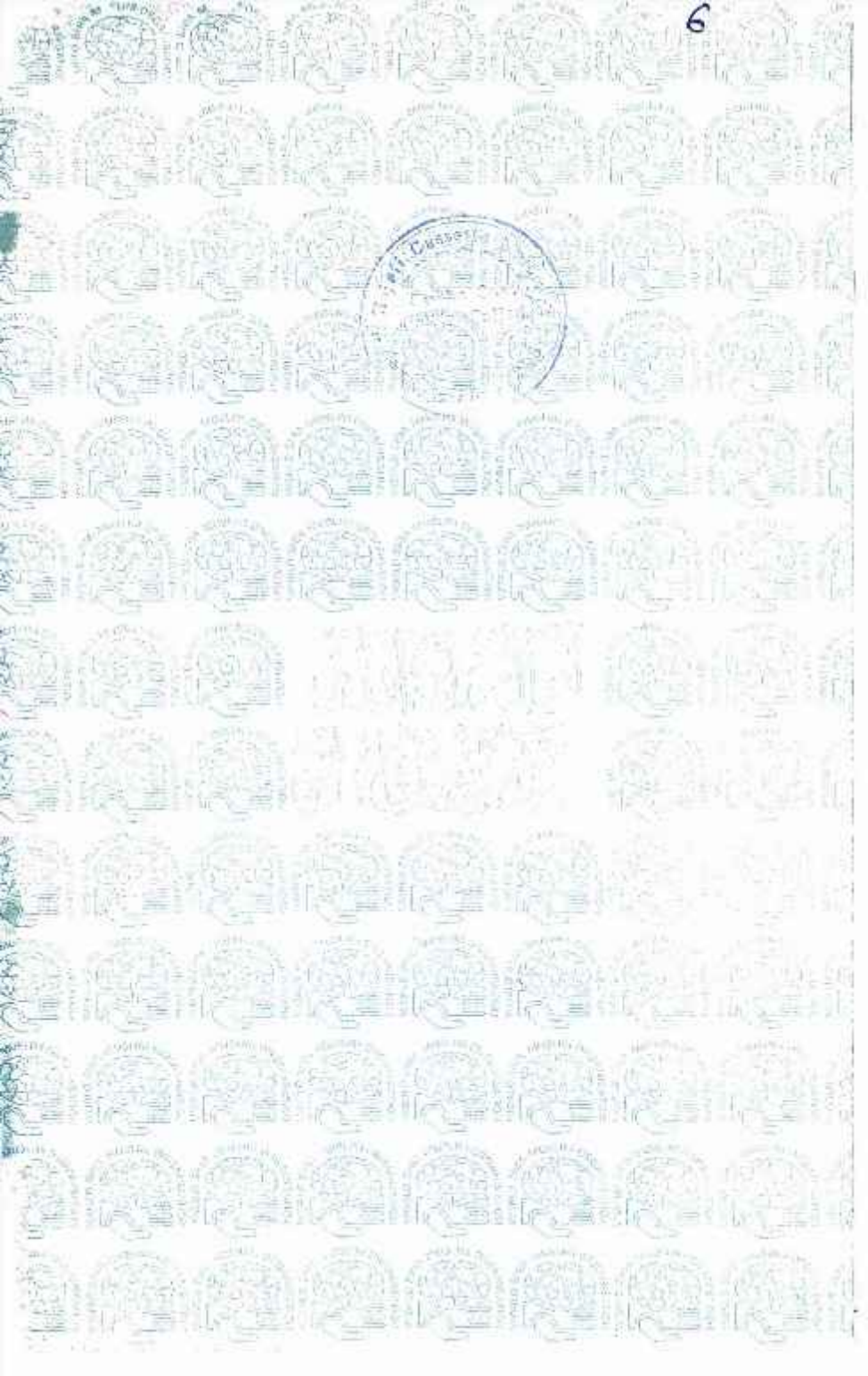


Universality of ISLAM



Allama Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i





UNIVERSALITY OF ISLAM

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ABOUT OURSELVES

An alert mind today notices a change in the intellectual life of man. Science and technology with their wondrous achievements seem to have reached their zenith. Material needs together with the passion for authority and supremacy have led man towards an apparent bankruptcy of the moral values. In this desperate situation one is forced to pause and reassess the potential dangers threatening mankind as a whole. Man, has once again set his eyes on Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful as he has now realized that the solution to his problems and his ultimate salvation lies in following the Divine commandments.

This shift from the material to the spiritual thinking is fully in keeping with the aims and objects of the Islamic Seminary. Religious precepts, abreast with the developments of our time, provide the much-needed sanctuary for the troubled and anxious mind. It is a result of increasing awareness, that it is being realized that the secret of living a virtuous life in this world leads to the eternal bliss of life in the Hereafter. This is the universal message of ISLAM.

The Islamic Seminary seeks to hold aloft the torch of spiritual guidance and to help in all earnest to promote mankind's spiritual heritage. It presents Qur'anic way of life in its pristine glory. It presents only that which is authoritative and authentic. Its publications are designed to meet the spiritual need of our times. It will serve as a perennial spring to those who are thirsty of knowledge.

The Islamic Seminary is a world organization endeavouring for Islamic fraternity. It enjoys the contributions of the best brains, in addition to having an international support for the fulfilment of its great objective. It has centres in Asia, Africa, Europe, America, Canada and Far East.

A list of addresses appears in the closing pages of this book. Readers can write to any of these centres for our publications.

Dear Reader,

السَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

This book is an Islamic Seminary publication. Its publications are designed to cater for the spiritual needs of the age with a particular emphasis on grooming Muslim mind and thinking. Utmost efforts have been made by the Seminary to put forward in its publications what is really authoritative and authentic in Islam.

You are requested to kindly go through this book in the spirit in which it is intended. You are also requested to communicate to us your free comments on our publication, which will be highly appreciated.

Propagating the message of Islam is a task which calls for the co-operation of all. The Seminary invites you to join it in this task complying cordially with the verse of the holy Qur'an: *"Say: I give you but one admonition, that you stand for Allah's sake jointly and singly"*. (34:46)

May Allah bless you!

Yours in Islam,
Publication Secretary.

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FOREWORD

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Amongst the Divinely revealed religions, Islam is by far the most comprehensive and complete religion. It takes care of man's total needs, material as well as spiritual. Its teachings reform his behaviour and elevates him to an exalted state.

For man's salvation, Islam has set forth a systematic code which is free from contrivance, contradiction and circumvention. It is an absolutely smooth and straight path.

The Qur'an guides the people towards truth and directs them to the right path. (Surah al-Ahqaf, 46:30)

Hence, abiding by the principles and teachings of Islam, man saves himself from the misfortunes of mortal life, and by its adoption he brings about harmony in his surroundings, and equips him in the struggle of life. And in the path of normal and evolutionary urges of life, he acquires a compatibility so as to shoulder the great responsibility of doing good to the larger interest of mankind.

Islam keeps a vigilant eye on the conduct and mode of life of human beings and it has laid down principles and code of ethics to meet with exigencies in a rational manner. As such in Islamic teachings, there is no problem which can go unsolved or unresolved. It is by this reason that Islam fulfils the individual, social, economic, judicial, political, psychological, intellectual and philosophical requirements and offers solutions. In fact, it envisages the

total benefits for the whole mankind that any other political system or code of conduct could ever do so.

Lord Hadley, a great thinker and scholar says: "It is my firm belief that if all the great thinkers and philosophers of Europe gather together to find out a religion which is based on the principles of universal logic and rational feelings, they will unanimously decide to adopt the Faith of Islam as there exists no doubt about its greatness and simplicity. This faith which is a boon in itself, is the logical and psychological conclusion of human behaviour and feelings. Apart from taking care of the sustenance of body and soul, it lays emphasis on spiritual advancement. After having given a comprehensive thought on the subject I feel elevated as if I have embarked upon a vast expanse of sunshine from dark alleys".

Islam is unique in itself as it stresses on the need of performing good deeds, taking care of personal health, acquiring knowledge and improving upon the intellectual faculties. It has also ordained that the followers should uphold moral values, as a complete man is one, who takes great care of this aspect of life.

However this is a broad-based outline of the high ideals and principles of Islam. These very fundamentals are discussed in detail in the present book. In short it can be said that this book carries the gist of the message of Islam.

The necessity of such a comprehensive book as can present to its readers the glorious teachings of Islam has been felt over a long time. In this context, it can be said that those, who have spent the major portion of their life in Europe and America, have noticed that in libraries there is a dearth of books which can spotlight on the salient features of Islam and which can present authentic accounts to that school of thought which keeps the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his Holy Progeny, peace be on them, in highest esteem and profoundest regard.

The book in hand is written by an erudite scholar, Allama Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai. The Islamic Seminary takes pleasure in offering the English version of this book to the readers.

It is sincerely hoped that this book will help our young generation to enlighten themselves so as to see Islam as the path to secure power and perfection and furthermore to identify themselves as true and obedient servants of Islam as well as to defend its principles from the core of their hearts.

Y. K. Nafsi

* * * * *

RELIGION

Religion is a code of conduct that governs man's faith, deeds and moral obligations. It has been brought by Allah's chosen Prophets for the salvation of mankind.

To have a firm belief in religion and to fashion life's activity in accordance with its principles are the best means for achieving success and happiness in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

Therefore, if we are conscientiously religious in our outlook and faithfully follow the teachings of Allah and His Holy Prophet, Muhammad, peace be on him and his progeny, we shall earn the benefits of life in this mortal world, and at the same time we shall secure an eternal bliss in the next world.

We all know that a fortunately virtuous man is the one who has a real aim in life, and who never lives in a state of uncertainty. Besides, he is the one who is endowed with good moral qualities and who has an urge to perform noble deeds. Such a person has his heart's satisfaction with the strength of moral character and he never involves himself in absurdities.

Faith, in fact, invites us to follow these guidelines as without them the very purpose of life is defeated. It resides in man's heart like a secret-service-man who is hired to shadow his subject. Likewise, faith is with the man in all circumstances. It prevents him from perversion and directs him to perform noble deeds.

Faith is a strong support which saves man from

sufferings and vicissitudes of life. Hence, pious people never lose heart in adverse circumstances. They never allow themselves to get frustrated or to suffer from inhibition. It is so because they have an abiding faith in Allah's infinite Power. They always think of Him in all circumstances and remain under His protection. It is on this account that their hearts remain contented, strengthened and serene.

Religion commands us to acquire moral values and to perform noble deeds in as far as it is humanly possible.

Religion can be subdivided into three parts:

- (i) Beliefs
- (ii) Morals
- (iii) Commandments

Now we elaborate these aspects of religion.

(i) **Beliefs:** If we apply our wisdom and common sense we come to the conclusion that this whole universe with all its astoundingly complex aspects and system has not come into existence all by its own. Besides, it is incomprehensible to believe that this vast universe is functioning with all its intricacies without the control of any outside Power which has set it into action.

Undoubtedly, there must be somebody who has by his invincible power and wisdom has created this wonderful world. And it is this power which is controlling its total affairs with stable laws and regulations.

Nothing has been created without any purpose. Anything that has been created has not been outside the realm of His Absolute Power.

Can it be believed that the Merciful Allah Who is so kind and benevolent to all of His creations, can abandon man to his wisdom — the man, who is the best specimen of His creations and majority among whom are prone to fall into the ditch of misfortune and waywardness? Most certainly not.

Thus, Allah directed the destiny of man through His chosen Prophets who were immune from any fault or error. The object was to make man obey His Commands and to make his life meaningful and well-deserving.

We notice that generally there appears to be no

apparent relief or benefit from following the Divine instructions. The one who has done good deeds goes unrewarded and the one who is wicked and cruel goes unpunished. From this it is deduced that there must have been another world where man's actions and deeds would be put to scrutiny and rewards and punishment would be awarded accordingly.

Hence, religion draws people nearer to such beliefs and similar other true convictions as will be dealt with later and it also warns them against ignorance and stupidity.

(ii) **Morals:** Religion directs us to develop good qualities and to adopt clean habits so as to become an emblem of virtues. It tells us to identify our duties and obligations, to treat mankind with love and affection, to keep its needs in our minds, to uphold justice, to behave with pleasant disposition and sincerity of purpose and to defend our personal rights. Furthermore, it asks us to observe decencies and not to usurp the people's rights of living and of earning livelihood with self-respect. And above all, it commands us not to spare any effort in the pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. It stresses that we should adopt the principles of justice and fairplay in all spheres of human activity.

(iii) **Commandments:** Religion commands us to perform those deeds, which are useful to us as well as to the society as a whole and to abstain from doing things which bring misfortunes and spell disaster.

It teaches us also to worship our Lord, the Creator, by offering prayers (*Salât*), by observing fast (*Saum*) and by doing similar other acts of submission to Allah.

This is the code of conduct that religion has brought to us and reminds us to follow it faithfully.

As is evident some of these laws pertain to faith and beliefs, some to moral values and some relate to putting them into practice. It is so because unless man does not become realistic in his approach and leads his life honestly and nobly, he cannot claim to be fortunate.

* * * * *

RELIGION IS A NECESSITY

The question that arises at the very outset is about the relevancy of man's life with religion and the belief in Allah. Can the society not carry on its functions without religion and without having the belief in Allah?

Is it not true that a religious person is the one who believes in the only Lord of the universe, and performs particular deeds in order to earn His pleasure?

It may be possible that according to the man-made laws the respective duties and benefits and losses of each member of the society can be determined. In that case these laws will take the place of religion and its existence will become unnecessary. But after scrutinizing the Islamic principles and teachings, this notion seems silly because Islam has not only ordained to praise and worship Allah but it has also laid down comprehensive principles and specific code of conduct for man's individual as well as social affairs.

Islam has taken an amazingly considered view of the vast expanse of mankind's world and has enacted laws and regulation for man's individual and social welfare and mental peace. It has also given the guarantee for the happiness and prosperity of the members of the human society to the maximum possible extent. And every fair-minded person testifies to the fact that those laws and regulations that have been the product of man's limited intellect and knowledge are void of perfection.

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah has praised the path of

Islam as mentioned previously. Here we elaborate some illustrating examples from the verses of the Holy Qur'an: *The religion towards which the people were called upon by the Prophets is based on worshipping Allah and obeying His Commands. Though the learned people of various other religions knew the difference between truth and falsehood, yet owing to religious prejudice and animosity, they refused to accept the truth and adopted a different course of their own, thus religions emerged on this Earth. In fact, the group of such people openly flouted the revelations of Allah. Allah will soon punish them for their misdeeds.* (Vide: Surah Ale Imran, 3:19)

If a person adopts a religion other than Islam, his religion shall not be accepted and he shall be the loser in the next world. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:85)

Believers, submit yourselves to the Will of Allah collectively in matters of religion and should not follow in the footsteps of Satan who is an open enemy of yours and you should not add or subtract anything in religion. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:208)

O Believers! If you enter into any covenant, honour it and when you take a vow with conviction and make Allah your Witness, do not break your oaths. Allah knows what you do. (Surah al-Nahl, 16:91)

Hence, when a Muslim enters into an agreement with Allah or makes a promise with His people, he should be honest and abide by it.

O Prophet, invite the people towards Allah through wisdom and fair exhortations and if you argue with them, do it in the better way. There is no doubt that your Lord knows well the persons, who have strayed from Him and He also knows those who are on the right path. (Surah al-Nahl, 16:125)

Therefore, for the propagation of religion, a person should talk to a man at his level of comprehending things and in the manner that can be fruitful to him and if by reason and advice he cannot make any headway, he should, by logical argument, which is one of the effective methods of proving a point, invite him towards truth.

The Holy Qur'an says: *O People! When Qur'an is recited, attend to it and understand it thoroughly. And do not talk in the middle. Perhaps (consequently) you may be bestowed with Divine Blessings.* (Surah al-A'raf, 7:204)

O Believers! Obey the Commands of Allah and His Prophet and those of the Imams whose allegiance is ordained upon you by Allah and His Prophet. And if you have belief in Allah and the Day of Judgement, resolve your disputes in the light of injunctions made by the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet. That is a better way of settling differences. (Surah al-Nisa, 4:59)

Actually, in the Islamic society there is no other means of resolving differences than the Holy Qur'an and the instructions of the Holy Prophet, and every difference should be resolved according to them. And, if a Muslim resolves the differences in the light of logical reasoning, it is because the Holy Qur'an has approved of the decision made by wisdom.

O Prophet! It is Allah's benevolence that you are so kind-hearted and soft-spoken and if you had been bad-tempered and fierce, these people would have become dispersed from around you. Therefore, you should ignore their lapses and ask for them Allah's forgiveness and keep on consulting them in their affairs. But when you make a determination on a certain thing, repose your trust in Allah. It is so because Allah makes a friend of those people, who have trust in Allah, and He Helps them. (Surah Ale Imran, 3:159)

Treating people with goodness, having regard for their welfare and consulting them on important matters, are the means of creating love and respect. And, it is also necessary that people should love their leader so that he can prevail upon them. Thus, Allah has commanded the leader of the Muslims to treat his followers kindly and make consultations with them.

However, as it is possible that the people may think in a wrong direction, the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, has been commanded to stick to his decision firmly after he has made consultations with them and since nobody

can go against the Will of Allah, he should look upon Allah on all matters and should submit them to Him.

The Almighty Allah has mentioned the religions of Judaism and Christianity which have the heavenly revealed Books — the Torah and the Evangel respectively, and which contain collective commandments and regulations.

The Torah and the Evangel which are at present with the Jews and Christians, also support this meaning because the Torah contains many civil and criminal laws and apparently the Evangel supports and confirms the doctrines of the Torah. (Surah Mā'ida, 5:43 — 44)

Conclusion: From whatever is explained before, it becomes evident that in the terminology of the Holy Qur'an, religion is that code of life from which there is no escape for man. The difference that exists between religion and the social code is that religion emanates from the revelations of Allah but the social code is the product of the people's notions and imagination. In other words, religion enjoins the people to live according to the Commands of Allah. But in the man-made social code there exists no such binding link.

BENEFITS OF RELIGION

From what has been said before, it is established that religion not only plays an important role in reforming individuals as well as society but it is also the only means of establishing justice and securing peace and prosperity in life.

The society that does not follow the laws of religion is deprived of realism and enlightenment, and it wastes its precious life in waywardness, outer manifestation of show and negligence. After discarding the sense of values, it passes its life in silly notions and egotism. Bad habits and mean conduct become its destiny and as such it loses all human values. Such a society not only fails to secure happiness and prosperity, but it faces the evil effects of its waywardness and sooner or later it can rise from its slumber and fully realize that the only way of salvation is religion and the belief in Allah. And ultimately it becomes remorseful for its deeds.

Further the Holy Qur'an declares: *Those who purify their souls will certainly have everlasting happiness and those who corrupt their souls will certainly be deprived of happiness.* (Surah al-Shams, 91: 9 – 10)

Thus, he who keeps away from vices, is blessed and he who commits sins, is deprived of peace, prosperity and salvation.

It should be borne in mind that happiness and salvation of the individual and society depend only upon following the religious commands. It is because practice makes a man perfect and the thing which has the real worth is not the claim of truthfulness but it is truth itself.

A person, who calls himself a Muslim, and is wicked and at the same time awaits the arrival of the angel of good fortune is like a patient who roams about, stuffing the doctor's prescription in his pocket, and still hopes for remedy! This is an established fact that by such behaviour one can never attain the desired goal.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an. *Those of the Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabe'ins¹ who believe in Allah and the Day of Judgement and strive righteously will receive their reward from the Gracious Lord.* (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:62)

Perhaps it can be concluded that according to this Qur'anic verse all those people who have a belief in Allah and the Day of Judgement and who also perform good deeds but do not believe in some or all the Prophets will still be deserving the salvation. But, it should be borne in mind that in the Holy Qur'an Allah has named all those who do not believe in all or some of the Prophets as disbelievers (*Kāfir*). He says: *Those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers and try to create differences between Allah and His Messengers, claim that they believe in some Messengers and not in others and wish to adopt a middle course between disbelief and belief, but in fact they are unbelievers.* (Surah al-Nisa, 4:150 – 151)

¹Those people who belonged to the religion of the Magi, and got inclined to Judaism and profess the faith of Magi and Judaism are called Sabe'ins.

Thus, only those people, who believe in all the Prophets, peace be on them, and perform good deeds, shall benefit from their faith.

MAN'S ROLE IN SOCIAL LIFE

If we study the circumstances which gave birth to human societies in the olden times, it becomes evidently clear that man neither aspires nor seeks anything except his well-being and smooth sailings in life and without doubt this target will not be attained until all the resources of life are fully utilized.

Man knows from his inborn intellectual faculty that he cannot satisfy his total needs nor can he achieve the comforts and the mental peace he is so much desirous of all alone by himself. Since he realizes that he cannot achieve success in life by surmounting the difficulties individually, he seeks the protection of the social role of life. He considers it an easy way of obtaining his goal through co-operation of other people, and hence, he endeavours to receive the benefits of life by the aid of others. This objective is attained when every individual shoulders the responsibility of contributing his efforts towards that end and then all the individuals pool the dividends of individual efforts, consequently every single individual according to his efforts and social needs, takes his share and carries on his daily routine of life peacefully.

In order to make his life more pleasant, man co-ordinates and co-operates with his fellow beings. In fact, all of them invest their efforts for the common cause and accumulate the fruits of their labour to be shared by individual persons according to their efforts and status.

NEED OF LAWS IN SOCIETY

As the fruit of people's collective efforts is accumulated, everybody wants to take advantage out of it. Consequently it will give rise to disputes and clashes.

This is an open fact that for the sake of material gains, discords and hatred develop and the people's spirit of mutual love is lost. To keep the people's mutual affec-

tion in tact, the society has to frame the rules and regulations so that by following them the disorderliness and chaos are checked.

There is no denying the fact that in order to run the affairs of the society, rules and regulations are not framed, there would prevail such a chaotic condition that the human society would not survive for a single day.

Undoubtedly, these regulations vary with regard to the differences in civilization, nation's barbaric disposition, the society's mode of thinking and the stance of governmental institutions. Still, however no society can do without the existence of such customary laws and regulations as are at least respected by the majority of the people. In fact, in the annals of human history, there never existed a society which had no codes, customs, rules and regulations.

MAN'S FREEDOM FROM LAWS

Since man does all his work according to his will and discretions, he feels a kind of freedom in his actions and considering this to be without any condition or binding, he tries to avoid all sorts of curbs and restrictions.

That is why he feels unhappy when he is confronted with hurdles and failures in the fulfilment of his desires. And whenever some restrictions are imposed upon him, he feels within himself a load and a sense of dejection. Thus, in however small in number these laws may be, they go against the man's freedom-loving nature as they impose restrictions on his freedom.

On the other hand, he also understands that if for the protection of society and its regulatory laws, he is not prepared to sacrifice some of his freedom, there would emerge such a disorderly situation which will instantly destroy his freedom and peace of mind. It is so because if he snatches one piece of a loaf from a man's mouth, others, too will snatch from him many pieces out of his hand and if he puts somebody to cruelty, he, too will not be spared. Hence, in order to preserve some of his freedom, he voluntarily parts with the rest of it and at the same time he cannot help but to respect the laws.

IS ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS AGAINST FREEDOM?

According to what have been said above, there exists a sort of variation and contradiction between the freedom-loving nature of man and the laws. In other words, laws are like a shackle which is put in his feet and it is his desperate desire to get rid of it by breaking it.

That is why side by side with practical rules and obligations there always are enacted some laws for providing punishment for violation of laws. These laws serve as deterrent against violations and also as incentive to benefits and reward, which induce people to abide by the rules and regulations. Hence, it cannot be denied that these things, that is, deterrent against punishment and incentive for rewards, help, to a certain extent, in enforcing laws, but they can neither ensure a complete remedy for violations nor can safeguard the total authority of the laws. The reason is that these penal laws are violated because like other laws they are also imperfect and defective.

As these laws can also be violated they are always at the risk of being infringed by the freedom-loving people. It is because the people who wield influence, openly and flagrantly flout them or by using their influence they compel the judicial and administrative authorities to side with them.

Those people who do not have much influence, take undue advantage of the weakness and callousness of the society's administrative machinery and indulge in violating the laws by surreptitious means, and by underhand approach or graft or by personal contact or relationship, fulfil their purpose and consequently by deflecting the administrative set-up they make it good-for-nothing.

The best proof of what has been said above is that we daily come across thousands of cases of law-breaking in various societies.

SOURCE OF THE VULNERABILITY OF LAWS

Now it should be found out as to where the source of this danger lies and in what way the man's rebellious and freedom-loving nature can be curbed so as to provide

remedial measures against law-breaking.

The source of this danger, which is greatly responsible for enthusing the ills in the society's body politic and which cannot be remedied by the laws even, is that in general, all those social methods which institute the laws, have set their eyes on the people's materialistic aspect of life and have not given any thoughtful consideration to their spiritual aspects and the inborn propensities.

Their only objective is to create the coordination of actions, discipline and balance so that the deeds are performed in such a manner that differences and clashes do not occur.

What the law wants is that its rulings are followed and that it should keep the society's functions under its control. It has no concern whatsoever with the people's intrinsic values and aspirations which are the motivating force of their deeds and actions and which are also the internal enemy of laws.

True, if the man's freedom-loving nature and his several other inborn inclinations (such as selfish disposition and sexual concupiscence which are the root cause of all the ills) are not attended, the society becomes subjected to chaos and disorderliness. And, the gulf of differences becomes widened. Hence the very existence of the laws and regulations is jeopardized by the invasion of the formidably strong rebellious elements which are the off-shoots of these very instinctive abnormalities. As such no law can remedy the ills and put a check on the difference of thoughts and actions.

DIVINE LAWS ARE SUPERIOR TO OTHER LAWS

For the protection of laws, the society's last resort is to establish penal code and to appoint a watchman. Still, as has been mentioned above, for the enforcement of laws, it is not possible to have a check on man's rebellious nature and other revolting tendencies through penal laws and law-enforcing agencies.

Similarly, religion also appoints administrative watchman and to punish the law-breakers and revolting elements,

enforces penal laws. Yet, it possesses other strong resources by which it overpowers every opposing force and destroys it completely.

(i) Religion which maintains a link between the man's social life and Allah, makes the man responsible to Allah for all his individual and social activities because Allah by His infinite Power and unlimited Knowledge has confined man from all sides and He is the Knower of everything that man thinks of and of any secret lurking in his heart. Nothing is hidden from Him.

Apart from the apparent watchman, religion entrusts the duty of man's surveillance to an internal supervisor which never falters with carelessness from its responsibilities and it becomes impossible to escape from its pronounced judgement. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *Allab encompasses everyone's activities.* (Surah Anfal, 8:47) *He is with you wherever you may be.* (Surah Hadid, 57:4) *Allab will certainly recompense everyone according to their deeds.* (Surah Hud, 11:111) *Allab certainly keeps watch over you.* (Surah Nisa, 4:1)

If we compare a man who lives within the bounds of man-made law with the one who is leading his life according to religious laws, the superiority of religion will dawn upon us thoroughly.

In a society where all individuals are devoutly religious and perform their religious obligations, people realize in all circumstances that Allah is watching them so they never think ill of one another. Therefore, the people, who live in such environment, are generally free from hostilities and contentions. Besides, they are also safe in the matter of people's opinion about one another. But in the case of man-made laws no such concept of safety is guaranteed.

Religion forbids man to harbour distrust. The Holy Qur'an says: *O Believers! Avoid conjecture because acting upon certain conjecture may lead to sin; and do not spy on one another or back-bite.* (Surah Hujrat, 49:12)

In a religious environment, man remains contented and serene. He leads a comfortable and happy life and

secures an eternal sublimity. But in a surrounding where the man-made laws have the upper hand, the situation is such that when one person sees that the police has an eye on him, he does not break the law though it would have just been possible that he might have done so otherwise.

Owing to broad-based guidelines of religion, every religious man realizes the truth that in this mortal world, his life is not confined to a short-lived existence and that he has still to spend an endless life which is not brought to a terminating point by death, and furthermore for achieving an eternal peace and happiness, the only course that is left open for him is to follow those religious commands which Allah has sent through His Prophets.

Since a believer knows quite well that religious commands are from that All-Wise, All-Seeing and All-Powerful Allah on whom man's interior as well as exterior self is wholly evident, there is no possibility of committing in a surreptitious manner a certain act, which amounts to the disobeying of Allah's Commands. Besides, he is not oblivious of the fact that he will be answerable to All-Powerful Allah in all circumstances.

(ii) According to his faith, a religious man also knows that if he punctually discharges his religious obligations, he is obeying his Lord. And though, in the capacity of being a humble creation of Allah, he does not desire anything in return, yet he would be recompensed by Allah's Grace and Benevolence.

Thus, every act of submission to Allah, which he does by his own will, is in actual fact a sort of a deal or a matter of give and take. It is so because by his willingness, he surrenders some of his personal freedom and in lieu thereof secures Allah's Pleasures and Blessings.

A religious man, therefore, feels immense pleasure by performing his religious duties and gets himself busy in this transaction of give and take. In return for whatever freedom he has sacrificed, he receives manifold benefits as if he sells a commodity and replaces it by buying a still better one.

On the contrary, a person, who is negligent towards

religious obligations, considers it harmful for himself to abide by the rules and regulations and thus he feels pain to sacrifice some of his personal freedom. As such he is always on the look-out for getting out of the clutches of law and of setting himself free. Here it will be appropriate to point out that there are still some more differences between religious and man-made laws.

The devout people, of their own will, abstain from sins while the law-abiding people refrain from committing crimes for fear of punishment. Religion rules the whole being of man, while the law has its jurisdiction over hands and feet only. Religion commands in a broad perspective both inwardly and outwardly, while the law only governs the outer aspect of man's conduct. Religion is not like a mere watchman, who wards off bad things, but is like a tutor who enlightens man on virtuous deeds and accomplishments. In this respect, the role of man-made law is nothing more than a policeman.

Therefore, benefit emanating from religion is far better than the one accruing from the man-made law. Thus, those people, who try to destroy religion and pin their hopes on man-made laws, are like a man who, by amputating his own legs, is walking on crutches.

Conclusion : From what has been said above it is clear that religion is by far the best system of organizing the human society as it trains man in a much better way than any other systems for enforcing the laws.

REMEDIAL MEASURES BY OTHER SYSTEMS

During the past century, the under-developed countries, after coming out of their long slumber, adopted the collective pattern of government for their progress and development. Neither they took advantage of the role of religion nor had they paid any heed to the weaker aspect of their laws. As such their condition deteriorated and the very complexion of their social system reflected a tinge of savage outlook.

In contrast, the advanced nations realized the weaker side of the enforcement of laws and in order to save them

from utter failure, they resorted to a different method of approach by adopting remedial measures. They opted for such a method of imparting knowledge and education as to build up the moral character of their people and to make them think of the laws of the country as a sacred heritage. Hence, no room was left for violation of laws. This type of training becomes instrumental in making people used to the habit of respecting the law.

However, it should be borne in mind that societies which receive such sort of training have two sets of opinion.

(i) According to their view and belief human relations, welfare needs, and kindness to people, which are based on realistic grounds, in fact originate from Divine religions, as since times immemorial and long before the advent of the well-developed societies, religion had invited the attention of the people towards these concepts. Indeed, the prosperity that we see in advanced societies is, as a matter of fact, the blessings of religion.

(ii) The attitude of mind originating from whimsical ideas and ludicrous fancies as for instance people were made to believe that if they suffered or got themselves killed for the cause of the country, their names would be preserved on the pages of history for ever.

It is possible that a person may be influenced by such sort of notions and he may stake his life by plunging himself in the battlefield or may kill many people of the enemy camp. Consequently some tangible results may be obtained, yet such notions may bring more harm than what apparently looks like benefits. Besides, it makes the man superstitious and destroys his very faculty of rational thinking.

However, those people who do not have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgement, consider the conception of death as a total annihilation of man's life. Such people are not endowed with any sense of judgement and power of perception to realize that there is another life after death which shall ensure eternal peace and prosperity.

Man by his very nature, yearns for religion. As long as he lives, he strives for his betterment and in order to achieve his objectives, he is on the look-out for all possible

means and resources. On the one hand he wants such effective means of permanent nature as cannot be defeated while on the other hand there exists a situation where in this world there are no such means as can give a guarantee for permanent success.

Man's yearning for religion is based on the fact that under the circumstances, when he, according to his very nature, wants to secure for himself a permanent source of happiness and prosperity and to depend on a prop which cannot be dismantled or defeated, he realizes that it is Allah's Will which is never defeated. Hence, the only way, for a man to submit himself to Allah, is to embrace Islam.

In the light of the foregoing, it can be said with certainty that this inherent desire of man is the solid proof of the veracity of the following three fundamental principles of Islam.

- (i) Monotheism
- (ii) The Prophethood of Muhammad
- (iii) The Day of Judgement.

Man's intellect is dependent upon his instinctive build-up and which is manifested by his conscious feelings and desires. For instance man cannot by error take friendship for enmity or his feeling of thirst for quenching of thirst. It is also true that at times man aspires to be as free as birds or wishes to be one of the stars studded in the firmament. Since man, with all seriousness of purpose, and from the very core of his heart, wants a real source of happiness and prosperity, he never gives up his hope for achieving his goal.

If in the Universe, there had not been the existence of that Undefeatable Source (Allah), man with his innocently permeating instinctive nature, would not have pondered over this matter at all.

Furthermore, if there had been no absolute peace and comfort as envisaged in the life after death, and if the code of religion which reached us through Prophethood, had not been true, there would have been no desire throbbing in man's heart for achieving peace and comfort.

HISTORICAL BASE OF RELIGION

The only authentic source of investigation regarding the historical basis of religions is the Holy Qur'an because it is immune from all sorts of errors, conjectures, prejudices and partialities.

The Holy Qur'an says tersely: *In the sight of Allah Islam is the only religion.* (Surah Ale Imran, 3:20)

From the very inception, Islam has been the religion of mankind. The Holy Qur'an expressly mentions that the present-day human race is the offspring of Prophet Adam on whom Divine revelations were made. His religion was very simple and it was based on some fundamental principles which made incumbent upon people to worship Allah, the only Supreme Being and to treat their fellow beings and in particular their parents, with kindness and favour and at the same time to abstain from quarrelling, killing, mischief, and many other such wicked deeds.

After Prophet Adam, his progeny started leading their lives with simplicity and without any conflicts. As and when people increased in number, they started living together and the concept and practice of the social role of man's life commenced practically. Owing to the prevailing conditions, the people were gradually drawn nearer to civilization. But when the population still increased in larger number, they divided themselves in tribes.

In each tribe, there were a few distinguished persons who were held in high esteem by tribesmen, so much so that after the death of these revered persons people erected their monuments in the shape of idols and effigies and started worshipping them. As is confirmed by the records of various religious heads, this practice laid the foundation of idol-worship. The history of idol-worship supports the same view.

Thereafter, the stronger people indulged in exploiting the weaker ones and gradually it gave rise to serious disputes and conflicts among the people. Such a state of affairs distracted man from the straight path and dragged him to extreme misfortunes and afflictions.

Ultimately, the All-Gracious Allah appointed His

prophets and revealed upon them His Revelations as Holy Scriptures so as to make people resolve their differences. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *In the beginning all people were one nation. When they started disputing with one another, Allah appointed His Prophets as warners and bearers of good tidings, and revealed to them the Holy Books so that those matters which were the cause of conflict between the people were resolved.* (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:213)

ISLAM – THE DIVINE PATH

Islam is the last of all the Divine religions. Hence as compared with all other religions, it is the most complete religion. After its inception all other religions were revoked. Obviously, a thing which is not perfect, cannot stand before the one which is comprehensive and superb.

Islam was brought to the entire mankind by the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, son of Abdullah, peace be on him and his progeny.

The door of salvation and happiness was made wide open to the humanity at large at a time when societies had already passed through the long span of moral degradation and corruptions, and were now fit to reach that level of mental uplift by virtue of which they could attain the lofty ideals of human accomplishments and Divine cognition, and had developed the tendency to act. Thus, Islam has brought to mankind such acceptable truths as can be easily understood by a man of rational outlook.

Apart from it, Islam has brought to mankind a distinguishing code of decent conduct. It also brought such precepts and commands as can manage the individual as well as social role of man's life. Islam ordains mankind to act upon its principles strictly.

It is because of these considerations that Islam qualifies itself as a Divine and everlasting religion. Islam is a complete code of life which envisages beliefs, governs the human affairs with regard to moral values and virtuous deeds in a manner so as to enable man to obtain for himself peace and prosperity in the next world.

The teachings of Islam are such that any society or

individual following them, would ultimately lead a prosperous life and gradually attains the pinnacle of glory.

Islam confers its blessings upon every individual and society in an equal manner. Anybody whether big or small, wise or unwise, man or woman, white or black and of the east or the west can derive benefits from it without any distinction, and can fulfil all his needs by following it. It is so because Islam's precepts and injunctions are basically for the entire mankind. It takes into consideration all human needs and solves them accordingly.

Among different people of various races and ages, man's nature and build-up is one and the same. Obviously, from the east to the west, the human society is like one family. That is to say everybody belongs to the same human species whether big or small, man or woman, wise or the unwise, and white or black is the member of this big family and all are equal on that basis. The needs of various people and races resemble those of one another. The people who will be born in future will be the offsprings of these very people and they will be inheriting all the needs and wants accordingly.

In short, Islam is a religion which satisfies all man's genuine and natural needs. This religion is good enough for all and it will last for ever. It is for this reason that Allah describes Islam as a rational religion and He invites mankind to maintain the rationality in man's nature. The distinguished religious personalities have said that Islam is a simple religion as it does not impose compulsions.

Just as religion occupies a unique position against other methods of social systems, Islam has a superiority over all other religions. It is from this stand-point that Islam is more beneficial to human society than any other system. This statement of fact becomes clear by making a comparison between the tenets of Islam and those of other religions.

ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Amongst all other religions, Islam is the only religion which is soundly social in nature.

Islamic teachings are neither like those of the present day religion like Christianity which only thinks of people's welfare in the life after death but is silent over their worldly affairs, nor are like the teachings of the present day religion of the Jews which deverts all its efforts towards education and guidance of only one nation nor like those of the religion of Magi nor like those of other religions which are confined to a fewer aspects of moral conduct.

In Islam the education and guidance of all the people as well as their peace and prosperity in both the worlds have always been given due consideration. And in fact it is the only way to reform the societies and to look after the people's prosperity, because it is futile to concentrate on the reformation of only one society or nation, when in the present time people of different parts of the world are coming closer to one another on the basis of mutually good relations of various nations. It is like purifying only one drop of water from a polluted pond or a rivulet and leaving out the rest. Besides, it is against the very principles of making reforms if other societies are ignored in preference to a particular one.

Furthermore, Islam throws sufficient light on the subject of creation of man and the universe over which the human mind so naturally ponders. All those moral values which can be inculcated in man, and the events that may happen in man's life, are dealt with thoroughly in the teachings of Islam. However, it has given recognition to only those thoughts which are based on reality and treats them as fundamentals and the one that tops the list is the belief in Oneness of Allah.

As regards the moral code, Islam has given priority to only those moral values which are nearer to the intelligent conscience and which are based on monotheism.

On the basis of morality, Islam has enacted such practicable rules and regulations as take into consideration minute details of human activity, and on account of which the individual responsibilities in general as well as in particular circumstances have been defined with regard to the individual or the society, irrespective of the white or the

black, the rural or the urban, man or woman, major or minor, master or slave, the rich or the poor and the ruler or the ruled.

Allah says: *Consider, how Allah compares the blessed word to that of a blessed tree which has firm roots and branches rising up into the sky.* (Surah Ibrahim, 14:24)

Anybody who scrutinizes the Islamic principles, moral teachings and jurisprudence, will find himself to be fathoming an ocean, the vast expanse and the depth of which are beyond the reach of human mind.

In spite of that each of its component factors are so interrelated with one another that the total body of components constitute a compact system of Divine worship and human love about which Allah made revelations upon His exalted Prophet.

ISLAM AND OTHER SOCIAL SYSTEMS

If we look closely into the ways and means of the developed societies, we find that though they have made enormous progress in educational and industrial development such as they have explored the moon and the mars and have stunned the man with unbelievable discoveries, yet they have brought the mankind to the verge of ruination and not only that, in so short a period of the past quarter of a century, they have shed twice the blood of hundreds and thousands of innocent people. Still they have scared the mankind with the danger of the third world war and it is just possible that it will bring about total destruction of human race.

It is by these methods that in the name of humanity and liberty, these advanced societies from their very inception have brought other nations of the four continents under subjugation of the West by their imperialistic designs. By this a smaller group of people has become the master of the destinies of millions of people in as far as their life, property and honour are concerned.

There is no denying the fact that the developed nations within their own spheres of activity have attained affluency with regard to worldly pleasures and the luxuries

of life, and though all of their ambitious programmes concerning social justice and educational and technological advancement have been met with, yet they are beset with hardships and numerous other difficulties such as the international conflicts and genocide of mankind.

Apart from that the world is anticipating a still worse thing to come. It goes without saying that all these sweet and bitter fruits are the outcome of our present day civilization and they are directly related to the shape of things pertaining to the ways of life of nations and societies which seemingly are drifting towards the so-called progress.

It should, however, be remembered that the advantages that accrue to us and are instrumental in bringing prosperity to the society, originate not from the law but they are the result of such moral values as truth, honesty, duty, consciousness, well-wishing and sacrifice. But though the same laws and regulations are prevalent in underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa yet their misfortunes and miseries are increasing day by day. And the bitter fruits of this very social system, which leave a bad taste in man's mouth become the cause of his misfortunes and miseries, and they drag the developed countries to a ruinous state. They originate from such despicable traits as greed, avarice, cruelty, pride and waywardness.

If we ponder over the code of Islam, we notice that it directs us principally to follow the principles of moral conduct by performing noble deeds for the well-being of mankind and to abstain from doing things which disrupt the peace and comfort of man's life even if, they may be having the underlying goodness for a particular nation.

Conclusions: From what has been preceded the following conclusions can be drawn:

(i) The Islamic system is better than other systems and it is more beneficial to humanity at large. The Holy Qur'an says: *This is the upright religion but most people do not know.* (Surah al-Rum, 30:30)

(ii) Most of the illuminating and fruitful benefits of the present-day world's civilization are the result of the blessings of the Divine religion of Islam. These are the living testi-

monies of what the West has derived from this Divine religion. It is because centuries ago (long before the advent of the Western civilization), Islam had invited people towards the principles of moral values and good behaviour by following which the West took the lead over us. The Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, peace be on him, in his last moment said to the people. "May you not adopt a course of action so as to make others take the lead by following the Holy Qur'an!"

(iii) According to Islamic teachings, it is necessary that man should consider good conduct as his objective and he should formulate rules and regulations on that basis.

To divorce oneself from the concept of noble deeds and to enact laws for the sake of material gains gradually lead the society to materialism, and deprive it from spirituality, which is the only differentiating factor between man and animals. It is on account of this that man acquires such carnivorous and herbivorous characteristics as of the wolves and leopards, and sheep and cows respectively. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet said. "The purpose of my Prophethood is to perfect the morals of the people".

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BELIEFS

Whatever natural phenomena and spectacles that man observes and watches around him compel him to try to investigate the causes of their coming into existence, obviously because, instinctively, he possesses a faculty of analytical thinking, and as such he never comes to the conclusion that all those things happened or existed all of a sudden.

If a driver finds that his vehicle has broken down, he does not think that this has happened by itself or without any cause. He starts probing in order to remove the obstacle which has caused the vehicle to come to a halt. After replacing the spares, he brings it back into motion.

Similarly, if a man feels hungry or thirsty, he tries to procure bread to eat and water to drink. Likewise, if he feels cold, he wears woolen clothes or warms himself alongside the fireplace as without these efforts he would not overcome the severity of cold weather. Again, if a man wants to erect a building, he does not hope the structure would come into existence all by itself. Thus, he provides materials and employs masons for its construction.

Since time immemorial man has been aware of the presence of lofty mountains, huge forests, and vast oceans. He has been watching the sun, the moon and the illuminating stars beating into a constant motion in a systematic and orderly manner. Despite it, the scientists are making frantic efforts to find out the very cause of their coming into existence. They never say that they have come into existence all by themselves.

To investigate and to find out the causes of the birth of the universe are characteristics of human nature which makes man to explore whether this universe with its splendid spectacle has come into existence by itself or there exists some source from which it originated. Besides, it also wants to know whether this wonderful system which is working all over the universe and which is guiding everything towards its particular aim, is in the control of a Being possessing infinite Power and Knowledge or it is just an accidental event.

PROOF OF THE CREATOR

When man, guided by his instinctive nature of accepting the realities, looks around, he comes across ample proof of the existence of the Creator and the Sustainer of this whole universe. It is this instinctive nature which makes him fully understand that all creations which are throbbing with life and everything amongst which is set on a fixed system of functioning in a regular cycle, and which is replaced by the other after a certain specified period of time, have neither come into existence by themselves, nor have they invented the system of their functioning.

As far as man is concerned, he has not selected for himself the human instincts and characteristics, but he has been created by somebody with all the accompanying human traits. In the same manner and means, human nature does not allow him to take it for granted that this system as a whole has been created in a perfunctory manner and without any aim and object. Even in case of a few bricks which are found arranged in a symmetrical order, his commonsense does not make him believe that it happened accidentally. Consequently man's realistic approach declares that there is definitely a Protector, Creator and Sustainer of life and the universe.

The infinite Being and the source of Knowledge and Power is Allah from Whom emanates everything that we see in existence. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *The Lord of the universe is that Who has created everything, given it a specific shape and then guides it.* (Surah al-Taha, 20:5)

ALLAH AND THE WORLD COMMUNITY

In the present time, the majority of the people inhabiting this earth are religious minded. They believe in Allah, the Creator, and worship Him, too. In the past ages also the same has been the practice of man. As far as history tells us, man has been religious in outlook and he has been accepting Allah as the only Lord of the universe. Though there have been differences of opinion in religious-oriented societies, yet every community of the world has attributed some specific characteristics to the Creator, the Lord of the universe, but they all agree on one point i.e. the existence of Allah. Like Islam, other religions, viz. Christianity, Judaism and Magianism hold similar belief. But those people, who deny the existence of the Creator, neither have nor will they ever have any cogent reason to substantiate their view. They say that they have no proof of the existence of the Creator but at the same time they do not hold any proof in support of His non-existence either. A man who follows materialism says that he does not know whether there is Allah or not, but he never says that there is no Allah. In other words, a man who follows materialism is not an atheist, but he is an agnostic. That is to say, he is not in a state of denial but of uncertainty. We call him a sceptic.

Allah has referred to such people in His Book in these words: *They have said, 'The only life is this worldly life and here we shall live and die. It is only time which will destroy us'. They have no knowledge about the fact. It is only their conjectures.* (Surah al-Jathia, 45:24)

The pre-historic archaeological excavations have established man's religion and his belief in Allah. Some proofs of man's belief in the life after death have also been found. In the newly discovered continents of America and Australia as well as in the old continents including the far-off islands, which were discovered in the past century, it is revealed that their inhabitants too had belief in Allah, and they, by different methods of approach, used to worship the Originator or the Creator of the universe though their contact with the old world remains untraceable in history.

When we ponder over the fact that man always had belief in Allah, it comes to light that man by his nature happens to be the subservient to the belief in Allah, and he, by his inborn intellect, acknowledges the existence of the Creator of the universe.

The Holy Qur'an makes pointed reference on this trait of man: *If you ask them as to who created them, they will certainly say that Allah has created them.* (Surah al-Zukhruf, 43:87) At another place the Holy Qur'an says: *If you ask them who has created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say: 'Allah has created them'.* (Surah Luqman, 31:25)

THE IMPACT OF SEARCHING TRUTH

According to man's inherent tendency towards searching truth, questions about the Creator of the universe and its working system arise in his mind, and when he says that there does exist a creator, he, by approving the existence of that Original as well as the Eternal source, responsible for the creation of the universe and its rotating system, bring everything in alignment with the Will of its Supporter Who has infinite Power and Knowledge.

Consequently, he feels in his heart a cherishing hope and satisfaction by virtue of which he never becomes desperate in overcoming the hardships and finding the solutions of his difficulties in life. It is because with his implicit faith in Allah he realizes that nothing howsoever strong it may be, is outside the ambits of Providence and that everything is under the Command of the All-Powerful Allah. Such a person never surrenders himself to the force of circumstances. And in the event when everything is on smooth sailing, he never becomes haughty and proud. He never becomes oblivious of his shortcomings and the life's limitations. He is fully aware of the fact that the law of cause and effect does not occur by itself but instead they happen on the behest of Allah. Ultimately, such a man knows that it is not proper to bow before anybody except Allah and further that one should never surrender oneself unconditionally to anybody except Allah. But the

man who denies the existence of the Creator will not be able to benefit by this sublime belief and the realistic approach as well as high morals and courage.

It is for this reason that in societies, which have been swept over by the materialistic outlook of life there occur innumerable cases of suicide. And people, who only look into the outward cause and effect become pessimistic in the face of adverse circumstances, and end their lives. On the contrary people, who are blessed with the cognition of Allah, do not despair of their lot, even when they happen to find themselves in the trap of death. Since they have perfect faith in Allah's Power and Wisdom, never lose hope:

In the last moment of his life when he was surrounded by the swords of enemies, Imam Husayn, peace be on him, proclaimed: "The only solitary thing which made this unbearable thing easy for me is my conviction that Allah is aware of all my actions".

The Holy Qur'an has elaborated this point in the following verses:

Those people who believe in the Lord of the universe as their Creator and affirm Him to be the Sustainer and who remain steadfast on what they profess, shall neither face fear nor grief. (Surah Ahqaf, 46:13)

The faithful persons are those whose hearts are serene by the remembrance of Allah. Remembrance of Allah certainly creates serenity in hearts. (Surah al-Rad, 13:28)

THE HOLY QUR'AN AND ALLAH

When an infant catches hold of the breast of his mother to suck it, actually he does so to drink milk. Again, if he takes a certain thing in his mouth, he wants to eat it. In case he finds that the object with him is not meant for eating, he throws it away. Similarly, when a man strives for a thing, he, in fact, wants to acquire it, and then he discovers that he has been mistaken and was treading on a wrong path he becomes despondent. As a matter of fact, man wants to avoid errors and faults and as far as it is possible, he continues his struggle to achieve his objective.

Hence, it becomes evidently clear that man, by his natural tendency, happens to be realistic, and as such he is always on the look-out for searching the truth and to adhere to it. This tendency is not the result of some sort of training, but it is motivated by instinct. If a man at times indulges in a rebellious action, or does not realize the truth, he does so because he has been on the wrong track. Had he known the reality or the truth, he would not have been on that track.

Sometimes under the influence of unbridled ambitions, man finds himself in a spiritual malady, as a result of which he feels the sweet taste of truth bitter in his mouth. Consequently he suppresses his natural tendency and despite acknowledging the fruitfulness of right actions, he involves himself in harmful things such as addiction to alcoholic drinks, narcotics, heroin etc.

The Holy Qur'an calls upon man to follow strictly the truth and the realities and to keep within himself the spirit of truthfulness fully alive.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *In the absence of truth there is nothing but falsehood.* (Surah Yunus, 10:32)

By the time, man is doomed to suffer loss, except the righteously striving believers who exhort each other to truth and patience. (Surah al-Asr, 103:2 - 3)

It is obvious that Allah has stressed these things because if a man does not keep his conscience alive and does not remain steadfast in truthful purposes, he will not achieve success in life. He will run after illusive things and will be involved in misguided and fruitless pursuits that will distract him from the right path. He will be wandering, like a beast, from place to place, and fall victim to greed, frivolities and follies.

Allah proclaims: *Can't you see that some have adopted their own temptations as their Lord? How can you then be their guardian? Do you think that most of them listen and understand? They are like cattle or even more straying and confused than them.* (Surah al-Furqan, 25:44)

When man's tendency of appreciating the realities becomes dominant and the habit of following the truth is

inculcated in him, the realities one after the other are unravelled to him and he receives each one of them with open arms stepping forward towards peace and prosperity.

EXISTENCE OF THE CREATOR

The Holy Qur'an says: *Could the existence of Allah Who has created the heavens and the earth be doubted?* (Surah Ibrahim, 14:10)

Explanation: During the daylight we see everything with our eyes such as we can see ourselves, houses, mountains, forests, rivers etc. but, when the darkness prevails, these things lose their visibility and we cannot see them. Thus it is concluded that these things themselves did not possess any source of light but it was the rays of the sun which had made them visible in its light. The sun is a shining object and it illuminates other objects by its light. Had these things possessed their own source of light they would never have become invisible after the setting of the sun.

Similarly, man, like other living creatures, perceives things by his sense organs e.g. eyes, ears, limbs etc. He discharges his functions through internal and external organs. But after a passage of time these organs lose their ability to function and lose their potency.

From this analogy we arrive at the conclusion that the senses, behaviour or motions which we notice in all living beings, were not linked with their bodies but with their soul. And when the soul leaves the body, it brings about the end of life.

To illustrate it further, if the function of seeing or hearing had only been dependent on the physical presence of the organs of eyes or ears, the same would have continued even after the death of the person, but, it is not so.

The same is the case with this vast universe, to which we belong as one of its component parts, and we cannot entertain any doubt about its existence. If its life had been of its own making, the question of its becoming deprived of it would not have arisen. But we see that its component parts lose their existence one by one. They are

always in the state of mutation as they change from one state to another.

Hence, we reach the conclusion that the origin of life of all living and non-living things rests on some other Being which has caused it to exist. And as soon as that Being severs its creative action with anything, it loses its existence.

That Being, Who is immortal and Who is solely responsible for the existence and the sustenance of the universe and of all that it contains, is given the name of Allah. It is that Being Who is imperishable and the question of its destruction does not arise.

MONOTHEISM

If a man, guided by his noble conscience, peacefully casts a glance over the entire universe, he will observe the signs of the sublime existence of its Creator, and from everything around him, he will realize the evidence of this reality, because everything, which a man comes across, is the specimen and sign which Allah has created. Or there is some characteristic which Allah has bestowed upon it; or it is a system which under the Command of Allah maintains everything under its working cycle. And since man himself is one amongst them, his whole being in itself is the positive proof of the presence of the Creator. It is so because neither he has created his being himself nor are his inherent tendencies, he is endowed with under his own control. He has also not given shape to the cycle of life which begins from his own birth. Hence, he cannot ascribe this system of life-cycle as merely accidental or chaos because he himself had not come into existence by his own making or by a stroke of chance. Consequently, man cannot but accept the presence of the Source which is the Creator and the Sustainer of the entire universe. It is the Creator Who has given existence and life to everything that exists and who is guiding it towards a particular path of perfection.

Besides when man realizes that the birth as well as the existence of everything is inter-related and is running under one system, he is forced to believe that there cannot be more than one Creator. The Holy Qur'an says: *Had*

there been other deities in the heavens and earth besides Allah, both the heavens and the earth would have been destroyed. (Surah al-Ambiya, 21:22)

Explanation: If according to the belief of the idolaters, there were several deities ruling over the universe, and each one had been controlling the affairs of his individual territory separately, the operative system would also have been separate and as a result of it the entire universe would have come collapsed. But on the contrary we notice that all component parts of the universe are inter-related in a common compact, constituting a single working system as a whole, thus, it can be said without any fear of contradiction that the Creator of the universe is One and only One, Who has created it and Who provides it with subsistence.

Perhaps some may think that since these other deities are a bit wise, they have not allowed any differences among themselves and that is why the universe is still intact. This notion is not sound because the single deity or manifold deities who run the universe do not work on the line on which human brain thinks.

This can be clarified further. From the very first day when we open our eyes in this world and see for ourselves the whole gamut of the working system, we make certain impressions on our mind and which add to our knowledge, too. And when we strive for satisfying our needs so as to adapt ourselves to the environments, we resort to taking appropriate steps as for example in order to satisfy our hunger we take food, too quench our thirst, we drink water, and to protect ourselves from the severities of weather we put on appropriate dresses.

From this point of view, our behaviour is dependent on our thinking and this behaviour occurs after our thinking. Our thinking is based on the system of the universe whose existence is prior to our base of thinking. But the system of running the affairs of the world and every part of it is itself the extraneous action of Allah and it is inconceivable that all His actions should go according to that pre-planned scheme which originated from the system. This indeed is a noteworthy point.

ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH

What is perfection? A house is perfect only when it fulfils all the requirements of its habitation. It should have sufficient accommodation for its inmates as well as for the visiting guests together with other amenities such as kitchen, bath, living and sitting rooms, etc. A house short of these would be considered as imperfect.

If man pays a little attention towards his environment and his creation facts will dawn upon him, except in certain cases when he involves himself too deeply in the worldly affairs, that he invests all his energies in solving his problems and tiding over his difficulties, and that he never finds time to attend to this important matter.

Besides, he finds himself acclimatized to the worldly pomp and show and absorbs himself in luxuries by ignoring the hard realities of life altogether. As the realities of life put a check on many a liberty, man by his very nature starts avoiding the truth in order to escape from the realities. It is for this reason that the Holy Qur'an has in different ways mentioned the creation and its domineering system and has provided proofs as well.

It is because many people, and particularly those who are fond of glamour and outward fascinations, consider the luxuries of life as a sign of happiness and prosperity. Such people do not have the ability to think on logical and philosophical grounds.

Despite this, man is a part and parcel of the universe and therefore, he cannot afford to keep himself aloof from the rest of the creations as well as its detailed system of working, and if and when he intends, he can divert his mind to the universe and its system so as to discover the existence of Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of life. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *In the creation of the heavens and the earth there are signs for the believers, (which lead them to believe in monotheism). And in the creation of your ownself as well as that of the animals whom Allah created on the earth, there are many signs for the believers (which make them believe in monotheism). And there are still many other signs for the wise people (who acknowledge*

the true religion, as for example) in the alteration of day and night (when at one time they are equal to each other and at another they are longer or shorter and sometimes more warm or more cold). And in the rains which Allah sends forth from the heavens and through which the dead (barren) earth becomes live (fertile). And similarly the winds which change their direction. (Vide: Surah Jathiya, 45:3 - 5)

Explanation: In the Holy Qur'an there are many verses which call upon man to ponder over the creation of the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, trees, mountains, oceans, animals and mankind and also to draw his attention towards that wonderful system which is playing its part perfectly. As a matter of fact the very process of creation and the system of controlling the activities of the universe which are proceeding on towards the ultimate goal, are extremely astonishing.

A grain of wheat or a seed of almond which grows from the soil turns into a full-bloom plant or a fruit-laden tree. From the time when this grain or seed is sown in the earth, first it gets ruptured and then its green foliage emerges from underneath the earth and the white tender root gets itself embedded in the earth's bosom, a big scheme goes into operation until it reaches its ultimate destiny, and by this the human mind is overcome with wonder.

The sun, the moon, the stars and the earth with all their potential force of rotations or revolutions and in the same way the dormant skill of the seed itself as well as all of the four seasons, summer, winter, autumn and spring, the atmospheric conditions, rains, the days and the nights, play their individual part in the growth of a wheat plant. Like a nursing mother each one of them is contributing its individual functions in making this specimen of creation attain its ultimate phase of maturity.

Similarly, the process of birth of a human child which is still more complicated than that of the wheat seedling or that of any other form of creation, dates back to several millions or billions of years old process of creation.

The man's daily routine of life which emanates from the strikingly wonderful system of internal functions and which is also connected with the outside world is spread over a period of several centuries. The scientists are trying to discover the secrets one after the other of man's internal self by examining his outward nature, but their knowledge is still meagre in regards to the facts which have yet to come to light.

Thus, if a person possesses all those things which are necessary for making him a complete physical entity, he will be considered as perfect, but if he is lacking in any part of the body he would be considered, to that extent, as imperfect.

On the basis of what has been explained, the quality of perfection is that which satisfies any need of life and which eradicates the defects. The merit of knowledge is that which dispels the dark shadows of ignorance and enlightens the people on what they do not know. The merit of strength makes the person fulfil his desires and enables him to overcome them. The same applies to life and its scope.

Our conscience tells us that the Creator of the universe possesses the attributes of perfection which are absolutely superb. He caused the existence of the universe and of everything that is in it. He fulfils all the genuine requirements and bestows His Benevolence and Blessings on them. Therefore, it cannot be conceived that one who himself is in want of something can fulfil the needs of others.

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah praises Himself for all the attributes of perfection and calls Himself to be free from every defect or error. He says, *Your Lord is Self-sufficient. He needs nothing but He fulfils the needs of every needy person.* (Vide: Surah Anam, 6:133) At another place He says, *Allah is the only Lord and to Him belongs all the exalted Names (Attributes) (He is Ever-lasting, All-Wise, All-Seeing, All-Hearing, All-Powerful. He is Indifferent, He needs nothing).* (Surah Taha, 20:8)

Therefore, one should consider Allah to be the possessor of Absolutely superb attributes of perfection and

His existence free from all faults and errors. It is because had He any fault, He would have been in want of something and as such there should have been still some other deity over him who could fulfil His needs. *Allab is too Glorious to be considered equal to others.* (Surah Yunus, 10:18)

When an intelligent man looks over this vast expanse of universe with its mysterious cycles of movement, its component parts, its great systems of control as a result of which various natural phenomena and spectacles are working in unison, he fully understands that the existence of this universe and of everything that is in it originates from a Source which is Allah and Who is indestructible, and Who by His Absolute Power and Infinite Knowledge has created them all and gives them sustenance and is guiding them with all His Benevolence to perfection. It is Allah Who is Immortal. He is the Lord of all things and He is All-Powerful.

In the Holy Qur'an Allah says: *To Allab belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He bestows life and causes them to die. He has Power over all things. He is the First, the Last, the Manifest the Unseen, and He knows everything.* (Surah Hadid, 57:2 — 3) *To Allab belongs all that is in the heavens, the earth, and all that is between them. Allab creates whatever He wants and He has power over all things.* (Surah al-Maida, 5:17)

Explanation: When we say that a certain person has the capacity of buying a car, we mean that he has sufficient money to pay for its price, and when we say that a certain man can lift a twenty kilo stone, we mean that he has the strength to do so.

Anyhow, a capacity or the strength is a means to acquire or accomplish a certain thing. And in case there is a possibility of anything to happen in this world, the same can happen through Allah. Therefore, it should be deduced that Allah has Power to do everything and His existence is the fountain-head of life. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *Doesn't the One who is subtle, All-aware and who created all things know all about them?* (Surah Mulk, 67:14)

When everything is helpless with regard to its coming into existence and is dependent on Allah's Infinite and Everlasting Existence, it can never be supposed that there exists a barrier between Allah and that thing or it is outside the reach of Allah. On the contrary everything is within Allah's Knowledge and He knows the complexities of everything and is controlling it from all sides.

JUSTICE

Allah is Just and Upright because justice is one of the attributes of perfection and Allah possesses all the attributes of absolute perfection. In the Holy Qur'an Allah testifies justice and condemns cruelties. He exhorts people to uphold justice and to avoid tyrannies. Hence, it is not possible that a thing which He Himself condemns can be his attribute or if a good attribute which He Himself approves may not be His attribute.

Allah says: *Allah does not commit even an atom's weight of injustice.* (Surah al-Nisa, 4:40) *Your Lord is not unjust to anyone.* (Surah al-Kahaf, 18:49) *Allah is never unjust to His creatures.* (Surah al-Mo'min, 40:31) *Whatever good you may receive is certainly from Allah and whatever ill that befalls you, is from your ownelves.* (Surah al-Nisa, 4:79) *Allah has created everything in the best form.* (Surah al-Sajdah, 32:7)

Everything has been made in its finest form. The beauty or ugliness which can be seen in some are only relative things. A snake, for example, or a scorpion, gives a ghastly feeling as compared to a human being and similarly if a thorn is compared with a flower, the former is certainly not a good looking thing but everything at its own place looks awe-inspiring and beautiful.

No doubt Allah, from the religious standpoint has included certain voluntarily acts among bad ones and has also forbidden them. Such acts fall under different categories of evil deeds. Pantheism, for example, or disobedience to the parents, unreasonable man-slaughter, alcoholic drinking, gambling or any other such deeds, as contraven the principles of religion, fall under the definition of sin.

As they violate the very sanctity of the fundamentals of religion, they are evil and anybody who commits them intentionally and deliberately is guilty and deserves punishment.

When we see a needy person, we try to help him according to our capacity. We lend support to a weak person or lead a blind man to his destination. We call such deeds as kindness or benevolence and consider them as good.

The kind of work that Allah does, cannot be but beneficence as He provides and showers His Benevolence to all and though He Himself needs nothing yet he fulfils everybody's needs to a reasonable extent.

Allah in the Holy Qur'an says: *He has given you everything that you asked for.* (Surah Ibrahim, 14:34)

He says further: *My Beneficence encompasses all things.* (Surah al-Araf, 7:156)

Allah says: *Your Lord is self-sufficient and Merciful* (Surah al-An'am, 6:134) That is Allah is the Absolute owner of everything. He needs nothing but is Merciful to all His creations.

Explanation: Whatever beauty and godliness that exist in this world and whatever attributes of perfection we think of are but the bounties of Allah. By this way Allah has fulfilled the needs of mankind. But if Allah had no such power, He would have not been able to possess this attribute of perfection and as such He would have shared His Power with somebody. Therefore, Allah's attributes of perfection are Absolute. He is absolutely perfect in all His attributes like Existence, Will, Knowledge and Power etc. and there cannot be any question of His having any short-comings, ignorance, death or worries etc.

PROPHETHOOD

Despite the fact that Allah is Self-sufficient He by His Absolute Power created the universe with all its inhabitants and furnished them with benevolent things. Man or any other living being from the time of his birth to death is nurtured by Allah. He is guided on a well-planned and disciplined way of life towards a specified aim and during

all this time he is blessed with Allah's Mercy.

If we trace back the various phases of our life such as infancy, childhood, youth and old age, our conscience will testify to Allah's Merciful bounties upon us. It is on this attribute of Mercy and Blessings that Allah always looks after the betterment of all of his creatures, and He never without any cogent reason put any disruption in their work. Man is also a creature of Allah and we know that man's happiness and prosperity lie in the fact that he has true faith, good morals and noble deeds.

Perhaps, somebody may say that man by his inherent intelligence, can discern between good and evil and differentiate between a smooth path and a ditch. But it should be remembered that intelligence alone cannot solve this problem and it cannot lead man to good conduct and realities. It is because in a society all illegal and immoral acts are committed by people who possess intelligence as well as sense of distinguishing between wrong and right. But these people have been overpowered by greed, selfishness and lust and as such have been led astray.

Therefore, it is necessary that Allah should guide us towards godliness through such personalities as cannot be influenced by greed or avarice, and in the matter of guidance they are immune from any fault and error. Such a course is nothing but Prophethood.

PROOF OF PROPHEETHOOD

From the preceded detailed discussions regarding monotheism, it has become evidently clear that Allah Has created various types of things and bestows sustenance upon them. In more clear words it can be said that every individual, right from his very birth, is busy maintaining his existence as well as building his individual personality. He tries to eradicate his weaknesses one after the other, fulfils his requirements and as far as possible makes himself self-sufficient. One who passes the passage of his life in a well-organized manner and also maintains his physical being intact, is guided by Allah at every step.

From this view-point, we arrive at the definite conclu-

sion that every form of world's creations has a special purpose of its existence on which it concentrates with all its might. In other words, in the life-cycle of the creatures there are special groups who have some specific responsibilities toward which only Allah guides them. The Holy Qur'an says: *Our Lord is the One Who created everything in its specific shape and guided it.* (Surah Taha, 20:50)

This principle is applicable to all creations without any exception. The stars in the sky, the earth underneath our feet, and everything that is on it, all the phenomena which reflect the origin of creation, the plants and animals are all governed by the same principle. Hence, from the point of view of the general guidance, man's position is the same as that of other creations, but there is one point of contrast between him and the others.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MAN AND OTHER CREATIONS

Take the planet earth as an example. It was created millions of years ago and as far as the opposing forces of action permit, it is busy in performing its duty with its latent forces and with its rotation on its axis, and revolution round the sun. It is preserving and testifying to its existence. Until such time as a still greater force pushes it out of its orbit, it will continue doing its duty. Or take an almond tree. Right from the beginning of its ambroynic stage to its full-bloom maturity, it is set on a systematic function for its growth and nourishment, and unless and until a bigger source interrupts its functions, it will keep on its process of growth.

Similar is the case with all other creations. But man performs his specific functions with his volition and power of thinking. Sometimes, man avoids doing certain things which could otherwise be very beneficial to him, and though he is not apt to face any hinderance, yet he intentionally does such things as can put him at a serious loss. Sometimes he refuses to take any antidote or sometimes he ends his life by taking a cup of poison.

This is an open fact that a human being who has been

created to perform his functions voluntarily cannot be compelled to accept the Divine guidance. In other words, the prophets exhort the people about the good and evil and happiness and misfortune and warn those people who do not follow the path of religion. Such people are at liberty to adopt either the good or the evil path.

It is true that man by his wisdom, in a limited scale, can differentiate between a good and bad thing and can know what is useful or harmful to him, but under the influence of his carnal desires, he is diverted towards the wrong path. Therefore, Divine guidance must reach the people from a source other than the medium of human intelligence and which is immune from lapses and errors. In other words, the principles and commands that Allah conveys through man's wisdom in a terse manner be confirmed by other source also. This source is the Prophethood according to which Allah among his creatures selects one particular being and reveals through him His commands and makes him responsible for making people to follow these commands by arousing their feelings to godliness and also by admonishing them of Allah's displeasure.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *O Prophet, We have sent revelations to you just as We sent to Nuh and the succeeding prophets The prophets were sent to give people the good tidings (of Allah's Mercy) and warn them (of His punishment) so that after the coming of the messengers, people should not have been left with any excuse regarding His Commands.* (Surah al-Nisa, 4:163 — 165)

MERITS OF THE PROPHETS

It now becomes clear that Allah selected as His messengers and prophets from among the human beings, who were endowed with Divine learning and instructions. They were sent for the guidance of mankind.

The person who brings Allah's message is called a messenger or a prophet and the code of law that he brings is known as religion.

Besides this, it has also become evidently clear that a prophet must possess the following special attributes:

(i) In order to accomplish his duty, he should not be imbecile and forgetful but he should be infallible so as to convey exactly to the people whatever has been revealed to him from Allah, and he should be free from blemish or error else the very purpose of Allah's Divine revelations would be defeated.

(ii) He should be immune from any lapse or sin in speech and deeds because such a thing nullifies the effect of preachings. People do not pay any heed to what a person professes if his actions are in contravention of his sayings, as obviously people expect him to set an example by acting on what he preaches. Therefore, in order to make the preachings more viable and effective, the prophet should be free from sins and errors. Allah refers to this point in the Holy Qur'an as follows, *He knows the unseen and He never divulges the secrets of the unseen except to those of his messengers whom he chooses and under such circumstances Allah protects him so as to enable him to convey the Divine Message to the people without any hindrance.* (Surah Jinn, 72:26 – 28)

(iii) He must possess high merits as chastity, bravery and justice etc. because these virtues are considered to be the attributes of the highest order. A person, who is free from all sins and has been dutifully following the religious doctrines, has a sublime character and morals.

PROPHETS HAILED FROM MANKIND

It is established from historical facts that prophets came from among human beings and they invited the people towards the religion of Allah, but little is known of their personal lives. It is only Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, about whose life nothing lies in obscurity.

The Holy Qur'an is the Divine Book which was revealed upon Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and which besides dealing with high ideals and objectives of the Islamic Faith refers to the prophethood of other prophets also and mentions about their aims and objectives. The Holy Qur'an openly declares that the prophets were raised towards the people by Allah. They called upon the people to believe in

monotheism and obey His Commands. The Holy Qur'an says: *To all the messengers that were sent before you We revealed that I am the only Allah to be worshipped.* (Surah Ambiya, 21:25)

THE DISTINGUISHED PROPHETS

The distinguished prophets on whom the Divine Books were revealed are five. They are Prophet Nuh (Noah), Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), Prophet Musa (Moses), Prophet Isa (Jesus) and Prophet Muhammad, peace be on them.

The Holy Qur'an refers to this fact in the following words: *Allah has simply clarified the religion which is revealed to you and that which Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa and Isa were commanded to follow. (He has explained it) so that you would be steadfast and united in your religion.* (Surah al-Shura, 42:13)

These five esteemed prophets who had their own Divine Books and the code of religious teachings and principles are called the distinguished prophets. These five prophets are not the only ones, as Allah sent His prophets towards every community of human society. Therefore, the prophets are great in number but the prophets whom the Holy Qur'an mentions are twenty-five. Allah in the Holy Qur'an says: *We have mentioned to you the details of a few among them and there are some about whom We have not mentioned.* (Surah Mo'min, 40:78)

Every community had its own prophet. (Surah Yunus, 10:47) *There has been a messenger in every community.* (Surah al-Rad, 13:7)

The prophets who came after the distinguished prophets, called upon the people to follow their teachings and hence, the process of prophethood and preachings continued until the time when Allah in order to discontinue this process and to formulate the final and the most perfect code of religious teachings, conferred the Prophethood to the greatest Prophet Muhammad, (son of Abdullah), peace be on him and his progeny. As such his Divine Book was termed as the Final Message of Allah's revelations.

Consequently the religion of the Holy Prophet will last until the Day of Judgement and his teachings will remain everlasting, too.

PROPHET NUH

The first of the distinguished prophets whom Allah from amongst the mankind raised as prophet with Divine Scriptures containing religious laws was Prophet Nuh. As is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, he called upon the people to abstain from polytheism and idolatry and instead worship Allah, the only God. He struggled hard to eliminate the class distinction and despotism from the society. He put forward the message of his mission with logical reasoning, and for quite a long period invested his efforts in reforming the people who were insipid, obstinate and rebellious, but very few of them could benefit by his teachings. At last Allah sent a terrific deluge which wiped the earth clean of the unbelievers. Prophet Nuh and his devotees laid the foundation of a religious society afresh.

Prophet Nuh was the first distinguished prophet and Messenger of Allah who established monotheism and struggled against cruelty and injustice. In appreciation of his devotion to the upright religion, Allah graced him with His greetings that will continue as long as this world exists. The Holy Qur'an says *Peace be upon Nuh among all the people of the world.* (Surah Sāffāt, 37:79)

PROPHET IBRAHIM

After Prophet Nuh a long period of time elapsed and in the meantime Prophet Hud, Prophet Saleh, and many other prophets endeavoured to call people towards monotheism and good conduct but polytheism and idolatry gained momentum and engulfed the whole world. At this time Allah raised Prophet Ibrahim who was the embodiment of a perfect man. By his pious nature he searched for the truth, acknowledged monotheism and as long as he lived he fought against polytheism and tyrannies.

As is evident from the Holy Qur'an and is also corroborated by the sayings of the Holy Imams (religious leaders)

of the Progeny of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Prophet Ibrahim passed his childhood aloof in a cave far from the humdrum of life and hectic activity of the people in town and cities. There he could only see his mother who will bring him food.

One day he and his mother came to town and met his uncle, Āzar. Prophet Ibrahim was wonder-struck to find everything new and novel. He would ponder over its creation and would endeavour to search for truth about creation. He noticed that Āzar and other people would chisel an idol and worship it. When he questioned them about the justification of this act, they could not satisfy him about the idols whom they considered as deities.

After the passage of time, Prophet Ibrahim boldly made a firm declaration that he worshipped Allah, the only Lord, and that he abhorred the practice of polytheism. Thus he took a firm stand against the idolaters and started calling them to believe in monotheism.

One day Prophet Ibrahim, stepped inside a temple and trampled the idols there. As according to the law of the time it was the gravest crime, he was prosecuted and sentenced to be burnt alive. Accordingly, he was thrown into the fire but Allah saved him and he came out of it safe and unhurt. (Vide: Surah al-Anbiya, 21 :69)

After sometime from Babylon, which was his home-country, Prophet Ibrahim, migrated to Syria and Palestine and there he continued his mission of preaching the religion of Allah.

In the later period of his life, Allah blessed Prophet Ibrahim with two sons, one was Prophet Ishāq (Isac), his progeny is known as Bani Israil, and the other was Prophet Ismail, who is the ancestor of the line of 'Mazār' of the Arab tribe.

Prophet Ismail was still a babe when by the Will of Allah, his father, Prophet Ibrahim, took him alongwith his mother to Hijāz (Province of present-day Makkah and Madina) and left them in an open desert place, which was without water and vegetation, and invited the Arab nomads to monotheism. Thereafter, he built Ka'bah, the House of

Allah, and asked the people to perform Hajj. Since that time pilgrimage of Hajj had been in vogue before the advent of Islam and up to the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him.

Prophet Ibrahim, was the forerunner of the religion of Allah and as is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, the Divine Scripture was also revealed on him. He was the first man, who named the religion of Allah as Islam and its followers as Muslims.

All the religions whose base is the belief in monotheism, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, come down from Prophet Ibrahim as the founders of the above-mentioned religions. Prophet Musa, Prophet Isa and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be on them, are the offsprings of Prophet Ibrahim and all of them preached their respective religions on the same line on which Prophet Ibrahim did.

PROPHET MUSA

Prophet Musa son of Imran is the third distinguished prophet who was equipped with the Divine Scripture and the religious laws. He is the descendant of Isrā'il i.e. Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob), peace be on him.

Prophet Musa's life was full of events. He was born at a time when Bani Israil, the Progeny of Israil, were leading a miserable life, — a life of humiliation and captivity under the Copts of Egypt and according to the decree of Fir'aun (Pharaoh),¹ the Egyptian King, their males were beheaded.

In accordance with the Divine guidance in a dream, Prophet Musa's mother put him in a wooden box and floated it into the river Nile. It ultimately landed at the foot of Firaun's palace. On Firaun's order when the box was taken out of the river it was found that it contained a new-born babe.

On the insistance of Āsiya, his wife, Fir'aun spared the life of the new-born child and as they themselves were issueless, they adopted the child. Incidentally, Prophet

¹ Fir'aun (Pharaoh) was the title of Egyptian kings.

Musa's own mother was hired as his nursing maid.

Prophet Musa, up to the time of his early youth, remained in the court of Fir'aun and thereafter, as a result of an involvement in a murder case he proceeded to Madyan. There he married one of the daughters of Prophet Shu'aib, and for a few years he tended sheepherd of Prophet Shu'aib as a shepherd.

When he felt homesick, he proceeded to Egypt along with his wife and all his assets. During his journey when he reached Toor-i Seena (Mount Sinai), Allah conferred him the prophethood and commanded him to invite Fir'aun to the belief in monotheism, to liberate Bani Israil from the captivity of the Copts, and to appoint his brother Prophet Harun (Aeron) as his vicegerent.

However, when by fulfilling his obligations of prophethood, he called Fir'aun towards Allah's Message. As Fir'aun who had declared himself as Lord of the Egyptians refuted Prophet Musa's Prophethood and also rejected the demand for Bani Israil's emancipation.

Though for years Prophet Musa had been preaching monotheism among the people and exhibited certain miracles also, yet Fir'aun and his people paid scant regard to his preachings and instead indulged in despotism. Finally one night Prophet Musa along with his people of Bani Israil proceeded towards the desert of Sinai. When he reached the coast of the Red Sea, the news of his departure was received by Fir'aun. He then chased him at the head of a big army. Prophet Musa by his miracle, made a cleavage into the sea and with his people waded across the sea but Fir'aun and his army got drowned in the deep sea. After this incident Allah revealed Taurat (Torah) on Prophet Musa and it became the religious laws of Bani Israil.

PROPHET ISA

Prophet Isa was the fourth of the distinguished prophets. He was also equipped with the Divine Book and the religious laws. He was born in an extraordinary manner. One day when his mother, Maryam (Mary), peace be on her, an absolutely chaste virgin was busy worshipping

Allah in *Baytul Maqdis* (Bethlehem), Jibril, the Arch-Angel appeared by Allah's order and gave her the good news of the birth of Prophet Isa. He blew the Spirit in her sleeve and thus she conceived Prophet Isa in her womb.

When on the birth of Prophet Isa, people started impugning the modesty of Holy Maryam, the child from his cradle spoke to the people in defence of his mother and told them about his prophethood and his Divine Scripture.

In the prime of youth, Prophet Isa, started his mission of calling people towards Allah and with slight amendment re-introduced the religious laws of Prophet Musa. He sent out his disciples to various places with Allah's message.

Gradually when his message spread widely, his people decided to do away with him, but Allah protected him as the Jews sent some other man on crucifixion.

It is necessary to mention here that in the Holy Qur'an, Allah has confirmed the name of Injeel (Evangel), the Divine Scripture that was revealed to Prophet Isa. His Evangel has nothing to do with the Gospels which were written after him about his mission and virtuous deeds and which were officially accepted. Such Gospels were written by Luke, Marks, Mathews and John.

THE HOLY PROPHET MUHAMMAD

In contrast to that of other prophets, the life-history of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (son of Abdullah), peace be on him and his progeny, is more clear and unambiguous. It is because as and when the time passed by owing to influence of historical events, the Divine Scriptures as well as the religious teachings of the prophets were tampered with in such a manner that the facts about their lives lie in obscurity. The highly exalted Holy Prophet of Islam is the last of all the prophets whom Allah graced him with Prophethood for the salvation of the entire mankind.

Fourteen hundred years ago, man was leading the life in such a manner that monotheism existed only in name, and the people had forsaken the worship of Allah. The society had become void of justice and human values. The House of Ka'bah was converted into a temple for the

worship of idols, and the religion of Prophet Ibrahim, was transformed into paganism and idol-worship.

The Arabs led a nomadic life. Even a few towns such as Hijaz and Yemen were inhabited by these nomads. They were in the worst condition of backwardness. Instead of leading a cultured or civilized life, they indulged in immorality, debauchery, wine-drinking and gambling. They had the custom of burying the new-born female child alive. The chief source of their sustenance and maintenance of life was larceny, dacoity, man-slaughtering and robbing the people of their cattle and property. Shedding of blood and tyrannical acts were a source of pride to them. Under such conditions, Allah sent the Holy Prophet, for the reformation of mankind. He revealed upon him the Divine Book which calls upon the people to obey Divine laws so as to lead a decent life with unflinching faith in Allah and to uphold truthfulness, justice and fairplay.

The Holy Prophet was born in the Holy city of Makkah in the 570 A.D. or 53 years before his migration to Madina. He was from the noblest family of Arabia.

The Holy Prophet's father had died sometime before his birth, and when he reached the age of six, his mother also passed away. His noble grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, then took the responsibility of his upbringing, but two years later he too died. After him, the responsibility of Holy Prophet's upbringing fell on the shoulders of his kind-hearted uncle, Abu Talib, who dearly loved the Holy Prophet and treated him like his own sons. Until a few months before migration, he kept him in his constant care and tutelage and in this regard he never slackened for even a single moment.

The people of Makkah like other Arabs used to tend sheep and goats and traded with neighbouring countries especially Syria. They never cared for the education of their children as they themselves were illiterate.

The Holy Prophet like other people of the tribe did not learn to read and write but from the beginning of his early life he was possessed of manifold noble qualities and virtues. Neither he told lies nor did he commit larceny or

misappropriation. He always abstained from undesirable and mean deeds. He was so sensible and intelligent that in quite a short span of time he became extremely popular and earned the titles of the **Honest and Trustworthy**.

The Arabs used to entrust their valuable things to him as they admired his honesty. When he reached the age of forty, Khadijah, peace be on her, a noble and wealthy lady of Makkah, engaged him for trading her merchandise. On account of his honesty and wisdom he earned good profits which raised him very high in Khadijah's esteem. Ultimately, she proposed to the Prophet who consented. After their wedding too, he continued to look after the business of his illustrious wife.

For forty years, the Holy Prophet passed his life mingling with the people and as such he was counted as one amongst them with the exception that he possessed high morals and performed virtuous deeds. He never committed any act of high-handedness or any wicked deeds which had become the stigma of the life of the Arabian people. Neither he exhibited any cruelty or cold-heartedness nor did he desire to subdue the people. The people trusted him because of his personal qualities and treated him with respect and regard.

Once it so happened that when the Arabs were renovating the House of Ka'bah, there arose a dispute over the issue of fixing *Hajr Aswad* (the Black Stone). Then the people unanimously decided to make the Holy Prophet, as an arbiter. He asked them to spread out a bed-sheet and to put the Black Stone on it. The chieftains of the various tribes held the sheet from the four corners and when it was lifted high, the Holy Prophet, placed the Black Stone at the proper place of installation. Thus, the matter was settled amicably and the danger of bloodshed was averted.

Even before the declaration of his prophethood, the Holy Prophet always worshipped Allah, the only Lord, and never did he bow before the idols. But since at that time he was not commanded by Allah to fight against the practice of idol-worship and the whimsical beliefs of idolatry, the people did not struggle with him. It was just

the same with the people who among the Arabs led a respectful life despite their belief in Judaism or Christianity.

THE INCIDENT OF BAHIRA, THE HERMIT

During his childhood when the Holy Prophet was under the patronage of his uncle, Abu Talib, the latter took him on a business trip to Syria. The caravan was very large and it was fully loaded with merchandise. After entering Syria they stopped at a town named Busra and pitched their tents near a monastery.

Bahira, the hermit, came out of the monastery and invited the caravan people to meals. Everybody consented and went inside the monastery. Abu Talib left his nephew outside to look after the goods and himself joined the people at the feast.

After satisfying himself that everybody had come inside, the hermit asked Abu Talib whether someone was left out. Abu Talib informed him that a young man who was the youngest of all had stayed behind. He asked Abu Talib to bring that young man also inside the monastery. Abu Talib beckoned his nephew, who was under an olive tree, and took him along to the hermit.

The hermit watched the Holy Prophet with a penetrating gaze and asked him to come closer to him. He took the Holy Prophet aside where Abu Talib too joined them. The hermit asked the Holy Prophet to give answer to his query after swearing by Lât and Uzza, the two eminent idols whom the Makkans worshipped. The Holy Prophet retorted by saying that in his sight the most abominable things were those two idols. At this the hermit insisted that the Holy Prophet would tell him the truth swearing by Allah, the only Lord. The Holy Prophet replied that never had he told any lie in his lifetime and that he should be quick with what he wanted to know. The hermit asked him what thing he liked most? The Holy Prophet replied, "It was solitude". The hermit again asked, what thing he watched most and desired to do so constantly. The Holy Prophet said that it was the skies and the stars. The hermit further asked the thing over which he pondered most. The

Holy Prophet remained silent but the hermit gave a dazed look at the Holy Prophet's forehead and asked at what time the Holy Prophet slept and what he would ponder at that time. He replied by saying that when he looked at the skies and the stars, he would find the stars under his lap and would find himself still higher than the stars.

The hermit then asked the Holy Prophet if he saw dreams. The Holy Prophet replied in the affirmative and said he saw things in the state of waking what he would witness in his dreams also. When the hermit asked for the details, the Holy Prophet observed silence at which he also kept quiet.

After a while, the hermit again addressed the Holy Prophet and wanted to look at the place between his shoulders. The Holy Prophet acceded to his wish. The hermit came near the Holy Prophet and after separating the robe on the shoulders he glanced at a black mole between the two shoulders and muttered: "He is the same one". Abu Talib asked the hermit as to what he was saying in his undertone. Instead the hermit asked Abu Talib about his relationship with the Holy Prophet. As Abu Talib loved the Holy Prophet more than his own sons, he replied that he was his son. The hermit retorted: "It cannot be so. It is not true because the young man's father is not alive". Abu Talib asked him how he said so, and finally declared that actually the young man was his nephew. At this the hermit said to Abu Talib: "Pay heed to what I am saying. This young man's future is highly bright. If, somebody sees what I have seen and identifies him, he would certainly kill him. So you should protect him from the enemies."

On Abu Talib's insistence regarding the matter, the hermit said that in the eyes of the Holy Prophet there reflected a sign of his being a great Prophet. Besides that there is a clear mark on his back which is a positive proof of his Prophethood.

THE STORY OF NESTURIUS, THE HERMIT

A few years later when the Holy Prophet visited Syria

again as a representative of lady Khadijah on a business trip, he was accompanied by her slave, Maysarah, whom Khadijah had instructed to obey him fully. This time also near the town of Busra he rested under a tree. Nearby was a monastery of Nasturia (Nestorius), the hermit who knew Maysarah very well.

Nastorius enquired of Maysarah about the man who was resting under the tree. Maysarah replied that the man belonged to the tribe of Quraysh.

At this the hermit told Maysarah that nobody other than the Prophets of Allah would ever rest under that particular tree. He further queried whether there was a reddish tinge in the eyes of that man. When Maysra said "Yes", the hermit declared, "He is the same man, that is the Promised Prophet of Allah and I wish to live up to the time when he invited the people to the religion of Allah".

THE JEWISH PROPHECY

Many Jewish tribes who had already read in their Scriptures about the advent of the Holy Prophet migrated to Hijaz and settled down in the neighbourhood of Madina. They were looking forward to the appearance of the Promised Prophet. They were wealthy people and were very often troubled by the Arabs who plundered their properties.

The Jews would tell the Arabs that they were prepared to face the hardship with perseverance until the time the Promised Prophet would emigrate there from Makkah. At that time they would accept him as Prophet. The reason of the early conversion of the people of Madina to Islam was that they had already been mentally prepared to embrace Islam because of Jewish inclination. However, the people of Madina did embrace Islam but the Jews because of prejudice and of their extremist nature were deprived of that blessing.

PROPHECIES ABOUT THE PROPHETHOOD

The Almighty Allah refers to the prophecies about the advent of the Holy Prophet at a number of places in

the Holy Qur'an. With particular reference to a group of people who believed in Divine Scripture, Allah says: *Those of the people of the Scriptures who follow Our Messenger, the illiterate Prophet (not conventionally educated) and whose prophecy about his prophethood is confirmed in Torat (Torah) and Injeel (Evangel). He enjoins them to do good and forbids them all that is unlawful. He makes all good things lawful for them and prohibits them only the filthy things. He relieves them of their burden and the fetters on their neck and grants them freedom.* (Vide: Surah al-A'raf, 7:157)

Now that a Book which confirms their Scripture has come to them, and they had been praying for victory over those who are disbelievers, they deny it (though they know it to be the truth). (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:89)

FROM PROPHETHOOD TO MIGRATION

When the dark clouds of ignorance had enveloped the entire Arabian peninsula and it had then become the hotbed of wickedness and cruelties, the All-Gracious Allah in His infinite Mercy sent His most exalted Messenger, the Holy Prophet to the world at large with His Command to call the people towards monotheism and make them worship and obey Allah, the only Lord and to invite them towards justice and fairplay, mutual co-operation and good morals, and, above all, to stand for righteousness and truth and for the overall good of the mankind to establish the foundation of faith, piety and the spirit of sacrifice.

In the beginning, the Holy Prophet was commanded to invite people to the basic principles and since the society was beset with high-handedness and tyrannies, he directed his message initially to those people who had the inclination to accept it. Thus, only a few individuals embraced his message. According to the historical records, among the early converts the first among men was Imam Ali, peace be on him, the Holy Prophet's first cousin, whom he had himself brought up, and the second person who embraced Islam was his esteemed wife, Khadijah.

After a span of time the Holy Prophet was commanded

to propagate the Divine religion amongst his near kin. In deference to the revelations he received he invited his near relatives, about forty in number, to a feast at his home and told them about the advent of his Prophethood. Thereafter, under Allah's command he started his preachings openly. Thus he spread the glowing light of this Divine guidance from his house to the world at large.

The Arabs in general and the Makkans in particular strongly reacted to the open invitation to Islam. Instead of attaining to its constructive goal, they resorted to vicious tactics and became outrageous and savage in their behaviour.

These people would call the Holy Prophet as an occultist, a wizard, a lunatic or a poet and would make fun of him. Whenever he called the people towards Islam or asked them to offer prayers to Allah, these rascals would create disturbance and sometimes would throw garbage on him, would hit him with batons, would talk in humiliating tone or would pelt him with pebbles. At times they would try to lure him with money and power so as to make him abandon his mission. Still, he showed no sign of weakness or defeat. It was a different matter that at times he would feel sorry for his people's ignorance and rebellious disposition. On such occasions, revelations from the Almighty Allah would console him and guide him to forbearance and perseverance. At times some Qur'anic revelations suggested to him to take no notice of people's high-handedness or show any kind of slackening in his efforts.

The unbelievers also put those people, who had embraced Islam to severe hardships and cruelties and consequently most of them met martyrdom. Some believers would ask the Holy Prophet to come to a settlement with the unbelievers but he would only say: "I haven't received any command from Allah in this regard so be patient".

There were still others who could not bear the hardships, left their homes and migrated to different countries.

When the unbelievers' cruelties and persecution reached its climax, the Holy Prophet allowed his followers to migrate to Habashah (Abyssinia) so as to protect themselves from oppression. Thus, a party of the believers

under the patronage of Ja'far (son of Abu Talib), migrated to Abyssinia with their families. Ja'far who was the brother of Imam Ali, was one of the most distinguished companions of the Holy Prophet.

When the infidels of Makkah were informed of their migration, they sent two experienced men with gifts and presents to the Emperor of Abyssinia with a request to send the refugees back to Makkah.

Ja'far in an impressive speech made before the Abyssinian Emperor, his clergymen and other high-ranking courtiers and officials established the personality of the Holy Prophet being highly endowed with Divine glow, and recited from the Holy Qur'an a few verses of Surah Maryam. His speech was so forceful that it made the eyes of the Emperor and the audience filled with tears. Consequently the Emperor outright rejected the request of the Makkans and returned their gifts and presents also. Instead, he decreed that the Muslim immigrants should be treated with due respect and all comforts and amenities of life should be provided to them.

After this incident, the infidels of Makkah decided to ostracize the people of the tribe of Bani Hashim and put them under a boycott, who were supporting the Holy Prophet in his mission. Then the infidels concluded a treaty which was unanimously signed and was placed in the House of Ka'bah.

JOURNEY TO TĀ'IF

The year when the Holy Prophet with the members of Bani Hashim came out of Shi'b Abi Talib, was the tenth year of the era of Prophethood. Around that time he made a short journey to Ta'if, a town about 100 kilometers from Makkah, and invited its people to Islam. There the illiterates and the hooligans emerged from everywhere and by using insulting language started pelting the Holy Prophet with stones, as a result of which he had to leave the town.

From Tā'if, the Holy Prophet returned to Makkah and stayed there for a little while but since his life was not safe, he remained in seclusion.

About that time, the elders of Makkah planned to put the Holy Prophet to death. They assembled at *Darun Nadwab* a place which was a sort of rendezvous. There, in one of the meetings, they hatched a plot to assassinate the Holy Prophet. It was planned that one man from every tribe of Arabia, would attack the house of the Holy Prophet and finish him.

The strategy of each tribe's participation was based on the idea that if the people of Bani Hashim, the tribe to which the Holy Prophet belonged, wanted to avenge his death, they could not be in a position to fight against all those who were involved in the plot, and since one man from Bani Hashim was amongst the plotters, Bani Hashim would not dispute.

Finally they decided to implement the plan. About forty people who were nominated from various tribes to kill the Holy Prophet, besieged his house in the night so that by early morning they would force an entry into the house and would accomplish the community's decision. But the Divine Will which was more powerful than their intention frustrated all their plans. Allah by His revelations forewarned the Holy Prophet of the unholy plot of the infidels and commanded him to leave Makkah during the night and migrate to Madina.

The Holy Prophet informed Imam Ali about this plan and commanded him to sleep in his bed during the night. He also made a will to Imam Ali and left the house at night. On the way he met Abu Bakr whom he took along with him on his way to Madina.

Before the migration, a few of the respectable people of Madina had already embraced Islam when they had earlier visited the Holy Prophet in Makkah. At the same time they not only promised to support him if he visited Madina, but, would also defend him in the same manner as they defended their own life and honour.

MIGRATION TO MADINA

The Holy Prophet reached the Cave of Thaur at night and after staying inside it for three days, he proceeded on

his journey to Madina. On reaching there, he was given a rousing reception by the people of Madina.

In Makkah the infidels who had already besieged his house in the night entered his house at the day-break and with their swords splashing in their hands, they approached his bed and, contrary to expectations, they found Imam Ali instead. After they learnt of the Holy Prophet's departure from Makkah, they started searching him everywhere but returned utterly disappointed.

The Holy Prophet arrived in Madina. The people of Madina embraced Islam with great fervour and enthusiasm and offered their dedicated support to the Holy Prophet. The environment of Madina then had an Islamic outlook. The city which was then known as Yathrib became "Madinatur Rasul", the city of the Prophet. Thus, Madina became the first city of Islam. About one-third of the city's population was in minority and though these people were hypocrites yet they sided with Islam out of the fear of the majority.

Islam now shed its light on all sides. First, the warring condition that had existed between Aws and Khazraj, the two great tribes for over years turned into a mutual peace and amity.

The believers in Madina swarmed round the beacon light of Islam with full faith and devotion. The remaining tribes also gradually embraced Islam. The Divine revelations commenced one after the other and were enforced. The intrigues, conflicts and wanton deeds were abolished, and justice, decent morals and discipline took their place.

The followers of Islam who were in Makkah and were severely being oppressed by unbelievers, gradually left their homes and migrated to Madina where their fellow brethren received them with open arms.

The Makkans who after embracing Islam had gradually migrated to Madina are known as *Muhājirs* (Emigrants) and those of Madina are called *Ansār* (Helpers).

In Madina and its suburbs and in Khaybar and Fadak many Jewish tribes were living. Their religious scholars always used to predict the prophethood of the Holy

Prophet of Islam. But after the Holy Prophet's migration when these tribes were invited to embrace Islam, they refused accept it. However, under specific conditions, a covenant was made between the Muslims and the Jews that they would avoid any confrontation and dispute.

The hostility of the unbelievers of Makkah increased as a result of the advancement of Islam and consequently their animosity also increased against the Holy Prophet and his devotees. Accordingly, they were trying to find an excuse for disrupting the solidarity of the Islamic Brotherhood. On the other hand the followers of Islam as well as the Muhajirs of Makkah were entertaining within their hearts a silent hatred against the infidels and they were awaiting the Divine command for punishing them and to liberate innocent children and people from their oppression.

THE BATTLE OF BADR

The Battle of Badr was the first military confrontation between the Muslims and the infidels which was fought in the second year of Hegira (Migration) at Badr, a valley lying midway between Makkah and Madina.

In this battle the infidels numbered about 1000 and they were well-equipped with weapons and other arsenals while the Muslims numbered about one-third and their weapons were scant.

Despite this handicap, Almighty Allah blessed the Muslims with a splendid victory while the infidels were shamefully defeated. In this battle the unbelievers sustained heavy casualties and a good number of their men were taken prisoners. Many of them retreated to Makkah after leaving behind an appreciable quantity of weapons. It is said that seventy of their men were killed in action, about half of whom were done away with only by the sword of Imam Ali and seventy were made prisoners.

THE BATTLE OF UHUD

In the third year of the Hegira, the unbelievers of Makkah under the command of Abu Sufyan with a strong army of 3000 soldiers (according to some record 5000)

invaded Madina, and at a barren place of Uhud, situated outside Madina, a tough battle ensued.

In this battle, the Holy Prophet, participated with 700 Muslim Mujahids. This time also, in the beginning the Muslims had an upper hand, but after a time owing to the lapses on the part of some Muslims, the forces of Islam had to suffer a set-back, as the unbelievers had attacked them from all sides and at one time the Muslims were completely trapped by the enemies.

In this battle the Muslims suffered heavy loss. Hamza, the uncle of the Holy Prophet, and about seventy companions, mostly from the Ansars, were martyred. The Holy Prophet received a wound in his forehead and his front tooth got dislodged. An infidel while attacking him on his shoulders shouted and said, "I slew Muhammad". Consequently, panic prevailed in the Islamic army. The Holy Prophet was left with Imam Ali and a few of his devotees, who, except Imam Ali, were all martyred.

It was only Imam Ali who continued defending the Holy Prophet by facing the enemy up to dangers. Abu Sufyan who got satisfied with the initial success, proceeded back to Makkah. The deserters of the Islamic army, however, came back to the Holy Prophet and expressed their desire to fight again.

After covering a distance of a few miles from Uhud, the unbelievers became remorseful of abandoning the battle without achieving the total victory. They had neither taken women and children as prisoners nor had they looted the property. As such they decided to make an attack on Madina again. But in the meantime, they received the news that the Islamic army was giving a hot chase in order to convert the battle in a decisive victory. They abandoned the idea of re-attacking Madina as this news had frightened them greatly.

Of course, it was true what they had heard. Under the behest of Allah, the Holy Prophet re-organized his army consisting of the people who had suffered in the battle. He made Imam Ali its commander and asked him to chase the enemies. In this battle, though the Muslims had suffered

heavy losses, yet it turned out a blessing in disguise. They had learnt a grim lesson from this battle as they paid the penalties of disobeying the Holy Prophet.

Finally when both sides had to cease fighting, they agreed to fight again in the plain of Badr in the following year. The Holy Prophet however, had reached the spot at the appointed time but the infidels did not turn up. After this battle, the Muslims mended their fences and except Makkah and Tā'if they made a forward march everywhere in the entire Arabian peninsula.

THE BATTLE OF TRENCH (KHANDAQ)

This was the third battle which was fought between the Holy Prophet and the unbelievers of Arabia. It was the last one, which was waged by the inhabitants of Makkah. This was a fierce battle in the sense that the infidels had put all their might in it. In history, it is famous by the names of 'Battle of *Abzāb*' (Tribes) or 'Battle of *Khandaq*'.

After the Battle of Uhud, the elders of Makkah, under the leadership of Abu Sufyan, made a desperate attempt to extinguish the light of Islam by getting rid of the Holy Prophet once for all.

In order to fulfil their purpose the infidels instigated the Arab tribes to rise against the Prophet. The Jewish tribes who were in conspiracy with the enemies of Islam, ultimately revoked their existing no-confrontation pact and entered into an alliance with the infidels. Consequently, intrigues, in the fifth year of Hegira, a huge army drawn from the people of Quraysh and other Arab and Jewish tribes invaded Madina.

The Holy Prophet, who had already received the intimation of the enemy's design made consultations with his companions. After great deliberations, it was on the advice of an eminent companion, Salman Farsi, that a trench was dug around the city of Madina so that the people should be safe inside the city as if in a fortress.

When the enemy's army reached Madina, it could not find entrance to the city. As an alternative, they laid siege to the city and thus the battle began. The siege and the

battle continued for quite a long time. It was this battle wherein a famous courageous Arab cavalier, Amr bin Abd Wad by name, was slain by Imam Ali.

Finally the Arab idolaters became tired of the long siege and differences also developed among the Jews. Once, when there appeared a severe windstorm followed by a terrible cold. The siege did not yield any tangible result and the infidels returned to their homes.

BATTLE OF KHAYBAR

The Battle of Trench took place in consequence of the instigations of the Jews, who had conspired with the infidels and had openly repudiated their agreement with the Muslims. Therefore, the Holy Prophet decided to bring the Jews living in and around Madina to task. Many a battle was fought with them, and the Muslims were victorious. Of these, the Battle of Khaybar is very significant.

The fortresses of the Jews were very strong and they possessed sufficient quantity of war materials. Besides, they had amongst them good warriors, too.

In this Battle, Imam Ali slew Marhab, the famous Jewish wrestler, and he then demoralized their army. Later on he proceeded towards the fort and uprooted its gate. Thus the Islamic army entered the fort and hoisted the flag of victory there. After a series of such battles, which ended in the seventh year of the Hegira, the Jewish strength in Hijaz was considerably reduced.

INVITING EMPERORS AND RULERS TO ISLAM

The Holy Prophet made Madina his permanent abode and the Muslims of Makkah also settled there as a result of oppressions and persecution of the infidels. The Ansar of Madina also fulfilled their promise by receiving the emigrants with open arms.

The Holy Prophet built Masjidun Nabi (the Prophet's Mosque) in Madina. Other mosques were also built by and by. The Islamic missionaries were sent to various places. Pacts were concluded with the Jews living in and around Madina and also with some of the Arab tribes. Gradually,

the light of Islam spread far and wide.

In the sixth year of the Hegira, the Holy Prophet sent a written invitation to Islam to the Emperors and Rulers of the time, viz. the Emperor of Persia (Iran), the Kaiser of Rome, Khadiv, the Ruler of Egypt and Negus, the Emperor of Habasha (Abyssinia).

The same year the Holy Prophet with a party of devoted Muslims proceeded to Makkah to perform Umra — pilgrimage to Ka'bah on the occasions other than that of Hajj. That year, the Muslims could not perform Umra, but, after a heated discussion with the infidels, an agreement, known as the "Treaty of Hudaibiya", was concluded. One of the conditions of this treaty was that any Arab tribe which wanted to side with either party, was at liberty to do so. But the Infidels of Makkah violated this treaty after a lapse of some time and consequently the Holy Prophet determined to conquer Makkah.

In the eighth year of the Hegira, however, the Holy Prophet with an army of 10,000 Muslims made a forward march and conquered Makkah without any fighting or bloodshed. There, the Holy Prophet found the House of Ka'bah installed with innumerable idols. He then removed them from there and totally destroyed them. Thus, he made the House of Allah clean of these unholy things. Most of the people of Makkah embraced Islam. The Holy Prophet sent for the elders of Makkah, who for twenty long years were his arch-enemy, and pardoned them without showing any sign of displeasure.

THE BATTLE OF HUNAYN

After the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet, undertook the task of reforming the people in the surrounding areas. He also fought many battles with the idolaters, one of these was the Battle of Hunayn.

The Battle of Hunayn is one of the important battles of Islam. This Battle was fought against the tribe of Hawāzan in the valley of Hunayn. The Islamic Army consisted of 12,000 soldiers while the Hawāzans were several thousand horsemen. This battle was very fierce as

before the people of Hawāzan had defeated the Muslims.

It was Imam Ali who ahead of the Holy Prophet carried the Standard of Islam in his hand and made a forward march against the enemy. With the exception of a few Muslims all had deserted the Holy Prophet. However, after a while, first the Ansars and then other Muslims came back to their positions and launched a severe attack on the enemy and put them to rout.

In this Battle, 5000 soldiers were taken prisoners, but on the recommendation of the Holy Prophet the Muslims set them free. Those of the captors who would not release their prisoners were ransomed by the Holy Prophet himself; then he set them free.

THE BATTLE OF TABUK

In the ninth year of the Hegira when the news was received that the Roman Emperor was raising an army of the Romans and Arabs, the Holy Prophet decided to fight the Romans. The Battle of Mo'ta was also fought in the same area. There, such commanders of Islamic Army as Ja'far, (May Allah be pleased with him) son of Abu Talib, (peace be on him) Zayd son of Harith and Abdullah son of Rawaha were martyred.

The Holy Prophet then led an army of 30,000 soldiers towards Tabuk, a place on the border of Hijaz and Syria, but in the meantime the Roman Army had already dispersed from there.

The Holy Prophet stayed there for three days and set in order the affairs prevailing in that region. After that he returned to Madina.

THE OTHER BATTLES

During the ten years of his life in Madina, the Holy Prophet fought as many as eighty battles (big or small) besides the battles that have been mentioned above. About a quarter of all the battles were those in which the Holy Prophet himself participated.

Whenever the Holy Prophet took part in a battle, his behaviour not similar to that of other generals, who, while

sitting in a safe place, would give directions to the army. On the contrary he always fought shoulder to shoulder with his soldiers and never did he sit at a safe place and ordered the soldiers to face the enemy.

GHADIR KHUM – THE SUCCESSION ISSUE

After the conquest of Makkah, in the eighth year of the Hegira, the entire Arabian peninsula came under the domination of Islam. This city, Makkah, contained the Holy Ka'bah, the Sanctuary of Allah. Tā'if too was conquered after the fall of Makkah.

In the tenth year of the Hegira, the Holy Prophet, proceeded to Makkah to perform Hajj, which was his last pilgrimage. After completing all his performances he returned to Madina. On his way back he stopped at a place called *Ghadir Khum* and in front of 12,000 pilgrims, who had come from all parts of the peninsula, he held the hand of Imam Ali and by raising it high, declared him as his vicegerent and successor. By this action the very issue of the successor to the Holy Prophet was settled once for all as the Holy Prophet had selected by the Command of Allah the person who could wield full authority over all Islamic matters as well as safeguard the Islamic system. In other words, the following Qur'anic verse was thoroughly translated into action. *O Prophet! Communicate to the people whatever has been revealed upon you by the Lord. But if you fail to communicate, it would be as though you have not accomplished the mission of Prophethood.* (Surah Ma'ida, 5:67)

A short time after his return to Madina, the Holy Prophet breathed his last in the eleventh year of the Hegira.

CONSOLIDATION OF ISLAM IN MADINA

The Message of the Prophet of Islam echoed in Madina to such an extent that it brought under its influence every house, lane and locality. People in large numbers came under the fold of Islam. The tribes residing in Makkah, Madina and various other parts of the Arabian peninsula ultimately embraced Islam and consequently the entire

Arabian peninsula came under the influence of Islam.

During his ten years stay in Madina the Holy Prophet was fully occupied in discharging his obligations and never had he rested for a single moment. He would communicate to the people whatever teachings and principles he received through Divine revelations. He would teach the people and would also solve their problems. Apart from it, he would enter into discussions and debates with the scholars of other religions, especially of the Jews.

Over and above this, he would himself run the affairs of the State also. Despite his heavy engagements in life, he would address himself, for the major part of his time, to the worship of Allah. He would observe fast frequently. That is, he would fast for three consecutive months of Rajab, Shābān and Ramazān and in addition to it for another thirty days on different days in the year. Sometimes as it was peculiar to him, he observed a special fast known as *Saumu Wisāl* (Fast unto union with Allah). This fast was of a kind in which he would be fasting for a few days and nights continuously.

He would devote his time to his domestic duties also and he would work for earning his livelihood too. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says, *The infidels wanted to put out the Divine Light by their mouths, but Allah would uphold His Light even though the infidels may dislike it. It is He who has sent His messengers towards the people with guidance and the true religion to stand supreme over all religions even though the infidels dislike it.* (Surah Saf, 61:8)

Obviously, this Divine promise was fulfilled during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet and even after his passing away. It is being also fulfilled today in a practical way as more than 900 million Muslims are now scattered all over the world.

At another place, Allah says: *You have been raised as the best people from mankind. You guide the people to perform good deeds and forbid them from evil things and you believe in Allah.* (Surah Ale Imran, 3:110)

PERSONALITY OF THE HOLY PROPHET

Historical facts indicate that the Holy Prophet was brought up in a society that was completely devoid of moral conduct. Intrigues, ignorance and immoral practices were rampant among the people. He however passed his childhood and youth in that very surroundings, but never bowed his head towards any idol nor did he adopt anything that was against human nature though, he lived amongst the people of a decadent society. From the simple way of his living, nobody could ever have predicted the future eventful course of life that lay ahead of him. True, how could such a thing be expected of a poor orphan who had not even learnt from anybody how to read and write.

The Holy Prophet continued leading his life in a simple manner until one night when he was busy worshipping Allah with a tranquil heart and a mind not preoccupied his personality underwent a complete change. In fact his serene personality with inherent qualities was transformed into a celestial one. He started considering several thousands of years old thoughts and beliefs which were ridiculously absurd and preposterous. In the light of his clear thinking and impeccable vision, he realized that the ways and means as well as the governing laws of his time were unjust and tortuous. After visualizing the future in the perspective of the past events, he showed a path which proved to be a sure road to prosperity for the mankind as a whole. His eyes and ears became different, for neither he would see anything but the truth, nor would he hear anything other than the truth. His tongue became the medium of Divine revelations, teachings and guidance.

His inherent nature which was till then concerned only with the object of reforming the business dealings as well as the day-to-day affairs of people's life, embarked upon a new horizon for undoing the wrong that had been perpetrated upon mankind for thousands of years. Thus, the Holy Prophet all by himself took up the cudgels, with a firm determination, for reviving the supremacy of truth, justice and righteousness without bothering the least about the formidable opposition and obstacles of his adversaries.

He would only talk about the Divine wisdom and would interpret all events of life from the aspect of monotheism. He would make a lucid elaboration of the high morals of human life and their mutual relationship. If he spoke of anything, he would mean it seriously. And whenever he called upon others to do something, he would himself first act upon it.

The religious code and the commands that the Holy Prophet introduced are based on the fundamental principle of the worship of Allah. Besides, he brought the code of conduct which had harmony between them and which were based on monotheism and regard for human values.

The laws brought by the Holy Prophet whether relating the worship of Allah or to other affairs are so comprehensive and universal that they encompass the total human activity, individual as well as social and offer solutions to all the problems of life.

The Holy Prophet considered the teachings of Islam as Divine and eternal. That is, he believed that Islam satisfied all the material and spiritual needs of mankind in any human society for all the times to come, and as such he called upon the people to embrace Islam for their own good. He himself repeatedly reminded: "The religion that I have brought (for you) guarantees your betterment in this world and the Hereafter."

No doubt he did not say so without purpose, for he arrived at the conclusion after studying the intricacies of the universe closely and keeping in view the future shape of things that were to happen in the world of mankind. In other words, first of all he discovered the unanimity between Islamic laws and man's physical and spiritual tendencies and after scrutinizing the future revolutionary happenings, he proclaimed that the teachings of Islam were eternal.

The prophecies of the Holy Prophet that have come to us through authentic sources give detailed accounts of events that were to happen from the time of his passing away to a time in the distant future.

The Holy Prophet accomplished his mission in twenty-

three years. The first thirteen years were spent in facing the tortuous treatment of the infidels of Makkah and in the remaining ten years he struggled against his arch-enemies as well as the internal hypocrites besides reforming the beliefs and morals of the Muslims as well as encountering many other difficulties. He traversed this strenuous path by upholding the truth and with a firm faith and resolve to keep it alive. His insight would only admit the truth and anything however beneficial it could be to him or was based on the people's aspirations but was beside the truth, would not receive his approval. Without any reluctance he would accept things that were just and he would reject outright those which were unjust.

If one looks without prejudice at what has been preceded, one cannot entertain any doubt that it was indeed a miracle for such a personage having been born under that gloomy state of affairs. True, it can only be due to the Will of Allah. That is why Allah in the Holy Qur'an repeatedly mentions the Holy Prophet as being an orphan and "unlettered" (being not able to read and write) and also mentions the obstacles in his early life. The kind of the personality that Almighty Allah endowed the Holy Prophet, with, is counted by Him as a Divine gift and also as a positive proof of the truthfulness of his mission. He says: *Were you not an orphan when Allah gave you shelter and succour? Were you not wondering about when Allah guided you? Were you not in need of things when Allah made you free from any need? Were you not unknown when Allah conferred on you honour and fame?* (Surah al-Zuhā, 93:6 - 8). *You were not able to read or write before the Qur'an was revealed to you, otherwise, the followers of falsehood would have tried to confused the matter.* (Surah Ankabut, 29:48) *Should you have any doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, produce one chapter comparable to it.* (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:23)

THE CONDUCT OF THE HOLY PROPHET

The only thing on which the Holy Prophet laid the foundation of his religion and which called the only means

of mankind's salvation is monotheism – the Belief in the Oneness of Allah.

According to this belief only Allah, the Creator of the universe, is to be worshipped and obeyed and it is not proper to submit oneself to anybody except Allah.

Thus, the behaviour of human society should be based on the principle of equality and brotherhood and we should have perfect faith in the Absolute Sovereignty of Allah. Allah Himself says so: *O Propbet! Say to the followers of the Bible, 'We must come to a common term. Let us worship no one except Allah the Lord; nor consider anything equal to Him, nor regard any of us as our Lord besides Allah'.* (Surah Ale Imran, 3:24)

The Holy Prophet had no motive other than the propagation of monotheism. He would preach Islam through mutual and peaceful discussion with the people. He would with cogent and clear reasoning invite people to embrace Islamic monotheism. He would also direct his devotees to adopt his ways and means while propagating Islam. Allah says, *O Propbet! Say: 'This is my way I and all my followers invite you to Allah with proper understanding.* (Surah Yusuf, 12:108)

The Holy Prophet by his pure conscience would treat everybody with equality and consider all as brother to one another. In matters of following Allah's Commands and the observance of punitive regulations, he would not allow any discriminations or exceptions. He would make no distinction between the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the man and the woman and the black and the white. He would give everybody his or her right and share in accordance with the religious laws and obligations. In this regard he often declared: "If Fatima, my daughter who is dearest to me, commits an act of larceny, I would not spare her even without chopping her hand".

Nobody had the privilege to dominate or coerce others. They enjoyed maximum freedom in matters outside the purview of law as freedom to violate the laws, is everywhere inadmissible, not to speak of Islamic laws.

It is this social freedom and justice about which Allah

has referred to while introducing His exalted Prophet in these words: *There are those who follow the Messenger, the illiterate Prophet (not conventionally educated), whose description they find written in the Torah and the Gospel. He (the Messenger) enjoins them to do good and forbids them to do all that is unlawful, makes lawful for them all that is pure and unlawful all that is filthy, removes their burdens and the entanglements in which they are involved. Those who believe in him, honour and help him, and follow the light which is sent down to him, will have everlasting happiness. Mubammad, tell them, "People, I have come to you all as the Messenger of Allah, to whom the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth belongs. There is no lord but He. In His hands are life and death. Have faith in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words. Follow him so that you will perhaps have guidance".* (Surah Araf, 7:157 - 158)

That is one reason why the Holy Prophet did not assume any distinctive posture for himself. Someone who did not know him beforehand could not distinguish him from amongst other people. He would attend to his usual household chores. He would himself welcome his visitors and would readily attend to the needs of others. He would neither give an inkling of being a monarch nor would seat on a throne nor would he act like the Head of a State. Wherever he went, he would go without an escort or a bodyguard. He would not permit the observance of any protocol.

Whatever he received for his personal use, he would distribute a major portion of it among the needy people. Not only that; at times when occasion arose, he would forego his meals also for the sake of those who were in dire need of food.

He would always lead the life of a poor man, and would pass most of his time amongst the poor and would never show any slackness in matters of giving the people their due rights.

On the day when Makkah was conquered by the Muslims, the tribal chiefs of Quraysh were brought before

the Holy Prophet. Despite the fact that they had persecuted the Muslims before their migration to Madina and had continued oppressing them even after that, he did not take any stern action against them but granted them general amnesty.

Whether friend or foe, everybody acknowledged the noblest attributes of the Holy Prophet. He was a unique symbol of good manners, pleasant disposition, tolerance and hospitality. The Holy Qur'an has praised his noble attributes in these words: *You have attained superb moral conduct.* (Surah al-Qalam, 68:4)

When he met the people, he would himself take the initiative in wishing them first — even to women, children and the captives.

Once when one of his companions asked his permission to prostrate himself before him, he said: "What nonsense you are talking about! My ways are not like those of the Czars or the Kisras. My dignity lies in the fact that I am a humble servant of Allah and His Messenger".

From the moment the Holy Prophet was ordained by Allah to preach the Divine religion and guide the people towards Allah, never did he rest, and instead he continued making untiring efforts in accomplishing the objectives of his mission. The thirteen years which he passed in Makkah before his migration to Madina were the days of great ordeals as he had suffered heavily at the hands of the infidels. But despite this, he addressed himself to the worship of Allah and to the completion of his mission.

Even during the ten years after the migration, the Holy Prophet had to encounter the opposition of the enemies of religion as well as that of the treacherous Jews and the hypocritical proselytes who violated agreements and flouted promises.

Notwithstanding these unfavourable conditions he conveyed to the people the principles and the teachings of Islam which are astoundingly cosmopolitan in nature, and also encountered with the enemies of Islam in more than eighty battles.

Although administration of justice and running the

affairs of the Islamic State which comprised the entire Arabian peninsula were his sole responsibility, he himself attended the people's complaints without any intermediary and redressed their grievances.

As regards the chivalry and boldness of the Holy Prophet it will suffice to mention here that he single-handedly started his campaign for the propagation of the Divine religion in the teeth of opposition by an unfriendly and brutal society, and despite the extremely painful treatment of the infidels he remained steadfast in his intentions and approaches. Over and above this, he never retreated in any battle but came out victorious and triumphant.

The Holy Prophet would always keep himself neat and tidy. He pronounced cleanliness to be the nucleus of Faith. Besides keeping his body and apparels pure and clean, the Holy Prophet put on a good dress. He met people with magnanimity. Whenever he came out of his house, he was dressed in his best clothes. He was very fond of using perfumes. Never did he show any sign of change in his mode of life. He was always moderate and courteous in his behaviour. Though he was of a very high calibre yet he never assumed anything which could indicate his superiority.

Never in his lifetime did the Holy Prophet called anybody names nor did he make any objectionable remarks against others. Never did he indulge in loud laughter, nor did he do anything which was below his dignity. Most of the time he would be in contemplation. He would listen to the aggrieved person with rapt attention. He would also listen to the objections raised by his critics and would satisfy them with his replies. He would never interrupt the speech of anybody. He would never put a check on anybody's freedom of thought. But he would point out the lapses of the people so as to heal their inner wounds.

The Holy Prophet was extremely kind and tender hearted. He was deeply touched when he saw the people suffering agonies. But he never hesitated to punish the wicked people. In the implementation of Allah's Command he would make no discrimination between man and man.

Once somebody stole something belonging to an Ansar. A Muslim and a Jew were the two suspects. People from the Ansar pleaded to the Holy Prophet that the Jew should be punished so that the honour of the Muslims in general and of the Ansar in particular be saved and because the Jews were also against the Muslims.

The Holy Prophet after arriving at a decision contrary to the wishes of the people, set the Jew free and pronounced judgement against the Muslim.

In the Battle of Badr when the Holy Prophet was ordering his army to file past in array he found one of the soldiers was a little ahead of his march. By touching him with his baton he ordered him to fall in line. At this the soldier feigned that he was hurt in his belly by the push of the baton and as such he would take the revenge upon the Prophet. The Holy Prophet handed his baton in the soldier's hand and asked him to fulfil his wish. At this the soldier lunged forward and by separating the Prophet's robe, he caressed the belly of the Holy Prophet and said: "Since I knew I would be killed today I wanted to have a touch of your sacred body". After that he attacked the enemy and was martyred.

The Holy Prophet always sided with the weak and the oppressed, and directed his companions to bring to his knowledge the needs of the poor and the grievances of the weak without showing any negligence. It is said that during his last days he recommended to the people two things: one was about the captives and the other about the women. Thereafter, he ceased talking and breathed his last. May Allah, the Merciful, the Beneficent bestow upon the Holy Prophet and his chosen progeny His Peace and Blessings!

THE BEQUEST OF HOLY PROPHET

Just as various constituents of the universe are in a constant state of mutation so also the human nature is liable to change. The variations that are often noticed in man are in fact manifested by different dispositions, such as bad or soft temperament, individual mode of thinking, sense of self-protection, tolerance forgetfulness etc.

Accordingly if the beliefs, customs, rules and regulations of any society are not based on solid foundations, and are not looked after by honest and trust-worthy men they will be subjected to alterations and fabrications and will ultimately die out. This fact can only be proved by analytical assessment and observation. Hence, as a measure of safeguard against the possibility of such a risk, the Holy Prophet in order to ensure the permanency of his Divine and eternal religion, introduced to the people a firm and unalterable document and able guardians. He bequeathed the Muslims two things, the Book of Allah and his Progeny. This fact has been consecutively narrated by scholars of all the Muslim sects and the Holy Prophet repeatedly said, "I am departing from you, and entrusting to you two precious things as sacred trust, one is the Book of Allah and the other is my *Ablul Bayt* (Progeny).

THE HOLY QUR'AN

The Holy Qur'an is the fountain-head of Islamic teachings and principles. It is a Divine Book and it bears the testimony of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet. It is the word of Allah which was revealed upon the Holy Prophet and it was conveyed by him to the mankind. It furnishes the mankind with wisdom and practical approach by virtue of which man can attain prosperity in this world and salvation in the Hereafter. It was gradually revealed upon the Holy Prophet during the twenty-three years of his Prophethood and it provides solutions of all human problems. It is a Divine Book which has no other aim except guiding the people towards the path of prosperity. It teaches man in an interesting manner the true beliefs, good morals and noble deeds, which are the bases of prosperity for the individuals as well as the human society. Thus Allah says: *We have revealed the Book upon you which fully explains everything.* (Surah Nahl, 16:89)

The Holy Qur'an has laid down the broad-based outlines of the Islamic teachings and principles and for the detailed elucidations and particularly of matters falling under the purview of Islamic jurisprudence it has directed

the people to refer to the Holy Prophet. Allah says: *We have revealed upon you the Qur'an so that you may explain in detail whatever is sent from Allah.* (Surah Nahl, 16:44)

In another verse Allah says: *This Book has been revealed upon you so that you may resolve the people's differences and enlighten them with the truth.* (Surah Nahl, 16:64)

The Holy Qur'an does not ask the people to follow it blindly. Instead it exhorts the people in the common language so that they may comprehend it by applying their common sense. It reminds them of the things which are logical which he cannot afford to ignore or disown.

Allah says: *The Qur'an is the final word, and it is certainly not a jest. The disbelievers plot every evil plan, but I too plan against them.* (Surah Tariq, 86:13 - 14)

The Holy Qur'an is a Book which distinguishes truth from falsehood. It is not a word which has been said for the sake of saying only. It unearths the true significance of the meaning to the extent that its logical bearing spreads like a ray of light. It is applicable on all people for all times to come. It is not like the words which man utters in accordance with his mental capacity and limited wisdom of which a part is based on exigencies while the remaining one is subjected to callousness. On the contrary, it is the Word of Allah which circumscribes every thing, visible or unseen. It is well-aware of tactics and evils of the wicked.

Hence, it becomes incumbent upon every Muslim that he should keep his eyes wide open and treat the preceding sacred verse as a constant reminder. He should consider the Book of Allah as living and lasting. He should not take it for granted what the people say or have understood about it. He should apply his independent sense of judgement and reasoning which are his inherent traits and about which the Holy Qur'an has also reminded him. It is because the Book of Allah is a living testimony as well as a final word for everybody. Such a Book cannot be deemed to be comprehensible to only a particular group of people. Allah says: *The believers (Muslims) should not be like those people*

of the Scripture, on whom the Scripture was revealed, but when the time passed their hearts became so hardened that they refused to accept the Divine law. (Surah Hadid, 57 :16)

The Holy Qur'an wants that the people should turn to their own nature and accept the truth. It is in this sense that first they should prepare themselves to accept the truth without any prejudice, and, without paying any heed to diabolic whisperings and temptations, should adopt that thing which appears to them as right as well as beneficial in this world and in the Hereafter.

If however, after examining the Islamic principles in their true perspective, and by applying their conscious mind, they find that the principles of this religion are based on truth, and further that their real happiness and prosperity lie in following them, they should accept them whole-heartedly.

No doubt under the circumstances, man's conduct and mode of behaviour will be dependent upon the rules and regulations prevalent in a society and which he by his very nature will accept. And as such these rules will be in harmony with man's natural disposition. It goes without saying that if the laws and regulations are in agreement with man's inherent tendencies there would exist no defect or contradiction in them. Such ways and means will not be self-contradictory. Either these will emanate from spiritual source or they will originate from materialistic considerations. These will either be in accordance with wisdom or they will be motivated by caprice and temptations.

While eulogizing the sanctity of the Holy Qur'an, Allah says: *The Qur'an guides the people towards the truth and leads them to a straight path (which is free from defects and denials).* (Surah Ahqaf, 46 :30) Allah further says: *This Qur'an shows the people the most upright path (that it supersedes all other religions).* (Surah Bani Israel, 17 :9)

In another verse the strength and the veracity of Islam is attributed to its compatability with the human nature. There cannot be two opinions on this point that the system and the mode of life which satisfy man's natural needs make him highly successful and prosperous.

Allah says: *Be devoted to the upright religion; it is harmonious with the nature which Allah has fashioned for man (which can run the affairs of the society and which can lead it to the goal of prosperity).* (Surah Rum, 30 :30)

He further says: *This Book has been revealed upon you (O Prophet!) so that you may lead the mankind from darkness to light.* (Surah Ibrahim, 14 :1).

The Holy Qur'an invites the people to a well-lighted path so that this light may lead them to their ultimate destiny. Undoubtedly, such a path could only be the one which can fulfil man's natural needs and satisfy his aspirations. Besides, it is in harmony with man's reasoning. It is this religion which is based on wisdom and reason and is called Islam.

Conversely the system which is based on caprice and temptations, and which serves as a tool for satisfying the carnal desires and aggressive designs of society's influential and domineering people or that system which aims at blindly following the traditions of the ancestors, or that one which a weak and backward nation adopts in imitating the ways of life of powerful nations, without applying their common sense but pretending that they are similar to them, leads man to the abyss of darkness. In reality it is like treading on a path which can never lead mankind to its desired goal.

In this regard Allah says: *Can the dead to whom We have given life and light (through religion) so that they may live among the people, be considered equal to those who can never come out of darkness.* (Surah Anam, 6 :123)

Thus from the view-point of Islam and the Muslims, the importance and greatness of this sacred Book becomes evidently clear. Just judge that the Holy Qur'an was revealed 1400 years ago and because of various reasons it has not only been held in very great esteem in many human societies but it has always at all times drawn the attention of mankind.

Without doubt the Holy Qur'an is a Divine Book which is the nucleus of the eternally Divine religion of Islam and which describes the highly meaningful and thought-provoking principles and doctrines of Islam in a rational

style. From this point of view it is as highly respected as the religion of Allah. In short, the Holy Qur'an is the Word of Allah and it is an everlasting miracle of the Holy Prophet.

THE HOLY QUR'AN IS A MIRACLE

It is an admitted fact that Arabic is a very rich and vast language. It can express man's inner feelings in a simple as well as in a highly compact form. As regards this particular peculiarity, no other language can surpass the Arabic language.

History bears testimony that though the Arabs, most of whom were nomads and had no idea of civilization in the Dark Age of ignorance, yet they were expert in the art of expression of their ideas in an inimitable style of eloquence and as such history cannot cite any parallel to them.

In the Arabian literary circle a beautiful style of poetry was considered to be a very big asset, and the people highly valued the speeches replete with poetic fervour. Just as the people had installed idols and statues of their deities in the Holy Ka'bah in the same way they had hung the literary works of the known geniuses of poetry on the walls of the Holy Ka'bah. In order to earn the recognition of their merit, the literary giants would leave no stone unturned in deciphering the meaning of difficult subjects in an impeccable style of flowing verses.

However, when the early verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed upon the Holy Prophet and he recited them before the people, it created a sensation among the Arabs, and mystified the poets and orators of great fame. The beautifully worded and meaningful verses of the Holy Qur'an enchanted the hearts of the people so much so that they were held spellbound. The people with literary flair became so much impressed that they forgot any other established form of eloquence and withdrew the literary master pieces known as "hangings" from the walls of Ka'bah. The beautiful and the sweet Words of Allah had such a tremendous effect that even the most eloquent of orators became dumbfounded before them. But on the contrary, these Divine Words of Allah proved to be a bitter

pill to swallow for the infidels and the idolaters, because the Holy Qur'an with its meaningful impact had exhorted the people to embrace monotheism. It had outright condemned polytheism and idolatry but these infidels worshipped the idols as their gods and they offered sacrifices to them. The Holy Qur'an identified these idols as nothing short of lifeless chips of woods and stones. It called upon the savage Arabs, filled with pride and haughtiness, to accept truth and to uphold justice and fairplay in dealing with their fellow beings and to abandon acts of barbarism, man-slaughter and dacoity which had become their second nature.

Ultimately, the Arab infidels and idolaters resorted to confrontation and started finding ways and means to extinguish the Divine light which had glowed for the guidance of mankind. But despite their condemnable efforts, they had to meet with despondency and failure. It is like the saying: "Man proposes and God disposes" or "The light kindled by Allah can never be extinguished"

In the early days of the Prophethood the people took the Holy Prophet to Walid who was a known connoisseur of literary works and enjoyed a good reputation among the Arabs. The Holy Prophet recited a few verses of the beginning of Surah Hâ Mim Sajdah. Despite his affectation of being a great critic, Walid listened to the recitation with rapt attention and when the Holy Prophet recited the verse: *If they ignore your message, tell them (O Prophet!) I have warned you against a blast of the thunder-bolt like that which struck the people of 'Ād and Thamud.* (41:13)

Walid's condition showed a sudden change. His entire body was trembling like a leaf and he receded to a state of stupor. Having seen the situation taking this turn, the people departed for their homes. Afterwards some people came to him and reprimanded him for letting them down before 'Muhammad', peace be on him. In reply Walid said that neither was he frightened of anybody nor was he tempted by anything but he knew well that the recitation that he heard from 'Muhammad, peace be on him, was not like the commonly spoken language, and instead it was

enchancing and held the hearer spellbound. Neither can it be called a poetic verse nor can it be a prose. It is something carrying a deep meaning and is in itself a complete message. If it was really necessary to have his confirmed opinion he should have been spared three days to ponder over it again.

After three days, the people again came to Walid and asked him his opinion. He replied: "The words uttered by 'Muhammad' are nothing short of a magical spell which enchant the hearts".

On Walid's directive the infidels abstained from listening to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an as they believed it to be the product of witchery and they also forbade people to do so. And whenever the Holy Prophet happened to recite the Holy Qur'an in the Holy Mosque (Ka'bah), these people hooted, jeered and started clapping so that the other people might not hear the recitation.

Notwithstanding this drawback, the people who in actual fact had drawn towards the enchanting verses of the Holy Qur'an, after taking advantage of the nightfall, would assemble outside the house of the Holy Prophet and listen to the recitation of the Holy Qur'an from behind the wall. At that they would whisper that such a piece of composition could not be man's creation. Pointing to this aspect in the Holy Qur'an Allah says: *We are well aware of the intentions of those people who hear you reciting the Holy Qur'an, and We are also aware of what these treacherous people talk of the spell of witchery having overpowered you and then they indulge among themselves in whisper-mongering.* (Surah Bani Israel, 17:47)

Whenever the Holy Prophet was in the precincts of the Holy Ka'bah, he would either recite the Holy Qur'an or will invite people towards Islam, the religion of Allah. And at that time whenever distinguished personalities happened to pass by that side they would bend themselves down in order to escape from being spotted by the Holy Prophet. Thus Allah says: *They bend themselves down so that they do not face the Holy Prophet.* (Surah Hud, 11:5)

ASPERSIONS AGAINST THE HOLY PROPHET

The infidels and the idolaters of Makkah were not only content with calling the Holy Qur'an as witchcraft but they also named the mission of the Holy Prophet as wizardry.

Whenever the Holy Prophet invited the people towards Allah or preached the Divine religion the infidels would say that he was applying his magical powers. But in actual fact the Holy Prophet used to enlighten the people on all those matters about the veracity of which they themselves had no doubt. Besides, he would point out to them the straight path by following which they could themselves experience the success and happiness of the society and which they had no genuine reason to disbelieve. Obviously, such rational statements could not be called a magical skill.

The Holy Prophet will arouse the people's sense of proportion by posing a question. "When you are asked not to worship these pieces of wood and stones which are of your own making and not to sacrifice your sons to fictitious gods, you call it magic. Can good morals such as truthfulness, steadfastness, human relations, justice, fairplay and human rights be given the name of magic?" In this context, Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *When you (O Prophet!) tell the unbelievers that after death they will be brought back to life again, they say, 'This is nothing but obvious magic'.* (Surah Hud, 11:7)

THE CHALLENGE OF HOLY QUR'AN

The infidels and the idolaters were not prepared to embrace Islam, because their hearts were sealed with the superstitious creed of idol-worship. As such they contradicted the Holy Prophet and considered him untruthful. The Divine Book, according to them, was the figment of his own imagination.

In order to refute this aspersion against the Holy Prophet, the Holy Qur'an challenged the most eloquent literary intelligentsia of Arabia to produce any such piece as could be similar to the Divine word if they wanted to

falsify the Holy Prophet. Thus Allah says: *Those people say that he has invented it (the Holy Qur'an). In fact they are devoid of faith. If they are truthful, let them produce something like it.* (Surah Tur, 52:31 – 34) Allah further says: *Do they say that Mubammad has invented the Qur'an? Tell them: 'If you are truthful then compose only one chapter like it.* (Surah Yunus, 10:38)

The infidels of Arabia despite their pride in rhetorics, eloquence and high-flown poetry, could not come forward to accept this challenge. Instead they turned the literary contest into a bloody episode because it was easier for them to kill and get killed than to suffer a disgraceful defeat in a literary contest.

The so-called Arabia's literary stalwarts could not stand against the Holy Qur'an. Not only those who were present at the time of revelation of the Holy Qur'an but also those who were born at a later time became helpless in this regard and surrendered themselves to despair.

As the human nature is such that whenever a man finds another man possessing some skill in any field of arts and sports such as boxing or walking on the rope in a trapeze and which of course has no direct bearing on utility or benefit for the human society, he tries to acquire proficiency in the same field in order to gain supremacy over the other man.

Similarly, some people are always on the look-out to find out an alternate path other than the one prescribed by the Holy Qur'an with the sole purpose of undermining the importance of the Divine Book. But all such people always failed miserably in their intentions and endeavours and also their pretext of calling the Divine Book as a spell of magic, could not hold sufficient ground for credibility, because magic is a fallacious thing which shows the truth as untruth and the untruth as truth. But the Holy Qur'an by virtue of its impeccably forceful style of swaying the hearts of the people distinctly stood as possessing the characteristic quality of Divine bearing which could not be called magic by any standard of judgement or wisdom.

If the Holy Qur'an by its explicit pronouncements

invites the people towards their multiple interests and reminds them of the realities which can be realized by the inherent tendency and consciousness which can lead them to truthfulness, well-being, justice and human relations, then it is nothing but presentation of realities. Such are the moral ethics which cannot be rejected by common sense.

Finally the infidels became so frustrated that they could not say that the Holy Qur'an was a word which was at the peak of human eloquence and which had no parallel in as far as its charming style and effectiveness were concerned. But despite all this they did not accept it as Divine word.

In other words in any sphere of activity special qualities or skills such as courage, valour, reading and writing etc., there exists in human history a name of a person who was a real genius, and who had no rivals, and who has been taken as an unmatched person in his field.

Similarly, it can well be supposed that the Holy Prophet was at the most exalted position in as far as his delivery of speech and his fluency in Arabic language were concerned. Therefore, under the circumstances, as his spoken words could be taken as those of a human being, it could as well be competed by someone. Neither did the contemporary men of letters say this nor those who opposed the Holy Qur'an could dare say so or bring something in proof of it. But since any attribute or artistic skill which achieves its highest merit at the hands of a master genius is after all the product of human intelligence and craftsmanship, it becomes possible for others also to emulate the path of that genius in producing something like his creative works which may either be as equal to his or even better than that though in actual fact it may still be wanting in something in as far as its perfection is concerned. Thus, in spite of all this, the genius will always be regarded as a pioneer in that particular field and others will be left only to follow it.

To cite an example, Hatim Tai enjoys an enviable position in generosity (being his personal quality) and nobody has as yet excelled him in this attribute but some

people can still be generous if they wish to be. Likewise, in the art of calligraphy, Mir, and in painting, Mani, are still unique. Yet, by seriousness of purpose one can work in calligraphy in Mir's style, and also can paint a miniature portrait in Mani's fashion.

According to this general principle, had the Holy Qur'an been man's highly perfected creation (and not Allah's word) it would have been possible for a genius of undisputed standing to produce a book or at least a single verse similar to that of the Holy Qur'an.

The Holy Qur'an has challenged the people not to produce a book better than it but it has made a simple demand for presenting a single chapter similar to that. In this context the Holy Qur'an challenges: *If you have any doubt about what We have revealed upon our Prophet, present one surah comparable to it and call all your supporters besides Allah, if your claim is true.* (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:23)

Do they say that Muhammad has invented the Qur'an? Tell them, "If your claim is true produce only one chapter like it. (Surah Yunus, 10:38)

They (the unbelievers) say that Muhammad has falsely ascribed the Qur'an to Allah. Ask them to produce ten chapters like those of the Qur'an and call upon your supporters for help besides Allah, if you are true in your claim'. (Surah Hud, 11:13) Say: If all men and jinn were to come together to bring the equivalent of this Qur'an, they could not do so even if they all were to help one another. (Surah Bani Israil, 17:88)

The unbelievers say that you have invented the Qur'an. If they are truthful, let them produce something like it. (Surah Tur, 52:34)

At the termination of this discussion, it should be borne in mind that the Holy Qur'an has not only bewildered the people by its relevancy of style and explicitly unique kind of eloquence but it has provided answers to all pertinent questions and offered solutions of all human problems. Besides, it has warned the people by foretelling the events that are to take place in the future.

Over and above this, it has vindicated the Truth. In short, the substance and the matter the Holy Qur'an contains is such that it has challenged the mankind to bring in anything just like it.

AHLUL BAYT – PROPHET'S CHOSEN DESCENDANTS

According to Arabic vocabulary and lexicography, the Ahlul Bayt (Progeny) of a person is described to be the inmates of his house such as wife, sons, daughters, the male servant or the maid-servant doing household work and who are all dependent to that man as the head of the family. Sometimes, the meaning of Ahlul Bayt is so wide as to include the father and mother, sisters and her children, and also paternal uncles and aunts, maternal aunts and their children. But according to the Holy Qur'an and the traditions of the Holy Prophet, one of the two meanings of Ahlul Bayt can be ascribed to that of the Holy Prophet. Because according to relevant traditions and narrations which have come down to us through consecutive and generally reliable and accepted sources, the term Ahlul Bayt, that is the Holy Prophet's immediate family is a very pious and highly venerated sign which only specifies the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, peace be on them.

Therefore, according to this description, all those living with the Holy Prophet and his other relations do not fall under the definition of Ahlul Bayt, though of course the dictionary does count such members as being so.

Not only that even Lady Khadijah, who enjoys the highest position of veneration amongst the wives of the Holy Prophet is not included in Ahlul Bayt. Similarly, Ibrahim, the Holy Prophet's son despite his occupying a highly exalted position, is not included in Ahlul Bayt.

Again, in accordance with these very traditions and narrations, the nine of the twelve Imams (vicegerents) who are the direct descendants of Imam Husayn are without doubt, members of Ahlul Bayt and thus only fourteen infallible personages are included in Ahlul Bayt. Whenever the term Ahlul Bayt is used, it means fourteen

Holy Personages including the Holy Prophet.

These thirteen Holy descendants of the Holy Prophet are endowed with virtues of the highest order and in Islam they enjoy unique position. Their following two distinctions are of great significance :

1. HADITH-I KISA

One day, when the Holy Prophet was in the house of Umme Salama, one of his wives, the Holy Prophet, after experiencing that Allah's Grace and Blessings were descending down, said: "Bring them here to me. Bring them here to me!" When he was asked as to who should be brought before him, he replied: "My Ahlul Bayt, that is, Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn." Thus they gathered round the Holy Prophet on the floor. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet wrapped himself along with them in a special sheet of cloth and spoke: "O my Lord! These are my progeny. These are my Ahlul Bayt. Therefore, bestow Your Blessings on Muhammad and his Chosen Descendants. Thereupon, Allah revealed the following verse upon the Holy Prophet:

O People of the (Prophet's) House! Allah wants to remove all kinds of uncleanness from you and to purify you by a thorough purification. (Surah Ahzab, 33:33)

At this time Umme Salama who was behind the curtain said: "I was seated at the door. There were in all seven personages inside the house namely, the Holy Prophet, Jibril, Mikā'il, Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn. I peeped in and asked: "O Holy Prophet! Am I too included in your Ahlul Bayt?" She further added: "By Allah, he didn't reply in the affirmative but said: 'You are on the right path but you are one of the wives of the Prophet'.¹

¹In another narration it is said that Umme Salama asked the Prophet whether she was not included in his Ahlul Bayt. The Holy Prophet replied: "You are on the right path but only these are my Ahlul Bayt."

Hence, it becomes clear that the Holy Prophet has distinguished his Ahlul Bayt from all his devoted followers and by his conduct and speech has explained the true significance of Ayat-i Tathir (verse of

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Hence according to the Ayat-i Tathir the Ahlul Bayt are pure and infallible, and are immune from all sins.

purification, Surah Ahzab, 33,33). The Holy Prophet then said that his Ahlul Bayt were wholly purified and pious personages and were infallible. In the same context he made a declaration before the Muslims present in the Mosque, as after every congregational prayers, he used to visit the house of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima and say: "O Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet! May Allah bestow upon you His Mercy and Blessings".

Some companions of the Holy Prophet have corroborated this version, adding that he repeated this action of his (that is coming to the house of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima) continuously for six months. Still however, some say that the time-period was of seven months and some say it was of eight or nine months. However, the people reckoned the time from their memory.

The Holy Prophet adopted this conduct with a view to reminding the entire Islamic Ummah as to who were his Ahlul Bayt about whom the verse of purification was revealed by Allah and what was its true significance. Furthermore, the Holy Prophet did so because it was also obligatory for him to act upon in accordance with the following verse of the Holy Qur'an: *We have revealed the Qur'an to you so that you could communicate to the people in clear terms whatever commands We sent so that the people could contemplate.* (Surah Nahl, 16:44)

The verse of purification became so popular that people invariably quoted it for substantiating their point of view in their discussions. One of those was Imam Husayn who is included in Ahlul Bayt. After the passing away of his illustrious father, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali, Imam Husayn said in one of his sermons thus: "I am one of those who are included in the Prophet's Ahlul Bayt whom Allah has protected from every uncleanness and whom Allah has purified by a thorough purification.

In the same way, Umme Salama quoted the verse of purification to Umra Hamdani. This was done so because after the martyrdom of Imam Ali, Umra had queried something about him and in reply, Umme Salama recited the verse in question.

When Mu'awiya asked Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas to address Imam Ali with abusive language, the latter reminded the former of the

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2. HADITH-I THAQALAYN

According to Hadith-i Thaqalayn which has already been mentioned before, the Chosen Descendants of the Holy Prophet will always remain integrated with the Holy Qur'an and they will not part company with each other. By this it is meant that in comprehending the meaning of the Holy Qur'an and the objectives of Islam they can never commit a mistake.

On the basis of these two merits (Ayat-i Tathir and Hadith Thaqalayn) it becomes crystal clear that the conduct of Ahlul Bayt are equal to those of the Holy Prophet.

Thus, the belief of Shi'ah conforms with the Qur'an and Hadith regarding the supremacy of Ahlul Bayt over all others and their inseparable attachment with the Holy Qur'an.

UNDISPUTED MERITS OF AHLUL BAYT

In writing the eulogies of Imam Ali and other exalted position of Imam Ali in the context of the verse of purification.

Similarly, when a gang of wicked hypocrites abused Imam Ali before Ibn Abbas, the latter, too referred to the verse of purification and emphasized that this verse was one of the ten proofs in support of the merits of Imam Ali.

When Umme Salama heard of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn in Iraq and the Iraqis cursed the Holy Imam, she related the incident of the verse of purification, which was revealed upon the Holy Prophet and she reminded the people about the true significance of the verse.

Imam Sajjad son of Imam Husayn also quoted the verse of purification before a Syrian who was lauding the accursed Yazid and insulting the Ahlul Bayt.

Video: Sahih Muslim, Vol. VII, p. 135; Sahih Tirmizi, Vol. XII, p. 85; Musnad Taysali, Vol. VIII, p. 274; Majma'uz Zawā'id, Vol. XI, p. 169; Mustadrak 'alās Sabihayn, Vol. III, p. 72; Sunan Bayhaqi, Vol. II, p. 149; Musnad Ahmad bin Hambal, Vol. VI, p. 298; Mushkilul Āthār, Vol. III, p. 147; Tafsir Tabari, Vol. XXII, p. 6; Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. III, p. 485; Tafsir Durr Manthur, Vol. V, p. 198; and Khasā'is Nisā'i, p. 4

members of Ahlul Bayt the traditionalists from a cross-section of the Sunni and the Shi'ah schools of thought have quoted many traditions of the Holy Prophet. Here we mention only three of them.

(i) In the ninth year of the Migration, the Christians of Najran town alongwith their elderly people and religious leaders came and entered into discussion with the Holy Prophet of Islam, but they were utterly defeated. Consequently, *Mubabila* (Imprecation) was suggested by Allah through Divine revelation: *If, in spite of the clear signs and proofs that you have with you, anyone disputes with you (about your prophethood) say to them: Let each of us bring our children, women, our people and ourselves. Then, we solemnly pray to Allah to invoke His curse upon those who lie.* (Surah Ale Imran, 3:61)

The Christian Heads of Najran accepted the imprecation. On the following day a large number of scholars and delegates from Najran assembled outside the house of the Holy Prophet of Islam, and awaited his arrival to know in what manner and what people he was accompanied with to participate in the imprecation. But the Holy Prophet appeared in a special manner by holding Imam Husayn in his lap and ushering Imam Hasan by clasping him by the arm, Fatima, his beloved daughter following just behind him, and Ali, following just behind her.¹

The Holy Prophet then advised his accompanying party of Holy Personages to say "Amen" when they all prayed to Allah for imprecation.

After seeing such a spectacle of Allah's Chosen and Blessed personages with Allah's Mercy and Blessings glowing on their countenance and finding them under Divine protection, the Christian deputation on behalf of the

¹Sahih Muslim, Vol. II, p. 360, printed in Isa Halabi and Vol. XV, p. 176, printed in Egypt; Sahih Tirmizi, vol. IV, p. 293, printed in Darul Fikr, Beirut; Musnad Ahmad bin Hambal, Vol. I, p. 185, printed in al-Maymana, Egypt; Matālibus Su'ul by Ibn Talha Shafi'i, Vol. I, p. 18, printed in Najaf and p. 8 printed in Tehran etc.

people of Najran got so scared that their leader addressed his people thus: "I swear by Allah that I am witnessing such faces in front of me that if they are allowed to invoke God's Wrath, the entire Christian community of Najran will be perished".

Consequently, the Najranians came in close proximity to the Holy Prophet and implored him that they should be spared of the imprecation. At this the Holy Prophet said them: "Then embrace Islam". In reply they said, "We have no courage and stamina to face the Muslims. We are prepared to voluntarily surrender to pay *jizya*, penalties by way of tax and want to pass our life peacefully under the umbrella of Islam".

Thus, this matter came to an end in that manner.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By this incident, it has evidently become clear that at the time of *Mubabila* (Imprecation) the Holy Prophet's accompanying Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn at Allah's behest through the verse of Mubahila (Surah Ale Inran, 3:61), the words: "We, ourselves, our women and our sons" mean the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn respectively and none else.

In other words when the Holy Prophet said, "Ourselves" he meant himself and Imam Ali. When he said "Our women", he meant Fatima, his beloved daughter. And, when he said: "Our children", he meant Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, peace be on them.

From the foregoing, firstly, it becomes established beyond a shadow of doubt that the Holy Prophet by indicating Imam Ali in the expression "Ourselves", made no differentiation between himself and Imam Ali. Secondly the Ahlul Bayt (Chosen descendants) of the Holy Prophet included only four besides the Holy Prophet and no one else.

It can be easily understood that the Ahlul Bayt of a person are only those who are commonly introduced by him with the words "Ourselves, our women and our children". And, if others were included in the Ahlul Bayt

of the Holy Prophet he would have taken them along with him to participate in imprecation.

In the same context, the infallibility of these four personages shall have to be accepted because Allah Himself testifies the piety and infallibility of Ahlul Bayt in the Holy Qur'an. Allah says: *O People of the (Prophet's) House! Allah wants to remove all kinds of uncleanness from you and to purify you by a thorough purification.* (Surah Ahzab, 33:33)

(ii) As has been quoted by the Sunni as well as the Shi'ah traditionalists, the Holy Prophet said: "My Ahlul Bayt are like Nuh's Ark. Whosoever embarks on it, shall be saved. And, whosoever declined to do so, shall be drowned".¹

(iii) In various other traditions invariably quoted by the Sunni and Shi'ah traditionalists, the Holy Prophet proclaimed: "I am entrusting amongst you two precious things as legacy. They are the Book of Allah and my Ahlul Bayt (Chosen descendants). As long as you hold on to them and seek guidance and protection under them, you shall never go astray".²

¹Mustadrakul Hākim, Vol. III, p. 151, published in Hyderabad Deccan, Yanabi'ul Mawaddah, Qandozi Hanafi, pp. 30 and 370, published in Al-Haidaria; published in Istanbul, pp. 27 and 308; Sawā'iq Muhriqā, Ibn Hajar Asqalāni, pp. 135, 184, 234, published in Al-Muhammadya, Egypt; Tarikhul Khulafa, Suyuti Shāfi'i; As'afur Rāghibin, Saban Shafi'i, p. 9, published in al-Sa'idiya.

²Sabih Tirmizi, Vol. V, p. 328, Hadith Serial No. 3874, published in Darul Fikr, Beirut, Vol. XIII, p. 199, published in Maktabatul Sawi, Egypt; Yanbi'ul Mawaddah Qandozi, p. 30, published in Istanbul; Kanzul Ummal, Vol. I, p. 44; Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. IV, p. 113, Published, Daru Ihiyā'ul Kutub, al-Arabia, Egypt; Jāme'ul Usul, Ibn Athir, Vol. I, p. 187, Hadith No. 69, published in Egypt; Mishkatul Masābih, Vol. III, p. 258, published in Damascus; Al-Sayful Yamanjul Maslul, p. 10, published in al-Tarraqi, Damascus; Abaqatul Anwār, Vol. I, p. 25, Published, Isfahan and numerous other books.

IMAMATE

The people who are at the helm of affairs in a country establish a workable administration system the main purpose of which is to run the government of the day and to look after the interest of the people in general does not function automatically but on its back are some experienced and competent persons who try to make the State viable.

Similarly, the same principle is applied in other systems in society as for example in educational or financial system. As such no system or any sphere of activity can be run without the control of a panel of experts in their respective fields but these people who are controlling the situation should be honest and really capable persons, because otherwise the entire working system would fall down like a house of cards. This is an aspect so simple that a man of ordinary intelligence can understand it quite well.

Therefore, there exists not a shadow of doubt that in an Islamic system also, which can be rightly and justly called a universally accepted viable system, the same principle of control is applied. Thus, for running this system also, there must exist some capable persons who can enforce the Islamic teachings and principles so as to make the people derive maximum possible benefit from it.

In an Islamic society, the responsibility of looking after the material and spiritual aspects of the people's welfare and benefits is given the name of Imamate and the one who shoulders this responsibility is called Imam or a vicegerent.

It is the belief of the Shi'ah that after the passing away of the Holy Prophet it is necessary that on behalf of Allah there must be among the people as an Imam whose function would be to preserve and uphold the sanctity of the principles and teachings of Islam and also to guide the people to the right path.

Anyone who can cast a searching glance on the lofty principles and doctrines of Islam and who at the same time tries to be honest, will arrive at the root of the truth, that in Islam Imamate is an accepted principle. In this regard,

Allah has indicated to this issue in explicitly worded verses of the Holy Qur'an.

PROOF OF IMAMATE

It has been already clarified in the previous discussions on Prophethood that the Lord of the universe who bestows His Blessings on His creatures, wants to guide everything that has been created, to its ultimate destiny and this is the underlying objective of reaching the acme of perfection.

Just as a fruit-laden tree is actually destined to blossom into flowers and then into fruits but its life-circle is entirely different from that of other living bodies, for instance birds. Likewise, a bird also traverses its destined path and tries to achieve its objectives. In the same manner and fashion every living body is guided to traverse its destined path only with the sole purpose of achieving its objectives.

Obviously, man is also one of the creations of Allah and on him also is applied the same principle.

This thing has also been made clear that since man can achieve his happiness and prosperity in life through his will and intent only, it is necessary that the Divine guidance specifically meant for man should be communicated to him through the preachings of the prophets so that the people in general are not left with any pretext of not having been guided by the Creator of the universe.

In this context, the verse of the Holy Qur'an is quoted below:

The messengers were sent to give people glad tidings (of Allah's Mercy) and warn them (of His punishment) so that no one would be able to object to Allah after the advent of the messengers. (Surah Nisa, 4:165)

It establishes the fact that just as prophets by their infallibility preserved the sanctity of the religion and guided the people to the straight path, in the same manner after their passing away, Allah appoints a person in their place who without having the title of a prophet and the privilege of receiving the Divine revelations, possesses similar attributes so as to guide the people towards religion

and maintain the viability of the teachings and principles of Islam to the extent that there could exist the least possibility of fabrication, concoction and misinterpretation otherwise the very purpose of Divine guidance would be defeated and the people would plead innocent before Allah.

As human intelligence is apt to err, it cannot make the people independent of the prophets of Allah. Similarly, in Islamic fraternity (Ummah), the presence of religious scholars and their teachings cannot keep the people aloof from the Imam.

As it has already been clarified, the question is not whether or not the people are following the religious commands but it is that the religion of Allah, that is Islamic teachings and commands, should reach the people in their real form without any change or mutation in them, and that it should be saved from annihilation.

It cannot be gain said that the scholars however truthful and pious they may be, cannot be immune from sins and other lapses. As such it is just possible that the religious principles and commands may be subjected to alteration or destruction at their hands whether they do it intentionally or otherwise.

In proof of this contention, we find the different sects and divergent views that have cropped up in Islam.

Hence, the very presence of the Imam among the people becomes the paramount need because the religion of Allah as well as its teachings and commandments should remain safe in his hand and whenever the people become wiser to benefit themselves from the Imam they should be able to seek his unflinching guidance.

THE HOLY PROPHET AND VICEGERENCY

Almighty Allah speaks in praise of His Messenger, the Holy Prophet as follows; *(O People!) A prophet from amongst you has already been sent to you. He becomes much aggrieved when you suffer from hardships. And he is immensely concerned about your well-being. He is profoundly benevolent and affectionate to the believers.* (Surah Tawbah, 9:128)

It is unbelievable that the Holy Prophet who according to the Holy Qur'an, was so kind and affectionate to his followers would not say anything on a very important issue like this, and would remain silent. At least common sense would not accept this proposition.

The Holy Prophet knew more than anybody else that the well-organized and well-knit institution of Islam was not meant to last for only ten or twenty years, so that he alone could patronize it, but it was to remain as an eternally viable process for the guidance of the posterity. It was for this reason that after foretelling the happenings that were to occur thousands of years after his passing away he laid down instructions and issued commands in that regard.

The Holy Prophet also knew quite well that since religion was a social system and furthermore as no such system could function for a single moment without proper supervision, it needed such a patron as could safeguard its teachings and commands and by keeping the wheels of the society in motion, guide the mankind towards peace, prosperity and salvation in this world and the Hereafter.

Hence how could it be possible that the Holy Prophet could become oblivious of the events that were to happen after him and abstain from throwing any light on pertinent issues such as this.

It was a routine with the Holy Prophet that whenever he went out of Madina either to take part in a battle or to perform Hajj, he appointed a deputy to look after the affairs of the State and in the event of any town or a city being annexed, he appointed a governor to run its administration. Similarly, whenever an army was sent to a battlefield, he nominated its commander. At times, he went as far as to name succeeding commanders in case they were martyred one after the other in action.

Keeping in view this method of handling things how can it be understood that the Holy Prophet before departing from this world, had not thought of nominating anyone as his successor?

In short, anyone who in right earnest cares to look into the high ideals and objectives of Islam and the infallible

attributes of its founder, the Holy Prophet will, without any shadow of doubt, testify that Imam^{at} (leadership) or *Walayat* (vicegerency) is by far the finally settled issue.

THE HOLY PROPHET APPOINTS HIS SUCCESSOR

With regard to the question as to who would be his successor after him, the Holy Prophet did not feel content by making verbal pronouncements only but from the very first day of his Prophethood, besides preaching monotheism as well as the role of Prophethood in Islam, he clinched the issue of succession for good as he declared that for all temporal and spiritual affairs of the Muslims, Imam Ali was the guardian and the master.

According to one tradition which has been quoted by both Sunni and Shi'ah scholars, on the day when the Holy Prophet was asked by a Divine Call to proclaim his mission openly, he invited his relations to a meeting and there he declared the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali to be his *vazir* (Minister), the guardian and the successor after him.

Over and above this, during his last days, at a place named Ghadir, before a huge gathering of 120,000 people, he raised the hand of Imam Ali, above his shoulders and declared: "Of whomsoever I am the guardian and the master, Ali, too is his guardian and master".¹

In addition to this, the Holy Prophet also mentioned the Imams and spiritual leaders who were to succeed Imam Ali. Not only that he mentioned their number as twelve but gave their names and defined their attributes also.

In a well-known tradition quoted by the Sunni and the Shi'ah traditionalists, the Holy Prophet said, "There are only twelve Imams in number and all of them hail from

¹ *Sawa'iq-i Muhriqa* by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami al-Makki al-Shafi'i, p. 25, printed in *al-Maymana*, Egypt; *Kanzul Ummal* by Muttaqi al-Hindi, Vol. I, p. 168, Second Edition, published in Hyderabad Deccan, India; *Al-Ghadir* by Allama Amini, Vol. I, p. 26, published in Beirut; *Musnad Ahmad bin Hambal*, vol. IV, p. 281 printed in *al-Maymana*, Egypt; *Ansābul Ashraf* by Balazari, Vol. II, p. 215, published in Beirut etc.

the Quraysh”.

Yet, in another very well-known tradition, the Holy Prophet addressed to Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari and said: “There are twelve Imams”. Thereafter, he named them one by one and said: “You will survive to meet the fifth Imam (Muhammad Baqir). Convey my regards and blessings to him”.

Apart from all this, the Holy Prophet especially nominated the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali as his immediate successor. In the same tradition, Imam Ali too nominated his successor and so did each one of the succeeding Imams.

INFALLIBILITY OF IMAM

From the preceding details, it becomes crystal clear that like the prophets Imam is also infallible. That is, there is no likelihood of his committing any sin or error, otherwise, the Divine guidance would have become so defective as to defeat the very purpose of Divine guidance.

MORAL QUALITIES OF IMAM

As for the Imam, it is necessary that he must possess attributes of valour and chivalry, piety, generosity, justice and fairplay, for anyone who is infallible will himself act upon the religious principles and teachings, because moral qualities are one of the fundamentals of Islam.

Therefore, it is logical that the Imam by virtue of possessing these qualities should occupy a position superior to that of the rest of the people, as it will be utterly ridiculous if a man is allowed to lead another one who is superior to him in all respects as well as in moral qualities, it will also be against Divine justice.

KNOWLEDGE OF IMAM

As Imam is the Head of religion and leader of the mankind as whole, it is necessary that he should have the knowledge of all human problems, which have an important bearing on man's life in this world and the Hereafter. In other words he should know all those matters

which are directly related to man's happiness and prosperity. Furthermore, it cannot be expected of an ignorant man to assume the role of a leader to guide those who are wise and learned. From the standpoint of Divine guidance such a mishap can never be tolerated.

THE FOURTEEN INFALLIBLES

The Holy Prophet Muhammad, his daughter, Fatima and the twelve Holy Imams, peace be on them, are the fourteen infallibles. Out of these fourteen Holy personages, the first five, the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn, are the five Holy ones who are called *Ashâb-i Kisa* (People of the Cloak). It is so because once the Holy Prophet had gathered them under his mantle and when he prayed to Allah for them, the following verse was revealed to him. *O People of the Prophet's (House)! Allah wants to remove all kinds of uncleanness from you and to purify you by a thorough purification.* (Surah Ahzab, 33:33)

THE HOLY IMAMS

The Holy Imams who are the successors of the Holy Prophet and the spiritual leaders of mankind in this world are the twelve Imams, whose number was textually fixed by the Holy Prophet of Allah in a number of authentic traditions which are unanimously accepted by the Muslims. Their names are in the following order:

1. Imam Ali b. Abi Talib — al-Murtaza
 2. Imam Hasan b. Ali — al-Mujtaba
 3. Imam Husayn b. Ali — al-Shaheed
 4. Imam Ali b. Husayn — al-Sajjad
 5. Imam Muhammad b. Ali — al-Baqir
 6. Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad — al-Sadiq
 7. Imam Musa b. Ja'far — al-Kazim
 8. Imam Ali b. Musa — al-Riza
 9. Imam Muhammad b. Ali — al-Taqi
 10. Imam Ali b. Muhammad — al-Naqi
 11. Imam Hasan b. Ali — al-Askari
 12. Imam Muhammad b. Hasan — al-Mahdi
- (May peace be on Muhammad and his progeny)

MERITS OF AHLUL BAYT

The Ahlul Bayt that is the Chosen Descendants of the Holy Prophet are the exact models of the teachings and the guidance of the Holy Prophet and their merits are as much the same as those of the Holy Prophet.

Undoubtedly, during the period of 250 years from the 11th year of the migration, that is, the year of the passing away of the Holy Prophet up to the 260th year of the Hegira, the year of the occultation of the last and living Imam Mahdi, the Holy Imams had to face varying conditions, and had to have contacts with the people. But their only object was that by following the commands of the Holy Prophet they should safeguard the fundamental principles of Islam and to prevent the people from making any innovations or changes in Islam as so as to ensure dissemination of Islamic ideology among the people in its pure form. As far as it was possible, the Holy Imams did not give up their particular stand in this regard.

The twenty-three years of the Prophetic Mission is divided in three phases of period. In the first three years of the Prophethood, the Holy Prophet was to preach the people in privacy. After that for ten years he openly invited people towards his mission. During this period he along with his devotees had to undergo extreme hardships at the hands of the unbelievers. As a matter of fact under such unfavourable conditions, the Holy Prophet could not reform the human society to its full extent. In the third and the last phase of ten years which began after his migration to Madina, the Holy Prophet had entered into an environment that was congenial to him to unravel the truth and realities. During this period, Islam made a forward march towards progress, and gradually there appeared new vistas of knowledge, wisdom and perfection for the people.

It becomes quite clear that although in each of the three phases, his ways and means were on a different pattern, yet the efforts of the Holy Prophet were aiming at upholding the truth.

In the case of the Holy Imams their period was similar

to that of the Holy Prophet before his migration.

At times, the environments of the Holy Imams were just like the first three years of the Prophethood when it was not possible to openly propagate truth. Yet, the Imams had to perform their functions and duties with caution. As for example, in the days of Imam Sajjad, and the later period of Imam Ja'far Sadiq the conditions were similar to those of the time of the Holy Prophet before migration.

Just as the Holy Prophet also could not do much owing to the oppressions of the idolaters, in the same manner the Holy Imams were put in a difficult situation by the persons in authority and influential people, so that they were unable to impart religious knowledge and guidance to the people.

However, a similarity can be drawn between the time of the ten years after the migration of the Holy Prophet and the five years of the Caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali and a small portion of the lifetime of the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet, Lady Fatima, Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn. The time-period of Imam Hasan and his companions was indeed too short. His time was such that it appeared as if the days of the Holy Prophet were clearly visible.

In short, it can be said that except the time that has been mentioned above, the Holy Imams could not utter a word against the usurping despotic rulers of their time. Hence, they could not but adopt a policy of restraint and *Taqayya* (Dissimulation) by conduct and speech so as not to provide any pretext for the ruling clique to subject them to oppression. But despite this, their enemies were bent upon finding pretexts to eliminate them totally.

THE HOLY IMAMS AND THE DESPOTIC RULERS

After the passing away of the Holy Prophet, the various regimes which came into power one after the other and branded themselves as Islamic, had a deep-rooted animosity against Ahlul Bayt and that enmity continued unabated.

The fact is that the Holy Prophet had spoken of the high merits and attributes of Ahlul Bayt out of which the

most significant one was about their wisdom and the infallibility in understanding the true meaning of the Holy Qur'an as well as their knowledge about lawful and unlawful things. It was for this reason that it became incumbent upon all the believers to hold them in highest esteem and respect. But it is an irony of fate that the people who professed themselves to be Muslims did not do any justice to their religious obligation.

It is an established fact that when the Holy Prophet, on the very first day of his open invitation to Islam called his near relations and introduced Imam Ali as his successor, and during the last days of his life, he categorically made a public announcement at a place called Ghadir-i Khum and at other places about the succession of Imam Ali. But after his passing away, some influential people in utter disregard of the testament of the Holy Prophet, selected a different man as his successor and deprived Ahlul Bayt of their legitimate rights.

This, however, was the reason why the successive regimes were scared of Ahlul Bayt and considered them as their dangerous adversary and started using methods by which they could eliminate them altogether.

The basic difference between Ahlul Bayt and the regime in power was that the former considered it of paramount importance for the Islamic State to be run on the Divine laws and regulations and further that measures should be taken so as to implement them and protect them from innovations. But after the passing away of the Holy Prophet the regimes which came into power, as was revealed by their deeds, avoided the enforcement of Islamic laws and also abandoned the teachings of the Holy Prophet not to speak of emulating his examples. At many places in the Holy Qur'an, the Almighty Allah has prohibited the Holy Prophet and his followers to make any innovations and alterations in the Divine commandments. Besides, He has warned against opposing the religious commands even to the slightest degree.

In the light of the unalterable Divine principles of Islam and its commandments, the Holy Prophet himself

had adopted such an attitude that in the enforcement of religious laws and principles he did not allow any latitude in respect of time, place and personality of any man.

According to Divine revelations, the strict observance and the adherence to the Divine laws and principles was made mandatory for everybody as well as for the Holy Prophet himself, and thus the Shari'ah or the religious code of conduct and Beliefs was applicable to everybody for all times and places. Because of this justice and equality, all kinds of discriminations had completely vanished.

Though the Holy Prophet himself on behalf of Allah was an absolute leader and the ruler, yet he showed no discrimination in his private or public life. He never approved of any pomp and show. Ruler, although he actually was, never did he allow any protocol and pageantry. Despite his very high exalted position never did he put on airs. As a matter of fact whenever an outsider visited him, he could not recognize him from amongst the people sitting around him.

In the time of the Holy Prophet in the various strata of society, no class distinction could be found. Man or woman, the privileged or the downtrodden, the rich or the poor, the strong or the weak, the city dweller or the villager, the captive or the master, and the white or the black, were all on the same footing. Every body felt his responsibility towards his religious obligations. He was safe from bowing his head in submission to those who wielded power and strength or from being subjected to persecutions at the hands of the tyrants.

If we seriously ponder over the matter it dawns upon us clearly especially after the events that we have seen after the passing away of the Holy Prophet that the sole purpose which the Holy Prophet wanted to achieve through his sublime conduct was that the Divine commands and laws are justly and equitably enforced. But the people who were the rulers did not adopt the conduct which was prescribed by the Holy Prophet. Instead they adopted a different course of action which brought about horrible consequences, as elaborated below.

- (i) In a very short span of time, there emerged serious regional and parochial differences. Muslims became divided into two groups, the stronger and the weaker. The life and property as well as the honour and dignity of the weaker group could not be saved from the clutches of the despots.
- (ii) The Islamic State got itself busy in gradually tampering with the Islamic injunctions and more often than not in the name of the welfare of the Islamic society and at times under the pretext of the security of the State and the political stability, they indulged in dilatory tactics in order to push aside the enforcement of the Islamic laws.

This method continued and widened. The so-called Islamic State refused to take any responsibility of re-establishing the Islamic system. Under the circumstances, it is obvious that if any proper attention is given to this important aspect of Islam the result would be simply chaos and confusion.

In short, the regimes contemporary with the Ahlul Bayt brought about changes in the Islamic injunctions out of sheer expediency and their mode of conduct and behaviour was quite in contrast with the standard set by the Holy Prophet.

On the other hand Ahlul Bayt followed the principles of the Holy Qur'an and considered them as the article of faith and fashioned their course of conduct in accordance with the noble qualities of the Holy Prophet.

In view of this contrasting picture of contradictions and incompatibilities, the despotic regimes of the time let loose their oppressive measures on Ahlul Bayt and not only that but they endeavoured to end their very existence.

Despite the hardships that they had to face, the Ahlul Bayt cared little about it and instead dedicated their lives entirely to the singular purpose of discharging their duties in line with their assignment of inviting the people to Islamic principles and commandments, and guiding the pious and virtuous people.

In order to comprehend the crux of the matter, it is necessary that we refer to history and take into consideration the numerical strength of the Shi'ah Muslims during

the five years' period of the Caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali. Undoubtedly, this Shi'ah strength had built itself up during the 25 years of his seclusion from public life.

Similarly, a good majority of the Shi'ah who had gathered around Imam Muhammad Baqir were those who had calmly and quietly received education and guidance from his esteemed father, Imam Sajjad.

In the same manner, hundreds and thousands of people, who were the devotees of Imam Riza and Ahlul Bayt had in actual fact been enlightened by the teachings of Imam Musa Kazim, who had from the dark dungeon in which he passed his life, spread the light of Islam.

In conclusion, it can be deduced that the teachings and guidance of Ahlul Bayt swayed the hearts of the people to such an extent that the Shi'ah Muslims, who were in an insignificant number at the time of the passing away of the Holy Prophet, increased to an enormous number during the later days of Ahlul Bayt.

As has been elaborated above, Ahlul Bayt passed their lives under severe circumstances, undergoing persecutions and subjugations at the hands of the ruling despots. But they never gave up their noble task of teaching and guiding the people under the cover of *Taqayya* (Dissimulation). Only four of the Holy Imams had a free hand in teaching the people without dissimulation though for a limited span of time.

Now we briefly introduce life-sketches of Ahlul Bayt:

IMAM ALI

Imam Ali, son of Abu Talib, was a perfect model of the upbringing and the tutorship of the Holy Prophet.

From his very childhood, Imam Ali was brought up by the Holy Prophet. His love and affection for the Holy Prophet was so immense and intense that he always remained close to him. He had the unique distinction of clasping the sacred body of the Holy Prophet under his arms and depositing it in the grave.

Imam Ali possesses the universally acknowledged and

Divinely-gifted spiritual personality. It can be said without any fear of contradiction that the discussions and comments made on the life and attributes of Imam Ali are too numerous to be found in any other great person of world fame. The Shi'ah and the Sunni Muslims as well as the non-Muslim theologians and scholars have written more than one thousand books on him.

Though both foes and friends have debated much about the attributes and the noble virtues of Imam Ali, yet no one was ever able to discover any weakness in his faith. Besides, none could find him deficient in his famous attributes of chivalry and valour, piety and godliness, knowledge and wisdom, justice and virtuous deeds and endowments of Divine Blessings. In support of this it can be mentioned that Imam Ali was a person who possessed nothing but virtues. In other words he was an embodiment of all that stands for virtue and goodness. He was a model of perfection in its entirety.

History bears testimony to the fact that from the time of the passing away of the Holy Prophet up to the present time, amongst all the known rulers, Imam Ali stands out singly as a person who not only ruled in accordance with the method of the Holy Prophet but he also never deviated from the standard set by him. Imam Ali enforced the Islamic laws and regulations in the same manner in which the Holy Prophet had done it. He never enacted any changes or innovations in those laws.

When for the selection of the caliph, a six-member advisory council was formed by the second caliph and which after his death had hotly debated the issue, it ultimately arrived at the conclusion as to who between Imam Ali and Uthman should become the caliph.

First, the caliphate was offered to Imam Ali on the condition that he would run the State's affairs according to the policies of the first two caliphs and treat the people's problems in accordance with their mode of conduct. Imam Ali outright rejected the offer and declared: "I shall not budge an inch from my own principles".

Then the caliphate was offered to Uthman. He accepted

it unhesitatingly with the same condition though after becoming the caliph he pursued entirely a different course of action.

In pursuing the Divine path, Imam Ali demonstrated an unparalleled devotion and self-sacrifice. No one amongst the companions of the Holy Prophet could match him in any respect. Besides, it cannot be denied that if Imam Ali, the champion of truth and the war hero had not been there, the infidels and the idolaters on the night of migration and thereafter in the Battles of Badr, Uhud, the Ditch, Khaybar and Hunayn would easily have desecrated the Divine standard and the Banner of truth by extinguishing the light of the Prophetood.

When Imam Ali, for the first time set his foot in the social environment, his life was very simple. Besides, both during the lifetime, and after the passing away of the Holy Prophet, as well as during the magnificent period of his caliphate he passed a simple life like an ordinary man. His food, clothing and home were no better than those of the poorest of the poor. He himself said: "The Head of the State should lead his life in such an humble manner that it should be a source of consolation to those who are needy and distressed and not that it should give a feeling of deprivation so as to make them suffer from desperation".

Notwithstanding the fact that Imam Ali was the Head of the Islamic world, he possessed only 700 dirhams on the day of his martyrdom. It was with that money that he wanted to employ a servant for doing his household work.

Imam Ali himself laboured to earn his livelihood. Agriculture was his main field of interest. He himself tilled the land, planted trees and sank subterraneous canals for irrigation.

Whatever money he earned from these sources and whatever he received as a booty, was distributed by him to the poor. And if he developed any land he gave it to the trust, and the income thus accrued from it was given to the needy.

Once during the period of his caliphate he ordered the entire income of his trust properties to be brought to

him first and then it should be spent. The total income thus accumulated was 24,000 gold dinars.

In all the battles, in which Imam Ali, fought against the enemy there was no one whom he did not overpower nor was there anyone who could challenge him openly. Furthermore, there was no encounter with the enemy in which Imam Ali had to retreat. He often said: "Even if the whole of Arabia rises against me I shall be ever proud of fighting them down".

Despite his indomitable courage and valour, the parallel of which history is unable to record, Imam Ali was immensely affectionate, kind-hearted, generous and humble. He neither killed women, children and the weak in any battle, nor did he make them captives. Besides, he never chased the fleeing enemy.

In the Battle of Siffin, Mu'awiya's army after taking the offensive, occupied the banks of the river Euphrates and intercepted the supply of water to the Imam's forces. After a while fierce fighting ensued and then the river banks were captured by the army of Imam Ali. On his command, the use of water was allowed to the enemy.

During the days of his caliphate, Imam Ali was easily accessible to each and all. He granted interviews to the people without a formal intermediary or a personal attendant. He travelled on foot and without any attendant or an escort. He went on round the streets and market places where he sermonized the people to practise continence and to abstain from tyranny. He was very kind to the widows and the helpless. He provided shelter to innumerable orphans in his own house, met with their needs and imparted them education.

Imam Ali laid special emphasis on acquiring knowledge and wisdom. He took keen interest in disseminating knowledge for he said: "There is no malady worse than ignorance".

In the Battle of Jamal (Camel) when Imam Ali was busy arraying his forces an Arab came forward and asked him the philosophy of monotheism. At this everybody objected to his insolence as it was not the time to ask such

a question. But Imam Ali took the man aside and said: "It is for establishing this truth that we are fighting this battle". And while filing past his forces the Holy Imam gave him a cogent reply and satisfied him.

Another such incident has also been recorded in connection with the Battle of Siffin and which speaks of the high calibre of Imam Ali in maintaining discipline on matters of religious sanctity and in his astonishing strength of Divine inspiration.

At a time when the Battle was in full swing, Imam Ali approached one of his soldiers and asked him to fetch water to drink. The soldier then filled a wooden bowl with water and brought it to the Imam. Imam Ali noticed a crack on the bowl and said: "Drinking of water from such containers is undesirable". The soldier defending himself said: "When in the thick of the fight, we are in such a grave situation that we are facing the enemy's arrows and swords, how can we take notice of such minor things?" At this Imam Ali replied: "It is for the establishment of these religious laws and Divine commandments that we are waging war against the enemy and, therefore, there should not be any question of a big or small thing".

After the Holy Prophet, Imam Ali was the first person who approached religious knowledge and thinking from the philosophical angle. In other words his approach of things was rational.

Furthermore, Imam Ali invented many literary terms in Arabic language. With the sole intention of saving the Holy Qur'an from being tampered with, he organized the analytic study of Arabic grammar.

Imam Ali possessed a deep knowledge and insight of religious, moral, social, political and even mathematical matters. It can be found in his sermons, letters and sayings under the caption "Nahjul Balaghah",¹ which are so remarkably wonderful.

Undoubtedly, Imam Ali, because of his sermons, letters, spiritual sayings and other thought-provoking,

¹ See: *Peak of Eloquence*, ISP 1984.

soul-touching and awe-inspiring statements is very well-known among the Muslims and his exalted personality stands distinctly unmatched. Besides, his understanding of the Holy Qur'an and its noble objectives as well as his comprehending the true significance of the concept and practice of Islam remained unsurpassed.

By his wisdom and knowledge, Imam Ali established the veracity of the famous tradition of the Holy Prophet which says: "I am the City of Knowledge and Ali is its gate".

Imam Ali not only proved himself to be the gate of the knowledge of the Holy Prophet, but he also proved it in a practical way.

FATIMA ZAHRA – THE EXALTED LADY

The highly exalted and truthful Lady Fatima Zahra was the only daughter dearest to the heart of the Holy Prophet. By her impeccable wisdom, implicit faith, infallible attributes and pleasant disposition, she had filled the noble heart of her father, the Holy Prophet with profoundest love and affection for her. Because of her wisdom, godliness and devotion to Allah, the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet earned for herself the salutary title of *Sayyidatun Nisa* – the chief of all the women.

The Holy Prophet often proclaimed: "Fatima's pleasure is my pleasure and my pleasure is Allah's pleasure. Fatima's displeasure is my displeasure and my displeasure is Allah's displeasure".

Lady Fatima was born of Lady Khadijah in the sixth year of the Prophethood. In the second year of the migration, she married Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful. It was three months after the passing away of her revered father, the Holy Prophet, she breathed her last.

Throughout her life Fatima Zahra remained steadfast in resigning herself to the Will of Allah. While confining herself to her home, she dedicated herself to the upbringing of her children. She shared her household duties with her maid-servant. They worked on alternate days.

Besides, she attained to women's problems and offered them the solutions. In her leisure hours, she addressed

herself to the worship of Allah. She gave in charity her money especially the income accruing from the sales proceeds of the fruits from her orchard in Fadak, a tract of land comprising a few small villages near Khaybar, to the poor and the needy. Never did she retain with her more than what she barely needed herself. At times, she went without food and instead she gave it to the hungry.

Lady Fatima occupied a highly exalted position. Her forbearance, bold and courageous conduct and strength of character are evidenced by her speech she delivered before Abu Bakr, the first caliph, after the confiscation of her Fadak fruit plantation on his orders and similar other pronouncements on other occasions.

Lady Fatima was the most revered and the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet. She was the beloved wife of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali; mother of Islam's eleven Holy Imams. And above all the Holy Progeny of the Holy Prophet are descended from her alone.

The Poet-Philosopher of the East, Allama Iqbal in one of his couplets in persian says:

*"Maryam Az Yak Nisbat-i Isa, Aziz;
Az Seb Nisbat Hazrat-i Zabra, Aziz".*

Mary has only one distinction of being the mother of Prophet Isa (Jesus) but Fatima Zahra has three distinctions of being the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet, the esteemed wife of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali and the exalted mother of the eleven Holy Imams.

According to the Qur'anic testimonies, Lady Fatima occupies a supreme position of infallibility.

IMAM HASAN AND IMAM HUSAYN

Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn are the real brothers. They are exalted sons of Imam Ali and Lady Fatima.

The Holy Prophet called his two grandsons as his own sons. He had for them intense love and affection. Whenever they were subjected to any trouble, he became extremely distressed.

The Holy Prophet once said: "Whether they are resting or rising these two sons of mine are the Imams and the leaders".

By "resting" it was inferred that Imam Hasan would play the role of the harbinger of peace and by "rising" it was meant that Imam Husayn would rise against the enemies of Islam.

The following is the famous saying of the Holy Prophet: "Hasan and Husayn are the two leaders of the youths of Paradise".

According to the will of his revered father, Imam Hasan was selected successor on his martyrdom and the people without hesitation took oath of allegiance to him. Except for the territories of Syria and Egypt where Mu'awiya had established his own independent kingdom, Imam Hasan, as the Head of the Islamic State administered the State functions efficiently for six months in accordance with the guidelines of Imam Ali.

During this short period of time, Imam Hasan raised an army for the purpose of suppressing Mu'awiya's rising but eventually he realized that the people were inclined towards him. Not only that he had discovered that his own generals were in conspiracy with Mu'awiya and also that they were in contact with him surreptitiously so that on receiving instructions they could hand him over to Mu'awiya or to kill him by his orders. Under the circumstances, Imam Hasan was left with no alternative but to accept a peace offer.

Imam Hasan made peace with Mu'awiya on certain conditions, but the latter did not honour his words.

After the pact, Mu'awiya came down to Iraq. He seated himself on a pulpit and delivered a speech before the Muslims. He said: "I was not fighting against you for the sake of religion, so that you observe fast and offer prayers but I wanted to rule over you. I have obtained my objective. The peace pact that was contracted with Hasan, is under my feet now".

After his self-abdication, Imam Hasan passed nine and a half years of his pious life under Mu'awiya's regime in very trying and unpleasant circumstances. His life was in constant danger so much so that he was not secure in his own house even. Finally Imam Hasan was martyred at the

hands of his wife named Jo'dah, who at Mu'awiya's behest poisoned him.

After the martyrdom of Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn, in deference to the Will of Allah and according to the will of his illustrious brother, followed in his footsteps. He devoted himself to his brother's mission of guiding the people to the right path.

For Imam Husayn the prevailing conditions were the same as of the days of his brother. Meantime, Mu'awiya had tightened his grip still further and Imam Husayn was in a tight spot.

After about nine and a half years Mu'awiya died, and the caliphate, which in actual fact had been converted into a monarchy, was passed on to his son, Yazid.

Unlike his cunning hypocritical father, Yazid was a self-conceited and contemptuous man. Youthful as he was, he openly indulged in debauchery and nasty revelries. And after assuming full control of his powers, this despotic soulless creature wrote to the Governor of Madina to take for him an oath of allegiance from Imam Husayn or send him his head instead.

When the Governor of Madina asked Imam Husayn for an oath of allegiance to Yazid, he asked for time. Thereafter, in the night, he proceeded to Makkah and took refuge in Ka'bah which is considered in Islam as a Sanctuary of Allah. After staying there for a few months he realized that Yazid was not going to spare him in any case and that he was bent upon taking his life. In the meantime he received several thousand letters from Iraq in which the people assured him of their support and asked him to start a campaign against Yazid, the tyrant ruler of Bani Umayya.

Keeping in view the condition that was prevailing there, Imam Husayn knew that his movement would not yield any tangible results. Nevertheless he made up his mind to refuse an oath of allegiance to Yazid and instead he was prepared to lay his life by fighting for the cause of truth.

He, therefore, along with his own people proceeded to Kufa. On his way at a deserted place named Karbala

about seventy kilometers from Kufa, he was confronted by a huge army of Yazid.

Before proceeding on his journey, Imam Husayn did not ask for help from any quarter. Instead he asked those people who were accompanying him to leave him and go to a place of safety as he was sure to be martyred in an encounter with the enemy. As such he was left with only a handful of his devoted followers and disciples. Now he and his people were besieged by the enemy's army in a tight enclosure and even water was denied to him and his people. Under this situation, he gave his companions an option either to accept the allegiance of Yazid or to get themselves martyred. Imam Husayn refused to pay allegiance to Yazid and was ready to be martyred.

On the tenth of Muharram, Imam Husayn fought valiantly from morning to dusk and ultimately along with his sons, nephews, uncle's son and other companions (seventy two in number), was martyred. Only one of his revered sons, Imam Sajjad survived as, because of his illness, he was unable to fight.

After the martyrdom of Imam Husayn the enemy's army looted the personal property of the Imam and made his family members captives. They took them with the heads of the martyrs from Karbala to Kufa and then to Damascus.

In captivity, Imam Sajjad delivered a speech in Syria. In the same way, Zaynab, the noble sister of Imam Husayn delivered forceful speeches before the large gatherings of people in Kufa, in front of Ibn Ziyad, the Governor of Kufa and lastly in the court of Yazid. In her speeches, she unravelled the truth by exposing Bani Umayya's high-handedness, cruelties and vicious deeds.

Finally the movement of Imam Husayn which ended in the sacred rising against cruelties, the shedding of blood of his sons and near and dear ones as well as of his devoted followers, and the plundering of his property and finally in the captivity of women and children, is such an extraordinary event that the like of it is untraceable in the history of the world.

However it can be said with certainty that because of this tragic event, Islam is alive still. Had this tragedy not happened, Bani Umayya would have wiped out every single trace of Islam.

About the Tragedy of Karbala, Allama Iqbal says in one of his Persian couplets:

*Babr-i Haq Dar Khak-o-Kbun Gbaltida Ast,
Pas Bina-i La Ila ba Gardida Ast.*

Imam Husayn lay in a pool of blood for the sake of truth. Thus he laid the foundation of monotheism.

THE STAND OF IMAM HASAN AND IMAM HUSAYN

According to the tradition of the Holy Prophet these two Imams are infallible leaders of Islam, yet apparently they seem to be different. Some have gone as far as to say that there existed a sharp contrast between their angle of vision and method of approach so much so that Imam Hasan despite the support of 40,000 strong army entered into a peace pact with Mu'awiya while Imam Husayn, with barely forty supporters in addition to his near kinsmen rose in defence of Islam and sacrificed his life along with his companions and his infant son.

By scrutinizing the situation, it has been proved that such an opinion is absurd because Imam Hasan passed his nine and a half years of life under the domination of Mu'awiya but he never opposed him openly, and similarly after the martyrdom of his brother, Imam Husayn passed his life for about nine and a half years under the regime of Mu'awiya but he neither thought of rising against Mu'awiya nor did he also oppose him openly.

Hence, the cause of the apparently different course of action adopted by these two great leaders should not be viewed as a temperamental difference but the same should be discovered in the divergent views and method of approach of Mu'awiya and his son, Yazid.

The policy pursued by Mu'awiya was not based on slipshod methods. He neither openly flouted the edicts of religion nor did he make a mockery of them. On the other hand, he preferred to be recognized as a companion of the

Holy Prophet and as one of the scribes of Divine revelations. Furthermore, on account of his sister being one of the wives of the Holy Prophet, and she being the mother of the Faithful, he prided himself to be the maternal uncle of the believers. Besides this, he was in good books of the second caliph who enjoyed the confidence as well as the esteem of the people.

Apart from this Mu'awiya appointed many of those companions of the Holy Prophet, who were held in great respect, for instance, Abu Hurayra, Amr bin Ās, Samra, Yusr, and Mughira bin Sho'ba as governors and other high-ranking officials. These people used to mobilize public opinion in his favour. Besides, a great many spurious traditions were being circulated among the people impressing upon them the high status of the companions of the Holy Prophet as being infallible and their conduct being indisputable. The underlying idea was that whatever the Sahāba (companions of the Holy Prophet) did was justified.

As a result of this manoeuvring, if and when anything that was done by Mu'awiya needed clarification or justification, the same was done by these very Sahāba who were his right hand men, or alternatively in certain cases his opponents were bribed into silence. And wherever such methods did not work, thousands of innocent supporters of Imam Ali, known in history as '*Sbi'ab-i Ali*' and several other Muslims, who incidentally were also the companions, were killed by the supporters of Mu'awiya.

Mu'awiya considered himself justified in all matters, and proceeded to his work patiently and cautiously. He had a knack of winning over people's heart by tact, politeness and leniency so much so that if somebody disgraced him by showering abuses on him or quarrelled with him, he was not out of humour, and instead gave him valuable gifts. This was the policy he adopted.

Outwardly, Mu'awiya showed great respect to Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn and sent them precious gifts. On the other hand, he had, by a public proclamation, made it clear that if anybody tried to quote any Hadith (tradition) in praise of the virtues and high attributes of Ahlul Bayt,

his life, property and honour would not be spared, but in the case of the traditions extolling the companions, he would be richly rewarded.

Besides, Mu'awiya had also issued orders that the persons leading the congregational prayers should by way of gaining spiritual rewards, abuse Imam Ali from the pulpit of the mosques. Also on his instructions, the devoted supporters of Imam Ali were assassinated on a large scale, and among them were also those who were the antagonists of Imam Ali but were also killed on account of friendship with Imam Ali.

From what has been stated above, it becomes clear that if Imam Hasan had risen against Mu'awiya, it would have produced no concrete result except that of harming the interest of Islam and more than anything else his and his supporters' lives would have been lost. And there was every possibility that Mu'awiya would have got Imam Hasan killed by his (Imam's) own supporters and then would himself have mourned his death in order to pacify the feelings of the people. He would have seized the opportunity of avenging the Imam's death by harassing people and charging the supporters of Imam Ali and Imam Hasan's devoted followers and disciples with murder under the pretext of avenging his death. This sort of role he had already played in the case of Uthman.

Yazid, unlike his hypocritical father, was a self-conceited and fickle-minded person. He believed in 'Might is Right'. He paid scant attention to public opinion. As such the irreparable damage that was being done to Islam from behind the currain, was now openly done by Yazid during his short regime.

In the first year of his assuming power as a despotic ruler, he massacred the progeny of the Holy Prophet.

In the second year, he ransacked Madina and by a decree made it lawful for his army to plunder the life, honour and property of the inhabitants of Madina for full three days.

In the third year, he demolished the Holy Ka'bah, the House of Allah.

It was as a result of these sordid acts of Yazid that the resistance and the sacrifice of Imam Husayn touched the hearts of the people and its impact grew more and more intense as days rolled on. In the beginning it appeared like a revolutionary movement which culminated in bloodshed but it ultimately turned out to build up a large group of the people to sacrifice themselves for the cause of the truth and for the love and respect for the Ahlul Bayt. It was for this reason that Mu'awiya had forewarned his son, Yazid, and advised him to leave Imam Husayn and not to antagonize him at any cost. But it was Yazid's obnoxious habits and self-glorification which made him blind to distinguish between right and wrong.

IMAM SAJJAD

During his period of Imamate, the method of approach of Imam Sajjad can be divided into two parts both of which conform to the general course of conduct pursued by the other Imams.

At the time of the tragedy of Karbala, Imam Sajjad was with his revered father and was associated with the movement initiated by Imam Husayn. After the martyrdom of his father, he was taken prisoner and was sent first from Karbala to Kufa and then to Syria.

During his captivity, he never observed *Taqayya* (Dissimulation) and instead he always spoke the truth without fear and fright. Whenever occasion demanded, he delivered speeches. By his frank and outspoken oratory, he eulogized the merits of the Ahlul Bayt (the family) of the Holy Prophet and won sympathies of the people. He condemned the atrocities meted out to his revered father and exposed the tyrannies of the rulers of Bani Umayya.

On his release, however, Imam Sajjad came to Madina. After the commotion being subsided, he retired into seclusion and addressed himself to the worship of Allah. His doors were shut on the faces of strangers. But he continued preaching his followers and guiding them to the right path.

The invocations he offered in his humility to Allah

are treasured in the annals of Islamic learning and teachings. It was through the medium of his invocations that achieved the proximity to Allah. He conversed with Him throughout his meditation.

The supplications of Imam Sajjad, peace be on him, have been compiled in a book which is famous by the name of "*Sabifa-i Sajjadiya*".

IMAM MUHAMMAD BAQIR

In the time of Imam Muhammad Baqir there appeared some facilities for the dissemination of religious knowledge and teachings. Under the pressure of Bani Umayya, the traditions regarding the jurisprudence of Ahlul Bayt were destroyed. Though thousands of traditions had been recorded about the Islamic principles and precepts, yet not more than five hundred of them quoted by the companions escaped destruction.

The purpose of this discussion is that as a consequence of the tragedy of Karbala, with the efforts of Imam Sajjad for thirty five years, a large number of the Shi'ah had come into existence but there were no records of the Islamic jurisprudence and commandments of Islam. But since the regime of Bani Umayya was getting collapsed because of internal bickerings and dissensions, and its rulers' indulgence in revelries, Imam Muhammad Baqir, the fifth Imam, availed himself of the opportunity of propagating the Islamic jurisprudence and furnishing the Islamic society with religious scholars.

IMAM JA'FAR SADIQ

When Imam Ja'far Sadiq was installed as the sixth Imam, the environment for the propagation and the spreading of Islamic knowledge and teachings had become more favourable, because on the one hand owing to the propagation of traditions by Imam Muhammad Baqir and the teachings and preachings of his trained disciples, the people took great interest in Islamic teachings under the infallible guidance of Ahlul Bayt, and on the other hand the kingdom of Bani Umayya was overtaken by Bani

Abbas. Bani Abbas in fact were marking time to consolidate their rule and since they toppled Bani Umayya on the pretext of avenging the sufferings of Ahlul Bayt, they treated them mildly.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq taught his disciples various branches of knowledge. Large number of scholars and groups of learned people used to come and pay homage to him in deference to his highly exalted position and benefited from his vast Divine knowledge and wisdom. They also sought his guidance by listening answers to their queries on intricate problems.

The Holy Imam entered into discussions with people belonging to various schools of thought and debated upon the questions with the scholars of various religions. He trained his disciples in various branches of religious knowledge. All his verbal pronouncements and the traditions quoted by him are named as "*Usul*" (Principles). To preserve them several hundred books have been published.

Whenever Imam Ja'far Sadiq got opportunity in these conditions of uncertainty and instability, he imparted knowledge to thousands of his disciples and left behind great treasure of knowledge and learning. The number of people who had the good fortune of acquiring knowledge and wisdom from him exceeded four thousand.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq had always insisted that his pupils should note down whatever they learnt from him, and committing them to memory. He prophesied that a time was fast approaching when all those books would be destroyed and the same would be needed afterwards for the posterity. It was because of this that all his disciples and pupils were fully equipped with writing instruments to note down whatever was taught to them.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq was always busy in teaching and training the people publicly and privately and thus he kept on transmitting knowledge and wisdom throughout his life.

In short, it was Imam Ja'far Sadiq who by his knowledge and wisdom demolished the barrier of ignorance and foolishness and re-modelled the foundations of the Divine religion of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

It is but for this achievement that he is regarded as the pioneer of the Shi'ah Faith of Islam which after his name is known as "Ja'fri School of Thought".

IMAM MUSA KAZIM

When Bani Abbas came into power after overthrowing the regime of Bani Umayya, they made Bani Fatima as their next target and accordingly they endeavoured hard to wipe out the traces of Ahlul Bayt — the family of the Holy Prophet. Many of them were beheaded straightaway. A good many of them were buried alive. And still quite a good number of them were used as building materials in the foundation of walls. They went so far as to set the house of the sixth Imam on fire. Besides this he was summoned to Iraq for inquisition a number of times.

Obviously, under such extreme conditions in the later days of his life, *Taqayya* (Dissimulation) became all the more necessary. Since he was under strict surveillance, he avoided meeting the people except a few of his devotees.

At last Mansur, the second Abbasid caliph got him poisoned. Hence we can say that the Imamate of the seventh Imam, was the period of great trial and tribulation.

In spite of being under the heavy cover of dissimulation, Imam Musa Kazim got himself heavily engaged in the task of disseminating and conveying information on Islamic teachings and principles. He also narrated many traditions. It can be said that after the fifth and the sixth Imams, his juristic precepts are more than those of other Holy Imams.

However, on account of severe dissimulation, many narrations quoted by him were anonymously quoted as coming from '*Alim* (Scholar) or '*Abdus Saleh* (Pious).

Imam Musa Kazim lived to see the reigns of four Abbasid caliphs Mansur, Hadi, Mahdi and Harun, all of whom treated him with extreme torture and tyranny.

At last under the orders of Harun, he was sent to imprisonment and for many years he was shifted from one prison to another. It was in the prison itself that he too was martyred through poisoning.

After giving a careful thought to the state of affairs that existed then, any sensible person can at once realize that the more the ruling caliphs as well as the enemies of the Holy Imams subjected the latter and their supporters to hardship and persecution, the more the number of their devotees increased and the more they became firm in their belief and conviction. Ultimately, they considered the caliphate as the most abominable and villainous institution.

It was the feeling of inferiority that had always troubled the minds of the caliphs and it made them helpless and disgraceful.

The seventh Abbasid caliph, Mamun was the contemporary of Imam Ali Riza, the right Imam. Since Mamun ascended the throne of the caliphate after slaying his brother, he thought that he should get rid of his grief and continued anxiety, and as such he wanted to destroy Shi'ism root and branch by implementing methods other than force and coercion.

For the purpose of achieving his object, Mamun adopted a new policy. He thought of appointing Imam Ali Riza, as his heir-apparent so that by getting him involved in the dirty game of the caliphate, he might disgrace him in the eyes of his supporters and ultimately the image of the greatness and piety of the Holy Imam might be tarnished and consequently the sacred institution of Imamate would have crumbled down all by itself.

With the pursuance of this policy, he was to gain one more advantage of weakening the movement of Bani Fatima against the Abbasids as the former would have erroneously thought that since the caliphate was being transferred already to Bani Fatima as a result of Imam Ali Riza being appointed as heir-apparent, there was no necessity of continuing the bloody revolts against the Abbasids. Thus after achieving these two objectives, it would have not been difficult for Mamun to end the life of Imam Ali Riza.

Mamun offered to Imam Ali Riza first the caliphate and then to accept the heir-apparentship. It was under the pressure of threats and intimidation that Imam Ali Riza

accepted the heir-apparentship on the condition that he would not be involved in making appointments and transfers of State officials or in running other State affairs.

Under the situation, Imam Ali Riza got himself busy in reforming the people by educating them and as far as it was possible he entered into discussions and debates with the scholars of other religions. He laid great emphasis on the true significance of the teachings of Islam by his thought-provoking speeches and pronouncements. Mamun too was keenly interested in such religious discussions.

The pronouncements and statements that have come to us from Imam Ali Riza about Islamic teachings are almost of the same number as those of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali and which exceed those of other Holy Imams.

One of the greatest benevolent offerings of Imam Ali Riza that have come to us as a legacy is that when the traditions relating to Ahlul Bayt which were in possession of the Shi'ah Muslims, were brought before him for scrutiny, he rejected many of them as being deliberately concocted and fabricated by treacherous elements. As a result of this, Shi'ah traditions are now free from any such fake and forged narrations.

When as an heir-apparent, Imam Ali Riza travelled from Madina to Marv, he received the most enthusiastic welcome from the people on his way especially when he was in Iran. Thousands of people from all over the place came in groups to pay homage to him. Generally people surrounded him with feelings of love and respect and sought his guidance in learning the commandments of Islam.

After noticing an unexpected and unprecedented ovation of the people to the Holy Imam, Mamun realized his error of pursuing that sort of policy and in an attempt to save his face he got him martyred with poison.

This incident after all paved the way for the revival of the caliphs' old policy with regard to Ahlul Bayt and their Shi'ah supporters.

IMAM MUHAMMAD TAQI, IMAM ALI NAQI AND IMAM HASAN ASKARI

These three Imams lived almost in identical conditions.

After the martyrdom of Imam Ali Riza, Mamun summoned the Imam's only son, Imam Muhammad Taqi to Baghdad and treated him with courtesy. He married his daughter to the Holy Imam and kept him with all honour and dignity.

Although apparently Mamun's attitude with Imam Muhammad Taqi was friendly, he had kept him under strict surveillance. In the similar way, the staying of Imam Ali Naqi and Imam Hasan Askari in Samarrah, the capital city of the caliphate, was in actual fact a detention.

The total duration of the Imamate of these three Holy Imams was of fifty seven years. During this period the number of the Shi'ah Muslims who lived in Iran, Iraq and Syria reached several hundred thousands and amongst them were thousands of traditionalists. Despite their large number, the traditions that have been quoted from these Holy Imams are not much in number.

Apart from this, these Holy Imams did not attain ripe ages. The ninth, tenth and the eleventh Imam were martyred respectively at the age of twenty five, forty and twenty seven years. From all these facts it becomes evidently clear that during the time of these three Holy Imams the opponents had a strong hold on them and as such they did not discharge their obligations of Imamate freely. Yet, very valuable narrations about the teachings and principles of Islam have reached us from these three Holy Imams.

IMAM MAHDI – THE AWAITED SAVIOUR

In the time of Imam Hasan Askari the prevailing authority of the caliphate had decided after all to kill his successor so as to bring an end to the institution of Imamate and to finish the Shi'ah (Supporters) of Islam altogether. Accordingly, Imam Hasan Askari was put under strict surveillance. For this reason, the birth of Imam Mahdi, the Imam of the present age,¹ was kept in secrecy. Barring

¹See: *The Awaited Saviour*, Murtaza Mutahhari, I.S.P. 1982.

a few distinguished Shi'ah, nobody had seen him till he had reached the age of six when his father, Imam Hasan Askari was alive.

After the martyrdom of his father, Imam Mahdi temporarily went into occultation in accordance with the Command of Allah for a short period during which he used to answer the queries and solve the problems of the Shi'ah Muslims through his intermediaries (four of his chosen representatives) who performed their duty one after the other for about four years. After the termination of *Ghaybat-i Sughra* (Minor Occultation) he went into *Ghaybat-i Kubra* (Major Occultation). He will remain invisible until the time the Divine Will makes him reappear. After his re-appearance, he will purify the earth of cruelties and will establish the reign of justice and equity. A large number of narrations from the Holy Prophet and the Holy Imams about the personality, the state of occultation, and the final reappearance of Imam Mahdi, which have come down to us, have been quoted by both the Sunni and Shi'ah traditionalists.

Many of the distinguished Shi'ah Muslims had the good fortune of seeing Imam Mahdi during the lifetime of his father and heard from him the good tidings of his Imamate.

Now after discussing the question of Prophethood and Imamate, we have arrived at a positive conclusion that this world would never become void of Allah's religion and of an Imam who would ever remain its strong supporter, and protector.

CONDUCT OF THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

The net result that we get from the study of the life of Allah's Prophets and leaders of religion is that they believed in the concept and practice of truth and truthfulness and invited mankind also to believe in truth and practise truthfulness. And in the fulfilment of their mission they spared no effort and sacrifice. In other words, their objective was that the people and the society should be guided on right lines. They wanted the people to get rid of

ignorance and superstitious beliefs and instead believe in truth and adopt a rational line of thinking. They wished that man should not behave like beasts.

The pious prophets and their successors had no selfish motive of their own. Their only concern was to put the society on the road to prosperity and happiness in this world and the Hereafter. They dedicated and devoted their entire life to this purpose only. They were never ill-disposed towards anybody. They wished happiness and prosperity to all and sundry. Their motto was: 'Do as you would be done by'. They gave utmost importance to this aspect of man's duty and wished that man had acquitted himself well. As for themselves, they never hesitated to sacrifice all their assets including their precious life itself for the fulfilment of their mission. They were immune from all evil things. They never made accusations against others nor were they jealous of anybody's high position and respectable status in society. The overall attributes that these people possessed will be dealt with again in the chapter on "Morals".

RESURRECTION – THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

The belief in the resurrection of man after his death is one of the three fundamentals of Islam. By nature, man is capable of discerning between good and bad things. It is a different matter that though he does not follow good things yet he knows that a good thing is always good. He cannot consider it bad only because he does not practise it. Similarly he considers a bad thing bad even if he indulges in doing it.

However, in this world we seldom find that a man who performs noble deeds is fully rewarded. We also see that a man who commits sins and other crimes remains unpunished. A man who abides by good things is often found suffering misfortunes and hardships and the one who does all sorts of immoral things is found enjoying an easy and comfortable life.

Hence had there not been a day on which man would have to account for his good or bad deeds and would be

recompensed for them than the idea that a thing is good or bad and it should be done or avoided would not have been found in his nature.

It should not be deduced that since man considers good things as good they maintain the affairs of the society by which the people lead a prosperous life and in the process he himself gets the benefits of good things. In the same way an evil-doer brings about disruption in the society and as a result of which he is also affected by his evil deeds. Although this sort of thinking is present in people who do not wield any power it cannot be said of those persons who have acquired power to rule over the people, since they are least affected by the peace and prosperity of the society but on the other hand, the more disorderliness and chaos is present in the society, the more they are benefited by them. But we cannot say with certainty that such people do not take good things as good or bad things as bad.

It should also not be construed that though such people are successful in their life, yet they will always be remembered with a bad name because of their evil deeds. It is but natural that it is only after they die that the people name them with contempt. Under this situation, there is no reason why man should not consider good things as good, and bad things as bad, for if that is not so the very belief of life after death will look like a myth. In the light of the previous discussion, we must believe, as is inherently present in our human nature, in the noble and the pious truth of our coming to life after death by Divine Will and the accountability of our good and evil deeds as a logical conclusion. The day when Allah will reward the righteous with eternal blessings and punish the evil-doers for their evil deeds is called the Day of Judgement.

RESURRECTION, RELIGIONS AND COMMUNITIES

The religions which call upon the people to worship Allah and to do noble deeds as well as to abstain from evil things, also have the belief in the resurrection of human beings. It is because the purpose of performing the

noble deeds can only be materialized if in return there happens to be a guarantee for their receiving benefits from them. As the man is not wholly or partially rewarded in this world for his virtuous and noble deeds, it is but natural that he will be rewarded in the next world with the beginning of his new life after death.

Apart from this, from the ancient tombs that have been discovered by excavations it is revealed as their exhibits and various signs show that man in the olden times also believed in the life after death as at burial many such rites were performed by which it was intended that the dead man could receive a good return of his deeds in the next world after his death.

THE HOLY QUR'AN AND RESURRECTION

The Holy Qur'an in several verses mentions of the life after death and in this connection it negates all doubts or misgivings. And at many places it arouses the man's intellect so that he may not entertain any doubt about this fact. At the first instance it reminds man about the man's creation by Allah's Absolute Power. Thus at one place He says: *Does not man realize that We created him from a seed of fluid? Yet he does not believe and forgets even his own creation. He says as to who could revive the decayed bones back to life? O Prophet! Tell them only He will revive them Who has first given them life from nonentity.* (Surah Yasin, 36:79).

Sometimes the Holy Qur'an tells the people by citing a similitude of the dead earth of the winter coming to life again at the coming of the spring and reminds man of the Omnipotence of Allah. He says: *One of the clear Divine signs is that you see the earth dead and motionless, but as soon as Allah pours rain on it, it comes to life and becomes fertile and green. Allah Who revives the dead earth to life Will also revive the dead man to life. Allah is able to do all things.* (Surah Ha Mim Sajdah, 41:39)

The Holy Qur'an discusses this matter with logical reasoning also. Allah says: *We have not created the heavens and earth and all that is between them in vain, though this*

is the belief of the infidels. Woe to the disbelievers; they will suffer the torment of Hell Fire. Do We consider the righteously striving believers equal to the evil doers in the earth? Are the pious ones equal to those who openly commit sin? (Surah Sâd, 38.27 – 28)

It is not like that a man comes into existence, roams about for sometime and dies and another man comes to life and dies until the process continues for long. Then the very purpose of creation would look nothing more than a plaything. But the All-Wise and All-Knowing Allah acts not in vain. Those people who disbelieve the resurrection, consider creation as meaningless. Can Allah treat the righteous and the virtuous people on the same level as the wicked and the evil-doers? In this world when the righteous and the wicked do not get the full return of their deeds, there will be a great injustice if both the groups do not get the reward or punishment in another world and this thing is against the Divine Justice.

FROM DEATH UP TO RESURRECTION

From the standpoint of Islam, man is a creation which is made up of body and soul. The body is a complex substance made of matter and as such it is governed by all the physical and natural laws affecting matter. That is to say like matter, it has its volume, weight and dimensions and it passes its life in a given place and time. It is affected by weather, cold and heat. It grows into an ageing process and becomes old. Ultimately, as by the Divine Will he was created and came to life on one day so also on a particular day his body will perish altogether like any other matter.

On the other hand, the human soul is not material. It has no qualities of a matter. It has the spiritual qualities of abstract nature such as thought, intention, love, hatred, joy, sorrows, friendliness, feeling of enmity, fear and hopefulness. The soul is independent of the body and it does not possess any quality of a matter but the body and its component parts like heart, brain, limbs and other organs are dependent of the soul in the discharge of their physical and physiological functions and no organ of human body

can be taken as the centre of his physical activity.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *We have created man from an extract of clay which was then turned into a living germ and placed in safe depository. The living germ then was turned into a shapeless lump of flesh from which bones were formed. The bones then were covered with flesh. At this stage We caused it to become another creature. All blessings belong to Allah, the best Creator. Thereafter you will certainly die and you will be brought back to life again on the day of resurrection.* (Surah Mo'minun, 23:14)

MEANING OF DEATH

From the standpoint of Islam it does not mean that man after his death becomes completely destroyed, vanished, extinct or non-existent, but it means that the human soul which is indestructible severs its connection with the body and as a result of which the body perishes. Thus, the soul continues its life without the bondage of body. Allah says: *Those who do not believe in the Day of Judgement say: 'How could it be possible that after death when our bodies turn into dust we will be recreated again'. O Prophet! Tell them that the Angel of Death who is deputed on everybody takes the soul out of the body; and to your Lord you will all return.* (Surah Sajdah, 32:11) (i.e. the soul remains intact with all its qualities; the body only perishes but the souls do not perish).

The Holy Prophet also said about it: "You do not perish after death. Only you are shifted from one house to another".

BARZAKH (PURGATORY)

From the Islamic point of view, man after death remains still alive but in a different form and shape. If he is virtuous, he is blessed with Divine bounties and if he is wicked and evil-doer he will remain under constant torture. And when the Day of Judgement comes everybody will be resurrected to life to account for his deeds.

The world in which man passes his life after death until the Day of Judgement is called *Barzakh*, that is the

transitory world. Allah says: *After death people will be behind Barzakh until the day of their resurrection.* (Surah Mo'minun, 23:100) Allah further says: *Do not think of those who are slain in the cause of Allah as dead. Nay, they are alive. Allah provides them their sustenance.* (Surah Ale Imran, 3:169)

MORALS

The innumeral resources that man has found for himself and the various amenities of life that he has acquired for his comfort and better living were not available to him from the very beginning. In fact these became available only gradually by man's continuous efforts and endeavours.

Right from the primitive days to the present civilization, man happened to be physically and mentally active. By his very instinct he has always been striving for utilizing his resources for making life worth living.

If man's internal or external parts of body like eyes, ears, mouth, hands, limbs, heart, lungs, liver and brain cease to perform their functions, he will be nothing but a corpse. It is for this reason that man does not discharge his functions or exhibits his physical activity because he is compelled to do so but as he is a human being and by virtue of human nature he understands it well that to acquire happiness and prosperity is the very essence of life. Thus in the fulfilment of this objective, he struggles hard irrespective of the surroundings he is living in or the manner of life he is adopting whether it be religious or temporal, statutory or despotic, nomadic or civic. Undoubtedly, these struggles of life and obligations are the only means for happiness and prosperity which are the real worth of life. In fact we cannot think of any better substitute for it.

One of the paramount problems that man faces in life is the realization of his sense of duty for without it his role

in society is reduced to naught. Thus, if anybody ignores his duties he lowers himself in the eyes of his fellow beings and as a natural consequence, he feels the prick of his conscience. By this he does not only harm the society of which he is a component part but also damages his own interest.

In the Holy Qur'an Allah says: *By the time, man is doomed to suffer loss, except the righteously striving believers who exhort each other to truthful purposes and to patience.* (Surah Asr, 103) Allah further says: *Corruption has spread on the earth because of the evil deeds of the people.* (Surah Rum, 30:41)

DISSENTING VIEWS ON THE DEFINITION OF DUTY

It is the bounded duty of man to realize his responsibilities towards his fellow beings and the human society. In fact it is such a vital obligation that nobody can deny it.

Human obligations have a direct bearing on the life and prosperity of man and, therefore, when the directions of religion are different from those of non-religious systems, the religious obligations will naturally be different from those of any other system.

Religion declares that man's life is infinite and eternal. It is indestructible and is not at all affected by death. The assets of this eternal life are the pious and the unflinching beliefs and good morals and virtuous deeds which he performs in this world, and which will stand him in good stead in the Hereafter.

When religion has specified the duties and obligations for every man in this world, it has also kept in view his well-being in the world Hereafter. Thus, religion fashions its commandments and regulations according to man's paramount duty towards Allah, the fruits of which will only be realized on the Day of Judgement.

The non-religious systems of doctrines, rules and regulations take into account only man's material needs and they are based on biological factors which are common to man and animals. However, they do not take into consideration the spiritual aspect of man's life. That is

why high ideals of morality are gradually diminishing and to a certain extent have completely vanished in non-religious societies. In the long run, they lead to moral degradation.

Some people argue that religion is based on blind following of its principles and teachings and it admits no logic at all and as such its follower has to accept everything that it encompasses without any reluctance. While on the other hand, they say that social laws and regulations are in full conformity with man's reasoning and sense of logical thinking. Such people in fact conveniently forget that the social or temporal rules and regulations are followed and obeyed without any excuse. It has never come to light that people have been given the liberty of questioning the laws that are in force in a country or to discuss their merits and demerits. And if a person does not understand the philosophy of some laws, rules or regulation, he is not exempted from abiding by them. From this point of view, there seems to be no difference between the *modus operandi* of the religious and the non-religious systems of working.

By studying the physical and social conditions that are prevalent in a country and by probing the various working systems, one can understand the philosophy behind their principles and some of the underlying details. The same is applied to religious principles also. Therefore, by studying the very philosophy of man's creation and his natural needs, one can fully comprehend the broad-based principles of religion which is by all means a realistic system.

The Holy Qur'an and many traditions invite man to apply his reasoning and use his common sense to understand the true significance of religious commandments and obligations. In this connection many traditions and teachings of the Holy Prophet and Ahlul Bayt are available and they fully explain the philosophy of religious commandments.

RECOGNITION OF DUTIES

As has been said in the beginning of this book, Islam is an eternally viable system which has been brought by

Muhammad, the Last Prophet, peace be on him and his progeny, from Allah the Great for the betterment of man's life in this world and the Hereafter and to enforce it upon the human society so as to relieve the people of ignorance and secure salvation for them.

Since religion is a perfect code of life, it has specified man's duties and obligations which it wants to be fulfilled. Generally, our life is connected with three main things.

(i) Our relationship with Allah Who is our Creator, for Whose bounties we owe the greatest debt of gratitude, and our duty towards Him is the greatest of all duties.

(ii) Our sense of duty towards ourselves.

(iii) Our sense of duty towards others, because we are forced to lead our lives with them and with their co-operation.

Therefore, as a rule, we are governed by laws which define our duty towards Allah, ourselves and others.

MAN'S DUTY TOWARDS ALLAH

Our duty towards Allah is the most important of all duties. Hence, we must perform this duty with sincerity of purpose. Man's first obligation is to believe in the existence of his Lord, the Creator. Since Allah is Omnipresent, His existence is reflected by all of His creations. Similarly, the knowledge of Allah's existence is the source of enlightenment to those who are gifted with an inner eye to perceive realities. The indifference towards this realistic approach leads to ignorance, lack of consciousness and disregard of the sense of duty. If a man becomes indifferent to Allah's cognition and His Benificence, he puts out the glowing light of his conscience and gets himself deprived of real happiness which as a rule is the main objective of one's life.

As we often see that those people, who refrain from believing in Allah and do not pay any heed to this reality of vital importance become devoid of spiritual elements with the result that there remains no difference whatsoever between them and other animals.

Allah says: *Stay away from those who turn away from Our guidance and who do not desire anything except*

the worldly life (Surah Najm, 53-29) (whose only purpose in life is to eat, drink and be merry. They have not known anything other than eating, drinking and sleeping).

It is worth mentioning here that since man is a realistic being and he is possessed of the faculties of reasoning and intellect, he should naturally try to know Allah, because with his intellectual faculty when he casts a glance at various types of creations he does see the signs of Allah's Existence, Knowledge, and Wisdom. The meaning of the cognition of Allah does not mean that he realizes Allah because of his own existence. It means that he should not become oblivious of the realities which cannot be allowed to remain hidden by any possible means, and further that he should not be callous towards his own conscience and instead answer its dictates which constantly invite him towards Allah and remind him of his obligations and should shake off all doubts and suspicions from his heart.

WORSHIP OF ALLAH

After having the belief in Allah, man's immediate duty is to worship Allah. It is because man's main objective is happiness and prosperity in this world and the Hereafter. This can only be achieved by enforcing and obeying the Commands of Allah which have been sent to us through His Prophets.

Thus, obedience to Allah by following His Commands is the foremost duty of man and any other duty is of secondary importance.

Allah says: *Your Lord has ordained that you must not worship and obey anything other than Him.* (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17-23)

He further says: *O People! Did We not command that you worship not the Satan who is your arch-enemy but worship Allah and obey Him alone? That is the right path for you.* (Surah Yasin, 36-60)

Hence, we should understand our position of helplessness and servitude and accept the infinite grandeur and Might of Allah, and know that He is Omniscient, Omnipresent and Omnipotent. Knowing that He encompasses

everything it becomes our bounden duty to obey His Commands. It is necessary for us to worship Allah and no one else. We should obey no one except the Holy Prophet and the pious Imams for whose obedience Allah has given us orders. Allah says: *Believers obey Allah, His Prophet and the religious leaders (that is, the Holy Imams)*. (Surah al-Nisa, 4:59)

As a consequence to our obedience to Allah and the religious leaders, that is the Holy Prophet and the pious Imams, it becomes incumbent upon us to revere everything which is associated with Allah. As such we must accord full respect to Allah, His Prophet and the Holy Imams while taking their names. We should sincerely venerate the Book of Allah, the Holy Ka'bah — the House of Allah, the sacred Mosques and the Holy shrines of the leaders of Islam, that is, the Holy Imams.

In this context, Allah says: *Anyone who accords due respect to the symbols of Allah and reveres them, establishes for himself inner piety*. (Surah Hajj, 22:32)

MAN'S DUTY TOWARDS HIS OWN SELF

Whatever course of life and whichever line of action man adopts, he does not desire anything except happiness and prosperity. And since the recognition of the attributes of a thing is in itself the recognition of that thing, so long as we do not identify ourselves we cannot discover our real needs in the fulfilment of which lies our salvation. Therefore, it is man's utmost duty to identify himself so that he can understand the true significance of happiness and prosperity, and he should utilize all the resources at his disposal, for his benefits, and, above all, he should not waste the short span of his precious life which in actual fact is his only asset in this world.

The Holy Prophet says: "Whosoever recognized himself recognized the Lord".

Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, says: "Whosoever recognized himself, reached the pinnacle of cognition".

Thus, when man recognizes himself he realizes that

his main duty is to keep the human qualities alive and dearest to his heart, and never to try to trample down these precious gems. Besides, he should take every care to maintain his physical and moral strength so that he is able to lead a lasting pleasant life.

Imam Ali says: "Whosoever has the sense of self-respect, despises carnal desires".

Man in fact is made up of two things, the soul and the body. Therefore, he should maintain the health and strength of both in accordance with the deep and clear injunctions of Islam.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

By its injunctions, Islam has given due consideration to man's health and personal hygiene. As for example Islam forbids eating of blood, flesh of dead animals, flesh of certain animals, poisonous foods, etc. It strictly disallows the use of intoxicants, unclean water for drinking purposes, overeating and using things injurious to human body. There are several other details in this regard.¹

CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness is one of the cardinal principles of personal hygiene. It has been given great importance in Islam. No other religion has laid so much emphasis on it as Islam has emphasized.

The Holy Prophet says: "Cleanliness is a part of faith".

This in itself is the best definition of cleanliness.

Bathing with hot water has always been stressed by religious leaders. Imam Musa Kazim says: "Bathing on alternate days keeps the man healthy and strong".

Imam Ali says: "Bathroom is such a fine place where man's dirt is washed away".

Apart from ordering cleanliness in general, Islam has in particular laid emphasis on the cleanliness of each and everything as for example, clipping of nails, removing of unwanted hair on head and body, washing of hands before and after meals, grooming of hair, washing of mouth,

¹ See: Articles of Islamic Acts - I.S.P. 1982.

cleansing of nostrils, brooming the house and keeping the roads, lanes, bylanes and places of shades under the trees neat and tidy.

In addition to these injunctions, Islam has prescribed prayers the prerequisite of which is cleanliness. For instance our body and dress must be free from all impurities before we offer prayers. We should perform ablutions (*Wuzu*) before offering prayers (*Salat*) five times a day. Also we should perform ablutions before offering other prayers, and take bath on frequent occasions. And in this regard the instructions are that while we are performing ablutions or taking bath, water should reach every part of the body and there should be no dirt or grease on the body which might prevent water from reaching the skin. Now it becomes abundantly clear that cleanliness of body as a whole has actually been made compulsory for us by Islamic injunctions.

KEEPING THE DRESS CLEAN

One of the Surahs (Chapters) which were revealed in the early days of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet, was Surah Mudaththir. In the fourth verse of this Surah Allah has commanded us to keep our clothes neat and tidy. Thus, according to the Islamic jurisprudence the keeping of dress neat and tidy has been made obligatory for offering *Salat* (Prayers). But to remain clean and tidy generally has been greatly stressed by every infallible Imam.

The Holy Prophet says: "It is incumbent upon man to keep his dress neat and tidy".

Imam Ali says: "Washing of clothes dispels grief and sorrows and also it makes *Salat* (Prayers) acceptable".

Apart from the cleanliness of body and clothes, it is also necessary that Muslims should dress smartly so as to keep up good appearance while they meet the people.

Imam Ali says: "You should wear your best dress and be well-groomed, because Allah likes good appearance. But all these should be acquired by lawful income". Thereafter, he recited the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:
O Prophet! Ask them who has made unlawful for the

servants of Allah the decent things which the Lord of the universe has provided them. (Surah al-A'raf, 7:32).

MOUTHWASHING AND MISWĀK (TOOTHBRUSH)

The mouth is a passage through which food is chewed and enters into the stomach. Consequently the particles of food which remain in the teeth and on the surface of the tongue and if these are not thoroughly removed an unpleasant odour is produced in the mouth, and sometimes some injurious substances are also produced in it. Man swallows all that along with his saliva. Such a man with a nauseous breath is not welcomed in any social gathering.

It is from this point of view that Islamic jurisprudence has ordained that all Muslims should daily brush their teeth with *miswāk* (a dried twig of a certain tree used for brushing teeth) and particularly before performing ablutions so as to keep their mouth clean.

The Holy Prophet says, "Had it not been due to consideration of hardship of people, I would have made it obligatory for Muslims to brush their teeth with *miswāk*". He also says: "The Arch-angel, Jibrīl always stressed upon the necessity of brushing the teeth, I thought that it might become obligatory at a later time".

CLEANSING OF NOSTRILS

One cannot do without breathing. In the surroundings where man lives, air is polluted with dust particles and other impurities which are harmful to health. In order to get rid of them in a natural course, Allah has provided hair inside the nostrils so that these particles do not reach the lungs. But often the dirt gets accumulated in nostrils and so it should be properly removed.

Islamic injunctions, however, enjoin that nostrils should be cleansed a few times before the performance of ablutions by drawing up fresh and clean water through the nose. This process ensures the removal of harmful particles.

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION

It is by his inherent tendency that man knows the

value of good conduct and realizes its importance from the standpoint of individual and social worth. It is from this point of view that one hardly finds anyone, who does not acknowledge the merit of good behaviour, and who does not accord respect to a well-behaved man.

It goes without saying that man attaches great importance to good morals but the commandments that Islam has made in this regard are well-known to everybody. Allah says: *By the soul and that (power) which designed it and inspired it with knowledge of evil and piety. Those who purify their souls will certainly have everlasting happiness and those who corrupt their souls will certainly be deprived.* (Surah Shams, 91.7 - 10)

Imam Ja'far Sadiq in the interpretation of this verse says: "Allah has made it clear on mankind what is good and what is evil and hence man should do only good and abstain from doing bad things".

IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE

Acquisition of knowledge is one of the sublime spiritual merits of the learned over the ignorant need not be emphasized.

The thing which distinguishes men from animals is the gift of wisdom and knowledge. All other animals have their animal instincts, by which they fulfil their biological needs. But neither they have any hope of improving upon their mode of living nor do they bring about any change in the life of their fellow animals. It is only man who increases his knowledge by applying his wisdom. He discovers new avenues of natural phenomena and adds new information to his knowledge by assessing his past achievements and enacts laws for the fulfilment of his material and spiritual needs. Looking back in the past he makes plans for his own as well as for others' welfare.

Islam, more than any other social system or religion, has laid great stress on the acquisition of knowledge. It has made it obligatory for every Muslim man and woman to acquire knowledge with a view to establish an entirely new social order. In this connection we have been furnished

with the commandments of the Holy Prophet and Imams.

The Holy Prophet says: "It is incumbent upon every Muslim to seek knowledge". In this saying 'knowledge' is used in the broad sense. It encompasses all kinds of knowledge. It also does not make any exception with regard to sex. Nor does it make any exception with regard to individual's disposition or mood. It is obligatory on everybody. He also adds: "Acquire knowledge from cradle to grave".

There is a particular time for the performance of religious duties and the obligation becomes due at the age of maturity. That is, the age of a person should be fifteen. Some of the religious duties are such that a person is exempted from their performance because of old age or of physical infirmity. But acquiring of knowledge is obligatory on everybody from birth till death. Therefore, it becomes compulsory for every Muslim to seek knowledge and wisdom throughout his life. The above-quoted tradition has extended the period of time for the performance of this duty as well as it has made it universal. Hence, the Holy Prophet says: "Acquire knowledge even if you have to go to China for that". In another tradition he says: "Knowledge and wisdom is the most valuable asset of a believer, which he has lost. He must go after it even if he has to go as far as China to acquire it".

In the light of this responsibility it becomes necessary for every Muslim to seek knowledge in any circumstances, even if has to make long journeys to acquire it. Hence he should try to regain his lost wealth. In yet another tradition, the Holy Prophet says: "Knowledge and wisdom are the lost wealth of the believer and he should secure them from whomsoever he can".

Thus the only condition for acquiring knowledge is that it should be authentic and useful to the society.

Islam lays particular stress on acquiring information relating to the mysteries of the creations and on pondering over the heavens, the earth, human nature, history, the ruins and monuments of ancient civilizations, philosophy, mathematics, natural science etc.

Likewise Islam has given importance to moral and

religious problems and to learning of arts and crafts of various fields which are essential for man.

The Holy Prophet attached such a great importance to the acquisition of knowledge that in the Battle of Badr when many infidels were taken prisoners he ordered that each of them could be freed after taking ransom from him but if each one of them taught at least ten Muslims how to read and write, he would be exempted from paying the ransom. This was for the first time in the history of the world that a school for adult education was set up, and which undoubtedly has gone to the credit of Muslims only. It was in the history of mankind for the first and the last time that under the command of the Holy Prophet heavy amount of money by way of compensating damages of war was condoned for the sake of imparting knowledge to the illiterate Muslims by the captives. Nobody had ever seen that the Commander-in-Chief of an army would prefer knowledge over a large sum of ransom money.

The Holy Prophet himself inspected such schools and took along with him educated people to put the learning candidates to test for the purpose of ascertaining their proficiency. He encouraged those candidates who were found to have shown keen interest in learning.

A historian writes that a woman, As-Shifa by name, who had learnt how to read and write, in the dark days of ignorance, before the advent of Islam, used to come to the house of the Holy Prophet and taught his wives how to read and write. On account of this service, he treated her with courtesy and encouraged her for doing her job.

IMPORTANCE OF STUDENTS

The importance of attaining any objective and the efforts made in that direction are directly related to the importance of that objective and since man by his very nature attaches importance to acquiring knowledge and considers it above everything, the importance of a student should also be considered greater than any other thing. Therefore, Islam which is a religion based on realities, gives utmost importance to students. Thus the Holy Prophet

says: "He who is acquiring knowledge is loved by Allah".

Participation in 'Jihad' (Holy War) is one of the obligations of Islam and it becomes obligatory for every Muslim if the same is ordered by the Holy Prophet or the Holy Imam. And yet those people who are engaged in the pursuit of religious knowledge are exempted from Jihad. It is also necessary that largest possible number of people should keep themselves busy in seeking knowledge. Thus, Allah says: *Believers should not set out for Jihad all in one. Some should stay behind to become scholars in religion and after completing their studies guide their people.* (Surah Tawbah, 9:122)

IMPORTANCE OF TEACHERS

Teacher is like a bright light which enlightens his environment. He tries to eradicate ignorance and illiteracy, and makes the ignorant and foolish people wise, and they with the help of knowledge tread the path leading to prosperity and Paradise. Hence, in Islam respect and obedience to teachers is obligatory. Islam recognizes the teacher as one of the holiest and most dignified personalities in human society. In this connection Imam Ali says, "Whosoever taught me even a single word made me his slave". This wise remark is sufficient enough to show the exalted rank of teachers.

Imam Ali further says: "Human beings are of three categories. (i) Scholars of Divine knowledge. (ii) Those who acquire knowledge for their own betterment and for that of others. (iii) Those who are void of knowledge and wisdom. The third category is like flies which sit on the body of the quadrupeds and with the gush of wind they change their direction and go where the wind starts blowing or when they are attracted by the foul odour, they move that way.

RESPECT FOR THE SCHOLARS

About the dignity of the scholars, the Holy Qur'an says: *Allah has exalted the ranks of the believers and those who achieved knowledge.* (Surah Mujadila, 58:12)

The Holy Prophet had such a high opinion about scholars that he said: "The death of a community is less harmful than the death of a scholar".

In yet another verse of the Holy Qur'an, Allah says: *Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only the wise take heed.* (Surah Zumar, 39:9)

This proves that a learned person cannot be equated with an ignorant man. Undoubtedly a wise and learned man has a superiority over all those who are void of knowledge and wisdom.

The above-quoted verse of the Holy Qur'an shows that knowledge is not restricted to acquiring religious knowledge only, but it means everything which gives man insight as well as foresight to perceive things related to temporal and spiritual aspects of life is knowledge.

Showing the superiority of 'Ulema' (Scholars) over the devout people, Imam Muhammad Baqir says: "A scholar who benefits people with his knowledge is superior to 70,000 devout persons".

According to the Holy Prophet, the calibre of any person can be judged by assessing the depth of his knowledge and wisdom. In this context he says: "Amongst the people, the wisest is one, who benefits himself from the knowledge of others. Man's worth is dependent on his knowledge only. Thus, one who has more knowledge deserves better respect and the one who possesses less knowledge enjoys a lesser position".

DUTIES OF TEACHERS AND PUPILS

The Holy Qur'an considers wisdom as man's real life, because without it there will remain no difference between him and the inanimate objects or dead persons. Therefore, a student should consider his teacher a sort of treasure from which he gradually obtains the secrets of life. He should accord due respect and honour to his teacher and should be very submissive to him and even if the teacher loses his temper, he should endure it with patience. He should always remember him with kind regards during his lifetime as well as after his death.

Similarly, the teacher should consider himself responsible for moulding the life of his pupils and as long as he does not make them a responsible and respectable citizens he should not rest for a single moment. On the one hand he should applaud those of his pupils who show great interest and enthusiasm in their education and training and on the other hand he should not become despondent if his pupils are slack or slow in their studies. He should not make them dejected with his talk and behaviour.

TWO MAIN BASES OF ISLAMIC TEACHING

There are some secrets behind the rules and regulations which govern the people in various human societies because if the same are made known to the general public, the government in power comes into jeopardy. Such a procedure is adopted because most of these rules and regulations are formed by the rulers and as such they are scared of people's criticism. That is why the Church and other centres of religious systems forbid people to think freely. They reserve for themselves the right of changing the text of Scriptures and their interpretations and expect the people to accept them blindly without any comment. That was the reason why many religions got the setback and the present-day working system of Christianity is a living example.

Since Islam has confidence in its being a truly Divine religion, it admits no ambiguous point on its path. Its working system, as compared to other religious or non-religious codes of life is based on two fundamental points:

(i) Islam does not conceal any truth nor does it allow its adherents to conceal it. Since the rules and regulations of this sacred religion have been fashioned in conformity with the laws of nature and the creation and from the view-point of truth and realities, none of its principles can be refuted. In Islam, concealing the truth has been declared as a major sin and those who conceal the truth have been cursed by Allah in the Holy Qur'an. He says: *Those who conceal the open proofs and the guidance that We revealed and which We have clearly declared before the people in the Bible,*

will be condemned by Allah and by those who have the right to condemn. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:159)

(ii) Islam commands its followers that they should think freely about truth and learning and wherever there is any ambiguity they should stop and not move forward so that their faith be saved from any doubt or suspicion. And if they fall a prey to doubt, they should try to remove it in an honest and just way and solve the problem independently. Allah says: *Do not follow what you do not know.* (Surah Bani Isrā'il, 17:36)

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

It is the human nature that man wants to understand and accept realities through his most valuable gift of common sense which makes him superior to all other animals. Therefore, man's very nature does not allow him to blindly follow others by suppressing his inherent freedom of thinking and making his own mental faculties misguided. But this point should not be ignored that when a man does not have the capacity of understanding certain realities or he is not hopeful of it because of the opposition of the other group, his very nature prevents him from thinking freely and expressing the truth. Further more if by expressing the truth man's life, property and honour are endangered common sense justifies the withholding of the truth so that its sanctity is preserved and the risk of man becoming a victim of misguidance and also the danger to his life, property and honour are avoided.

The Holy Imams through many narrations have also asked the people to strictly refrain from pondering over realities which are beyond their reach of comprehension.

In the Holy Qur'an Allah has on two occasions declared the withholding of the truth as justified dissimulation (Vide Surah Ale Imran, 3:28 and Surah al-Nahl, 16:106)

CONCLUSION

Islam in certain circumstances not only asks to withhold the truth but it also considers this as necessary:

(i) On the occasion of dissimulation when the expression

of truth may endanger the life, property and honour.

(ii) When a man does not have the capacity of understanding the truth and the expression of which leads him to misguidance and the truth is subjected to humility.

(iii) When because of the lack of understanding, the truth may be misinterpreted by independent thinking and may lead to misguidance.

IJTIHAD AND TAQLID

Man's requirements in life and his efforts in fulfilling them are so numerous that normally it becomes difficult for him to have perfect knowledge of everything. On the other hand since man performs his work according to his intention and a particular inclination, it becomes necessary that he should possess sufficient knowledge about the nature of that work and if he does not possess sufficient knowledge, he cannot make a decision. Thus, it is essential that for anything that he does, he should have proper knowledge of it, or he should seek the opinion of experts and act according to their advice. It is but natural that in case of sickness, man refers to a physician; in making a plan of the house, he goes to an architect; in building the house, he employs a mason, and in making doors and windows, he takes the help of a carpenter. Hence, with the exception of a few things, we normally depend on others in following their advice.

Therefore, if someone claims that he does not follow anybody, he either does not understand what he says or he is a mental case. Islam which has based its fundamental principles and teachings on man's rational thinking has also adopted the same procedure. Islam commands its followers to learn the principles and teachings of religion from the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnat* (Conduct) of the Holy Prophet and the Holy Imams.

Obviously it is not possible for everybody to deduce the true meanings of religious commands from the Holy Qur'an and the *Sunnat* of the Holy Prophet, and the Muslims cannot do this easily. Only a particular group of people can be able to perform this duty.

Therefore, as a natural course the meaning of this commandment lies in the fact that those Muslims, who cannot understand the true significance and the real meaning of religious commandments and principles should refer to those people who have understood the true meaning and significance by their reasoning, and hence they should follow and discharge their obligations according to the instructions given by them.

The scholar who has a complete command of knowledge on religious matters and can draw conclusions through reasoning is called a *Mujtabid* and this procedure is called *Ijtihad* and the people who follow the instructions of a *Mujtabid* are known as *Muqallid* (followers) and their act of following is called *Taqlid*.

This should, however, be borne in mind that the act of following is applicable only on matters relating to worshipping and the transaction of business and other religious affairs, but in matters of the principles of religion which solely concern the beliefs, one cannot depend on following the opinion of others. It is because as far as the principles are concerned, the question is not of practice but it is a matter of faith and belief and as such to adopt the faith and beliefs of others as one's own faith and beliefs is not possible. It cannot be said that Allah is One because our forefathers and the scholars have said so or the life after death is a reality because all Muslims believe in it. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon every Muslim that he should accept the principles of religion by his reasoning howsoever simple it may be.

MAN'S DUTY TOWARDS HIS PARENTS

Parents are the cause of the birth and the early up bringing of their children. It is on this account that in Islam great emphasis has been laid on the obedience and respect for parents, so much so that after mentioning the belief in monotheism in the Holy Qur'an, Allah commands us to be kind to our parents. Allah says: *Your Lord commands you to worship Him and none else, and to be kind to your parents.* (Surah Bani Isra'il, 17:23)

In the traditions which mention major sins, the sin next to polytheism is maltreatment of parents. Apart from that after the above-quoted verse, Allah says further, 'If both or either of your parents attain old age in your lifetime, do not talk with them harshly and do not taunt them with unbecoming remarks but talk with them with respect and treat them with kindness and say: "O My Lord! Bestow Your Blessings on them both just as they brought me up during childhood"'.

In Islam obedience to parents is obligatory except that they forbid obligatory acts or enjoin to do unlawful thing.

By experiece it has been established that those, who hurt their parents, do not attain happiness and prosperity during their lifetime and ultimately are deprived of salvation.

DISOBEDIENCE TO PARENTS

In a house the parents have the same important link with their children as the root of a tree has with its branches. Just as the branches of a tree owe their existence to its roots so also the children have the same relationship to their parents. And since the human society is composed of two groups, that is the parents and the children, the real root of the society is parents. To treat the parents unfairly and to agonize them besides being an act of extreme neglect and cowardice, is the cause of human degradation and the destruction of society itself, because if the children will not respect their parents it will result in the indifference of the parents towards them and if the children treat their parents with contempt they cannot hope to receive any better treatment from their own children, and in times of their old age and infirmity they will not expect any sympathetic treatment from them and as a natural course will fight shy of rearing the family just as we see these days.

On the basis of such a line of thinking the process of begetting children will come to a halt, for no sensible man can ever waste his precious life for watering a plant the fruits of which he would not be able to taste or under whose shade he would not be able to rest. In other words he would not receive in return of his efforts anything

except agony. Possibly we may consider that perhaps the government in power might give certain incentive for the procreating of offspring. But this fact cannot be overlooked that any social system which is devoid of human sentiments and emotions for example the inherent feeling of love and affection between parents and their children, cannot last for long. On the contrary, by discarding an inherent tendency, man becomes deprived of spiritual gains.

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN ON PARENTS

The result of any work that an employee performs and which benefits the employer is called the latter's 'right' and the work to be performed is called 'duty', or 'obligation'. If a man employs a worker on certain wages, the payment of the wages is the duty of the employer and the receiving of the wages is the right of the worker. If the employer does not pay the wages, it is the right of the worker to demand his wages.

We all know that man was not created to live for ever and after all he will have to depart from this world sooner or later. Therefore, in order to save the human race from extinction. Almighty Allah has introduced the reproductory system so that people should procreate offsprings, and for that purpose He has endowed them with the relevant natural tendencies.

Since man has been fully equipped for this purpose, it is but natural that he thinks his offsprings as part of his own body, and considers his life as his own life. Man invests his full efforts and endures hardship in providing his offspring the comforts and the success of life because he considers his destruction as his own destruction. In fact he is only accomplishing the process of procreation of human race. Hence, it becomes obligatory for the parents to abide by this principle which is in harmony with both human conscience and religious code. Therefore, parents should bring up their children in the best possible manner so that they grow up into a wellcivilized person. They should provide them with such facilities as from the human point of view, they consider necessary for themselves.

SOME INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARENTS

(i) From the very birth of a child, parents should lay the foundation of his good moral conduct and virtues and avoid frightening him by superstitious tales and restrain them from bad and immoral acts. They should neither tell lies nor should they use any unbecoming or indecent words before him. They should themselves do noble deeds so that the child also may imbibe the spirit of doing such deeds when he comes of age. They should also demonstrate before him hard work, courage, justice and fairplay so that according to the law of "Transference of the sense of morality" the sense of justice and love for humanity may be created in him.

(ii) They should take care of his basic needs of food and other amenities of life until the time he becomes self-reliant. They should take care of his health and personal hygiene so that with a sound mind and a sound body he may attain proper education and training.

(iii) When the child attains the age of schooling which is normally the age of seven years, they should employ for him a tutor, who is endowed with the qualities of a good teacher so that the child should receive a healthy education and training and should become well-versed in spiritual refinement, self-restraint, tolerance and good conduct.

(vi) When the child attains the age of majority the parents should take him along with him while visiting the relatives and attending the mosque or in social gatherings in order to give him practical training of social behaviour, customs and manners.

RESPECT FOR THE ELDERS

To respect the elderly people is also an obligation. The Holy Prophet says: "The respect and regard of the elderly people is the respect and regard of Allah".

RIGHTS OF KINSFOLK

Man's blood relations from his father's and mother's side are the component members of the society, and because of one blood and common cells he becomes a

member of one family. Because of this natural bondage of blood relations, Islam commands its followers to treat their blood relations with kindness. In the Holy Qur'an as well as in the narrations of the religious leaders, this aspect of man's duty has been greatly stressed. Allah says: *People, have fear of the One by whose Name you swear to settle your differences and have respect for your relatives. Allah certainly keeps a watch over you.* (Surah al-Nisa, 4:1)

The Holy Prophet says: "I exhort my followers to show kindness to their relations and if there is a distance of a passage of one year between them they should not sever their connections with them".

RIGHTS OF NEIGHBOURS

Since neighbours because of living closely with one another are like members of a large family, the conduct of anyone of them has a direct impact on his fellow-neighbours. A man who makes a noise in his house during the night does not disturb the people living at a distance but he robs his immediate neighbour of his peace of mind. A rich man who is passing a luxurious life in his palatial house may be away from the poor people living at a far of distance, but plays havoc with his poor neighbour living in a state of extreme poverty and passing a miserable life. A day will definitely come when this rich man will get the due punishment for his doings. That is why Islam has laid great stress on looking after one's neighbour's interest.

The Holy Prophet says: "The Arch-angel Jibril pleaded so much for the neighbours' rights that I thought one day Allah would make one's neighbours as one's heirs". He also said: "One who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgement, never oppresses his neighbours. If he borrows money he lends it. He fully shares his joys and sorrows. He does not torture his neighbours even if he happens to be an infidel". He further said: "He who gives trouble to his neighbours will be far off from the fragrance of Paradise. He who does not give due consideration to the rights of his neighbours is not from amongst us. He who eats his fill and knows that his neighbour is hungry and does not give him anything to eat, is not a Muslim".

MAN'S DUTY TOWARDS THE POOR AND THE NEEDY

There is no doubt that society comes into existence for meeting the needs of the individuals and as such it becomes the duty of every member of the society to help the poor and the needy who cannot afford to procure the necessities of life.

In the present age it has become evident that in contrast to the hardships and misfortunes of the poor people, the freedom of the rich people from any restrictions poses a potential danger which will destroy the very fabric of society and in which the rich themselves will become the first victims.

Taking into consideration the consequences of this danger, 1400 years ago Islam commanded that each year the rich should distribute a certain portion of their wealth among the poor and the needy in order to meet their necessities and then they could still do something more for their betterment. Allah says: *You can never attain piety unless you spend part of what you dearly love for the cause of Allah.* (Surah Ale Imran, 3,93)

Innumerable narrations about service to humanity have reached us. The Holy Prophet says: "The best among you is one who is most helpful to others". He also said: "On the Day of Judgement that man will have a superior rank before Allah who as compared to others was foremost in helping the people".

MAN'S DUTY TOWARDS SOCIETY

We all know that man works in collaboration with other men and by this all are mutually benefited. The society which is composed of individuals is just like a huge man and each individual is like one of his organs. Man's each individual organ performs a particular function and benefit from the functions of other organs, too. If each organ performs its own individual function only and does not help other organs as for example if hands and feet are discharging their functions and the eyes do not co-operate with them, or the mouth only masticates the food and

does not pass it on to the stomach, man's existence will ultimately come to a stop with the result that the organs will also meet with the same fate.

As far as society is concerned, the duty of its individuals is also like that of the organs of the human body. That is to say man should look for his interest from the point of view of the interest of the society as a whole, and in whatever he does he should take into consideration the good of the society so that he should taste the fruit of his hard work. Man should try to benefit others so that he too is benefited. He should protect the rights of others so that his own rights are protected. This is a fact which we can understand from our common sense and insight. Islam which is based on realities and the facts of creations does not have any other view.

The Holy Prophet says: "A Muslim is one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims remain protected". At another place he says: "Muslims are brothers to one another and as compared to others they have one common hand, heart and objective". He further said: "One who does not give any importance to the affairs of the Muslims is not a Muslim".

It is reported that when in the Battle of Tabuk, the Holy Prophet proceeded towards the Roman border, there were three of the Muslims who did not participate in the battle. When the triumphant Muslim soldiers returned from the battle, these three persons went forward to welcome them. They also greeted the Holy Prophet but he turned his face away from them and did not reciprocate their good wishes. Similarly, when all other Muslims became indifferent to them and when there was not a single person left in Madina including their wives who talked with them, they went up the hill to pass their lives in repentance and in praying to Allah asking for His forgiveness. After a few days, however, when Allah pardoned them, they came back to the city of Madina.

JUSTICE

According to Islamic ideology, the world as a whole is

a reality which is based on justice. Everything is governed by a set order. In the Holy Qur'an Allah says: *He raised the heavens and set up everything in balance.* (Surah Rahman, 55:6 – 7)

According to the principle that we learnt from Imam Ali, justice means: "To keep a thing at its proper place" and in contrast to it cruelty means: "To keep a thing out of the right or usual order".

According to the Holy Qur'an and the narrations of the religious leaders justice is of two kinds: individual justice and social justice. Islam has therefore, focussed its attention on these two things.

INDIVIDUAL JUSTICE

The individual justice is that man should avoid telling lies, backbiting, and committing other major sins, and should not be tempted to commit minor sins also. Anybody who possesses this attribute is called a just man and if according to Islamic teachings he possesses knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and commandments he can act as a *Qâzi* (Judge), and can be a *Mujtabid* (Jurist) to be followed, and can also perform other social duties. But anybody who despite being a scholar is devoid of this merit (individual justice) cannot be rewarded with these honorific titles.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice is that as regards people's rights, man should not over-rate or under-rate the other person, but according to Islamic law should treat everyone with equality. In the implementation of Divine commandments, he should not deviate from righteousness and should not go astray under the fit of emotions and sentiments. The Holy Qur'an explicitly declares: *Allah commands to maintain justice.* (Surah al-Nahl, 16:90)

In another verse, Allah commands the rulers to give decisions based on justice. In many other verses and narrations it is commanded that we should do justice both by words and deeds. And in most of the verses of the Holy Qur'an the tyrants have been condemned.

OPPRESSIONS AND PERSECUTIONS

Out of a total of 114 Surahs (Chapters) of the Holy Qur'an, two-third of them speak against cruelty.

There is hardly any man who has not realized the bad effects of cruelty or who has not known that because of cruelty in a society there were misfortunes, bloodshed and destruction of families. Experience also shows that howsoever strong the structure of cruelty was it did not last for long and ultimately it fell upon the tyrants themselves. Allah says: *Certainly Allah will not guide the tyrants.* (Surah Anam, 6.144)

Imam Ali says: A regime can last with infidelity but not with tyranny".

SOCIAL WELFARE

Whether or not man admits himself as being the member of a society, the fact remains that he cannot afford to keep himself aloof from it and from mixing with people. The purpose of being social is that man should protect his social status as well as improve upon his material and spiritual gains and solve his personal problems in the best possible manner.

Therefore, man should meet the people in such a manner that he may make himself popular and enhance his social status so that he may have the largest possible number of friends and well-wishers. When people find that a man is not well-behaved and is short-tempered, they start hating him and avoid his company. By this he lowers himself in the eyes of the people. He feels himself lonely though he is living among people. He becomes a stranger in his own land. And these things are the signs of man's worst form of misfortunes.

That is one reason why Islam has commanded its followers to meet people with grace and in this connection it has laid down the best code of moral conduct. One of such injunctions of Islam is that when Muslims meet they should greet one another and exchange mutual good wishes. The one who takes the first lead in wishing others deserves better blessings.

The Holy Prophet always took the initiative in wishing the people including women and children. And if anyone wished him, he reciprocated it with still better words of salutations. Allah says: *Whenever someone greets you, in reply you should greet him in a better way or wish him in the same words.* (Surah Nisa, 4:86)

It has also been commanded that when one meets the people, he should treat them with utmost courtesy and treat them with respect in accordance with their status. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says: *Among the servants of Beneficent Allah are those who walk gently on earth and when addressed by the ignorant ones their only response is "Peace be with you".* (Surah Furqan, 25:63)

It is necessary to clarify here that by courtesy and modesty it does not mean that man should degrade himself in the eyes of others or damage his prestige but it means that he should neither pose as a distinguished person nor should he brag or consider the people as inferior. On the other hand, the treating of the people with respect should not amount to flattering or insincere praise. Instead everybody should be treated with respect in accordance with his religious and social standing. The elderly people should be treated with respect because of their old age and man should be treated generally in the name of humanity.

According respect to the people also does not mean that if someone is doing something objectionable one should remain silent or if in gathering someone indulges in activities detrimental to human conduct and injunctions of religion, one should become a party to it in duress.

In short, the respect of the people does not mean respect of their body but means respect of their noble, religious, and moral qualities. Therefore, for a man who has forsaken his human qualities and religious bearing, the question of according respect to him does not arise. The Holy Prophet said: "By obeying others one should not become a sinner before Allah".

TEASING PEOPLE AND DOING MISCHIEF

Both these tendencies are very much similar to each

other. Teasing means to annoy whether it be by words as for example abusing, or by bad behaviour which causes the people to face hardships. Mischief, means to create trouble. Thus both these things are contrary to the very spirit on which the society's existence is based. And that spirit is composed of the two things trouble-free life and peace of mind. That is why Islam which gives great importance to the social welfare has strictly forbidden the above-mentioned two evils. Allah says: *Those who annoy the believing men and women without reason, will bear the sin for a false accusation which is a manifest offence.* (Surah Ahzab, 33:58)

The Holy Prophet says: "He who tortures a Muslim, tortures me; and who tortures me, tortures Allah. Such man has been condemned in Torah, Evangel and the Holy Qur'an". He further says: "Anyone who frightens a Muslim with a rude stare will be frightened by Allah on the Day of Judgement".

ASSOCIATING WITH GOOD PEOPLE

Normally man mingles with all types of people but according to his personal inclinations, he prefers associating with a particular group of people. These are his friends. In such a company of people there exists a common affinity of morality, disposition or vocational pursuit. And since people living in a company are influenced by one another's habits and morals, man should, therefore always keep company with good people so that each one of them should adopt the good morals of the other and each one should be benefited by sincere friendship. Over and above this their social standing is enhanced in the eyes of the people. Imam Ali says: "Your best friend is one who guides you to noble deeds". He further says. "The character of a man can be judged from his friends".

SHUNNING BAD PEOPLE

To associate with people of shabby character leads to misfortune and disaster. Suffice it to say that if we inquire of men having bad character or criminal such as thieves, robbers etc; they will say that it was the bad company

which brought them to that stage. It is true that out of everyone thousand men no one would be found to have indulged in vices of his own accord.

Imam Ali says: "Keep off the company of bad characters, else a bad friend will make you like himself, because he will never accept you unless he makes you like himself". He further says: "Avoid friendship of a person of bad character, because he will make you go to the stake against a very small price".

HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY

The mutual relations which are the essentials of society are established by mutual conversation. Therefore, speaking of truth which reveals the realities is one of the fundamental aims of the society. The advantages which the society can never afford to ignore are obtained by speaking the truth. The following are a few such advantages of speaking the truth.

(i) People trust the truthful man and they become satisfied with whatever he says. (ii) A truthful man feels elevated in his conscience and he remains protected from the remorseful feelings of telling lies. (iii) A truthful man keeps his promises and never misappropriates the property he is entrusted with, because truthfulness by words is not different from truthful behaviour. (iv) By speaking the truth many a discord and dispute is settled because the root cause of any discord or dispute is that either of the party is not speaking the truth, or both are telling lies. (v) Many an immoral thing and violation of rules and regulations is eliminated by telling the truth, because people in order to hide their shortcomings resort to telling lies.

Imam Ali says: "A true Muslim is one who prefers truth to untruth howsoever harmful that truth and howsoever profitable that untruth may prove to be, but by this preference he will achieve a spiritual enlightenment".

THE DISADVANTAGES OF TELLING LIES

From what has been said above, the disadvantages of telling lies become clear. Undoubtedly, a liar is an arch-

enemy of the society as by his lies he tries to corrupt the society as a whole. The lie or the untruth is like a narcotic which paralyses the intelligence and wisdom of the society by putting a cover over the truth, or it is like an alcoholic drink which intoxicates the people and robs them of their ability to differentiate between good and bad things. Thus Islam regards lies as one of the major sins and does not accept the religious personality of a liar. The Holy Prophet says: "There are three categories of people who despite their offering prayers and observing fast are hypocrites – one who lies, the one who does not fulfil his promise and the one who misappropriates property entrusted to him".

Imam Ali says: "Man does not know the real worth of belief unless he gives up telling lies even while joking".

Telling lies has not only been considered as a sin or a bad thing from the religious point of view but from the stand-point of common sense also it has been considered as a bad thing. This nasty habit soon destroys the confidence which is a mutual link between the people, and then the liar victually leads a lonely life despite being an integral part of the society.

Man comes across numerous means and things in his life. By utilizing them he survives and fulfils his desires. This entity, that is man, who performs his activities with his intentions and conscious mind has based his life's foundation on knowledge. He works with his brain and the nature of his work depends on the information which he receives. He marshals facts in his mind and acts according to them. Therefore, for man the acquiring of correct information is very necessary. If a man becomes deprived of exterior information as for instance starts taking distant as near and near as distant and whatever information he receives is contrary to truth, his life is doomed to disappointment. Hence, it is clearly proved that telling lies as a matter of fact is a potential danger to man's social life. A liar is a characterless and mean fellow. He is the enemy of the society. He is not worthy of trust and he always remains under Allah's curse.

BACKBITING AND SLANDERING

Speaking ill of others or finding fault with them in their absence even though it is correct is backbiting and making false allegations behind their back is slandering.

No doubt Allah has not created anybody (except the Prophets and the Imams) infallible, so anybody can err because of his tendency towards faults and lapses. Normally the shortcomings of people are protected by Allah. If for a moment their faults and defects are exposed, everybody will become sick of one another and the very fabric of society will be torn to pieces. That is why Allah has forbidden backbiting so that people are protected from being spoken ill of by others behind their back and their life remains normal and gradually the outward glamour of their life may correct its internal faults and defects. Allah says: *Do not spy on one another or back-bite. Would anyone of you like to eat the disgusting dead flesh of your brother?* (Surah Hujarat, 49:12)

Slandering is still a worse sin than backbiting and common sense also condemns it. Allah has categorically termed it as an evil. The Holy Qur'an says: *Those who do not believe in the miracles of Allah invent lies and they are liars.* (Surah Nahl, 16:105)

ATTACK ON PERSONAL CHASTITY

From the view-point of Islam, attacking somebody's modesty is a major sin and according to given conditions severe punishments of lashing, beheading and stoning to death have been prescribed for it.

Even if these heinous crime (like adultery) is committed by mutual consent of the two sides it shakes the very foundation of heredity of human race to which Islam gives utmost importance. It disrupts the laws of inheritance and wipes out the mutual love and affection between the parents and the offsprings, and this love and affection is in fact the basic of human society.

SELF-RESPECT AND HONESTY

The Divine system has brought about the creation of

man in such a manner that he should live with people in perfect operation and be dependent on them and besides that he should do his own work individually and earn the fruits of his labour.

From what has been said above, there remains no doubt that by self-respect it is meant that man should use his own inherent qualities in order to meet his needs and should not bank on others. This trend in itself goes to build up his personal qualities. The sense of self-respect acts as a sheet-anchor which protects the man from leading a disgraceful life and from many evil deeds. Anyone who does not possess a sense of self-respect and depends on others, easily loses his sense of judgement and is looked down upon by others. In that case he indulges in everything what others ask him to do under temptation of personal gains and thus he sacrifices his personal liberty, honour and self-respect.

Many of the crimes such as man-slaughter, dacoity, robbery, pickpocketing, lying, flattering, treason and acting as stooges to foreign interests are the direct results of temptations and dependence on others. But the man who considers his self-respect as his life's biggest asset never bows his head before any authority except the Divine Power. He always defends everything which he considers righteous. The sense of self-respect is the best means of creating in one's heart the spirit of honesty and the readiness to protect it.

HELPING THE NEEDY

It cannot be denied that in every society there are people who are helpless and needy. It is the duty of the wealthy people to help such people and should not ignore their right. Islam has laid great stress on fulfilling this obligation and has made the rich people responsible for helping the helpless and the poor people. Allah introduces Himself as Virtuous, Kind and Benevolent and asks His servants to own such attributes. The Holy Qur'an says: *Allah is with the virtuous.* (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:194) *It is to your own good if you spend (in the cause of Allah).*

(Surah al-Baqarah, 2:272) *Whatever you spend (in the cause of Allah) will be reimbursed to you and you shall not be in a loss.* (Surah Fatir, 35:29)

After taking into consideration the advantages of social conditions and doing good to the needy, one can fully comprehend the meaning of the above-quoted verses, because in a society the benefits of its total resources are meant for all individuals. And if in any society there is a class of people who is unable to contribute anything for the good of the society owing to poverty and helplessness, it becomes deficient in its monetary resources and growth of wealth, and its after-effects affect all the individuals and ultimately a stage is reached in which the worst affected are the rich and affluent people. On the contrary, if the rich people realize their duty and with an urge of "virtue is its own reward" start helping the poor and needy, it will bring them some of the following good dividends:

- (i) By being virtuous they will win the sympathy of others who will hold them in high esteem.
- (ii) They get high esteem and respect against as nominal sum of money.
- (iii) They obtain the goodwill of others as normally people like the virtuous.
- (iv) They are saved from a day when the poor rise in revolt and ransack everything root and branch.
- (v) The small sum of money they spend for the good of the poor boosts up the society's economies and its benefit will come back to them. There are several verses relating to the advantages of spending money in the cause of Allah, and people are urged to adopt that practice.

CO-OPERATION

Doing good to and helping others, upon which we have dwelt above is one of the several kinds of co-operation, which is the basis of human society. Actually society is another name of holding one another's hands so that individuals help one another and thus all relevant matters are turned to good account. However, it should not be construed that Islam says that virtue means only spending

of money but its aim is to satisfy the want of everybody no matter if his want is other than money. And this is what the human conscience also wishes for.

To educate an illiterate, escorting the blind to his destination, guiding the unguided, giving support to the stumbler are one of the few attributes of virtue. These are the forms of the co-operation which we have already dealt with in connection with the establishment of society. This is a fact that if a man does not do secondary things he cannot do the basic things also and if he does not fulfil minor obligations, he cannot discharge his major obligations also.

ALMS AND DONATIONS

The worth of virtuous deeds depends on the results which are obtained from them. The more common and stable these results are the more agreeable and dignified will they be. To treat a sick person is an act of virtue and goodness. But it stands no comparison with the building of a hospital where several hundred patients are given medical treatment daily. Similarly to coach one student cannot be compared with opening a college where several hundred students receive education. It is for this reason that a trust or charitable institution is the best form of virtue and goodness. In religious terminology this charitable institution is called *Sadaqa-i Jariya* that is "Donation yielding lasting benefits". The Holy Prophet says: "Two things are signs of man's eminence — a virtuous son and the other *Sadqa-i Jariya*".

From the Holy Qur'an and traditions it is known that as long as *Sadaqa-i Jariya* is in existence, the donor receives the benefits of benevolence and blessings.

SACRIFICING ONE'S LIFE

Man's life in reality is the one which is blessed with nobility of character as the life without it is as good as death. And this death is still worse than the natural death. Therefore, a man who values the real worth of life should run away from such a miserable life as he would like to run away from death.

In whatever conditions man passes his life his conscience urges him to realize that in defence of a thing which he values most laying down even his life is itself a noble deed. Though as far as religion is concerned this matter is more clear than any other logical conclusions and it is free from speculations and superstitions, because anybody who by defending the high ideals of religious society lays down his life in accordance with religious injunctions knows it fully well that he is not losing anything. By sacrificing his short-lived, precious and pleasant life in the Divine path, he gets back still more pleasant, precious and eternal life and his happiness and prosperity never fade out.

In this connection, Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: *Do not think of those slain for the cause of Allah as dead. They are alive with their Lord and receive sustenance from Him. They are pleased with the favour from their Lord.* (Surah Ale Imran, 3, 170)

However in the non-religious systems of beliefs, man's life is considered to be short-lived and confined only to this world alone. They do not believe in the life after death. They call it mere speculation and superstition. They say that if a man lays down his life for the cause of his country and the people, his name will be written down in history in gold letters amongst country's heroes and martyrs and as such he will be living for ever.

In Islam no other noble deed has been more highly praised than the laying down of one's life as a martyr in the Divine path. The Holy Prophet says: "One noble deed is greater than another until a stage comes to martyrdom which is unsurpassed by any virtuous deed".

In the early days of Islam, the Muslims used to entreat the Holy Prophet to pray for their salvation and consequently they were endowed with the grace of martyrdom.¹

GENEROSITY AND PHILANTHROPY

Money plays an important role in moderating the life

¹ See: The Martyr by Allama Murtaza Mutahhari, I.S.P. 1980.

and as such many people consider that money is all in all in life. They do not have any concept of human qualities and nobleness. Their only aim in life is amassing wealth, as a result of which they become miserly and deprive people of their due share. Sometime they go a step forward and become so mean that they do not use their money and wealth for themselves. They neither benefit themselves nor do they benefit others from their wealth. Their only article of faith becomes the hoarding of wealth. Those who are addicted to the vile habit of stinginess are callous and become bankrupt of human values because of the following reasons:

(i) They believe only in their own peace and prosperity. They believe in individual life only, though human nature tells us that social life is the only real life, as an individual life, in whatever forms it may be ends in failure.

(ii) Making use of their powers they compel the helpless and the poor to bow down before them for help. Though they never intend to help them, they make them their slaves. By this they keep the spirit of idolatry alive. This results in depriving the society of the spirit of chivalry, valour, courage and other human traits.

(iii) Not only that such people abandon mutual love and respect, human relations, sympathy and welfare but they also introduce various crimes, usurpations and several other baser elements in the society, because poverty is the main cause of such crimes as stealing, robbing, lying, killing etc, which are rampant among the poor class of people. Besides, anger, grudge and revenge take its root in the heart of these downtrodden people against the wealthy people who in turn encourage them. As a matter of fact a stingy man is the worst enemy of human society and as such he becomes the victim of Divine Wrath and also of people's hatred.

Many verses of the Holy Qur'an have condemned stinginess and in contrast have praised the spirit of generosity, philanthropy and the spending of money in the cause of Allah and for helping the helpless and the needy. Allah has promised in the Holy Qur'an that any sum of money

spent in the cause of Allah will be returned 10 times more and sometime 70 times and even 700 times to the one who spent that money. And experience also shows that those people who are generous enough in spending money on the poor and the needy with compassion and meet other financial needs of the society get well-off day by day as their income increases and never diminishes. And if per chance such people have a set-back in their career, they win the sympathy of everybody by virtue of their reputation of having been generous and philanthropist in the past. By this they virtually receive back all that they had spent before. Apart from it, noble men have their heart's pleasure in making their conscience fully satisfied. They are always prepared to follow the command of the Divine Book and serve the interest of humanity with a pious sense of sympathy, kindness, human relations and compassion and gain respect and popularity as well as Allah's Blessings and everlasting peace and prosperity.

THE CONCEPT OF JIHAD

Every living body has the tendency to defend itself and for that purpose he is endowed with the requisite strength. Man by his very nature understands it fully well that he should defend himself and subdue his enemy who is out to subdue him. Similarly man rises in protest against the one who harms his interests and prevents him from doing so. This very inherent tendency which plays its role in individuals is also present in human society. That is to say an enemy which is detrimental to the interest of individual and the society as whole is considered to be worth slaying. Therefore, ever since the human being and the human society came into existence, it was thought justifiable to take drastic action against the enemies.

Islam is a social system which is based on monotheism. It considers those who violate truth and justice as its arch-enemies and a stumbling-block in the smooth functioning of the society. It has no respect for them. Since Islam presents itself as a universal religion, and it does not, for its followers, demarcate any geographical frontiers or a

homeland, it is at war with anyone who is a polytheist and who, despite the clear sayings and wise teachings, denies the truth and violates the Divine commandments, so that he may yield to justice and truth.

The foregoing explanation is the essence of the concept of Jihad (Holy War) in Islam and it is in conformity with the natural drive of the human society which takes action against its enemies.

Contrary to the propagands of the enemies of Islam, it is not a religion of sword. It is not a despotic system the only logic of which is sword or political manoeuvring. It is a religion which has been directed by Allah and in His Divine Book He has addressed the people with wisdom and logic. He invites the people to embrace a religious system which is in harmony with the philosophy of creation.

The religion which wishes good for everybody in its general greeting *Salâm* which incorporates the supplication of peaceful living and its overall universal programme which is based on the instructions of the Holy Qur'an, cannot in any case be religion of "Sword" (Vide: Surah Nisa, 4, 128).

In the lifetime of the Holy Prophet when the light of Islam prevailed upon the entire Arabian peninsula and the Muslims had to face fierce battles, the Muslims suffered a casualty of not more than 200 persons as against 1000 of the infidels. (1000 dead including 700 men from Bani Qurayza who were slain by their own decision). Therefore, it is indeed an unjust statement that Islam is the religion of sword.

CONDITIONS OF WAGING WAR

There are three categories of people against whom Islam wages the Holy War:

(i) The infidels, that is those people who do not believe in Monotheism, Prophethood and the Day of Judgement. First of all they should be invited to embrace Islam, and they should be explained the principles and teachings in a lucid manner so that there should be no ambiguity in comprehending them. Thus if they accept the Divine

religion, they become the brethren-in-Islam, and share equally in one another's weal and woe. And if after having known the explicit realities and the truth they do not accept the invitation and remain adamant, the obligation of Jihad rapidly comes into operation.

(ii) Islam considers the people of the Scriptures (the Jews, the Christian and the Magi) the followers of a religion and the Divine Book as they also believe in monotheism, Prophethood and the Day of Judgement. Islam has given them concession as by their paying *Jizya* (Tribute) and accepting the patronage of Islam it allowed them to live under its protection and follow their own religion without any coercion. Under this situation, their life, property and honour deserve as much protection as those of Muslims and in return they only pay a nominal *Jizya* to the Islamic State. But they are not allowed to indulge in any subversive activity against the interest of Islam or to make false propaganda or support the enemies of Islam.

(iii) Islam fights against those Muslims, who rise in revolt and take to arms against Islam and the Muslims, and also against those, who are responsible for shedding blood, that they may accept the authority and refrain from creating trouble.

(iv) Islam wages war against the enemies, who revolt against the Muslims in order to destroy Islam and the Islamic government. In that case it becomes obligatory on all Muslims to defend themselves and treat the enemy as infidels. To meet the exigencies of the situation the Islamic State can enter into a peace pact with the enemies of Islam for the time being, but it cannot certainly allow Muslims to establish friendly relations with them in such a manner that by their speech and conduct they should influence the Muslims in changing their mode of thinking and course of action.

AVOIDING JIHAD AND DEFENCE

If someone runs away from the battlefield it means that he considers his own life more precious than the very existence and survival of the society. In fact such an action

amounts to handing over the religious sanctities and the life, property and honour of the people in the hands of the enemies. That is why one's running away from Jihad is considered as a major sin and Allah in the Holy Qur'an has promised him Hell. Thus, He says: *Believers, do not retreat when facing the marching army of the unbelievers for no believer will turn back at that time except for strategic reasons or to join another band. Whoever deserts the believers will incur the Wrath of Allah and will dwell in Hell, a terrible dwelling.* (Surah Anfal, 8:16)

DEFENDING THE COUNTRY

From what has been said above, the defence of the Islamic State and the Muslims is one of the important duties in Islam. Allah says: *Do not consider those who are slain in the cause of Allah to be dead. They are alive but you are not aware of them.* (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:154)

The account of the brave men who by risking their life championed the cause of Islam in its early days by fighting the enemies, as well as the chivalrous deeds of the martyrs who were bathed in blood amazingly carry great lessons. These were the pious souls who laid the firm foundation of this Divine religion by their pure blood and martyred bodies.

INTERNAL ENEMIES OF THE SOCIETY

Just as it is necessary to fight against the external enemies of the society, it is also equally necessary to fight against the internal enemies also. The internal enemy is one who violates the general discipline and flouts the rules and regulations and thereby disrupts the unity of the society. That is why for the peace and prosperity of the society, institutions, and law-enforcing agencies in the shape of security forces which award various punishments to defaulters are established.

Apart from administrative matters and awarding of punishments, Islam has made it obligatory on every individual to do good deeds and prevent the evil. By this an incentive has been provided for an effective competition.

The basic difference between Islam and other social systems is that in the latter the stress on reforming the personal behaviour and deeds of individuals is made, while in Islam due consideration to moral upliftment also in addition to actions and deeds has been given.

The sins that Islam has strictly forbidden are in fact the deeds which have an adverse effect on the society and which result in disastrous consequences. Still however, there are some sins, which affect the sinner or sinners and directly create interference in the working of the society. Their instance is like a diseased part of man's body. Many of these sins which interfere in the worship of Allah and ignore the Divine obligations such as offering *Salât* (Prayers) fasting etc. come under this category.

There are some sins, which are the direct cause of disaster for the society itself. Their example is like those maladies which have a direct effect on the life itself and which bring about his death. Telling lies and slandering are such sins, and from the Islamic point of view, the neglecting of one's duty towards the rights of one's parents, back-biting and criminal assault come under the same category.

DEFENDING THE TRUTH

There is another defence which is more important than that of the country. It is the defence of truth, which is the only objective of Islam.

The basic objective of this Divine faith is to establish truth and reality. That is why this religion has been named as Divine religion i.e. the religion which is truth and which contains nothing but truth and which does not recognize anything as its target but truth. Allah in praise of the Holy Qur'an which contains truth and all the realities says: *The Holy Qur'an guides to the path of truth which has no defects and contradictions.* (Surah Ahqaf, 46:30) That is the reason why every Muslim should follow the truth, speak the truth, listen to the truth and by all the power at his command should defend the truth at all costs.

HOMICIDE

One of the cruel deeds that Islam vehemently abhors and condemns is homicide, or killing of the human being. Killing somebody is one of the major sins and Allah has declared that the killing of one person is to that of the entire mankind. (Vide: Surah Ma'ida, 5:32) It is because the killer concerns the humanity as a whole and whether it is one individual or a thousand individuals humanity is equally included in them.

PROPERTY OF THE ORPHANS

Just as doing good to others is a noble deed, in the same way doing ill to others is a cruel act. Islam has strictly forbidden some kinds of cruelties and exploitations and one of them is the misappropriation of orphans' property. Islam has called the usurpation of their property as a major sin. In the Holy Qur'an it has been clearly stated that anyone who devours the orphans' property in fact devours fire and soon he would be plunged into the raging flames.

The reason why the Holy Imams so strictly forbade this sin seems to be that for a grown up person, whose property has been misappropriated it may be just possible that he can defend his right by battling with the usurper but in the case of a minor orphan this would not be possible at all.

DESPAIRING OF ALLAH'S MERCY

One of the most serious sins is the sin of losing hope in the Divine Mercy. Allah says: *Mubammad, tell myservants who have committed injustice to themselves, 'Do not despair of the Mercy of Allah, surely Allah forgives all the sins, He is the Forgiver, the Merciful'*. (Surah Zumr, 39:54)

On another occasion Allah has likened the one who is despaired of Allah's Mercy to an infidel, because if someone becomes despaired of Allah's Mercy, he is left with nothing which can motivate him to perform noble deeds and abstain from evil deeds and smaller sins. In fact the only motivating force in both things is "hopefulness of

Allah's Mercy and of salvation from His Wrath". And this factor is absent in one who is despaired of Allah's Mercy. From the point of view of internal state of his heart there remains absolutely no difference between a man who is despaired of Allah's Mercy and those persons who do not follow any religion.

WRATH AND ANGER

Anger is a state in which man resorts to retaliatory action and by taking revenge he feels himself tranquil and relaxed. Therefore, under that condition if a man does not exhibit self-control, he becomes out of spirits and is subdued by wrath and anger. Consequently he starts taking every bad thing as good and a stage comes when he becomes more fierce than carnivorous animals. Hence, Islam has laid great stress on restraining our passions. Allah likes those people who have control over their rage and show restraint over their wrath and anger. Thus, Allah says: *(Paradise is for those) who harness their anger and forgive the people.* (Surah Al-Imran, 3:134) He also says: *This reward will be for those who keep away from major sins and indecency and who forgive when they are made angry.* (Surah Shura, 42:37)

BRIBE

A man, who is officially authorized to take decision in certain matters, accepts cash or gift in consideration of his duty that cash or gift is called bribe. Islam has counted the taking of bribe as a major sin and the one who takes bribe is deprived of social religious merits (justice) and deserves Divine condemnation. The Holy Qur'an and the traditions have clearly spoken on this point: The Holy Prophet has cursed the one who gives bribe and the one who accepts bribe and the one who acts as an agent in the deal.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq says, "Accepting bribe in connection with giving a decision is equivalent to infidelity".

This condemnation is in connection with giving a just decision and taking bribe but if bribe is taken in order to

give a wrong and unjust decision it would be a graver sin and would entail a severer punishment.

THEFT

Stealing is a condemnable action which poses a danger to the financial stability of the society. A man's asset is his money and wealth which he earns by his hard labour and he takes every care to protect it. Anybody who violates this protection in fact brings about instability and chaos in the society and he deprives the people of life's hard-earned assets. That is why Islam has prescribed severe punishment for this detestable crime that four fingers of the right hand of the thief should be cut off. Allah says: *Cut the hand of the thief and let him meet his fate.* (Surah Maidah, 5:38)

DISHONEST WEIGHING AND MEASURING

Islam considers dishonest weighing and measuring in business transaction as a major sin. The Holy Qur'an condemns such sinners in these words: *Woe to those who are fraudulent in weighing and measuring, those who demand in full from others but when they measure or weigh, give less. Don't they realize that they will be resurrected on Doomsday.* (Surah Mutaffifin, 83:1 and 4 - 5)

One who sells less and covets his client's wealth by fraudulent means loses the people's confidence and gradually loses his customers as well as his capital money.

PUNISHMENT OF SINS

Islam calls all evil deeds as major sins and Allah has warned the sinners in the Holy Qur'an. Apart from that, very severe punishments have been prescribed for certain sins. According to Islam such sinners forfeit the status of the pious that they cannot be recognized to be a respectable member of the society. Anybody who commits a major sin, loses his social status and is deprived of all the privileges which make him a respectable member of the society. He is debarred from holding any public office in Islamic society. He can neither be a leader nor can he lead congregations.

gational prayers. His testimony cannot be accepted against anybody. As long as he does not sincerely repent of his doings and continuously perform noble deeds, his position in society will remain the same.

IMPORTANCE OF WORK

The functioning of the universe is based on work and efforts and it is work which is the essence of the life of every creation. Allah has provided resources to all his creations commensurate with their individual needs and requirement. Man who is a sublime form of Allah's creation has his needs and requirements more than any other creations and for this reason he has to work more for maintaining his life. That is why Islam which is a Divine and social religion has made hard work compulsory for us. The Holy Prophet says: "It is obligatory for every Muslim to earn an honest livelihood in order to meet his or her life's needs and requirements".

Islam pays no importance to lazy people. Whenever the Holy Prophet happened to see a man with good build he would say in amazement: "Does this man work to earn his living?" If the answer was given in negative, he would say: "He has lowered himself in our eyes". Thus the Holy Prophet gave no importance to those who do not work.

According to Islamic teachings man should adopt a suitable profession of his liking and earn his livelihood so that he should shoulder one of the burdens of the society and help others. Allah says; *Man can achieve success only through his efforts and hardwork.* (Surah Najm, 53:39)

In short Islam has laid great emphasis on earning one's living by his hard labour and sustained efforts. It has been aptly said that self-strength is the best strength. A parasitic life is disgraceful.

Islam has not overlooked the importance of economic activity even in moments of trial. Imam Sadiq addressed to one of his companions: "Even on the day when the soldiers are arrayed against the enemy in the battlefield and the fighting is intense you should not ignore your efforts of earning your livelihood and you should continue

your struggle under such trying circumstances".

Islam has strictly forbidden us to remain without work and be lethargic.

IDLENESS IS A CURSE

From what has been said above it is clear that effort and hard work is a path which Allah has shown us for leading a happy and prosperous life.

There is no doubt that deviation from the Divine laws is harmful to man though the harm is small, because it is on these laws that life exists and deviating from them will only lead to misfortune in this world and the Hereafter. In this connection Imam Musa Kazim says: "Do not show any sign of laziness in the performance of work else you will lose both this world and the Hereafter".

The Holy Prophet has cursed those who are habitually work-shy and who depend upon others.

Nowadays social and psychological research has revealed that the root cause of the ills of the society lies in remaining idle. It is idleness which sterilizes the very culture and finances of the society and gives rise to many social evil as it the devil's workshop.

FARMING AND ITS ADVANTAGES

Farming and raising the crops which is the main sources of supply of food grains for the society is considered to be the most desirable vocation. In Islam the adoption of agriculture as one's profession has been greatly stressed. Imam Sadiq says: "The status of a farmer will be higher than that of anybody else on the Day of Judgement". Imam Muhammad Baqir says: "There is no vocation better than agriculture whose blessings are for all and sundry, because all good and bad people, birds and cattle derive benefits from it and pray for them from the core of their hearts".

The Holy Prophet says: "A Muslim who plants a tree or grows vegetables which men, birds and cattles eat, receives the reward of giving alms".

It is incumbent upon Muslims that they make the

best use of their talents and inborn faculties. One of the the Holy Imams, declares: "If the hour of the world's annihilation and the splitting up of the solar system comes, and you are holding a seedling in your hand, and you have still a little time, do not hesitate to plant it in the soil. That is, the worry of world's ultimate end should not deter you from doing a noble deed".

Imam Ali says: "May the curse of Allah be upon him, who has soil and water (that is, natural resources) and does not utilize his human strength to derive benefits out of them and instead leads a life of a pauper or a beggar".

SELF-CONFIDENCE

In the chapter dealing with beliefs, it has been repeatedly mentioned that Islamic universal system hinges on the belief that man should not worship anyone but Allah the One, and that he should not bow his head before anybody except Allah, the Lord of the universe.

Allah is the Creator of everything and He gives sustenance to everyone. Everybody gets his subsistence from Him. Nobody is superior to anyone except the one who relies on Allah. Every Muslim should have self-confidence and make the best use of his Divinely gifted freedom and use all the resources at his disposal and traverse on the destined path of his life. He should not look to others for help; he should not pin his hopes on others and chisel out every day a new idol. A servant should realize that he eats his bread which is his own and not that it has been given by his master. The labourer should also realize that he earns his living by dint of his hard labour and his employer is not doing him a favour. Every working man should have this faith in him that whatever he earns is not a gift of the government or the society to which he belongs but it is the fruit of his labour. In short a free man should never pin his hopes on anybody except Allah or bow himself before anybody other than Allah else he would debase himself subconsciously and would be dominated by polytheistic servile tendency which is so common with idolaters.

By self-confidence it is meant that man should depend upon his personal abilities and should not bank on others help. But this also does not mean that he should sever his relations with Allah and start considering himself as the sole master of his destiny in realizing the aims and objectives of his ambitions, wishes and desires.

A PARASITIC LIFE

To pass a life depending on others is really losing human pride and freedom. It leads to all social evils, which in fact emanate from disgrace and backwardness. He who depends on others and does not do anything for himself in fact has sold his conscience and self-respect. He becomes their lackey and does everything what they ask him to do no matter if it may be good or bad, right or wrong. He pockets every insult and becomes servile to others. He agrees to everything which is unacceptable and cruel and ultimately considers the Islamic principles and teachings to be useless. To beg for a thing without any reasonable ground is also forbidden in Islam. The monetary help of the poor which is one of the essential principles of Islamic teachings is only meant for those helpless people, whose income falls short of the expenses of their bare necessities of life or who have been incapable of earning their living.

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COMMANDMENTS

Just as we have already said in the beginning of this book, the Islamic principles and teachings can be divided into three parts. The first part consists of beliefs, the second of morals and the third one consists of commandments.

After having faith and belief in Allah, we should obey His Commandments by offering *Salât* (Prayers) and observing *Saum* (Fast) etc, which are signs of one's submission to Allah.

SALAT (PRAYERS)

When the people of Hell will be asked: "*What led you into Hell?*" They will reply, "*We did not pray*". (Surah Mudaththir, 74 :42, 43)

The Holy Prophet says: "Prayers (*Salât*) is such a pillar of religion that if it is accepted by Allah other deeds are also accepted but if it is rejected other deeds are also rejected".

When a man bathes five times during the day, his body becomes clean. Similarly, five-time daily prayers cleanses a man of his sins. But one thing should be borne in mind that if a person who offers prayers but does not devote attention to it is like a man who is not offering prayers at all. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says: *Woe to the worshippers who become confused during their prayers.* (Surah Mā'un, 107 4 - 5)

Once when the Holy Prophet arrived in the Mosque, he saw a man who while offering his prayers was not

properly performing *Ruku'* and *Sajda* (Bowing and Prostration). He then said: "If this man dies under this condition, he will not die as a Muslim".

It is however, incumbent upon Muslims to offer their prayers honestly and sincerely and while doing so they must remember as to whom they are addressing themselves, and should be careful of properly performing the acts of prayers so that they may be rewarded with the full benefits of offering prayers.

Regarding the benefits of offering prayers the Holy Qur'an says: *Prayers keeps one away from indecency and evil.* (Surah Ankabut, 29:45)

Honestly speaking it is exactly the same because the discipline and orderliness in offering prayers are such that if one strictly follows them he can never fall a prey to evil deeds.

To cite an example, one of the precepts of prayer is that neither the place nor the dress worn by the worshipper should be illegally obtained, so much so that even if a single thread that is woven into his dress is illegally obtained his prayers would not be accepted. However, prayer is only acceptable when man is free from greed, jealousy and other evil intentions. As a matter of fact, greed and jealousy are the sources of many other evils.

If certain people despite offering their prayers, indulge in evil deeds, the reason is that they have not given due consideration to the conditions for prayers. This results in the non-acceptance of their prayers and consequently they are deprived of its benefits.

The Islamic jurists have laid so much stress on prayers that one is not exempted from offering it even at his death bed. If someone cannot utter Surah Hamd (the first chapter of the Holy Qur'an) and other supplications, he should do so in his heart. If he cannot stand in prayers, he can offer his prayers in a sitting position and if that is also not possible he can do so by lying down. In short, prayer is not exempted in any circumstance. If someone is in a state of emergency that is, he is in the battlefield or if he fears an attack from the enemy, and he cannot find a right direction

to *Qibla* (Holy Ka'bah) he must offer his prayers in any direction out of sheer exigency. Thus the stress is on offering prayers in any condition or eventuality. Even if a man is drowning he should offer his prayers through signs.

OBLIGATORY PRAYERS

The obligatory prayers are six in number:

1. *Salāt Yawmiya* (Daily prayers)
2. *Salāt-i Āyāt* (Divine Sign Prayers)
3. *Salāt-i Mayyit* (Funeral Prayers)
4. *Salāt-i Tawaf-i Wajib* (Obligatory circumambulation Prayers)
5. *Salāt Qaza Walidayn* (Prayers that were not offered by the parents). This is obligatory only on the eldest son on behalf of his parents.
6. *Salāt-i Ijāra, Nazr, Qasam* and *'Abd* (becomes obligatory for one who is hired to offer prayers, or when one makes a vow or promise to offer prayers).

PREREQUISITES OF PRAYERS

For offering prayers, that is when one is worshipping Allah with all humility and submission there are certain prerequisites without which prayers cannot be considered as properly offered. These are as under:

- (i) Cleanliness (*tabarat*); (ii) Timing for Prayers; (iii) Dress of the worshipper; (iv) Place where prayer is being offered; (v) *Qibla* (direction towards Ka'bah)

The above points are elaborated below:

CLEANLINESS (TAHĀRAT)

It is necessary that man's body and clothes should be perfectly clean of impurities before he offers prayers. He should perform *Wuzu* (Ablution), ceremonial bath or *Tayyanum* before he offers prayers.

IMPURITIES (NAJĀSĀT)

Many things are filthy and unclean. They are as follows:

- (i) Urine (ii) the faeces, discharged from the bowels.¹

¹The part polluted by urine can be cleansed only by water. The

The urine and the excrements of those animals whose flesh is forbidden and whose blood gushes out on cutting the artery of the neck such as cats, foxes, rabbits etc is impure. Similarly, the urine and excrement of birds and animals whose flesh is forbidden because of their eating the filth, is impure.

(iii) The flesh of dead animals whose blood gushes out on cutting the artery whether forbidden or not is impure. But certain parts of the dead animals, such as hair, wool, nails etc. which do not have life in them are exempted.

(iv) The blood of those animals, whose blood gushes out on cutting the artery, is impure whether or not their flesh is forbidden.

(v), (vi) The dog and the pig, whose parts of body including hair are impure.

(vii) Alcohol or any other thing in liquid form which intoxicates the man, (viii) Beer (Barley wine).

PURIFYING AGENTS (MUTAHHIRĀT)

Anything by which impurities are removed is called purifying agents. Some of them are as under:

(i) **Water:** This purifies everything which has become impure (*Najis*) but that is on the condition that it should be pure water. If water is in the form of juice or extract as for instance water of melon or rosewater it cannot purify the impure thing and with such water ablution and ceremonial bath is not allowed.¹

anus can, however be cleansed by washing with water or by three stone pieces or any other pieces of such things but if the faeces soiled the adjoining region, cleansing with water will be necessary. If three pieces are not sufficient enough for cleansing purpose more pieces should be used until the area is completely cleansed of excrement.

¹Water is of two kinds: *Kur* water and under *Kur* water. The *Kur* water is about 384 kilogram in weight and if it becomes contaminated with impure thing, it does not become impure if its taste, smell and colour is not changed. *Qallil* or under *Kur* water is that which becomes impure on contact with some impurity. To make it pure it is necessary to connect it with flowing water (of river etc.) or with *Kur* water.

- (ii) **Earth**: It purifies the soles of foot and shoes.
- (iii) **Sun**: It purifies the impure earth or ground as well as buildings and things affixed to it like doors, windows and nails fixed in the walls which are dried up by its rays.
- (iv) **Istahāla (Transformation)**: If an impure thing is transformed into a different thing altogether and looks like a pure thing as for example a dog having been transformed into salt by falling down into a salt mine it becomes pure.
- (v) **Intiqāl (Transference)**: If the blood of animals which gushes out on cutting of the artery is transferred in the body of animals, whose blood does not gush out as for example the transference of human blood into the body of mosquitoes or flies etc. is pure.
- (vi) The removal of impurities from the exterior of the animals and interior of the human being. That is, if the blood is on the back of an animal or in the interior of a man's nose, that portion automatically becomes purified after the blood is removed and thus there will be no necessity of washing it with water.
- (vii) **Taba'iyat (Following or imitation)**: One impure thing becomes pure because of the purification of another impure thing. That is, if an infidel is converted to Islam, his children will automatically be purified because of his father's conversion to Islam.
- (viii) **Lessening in quantity**: The lessening of two-third quantity of grape juice. The grape juice on boiling becomes impure. If, on boiling, two-third of its quantity is evaporated into steam, the remaining quantity becomes pure.

ABLUTION AND ITS RULES

It is desirable that before the performance of ablution first the teeth are brushed with Miswak (the twig of a tree meant for that purpose) and the mouth is rinsed. It is also desirable to cleanse the nostrils by drawing up pure water inside the nose.

METHOD OF PERFORMING ABLUTIONS

In performing ablution it is necessary that the face from the roots of the hair on the forehead to the chin, and

the forearm from the elbow to the finger tips should be washed, and wiping (masah) of the front part of the head and the upper part of the two feet should be performed.

- (i) **Body parts:** The relevant body parts should be pure.
- (ii) **Water:** The water for ablution should be pure and unmixed and it should be lawfully acquired.
- (iii) **Intention:** That is, it is to be intended that ablution is performed for the pleasure of Allah. In other words if ablution is performed for purpose of giving comfort or coolness to the body, it is not ablution.
- (iv) **Sequence:** That is, first the face, then the right hand and then the left hand should be washed and thereafter the wiping of the head and feet should be done.
- (v) The performance of ablution should be done in quick succession without pause so that the preceding body part which has been washed or wiped before should not get dried up. But if due to climatic condition or body heat any part of the body is dried up, ablution will be all right.

COMMENT

It is not necessary that the 'Masa' of head that is wiping the head wet should be done on the skin but it can be done on the hair, but if the hair collects on the front part of the head it should be separated. Furthermore, if the hair is so long as to cover the face, it should be combed and 'Masa' should be performed on the root of the hair or on the skin.

INVALIDATION OF ABLUTION

The things which invalidate an ablution are called 'Mubtilat-i Wuzu' and these are eight in number.

- (i) Urine
- (ii) Faeces
- (iii) The wind of the stomach or intestine which comes from the rectal opening, or on account of surgery it passes out from a different opening.
- (iv) Fainting or unconsciousness
- (v) State of intoxication
- (vi) Nap or sleep if both eyes and ears lose their respective

function of seeing and hearing but if eyes can see and the ears do not hear, ablution will not be nullified.

(vii) Lunacy

(viii) Sexual intercourse or any other such things as necessitate the taking of bath as an obligatory duty. Besides, occasional undue menstrual bleeding from women nullifies the ablution.

CEREMONIAL BATH

Bath is taken by two ways, one is in sequential order and the other is immersion. In the former case head, neck right side of the body and then the left side are washed in sequential order and in the latter case the whole body should be immersed into water at one and the same time.

Bath is of two kinds:

- (i) *Wajib* bath (obligatory bath) and,
- (ii) *Mustabab* bath (recommended bath).

In Islamic jurisprudence recommended baths are many but obligatory baths are seven in number. These are as follows:

- (i) Bath after sexual intercourse or discharge of semen.
- (ii) Giving a bath to the dead body
- (iii) Bath after touching the dead body (*Mas-e Mayyit*) (If a man touches a dead body which has not been given the bath and which has become cold, he must take bath himself).
- (iv) When one has taken an oath to perform bath.
- (v) Bath after cessation of menstruation.
- (vi) Bath after the cessation of *Nifas* (lochia) blood.
- (vii) Bath after the cessation of *Istihaza*, (undue menses).

Out of the above listed seven kinds of baths, the first four are applicable to both men and women and the last three are meant for women only.

The things which are forbidden for either of the party who have had a sexual intercourse are as under:

- (i) To touch the writings of the Holy Qur'an; Names of Allah, the Holy Prophet and the Holy Imams.
- (ii) To enter 'Masjidul Haram' (Holy Ka'bah) and the

Masjidun Nabi, the Holy Prophet's Mosque in Madina.
(iii) To stay in other mosques or to keep something there.

OBLIGATORY PROSTRATION

To recite any of the following four Surahs which contain the relevant verses by reciting which it becomes obligatory to perform prostration : Surah Najm ; Surah Iqra ; Surah Alif Lam Mim Tanzil and Surah Hâ Mim Sajda.

COMMENT

In taking bath intention is necessary and before taking bath the body should be purified and water should flow on the skin of the body.

TAYAMMUM

Tayammum is ablution or ceremonial bath performed with earth or sand instead of water. If a man for want of sufficient time or on account of illness or for want of water or for any other such reasons cannot perform ablution or bath for prayers or any other obligations, he should perform *tayammum*.

METHOD OF PERFORMING TAYAMMUM

Four things are obligatory in *tayammum*.

- (i) *Niyyat* (Intention)
- (ii) To strike the palms of both the hands on sand or any other such thing as is allowed for *tayammum*.
- (iii) Passing the palms of both the hands on the forehead and its two sides beginning from the place where hair of one's head grow to the eyebrows and above the nose and if the eyebrows are also rubbed it is still better.
- (iv) Passing the palm of the left hand over the entire back of the right hand and then passing the palm of the right hand over the back of the left hand. If *tayammum* is performed in lieu of ablution the above procedure is enough and if it is done in lieu of bath then the hands should be hit on the sand once more for the second time and the back of the hands should be wiped.

RULES RELATING TO TAYAMMUM

(i) *Tayammum* should be performed on earth, sand, lump of clay, or stone, but according to recommended precaution if earth is available *tayammum* should not be performed on anything else. In case earth is not available then it should be performed on sand, lump of clay and failing that on stone. If any of these things is not available at all then we should perform *tayammum* on any place where dust has accumulated.

(ii) On limestone or other mineral substance, *tayammum* should not be performed.

(iii) If water is available on high price and a man can afford to pay the price, he cannot perform *tayammum*. In that case he should purchase water and perform ablution or bath as the case may be.

TIMINGS FOR PRAYERS

The *Zohr* and *Asr* (noon and after noon) prayers each have their respective specific timings as well as a time common to both.

The specific timing of *Zohr* prayers begins from the start of the *Zohr* time¹ to the time when the time of offering *Zohr* prayers is approximately finished. If anyone by mistake during this time of four *rakats* of *Zohr* prayers at the very start of its time, offers his *Asr* prayers also, his prayers will be void.

¹If a stick or any other similar thing is pitched into the ground perpendicularly in the morning when the sun rises, its shadow will fall to the west and as and when the sun starts rising this shadow becomes shortened and further at the time of the beginning of noon-time this shadow is the shortest. After the noontime, this shadow now falls towards East and as and when the sun starts proceeding towards the West, the shadow gets longer. Therefore, when the shadow becomes the shortest and then starts lengthening, it indicates that the timing of *Zohr* prayers has begun. But one thing should be borne in mind that at certain places for example at Makkah at the time of *Zohr*, the shadow disappears and in such places when the shadow reappears it shows that the timing of *Zohr* has begun.

The specific timing of *Asr* prayers is that before *Maghrib* there is only four *rakat*'s time for offering *Asr* prayers. If anyone by that time has not offered *Zohr* prayers, his *Zohr* prayers lapses and he should offer his *Asr* prayers.

The time between the specific times of *Zohr* and *Asr* is the common timing for offering *Zohr* and *Asr* prayers. If during this time anyone by mistake offers his *Asr* prayers before having offered *Zohr* prayers, his prayers will be in order and he should offer his *Zohr* prayers after the *Asr* prayers.

There is also a specific and common timing of *Maghrib* and *Isba* (dusk and night) prayers.

The timing of *Maghrib* prayers only is from the beginning of sun-set to the time when approximately three *Rak'at* can be offered.¹

The specific timing of *Isba* prayers is when before midnight² only four *rakat* time for offering *Isba* prayers is left. Thus if anyone has not offered his *Maghrib* prayers by that time, he should first offer *Isba* prayers and then *Maghrib* prayers.

The time between the specific timing of *Maghrib* and *Isba* prayers is the common timing of the two prayers. And if anyone by mistake offers *Isba* prayers before offering *Maghrib* prayers, his prayers is in order. He should however, offer his *Maghrib* prayers after *Isba* prayers.

The timing for morning prayers, *Fajr*³ is from the beginning of the dawn to the rising of the sun.

¹*Maghrib* actually starts fifteen minutes after the sunset and its sign is that after sunset the redness on the Eastern horizon disappears.

²The midnight, according to Islamic jurisprudence is the time when eleven and a quarter hours have passed after *Zohr*.

³Before the morning *Azan* (call for prayers) whiteness in the Eastern horizon appears. This time is called a "*Fajr Awwal*" or "*Fajr Kâzib*" (False Dawn). And when this whiteness spreads, the time for true Dawn begins and at this occasion *Azan* is called. This is the beginning of the timing for morning prayers.

DRESS FOR PRAYERS

There are certain conditions with regard to the dress of the person who offers prayers.

- (i) It should be lawful, that is it should belong to him. And if it does not belong to him the actual owner must have given him permission to wear it.
- (ii) It should not be impure.
- (iii) It should not be made of the hides of a dead animal whether its flesh is allowed or forbidden.
- (iv) It should not be made of hair or wool of those animals whose flesh is forbidden but prayers can be offered with the dress made of Sable-fur.
- (v) If one who offers prayers is man, his dress should not be made of silk or gold threads and he should not wear any gold ornament. Apart from prayers the silk dress and gold are forbidden for men.

PLACE FOR PRAYERS

There are certain conditions for the place where prayers are to be offered.

- (i) It should be lawful.
- (ii) It should be stationary, that is it should not be shaking. If a man is compelled to offer prayers at a place which is in motion (train or boat), there is no harm, but if the thing is moving from the Qibla to any other direction, he should turn his face towards Qibla (the Holy Ka'bah).
- (iii) If the place of prayers is impure (Najis) it should not be so damp that it should soil the man's body and garments while offering prayers but if the place, where the forehead is rested, is impure, prayers will not be valid even if the place is dry.
- (iv) The place, where the forehead rests, should not be higher or lower than the knees and the fingertips of the feet of the person offering prayers by the length of four joined fingers of the hand.

QIBLA

The Holy Ka'bah which is situated in Makkah is Qibla and Prayers must be offered with one's face turned

towards it. But if a man who is further away and is standing or sitting in such a manner that the people say that he is offering his prayers with his face towards the Ka'bah, it is in order. And for other acts also for which we should face the Ka'bah as for example slaughtering of animals, the same rule will apply here.

If someone cannot offer his prayers in a sitting position, he should lie down on his right side in such a way that the front of his body should face the Ka'bah, and if it is not possible then he should lie on his back in such a way that the soles of his feet face the Ka'bah.

If a person who wants to offer prayers is not in a position to know the direction of Ka'bah, he should determine the direction of Ka'bah through the mosques, tombstones, cemeteries or any other such things.

ESSENTIALS OF PRAYERS

The essentials of prayers that is those things which are obligatory during prayers are eleven in number:

- (i) *Niyyat* (Intention)
- (ii) *Qiyām* (Standing position)
- (iii) *Takbirul Abram* (pronouncing *Allabo Akbar* in the beginning of the prayers.
- (iv) *Qarā'ī* (Recitation of Surah Hamd and other Surah)
- (v) *Ruku'* (Bowing)
- (vi) *Sajda* (Prostration)
- (vii) *Tashabbud* (Testifying the monotheism and in the Prophethood of the Holy Prophct.
- (viii) *Salām* (Greetings and blessing on the Holy Prophet and the pious)
- (ix) Sequence (that is, acts should be performed in proper order).
- (x) *Zikr* (Recital in *Ruku'* and *Sajda*)
- (xi) *Muwālāt* (consequitiveness) that is, there should be no pause in between any of the two acts of performance.¹

¹Revered. Allama has regarded '*Tumānina*' that is offering of the prayers in a dignified and disciplined manner as one of the obligatory acts.

Out of these eleven obligatory things, five are basic elements in prayers and if these are omitted intentionally or unintentionally, prayers will become void. The remaining are obligatory and by omitting them or by increasing or decreasing them intentionally, prayers will be void.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF PRAYERS

- (i) *Niyyat* (Intention)
- (ii) *Takbirul Abrām* (Saying of *Allabo Akbar* in the beginning of prayers)
- (iii) *Qiyām* (Standing at the time of calling *Takbirul Abram* and immediately before *Ruku'*)
- (iv) *Ruku'* (Bowling)
- (v) *Sajdatain* (Two Prostrations)

INTENTION

Intention means that man offers prayers with the intention of *Qurbat* (for the sake of Allah). It is not necessary to utter intention by saying: "I offer four rak'at noon prayer *Qurbatan ilallah* but the intention of offering the particular prayers is enough.

TAKBIRATUL AHRĀM

After the call of *Azan* and *Iqamah* and intention and saying of *Allabo Akbar*, prayers commences. After pronouncing *Allabo Akbar* many things such as eating, drinking, laughing or turning one's back towards *Qibla* (Ka'bah) become forbidden, this *takbir*, that is *Allabo Akbar* is called *Takbiratul Abram*.

It is desirable that while pronouncing *takbir* we should raise our hands and by doing this we should be reminded of Allah's Greatness and ignore every other thing.

STANDING POSITION

Standing position at the time of pronouncing *Takbiratul Abram* and immediately before *Ruku'* (Bowling) is the basic act of prayers. But at the time of reciting '*Hamd*' and other Surah and after performing the *Ruku'* the standing position is not the basic act. Thus if anyone forgets to

perform *Ruku'* and before going into prostration he remembers of it, he should stand up and then go to *Ruku'*.

If he goes to *Ruku'* in a bowing position, his prayers will be void because he had not completed the basic act of standing which precedes *Ruku'*.

BOWING

After reciting the two surahs, one should bow down a little to the extent that his hands reach his knees. This act is called *Ruku'*.

In *Ruku'*, *Subhāna Rabbiyal 'Azimi Wa Bibamdibi* should be uttered once or *Subhānallab* three times.

After performing *Ruku'* one should stand erect before performing prostration.

PROSTRATION

Sajdah means that one should rest his forehead, the two palms, knees and the tip of the big toes of both the feet on the ground and should utter *Subhāna Rabbiyal A'la Wa Bibamdibi* once or *Subhānallab* three times, and then resume the sitting position and thereafter perform prostration again for the second time and repeat the same recital. The place where the forehead is rested should be the earth or such other thing which grows out of earth. *Sajdah* is not allowed on anything which is used as food or which is used as garment or on any mineral.

TASHAHHUD AND SALĀM

If the prayers is of two *Rak'at* one should resume the standing position after performing the two *Sajda* and recite *Hamd, Surah* and *Qunut*.¹

¹After "Hamd" and Surah, one should raise his hands adjacent to his face and then recite any desirable supplication as for example *Rabbana Ātina Fidduniya Hasanatan Wa Fil Akbirati Hasanatan Wa Qina Āzāban Nār*".

And after *Ruku'* and *Sajda, Tashabbud*¹ and then *Salām*² should be recited.

If the prayer consists of three *Rak'at*, one should resume the standing position after reciting *Tashabbud* and recite *Hamd* or say *Subhāmallabi Walhamdolillabi Wa Lā ilāha Illallabu Wallabu Akbar* three times and then perform the *Ruku'*, two *Sajda, Tashabbud* and *Salām*.

If the prayer consists of four *Rak'at*, then in the fourth *Rak'at* the same recitals are repeated as were done in the third *Rak'at* of prayers of three *Rak'at* and then *Tashabbud* and *Salām* are recited.

PRAYERS OF SIGNS

On account of four things, *Salāt-i Āyāt* becomes obligatory. First, and second the Sun-eclipse, and the Moon eclipse even if the eclipse is partial and does not cause fear; third, earthquake even if it does not give any frightening feeling, and the fourth, roaring of clouds, thunderbolts, black and red windstorm and similar other phenomena which cause fright among the people.

METHOD OF OFFERING SIGN PRAYERS

Sign prayers consists of two *Rak'at* and each *Rak'at* consists of five *Ruku'*. After intention first we should recite the *Takbir*, then recite *Hamd* and then one complete Surah. Thereafter, we should go to *Ruku'* and then return from *Ruku'* and recite again for the second time *Hamd* and one Surah and then go back to *Ruku'* again for the second time. We should repeat this performance five times and after returning from the fifth *Ruku'*, we should perform two *Sajda* and resume the standing position. In the second

¹In *Tashabbud* the following words are to be recited: *Asb-bado An lā ilāha Illallabo wabdabu Lā Sbarika Labu Wa Asb-bado Anna Mubammadan Abdubu wa Rasulubu. Allabumma Sallay 'Alā Mubammadin wa Āl-i Mubammad.*

²*Salām* is like this: *Assalamo Alayka Ayyu Han Nabiyyu Wa Rabmatullabi Wa Barakātubu. Assalāmu 'Alayna Wa 'Alā Ibādillabis Sālibin. Assalāmu 'Alaykum wa Rabmatullabi wa Barakātubu.*

Rak'at we should repeat the same performance as of the first *Rak'at* and in the end recite *Tashabbud* and *Salam* as usual. In the signs prayers it is also possible that after intention and recitation of *Takbir* and *Hamd* we should divide the Surah in five parts and after recitation of *Hamd* recite one verse or more and go to *Ruku'* and then stand up and without reciting *Hamd* recite another part of Surah and go to *Ruku'* and continue this procedure till before fifth *Ruku'* we finish the Surah and then we should perform the two *Sajda*. The same procedure should be adopted in the second *Rak'at* and finish the prayers with *Tashabbud* and *Salām*.

PRAYERS OF A TRAVELLER (SALĀTUL QASR)

Anyone who is on a journey, must shorten the four-*Rak'at* prayers and offer two *Rak'at* instead of the usual four *Rak'at* on the following six conditions:

- (i) His journey should not be less than eight "*farsang*" that is 45 kilometers. If he goes four "*farsang*" on his outward journey and four "*farsang*" on his backward journey he will be called a traveller.
- (ii) Before the start of his journey his intention should be to cover a distance of eight "*farsang*".
- (iii) During his journey he should not change his intention.
- (iv) His journey is not undertaken for the purpose of committing any sin.
- (v) Travelling should not be his profession. If a man's profession is travelling (as for example he is a driver) he should offer his prayers in full except that he stays at home for ten days. In that case he should offer *Salātul Qasr* if he goes on a journey for three times.
- (vi) If he reaches the limit of *Tarakhkbus* (i.e. at a point where he cannot hear the *Azān* of the town and the people of the town do not see him).

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS (SALĀTUL JAMĀ'AH)

It is desirable that Muslims offer prayers in congregation. The spiritual reward is many thousand times more in congregational prayers than it is offered alone or in solitude.

CONDITIONS OF CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS

(i) It is necessary that the Imam leading the congregational prayers is "*Mukallaf*" i.e. he has reached the age of fifteen. He should be a Muslim, just, and legitimately born person and furthermore he should be in a position to offer prayers in a proper manner. And if *Ma'mumin* – the people who offer prayers behind the Imam, are male, the Imam (leader) should also be a male.

(ii) There should be no curtain or any such barrier between the Imam and the followers so as to prevent the latter from seeing the former. But if the followers are women, there is no harm for putting a curtain.

(iii) The place of the Imam should not be much higher than that of the followers but if there is a difference of the length of four joined fingers or less than that then it will be all right. The followers of the prayers should take their position either behind the Imam or beside him.

RULES REGARDING CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS

(i) The followers of the congregational prayers should recite everything except *Hamd* and *Surab*. But if his first or the second *Rak'at* is the third or the fourth *Rak'at* of the Imam he should recite *Hamd* and *Surab* also and if because of reciting *Surah* he cannot follow the Imam in performing *Ruku'* he should recite *Hamd* only and join the Imam in *Ruku'*. And if he cannot join him in *Ruku'*, he should complete his prayers with the intention of offering it individually.

(ii) The followers should perform *Ruku'* and *Sajda* and other acts of prayers with the Imam or a little later, but he must perform *Takbiratul Abram* and *Salām* after the Imam.

(iii) If a follower joins the congregational prayers at the time when the Imam is in *Ruku'* his prayers is valid and it will be counted as one *Rak'at*.

FASTING

Fasting is one of the Articles of Islamic Acts. It is incumbent upon every adult person to observe fast during the month of Ramazan. That is, in deference to Allah's

Command, he should, from the time of *Azan* of morning prayers till the *Maghrib* (Dusk) time, abstain from things which invalidate the fasting. In Islam, the importance of keeping fast has been greatly emphasized. Islam, as a matter of fact, attaches great importance to this act. The spiritual reward for observing fast is so great that although Allah has fixed its reward beforehand He ascribes it to Himself saying: "Fasting is for me and I will give its reward".

Fasting with its specific conditions is very effective as it prevents man from sensual desires and purifies his soul from all pollutions. The Holy Prophet addressing Jabir bin Abdullah Ansari said: "O Jabir! This is the month of Ramazan. Anyone who observes Fasts during the day and keeps awake during the night in the worship of Allah, protects his stomach from the forbidden things, remains aloof from all corruptions and keeps a check on his tongue, will become purified of his sins at the termination of this month". Jabir said: "O Holy Prophet of Allah! How good is this tidings?" The Holy Prophet replied: "O Jabir! But its conditions are very hard".

Similarly, Imam Ja'far Sadiq says: "Fasting is a strong shield against the blazing Fire of Hell".

RAMAZAN IS THE MONTH OF ALLAH

In various narrations, the month of Ramazan has been given pleasant names such as "The Holy Month" and the "Spring-time of recitation of the Holy Qur'an" but "The Month of Allah" is by far the best and the most appropriate name.

There is no doubt that all months belong to Allah but because of its importance, the month of Ramazan is called the Month of Allah and this name in fact carries a special significance of spiritual distinction. It is this very month during which the Holy Qur'an was revealed.

On the commencement of the month of Ramazan, the gateway to Divine Mercy is opened to Allah's servants. And the people who observe Fasts develop in themselves a passion for worship, and spiritual and moral refinement.

The Holy Prophet on the last Friday of the month of

Sha'ban said about the greatness and significance of the "Month of Allah" as follows: "O people! The Month of Allah with all its blessings, bounties and means of salvation is approaching towards you. This is the month which is best of all the months in Allah's esteem. Its days are the best days; its nights are the best nights; and its moments are the best moments. This is the month during which you are invited by Allah as His guest and you have been blessed with His Mercy and Kindness. In this month every breath that you take carries a reward of glorification of Allah and when you sleep you will have a recompense of worship. In this month when you invoke and implore Allah, He will grant your invocation. Thus, with all your sincerity and purity of heart pray to Allah that He may grant you the willingness to observe Fast and recite the Holy Qur'an, because unlucky is the man, who deprives himself from receiving Allah's Mercy and salvation in this month".

FASTING LEADS TO PIETY

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah says: *O Believers! Fasting has been made obligatory for you as it was made obligatory for the people before you so that you become pious.* (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:183)

Islam commands its followers to observe Fast during the month of Ramazan. By keeping one month's Fast, Muslims in fact are able to inculcate in themselves the spirit of *Taqwa* (Piety), because when a man restrains himself from fulfilling his body's natural demands, he can as well equally abstain himself from following the dictates of his temptations. There is no doubt about it that Islam for the purpose of enabling the man who observes Fast to attain the exalted position, not only considers it good enough for him to abstain from eating and drinking but it also ordains that man should control himself from all those things which tempt him to commit sins or let him go astray in following the satanic temptations and the unbridled wicked desires.

THINGS WHICH MAKE FAST VOID

The following things make a fast void:

- (i) Eating and drinking (even those things which are not edibles for instance, sand or extract of tree).
- (ii) Sexual intercourse
- (iii) Masturbation or self-gratification to the extent that semen is discharged.
- (iv) To ascribe a false statement to Allah, His Holy Prophet and the Holy Imams.
- (v) Making thick dust reach the throat.
- (vi) Immersing one's head in water.
- (vii) To remain in the condition of impurity after sexual intercourse, menstruation (Hayz) or cessation of the bleeding after child-birth (Nifas) till the time of the call of morning prayers.
- (viii) To introduce liquid substance in the rectum for purpose of enema.
- (ix) Intentional vomiting

For further details consult Articles of Islamic Acts, I.S.P. 1982.

BAY* (BUSINESS)

*Bay** means selling or exchanging ones goods with another in such a manner that one should be the owner of the goods, called the "Seller" who hands over his goods in exchange of money to the other party called the "Buyer".

As it is obvious, selling is a kind of a contract for which the presence of two parties, the seller and the buyer, are necessary. Thus, the general stipulations of a contract, for instance, adulthood, sanity, intention and the authority of the two parties are applicable to "Selling".

THE REQUISITES OF SELLING

The sales deal is one of the confirmed contracts. That is, after the finalization of the deal, neither party, the seller or the buyer, is authorized to revoke it.

Taking into consideration the possibility of an error or negligence at the time of the conclusion of the sales deal, by which the seller or the buyer sustains heavy loss, it

will not be a sound policy to regard the sales contract as final and irrevocable. That is why the Islamic jurists have proposed two methods to overcome this difficulty. The first is *Iqāla* (Annulment). In this if any of the two contracting parties feels regretful and wants to cancel the deal, it is desirable that the other party should agree with him and revoke the contract. The second is *Kbiyār* (Option). This is a special option by which a contracting party can revoke the contract. Some of the well-known options are as under:

(i) **Option Concerning the Assembly:** As long as the meeting in which the contract is reached is not dispersed, the contracting parties will have the option of revoking the deal. This is called *Kbiyārul Majlis*.

(ii) **Option Concerning Misappropriation:** If anyone of the contracting parties was deceived and he suffered a loss in the deal as for example a certain goods was sold at a price lower than its actual cost or is purchased at a higher price, the party which becomes the victim of such a deceit can revoke the contract. This is called *Kbiyārul Ghabn*.

(iii) **Option Concerning Defect:** When after the finalization of the contract, the buyer detects any defect in the goods, he can claim a rebate on the difference in price. This is called *Kbiyārul 'Aib*.

(iv) **Option Concerning Animals:** In case of animals for instance sheep and cattle and horses, the buyer has the option of three days in which time he can revoke the contract. This is called *Kbiyārul Haywān*.

(v) **Option Concerning Stipulations:** If the seller or the buyer has laid down certain stipulation regarding the deal, then on violation of such stipulation, either party can revoke the contract. This is called *Kbiyārut Tā'khir*.

CASH, CREDIT AND ADVANCE PAYMENT

In exchange of money or goods, the sales deal is of four kinds:

(i) After the finalization of the contract about the goods or the price, the deal is concluded by payment of cash.

(ii) After the finalization of the contract, the goods are handed over to the buyer but the payment is deferred.

Such a deal is said to be 'on credit basis'.

(iii) As opposed to the second kind, the payment is made in advance of the delivery of the goods. Such a deal is said to be 'On Advance Payment Basis'.

(iv) As opposed to the first kind, the handing over of the goods and the payment are to be effected at a later time. Such a deal is said to be a 'Promised deal'.

Out of the above four deals the first three are in order while the fourth one is void.

CONFESSION

The importance of making confession; In a society where there is an attempt to restore the rights which have the risk of being infringed, the importance of confession needs no emphasis, because the duty which the courts of law perform after great deliberations and probing can be accomplished by confession in two words only.

From the point of view of an individual also in Islam, confession has great importance, because it emanates from that inborn tendency for the revival and viability of which Islam makes full efforts and that tendency is the love of truth which is opposed to love of greed.

Allah says: *Believers! Be the supporters of justice and the witnesses for Allah even against yourselves, parents, and relatives, regardless they are rich or poor.* (Surah al-Nisa, 4:135)

The Holy Prophet says: "Speak the truth even though it causes harm to you".

MEANING OF CONFESSION AND ITS CONDITIONS

In the term of Islamic Jurisprudence, confession means the word spoken by a person which proves the right of another person, for example a man confesses that he owes \$1000 to such and such person.

It is necessary that the man who makes a confession is adult and sane. Hence, confession of a person who is minor, insane, or is intoxicated or is sleeping, is not acceptable.

EDIBLES

In Islam anything which is edible is permissible to take except those intoxicants some of which have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and some have been described by the Holy Prophet. Those things which have been forbidden to eat or drink are of two kinds i.e. living and non-living things.

1. ANIMALS

These are of three kinds: (i) Marine animals; (ii) Land animals and (iii) Birds.

(i) **Marine Animals:** Out of those animals which live in water, only aquatic birds and the fish with scales are permissible and the rest as for example eel, seal, dogfish, tortoise, otter are not permissible.

(ii) **Land Animals:** Land animals are of two kinds: Pet animals and wild animals.

Among the pet animals, the meat of sheep, goat, cow, camel is permissible. Similarly the eating of meat of horse, donkey and mule is permissible but not desirable. Other pet animals such as dog and cat are forbidden.

Among the wild animals, cows, lamb, mountain goat, zebra and deer are permissible and the other carnivorous animals as for example lion, leopard, wolf, fox, jackal and rabbit are forbidden.

(iii) **Birds:** Among the birds, those which possess crops and gizzard or those which flap their wings more while flying and those which do not have a claw as fox like, pet chicken, pigeon, dove, partridge are permissible and the rest are forbidden. Some of the species of locust are permissible. For further details, consult Articles of Islamic Acts, I.S.P. 1982.

COMMENT

The meat of the permissible animals which have been mentioned above will only be permissible when they are slaughtered in accordance with the Islamic injunctions.

2. NON-LIVING THINGS

These are of two kinds: Solids and Fluids.

SOLIDS

(i) To eat the meat of any dead animal whether permissible or forbidden is forbidden. Impure things are also forbidden. The same order applies to the excrement of unlawful animals. The eating of things which become impure with the contact of impure things is also forbidden.

(ii) Dust is forbidden.

(iii) Deadly poisons are forbidden.

(iv) Those things which cause nausea to man as for example excrement of animals, water from brain membranes and anything which comes out of the bowels is forbidden. Similarly, there are fifteen parts of the body of an animal which are forbidden, although its meat is permissible. For details, consult relevant books.

FLUIDS

(i) An intoxicant of any kind is forbidden even if it is in a minute quantity.

(ii) The milk of those animals whose meat is forbidden as for example, swine, cat, bitch etc.

(iii) The blood of the animals.

(iv) The impure fluids such as urine and semen of the animals whose blood gushes out are forbidden.

(v) Any fluid which is touched by an impure thing.

COMMENT

The forbidden eatable things are prohibited but are allowed in case of emergency, for instance, when there is a risk that a man would die of hunger if he does not eat forbidden eatable things, or that he is afraid of falling sick, or that his illness would become intense or that during a journey that he fears he would lag behind his companions on account of his weakness or that he would die of his weakness. The use of forbidden things is allowed only during the period of emergency. This exception is not in the case of a man who leaves his country with an intention of committing theft or any crime against the State and is faced with an emergency.

HEALTH IS WEALTH

To take care of one's health is the foremost duty of man and anybody who has even the slightest intelligence can know its importance himself.

The various articles of food which have an adverse effect on health are quite obvious. Apart from it, these things influence man's mentality, morals and social behaviour. It cannot be gainsaid that there is a lot of difference between the psychological tendency of an intoxicated and a sober person and that each has his own different social attitude. To cite an example, if a man becomes habituated to eating detestable things the effect that this habit will have on his individual and social life will not be acceptable to the people with whom he associates.

That is why man by his inherent tendency knows the limitations of his diet. He should not eat every eatable thing nor should he drink every drinkable thing just as Allah, in the Holy Qur'an has declared that He has created everything on earth for man and He is Absolute. He knows better what is good or bad for his creatures and for the sake of his welfare, He has made certain eatables as lawful and certain as unlawful for him.

Imam Ali Riza says: "Allah has not made any edible lawful except those things which are useful and beneficial to man and also He has not made anything forbidden except those which are harmful and fatal to man".

The underlying wisdom of making certain eatable things forbidden can only be understood by a man who has a clear and straight thinking and the reason behind a few of them can be fully known through scientific discussions. If we cannot understand the reason why somethings have been forbidden it cannot be construed that it will never be understood by us. And even if we fail to comprehend it will not be proper to say that there was no wisdom in forbidding them but since these commandments are from Allah, Who has Infinite Knowledge, the wisdom behind it is unquestionable. It is a different matter that because of our short life and limited knowledge and resources we may not comprehend the underlying benefits that emanate from them.

USURPATION

If some one snatches the property of another man and keeps it under his possession without denying the other man's ownership, and brings it under his use this act in the terminology of Islamic Jurisprudence is called "Usurpation". Thus usurpation is expropriation of others property without completing the formal conditions of sales, lease or authorization.

This shows that usurpation is an evil deed which violates the principles of monopoly and ownership and just as on the one hand the principle of monopoly and the right of ownership are effective for the society's existence, usurpation on the contrary destroys the society and puts a check on its growth.

If it becomes a rule by which the society's influential people without any reason can grab the property of the weak and helpless people there will then be no value of the right of ownership and anyone who finds someone as weaker than himself will adopt the same attitude with regard to right of ownership of other people and in order to obtain the benefit of their hard labour, the downtrodden and the weak will lose their self-respect and honour. This will result in making the human society a market place for the trading of slaves. There will then be no regard for law and order and transgression and oppression will take their place.

Hence Islam has laid down strict rules for the punishment of the usurper and has called usurpation as a major sin.

According to the Holy Qur'an and the traditions, there is a possibility of Allah's forgiveness of all sins except the sin of polytheism. And even the sin of polytheism can be condoned by Allah if the sinner asks for Allah's forgiveness after repentance for his sin, but if someone is guilty of usurping the property and expropriating the rights of others, his sin will not be forgiven by Allah and he will be punished unless the aggrieved party forgives.

SOME INJUNCTIONS ABOUT USURPATION

(i) It is incumbent upon the usurper to return the

usurped property to its rightful owner, and if the later is not alive then to his heirs even though he has to face a heavy loss for that, as for example if someone has usurped another person's stone or an iron bar and has put it in constructing a building valuing in the amount of thousands and hundreds of thousands of rupees, he would have to dismantle the building and return the particular piece of stone or an iron bar to its rightful owner except that the owner agrees with him to accept the price of the usurped property. Similarly, if ten maunds of wheat are usurped and the usurper mixes it with ten donkey-loads of barley, then if the actual owner does not agree to accept the price of the wheat, the usurper will have to sift the wheat grains from barley and to handover the same to the owner.

(ii) If some defect occurs in the usurped property, the usurper should besides returning the original property to the owner compensate for the loss sustained because of that defect.

(iii) If the usurped property is destroyed, the usurper should pay the price to its owner.

(iv) If the usurper does not take advantage of the benefit or dividend accruing from the usurped property, it will be his own responsibility as for example a man usurps somebody's taxi-cab and keeps its wheels jammed for sometime. And if he takes some benefit or dividend from the usurped property as for example the usurper usurps a lamb and fattens it by feeding he will have no claim on this advantage and if in case the advantage can be separated, as for example if a land is usurped and the usurper by cultivating it, raised the crop, he should return the usurped property alongwith its compensation, and crop will belong to the usurper.

SHUF'A (PRE-EMPTION)

If two persons jointly own a house or any other property and one of the partners sells his share to a third person, it is the right of the second partner to purchase his share on the same terms and conditions. This right is called Shuf'a or right of pre-emption.

This is evidently clear that in Islam this right has been

made in order to maintain harmony in the partnership and to eradicate damage or loss which may be due to the trespassing by the partner. It is often seen that the ownership of a joint property by a third party leads to loss of the pre-emptive partner or owing to change in the method of dealings, disputes and discords arise, or the transfer of the share of the outgoing partner to the pre-emptive partner without involving the third party becomes beneficial to the pre-emptive partner.

The right of pre-emption applies to land, house, garden and similar other immovable properties. On movable properties, the law of the right of pre-emption does not apply.

DEVELOPING THE BARREN LAND

To rehabilitate a land which is not utilized or has never been used before or was in use at one time and became deserted later, or was turned into a barren tract afterwards or assumed the shape of a meadow or farmland is considered a noble deed in Islam and besides having the benefit of holding the title of ownership it becomes the cause for a blessing in the Hereafter.

The Holy Prophet says that anyone who rehabilitates a barren land, becomes its owner. And Imam Ja'far Sadiq says that any party or group of people who first develops a land has the first right of its ownership.

In Islam the barren lands are the properties of Allah, His Prophet and the Holy Imam. That is, they are a part of the Islamic State and are treated like a booty.

The barren land can be developed according to the following conditions and its ownership can be determined. If various people claim its ownership, the one who took the initiative in developing it, deserves the right of ownership.

- (i) Taking the permission of Imam or his deputy.
- (ii) Somebody else has not demarcated it before by erecting a fencing of stones etc.
- (iii) The property of others has not spread over it as for example an area adjoining a canal or a land underneath a well or a farm land.
- (iv) It should not be a free land like a deserted mosque or

a trust property or it is not like avenues or roads which are the property of the people in general.

COMMENTS

Reconditioning and development are formal terms. Thus, generally speaking when it is said that "a certain person has developed a land" it proves his ownership. No doubt for various purposes the development too is of various kinds as for instance in agriculture it means ploughing it for cultivation and for construction of a building it means raising a boundary wall on it.

(v) If there are mineral mines in a land and everyone without digging it can make use of it, then he has a right to do so according to his need and if for deriving benefits some technical skill is required as for instance in case of silver and gold mines, then anyone who labours to dig them out has the right to own them. But rivers are the common property of the Mulims. The same is the case with small rivers, snow, and rain water, which flow from the mountains down to the planes and one who has a near access to them deserves their use the most as against others.

LUQATA (LOST PROPERTY)

The property which a person finds, and whose owner is not known is called Luqata.

(i) If a property is found and its owner is not known and if its value is equivalent to one 'mithqāl'¹ of silver or less than that, the finder can use it himself without any hesitation. And if its value is more than one mithqāl, then it should not be picked up, and if it is picked up it should be preserved as a trust and then it should be announced at important places continuously for one year, and after finding the owner it should be handed over to him, and if the owner is not found, then on his behalf it should be given to the poor as charity.

(ii) If the property is found from a devastated place, a cave or a barren land, then it belongs to the finder.

¹Mithqāl: A measure equivalent in weight to 24 peas, approximately 5 grams.

(iii) If an animal is found, and its owner is not known, the principle of Luqata will be applicable on it.

(iv) If a child is found at a thoroughfare and his owner is not known it becomes incumbent upon every Muslim to pick him up and protect him.

(v) If a stolen property is kept with somebody as a trust, the principles of Luqata will be applicable on it. Such a property should be handed over to its actual owner and should not be returned to the thief.

* * * * *

The End

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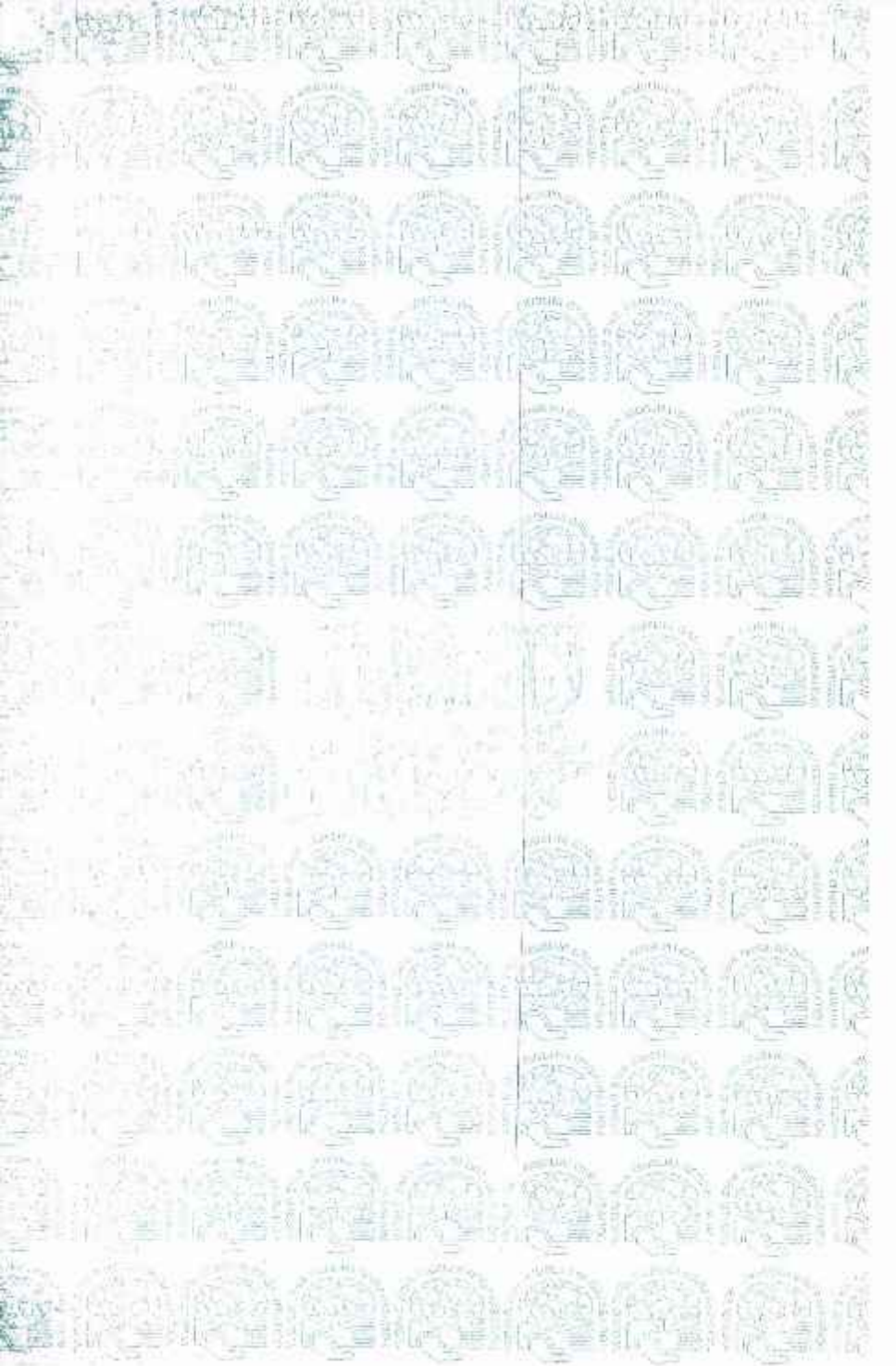
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IMAM ALI (P) ON

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"Have you fully realized
what Islam is?

It is indeed a religion
founded on truth.

It is such a fountain-head of learning
that several streams of
wisdom and knowledge
flow from it.

It is such a lamp
that several lamps
will be lighted from it.

It is a lofty beacon of light
illuminating the path of Allah.

It is such a set of principles and beliefs
that will fully satisfy
every seeker of
truth and reality.

Know you all
that Allah has made Islam
the most sublime path
for the attainment
of His supreme pleasure
and the highest standard of
His worship and obedience.

He has favoured it
with noble precepts, exalted principles,
undoubtable arguments,
unchallengeable supremacy
and undeniable wisdom.

It is upto you
to maintain the eminence and dignity
granted to it by the Lord,
to follow it sincerely,
to do justice to its articles of faith and belief,
to obey implicitly its tenets and orders
and to give it the proper place
in your lives".