other words, Divine Justice is not arbitrarily imposed; on the other hand, it is the inevitable result of one's own actions or what one earns for oneself.

When the Qur'an was delivered, the prevalent beliefs had invested God with the characteristics of absolutism and despotism. He was believed to be a whimsical autocrat. Therefore, people used to offer sacrifices to please their moody God. They even sacrificed human beings to please Him. Though Jews and Christians had a little higher conception of God, they too believed that God was an absolute dictator. If He was pleased with them He would call Himself God of Israel, and if displeased He would take revenge on them and destroy them.

The Christian belief was also unreasonable. According to their belief, the entire human race was in a sinful state because Adam had acted against the will of God, and Christ had to sacrifice himself on the Cross, to wash away human sin. But the Qur'an contradicts all these beliefs and says clearly that: *"Who receives guidance, receives it for his own benefit, who goes astray does so to his own*

loss: no bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another ..." (Al Isra' 17:15).

Following the law of action and reaction, every type of human action produces a result peculiar to it. This Divine law operates not only in the physical world but in the spiritual realm also. No one thinks that good seeds will bring a bad harvest. No good can come out of something, which is bad. The Qur'an calls it recompense, requital or justice: *"Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds."* (Al-Mudastir; 74:38)

Everyone will have to answer for what he has earned. The Qur'an has repeatedly given this message and described the law of just return by asking human beings to commit "**Dos**" or good and to omit "**Don'ts**" or evil. The object of its frequent insistence on the "**dos**" and "**don'ts**" is not to please a God, who is full of anger, but to avoid self-destruction and to attain perpetual bliss and salvation. *"Whoever works righteousness benefits his own soul, whoever works evil, it is against his own soul, nor is your Lord ever unjust (in the least) to His servants."* (Fussilaat; 41:46)

Human beings, with limited wisdom, have often misunderstood natural calamities and wrongly attributed them to the wrath of a god. Due to these wrong notions, people developed fear and often got terrified with God. In reality, these calamities or disasters are manifestations of God's mercy. These destructions or correctives are meant to develop the useful and to eliminate what is harmful. Thus Divine law maintains balance, order and organisation in the universe. Man, not only needs Divine protection and care, but also Divine justice, which makes life good and mars all that which is not good for life.

Justice is nothing but doing everything rightly. If things are rightly done, then justice is done with them.

Everything which is rightly done or with which justice is done becomes beautiful, because beauty is a state of correct proportion, or moderation. Correct proportion and moderation, not only make inanimate things beautiful but also human beings attractive. So the Divine law operates universally and not only minor things but also celestial bodies are fixed and balanced properly. They are fixed and their movement is limited in their respective spheres. If they are disturbed they will crush and destroy the entire cosmos. *“Glorify the name of your Guardian-Lord Most High, Who has created and further, given order and proportion; Who has measured and granted guidance.”* (Al-Aa’la; 87:1~3) And those who do not balance themselves violate the law and therefore they suffer. *“Do they seek for other than the Religion of Allah? While all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willingly or unwillingly, bowed to His Will (accepted Islam), and to Him shall they all be brought back.”* (Al-e ‘Imraan; 3: 83)

The Qur’an tells us, that God will judge everything on the Day of Resurrection. Everybody would get his reward for his doings. The Qur’an has used that term *kasab* for every action, good or bad. *Kasab* in Arabic means, **“What one earns.”** *Kasab* includes reward and punishment, which is the consequence of deeds - virtuous or vicious. *“On no soul does Allah place a burden greater than it can bear. It gets every good that it earns, and it suffers every ill that it earns...”* (Al-Baqarah; 2:286)

And further, the Qur’an says that the same principle is applicable to the deeds of groups, nations and communities. *“That was a people that have passed away. They shall reap the fruit of what they did, and of what you did. You shall not be asked about what they did.”* (Al-Baqarah; 2:134)

The Qur’an teaches without any ambiguity that everybody would be held responsible for his own deeds. Everyone will have to answer only for his/her own

actions. He will be treated fairly and justly. He will not be asked for that which his forefathers had done. The Qur'an also affirms that evildoers store evil for themselves and the virtuous store good for themselves. Every individual, every group, and every nation would be questioned for their deeds.

It has already been pointed out that reward and punishment, will be the result of one's own action, and God's pleasure or anger has got nothing to do with this. The Law of 'Just Return' is also imperative for balance, harmony, and unity in life.

The Qur'an directs us to think whether this Law of 'Just Return', which is so visibly in operation in this material world, will not be at work in respect of human deeds. The Qur'an uses the term '*aamaal-e-saalih*' or righteous deeds for all balanced actions in every field of life. The primary duty of man towards God is to realise himself and his relation to God Almighty, his Creator Sustainer.

According to the Qur'an, man has to perform two responsibilities. One is related to his own self. The Qur'an calls it the '**Rights of God**' (*Huqooqullah*) and the other is in relation to the world, and the Qur'an terms it the '**Rights of the People**' (*Huqooqul'ibaad*).

There are four rights of God: (1) to offer the obligatory prayers five times a day (*Salaah*), (2) observation of fasts in the month of *Ramadan* every year (*Saum*), (3) paying out of own savings towards charity (*Zakaah*), and (4) pilgrimage to Makkah (*Hajj*). The performance of these duties is according to the balance set in the nature of man and for such people. The Qur'an says: "*O you who believe! If you will help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you, and plant your feet firmly.*" (Muhammad; 47:7)

The second responsibility or *Huqooqul'ibaad'* is that one should develop in oneself social consciousness and work for the welfare of others. He should never do harm to anybody. He should do his best for the welfare of every human being. In other words, he should try to create in himself some of the attributes of God.

The two responsibilities of man may be briefly mentioned as obligations to one's self and obligations to society. These are human actions and the character of the mind determines every human action. The Prophet (SAWS) said: "**Actions rest on motives.**" (Bukhari), because motive is the index to the mind. If one is doing a good thing with an evil intention, it is of no avail; on the contrary, he will be punished for such action. On the other hand, if one is doing a thing with a good motive, but somehow adopts wrong or bad means unintentionally, he may be excused. So purity of motives is very important. And this purity is promoted by properly using the balance set in human nature to perform the obligation to self and the obligations to society in harmony. The Prophet (SAWS) said: "**Respect the ways of God and be affectionate to the family of God.**" (Baihaqi) The purpose of the Qur'an is that everyone should be mindful of his dual role or he must never forget his obligations to his own self and obligations to society. He must be mindful in performing every human activity physical, spiritual, intellectual, economic political or social. He must be careful about what is permissible and what is forbidden or unlawful. Besides this, the personal virtues, i.e. purity, kindness, love, affection, chastity, truthfulness, forbearance, trustworthiness, respect for covenants, justice, morality, and mercy are most indispensable and imperative for righteous living. And the opposite qualities such as haste, cruelty, fornication, adultery, indecency, falsehood, hypocrisy, spite, defection, unfaithfulness, treachery and injustice are not only vices but great sins

according to the Qur'an. These vices create hatred and not only divide human beings but also disintegrate the society, while the Qur'an wants people to unite and live in harmony with peace and friendship. So these are the '*aamaal-e-saalih*' or righteous deeds as described by the Qur'an.

The Qur'an lays great emphasis on unity and harmony. It also stresses the need for purification of motives and says that every action should be done purely for the sake of God, for His pleasure: "*Say: truly my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and my death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds.*" (Al-An'aam; 6:162)

Thus every action of man may assume a spiritual significance. Every ordinary deed of man, if it is done according to the will and wish of God, becomes a virtue. Even worldly affairs become religious affairs in Islam. The awareness of God and of fellow beings, which the Qur'an wants to create in every human being, is very essential for the welfare of society. And these two senses are indispensable for the modern man, if he wants to survive in this divided world.

To pursue the path of righteousness is in reality to respect the ways of Allah, and to show affection to the "**family of Allah**" or as Carlyle put it, to abide by the "**great law of the world**". It is along this path that we meet the God Conscious or *Muttaqeen* (God fearing), *Saabireen* (Steadfast), *Saaliheen* (Righteous), and *Siddiqeen* (Truthful), as the Qur'an describes them. Whenever a devout Muslim raises his voice in his prayer to God to say: "*Show us to the Straight Way. The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath and who got not astray.*" (Al-Faatihah; 1:6,7)

It is this path of righteousness that he desires to be shown, and guided herein. The highest aim which a nation or community may, on the analogy of the individual, aspire to, is not material or political superiority over others, which has had a fascination for ambitious people throughout history. The very idea of a distinction on this basis between one community and another is excluded from the concept of International life favoured by Islam, the concept of a **“fold, every member of which shall be a shepherd or keeper unto every other. The criterion of superiority must lie in the character of the corporate righteousness displayed.”**¹⁰

The significant prayer of the Prophet (SAWS) for himself and also for his followers was this: **“O Allah! Make us guides in the path of life and keep us guided ourselves therein-neither going astray, nor leading astray.”**¹¹

It is also necessary that everyone should blend his sense of *Huqooqullah*, or obligations to God, with that of *Huqooqul'ibaad*, or obligations to society. To attain this aim the Prophet (SAWS) recommended the prayer: **“O God! I seek Thy refuge from any wrong that I may do to others, and from any wrong that others may do to me; from any harshness that I may show to others, and from any harshness that others may show to me; and from any sin thou mayest not forgive”**.¹²

Thus the Qur'an wants human beings to be careful of their deeds or actions, and it enjoins them to do everything which is good in the light of the Qur'an, which is delivered for the welfare of all mankind. The Qur'anic

¹⁰ Dr. S.A. Latif, *The Mind that Qur'an Builds*, p.p. 49-50.

¹¹ Dr. S.A. Latif, *The Concept of Society in Islam*, pp. 73.

¹² Quoted from *ibid.*, pp. 73

verses have clearly stated that every action has a reaction. Good brings good and evil brings evil. So every human being should be very careful in his word and deed. He should keep the consequences in his mind and then act if he is prepared to bear the reaction to his action. In other words, it is the duty of man, who calls himself rational and reasonable, to do that which is useful for himself and to avoid what is useless and harmful to others in the light of the Qur'an and reason, because by doing right things, he makes his own self and pleases God, and by doing a wrong thing, he mars his own self and displeases God: *"By the soul and proportion and order to given to it; and its inspiration as to its wrong and its right; truly he succeeds who purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it."* (Ash-Shams; 91:7~10) And he should never forget that: *"Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it."* (Az-Zalzalah; 99:7,8)

SPIRITUAL LIFE IN ISLAM

In Islam the belief in the life hereafter is based on the fact that the Almighty God Who has created this world of ours with a definite purpose, Whose providence knows no limits, and Who is the Cherisher and Nourisher and Sustainer of all, cannot allow the human life to end with the short span of its physical existence on earth. It continues even after death, though it undergoes a transformation and enters into a new order. This is also quite natural, because when God provides everything not only for the material or physical welfare and development of man, but also for its spiritual uplift. It is really unbelievable and unreasonable that man, who is the crown of all creation, would not exist beyond the physical level of his existence. According to the teachings of the Qur'an, there is life beyond the grave and man has not been created in vain or simply for the enjoyment of worldly goods. He has been brought into this world with a higher purpose in view. He will be also brought back to life hereafter, and the Divine creativity stands beyond all purposeless acts: *"Not for (idle) sport did We created the heavens and the earth and all that is between (them)."* (Al-Anbia; 21:16), *"Does man think that he will be left aimless (without any future or purpose)?"* (Al-Qiyamah; 75:36)

It is really inconceivable that man, whom God created in His own image, after billions of years of unceasing growth and development, will pass away as if he was never there. When everything has been changing itself in different shapes and forms, and when development and growth is a Divine Law, why then should man be an exception? Every care is taken by Nature for the growth and development of man. He is provided with favourable conditions before and after his birth; instinct and reason help him to grow and mature. It

appears to be the will of God that man who has been sustained in every stage of his earthly career must rise higher and higher. But perfection, he can never reach here. It is, therefore, necessary for him to assume a new form after death. Says the Qur'an: *"Did you then think that We had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to Us (for account)?"* (Al-Mominun; 23:115), *"We created not the heavens, the earth, and all between them, merely in (idle) sport."* (Al-Dukhaan; 44:38)

These verses give expression to the conviction that there is no flaw or fault in creation. This is also Divine mercy that each creation is perfect and beautiful. The appropriateness and right proportion of everything are clear indications that all is happening with a fixed intention and purpose.

This life is thus understood to be only a transition for the life to come. The Qur'an also argues the inevitability of life hereafter from the quality of mercy: *"See they not that Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth is able to create the like of them (anew)? Only He has decreed a term appointed of which there is no doubt..."* (Al-Isra; 17:99), *"Do they not reflect in their own minds? Not but in truth and for a term appointed did Allah create the heavens and the earth, and all between them. Yet are there truly many among men who deny the meeting with their Lord (at the Resurrection)!"* (Ar-Room; 30:8)

There is no ground whatsoever to deny the continuity of life after death and all that has been said against it rests on false assumptions. Even before the advent of Christianity and Islam, many people accepted some form of existence after death. Among European philosophers Plato's is an outstanding example. His approach to the problem of life hereafter or immortality is not only based on logical grounds but also on practical

considerations. His main source of inspiration in this respect is his teacher Socrates who faced death with serenity and calm. Though Cunningham has described the attitude of Socrates to life hereafter, and Plato himself is convinced that the death of his great master is an unquestionable and unambiguous assurance of the life to come. Moral considerations also lead us towards the belief that there is life after death, because in this world it is often noticed that virtue suffers and vice flourishes. This disparity should be removed. Unless it is removed, morality has no meaning at all. So, life after death and the Day of Judgment give us hope that virtue will be rewarded and vice will be punished. In other words, morality would succeed in the life hereafter. Among modern philosophers Kant has emphatically affirmed this view. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant says that from the theoretical standpoint one cannot believe in immortal soul, but from the moral one, we must. He further argues that moral perfection cannot be attained in one's life. We seldom do our duty for the sake of duty. Instead of this we hanker after results. But, according to Kant, the moral ideal is to do duty for the sake of duty without any concern for the benefits. It is rather difficult for a human being to reach this goal in life. And if we do not believe in life after death, the moral ideal would remain unattained or unattainable. Those who admit this admit the failure of moral life. And this theory is inconsistent with faith in morality, which implies that man's moral struggle must finally succeed. For this we must believe that there is life after death in which we can attain moral perfection. According to Kant, there cannot be any faith in morality without a faith in life hereafter.

Scientists say that man is the result of a long process of creative evolution. "If we look back across time, the very first impulse of life in creation, life on earth, will be found to be an immeasurably lengthy process of

evolution aiming at, and culminating in, the completion of man."¹³

Here the question arises: Is it credible that man, who came into being after a long process and for whose development Nature took billions and billions of years, will perish for ever after a short span of life?

The greatest tragedy of the modern age is that modern man has completely lost his faith in the life hereafter. He sees all joy and pleasure in this life and wants to enjoy life at any cost. He has lost faith even in virtue. He prefers this life.

Bertrand Russell is the true spokesman of the modern man when he says that a happy man is no doubt virtuous, but, on the other hand, a virtuous man is not necessarily happy. But it is rather difficult for a man, who has a clear mind, to ignore the importance of collective happiness, which is based on morality. No one can deny the collective and social value of a moral attitude. I would also like to mention here Louis Dickinson, who says that he does not agree with the men of science, who believe that man is mortal. He says that the scientific denial of immortality is based upon the admitted fact of the connection between mind and brain; whence it is assumed that the death of the brain must involve the death of that, whatever it be, which has been called the soul. This may indeed be true, but it is not necessarily or obviously true; it does not follow logically from the fact of the connection. For, as William James has ably set forth in his lecture on "**Human Immortality**," that fact may simply not be the production, but the transmission of mind by brain. **The soul, as Plato thought, may be capable of existing without the body, though it be imprisoned in it as in a**

¹³ Dr. S.A Latif. *The Basic Concepts of the Qur'an* pp.42.

tomb. It looks out, we might suppose, through the windows of the senses; and its vision is obscured or distorted by every imperfection of the glass.¹⁴ If a man is shut up in a house, *Allamac* Taggart has remarked, "the transparency of the windows is an essential condition of his seeing the sky." But, he wittily adds: "**It would not be prudent to infer that if he walked out of the house he could not see the sky, because there was no longer any glass through which he might see it.**"¹⁵ The point is that the only fact we have is the connection in our present experience, of body and mind. That the soul, therefore, dies with the brain is an inference, and quite possible, that may be as much due to a defect of their imagination as to superiority of their judgment. To infer wisely in such matters, one must be a poet as well as a man of science. Dickinson says that he would rather trust the intuitions of Goethe¹⁶ or of Browning than the ratiocination of Spencer or of Hegel. For in making his hypothesis a man is determined whether he knows it or not, by his habitual sense of what is possible, and in this curious universe many things are possible which seem incredible to men who have never been astonished. Does it seem incredible that the body should be the habitation, not the creator of the soul; that this will continue to live when that has died? Dickinson replies in the words of a poet;

"Is it wonderful that I should be immortal as everyone is immortal?"

"I know it is wonderful, but my eyesight is equally wonderful, and how I was conceived in my mother's womb is equally wonderful: and passed from a babe,

¹⁴ G.L. Dickinson, *Religion and Immortality*. pp 51, 52.

¹⁵ *Allamac* Taggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion*. pp 105.

¹⁶ The principal sayings of Goethe on "Life after Death" have been collected by Dr. W. Bode in a book entitled "Meinie Religion".

in the creeping trance of a couple of summers and winters, to articulate and walk."

"All this is equally wonderful. And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each other, without ever seeing each other and never perhaps to see each other, is every bit as wonderful."

"All that I can think such thoughts as these is just as wonderful. And that, I can remind you and you can think of them and know to be true is just as wonderful. And then that the moon spins round the earth, and with the earth, is equally wonderful."

"And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars is equally wonderful."¹⁷

Dickinson further says that it is not necessary that from the intuition of poets anything can be finally concluded about the immortality of man. But in his support he quotes Nietzsche who christens it "**eternal recurrence**" and hails it in this passionate refrain:

"Oh! How could I fail to be eager for eternity; and for the marriage ring of rings, the ring of recurrence?"

"Never yet have I found the woman by whom I should like to have children, unless it be this woman I love; for love thee, of eternity!"

This positive view of immortality has a prophetic fervour and it reveals a real tendency in the modern mind. Anyway, common sense agrees with the theory that immortality of man is necessary and desirable. *Allamac Taggart* says that a survival of the substance of one's self

¹⁷ Dickinson op. cit. Pp 54.

would be desirable, even though it carried with it no consciousness of survival. Concluding, Dickinson says that he agrees with *Allamac Taggart*,¹⁸ but he also holds that much more desirable would be an immortality which carried with it a continuance of consciousness.

To be brief, this belief in immortality is not confined to Semitic religions only but extends to almost every unsophisticated consciousness.

A faith in life after death is the last of the basic principles of Islam. The word generally used in the Qur'an to point out this life is *al-Aakhirah* and *aakhir* (last) is the opposite of *awwal* (first). In other words, this word indicates a life, which will come after this life. That life will not only be the last life, but it will also be a lasting life. In the light of the Qur'an, death is not the end of man's life; it only opens the door to another and higher form of life. *"Do you then see the (human seed) that you emit? Is it you who create it, or are We the Creator? We have decreed death to be your common lot, and We are not to be frustrated from changing your forms and creating you (again) in (forms) that you know not."* (Al-Waq'iah; 56:58-61)

Just as from the small life germ God creates man and he does not lose his individuality in spite of many changes, so from this man God would make a higher man. This new life is described in the following verse: *"See how We have bestowed more on some of than on others, but verily the Hereafter is more in rank and gradation and more in excellence."* (Al-Isra; 17:21)

The faith in life after death is very important in Islam and it comes next only to faith in one God. *"Those who believe (in that Qur'an) and those who follow Jewish*

¹⁸ Dickinson op. cit. pp 127.

(scriptures), and the Christians, and Sabaians - whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." (Al-Baqarah; 2:62)

In the Qur'an God is the Master of the Day of Requital and thus the teaching of the Qur'an naturally involves the belief in the life Hereafter. The next life is significant in so far as it will involve the requital of what man has done in his earthly life. The reason is clear. The greater the faith in the good or bad consequences of a deed, the greater is incentive which urges a human being to pursue or to withhold himself from it. It is clear that man can save himself and his soul from destruction by good actions. *"Blessed be He in Whose hand is the sovereignty. And He has power over all things, Who has created death and life, that He may try which of you is the best in deed; and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving."* (Al Mulk; 67:1,2)

A deep consciousness of the consequences of a deed, which must follow even after death, will impel human beings to lead a life of purity. Such a life leads men to truth, virtue, and self-sacrifice.

According to *Maulana Azaad*, man's belief in life hereafter, and the fear that he will have to stand before God and he will have to answer for every action, must necessarily reform him and mould him into a better pattern of conduct and behaviour. And ultimately it will transform him into a true servant of God and well wisher of all his fellow beings. The belief in life after death also elevates the motives with which a deed is done. It makes a man work with the most selfless of motives, for he seeks no reward for what he does, his work is for higher and nobler ends. The Qur'an not only speaks of a life after death, says *Maulana Azaad*, but it also states that the basis of **that** life is laid in **this** life. The preparation for that life

must begin in this life. For the good the heavenly life, and for the wicked a life in Hell, begin even here, though many do not realise it. *"(It will be said:) 'You were heedless of this; now have We removed your veil, and sharp is your sight this Day.'*" (Quaaf; 50:22)

This indicates that the spiritual life, which is hidden here from the human eye due to material limitations, will become manifest after the Resurrection, because human vision will then be clearer, the veil of material limitations having been removed. *"Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it."* (Al-Zalzalah; 99:7,8) And: *"Does he not know when that which is in the graves is scattered abroad and that which is (locked up) in (human) breasts is made manifest."* (Al-A'diaat; 100:9,10) And: *"The, he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) heavy, will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction, but he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light, will have his home in a (bottomless) pit."* (Al-Qari'ah; 101:6~9)

THE STRAIGHT PATH

Through the quality of His Divine mercy, it is quite evident that God has provided all the necessary conditions for the progress and prosperity of human beings not only in this world but also hereafter: *“Glorify the name of your Guardian Lord, Most High, Who has created and further, given order and proportion, Who has measured and granted guidance, and Who brings out the (green and luscious) pastures.”* (Al-Aa’la; 87:1~4)

The Qur’an also says that there is no flaw in God’s creation. It is the quality of mercy from which the Qur’an also argues the inevitability of life hereafter and the need for Divine revelation for the guidance of human beings. Says the Qur’an *“That day shall you be brought to Judgment; no act of yours that you hide will be hidden.”* (Al-Haaqqa; 69:18)

It is not possible, that Divine mercy, which has provided everything for the physical growth the development of man, should omit to make the necessary provision for the spiritual uplift of man? God has also laid down a law for spiritual uplift: *“Verily Man is in loss, except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and (joining together) in the mutual enjoining of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy.”* (Al-’Asr; 103:2,3)

It is the revelation of God, the message of God, which is transmitted through successive Prophets to show human beings the path of rectitude. This is also the mercy of God in another form. Through these books God has been showing humanity the path of grace and success. God has not only sent the Qur’an (the final revelation) through the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), but also sent his messages through Moses and other Prophets before him:

"...and before him is the Book Moses - a guide and a mercy..."
(Hud; 11:17)

Further, the Qur'an says that this message of God is a light to guide you in the darkness of ignorance: *"O mankind! There has come to you and admonition, from your Lord, and a healing for the (diseases) in your breasts - and for those who believe, a Guidance and a Mercy."* (Yunus; 10:57)

God as the preserver is necessarily associated with the attribute of guidance. This guidance is the final gift God to His creation: *"Glorify the name of you Guardian Lord Most High, Who has created and further, given order and proportion; Who has measured and granted guidance."* (Al-Aa'la; 87:1~3) This guidance is granted in four stages:

- The first stage is that of blind instinct, which is exemplified in the lower levels of evolution. Who guides the animals at this level? None but God alone guides them in the right direction.
- In the second stage, guidance is provided through the medium of senses. At this stage consciousness begins to assume the direction of animal behaviour.
- The third stage is that of intellect which distinguishes human beings from animals. This stage of guidance is only for human beings and opens the way to unlimited advancement in every conceivable field.
- Intellect elevates human beings to the highest place in creation. Hence they are designated as the noblest of all created beings: *"He Who taught (the use of) the Pen - taught man what which he knew not."* (Al-'Alaq; 96:4,5)

Intellect works only upon the material, which has been supplied by the senses. It cannot go beyond the data supplied. We often see that in practical life, man falls a victim to desires and passions; and intellectual guidance and reason fail to prevent him from wrong-doing. Almighty God, being aware of the weakness of the human intellect, says *Maulana Azaad*, now guides him through revelation. This, he avers, is the fourth stage in Divine guidance. The Qur'an says: "*Verily We take upon Us to guide.*" (Al-Lail; 92:12) And: "*And if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.*" (Al Baqarah; 2:38)

The Qur'an is full of verses which tell us that God sends Prophets as the vehicles of revelation for the guidance of the people. "...Say: '*The Guidance of Allah – that is the (only) Guidance*', *Were you to follow their desires after the knowledge which has come reached you, then would you find neither protector nor helper against Allah...*" (Al Baqarah; 2:120)

Now, the Qur'an gives a warning to those who dare leave the path of righteousness and follow their selfish desires despite the guidance vouchsafed to them. This guidance is universal and knows no distinction of caste, class, colour and creed, because, as *Maulana Azaad* points out, the guidance or message which is for a particular group or community or which divides human beings into groups, is false and it should not be followed. There is only one true path, the path of rectitude and grace. This is the universal path, which leads all man kinds towards peace and eternal bliss. The Qur'an terms it Islam which means complete submission and obedience to God.

The Qur'an tells us that in the beginning mankind was but a single homogeneous community. They lived a

natural life. There was no difference or conflict. It was only at a subsequent stage when they had increased in number that conflicting pressures tore them apart and divided them into warring groups each hating the other. Exploitation, suppression, and oppression became the order of the day. Thus the situation demanded external guidance because the three previous stages of guidance had failed to keep mankind together. So, to ensure justice, to reunite mankind and to show them the right path, God sent Messengers in succession. They brought light for human beings and brought them out of the darkness of ignorance, hatred, and groupism. These Messengers were sent to every nook and corner of the world to convey the message of God to all man kinds. *“Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent The Book in truth, to judge in matters wherein they differed. But the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His grace guided the Believers to the Truth concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guides whom He will to a path that is straight.”* (Al Baqarah; 2:213) [See also Fatir; 35:24 and Ra’d; 13:7]

The Qur’an further stressed that the message of God has always been the same, though it was conveyed in different languages and at different times through many Prophets. Says the Qur’an: *“We sent not a messenger except (to teach) in the language of his people, in order to make (things) clear to them...”* (Ibrahim; 14:4)

The path of rectitude is universal and remains the same in spite of the changes of time and people. All Messengers of God gave the same message to their people. They invited them to worship the Lord of the Universe, their Creator, Sustainer, Nourisher and Well-wisher. They all tried to unite them under one banner. Napoleon Hill writes: “Muhammad had invited the Jews and Christians

to join him for he was not building a new religion. He was calling all who believed in one God to join in a single faith. If the Jews and Christians had accepted his invitation to Islam, would have conquered the world.”¹⁹

God created all men alike as human beings but they divided themselves into groups and sections on the basis of race, colour, language, nationality, etc. Mankind was thus divided and subdivided by innumerable artificial differences. There remained but one single relationship, one sacred bond which still held mankind together and which could unite them again in spite of all differences. This, as every Messenger of God pointed out, was the common worship of the one God. In other words, the God of every race, colour, country, and nation, is the same, Who sent Adam, Nuh (Noah), Ibraheem (Abraham), Moosa (Moses), E’isa (Jesus), and finally Muhammad. All yield submission to the same God and prove that all are one family, living in one home, because the teachings of all the Prophets were basically identical. Summing up all the messages, the Qur’an says: *“The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to you - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, namely, that you should remain steadfast in Religion, and make no division therein...”* (Ash-Shoora; 42:13) [See also Al-e ‘Imraan; 3:84]

The Qur’an, thus confirming these facts, reiterates the message of God: *“To you We sent the Scriptures in truth, confirming the scriptures that came before and guarding it in safety. So judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vane desires diverging from the Truth that has to you...”* (Al-Ma’edah; 5:48)

¹⁹ Hill, Napoleon, ‘Think and Grow Rich’ pp103.

The most significant part of the Qur'anic message is that Divine revelation has always been one and the same for all mankind. But the vagaries of history are so strange, that the greater the emphasis that the Qur'an lays on this truth, the stronger has been the inclination on the part of the world to relegate it to the background. In fact, no other truth of the Qur'an has been kept so deliberately out of sight. Should one study the Qur'an with an open mind and look into its numerous clear assertions in this respect, and then observe what has actually happened despite such assertions, one will not fail to notice that the faith of the Qur'an also has, in the course of history, been given the character of an exclusive concern even as other faiths.²⁰ The Qur'an also adds that the Messengers were numerous who were sent to deliver the message of God. But the names of all the Messengers are not given in the Qur'an. The way of God is the same in every age. "*But how many were the prophets We sent amongst the peoples of old.*" (Az-Zukhruf; 43:5) [See also Al Mo'min; 40:78 and Bani Israel; 17:15]

The original message of God, or the path of rectitude, shown to all mankind in all ages and climes through all these Prophets is that one should have belief in one God and act righteously. The Qur'an further asserts that the teachings of all the Prophets, or founders of religions, brought the same teaching, differences grew up among the followers. Explaining the situation the Qur'an says, that these differences are of two kinds: firstly, those which the followers themselves produced through deliberate deviation from the original message, and secondly, those differences which arose in the course of the implementation of the message. For instance, the differences in the form of worship; these differences are not important because they pertain to the formal and external side of religion. Besides this the peculiarities of

²⁰ Dr. S.A. Latif. 'This Basic Concept of the Qur'an' pp. 83.

different groups and changing conditions of life in different countries demanded variations in the manner and method of implementing the real message, in so far as they were consonant with the basic belief in one God and righteous living. Says the Qur'an: *"To every people have We appointed rites which they must follow; let them not then dispute with you on the matter, but you invite (them) to your Lord: for you are assuredly on the Right Way."* (Al Hajj; 22:67) The issue is further clarified in Al Baqarah; 2:143 and Al Ma'edah; 5:48.

The above verses clearly point out the distinction between *Deen* (Faith) and *Shara'* (Law). *Deen* is devotion to God by righteous living and *Shara'* is the programme to be followed for the attainment of that goal. The important thing is the spirit and not the form. In other words, the important thing is religion and not the programme of action, which may change according to the prevailing conditions and circumstances.

What constitutes the true religion is described in the following thus: *"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or the West; but it righteousness to believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kind, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, and for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayers give Zakaah, to fulfil the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic; such are the people of truth and God-fearing."* (Al-Baqarah; 2:177)

The Qur'an formulated this definition of true religion, or the path of rectitude, over fourteen hundred years ago. If the world has so far failed to understand what the essential elements of a true religion are, it is definitely not the fault of the Qur'an. When the Qur'an was

delivered to the world, the followers of older creeds mistook the outward forms of religion for religion itself. Every group believed that it had an exclusive right to salvation. But the Qur'an pointed out clearly that the outward form or ritual is not religion and, therefore, the criterion for truth is not ritual but spirit. The real religion was devotion to God and righteous living. The Qur'an made a clear distinction between outward practices and inward spirit, laying the main emphasis on the latter.

The Qur'an made it plain that God could have created all mankind on one identical pattern but He did not do so because He wanted every man to develop in his own way and express his individuality so that he would not be merely a copy of other men. However, it is obligatory on all to walk in the path of righteousness. The Qur'an laid great stress on tolerance and sympathetic understanding of other religions.

It also emphasises that no one should be compelled to change his faith. Addressing the Prophet (SAWS), God says: *"If it had been your Lord's Will, they would have all believed – all who are on earth! Will you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!"* (Yunus; 10:99)

The question here arises: when the basis of all religions is the same, why was the Qur'an revealed? The reply is that there is no doubt that all religions are based on truth, but their followers strayed away from truth. This was the situation which necessitated a fresh injunction from God, and the Qur'an was revealed to unite mankind and to bring them back to the path of rectitude.

The Qur'an brought humanity back to true religion and exhorted men to keep their mind fixed on the following truths:

- The salvation of man depends, not on his belonging to a particular race cast or colour but entirely on his right belief and right actions.
- Religion has been and is the same for all man kinds, and to forget this basic unity and universality of religion and to form different groups is to stray from the path of rectitude.
- The essence of all religions is to worship directly the one God, the Creator of the universes, and to live righteously, and to have faith in the last judgment: *“Those who believe (in the Qur’an) and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and Christians and the Sabaians, any who believes in Allah and the Last Day and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.”* (Al Baqarah; 2:62)

The Qur’an made it quite clear that it did not bring a new message but it brought the same old message from God, which had been granted to all former Prophet as mentioned above. It further tells us that the path of rectitude is same which was shown to mankind through Noah, Abraham, Isma’il, Isaac and Jacob and several other Prophets including those who have not been explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an. The Qur’an says: *“Those were the (Prophets) who received Allah’s guidance. Follow the guidance they received...”* (Al-An’am; 6:90)

So it becomes necessary to accept all the Prophets because they all were sent to show the same path. The Qur’an says that those who do not accept all the Prophets, and either discriminate or totally reject some Prophets lose the right path. *“Those who deny Allah and His Messengers, wish to separate between and His Messengers saying: ‘We*

believe in some and reject others', and wish to take course midway; they are in truth unbelievers..." (An-Nisa; 4:150, 151)

Summing up, we may say that the basic teaching of all the Prophets is the same and the Qur'an was delivered when the followers of the former Prophets had, disregarding the original teaching, strayed away from the right path. The Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) came and brought the same message though in a different language and style. Thus the Qur'an reiterates the same teachings, and shows the same path which had already been pointed out many times on previous occasions. It enjoins men to act in ways that have universally been admitted to be right. It forbids all those acts which are universally considered to be wrong. Thus the Qur'an calls upon man to follow this universally recognised path of rectitude and to shun all other paths which lead to differences and divisions.

This path of rectitude, a true path or common religion of all the Prophets, is termed 'Islam' in the Qur'an: *"The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will)... So, if they dispute with you say: 'I have submitted my whole self to Allah and so have those who follow me.' And say to the people of the Book and those who are unlearned: 'Do you also submit yourself?' If they do, they are in right guidance. But if they turn back, your duty is to convey the Message and in Allah's sight are (all) His servants."* (Al-e Imraan; 3:19,20)

THE UNIVERSAL PATH

There are over three hundred places in the Qur'an dealing with Divine mercy and love of God. If we take into account all these verses which deal with other attributes related to mercy and love, then we can say that the Qur'an is nothing but a message of Divine mercy. Whenever the Qur'an addresses the sinners, it addresses them with love and affection: *"Say: 'O my bond servants, who have transgressed against their own souls, despair not of the Mercy of Allah, for Allah forgives all sins, for He is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."* (Az-Zumar; 39:53)

God addresses the "**Bond Servants**" with all this affection on more than twenty occasions in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an stresses its mission to reunite all mankind. It has not brought a new message, and it does not favour any exclusive group or nation. On the other hand, its mission is to put an end to all conflicts and differences in groups, and to show all mankind the one path, the path of rectitude and truth. And that is the path that has been shown by Prophets from time immemorial. *"O you Messengers! Enjoy (all) things food and pure and work righteousness; for I am well acquainted with (all) that you do. And verily this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah and I am your Lord and Cherisher; therefore fear Me (and no other). But people have cut off their affairs (of unity) between them, into sects; each party rejoices in that which is with itself."* (Al-Mominun; 23:51~53)

For the Qur'an the oneness of God implies the oneness of His Truth, howsoever different might have been the languages in which His Message was conveyed. If you believe in one Prophet and do not believe in other Prophets, it means you accept a reality at one place and

reject the same reality at another. The Qur'an calls upon everyone to accept all the Prophets and their books without any discrimination: *"The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believes in Allah and His Angels and His Books and His Messengers: 'We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of his Messengers.'* And they say: *'We hear, and obey, (we seek) your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the end of all journeys.'*" (Al-Baqarah; 2:285)

For the Qur'an the Divine truth is a universal gift from God. It is not the monopoly of any race or religious group. Men may be divided by geographical and racial boundaries, but Divine truth knows none. It cannot be divided. It bears no national or racial imprint. You should, therefore, seek this truth and follow it. This truth of God is man's treasure, no matter in whatever form it is found, and man is heir to it. The Qur'an invites men to follow this truth and avoid every form of groupism, nationalism, and racialism. The Qur'an calls the path of denial the path of division and distinction. It says the path of rectitude lies in the belief in all the Prophets, because the acceptance of one and rejection of other means rejection of all. The Qur'an points out the path of true believers: *"Who believe in the Unseen and are steadfast in prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them. And who believe in the revelations sent you, and sent before your time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter. They are on (true) Guidance from their Lord, and it is these who will prosper."* (Al-Baqarah; 2:3~5)

The Qur'an asks repeatedly as to why be there conflicts and tension in the name of God and religion when God is one and the same and His message has been identical? It calls upon man to have faith in one God and to live a righteous life in conformity with that belief without condemning any religion or its founder. The Qur'an confirms the basic message of all religions. The

Qur'an, never claimed to be the testament of a new religion. It was the same religion of God appearing at different times. It asked the people to return to their own religions by clearing them of the accretions, which had gathered around them. Had they done it, they would have found no conflict between this message and the message they had received before. Says the Qur'an: "...establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong..." (Luqmaan; 31:17)

The Qur'an's message is that there are deeds which are universally accepted as good and there are also acts which are wicked in the eyes of one and all. For instance, all are of one accord that truth is good and mendacity is evil. All agree that honesty is a virtue and dishonesty is a vice. All hold that kindness towards everyone, service to parents, care of the poor and assistance of the oppressed and needy are things really good. All agree that cruelty and ill treatment are evil acts. When all religions of the world, all moral philosophers and all communities, in spite of differences in other matters, held similar views in respect of these qualities, why then should there be any hostility to the message of the Qur'an? In other words, the message Qur'an has been practically accepted universally. It is in vogue everywhere; it is another matter that some people are not aware of the fact that they are following the same path shown to mankind fourteen hundred years ago. Thus the mission of the Qur'an has been fulfilled to a great extent. The Qur'an says that natural laws never change. So the way of God, or the right religion, cannot be altered for any one.

The Qur'an calls upon man to do whatever is good and to avoid whatever is evil. This is the same message, which was brought by Abraham and it is Islam: "*So set your face truly to the religion being upright, the nature in which Allah has made mankind. No change (there is) in the work*

(wrought) by Allah: that is the true Religion, but most among mankind know not. Turn you in repentance to Him, and fear Him: establish regular prayers, and be not you among those who joined gods with Allah – those who split up their Religion and become (mere) Sects, each party rejoicing in which is with itself.”
(Ar-Rum: 30:30~32)

The Qur’an holds that if all the people resolve to return to the path of devotion to God and righteous living, then the purpose of the Qur’an is fulfilled.

The beauty of the Qur’anic message is that it approves all the religions in their original form. It calls upon the followers of all religions to assemble on one platform, and declares that all religions of the world are the branches of one great tree. The Qur’an presented to mankind the principle of the universal truth of religion (1) the Qur’an proclaimed the unity of religion; (2) it is opposed to all groupism; (3) it made it clear that salvation can be achieved through devotion to God and righteous living.

No racial or religious group can claim itself to be the only heir. It made it clear that, as the physical laws of Nature are necessary for man's physical development, so the spiritual laws of nature are essential for his spiritual progress. The Qur’anic revelation was delivered to remind mankind of the spiritual laws of Nature and to weld them in a single brotherhood, under one banner, and to lead them towards peace, progress and prosperity. Dr. Latif says: **“To the student of the Qur’an, not one word, in the preamble or in the objectives of the charter and not a single article in the text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will seem unfamiliar. Under a creed which places man next to God, and brushes aside all distinctions of race, colour and birth, and calls upon all mankind to live together as a family of God, the**

Universal Declaration of Human Rights must follow as a basic corollary, or an extension of the Qur'anic programme."²¹

The Qur'an stands for internationalism for which modern social scientists and philosophers are striving. It was for its rationalism and dynamism that George Bernard Shaw called Islam the future religion of Europe. And this is what Professor Gibb says: **"Within the Western world, Islam still maintains the balance between exaggerated opposites. Opposed equally to the anarchy of European nationalism and the regimentation of Russian Communism, it has not yet succumbed to that obsession with the economic side of life, which is characteristic of present day Europe and present-day Russia alike. Its social ethic has been admirably summed up by Professor Massignon: 'Islam has the merit of standing for a very equalitarian conception of the contribution of each citizen by the tithe to the resources of the community; it is hostile to unrestricted exchange, to banking capital, to State loans, to indirect taxes on objects of primary necessity, but it holds to the rights of the father and the husband, to private property, and to commercial capital. Here again it occupies an intermediate position between the doctrines of bourgeois capitalism and Bolshevist communism'. But Islam has yet a further service to render to the cause of humanity. It stands after all nearer to the East than Europe does, and it possesses a magnificent tradition of inter-racial understanding and cooperation. No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity, and of endeavour, so many and so various races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India and Indonesia, perhaps also the small Muslim communities in China, and still the smaller community in Japan show that Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently**

²¹ Dr. S. A. Latif. 'The Mind Al Qur'an Builds', pp.83.

irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the east and the West is to be replaced by cooperation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In this lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relation with the East. If they unite, the hope of peaceful issue is immeasurably enhanced-but if Europe by rejecting the cooperation of Islam throws it into the arms of its rivals, the issue can only be disastrous for both."²²

There is one true path, the universal path for all mankind and the Qur'an refers to it as Islam.

²² H.A.R. Gibb. 'Whither Islam', pp.378-79.

RATIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND IT'S RELEVANCE IN MODERN SOCIETY

Poets and philosophers endeavour to find an access to Reality and formulate moral and social laws for human welfare on the basis of their poetic or philosophic vision, but religion in its advanced form occupies a higher place than philosophy and poetry. Dr. Iqbaal says: "Transformation and guidance of man's inner and outer life is the essential aim of religion."²³ Religion alone can unite humanity which is split into regional, lingual, political and economic divisions. Religion has played a vital role in the promotion of universal brotherhood and the maintenance of peace and friendship among peoples. **"Today, of all times, the need for religion is greater because in the world of today people are seized with the evil of fear and frustration, hatred and selfishness. Religious faith alone could lift an individual out of the morass of selfishness and make him think kindly of others. Religion is the only cure for present day ills. It alone can bring people together and can create international understanding and friendship."**²⁴

"If education was devoid of religious element, there would be no appreciation of moral values or moulding of character in human lives. Europe and America felt the need of religious education, as it was observed that without religious influences people became over-rationalistic..... We have no fear that people will become ultra-rationalists. On the contrary, we are surrounded by over religiosity. Our present difficulties,

²³ M. Iqbaal. 'Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam', pp.2.

²⁴ The Times of India, Delhi, 16 November, 1947, reporting *Maulana Azaad's* speech.

unlike those of Europe, are not creations of materialistic zealots but of religious fanatics. If we want to overcome them, the solution lies, not in rejecting religious instruction in elementary stages, but in imparting sound and healthy religious education. We cannot have an intellectual mould without religion.”²⁵

The religious value of education lies in its power to regulate the conduct of man's life as individual and a member of society. It also develops the integrity of the individual to the fullest possible extent. In short, religion equips man with moral strength, lofty ideals, spirit of love, equality, and service.

The attainment of the nearness of God is the ultimate end of every human being. By process of evolution through ages man has attained supremacy over the entire creation. The process had to be continued till man became a better man, by overcoming the animal in him. This goal can be reached only if man aspires to the religious ideal. Discussing the functions of philosophy and religion, Schopenhauer says: **“Religion soothes the sufferings of the majority of mankind. What philosophy does to the few, religion does to the many. Religion is the manifestation of all that is noble in man. It looks strange that man who has the great power of intellect and independence should fail to solve his own conflicts and problems. Whenever society is divorced from religious and moral values it has always fallen prey to man's own child instincts of war and extermination.”**

Religion is indispensable for man. It is the religious spirit which guides man towards peace and salvation. Religion creates love, toleration, and sympathy. The

²⁵ ‘Speech of Maulana Azaad (1947~55)’ pp. 25, 26. Presidential Address at the Fourteenth Session of the Central Advisory Board of Education, New Delhi, January, 1948.

spiritual message of religion can eliminate deep-rooted evil from man forever. Schopenhauer pleads for a religion which has no name, and which imbibes the essence of all religions, a religion which is attuned with science, philosophy and metaphysics. He says: **“Religions are necessary for the people and an inestimable benefit to them. But if they oppose the progress of mankind in the knowledge of the truth they must with the utmost possible forbearance be set aside.”**²⁶

Religion is not only the answer to the metaphysical needs of man, but also necessary for his material welfare.

Schopenhauer also feels the needs of religion and morality in men. **“Philosophers on their side have, at all times, endeavoured to attain clear comprehension of the thing and, notwithstanding their differences in other respects, all, excepting the strictly materialistic philosophical systems, agree in this one point, that what is most important, may alone be essential, in our whole existence, that on which everything depends, the real meaning, pivot or point of it, lies in the morality of human actions.”**²⁷

Schopenhauer says that every religion performs the same function. And *Maulana Azaad* agrees with him when he says that the real function of religion is to create in human beings a high sense of morality.

Religion is a necessary guide for man and a beacon light to the spiritual wayfarer. The following observations of Schopenhauer are consistent with Islamic thought. **“Religion with its furtherance of good and kindly feelings, its guidance in conduct, the support and**

²⁶ Schopenhauer. ‘The World as Will and Idea’. Vol. II pp. 370.

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 372.

consolation it gives to suffering humanity in life and death, helps him in every possible way.”²⁸

Religion not only moulds man’s character, but also infuses in him the spirit of nobility, respect of others and a benevolent feeling for everyone. Religion only has the dynamic power, which tones up in human beings the feelings for the ideal. Religion kills the baser desires of man. Religion alone can bring about a radical transformation in man. It can control a man who has become a clever devil with all the knowledge, but without the knowledge of religion. Religion is necessary for mankind and the quest of religion is the quest of God. “...I respond to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Me...” (Al-Baqarah; 2:186)

We may conclude that as a scientific Religion and Rational Code of Conduct ISLAM is really the demand of time and clearly proves its relevance in modern society:

“Say you: ‘We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to

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