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ISLAM AND QUR'AN**

**NO : 9**

**ISLAM WAS THE RELIGION  
OF ALL THE PROPHETS:  
MUHAMMAD (SAWS) WAS THE  
LAST PROPHET**

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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 an 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. We hope that these Monographs will excite and stimulate the interest of both the Muslim and Non-Muslim intellectuals, to read the Qur'an and appreciate its true meaning and significance

This Monograph entitled **Islam Was the Religion of All the Prophets: Muhammad (Saws) Was the Last Prophet**, highlights ideological identity among all the religions since they had all stemmed out of the same Supreme Divine Power, Allah (SWT). The evolution process of religions and religious codes was completed and perfected during the Prophetic tenure of Muhammad (SAWS) The perfection of *Deen-e-Islam* and the gift of **Al-Qur'an**, a divine book of universal relevance for the guidance of all mankind till eternity obviated the need for a divinely ordained Prophets in the future. Hence the chain of Prophets was terminated. Muhammad (SAWS)

was the last Prophet. Allah (SWT) bestowed upon him many distinctions, not conferred on any of the preceding prophets. One was the universal relevance of his message and timelessness of its validity. He will be the only prophet who would be elevated to *Maqam-e-Mahmood (Station of Praise and Glory)* on the Day of Resurrection, and would be allowed by Allah (SWT) to intercede on that day. The Qur'an testifies that Muhammad (SAWS) epitomised the Qur'anic values and the spirit and ethos of Islam. Further his exemplary character and the unmatched brilliance of his achievements will be a perennial source of inspiration to all mankind till eternity.

We wish to express our grateful thanks to Prof. Taqui Ali Mirza, Professor of English (Retd.), Osmania University, who meticulously checked the draft and helped us in refining the language.

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

وَأَخِيرُ دَعْوَا هُمْ أَنْ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

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## INTRODUCTION

The prophetic mission of Muhammad (SAWS) was the last and the most epoch making divinely ordained mission of far reaching significance. During his prophetic tenure Allah (SWT<sup>2</sup>) made three crucially important proclamations concerning the divine guidance of human beings. One, that *Deen-e-Islam* was perfected during his Prophet-hood, second that the Final Message from Allah (SWT) i.e. the Holy Qur'an would be universally relevant and free from corruption, retaining its original text till eternity, and finally the chain of Prophets was terminated with Muhammad (SAWS). It may also be noted that the Qur'anic declaration regarding completion of *Deen-e-Islam* naturally implied that this *Deen* (religion) was a continuation of all the preceding religions (*Deen*) preached by prophets prior to Muhammad (SAWS). This had now been perfected before finally ending for good the chain of Prophet-hood.

These proclamations in the Qur'an made the mission of Muhammad (SAWS) distinct from the missions of earlier prophets whose missionary activities were either community or region specific. In view of these distinguishing features of his mission, he had some unique

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<sup>1</sup> SAWS stands for '*Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wo Sallam*' meaning 'Allah's blessings and peace be upon him'.

<sup>2</sup> SWT stands for '*Sub'hanahu Wo Ta'la*' meaning 'Pure and Exalted'

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experiences, one of which was of course his miraculous Night Journey (*Asra*) and Ascent to Heaven (*Me'raj*). Besides being an exalted prophet he was a unique person whose human qualities will always remain unmatched since they were perfectly modelled on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

In this monograph it is proposed to discuss the significance of the aforesaid three epoch making Qur'anic proclamations. In addition the identical nature of all the prophetic missions, from Nuh (AS) (Noah) to Muhammad (SAWS), the unique characteristic of Prophet Muhammad's (SAWS) mission and total harmony between his temporal and spiritual life, precepts and practices will be highlighted.

**ORIGIN AND CONTINUITY OF DEEN-E-ISLAM:**

Allah (SWT), while commanding Adam (AS<sup>3</sup>) to descend to earth, also made it the permanent abode of mankind till the Doomsday. He also committed graciously to commission periodically His messengers for the guidance of mankind. Those who followed the paths shown by the prophets will have nothing to fear and will live in eternal bliss whereas those who defied will be condemned to the fire of hell: *"We said get ye down all from here: and if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever 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 companions of the Fire, they shall abide therein."* (al-Baqarah; 2:38-39)

It was in fulfilment of this solemn promise that Allah (SWT) sent His Messengers since the dawn of

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<sup>3</sup> AS stands for '*Alaihi Salaam*' meaning Peace upon him'.

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civilization and revealed to them His divine guidance in order to lead mankind to the path of piety and righteousness. The Holy Qur'an does not tell us about the total number of prophets or messengers commissioned by Allah (SWT) but it does inform that they were deputed to all the habitable parts of the world. *"For We assuredly sent amongst every people a Messenger (with the command), serve Allah and eschew evil."* (an-Nahl; 16:36) This fact was restated: *"Verily We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, and there never was a people without a warner among them (in the past). And if they reject thee so did their predecessors, to whom came their messengers with clear signs and scriptures and the book of enlightenment."* (Fatir; 35:24-25)

The prophets were no strangers to the communities they were commissioned to work with. They spoke the language of the people among whom they lived and preached. There was no communication gap between the prophets and their people. This is clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an: *"We sent not a messenger except (to teach) in the language of his own people, in order to make (things) clear to them."* (Ibrahim; 14:4)

According to a Tradition of the Prophet (SAWS), quoted in *Masnad al-Ahmad* there were one hundred and twenty four thousand prophets deputed by Allah, the Almighty, from time to time. (1) However, according to the Holy Qur'an Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was informed of the names and missionary activities of only 25 of them, most of these were the Semitic prophets who could be easily identified by the Jews and Christians\*: *"We*

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**Note:**\* Names of Prophets, besides Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), mentioned in the Qur'an are:

*Idris (AS), Nuh (AS) (Noah), Hud (AS), Salih (AS), Ibrahim (AS) (Abraham), Lut (AS) (Lot), Isma'el (AS) (Ishmael), Is'haq (AS)*

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*did afore-time send messengers before thee: of them there are some whose story We have related to thee and some whose story We have not related to thee.”* (Ghaafir; 40:78)

Further all the Prophets proclaimed the Supremacy, Unity and Oneness of Allah (SWT): *“Not a messenger did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me.”* (al-Anbiya; 21:25) They also warned their respective peoples of their accountability to Allah (SWT) for their worldly deeds so that they would not be able to complain on the Day of Reckoning that they had none to guide them to the path of virtue and truth, and to warn them against sinful acts *“Messengers who gave good news as well as warning that mankind, after (the coming) of the messengers should have no plea against Allah, for Allah is exalted in power, wise.”* (an-Nisa; 4:165)

All the Prophets were divinely inspired but 18 of the 25 prophets mentioned earlier are specifically named in the Holy Qur’an who were gifted by Allah (SWT) *“the Book, the Authority and Prophet hood.”* (al-An'am; 6:89 (See Note on page 2)

Prophet Nuh (AS) was the first among the Prophets who had a divinely inspired scripture to reform a corrupt

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*(Isaac), Ya'qub (AS) (Jacob), Yusuf (AS) (Joseph), Ayyub (AS) (Job), Shuay'eb (AS), Musa (AS) (Moses), Haroon (AS) (Aaron), Ilyas (AS), Al Yasa (Elisha) (AS). Zul Kifl (AS), Ashmoil (AS) (Samuel), Dawood (AS) (David), Suleiman (AS) (Solomon), Yunus (AS) (Jonah), Ozair (AS), Zachariah (AS), Yahiya (AS) (John the Baptist), Isa (AS) (Jesus)*

Biblical names of some of the prophets are given in parentheses. Names of prophets divinely gifted with revealed books, as mentioned in the Holy Qur’an, are printed in italics.

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society, which is also corroborated by a Tradition of the Prophet (SAWS). (2) Presumably the Qur'an refers to such ancient scriptures when it speaks of *Zubur ul Awwaleen*: ***"Without doubt it is (announced) in the revealed books of former peoples."*** (ash-Sho'ra'; 26:196)

**CONTINUITY OF ISLAMIC CODE FROM NUH (AS) AND  
IBRAHIM (AS) TO MUHAMMAD (SAWS):**

It can be stated on the authority of the Holy Qur'an that Islam is the one and only religion divinely ordained by Allah (SWT), followed the breached by all the prophets. It is interesting to observe that *Deen al-Islam* (Religion of Islam) is not named after any prophet, god or goddess. The word Islam simply means peace and total submission to the will of Allah (SWT). A true Muslim is one who, besides believing in the Oneness of Allah (SWT), completely surrenders himself to His will. It was this *Deen al-Islam* which Adam (AS) was asked to follow when he was commanded to descend to earth. Subsequently definite commands were transmitted through various prophets to their respective folks to follow the path defined by Islam so that they did not astray from the path of truth and righteousness. This is strongly corroborated by the Qur'anic verses. The Holy Qur'an emphatically proclaims that ***"Mankind was one and single nation and Allah (SWT) sent messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth to judge between people in matters wherein they differed."*** (al-Baqarah; 2:213)

It is clear from the aforesaid verse that the people were being repeatedly misguided by the forces of evil which operated surreptitiously and menacingly. They even succeeded in dividing the people into religious sects and sub-sects, some of them even worshipping gods other

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than Allah (SWT). This naturally created the necessity to commission prophets periodically to reassert the basic principles of Islam and bring back people to recognise the Unity and Supremacy of Allah (SWT) and warn them of their eventual return to Allah (SWT) after death on the Day of Reckoning, when they will have to account for their worldly deeds.

As indicated earlier approximately 1,24,000 prophets were divinely ordained prior to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) to reform different groups of people living in different ages, in diverse and even isolated regions but they all conveyed identical messages as is forcefully and explicitly stated: *"The same religion has He established as that which He enjoined on Nuh - that which We have sent by inspiration to thee and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses and Jesus: namely that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein. To those who worship other things than Allah hard is the (way) to which you call them. Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases and guides to Himself those who turn (to Him)."* (ash-Shura; 42:13)

The continuity of Islam right from the time of Prophet Nuh has again been stressed: *"Behold, We have inspired thee (O! Prophet) just as We inspired Nuh, and all the Prophets after him - as We inspired Abraham, and Isma'el, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Jonah, and Aaron and Solomon; and as We vouchsafed unto David, a book of divine wisdom; and as (We inspired other) apostles whom We have mentioned to thee ere this, as well as apostles whom We have not mentioned to thee, and as God spoke His words unto Moses!"* (an-Nisa; 4:163-164) That Prophets Nuh (AS) and Ibrahim (AS) followed the same Deen has been more specifically stated as follows: *Peace and salutation to Noah among the nations. Thus indeed do we reward those who do right, for he was one of our believing*

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*servants. Then the rest We overwhelmed in the Flood. Verily, among those who followed his way was Abraham."* (as-Saffaat; 37:79-83)

Thus Islam was the first and only *Deen* (religion) formally promulgated by Allah (SWT) through Nuh (AS). The other prophets followed suit and carried forward the divine message.

That the messages of all the Prophets were of identical nature has been repeatedly stressed and highlighted in *Surah al-A'raaf* (Chapter 7) verses 50 to 93; *Surah Hood* (Chapter 11) verses 25-109; *Surah al-Anbiya* (Chapter 21) verses 51 to 91; and *Surah al-Sho'ra* (Chapter 26) verses 16-191.

In *Surah al-A'raaf* (Chapter 7) Prophets Nuh, Hood, Salih, Lut, Sho'aib proclaimed the Oneness of Allah, condemned idol worship and asked their respective peoples to worship the one and only Allah: *"O my people! worship Allah! Ye have no other god but Him. Will ye not fear (Allah)?*

In *Surah Hood*, (Chapter 11) verses 25-109 the missionary tasks assigned to some of the Prophets have been spelled out. They distinctly bring out their commonalties, unity of purpose and identity of ideology. For instance the Holy Qur'an reveals that Allah (SWT) *"sent Noah to his people with a mission: I have come to you with a clear warning that ye serve none but Allah: Verily I do fear for you the penalty of a grievous day."* (Hood; 11:25-26)

Identical was the message of Prophet-hood to the people of Ad: *"To the Ad people We sent, Hood, one of their own brethren. He said 'O my people worship Allah:*

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*ye have no other god but Him. (Your other gods) ye do nothing but invent."* (Hood; 11:50)

Prophet Salih was divinely commissioned to convey the Message of Allah (SWT) to his people - Thamood. His message was exactly similar to that of Prophets Nuh and Hood: *"O my people! Worship Allah: Ye have no other god but Him. It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein: then ask forgiveness of Him, and turn to Him in repentance: for my Lord is (always) near, ready to answer."* (Hood; 11:61)

In this same *Surah* (Chapter 11), as we proceed further, the Holy Qur'an reveals that Prophet Sho'aib was assigned the task to reform the people of Madyan: *"to the Madyan people (We sent) Sho'aib, one of their brethren: he said 'O my people worship Allah: ye have no other god but Him. And give not short measure or weight: I see you in prosperity but I fear you the penalty of a Day that will compass (you) all round."* (Hood; 11:84)

And finally in the concluding part of this *Surah* the Holy Qur'an highlights that Prophet Musa (AS) was also sent to convey the same message and instil the same warning to *Fira'on* (Pharaoh): *"And we sent Moses with our clear (signs) and an authority manifest."* (Hood; 11:96)

The identical nature of the messages of all the prophets is strongly corroborated by the statement of Prophet Isa (AS) that he was divinely commissioned to continue and fulfil the teachings of the Prophets preceding him. It is stated in Mathew (5:17-18): **"Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the Prophet: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."**(3)

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These striking similarities in the messages of all the Prophets have been further highlighted in *Surah al-Sho'ra* (Chapter 26) verses 16 to 191. Prophet Musa (AS) was deputed to convey the message to *Fira'on* (Pharaoh) and to warn him sternly against acts of blasphemy. He declared unambiguously in the Court of *Fira'on* *"We have been sent by the Lord and Cherisher of the Worlds... the Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between - if ye want to be quite sure ... Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers from the beginning...Lord of the East and West, and all between! If ye only had sense."* (*ash-Sho'ra*; 26:16, 26 and 28)

Finally *Fira'on* (Pharaoh) was firmly asked to refrain from acts of blasphemy and submit to the Supreme Authority of Allah (SWT).

This striking similarity and total identity in letter and spirit of all the divine messages, from Nuh (AS) and Ibrahim (AS) to the last of the Prophets, Muhammad (SAWS), is again proclaimed firmly and declared unequivocally in *Surah al-Anbiya* (Chapter 21) that all people initially belonged to one and the same religious fraternity as guided by their respective Prophets: *"Verily this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me and no others. But later generations cut off their affairs (of unity), one from another (yet) will they all return to Us."* (*al-Anbiya*; 21:92)

The continuity of identical faith and ideology runs strongly among all the religions (*Deen*) because all the prophets invariably tread the religious path chalked out by Ibrahim (AS) through Divine guidance. It has been repeatedly emphasised in the Holy Qur'an that Islam was the religion of Ibrahim who was always on the right path of truth and righteousness who never joined any god with

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Allah (SWT). Hence Muslims have been asked to declare firmly: *“Verily, my Lord has guided me to a way that is straight - a religion of right - the path (trod) by Abraham the true in faith, and lie (certainly) joined not gods with Allah.”* (al-An'am; 6:161)

In one of his prayers Ibrahim (AS) besought Allah (SWT) to produce “Muslims” among his offspring and their successive generations: These Muslims or followers of Islam will stand out among the people of the world as those who submit totally and without any reservation to the will of Allah (SWT). *“O our Lord! Make of us Muslim, bowing to Thy (will) and of our progeny a people bowing to Thy (will);”* (al-Baqarah; 2:128) Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) too was commanded to follow the religion (*Deen*) of Ibrahim (AS): *“So we have taught thee the inspired (message) follow the ways of Abraham the true in Faith, and he joined not gods with Allah.”* (an-Nahl; 16:123)

This is precisely the reason that the Holy Qur'an addresses to Quraysh (People living in and around Makkah) that being the progeny of Ibrahim (AS), through his son Ismail (AS), their true faith ought to be Islam which was the faith of Ibrahim and Ismail. In deference to his wishes, Allah (SWT) has named followers of Ibrahim (AS) as Muslims in the Holy Qur'an as well as in the preceding religions propagated by Prophets Musa, Isa, Yunus, Ya'qub and others: *“And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you and imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witness for mankind.”* (al-Hajj; 22:78)

The Holy Qur'an repeatedly stresses that Islam, which is not named after any prophet, is the only *Deen*

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(religion) acceptable to Allah (SWT). This naturally confirms the continuity of Islam as the one and only religion (*Deen*) divinely ordained for the guidance of mankind during different phases of the development, evolution and reformation of societies and civilizations.

The unity and continuity of the Religion (*Deen*) Islam is also clearly testified by the Qur'anic declaration: *"the religion before Allah is Islam (Submission to His Will). Nor did the people of the book dissent there from except through envy of each other, after knowledge had come to them. But if any deny signs of Allah, Allah is swift in calling to account."* (Al-e Imraan; 3:19) That Islam is the chosen religion (*Deen*) of Allah has been re-emphasised thus: *"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (Submission to Allah) never will it be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)."* (Al-e Imraan; 3:85)

With the geographical spread of human civilization the need was consistently felt to commission divine Messengers' in different regions to guide the people to the path of truth and righteousness and to rectify the distortions which mutilated the basics of the belief originally communicated through Nuh (AS) and Ibrahim (AS). Even the divine messages communicated by Musa (AS) and Isa (AS) were substantially distorted. Thus Allah (SWT) in His absolute wisdom decided to convey his ultimate message of Truth of universal relevance and which will be divinely protected from corruption till the Doomsday. This was the Message which was finally revealed to Muhammad (SAWS). While the prophets prior to Muhammad (SAWS) were mandated to function within their respective communities, the divine mission of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) alone was not community specific. It was comprehensive, all pervasive, covered all mankind and was proclaimed to be of universal relevance:

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

**PERFECTION OF *DEEN-E-ISLAM* AND TERMINATION OF  
PROPHET-HOOD:**

While the ideological content of Prophet Muhammad's (SAWS) mission was identical with that of the preceding prophets, it differed essentially in its scope, diversity of themes covered and comprehensiveness. Most of the prophets prior to Muhammad (SAWS) were deputed among small isolated communities, hence their territorial jurisdiction was quite restricted and the messages they communicated were considerably limited in scope. According to the Holy Qur'an the missionary activities of Yunus (AS) (Jonah) was confined to a population of approximately one hundred thousand: *"And We sent him to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more."* (as-Saffaat; 37:147)

Similarly the territorial jurisdiction of other prophets for spreading the divine message was equally limited. The maximum territory for missionary activities, prior to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), was presumably assigned to Musa (AS) viz. Egypt and the adjacent land of Palestine. By the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) the habitable world had extended from the Pacific Ocean in the East to the Atlantic Ocean in the West. Major centres of civilization had emerged in China, India, Persia, Egypt, Greece and Italy (Roman Empire). These centres of civilizations were mutually linked through trading transactions and interacted through military interventions and invasions. The Holy Qur'an itself mentions about the recurring conflict between Persian and Roman Empires *Surah ar-Room* (chapter 30)

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These civilizations had their distinct value systems highly biased in favour of the ruling and religious elite and extremely humiliating for the common man. None of them including the Christian Roman Empire acknowledged the unity and supremacy of Allah (SWT). The Christians had definitely deviated from the concept of Unity when they replaced it by Trinity (Son-Father and the Holy Spirit). The Persians worshipped the Fire. The Chinese and the Indians believed in pantheism.

The enormous territorial expansion of human civilization with misguided religious beliefs and distorted ethical values called for a divine message which would have universal relevance and application. It was to fulfil this vital need and to radically reform the fast deteriorating religious and ethical values that the Holy Qur'an was revealed and with it the Prophetic mission of Muhammad (SAWS) commenced. The time was therefore ripe to re-establish firmly the *Deen* (religion) preached and propagated by Ibrahim (AS), to reassert forcefully the Unity or Oneness of Allah (SWT), instil His fear in the minds and hearts of the mankind and warn them of their accountability to Him on the Day of Reckoning. It was thus to complete the mission initiated by Nuh (AS), Ibrahim (AS) and subsequently pursued by Musa (AS), Isa (AS) and numerous other prophets spread all over the globe that Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was divinely called upon to accomplish. Hence his message, though delivered in Arabic and in Arabia, was nonetheless relevant for all mankind. The Holy Qur'an also made it very clear: *"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)

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In order to fulfil his missionary task the Prophet was gifted with the most effective divine weapon - the Holy Qur'an and Allah (SWT) unequivocally declared it to be a book of guidance for all mankind: "*Verily this is no less than a Message to (all) the worlds.*" (at-Takweer; 81:27) Allah (SWT) also promised to maintain the originality and the purity of the Qur'anic text and keep it free from corruption: "*We have without doubt sent down the Message and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption).*" (al-Hijr; 15:9)

It is unfortunately true that all the scriptures divinely revealed prior to the Qur'an have been largely corrupted through extensive interpolations and have hence lost credibility. The texts of the divinely revealed books such as Torah of the Jews and Bible of the Christians have also been significantly changed due to interpolation. Historical facts have been distorted therein and even the characters of some of the prophets have been stigmatised. They are full of contradictory statements. Prophet Nuh (AS) is presented as a drunken husbandman (Genesis 9:20-20) whereas in another passage, in the same book, he is described as a pious and noble soul: "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9). Similarly the Exodus (32:1-6) blames Haroon (AS) squarely for the reintroduction of idol worship among the followers of Musa (AS) (Moses) while he had gone to Mt. Sinai to receive the divine Command (Ten Commandments of Torah). The Holy Qur'an completely exonerates the former of this blasphemous act.

The Vedas too like the Bible present contradictory statements regarding the creation of the sun. While in one passage the Rig Veda mentions that the sun was made by the Soma god (ix, 96:5). In another passage it contradicts itself by pointing that God Indira was its maker. There are

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varying accounts regarding the position of the sun in sky. While Shukla Yajur Veda (4:31) claims that the position of the sun in the sky was set by god Varuna, the Athar Veda states (XIII, 2:12) that the sun was carried from the earth to the sky by Atri Rishi alone to create the months. In Rig Veda, however it is observed that the sun was carried by the sons of Angira Rishi to heaven (X, 62:3) (4) In view of this diverse types of unscientific and irrational interpolations in all the ancient scriptures from the Vedas to the Bible they cannot be much relied upon. They have to be used circumspectly.

Further the Christians made Christ the son of God and the Jews treated Ozair as His son. The Brahmins instead of worshipping the one and only Brahma had started worshipping His Avatars or Incarnations. The precincts of Ka'bah, the first house of worship built on earth for supplication to Allah (SWT), by Ibrahim (AS) and his son Ismail (AS) was completely desecrated by the idolatrous practices of the people of Makkah. There were more than 360 different types of idols kept around Ka'bah the prominent among them being *Lat*, *Manat* and *Uzzah*. It was to restore the pristine sanctity of Ka'bah as the house of worship for Allah (SWT) and to eliminate gross corruption which had permeated the social and religious life in Arabia and the adjoining lands that Muhammad's (SAWS) Prophet-hood was divinely commissioned, strongly supported by Qur'anic revelations, to bring about radical and revolutionary reforms. The Qur'an is a comprehensive book of guidance covering all facets of human life: *"Verily We have propounded for men, in this Qur'an, every kind of parable. But if thou bring to them any sign, the unbelievers are sure to say, 'Ye do nothing but talk vanities."* (ar-Room; 30:58)

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The Holy Qur'an deals with the total conduct of human life. There is no aspect of life, spiritual or material, religious or secular, social and personal which has been left uncovered by the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an explains rationally the divine purpose of man's creation on earth, outlines his missionary role as the vice-gerent of Allah (SWT), instils in his mind and heart the fear of Allah (SWT) and warns him of his final accountability to Allah (SWT) for his worldly deeds on the Day of Reckoning. In addition it excites the spirit of enquiry and relentless search for the Truth as ordained in the Holy Qur'an. It emphasises the universal relevance of the message of Al-Qur'an and its efficacy as an inspiring and effective instrument to guide human beings to the paths of piety and righteousness. It insists on high and impeccable moral standards in public life. Once these fundamental codes for the conduct of the affairs of human life were ordained and made universally applicable, the need to develop new value systems was made superfluous, and obviated the necessity to depute prophets to initiate societal reforms of radical nature. Further Allah (SWT) ensured to keep the Holy Qur'an free from corruption so that the values enshrined in it will ever be available, as observed above, in their original form without any distortion and interpolation.

The Holy Qur'an thus provides a perennial source of universally valid, value based education of the highest and unmatched quality. The ethical norms relating to social, economic and political behaviour as prescribed in the Holy Qur'an, if firmly adhered to, would lead to peace and stability, progress and prosperity, justice and equality. This naturally marked the fulfilment and perfection of *Deen al-Islam*. Hence Allah (SWT) declared unequivocally *"This day I have perfected your religion for you,*

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*completed My favours upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."* (al-Ma'edah; 5:3)

The "perfection of religion" obviously implies that the basic laws, fundamental principles and Divine Commandments have been finalised. They are immutable and would not be subject to any alteration and modification as they have originated from Allah (SWT), the source of all knowledge, wisdom and laws: *"But no change, wilt thou find in Allah's way (of dealing). No turning off will thou find in Allah's way (of dealing)."* (Fatir; 35:43)

The validity of these values, principles and laws will stand the test of time and will continue to be meaningfully relevant in guiding people to the path of truth, piety and righteousness till eternity.

The Qur'anic verse 5:3 cited earlier also highlights the fact that together with the "Perfection of the *Deen*" (religion) the favours, gifts and blessings were also bestowed upon Muslims in full measure and in totality. Since the "completion of favours" has been used to complement the "perfection of *Deen*" it obviously implies that this divine gift ought also to be of enduring nature and eternal value in order to strengthen, reinforce and maintain the purity of *Deen* (religion). The other gifts such as the complete control of Ka'bah and undisputed dominance in the entire Arabian peninsula were of course significant historical landmarks but the gift of the Holy Qur'an was the most valued gift of lasting importance which alone could ensure the sanctity and purity of *Deen al-Islam* on a continuing basis till eternity.

Finally the Holy Qur'an, while confirming the continuity of Islam, proclaims unambiguously that Islam which was the religion of all prophets including Nuh (AS)

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and Ibrahim (AS) has now been perfected leaving no scope for any change, none whatsoever. Islam had thus attained its climax during the Prophetic tenure of Muhammad (SAWS). Islamic values governing the conduct of human life were permanently enshrined in the immutable and incorruptible Qur'an to act as a divine guide to human beings to the path of piety and righteousness till the Doomsday. It naturally obviated the need to continue with the institution of Prophet-hood. Hence Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was proclaimed the last prophet: *"Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the seal of the prophets."* (al-Ahzaab; 33:40)

The Prophet also refers to this fact in his last sermon: "O people, no prophet would be raised after me and no new *Ummah* (would be formed) after you" (5). On his death, therefore, the chain of prophets which commenced with the descent of Adam on earth was finally terminated.

Having perfected *Deen al-Islam*, Allah (SWT) also committed that Islam, the religion of truth, justice and righteousness would eventually prevail outshining all other religions: *"Vain would they extinguish Allah's light with their mouth but Allah will not allow but that His light should be perfected, even though the unbelievers may detest (it). It is He Who hath sent His Messenger with guidance and the Religion of Truth to proclaim it over all religions, even though the Pagans may detest (it)."* (at-Tawbah; 9:32-33)

Islam will eventually triumph not through the lethal instruments of war, but through its message of peace and universal brotherhood, nobility and inherent strength of its ethical norms and spiritual values together with firm faith in the supreme power of Allah (SWT). This

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was best exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) himself who spread ceaselessly for 23 years, like a "Glorious Lamp", the Message of Truth in order to dispel darkness.

**PREDICTIONS ABOUT PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAWS) IN  
OTHER DIVINELY REVEALED BOOKS:**

The Prophet-hood of Muhammad (SAWS) and the Message of the Holy Qur'an were such divinely ordained epoch making events in the history of human civilization that one would expect their reference to echo in all the earlier revealed books. An objective and unbiased examination of the texts of some of the extant revealed books prior to the Holy Qur'an confirms the validity of this assumption. Although the other revealed books prior to the Holy Qur'an have been grossly corrupted due to human intervention, yet it is interesting to observe that predictions regarding the prophetic mission of Muhammad (SAWS) are still well preserved in most of these revealed books.

**Puranas and Vedas**

The Puranas are the sacred texts of great antiquity, written by Rishi Ved Vyas. Of the 18 authentic Puranas there is clear prediction in the "Bhavishya Purana", written centuries before the birth of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), about the arrival of a holy messenger from Allah (SWT) to reform the human society. An English translation of the concerned "Shlokas" of the "Bhavishya Purana" is as follows: **"A Malechha, (not of the Indian Origin), Acharya (religious and spiritual teacher) appeared with his disciples. He is famed as Mahamad (Muhammad). After bathing this Mahadev (great person of reverence)**

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of the desert land with Ganges Water and five holy herbs of Chandan etc. Raja Bhoj (A king described in many ancient Indian works) said: I pay obeisance to you the inhabitant of the desert, the guardian of the world (*Sarwar-e-Aalam*) for the destruction of the devils, O possessor of manifold miracles, for the purification of the Malechha, picture of truth, wisdom and joy. Take me as one seeking your protection".

"For the idol established beside Raja Bhoj, Mahamad said: that which you bow to can eat out of my left over. Saying thus he demonstrated before the Raja accordingly. Hearing and seeing this, Raja Bhoj was bewildered, and in the Malechha religion, his belief established. At night a godly form in Paisacha, (Non-Aryan) body, appeared and said to Raja Bhoj, O King, although your Arya Dharma is best of all, even then by the will of Ishvara (God) I will establish the same religion by the name Paisacha religion. The one who is circumcised, bereft of the tail (on the head), sporting a beard, the man of high pitch calls (the call of *Adhan*) and the non-vegetarian one will be my man" (Bhavishya Purana, Prati Sarg Parva : Part III chap 3, Shloka Nos: 5-0, 15-17, 23-25). (6)

The Vishnu Purana (Chapter 24) also predicted the arrival of the last incarnation of God. It will take place in the form of a warrior "Who will be born in Sambhla Dip (Island of Sand) in an eminent family. His father's name would be Vishnuyasa (Slave of God-Abdullah), and the mother would be called Somti (Aminah - worthy of confidence).

The **Vedas** also speak of that Messenger of the last sacrifice. The "**Athar Veda**" distinctly refers to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) in the following Shlokas:

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1. Listen to this with respect Omen, Narashansa (Muhammad is the literal equivalent of this word) will be praised. We receive this refugee from 60,000 enemies.
2. Camel is his transport and he has twenty she camels. The top of his chariot bows down escaping from touching heaven. (Athar Veda 20:127:1-3).

It may be noted that there is no person by the name of "Narashansa" in Indian mythology. This Vedic verse therefore specifically predicts the arrival in future of the praised man "Narashansa" or Muhammad. (See reference (6) above)

**Buddhist Scripture:**

Besides the Puranas and the Vedas the divine scriptures of other ancient religions also predict unambiguously about the ultimate arrival of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). There is a prediction about his birth and prophetic mission in the Buddhist scriptures as well. While Buddha was on his death bed his principal disciple Nanda asked as to who would carry on his teaching. Gautama Buddha answered: **"I am neither the first nor the last. At an appropriate time another Buddha will arrive who will be thoroughly enlightened, his actions will be pious and full of wisdom, a blessing for the mankind, an incomparable leader of mankind, he would be preaching to the world with the same eternal truth which I have done but he will establish a new society based on religious values and will be known as "Mesriya" (7).**

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### Parsi Scriptures:

The Farsi (Parsi) religion, which originated from Persia, is one of the oldest religions. The Parsis worship the fire. They have two sacred scriptures: Zend Avesta and Dasatir. The Zend Avesta according to Dr. Hamidullah predicted the coming in of an iconoclast whose name will be "Soeshyant" (the Mercy unto all). (8). The prophecy about the arrival of Muhammad (SAWS) is still more clearly stated in the Dasatir. **"When the Persians should sink 80 low in morality a man will be born in Arabia whose followers will upset their throne, religion and everything. The mighty stiff-necked ones of Persia will be over powered. The house which was built (the Ka'bah in Makkah built by Prophet Abraham) and in which many idols have been placed will be purged of idols, and people will say their prayers facing towards it. His followers will capture the towns of Parsis, and Taus and Balkh and other big places round about. People will embroil with one another. The wise men of Persia and others will join his followers."** (9)

### Tauret (Torah) and Injeel (Bible):

The Holy Qur'an reveals that prediction about the Prophet-hood of Muhammad (SAWS) is clearly stated in both the *Tauret* (Torah) and *Injeel* (Bible): *"Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures) - in the law (Torah) and the Gospel."* (al-A'raaf; 7:157) Further the Holy Qur'an reveals that all the Prophets preceding Muhammad (SAWS) had firmly committed themselves in a Covenant to Allah (SWT) that if any other Prophet was divinely commissioned to preach and propagate the Commands of Allah (SWT) they would implicitly follow him: *"Behold! Allah took the covenants of the Prophets saying I give you a book of wisdom then comes to you*

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*messenger, confirming what is with you do you believe in him and render him help. Allah said "Do you agree and take this my covenant as binding on you? They said, "We agree, He said then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses." (Al-e Imraan; 3:81)*

These Qur'anic assertions are clearly discernible in both the *Tauret* (Torah) and the *Injeel* (Bible).

Despite all the distortions and confusions one finds in *Tauret* (Torah) the passage predicting the arrival of Muhammad (SAWS) is well preserved: And the Lord said unto Moses "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee (O Moses) and will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deuteronomy 18:18-20) (10). This could refer to none else but Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) who had directly descended from Ismail (Ishmael) (AS), the elder brother of Is'haq (Isaac) (AS). Moosa (Moses) (AS) was the descendant of the latter. Thus the word "brethren" in Deuteronomy refers to this fact of common lineage of Moosa (AS) and Muhammad (SAWS). That the latter was a Prophet like Moosa (AS) is evident from the fact that there are strong commonalties in the various events of their lives. Both Moosa (AS) and Muhammad (SAWS) had normal births and deaths whereas that of Isa (AS) was under miraculous circumstances. The divine messages to both Moosa (AS) and Muhammad (SAWS) were available in writing. The Bible was written quite sometime after the miraculous disappearance of Isa (AS). Hence the phrase prophet like unto thee applies to Muhammad (SAWS) only. Finally besides the spiritual values of their respective messages both were commanded to enforce legal codes as well, in their respective political territories. Thus from whatever angle it is examined the aforesaid quotation applies to Muhammad (SAWS) alone.

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The Holy Qur'an reveals that there is direct reference by name to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) in the Bible *"And remember Jesus, the son of Mary said 'O children of Israel! I am the messenger of Allah (sent) to you confirming the law (which came) before me and giving glad tidings of a messenger to come after me whose name shall be Ahmad.' But when he came to them with clear signs they said 'This is evident sorcery!'"* (Saff; 61:6)

In the Biblical text as well there are passages in the "New Testament", clearly revealing the arrival of a prophet to complete the unfinished task of Isa (Jesus) (AS): **"It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I do not go away the Comforter will not come unto you. But when, the spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatever he shall hear (from God) that shall he speak and he will show you things to come"** (John: 16/7-14). The Prophet (SAWS) has been called the Counsellor or the Paraclete (The one who is the most praise worthy) in the "New Testament": **"But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, who the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all good things and will bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you"** (John 14:26) (11).\*\*

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\*\* "Ahmad" or "Muhammad", the Praised one, is almost a translation of the Greek word Pericytos. In the present Gospel of John 46 XIV; 16; XV: 26, and XVI: 7, the word "comforter" in the English version is for the Greek word "Paracletos" which means "Advocate" one called to the help of another, a kind of friend" rather than "Comforter - The Greek word translated Comforter is Paracletos which is an easy corruption from Pericytos which is almost a literal translation of Ahmad and Mohammad. This interpretation of the word Paraclete in Bible has been challenged by Christian scholars. However Sir William Muir in his "Life of Mahomet" (abridged edition 1871, p.5,

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There is a clear reference to prophet Muhammad (SAWS) in the Book of "Isaiah" as well: **"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of its roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord"** (ch: 11:1-2).

This statement in the Book of "Isaiah" predicts the coming in the future of a prophet who will be wise, knowledgeable, will encourage the cultivation of knowledge and will ask people to fear Allah and of the divine punishment. This very clearly reflects the spirit of the Qur'an and outlines the personality of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). Further it points out that the future prophet would be from the stem of 'Jesse' who according to Encyclopaedia Biblica is "contracted from Ishmael". Hence the aforesaid prediction in the Book of Isaiah refers only to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and not to Jesus as some of the Christian scholars suggest. (13)

The Gospel of St. Barnabas is a significant religious text which was accepted as canonical in the churches of Alexandria till 325 C.E. Subsequently it was deliberately concealed and kept out of the public view by the Vatican. It has now seen the light of the day. This Gospel was completed before the death of St. Barnabas in 61 C.E. The texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls of the Qumran caves date back from 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. to the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. There are striking affinities in the thought and language of the Gospel of Barnabas and the Qumran texts. There is an equally striking similarity between the Qur'anic

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admits that, 'Ahmad' was used in translation of Parcalete in the 8th century Arabic translation of Bible." (12)

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revelations and the statements recorded in this Gospel. In one of its passages it reveals that the Jews asked Jesus if he was the expected Messiah. He categorically said "No" and made the following statement. **"As God lives, in whose presence my soul stands, I am not the Messiah whom all the tribes of the earth expect, even as God promised to our father Abraham saying: "In your seed will I bless all of the tribes of the earth." But when God shall take me away from the world, Satan will raise again this accursed sedition, by making the impious believe that I am God, son of God. At such time, my word and my doctrine shall be contaminated so much that scarcely shall there remain thirty faithful ones. At that time, God will have mercy upon the world and will send his messenger for whom he has made all things. He shall come from the south with power and shall destroy the idols and the idolaters. He shall take away the dominion which Satan has over men. He shall bring with him the mercy of God for salvation of those who shall believe in his words" (the Gospel of Barnabas, 96).** Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) is mentioned even by name in this Gospel. (14)

**AL- QUR'AN ON PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAWS):**

Thus the spirit of truth, wisdom and knowledge, as predicted in both the *Taurat* (Torah) and *Injeel* (Bible), did eventually arrive conveying loudly and clearly the divine Message commencing from the Mount of Light in Makkah and culminating in the last sermon on the Mountain of Mercy in Arafat.

While building Ka'bah together with his son Isma'el (Ishmael) (AS), Ibrahim (Abraham) (AS) also prayed to Allah (SWT) that a Messenger be commissioned from among the people living in and around Makkah in order to guide them to the path of piety and virtue and who will communicate to them the instructions received directly

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from Allah (SWT): *“Our Lord: send amongst them a Messenger of their own who shall rehearse Thy signs to them and instruct them in scripture and wisdom, sanctify them for Thou art the exalted in might the wise.”* (al-Baqarah; 2:129)

Allah (SWT) answered the prayers of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) and commissioned to the domain of Makkah a Messenger who brought the message of love and true guidance not only for the Arab Peninsula but for all mankind. Allah (SWT) points out in the Holy Qur’an that the Mission of Muhammad (SAWS) was not confined to any particular tribe, or people of any particular region, or for any specific period of time. It was neither time specific nor area nor community or tribe specific. It was valid for all the time and for all the peoples of the world. The message of the Holy Qur’an was therefore of universal relevance, intended to guide the entire mankind for all times to come: *“We have not sent thee but as universal (messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings and warning them (against sin) but most men understand not.”* (Saba; 34:28)

Muhammad (SAWS) was divinely endowed with impeccable character even from his childhood. He was incorruptible, honest to the core and always fought for the oppressed. The people of Makkah endearingly and respectfully called him *Al-Ameen* i.e. the trustworthy. At a very young age he was asked to arbitrate in a dispute among the tribes as to which of them should fix the sacred black stone at the junction of two walls of Ka'bah. Subsequently he was unanimously invited by all of them to fix it on their behalf.

Even the Jews were impressed by his exemplary sense of honesty which led to the conversion to Islam of a number of prominent Jews and particularly Abdullah bin Salam who on seeing the Prophet (SAWS) proclaimed

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spontaneously that *"this could not be the face of a liar."*  
(15)

There are numerous biographical accounts of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) which furnish the minutest details of his life right from his birth to death. His was such a magnetic personality that it had attracted the attention of biographers from all over the world. But no biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) can match the elegance, eloquence and the majesty of the Qur'anic language while eulogising the quality, the character, the status and position of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). Some of the verses even depict the early stages in the growth and development of the life of the Prophet (SAWS). We can get a true insight into his life and personality through the divine words of appreciation which Allah (SWT) out of His unbounded generosity, has showered on him. This is what has been attempted in the following paragraphs.

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was born at dawn on Monday, 12th Rabi-ul-Awwal (570 CE) in the city of Makkah. His grandfather Abdul Muttalib was the guardian of Ka'bah, and the entire environment around him was idolatrous. Right from childhood Muhammad (SAWS) was totally indifferent to rituals relating to idol worship and other idolatrous practices which were being frequently performed around Ka'bah. He used to feel acutely disturbed and would isolate himself completely from the members of his community. Beside Muhammad (SAWS) a few other people in Makkah and notably four viz. Warqa bin Naufil, Obaidullah bin Hajash, Usman bin Al-Hawarith and Zaid bin Amroo were equally disgusted with the idolatrous rituals around Ka'bah. Of these only Warqa bin Naufil was left in Makkah but he had become a Christian. Muhammad (SAWS) was thus left alone, but continued his quest for "Truth" in the isolated caves or

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even while grazing his flock of goats and sheep in the pasture lands around Makkah. This disgust against idol worship intensified with the passage of time and maturity of age. He would sometimes completely withdraw himself from his family and relations to Cave Hira on the Mount of Light for deep and prolonged contemplation. In his late thirties it became his regular practice that every year during the month of Ramadhan he would withdraw to this cave meditating about the Creation, the Creator of the Universe, elimination of idolatry, etc.

Muhammad (SAWS) was of noble lineage but his financial condition was rather poor. He was being supported by his uncle Abu Talib who just managed to make both ends meet. In view of this Muhammad (SAWS) used to carry the family flock of goats for grazing and even accompanied his uncle with his trading caravans. Financial matters commenced suddenly improving when he was accidentally introduced to Khadijah bint Khwaled, a rich widow and a leading merchant of Makkah. Initially he was asked to lead her trading caravan and transact business for her. She was so profoundly impressed by his sincerity and honesty that eventually offered to marry him. This marriage transformed Muhammad's (SAWS) poverty to affluence. But his intense and sincere search to identify the Creator and eliminate idolatry continued unabated. As stated earlier he used to withdraw himself from the rest of the community and even from the members of his family during the month of Ramadhan to Cave Hira on the Mount of Light in order to concentrate undisturbed on the mysteries of the universe. It was during this period of retirement in the month of Ramadhan at the age of forty that he was blessed with the mantle of Prophet-hood and received the first revelation through Archangel Jibriel (Gabriel in Bible) who asked him: *"to proclaim (or Read) in the name of thy Lord and*

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*Cherisher Who created - created man out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood. Proclaim and thy Lord is most bountiful. He Who taught the use of the pen - taught man that which he knew not."* (al-'Alaq; 96:1-5)

This inspired revelation was a most mysterious experience. The Prophet (SAWS) was under tremendous strain since he was doubtful if this was an illusion or a reality. He narrated his experience to his wife Khadijah (RA<sup>4</sup>) who assured him that it was a reality. She immediately consulted her cousin Warqa bin Naufil, a learned Christian who confirmed that what Muhammad (SAWS) received was a divine revelation through *Jibriel* and which was clearly predicted in the Bible (16).

The Prophet (SAWS) felt highly relaxed and relieved that what he had witnessed was a reality and that he was the fortunate and blessed recipient of the Divine Message and of Prophet-hood. After the first revelation he continued his practice of retiring to Cave Hira for deep meditation in solitude but the flow of revelation had suddenly stopped.

This *Fataratul Wahi* (sudden stoppage of divine revelation) was most vexatious, frustrating and depressed him completely. During *Fataratul Wahi* period he would occasionally hear the voice of Angel reiterating his status as the Messenger of Allah (SWT) but again there, was no trace of divine revelation. It was in this agitated mental state while he was returning from Cave Hira that he heard till the voice of *Jibriel* on the Mount of Light which attracted his attention towards the horizon where he sighted the same angel whom he had seen at the time of the first revelation. This incident is described as follows

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<sup>4</sup> ra stands for 'Razi-Allahu 'anhu/'ahna/'anhuma/'ahum', meaning 'May Allah be please with him/her/twain/them.

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**“While I was walking I heard a voice from the sky. I looked up towards the sky, and behold I saw the same angel who came to me in Cave Hira, sitting on a chair between the sky and the earth. I was so terrified by him that I fell down on the ground. Then I went to my wife and said ‘wrap me in garments.’ She wrapped me and then Allah revealed *Surah al-Mudaththir* (74:15). Thereafter the continuity of divine revelation was never suspended: “the Divine revelation started coming more frequently and regularly.” (17)**

The Truth that he was the chosen prophet and recipient of divine revelation was promptly accepted by his wife Khadijah (RA), friend Abu Bakr (RA), cousin Ali (RA) and freed slave Zaid Bin Thabit (RA). Others however mocked and thought that Muhammad (SAWS) had either gone mad or was possessed. The Prophet (SAWS) was asked by Allah (SWT) to ignore these frivolous comments and assured him that he was the chosen one to fulfil God's mission on earth and convey the divine message which would benefit all mankind. *“And the unbelievers would almost trip thee up with their eyes when they hear the Message and they say ‘Surely he is possessed. But it is nothing less than a message to all the world.”* (al-Qalam; 68:51-52)

The Prophet has been repeatedly consoled and assured in the Qur'an that he was neither possessed, nor mad, nor a soothsayer. He was an honoured messenger of Allah (SWT) carrying the message of Truth and warning to mankind about the Day of Reckoning (15:6, 52:29; 68:51-52; and 81:22-23). He was therefore commanded by Allah (SWT) to continue to convey the message of Truth: *“Proclaim thou the praises of thy Lord. For by the grace of thy Lord thou art no (vulgar) soothsayer, nor art thou one possessed.”* (at-Toor; 52:29)

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Having received firm divine assurance the Prophet (SAWS) proceeded on with his missionary assignment with still greater enthusiasm and vigour.

Meanwhile the flow of revelation increased. Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was keen to commit immediately the revealed verses to memory in order not to forget them. Suspecting that he might forget them he would be simultaneously repeating the verses being communicated to him by Archangel *Jibriel*. His anxiety to commit the revelations to memory was understandable but he was advised by Allah (SWT) against undue haste. He was assured that Allah (SWT) will see to it that these verses were properly enshrined in his heart and mind so that he should never forget them, and hence the following verses were revealed: *“Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur’an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it. But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated). Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear).”* (al-Qiyamah; 75:16-19) This advice was reiterated in another verse wherein he was also asked to constantly pray to Allah (SWT) to enhance his knowledge: *“High above all is Allah the King, the Truth. Be not in haste with the Qur’an before its revelation to thee is completed, but say O my Lord advance me in knowledge.”* (Taahaa; 20:114)

The Prophet (SAWS) initially carried out his mission secretly. It did not receive any appreciable measure of success in the early stages. Most of the people of Makkah came to know of his claim to be a prophet and of his prophetic mission to establish the Unity and Supremacy of Allah (SWT), the Creator and the Sustainer of the Universe, to instil in their minds and hearts His fear, and to warn them of their accountability to Allah (SWT) on the Day of Reckoning. Instead of believing in the truthfulness of the Message they continued to ridicule him and thought that

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someone had cast a spell on him and therefore he was not in his senses. These sustained and unreasonable criticisms deeply distressed him but these moments of distress were greatly relieved when he was categorically reassured that for this noble and missionary role he would be amply rewarded by Allah *“Nun By the pen and by the (record) which (men) write, thou art not by the grace of thy Lord mad or possessed. Nay, verily for thee is a reward unfailing. And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character. Soon will thou see and they will see which of you is afflicted with madness.”* (al-Qalam; 68:1-6)

In these verses Allah (SWT) exhorts Muhammad (SAWS) not to be disheartened. He doubly assured him of supreme importance of the monumental mission assigned to him for which he would be handsomely rewarded and that Allah (SWT) Himself testified that Muhammad (SAWS) was divinely gifted with an unmatched nobility of character among the human beings.

With this divine reassurance the Prophet (SAWS) carried on his missionary activities with even greater enthusiasm and never looked back. Meanwhile the Prophet (SAWS) received divine command for the night prayers through *Surah Muzammil: “O thou folded in garments! Stand (to prayer) by night, but not all night, half of it - or little less or a little more and recite the Qur’an in slow, measured rhythmic tones, soon shall We send down to thee a weighty message.”* (al-Muzammil; 73:1-5)

The “Weighty Message” obviously implies an important responsibility which will bring about revolutionary changes in the society. Allah (SWT) chose Muhammad (SAWS) to implement this epoch making mission. This was a stupendous task and Muhammad (SAWS) prepared himself enthusiastically to fulfil this

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revolutionary role to reform the society radically in accordance with the Qur'anic principles. After the revelation of this verse he commenced praying during the night. Meanwhile the Prophet fell sick, could not get up for a few nights to offer his prayers. Noticing the sudden suspension of prayers during the night Abu Lahab's wife (an unbeliever) remarked that Muhammad's (SAWS) Allah had forsaken him. This remark deeply hurt and distressed the Prophet (SAWS). While he was feeling extremely gloomy and depressed that *Jibriel* revealed *Surah Ad-Du'ha* (93) to lift up his morale and make him feel self-confident (18).

He was profoundly disappointed at the lack of acceptability of the divine message which he was commanded to communicate fearlessly. He was equally frustrated that the Quraysh of Makkah were obstinately defiant and in no mood to listen to him. In fact he was being ridiculed. It was to elevate his spirits and infuse in him the moral courage to shoulder the immense responsibility of Prophet-hood which was cast on him that Allah (SWT) categorically assured him of an extremely bright future. In other words this ensured the success of his mission and a high degree of acceptability in the future of the divine message which he was communicating assiduously among the people of Makkah. Together with this definitive assurance he was reminded of his distressful past which was pleasantly transformed to prosperity and filled with happiness of a satisfactory family life. Similarly the tormenting phase of his prophetic mission would eventually be replaced by glorious successes which the Prophet (SAWS) would find extremely rewarding and satisfying. The early phase of Prophet's (SAWS) life, particularly his disturbed mental state in search of the ultimate reality before the revelation, his stark poverty, which was subsequently altered to

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affluence, has been eloquently described in *Surah ad-Du'ha* (93) of the Holy Qur'an. *"By the glorious morning light, and by the night when it is still the Guardian Lord has not forsaken thee nor is He displeased. And verily the hereafter will be better for thee than the present. And soon will thy Guardian Lord give thee (that wherewith) thou shall be well pleased. Did He not find thee an, orphan and give thee shelter (and care)? And He found thee wandering, and gave thee guidance. And He found thee in need, and made thee independent."* (ad-Du'ha; 93:1-8)

These verses encouraged him immensely and helped to restore his self confidence. He was motivated to proceed with his missionary activities with greater degree of self assurance though secretly. The preaching of Islam continued secretly for nearly three years where after the Prophet (SAWS) was commanded by Allah (SWT) to communicate the Message to his relatives and warn them openly. *"And warn thy nearest kindred."* (ash-Sho'ra'; 26:214)

It can be stated on the authority of "*Sahih Muslim*", one of the most authentic works on the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) that when this verse was revealed "The Messenger of Allah set off till he climbed "Safa" and called loudly. Be on your guard! They said who is it calling aloud? They said Muhammad. They gathered around him. He the Apostle said: 'If I were to inform you that there were horsemen emerging out of the foot of this mountain, would you believe me?' They said: 'We have not experienced any lie from you'. He said: 'Well, I am a warner to you before a severe torment'. He (the narrator) said that Abu Lahab then said: Destruction to you. Is it for this you have gathered us?" (19). On this contemptuous remark from Abu Lahab the people dispersed immediately. He was not discouraged but continued to carry out the commands of Allah (SWT) with vigour and

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vitality. Subsequently he invited twice, for meals at his residence, nearly 40-50 leading members of Quraysh community and urged them accept one Allah and give up idolatry. Ali, then a twelve year old lad, openly acclaimed the truth of Muhammad's (SAWS) Message, whereas others laughed at the invitation and went back to their homes after dinner. This did not deter Muhammad (SAWS). In fact it firmed up his determination even more to convey the divine Message with greater zeal and energy. It was now an open declaration of war against idolatry. He was subjected to inhuman torture, tormented and humiliated beyond description. Nonetheless the propagation of the Message continued relentlessly attracting to its fold such influential members of the Quraysh family as Hamza (RA) (Prophet's Uncle) and Umar (RA).

Despite these unmitigated sufferings the Prophet's (SAWS) steely resolve to continue with his mission was never shaken. He continued to be protected by Allah (SWT) Who assured him that the severe trials and tribulations will eventually end. He will find life more comfortable and relaxed. Further he will enjoy, in due course of time, an extremely elevated, most enviable and dignified rank and position in this world and the Hereafter. He was not only assured of a glorious success of his mission but his personal status will also rise to supreme heights which no man in the past nor anyone in the future will be able to reach. Allah (SWT) had purified his heart of base elements. It was filled only with highly refined spiritual qualities which make man truly the vice-gerent of Allah (SWT) and bestow upon him an incomparable magnanimity of character. Allah (SWT) assured the Prophet (SAWS) that in the history of human civilization he will occupy a uniquely distinguished status and eminence which will be beyond the reach of any other individual. He was doubly assured that the afflictions and failures which he was

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experiencing would eventually be replaced by comfort and success: *"Have We not opened up thy heart? And lifted from thee the burden that had weighed so heavily on thy back? And (have We not) raised thee in high dignity. And, behold with every hardship comes ease: Verily with every hardship comes ease!"* (an-Nashrah; 94:1-4)

Inspired and reinforced by the divine support Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) pursued his mission with unparalleled enthusiasm and vigour, determined to succeed. He was also commanded by Allah (SWT) to persevere with his mission irrespective of the adverse response from the nonbelievers since his role was basically to warn the people and convey glad tidings: *"O Prophet! Truly We have sent thee as a witness, a bearer of glad tidings and a warner."* (al-Ahzaab; 33:45)

This role of the Prophet (SAWS) both as a warner and as a bearer of glad tidings, has been repeatedly stressed in a number of Qur'anic verses: *"Thou art no other than a warner. Verily We have sent thee in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings and as a warner."* (Fatir; 35:23-24)

The Prophet (SAWS) was not to be the guardian of the faith and belief of people. He was however expected to work ceaselessly, fearlessly, truthfully and patiently against all odds in conveying the message to as many as was humanly possible. He would be deemed to have executed his mission if the divine message was even simply communicated to the people. The Prophet (SAWS) was not asked to keep a surveillance on them: *"Therefore do thou give admonition, for thou art one to admonish. Thou art not to manage (men's) affairs."* (al-Ghashiyah; 88:21-22)

Once the message was conveyed the responsibility shifted to the people whether to accept or reject it: *"By the*

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*soul and the proportion and order given to it, and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right. Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it.*" (ash-Shams; 91:7-10)

Muhammad (SAWS) epitomised the divine qualities conferred on all the previous prophets and had some unique distinctions not conferred on anyone before him. Though last in the line of prophets he was assigned with a unique mission of universal relevance and of immense significance for the future of all mankind: *"Now (as for thee, O Muhammad) We have not sent thee otherwise than to mankind at large, to be a herald of glad tidings and a warner: but most people do not understand (this)."* (Saba; 34:28)

It is fascinating to note that in view of the significance of the Prophetic mission of Muhammad (SAWS) the Holy Qur'an describes his mission as: "glorious lamp" like the sun shedding lustrous light: *"And as one who invites to Allah's (grace) by His leave, and as a lamp spreading light."* (al-Ahzaab; 33:46)

With the rising sun all the stars fade away, even the full moon loses its lustre and darkness is dispelled. This is precisely what happened with the dawn of the Prophetic Mission of Muhammad (SAWS). It dispelled darkness and superstitions which had overwhelmed the Arab Peninsula.

Muhammad (SAWS) was so thoroughly dedicated to his prophetic mission that he carried it out with exemplary distinction. While in Makkah he suffered patiently the torture and humiliation he was subjected to by the unbelievers but never did he deviate from conveying the commands of Allah (SWT). In Madinah he had to counter the intrigue, treachery and the armed might of both the pagan Arabs and Jews in order to establish the

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supremacy of Islam. But none of the battles that Muhammad (SAWS) fought constituted acts of aggression. They were all fought either to defend Islam against acts of aggression of the Arab-Jewish military combine or to intervene militarily against a breach of faith as in the battle of Khaibar. He did not hesitate to defend Islam against the then greatest power on earth viz. the Roman Empire (Tabuk expedition). He never projected Islam as a fanatic and aggressive religion. He took great care to emphasise the liberal outlook of Islam rather than act as an aggressor. He preferred to enter into an apparently unfavourable treaty viz. the Treaty of Hudaibiyah and thereby avoided the invasion of Makkah and its conquest through war and bloodshed. Although the terms of the treaty looked humiliating it eventually turned out to be the greatest blessing. This treaty was divinely blessed and therefore was called by Allah (SWT) a '**manifest victory**'.

Allah (SWT) was exceedingly pleased with the dedication and devotion, patience and perseverance with which Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) spread the divine message under conditions of extreme trials and tribulations. Hence in a gesture of supreme generosity, Allah (SWT) condoned all his oversights committed in the past, as also those, which may be committed in the future: Muhammad (SAWS) was also assured of divine help in all his missionary endeavours. Further Allah (SWT) also assured that He would always keep him on the path of truth and righteousness: *"Verily We have granted thee a manifest victory, that Allah may forgive thee, thy faults of the past and those to follow. Fulfil His favour to thee and guide thee on the straight way."* (al-Fath; 48:1-3)

After the revelation of the aforesaid verses the Prophet (SAWS) intensified his prayers and supplication to prove worthy of the unique divine privilege bestowed

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upon him. We can well visualise the status to which Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was raised by the fact that Allah (SWT) equated the command of the Prophet (SAWS) with that of His own and proclaimed emphatically ***“He who obeys the messenger obeys Allah.”*** (an-Nisa; 4:80)

The admiration, affection, honour and respect with which Allah (SWT) treated Muhammad (SAWS) is further highlighted by the Qur’anic verse which proclaims that Allah (SWT) and His angels convey their greetings and shower their blessings on Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and calls upon the believers also to offer the same: ***“Allah and His angels send blessings on the Prophet: O ye that believe; send blessings on him and salute him with all respect.”*** (al-Ahzaab; 33:56)

The climax of Allah's (SWT) pleasure and seal of total approval of intense devotion, extreme dedication, and excellence with which Muhammad (SAWS) fulfilled his missionary role was revealed when. He decreed that in the "Hereafter" on the Day of Reckoning the Prophet (SAWS) will be elevated to the most distinguished position, not granted to any other prophet i.e. *Maqam-e-Mahmood*: ***“Soon will thy Lord raise thee to a station of praise and glory.”*** (al-Isra; 17:79)

While Prophet Muhammad’s (SAWS) personal status soared to supreme heights, unsealed by any of the preceding prophets, he never overlooked the welfare of his own *Ummah*. He was extremely concerned about their welfare and particularly about their destiny in the Hereafter. He was constantly busy in reforming their character, motivating them to perform noble deeds to earn the pleasure of Allah (SWT) and avoid all such thoughts and acts which invite His displeasure. This compassionate concern of the Prophet (SAWS) has been eloquently testified by Allah (SWT) in the following verse: ***“Now hath***

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*come unto you a messenger from amongst yourselves: it grieves him that you should perish: ardently anxious is he over you: to the believers is the most kind and merciful,"*  
(at-Tawbah; 9:128)

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was indeed accorded a most distinguished position among all the prophets commissioned by Allah (SWT) for the guidance of mankind. His unique personal achievement however lies in the fact that he meticulously and conscientiously conveyed the Qur'anic message to his *Ummah* and modelled his own character faithfully and scrupulously on the lines prescribed in the Qur'an. Hence he achieved the rare distinction of total harmony in his preaching and personal behaviour, precepts and practices and in his worldly and spiritual life. He meticulously preached for the Unity of Allah, the Creator and the Sustainer of the Universe unequivocally declared that the Qur'anic Message was universally relevant for the guidance of all mankind.

He was not only proclaimed by Allah (SWT) as the Seal of the Prophet but also as mercy to all mankind for His message will survive till eternity and will be a source of redemption on the Day of Reckoning to all those who follow it.

**FIVE UNIQUE DIVINE DISTINCTIONS BESTOWED ON  
PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAWS):**

In addition to what has been stated above he was gifted by Allah (SWT) five unique honours, not bestowed on any other preceding prophets. One of which of course, as we know is the universality of the message of the Holy Qur'an. The missions of other prophets were however, confined to their communities, tribes or regions. The other was that the whole earth was made sacred to him. Thus a

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Muslim can offer his *Salaat* (prayer) in any clean place if he/she is away from home or from a mosque. These five distinctive divine gifts bestowed upon Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) have been elaborated in the following saying of the Prophet (SAWS): "I have been conferred upon five (things) which were not granted to anyone before me (and these are). (1) Every apostle was sent particularly to his own people, whereas I have been sent to all the red and black, (2) the spoils of war have been made lawful for me, and these were never made lawful to anyone before me, (3) the earth has been made sacred, and pure and mosque for me, so whenever the time for prayer comes for anyone of you he should pray wherever he is, (4) I have been supported by awe (by which the enemy is overwhelmed) from the distance (which one takes) me a month to cover and (5) I have been granted intercession." (20). Of these the most unique honour is the permission to intercede on behalf of others to seek their pardon from Allah (SWT) on the Day of Reckoning. On that fateful day all other prophets will be directing people to approach Muhammad (SAWS) for he alone shall have the privilege to intercede.

In addition to the aforesaid unique distinctions he was also taken on a miraculous journey from Makkah to Jerusalem, where he led a prayer attended by all the prophets preceding him which culminated in his astonishing ascent to the Heaven (*Me'raj*).

**The Miracle of the Night Journey (*Asra*) and Ascent to Heaven (*Me'raj*):**

The word *Me'raj* refers to the divinely ordained miraculous journey of the Prophet from the earth to the Heaven. It is marked by two distinct stages. The first stage was the night journey from "*Masjid al-Haraam*" (Ka'bah) to "*Masjid al-Aqsa*" (Jerusalem) which has been called "*Asra*"

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in the Qur'an, and the sound was the ascent to Heaven called the 'Me'raj'. Barring one or two most of the leading authorities agree that the miracle of 'Asra' and 'Me'raj' occurred about a year or a year and a half before migration to Madinah. (21) This unique experience of the Prophet (SAWS) is borne out by the Qur'anic Verses 17:1; 17:60 and 53:2-18. The first verse of Chapter 17 (al-Isra) reveals the fact that by the command of Allah (SWT) Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), the last prophet of Allah (SWT), and His dearest servant, was transported from *Masjid Al-Haraam* (the Mosque of Ka'bah) to the distant and hallowed precincts of the Mosque of *Al-Aqsa*, located in Jerusalem, which is divinely blessed being the abode of rest of a large number of Prophets. This journey which normally takes 30-40 days was performed by him during a fraction of the night. The purpose of this miraculous journey was to let the Prophet (SAWS) witness with his own eyes the remarkable creations or signs of Allah (SWT) during his ascent from *Masjid Al-Aqsa* to the Heaven. The entire event of *Asra* and *Me'raj* stems out from the following verse of the Qur'an: ***"Glory to (Allah) Who did take His servant for a journey by night from the sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque whose precincts We did bless - in order that We might show him some of Our signs for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things)."*** (al-Isra; 17:1)

*Surah al-Isra* (Chapter 17) opens significantly with the word *Sub'han Al-Lazi*. Most of the leading exegetists of the Qur'an agree that the use of the word *Subhan Al-Lazi*. The Prophet's ascent to heaven (*Me'raj*) has been concisely but clearly indicated in the following verses: ***"By the star when it goes down your companion is neither astray nor being misled, nor does he say (aught) of (his own) desire. It is no less than inspiration sent down to him. He was taught by one mighty in power, endued with wisdom for he appeared (in Stately form) while he was in the highest***

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*part of the horizon, then he approached and came closer, and was at a distance of about two bow lengths or (even) nearer; so did (Allah) convey the inspiration to His servant (conveyed) what He meant to convey. The Prophet's (mind and) heart in no way falsified that which he saw. Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he saw? For indeed he saw him at a second descent, near the Lote-tree beyond which none may pass. Near it is the Garden of Abode. Behold the Lote-tree was shrouded (in mystery unspeakable). (His) sight never swerved, nor did it go wrong! for truly did he see of the signs of his Lord, the Greatest." (an-Najm; 53:1-18)*

While verses 1-11 refer to the vision of Archangel *Jibreel* (Gabriel) in his realistic form, verses 13-18 clearly speak of *Me'raj* when they refer to '*Sidratul-Muntaha*' and Garden of Abode. They are located at the farthest accessible spot, in the heaven, beyond which even the angels are not permitted to step out. Further Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) witnessed these splendid divine signs with eyes firmly fixed which never wavered.

**'Asra' (The Night Journey):**

This transcendental return journey of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), in the fraction of a night, from *Masjid al-Haraam* (Makkah-Ka'bah) to *Masjid Al-Aqsa* (Jerusalem) and his Ascent to Heaven has raised intense argument among the Muslim exegetists themselves. They have argued vehemently whether such a journey could ever be physically performed in that age within such a short duration, whether it was a journey of the soul where the physical body stayed behind or whether it was one of those realistic dreams shown to prophets such as the dream of Prophet Ibrahim (AS) where he was commanded to sacrifice his son on three successive nights. All the authorities rule out the dream theory for the non-believers

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of Makkah would not have made such a hue and cry about it if it was just a dream. They would have laughed at it and called it the dream of a lunatic. Instead they mocked at it and called the event as false and fabricated. The Qur'an also points out that this miraculous event was a severe trial of both the believers and non-believers in accepting the Supreme Power and Authority of Allah (SWT): *"Behold! We told thee that thy Lord doth encompass mankind roundabout We granted thee vision which We showed thee but as a trial for men as also the Cursed Tree mentioned in the Qur'an: We put terror (and warning) into them, but it only increases their inordinate transgression."* (al-Isra; 17:60)

The believers like Abu Bakr (RA), Ali (RA), Omar (RA), Zaid bin Thabit (RA) and others accepted it without reservation, whereas the non-believers received it in utter belief and treated it as false, fictitious and fabricated. Some of the old Muslim exegetists and even Ayisha (RA), the Prophet's wife, Mu'awiah (RA), Hazifa bin Al-Yamaan (RA) considered the event to be an experience of the soul. Without going into the details of the controversy and taking a stand one way or the other one tends to agree with Ibn Hisham that "Allah alone knows the truth. It is nonetheless a fact that by the command of Allah (SWT) Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) did visit *Baitul-Maqdas* and witnessed divine signs. It is irrelevant if it was an experience of the soul or in a state of awakening." (22)

Maulana Azad in his *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an* has adopted almost an identical position. He accepts the reality of the event of 'Asra' but does not give any opinion whether it was in a state of awakening or an experience of the soul only. He reiterates the views and perceptions of two groups of companions of the Prophet and early contemporary scholars on this issue: "One group is inclined to believe that the event involved both body and

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soul. Whereas 'Ayesha (RA), Hazifa bin Al-Yamaan (RA), Hasan (RA), Mu'awiah (RA), Ibn-e-Is'haq (RA) etc. view it as an event involving soul only." (23)

Maulana Azad further points that the experiences of the prophets are unique and transcendental in nature. They are thus distinctly different from the normal human feelings and perceptions. Hence they are invariably beyond the comprehension of ordinary human minds. They cannot be explained through our day to day experience: "In the case of *Asra* too, our ordinary examples cannot be useful. This is the reason why companions of the Holy Prophet (SAWS) differed in their comprehension. Those who negated the occurrence of the event in the state of awakening doubt if bodily transportation of the Prophet could have ever taken place. Those who insist that the event took place in the state of awakening are of the opinion that the event was not like a dream. There is no doubt that both were right in their respective understanding. In one of the true traditions itself it is recorded that the Holy Prophet (SAWS) said, 'I was in a state which can neither be called awakening or sleep.' It is evident that we can neither say that the event took place during the state of awakening nor while asleep as we understand and experience. It was a peculiar state of mind which we cannot comprehend much less express." (see reference 23 above)

Despite the views expressed by Ibn Hisham and Maulana Azad it may, however, be suggested that the bodily transportation of the Prophet (SAWS) cannot be summarily dismissed. It is immaterial if it really happened or not but it was well within the realm of possibility. It can be substantiated based on Qur'anic revelations and new directions in scientific researches. There are distinct and definitive Qur'anic verses which testify to the shift of

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objects from long distances in fraction of seconds by the command of Allah (SWT). As for instance in *Surah Al-Anbiya* (Chapter-21) the Holy Qur'an refers to the stormy wind made subservient to Suleiman (AS) (Solomon): ***"And unto Solomon (We made subservient) the stormy wind so that it sped at his behest towards the land which We had blessed."*** (al-Anbiya; 21:81)

In *Surah Saba* (Chapter 34) the Qur'an again refers to wind being obedient to Solomon and at his command carried him to long distances within a short span of time: ***"And to Solomon (We made) the wind obedient: its early morning stride was a month's journey and its evening (stride) was a month's journey."*** (Saba; 34:12) And that this wind used to transport him with speed and safety is clearly indicated in the following verse: ***"Then We subjected the wind to his power, to flow gently to his order, whithersoever he willed."*** (Duwaad; 38:36)

It is quite clear from the above quoted Qur'anic verses that Suleiman (AS) was endowed by Allah (SWT) with the power to control the speed and direction of wind.

The Qur'an also reveals that the throne of the Queen of Saba was physically shifted in a twinkling of the eyelid from the Queen's palace in Yemen to the palace of Solomon in Jerusalem (a distance of about 2000 miles): ***"Said one who had knowledge of the Book: 'I will bring it to thee within the twinkling of an eye!' Then when (Solomon) saw it placed firmly before him, he said this is by the grace of my Lord."*** (Namal; 27:40)

In the instances cited above transfer of physical objects were involved. They were transported with extreme rapidity, unimaginable during the period of Suleiman (AS). The shift of the throne of Queen of Saba from Yemen to Jerusalem was accomplished with

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lightning speed or even faster than that. In view of these evidences provided in the Holy Qur'an one should not exclude the bodily transportation of the Prophet (SAWS) from Makkah to Jerusalem :in the twinkling of an eye. This is also supported by a true Tradition described by Ibn Katheer in his commentary. The Celestial steed (*Burraq*) which had carried the Prophet from *Masjid al-Haraam* was left at Jerusalem tethered to gate of *Masjid al-Aqsa*. The fact of *Burraq* the vehicle which transported Muhammad (SAWS) from *Masjid al-Haraam* to *Masjid al-Aqsa*, being parked in Jerusalem was confirmed by a contemporary eminent Christian scholar, Elijah. Mufti Shafi in his commentary on the event of *Asra* quoting Ibn Katheer refers to the letter of the Prophet (SAWS) which he had addressed to the Roman Emperor Harqul (Heraclius). This letter reached the Emperor when he was camping in Damascus. Abu Sufyan was also there heading an Arab trading caravan. He was called to the court and questioned about the Prophet (SAWS). Being an enemy of Islam and of Muhammad (SAWS), Abu Sufyan mentioned the claim of the Prophet (SAWS) regarding *Asra* and *Me'raj*. He thought that on hearing this preposterous claim the Roman Emperor would turn against Islam. It was at this point that Elijah (Iliya) intervened and confirmed this event. He remarked that on that particular night he could not shut one of the gates of the wall of *Masjid al-Aqsa*. In the morning he observed that "it was fixed to a rock of the mosque and it appeared that some animal was tethered to the gate." (24)

**'Me'raj' (Ascent to Heaven):**

The second stage in this miraculous journey was the ascent of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) with Archangel

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*Jibriel* to the Heaven where he witnessed *Al Baitul Ma'mur*<sup>5</sup> and Garden of Abode. Further Allah (SWT) desired through the event of *Me'raj* that Muhammad (SAWS) should personally witness some of His unique and dazzling creations - which are beyond the intellectual reach of man, his flight of imagination, and which defy description. The Prophet (SAWS) observed these splendid creations with eyes wide open and firmly fixed on the objects without even bathing of the eyelids *"Will ye then dispute with him concerning what he saw? For indeed he saw him at a second descent, near the Lote-tree (Sidrat-ul Muntaha*<sup>6</sup> *beyond which none may pass. Near it is the Garden of Abode. Behold the Lote-tree was shrouded in mystery unspeakable or (veiled in a veil of nameless splendour) - His sight never swerved nor did it go wrong for truly did he see of the signs of his Lord the greatest."* (an-Najm; 53:12-18)

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<sup>5</sup> *Al-Bait al-Ma'mur* "The Much-frequented House" is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. It is a heavenly house of worship which numerous heavenly beings frequently visit for the adoration of their Creator. It is said to have been the spiritual prototype of the Ka'bah in Mecca (Ibn Kathir, VIII, 76) which is the earthly symbol of the Oneness of God in the same sense as the "Much Frequented House" is its heavenly symbol (*Sahih Muslim Vol. 1, p: 102*)

<sup>6</sup> *Sidrat-ul-Muntaha*: The author of 'Mufraddi' suggests, in explanation of this Qur'anic expression, that the *Sidr* (Arabian Lote-tree) is, owing to the abundance of its shade, symbolic of the shade of Paradise. Pursuing this trend of thought we may perhaps assume the expression: Lote-tree of the farthest limit is indicative of the limit of knowledge allowed to the created beings; though great and wonderful in itself, their knowledge, even in Paradise, can never attain to the limitless perfection of the knowledge which the Creator has reserved for Himself (*Sahih Muslim Vol. 1, p: 102*).

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Since wiblessing these glorious and unique creations was one of the principal objects of this night journey therefore it cannot be ruled out that this journey also might have involved actual bodily shift of the Prophet (SAWS) in his ascent from Jerusalem to the Heaven. It could have been performed the same way as the descent of Adam and Eve from Heaven to Earth by the command of Allah (SWT): *“Allah said (to Adam and Eve) get ye down with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling place and your means of livelihood for a time.”* (al-A'raaf; 7:24)

These two transcendental events *Asra* (The Night Journey) and *Me'raj* (Ascent to Heaven) if viewed in the light of the Qur'anic verses quoted earlier (7:22 and 24, 34:12; 38:36, 27:40) and the phenomenal heights man has scaled in the field of space technology are well within the realm of possibility. Man can launch not only satellites to probe into the mysteries of the planets of the solar system, located millions of miles away, but can also manipulate and control their movement and rectify some of their faults promptly and efficiently through remote control system from the earth itself. If man, with his limited knowledge and understanding of the Laws of Nature, can organize such spectacular space flights with skill and competence then Allah (SWT) with his limitless knowledge can certainly transport human beings in space with absolute perfection, in total comfort and safety, covering billions of miles with speed faster than light. It is quite possible that He commanded Muhammad (SAWS) to ascend from Earth to Heaven the way He ordered Adam and Eve to descend from Heaven to Earth. Recent researches in experimental physics confirm that photons,

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the most simple elementary particles on earth, do travel faster than light.<sup>7</sup>

Further it may be noted that man, despite his superb accomplishments in science and technology, can never attain the excellence, the ingenuity, the splendour and the uniqueness of divine creations. Allah (SWT) is the absolute Creator, of the universe and its system, can create things out of nothing, in split seconds, with absolute perfection and can exercise absolute control over them. Man cannot excel the creative genius of Allah (SWT) and the supreme control He exercises over His creations: *“Allah is the creator of all things: He is the One, the Supreme and Irresistible.”* (ar-Ra'd; 13:16) And *“To Him is due the primal origins of the heavens and the earth. When He decreeth a matter He said to it ‘Be’ and it is.”* (al-Baqarah; 2:117)

It is our submission that the event of *Me'raj*, if examined in the background of the creation of Man, in a way, symbolises the completion of the cycle of human destiny which commenced with the creation of Adam (Man). Man was endowed with a status superior to angels. He was placed to dwell in the Heavenly garden of blissful happiness to enjoy in full measure the bounties of Allah (SWT). He was, however, strictly forbidden not to approach a particular tree. Adam pledged to avoid it but eventually

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<sup>7</sup> Recent researches in the field of quantum teleportation by the IBM physicist Charles Bennet and his colleagues, and by the teleportation team at the Institute of Experimental Physics, Innsbruck, Austria, reveal that objects such as photons can travel faster than light. It is quite likely that in the near or distant future, we may develop quantum computer “which could process information such as this feature quicker than the speed of light. Asian Age : 17-1-1998 : Report by Rolf Soderland : Beam Me up, Scotty: Teleportation may not be fantasy, after all.”

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succumbed to satanic temptations. He was sternly rebuked by Allah (SWT) for this act of transgression. Adam felt a deep sense of guilt and remorse and promptly sought Allah's (SWT) pardon. He was pardoned but was simultaneously expelled from the Heaven to dwell on earth to struggle perpetually against devilish temptations in order to keep to the path of piety and righteousness to earn a place to live in Heaven after death. This descent of Adam from Heaven to earth marked the fall of Man from the Divine Grace. *Me'raj*, the Ascent to Heaven, was a unique divine privilege granted exclusively to Muhammad (SAWS) the last Prophet. No human being can ever even dream of achieving that privileged position. Nonetheless it heralds Man's rise to his original status as Vice-gerent of Allah (SWT) superior to angels. The event of *Me'raj* thus symbolises the climax of human destiny, signifying Man's ultimate rise to supreme heights in knowledge, wisdom and piety as predicted in the Holy Qur'an.

**PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAWS):THE PERFECT EXEMPLAR OF RIGHTEOUS DEEDS:**

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) reflected the spirit, the meaning and the interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. He was the ultimate in epitomising the spirit and character of Islam. There was no contradiction in his thought and action, precept and practice, in his worldly and spiritual life. They were in perfect harmony. He had attained the pinnacle of both spiritual glory and human nobility. He sought the pleasure of Allah (SWT) by offering prayers and serving the mankind. His character was in total conformity with the righteous deeds as prescribed in the Holy Qur'an. In short he symbolised in totality the spirit of the Holy Qur'an which lent strength and refinement to his flawless character. The brilliance of his achievements during his life

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time has remained unmatched and unparalleled, even to this day, in the history of mankind. That the character of Muhammad (SAWS) was of great piety and unimpeachable integrity is testified by the Holy Qur'an wherein it is proclaimed that *"Thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character,"* (al-Qalam; 68:4)

The entire life of the Prophet (SAWS) was a confirmation of this proclamation. He stood by his commitments, always protected the weak, helped the needy, could never be provoked to anger, was always just and fair. His spiritualism fortified the nobility and strength of his character which he maintained not by leading the life of a recluse but by living an active life, struggling through it with courage of conviction, dedication, and total submission to the will of Allah (SWT).

**Equality of Man before Allah:**

Equality of Man before Allah (SWT), irrespective of his position and wealth, colour and caste has been repeatedly stressed in the Holy Qur'an and was firmly adhered to by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). Despite his status as the Prophet of Islam and ruler of Madinah he never hesitated to do any work for his people and in the cause of Islam. While the Mosque of Madinah was under construction he was among the workers carrying load for laying the foundation or raising the wall of the Mosque. (25). Similarly, on the eve of the Battle of the Trench (غزوة الخندق) he participated in trench digging with his companions and helped them in even breaking blocks of boulders or hard rock which his companions failed to break or remove. (26) Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was always willing to lend a helping hand whosoever asked for it for a, right cause. One of his companions in Madinah, Khabbab bin Arat (RA), had gone away on a warring

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expedition. There were no male members in his family. The female members of the household had difficulty in milking their goats. They represented this to the Prophet (SAWS) who himself milked their goats every morning till the return of Khabbab (27).

It may be observed that the Prophet (SAWS) through his insistence on righteous deeds also strongly reiterated the Qur'anic injunction that faith alone will not lead one to heaven unless it is reinforced by righteous deeds. He once told his companions **"By God not one single person will enter heaven unless he performed righteous deeds"** (28). This is also borne out by the verdict given by the Prophet on the fate of two lady companions, one of whom offered regular prayers, charity, and alms but used to hurt her neighbours with her sharp tongue and pungent remarks. The other one offered only the minimum number of prayers, but was soft-spoken, helpful to others and never offended anyone. The Prophet remarked that the former was bereft of piety and would find a place in hell, whereas the latter would enter heaven on account of her pious deeds, (29).

### **Protection of the Innocent and Orphans:**

The Qur'an strongly enjoins upon Muslims not to harass, and deal fraudulently with anyone and lend full protection to the property of the orphans. The Prophet adhered to it religiously. Even before the declaration of his Prophet-hood he had joined an Order of Chivalry, called *Half-al-Fudool* whose members swore to come to the help of any and every person oppressed in the town (Makkah) (30). The Prophet (SAWS) was ever proud of being a member of this Covenant. His own inherent characteristics of fair play, honesty, integrity and humaneness were strongly reinforced by the Qur'anic

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injunctions. He, therefore, could not suffer anyone being cheated or harassed. In the early phase of his prophetic mission two incidents strongly testify to this. In both the cases a most powerful pagan Quraysh leader was involved viz., Abul-Hakam bin Hasham (Abu Jahal). Once Abu Jahal attempted to cheat and harass an outsider who had come to Makkah to sell three pedigree camels. Abu Jahal refused to give the right price for the camels, nor would he let anyone else buy them. The harassed outsider raised this matter openly in the courtyard of Ka'bah where Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was also sitting with some of his companions. As soon as he heard the Arab Bedouin he bought those three camels for the price quoted by him and sternly warned Abu Jahal not to repeat these mean tricks again. Fighting for the cause of the oppressed is innate to Islam to which Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) subscribed magnificently. In another instance Abu Jahal was found oppressing an orphan boy by misappropriating his property. Protection of orphan's property is enjoined upon Muslims and they are sternly warned against its misuse. This orphan boy once complained to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) that Abu-Jahal had usurped his possessions after his father's death and had impoverished him to such an extent that he could not even buy clothes to wear. The Prophet (SAWS) immediately took the orphan boy to Abu Jahal's house and forced the latter to return to the orphan his confiscated property.(31)

**Generosity and Kindness of the Prophet:**

In matters of charity, generosity, kindness, fairness and justice Islam has been most secular and Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) practiced it most scrupulously. There are numerous instances of his unbiased generosity towards non-Muslims and even to the pagan Arabs. As for instance once the daughter of the legendary Hatim Tai, a

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very noble, charitable and generous character, appeared before the Prophet (SAWS) as a prisoner of war. Prior to the pronouncement of any judgement on her fate she introduced herself to the Prophet (SAWS) as the daughter of Hatim Tai who was a noble soul, most hospitable, always helped the poor and needy, fed the hungry, clothed the naked and never allowed any beggar to go empty handed from his house. She, therefore, appealed to the Prophet (SAWS) that being the daughter of a noble, and generous tribal chief she may be spared the agony and humiliation of being dishonoured as a prisoner of war. The Prophet was touched and Hatim Tai's daughter was set free by virtue of the righteous deeds of her father.(32). In another case Asma (RA) an elder sister of Aisha (RA), wife of the Prophet (SAWS), approached the latter to seek his guidance if she could help her poor mother who was an avowed *Kafir* (non-believer) but was in need of help. The Prophet (SAWS) readily assented, for not only the lady seeking assistance was poor but was also her mother. (33). The Holy Qur'an has enjoined upon Muslims to be respectful to their parents even if they happen to be non-Muslims: *"But they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to Me (in love)."* (Luqmaan; 31:15)

**Firm Adherence to Commitments:**

The Holy Qur'an enjoins upon Muslims to adhere firmly to their commitments *"O ye who believe! Fulfil (all) obligations."* (al-Ma'edah; 5:1) In total compliance with this Qur'anic injunction Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) stood by his commitment like a rock unmindful of the consequences. A classic example in this regard was the "Treaty of Hudaibiyah", between the Prophet (SAWS) and

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the pagan leaders of Makkah. One of the clauses of this treaty was “that whoso cometh unto Muhammad of Quraysh, without the leave of his guardian, Muhammad shall return him unto them, but whoso cometh unto Quraysh of those who are with Muhammad, they shall not be returned”(34). Immediately after the treaty was signed Abu-Jandel, a Muslim prisoner, arrived at the camp of Prophet Muhammad and sought asylum which the latter refused on the ground that “We have agreed on the terms of a truce with these people, and have given them our solemn pledge, even as they have done to us, and we will not now break our word” (35). Similarly the Prophet would never exploit a situation to his advantage wrongly even under the most difficult circumstances. At the time of the “Battle of Badr” when the Muslims were scanty in number and were in dire need to raise their strength; two companions of the Prophet, Hazifa bin Al-Yamaan and Abu Hussayl arrived before Prophet (SAWS) and sought permission to join the battle ranks against the Quraysh of Makkah. They however informed the Prophet (SAWS) that on the way from Makkah to Madinah they were arrested by the Pagan Makkans who released them on the condition that they would not join hands with other Muslims to fight against them. The Prophet advised them to abide by their commitment and did not enlist them.(36)

**Implementation of the Divine Law of Justice:**

The divine law of justice was firmly upheld by Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). Once a leading lady of Quraysh was caught pilfering and her hand, according to the Qur’anic injunction was to be chopped off. Some of the closest companions of the Prophet (SAWS) recommended milder punishment. While declining their request the Prophet (SAWS) remarked “that earlier tribes and peoples were ruined because of their distorted dispensation of

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justice. The poor would be severely punished for their guilt while the crime of the rich will be overlooked. Even if my daughter were guilty of such a crime I would not have hesitated to inflict the same punishment to her.”(37). This divine principle of justice with equity has been completely mutilated and distorted in the present socio-political system all over the world. While the rich and influential, their close relatives and associates manage to escape the clutches of law, the poor and the weak are made to suffer, sometimes, for crimes they have not even committed.

The Prophet (SAWS), whenever in a politically strong position against his adversaries, would refuse to exploit the situation to his advantage. After the conquest of Makkah, the Makkans *Mohajirs* (migrants) who had settled down in Madinah returned to Makkah and expected that their houses, which were occupied by the pagans, would be restored to them. A brother of Zainab (RA), one of the wives of the Prophet (SAWS), staked his claim for the return of his house but was dissuaded by the Prophet (SAWS) to forsake it, which he did. Thus not a single pagan Makkans was dislodged from the house of the Muslim *Mohajirs* (migrants) which the former had occupied on the migration of the latter.(38)

**Unfair Means to Achieve Ends Disapproved:**

Islam never justified unfair means to achieve ends. The Prophet (SAWS) never deviated from this principle. A misdeed is a misdeed irrespective of the fact as to who commits it and for what purpose. As for instance, Mogheera bin Sho'aiba (RA) before his conversion to Islam was with a non-Muslim trading caravan. He got an opportunity to kill all the members of that caravan and seized their goods. Thereafter, he appeared before the Prophet to profess Islam together with the seized goods.

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The Prophet (SAWS) welcomed him to the fold of Islam but refused to accept the looted property since it was contrary to Islamic values (39). Similarly, once an ambassador of the Quraysh of Makkah was deputed to negotiate the terms of a treaty with the Prophet (SAWS). During the course of this meeting he expressed his desire to embrace Islam. The Prophet (SAWS) appreciated his desire to embrace Islam but did not accept him into its fold since he enjoyed the status of the ambassador of the adversaries of Islam. He did not agree to break the covenant for the Holy Qur'an has strongly instructed against the breach of contract. He advised the ambassador to "complete his assigned mission and go back to his people. Thereafter, if he still felt the urge to join Islam he should come back to him." (40).

**Forcible Conversion not favoured:**

Forcible conversion is not favoured in Islam and the Holy Qur'an has certainly proclaimed against it: "*There is no compulsion in religion*" (al-Baqarah; 2:256). It was customary in Madinah before the advent of Islam that the Arab women, whose children would not survive, would hand over their new born babies to a Jewish family and allow them to be converted to the Jewish religion if the child survived. Thus a number of Arab children had become Jews. After their acceptance of Islam the Arabs wanted their children to be returned to them and converted to Islam. The Jews protested against this. The case was finally referred to the Prophet (SAWS) for his decision. He left it to the will of the children. There was no forcible conversion. Those of the children who wanted to stay as Jews were allowed to stay as such, and the rest embraced Islam. With his political authority over Madinah he could have forcibly converted all the children but he refused to exercise it. (41)

### **Justice and Fair Play with Non-Muslims:**

The Prophet was strongly opposed to harassing and oppressing the non-Muslim subjects in a Islamic state. He categorically warned his companions that "Allah (SWT) will punish all those on the Day of Judgement who will be found guilty of tormenting their fellow human beings" (42). He advised his companions to treat the non-Muslim subjects with compassion and respect, as fellow human beings. He sternly warned them "against oppressing and torturing the non-Muslim subjects or humiliating them or forcibly depriving them of their rightful possession. If the Muslims were found guilty of any of these reprehensible acts he i.e., Muhammad (SAWS) will stand for the non-Muslims against the guilty Muslims on the Day of Judgement." (43).

### **Righteousness:**

Righteousness is the hallmark of a Muslim. The Holy Qur'an and '*Uswa-e-Husnah*' i.e. "exemplary pattern of conduct of the Prophet (SAWS)" are there to guide man to the path of righteousness. According to a tradition of the Prophet (SAWS), however, man/woman has to search his/ her own conscience to check if the path of righteousness is being pursued or not. "Wabisa bin Ma'bad (RA) has reported the messenger of Allah viz., Muhammad (SAWS) as saying, "Have you come to ask righteousness and sin, Wabisa?" When he replied that he had, he joined his fingers and striking his breast with them said, "Ask yourself for a decision, ask your heart for a decision (saying it three times). Righteousness is that with which the soul is tranquil and the heart is tranquil, but sin is that which arouses suspicion in the soul and is perplexing in the breast, even if people give you a decision in its favour." (44)

### **Abhorrence of Pride:**

Allah (SWT) has condemned in the Holy Qur'an those people who behave arrogantly and are filled with pride *"Nor walk on the earth with insolence for thou canst not rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height. Of all such things the evil is hateful in the sight of thy Lord."* (al-Isra; 17:37-38) This strong condemnation is reiterated in *Surah Luqman "and swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth, for Allah loveth not any arrogant boaster."* (Luqmaan; 31:18)

Consequently the Prophet (SAWS) expressed his 'abhorrence and total disapproval of proud and haughty people: "It is narrated on the authority of Abdullah bin Mas'ood (RA) that the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) observed: "He who has in his heart the weight of grain of mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise. A person (amongst his hearers) said: Verily a person loves that his dress should be fine, and his shoes should be fine. He (the Holy Prophet) remarked: Verily, Allah is Graceful and He loves Grace. Pride is disdainful of the truth (out of self-conceitedness) and contempt for the people." (45)

### **Unparalleled Magnanimity:**

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) performed the most magnanimous act towards his enemies after his greatest political and religious victory i.e., the conquest of Makkah and the control of Ka'bah. The Quraysh of Makkah had tortured him, reviled him, driven him and his companions out of their homes in Makkah, and had adopted every stratagem to defeat his Mission. Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, had defiled the dead body of Hamza (RA), an uncle of the Prophet (SAWS), which had grieved him most. On the accomplishment of his Mission with the conquest

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of Makkah, the Prophet of Islam (SAWS) announced general amnesty to all Makkans whether they had accepted Islam or not. The victor of Makkah announced to the vanquished “verily I say as my brother Joseph spoke to his brothers this day there shall be no upbraiding of you nor reproach, God forgiveth you and He is the most Merciful of Merciful.” (46) This amnesty has no parallel in history. There was no malice, no ill feeling, no vindictiveness, no massacre, no destruction on the conquest of Makkah. This victory ushered in an era of peace and reconstruction banishing the spirit of hatred and vengeance together with the destruction of the idols of Ka'bah. There was no forcible conversion but willing and voluntary acceptance of Islam which had established its moral superiority together with political authority.

**CONCLUSION:**

In the aforesaid paragraphs we have discussed the unique importance of the prophetic mission of Muhammad (SAWS) in the history of human civilization. His epoch making mission, unlike the other prophetic missions which were time bound, region and community specific, was made universal in character and freed from the limitations of time, space and ethnicity. It was also marked for three notable proclamations by Allah (SWT) in the Holy Qur'an. These were (1) the completion and perfection of *Deen-e-Islam* (Islamic religion), (2) that the Holy Qur'an, the book revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS), will retain its originality and will survive till eternity as the sole and authentic source of divine guidance for all mankind, and that (3) the chain of prophets will be terminated with the death of Muhammad (SAWS). He would, thus be the last in the line of Prophets but his message will hold valid till eternity. His exemplary conduct as a prophet, moulded according to Qur'anic values, will stay as the ultimate norm in piety and

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righteousness for human beings to emulate till the Doomsday. He was therefore divinely designated as 'Mercy unto all mankind'.

Islam was the first and the only religion divinely ordained to reform human society. Its magnificent and noble edifice was meticulously developed by Nun (AS) (Noah), Ibrahim (AS) (Abraham) and all other Prophets preceding Muhammad (SAWS). It was given final shape during Muhammad's (SAWS) mission who filled in the vital gaps and finer details by the Command of Allah (SWT). The Prophet (SAWS) himself stated the following, as recorded in *Sahih* Muslim, about his role in the development and perfection of Islam: "Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: The similitude of mine and that of the Apostles (before me) is that of a person who constructed a building and he built it fine and well and the people went round it saying: Never have we seen a building more imposing than this, but for one brick, and I am that brick (with which you give the finishing touch to the building)" (47)

Because of the uniqueness and the universality of the Prophetic mission of Muhammad (SAWS) all the other extant divine scriptures besides the Qur'an speak about his mission. The Bhavishya Purana predicts about his arrival as the guardian of the world (*Sarwar-e-Alam*). He is referred to as Narashansa i.e. Muhammad' in the Athar Veda. The Buddha, at his death bed, predicted the arrival of a Mesriya (mercy unto world), an incomparable leader of mankind. He has been called a 'Soeshyant' (the mercy unto all) in the Zend-Avesta of the Parsis. There are numerous references to Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) in both the *Tauret* (Torah) and *Injeel* (Bible). It is predicted in Deuteronomy of the Old Testament that "Lord said unto Moses I will raise them up a prophet from among their

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brethren like unto thee (O Moses) and will put my words in his mouth and he shall speak unto them all that I command him" (Deuteronomy : 18:18-20). There are passages in the Bible which reveal the arrival of a prophet to complete the unfinished task of Jesus (Isa) (AS). He has been called the "Comforter" and the "Counsellor" or "Paraclete" (the one who is the most praiseworthy) in the New Testament (John : 16/7-14; 14/24). Jesus or Isa (AS) himself admitted that he was not the promised prophet the world was expecting. That prophet would arrive only after his departure and "He shall bring with him the mercy of God for salvation of those who shall believe in his words. (Gospel of Barnabas)

Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was divinely granted many distinctions not conferred on any of the prophets preceding him. One of these was that the entire earth was made sacred to him. Thus a Muslim can offer his *Salaat* (prayer) in any clean place on earth, if a mosque is not accessible, and he/she is away from home. Another unique privilege divinely accorded to him is the permission to intercede on behalf of his *Ummah* before Allah (SWT) on the Day of Reckoning to seek their reprieve if not guilty of Shirk (Joining any other god with Allah [SWT]).

However the most privileged and unique distinction conferred on Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) was his journey during the fraction of a night from *Masjid al-Haraam* (Ka'bah) in Makkah to *Masjid al-Aqsa* in Jerusalem (*Asra*) and from Jerusalem to the Heaven (*Me'raj*). This miraculous transcendental event has been discussed briefly. Companions of the Prophet (SAWS) and exegetes differ as to whether it was a mere spiritual experience or real live experience in full consciousness. The position has been beautifully summed up by Ibn Hisham "Allah alone

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knows the truth. It is nonetheless a fact that by the command of Allah (SWT), Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) did visit *Baitul Maqdas* and witnessed divine signs. It is irrelevant if it was an experience of the soul or in a state of awaking" (22). It could have been either. The possibility of transportation of the body of the Prophet (SAWS), in full awakening cannot be ruled out because of strong Qur'anic evidences such as the descent of Adam, in human form, from Heaven to Earth: Further if scientists can send man to moon and bring him back, if they can launch space vehicles to probe the secrets of planets, can it be beyond the power of Allah (SWT) to take His beloved Prophet (SAWS) to Heaven and bring him back to Earth: *"To Allah doth belong the dominions of the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, and it is He Who hath power over all things."* (al-Ma'edah; 5:120)

It is our submission that the event of *Me'raj* symbolises the climax of the cycle of human destiny beginning with the creation of man superior to angels. His subsequent fall from Divine Grace and descent to earth for transgressing the Divine Command. And finally culminating in the rise of Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) to the supreme heights of the Heaven, representing the restoration of Divine Grace and Man's superiority to angels.

It may thus be concluded that Muhammad (SAWS), the last of the divinely commissioned Prophets, conveyed a message of universal relevance and left the legacy of Holy Qur'an **"which makes the Divine power present among humans (and acts as) an anchor of timelessness in a changing world"** (49). Having modelled his life in accordance with Qur'anic values he was a perfect human being incomparable in his qualities of head and heart to any other human being past, present and even future. It is

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therefore not surprising that he is being acknowledged the greatest of all time greats in human history: **“It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history” (50)**

Note: English Translation of the Qur’anic verses are from:

Yusuf Ali, Abdullah (1989)	:	The Holy Qur’an, Text, Translation and Commentary (New Revised Edition), Amanah Corporation, Brentwood, Maryland, USA.
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