

Goodword

Islamic Studies

A Graded Course

Grade 9

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INTRODUCTION

Islam is the religion of the universe. Everything in the universe submits itself to the Will of Allah. Therefore submission to Allah is the only true religion for both man and the universe. Everything or being in the universe, including man, must strictly obey the commands of Allah without any deviation or alteration.

Indeed, the central characteristic of all followers of the Islamic faith is their belief in the one Allah. The word Islam literally means "surrender" or "submission," and those who follow the religion are called Muslims. A Muslim then is one who surrenders or submits completely to the Will of Allah. Submission to Allah, however, is not a passive but a positive act of bringing one's likes and dislikes, attitudes and behaviour into harmony with Allah's Will. Correct belief and action together are absolutely vital. One is worthless without the other. Furthermore, a true Muslim believes that submission and obedience to the Will of Allah is the only way in which an individual can ever achieve real peace of mind and heart. The knowledge he needs to have of the Will of Allah must inevitably be derived from the Quran, the last of the divine books revealed by Allah to His Final Prophet.

Following Islam also means living in harmony with nature. And this in turn means that at all times man must unfailingly do as Allah desires. Moreover, he should lead his life acknowledging the greatness of his Creator and showing appreciation of His favours. He should focus all his attention on Allah alone, who is the Creator of everything on this earth and in the universe. He should entirely subordinate his intention and thinking to the Will of Allah.

Doing as Allah enjoins creates harmony, earns Allah's favour and banishes evil; it follows, therefore, that an Islamic society based on the ideals of the Quran and the teachings of Allah's Last Messenger will necessarily be free of social ills. The root of all evil in this world is the lack of fear of Almighty Allah, while the presence of this fear is the secret of all good. A Muslim should bear it in mind that one day he will die and shall have to give an account of himself to Allah. There can be no better rein upon an individual's actions than the thought that Allah will one day call upon him to account for his deeds.

Part-I

UNIT

1

Islamic Studies: Definition and Scope

Definition

(I) WHAT IS ISLAM?

Total Submission

Islam means submission to God. It is an Arabic word, derived from 'Aslama', which means submission. The name 'Islam' is conferred on the divine religion in this verse of the Quran:

"Today I have perfected your religion for you, and I have completed My favour to you, and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (5:3)

The Quran tells us that submission to God should be total:

"O you who believe! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly..." (2:208)

A Muslim is required to submit himself or herself to God with total devotion and in all sincerity. This submission implies complete obedience to God in all matters.

Islam is the name chosen by God for the religion approved by Him for human beings. All the messengers sent by God (from Adam to the Prophet Muhammad, the last messenger of God), brought the same religion: the religion of total submission and surrender to God. The Quran states:

"The same religion has He established for you as that which we enjoined on Nuh and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We ordained for Ibrahim, Musa and Isa, saying that you should remain steadfast in religion, and make no division therein..." (42:13).

God's religion is one religion. It is the same religion, which has always been revealed by God to His prophets. According to the Quran, all the previous apostles, Nuh, Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Yaqub, Lut, Yusuf, Musa, and Isa were Muslims.

The Quran also tells us that submission to God is the only religion for both man and the universe:

"Are they seeking a religion other than God's, when all creatures in heaven and on earth have submitted to Him, willingly or by compulsion? To Him they shall all return." (3:83)

Islam is the religion of the universe. Everything in the universe—the sun, the moon, the stars—have all completely submitted themselves to the will of God. This means that submission to God is the only true religion for both man and the universe. All the things on the earth or in space follow God's commands to the letter. The revolution of the stars, the flowing of water, the

growing of trees, in short, all things are following the same course, which was determined for them by God. Nothing is allowed to deviate from the divine path. The Quran says:

"The sun is not allowed to overtake the moon, nor does the night outpace the day. Each moves along in its own orbit." (36:40)

Each one is faithfully carrying out the duty assigned to it without making the slightest deviation from the path God has ordained for it. Man is likewise required to demonstrate that same total submission to the will of God. Everyone should strictly obey the commands of God without any deviation or alteration.

At all times man must unfailingly do as the Lord desires. His hands and feet, his eyes and tongue, his heart and mind, all must bow in supplication to God. No part of him, whether mental or physical, should in any way flout His will. This is required of all human beings. The Prophet Muhammad has declared:

'A believer with his faith is like a horse with its tether. The movement of the horse is restricted to the length of its tether. The same is true of the believer. His words and deeds are all restricted by the limitations set by his faith.'

A true Muslims Character

A true Muslim leads a highly disciplined life, always adhering to the set of do's and don'ts ordained by God Almighty. He is entirely pure in speech, and even subordinates his intention and thinking to the will of God. He always feels himself to be a servant of his Lord.

The Quran depicts the true Muslim thus:

'And the servants of the Beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them, they say: "Peace." And they who pass the night standing and prostrating themselves before their Lord. And they who say: "O our Lord! ward off from us the punishment of hell, for surely its punishment is everlasting. Surely it is an evil abode and an evil place to stay." And they who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor parsimonious, but keep the golden mean... And whoever repents and does good shall surely return to Allah... These shall be rewarded with lofty places in paradise because they were patient, and shall be met therein with greetings and salutations. There they shall abide forever: a blessed dwelling and a blessed resting place.' (25:63-67, 70-71, 75-76)

So Islam means living in harmony with nature, as one ought to, face to face with reality. Man has not created himself. He has been created by God. To live in accordance with reality is, then to acknowledge the greatness of God and show appreciation of His favours. He wants something to depend upon, something on which to focus his efforts. If he leads his life in accordance with reality, he will focus all his attention on God alone, who is the Creator of everything on this earth and in the universe: nothing besides Him has any real power.

The position that Islam occupies in relation to our lives should be an integral, not a supplementary one:

"Take on God's own colour. And who has better colour than God?" (2:138)

Here is an example to illustrate this point. When a stone is dropped in water it descends to the bottom and settles there. It is in the water, but separate from it. On the other hand, if colour is put into a glass of water, the colour and water combine. The water is not separate from the colour. Both intermingle in such a way that no one can detect any difference between the two.

The relationship between Islam and a true believer should be like that of colour and water, not of stone and water. Islam should not just be an accessory to a Muslim's life; it should merge with his whole being; as the Quran says, Islam should be entered into 'in its totality' (2:208).

When a person adopts Islam in this manner, it becomes like his own heartbeat as it permeates his emotions. It enters his thoughts, moulding his intellect in its own fashion. It becomes the eye with which he sees, the tongue with which he speaks, the hands and feet with which he performs his day to day functions. It takes possession of a person, to the exclusion of everything else. His every statement bears the stamp of Islam and his actions reflect Islamic colours.

If Islam is like a stone dropped into in water, it is not Islam at all. Faith should be absorbed by a person in the way colour is dissolved in water. Just as the emotions of love and hate are felt by the whole body, so, when one adopts Islam in the real sense of the word, it becomes an issue affecting one's whole existence. The Muslim and Islam become inseparably attached to each other.

(II) THE RISE OF ISLAM

An Overview from Adam to the Prophet Muhammad

All of the prophets who came into this world had an identical mission. They taught that man's life on earth was but a tiny part of his eternal life and that in this world man was put to the test. Reward or punishment would come in the next. After death, if he had followed the Lord's path, he would find his eternal abode in heaven. But, if he had strayed from it, he would be plunged straight into hell forever. This was the reality of life taught by each and every one of the prophets.

Adam was the first man on earth and also the first prophet. He was succeeded by a long line of prophets right up to the time of the Messiah. Altogether there have been some 124,000 messengers of God, of whom 315 have been prophets. They appeared in different lands and among different peoples, preaching the word of God to the people. But very few of those they addressed have ever proved willing to give up their freedom for the sake of God. Few people, for instance, followed the Prophet Yahya (John the Baptist) and he died a martyr's death. When Lot left his people, only two of his daughters accompanied him. According to the Old Testament, only eight people entered the ark along with Noah. When Abraham left his native country, Mesopotamia (now in Iraq), the only people to accompany him were his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot, although they were later joined by his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. Even after great missionary effort on the part of Jesus, the priests and religious authorities who heard his teachings did not follow him, and even his twelve apostles temporarily forsook him at the moment of truth.

This was the unhappy lot of most of the prophets. The ties of kith and kin sometimes brought a handful of followers to the more fortunate, but as often as not, would-be prophets were

forced by the insensitivity of those around them to live out their lives in solitude and persecution. This verse of the Quran very aptly sums up common attitudes to prophethood throughout the history of mankind: "Alas for the servants! They laugh to scorn every prophet that comes to them!"

In God's sight, the prophets stand head and shoulders above the human race. How extraordinary it is, then, that they are the very ones to whom the least historical importance has been attached. History has fully chronicled the lives of kings and soldiers, but not one single prophet's life has been given its due place in the annals of history. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), who was born one thousand years after the Prophet Moses, was not even acquainted with Moses' name. The reason is not far to seek: most of the prophets were rejected by their peoples; their homes were demolished; they were treated as outcasts by society; they appeared so unimportant that no one deemed it necessary even to make any mention of them.

Why were the prophets treated in this manner? There was just one reason for this, and that was their criticism of current practices, especially of the established religious authorities, the priesthood. There is nothing people love more than being praised; and there is nothing they hate more than being criticised. The prophets exposed the difference between right and wrong, making no compromise with their peoples. They persistently pointed out the faults in people's beliefs and actions. Consequently, people turned against them. If the prophets had taught what everyone wanted to hear, they would never have been treated in this manner.

Although this was the fate of most of the prophets, a few of them were spared, Joseph, Solomon and David being names that immediately spring to mind. But the power and prestige that these prophets acquired was not due to the popularity of their teachings; they had an entirely separate origin.

David was a young soldier in the army of the Israelites under King Saul, during the time that the Israelites and Philistines went to war with each other. Among the army of Philistines was the giant Goliath. So powerful a fighter was he, that no one was prepared to do battle with him. King Saul then announced that he would give his daughter in marriage to anyone who slew Goliath. David came forward, challenged the giant, and killed him. In this way he became the son-in-law of the King of Israel. In a subsequent war, both King Saul and his heir apparent were killed in battle. David was thereupon crowned King of Israel. Solomon, David's son, succeeded to his father's throne. As for Joseph, he was blessed by God with the ability to interpret dreams and the King of Egypt, impressed by his ability, went so far as to entrust the affairs of state to him. But the King still remained the head of state, and he and his subjects continued to adhere to their pagan religion.

This hostile treatment meted out to the prophets throughout the ages deprived people of true guidance and, what was even more serious, made the preservation of the scriptures and teachings of the prophets impossible. Only a prophet's followers can preserve his teachings after him; but the prophets either had no followers, or they were so few as to be unable to counter the challenges of their society on the issue of the preservation of the Holy Scriptures.

God's Judgement

The knowledge possessed by God is eternal. He sees the future just as He does the past. He was aware, before the sending of the prophets, that this would be the fate of the human race. So He had decreed that He would remedy this situation at the end of the prophetic era by sending His own special envoy to the world: a prophet whose task would be not only to preach religion,

but also to exalt it above all others on earth. He would be granted special succour from God, enabling him to compel his people to bow to the truth. God would keep him on earth until he had brought about the desired revolution. God's own might would assist the Prophet to vanquish his enemies. In this way the true religion would be established on solid foundations and God's word would be perpetuated. As it says in the Bible, "for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea."

Translations and additions have taken the present-day Bible very far from the original. But it still contains multiple references to the coming of the Prophet Muhammad. If one studies the Bible objectively, one will find certain references that cannot be applied to anyone else. The very purpose of the mission of the Prophet Jesus was to announce to the world, and to the Jewish nation in particular, the coming of the final prophet. The "New Testament" to which he referred was, in truth, Islam, for it marked the end of Jewish religious hegemony and projected the Children of Ishmael as the true recipients of the word of God. Hence the rise of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Prophet Jesus came to the world six hundred years before the last of the prophets. In one reference to Jesus, the Quran has this to say:

"And remember the Prophet Jesus, who said to the Children of Israel: "I am sent forth to you by God to confirm the Torah already revealed and to give news of an apostle that will come after me."

In his biography of the Prophet, Ibn Hisham quotes the historian, Muhammad ibn Ishaq, the most authentic source on the Prophet's life, as saying that when Jesus spoke in his mother tongue, Aramaic, the word that he used for the coming prophet was "Munhamann" meaning "the praised one." This traditionally accepted title was probably passed on to him by Palestinian Christians who had come under Islamic rule. When the Bible was translated into Greek, the word became "Paraclete".

(III) THE EXPANSION OF ISLAM AFTER THE PROPHET

The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH) passed away in 632 A.D. By the time of his death the warring tribes of Arabia had been already brought under Muslim rule with its centre at Madinah. The compact Muslim brotherhood thus born in Arabia took over almost the whole of the Arabian Peninsula. Its rule then spread towards the north into the lands of the Persian Empire, to the north west (Syria, Egypt, the coast of northern Africa and finally Spain) and to the north east into the provinces of northern India. This was accomplished during the reign of the Pious Caliphs (632-665), who were followed by the Umayyads (665-750) and the Abbasids (750-1258). This political expansion was accompanied by the spread of Islam as a religious faith. A time came, when the new converts to Islam – the Persians and the Central Asian Turks – became the dominating force in carrying Islam to new parts of the known world.

The Persians and the Central Asian Turks having accepted Islam, became some of its staunchest supporters. They adopted not only the faith but also the customs and language of the Arabs for religious and scholarly purposes. It was the Turks who, along with the Persians, played the main role in bringing Islam to India and establishing a dynasty there in 1198 (the Slave Dynasty was the first Muslim dynasty ruling from the capital in Delhi). Anatolia, a part of the Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople, was also conquered by the Turks in the

sixteenth century and came to be known thereafter as Turkey. Parts of Europe adjacent to Turkey were then in turn won for Islam through the agency of the Ottomans rulers of Turkey.

The Pious Caliphs (Khalifa Rashidun) (632-661)

The Prophet did not nominate any successor. The new Muslim community consisted of two main groups: the Muhajirun or the Emigrants, who came with the Prophet from Makkah, and the Ansar or the Helpers, who were the natives of Madinah. It was the latter who welcomed the Prophet in their city after he was forced to flee from Makkah. Now the community urgently needed a leader, who could hold them together once the Prophet was not there to guide them. There was much confusion and uncertainty till Abu Bakr, the Prophet's father-in-law, companion and leading follower proclaimed to the community:

"O men, if you worship Muhammad, Muhammad is dead; if you worship God, God is alive."

It was Abu Bakr who was then chosen as the first caliph or the leader of the Muslims. After Abu Bakr, who held the office of the caliph from 632 to 634, that is till his death, there were three more caliphs, who are regarded as "Rightly Guided": 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (634-644), 'Uthman ibn 'Affan (644-56) and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (656-661).

The caliph was not a prophet. He was a leader of the community, but not in the sense of a messenger of God. However, he was considered to be the religious authority by all the Muslims. The first four caliphs, being close companions of the Prophet and related to him through marriage ties, knew his life best and could offer advice on many points of teaching and doctrine.

Abu Bakr and his successors soon found themselves called upon to exercise leadership over a wider geographical area than the Prophet, whose rule as a statesman had been basically restricted to the Arabian Peninsula. One must remember that there was implicit in Muhammad's teachings and actions a strong sense of universalism. Islam was understood to be a universal faith destined to spread all over the earth and every human being was therefore a potential Muslim. Thus, the Prophet Muhammad claimed universal authority and this claim implied that there was no natural geographically or humanly imposed boundary that could stop Islam from expanding far and wide.

During the reign of the second caliph, 'Umar (634-644) the whole of Persia, Syria, Jerusalem, and the Egyptian provinces of the Byzantine empire came under the sway of Islam. While most of the early conquests in Persia and Syria were accomplished under the generalship of Khalid bin Walid, the Egyptian campaign was conducted by Amr bin al-Aas. After the fall of Fustat (the site of what was later to become Cairo) in 639 A.D., most of the southern lands of the Byzantine Empire were won over by the Muslims.

'Umar met his death at the hands of a Persian slave in 643 A.D., while he was saying his prayers and 'Uthman was elected as his successor. During the early part of his reign, the Persian principalities in the northeast, Kabul, Ghazna, Balkh and Turkestan paid homage to the Muslims. Soon after, in 650 A.D. Khorasan also fell into their hands. Thus the Persian Empire came to an end and its lands were brought within the sphere of influence of Islam; it came under the direct rule of the caliph at Madinah. In the West, the Muslims, hold over Syria and Egypt was consolidated under the leadership of the Muslim general and governor, Mu'awiya. Tripoli, a part of the Byzantine Empire, was also occupied; it became a North African province of the Muslim empire.

The tragic murder of 'Uthman at the hands of rebels from within the Muslim community upset the inner balance of this far-flung empire with its capital at Madinah. One of the reasons for 'Ali, the next elected caliph (656-661), transferring the capital from Madinah to Kufa in Iraq was that Kufa was more centrally placed to serve as the focal point of the huge empire.

'Ali, though a son-in-law of the Prophet and one of the earliest converts to Islam, faced considerable internal opposition from different factions within the community. This led to a number of battles. Finally, he was assassinated in his own capital Kufa. Mu'awiyya proclaimed himself caliph and 'Ali's elder son, Hasan, agreed to it.

The death of 'Ali and the coming to power of Mu'awiyya (661-680) have always been regarded as marking the end of one phase and the beginning of another. The first four caliphs: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali are known as the '*rashidun*', or 'rightly guided'. Their reigns saw the consolidation of the Islamic faith which eager believers carried far and wide coupled with a great territorial expansion of Islam. But once Mu'awiyya became the caliph, things changed. The office of the caliph became virtually hereditary, passing from father to son. The capital of the empire was moved to Damascus, an old city in the rich province of Syria, where a court and a less austere way of life could be maintained. The form of the government became more elaborate with the caliph no longer being one among equals, but a ruler in the real sense of the word.

The Umayyads (661-750)

Mu'awiyya (661-680) started a new order of government and a new dynasty, called the Umayyads, from the name of their ancestor, Umayya. The centre of power moved from the original Islamic lands, from the Arabian Peninsula and the deserts, to the newly acquired province of Syria. Damascus, the new capital, was already an established city with a large non-Muslim (mostly Christian) and non-Arabic speaking population. The austerity of the time of the Prophet and the 'Rightly Guided' Caliphs gave way to the splendours of courtly life. The style of the government changed with many new converts to Islam and also non-Muslims being employed in the administration. The local population converted on a large scale. The spread of Islam continued and the caliph's rule kept expanding.

Egypt became a part of the Muslim empire in the time of 'Uthman. The Egyptians converted en masse. Now, Muslim forces advanced along the coast of North Africa, claiming erstwhile Roman provinces for Islam. They established their first important base at Qayrawan (in the Roman or Byzantine province of Ifriqiya); then carried on till they reached the Atlantic coast in Morocco and advanced across the straits to Spain. First, a Berber convert to Islam, Tahir bin Zubayr, landed his forces on the shores of Spain in 711, and then his master, Musa bin Nusayr, joined him and secured Spain for Islam. Known as al-Andalus, the Spanish provinces flourished under Muslim rule, attaining virtual independence from the centre and developed its own amazing Islamic culture. The Muslims ruled in Spain till 1492, when the neighbouring Christian Spanish kingdoms finally defeated the ruler of Granada and took over his lands.

During the Umayyad rule, equally spectacular progress had been made in Transoxiana (northern Persia and Central Asia) and at the same time the first Muslim inroads were made into the northwest Indian province of Sind.

Such a large acquisition of territories, spread over three continents (Asia, Africa and Europe) and separated from each other by distances of thousands of kilometres, brought with it an immense increase in the resources of the central government. But at the same time, it added a

large number of diverse people, mainly a non-Arab population, to the state. The once predominantly Arab empire soon became multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic, held together by the unifying force of Islam, with its monotheism and belief in the prophethood of Muhammad. Arabic was accepted as the *lingua franca* (common language of communication) for religious and other purposes to do with the conduct of the affairs of state. With the passage of time the number of Muslims, grew and there emerged one standard ideal Islamic society based on values enshrined in the Quran and traditions.

The Abbasids (750-1258)

The rule of the Umayyads (661-750) with its capital in Damascus was replaced with that of the Abbasids (750-1258), who, rising in opposition to the Umayyad rule, took over the caliphate. They claimed descent from another branch of the family of the Prophet, from his uncle 'Abbas. Abu'l 'Abbas as-Saffah, the founder of the dynasty, was proclaimed caliph in Kufa in 750 A.D. and ruled till 754.

In some ways the Abbasid rule did not differ much from that of the later Umayyads. Their first task was to concentrate their power, and this was accomplished under Abu'l 'Abbas as Saffah's illustrious successors, particularly al Mansur (754-775), Harun al Rashid (786-809) and al-Mamun (813-833). A new city was created to serve as the new capital - Baghdad. Now the importance of the western lands of the Islamic domain (Egypt, Maghreb, Spain) spread around the Mediterranean coast decreased, and importance was given to the former lands of the Sassanid (Persian) Empire (present-day Iraq and Iran) as well as to Khorasan and Central Asia.

The city of Baghdad, founded by al-Mansur (754-775), was named by him 'Madinat as-Salam' (City of Peace). The Caliph with his own hands laid down its first brick in 762 A.D. It lay on the west bank of the River Tigris in that very same valley, which had provided sites for some of the mightiest capitals of the ancient world. Circular in form, it was also called the Round City (al-mudawwarah). Its urban plan and its very concept reflected the new idea of sovereignty and the might of its ruler.

The fall of the Abbasid dynasty was accomplished with the sack of Baghdad in 1258 by the Mongols, who swept in from Central Asia, reducing everything on their way to ruins and causing the death of the last caliph. Power then passed on to local dynasties, which ruled in Spain, Egypt, Iran, India, Turkey. The rulers of these countries, besides consolidating their political power, worked under the umbrella of Islam.

The Spread of Islam up to Modern Times

At the time of the Prophet Muhammad's death in 632 A.D., Islam could be considered a local religion confined essentially to the Arabian Peninsula. It had just started to make inroads into the areas adjoining it. However, within the span of the rule of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs (632-661) of the two biggest empires of the times, one, the Persian Empire, vanished completely and its lands were absorbed within the Islamic spheres: Persia, Iraq, and Khorasan, while the other, the Byzantine Empire, lost all its provinces adjacent to the Mediterranean: Syria, Egypt, and Ifriqiya. Muslim rule spread from Spain in the west, where the first steps had been taken in 711 A.D., to Sindh in the east and Central Asia in the north.

The rapid spread of Islam changed the character of both rulers and society. Although the Umayyads were worldly statesmen, the Abbasids surpassed them in establishing a highly sophisticated court and administration fashioned on Persian monarchical traditions. They

became great patrons of the arts and letters, and the Abbasid period is usually equated with the flourishing of literature, science and learning.

The sack of Baghdad by the Mongols in 1258 finally put an end to the Abbasid caliphate. But meanwhile, states ruled by local dynasties appeared in Egypt (Fatimids, Mamluks), Iran, and present day Afghanistan and Central Asia. India, starting from 1189 when the first Muslim dynasty, the Slave dynasty was established, till the mutiny of 1857, when the last Mughal ruler was deposed by the British, was a country ruled by Muslim kings. Islam in India spread as far as Assam in the east, Kashmir in the north and Vijayanagram in the south. There was a peaceful penetration of Islam, brought about through Muslim traders, in the Malay Peninsula and the islands that now form part of Indonesia. Similarly, Muslims are present in China, especially in the western and northern provinces, (which have been linked since ancient times by trade and ethnic ties to Central Asia) and constitute something like 8-10% of the Chinese population.

The countries of Northern, Eastern and Central Africa continue to be Islamic. Turkey, once overrun by the Turks and constituted as a kingdom under the Ottomans, remains Muslim, though the secular reforms of the nineteen and twentieth century to some extent changed the character of Turkish society.

The political power of Islam disappeared from Europe after the conquest of the last Muslim state of al Andalus, Granada, in 1492. But nonetheless, the number of Muslims in Europe is steadily growing.

There are pockets of Muslims, who settled hundreds of years ago in different parts of Europe, especially in the areas of present day Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Albania, and eastern Poland. They are mostly of Turkish or Tatar origin and were assimilated within their local states till the Balkan war in the last part of the twentieth century made them feel strangers in their own lands.

Then, there are numerous groups of immigrants from various Muslim countries – Turks in Germany; Moroccans and Algerians in France (both Morocco and Algeria were once French colonies); Indians, Pakistanis and Bangla Deshis in Britain, the USA and Canada).

Impressed with the message of peace contained in the Quran, a large number of non-Muslims, almost all over the world, continue to turn towards the religion of peace.

Scope

(I) SOCIAL LIFE

Social System of Islam

The word 'social' in its strict sense refers to the mutual relations of human beings in a given society. While dealing with the social system of Islam we have, therefore, to consider the nature of a society which is formed according to divine law for the purpose of harmonious and peaceful coexistence. The social system thus covers the whole range of mutual relations and the quality of life within its framework largely depends upon the law which controls it.

The principle of law, which ensures good human relations is summed up in the saying of the Prophet: 'Do not inflict injury, nor repay one injury with another.' This serves to purge the society of social evils and paves the way for peaceful coexistence. Islam is a universal religion and whoever embraces it becomes a Muslim and an integral part of the society. 'In mutual compassion, love and kindness, the believers are like a body, if one of its parts feels pain, the whole body responds with wakefulness and fever' as the Prophet observed. Such is the unity of life found desirable in Islam.

One of the most important aspects of living together in a society is the quality of the relationships, which develop between its different members. Love, tenderness, care, affection, friendliness and consideration should mark every relationship - be it that of relative, neighbour, or friend. In living side by side with one another, and in serving each others' needs, society's members are constantly obliged to deal with one another. It is in the matter of these everyday transactions that all kinds of issues arise which can call forth a negative human reaction. Greed, opportunism and the desire to dominate are to blame for much of the friction in society. It is in such situations that the control exercised by the law guarantees justice for all, thereby making it possible to establish good human relations.

As far as Muslims are concerned, they are left in no doubt as to how they should conduct themselves in their social living, for they are given clear injunctions on this subject in the chapter in the Quran entitled, The Chambers. (Chapter 49, "Al-Hujarat") This enjoins believers to live together as brothers, and be quick to settle any quarrels, which may break out between them.

The only way to eradicate these social ills is for people to live in fear of God. It is only if they are ever conscious that God is watching over them, and will call them to account for all their actions in the Hereafter, that they will acquire the qualities that make for a good, healthy society. Their state of awareness will act as a rein on any excesses they may feel inclined to commit, and will restrain them from doing any injustice to their fellow men.

Here are a few sayings of the Prophet, which throw some light on the teachings of Islam on particular aspects of social living:

"One is not a true believer until one wishes for one's brother what one wishes for oneself."

"There are three things belonging to a Muslim, which for all Muslims should remain inviolate: his blood, his property and his honour."

"A Muslim is one from whose tongue and hands other Muslims are safe."

"A Muslim is a brother to another Muslim: he neither oppresses his brother, nor does he leave him in the lurch. Whoever helps his brother can count on the help of God, and whoever removes some hardship for a Muslim, will be relieved by God of some hardship on the Day of Resurrection, while one who keeps a Muslim's secrets will have his secrets kept by God on that Day."

"Almighty God has told me to be humble: one person should not commit excesses against another, nor should one look down on anyone."

"A Muslim is to another Muslim as one part of a building is to another part: each part strengthens the other parts." Here the Prophet interlaced his fingers to illustrate this.

Islamic Society

The picture of Islamic Society, which emerges from these sayings of the Prophet shows how a believer should live amongst his fellowmen: he should look upon them not as strangers, but as if they were a part of himself. When the conduct of others makes him happy, he should realize from this what will make others happy, and act accordingly. Conversely, when he feels distressed by the behaviour of others, he should realize how troubled others would be if he served them in like manner. He is, therefore, careful not to treat anyone in this way.

The nature of Islamic society must be such that day-to-day dealings are marked with mutual kindness, esteem and consideration. People should be as ready to assist each other in times of need as they would be to take action in the case of their own need.

With the idea of doing justice to all, there could be no question then of behaving with arrogance, attempting to assert one's superiority, or even of feeling jealous of anyone who excelled in some particular way. Everyone should wish his fellows well, and be like a close companion to them all the days of his life.

What is required for such an Islamic society to come into being? The answer is simply that people should fear God. The secret of all good in this world is the fear of God, while the absence of this fear is the root of all evil. The Companions of the Prophet used to observe that "your greatest well-wisher is one who fears God with regard to you." Indeed, it is the truly God-fearing man who is predisposed to treat others well.

There can be no better rein upon an individual's actions than the thought that God will one day call him to account for his deeds; that all matters will be judged by God and that no one will ever escape punishment for his misdeeds. One might conceivably escape being punished in this world, but there is absolutely no way that one will be able to escape God's punishment in the world beyond the grave.

A Muslim society should be one of mutual benevolence and justice for all, but this can only be so if all its members have the fear of God in their hearts. When one Muslim has dealings with another, he should not feel that he has to do with a mere human being, but that it is God Himself - God with every strength at His command - with whom he has to deal. Every human being

should strike him as a creature sustained by his Maker. He should never forget that everything he does in life will finally be judged by God, who has full knowledge of both his inner thoughts and his outward deeds. A Muslim should bear it ever in mind that one day he will die, and shall have to give an account of himself to God. He keeps praying to God to be kind and compassionate towards him on the Day of Judgement. This very prostration of himself before God will make him kind-hearted and compassionate towards his fellow-men. He will forgive others for the excesses they commit against him, hoping that in this way he will earn God's forgiveness for his own excesses. He will be generous to others in the hope that God will be generous to him. He will give to others more than he receives from them, for he hopes that, in return for even the most paltry of his good deeds, great rewards will be bestowed upon him by God.

In an Islamic society, the individual should be more conscious of his responsibilities than of his rights; when there is cause for disagreement, or he has a grudge against someone, he should be ready to acknowledge his own errors whenever he himself is in the wrong.

Kindness in Islam

It is true that an Islamic society is one of very strict principles, but it is one, which is also marked by people's kindness and consideration towards others, one sign of a true believer being his strictness with himself, and his tolerance towards others. There is a saying of the Prophet to this effect: "I have been sent to make things easy for people, and not to make things more difficult."

When the Prophet once exhorted people to give alms, one of his listeners asked:

"What if one has nothing to give?" To this the Prophet replied:

"Then speak to people kindly, for that is also a form of charity."

"And what if one has no kind words to offer?"

the man asked. The Prophet then said:

"Then avoid inflicting evil on others."

What this implies is that the best person in an Islamic society is the one who does most good to others. He is one who gives to others from that which he has been given by God. He benefits others in both word and deed. The least that one can do in this respect is to avoid inflicting harm on others. If one is not able to give, at least one should not take away. If one cannot help another, one should at least not make things more difficult for him. Should one have no gentle words to offer, one should avoid hurting others with words of bitterness and wrath.

In his *Muwatta*, Imam Malik writes that a man once came to the Prophet and asked him to give him some words of guidance on which he could base his life. The Prophet told him quite simply to avoid becoming angry. A truly Islamic society consists of people who are fully conscious of the negative effects of anger, and who, therefore, carefully suppress all such feelings. In this way, they are able to keep themselves in such a positive frame of mind that they can face provocation without stooping to anger, hate, vengeance, envy or scorn. They are able, on the contrary, to follow the path of love, justice, benevolence, forgiveness, and magnanimity.

It is in one's treatment of others that man is being tested in this world, and this is of special importance in the case of weak and helpless souls. When one treats such people in a decent manner, it is for the sake of God. There is no other incentive in this case. But when one treats a powerful person well, it is partly in the hopes that one will receive something in return.

The case is very different when a human being, alone and powerless, stands before one and appeals for help. Anyone who comes to the aid of such a person, therefore, shows himself to be a selfless and a forgiving human being. He is acting thus solely for the sake of God, for, in this instance, apart from the Almighty's pleasure, there is nothing further to be gained.

It is one who shows kindness to others, purely for the sake of God, who is considered the dearest of all God's servants. And when he soothes the pain of one of God's servants – doing so only for the sake of God – at that very moment he finds God Himself.

(II) ECONOMIC LIFE

Welth Creation: Islamic Way

God is the Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer of the world. The supremacy of God is the basis of the tenets of Islam.

"His is the sovereignty of the Heavens and the earth and all affairs are referred back to God." (57:5)

"He it is who created for you all that there is on the earth." (2:29)

It is the birthright of every individual to receive his share of this divine provision, but only by lawful means. There is no distinction allowed on the basis of colour, creed or race. All people may enjoy equal opportunities in the economic field and decide as to how to earn their living. This freedom of work is provided for by the Islamic Sharia on the condition that it will entail no unlawful action.

Any wealth earned by honest means is considered the "blessings of God" (Quran). And Muslims are enjoined to acquire wealth only through hard work and honest effort. The Quran says:

"But seek the abode of the Hereafter in that which God has given you and neglect not your share of the world." (28:77)

The Quran regards the possession and acquisition of wealth as a trial for human beings. One must use it properly to improve one's eternal life in the Hereafter and not spend it lavishly first to satisfy one's whims and fancies, thus bringing down the wrath of God upon oneself.

God Himself created all good things. He permitted His devotees to use them. But there must be true harmony between the moral and economic sides of one's life. A man should neither be so entirely engrossed in this world that, in the acquisition of material things, he forgets God, nor should he ignore the economic requirements of his family. He should keep everything in proper perspective.

"Eat of the pleasant and pure things that God has bestowed on you." (5:5)

"O Muhammad, ask them, who has forbidden them to wear the decent garments that God has created for His servants and who has forbidden the good and pure things of life bestowed by Him?" (7:32)

The Prophet said:

"The best of you is one who leaves not this world for the Hereafter and the Hereafter for this world, and is not a burden on the people."

It is important to have a balanced view of the economic and the spiritual. Giving more weight to one over the other leads to an uneven growth of human society. The Quran says:

"Men whom neither merchandise nor sale can divert from remembrance of God nor from regular prayers, nor from practising regular charity – their only thought is for the Day when hearts and eyes will be transformed."

Ethical System

Islam teaches man to improve his material life in order to improve his chances for the eternal life.

Since without satisfying basic needs the moral standard can never be improved, Islam has made provision for the fulfilment of the basic needs of every individual in its economic system.

The functioning of the Islamic economic system is dependent on right and ethical behaviour. God and the Prophet stressed again and again that everything in this world is for the use of man. At the same time emphasis is laid on the personal responsibility of human beings. Just as man is responsible for himself, so is he responsible for his family and for his relations; for his neighbours and then for his community. (51:19)

"If anyone undertakes any work, God loves to see him do it nicely and efficiently for He is beautiful and He loves to see things done in a beautiful and nice way."

The employer is bound by law to pay a fair wage as soon as the work is done. It is reported by Abduallah bin Umar that the Prophet said: "Give the labourer his wages before his sweat dries." (Ibn Majah)

Islam has recognised individuals' right to own property, but subjected it to such limitation as to make it profitable, but not harmful to the common good of society. In fact, Islam has set a pattern of private ownership that is compatible with the public interest. Individual right of ownership forms the basis of economic life in a Muslim society.

The right of inheritance is recognised and elaborated on in Islam. Obviously it can be recognised only if people have the right of ownership.

"There is a share for men in what has been left by parents and near relatives, and there is a share also for women in what has been left by parents and near relatives, whether it be little or much, for this share has been prescribed (by God)." (4:7)

Islam emphasised wide circulation of wealth so that it is spread throughout the community and not confined to a small group of people. The law of inheritance and charity (compulsory as well as optional) assisted in widening the area of circulation of wealth. However, there was still a likelihood of the centralisation of such resources. Therefore, Islam has issued special instructions in this respect.

"Whatever God may restore to His Messenger.... is due to God and to His messenger... the orphans and the needy... so that it may not be confined to the (few) rich among you." (49:7)

Islam gives every individual liberty to create as much wealth as he can by his knowledge, skill and labour, that is, through means that are not anti-social or immoral. It envisages a natural inequality of energy and aptitude, which necessarily results in the inequality of material or social rewards. But on the whole, society is an organism that restricts all those ways that lead to the concentration of wealth in a few hands.

According to the Islamic philosophy of life, the life of man on earth is a temporary phase before he attains eternal life in the Hereafter. He must, therefore, use every moment of this temporal life to improve his eternal life, and this requires him to use all his mental and physical faculties to the maximum possible extent. Man's success in the Hereafter is dependent on the utilisation of the resources of this world in a right and proper way. This worldly life is simply a trial and all the things – health, wealth, power, family etc. – given to people in varying degrees are only instruments of the test.

God, in granting an abundance of wealth to some, watches how they spend and use it; whether they regard it as their personal property acquired through their own efforts and intelligence, or think of it as a blessing of God and let others also share in it.

(III) MORAL LIFE

The Teachings of Ethics

The Prophet of Islam once said: "I have been sent to perfect the code of high ethics."

Islam attaches such great importance to moral values that, according to Islamic belief even worshipping God alone is not enough to make one a perfect believer. In addition to this, it is necessary for the believer in dealing with others, to observe all the norms of a sublime moral character. That is, in all circumstances he should adhere to the highest standard ethical (moral) values. We learn of this high standard from the following traditions of the Prophet and the Quran.

In the Quran the Prophet Muhammad is described as being of a "sublime character." Here is a saying of the Prophet, which throws light on what constitutes this "sublime character":

"Never debase your character by saying that if people treat you well, you will treat them well, and if they harm you, then you will do worse to them. Rather, become accustomed to being good to those who are good to you, and not wronging those who harm you."

The sublime character described here was displayed – in its noblest form – by the Prophet himself. With the Prophet such a character was a basic requisite, while for the ordinary Muslim it is just an ideal he should strive for.

There are two types of character, the ordinary and the superior level. An ordinary character is based on the principle: "Do as you have been done by." This might be termed a "knee-jerk character." Since it offers only reflex responses to treatment by others. People of such a character break with those who break with them, wrong those who wrong them, and harm those who harm them.

But character of a higher level is based on the principle: "Do as you would be done by." Those possessed of such a character deal with both friend and foe in the same principled manner, irrespective of how they themselves have been treated. They are reconciliatory, even re-

establishing relations with those who break with them. They are compassionate, even to those who seek to harm them. They are forbearing, even towards those who wrong them.

Here is another saying of the Prophet, which illustrates the importance and relevance of a gentle character:

"It was thanks to God's mercy that you were lenient to them. Had you been cruel and hard-hearted, they would surely have deserted you."

It was this magnanimity of the Prophet that gave him the power to capture people's hearts: the closer one came to him, the more one would be won over by his noble character.

The Prophet once said:

"Honouring ties of relationship does not mean honouring your ties with those who honour their ties with you; it means honouring your ties with those who sever their ties with you."

Adopting a high code of ethics means practising what one preaches; treating the weak with the same courtesy and deference as one shows to the strong; setting the same standards for oneself as one sets for others; never budging from one's principles; maintaining a high moral bearing, even when others stoop to the depths of degradation. From this point of view, the Prophet of Islam stood at the highest pinnacle of human ethics, never abandoning the lofty standards that he preached.

The life of the Prophet shows that Muslims should be meticulous in fulfilling obligations and returning trusts. Even if they have been treated badly by those with whom they are dealing, they should still pay them their full due. However much it may hurt them, they should never deny people their rights.

Moral Values

In chapter 38 of the Quran, the Prophet David is thus addressed by God:

"Rule with justice among men and do not yield to lust, lest it should turn you away from God's path." (38: 26)

God has laid down a straight path of virtue for man and then implanted the sense of this in human nature. If man were to trust his instincts and follow this silent guidance, he would never become a prey to deviation. He would unerringly follow this straight thoroughfare of life, until he reached his final destination.

There is only one thing, which leads man astray from this path of divine guidance, and that is his own unquenchable desire. This desire causes man to waver at every turn in life; the wise man is one who does not allow himself to be swayed by its influence. One who succumbs to his own desires will necessarily fall by the wayside, his ultimate fate being abasement and destruction.

Human desires lead man astray in many ways. At times they lure him away from the deeper realities of life towards the false glitter of the world. At times momentary gain leads him far afield from the path of permanent gain. At yet other times, man allows himself to be provoked by matters of sheer prejudice and, giving no forethought to the outcome, involves himself in such confrontations as lead to serious hostilities. In the end, it is he himself who suffers the maximum losses.

To lead a successful life, man must keep his negative urges under control, rather than be controlled by them. His own insatiability is his greatest enemy. The better way of life, as opposed to one guided by desire, is that based on a sound code of ethics. Far from falling a victim to his baser self, man should conform to a set of high human principles. He should be governed in thought, word and deed not by the mere urge to pursue selfish aims, but by utter selflessness and a profound love of God.

(IV) FAMILY LIFE

The family is the basic unit of society, and Islam attaches great importance to it. It has laid down rules for ensuring its smooth functioning, in order that man may live in harmony with his Creator and His creation. About one third of the legal injunctions of the Quran and numerous traditions of the Prophet concern the proper regulation and right functioning of the family.

The Quran enjoins upon the Muslims to practise moderation in all matters in their relations with their parents, wives, children and all other relatives, whether near or distant.

The Structure of a Muslim family

In Islam, the family has the status of a divinely ordained institution. It is an extended family, sometimes consisting of three or four generations.

- i. the husband, the wife, their children, parents and servants;
- ii. close relatives, with whom marriage is forbidden;
- iii. all those relatives who are not covered by the above categories.

The family forms the nucleus of the total Islamic social order. To promote the smooth functioning of the family, different roles have been assigned to the male and female members. By a broad division of labour, the woman in the family is expected to look after the house; while the man has to earn in order to provide a livelihood for the family.

The man is in the position of the head and the supervisor. It is his responsibility to support the family economically and materially. A woman's major responsibility lies within the family.

Men and women have equal rights. They also have an equal spiritual status. Both of them have to cultivate the Islamic virtues, e.g., faith in God, devotion and service in life, truthfulness, patience and constancy, humility, charity, chastity in thought, word and deed, etc. These virtues are as necessary to women as to men. Both sexes have spiritual as well as human rights and duties in an equal degree and the future reward of the Hereafter is provided as much for one as for the other.

Men and women have equal cultural rights. The Prophet declared that a good education and the training of children, for sons as well as daughters, were the best gifts a father could give.

Islam has established equality in status between man and woman in absolute terms. Both of them have equal spiritual status. The Quran states:

"Never will I (God) suffer to be lost the work of any of you, male or female. You are members, one of another." (3:195)

To preserve the institution of the family, marriage has been enjoined. The Prophet stressed the necessity of marriage saying, "To live in marriage is to observe my way. He who turns away from this way is not of me." *Nikah* or *aqd* is essential for the validation of marriage. For a valid marriage, mutual consent of the spouses, the payment of dower by the husband to the wife are some of the essential conditions. The Quran has this to say:

"They are your garments and you are their garments (2:187)

The husband is responsible for the maintenance of his wife and children. The wife and husband have to work jointly to train and educate the children.

God has enjoined us to be kind to our parents, to honour and respect them. Parents have to be treated with all humility and kindness. The mother occupies a special position. The Prophet has declared that paradise lay at the feet of the mother.

The Prophet commanded, "When God endows you with prosperity, spend first on yourself and your family." It is a reminder to Muslims to contribute materially to the welfare and well-being of the entire family.

In Islam the family is welded together by three factors:

1. Kinship or blood ties which are the strongest natural ties
2. Marital commitments
3. Faith.

Kinship

Kinship or blood ties are the strongest natural ties. It is because of the strength and importance of these ties that the Prophet said: "He is not of me who severs or breaks the ties of kinship." He also said: "No sin is more swiftly punished than oppression and the breaking of family ties."

Marital Commitments

Marital commitments also weld a family together, for Islam recognises no more wholesome framework for sexual relations and the rearing of children than marriage.

Faith

The third ingredient in strong family relationships is faith and commitment to faith. If all members of a family are Muslims, there is likely to be greater harmony and common goals and interests than if family members belongs to different faiths.

In some cases, in fact, faith supersedes kinship or marital commitments. A person is required to love his parents and treat them with respect and consideration, even if they are not Muslims. But he is not required to obey his parents if they ask him to believe in gods other than the One True God or commit any acts, which involve disobedience to God.

The Duties of Parents to Children

Parents are under the obligation not only to cherish and sustain their children but also to educate and train them. They must necessarily have a certain sensitivity towards the emotional and physical needs and capacities of the children in this case. The Arabic word *tarbiyyah*, from a

root meaning ‘to own, to look after and cherish,’ sums up the entire process of nurturing, and helping to grow and flourish. Since the primary responsibility for the process of *tarbiyyah* rests with the parents, it is crucial that both parents play their respective roles in the formative education and development of the child.

This is stressed in a famous saying of the Prophet, peace be on him:

“Every child is born in a natural state of goodness. It is his parents who make him into a Jew, a Christian or a Magian.”

Not only parents, but grandparents, uncles and aunts, sisters and brothers, neighbours and teachers – all have an important role in the correct upbringing of new generations.

Grandparents, with their wisdom gained through experience, can provide much needed relief to parents under stress. We are reminded of the example of the Prophet, in his care for his daughter Fatimah and his love for her children, Hasan and Husayn.

According to a tradition, the Prophet is reported to have said:

“Those who do not show mercy to others will not have God’s mercy shown to them.”

Tarbiyyah or the Education of Children

In the *tarbiyyah* of children, we must remember that children often learn from example. The proper conduct of parents and the example they set are crucial factors in the upbringing of children. Parents who expect their children to be disciplined and to work hard must themselves be disciplined and work hard. Parents who expect their children to be truthful must not be in the habit of telling lies. Also, it is important to remember that the treatment given to children in the early years of their lives can have far-reaching effects on their mental and emotional state later on in life.

While educating and bringing up children, one should try to remember that they should be trained to grow up with the true Islamic spirit.

“Be generous, kind and noble to your children and make their habits and manners good and beautiful,” said the Prophet. Among the virtues they should cultivate are the habits of truthfulness, honesty, gentleness, politeness (according to the Prophet, “Gentleness adorns everything.”) helpfulness and consideration for others.

Children need to develop the the etiquette of Islam: when and how to greet others; how to speak, sit, and eat, as taught by the noble Prophet; to do everything in the manner, time and place that are appropriate for it.

Above all, correct training should ensure that children develop a love for Islam, a love for God and that they develop a willingness to strive for the good of others and lead their lives in accordance with Islamic values.

QUESTIONS

(a) Definition

- (i) What is Islam?
- 1. What does Islam mean?

2. Why does the whole of the universe surrender to God?
 3. How does faith shape the life of the believer?
 4. How does the will of God override the will of man?
 5. What is the relation between Islam and the true believer?
- (ii) The rise of Islam from Adam to the Prophet Muhammad.
1. Why were the Prophets sent to this world?
 2. Who was the first prophet?
 3. Who were some of the early prophets of Islam?
 4. What was the fate of most of the prophets?
 5. What was the reason God sent so many prophets?
 6. Did all the prophets bring books of revelation?
 7. What were the names of some of the earlier books of revelations?
 8. Write an essay on the last Prophet, the Prophet Muhammad.
- (iii) The expansion of Islam after the Prophet.
1. What was the geographical territory won over by Islam at the time of the Prophet's death?
 2. Give the names of the four 'rightly guided' caliphs who succeeded the Prophet.
 3. What was the contribution of the 'rightly guided' caliphs to the expansion of Islam?
 4. How did the Umayyads and Abbasids strive to expand the geographical boundaries of Islam?
 5. What is the present day status of Islam in the world?

(b) Scope

- (i) Social Life
1. What is the base of social life in Islam?
 2. What other name did the Prophet give to religion?
 3. What are the most important aspects of living together in society?
 4. How should the believers settle any hostilities among themselves?
 5. Give a few examples of what the Quran says about the true believers.
 6. Why should people have the fear of God in their hearts?
 7. What should one, who has nothing, give as alms?
 8. Why should one treat all people equally, irrespective of their status?

- (ii) Economic Life
1. Who is the Creator of all the things in this world?
 2. Why did God create all the good things on earth?

- 3 Why is the possession and acquisition of wealth considered to be a trial for the believer?
- 4 What does the functioning of the economic system in Islam depend on?
- 5 What is Islam's view on the individual's right to own property?
- 6 What does Islam say about the right to inheritance?
- 7 Is there any restriction in Islam on the accumulation of wealth?

(iii) Moral Life

- 1 What is meant by moral value?
- 2 Why does Islam attach great importance to moral values?
- 3 Who is considered the model to be emulated as far as moral character is concerned?
- 4 What does the statement 'practicing what one preaches' imply?
- 5 What is called the 'straight path'?
- 6 What leads man astray from the path of divine guidance?
- 7 What is required to lead a successful life?

(iv) Family Life

- 1 What are the three factors, which keep the family together in Islam?
- 2 What is kinship?
- 3 Why is marriage important in family life?
- 4 What role does faith play in keeping the family together?
- 5 What is a nuclear family and what is an extended family?
- 6 Why is it important to preserve the extended family in Islam?
- 7 What are the parents' duties to children?
- 8 What is '*tarbiyyah*'?

UNIT

2

Man in the Universe (the Islamic Perspective)

(I) THE UNIVERSE AS A PURPOSEFUL SYSTEM OF CREATION

Our universe is a beautiful work of the Creator and many of the beautiful names of God point to this. God is called: Al-Khaliq (the Creator), Al-Bari (The Maker), Al-Musawwir (the Shaper), al-Muhiyy (The Giver of Life) and Al-Badi (The Innovative Creator). The universe was fashioned by God according to a well conceived plan at the divine command 'Be'.

The Quran states:

'Do they want some religion other than God's, though each and every thing in heaven or earth is under His sway? And all will be led back towards God' (3:83).

This indicates that the universe has been subjected to the code of monotheism - a plain affirmation that the One God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and that in Him alone are vested all powers. None besides Him has any sway over the universe. The entire cosmos, from the particles of dust to the galaxies of stars, is under the direct domination of the One God who, alone, is the Master of all beings. This is the reason that the entire universe, with all its vast expanse, is exactly as it should be. No flaw in its functioning has ever been detected and its speed has not faltered even by a second during the thousands of millions of years of its existence. This is the model that man is asked to follow, for it is a practical demonstration of the creed of monotheism.

Total Submission

The greatest and most salient characteristic of the universe is that it is fully obedient to its Creator. (41: 12). Even after the elapsing of hundreds of millions of years, the sun, the earth and the stars, moving at incredible speeds in their orbits, have not wavered even by a fraction of a second in their course, each one faithfully carrying out the duty assigned to it. Man is likewise required to demonstrate that same total submission, and is called upon to make even his most fervent personal desires subservient to the will of God. At all times, he must unfailingly do as the Lord desires. His hands and feet, his eyes and tongue, his heart and mind, all must bow in supplication to God, so that no part of him, whether mental or physical, should in any way flout His will.

Worship of God

The Quran tells us that all things in the universe worship and glorify God (24:41). The very birds chirping in the green boughs of the trees seem to sing songs in praise of their Creator and Sustainer. The trees, when they cast their shadows on the earth, seem to have lain prostrate themselves before their Creator. The sun, when it sends down its beautiful rays to earth after the darkness of night, seems to express the thought: 'Glorified be the One who is the source of all light. Should He choose to extinguish it, darkness would engulf the entire universe.' It is this very same formula which man is called upon to follow. Overwhelmed with gratitude for God's munificence, he must also give expression to his devotion by singing the glories of his Lord; remembrance of God should become the richest treasure of his life, and devotion to Him should become a life-long vocation.

Stability of Character

One important characteristic of the universe is that it moves on its course with such exactitude that coming events can be forecast with one hundred per cent certainty (10:5). The same kind of predictability is essential in man. So methodical and so responsible should his conduct be that his probable reaction in any given situation should be plainly foreseeable. Even at the most preliminary stage of any transaction with him, we should feel that we know for certain what his attitude and plan of action will be. His word should, indeed, be as dependable as the rising and the setting of the sun.

Harmony

Another compelling aspect of the universe is that all its parts work in complete harmony with each other (36:40). It has never been the case that the sun and moon have worked at cross purposes. The stars never collide. Air and water, sun and soil, all work in consonance with each other. More than one hundred elements, the components of all the known matter in the universe, work in perfect accord, and no clash of purpose – has ever been detected in them. It behoves man also to emulate their example and, in the carrying out of whatever his tasks may be, avoid any confrontations with others.

Result Orientation

An inestimable virtue of the universe is that all its activities bear fruit (13: 17). As far as our world is concerned, the rotation of the earth, the alternation between day and night, the rains, the changes of the seasons, etc., are all, as it were, result-oriented. Natural activity, if allowed to go on unhindered, will never cause chaos and man would do well to adapt himself to this principle.

Divine Morals As Reflected In The Universe

The purpose and wisdom, which manifest themselves in the wider universe under the direct control of God, have to be adopted by man of his own accord in his personal life. What God has established on a physical plane, man has to establish on a moral plane. With the same strength as is possessed by the iron which is found everywhere in the cosmos, man must have real staunchness of character. But kind-heartedness must spring from him too, in the way that the springs gush forth from the rocks. Just as fragrance and colour are to be found in abundance in the cosmos, so should man's life be enhanced by the fairness and honesty of his dealings. He should be like the tree which breathes out oxygen in return for the carbon dioxide which it breathes in: that is, he should return good for evil; he should be kind to those who wrong him. He should learn too, from the fact that nothing in the cosmos ever encroaches upon anything else. Each physical entity concentrates solely upon playing its own part in the order of the universe. Man must also engage in the same positive action, avoiding all negative activities. Innumerable activities are going on throughout the cosmos on the grandest of scales, but without any recompense. In like manner, man should keep on discharging his responsibilities without any hope of reward. He should reflect upon how the lofty mountains and the trees cast their shadows upon the earth, with no thought for what anyone can do for them in return, and should emulate this act in all humility, for, as the Prophet has enjoined, no one should be proud; no one should consider himself superior to others.

The activities going on in the world at every moment proclaim who are the worthy and who are the unworthy. Those who are motivated solely by the superficial interests of money, honour or fame are little better than miserable misfits in this selfless world of God. They are not true to the standards set in this universe, which is a living manifestation of divine ethics. Only those who can be motivated by the truth, pure and simple, who can rise above personal interests, freeing themselves from complexes and obsessions, shall be deserving of honour and glory from God. In the heavenly world to come, all those who have been activated solely by their immediate worldly interests, will be marked down as unworthy, and cast out from it. This beautiful and blissful world will be inherited only by those who, motivated by unworldly interests, lifted their eyes from the immediate, material things in order to be able to see things distant and 'unseen':

The universe demonstrates at all points in time and on a vast scale what kind of citizens are required by God to inherit the ideal world of tomorrow – Paradise. God desires men who will be true to His morals, and who will practice the religion that is enshrined, in theory, in His Book and, in practice, in His universe. Those who refuse to learn their lesson and persist in following the path of selfish passion are wrongdoers of the worst kind. Those who refuse to see God's signs, although they have eyes, and refuse to hear God's voice, although they have ears, are, in the eyes of God, 'the worst animals' (8:22).

(II) CREATION OF MAN (QURANIC ACCOUNT)

Man is God's servant. Man has been created by God with a plan, that is, to place him temporarily on earth in order to test him. Then those who pass this test will be rewarded, while those who fail will be rejected.

For the purposes of this test, man has been granted freedom in this world. Whatever man receives in this world is not as a matter of right but only as a matter of trial. Every situation here is a test, and in all situations man must give a proper performance, as is required of him by God.

The proper attitude for man is not to take to the paths of his desires, but to try to understand the divine plan of creation and then after being convinced of its ineluctability, he should build his life accordingly.

Man may deviate from the divine plan by misusing the freedom given to him by God, but he cannot save himself from the consequences of this deviation.

In such a state of affairs, it is in the interest of man himself that he remain extremely cautious in determining the course of his life. Instead of being guided by his own will and desires, he should make God's will his guide. Instead of pursuing his own ambitions, he should lead a life in conformance with the commands of God.

Man may be a masterpiece of divine creation, but he must nevertheless remain subservient to the plan of God. Making a full acknowledgement of these two aspects of the existence of mankind is the key to human progress.

Man succeeded in building a modern industrial civilization by discovering and exploiting the laws of nature. Similarly, in the next world man will achieve lasting success on a much vaster scale, but only after striving earnestly to comprehend God's creation plan for humanity and then adhering unflinchingly to its edicts.

Man's True Purpose in Life

Man attains his highest distinction only when he leads a purposeful life. Such a life characterises the most advanced stage of human development. This does not mean that, by taking up just any task which is ostensibly significant, man's life becomes truly purposeful. A really purposeful life is one in which man discovers his supreme status as a moral being; it is a life in which his personality makes manifest the unique and distinctive ability to make moral choices. An animal strives to obtain food; a bird flies in search of a better country when the season changes; a wasp busies itself building up its own home from tiny particles of earth; a herd of deer takes measures to protect itself from wild beasts of prey. All of these appear to be purposeful actions. But when the phrase 'a purposeful life' is applied to man, it does not refer to practical efforts of this nature. Without doubt arranging for food, clothes and shelter are some of the tasks that man has to perform in this world; but this is a level of purposefulness at which men and animals, being concerned only with bare survival, are equal. Its true application in relation to man can only be that, in which he appears in all his dignity: when it goes beyond common animalism and takes the form of superior humanism.

God's creations in this world fall into two categories: animate and inanimate. Obviously, animate objects enjoy a certain superiority over inanimate objects. The former can be divided into three classes: the vegetable, the animal and the human. Modern scientific research has shown that plants also possess life, in that they nourish themselves, they grow and they have feelings.

But animals and men surely represent a higher form of life. In what way does man excel animals? Many theories have been advanced in answer to this question over the ages, and great minds are still studying it. But modern biologists have come to the conclusion that it is man's capacity for conceptual thought, which distinguishes him from other life forms. Animals lack this quality, whereas man is conscious of the fact that he is thinking. He consciously forms all plans of action in his mind; in his everyday life his actions are determined by him. Whereas this is not the case with animals. Though many of their actions appear to be like those of men, these actions are not the result of thought; they all stem from pure instinct. Animals are simply led intuitively by their desires and their needs in a certain direction. Their actions are governed by environmental stresses from without and physical pressures from within.

It is from this unique capacity of man to conceptualise that we can conceive of what his higher purpose in life should be: one which in no way results from the pressures of desire or of immediate exigencies. It must emanate from his own urge to worship God.

Man's true purpose in life can only be one which reflects the nobler side of his character; one which represents him as the superior being that he is.

If one pauses at this stage to take note of what the Qur'an has to say, one will find that it gives us clear guidance in this matter. Man's purpose in life has been explained in the Quran in the following words:

'I created mankind and the jinn that they might worship me. I demand no livelihood of them, nor do I ask that they should feed me. God alone is the Magnificent Giver, the Mighty One, the Invincible.' (51:53)

These verses specify man's purpose in life as worship. This is a purpose which highlights man's uniqueness in its ultimate form. It raises man to a much higher plane than that of the animals. Not a trace of animalism contributes to the achievement of such a goal. God does not, as the verse states, demand of you a livelihood, rather He himself is responsible for your livelihood.

This means that worship of God is a purpose, which is motivated neither by inward desires nor outward influences, but comes into being through thought alone. Only when a person goes beyond his self and his environment can he understand that there is a higher purpose, on which he should focus his life. The motive force towards the fulfillment of this purpose is not the urge to satisfy one's needs or those of others. The worshipper seeks neither to gratify his own desires nor those of the Being he worships. It is a purpose, which sets before man a goal far above all these things - a goal which does not follow internal needs or external pressures, but results purely from conceptual thought.

When a person works, makes money, builds a house, and makes an effort to improve his standard of living, he appears to be engaged in efforts towards some worthy end. But a life of this nature cannot be called a purposeful life, for these activities do not demonstrate man's unique status. It might seem as if they are the result of deliberation, but if one looks at the matter in depth, one will see that in actual fact the motive force behind these actions is the same urge that motivates an animal in various ways, i.e. its concern for its own survival. It is the driving force of one's desires, the pressure of one's needs, and the wish to fulfill the demands of one's self that underlie such a life. These are the considerations which, in fact, guide a person in his search for his livelihood.

When man grows up, he realizes that there are certain material necessities without which he cannot live. He requires food, clothes, a place to live; he requires a reliable source of income to sustain him throughout his life. He is forced by these considerations to obtain these things. Then he sees that those who have an abundance of these material things enjoy respect and apparently possess every form of happiness and luxury in this world. Thus he is driven on to do more than just seek a livelihood; he desires to earn to a degree greatly in excess of his actual requirements.

In bustling markets, grandiose offices, and opulent buildings, he is not really guided by deliberate thought. Rather, he is being guided by inflated ideas of his own needs, desires, longings and ambitions to achieve fame and high status in this world. For this reason these activities cannot be considered as being directed towards the purpose, which sets man apart from the animals and lends him a higher distinction.

Man's greater dignity cannot be based only on a purpose, which emanates from inner desires and pressures of environment. Man's true purpose in life can only be to seek the pleasure of God. When man seeks the pleasure of his Lord, his human qualities are fully realized. This is a purpose loftier than the one towards which an animal directs its energies. It distinguishes man from the animals. It is the ultimate station of human dignity.

To determine the purpose of life is, in short, to strive to make life meaningful. It must surely, therefore, be one which is in accordance with man's unique status; it must be one which leads man on the path to success and progress in terms of his true nature.

(III) MAN AS A FINITE BEING

Man is placed on earth only for a very short time. There, he will be trained tested, and then passed over to the Hereafter where he will stay forever. The possessions and blessings of this world, although created in a way similar to their originals in Heaven, actually possess many defects and weaknesses. For they are only intended to make man remember the Hereafter.

Allah describes how the world is a temporary place full of deception: "Know that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp and mutual boasting among you, and rivalry in respect of wealth and children, just like the vegetation after rain, whose growth is pleasing to the tiller; afterwards it dries up and you see it turning yellow; then it becomes straw. But in the Hereafter there is a severe torment, and there is Forgiveness from Allah and His Good Pleasure, whereas the life of this world is only deceptive enjoyment."

Just as it is stated in the Quran, all of the ignorant people live only for a few objectives such as riches and children and other things about which they can boast. In another verse the goods and chattels of deception in the world are described thus:

"Fair in the eyes of men is the love of things they covet: Women and sons; Heaped-up hoards of gold and silver; horses branded; and (wealth of) cattle and well-tilled land. Such are the possessions of this world's life; but in nearness to Allah is the best of the goals (to return to). Say: Shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those? For the righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home; with companions pure; and the good pleasure of Allah. For in Allah's sight are (all) His servants." (3:14-15)

The life of this world is extremely rudimentary and lacking in worth when compared to the eternal life in the Hereafter. To express this, the original Arabic word for the "world" has the connotation of a "scanty, crowded, dirty place". People consider that their 60-70 year long life on this earth will be a long and satisfying one. Yet, in a very short time death comes and all are buried in their graves. As a matter of fact, as death comes closer, one realizes how short a time he has stayed in this world. On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will question the people.

"He will say: 'What number of years did you stay on earth?' They will reply: 'We stayed a day or part of a day: but ask those who keep account.' He will say: 'You stayed but a little – if you had only known! Did you think that We had created you in jest, and that you would never be brought back to Us?'" (23:112-115)

Denying Allah and disregarding the Hereafter in the life-long pursuit of worldly greed will mean eternal punishment in Hell-Fire. Those who conduct themselves in this way are described in the Quran as

"people who buy the life of this world for the price of the Hereafter". For them Allah decrees: "Their penalty shall not be lightened, nor shall they be helped." (2:86)

Another verse states:

"Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the present and those who heed not Our Signs; their abode is the Fire, because of the evil they earned." (10:7-8)

Those who forget that this world is only a temporary place of trial and who are not mindful of Allah's Signs, but are quite satisfied with worldly play and the amusements of this life, assuming them to be their own, and even deifying them, will surely deserve the most grievous penalty. The Quran describes the status of such people:

"Then, as for him who transgresses all bounds, and prefers the life of this world, then surely the hell, that is the abode." (79:37-39)

God has made His heaven full of all kinds of blessings in the world of the Hereafter. Those who prove to be God-fearing and pious in this world will enter into that world to find the gates of heaven eternally open for them. But those who are oblivious of God in this present world will be deprived of the blessings of the Hereafter.

God is invisible in this present world, and will appear in all His power and majesty only in the world of the Hereafter. Then all human beings will bow low before Him. But at that time, surrendering will be of no avail. Surrendering before God after seeing Him in the Hereafter will not benefit anyone.

Death is not the end of a person's life. It is only the beginning of the next stage of life. Death is that interim stage when man leaves this temporary world of today for the eternal world of tomorrow. He goes out of the temporary accommodation of the world to enter the eternal resting place of the Hereafter. The coming of this stage in the Hereafter is the greatest certainty in one's life. No one can save himself from this fate in the Hereafter.

(IV) THE ISLAMIC VIEW OF LIFE

According to Islamic tradition, life is a creation of God. God wanted to create life and there was life.

Creation falls into four categories – inanimate matter, plants, animals and human beings. No category has evolved from any other. According to Islam, all four have been produced as a result of separate creation. Similarly, of the living things, there are a great number of species, right from amoeba to human beings. Again, none of these living species has been produced from any other through the process of evolution. Rather they have all been created separately. There is no doubt that there is some similarity in their physical system, but each has a permanent, separate existence. There is no concept of a missing link in Islam.

The Prophet Muhammad said : "God created man in his own image." This does not mean that life in the form of man is a part of God. Islam believes in dualism. According to Islam God and human beings are two separate entities. What this tradition means is simply that man is endowed with certain special qualities. We know that mountains cannot walk, but humans can. The ocean cannot hear, but humans can. The moon cannot see, but man can. No two trees can enter into a dialogue, but two persons can. No planet can organize a seminar, but human beings can. No stars can invent a machine, but life in the form of man can. These are the unique qualities of the human being.

According to a *hadith* (tradition of the Prophet Muhammad) God said : "I was a hidden treasure. Then I wanted to be known and I created human beings." It is a fact that the capacity for conceptual thinking is the special quality of human beings. So God created man for this purpose. It is required that human beings discover God's existence and realize His presence. Once man realizes God, he is showered with divine blessings. Then he offers thanks to his Sustainer. According to Islam, thanksgiving (*shukr*) is the greatest form of worship.

As far as the relationship between science and religion is concerned, it could be referred to a very well established principle of Islam which is known as *al-Maruf* (the good). It means that anything proved to be good for mankind would also be regarded as good in Islam. Here is a very

relevant hadith, which throws light on this matter. The Prophet of Islam was born in Makkah, a desert city where he lived for fifty years. Then he migrated to Madinah which was built on fertile land, with soil especially suitable for date plantation. There were many date orchards in the city.

As a matter of ancient custom, the Madinans used to pollinate the date plants artificially. Prophet was not familiar with this custom. One day when he passed by some people who had climbed up to the top of date palms, he enquired as to what they were doing. He was told that they were pollinating the trees in order to fertilize them. The Prophet said, 'I don't think this will benefit them.' When people learned of the Prophet's comment, they stopped the practice of pollination. The yield was very low that year.

When the Prophet came to know of this, he said, "If they benefit from pollination, they should continue with this practice. It was only an opinion." Then the Prophet told the date growers to adhere to their own methods, and said, "You know better about your worldly affairs." (Sahih Muslim). According to this tradition, worldly affairs like horticulture, agriculture, engineering, architecture, and irrigation and, of course, all the disciplines dealing with life sciences fall into the category *al-Maruf*. In terms of our scientific research and experience, whatever is proved to be good for mankind will also be regarded as good in Islam. So there is no possibility of contradiction between Islam and facts proved by any branch of science, including the biological sciences.

Although the Quran and hadith provide principles covering this area, we do not find details of all these basic injunctions. For instance, the development that has taken place in the science of surgery has shown that some parts of the human body can be transplanted in another human body. If the eye of a dead person is taken out immediately after his death, it can be transplanted in the eyesocket of a blind person and he may regain his sight.

Islam does not offer guidance about these matters in detail. Basic guidelines, not details, regarding these matters are given in the Quran and Hadith. Islam gives us a principle which applies to this subject as well. That is, "everything is lawful unless it is declared unlawful."

In the light of this Islamic principle, we can safely say that the donation of any organ is permissible in Islam, for the shariah has not held it unlawful.

Then there is another principle in Islam known as *sadaqa-jaria*, i.e. the continuance of a charitable gift. The benefits of this kind of alms-giving are long-lasting. The good effect of a transplanted eye will, for example, continue long after the donor's death. Such acts, far from incurring God's displeasure, will bring the donor divine rewards.

QUESTIONS

- (i) The universe as a purposeful system of creation.
 - 1 What are the Names of Allah that refer to His role as the Creator?
 - 2 How do we know that the universe is the creation of God?
 - 3 What aspects of reality in the case of the universe confirm that God created it?
 - 4 In what way is the universe obedient to God?
 - 5 How do the things forming the universe worship God?
 - 6 How are divine morals reflected in the universe?
 - 7 What kinds of citizens are required to inhabit God's universe?
- (ii) The creation of man
 - 1 Who is the Creator of humankind?

- 2 What was the purpose of creating a human being?
 - 3 What is the believer's true purpose in life?
 - 4 Why is the human being a form of life superior to the animal?
 - 5 What makes man's life meaningful in this world?
- (iii) Man as a finite being.
- 1 What was the reason God placed human beings on the earth?
 - 2 How does the concept of the Hereafter affect a person's life on earth?
 - 3 Why can it be said that this world is only a temporary residence of the human race?
 - 4 Does God keep an account of the individual's life on earth?
 - 5 What is the reward for a good life and the punishment for an ungodly life?
- (iv) The Islamic view of life
- 1 Why is God considered to be the supreme source of life in Islamic tradition?
 - 2 Into what four categories can the creation be divided?
 - 3 What is meant by the Prophet Muhammad's saying, "God created man in His own image."?
 - 4 Why did God decide to create man?
 - 5 What does the hadith dealing with the pollination of date palms teach us?
 - 6 Why should one always be grateful to God and how should one express it?

UNIT

3

The Articles of Faith in Islam

(I) WHAT IS FAITH?

The essence of faith is the realization or discovery of God (*ma 'arifah*). When a man consciously seeks out and finds God, and thereby has access to divine realities, that is what constitutes faith.

This discovery is no simple matter. God is the Creator and Owner of all things. He will award or punish all, according to their deeds; none is free from His grip. The discovery of such a God shakes to the core the whole life of man. His thinking is revolutionized, for God becomes the centre of all His emotions.

With God as the principal focus of his attention, man becomes God's servant in the fullest sense of the word. He becomes a man whose living and dying is all for God.

Such a faith ultimately results in all of man's behaviour and his dealings taking on the hue of God. When the believer speaks, he is conscious of the fact that God is listening to him. When he walks, he does so with modesty so that his gait may not be displeasing to God. When he deals with people, he is always worried lest he deal unjustly and be punished by God in the next life.

The impact of this degree of faith makes the entire life of man Hereafter – (*akhirat*)-oriented. In all matters his eyes are focused on the Hereafter. Instead of immediate gain he makes gain in the next life his goal. Whenever there are two aspects of any matter, one pertaining to this world and the other to the next world, he always prefers the latter.

Faith, another name for the recognition of the Supreme God, becomes for the believer a fountainhead of limitless confidence in his Creator. When this recognition takes root in an individual's heart and soul, his whole personality becomes regenerated. Knowing that in all circumstances he may depend upon God, he becomes a new man.

The Arabic word for belief is "*iman*." It literally means 'to know,' 'to believe,' 'to put one's trust in something or someone.' In the Islamic Shariah, *Iman* means putting one's trust in, or having complete faith in Allah, His Prophet and His message.

In this world all things fall into two separate categories – those that grow and those that do not. For example, a stone does not grow. It remains in the same state. On the contrary, a tree goes on growing. The Quran likens the faith and the faithful to the tree. (14:24). That is, unlike the stone, they do not remain static, but go on increasing, never coming to a standstill.

At various places in the Quran it is said that faith is something which continues to grow:

'The true believers are those... whose faith grows stronger as they listen to His revelation.'

'As for those who follow the right path, God will increase their guidance...' (47:17).

'As they (the believers) listen, their humility increases.' (17:109)

'God will increase the guidance to those that have followed the right path.' (19:76).

... Say: Lord, increase my knowledge. (20:114)

Those who have had the wealth of true faith bestowed on them will find their faith goes on increasing in the manner mentioned in the Quran. On the contrary, those who have not been lifted up to the heights of true faith will find that their 'faith' is something static which does not grow.

According to Ata ibn Yasar Abdullah ibn Rawaha once said to one of his companions: "Let's come to bring faith in God for a while."

These words enraged his companion and he asked, "Aren't we believers already?" Ibn Rawaha replied, "Yes, that is true. We are believers. But when we remember God, our faith increases."

To the companion, faith (*iman*) meant the recitation of the monotheistic creed. There is no god but the One God – after which he felt that his faith was complete. But so far as Abdullah ibn Rawaha was concerned, he had discovered God the limitless, God with all his forms of perfection. For the former, the recitation of the creed (*kalima*) was all that mattered, but, to the latter, *kalima* recitation was only the beginning. The concept of God that came to his mind was a treasure house of limitless perfection. This being so, he felt that his remembrance of God should also be endless. He lived in God. And one who lives in God will remember God continuously. He will never have the feeling that he has come to the outermost limit. The third Caliph Uthman said, "If your hearts are purified, you will never feel that you have had your fill of the remembrance of God."

Whether a man feels satisfied or dissatisfied depends upon his capacity for satisfaction. A small container is soon filled up with just a small quantity of water. But no amount of water will fill up the ocean-bed. An ocean requires an unlimited quantity of water, if it is to be filled right up. The same applies to a man. If, like the small container, his desire for God is limited in extent, it will soon be fulfilled. But if, like the ocean, his desire for God is limitless, it will never come to an end.

There are seven things which are essential for a Muslim to believe in. These are spelled out in detail in the formal declaration of Islamic faith known as *Iman Mufassal*. Muslims pledge this faith in Allah, in His angels, in His revealed Books, in all of His messengers, in the Last Day (the Day of Judgement), in the doctrine of predestination, which lays down that everything good or bad is decided by Allah), (*Taqdir*) and in the life after death.

Without *iman*, the individual's espousal of Islam as his religion would lack credibility. That is why, if he is to be a true believer, he must not only testify to his faith by word of mouth (*shahaada bil lisan*), but must also accept it with all his heart and soul and then staunchly adhere to it. Furthermore, he is obliged to do good works in keeping with the fundamentals of the faith. Both belief (*iman*), and right action (*amal*) are absolutely vital.

The Article of Faith - The *Shahaadah*

The Creed, or article of faith, called *shahaadah*, literally means 'witness' or 'testimony.' The first of the five pillars of Islam, its nomenclature derives from the word '*Ashhadu*', which means 'I declare,' or 'I bear witness.' As an Islamic term, it means testifying to faith in Islam. The words of the *shahaadah* in Arabic are: *La ilaha illa Allah Muhammad ur-rasul Allah*. This means: 'There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' Its recital is called the '*kalimah*'.

For Muslims there are certain requirements which have to be observed regarding the *the recital* of the articles of faith.

They are as follows:

It has to be repeated aloud, at least once in a lifetime.

Its meaning has to be fully understood.

It should be believed in "with the heart."

It should be professed until death.

When spoken in Arabic and with sincerity, it is a commitment to obey God and follow the Prophet:

'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah; I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.'

These are the first words that are breathed into a child's ear at birth. These are also the last words which a Muslim would utter with his dying breath.

Even if someone recites the *shahaadah* hypocritically – which is not acceptable to God – he will still, for practical purposes, continue to be regarded as a member of the Muslim community. Nevertheless, a proper understanding of the basic tenets is a prerequisite for all true believers. And sincere and heartfelt faith is a sine qua non if salvation is to be ensured in the life Hereafter.

The *shahaadah* consists of two parts; one, a negation, the other an affirmation. The first part – *La ilaha illa Allah* (there is no other God) negates the existence of each and every false god, and condemns false worship. The word '*ilaah*' means 'god' or any object of worship; it could refer to any being, person, matter or concept, which is taken as an object of adoration or worship.

The second part of *shahaadah* – *illa Allah* – stresses that only Allah, the one and only God, the Creator and Sustainer of all being, merits our reverence. No one else is to be worshipped or turned to for help or refuge. Neither angels, nor prophets nor saints, nor any other object share in His divinity. There is only One God, One Creator, One Sustainer – the Almighty Allah.

(II) FAITH IN GOD (TAWHEED)

(a) *Towhid*

The declaration that 'there is no God but Allah' is the essence of Islam. It means that Allah has no partner (*sharik*): He exists by Himself. This is expressed by the Arabic word *tawheed*, 'oneness' and 'unity,' which in the Islamic context means 'the oneness of Allah.' This is a fundamental doctrine encompassing the oneness of Allah in every sense of the expression. Nothing can rival Him as a source of power or love. There is no one worthy of worship other than Allah. He is not an abstract concept. He is always near us; He cares for us and we owe our existence to Him alone.

Islam established a close and direct relationship between the Creator and His creation, in which no mediating power plays any role. God's absolute unity is reflected in the unity of His creation, in which each individual part is in harmonious conjunction with all of the others. There is nothing remotely like Him. The Quran thus enjoins us:

"Say: He is Allah, the One. Allah the Absolute. He does not beget, nor is He begotten; and there is none like Him." (chapter 112).

God alone is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, including human beings. He is the sole possessor of all powers. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent. That is, although invisible to the naked eye, He knows everything, He sees everything, He has full control over everything and is present everywhere.

Monotheism is the doctrine that all power lies in the hands of one God alone; that He alone deserves to be worshipped. No act in the nature of worship is lawful unless directed towards God. It is God alone who fulfills our needs. It is God alone, who is behind the functioning of the entire universe.

Here are further verses from the Quran which very clearly state the concept of God:

"Truly your God is but one: Lord of the heavens and of the earth." (37:4)

"This is God your Lord; there is no God but He, the Creator of all things; therefore, worship Him alone." (6:102)

"Your God is one God; there is no God but He, the Compassionate, the Merciful." (2:158)

"God: there is no God but He, the Living, the Eternal One. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is what the heavens and the earth contain. Who can intercede with Him, unless by His leave? He is cognizant of men's affairs now and in the future. Men can grasp only that part of His knowledge which He will. His throne is as vast as the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not weary Him. He is the Exalted, the Immense One." (2:255)

Tawheed has two aspects to it: *tawheed fi az-zat* and *tawheed fi as-sifat*, that is, oneness of being and oneness of attributes. This means that God is *alone* in His Being as well as in His attributes.

The attributes of God are called *al-Asma ul-Husna*, or the excellent names. The Quran says:

"But God's are excellent names, call on Him by them." (7:179) According to Abu Hurayrah, a Companion of the Prophet, there is a saying of the Prophet to this effect: "Verily, there are ninety nine names of God."

Islam enjoins believers to worship one Allah alone. No other being or object is worthy of being worshipped. No other being should be associated with Allah. Idolatry, or *shirk*, is to worship or hold in reverence anything other than God. This is strictly forbidden in Islam, and is regarded as the worst of all sins.

The Far-Reaching Effect of Tawheed

By believing in one true God, man is saved from worshipping many false gods. *Tawheed* enables man to establish a direct link between God and man.

Belief in *tawheed* makes man humble and modest instead of being proud and arrogant. It is because belief in one Great God implies that man is His humble servant and that modesty alone befits him. Believers know that they must submit to Allah, on whom they depend utterly. Submission to one God results in individual freedom and dignity, for all human beings then become equal and all deserve our respect. There is only one God and all of us are servants of the same God. Belief in the oneness of Allah helps the individual to live in unity with others. Belief in one Creator gives a sense of oneness with all creation.

Belief in one God gives the believers confidence, for, they trust in Allah and believe that nothing can happen unless God wills it. Life and death are entirely in His hands. They remain content because they believe that power, wealth and success come from Allah alone. He gives them to whom He thinks fit and takes them away from whom He pleases. *Tawheed* thus brings about a unique blend of submission to God and human dignity and freedom.

(b) Belief in Angels (*Malaika*)

Of the many beings created by God, the angels are of special importance. They have been invested by God with the supernatural power to keep order in the functioning of the universe. They do not, however, deviate in the slightest from the path of God, for all their actions are in complete obedience to His will.

Diverse and numerous events are taking place at every moment in the universe, for instance, the movement of the stars, the shining of the sun and moon, the falling of the rain, the alternation of the seasons, and so on. All of these, and many other continually recurring events are attended to by the angels. Working in the universe as extremely faithful and obedient servants of God, they ensure the continued existence of the human and animal species on earth.

As well as running the world's systems, these angels, a numerous band, take charge of all matters in heaven and hell.

The role of the angels can be understood by the example of a large factory. In any such factory, there are many big and complex machines, which produce the goods for which the factory has been established. But these machines do not run on their own. To facilitate their smooth running, many human hands are required. Therefore, in every factory there are always a number of people whose duty it is to attend constantly to their proper and efficient functioning. Similarly, countless angels are appointed to ensure the proper functioning of the great factory of the universe.

The difference between the two factories is simply that in the material one, the human hands are visible, while in the metaphorical one—the great mechanism of the universe—the angels remain invisible.

Angels (*malak*, literally meaning 'messenger') serve as intermediaries between God and man. They transmit messages to His envoys, worthy individuals who are specially chosen by God for the task of being His messengers. These messengers are called prophets, and it is the prophets alone who receive the divine revelations, through an angel, who is the celestial messenger. According to the Quran, the angel Jibrail (Gabriel), meaning the 'power of God,' — also alluded to in the Quran as a "trustworthy spirit" (*al-ruh-al-amin*)—brought divine revelations to the Prophet of Islam.

Most important among the angels are Jibrail, Mikail, Izrail and Israfil.

Jibrail, as we have said, is the 'holy spirit', who brings revelations from Allah to His prophets.

Izrail is called the angel of death, for he takes away the souls of the dying.

Israfil will blow the trumpet when the time comes for the world to end and on the Day of Judgement.

The angels, who continuously praise and glorify the Lord, have been given the necessary qualities and powers to perform specific functions. They have no free will. They always obey Allah and never displease Him. Man, on the other hand, has been given free will and can choose between right and wrong.

Angels are creatures of light (*nur*) who pervade the whole universe. Although in the kingdom of Allah there are many millions of them, they belong to the realm of the invisible, so that the only way we can see them is if they appear in human form. Jibrail used to appear to the Prophet in various forms. Sometimes he hung suspended in the air, sometimes he appeared in the shape of a man, and sometimes he sprouted wings, etc. The angel Jibrail once appeared before a gathering of the companions of the Prophet in order to teach them about Islam. On that occasion, he took the form of a Companion of the Prophet. Angels can take any suitable form in order to perform their duties, and are constantly occupied in carrying out Allah's orders.

Angels are continuously present on earth, particularly at prayer times. Man may not be able to see the angels, but the angels can certainly see man and are in constant touch with human beings. They keep a watch on them on behalf of God and many of them are eternally busy recording all of our thoughts, words and deeds. They are called the 'respected recorders' (*kiraman katibin*). Not a single word we say goes unrecorded. (50:18)

They are the friends and protectors (41:30-32) of human beings, and are God's most obedient and loyal servants.

Man may not be able to see the angels, but the angels can certainly see man, and keep a watch on him on behalf of God. It is these very angels who take man's soul away after death.

(c) Faith in Destiny

Taqdir (predestination) forms part of the fundamental beliefs of Islam. This is the sixth article of faith. *Taqdir* in Arabic is also called *Al-Qadha-o-al Qadr*, which means to "measure out" or "pre-ordering."

Taqdir means belief in God's having, for all eternity, predetermined and decreed all things, good as well as bad. Nothing can happen of itself in the world, whether good or evil. God has created this universe with His power, His knowledge, His wisdom and His will and has set a certain course for it. Then He has ordained a law, which may be called the law of nature, for the physical, animal and human world, and for everything else in this universe.

The Quran says:

"The Lord has created and balanced all things and has fixed their destinies and guided them." (87:2)

Nothing can befall us but what God has destined for us.

"We have created all things according to a fixed decree." (54:49)

For all of His creation God has set a course to follow. Nothing can deviate from the path set by God. In this respect the movements of the sun and moon, the stars and planets, the rotation of the earth, the laws of cause and effect working behind the growth and function of all natural

phenomena, the existence of all living creatures including human beings, their life and death—all are governed by natural laws. In religious terminology this is the divine *taqdir*.

The belief in *taqdir* is to acknowledge that God's power is limitless. His Decree is eternal. No one can obstruct the fulfillment of His decrees. His knowledge is eternal. That is, whatever happens, is happening, or is to happen in future, does so with the prior knowledge of God. Nothing pertaining to the past, present or future is concealed from His view. He is abreast of all the minutest details of this universe. Everything that has been or will be depends entirely on His foreknowledge and sovereign will.

There is some misunderstanding about this belief in *taqdir*. There are certain people who believe that man is totally helpless. This is not true. There is no doubt about it that it is what God decrees, which takes place. No one can change His *taqdir*. But it is also true that man has been granted wisdom, freedom and will power by God. This is quite exceptional, for none of the other entities in the universe have been granted any free will; they have to follow the path set for them by God. But the case of man is different. He has been given the power of discrimination between good and bad. Then he has also been granted the freedom to choose one course over another. For instance, according to Islam, just as disease is a *taqdir* of God, so is its remedy. Therefore, if one falls ill, he may counter it with the other *taqdir* of God, that is, he may take medicine for it. Similarly, both good and evil are God's *taqdir*. Now man has the freedom to opt for whatever *taqdir* he thinks fit.

(III) FAITH IN PROPHETHOOD

Man has been placed on this earth by God in order that his obedience to his Maker may be put to the test. For this purpose he has been given complete freedom to tread the paths of both good and evil. He has a choice. But to follow the path desired for him by God, man is in need of guiding principles. The true source of guidance, according to Islam, is to be found in prophethood. Throughout human history, God in His infinite Mercy, selected certain individuals to communicate His message to mankind, so that all human beings might be given an opportunity to follow the right path. These chosen people were called prophets, or messengers. They received God's message through His angel and then conveyed it to their people.

All the prophets, according to Islam, brought the same basic truth: that there is only one God and that all human beings are accountable to God for their actions: when Doomsday finally comes, they will be judged by Him according to their good and bad deeds. Those who believe in Allah and His Prophet shall be rewarded by God in the next world, while those who disbelieve shall be punished by God in the next world as befits the deeds they have performed on earth.

"Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills, and guides to Himself those who turn to Him in repentance." (42:13)

God's messengers came in every age and to every region. According to a *Hadith*, starting with Adam and ending with the Prophet Muahmmad, 1,24,000 messengers were sent in succession to guide the people to the right path. The prophets mentioned by name in the Quran are two dozen in number. The five major prophets who came before Muhammad were Adam, Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), and Isa (Jesus). The Prophet Muhammad, the last in this long line of prophets, was known as the 'Seal of the Prophets.'

In the past the need for new prophets had arisen because God's religion, having been distorted in a number of different ways, was no longer in its pristine form. New prophets had to come to the world periodically in order to revive the true spirit of religion, and thus restore it to its original form. After the Prophet Muhammad, there was no need for another prophet, for the Book – the Quran – which he gave to the world, has been preserved intact, in its original form.

The Islamic concept of prophethood is different from that of other religions. Some religions would have it that even God Himself becomes incarnate in human shape, and that his prophets are in some way superhuman or other-worldly. But a prophet in the Islamic sense is no different from any other human being. His uniqueness lies simply in his being the chosen messenger of God.

God's Apostles were born into this world just like any other human beings. They led their lives just as others did, thus demonstrating to their people how God's servants should, in practice, conduct themselves on earth, and showing them clearly what path they must tread in order to avert God's displeasure and make themselves worthy of His blessings.

The prophets who brought books were called *rasul*, while those who did not were called *nabi*.

Of the holy books, four find mention in the Quran: the *Sahifa*, scrolls given to Ibrahim; the *Tawrat*, the revelations made to Musa; the *Zabur*, the psalms given to Dawud (David); the *Injil*, the teachings given to Isa (Jesus). Each of these was originally a complete revelation, but unfortunately, these books and teachings were not properly preserved. Some, like the *Sahifa*, were lost completely. Others were changed in various ways by human intervention. Thus these previous scriptures are no longer in their original form. They could best be described as edited versions of divine revelations, which have been altered from time to time by editors and commentators.

(IV) FAITH IN THE HEREAFTER

According to Islam, the present world is not an eternal abode. The Quran tells us that man is placed here only temporarily, so that his moral fibre may be tested in terms of his obedience to God's will. He must always remember that there will be the life Hereafter, or *Akhira* as it is known in Islamic terminology. This is also referred to as *Ma'ad*, which means a place to which one returns.

There is a time limit to mortal existence. Death marks the end of the testing period for all human beings. But death only means a change of abode, for the soul never dies. Man returns to the realm whence he came, so that he may wait for the Day of Judgement. That realm, the life Hereafter, is the eternal world. Thus man's life is divided into two parts: a brief stay in this world and an eternal life in the next world. To the ungodly, it is only then that it becomes obvious that a life which is eternal is far more important than this present existence.

God created human beings and made them responsible for their actions by granting them freedom. If there were no Afterlife, in which the good were rewarded and the bad punished, there would be no justice; in which case, it would appear meaningless to create people with a conscience and a sense of responsibility. But God is just and always acts justly. Hence it is the absolute demand of justice that there should be a Day of Judgement when everyone is brought to book.

After death, human beings will, therefore, leave this present, ephemeral abode and, on the Day of Judgement, will enter another world, which will be eternal. When the time comes for the Last Reckoning, God will destroy this world and replace it with a permanent, everlasting world. All human beings will then be resurrected and brought before the Almighty to be judged. On that day, everyone will stand alone before God. Those who have done good deeds in the world they have left behind will be rewarded. Their reward will be paradise, a state of joy, happiness and peace.

The Quran states: "Allah has created death and life to test which one of you is best in conduct." (67:1)

Furthermore, the concept of the Hereafter gives a fuller meaning and purpose to the life of the believer. One who firmly believes in this concept will not give in to greed or to any other such worldly failings. He will not be a materialist, for he knows that this material life will surely come to an end with death, whereas there will be a whole eternity before him in the Afterlife, during which he will certainly rejoice in having paid due attention to the spiritual side of life on this earth.

Death is not the end of our lives; it is the beginning of our real life. Because our future fate is to be decided on the basis of our present performance, we can either make use of our opportunities on earth to ensure a well-deserved place for ourselves in Paradise, or we can throw them away and condemn ourselves to punishment in Hell.

The belief in the Hereafter naturally has a great influence on the life of a believer. When he knows that Allah is watching all his actions, his behaviour will be responsible. He will always endeavour to lead his life in consonance with the will of God and will inevitably avoid any course which will incur God's displeasure.

QUESTIONS

(i) What is Faith?

- 1 What is meant by the realization of God?
- 2 Why should God be the principal focus of man's attention?
- 3 What does the word '*iman*' mean?
- 4 Why are we obliged to do good works besides having the right belief?
- 5 What are the seven things a Muslim should believe in?

(ii) Faith in Allah.

(a) *Tawheed*

- 1 What is meant by '*shahadah*'?
- 2 What are the requirements that have to be observed regarding the *kalima*?
- 3 What are the words of the *kalima* in Arabic and their meaning in English?
- 4 What is the meaning of '*tawheed*'?
- 5 What are the two aspects of '*tawheed*'?
- 6 What are the attributes of God called?
- 7 What is the effect of '*tawheed*' on the believer?

(b) Angels

- 1 Why is the belief in angels one of the essential fundamental beliefs of Islam?
- 2 What role do the angels play in the universe?
- 3 What are the angels created of?
- 4 Why do the angels record everything that happens in a man's life?
- 5 Why can't we see the angels?
- 6 Write an essay on 'the angel as the messenger of God.'

(c) Destiny

- 1 What does *taqdir* mean?
- 2 What does the Quran say about destiny?
- 3 How does belief in *taqdir* confirm God's limitless power?
- 4 How is man's free choice reconciled with '*taqdir*' in Islamic thinking?
- 5 Why should man always choose good over evil?

(iii) Faith in *risalah* (prophethood)

- 1 Whom do we call a prophet?
- 2 Why did God send many prophets one after the other?
- 3 What is the basic truth taught by all the prophets?
- 4 In what way is the Islamic concept of prophethood different from that of other religions?
- 5 What is the difference between '*rasul*' and '*nabi*'?
- 6 What are the four holy books mentioned in the Quran?

(iv) Faith in the Hereafter.

- 1 What Arabic words are used for the Hereafter?
- 2 How is man's life divided into two parts?
- 3 What is the Day of Judgement?
- 4 Why is it important to lead a moral life on earth?
- 5 How does man's life on earth affect his life in the Hereafter?

UNIT

4

Prophethood in Islam

(I) THE CONCEPT OF PROPHETHOOD

A prophet is a person chosen by God as his representative on earth. When God appoints someone as His Messenger, He sends His angel to him to inform him of the new status. In that way, the individual can have no doubts about his appointment as God's apostle. Later, God reveals His message to him through His angels, so that he may communicate the divine teachings to all his fellow men.

God has given man a mind, so that he may be endowed with understanding. But this mind can only grasp things that are apparent. It cannot go below the surface of things, and there are many things that cannot be comprehended by superficial knowledge. The deeper realities of this world remain beyond the scope of the human mind. Where the question of God and the next world are concerned, they must remain invisible forever and forever beyond the reach of human perception.

What the prophet does is to enlighten people, so that they may overcome this human shortcoming. He tells them of the reality of things here and now, and also gives tidings of the next world. He thereby enables the individual to formulate a plan for his entire existence, both on earth and in the life Hereafter. Once the man receives the guidance of God through the prophet, he gains knowledge and awareness, which enable him to carve out a successful life for himself.

Since the time of the first human settlement on earth, there have been many prophets sent by God throughout the ages to convey His messages to human beings. However, whatever records of these ancient prophets have survived have had to be discounted as historically unreliable because of interpolations. The same is true of the books they brought to mankind. The sole exception was the case of the Prophet Muhammad, who had been chosen by God as His Final Messenger. The Prophet was born in an age when the history of the world was already being extensively chronicled. The circumstances were already such that authentic records could be kept of God's message and the Prophet's exemplary life. The relevant facts were passed on from one generation to the next by both oral and written tradition. With the advent of the printing press came the modern guarantees that no changes would ever be made in the divine scriptures. This makes the position of the Prophet Muhammad as God's Final messenger and His sole representative on earth, till the Doomsday, unassailable.

Adam was the first man as well as the first prophet. But when Adam's people abandoned the ways of the Lord, the Prophet Noah was sent to reform the descendants of Adam. Despite his prolonged efforts, Adam's progeny, with the exception of a very few, resisted Noah's message. Finally, only eight human beings boarded the Ark and were saved by God from the Terrible Flood that destroyed the whole earth. Then the human race made a fresh start, with the followers of Noah, who were saved from the Great Storm. But again this new generation, with the passage of time, digressed from the path of monotheism. This went on, repeatedly, for many centuries. God continued to send prophets one after the other:

'Then We sent Our Messengers in succession. Every time there came to a nation their messenger, they denied him; so We made them follow one another (to destruction), and We made them as lessons for the mankind to learn from them.' (28:44).

But far from showing any willingness to accept their message, people laughed at His apostles: 'Alas for mankind! There never came a Messenger to them but they used to mock at him.' (36:30).

The Prophet Abraham also attempted to reform society, but met the same fate as that of the prophets preceding him. Then God devised a new plan for the divine guidance of human affairs. Accordingly, Abraham was commanded to leave populated areas, go to the desert near where Makkah now stands and settle his wife Hajira and their little child Isma'il there. Initially, Hajira and Isma'il were the only inhabitants of the valley. Abraham himself stayed in Palestine and visited them at certain intervals. In this way, in the hostile and desert environment, a new generation began to be formed. It was finally in this land that the Prophet Muhammad, the Last Prophet, was born. His message was the final message of God to humankind about the religion of Islam or submission to God's will, the best of the religions. God in His mercy willed him to achieve what no other prophet before him could, though there were many who were great kings like Solomon and David. All of them were also very patient and forbearing men, like Yakub, Ayyub, and Yusuf.

Though all the prophets were given a divine message, only four of them were given heavenly books. These books were the Towrah given to Moses, the Zabur given to David, the Injil given to Isa and the Quran revealed to the Prophet Muhammad. The earlier scriptures were not preserved in their authentic and original form. It is only the Quran that exists in exactly the same form as it was revealed. With the establishment of the religion of peace, that is Islam, God's divine arrangement for preparing human beings for eternal life became everlasting and will continue till the Day of Judgement.

In short, it can be said that the concept of prophethood in Islam is a divine arrangement devised by God for the salvation of humankind.

(II) THE ROLE OF THE PROPHETS IN HUMAN SOCIETY

According to one tradition, more than one lakh prophets came to the world. Prophets were those human beings who were selected by God for the communication of His message. These messengers of God were bearers of human values in the full sense of the expression.

The description of the prophets in the Quran and the Bible shows that one objective of the prophetic mission was to establish a standard of ethics aimed at improving human society.

When man was made to inhabit this world, everything required by him for the fulfilment of his material needs was already in place.

But from the ethical point of view, man did not know the do's and the don'ts. It was the prophets who brought to men the ethical norms of human behaviour. The prophets told them that their status was far superior to that of any other living creature. The only thing that the animals required was to satisfy their material and physical needs. Man, however, was gifted with an ethical sense. The awareness of justice and injustice had been inculcated in him at the

unconscious level. But it was difficult for him to bring it to the conscious level and to establish the system of his life on this basis.

It was with the help of the prophets that he was enabled to rise from the animal level and lead a life as an ethical being. It was the prophets who tried to build human society based on ethics. It is a fact that all the ethical teachings and values found in this world are the gift of the prophets.

The Prophet Nuh was a great prophet of early times. During his long prophetic career he exhorted people to adopt divine ethics and shun evil ways. He enjoined them to lead their lives as well-wishers of each other.

The prophets advocated social justice, so that everyone should be dealt with fairly and squarely and be given his full due. Social justice also meant wishing others well and treating them as one would want to be treated oneself. There should be no exploit action: each individual of society should be accorded full respect. Each should receive treatment based on principle and not on self-interest.

All the prophets sent to the world in different times and circumstances played the role of improving society. The prophetic mission can be summed up briefly in two words. monotheism and justice.

That is, to believe in one God and base all dealings between people on justice. That is why all the prophets, on the one hand exhorted their people to worship the one and only God and on the other, they strove to improve the moral character of their people, so that they might be of help to others instead of inflicting harm on them.

There were some prophets who were also kings, like Solomon and David, while the Prophet Yusuf held the high official position of being minister to the king of Egypt. All of them used their political power for social welfare.

There was a very severe seven year famine during the times of the Prophet Yusuf, during which time he made such an arrangement for the distribution of grains as was unparalleled in the history of humankind. The people were provided with grains at a very cheap price, and were not discriminated against in this distribution. The details of the lives of these prophet-kings can be found both in the Bible and the Quran.

Jesus laid great stress on moral values and social justice. The New Testament is replete with these teachings. He went to the extent of exhorting his people to love their enemies. That is giving fair treatment unilaterally even to one's enemy. On no pretext should one be unjust and indulge in any action, which creates dissension and corruption in society.

It is as a result of these teachings of Jesus Christ that Christians are engaged in social work more than any other community. It would not be wrong to say that, for the first time in human history, it was the Christian community that gave social work the form of a properly organized social institution, spreading their network of social service all over the world. They became models to be followed by other communities also followed in their footsteps. A notable example was Mother Teresa who earned great fame and was given the Nobel Peace Prize for her selfless services.

The teachings of the Prophet of Islam provide the definitive model for high moral character. From early childhood he possessed exceptional moral virtues. His honesty was so evident that he earned the title of *al-ameen* (trustworthy) from his compatriots.

One very important aspect of the mission of the Prophet of Islam was to bring a revolution to the world, so that man could lead his life free from all man-made shackles. The society in those days was based on disparity: some were held superior, some inferior. Economic exploitation was

common. The system of kingship was not based on justice to all. Only the highly placed could receive justice in this set-up. After a long struggle the Prophet of Islam started a social revolution. The ancient traditional age was brought to an end all over the inhabited world of the time. Prior to the Prophet of Islam nature was held to be an object of worship. The Prophet of Islam, displaced it from its high pedestal and made it a subject of investigation and subjugation. In its wake came the scientific revolution. After a great number of scientific discoveries had been made, the industrial revolution followed. Subsequently, for the first time in human history, it was possible for man to benefit from the divine blessings hidden in nature.

To put an end to economic exploitation the Prophet of Islam forbade the practice of usury and other similar activities.

Then the Prophet of Islam gave equality an absolute status. God was the Lord of all human beings, so all human beings were equal. The difference between master and slave, black and white, rich and poor had no place in this ideology. The concept of the inferior race and the superior race vanished. Good moral character was held to be the only yardstick for judging human beings. This brought the system based on discrimination to an end.

The Prophet of Islam also established a just economic system. It was held obligatory for the believers to spend a part of their income to fulfil the needs of the deprived members of society.

The Prophet of Islam did not just preach these fine theories, but also succeeded in establishing a system on the basis of these principles – a system where there was no political coercion, no economic exploitation, no human inequality. Even the women who had been held inferior to men since ancient times, were given their due status. The Prophet of Islam said that they were halves of men, both complementing one another. Women were also given their share in property. In fact there are traditions, which tell one to look after one's mother far more than one's father.

In this way the Prophet of Islam established in practice an example of the good human society, which the world had been seeking all along.

(III) SOME PROMINENT PROPHETS

(a) The Prophet Adam

God created Adam, the first man, and the father of mankind. He created him out of clay and moulded him into shape (7:12) God gave him good shape and fashioned him in due proportion and created him in the best of moulds (7:11) Then God breathed his spirit into Adam. God's breathing of this spirit means His endowing him with life and consciousness: that is, with a soul.

After the completion of the creation of Adam, God taught him the names or nature of all things. The knowledge of names here denotes man's faculty of conceptual thought. It is by virtue of his ability to think conceptually that man is superior even to the angels.

God endowed Adam, who represented the whole human race, with the ability of conceptual thought, and freedom. He decreed that he would be established on earth, saying that he would inherit the earth. God also told the angels that He had decreed that Adam, a human being would inherit the earth (2:30). The angels replied:

"Lord, will you place on the earth one who will spread corruption and will shed blood? Whereas we sing your praises and sanctify your name." (2:30).

God replied that He knew what they did not.

Then God in His omnipotence brought the whole human race before Adam and said to the angels: "These are the progeny of Adam. Can you give me the name of each one of them, and say what sort of people they will be?" The angels, having no knowledge of them, were unable to answer. Then God told Adam their names and characteristics, and commanded him to pass the knowledge on to the angels. When Adam had explained to them the nature of the human race, they realized that, besides the wicked and the corrupt, there would also be among their number great, righteous and pious souls.

Then God ordered the Angels and the Jinn, whom He had created before Adam, to prostrate themselves before him. The angels immediately obeyed the divine commandment. But Satan, chief of the angels, did not prostrate himself. When God asked him to explain his disobedience, he replied, 'I am better than him; you created me from fire, while him you created from mud.' (Quran 7:12). Satan was sentenced by God to everlasting damnation because of his disobedience.

"Satan then asked God to give him respite till Doomsday." God granted his request and made this concession to him.

Satan then said to God, "Now, because You have caused me to go astray, I shall lead human beings astray and I shall turn many of the believers into unbelievers." God said, 'Begone! You stand accursed forever. As for your followers, I will cast them all into Hell.'

Then God created a female companion for Adam called Eve. She became Adam's wife and God settled them in Paradise.

All of Paradise with its vast expanses was now within the reach of Adam and his spouse. It was full of innumerable kinds of good things and they had all the freedom to use them in whatever manner they liked. But in the midst of countless permitted things, there was one thing which they were banned from doing, i.e., they had not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. Satan used this prohibition as a vantage point from which to attack them. He incited them to wrongdoing by saying that this thing from which they had to stay away was the most important thing in paradise. The whole secret of holiness and eternity was hidden therein.

Adam and his wife were influenced by Satan's continuous urging and finally ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. But, when they did this, the result was entirely the opposite of what they had expected. This disobedience of theirs removed the cloak of safety from their bodies. They started to feel absolutely helpless in a world where they had every convenience and total safety.

This indicates the special weapon used by Satan to deceive man into distancing himself from God's Grace and succour. His strategy was to belittle in the eyes of man the extensive world of legitimate gifts from God and to inflate the importance of the few prohibited things, by presenting them in an attractive light, all the while reassuring man of the immense advantages concealed within them.

Then Adam and Eve realised that they had committed a great sin, and that Allah was angry with them. They sincerely repented saying, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and do not show us mercy, we shall be doomed for ever." Then God turned to them mercifully, choosing to bestow His Grace upon them and give them guidance.

Adam and his wife were commanded by God to descend from Paradise and settle on earth and to follow the guidance to be sent by God. God bestowed His grace on Adam's descendants. (3:33).

God commanded them to do good deeds and prove themselves His obedient servants so that they might be held deserving of Eternal Paradise after death. This is the advice for all human

beings. If a person does not follow the right path shown by God, he becomes the follower of Satan and will be thrown into the fire of Hell.

Thus Adam was the first man and the first prophet on the earth.

(b) The Prophet Nuh

The Prophet Nuh was chosen by God to communicate to mankind, His message with which Adam had earlier been entrusted. But as the people over the ages forgot the message of the first prophet and strayed from the straight path, God, in His mercy, gave humankind another chance to repent. As there were still some good people left on earth, He sent another prophet to teach them the Truth. He told Nuh to go to His erring people with His message, and guide them about what was good and what was bad.

Nuh went to his own people to tell them of the duty, which God – the Creator of the heavens and earth – had given him to carry out. He tried hard to give them advice, but no one, neither the rich nor the poor, listened to him. Rather, the chiefs of the tribe challenged him, saying to their people:

'He is no more than a human being like you, but he seeks to make himself superior to you. Had Allah willed, He surely could have sent down angels.'
(23:24)

And though he argued with them and tried to convince them of the truth of his message, they refused to listen to him or stop worshipping the idols. His words, pointing to the wonders of the universe created by God as the sure sign of His existence, made no impression on them and they persisted in their ways.

After years of hardship and untiring effort, Nuh still did his best to bring them to the path of God, telling them:

'He (Allah) will forgive you your sins and give you respite for an appointed term.' (71:4).

But they plotted against him and threatened to have him stoned to death. In great distress, Nuh prayed to his Lord: 'My Lord! Do not leave a single disbeliever on the earth! If You leave them, they will mislead Your servants, and they will beget none but wicked disbelievers. My Lord! Forgive me, and my parents, and him who enters my home as a believer, and all the believing men and women.' (71:26-28). And God heard his prayers.

Then God revealed to Nuh that He had decided to send to the earth a terrible flood that would destroy everyone and every thing upon it. He also told him that the punishment would be everlasting. Only Nuh and his followers would, by the grace of God, be saved. At the same time, God ordered Nuh to build an Ark or a ship and to collect pairs (male and female) of every living species to put in the Ark at the time of Flood. He not only ordered Nuh to build the Ark but gave him detailed instructions about how to do it. The Quran describes this in the following words: 'We revealed Our will to him, saying: 'Build an ark under Our watchful eye, according to Our instructions. When Our judgement comes to pass and water wells out from the Oven, take aboard a pair from every species and the members of your household, except those of them already doomed. Do not plead with Me for those who have done wrong: They shall be drowned. And when you and all your followers have gone aboard, say:

'Praise be to God who has delivered us from a sinful nation. Lord, let my landing from this ark be blessed. You alone can make me land safety.' (23:27-29)

Only those who believed in the message of the prophet Nuh followed him into the ship. One of his sons and his own wife, Waiya, who did not believe his words, were left behind. And as God's scourge descended on the earth, rain poured down and did not stop till the whole world was submerged in water. But the people and animals in the Ark were safe from God's punishment. Everybody perished, even Canan, one of the sons of the prophet, for he was amongst those who denied the call of God. Nuh could not contain his grief, so he called out to the Lord to save his son, but God replied: 'He was no kinsman of yours: he had acted unjustly.' And Nuh repented of having sinned by asking for mercy for an unbeliever, though he be his own flesh and blood. This shows that the closest tie between people is faith, and not even family or race.

Finally the Ark came to rest on a mountain and slowly the waters receded, and the people and the animals disembarked. In this way God led the Prophet Nuh and his people to safety and He made the Flood and the Ark signs of warning for future generations.

The life of the Prophet Nuh was not different from the life of many other prophets, as he too was persecuted by his own people. His followers were few in number but finally it was they who were, through the mercy of God, saved from the Flood and eternal punishment. But the message of God is constantly the same; it is a call to accept the Truth, a call repeated by every prophet and showing God's unending mercy to mankind.

(c) The Prophet Ibrahim

The Prophet Ibrahim, through the line of his son Ismail, was an ancestor of the Prophet Muhammad. Both Ibrahim and his son Ismail were messengers of God and together they rebuilt the Kabah in Makkah. Ibrahim established the pilgrimage to Makkah by calling mankind to the House of God. Ibrahim was tried by certain of God's commands which he fulfilled, and was made a leader of mankind. While laying the foundations of the Kabah, Ibrahim and Ismail prayed to God to accept their service, and to make them and their progeny Muslim. They further extended their thanksgiving and prayed to be fed with fruits. They also prayed for Makkah to be made a city of peace and security and for an to be sent Apostle from amongst them. Chosen by God as a leader for mankind, Ibrahim was granted God's mercy and high honour. Acknowledging all this, Ibrahim showed his gratitude to God, the Almighty, and God continued guiding him to the straight path through revelation.

Ibrahim argued with his father about the evils of polytheism and urged him to give up idol-worship. But the latter rejected his advice and threatened to have him stoned to death. Ibrahim nevertheless broke the idols, and so he was thrown into a blazing fire. By God's intervention the fire was cooled and Ibrahim was saved.

Then God commanded Ibrahim to migrate with his nephew, Lut, to the blessed land. Ibrahim prayed for the grant of a righteous son and his prayer was accepted. Ibrahim was tried by God commanding him to sacrifice his eldest son, Ismail. When Ibrahim told his son about this dream the latter replied. 'O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me steadfast and obedient to God.' Ibrahim then laid his son face down for the sacrifice. At that moment God called out to Ibrahim that he had already fulfilled His command. It had been a great trial of Ibrahim's intention and God accepted this as his sacrifice. Then God sent a ram to be sacrificed instead.

The Prophet Ibrahim set a great example for the Muslims to follow. They must be ever willing to sacrifice everything for the cause of God, for everything we possess is given to us by God.

The Prophet Ibrahim set an unparalleled example of complete submission and devotion to God. It meant a complete abnegation of his will in obedience to God's command.

The literal meaning of Islam is to submit oneself to complete obedience and devotion to God. That is why this complete obedience and devotion of Ibrahim and Ismail to God has been termed 'Islam' in the Quran:

"When they both submitted (aslama) their will (to God) and he had laid him prostrate on his forehead (for sacrifice) (Al-Saffat 103).

The Prophet Ibrahim decided to leave the country and go to some other land to preach the revealed message of God and call the people to the right path. He left his home and travelled to Jordan, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt. He also visited for Hijaz to carry out his *dawah* mission. And he went on like this going from place to place, calling people towards God.

A son was born to the Prophet Ibrahim in his old age. God commanded him to leave his new-born son named Ismail and his mother Hajra in the barren land where Makkah now stands. Ibrahim immediately complied with this injunction and left his wife and son at the place where the Kabah was later built.

When Ismail grew up, the Prophet Ibrahim had a dream in which he was sacrificing his son, Ismail. The dreams of the prophets are never false. He at once understood the meaning of this dream. He related the dream to his son. Being an obedient son, Ismail took no time in understanding the will of God. He said willingly,

"Father do what you have been commanded to do. If Allah has willed so, you will find me among those who are patient and submissive."

So he bowed to the command of God, and prepared himself to give his life if that pleased his Lord. Ibrahim laid his son face down on the earth to sacrifice him. This shows that Ibrahim regarded nothing dearer to himself than his Lord's Command. The Lord accepted his sacrifice and declared:

'You have indeed proved your dream to be true. Truly, we reward the righteous person. Truly, it was an open trial, and We sent the ram to be sacrificed in place of your son.'

As the Prophet Ibrahim opened his eyes, he found a ram standing there ready for the sacrifice.

In memory of this great event God commanded all Muslims to offer sacrifices on the 10th of Dul Hijjah every year.

Ibrahim emerged successfully from every test. He had even been prepared to sacrifice his dearest son. That is why God called him Khalilullah (Allah's friend). Allah also made him a leader and guide for all human beings. So when God said to the Prophet Ibrahim, We make you leader of the world, Ibrahim said,

'O my God, are You giving this high place to my children also? This does not apply to those who go on the wrong path.'

Then God commanded Ibrahim to build the Kabah as a centre for the Muslims the world over.

'Kubah' is the name of God's house of worship in Makkah. This is the centre of Islam (monotheism) for all time to come. The Prophet Ibrahim with the help of his son Ismail started building the Kabah. While raising the walls of the Kabah, the Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail prayed thus to their Lord: "O our Lord, accept our efforts. Only You are the hearer of our prayers and only You are the knower of everything, our Lord. Make both of us true Muslims. Raise from among our children such people as act solely upon Your command. Teach us the ways of Your worship and accept our repentance. Pardon all our mistakes and sins. You are kind and merciful."

When the building of the Kabah was completed, Ibrahim prayed to God:

"O Lord, I brought some of my dear ones to settle in this barren Land. Our God, with Your infinite bounty, make this place a city of peace. Our Lord, protect me and my children from idol worship."

Then Allah commanded this prophet to keep the Kabah pure and clean and free of idols. 'This house is the centre of worship of one God alone.... for those who visit it, circumambulate it, bow and prostrate yourselves to Me.' So the Prophet Ibrahim carried out the command of God and made the Kabah the greatest centre of monotheism. The Prophet Ibrahim's life presents the best example of total submission to God. He was ready to carry out his Lord's commands and passed his life as a humble servant of the Creator of the world.

After Ibrahim, a number of prophets were sent to the world - Ismail, Al-Yasa, Younus and Lut. They were granted by God the favour of revelation. They were truthful and righteous. Ibrahim used to enjoin on his people prayer and charity. Ismail, Idris and Dhul Kifl were all men of constancy and patience. And Allah admitted them to His mercy, for they were of the righteous ones.

Ismail was ready to suffer patiently in the cause of God. Al Yasa and Dhul Kifl, all of them were the best chosen. Ibrahim impressed it upon his sons, Ismail and Ishaq, that God had chosen the religion of Islam for them, and that they should not die except as Muslims. And the same advice was given by Yaqoub to his sons.

(d) The Prophet Musa

The followers of the Prophet Yaqub, also known as Israel, were called the Banu Israil (Israelites). They had gone on living in Egypt since the days of the Prophet Yusuf.

Musa was born in Egypt 450 years after the days of Yusuf. At that time Egypt was ruled by the Pharaohs.

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, treated the Israelites harshly. He feared that these 'foreigners,' who were former rulers, might grow in number and become powerful enough to overthrow his kingship. So he took every step to crush them. Rameses II went to the extent of giving orders to kill every male child born to them.

Musa was born during this critical time. His mother, therefore concealed him for three months. Then, by divine inspiration, she put the baby into a basket and floated it in the river. She asked Maryam, Musa's sister to watch it from a distance to avoid suspicion.

The basket was picked up by Pharaoh's men, who took the baby to Pharaoh's wife. She was very glad to have the lovely baby and adopted him. Musa's sister went to Pharaoh's palace and

suggested a nurse to look after the baby and suckle him. She was asked to bring her to the palace. Musa's own mother was thus engaged as his nurse. In this way Musa was brought up in the royal palace, where he received the best training. Later, Allah granted him prophethood and bestowed on him wisdom and knowledge. Musa and his brother Harun were guided to the straight path (37:118).

One day Musa came across an Egyptian who was beating an Israelite. Musa gave the Egyptian a blow, which resulted in his death. After this inadvertent killing, Musa had to leave the city. He went to Madyan, where he stayed for a period of ten years. Then he moved on to Tuwa, a valley at the foot of Mount Sinai. He was travelling with his family when he saw a fire in the direction of Mount Tur. Here he received divine guidance and was selected as a messenger of God.

Musa was granted two signs, a 'rod' which, when thrown down would turn into a living serpent, and the ability to make his hand shine after it was drawn out from under his arm (20:17-22)

God commanded him to go to Pharaoh and urge him to worship the one God. Musa asked God to make his brother Harun his helper and God granted his prayer.

Musa and Harun then went to the Pharaoh. They exhorted him to obey God and allow the Israelites to leave his country. Pharaoh defied him and called him a liar and a sorcerer. Pharaoh summoned his own sorcerers for a contest. His magicians were badly defeated, and bowing to the truth, they professed their faith in God.

Pharaoh became angry and intensified his cruel treatment of the Israelites. Therefore, God commanded Musa to leave Egypt with the Israelites, at night to avoid arousing Pharaoh's suspicion. But the Egyptians came to know of their plan and so Pharaoh and his soldiers chased them, almost catching them near the shore of the Red Sea. Now there was no way to flee. Then God commanded Musa to throw his rod to the water. When he did so, the mighty sea parted, making a path in the middle for the Israelites to cross over. Pharaoh and his soldiers went in hot pursuit of them, but Musa and his people safely reached the opposite shore. While Pharaoh and his forces were still in the middle of the sea, the water on both sides suddenly began to pour over them and they were drowned. This is how God punishes transgressors and helps his servants.

When the Israelites crossed the northern end of the Red Sea, they reached the Sinai Peninsula. During this journey, they saw a community engaged in idol worship. Musa said to them: 'All your devotion is going to be wasted.' The greatest weakness of man is to attach importance to appearance, thus becoming unable to devote his attention to the Invisible God.

The Israelites were given superiority over all mankind. This superiority was not meant in the racial sense but was relevant rather to their mission. It is the way of God that he selects a community to become the bearer of the Book of God and, through this community He conveys His message to other nations. In ancient times this office was held by the Israelites, but after the coming of the Final Prophet, this office was given to the Muslim community.

Musa was given commands concerning *dawah* in Egypt, but the laws (shariah) were communicated to him after he reached the Sinai desert.

Musa received his first prophetic call on a mountainside. The next time he was again called to a mountain, (Mount Sinai) to receive the commands of the Torah. This shows that the environment of nature is the best place for receiving divine inspiration. In the quiet world of the trees, mountains and rivers, one begins to feel oneself closer to God.

There was a clever man named Samiri among the Israelites. When Musa left for the mountain, leaving his people in the care of Harun, Samiri started misleading them. He collected pieces of jewellery from the people and moulded them into the shape of a calf. The sculpting art of the ancient Egyptians was such that when air passed through the calf, a bellowing sound came out of its mouth. People are generally awed by strange things, so this "miracle" of the calf lead them to believe that there was something sacred about it and they began worshipping it. A large number of people were misled by Samiri's eloquence. Except for Harun and a few of his companions nobody dared to openly protest against him.

When Musa came down from the mountain and saw the Israelites worshipping the golden calf, he held Harun responsible for this, under the impression that he had neglected his duty as a reformer.

Musa became very angry with Harun. But when Harun told him that he had done all he could to show his people the right path, but to no avail, then Musa forgave him and started praying to God for him.

Musa spent forty nights on the mountain top. God revealed His law and gave him the tablets of stone inscribed with divine rules to be followed by the believers. Here, on Mount Sinai, Musa was given the Ten Commandments and the law. Musa requested God to show Himself to him, so God manifested His glory on Mount Tur. When the Lord revealed His Glory to the mountain, it crumbled to dust and Musa swooned (7:142-145). "Glory be to you!" Musa exclaimed when he had regained his senses. "Accept my repentance. I am the first to believe."

God accepted the Prophet Musa's repentance:

"Musa, I have chosen you of all mankind to make known my messages and My commandments. Take, therefore, what I have given you and be thankful." (7:144)

Musa took the stone tablets and went back down to the camp to communicate the divine laws to the Children of Israel.

The sacred book given to Musa is called the Taurat. It contained a pledge of guidance and mercy to those that fear their Lord. (7:150-154).

We inscribed for him upon the Tablets all manner of precepts, and instructions concerning all things, and said to him:

"Observe these steadfastly, and enjoin your people to observe what is best in them." (7:142-144)

Musa and Harun were Allah's believing servants (37:122) on whom be peace and salutation. (37:120)

Zakariya, Yahya, Isa and Ilyas, all in the ranks of the righteous, were Allah's believing servants and apostles (37:12:3). They asked their people to fear God and worship Him alone, but the people rejected them.

(e) The Prophet Dawood

Prophet David was born in Bethlehem. He belonged to the tribe of Judah of the Bani Israil. He is regarded in Jewish traditions as the ideal king, the founder of a vast and powerful state for the Bani Israil. For ancient Israel his role was second only to that of Musa.

David began his career at the court of Saul, Israel's first king. The most urgent task before Saul was to crush the enemies of the Bani Israil, in particular the Amalikites. The Amalikites were

led by Goliath, the giant warrior. The Israelis were so frightened of him that they refused to fight against his forces. However, finally they decided to fight the Amalikites till the last breath.

Goliath came to the battlefield and challenged the Israelites to face him, but they did not dare to come forward. At this juncture, David, still in his teens, rushed towards Goliath and killed him in a few minutes. Israel's fate changed overnight and David became the hero of his nation. This brave boy was granted prophethood by God.

Saul was so greatly impressed by his skill and bravery that he gave him his daughter Michal in marriage. With the help of David (Dawood), Saul conquered Palestine and ruled there for 16 years from 1020 B.C. to 1004 B.C. He appointed David as his successor. He became the king of the Israelis in Palestine in 1004 BC.

Along with strength and wisdom God also granted David a sweet and melodious voice. He received the Psalms from God. The Psalms are one of the four scriptures that are mentioned in the Quran. When David sang these hymns in his melodious voice, all the valleys and mountains echoed with the sound. The birds too sang God's praises along with the Prophet David. He used to offer his prayers to God with such superior eloquence that even the mountains and birds would join him.

When a believer who is fully absorbed in the remembrance of God recites the praises of God, he is in fact in consonance with the entire universe; all things in heaven and on the earth join him in chorus, albeit in silent language. But Almighty God had blessed David in such a special way, that the hills, mountains and birds used to join him audibly when he recited the praises of God.

Similarly, Almighty God had given David the skills to make use of iron. He developed the technique of melting and moulding iron to such an extent that he could make the very fine links of which chain mail is composed. The suits of armour made from this could be worn like ordinary clothes. At that time, this technique was unknown to the world. Almighty God Himself willed that he be taught this technique through the agency of the angels.

Almighty God had blessed him with extraordinary strength and a strong empire, but he always turned to God in matters. He used to sit on a mountainside and sing songs in praise of God with such great devotion that the whole environment would seem to join with him. The Quran says:

'The hills sing the praises of God with him.' (21:78).

God had blessed Dawood with a very strong empire. The secret of the strength was wisdom and decisive speech (38:20). He had the ability to take the right decisions at the right times. These are the things that make a ruler effective. Such a ruler does not decide matters according to his whims and fancies, but abides by the principles of truth and justice.

David was a grateful servant of God. He praised God for granting him great knowledge and favouring him over many of His servants.

Allah bestowed His grace on David and commanded him to work with righteousness. His family too was commanded to give thanks to Allah. David was a man of strength and always turned to God.

(f) The Prophet Solomon

Solomon was the youngest son of David, the prophet king of the children of Israel. Solomon succeeded David as prophet and king. His reign extended from 965 B.C. to 926 B.C. Thus, he ruled for about forty years. His empire was spread over an area reaching from Palestine to

Transjordan. God revealed His message to Solomon. He was granted knowledge and wisdom. God bestowed upon him and David the capability to settle human problems and take right decisions in judging all matters. God had given Solomon many different kinds of knowledge. Moreover, he was blessed with many things by way of miracles, for example he understood the language of the birds. He could train them and use them for sending messages, etc. Solomon enjoyed extraordinary superiority over his contemporaries. But this superiority only created a feeling of humility in him. Whatever he had, he considered to be a direct gift of God in His manifest grace (27:16).

God even tamed the winds for him (21:81). The taming of winds meant that the seas became navigable. Indeed, in ancient times ocean travel was revolutionized when man invented ships with sails, which were a means of harnessing the winds; sails performed the function of engines for the ships of those days. An important aspect of the invention of ships with sails was that it made the oceans usable for large-scale transport. This gives an indication that man was taught the science of navigation on the seas through the prophets.

Besides this, a group of Jinn was made subservient to Solomon. They used to execute for him large welfare projects, which could not be done by ordinary men. In the modern machine age, such enormous tasks are performed by machines. Before the machine age, in order to facilitate the carrying out of major projects, God had made the Jinn subordinate to His prophets.

In Solomon's army there were not only human beings but also genes and birds. Once Solomon's army passed through a valley where there were innumerable ants. The talk among the ants on this occasion was understood by Solomon.

Such an incident should have been enough to make an ordinary man conceited and proud. But Solomon became the embodiment of gratitude on this account. Whatever was his to all appearances, he fully attributed to God---and this is the way of a pious and righteous man.

The Sabeans were a wealthy community of ancient times. (11 B.C. to 115B.C.) Its centre was Ma'arib (Yemen), where its grand ruins are still in existence. During Solomon's period, this area was under the rule of a woman called Bilquees (Sheba). The people of this place used to worship the sun, Satan having taught them that the only thing worth worshipping was whatever was most prominent. As the sun was the most prominent of all visible things, only the sun deserved to be considered a god and worshipped.

Solomon, received detailed information about the Sabeans through the hoopoe. This hoopoe perhaps belonged to Solomon's army of birds and possibly received regular training.

Solomon's power and empire were the gifts of God. Similarly, the manner in which he dealt with the Kingdom of Sabeans was also at the will of God. Shah Abdul Quader (of Delhi) writes in connection with verse 37: "No other prophet spoke like this. Solomon had the force of God Almighty's empire behind him, so he spoke like this."

Bilquees, the Queen of Saba viewed the matter quite realistically. She realised that if she resisted the might of Solomon, there was a strong possibility of her being defeated and then her nation would be treated as every vanquished nation is treated by a victorious nation. On the contrary, she thought, she would be saved if she surrendered. However, the queen pursued the course of sending gifts to him by way of initial feelers, so that she might know whether Solomon was attracted by wealth or whether, beyond that, he had any other demand based on some principle.

In comparison with the invaluable wealth which Solomon had received in the shape of prophethood and the realisation of God, every other kind of wealth was worthless in his eyes. So,

when gifts of gold and silver were presented to him on behalf of the Queen of Saba, he did not even look at them.

Solomon, by his conduct, gave the impression to the emissaries of the Queen of Saba that his concern was that of principle and not of self-interest. The Qur'anic commentator Ibn-e-Kathir, by way of explanation presents Solomon's point of view:

"Do you want to influence me with your wealth so that I should let you off along with your polytheism and allow you to keep your kingdom?"

Though Solomon was endowed with extraordinary power, he planned to subjugate the Sabean people by demonstrating his power rather than by using it. So, he arranged to have the Queen's throne shifted from her palace in Ma'arib to Jerusalem (Palestine), through one of his special emissaries. This incident of having the throne brought to him probably occurred when, on the return of the presents, the Queen of Saba started out from Yemen for Palestine, so that she could reach Solomon's court and have direct talks with him. The queen's journey attended by pomp and glory must have started after the return of her envoys who presumably described the magnificence of Solomon's court and repeated to her his utterances, which testified to his lofty character.

The distance between Ma'arib and Jerusalem is about fifteen hundred miles. This long distance was covered in such a way that no sooner had the words of command fallen from Solomon's lips than the jewel-studded throne was there before him. In spite of this extraordinary power, he had no feelings of pride. He remained the embodiment of modesty and kept bowing down before God.

The Queen of Saba, having set forth from her country, reached Bait ul Maqdis. When she entered Solomon's palace, the throne was brought before her, without her being told anything about it, and she was asked whether it was her throne. When she saw it, she was wonder-struck at God's powers. This throne, which she had kept safe in her palace in Ma'arib, had mysteriously traversed a distance of fifteen hundred miles and reached Bait ul-Maqdis.

After entering Solomon's palace, the Queen of Saba reached an area whose floor was made of thick, transparent glass slabs with water flowing beneath them. When the queen reached this point, she suddenly felt that there was a pool of water before her. At that time she did what anyone stepping into the water does, i.e. she involuntarily pulled up her skirt.

In this way she was made to see in a practical way how one is deceived by outward appearances, the inner real fact often being different from what meets the eye. Man starts worshipping the sun and moon because of their prominence, but the real God is beyond these visible phenomena.

The Queen of Saba had so far been worshipping the sun under the influence of her national conventions. But, in the company of Solomon, whatever she heard and saw, completely banished from her mind all impressions of the majesty of anything other than God. Consequently, she renounced the religion of polytheism and whole-heartedly embraced the religion of monotheism.

According to the commentators, Solomon, perceiving that his end was near had prayed to God that his death might be concealed from the jinns, who were constructing the Temple at Jerusalem till they had entirely finished the edifice. In fulfilment of this prayer, He died as he stood at his prayers, leaning on his staff, which supported the body in that posture a full year, by which time the temple became completed. And it was then that the fact of his death was revealed by the white ants gnawing his staff.

When it was time for Solomon to die, he was leaning on a stick and having some constructive work done by "jinn". The angel of death took away his life-spirit, but his lifeless body, with the support of the stick remained upright. The Jinn continued with their work under the impression that he was nearby supervising the work. Then some white ants infested the stick. After some time, when the white ants had made the stick hollow, his body fell to the ground. At that time only the Jinn came to know that he had died.

This incident had taken place in this manner most probably with a view to eradicating the erroneous popular belief that the Jinn had knowledge of the future.

Solomon enjoyed extraordinary superiority over his contemporaries. But his superiority only created a feeling of humility in him. Whatever he had he considered the direct gift of God.

(g) The Prophet Isa

The Birth and Life of Isa

The Banu Israil, or the Jews, were the chosen people of the Lord and were granted many favours by Him. However, they violated the Lord's orders and refused to obey the prophets, so the Lord, the Merciful, once again sent a prophet to bring them to the right path. This prophet was Isa, son of Maryam.

Isa (or Jesus, as he is called by the Christians in English) was born in 4 B.C. This birth was miraculous as he had been born to the virgin Mary, without a father, by the Lord's command (13:17-21).

Isa's virgin mother, Maryam, had been pledged even before her birth, by her own mother, to the service of the Lord and as a small girl had been sent to Solomon's temple in Jerusalem, the highest temple of the Jews. There, she kept herself in retirement (*i'tikaf*) and occupied herself with worship. One day she saw in front of her a strong man and she became afraid. But he said he was an angel sent by God and a messenger of the Lord, who came to give her the good news, that through God's command, she would bear a child.

Maryam, an unmarried girl, belonging to religious family, and a virgin, left the temple and went to a faraway place (Bethlehem or Bait ul Lehem) (19:22-23) for she was stricken with shame. There, under a date palm and near a spring, Isa was born (19:24-26) to her. Then Maryam returned to her own people with her new-born child in her lap. It was the infant Isa himself who told the people that he was a servant of Allah. He told them that Allah was his Lord and that they should worship Him. (19:29-33).

Isa's miraculous birth and his testimony that he was a servant of Allah are attested to in the Quran, which also clearly refutes the Christian belief that he was the son of God (3:54).

God sent Isa as a clear sign of His will, gave him miraculous powers and strengthened him with the holy spirit.

The gift of performing miracles was bestowed upon him by God so that, through these miraculous acts, people might recognise him as a true prophet of God and have faith in him. But this was not to be. Isa's early disciples saw him merely as a human being and prophet of God. (5:77-78). Later followers (today called Christians), believed, however, that he was not only the son of God but that God was incarnate in him.

Isa was blessed by God with the miraculous power to bring dead men to life by blowing his breath into them. Such miraculous powers were, in fact, a sign of God, which was displayed in order to demonstrate the possibility of life after death. But people like the Jews did not learn any

lesson from it. On the contrary, orthodox Jews opposed him while his own followers soon began treating him as a superman and started worshipping him as the son of God and also as God. If these miracles had been treated as signs of God, they could have been a tremendous source of guidance. But as humankind failed to take them as signs of God, they were lead astray.

Besides bringing dead men to life, Isa performed many other miracles. He made clay figures of birds and by breathing into them, turned them into real birds, which flew away once given life. By God's leave, he gave sight to those born blind and healed the lepers. (3:49)

The Jews, who did not believe in him, accused him of practicing magic. They plotted against him and wanted to crucify him, but Allah saved him from this death (4:157) and raised him to heaven (4:158). Thus, contrary to Christian belief, Isa was not crucified at all.

Healing and Preaching

Jesus began his preaching after the age of 30, and he also worked miracles. People began to come in hordes to hear him preach. These people were mostly from the common and lower sections of society. The oppressed and the downtrodden, the sick and the blind came to him for liberation and salvation. Jesus healed the sick and also saved their souls. He spoke in the language of the people, and taught them with the help of parables, so that even the lowest of the low could understand him and take lessons from his words.

Jesus selected 12 disciples from different backgrounds to help him in his mission. These 12 disciples followed him wherever he went, moving from one town to another, from one village to the next, in order to preach, heal and guide the people, and set them free from the bondage of sin and strife.

He also taught the people to love one another, and prepare for the kingdom of heaven, as nobody would live for ever on this earth, and all would have to go back to the Creator. Therefore, one should repent of one's misdeeds, accept the Lord in one's heart, and lead a life of goodness and piety, and, in the name of God, devote oneself to the service of others.

Jesus also preached against the accumulation of wealth on this earth. He said that the earth and all its wealth would pass away, but that the word of God would be eternal. Therefore, men should not set their hearts on these worldly things, but instead work towards the attainment of forgiveness, and devote themselves to the cause of spreading the message of God's love to everyone on this earth.

Jesus also said that it was the duty of everyone in this world, to impart this message of love to all of mankind. After we die in this world, we will be accountable for our actions, and we will have to answer to God for not having fulfilled our duties.

Jesus also taught the people to pray without ceasing and to have faith in God alone, so he became very popular among the common men. For this reason, the Jewish clergy started feeling threatened by his preaching, and by his miraculous works. They therefore set out to stop him from becoming too popular. Jesus associated himself with the downtrodden and the ostracized classes. He ate in their houses and even gave respect to women. During those days, women were not considered to be on a par with men, and were not accorded the respect and status of today. Jesus treated them equally, and intervened in favour of sinners, so that they might be given another chance to lead respectable lives.

The Jewish priestly class did not like his interference, and was always on the look-out for a way to arrest him on charges of disrespect to the laws of Moses. His radical views concerning the

observance of sabbath (the day of rest) also attracted many controversies, as well as his interpretation of the teaching in the old Scriptures.

He was against such rigid laws as made men heartless, and filled them with pride. He taught humility, and advocated just actions. He stressed the importance of inner purity rather than any outward show of religiosity. This was very much against the priestly class, who, in the mere observation of rules and regulations, considered themselves pious, and were thus filled with a sense of self-righteousness.

Thus, the opposition, which comprised mainly of the priestly class, began to think of a way to put a stop to all the activities of Jesus. They charged him with promoting sinners, and of trying to gain a political standing. They went to the governor of Judea, Pilate. They charged Jesus with blasphemy and presented him as a potential political rival. The governor did not feel threatened by Jesus, but as the majority of his supporters were against Jesus, and in favour of putting him to death, he could do nothing to prevent them from doing so. However, God Almighty saved him, as we learn from the Quran.

Jesus taught men to love one another, as one would love oneself. To do good to all, and return good for evil.

He taught patience, and acceptance of God's will, as everything comes from God, and one should be contented with everything one receives. He also taught mankind to forgive one another, as God forgives us our many sins; to renounce the pleasures and wealth of this world, as everything on this earth will pass away, except the kingdom of God. Therefore, man should do good deeds, help the poor and needy, and be ready for the day on which God will pass His final judgement on the basis of men's good and bad deeds.

(h) The Prophet Yusuf

The Prophet Yusuf, the son of the Prophet Yaqub, was of the chosen ones of God. He was granted wisdom and knowledge and was taught the interpretation of dreams.

Yusuf's story has been described as the most beautiful of stories in the Quran. (Chapter 12)

Yaqub had twelve sons. Of these twelve sons, two, Yusuf and Bin Yameen, were from one mother, and the other ten were their stepbrothers. From his childhood, Yusuf was handsome, intelligent and obedient. The stepbrothers were selfish and quarrelsome. They became jealous of Yusuf because the father loved him more than the others.

When Yusuf was 17 years old, he had a strange dream that eleven stars, the sun and the moon were prostrating themselves before him. On hearing about this dream, Yaqub said that it meant that his Lord would choose him to carry out His tasks. He will make you His apostle and grant him wisdom and understanding.

After this dream, the Prophet Yaqub began paying more attention to Yusuf. The stepbrothers became very angry. They thought of an evil plan to get rid of Yusuf. They discussed the matter amongst themselves and finally hatched a plot to throw him into a dark well in a far-off-forest. (As it happened, some passing caravan would take him out of the well and carry him away.)

They managed to persuade Yaqub to allow them to take Yusuf for an outing. While playing they went further and further into the forest where they found a dark well. So they threw Yusuf down into it. God instilled peace in his mind and he received inspiration from his Lord that he would receive divine succour and one day he would be so high in rank that his brothers would not even recognize him.

The brothers went home and told their father that a wolf had eaten him. They produced his shirt soaked with goat's blood as evidence. The shirt was blood-stained but was not torn anywhere. Yaqub refused to accept the concocted story. He said to his sons: "If the wolf had eaten him, it would have torn his shirt as well."

He was very distressed and shocked. He cried: "Your souls have tempted you to evil. Sweet patience! (*sabr jamil*) Allah alone can help me to bear the loss." Yaqoob was confident that Yusuf must be alive somewhere and that Allah had very likely chosen him for some more noble destiny.

Joseph remained in the dark well hungry and thirsty for about three days. In the meantime a caravan bound for Egypt passed by. A water carrier was sent to the well to draw some water for the animals and the travellers. As he lowered the bucket into the well to draw out water, he was amazed to see a boy standing at the bottom of the well. He shouted to his companions: "Good news to all of you, I have found a boy at the bottom of the well." Then they pulled him out of the well. They hid him among their merchandise so that they could sell him as a slave.

When the caravan arrived in Egypt, Yusuf was sold for the paltry sum of 20 dirhams to a nobleman from the royal court, who bore the title of Aziz. He took Yusuf into his service, and he instructed his wife to be kind to him. He asked her to treat him honourably. He had no children so he thought that one day he might adopt him as his son.

Thus, according to God's plan, Yusuf was brought from a small village to the most civilized city of the time to grow in knowledge, judgement and power.

Whenever some hardship befalls a believer, it is very likely that God is planning something better for him. As we find in the case of Yusuf, he was thrown into a well only to be taken to a far better place. But this happens only if the people concerned endure their misfortunes with patience.

Then Aziz's wife, whose name was Zulaykha, felt very attracted to Yusuf, but he kept his distance and never responded to her advances. God helped him to keep away from evil and from all shameful deeds. Zulaykha tried to throw the blame on Yusuf but finally his innocence was established.

Zulaykha however threatened to send him to prison if he did not listen to her. Then Yusuf prayed to God that he preferred prison to giving in to her advances. His prayer was accepted and he was sent to prison. Prison opened another chapter in the life of the Prophet Yusuf. God always plans things, which are for the betterment of the believer; even if at a face value they look like hardships, they may eventually turn out to be blessings. This is exactly what happened in the case of the Prophet Yusuf. God rewards those who preserve their chastity and are patient. God was with Yusuf. He had a great plan for his future. It was here that God granted him prophethood. Then Yusuf began preaching the call of God to the other prisoners.

There were two prisoners who were servants in the royal court. One of them was the king's cup-bearer and the other one was the king's baker. Each had been charged with conspiring to poison the king. One night each of them had a strange dream. They asked Yusuf to interpret both their dreams.

The cup-bearer had dreamt that he was pressing grapes to make wine. The baker saw in his dream that he himself was carrying some bread on his head, which was pecked at by birds.

Yusuf told them that the ability to interpret dreams had been given to him by his Lord. He felt that it was the right time to teach them the true faith, so he made a long speech to his cell mates. He taught them to believe in the one true God and urged them to give up idol-worship. (12:39-40). And then he gave the interpretation of their dreams.

To the cup bearer Yusuf said that he would shortly be released from prison and would pour wine for the king. To the baker Yusuf said that he would be sentenced to death and birds would peck at his head.

Yusuf's predictions came true. After being put on trial, the baker was found guilty and charged with trying to poison the king. Thus the baker was condemned to death. The cup-bearer was released and returned to the palace to his old job of serving wine to the king.

A few years after this incident, the king of Egypt had a very strange dream that seven weak cows were devouring seven fat ones, and seven green ears of corn were being replaced by seven dry ones. All the wise men of Egypt were invited to interpret this dream, but no one could produce an answer, which would satisfy the king. At this moment the cup-bearer was reminded of Yusuf's ability to interpret dreams. He told the king about him and the king immediately sent him to call Yusuf.

Yusuf at once interpreted the king's dream. He explained that in Egypt there would be seven years of prosperity. But following these seven years of prosperity and abundance there would come seven years of famine, when crops would not grow, cattle would die and people would starve to death. He also suggested measures to solve this problem.

The king was very pleased with this interpretation and sent his messenger to bring Yusuf to the royal palace. But Yusuf refused to leave the prison until his name was cleared. Yusuf was to carry out the divine mission, therefore, it was necessary that any false charges should be cleared and he should emerge with a clean image.

The king ordered an enquiry into Yusuf's complaint. Aziz's wife and other women were called by the king. The Aziz's wife openly admitted her crime saying: "We know no evil of him. It was I who attempted to seduce him. He was chaste and truthful."

Thus Yusuf was honourably released from the prison. The king was very impressed by his wisdom and truthfulness. The king honoured him by making him his most trusted minister. Yusuf was given charge of the storehouses, and was thus established in the land. (12:50-57)

Thus the dark prison became a stepping stone to the royal court and ultimately to the seat of power in the lands of Egypt. The story of the Prophet Yusuf is a great reminder to believers to put their entire trust in Allah at all times.

Yusuf arranged for grain to be properly stored all over the country. During the seven good years, he saw to it that there was enough grain to see them through the hard times. The seven good years passed followed by seven lean and hungry years when no crop would grow. The whole of Egypt was hit by famine.

The famine affected the neighbouring countries as well. So caravans came from all directions to buy grain or barter for it.

The land of Canaan, the homeland of Yusuf, was also hit by famine. Yusuf's brothers too came to him for grain. Yusuf recognized them and gave them enough provisions. He told them that the next time they should bring their younger brother (Yusuf's real brother) Bin-Yameen. When Bin-Yameen came Yusuf detained him. Then, on the next visit of the brothers, Yusuf revealed himself and forgave them; he sent his shirt to his father and asked his brothers to bring his parents.

Yusuf embraced his parents and, showing them the deepest respect, made them sit on the throne. Seeing the high position of Yusuf, they all fell prostrate before him, as a mark of thanksgiving. Thus the dream that Yusuf had had as a boy of the sun, the moon and eleven stars prostrating themselves before him had come true.

Overwhelmed with gratitude to God, Yusuf prostrated himself before Him Saying: 'O my Lord!'

Yusuf praised God for making his dream come true, for bringing him out of the prison, and for the reconciliation with his brothers and his parents and for granting him power and the ability to interpret of dreams, and he prayed that he might die as a Muslim and be united with the righteous. (12:100-101)

(i) The Prophet Ayyub

The Prophet Ayyub was granted revelation and was guided by Allah. He was full of patience and constancy, and always turned to God in repentance. He is represented in the Quran as a patient man.

The Prophet Ayub (Job) was an Israelite prophet of the ninth century B.C. According to the Bible, he was initially very rich. He was blessed with farms, cattle, houses, children, etc., to such an extent that it was said that nobody was his peer in the entire East. In spite of this, however, Ayub was a very grateful and faithful person. His life set an example of how a person may remain humble and modest, in spite of being blessed with great wealth and honour.

But, Satan reversed the lesson to be learned from this situation. He managed to convince people that Ayub's extraordinary reverence for God was on account of the extraordinary blessings that had been showered on him. If he were to be deprived of these blessings, —so Satan maintained—his entire gratefulness would vanish.

God thereupon set another example through Ayyub. His cattle died, his farms were destroyed, his children died and even his body was afflicted with a disease. All his friends and relatives left him, except his wife who remained with him. But Ayub reconciled himself with God's decision. He exercised the utmost patience. In the words of the Bible:

'Then Job, tore his robe and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshipped.' And he said: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job did not sin, nor did he charge God with wrongdoing.' (Job, 1:20-22)

When Ayub showed so much patience and gratefulness, not only was a befitting reward set apart for him in the Hereafter, but his circumstances in the world were also changed greatly for the better.

"Then God gave him double of what he had before" (Job:42:12).

This very incident is thus described in the Prophet Muhammad's Tradition (Hadith) in figurative language: "When God changed the days of Ayub again, He sent a shower of golden grass-hoppers down upon him."

QUESTIONS

- (i) The concept of prophethood
 - 1 Why did God find it necessary to send prophets?

- 2 How do the prophets acquire the guidance necessary to guide the people?
 - 3 What is the basic truth, which all the prophets bring?
 - 4 Who is called 'The Seal of the Prophets'?
 - 5 How many messengers were sent to guide people?
- (ii) The role of the prophets in human society.
- 1 Describe the character of the prophets.
 - 2 Which prophets are mentioned in the Quran by name?
 - 3 What is the common truth taught by all the prophets?
 - 4 Why was each prophet given a different '*sharia*'?
 - 5 What do we understand by the term '*dawah*'?
- (iii) Some prominent prophets.
- 1 Who was Adam?
 - 2 Write on the Prophet Nuh and the punishment given to people in his time.
 - 3 Who was Musa and what book did God give to him?
 - 4 Who was Daud and what gifts did God bestow on him?
 - 5 Who was Ibrahim and why is he revered in Islam?
 - 6 Who was Solomon and what does the Quran say about him?
 - 7 Who was Isa and what did he preach?
 - 8 Tell the life story of the Prophet Yusuf.
 - 9 Why was the Prophet Ayyub famous for patience and forbearance?

UNIT

5

Faith in Practice

(I) THE IMPACT OF FAITH UPON THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Islam can be summed up very briefly: fear of God (*taqwa*) and benevolence towards others. *Taqwa* means piety, that is, leading a life of caution and restraint in this world. The object of all the teachings of Islam is to produce the spirit of piety in every action.

These imbued with *taqwa* always keep in view the will and pleasure of God in every task they perform. Their lives are based on truthfulness and honesty. No worldly loss diverts them from the path of truth. The Quran describes those whose lives are marked by *taqwa* in these words:

'But it is righteousness - to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in *salat*, and practise *zakat*; to fulfil the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of distress. Such are the people of *taqwa* (the people of truth, the God-fearing).' (2:177)

Those who possess *taqwa* firmly believe that God is present everywhere and sees everything. This inspires in them a strong desire to perform good deeds and a hatred for evil. Such thinking induces righteous conduct and *taqwa* thus becomes the foundation of all good deeds.

Once an individual becomes a God-fearing person, his life changes completely. He becomes careful to avoid that which will lead him to Hell, and is desirous of anything which will make him deserving of paradise. He loves and fears God above all.

Fear of God and consciousness of the eternal destiny of mankind makes one extremely cautious in dealing with one's fellow men. It is then clear that mistreating other would mean exposing oneself to the fire of hell. Arrogance is never an option for in human interaction every man is supported by the power of God and His angels. Neither is injustice even an option for everyone knows that eventually he will have to answer to God for his actions. One does not see others as mere people; for one realizes that Almighty God is also standing by their side.

Faith in God Almighty transforms the believer completely. It shakes his human soul. His entire being is engulfed in the fear of God. This fear is manifested in all his dealings with others. He does not humiliate the weak, for he sees that God is standing by the side of His servants. He does not bow before the strong, because he sees that all are helpless before God.

A man of faith has been likened to a tree in the Quran (14:24). As we all know, man receives shade, fruits and flowers from the tree. All such qualities are found in God worshippers in the true sense of the word. They give comfort to everyone, they have a soothing cooling effect upon all.

There is also a tradition to this effect. The Prophet of Islam said: 'The believer is like a gentle plant.' When the winds blow, it does not become rigid, but rather sways to and fro with each gust, and when the winds are not blowing it stands still once again. This is exactly the case of the true believer. He does not display arrogance. His way is that of adjustment and not of clash and confrontation. He follows the principle of persuasion and avoids the way of violence.

A true believer is one who is always conscious of the presence of God. He feels that each time he gives his word to another, it is a divine promise.

Therefore he is extremely circumspect about giving his word. He believes that every commitment made between two persons is actually made under the watchful eyes of God, and that he will be accountable for its fulfilment in the court of God. This compels him to be highly responsible as regards his promises. Whenever he gives his word to anyone, he makes a point of keeping it.

Many other virtues come in the wake of the fulfilment of promises. One of these is mutual trust. In a society where mutual trust exists, there is an atmosphere of confidence, as there is no fear of promises being broken. It is therefore faith that makes man the possessor of this highest of human virtues.

Another impact of faith upon the behaviour of the believer is that he becomes a truth-loving person. He always speaks the truth. In all matters he says only what is in accordance with reality.

Truth is the highest virtue of a believer's character. A man of faith is a man of principle. He finds it impossible to deny the truth. He thus becomes totally free of falsehood or double-standards. His whole existence is moulded by truth.

An important aspect of true God-worship is that the worshipper, instead of living within the confines of the self, begins to live in the world of reality. The truly pious person begins to look upon people with love and compassion. He does not expect anything from anyone. That is why, even if others do not behave well towards him, he behaves well towards them and he continues to be tolerant towards them.

Then the Quran and the Hadith lay great stress on compassion. The Prophet of Islam said:

"O people, be compassionate to others, so that you may be granted compassion by God."

In this way Islam makes compassion a matter of self interest for every man, as his own future depends on his compassionate behaviour to his fellow men. In this way the Islamic faith motivates the faithful to be compassionate in their dealings with one another. Those who want to receive God's grace will have to show compassion to others.

In short, faith makes the believer a responsible person towards both God and man. His duty towards God means believing in Him, worshipping Him and carrying out all His commandments.

Duty towards man means giving him such treatment as is in accordance with Islamic teachings. A true believer therefore gives proper respect to others, never humiliates them while giving them help, does not harm them, fulfils trusts, never breaks his word, never usurps the wealth and property of others and deals justly with others in all circumstances.

In short, when an individual adopts Islam, first of all it is his thinking, which comes under its sway, then his desires, his feelings, his interests, his relations, his loves and his hatred. All are coloured by his obedience to God's will.

When man comes under God's command, in his daily life, his behaviour with others, his dealings, all are moulded by the demands of Islam. Faith prepares him to lead a worthy life in

society, by adopting an attitude of modesty, sympathy and goodwill in all his dealings. In short, faith perfects man's relation with God as well as with other human beings.

(II) THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability is one of the basic teachings of Islam. A perfect divine arrangement preserves a complete record of every person's words and deeds. On the Day of Judgement, every single human being will be faced with an entire and accurate record of his deeds on earth and this is what the Quran has to say about this fact: 'Each word he utters shall be noted down by a vigilant guardian.' (50:18)

A careful study of the present world shows that there is an unerring system of 'recording' in existence here on earth. The thinking of man is being impressed on the membrane of his brain. Every utterance of man is permanently preserved in the air in the shape of sound waves. Man's actions are preserved in the external world by means of heat waves in such a way that they can be reproduced at any point in time. All these are known facts today. It is these known facts that make the Qur'an's claim totally credible, that man's intentions, his utterances and his actions, are all in the knowledge of his Creator. Every single thought or act of a human being is being entered in the registers of the angels.

Man will be held accountable on the Day of Judgement for anything he does on earth. On the Day of Resurrection a total picture of an individual's good and bad deeds in this world will come before him. On seeing this record, he will exclaim: 'What can this book mean? It omits nothing small or great; everything is noted down.' (18:19).

Whatsoever a man does is put on record by God's arrangement. Man's intentions, his sayings and his deeds are all imprinted on the screen of the universe. Today this arrangement or system is not visible to us, but on the Day of Judgment the curtain hiding it will be raised. At that moment man will instantly be terrified to see that whatever he had been doing in this world, under the misconception that nobody knew about it, is so clearly recorded here that neither the smallest nor the greatest thing has been left out.

On the Day of Judgement, the treatment meted out to a man by God will be based on thoroughly established facts. For this reason, on that Day, when he receives his reward or punishment for his deeds, he will know, beyond a shadow of doubt, that he is getting what he really deserves - nothing more and nothing less.

According to a tradition the Prophet enjoined the believers: 'Reckon yourselves before being reckoned with.' According to another tradition, on the Day of Judgement no one can move until he has been asked about four things: (1) about where he spent his life; (2) where he spent his youth; (3) where he earned his wealth; and (4) where he spent his wealth.

Accountability is a basic and very important concept in Islam. It rules man's life on earth and determines his fate in the Hereafter. That is because, according to the Islamic viewpoint man is not born into this world only to make money and die after living here for a hundred years or so. The truth is that human life is an eternal life and we live in this world only for a small fraction of our real lives. The actual and eternal life is to be lived in the next world. The present mundane world has been created merely for human trial. The consequences of our good or bad deeds will be reaped in the life in the next, eternal world. It is to gather this harvest that we strive.

This way of understanding life makes life an extremely serious business. It produces a strong incentive in a man to take even the smallest matters of life very seriously. An individual therefore should be alert at every moment of his life. He should lead his life in this world in a manner that, rather invite God's wrath and the ensuing punishment, would bring down His blessings upon him in the world to come.

(III) THE SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR OF THE GOD-CONSCIOUS PERSON

A pious person is one who is totally God-conscious. Such a person leads his life in this world with the feeling that all his works and deeds are observed by the eyes of God. He is then accountable for all his actions to God, for nothing lies hidden from the All-Knowing God.

This type of conviction and feeling makes a man a responsible member of his society. His behaviour is totally changed. He is always aware of the fact, that all his dealings are related directly to God. So he is always conscious of the presence of God between him and the other person. The other person may be rich or poor, weak or strong, but he will always treat him with justice, for he is conscious of the fact that God will take him to task for any shortcoming on his part. This consciousness will make him fully alert to the fact that he must take every step in this world with great forethought of its consequences.

According to Islamic belief, everything in this world is designed as a test for human beings. Even social dealings are meant to serve the purpose of divine trial. Any dealings, be they pleasant or unpleasant, favourable or unfavourable, are always a test paper for the participants. This situation has been created because God wants to test individuals on their behaviour towards others.

In Islam, relations in social life are based on total justice. According to Islamic teachings man must in all possible situations in life, adhere to justice, be the outcome favourable or unfavourable to him, beneficial or detrimental. Whatever the issue, he has to observe the principles of justice. This is the true basis of social ethics as far as Islam is concerned.

This belief is extremely important. It gives man the necessary courage to do good deeds. He then rises above the mere expectation of reward from his fellow human beings as the upshot of his dealings with them. He has the conviction that God is constantly watching him and that He will reward him for his virtuous deeds, whether or not society itself sets any value on his good deeds. The just man leads a principled life without expecting any return from others.

Thus, piety does not consist in turning one's face towards the east or the west. The truly pious are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels and the scriptures and the prophets; who for the love of God give their wealth to kinsfolk, orphans, the poor, the wayfarers in need and beggars; who give for the redemption of captives; who attend to their prayers and pay the poor-due; who are true to their promises and endure with fortitude misfortune, hardships and peril. These are the true believers; these are the God-fearing (2:177).

Man needs to be clothed, but not just externally. He needs inner raiment too: that of piety, fear of God, acceptance of truth, setting the same standard for oneself as for others, regarding oneself as God's servant, remaining modest and humble, concentrating on the thoughts of the Hereafter, instead of being astray in the world. When an individual adopts all these values, it is

like a splendid accoutrement of his inner existence, and when he adopts an attitude opposite to this, he divests his inner existence of its entire moral apparel.

QUESTIONS

- (i) The impact of faith upon the behaviour of an individual
 - 1 How does belief in One God shape the personality of an individual?
 - 2 What is meant by *taqwa* and how is it reflected in the everyday life of an individual?
 - 3 Why should we fear God?
 - 4 What are the good personal traits that faith develops in a believer?
- (ii) The development of a sense of responsibility and accountability.
 - 1 What is the meaning of each person being accountable for his deeds?
 - 2 How is God's presence felt in the world?
 - 3 How does God show mercy in the world?
 - 4 Why do believers feel both fear and hope at the same time?
- (iii) The social behaviour of the God-conscious person
 - 1 Whom do we call a God-conscious person?
 - 2 Why does God always test us?
 - 3 Why is piety important in the social life of Islam?
 - 4 What do pious people believe in?
 - 5 Why are pious people called the true believers?
 - 6 Why should our lives be God-oriented?

PART-II

UNIT

6

The Prophet Muhammad
at Makkah

(I) THE EARLY LIFE OF THE PROPHET

The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, was born in Makkah in 570 A.D. in the tribe of the Quraysh and died at the age of 63 in 632 A.D. in Madinah. The year of his birth is known among the Arabs as the Year of the Elephant (*Aam al-Fil*) referring to the campaign of Abraha, an Abyssinian ruler, who had come to Makkah to destroy the Kabah. Makkah was then inhabited mainly by the tribe of the Quraysh. In those times, this tribe enjoyed great prestige all over Arabia and the neighbouring countries, for Makkah was a flourishing trade and religious centre.

Muhammad was still in his mother's womb when his father, Abdullah, died. After his birth, Aminah, his mother, sent the baby to Abdul Muttalib, his grandfather, who was in the Kabah at that time. The grandfather was overjoyed at the news, for he had loved Abdullah, Muhammad's father, very much. He gave him the name "Muhammad", meaning "the praised one." As was the practice of the Makkan nobility, he was handed over to a wet nurse, Halimah al-Sadiyya, who belonged to the Banu Sad tribe. This custom is still practiced among the Makkan aristocracy.

Halimah nursed Muhammad for two years and a few months. She said that while he stayed with them, her family received all kinds of unaccustomed blessings. Having nursed so many children before, she noticed something 'different' or 'extraordinary' about the infant Muhammad.

Two years later, after the child had been weaned, Halimah brought him back to his mother. But Makkah at that time was stricken with an epidemic, so Aminah asked her to take him back to live in the pure air of the desert.

Thus Muhammad remained in the charge of Halimah until the age of five. He learned Arabic in its purest form from this tribe. Muhammad returned to his mother after five years of desert life. Then Aminah took him to Madinah (at that time known as Yathrib) to meet her uncles, the Banu al-Najjar. She was accompanied by Umm Ayman, her servant, on that trip. After a stay of one month in Madinah, Aminah was on her way back to Makkah, when passing

through a village called Abwah, she fell ill and died there. She was buried in Abwah. It fell to Umm Ayman to bring Muhammad back to Makkah.

Therefore, the orphan Muhammad was taken care of by his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, chief of the clan of the Banu Hashim. He looked after him with great affection. As leader of the Quraysh, he used to sit on a cushion in the Kabah, and whenever Muhammad joined him, he was allowed to sit on that cushion. If anyone tried to stop him, his grandfather would say, "Leave him alone. By God, he is very important." (Ibn Hisham) Abdul Muttalib died when Muhammad was eight years old.

Now the guardianship of Muhammad passed to Abu Talib, his uncle, who was a merchant.

Trade

Once when Abu Talib was preparing to go to Syria on a trading journey, Muhammad expressed a keen desire to accompany him. Though he was too young to undertake such a difficult journey, Abu Talib was so full of affection for him that he could not refuse, and agreed to take him along.

Their trade caravan halted in the city of Busra in Syria. There was a Christian monk by the name of Bahirah living there in a monastery. He had read in the ancient books about the emergence of an Arab prophet. He recognised in Muhammad the signs of prophethood. He knew at once that he was the boy who had been destined to become the last of the prophets.

Ibn Ishaq writes, "Muhammad entered his adulthood as if God Himself was protecting him from the widespread evils of the period of ignorance." By this time he was well-known in Makkah for his good morals, gentle disposition and sincerity. In fact, he was called Al-Amin (trustworthy) and As-Sadiq (truthful) by his compatriots.

Before attaining prophethood, while Muhammad was still engaged in trading,. Abdullah bin Abi al-Hamsa said:

"I had transacted some business with Muhammad in those days and owed him money. I asked him to wait till I brought the required sum. When I reached home, I completely forgot about it. I remembered three days later and rushed to the spot where I had left Muhammad. He was there waiting for me."

"He did not upbraid me. All he said was, 'You caused me a great deal of inconvenience. I have been waiting for you here for the last three days.'" (Ibn Ishaq)

Marriage with Khadija

When Muhammad was twenty-five, a rich 40-year old widow, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid of the Quraysh tribe, entrusted him with the management of her business. She used to employ men to engage in trading on her behalf, and rewarded them with a share of the profits. Muhammad was so honest in all his dealings that she was deeply impressed by his virtues and expressed her desire to marry him. After consultations with his uncle, Muhammad accepted the proposal of marriage. Khadijah became his first wife and during her lifetime he had no other wife. With the exception of Ibrahim, who died in infancy, all his children were born to Khadijah. All his sons died in infancy. Of the daughters, Ruqaiyyah, Zaynab, Umm Kulthum and Fatimah lived long enough to accept Islam and migrate to Madinah with the Prophet.

The Reconstruction of Kabah

When Muhammad was twenty-five, the Quraysh decided to rebuild the Kabah after a sudden flood had shaken its foundations and cracked its walls. The old structure was demolished and the new construction began. When the walls rose from the ground and the time came to place the famous Black Stone (*Hajr al-Aswad*) in its place on the east wall, a dispute arose among the clans as to who would have the honour of laying it in place. Each clan wanted to have the honour of placing the stone for itself. This dispute almost led to a civil war. No peaceful solution seemed possible.

A covenant known as the Alliance of Fudul (*Hilf al-Fudul*) had been entered into by three men, Fadal bin Fadalah, Fadal bin Vida and Fadal bin Harith. This was to ensure that no oppressor ever lived in Makkah. In view of the widespread disturbances, there was a move to revive the Alliance of Fudul, to restore tribal harmony and ensure peaceful co-existence.

At this critical juncture Abu Umayyah, the son of Mughirah al-Makhzumi, said to the Makkans, "Put it off till tomorrow. The man who enters the Kabah first of all in the morning will be our arbitrator in this dispute." Everybody liked the idea. Men from different tribes ran to the Kabah before dawn next morning. Each one tried to be the first to enter the House of God. But the first one to pass through the gate was Muhammad. On seeing him they all said, "There goes al-Amin. We shall agree with his verdict." Then he was asked to give his decision on the matter. He took a sheet of cloth and spread it on the ground, and placed the Black Stone in the middle of it and then he asked the chiefs of all tribes to hold different ends of the sheet and lift it up. They carried the stone to the site of construction. Then Muhammad picked up the stone from the sheet and set it in place. Thus a bloody clash was averted and the dispute resolved to everybody's satisfaction.

(II) NABUWAH (PROPHETHOOD)

Visits to the Cave of Hira

With his marriage to the wealthy Khadijah, Muhammad had access to all her wealth and property, and could expand his business as much as he desired. He had every opportunity to lead a successful and comfortable life. But with the passing of the years he became less and less interested in business and devoted more and more of his time to the search for truth by means of reflection and meditation. Instead of trying to establish himself in his society, he took to the desert. Over a period of six months, he would often go to mount Hira, three miles from Makkah. He would stay there in the cave, lost in thought for hours on end. When his supply of food and water was exhausted, he would return home for provisions and go back to the solitude of nature to pray and meditate. He sought answers to the mysteries of life. What is man's true role in life? What does the Lord require of us, as His servants? From where does man come and where will he go after death? It was to find answers to these perplexing questions that he betook himself to the stillness of the desert.

Finally, during the month of Ramadan, God turned in mercy to His Prophet, to guide him to the path of truth. At the age of 40, on February 12, 610 A.D., the Prophet was sitting all alone in his cave, when Gabriel, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in human form, bringing the first

message from God. The Prophet's quest had finally been rewarded: God granted him guidance and chose him as His Prophet.

The angel said to him "Read."

The Prophet replied, "I do not know how to read."

Muhammad now felt that his body was being squeezed hard. Then the angel released him and repeated the same command. Again Muhammad replied that he did not know how to recite. The angel again squeezed him and then released him for the third time and said: Read!"

Then a change came over him and he was able to repeat the divine words. Then Gabriel revealed to him the chapter called Al-Alaq.

"Recite in the name of your Lord, who created; who created man from a clot of blood; Recite, and your Lord is the most Gracious. It is He who has taught man by the pen that which he did not know." (96:1-5)

Muhammad recited these verses, repeating them after the angel. Then he found that these words were written on his heart (Ibn Ishaq).

The Prophet trembled in fear at what he had seen and heard in the cave. The revelation was a totally new experience for him. He set off for his house immediately after the disappearance of the angel.

On reaching home, the Prophet asked Khadijah to wrap him in blankets. He was shivering with high fever. When he calmed down, he related the whole incident to her.

Khadijah, being very kind and understanding, tried her best to reassure him.

She said: "By Him who dominates Khadijah's soul, I pray and I hope that you will be the Prophet of this nation. By God, He will not let you down. You are kind to your relations. You speak the truth, you help the poor and bear their burden, you honour guests and help those in distress. Surely God will never let you fail."

Khadijah then suggested that they should go and consult her cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who had become a Christian hermit.

Waraqa heard the whole account from Muhammad and said:

"I am sure the angel that descended on Moses has descended on you. You will be abused, and you will be pursued. I wish I could be alive to give you my support when your people will turn you out."

"Will they turn me out?" The Prophet found this difficult to believe. Waraqa replied that people have always turned against those who are recipients of God's messages.

(III) LIFE AT MAKKAH (POST REVELATION)

First converts

The Prophet's wife Khadijah was the first convert to Islam. When the news of Muhammad's prophethood reached a freed slave, Zayd, who was 30 years of age, and his cousin Ali, who was about eleven, both declared their faith in Islam. Abu Bakr, who had been the Prophet's friend from childhood, was out of town. On his return he heard of the new experience of the Prophet. People said to him that his friend had taken leave of his senses, believing that angels brought him messages from God. But Abu Bakr trusted the Prophet completely. Not for one moment did he doubt his veracity. He immediately went to meet the Prophet to find out the truth for himself.

Abu Bakr asked the Prophet whether an angel had really descended upon him from God and had given him a message. The Prophet said "Yes," and without a moment's hesitation Abu Bakr professed his faith. He did not require any arguments to be convinced that he was telling the truth.

This small group of the Faithful were the first believers in Islam. In the first stage, the Prophet was asked to spread the message of Islam quietly, to avoid arousing any hostility. Abu Bakr, being an influential merchant, was able to bring some of his friends, also rich merchants, into the fold of Islam. But the majority of the conversions took place among the weak and the poor.

The Prophet received the command from God to spread the message publicly, but first to his own kin.

According to Arab custom, people used to ascend a hill when they had to announce some important news. So the Prophet, with his all-important tidings, climbed up on a hillock called Safa, situated near the Kabah. He then called out to the people, who all gathered around him. Then he addressed them thus: "If I tell you that a big army is hiding behind that mountain and is ready to attack you, will you believe me?" They all chorused, "Of course, we will, for we trust you. We know you always tell the truth." Then the Prophet said:

"God has commanded me to warn you, my kinsmen, that you should worship none but the one and only God. If you fail to do so, you will invite God's wrath. And I will not be able to do anything to help you, even though you are my kinsmen."

Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle, became very angry and said:

"Woe to you on this day! Did you assemble us for this?"

Some remarked that he had gone mad. Soon they all dispersed without caring to give any thought to the words of the Prophet.

Opposition to the Prophet

There was one main reason for the Quraysh to oppose the Prophet, and to keep him from spreading his message. Makkah was a centre of pilgrimage because of the Kabah, which housed 360 idols of the neighbouring tribes and nations. Since Islam believed in only one God, the Quraysh feared that once the concept of one God became popular, the tribes would stop visiting the Kabah to pay homage to the idols. This would deprive them of the respect they commanded as guardians of the Kabah. Besides, the prosperity of Makkah depended mainly on these idols. People in great numbers from the neighbouring tribes used to visit Makkah all the year round to make offerings to the idols. This brought prosperity to Makkah, for trade flourished side by side with the pilgrimage. Makkah being a desert, no agricultural or economic resources existed there. The Kabah was their only asset. But not all of the Makkans were hostile. There were people who gave serious thought to the message of the Quran and gradually began to accept it. About 200 people from Makkah as well as the neighbouring settlements entered the fold of Islam.

The Quraysh, who enjoyed the Makkan leadership considered the teachings of the new religion an insult to the religion of their forefathers. In Islam they saw a danger to their own leadership. Such leaders as Abu Jahl, Abu Lahab were the most hostile to the Prophet. They

began to give serious thought to the matter. Islam was fast gaining ground, so they thought that they could not afford to postpone taking action. They had to nip this menace in the bud.

The Support of Abu Talib

The chiefs of different clans gathered to discuss this matter. They all felt that if Abu Talib did not come in their way, they would have no difficulty in finding a solution to this problem. So they all came to Abu Talib to tell him to stop Muhammad from spreading his message.

They warned him, "Tell Muhammad to stop spreading his message, or you will abandon him. If you fail to do so, you should be ready to suffer for the deeds of your nephew."

Abu Talib, an old man, felt that he would not be able to resist their wrath. So he told Muhammad what the Quraysh chiefs had said to him and then added, "My dearest nephew, look to your own safety, and to the safety of your uncle, and do not cause me to carry a burden I cannot bear."

For a while the Prophet stood motionless. On the one hand, there was his old uncle, weakened by the people's opposition, and on the other hand, there was the responsibility to proclaim the truth till his last breath. And the only source of strength was his faith and his conviction in the truth. So he decided to discharge his duty whatever the cost. In a firm and calm voice, and with tears in his eyes, he said: "O uncle! By God Almighty, I swear that even if they were to place the sun on my right and the moon on my left, I would not give up my mission. I must go on carrying it out until I die."

Abu Talib, touched by the sincerity and force of the words uttered by his nephew, remained motionless for a while. Then he turned to the Prophet and said:

"My nephew, go your way. Do your duty. Let my people turn against me. I am with you. No one shall harm you as long as I live."

Opposition Intensified

When the Quraysh saw that the pressure on Abu Talib had failed, they decided to make life unbearable for the Prophet and his followers. Slaves, the weakest sections of society, were the worst sufferers. Their masters beat them brutally and some of them were beaten to death. But they suffered all this patiently. Abu Bakr spent much of his wealth on freeing these slaves.

Even the wealthy Muslims were not spared. They were also persecuted. Their own relatives turned against them. After the death of Abu Talib and Khadijah, people were emboldened to persecute the Prophet. They threw rubbish on him as he passed through the streets. They spread thorns in his path. They made a noise when the Prophet stood up in the Kabah to pray.

The Makkans did all that they could to turn people away from the Prophet. But in spite of all their efforts, Islam continued to spread. Some of the powerful men of Makkah accepted Islam. Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, who was famous for his bravery, and Abu Dharr Ghifari were among them.

The First Migration

The Makkan chiefs were more enraged than ever before. They made life so difficult for the Muslims that a number of them migrated to Abyssinia, an area nearby, with the Prophet's permission. At first fifteen men and women migrated to Abyssinia. Slowly, the number reached 83.

This safe haven of the Muslims made the Makkans all the more angry. They sent two of their men to Negus, the king of Abyssinia. These men brought him precious gifts and requested him to turn these 'ignoble' people out of his land as they had forsaken their forefathers' religion to follow a new religion. Negus sent for the Muslims and asked them to explain their case. Thereupon Jafar, son of Abu Talib, briefly explained to him the teachings of Islam and recited some portions from the Quran from the chapter called 'Mary'. Negus was very impressed and said: "Go forth into my kingdom; I shall not extradite you at all."

Then he turned to the Makkans and said: "Go away, I cannot give up these people. They are following the true faith."

Social Boycott

With the passage of time, the Makkan chiefs became more and more bitter. They felt that it was Muhammad's clan, the Banu Hashim, headed by Abu Talib that was responsible for all this misery and that if they had given up Muhammad, all his activities could have been stopped without delay. They made it known to the Banu Hashim that if they did not surrender Muhammad to them, they would have to suffer the consequences.

The tribes of Makkah entered into an agreement. They agreed to cut off all dealings with the Banu Hashim. No one was to sell anything to them. The agreement was signed and hung up in the sacred Kabah. This was the seventh year of prophethood.

This period of boycott was one of great hardship for the Banu Hashim and the Muslims. While this ban was in force, Abu Talib, the chief of the Banu Hashim, had to take refuge in a narrow valley, which came to be known as Abu Talib's Pass. For three years, the Prophet and all his relatives lived in this valley. Many of the Muslims joined them. All supplies to the valley were cut off. The Banu Hashim had to live on the leaves and roots of trees.

Finally, certain kind-hearted Makkan leaders took pity on the Banu Hashim. They tore to pieces the agreement hanging in the Kabah so that the Banu Hashim could come back to their homes. But soon after this, Abu Talib the Prophet's uncle, died. His health had deteriorated during the three years of hardship. Although Abu Talib had not accepted Islam, as head of his clan he had protected the Prophet from his opponents.

The Year of Sorrow

After his death, Abu Lahab, another uncle of the Prophet, became head of the Banu Hashim. He was the bitterest enemy of Islam and the Muslims. He made it clear to the Quraysh that Muhammad no longer enjoyed his clan's protection. In those days, it was impossible for an individual to survive without the protection of his clan.

Khadijah, the faithful wife of the Prophet, also died soon after the ban was lifted. Both these deaths took place in the 10th year of prophethood.

The loss of Abu Talib and Khadijah saddened the Prophet, for they had been great sources of strength to him. It was their deaths that made the enemy bold enough to persecute him. One day when the Prophet was praying in the Kabah, Abu Jahl put a piece of cloth round his neck and twisted it hard. He would have strangled the Prophet had not Abu Bakr rushed to his help in time.

The Journey to Taif

Day by day, the situation worsened. So the Prophet decided to go to Taif, a neighbouring town, 40 miles from Makkah to spread the teachings of Islam. He was accompanied only by his servant Addas. He spoke to the leaders of the town and invited them to accept Islam. They paid no heed to his message. They were such evil people that they did not stop at that. When the Prophet was leaving the town in a dejected state, he was chased by street urchins instigated by these chiefs. They abused him and threw stones at him as he walked out of town. They continued to pelt him with stones at until nightfall. Relieved of their presence, he stopped on the way in an orchard to rest. He was badly hurt, bleeding profusely. Yet he only prayed for their guidance. He did not curse them. In all humility he addressed God in these words.

"Lord! Forgive these people, for they know not what they do."

Miraj

In the tenth year of Prophethood the angel Gabriel came to take the Prophet on the miraculous journey to the heavens known as Miraj. They first went from Makkah to Jerusalem, the Prophet riding on a winged horse. At Jerusalem, the Prophet said his prayers in the Temple of David, where all other prophets joined him in prayer. Then he ascended to the heavens, still accompanied by the angel Gabriel. God granted an audience to His messenger. It was on this blessed occasion that the Prophet received God's commandments, including the prayer to be said five times daily. The Prophet then came back home. All this took place overnight.

There are two views about this heavenly journey. Some hold that this ascension was made by the Prophet's soul, while others hold that it was made by his body. According to Umm Hani, the body of the Prophet was never missed from his bed. Rather God caused only his soul to travel. Aishah, the Prophet's wife, was also of the same view. A third opinion is that the Miraj from Makkah to Jerusalem took place in the flesh, while from Jerusalem to the heavens it took place only in the spirit.

Islam spreads to Yathrib (Madinah)

The Prophet used to convey the message of Islam to all those who came from outside Makkah. In the eleventh year of prophethood, six men from the tribe of Khazraj of Yathrib (later known as Madinatun-Nabi, the Prophet's city) accepted Islam during their pilgrimage to Makkah in 620. The following year twelve more men from Yathrib accepted Islam. This time they took an oath pledging allegiance to the Prophet. This oath is known as the First Pledge of Aqabah, named after the Aqabah pass, at Mina, near Makkah, where they had made their pledge. They requested the Prophet to send Musab bin Umair, a companion of the Prophet, to Yathrib to convey the message of Islam to the inhabitants. There the divine message was immediately well received, and within a year, a number of people converted to Islam as a result of the preaching of Musab ibn Umair.

In the thirteenth year of Prophethood, seventy two Muslims from Yathrib came for the Hajj. On behalf of their people, they invited the Prophet to make Yathrib his home. During the pilgrimage they also took the oath, known as the second pledge of Aqabah. These men from Yathrib, of the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, pledged to protect the Prophet from his enemies. For all this sacrifice on their part they wanted only one assurance from the Prophet: that when the

Prophet had gained power, he should not leave them and return to Makkah. The Prophet replied: "You have that assurance. I am yours and you are mine."

Now the Muslims began to emigrate to Yathrib in large numbers to escape persecution at the hands of the Quraysh. Only the Prophet, Abu Bakr and a few Muslims were left in Makkah.

This infuriated the Quraysh, for Islam was now strengthening its roots in Yathrib. They were greatly alarmed that their enemies were gaining a firm foothold. There was nothing more dangerous than that. So they resolved to remove the danger once and for all. They said: "Kill Muhammad and Islam will die with him."

(IV) HIJRAH

The Emigration

As the Makkans were plotting against life, God sent His command to him to leave for Yathrib. Before making his preparations, he first called Ali and gave him the people's deposits and asked him to return them to the depositors. Already, the young men with whom the Quraysh had conspired to carry out the assassination were collecting on that fateful night to put their plan to action. But God had another plan. And who can overrule the will of God? Accordingly, the Prophet made Ali lie in his bed while he himself left the house at midnight.

The Prophet had already informed Abu Bakr, his closest friend, of the plan to emigrate, to be conducted in total secrecy. They left Makkah before dawn, riding on two camels which Abu Bakr had kept ready to carry them across the desert. About five miles from the city they took shelter in a cave called Thawr.

When the Makkans learnt of the Prophet's escape, they were mad with rage. They offered a prize of one hundred camels to anyone who captured Muhammad. A number of horsemen raced out into the desert. A few of them even managed to reach the very mouth of the cave of Thawr. Abu Bakr was stricken with fear lest they harm the Prophet. But the Prophet reassured him, saying:

"Don't be afraid. We are not just two in this cave. There is a third – God."
(Bukhari)

The Prophet and Abu Bakr lay hidden in this cave for three days and three nights. On the fourth day they came out and continued the journey along with Abdullah ibn Urayqit, their guide, and Amir bin Fuhaira, Abu Bakr's servant.

After a continuous ride of a day and a night the Prophet and Abu Bakr stopped to rest. It was then that Suraqah bin Malik, who had sighted them on the road to Madinah, managed to come close to them. He had been one of those horsemen who, eager to earn the reward of a hundred camels, had gone in hot pursuit of the Prophet. But when he spurred on his horse, it stumbled and fell, bringing Suraqa down also. He made two more attempts to approach the Prophet, but the same thing happened each time. Now Suraqa was frightened. He realised that no one could harm the Prophet, for he was under divine protection. He begged for mercy. The Prophet forgave him.

QUESTIONS

- (i) The early life of the Prophet (prior to the revelations)
 - 1. When and where was the Prophet of Islam born?
 - 2. What were the names of his parents?
 - 3. Who brought up the Prophet after his mother died?
 - 4. How did the Prophet earn his living?
 - 5. What was the name of the Prophet's first wife?
 - 6. What were the names of his four daughters?
 - 7. Give an account of the Prophet's role in rebuilding the Kabah.
 - 8. Where did the Prophet usually go to meditate in solitude?
- (ii) Nabuwath
 - 1. Where did the Prophet receive the first revelation?
 - 2. Who conveyed the first revelation to the Prophet?
 - 3. What were the words of the first revelation?
 - 4. Who were the first converts to Islam?
- (iii) Life at Makkah (post revelation)
 - 1. Why did the Prophet face opposition to his message in Makkah?
 - 2. Why did some of the followers migrate to Abyssinia?
 - 3. Describe the treatment given to the Prophet by the inhabitants of Taif.
 - 4. How was the Prophet socially boycotted in Makkah?
 - 5. Give account of the '*miraj*'.
- (iv) The *hijrah* (The emigration)
 - 1. Why did the people of Madinah invite the Prophet of Islam to come to their city?
 - 2. What were the reasons for migration?
 - 3. Describe the migration of the Prophet.
 - 4. What was the reaction of the inhabitants of Makkah to the '*hijrah*'?
 - 5. How was the Prophet received in Madinah?
 - 6. In what year did the '*hijrah*' take place?

UNIT

7

The Life of The Prophet Muhammad at Madinah

(I) THE EMERGENCE OF A MUSLIM COMMUNITY

After six days' journey the Prophet reached Quba, a village three miles from Madinah. At that time the people of Madinah had been waiting impatiently for his arrival. The Prophet stayed for two weeks in Quba, where he built the first mosque of Islam.

Each morning people used to come out of the city and watch the road from Quba. At last the great day arrived. He set off for Madinah on a Friday morning. When he entered the town, he found that all the people, men, women and children, had turned out to receive him. The women stood on the house-tops and sang songs of joy.

They had all lined both sides of the street to receive him. When the Prophet entered the city, everybody wanted him to be his guest. The more zealous held the reins of the camel and wanted the Prophet to dismount in front of their doors and enter their houses. But the Prophet refused politely and said: "Leave my camel alone. She is under the command of God; she will stop where God wants her to stop."

It finally stopped at a site which belonged to two orphans of the Banu Najjar tribe. The Prophet dismounted saying: "It seems that this is where God wants us to stop."

He then bought this land to build a mosque and some houses on it. After settling this matter, the Prophet asked who lived nearest to the site. Abu Ayyub Ansari said that his house was the nearest and requested the Prophet to be his guest. The Prophet stayed in his house for about seven months. In the meantime, his house was built.

From the day the Prophet came to Yathrib, it came to be called Madinatun-Nabi or "The City of the Prophet."

The Prophet entered Yathrib on the 17 September 622. This year was later designated by Caliph Umar as the first year of the Islamic era, for this event was considered to be the most important in the history of Islam.

The Brotherhood of Islam

The first problem faced by the Prophet was that of the Makkan refugees. They had neither homes nor money. Most of them had been well-to-do in Makkah, but they had left everything there. So the first important thing for the Prophet was to settle them in their new surroundings.

The solution to this problem was found in the concept of brotherhood in Islam. The Prophet collected the Muslims and suggested that one Ansari (Madinan) Muslim and one refugee Makkan Muslim should become linked together as two brothers.

They immediately accepted the suggestion of the Prophet. Each Ansari took one Makkan Muslim as his brother. This bond between the two became even more powerful than a blood relationship. The Ansari gave his Makkan brother half of everything he possessed – house, land, money and other belongings.

The Prophet's Mosque

The next most important task for the Prophet was to build a mosque. This mosque was built on the land he had bought from the orphans. It had mud walls and a roof of palm leaves. Huts were built adjacent to the mosque for the Prophet's family.

A platform with a thatched roof was built in one corner of the mosque. Poor people who had no home or family lived here. They spent their time in worship and prayer. They were fed by those Muslims who could afford to do so. They also sometimes earned their living by collecting wood from the jungle and selling it in the market. These people came to be known as *Ashabus-Safa*, people of the bench. Abu Hurayrah, also one of *Ashabus-Safa*, and the most constant attendant of the Prophet, related more traditions of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet than any other.

Yathrib was inhabited mostly by the tribes of Aws and Khazraj. Both tribes rapidly entered the fold of Islam. Some Jewish tribes also lived in the city. They were rich, owned orchards and were very powerful.

Now the Prophet turned his attention to the important task of establishing friendly relations with various tribes. The Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nazir, Banu Qurayza and the Jewish tribes, were neither friendly nor hostile towards the Aws and Khazraj. But now that the Aws and Khazraj had accepted Islam, it was necessary to make a new treaty to determine each other's rights and duties in the new scenario, with the Prophet as their leader.

The Covenant of Madinah

When the Prophet saw that the Jews were not going to accept Islam, he devised a plan to save the Muslims from any future disturbance. He negotiated a contract called the pact of Madinah for this purpose.

This pact relating to religion and other social matters, was entered into five months after the emigration. It determined their rights as well as their duties as allies of the Muslims. The details of the pact of Madinah are as follows:

In the name of God, the compassionate the Merciful.

This is a covenant in writing from Muhammad, the Prophet of God, to the believers and Muslims of Madinah and the Jews who want an alliance with them. Each party, adhering to its own culture and tradition, will be bound by the articles of this covenant.

1. The custom of *qisas* (requital retaliation), prevalent since ancient times, will continue to be observed with justice and kindness.
2. Every clan shall redeem its prisoners with kindness and justice.

3. All the members of the different clans will be bound by this covenant which lays down that the hand of every man shall be against him, who seeks to spread injustice, sin, enmity or competition between believers. No concession will be made, even though the person concerned may be the son of one of the leaders or chiefs.
4. No believer shall stay a believer for the sake of an unbeliever; neither shall he assist an unbeliever against a believer.
5. A poor Muslim is entitled to the same right to protection as a Muslim of wealth and position.
6. The Jews who submit to the authority of the Muslims are entitled to their assistance and the same rights as Muslims without injustice or partisanship.
7. In any military expeditions, the Jews are expected to support the Muslims and to contribute to the cost of war. At the same time, the Jews are not allowed to assist the opponents of the Muslims. And the Muslims will not support their enemies.
8. If the contracting parties want to disassociate themselves from this covenant, they can do so only with the permission of the Prophet.
9. No one must help an evil-doer or shelter him. Whoever does so shall be cursed by God and His anger will fall upon him, on the Day of Judgement.
10. If the Muslims want to make peace with someone, the Jews will be bound to concern and join in this.
11. If anyone is convicted of killing a believer, and a witness to or proof of this killing is available, he will be subject to retaliation, unless the next of kin is willing to accept blood money.
12. All future disputes between those who accept this charter shall be referred, under God, to the Prophet.

This agreement was made with the Jews who were composed of three large tribes — the Banu Qaynuqa, Banu Nazir, and Banu Qurayzah.

All the three Jewish tribes subsequently violated the articles of the covenant. They plotted against the Muslims, and sided with the enemies of the Muslims. In this way, this covenant was soon annulled.

This pact, dictated by the Prophet, granted full religious freedom to the Jews. The Muslims and the Jews had to live in peace and amity together as brothers, helping one another in times of need.

After the conclusion of this treaty, Islam found a safe home in Yathrib.

The Prophet's Family

The Prophet had a large family. He married twelve other wives after the death of Khadijah. Most of them were widows, two of his wives being Jewish, while one was a Christian.

In those days, polygamy was prevalent. Islam restricted the number of wives to four. In those days, when men were often killed in battle the women who were left behind had to be looked after. So taking several wives was like taking helpless refugees into one's home. They

were treated kindly and generously. Muslim men were encouraged to look after the widows of friends who had died in battle, give them separate homes, and treat them equally in every respect.

The Prophet's wives shared his pious way of life. They made great personal sacrifices, bearing patiently with all kinds of hardship in the path of God. So they became known as the mothers of the faithful. All the Prophet's sons had died in infancy. But four daughters borne by Khadijah survived infancy, grew to adulthood, married and bore children. They were Fatimah, Umm Kulthum, Ruqayyah and Zaynab.

The Battle of Badr

The Prophet was a man of peace and reconciliation. He urged his companions to ask God for peace, for the Prophet's main task was the communication of the divine message to the people; an atmosphere of peace and goodwill was essential to perform this duty. But the Quraysh did not allow him to work in peaceful conditions. When they saw that the Muslims were becoming increasingly stronger, they resolved to wage war and crush them altogether.

The Quraysh marched to Madinah with a thousand strong army. They camped at Badr, about eighty miles from Madinah. It was the month of Ramadan, 2 A.H. On hearing the news of the enemy camping at Badr, the Prophet marched out of Madinah at the head of an army of 313 Muslims. There were few horses and the Muslims had no armour. The Makkans, on the other hand, were well armed and had 300 horses and 700 camels.

The battle, in which the Makkans were seriously outnumbered, began on Friday the 17th of Ramadan. The fighting lasted only a few hours, during which the Prophet prayed continuously for divine succour. God then sent angels to help the Muslims who emerged victorious. The Quraysh suffered a total rout.

The defeat, however, did not teach the Quraysh a lesson, but further enraged them. Determined to wipe out the blot of this humiliation, they now began preparations for a second attack, on a much bigger scale. They raised an army of more than 3000 warriors and, mad with revenge, marched to Madinah led by Abu Sufyan.

The Battle of Uhud

The Battle of Uhud took place in 624 A.D. The enemy numbered 3000, while the Prophet's men numbered only 700. But with God on their side, the Muslims, successfully repulsed the attack. The enemy started retreating, leaving behind large quantities of booty. Victory was imminent for the Muslims, when forty archers whom the Prophet had assigned to the hillside to guard the pass, saw the retreating army and thought that if they remained on the hill, they would lose their share of the booty. Therefore most of them abandoned their posts. This left the way open for a counter attack.

When Khalid bin Walid, still a non-Muslim, saw the pass undefended, he led his men behind the hill and killed the few archers who still stood guard. Then he fell upon the Muslims from the rear. Seeing this, the fleeing Quraysh leaders turned back. The Muslims were thrown into utter confusion. The Prophet himself was wounded. But the Muslims stood like a solid wall of stone around the Prophet, and managed to repulse all attacks with superhuman courage. Many fell dead and several were wounded. They had gone to the extent of sacrificing their lives to save the Prophet from the enemy onslaught. Slowly the enemy was beaten back.

The Quraysh lost 14 men, while the Muslims lost 70. Among the dead was Hamzah, the Prophet's uncle. The Prophet grieved over the loss of this brave soul. With deep sorrow the martyrs were buried and the Muslims came back to Madinah.

The Quraysh knew at heart that the Muslims would have emerged victorious, had not the fateful mistake of a few Muslims turned their victory into defeat. So for two years they made no attempt to invade Makkah.

(II) THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MADINAN COMMUNITY

(a) *Muwakhaat (Brotherhood)*

The position of the Muslims in Madinah was that of 'refugees'. In order to help them settle down properly, the Prophet encouraged brotherhood between Emigrants and the Helpers. On reaching Madinah, the Prophet called for a meeting between the Muhajirs (emigrants) and Ansaars (Madinan Muslims) and asked them to pledge brotherhood among themselves. He himself took Ali by the hand and said: 'This is my brother.' The Prophet then paired off Muhajirs and Ansaars as brothers, taking care that each pair was close to one another in status, temperament, trade, etc. Although it was meant to meet a temporary situation, the result was effective and lasting. The Muhajirs, due to their long association with the Prophet, had acquired a sound knowledge of Islam. They had, moreover, imbibed the spirit of Islam which was manifested in their behaviour, thinking, and their God-fearing attitude in all matters. Thanks to their close association with the Ansars, they were able to give their Ansar brothers a proper grounding in their new religion, so that they too imbibed the spirit of Islam.

Due to this fraternity having been formed, the Muhajir Muslims no longer remained strangers in Madinah. Both groups helped each other in all matters and associated freely. This fraternity became like a real blood relationship in that they even gave each other rights to the property of one another, just as real brothers do.

This brotherhood was such an ideal relationship that it is hard to find a parallel in history. The Muhajirs stayed in the homes of their Ansar brothers. The Ansars offered half of all their property to the emigrants. Their property mostly consisted of orchards. But the Muhajirs did not know how to cultivate the land. The Ansars were so fair and just in their dealing that they cultivated the land themselves, doing all the hard work, but sharing the produce equally with their Muhajir brothers. The Muhajirs were also given a share in the inheritance, when his Ansar brother died. Later on, when the Muhajirs had properly settled in Madinah, this share was discontinued, as the Quran then confined inheritance solely to the real family members.

Although the Ansars had wholeheartedly accepted them as their brothers, the Muhajirs for their part did not want to be a burden on them. Therefore they soon engaged themselves in different kinds of work for their subsistence. For instance, Abu Bakr started a cloth business and Umar Faruq bought and sold dates.

The Ansars had sacrificed a great deal to assist the Muhajirs during their time of need. Therefore, when Khaybar was conquered, the Prophet wanted to give them a share in these lands in recompense for their services. But the Ansars declined to accept this. They said that they had helped the Muhajirs only in the name of God, for the cause of God. They only wanted to earn a place in paradise, as the Prophet had promised them on the occasion of the second pledge of

Aqabah. So they refused to accept any earthly recompense for the help they had extended to their Muhajir brothers.

(b) Fraternity

"O ye who believe. Observe your duty to Allah with right observance and die not till ye have surrendered (unto Him).

"And hold fast, all of you together, to the cord of Allah, and do not separate. And remember Allah's favour to you: how you were enemies and He brought about a friendship between you, so that you became like brothers by His grace, and how you were on the brink of an abyss of fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes clear His revelations to you in order that you may be guided."

The Prophet (may God bless him) said: "The Muslims are like a wall, one part supporting another. The Muslims are all one body. If the eye is injured the whole body suffers, and if the foot is injured, the whole body suffers."

In his speech from Mount Arafat to a great multitude of men, on the occasion of the Hajjat-al-Wada', "the farewell pilgrimage," his last visit to Mecca, he said: "O people, listen to my words with understanding for I do not know whether, after this year, I shall ever be among you in this place. Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable to each other until you appear before your Lord, just as this day and this month are sacred for all, and remember you will have to appear before your Lord who will demand from you an account of all your acts.

"The Lord has prescribed for every man his share of inheritance; no testament to the prejudice of heirs is lawful.

"The child belongs to the parent, and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned.

"Whoever falsely claims another for his father or his master will be cursed by God and the angels and all mankind.

"O people, you have rights over your wives and your wives have rights over you. It is their duty not to break their wifely faith, nor commit any act of manifest indecency. If they do so, you have authority to confine them in separate rooms and to punish them, but not severely. But if they refrain, clothe them and feed them properly. Treat your women with loving kindness. You have taken them on the security of Allah and made their persons lawful to you by the words of Allah.

"Be faithful to the trust imposed on you, and shun transgression.

"O people! Listen to my words and understand them. Know that all Muslims are brothers to each other; you are one fraternity. No thing belonging to one of you can be lawfully kept by his brother, unless it is given out of free goodwill. Refrain from committing injustice."

The Prophet himself practiced what he preached. He was always one with his people. When he proclaimed the brotherhood of Muslims, he did not exempt himself.

The Prophet of Islam not only proclaimed the fact of universal human brotherhood, but for the first time in the history of the world, made of it a principle and a fact of common law. All the ordinances of Islam incline towards this, and it has been shown to be the only ground of genuine human progress. Brotherly relations were established permanently between men and nations, however different in character and rank and wealth and power. "The slaves who say their prayers are your brothers." And these were not empty words. They were actually so treated. In the intercourse between nations also there was established a brotherhood which still endures. The Prophet declared : "He is not of us who sides with his tribe in aggression, and he is not of us

who calls others to help him in tyranny, and he is not of us who dies while assisting his tribe in injustice."

"Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

This great brotherhood of all sorts and conditions of human beings is bound together by a very strong tie.

The observance of religious ordinances extend this universal brotherhood of Islam. It binds together all people in complete agreement and equality, the governor and the governed, the rich and the poor. One of the most important ways of binding is the daily and weekly prayers in congregation, where all Muslims of every degree stand as equals in humanity, and the Imam, the leader, is chosen not for rank or wealth, but piety. Another is the yearly pilgrimage – a most important institution to the culture of Islam. On the pilgrimage, kings, peasants, nobles, workmen, rich and poor, all wear the same coarse clothing, perform the same ceremonies in the same way, equal as all mankind are equal at the hour of death.

According to Islam, all human beings have been created by one and the same God, and for this reason belong to one great brotherhood. No one is superior or inferior. All human beings are equal before God. All are equally his creatures and His servants.

c) Sincerity

In the Quran 'sincerity' is used in the sense of 'pure and unadulterated'. The concept of sincerity mentioned in the Quran denotes turning to God in devoutness. The life of the Prophet Muhammad was the very embodiment of sincerity and a model for all the believers to follow. A sincere believer devotes all his deeds throughout his entire life to seeking the approval of God and expects his reward only from Him. He does not make devious calculations based on the opinions of other people nor does he seek the favour of others. Therefore all of his actions are sincere and candid, such as would earn God's approval.

The Messenger of God emphasized sincerity as a truly Islamic virtue. Being true to the commandments of God and the Sunnah is considered the mark of a true believer and a sincere person. The Prophet regularly instructed his followers to be sincere in everything they did and explained to them the exact meaning of sincerity, as well as its opposite: hypocrisy. Many traditions bear witness to this. Zayd ibn Arqam records the Prophet as saying: 'Whoever says with sincerity that there is no god save God shall enter Paradise.' When asked what this sincerity was, he replied: 'Let his very oath debar him from what God has forbidden.'

Sincerity is the very base on which a Muslim is to build his whole life. It is in this world that he is put to the test, because every step taken on earth will be judged and the reward given accordingly. One should therefore think of the consequences beforehand. 'Reckon with yourselves,' said Umar, 'before you are reckoned with in the next world; and weigh your own actions before they are weighed on the divine scales of justice; and prepare yourself for the great appearance before God.'

A sincere person is honest first with God and then with people, because he knows very well that God hears and sees all things. As he believes that he will be judged in His presence and will be held responsible for all of his words and deeds, thoughts, he thinks twice before doing anything. For this reason the sincerity and candour of believers are among the most significant signs of the firmness of their faith.

God has made the sincere attitude of the messengers, who always sought to earn the approval of God, an example for believers: 'And tell of Our servants Ibrahim, Ishaq, and Yaqub:

men of might and vision whom We made with the pure thought of the Hereafter. They shall be with Us among the righteous whom We have chosen.' (38:45-47)

Those who turn to God in sincerity are praised in the Quran. The Quran says: '...let those rejoice who abstain from idol worship and turn to God in repentance. Give good news to My servants, who listen to My Word and follows what is best in it. These are the ones whom God has guided; they are the people of understanding.' (39:17-18)

Right and sincere intention should guide one in everything one does. The Prophet warned that one should not seek wealth and even knowledge in order to gain personal prestige. It is selflessness, true intentions and being faithful to God and mankind that bring the final reward in the Hereafter. Ubayy ibn Kaab said: 'Acquire knowledge and use it. Do not acquire it in order thereby to enhance yourselves. Otherwise a time will come when learning will be used as an adornment in the manner of clothes.'

Yet another hadith illustrates that the Prophet taught that lust for fame was the worst single danger for man and only sincerity and right intentions would serve to gain him eternal life. On his deathbed, Shaddad ibn Aus said to those around him: 'What I fear most for this community is ostentation and the harbouring of secret desires.' Sufyan Thauri explained the meaning of 'secret desires': 'It is the fondness of praise for one's good deeds.' When the Prophet himself was questioned on this subject, he said that 'secret desires' were harboured, for example, by those who sought knowledge, because the idea that people would then come and sit at their feet was pleasing to them.

The importance of deeds performed solely for God's sake is stressed in many hadiths: 'God accepts those deeds which were performed purely for His sake and which were meant to seek His pleasure.' (Abu Daud)

One should always act with fear of God in one's heart for God sees every deed and perceives every thought in the mind of man.

The Prophet once came across Abu Masud Ansari beating his slave. 'You should know, Abu Masud,' he said, 'that God has more power over you than you have over this slave.' Abu Masud trembled on hearing these words of the Prophet. 'Messenger of God,' he said, 'I am freeing this slave for God's sake.' 'If you had not acted thus,' said the Prophet, 'the flames of Hell would have engulfed you.'

Sincerity also involves putting oneself in others' shoes and not entertaining suspicions, as well as rejoicing in others' prosperity and refraining from jealousy.

Abdullah ibn Abbas once said: 'Whenever I hear that rain has fallen on a Muslim town, I am happy, even though I myself have no cattle grazing there.'

The opposite of a sincere person is a hypocrite. The signs of a hypocrite are clearly given in the Quran and the Sunnah. A hypocrite is a person who 1) lies or distorts the truth, 2) does not keep his promises and obligations, and, 3) divulges the secrets entrusted to him by one person to other people. The Quran and the hadith explicitly condemn hypocrisy in very strong terms and consider it one of the greater sins barring one's entry to Paradise. Hypocrisy is an evil, which arises out of a word, uttered by the tongue or a motion expressed by signs or gestures, which does not correspond with the heart or mind. So, when there is a contradiction between an action and the intention behind it, the result is hypocrisy.

God dislikes all kinds of hypocrisy, whether in words, deeds or gestures. The Quran says: 'The hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of Hell...' (4:145).

According to Messenger of God, 'There are three signs of a hypocrite, even if he fasts, prays and asserts that he is a Muslim: when he speaks, he lies, when he makes a promise, he breaks it, and when he is trusted, he betrays his trust.'

The Quran and the Sunnah have given us guidance in every walk of life. Putting their teachings into practice will result in one becoming true to God, thus earning the title of a sincere and God-fearing person.

QUESTIONS

- (i) The emergence of the Muslim community.
 - 1. What does Madinatu'n-Nabi mean?
 - 2. What were the two main groups in the community of Madinah?
 - 3. How was the Prophet's mosque built?
 - 4. Who were the people called 'people of the bench'?
- (ii) The characteristics of the Madinan community.
 - 1. How did the Prophet assume the role of the leader of the community?
 - 2. How did the 'Helpers' look after the 'Emigrants'?
 - 3. How did the family of the Prophet set an example for the believers?
 - 4. How did the men look after the widows of the Muslims killed in battles?
 - (a) Brotherhood
 - 1. How did the Prophet establish the bond of brotherhood in Madinah?
 - 2. How did this bond help the 'refugees' to feel at home in Madinah?
 - 3. Where did the '*muhajirs*' stay initially in Madinah?
 - 4. What was the 'Covenant of Madinah'?
 - 5. When and with whom was this pact concluded?
 - (b) Fraternity
 - 1. What is the meaning of the 'Muslim fraternity'?
 - 2. Give an account of the Prophet's speech on the occasion of 'the farewell pilgrimage' with reference to the 'Muslim fraternity'.
 - 3. Why should we respect the property of our brothers in faith?
 - (c) Sincerity
 - 1. What is meant by sincerity in Islam?
 - 2. Narrate some hadith, which tells of the virtues of sincerity.
 - 3. Why is hypocrisy considered the opposite of sincerity?
 - 4. What are the marks of a hypocrite?
 - 5. Why should we always follow the path of sincerity in our dealings with both God and men?

8

The treatment of other Communities

(I) THE PROPHET'S TREATIES WITH NON-MUSLIMS

The migration, or Hijrah, of the Muslims of Makkah to Madinah in 622 A.D. opened a new chapter in the life of the new Muslim community. Till then the converts to Islam were themselves persecuted by the inhabitants of Makkah and its surroundings, but once the decision to migrate to Yathrib was taken, the Muslims found themselves in a position of strength. They further strengthened their position by entering into treaties with non-Muslims. Of these treaties the most important was the treaty signed by the Prophet Muhammad himself soon after the Muslims arrived in Yathrib, which later came to be known as Medinat ul Nabi, the Prophet's city. The main parties to these treaties were the Muslim emigrants and the inhabitants of Madinah.

At the time of the Prophet, there were many tribes in the Arabian Peninsula, some of which were Jewish or Christian. They used to follow their own laws and customs, and worshipped God according to the tenets of their respective religions. There was no pressure on the part of the Prophet to convert them to Islam. Rather, he recognised them as People of the Book, that is, people to whom God's messages, were sent in earlier times and were enshrined in their scriptures. The Prophet let them lead a peaceful life, treated their religion with respect and entered into a number of treaties with them to ensure mutual cooperation.

In Madinah itself, the Jews were a part of the local community and the Prophet made a treaty with them, keeping peaceful coexistence in mind. He never acted against them unless they opened direct hostilities against him. But after the Battle of Badr, which took place in 624 A.D. (or the 2nd year after the Hijrat), the Prophet had to deal with the Jewish tribe of the Banu Qainuqa most sternly, for they had sided with the unbelievers, aided the Makkans and broken their treaties with the Prophet. Consequently, they were expelled from Madinah. However, it is important to remember that the decision to expel them from Madinah was not dictated by religious prejudice but by the fact that they had broken the treaty. As the trust is one of the very important social obligations enjoined in the Quran and the breaking of treaties a sin, it was the behaviour of the tribe and not their religion, which dictated the decision of the Prophet, in which God guided him through a revelation (59:15).

After that, the Prophet entered into many treaties with the Jews and the Christians of Arabia. In 632 A.D. (that is 10 years after the Hijrat), the Christians of Najran sent a deputation to the Prophet. The Prophet lodged the members of the deputation in his mosque and permitted them to say their prayers there according to their own faith. He invited them to accept Islam and explained to them that 'Isa was a prophet, but not a son of God. It was on this occasion that the following verse of the Quran was revealed: 'The similitude of 'Isa before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him 'Be' and he was" (3:59). Though the Christians of Najran did not abandon their faith, they entered into a treaty with the Muslims and were given a

pledge that they would be free to practice their religion and have the protection of the state on the payment of a poll tax.

The text of the treaty signed by the Prophet with the Christians of Najran is a historical document giving evidence of a guarantee of the right to religious freedom under Islam. It runs as follows: 'The Najran and those living therein are placed under the protection of God and the responsibility of Muhammad, the Prophet and Messenger of God, so far as their lives, their religion, their lands, their property, the individual members both present and absent, their places of worship and their right of prayers are concerned. Similarly, neither any priest nor monk shall be removed from his position, nor a person making a religious endowment shall be deprived of his bequeathed state. And all that they legally own, small and big, shall belong to them, so long it has nothing to do with usury or the blood vengeance prevalent during the days of ignorance. And in case a person claims something from them by right, it will be settled on the basis of equity and justice and without discrimination to either of the parties. Whoever has taken usury before signing this covenant, I do not hold any obligation for that. Nobody shall be held liable for the acts of oppression committed by any other member of his community. God and His Messenger shall remain bound for all time by the contents of this treaty, unless decreed by God, provided they (the Christians of Najran) remain sincere and continue dealing with fairness among themselves and without resorting to injustice or acts of oppression against each other.'

A careful study of the life of the Prophet, through the Quran and traditions, confirms that he never tired of calling people to the path of God, or of exhorting them to keep the peace. He was firm in his stand that peace was better than war. Peaceful co-existence, established through a network of peace treaties and divine guidance, especially pertinent in the treatment of non-Muslims and even the Muslims' enemies, was more pleasing to God than direct hostilities. The Quran says: 'Permission to fight is given to those who are attacked, because they have been wronged. God will certainly help those who help Him.' (22:39) and 'Fight in the name of God those who fight you, but do not go beyond the limits. God does not love the transgressors.' (2:190)

To emulate the Prophet is considered *sunnah* in Islam and his treatment of other communities should serve as a guideline to be emulated also in today's world. If he considered the treaties as a framework for working out differences and ensuring peaceful living conditions, the same should be done in the contemporary world.

(II) POLICY TOWARDS NON-MUSLIMS

The attitude of Islam towards non-Muslims is summed up in the Qur'anic verses: "There should be no compulsion in religion" (2:256) and "Your (prophet's) duty is only to convey the Message" (42:48). Compulsion is thus ruled out for the purpose of the propagation of Islam. The duty of the Prophet is merely to communicate and propagate the Message. The result is in the hand of God. It can be said of the period of the Prophet and the regime of his Rightly-Guided Caliphs that no one was ever converted through compulsion.

The Quran lays down a unique principle in regard to the treatment of non-Muslims. It grants complete autonomy to every religious community, which not only then enjoys freedom of faith and worship in its own way, but is also free to follow its own laws and cases decided by its own judges. The concept of complete internal autonomy has been advocated in a number of

Qur'anic verses, one of which is very clear: "And let the People of the Gospel judge according to what Allah has revealed therein." (5:47)

This means that Christians should judge according to the laws given by God in the Bible. In deference to this principle, every religious community was granted complete autonomy during the time of the Prophet. They enjoyed as much freedom in respect of their religion, worship and legal matters as did any Muslim. A little later a new development took place. It was made incumbent on every Muslim to participate in war but non-Muslims were exempted from this duty for the simple reason that they could not be compelled to wage a war. Muslims defended the frontiers of the state and laid down their lives for it, but non-Muslim subjects of the state enjoyed the fruits of peace, safety and security. They only paid a small price for this enviable privilege, by way of a tax called *jizyah*. This was not an innovation of Islam. Islam inherited this institution from Iran, where those who did not discharge military duty had to pay this tax. The tax on non-Muslim subjects was very light. It was equivalent to ten days' food in a year - a small price to pay for being guaranteed full protection as a citizen and an exemption from military duties.

No discrimination was exercised against non-Muslims on the basis of religion. In 2 AH, after the Muslim victory at the Battle of Badr, Makkans sent yet another delegation to the Negus with a view to seek the repatriation of Muslims from Abyssinia so that they could be persecuted at home. To counter the move, the Prophet sent a non-Muslim, Amr ibn Umayyah al-Qumri, as his ambassador to the court of the Negus.

The attitude of the Prophet towards his Jewish neighbours was kind and cordial. He always visited their homes to enquire after the health of their sick children. There was a Jewish tribe by the name of the Banu Arid in Madinah. The Prophet had been pleased with them for some reason and had fixed an annual stipend for them. When the funeral procession of a Jew passed by in the street, the Prophet always stood up as a mark of deference.

The attitude of the Muslims towards their non-Muslim compatriots was one of kindness, consideration and extreme tolerance. This generous treatment was reciprocated by their trust and loyalty. A civil war started in the Muslim state during the Caliphate of 'Uthman and continued down the ages, but never once did non-Muslim subjects raise the standard of revolt. They sided neither with one nor the other party. They always remained neutral and never took advantage of the situation. The ruler of Byzantium strongly urged the Christian subjects of Islam to rise in revolt while a civil war was raging between 'Ali and Mu'awiyah. He promised to liberate them by attacking the Muslims, but he did not succeed in inciting a rebellion. Such efforts continued down the ages until the time of the Crusades, but the Christian subjects of Islam always responded by saying that they preferred the pagan rulers (i.e. the Muslims) to their co-religionists.

The reason for this loyalty was the fact that the Muslims never compelled the Christians to renounce their religion and gave them complete religious freedom. Their religious institutions received aid and assistance from Muslims. An authentic original document exists belonging to the period of 'Umar in which a Christian gives the good news to his co-religionists in another city, saying that a new nation had taken over as their ruler, but it did not indulge in tyranny. On the contrary, it protected their churches and gave financial aid to their converts.

There are no priests or missionaries in Islam. It is the duty of all Muslims, men and women both, to preach Islam to mankind. This duty cannot be performed by ignorant and illiterate persons who can neither read the Quran nor understand its meaning. So, it is the religious duty of the Muslim community to introduce the teaching of the Quran as well as reading and writing.

If Islam is to be preached to non-Muslims, the Muslims themselves have to know the beliefs and teachings of Islam. Similarly, if Islam and the message of the Quran are to be spread to non-Muslims, it is clear that the Muslims should be helpful and kind to the non-Muslims. If they keep away from the non-Muslims, if they hate them or do not respect them, the non-Muslims would neither listen to their preaching nor turn towards Islam. That is why the Quran says: 'Do not abuse the gods of other religions or their prophets and religious men, lest they should abuse your God or Prophet or your religious men.' The Prophet always showed great respect for the non-Muslims, treating them kindly, and never doing anything that injured their feelings. Therefore, friendship and cooperation with the non-Muslims is a religious duty of all Muslims, because without winning their hearts through kindness, we cannot win them to Islam. War is allowed only as an act of defense. For friendly non-Muslims, Islam offers friendship and goodwill. There is not a single instance in history where the Muslims stabbed a friendly non-Muslim power in the back. Islam stands for justice and fair-play for all, whether Muslims or non-Muslims.

(III) THE RIGHTS OF NON-MUSLIMS IN ISLAM

Islam as a religion possesses very clear guidelines for the treatment of non-Muslims and gives them the right to live according to their own faith. The Jews and the Christians are called the People of the Book and considered to believe, like the Muslims, in the One and Only God. On the authority of Abu Da'ud, it has been reported that Messenger of God said: "On the day of resurrection I shall stand as the defender of anyone whose covenants are broken by others, whose rights are usurped; who has burdens imposed upon him, which are beyond his physical capacities, and from whom things are taken without his consent."

Another tradition recorded by Abu Yusuf in his book, '*Al-Kharaj*' says that Amr bin Maimun reported the Caliph Umar as saying:

'I advise whosoever is going to be my successor to be kind and just to 'the people of dhimmah' (non-Muslim subjects living under the protection of an Islamic state), to fulfill all their obligations towards them, to defend them against any external threats and not to compel them to do what is beyond their physical powers.'

It can therefore be said with great truthfulness that Islam has been remarkably unique in legislating laws with compassion and sympathy in matters relating to the non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state.

It is the duty of the Islamic state to provide internal and external security and religious freedom to its non-Muslim citizens. To offset this protection and exemption from defence service granted to them, Islam imposes a small tax, known as *jizyah*, which is to be paid only by those who are financially solvent. The rights and privileges awarded to the non-Muslim minority in an Islamic state have no precedent in the entire history of mankind.

Here are some of the teachings of Islam that underline the need for justice and equality to the non-Muslims living in an Islamic state.

It is stated in the Quran: 'God does not forbid you to be kind and equitable to those who have neither made war on your religion nor driven you from your homes.' (60:8)

God also calls upon Muslims to strictly adhere to the principle of justice and equity while dealing with those who do not share their convictions. He says: 'Do not allow your hatred of

other men to turn you away from justice. Deal justly; justice is nearer to true piety. Have fear of Allah; He is aware of all your actions.' (5:8)

The traditions of the Prophet abound in similar injunctions. He has repeatedly commanded his followers to be kind and fair to their non-Muslim fellow-citizens and prohibited them from subjecting them to oppression or injustice and denying them their basic human rights and freedom. Non-Muslims were allowed to be ruled by their own laws, and to follow the tenets of their own faith. Muslims were prohibited from coercing them into acceptance of Islam. A woman belonging to the People of the Book could marry a Muslim and continue following her own way of worshipping God in peace.

The treaty, which the Prophet signed with the non-Muslims of Najran, guaranteed their lives, their religion, their lands, their property, their places of worship and their right of prayers. It also contained the following clause: 'None of you shall be held liable for an act of oppression committed by another member (of your community).' This envisaged a principle based on the concept of individual accountability according to which a person is held responsible only for his own actions and not for the actions of anybody else.

This principle is also endorsed in the Quran in decisive and unequivocal terms: 'Each man shall reap the fruits of his own deeds: no soul shall bear another's burden.' (6:164).

The Islamic state was bound to provide the People of the Book with full protection against old age, physical weakness, poverty and hunger. It is said that Caliph 'Umar used to show great personal concern for the welfare and well-being of the non-Muslim minority living under his care by keeping himself well informed of their conditions and suffering. He came to their rescue whenever the need arose. While patrolling the neighbourhoods, he once came upon an old man belonging to the non-Muslim community begging from door to door. Feeling grieved and perturbed, he commented: 'How can I have the courage to face my Lord (on the day of Judgement) when one of my subjects is compelled to beg in order to earn his livelihood. Certainly, this is not the justice and equity that the Islamic Shari'ah intends to achieve in dealing with the non-Muslim subjects living in an Islamic State.'

As its name signifies, Islam is a religion of peace and security, therefore, non-Muslims should be free of any fear of being treated in a way displeasing to God. The Quran states:

'Believers, Jews, Christians, and Sabeans – whomsoever believes in God and the Last Day and does what is right - shall be rewarded by their Lord; they have nothing to fear or to regret.' (2:62)

The rights conceded to non-Muslims by Islam cover a wide range of that today might be classified as basic human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression, the right to belief and worship, the right to security and privacy, and the right to protection by the state and the authorities. In no way, as mentioned in the verse of the Quran quoted above, should a dislike or hatred of a nation influence Muslims in their dealings with it, or cause them to abandon the code of justice prescribed by God.

QUESTIONS

(i) The Prophet's treaties with non-Muslims

- 1 Why did the Prophet consider it important to enter into treaties with non-Muslims?
- 2 What was the Prophet's attitude towards the Jews of Madinah?

- 3 Describe the treaty with the Christians of Najran.
 - 4 What did the Prophet consider to be the right behaviour towards non-Muslims?
 - 5 What do the treaties of the Prophet with non-Muslims teach us?
- (ii) The policy towards non-Muslims.
1. What does the Quran say about compulsion in religion?
 2. What is meant by the 'complete autonomy' of a religious community?
 3. By what laws are non-Muslims judged when living with Muslims?
 4. What was the attitude of the Prophet to the Jews and the Christians?
 5. Why were the non-Muslims loyal to the Muslim government?
- (iii) The rights of non-Muslims in Islam
1. What is the status of non-Muslims in Islam?
 2. Who are the *dhimmis*?
 3. Why are the non-Muslims allowed to be ruled by their own laws?
 4. Write on 'there is no compulsion of faith in Islam'.
 5. Who are the 'People of the Book'?
 6. Write on the rights of non-Muslims with reference to the Quran and Hadith.

UNIT

9

Dawah

(I) PREACHING OF ISLAM

During his last days the Prophet gathered his companions together in the mosque in Madinah and addressed them in these words: God has sent me as His messenger for the entire world. So do not differ with one another. And spread in the land and communicate my message to people inhabiting other places besides Arabia. (*Seerat Ibn Hisham*, 4/279).

It was this injunction of the Prophet that led to the Sahaba (companions of the Prophet) settling in foreign lands. In those countries they either engaged in commerce or earned their living by hard work, all the while communicating to their non-Muslim compatriots the message of monotheism which they had received from the Prophet. Every one of them thus became a virtual ambassador of Islam. This resulted in Islam spreading across the globe. Evidence of this can still be seen in the inhabited world of that time.

Umm Haram bint Milhan, a Sahabiya, (a companion of the Prophet) was married to Ubadah ibn as-Samit Ansari. Along with her husband she undertook several trips to foreign countries. Now her grave is in Cyprus, and is called the grave of the pious woman (*Hayat As-Sahaba* 1/592). The grave of Khalid ibn al-Walid, a prominent Muslim general, who was born in Makkah, is in Hims in Syria.

The same is true of the majority of the Companions of the Prophet. At the time of the Prophet's demise, his companions numbered more than one lakh. However, it is worth noting that if one goes to Makkah and Madinah one will find only a small number of graves there. The reason for this is that these companions left Arabia and spread to various countries far and beyond its borders. The majority of them breathed their last in various Asian and African countries, where their graves still exist.

History is repeating itself in modern times. New circumstances, produced in the wake of the industrial revolution, have resulted in Muslims leaving their homelands to spread all over the world. Today, whichever part of the globe we visit, we will find Muslims there. Mosques and Islamic institutions have come up everywhere. Muslims have settled in these countries either for work or for business. However, in respect of their religion, their actual position is that of Islam's representatives. It is as if each one of them is an ambassador of God. Now the need of the hour is to awaken the missionary spirit in these Muslims settled in foreign lands, so that they may effectively communicate the message of Islam—a task of universal magnitude made incumbent upon them by their new sets of circumstances.

(II) THE PEACE TREATY OF HUDAYBIYA (SULABI HUDAYBIYA)

In the sixth year of the Hijrah, or 628 A.D., the Prophet, acting on the word of God, set out on a pilgrimage to Makkah along with 1400 Companions. But the Quraysh stopped them at a place called al-Hudaybiyyah, some eleven kilometers from Makkah. Here the Prophet signed a peace treaty with the Quraysh, which was called by the Quran "a clear victory." The Treaty provided for ten years of peace between the Quraysh and the Muslims. There was to be no war or treachery between them. The Treaty was concluded with the agreement that the Muslims would not make the pilgrimage that year, but that the following year the Prophet Muhammad and his followers would be free to go to Makkah and stay for three days..

The terms of the Hudaybiyyah Peace Treaty were as follows:

1. that the Muslims would return to Madinah that year without performing the 'Umrah;
2. that the pagans would, however, allow them to do so the next year, provided their stay in Makkah did not exceed three days;
3. that the Muslims would not bring any arms with them;
4. that no Muslim residing in Makkah would migrate to Madinah, but if any migrant in Madinah wished to return to Makkah, he would not be prevented;
5. that pagans visiting Madinah would be permitted to return to Makkah but Muslims visiting Makkah would not be allowed to return;
6. that tribes were at liberty to join any of the two contracting parties.

According to this treaty the Prophet and his companions left Hudaybiya for Madinah. The following year they came again and performed *umra* as stipulated by the treaty of Hudaybiya.

This incident of Hudaybiya embodies a special *sunnah* of the Prophet, that is, not clashing with others unnecessarily; refraining scrupulously from turning any difficult situation into a prestige issue; rather, taking the problem as it is and keeping oneself free from any complexes which could distort matters; attempting to understand matters by rising above sentiments and emotions, and solving problems wisely by giving concessions to the other party.

When the individual refrains from making a controversial matter into one of prestige, this gives rise to serious thinking. This non-emotional thinking helps him to understand that if he were to walk away from the point of controversy, he would find all other paths open to him. The same was the case in Hudaybiya. The Prophet of Islam wanted to enter Makkah, but the Quraysh did not allow him to do so. Yet the Prophet did not let the obstructiveness of the Quraysh become a matter of prestige. His own positive approach enabled him to lead Muslims away from the field of war to the field of *dawah*, (the propagation of Islam) a far vaster arena for their struggle in the cause of Islam.

By unilaterally accepting all the conditions of the opponents of Islam, the Prophet of Islam made a no-war pact called the Hudaybiya Peace Treaty in 6 A.H. On account of his unconditional acceptance of the enemy's terms, some Muslims held it to be a humiliating pact (*Seerah ibn Hisham*, 3/365). But after this treaty was finalized, the chapter in the Quran, called 'Victory' (Al-Fath) was revealed, in which this peace treaty was called 'a clear victory.' (48:1)

The reason for this difference in assessment was that human beings looked at it from the angle of the present, while God looked at it from the angle of the future. It is this reality which has been pointed out in the Quran in these words:

'Allah knew what you did not know.' (48:27)

At the outset, the Hudaybiya peace treaty appeared to mean nothing but surrender and humiliation. But God saw it from the point of view of its practical result in the future. That is why the Quran called it a clear victory. The well known *taabii*, (a disciple of the companions), Ibn Shihab Az Zuhri, says: "Never before in Islam had there been such a great victory before Hudaybiya. Whenever Muslims and non-Muslims met one another before Hudaybiya, they came to the point of confrontation. But when peace prevailed and war was stopped under the treaty, people became safe from one another. In this peaceful atmosphere, they interacted with one another and began exchanging their thoughts. Then whoever had the occasion to hear about Islam, and had sound judgement, entered its fold. After the peace treaty, within a period of two years, as many people or even more accepted Islam as had done so before, only over a much longer period of time."

The Hudaybiya *sunnah* is the sum total of the actions of the Prophet of Islam, resulting in the 'clear victory' as recorded in the Quran, which led the Islamic movement to the age of revolution and ultimate ascendancy. Consequently, such opportunities were opened up for Islam as had never hitherto presented themselves. The impleation of the Sunnah Hudaybiya is, to put it briefly, that problems should be ignored in order to buy time in which to avail of the opportunities.

God has made this world in such a way that, here, according to the Quran, difficulty is always accompanied by ease (Chapter 103). By the very system or law of nature itself, it happens that in this world there are always favourable opportunities alongside problems. By availing of these opportunities, great progress can be made. The reason for failure in life is often traceable to the fact that people become embroiled in controversy. They think that unless all obstacles and hurdles are removed, the onward journey can never be made.

But the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam is totally different. That is, we should refrain from tackling difficulties by confrontational methods. Instead, we must find ways and means of availing of the existing opportunities by avoiding the problems. If necessary, this principle should be observed to the extent of our being willing to accept the unilateral conditions of opponents, treating them as representing a temporary phase.

The incident that took place in Hudaybiya is a specific instance. Apparently, it is regarded as only one of the many such incidents recorded in the *seerah*. But, in reality, it is not just one happening like many others. In actual fact, the spirit of Hudaybiya pervades the entire life of the Prophet. It would not be wrong to say that this was a very well-considered policy of the Prophet, which he adopted throughout his life.

The Hudaybiya policy, in fact, is that in any set of circumstances, problems have to be ignored and opportunities, despite all difficulties, have to be availed of. We find a number of examples of this policy in the life of the Prophet. The Prophet followed this same principle in his Makkan as well as the Madinan period. The only difference between Hudaybiya and other similar incidents is that on the occasion of Hudaybiya this policy was adopted following a bilateral declaration, while at other times it was followed by a unilateral decision.

The method of the Prophet was to study the prevailing sets of circumstances dispassionately and objectively and then follow an appropriate course on his own, without any external pressure. This is what we have called the Hudaybiya policy. For instance, in the early phase in Makkah before the Hijrah, the Prophet communicated his *dawah* message secretly. It did not mean that the Prophet had a meeting with the idolaters of Makkah, and then as a matter of bilateral decision-

making engaged not to propagate his message publicly but in secret. It was rather that by making concessions to circumstances, he on his own adopted the method of secret propagation, without waiting for any social compulsion.

The essence of the Hudaybiya spirit is to completely refrain from entering into any controversy with the other party and to concentrate all one's efforts on achieving one's goal in non-controversial fields. This policy can be followed only when the *dayee* is willing to give concessions to the other party unilaterally—such concessions as the other party at that point in time considers its right. The Hudaybiya policy cannot be followed without such unilateral concession-making. A study of the *seerah* shows that the Prophet always followed the same policy. That is why it became possible for him to minimize his losses and maximize his benefits.

The incident of Hudaybiya provides a historic example of conduct appropriate to the situation. The believers on that occasion, in taking up a godly attitude, entitled themselves to victory, while the Quraysh who took up an ungodly attitude had consequently to suffer defeat and failure.

The incident of Hudaybiya is not simply a chapter of past history. It is a living historical example. It tells believers in every age as to which course in controversial situations is a sure guarantee of success. This involves refraining from making a controversial matter into one of prestige, but rather trying to seek a solution in the spirit of *taqwa* (God-fearing spirit).

(III) THE CONQUEST OF MAKKAH

Call to the World

After the treaty of Hudaybiyah was signed and peace prevailed, the Prophet took full advantage of the opportunities it afforded him. He sent his companions with letters to the rulers and kings whose realms were contiguous with, or close to Arabia. The companions delivered these letters to the rulers of Iran, Byzantium, Abyssinia, Egypt and Syria, among others. These letters contained the fundamental teachings of Islam and the rulers were invited to accept Islam.

Some of them, like Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia, accepted Islam, while others rejected it, but they accepted the letters graciously and sent presents to the Prophet. Only the Emperor of Iran, Khusro Parvez, tore up the Prophet's message in his arrogance. He considered it beneath his dignity to accept such a letter. When the Prophet received this news, he said: "The Emperor of Persia has himself torn his kingdom into pieces." This prediction was fulfilled during the rule of Caliph Umar, when Iran came under Muslim rule.

Fall of Makkah

Two years after the signing of this treaty, it was violated by the Quraysh. The Prophet then announced that the peace agreement had been revoked.

Subsequently, on the 10th of Ramadan, he left for Makkah accompanied by 10,000 companions. This march was conducted in complete secrecy. Only when they had encamped a few miles from the city did the Makkans come to know of their arrival. The Makkans were completely taken by surprise. Faced with this numerical strength, the Makkans found themselves helpless. Therefore they conceded their defeat without any resistance. Makkah was thus conquered without any armed encounter. The Muslims had strict orders to shed no blood. The

Makkans were told that they would be safe if they kept indoors or took refuge in the Kabah or in Abu Sufyan's house.

After the fall of Makkah, the Kabah was purified of all the idols which had been placed in it. Then Bilal, the Negro companion of the Prophet, went up on to the roof of the Kabah and gave the call to prayer (*azan*), then the companions said the thanksgiving prayer, led by the Prophet.

Pardon for All

The Makkan leaders sat in the compound of the Kabah. They were, without exception, the worst types of criminals. Therefore, even if all of them had been put to death, the punishment would have been fully justified. But the Prophet, being of a noble character, did not take any action against them. He unilaterally declared a general amnesty, saying: "Go, you are all free."

The Makkan idolaters could hardly believe their ears. This generous treatment meted out to the fallen foe won all hearts, including those of the most bitter enemies of Islam. After the conquest of their hearts, they had no choice but to embrace Islam. All the insolent Makkans surrendered and joined the Prophet in his mission as his companions. All opposition had just vanished.

Battle of Hunayn

The fall of Makkah was not taken kindly by all the tribes. The Banu Thaqif and the Hawazin, who lived between Makkah and Taif, were highly perturbed by the developments in Makkah. Sensing the danger to their independence and supremacy, they turned aggressive and collected a huge army. This army was encamped in the valley of Hunayn, to which a narrow pass was the only entrance.

Expert archers hid themselves behind rocky crags. The Prophet arrived with an army of 12,000. But when the Muslims filed between the narrow rocky walls of the pass, they panicked under the sudden heavy rain of arrows from the hidden archers. About 11,000 of the 12,000 strong Muslim army turned and fled, for they were not at all prepared for this sudden attack. But the Prophet and some of his close companions showed no signs of panic, reposing their entire trust in God. God sent His succour as promised. Thus, despite the initial setback, the course of battle was altered. The Muslims finally won an extraordinary victory. Six thousand members of the Hawazin tribe were taken prisoner. They were proven war criminals. According to the prevailing custom, they should all have been put to death. But the Prophet pardoned them all and set them free without setting any conditions. This extraordinary and unexpected amnesty impressed these insolent people so greatly that they all entered the fold of Islam. After the conversion of the Hawazin tribe, the rebel Thaqif tribe of Taif lost courage. Within one month they all surrendered and embraced Islam.

The First Hajj under Islam

The first hajj under Islam took place in the ninth year of the Hijrah. The Prophet himself did not lead it but sent Abu Bakr in his place. The ninth year of Hijrah witnessed a rapid spread of Islam. Representatives of tribes inhabiting far-off parts of Arabia poured into Madinah. They had a two-fold purpose—to convert to Islam and to establish relations with the newly formed Islamic state. These delegations came in such large numbers that the year became known as 'the year of delegations.' In this way, one after another, all the tribes of Arabia entered the fold of Islam.

(IV) THE SERMON OF HIJJAT-UL-WIDAH AND ITS IMPORTANCE

In the ninth year of the Hijra the Prophet went on a pilgrimage to Makkah. On the day of the Pilgrimage, he received the revelation containing this verse of the Quran which says:

'This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.' (5:4)

This verse said in effect that the Message which the Prophet had brought from God and which by word and deed he had been expounding all these years, had been completed. Every part of this Message was a blessing. The Message now completed embodied the highest blessings which man could receive from God. The Message is epitomized in the name 'al-Islam', which means submission. Submission was to be the religion of Muslims, the religion of mankind. The Holy Prophet recited this verse in the valley of Muzdalifa, where the pilgrims had assembled. Returning from Muzdalifa, the Prophet stopped at Mina. It was the eleventh day of the month of Dhu'l-Hijja. The Prophet stood before a large gathering of Muslims and delivered an address, famed in history as the farewell address of the Prophet. In the course of this addresss he said:

'O men, lend me an attentive ear. For I do not know whether I will stand before you again in this valley and address you as I address you now. Your lives and your possessions have been made immune by God to attacks by one another until the Day of Judgement. God has appointed for everyone a share in inheritance. No 'will' shall now be admitted which is prejudicial to the interests of a rightful heir. A child born in any house will be regarded as the child of the father in that house. Whoever contests the parentage of this child will be liable to punishment under the Law of Islam. Anyone who attributes his birth to someone else's father, or falsely claims someone to be his master will be cursed by God, His angels and the whole of mankind.'

O men, you have some rights over your wives, but your wives also have some rights over you. Your right over them is that they should live chaste lives, and not adopt ways which may bring disgrace to the husband in the sight of his people; If your wives do dot live up to this, then you have the right to punish them. You can punish them after due inquiry has been made by a competent authority, and your right to punish has been established. Even so, punishment in such a case must not be very severe. But if your wives do no such thing, and their behaviour is not such as would bring disgrace to their husbands, then your duty is to provide for them food and garments and shelter, according to your own standard of living. Remember you must always treat your wives well. God has charged you with the duty of looking after them. Woman is weak and cannot protect her own rights. When you married, God appointed you the trustees of those rights. You brought your wives to your homes under the Law of God. You must not, therefore, breach the trust which God has placed in your hands.

O men, you still have in your possession some prisoners of war. I advise you, therefore, to feed them and to clothe them in the same way and style as you feed and clothe yourselves. If they do anything wrong which you are unable to forgive, then pass them on to someone else. They are part of God's creation. To give them pain or trouble can never be right.

O men, what I say to you, you must bear and remember. All Muslims are as brethren to one another. All of you are equal. All men, whatever nation or tribe they may belong to, and whatever station in life they may hold, are equal.

While he was saying this the Prophet raised his hands and joined the fingers of the one hand with the fingers of the other and then said:

'Just as the fingers of the two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to one another. No one has any right, or any superior claim over another. You are like brothers.'

Proceeding, the Prophet said:

Do you know what month this is? What territory we are in? What day of the year it is today?

The Muslims said in reply, that they knew it was the sacred month, the sacred land and the day of the Hajj.

Then the Prophet said: Just as this month is sacred, this land inviolate, and this day holy, so has God made the lives, property and honour of every man sacred. To take any man's life or his property, or attack his honour, is as unjust and wrong as to violate the sacredness of this day, this month, and this territory. What I command you today is not meant only for today, it is meant for all time. You are expected to remember it and to act upon it until you leave this world and go to the next to meet your Maker.

In conclusion, he said: What I have said to you, you should communicate to the ends of the earth. Maybe those who have not heard me may benefit by it more than those who have heard me (Sihah Sitta, Tabari, Hisham and Khamis).

The Prophet's address is the epitome of the entire teaching and spirit of Islam. It shows how deep was the Prophet's concern for the welfare of man and the peace of the world; also how deep was his regard for the rights of women and other weak creatures.

And for those members of society who were wrongly looked upon, treated as slaves and subjected to cruelties and excesses of all kinds. The Prophet knew his end was near. He had had hints from God about his death. And he felt he should not leave this world without assuring even the prisoners of war of the rights which were theirs in the sight of God. Inequality between man and man oppressed the Prophet.

He taught that human life and human possessions had the same sacredness, which belonged to sacred days, sacred months and sacred places. No man ever showed such concern and such care for the welfare of women, the rights of the weak, and for peace between nations as did the Prophet of Islam. No man ever did as much as the Prophet to promote equality among mankind. No man yearned as much as he for the good of man. No wonder Islam has always upheld the right of women to possess and to inherit property.

Every person who enters Islam becomes the equal of everyone else, no matter how low the society from which he comes. In a Muslim mosque, a king, a religious leader and a common man have the same status; there is no difference between them. Freedom and equality are characteristic contributions of Islam to the culture of the world.

(V) MUHAMMAD AS THE SEAL OF THE PROPHETS

According to Islamic belief, the chain of prophethood came to an end with the Prophet Muhammad, he being the final Prophet. No prophet is now going to be sent to the world by God.

This is repeatedly mentioned in the Quran and *Hadith*. There is a specific verse to this effect in the Quran: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men. But he is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets. And Allah has full knowledge of all things." (33:40)

The word 'seal' (in Arabic *khatam*) as used in the above verse signifies a means of complete closure. (It should not be confused with 'stamp' which is something affixed to a document to guarantee its authenticity). The Prophet Muhammad being the 'seal of the Prophets' means that his advent put a stop to there being any continuation of the chain of prophets.

Abdullah Yousuf Ali, a well-known commentator on the Quran writes: 'When a document is sealed, it is complete and there can be no further addition. Thus the Prophet Muhammad put an end to the long line of messengers. There has been and will be no prophet after Muhammad. Thus when something is sealed, it is finally closed: nothing will come out and nothing will go in.'

There are many traditions to this effect, a few of which we reproduce here:

"Messengership and Prophethood have been severed. Now there will be no Messenger and no Prophet after me." (Ahmad, Tirmidhi).

"I came and I brought to an end the chain of prophethood." (Muslim)

"I am the last comer, there is no prophet after me (Bukhari, Muslim). I am Muhammad, the unlettered prophet and there is no prophet after me." (Ahmad)

Besides the verse mentioned above in Chapter 33, there are several verses which indirectly prove that there would be no other prophet and that there was no need for the advent of any other prophet according to the divine scheme. Here is another verse on this topic:

"The unbelievers have this day despaired of (vanquishing) your religion. Have no fear of them: fear Me. This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed My favour to you. I have chosen Islam to be your faith." (5:3)

'Today I have perfected your religion' means that God has sent all the commands required by human beings. Here the perfection of religion is not referred to in the absolute sense. Rather it refers to the completion of the Quran as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years. Thus it is the completion of the revelation, which is mentioned here, and not the completion of Divine Religion. That is why the wording is not 'Today I have completed religion,' but, 'This day I have completed your religion for you.' The truth is that God has given His religion to man in a perfect form for every age.

In this verse God's perfection of religion does not refer to its comprehensiveness. That is to say that it does not mean that all the possible commands relating to all walks of life have been revealed to the final Prophet. In this verse '...perfected your religion for you' means not the completion of the commands but the consolidation of religion. That is, now the religion of God is based on solid foundations. This consolidation is so perfect that it has risen above all enemy plots, and will not be harmed by them. God has made the believers secure from the fear of enemies.

In more recent times, certain reformers put forward the argument that humanity had passed from the traditional age to the scientific age, or from the handicraft age to the machine age, and therefore the need had arisen to give man fresh guidance in view of the changed circumstances.

This argument has no basis in reality. It is, of course, true that with the aid of the latest technology, many changes have been made in modern times which have affected the course of civilization. But none of these changes has anything to do with revelation or prophethood. These

words of the Prophet: ‘You know your worldly matters better.’ (*Sahih Muslim bi sharah an nawavi*, 15/118) are applicable to the ways and means of daily existence.

God’s prophets came to tell us of the principles that govern life. They did not come to guide us as to how to develop our civilization. Therefore, advancing arguments to prove the need for a new prophet with reference to cultural progress is quite futile. It has to do neither with the *shariah* nor with reason.

For this is not a problem for the solution of which a new prophet is required who would bring new commands. Indeed, the answer to this question is found in the *sirah* of the Prophet himself. When the Prophet migrated to Madinah from Makkah, at that time Jews and idolaters too lived there alongside the Muslims. Madinah’s society, in effect, was multi-religious in character.

At that time the Prophet of Islam issued the “Charter of Madinah.” This Charter, establishing the administrative leadership of the Prophet, declared that the affairs of each religious group would be decided according to its own religious and tribal traditions. This gives us the principle that a multi-religious society should be organised in a way that the central administration rests largely in the hands of the majority community, while each religious or cultural group will enjoy the right to organize its internal matters according to its own beliefs and traditions.

Thus this problem is not one of common belief but rather of common respect – respecting the adherents of all religions. This is the solution we have been given to this problem in Islam.

Of the many verses in the Quran which relate to this issue of the finality of prophethood, the following is of particular significance:

‘Pray during the latter part of the night, an additional duty (for which) your Lord may exalt you to a position of praise and glory.’ (17:79)

(A ‘position of praise and glory’ is translated in Arabic as Muqam-e-Mahmood’).

When God’s religion is so preserved and consolidated, it becomes possible, even without the personal presence of the Prophet, to fully understand God’s religion and practice it. After such momentous events have taken place, as marked the life of the Prophet, humanity does not continue to live in the darkness of ignorance; it is brought into the light of knowledge. Thus for any seeker after truth it becomes not only possible but also easy to learn the will of God. And this is the reason for sending the prophets to the world. When this purpose is being served, there is no reason whatsoever to send another prophet.

A new prophet comes when the religion brought by the previous prophet is not preserved in its original form, that is, when the world is deprived of true guidance from God. Now when the consolidation of religion has become a guarantee that no plot or antagonistic move can distort the original form of God’s religion, there is no need for the arrival of a new prophet.

QUESTIONS

- (i) The preaching of Islam
 - 1. Why did the Companions of the Prophet travel to faraway lands?
 - 2. Why can all Muslims be called ambassadors of Islam?

3. Write a short note on the spread of Islamic institutions and faith to all parts of the globe.

(ii) The peace treaty of Hudaybiya (*Sulahi-Hudaybiya*)

1. In what year was the peace treaty entered into?
2. Who were the two parties to the peace treaty?
3. What were the terms of the peace treaty of Hudaybiya?
4. What lesson do we learn from the Prophet's attitude while he negotiated the treaty?
5. Why did the Prophet consider peace so important?

(iii) The conquest of Makkah

- 1 When was the peace treaty of Hudaybiya violated by the Quraysh?
- 2 How many companions accompanied the Prophet when he set out to Makkah?
- 3 Why did the Makkans give in without a fight?
- 4 How was the Kabah purified?
- 5 Why did the Prophet pardon all the people of Makkah?
- 6 Describe the battle of Hunayn State the reasons for it, as well as its outcome.
- 7 Describe the First Hajj under Islam.

(iv) The Sermon of Hijat ul widah and its importance.

- 1 In what year did the Prophet perform the last pilgrimage?
- 2 On what occasion did the Prophet deliver the last sermon?
- 3 What are the main points of the last sermon?
- 4 What is the importance of the last sermon?
- 5 How is the Prophet's address the epitome of the entire teaching and spirit of Islam?
- 6 Write an essay on the equality of all Muslims with reference to the Last Sermon.
- 7 Write on the duties and rights of Muslims in the light of the Last Sermon.

(v) Muhammad as the seal of the Prophets

- 1 Why is the Prophet Muhammad called the Seal of the Prophets?
- 2 In how many years was the whole Quran revealed?
- 3 In what sense did God 'perfect the religion' for the Muslims?
- 4 Why there is no need for God to send any more prophets?

UNIT

10

The day-to-day
life of the Prophet
(a brief account)

(I) WORSHIP

In order to have a proper understanding of why the Prophet Muhammad was so effective in everything he did, we should look at his character and the special abilities that God bestowed upon him. He was of a noble character, displayed great patience and perseverance, was always just and knew how to communicate with others. His purity and worship of God had no equal.

Before becoming a prophet, Muhammad would go into seclusion to meditate. He would spend many nights in a cave on Mount Hira and it was there that he received his first revelation.

After becoming a prophet, Muhammad was ordered by God to spend part of the night in prayer:

'O you folded in garments! Stand up to prayer by night, but not all night, half of it or a little less, and recite the Quran in slow rhythmic tones.' (73:1-4)

When the Prophet Muhammad prayed alone at night, he would stand for several hours. His wife Aisha asked him: 'O Messenger of God! Why do you pray so much when Allah has already forgiven you your sins, what happened in the past and what may follow?' He replied: 'Should I not be a grateful servant of Allah?' (Bukhari, Muslim). When the Prophet led others in prayer, he would shorten his prayers. His advice was to shorten the congregational prayer, because among those praying were the sick and the elderly who could not stand too long.

The Quran says about the Prophet's prayers: 'And put your trust in God, the Exalted in Might, the Merciful Who sees you standing upright in prayer and your movements among those who prostrate themselves. For God hears and knows all things.' (26:217-220)

In addition to regular prayers, the Prophet Muhammad taught us to remember God and seek His forgiveness at all times. He said: 'By Allah! I seek His forgiveness seventy times every day.'

The Prophet Muhammad taught us that prayer is a way of saying how we need God's grace for every single thing we have, and how God's power over all things is total. There are different kinds of prayers. Some are to praise Allah for all the things in the world and some are to thank Him for His blessings. We often ask Allah to forgive us, telling Him of our fears and worries. At other times we pray for others to be helped and cared for.

The Prophet advised people to pray in times of peace and plenty, and not just in times of difficulty. One of his favourite prayers in the Quran was for his parents: "My Lord, have mercy on them, as they have raised me up when I was little." He also said brotherly love was a great virtue. In his prayers to his Creator for all of humanity, he would say: "O Lord, all Your servants are brothers."

The Prophet urged his followers to ask Allah for forgiveness: "Allah holds out His hand at night for those who have done wrong during the day to repent. And He holds out His hand during the day for those who have done wrong at night to repent."

To have God's special protection, he would pray, "Allah, save me from leprosy, insanity and incurable diseases. O Allah, save me from want, poverty and being humbled. Save me from doing wrong or being wronged."

The Prophet forbade believers to pray for their own deaths or even to think about suicide. "If anyone is in a very dreadful state," said the Prophet, "let him pray, 'O Allah, keep me alive so long as life is good for me, and take away my soul to Yourself when death is best for me.'"

One who prays for another in his or her absence will most probably have his prayers fulfilled for, as the Prophet explained, to every believer Allah has assigned an angel who says, "Amen! And to you the same." His own selflessness was shown by his praying even for those who harmed him.

The Prophet, a keen observer of nature, regarded all natural things with a great sense of wonder. For example, seeing a new moon, he would pray, "O Allah, let its rays bring us security, peace and submission." Looking at the moon, he would continue, "My Lord and Your Lord is Allah. May this be a crescent of guidance and goodness."

The Prophet would urge people to remember Allah constantly, as he believed that "one who remembers his Lord and one who does not remember his Lord are as unlike as the living and the dead." Therefore, the Prophet would urge his followers to remember Allah by day and by night, even if only by saying a few words.

Two phrases are light on the tongue yet heavy in the balance, and loved by the Merciful: *Subhan Allah wa bihamdihi, Subhan Allahil-Azeem.* (Glory be to God and all Praises are His, Glory be to God, the Magnificent.)

(II) FAMILY LIFE

The Prophet of Islam was a man chosen by God for His divine mission and his life was an example of a perfect life. It serves as a model to be followed in all walks of life. His family life was full of love, tenderness and care for his wives and children. His first wife, Khadija, whom he married before he attained the prophethood, was his greatest supporter in times of difficulty and the first convert to Islam. As long as she lived, the Prophet did not marry any other woman. After her death, he married Sauda, who was a widow. She was the only Muslim in her whole family and thus required protection and help. On the advice of some of his Companions, the Prophet married her and took her under his own protection.

Aisha, the daughter of Abu Bakr, was only a little girl when the Prophet chose her for his wife. She was the only one of his wives who was not married earlier. All the other marriages of the Prophet, after his marrying Aisha, were either widows or divorced women. By marrying

them the Prophet gave them his protection and security, thus enabling them to live their lives with self-respect.

The Prophet Muhammad was extremely kind and fair towards all his wives. If on certain occasions any one of them did not treat him with due deference, he merely smiled and passed the matter over. One day he said to Aisha: 'Aisha, whenever you are upset with me, I always come to know it.' Aisha asked: 'How is that?' He replied: 'I have noticed that when you are pleased with me and in the course of conversation you have to refer to God, you refer to Him as the Lord of Muhammad. But, if you are not pleased with me, you refer to Him as the Lord of Ibrahim.' At this Aisha laughed and said he was right. This incident is reported in the traditions of Bukhari.

Though after Khadija's death the Prophet married other women, he remembered her often. If by chance he saw any article that had belonged to her, he was always overcome by emotions. After the Battle of Badr among the prisoners taken by the Muslims was also a son-in-law of the Prophet. He possessed nothing, which he could offer as a ransom and obtain freedom. His wife, Zainab, the Prophet's daughter, sent to Madinah some jewellery, which she had received from her mother, Khadija, to ransom her husband. When the Prophet saw it, he recognized it immediately and was greatly affected. He said to the Companions: 'I have no authority in this matter, but I know that this necklace is cherished by Zainab as the last memento of her dead mother, and, provided it commands itself to you, I would suggest that she should not be deprived of it and it may be returned to her.' The Companions said they had nothing against this and readily adopted his suggestion.

The Prophet loved his daughters very much and showered lots of affection on his little grandsons, Hasan and Husain, the sons of Fatima. He kissed them and played with them. When the Prophet was on his deathbed, Fatima was saddened and cried but her father told her they would meet in the Hereafter, and her face lit up when she heard that. She died six months after her father.

As a human being the Prophet was endowed with all the human emotions. He enjoyed a simple life and lived in fear of God. But he was not spared any sorrows and suffered in life like any other human beings. When his infant sons died he was saddened and his heart was filled with sorrow, as would happen with any other man.

The traditions narrate the life of the Prophet in great detail for, later on, it served as a model for the conduct of all Muslims. Therefore, there are innumerable hadith dealing with every aspect of his life: advice on marriage, the bringing up of children, the treatment of servants and slaves, behaviour within the confines of one's home, the way to eat and drink, how to dress. When asked about the Prophet, Aisha said: 'He was the embodiment of the Quran.'

(III) ATTITUDE TOWARDS NEIGHBOURS, SLAVES AND STRANGERS

The Prophet Muhammad is introduced in the Qur'an in these words:

And We have not sent you forth, but as a mercy to mankind (21: 107).

According to a tradition recorded in the *Sahih* of Imam Muslim, when his opponents greatly increased their persecution, his Companions asked him to curse them. At this the Prophet replied, "I have not been sent to lay a curse upon men but to be a blessing to them." His

opponents continued to treat him and his Companions with injustice and cruelty, but he always prayed for them.

Once he was so badly stoned by his enemies that the blood began to spurt from all over his body. This happened when he went to Ta'if, where the Hijaz aristocracy used to while away their summer days. When he attempted to call them to Islam, instead of listening to his words of wisdom, they set the street urchins upon him, who kept chasing him till nightfall. Even at that point, when he was utterly exhausted and bleeding from head to foot, all he said was: "O my Lord, guide my people along the true path as they are ignorant of the truth."

All this tells us what kind of awareness he wanted to bring about in man. His mission was to bring people abreast of the reality that all men and women, although inhabiting different regions of the world, and seemingly different from one another as regards their colour, language, dress, culture, etc., were each other's blood brothers. Hence a correct relationship will be established between all human beings only if they regard one another as sisters and brothers. Only then will proper feelings of love and respect prevail throughout the world.

According to a *hadith* (sayings of the Prophet), the Prophet once said, "A true believer is one with whom others feel secure. One who returns love for hatred." The Prophet made it clear that one who would only return love when love was offered him was on a lower ethical plane. We should never think it is only if people treat us well, that we should treat them well. We should rather make a point of being good to those who are not good of us and to not wronging those who harm us.

The Prophet's own example is testified to by Anas ibn Malik, who served the Prophet for ten years. He says that the Prophet never ever rebuked him. "When I did something, he never questioned my manner of doing it; and when I did not do something, he never questioned my failure to do it. He was the most good-natured of all men." Such conduct gained him the respect even of his enemies and his followers stood by him through all kinds of hardship and misfortune. He applied the principles on which his own life was based in equal measure to those who followed his path and to those who had harmed or disconcerted him.

It could never happen in the present world that everyone's thinking, tastes, aptitudes, likes and dislikes exactly coincided. For many reasons, differences do arise in this world. But then, what is the permanent solution to the problem? The solution lies in tolerance, called *i'raz* in Arabic. The Prophet's entire life served as a perfect example of this principle. According to his wife, 'Aisha, "He was a personification of the Quran."

That is to say, the Prophet moulded his own life in accordance with the ideal pattern of life which he presented to others in the form of the Qur'an. He never beat a servant, or a woman, or anyone else. He did, of course, fight for what was right. Yet, when he had to choose between two alternatives, he would take the easier course, provided it involved no sin. No one was more careful to avoid sin than he. He never sought revenge on his own behalf for any wrong done to him personally. Only if God's commandments had been broken would he mete out retribution for the sake of God. It was such conduct, which gained the Prophet universal respect.

In the early Meccan period, when the antagonists far exceeded the Prophet's companions in number, it often happened that when the Prophet would stand to pray, his detractors would come near him and whistle and clap in order to disturb him, but the Prophet did not even once show his anger at such acts. He always opted for the policy of tolerance and avoidance of confrontation.

Neighbours

The Prophet always treated his neighbours with extreme kindness and consideration. He used to say that the angel Gabriel had emphasized consideration for one's neighbours so often that he sometimes began to think that a neighbour would perhaps be included among the prescribed heirs. Abu Dharr relates that the Holy Prophet said to him: "Abu Dharr, while broth is being cooked for your family, add a little more water to it so that your neighbour may also share in it.". This does not mean that the neighbour should not be invited to share in other things but, as the Arabs were mostly a migratory people and their favourite dish was broth, the Prophet referred to this dish as a typical one and taught that one should not think so much of the taste of the food as of the obligation to share it with one's neighbour.

Abu Huraira relates: "On one occasion the Holy Prophet exclaimed: 'I call God to witness that he is not a believer! I call God to witness that he is not a believer! I call God to witness that he is not a believer!' The Companions inquired: 'Who is not a believer, O Messenger of Allah?' and he replied: 'He whose neighbour is not secure against injury and ill-treatment at his hands.' On one occasion when he was addressing women, he said: 'If anybody finds only the foot of a goat to cook, that person should share it with his or her neighbour.' He asked people not to object to their neighbours driving pegs into their walls or putting them to any other use which occasioned no injury. Abu Huraira relates: "The Prophet said: 'He who believes in God and in the Day of Judgement should cause no inconvenience to his neighbour: he who believes in God and in the Day of judgement should cause no inconvenience to his guest, and he who believes in God and in the Day of Judgement should utter only words of virtue or he should keep quiet' (Muslim).

In another *hadith* the Prophet said: "If a believer is not able to benefit others, he must at least do them no harm."

This shows that to the Prophet the man who becomes useful to others leads his life on a higher plane. But if he fails to do so, he should at least create no trouble for his fellow men. For a man to be a really good servant of God, he must live in this world as a no-problem person. There is no third option.

The Prophet once borrowed some money from a Jew. After a few days the Jew came to demand the re-payment of his debt. The Prophet told him that at that moment he had nothing to pay him with. The Jew said that he would not let him go until he had paid him back. And so the Jew stayed there, from morning till night, holding the Prophet captive. At that time the Prophet was the established ruler of Madinah and could have easily taken action against him. His Companions naturally wanted to rebuke the man and chase him away. But the Prophet forbade this, saying, "The Lord has forbidden us to wrong anyone."

The Jew continued to hold the Prophet captive until the following morning. But with the first light of dawn, the Jew was moved by the Prophet's tolerance, and he thereupon embraced Islam. In spite of being a rich man, he had detained the Prophet the day before on account of a few pence. But now the Prophet's noble conduct had had such an impact on him that he was willing to give all his wealth to the Prophet, saying, "Spend it as you please."

One day the Prophet was sitting in the mosque along with his companions. A Bedouin entered the mosque and started urinating. The Companions rushed to catch him and give him a good beating. But the Prophet did not allow them to do so. After the Bedouin had urinated, he asked his Companions to bring a bucket of water and wash the place. Afterwards the Prophet called the man and with gentleness and affection explained to him that this was a place of worship and that it should be kept clean.

Since the Prophet avoided war at all costs, he strove to bring about a peace agreement between him and the Meccans. After great efforts on his part, the non-Muslims agreed to the finalizing of a two-year peace treaty, which was drafted and signed at al-Hudaybiyyah.

Once the Prophet was seated by the way side in Madinah, along with his companions. During this time a funeral procession passed by. On seeing this, the Prophet stood up. Seeing the Prophet stand up, one of his Companion remarked that the funeral was that of a Jew, that is, a non-Muslim. The Prophet replied, 'Was he not a human being?'

This incident illustrates how an atmosphere of mutual love and compassion can be brought about in the world only when we consciously rise above all demarcation of caste, colour and creed. Just as the Prophet did, we too must look at all men as human beings who deserve to be respected at all times

Slaves

The Prophet Muhammad constantly exhorted those who owned slaves to treat them kindly and well. He had laid down that if the owner of a slave beat his slave or abused him, the only reparation that he could make was to set the slave free (Muslim).

He devised means for the freeing of slaves on every pretext. According to a tradition, if a person owning a slave sets him free, God will in recompense save every part of his body corresponding to every part of the slave's body from the torment of Hell. Again, he laid down that a slave should be asked to perform only those tasks that he could easily accomplish. Also, when he was set to do a task, his master should help him in performing it, so that the slave should experience no feeling of humiliation or degradation (Muslim). If a master went on a journey accompanied by a slave, it was his duty to share his mount with the slave either by both riding together or each riding in turn. Abu Huraira, who used to spend the whole of his time after becoming a Muslim in the company of the Prophet and who had repeatedly heard the Prophet's injunctions regarding the treatment of slaves, said:

"I call God to witness in Whose hands is my life that, were it not for the opportunities that I have of joining the Prophet in every task and of performing the Pilgrimage and were it not that I have opportunities of serving my old mother, I would have desired to die a slave, for the Holy Prophet constantly insisted upon slaves being well and kindly treated." (Muslim)

Ma'rur bin Suwaid relates that he once saw Abu Dharr Ghaffari (a Companion of the Prophet) wearing clothes exactly similar to those worn by his slave, I and he asked him why. He replied. During the lifetime of the Prophet I once taunted a man with his mother having been a slave. Upon this the Prophet rebuked me and said:

'You still seem to entertain pre-Islamic notions. What are slaves? They are your brethren and the source of your power. God in His wisdom confers temporary authority upon you over them. He who has such authority over his brother should feed him with the kind of food he himself eats; clothe him with the kind of clothes he himself wears and should not set him a task beyond his strength and should himself help him in whatever he is asked to do.'"

On another occasion the Prophet said:

"When your servant cooks food for you and sets it out before you, you should ask him to sit down with you to eat or at least to partake of a portion of it in your company, for he has established a right in it by working on it." (Muslim).

QUESTIONS

(i) Worship

1. What did the Prophet tell his followers to pray for?
2. Why did the Prophet stress the importance of prayer for forgiveness?
3. Why did the Prophet forbid praying for one's own death?
4. What does remembering God constantly mean?
5. What are the two phrases that believers should keep on repeating?

(ii) Family life

1. How did the Prophet treat his wives?
2. Why did the Prophet respect Khadija?
3. What did the Prophet suggest should be done when he saw that his daughter Zainab had sent a necklace, which once had belonged to Khadija, as ransom for her husband?
4. How did the Prophet treat his grandsons?
5. How is the family life of the Prophet to be emulated by the Muslims today?

(iii) The Prophet's attitude towards strangers, slaves and neighbours..

1. How were slaves to be treated in Islam?
2. What rights could slaves claim in Islam?
3. What did the Prophet teach about neighbours?
4. Why is it so important to treat slaves, neighbours and strangers kindly?
5. Who is considered a neighbour?
6. Write on the Prophet's attitude towards slaves, neighbours and strangers, illustrating it with verses from the Quran and some hadith.