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NO : 2

**BASIC TENETS
OF
ISLAM**

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BASIC TENETS OF ISLAM

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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 Mustafa Educational Network Trust (MEDNET) 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 on BASIC TENETS OF ISLAM attempts to present a concise and coherent account of the key elements of Islamic faith such as *Wahdaniyat* (Oneness of Allah), *Risalat* (Prophet-hood) and *Aakhirat* (Day of Reckoning) and explains the importance of the various proclamations and assertions which Muslims repeatedly make to affirm their total faith in Allah, His Prophets and the Message of the Qur'an.

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

وَأَخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

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INTRODUCTION

Allah (SWT) has created man as His Vice-gerent on earth. He has endowed him with intelligence and understanding. He has imbued man with His spirit. Therefore, no action of man can be without purpose and design. All actions are considered a waste of time, resources, and energy, if done without an aim and without a good purpose in mind. Of all the objects in this world, human life is the most precious. Further, human life is marked for its extremely short span, transitory character and fast movement. It is destined to end but, when, where and under what circumstances is known to nobody except Allah (SWT). This fact of life has been most aptly expressed in the Holy Qur'an.

"Verily the knowledge of the hour is with Allah (alone). It is He Who sends down rain, and He Who knows what is in the wombs. Nor does anyone know what it is that he will earn on the morrow: Nor does anyone know in what land he is to die, verily with Allah is full knowledge He is acquainted with all things". (Luqman; 31:34)

Despite its transitory nature, man's life is too precious to be allowed to end without executing any noble deed as the Vice-gerent of Allah (SWT) on earth. *Surah* (Chapter) 103 of the Holy Qur'an describes this in a simple yet comprehensive manner. It says:

"By the Time, verily Man is in loss, except such as have Faith and do righteous deeds, and (join together) in the mutual enjoining of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy." (Al-Asr; 103:1-3)

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This brief *Surah* gives us the real mission of life if it is to be spent purposefully, otherwise it will be construed to be a total loss. Therefore, for any sensible man, it is of the utmost importance to know about the mission in life in detail and embark on living each moment of his precious life in fulfillment of that mission. We see everyone, besides our near and dear ones, meeting inevitable death. We also observe that the first thing that leaves one's company is one's wealth. The relatives perform the last rites and go about their daily routine. None accompanies the individual except the deeds that he performed during his lifetime; good or bad, virtuous or wicked; they are attributed to the deceased. This is very aptly put in one of the *Ahadis* (Traditions) of the Holy Prophet (SAWS).

"Three things follow a dead man, (of these) two return, and one remains with him; his people, his wealth, and his works follow him, but his people and his wealth return and his works alone remain (with him)." (Bukhari & Muslim)

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that an individual should embark upon the journey of his life in a meaningful way doing virtuous deeds so as to earn to his credit such deeds as please his Creator and Nourisher.

As a good and durable house cannot be built without a good plan and a strong foundation, no one can lead a good and healthy life without knowing the basic principles that should govern the conduct of his/her life. Islam has well defined the basic tenets that form the foundation of its code. These are also called the 'Articles of Faith'. It is very important to have a clear idea of these Articles of Faith, or the Basic Tenets of Islam, which spell out the fundamentals of Islam and help man to lead a virtuous life and earn the pleasure of Allah (SWT¹).

¹ SWT stands for 'Subhanuhu wo Ta'la', meaning 'Pure and eExalted'.

The Basic Tenets or Articles of Faith are expressed quite explicitly in the prime 'Statement of Faith' called *Kalima-e-Tayyib*:

"There is no god except Allah, (and) Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

The importance of this statement can be judged from the fact that a non-Muslim, intending to embrace Islam, becomes a Muslim the moment he utters this with full sincerity and understanding while being in his normal senses and without any coercion or inducements. This article of faith implies that there is just ONE GOD, called ALLAH (SWT), and that Prophet Muhammad (SAWS²) is HIS MESSENGER, called *Rasulallah* in Arabic. Thus belief in the Oneness or *Wahdaniyat* of Allah (God) is a fundamental belief. The status of the Holy Prophet (SAWS), the highest amongst all human beings, is that of the Messenger of Allah (SWT), a unique honour bestowed exclusively upon a few selected souls by Allah (SWT).

IMAAN-E-MUJMAL AND IMAAN-E-MUFASSAL:

There are two other statements called *Imaan-e-Mujmal* (brief statement of the Article of Faith) and *Imaan-e-Muffassal* (detailed statement of the Article of Faith) which forcefully reinforce the basic tenets of Islam identified and proclaimed in *Kalima-e-Tayyib* and also add some critically important dimensions to the basic tenets of Islam.

Imaan-e-Mujmal:

² SWAS stands for 'Sallallahu Alaihi wo Sallam', meaning May Blessings of Allah and Peace be upon him'.

"I declare faith in Allah as He is with His names and attributes, and I have accepted unreservedly all His Commandments."

This short statement is an un-ambiguous proclamation of the existence of ONE Allah (SWT), called by any good name representing His attributes, and acknowledgment of the acceptance of all His commandments.

The *Imaan-e-Muffassal* spells out the same article of faith more explicitly as under:

"I declare faith in Allah, and His Angels, and His Books, and His Messengers, and the Last Day, and in the Measure (destiny), in the good of it and evil of it from Allah, the Most High, and in rising after death."

It may be noticed that these statements are only an elaboration of the first statement i.e. *Kalima-e-Tayyib*. It contains the following seven significant components that form the core of *Imaan* (Faith). These are:

1. Existence of **Allah** (SWT) as a **SINGLE** entity without partners of any nature and degree, neither in His form nor in His attributes.
2. The **Angels**, who are creatures invisible to the human eye, meant for special duties assigned by Allah (SWT).
3. The **Scriptures** containing guidance for mankind and other details whose originator is Allah (SWT).
4. The **Messengers** (Prophets) appointed by Allah (SWT) for preaching the divine guidance as conveyed to them by Him.

5. The **Last Day** or the **Day of Reckoning** for final accountability of deeds and final judgment, leading to reward or punishment.
6. **Belief in Fate:** This article of faith is sometimes misunderstood as a concept of determinism, i.e. human beings have no freedom of choice including in matters of deeds. This misconception is the result of improper understanding of the difference between events and external causes on the one hand; and the reckonable deeds on the other. Added to this confusion are the unrelenting efforts of motivated non-Muslims to ridicule Islamic philosophy as illogical and unscientific and meant to wean away innocent and ignorant Muslims. It should be clearly borne in mind that man has adequate freedom to distinguish between vice and virtue, make his own choice to act and for which he will be accountable to Allah (SWT): According to the Holy Qur'an:

"Verily We have shown him the way; (and it rests with him to prove himself) either grateful or ungrateful". (Al-Insan; 76:3)

'*Qadr*' (Fate) pertains to all those happenings, which are beyond the control of an individual. Birth, death (place, time and parents included), accidents, calamities, unexpected gains and losses and so on, take place in the life of an individual without his planning and intention. These are determined in order to test the depth and strength of *Imaan* (Faith) of an individual. These are different for different persons. The Holy Qur'an states clearly:

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"And surely We shall try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth and lives and crops,"(Al-Baqarah; 2:155).

"On no soul doth 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)

"Say: Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has desired for us (At-Tawbah; 9:51)

7. **Resurrection**, i.e., rising after death for facing the final trial and ultimate destiny.

These seven core components of *Imaan* are generally condensed into the following three key elements, which are commonly used to define the Basic Tenets of Islam:

1. **TAWHEED** (Singularity or unitary status of Allah (SWT)): This is also called **WAHDANIYAT**.
2. **RISALAT** (Institution for the conveyance of divine messages to mankind from times immemorial): This includes the Angels, Books (scriptures), and duly appointed Messengers for proclaiming the divine messages and for teaching the commandments and their practical application to mankind.
3. **AAKHIRAT** (Hereafter): End of this life as we know it; followed by Resurrection for Final Judgment; award of eternal life in Heaven or Hell according to the faith and deeds of individuals.

Without total belief in and understanding of the above tenets, no one can become a true *Momin* (Believer) and Muslim (Obedient). It is of the utmost importance

that all Muslims, particularly adults, ensure that they fulfill this pre-requisite at the earliest, if not already done; otherwise, their *Imaan* cannot be called perfect.

TAWHEED (ONENESS OF ALLAH)

As already stated the concept of *Tawheed* or *Wahdaniyat* is the single most important Article of Faith in Islam. It covers two fundamental facts, i.e. existence and oneness.

The vastness of the universe, with all its incomprehensible wonders in the skies and underneath the earth, is sufficient evidence of the existence of a Creator. In Islam, the Creator is called Allah (SWT), which is the personal name of the one true god. Nothing else can be called Allah (SWT). This name has no plurality or gender. In religions other than Islam, the Creator is personified in gods, goddesses, and many lesser deities. The scheme of things running in perfect harmony to the minutest accuracy in the universe establishes proof, beyond any realm of doubt, of the Creator and Sustainer of all things. The hand of the Creator could well be visualized and instinctively felt enveloping the world around us. The blue sky, the stars, the sun and the moon, the huge mountains, the rivers, all following a set pattern and a system in their existence, compel us to proclaim that these things have not come into the world of their own. The Holy Qur'an emphatically states thus:

"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 can intercede in His presence except as He permits? 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 doth 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 glory)." (Al-Baqarah; 2:255)

Look at man himself. Is he not the masterpiece among the creations of Allah (SWT)? A unique creature in every respect distinctly different from all other creations. Human nature is unique in temperament, a conflicting blend of contrasts, love and hatred, revenge and forgiveness, cruelty and mercy, joy and sorrow etc., He is strong in some spheres but weak and tender emotionally. Man is swayed by greed frequently but displays generosity on occasions to a surprisingly high degree. He is a strange combination of vice and virtue.

Modern discoveries in every branch of science have unfolded thousands of mysteries that go with the governance of the universe, and scientists are astounded at the equilibrium of its working. They know the why and what of things that their discoveries speak about. But at the end, they are dumb-founded as to who and how this has come to pass. A large number of scientists do acknowledge that ultimately this phenomenon is the work of a Supernatural Being. They are equally conscious of the fact that much more still remains to be discovered. From the tiny ant to the galaxy of stars all, speak eloquently of the existence of an Almighty Creator and Sustainer. He is the Originator and He is the Nourisher. The Creator and Sustainer of the universe cannot be personified. He is the light of the universe Who cannot be replicated or reflected in the images of gods and goddesses. It defies logic and reasoning. The Creator cannot be created. It is totally irrational even to conceive of it, leave apart worshipping it. Similarly, it is absurd and inconceivable to associate any wife and children with the Creator, the Supreme Authority of the universe, Who can create anything at will and in a flash. Such a preposterous idea (thought) will be repugnant to any sane thinking person. The Holy Qur'an substantiates thus:

“Say: He is Allah, The One and only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like Him.” (Al-Iqbas; 112:1-4).

The Holy Qur'an categorically denies as propagated by other religions, that there can be many deities functioning independently of one another. Had it been thus, their clash of interest, their whims and fancies, as are found plentiful in human beings, would have destroyed the harmonious functioning witnessed in the universe. This fact has been eloquently expressed in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

“No son did Allah beget, Nor is there any god along with Him: if there were many gods behold each god would have taken away what he had created, and some would have lorded it over others! Glory to Allah! He is free) from the (sort of) things they attribute to Him”. (Al-Mominoon; 23:91)

One could ask why man has, all along his known history, been worshipping many deities; or to say the least, everything that came his way, helpful or harmful. Fear complex is inherent in man. In the early period of his growth, he was awed by everything that harmed him. He bowed for safety to the snakes, the storms, the hurricanes and what not. He also worshipped the sun, the moon, rains, and harvests, as benefactors of his livelihood. He turned to everything that gave him solace and thereby came to believe in many gods; the god of wrath, the goddess of mercy, the goddess of wealth, the goddess of knowledge, and a host of others - all of them were personified in human form. Failing with one deity, the follower would turn to another either for redemption or for the fulfillment of needs.

THE KALIMAS **(Recitations and Pronouncements)**

Tawheed is the belief not only in the existence of Allah (SWT) but also in His unitary status. This is the most fundamental and important teaching of the Holy Qur'an and *Ahadis* (Traditions of the Holy Prophet). It is the fountainhead of *Imaan*. There are five well-known and oft-recited *Kalimas*, *which* state this fact in such a way that it becomes impossible for any person to harbour the idea, however remotely, about any kind of plurality in the existence of the Creator and Nourisher. However, there is an important precondition that is the openness of mind and sincerity of purpose. Thus, these tenets have acquired prime importance in the teaching of *Deen-e-Islam* from the very beginning. Their clear understanding and repeated recitation strengthen *Imaan* and ensure safeguards against possible commitment of *Shirk* (joining other beings with Allah (SWT)). The commitment of *Shirk* is an abominable and unpardonable sin as proclaimed in the Holy Quran.

“Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgives anything else, to whom He pleases; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed”:(An-Nisa; 4:48)

The following Five *Kalimas* provide the surest shield against the heinous sin of *Shirk*.

THE FIRST KALIMA (Kalima-e-Tayyib). This *Kalima* has been explained briefly earlier in Chapter - I. Detailed explanation is given here.

“There is no god except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.”

Kalima-e-Tayyib is of the foremost importance. All other beliefs are the offshoot of this Holy *Kalima*. By pronouncing this Holy *Kalima*, and accepting its meaning, significance and implications with an open mind and heart, any person can embrace Islam thus joining the universal fraternity of Muslims. This solemn declaration of the Holy *Kalima* consists of two parts. The first part that: *“There is no god except Allah”* - contains the monotheistic concept of God that no other religion has today in its purity and proclamation. Islam, in its very first proclamation through this Holy *Kalima* (Recitation and Pronouncement) declares the Oneness of Allah (SWT). It preaches that Allah (SWT) is the Almighty, the Creator of the universe, the Nourisher and Sustainer of all things and the Dispenser of life and death. Allah (SWT) is omnipotent and omnipresent. Apart from Him, all other living beings on earth in subservient to are His will and pleasure. A *Hadith* (saying of the Holy Prophet) reports; *“The keys to Paradise lie in testifying that ‘there is no god but Allah.’”* (Musnad-e-Ahmed) As such, no one is worthy of worship and obedience except Allah (SWT). He alone is to be worshipped and obeyed. The second part *“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah”* signifies the equally important aspect of the monotheistic concept by declaring that the most beloved and revered personality only after Allah (SWT) is the Messenger of Allah(SWT). Prophets are highly honoured servants of Allah (SWT) and should never be treated as equal to Allah (SWT). The significance of this assertion lies in the fact that mankind has committed the blasphemy of elevating the status of the prophets to that of Allah (SWT) Who is their Creator! The best example is that of Prophet *Isa* (Jesus Christ) (AS) whom the Christians, out of extreme reverence, erroneously believe to be son of

God! Such a misguided belief blurs the distinction between the Creator and the created. This part of the Holy *Kalima* is a constant reminder of this fact and prevents the recurrence of such grave mistakes, which have been strongly condemned in the Holy Qur'an as blasphemous.

"O people of the Book commit no excesses in your religion; nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus, the son of Mary was (no more than) a messenger of Allah and His word which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not three, desist, it will be better for you: for Allah is one God, glory be to Him: (far Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the Heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a disposer of affairs" (An-Nisa; 4:171)

Similarly Luqman also sternly warned his son to refrain from combining anyone else in worship with Allah (SWT) for that will be an unpardonable sin. Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction:

"O my son! Join not in worship (others) with Allah: for false worship is the highest wrong doing (Luqman; 31:13)

THE SECOND KALIMA (*Kalima-e-Shahadat*).

"I bear witness that there is no god except Allah The One and none is His partner; I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger".

It is evident that the same concept of oneness is being asserted with greater emphasis. The fact that Allah(SWT)is one and without any partner is expressed more explicitly and clearly. Similarly, it is also being emphasised with equal force that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) is but His servant and Messenger. Thus, extreme care has been taken to safeguard the

monotheistic concept of godhood. The distinctive difference between Allah (SWT) and His prophet has been rigidly maintained leaving no chance for any misunderstanding and confusion.

THE THIRD KALIMA (*Kalima-e-Tamjeed*)

“Allah, the pure, to Him is the praise and there is no god except Allah and Allah is Great and there is none to encompass and none is powerful except Allah the Most High and Elevated.”

This *Kalima* stresses His self / being of Allah (SWT), the Singularity of Allah (SWT), His Greatness, the Supremacy of His Power, and Position and the Uniqueness of His Status. The underlying idea is again to stress the Uniqueness and Absoluteness of Allah(SWT).

THE FOURTH KALIMA (*Kalima-e-Tawheed*).

“There is no deity except Allah, He is the only one and has no partners. Unto Him belongs the Kingdom, and unto Him is due all praise. He grants life and causes death. In His hand lies the good. And He has power over all things.”

This *Kalima* highlights the concept of one Almighty and Unique Allah(SWT)Who is incomparable and beyond human imagination.

THE FIFTH KALIMA(*Kalama-e-Radd-e-Kufr*).

“O Allah, I verily seek Your protection lest I join anything as partners with You while I know of it; and seek Your forgiveness from what I know not. I turn away from it and I am innocent of disbelief and joining partners with You and all wrong doings. I surrender to Your Will, and I have brought faith; and I also declare that there is no

deity except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

The aforesaid two solemn declarations of faith (*Imaan*) and five *Kalimas* highlight the fact that *Tawheed* is the fountainhead and the single overarching principle of Islam. It is the essence of *Deen-e-Islam* and distinguishes it clearly and unambiguously from all other religions including some of the monotheistic ones. The belief in *Tawheed* transforms the mind and spirit of man. It dispels all other fear from the heart and mind except that of Allah (SWT) the Omnipotent and the Omnipresent, the Creator and the Sustainer of the universe, Who alone can bring people to life and cause them to die. A Muslim reposes his total faith and belief in the Supreme Authority of Allah (SWT) which besides removing all worldly fear strengthens his belief in the unity of mankind which transcends all barriers of caste, creed, colour and ethnicity.

All these five *Kalimas* enshrine the articles of Islamic Faith. They repeatedly stress the Unity, the Singularity, the Uniqueness, and the Supreme Authority of Allah (SWT) and distinguish unambiguously between Allah (SWT) the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and prophet Muhammad (SAWS) who is His creation and His honoured Messenger. These ought to be imbedded in the heart and soul of every Muslim right from childhood. These declarations of Faith act as safeguards against the concept of polytheism. No matter what odds there are against him and no matter what consequences befall on him, when it becomes a matter between *Imaan* or Faith on the one hand and all worldly gains, his compulsions, subjugation to material well-being on the other, a true Muslim or *Momin* rises to the occasion and declares without fear the Oneness of Allah (SWT). This is the greatness of a true Muslim. The intensity of his feelings and emotions towards Faith is unfathomable.

EFFECTS ON SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

How does the first tenet, *Tawheed*, contribute to the social behaviour of man? As soon as an individual declares the Oneness of Allah (SWT), the Creator, Sustainer and the Nourisher, he/she turns to be a believer, and sheds all his/her fear of everything else. He/she firmly believes that nothing will befall on him/her against the Will of Allah (SWT). He/she also believes in the unity of mankind since all are born out of a single pair of man and woman. Having acquired this perception, a Muslim transcends the barriers of caste, creed, and colour, and thus invites every individual whether black or white poor or rich, intellectual or layman alike, to join the Islamic fraternity. All are welcome. No rites and rituals are required to embrace Islam. A single proclamation with the sincerity of heart of *Kalima-e-Tayyib* that: "*There is no god except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.*" elevates him/her to a supremely high standard of perception as a Muslim. By reciting the *Kalima* sincerely and with firm belief a Muslim stands totally transformed. All inhibitions are evaporated, attitude towards fellow-beings undergoes a radical change. He/She becomes a part of the universal brotherhood marked for its love and compassion, where people are identified by their deeds rather than by their caste; colour, wealth, position and worldly status. The concept of *Tawheed* makes one acutely conscious of the transient nature of this world and the lasting character of the Hereafter as the eternal abode of mankind. It instills in the hearts and minds of people the fear of Allah (SWT) and their accountability to Him, which is essential to keep human beings on the path of piety.

The concept of universal brotherhood in Islam and equality of man is demonstrated abundantly and distinctly

at the time of the annual pilgrimage of Hajj when people from every nook and corner of the world - the Westerners, the Africans, the Orientals, the Black and the White, the Poor and the Rich rub shoulder to shoulder, while performing various rites relating to the pilgrimage. It is a unique and inspiring spectacle! The declaration of faith in the Oneness of Allah, has bound together the people of varied cultures, languages and ethnicity from diverse regions and countries. Islam becomes their distinct identity, which is strikingly writ on their faces. They have opted of their own free will for the Islamic Code of Conduct. Their total submission to the commands of Allah (SWT) has put them on the highest pedestal of human behaviour. The seven codes relating to *Imaan* and the *Kalimas* have interwoven them into a single fraternity. It is unique to *Deen-e-Islam* that it has been successful in bringing people on to one platform with a single motto. The miracle has been wrought by the proclamation of *Tawheed*. These are a few simple words but with immense appeal. Their impact courses through their hearts and minds and binds them together as the servants of the One and only Allah (SWT). Thus, *Tawheed* represents the basic spirit of Islam, its *raison d'être* (reason for existence).

RISALAT (DIVINE GUIDANCE)

To err is human and that man would need continual guidance was evident from the day *Iblees* (Satan) could tempt Adam (AS) to deviate from clear instructions from Allah (SWT) not to partake of a particular fruit in heaven:

'We said "O Adam: dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree or ye run into harm and transgression. Then did Satan make them slip from the Garden and get them out of the state of felicity in which they had been" (Al-Baqarah; 2:35-36) .

This human weakness was further demonstrated during the life span of Adam (AS) when his son *Qabil* (Caen of Bible) in a fit of rage and arrogance killed his own brother *Habil* (Abel) who was innocent, humble and pious:

The selfish soul of the other led him to the murder of his brother: he murdered him and became himself one of the lost ones" (Al-Maedah; 5:30)

That the people and communities have been going astray, despite periodic divine guidance is brought out, by the introduction of idol worship as early as the fifth generation after the death of Adam (AS). Upto the time of *Mehla'eel*, the great grandson of *Shis* (AS), the son of Adam (AS), the people believed in the unity of God and worshipped only Allah (SWT). The society was later corrupted, idol worship was introduced when the son of *Mehla'eel* got an idol made of his father and people were

invited to pay their respect (*ziarat*)*. Subsequently the society was reformed by Prophet *Idris* (AS) but on his death it again got corrupted and idol worship was reintroduced. Later Prophet *Nuh* (AS) (Noah of the Bible) bitterly complained about this evil practice to Allah (SWT):

“And they have said (to each other), abandon not your gods, abandon neither Wadd, nor Suwa, neither Yaghuth nor Yauq, nor Nasr” (Nuh; 71:23).

We have it on the authority of *Kitab ul-Tafsir Al-Bukhari* that the aforesaid five persons - four males and one female (*Suwa*) - were noble souls**. These pious persons preached the Oneness of Allah (SWT) and that He alone be worshipped. After their demise, people made idols of these noble persons; and began worshipping them. *Nuh* (AS) was raised among these very people to bring them back to the concept of Oneness (Singularity) of Allah (SWT).

They did not heed the preaching of *Nuh* (AS). Ultimately the wrath of Allah (SWT) came down upon these people in the form of a Great Flood. All of them perished except *Nuh* (AS), most of his family members, and a few followers who were with him in the Ark, which he had built under instruction from Allah (SWT). *Nuh's* (AS) son who had turned an infidel was also punished. He too perished with the rest of the infidels. From this group of survivors, from the holocaust of the Great Flood, arose a new generation of men and women, which spread around countries.

*S. Anwar Ali (1987) : Qur'an the Fundamental Law of Human Life, Karachi, (Vol.1, p:210,).

**Abdul Karim Parikh : Tafsiri Khazana, 1996, New Delhi, p:133

Realising the need for continuous guidance of mankind, Allah (SWT) while exiling Adam (AS) from Paradise to the earth, announced that He would periodically transmit commands for the guidance of mankind so that they may adhere to the path of piety and righteousness:

"We said get ye down all from here, and as if sure there comes to you guidance from Me whoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. But those who reject faith and belie Our signs they shall be the companions of the Fire, they shall abide therein" (Al-Baqarah; 2:38-39).

It was in pursuance of this command that the divine messengers were selected from among human beings. They were periodically commissioned by Allah (SWT) to reform social evils and prevent mankind from going astray. These divinely inspired human beings who received their instructions from Allah (SWT) through the angels were called Prophets. They were selected from all parts of the habitable world, from among the local people in the respective regions, and addressed in their own language so that the divine message could get across straight without any difficulty:

"To every people (was sent) a Messenger, when their Messenger comes (before them), the matter will be judged between them with Justice and they will not be wronged. (Yunus; 10:47)

This fact has been reiterated in another verse of the Holy Qur'an :

"For We assuredly sent amongst every people a Messenger (with the command) serve Allah and eschew evil" (An-Nahl; 16:36).

After Adam (AS) there has been a long line of Prophets beginning with *Nuh* (AS) and ending with Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), who has been designated as the "Seal of the Prophets", in the Qur'an. Belief in all these divinely commissioned prophets is integral to the Muslim faith.

The Qur'an does not furnish information about all the prophets divinely commissioned on earth but the four most notable Prophets after *Nuh*(AS) were *Ibrahim*(AS) (Abraham of the Bible) *Musa* (AS) (Moses), *Isa*(AS) (Jesus Christ) and the last among them, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). All these Prophets were gifted with divine scriptures for the guidance of mankind. It may be mentioned incidentally that *Ibrahim* (AS) was the progenitor of both Prophet *Musa* (AS) and Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). Prophet *Isa* (AS) of course had no father. He was miraculously born of *Maryam* (Virgin Mary) at the command of Allah (SWT). Some significant events of these four prophets are outlined in the following paras:

The monotheistic religions of the world viz., Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all trace their origin to *Ibrahim* (AS). *Ibrahim* (AS) was a resident of Babylonia where his father was a high priest of its great temple where idol worship was prevalent. The Babylonian King *Nimrod* was haughty and arrogant. During his reign, there was acute moral degradation, cruelty was rampant and the poor were being humiliated by the king, the priests and the nobility. They were being subjected to untold misery and hardship. It was under such extreme circumstances that Prophet *Ibrahim* (AS) was commissioned to reform the society. It was only to prevent the perpetuation of tyranny, and to restore human dignity and equality of mankind, that Prophets were commissioned and asked to

communicate relentlessly the commands of Allah(SWT). The people were invited by persuasive arguments to follow the path of righteousness. The kings, the rich and the priests connived and conspired to force the people not to follow the Prophets. History is replete with many instances of Prophets being persecuted by their own people. Such people were not spared by Allah (SWT). They were subjected to exemplary punishment for harassing their Prophets and ignoring their teachings. This has been the *Sunnat-e-Ilahi* (tradition or precept of Allah) all through the ages. The annihilation of the people of *Aad*, *Thamud*, and *Lut* are glaring examples of divinely ordained punishment.

Ibrahim (AS) preached the Oneness of Allah (SWT); broke the idols and demonstrated to the people the utter inability of their objects of worship to save themselves from his hands. As a consequence, *Ibrahim* (AS) suffered at the hands of *Nimrod*, who professed to be god himself. He was cast in a huge fire lit for the purpose. Allah (SWT) saved him by ordering the fire to turn pleasantly cool and comfortable to *Ibrahim* (AS):

“They said burn him and protect your gods, if ye do anything at all. We said O Fire! Be thou cool and a means of safety for Ibrahim” (Al-Anbiya; 21:68-69).

Such inhuman conditions had to be faced by each and every Prophet that sent by Allah(SWT) to spread the message of Truth. The futility of the concept of plurality of gods was condemned by the Prophets again and again. But with the passing away of each Prophet, the clergy of that period brought back to the people the ancestral beliefs of various gods and goddesses. Thus the belief in the plurality of gods is prevalent even to this day by way of characterising and personifying noble people as

incarnations of god. Islam rejects characterisation of the Almighty Allah (SWT) any human form; thus basically negating idol worship.

Nearly 2000 years before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), the Israelites (Jewish community) passed through a cataclysmic period in their history. They lived a miserable life as slaves in Egypt to *Fira'un* (Pharaoh of Bible) and his people. *Musa* (AS) (Moses of Bible) was raised as Prophet among the *Bani-Israel* (Jews) to relieve them of their sufferings at the hands of *Fira'un* who claimed to be a god himself. *Musa*(AS) proclaimed Allah's (SWT) Oneness, denounced the godhood of *Fira'un*, and strongly protested against his tyrannical treatment towards *Bani Israel* (Jews). This followed a period of protracted confrontation. When the *Firaunic* oppression became unbearable, *Musa*(AS), as ordained by Allah (SWT), led all the *Bani Israel* (Jews) to migrate to Palestine. In order to capture them, *Fira'un*, in rage and fury, followed them with his army. The Jews had to cross the Red sea to reach Palestine, and escape from his stranglehold. As guided by Allah (SWT), *Musa* (AS) threw his staff on the water whereupon a wide path was miraculously created through the water. *Musa* (AS) and the *Bani Israel* (Jews) safely crossed over to the other side. *Fira'un* (Pharaoh of Bible) reached the shore and witnessed how the Jews had reached the other side. He and his army also took the same path. While they were in the middle, the waters from the sides engulfed them. *Fir'aun* and all his army were drowned - a glaring lesson of divine punishment. Thus *Musa* (AS) and *Bani Israel* were saved from the tyranny of *Fira'un*. The same waterway, which saved the believers of Allah (SWT), became a watery grave for the non-believers or the *Kafireen*. Such are the miraculous ways of Allah (SWT) for protecting the faithful, who repose total faith in Him.

Subsequently while Prophet *Musa* (AS), had gone to Mount Sinai (*Toor*) to receive the *Commandments* from Allah (SWT), the *Bani Israel* misled by *Samiri*, a sorcerer, began worshipping a golden calf made by him. They did not pay heed to the entreaties of *Haroon* (AS) (Aaron of Bible), brother of Prophet *Musa* (AS), to stop this blasphemous act of idol worship.* The wrath of Allah (SWT) fell on *Samiri*. *Samiri* after initial denials finally acknowledged his guilt to *Musa* (AS). *Samiri* was divinely punished to live a condemned life in this world. During his lifetime, he went on declaring himself a condemned and untouchable soul. He was completely isolated and socially boycotted. He was also warned of a far more severe punishment in the Hereafter. Allah (SWT) does not like *Mushrikeen* (idol worshippers) and *Munafiqeen* (Hypocrites). The wrath of Allah (SWT) is severe upon them, so also the punishment that follows.

"The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the fire; no helper wilt thou find for them" (4:145)

The last of the Jewish prophets after *Musa* (Moses) (AS) was Prophet *Isa* (AS) (Jesus Christ) who reiterated the teachings of *Taurat* (Torah of Bible) and preached the message of *Tawheed* nearly 600 years before the birth of the last Prophet, Muhammad (SAWS). Christians, the followers of *Isa* (AS), are identified in the Qur'an as *Nasrani*. Prophet *Isa* (AS) was miraculously born to *Maryam* (Virgin Mary)

* There is no reference to *Samiri* in *Taurat* (Torah). Hence the responsibility for this blasphemous act was mischievously cast on *Haroon* in *Taurat* who has been completely absolved of this guilt in the Holy Qur'an.

without a father. The Qur'an testifies to her virginity and chastity, which is an article of faith with the Muslims. Prophet *Isa(AS)* was divinely gifted with many miracles such as talking to people right from the cradle stage, reviving the dead to life with the command of Allah (SWT) etc. Like all other prophets, he was also greatly harassed and persecuted by his own people and the then rulers. The Roman authorities had finally decided to crucify him but they could neither kill nor crucify him as clarified in the Holy Qur'an:

"That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah", But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them (An-Nisa; 4:157).

The *Injeel* (Bible) was divinely revealed to *Isa(AS)* for the guidance of mankind. The current version of *Injeel* however is corrupted. The *Injeel* like the *Taurat* also predicted the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS).

ADVENT OF ISLAM

The people of *Makkah* and its neighbourhood were illiterate brutes steeped in idolatory before the advent of Islam. *Ka'bah*, the Grand Mosque in *Makkah*, was built by Prophet *Ibrahim* (AS) and his eldest son Prophet *Ismail*(AS) as the first house of worship for Allah (SWT) on earth. It was dedicated to the worship of One and only Allah (SWT) and was divinely blessed:

“The first House (of worship) appointed for mankind was that at Bakkah, full of blessing and of guidance for all kinds of beings” (Al-e Imran; 3:96).

The town of *Makkah* was also called *Bakkah* at that time. Until the conquest of *Makkah*, 360 idols were placed in and around *Ka'bah*. These idols were worshipped by various tribes of Quraysh. In the outskirts of the city of *Makkah* were found the famous idols of *Laat*, *Uzzah* and *Hubal*, revered by all Arabs.

The Arabs living in and around *Makkah* were the descendants of Prophet *Ismail* (AS), the elder son of Prophet *Ibrahim* (AS). The former was ordained by Allah (SWT) to settle down in the valley of *Makkah*. These people lived a secluded life, away from the civilisation of Rome and Persia. They struggled all along for their livelihood in the confines of the desert. They lived rearing sheep, hunting wild animals and eating palm-fruits. The Arabs grew as a sturdy people, brave and outspoken in their ways, but were arrogant and obstinate. They were wild and irrational in their behaviour. Tribal rivalries were rampant. Tribal fights would flare up on the slightest provocation. It is stated that one such fight lasted for 40 years before the Holy Prophet (SAWS) was born. Blood

used to be shed even on trivial matters. The birth of a female child was treated contemptuously and a disgraceful act. Their daily transactions of life were marked by deceit and treachery, selfishness and immorality, feelings of mutual hatred and recrimination, vindictiveness and revengefulness. Slavery was widespread and slaves were very cruelly treated. For all their perverse, cruel, and immoral deeds, they had no feeling of regrets and repentance.

It was among such turbulent people known for their bravery but filled with arrogance and pride, that the Final Message viz., the Holy Qur'an was revealed and proclaimed by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) for the benefit of all mankind.

"We have not sent thee but as a Universal (messenger) to men giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin) but most men understand not" (Saba; 34:28)

PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAWS)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) is the last Prophet of Allah (SWT) in the series of Prophets divinely commissioned by Him for the guidance of mankind. He was born at dawn on Monday, 12 *Rabbi-ul-Awwal* (53 years before Hijra 570 AD.) in the city of *Makkah*. It is famous for *Ka'bah* - the Grand Mosque - where Muslims go for pilgrimage (*Hajj*) every year. He was born to a noble lady *Aminah* and was named Muhammad, meaning much praised. His father, Abdullah was the son of Abdul Muttalib the chief of the Quraysh, died a few months before his birth. As was customary in Arabia, he was handed over to Halima Sa'diyah, for wet-nursing. Muhammad (SAWS) lived with her for about five years. On the demise of his mother, he was taken in patronage by his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib and after his death, he began living with his uncle Abu Talib. His uncle had a big family, and was not a person of much means. As such, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), in his young age, helped him in his earnings by rearing sheep.

Muhammad (SAWS) was very handsome. He had a fair complexion, curly hair and a dense beard. He was sturdy, with broad shoulders and a wide chest, brave and generous. Muhammad (SAWS) was shy and simple in his habits, kind to everyone and affectionate to children. For his pleasing and humble manners, he was liked by one and all in *Makkah*. His childhood and prime age were all transparent before the people of *Makkah*. People brought their valuables and money to him for safe custody. He earned from them the title of *Al-Sadiq-ul-Amin*; meaning trustworthy. He helped everyone in his small errands in daily life. He did what he promised. The age of twenty-five, he married a noble lady called Khadijah (RA). She was

Basic Tenets of Islam

a widow having her own business. She sent merchandise to north and south Arabia. Muhammad (SAWS) also took the goods for trade and brought more profits than anyone else bring.

ASSIGNMENT OF *RISALAT* (Prophethood)

Muhammad (SAWS), being disgusted with the idolatrous practices of the people of *Makkah*, used to frequently withdraw to cave *Hira*, located in a mountain about two miles (3 1/4 km) from *Makkah* for meditation. This enabled him to keep away from the internecine bloody fights among the Arab tribes and their blasphemous activities. He also found the social setting most repulsive where wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few. There was stark poverty, and the rich oppressed the poor. There was no respect for women and female children used to be buried alive. The slaves were tortured and brutalised. These shameful and tyrannical practices profoundly touched Muhammad (SAWS) and agitated his mind. He was constantly thinking of ways and means to mitigate the sufferings of the poor and the needy, and to eliminate idolatry. Consequently, his frequency of visits to cave *Hira* increased. Further, he commenced to spend there regularly one full month in *Ramadhan* for concentrated and undisturbed meditation seeking answers to his queries.

It was in one of his visits to cave *Hira* in the month of *Ramadhan* when Muhammad (SAWS) was deeply lost in his thoughts on the creation of the universe, elimination of idolatry, social evils etc., that the *Wahi* (Revelation) was brought to him by Archangel *Jibrael* (Gabriel in Bible). Soon after he returned to the house, narrated the arrival of *Jibrael* and the revelation or *Wahi* to his wife, Khadijah (RA). At that time Muhammad (SAWS) was just over 40 years of age and the first *Wahi* revealed to him was:

*Proclaim! (Or Read) in the name of the Lord and Cherisher,
Who create - (Al-Alaq; 96:1)*

Khadijah (RA), his wife, was the first to accept his Prophethood and embrace Islam. Among the men, his close friend, Abu Bakr (RA), was the first to embrace Islam without any reservation or hesitation. His cousin Ali (RA), a grown up boy, was the first among children and Zayd bin Thabit (RA) was the first among slaves to become Muslims. Despite initial hardships and difficulties, the divine mission of Muhammad (SAWS) was a great success and before his death, the whole of Arabia had turned Muslim.

THE HOLY QUR'AN - A DIVINE MESSAGE

The Qur'anic verses were divinely revealed to Prophet Muhammad through Archangel *Jibrael* for nearly 23 years until his death (about 13 years in *Makkah* and 10 years in *Medina*). These Qur'anic verses collected and compiled in a book form constitute the Holy Scripture of the Muslims called the Qur'an. In its literal parlance, Qur'an means 'often read'. The Holy Qur'an declares unambiguously the ONENESS of Allah (SWT), and the brotherhood of mankind, thereby pouring out grace, mercy, bounty and love to one and all. It is a fountain of mercy and wisdom. It refutes selfishness and vain pride of birth, race, and colour and the amassing of power and wealth in the hands of a few besides the orgies of gambling and drunkenness. It denounces, forcefully idol worship and condemns outright the institution of priesthood.

The verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) intermittently on different occasions and at different places. He recited them and also had them recorded immediately after their revelation. The Qur'anic verses were arranged in a particular order as commanded by Allah (SWT). They were imprinted on his heart and mind, and preserved in the memory of his devoted disciples or companions. The Qur'anic verses were also regularly recited in prayers (*Salaat*) by the Prophet and his companions even before *Salaat* was made obligatory five times daily after his return from *Me'raj* (Ascent to Heaven). By virtue of the recitation of the Qur'anic verses by the Muslims across the globe, in all the mandatory *Salaat* and congregational prayers including *Tarawiyah* in the month of *Ramadhan* (Fasting or *Saum*), the

Holy Qur'an is the most widely read book in the world. A large number of Muslims all over the world read and recite the Holy Qur'an daily with devotion, reverence, and understanding. It is the only religious text, which claims to have millions of *Huffaz* (who have committed the whole Qur'anic text to memory). They can recite the Qur'anic verses without even looking into the text. It is the FINAL DIVINELY REVEALED WORD OF ALLAH (SWT) for the salvation of mankind.

Muhammad (SAWS) had the status of a Prophet and he constantly stressed that prophets should never be equated with Allah (SWT), Who stands alone as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and is incomparable. The position of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) as the Messenger and servant of Allah is very clearly defined in *Kalima-e-Shahadat*:

“I bear witness that there is no god except Allah The One, and none is His partner; I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His Messenger”

While stressing the Oneness or Unity of Allah (SWT) this *Kalima* makes it abundantly clear that though Muhammad (SAWS) was a Prophet of Allah he was, nonetheless, His servant as well. Hence, he should never be elevated to the status of God. However, Muhammad (SAWS) enjoyed an exalted position among the prophets being the ‘Seal’ or the ‘Last’ MESSENGER of Allah (SWT). He preached and practiced Islam with absolute perfection and achieved total success in his mission. There was no contradiction in his precepts and practices. Prophethood is a DIVINE GIFT. It cannot be acquired, and prophets are not incarnation of gods. Islam totally rejects the concept of incarnation.

Basic Tenets of Islam

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was no doubt born among the Arabs and the Message of Allah (SWT) was delivered in Arabic language, but the Holy Qur'an, is addressed to all mankind. The Holy Qur'an proclaims:

"But it is nothing less than a message to all the worlds". (Al-Qalam; 68:52)

About the universality of the message, the Holy Qur'an categorically declares:

"We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to man, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin) but most men understand not" (Saba; 34:28)

Although Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) communicated Allah's message directly to the people of Arabia including Jews and Christians, it was of universal relevance for the benefit and guidance of all mankind. The Prophet also stressed the truthfulness and the universality of the Message to all mankind in one of his sayings. *"O Mankind, I am the Messenger of Allah unto you all."* In view of the universal relevance of the Qur'anic message, Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) invited, besides the common people, even the Kings of Iran, Rome, Abyssinia etc., to accept Islam.

These Basic Tenets of Islam, as explained in the foregoing paras, firmly establish a solemn covenant between a Muslim and his/her Creator for the Islamic way of life. Once a person proclaims with conviction the *Kalima-e-Tayyib*, he/she accepts the faith of Islam submitting himself/herself to the WILL OF ALLAH (SWT) as enshrined in the laws laid down in the Holy Qur'an. For all practical purposes, a Muslim is expected to

be guided by the Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet (SAWS).

A Bedouin (an Arab nomad) once called on *Ummul Momineen* (mother of the *believers*), Ayesha (RA), after the passing away of the Prophet (SAWS), and asked as to what was the *Akhlaq* (moral behaviour) of the Prophet (SAWS). She asked the villager whether he reads and understands the Holy Qur'an. On receiving an affirmative reply, she said: "*Then why is it that you ask of me? He was all Qur'an in living and practice, nothing else.*"

It can be observed from the preceding paras that Prophets such as *Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, Isa* and many others had preceded Muhammad (SAWS). In the course of time the Holy Scriptures were either lost or corrupted and teachings distorted. The Holy Book *Taurat* (Torah in English), the Commandments given to Prophet *Musa* (AS), now named 'Old Testament'; and *Injeel* (Bible in English), the Holy Scripture given to *Isa* (AS) (Jesus Christ), now found in the 'New Testament', are ample testimony of the distorted teachings of those two religions. Their followers have forsaken the monotheistic concept of god (Oneness or *Tawheed*) which has been the essence of the teachings of these religions. Thus in pursuance of His divine scheme, Allah (SWT) sent His last Prophet - Muhammad (SAWS) with HIS FINAL MESSAGE - THE HOLY QUR'AN, to be preached and followed by all seekers of truth for all times to come. Allah (SWT) also guaranteed to protect its originality and purity and keep it free from corruption:

"We without doubt sent down the message and We will assuredly guard it from corruption" (Al-Hijr; 15:9)

It is obligatory on all Muslims to accept the divinity and truthfulness of the Holy Qur'an. This will please both

Allah (SWT) and the Prophet (SAWS) as is borne out by the following Qur'anic verse and the traditions of the Prophet (SAWS):

"...So take what the Messenger gives you, and refrain from what he prohibits you..." (Al-Hashr; 59:7)

Explaining it further, the Holy Prophet (SAWS) has said:

"None of you is a believer until his desire bows to what I have brought" (Mishkat)

"He who will be pleased with Allah as Lord, with Islam as religion, and with Muhammad as Messenger will experience the flavour of faith." (Muslim)

Out of 23 long years of his *Risalat* (Prophethood), 13 years were spent in *Makkah* and its vicinity preaching Islam. The later 10 years were spent in *Madinah*, a fertile habitation some 480 kilometers northwest of *Makkah*, where he established the first Islamic state.

From the time of declaration of his Prophethood, proclamation of the Oneness of Allah (SWT), and preachings against idol worship, Muhammad (SAWS) and his companions were harassed and tormented to the extreme by the chiefs of the non-believers. The living conditions of Muhammad (SAWS) and his followers in *Makkah* were made miserable and intolerable. Instances of their tyrannical treatment had no parallel. *Bilal*(RA), then a slave, who had accepted Islam was dragged on burning sand, under the scorching mid-day sun, for uttering the word '*Ahad*', '*Ahad*' meaning Allah is the One. Another instance is that of Umme Ammar. This lady was put to death for proclaiming the Oneness of Allah (SWT). She

denounced the idols. She was attacked by a lance, which pierced, through the lower part of her body. She died reciting the Glory of Allah (SWT). This brave woman was the first person ever to have sacrificed her life for her belief in Islam. Even 1400 years after the incident, she still lives as a shining star in the hearts and minds of the Muslims for her selfless sacrifice and unwavering faith in Islam. A large number of Muslims have, all along, laid down their lives emulating this great lady. This ought to be the attitude of every Muslim who should always be ready to sacrifice everything to protect his/her faith in Islam.

MALAIKAH : (ANGELS)

Another significant aspect of the *Imaan* of a Muslim is to believe in the existence of angels. They have been created by Allah (SWT) out of *Noor* (light). The angels strictly adhere to the duties assigned to them by the Creator. They are countless in number. The Qur'an says that innumerable angels hold the 'Throne' of Allah (SWT). Symbolically, it means that the angels are ever ready to carry out the commandments of Allah (SWT) in the governance of the universe.

Prominent among them are the four angels better known for their assignments. *Jibrael* (AS) (Gabriel of Bible), is the archangel who had the honour and privilege to convey the Holy Scriptures upon the Prophets. *Jibrael* (AS) has presumably accomplished the assigned task by communicating the Last and Final Message of Allah (SWT), **AL - QUR'AN**, to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), the Last of the Prophets.

The second angel *Michael* (AS) (Michael of Bible) is assigned to administer the rains, signifying the nourishment of the world. The third, angel *Izrael* (AS) (Israel of Bible), is assigned the task of ending life, i.e. bring death to every living being when ordained by Allah (SWT). The last of the famous angels is *Israfeel* (AS) (Israfil of Bible), the angel who will sound the *Soor* (Trumpet) to announce the end of the present world and herald the arrival of the Doomsday - The Day of Judgment, and the commencement of the eternal life thereafter.

Before going to the last basic tenet of Islam, i.e., *Aakhirat* - the life Hereafter, let us again stop briefly to look

into the nature of man himself. Allah (SWT) narrates in *SurahTeen*: of the Holy Qur'an:

"*We have indeed created man in the best of moulds,..*" (At-Tien; 95:4)

Physically man is made of water and clay. But the unique and mysterious component of man is the '*Rooh*' (Soul), which may be defined as the Divine Energy which expresses itself through a free and self determining will. To state more explicitly, man is the only creation of Allah (SWT) to be given the 'Power of Reasoning', and the 'Will' to do or not to do things. He can exercise his power of discretion that has not been gifted to any other creation on earth.

Within human limitations, man has been endowed with the attributes of the Creator, such as the qualities of mercy, love, forgiveness etc. all that is good and noble. But also inherent in him is the '*Nafs*' (Self); the instinct of waywardness that goes to induce sinful living. As such, man is called upon to use his discretionary powers, the power of reasoning and the will, to do or not to do when faced with good or evil.

Because of this independence, man has been made to account for all his deeds, during his entire tenure on earth, whether they be good or evil. The Holy Qur'an says that every act committed by an individual shall be recorded and the account will be shown to him/her on the Day of Reckoning in order to enable him/her to assess his/her own good and bad deeds:

"On that Day will men proceed in groups sorted out, to be shown the Deeds that they (had done). 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-Zalzala; 99:6-8)

AAKHIRAT(HEREAFTER)

Allah (SWT) demands from all mankind, particularly from Muslims, who are the first addressees, to lead a righteous life as prescribed in the Holy Qur'an. He admonishes man to refrain from sinful living. But the human instinct in man persuaded by *Shaitaan* (Satan), urges him to sensual pleasures, worldly gains, arrogant behaviour and foul play. The satanic temptation to materialistic pleasures of life is so overwhelming that man tends to assume that this worldly life is the ultimate end. He develops a passion for materialistic pleasures and attempts to acquire them by any means. While making this conscious choice he/she completely ignores the fact that there will be a Day of Reckoning when he/she will be brought back to life to account for his/her worldly deeds. On that Day good and bad deeds will be exposed in the minutest detail for nothing can be concealed from Allah (SWT). That will be the most agonizing Day of trials and tribulations for human beings. Such would be the state of bewilderment on the Day of Judgment that none would care even for his/her own kin, children, wife and parents.

"The Day ye shall see it, every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling-babe,." (Al-Hajj; 22:2)

It must therefore be borne in mind that death in this world is not the end of life. Another kind of life will prevail that would be announced after the Day of Judgment. Death here simply means that man's active life on earth has ceased. The following verse from the Holy Qur'an is appropriate to be mentioned here:

"Every soul shall have a taste of death: and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. Only he who

is saved far from the Fire and admitted to the Garden will have succeeded: for the life of this world is but goods and chattels of deception." (Al-e Imran; 3:185)

When Allah (SWT), the Almighty would wish it, the *First Soor* (Trumpet) will be blown by the angel *Israfeel*. Thereupon every existing object will be completely annihilated and none shall remain alive. Everything will perish except Allah (SWT), the Creator of the universe and Sustainer of life, and whatever He wishes. The following verse from the Holy Qur'an declares categorically:

"The Trumpet will (just) be sounded, when all that are in the heavens and on earth will swoon, except such as it will please Allah (to exempt). Then will a second one be sounded, when, behold, they will be standing and looking on! (Az-Zumar; 39:68).

With the *Second Soor* (Trumpet) blown, the Resurrection will take place. The dead shall come back to life to assemble before their Lord, the Creator. The following *Hadith* picturises the rising of the dead. Abu Razin Al Oqaile has reported:

"I asked; O' Messenger of Allah! How will Allah reproduce in this creation?" 'He said: Have you not passed by the valley of your people at the time of drought and then passed by it while it is luxuriant with greens?' ' yes', I replied. He said: 'that is the sign of Allah in His creation; likewise Allah brings the dead to life'". (Miskhat)

Every person shall then realise that the Day of Reckoning has arrived. The entire record of deeds of every man and woman will be presented before Allah (SWT), Who will sit in court for the final judgment. Those who emerge sinful and deserve punishment will be condemned to Hell - the place of fire and torture. Those adjudged as pious and

virtuous will be awarded the heavenly abode of eternal bliss.

The Holy Qur'an warns mankind of dire consequences of denying life in the Hereafter:

"And to those who believe not in the Hereafter,(it announces) that We have prepared for them a Chastisement Grievous (indeed)." (Al-Isra; 17:10)

In another verse, the Holy Qur'an states the trait of the disbeliever:

"Your God is one God: as to those who believe not in the Hereafter, their hearts refuse to know, and they are arrogant". (An-Nahl; 16:22)

The true Muslims are those who firmly believe in the Hereafter:

"And who believe in the Revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and (in their hearts) have the assurance of the Hereafter." (Al-Baqarah; 2:4)

This belief in the Hereafter plays a powerful role in the reformation of our lives. The Holy Qur'an states that if a person has *Imaan* thoroughly ingrained in his/her heart, leads a righteous life as shown to him/her by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), he/she will live a contented life here and a happy life in the Hereafter. In appreciation of the noble life that the faithful lived on earth by following the commandments of the Holy Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet (SAWS), they will be blessed and rewarded on the Day of Judgment with the immeasurable bounties of the heaven, which cannot be humanly conceived. The heavenly abode is a place of beauty and grandeur beyond imagination. It will be notably marked

for its total tranquility and blissful pleasure. Every conceivable pious wish will be fulfilled just for the asking. Above all the residents of heaven will be honoured with the direct vision of Allah (SWT). The Holy Qur'an offers to the faithful, the cheerful tidings from Allah (SWT):

"(To the righteous soul will be said:) "O (thou) soul in (complete) rest and satisfaction! Come back thou to thy Lord,- well pleased (thyself) and well pleasing unto Him! Enter thou, then, among My Devotees! Yea, enter thou My Heaven! " (Al-Fajr; 89:27~30)

The disobedient and sinful, will be punished. Their place shall be the Hell of Fire. The guilty shall reap the fruits of their own wicked acts. The unfaithful or *Kafireen* will cry and lament for worshipping many gods or goddesses, which, according to Holy Qur'an, is an unpardonable sin. They will entreat to be sent back to the earth to redeem their wrong doings. They would be told that pardon and rectification of their misdeeds was possible only before their death. This day is the Day of Final Verdict.

The belief in Life in The Hereafter is an essential part of the Islamic faith. The denial of this belief makes other beliefs meaningless. It is the fear of Allah (SWT) and of the punishment on the Day of Reckoning which strikes terror in the hearts and souls of the believers. It is this concept of accountability that helps the Muslims to keep to the path of piety and truthfulness. If accountability, fear of Allah (SWT), rewards and punishment in the Hereafter are not there then who would tread the path of righteousness!

CONCLUSION

Tawheed, Risalat and *Aakhirat* constitute the foundation of Islam and precisely define its basic framework:

The Industrial Revolution has brought all material benefits to man and has enabled him to live luxuriously. Standards of living have reached new heights. Poverty has been practically eliminated from almost all the developed countries of the world. Because of the social welfare measures, adopted by governments, deaths due to hunger are rare. Despite this material well-being, is man living a happy life? The material welfare of man represents only one aspect of his life. Its spiritual content is equally important. In the absence of spiritual well being an acute void in life is felt which disturbs its equilibrium. With growing prosperity, the wealthy should have experienced total contentment in life. Their contentment is only apparent and not real. They also feel the pangs of disenchantment and lead a highly disturbed and stressful life. History bears testimony to the fact that man has been constantly in search of spiritual satisfaction. In order to quench his spiritual thirst man has wandered all over. The spiritual content of life provides man with his identity, in the absence of which he feels totally lost.

An American scholar standing on the roof of the 102 storeyed Empire State Building in New York looked down. He saw cars moving like tiny creatures crawling. A thought struck his mind instantly. He asked himself: 'where is man'? That is the big question everywhere man is asking.

Reformers and sociologists are trying hard to find remedies for the maladies torturing the spirit of man. Abundance of wealth has brought more greed to them, many more social evils, and much more moral degradation. The disastrous consequences of the two World Wars are evident from the total erosion of ethical values, the dominance of machines over men and perpetuation of tyranny and oppression of the strong over the weak. The Third World War, if it takes place, will result in total destruction because of the use of lethal nuclear weapons.

Devoid of moral values, man today is lured by narcotic drugs, addiction to which has made his life much more miserable than before. Thousands and thousands of people are trying various dogmas, and joining different cult groups in order to find solace for their souls. In spite of all these efforts they are still groping in the dark, and feel thoroughly disillusioned for they find their goal, i.e. spiritual contentment, still a distant dream far removed from reality.

Islam is the answer to their agony. A balanced living, brought forth by Islam, is the solution to the demands of modern society, where deceptive living transcends the limits of decency and good conduct. Islam has evolved a comprehensive value system, which covers all aspects of human life. As an individual, man's conduct is well defined; as a member of the family, his obligations are charted out together with the rights he enjoys in that entity. As a member of the larger society i.e., as the citizen of a country, his duties and rights are well marked out and what he owes to others beyond the frontiers of his family and country is well contemplated in Islam.

Allah (SWT), the Creator of man, knows well what he needs. The Almighty has been extra-ordinarily generous to man. He has endowed him with immense resources and subjected them to his control. Man has been asked by his Creator to unfold the mysteries of the universe and make use of its vast resources for his own good and for all mankind, and to express profound gratitude to Allah (SWT) for His bounties.

It may be concluded that *Tawheed* (Unity of Allah), *Risalat* or Prophethood (Messengers and Messages for the guidance of mankind), and *Aakhirat* (Day of Reckoning) are strongly interlinked. *Tawheed* constantly reminds us that there is a Single Controlling Authority, which charts out the course of the universe and guides the destiny of mankind. This Supreme Authority in His munificence has endowed man with immense resources for his sustenance. Man should always be grateful to Allah (SWT) for His unbounded generosity. *Risalat* is a reminder of His message and the constant concern of Allah (SWT) for the welfare of mankind. He commissioned Prophets to convey divine guidance to mankind in order to prevent people from being misguided by the devilish tricks of the wily *Iblees* (Satan) who has vowed to keep mankind away from the path of piety. *Risalat* helps us to save us from satanic tricks and desist from following him. The divine messages communicated by the prophets make us realise the importance of patience, perseverance, tolerance, compassion, justice, truth, and humility, and a balance between materialistic pleasures and spiritual content of life. It finally leads us towards obedience to the commands of Allah (SWT) and perpetual gratitude to Him. *Aakhirat* instills in our hearts and minds the fear of Allah (SWT) and cautions us that the worldly life is of a transient nature and man will have to render account for all his deeds on the Day of Reckoning when his fate will be

finally decided for his final abode: Heaven or Hell. Without the fear of Allah (SWT) and firm belief in accountability on the Final Day of Reckoning, the world will be steeped in moral anarchy, physical turmoil, and spiritual chaos. Hence this stern warning from Allah (SWT).

“Verily We take upon Us to guide, and verily unto Us (belong) the End and the Beginning. Therefore do I warn you of a Fire blazing fiercely; none shall burn therein but those most unfortunate ones who give the lie to Truth and turn their backs. But those most devoted to Allah shall be removed far from it.”
(Al-Lail; 92:12~17)

These **Basic Tenets of Islam** epitomise the true spirit of *Deen-e-Islam* and adequately reflect its basic character. Adherence to the norms laid down in these Basic Tenets will strike a balance between material and spiritual aspects of life. It will lead individuals and communities to develop their personality and character in perfect harmony and peace, replacing hatred with love, conflict with cooperation and selfishness with self-sacrifice.