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The Holy Prophet *If a Muslim plants a tree and men and animals eat from it, all of*
Muhammad^(sa) said: *this will be regarded as an everlasting act of charity.*

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Special contributors:

- Amatul-Hadi Ahmad
- Farina Qureshi
- Proof-readers:**
- Shaukia Mir
- Abdul Ghany Jahangeer
- Khan

Design and layout:

Tanveer Khokhar

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Muhammad Hanif

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Notes & Comments

Tobacco - its continued globalisation and effects

Tobacco is the second major cause of death in the world. It is responsible for the deaths of 1 in every 10 adults worldwide, amounting to 5 million people a yearⁱ if smoking patterns continue.ⁱⁱ This number is likely to double in the next 10 years. It is to offset this pattern that the world's first global health treaty came into force on 27 February 2005. Formally known as the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), it is the first legal instrument designed to reduce tobacco-related deaths and disease around the world it has been signed by 168 countries and ratified by 57 of them. Unfortunately, some of the richest nations, including the US, have not signed the treaty. The demands made by the treaty are health warnings on cigarette packets to cover 30% of the

packet and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. Although smoking has not been directly outlawed in the Holy Qur'an, the treaty is a step towards following the Qur'anic injunctions to enjoin good and forbid evil and to hasten to vie with one another in good works (Ch.3:V.115).

Moreover, it is not only the health costs which have spurred on this global treaty. Economic costs of tobacco use are equally devastating. For example, the World Bank estimates that high-income countries spend currently between 6% and 15% of their total health-care costs to treat tobacco-related diseases. In addition to the high public health costs of treating tobacco-caused diseases, tobacco kills people at the height of their productivity, depriving families of bread-

winners and nations of a healthy workforce. Due to increased sickness, tobacco users are also less productive while they are alive. For example, although Canada gains \$3 billion annually from tobacco, tobacco's costs – including physicians' services, hospital bills, drugs and administrative services come to \$2.4 billion. To this another \$1.5 billion can be added for the loss of productivity caused by smoking-related health diseases. So, leaving aside environmental costs, the tobacco industry causes Canada a loss of almost \$1 billion annually.ⁱⁱⁱ

However, in recent years as Western nations and people have become increasingly aware of the health, social and economic problems of smoking and enforce stricter regulations, the tobacco industry is increasingly looking to the East in the search for new markets. The tobacco industry has laid a firm grip on Developing World markets – with governments playing an active role in the promotion of the industry, as well as on

Developing World minds – where 84% of the world's 1.8 billion smokers live.^{iv}

Due to the immaturity of economies and the health sector in poorer countries, the effects on less developed societies are more serious. In Egypt, annual costs of treating diseases caused by tobacco use have been estimated at US\$545.5 million and in China health costs of smoking were estimated at US\$6.5 billion per year.^v This diverts scarce resources away from other much needed sectors such as education and infrastructural development.

Studies across all the regions in the world show that it is the poorest people who tend to smoke the most in both developing and developed countries, and who bear most of the disease burden. In poorest households in some low-income countries as much as 10% of total household expenditure is on tobacco. This means that these families have less money to spend on basic items such as food, education and health care.^{vi}

Not only is tobacco linked to poverty, but it also has a bearing on development. Researchers working in parts of Africa have shown the effect which growing tobacco has on the physical environment. Tobacco has been referred to as the 'greedy weed'^{viii} for it depletes the soil of its nutrients taking up to 3 years for it to regenerate. During this time the land lies fallow unable to support any food crop.

Thus, what we see is that after years of social relaxation in the name of freedom of choice, there is an explicit acknowledgment that the liberty much sought after is not as sweet as once thought. The problems which tobacco has caused are global in magnitude and as such the solutions should also be global. The treaty is a step in the right direction towards fulfilling this objective, and in accordance with Islamic teachings, does not outlaw smoking, but rather through increasing awareness to the dangers of smoking on the health, social, economic and environmental well-being of

society, people are given more knowledge on which to base their personal choices.

By Maidah Ahmad – Canada

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Knowledge of God - part 11

This series sets out, in the words of the Promised Messiah^(as), Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a summary of his exposition of four outstanding topics: ISLAM; ALLAH, THE EXALTED; THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa) and THE HOLY QUR'AN. The original compilation, in Urdu, from which these extracts have been translated into English, was collated with great care and diligence by Syed Daud Ahmad Sahib, Allah have mercy on him and reward him graciously for his great labour of love. Amin. The English rendering is by the late Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, may Allah be pleased with him, and is quoted from *The Essence of Islam*, Volume 1. All references throughout, unless otherwise specifically mentioned, are from the Holy Qur'an.

Knowledge of God

It is a very fine question, what is the nature of the knowledge of Almighty God through the perfection of which He is aware of the overt and the covert of every particle? It is true that reason cannot comprehend the true condition of that knowledge, yet it is entirely true to say that of all types of knowledge that can be conceived of, that knowledge is more powerful and stronger and fuller and more complete. When we observe our own ways of acquiring knowledge and consider its diverse types, we find that the greatest and most

certain and most absolute of all the types of knowledge is the knowledge that we possess concerning our own existence.

No man can in any condition forget his own existence or entertain any doubt concerning it. So far as our reason extends, we find this type of knowledge more powerful and stronger and fuller and more complete. We find it inconsistent with the perfection of God Almighty that His knowledge with regard to His creatures should in any way be less perfect than this, inasmuch as it would be a

default that God Almighty should not possess the highest kind of knowledge that could be conceived of and it can be objected why God's knowledge fell short of the highest kind. Was it by His own design or by some compulsion? It could not be by His own design for no one deliberately permits a deficiency with regard to himself. Then how should God Almighty, Who loves perfection, permit such a deficiency concerning Himself? If it is said that it is by some compulsion, then it would follow that the compeller would be supreme over God Almighty in his powers and his strength, so that on account of that excess of strength he should be able to restrain God in His designs. But that is impossible in itself because nobody is supreme over God Almighty through whose obstruction He could be confronted with some compulsion. It is established, therefore, that God's knowledge is perfect.

We have just now affirmed that of all types of knowledge the

most perfect is that which a person has with regard to his own existence. We have therefore to acknowledge that God's knowledge concerning His creation is like that knowledge though we cannot comprehend its true nature. Our reason tells us that the most certain and absolute knowledge is that which should exclude any distance or barrier between the knower and that which is to be known. That knowledge is of this type. As a man is not dependent upon other sources of knowledge in order to be aware of his own existence, to be animate and to consider oneself as an animate are so close to each other as to be identical. Such should be the knowledge of God Almighty concerning the whole universe. Here also there should be no difference and distance between the Knower and that which is to be known. This high quality of knowledge which God needs for the establishment of His Godhead can be predicated of Him, when it is accepted concerning Him that there is so much closeness and such relationship between

Him and the subject of His knowledge, greater than which it is not possible to imagine.

This perfect relationship with the subjects of His knowledge can exist only when all of them should have proceeded from Him and should be His creation. Their being must be dependent upon His Being. In other words, when the situation should be such that the true existence should be only His and all others should have proceeded from Him and should subsist with His support. Even after their creation, they should not be independent of Him, nor be separate from Him, but in truth after the creation of all things, He alone should be truly alive and all other life should have proceeded from Him and should exist only with His support. He alone should be subject to no limitation and everything else, souls as well as bodies, should be confined within the limits set by Him. He should comprehend everything; everything should be comprehended in His *Rububiyyat*. There should be nothing which should not have proceeded from His



The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as). In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

His claims constitute the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

hand and should not be included within His *Rububiyyat*, nor should it exist without His support. It is only in such a situation that God Almighty would have a perfect relationship with the subjects of His

knowledge. This relationship is referred in the Holy Qur'an as:

...We are closer to him than even his jugular vein.
(Ch.50: V.17)

Similarly at another place it is said:

... He is the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining...
(Ch.2:V.256)

That is to say: He alone sustains true life and everything else has proceeded from Him and has a life because of Him.

In truth He is the Life of all lives and is the Power of all powers....

If the soul is not accepted as having been created, then there would be no reason to assume that someone who bears the fictitious title of Permeshwar would have any knowledge concerning the reality of the soul, whose knowledge would extend to the ultimate limits of the soul. A person who has full

knowledge concerning a thing has the power to make it also, and if he has not the power then his knowledge must be defective in some respect. In the absence of full knowledge, it would be difficult to distinguish between similar things, let alone to have the power of making them. If God Almighty is not the Creator of things then He not only suffers from the deficiency that His knowledge is incomplete, but it also follows that He would be subject to confusion in distinguishing between millions of souls and might often mistake the soul of X as the soul of Y. Partial knowledge often leads to such confusion. (*Surma Chashm Arya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 2, pp. 221-226 footnote*)

It might be asked that if full comprehension of a thing implies the power to create it then, as God's knowledge of His Own Being is perfect, is He the Creator of His Own Being or has He power to create the like of Himself? The answer to the first part is that were God Almighty the

Creator of His Own Being, it would involve His being in existence before His coming into existence and this is an impossibility. God Almighty possessing complete knowledge of His Own Being means that, in this instance, the Knower and His knowledge and that which is known are all the same and cannot be separated. There is here nothing which should be regarded as having been created. God's knowledge of His Own Being cannot be compared to anything else. In this instance, the Knower is not something apart from that which is known so that one may be designated as the Creator and the other as creation. The proper way to put it is that His Being is uncreated and is eternally and everlastingly Self-Existing and that is the meaning of God.

The second part of the objection is that God's complete knowledge of Himself means that He has the power to create His Own like. The answer to this is that God's power directs itself towards matters which are not inconsistent with His eternal

attributes. It is true that God, if He so desires, can create that of which He has perfect knowledge, but it is correct and does not follow that whatever He has the power to do He should proceed to do without regard to His perfect attributes. In the exercise of all His powers, He has regard to His perfect attributes and He has it in mind whether that which He wills is not contradictory to His perfect attributes. For instance, He has the power to burn a pious and righteous person in the fire of Hell, but His mercy and justice and attribute of reward would stand in the way, and, therefore, He never does it. In the same way His power is never inclined to destroy Himself for this would be contrary to His eternal life. He does not create His Own like because His attributes of Unity and Peerlessness, which are eternal, prevent Him from thinking in that way. It should be understood that to be unable to do something is one thing, but despite the power to do a thing, not to address Himself to something contradictory to His attributes, is

quite another. (*Surma Chashm Arya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 2, pp. 230-233 footnote*)

It is characteristic of God Almighty alone to know the hidden by virtue of His personal power and His personal condition. From ancient times, those who based themselves upon truth have believed that it is proper for God Almighty that He should know the hidden. This is a personal speciality of His. He has no associate in this attribute as He has no associate in His other attributes. It is, therefore, impossible for anyone to have personal knowledge of the hidden whether he is a Prophet or *Muhaddath* or *Wali*. It is true, however, that favourites and chosen ones are given knowledge of hidden mysteries through revelation. This has been so since ancient times and continues today, but such experience is now confined to the followers of the Holy Prophet^(sa).

(*Tasdiq-un-Nabi, pp.26-27 or Maktubat-e-Ahmadiyya, Vol. 3, p.57*)

Our Ever-Living and All-Sustaining God talks to me like one person talks to another. I ask Him something and supplicate Him and He answers in words full of power. If this should happen a thousand times, He would not fail to answer. In His words He discloses wonderful hidden matters and displays scenes of extraordinary powers till He makes it clear that He alone is the One Who should be called God. He accepts prayers and intimates their acceptance. He resolves great difficulties and through repeated supplications revives those who are sick and very nearly dead. He discloses all these designs of His in advance through His words which relate to future events. He proves that He is the God of heaven and earth. He addressed me and told me that He would safeguard me against death by plague and all those who dwell in my house in piety and righteousness. Who else is there in this age except myself who has published such a revelation and disclosed God's promise concerning the members of his

family and other pious people who dwell within his house?

(Naseem-e-Da'wat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 19, pp. 448-449)

Among the natural conditions of man, is the search for a Higher Being for Whom there is an attraction in his heart of hearts. The effect of that search begins to be felt as soon as a child is born. As soon as it is born, it exhibits a spiritual characteristic which is that it leans towards its mother and entertains a natural affection for her. As its senses develop and the flower of its nature blooms, this attraction of love, which is inherent in it, begins to exhibit itself patently. It finds no comfort anywhere except in the lap of its mother. If it is separated from its mother and is put at a distance from her, its life becomes bitter, and though a heap of bounties may be placed before it, it finds its true comfort only in its mother's lap and nowhere else. Then what is this attraction that it feels towards its mother?

In truth, it is the same attraction which is vested in a child's nature for God. Every exhibition of affection by a person in fact proceeds from that very attraction, and the restlessness of a lover which a person experiences is in truth a reflection of that very love, as if he takes up diverse things and examines them in search for something that he has lost and whose name he has forgotten. A person's love of property, or children, or wife, or his soul being drawn towards the song of a sweet voiced singer, are in fact all in search of the lost Beloved. As man cannot perceive with his physical eyes the Imperceptible Being Who is latent in everyone like fire and yet is hidden from everyone, nor can he find Him through the exercise of his imperfect reason, he has been subject to many errors in his understanding of Him and through his errors he renders to others that which is His due. God Almighty has mentioned an excellent illustration in the Holy Qur'an that the world is like a great hall paved smooth with slabs of glass

and a current of water flows underneath them which runs very fast. A person looking at the slabs of glass wrongly imagines them to be water also and is afraid of walking upon them as he would be afraid of walking upon water, though in reality they are only glass but very clear and transparent. Thus, these great objects in heaven like the sun and the moon etc. are transparent like glass and are worshipped by mistake. Behind them, there is a Higher Power at work which is flowing swiftly like water. It is the mistake of those who worship created things that they attribute to the glass all this activity which is being manifested by the Power behind it. This is the explanation of the verse:

*.. 'It is a palace paved smooth
with slabs of glass'...*
(Ch.27:V.45)

As the Being of God Almighty, despite its brightness, is hidden beyond sight, the physical universe is not adequate for its true recognition. This is the reason why those who

depended upon the physical system despite their careful consideration of its perfect orderliness which comprehends hundreds of wonders within itself, and despite their pursuit of astronomy and physics and philosophy to a degree which shows that they had penetrated through heaven and earth, could not get rid of their doubts and suspicions and became involved in all types of errors and wandered far afield chasing their imaginary will-o'-the-wisp. If they thought of the Being of the Creator, they proceeded only thus far that observing the great orderliness of the wise system they imagined that it should have a Creator. It is obvious, however, that this idea is incomplete and this understanding is imperfect, for to say that this system needs a God is not equal to saying that God in fact exists. This was only their conjectural understanding which cannot bestow satisfaction and contentment upon the heart, nor can it altogether remove doubts. This is not a cup which could quench the thirst

of complete understanding which is inherent in man's nature. In fact, such imperfect understanding is very dangerous, for after a great deal of noise it leads to nothing.

So long as God Almighty does not affirm His Existence by His word, as indeed He has done, the mere observation of His handiwork does not afford satisfaction. For instance, if we see a room which is bolted from the inside, our first reaction would be that there is someone inside who has put up the bolts for it is impossible to put up the bolts from the outside. But if over a long period no one from inside should respond to repeated calls, we would have to abandon our assumption that there is someone inside and we would imagine that there is no one inside and that the bolts have been put up through some clever device. This is the case of the philosophers whose understanding does not go beyond the observation of God's work. It is a great mistake to imagine that God is like a corpse which has to

be brought out of its grave by man. If God has to be discovered through human effort, all our hopes of such a God are vain.

Indeed God is the Being Who has ever called mankind to Himself by announcing: **I am present.** It would be impertinence to imagine that man has laid Him under an obligation through his understanding of Him and that if there had been no philosophers He would have remained unknown. It is another impertinence to enquire whether God has a tongue wherewith He can speak. Has He not created all heavenly bodies and the earth without physical hands? Does He not see the whole world without physical eyes? Does He not hear us without physical ears? Was it then not necessary that He should also speak?

It is not at all correct to say that all God's speaking has been left behind and that there is nothing in future. We cannot seal up His words and His speech in any age. Without doubt, He is ready to enrich the

seekers from the fountain of revelation as He used to do before. The gates of His grace are as open today as they were at any time. It is true, however, that the needs for law and limitations having been fulfilled, all Messengerships and Prophethoods found their perfection at their last point, which was the person of our lord and master, the Holy Prophet^(sa).

(Islami Usul ki Philosophy, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 10, pp. 363-367)

True knowledge of God depends upon this that we should reach the Living God Who speaks clearly to His favourites and bestows satisfaction and contentment upon them with His Majestic and delicious speech. He speaks to them as one man speaks to another and converses with them as a certainty that is beyond doubt or suspicion. He listens to them and responds to them and hearing their supplications He informs them of their acceptance. He proves

to them that He is God on the one side by His majestic and delicious words, and on the other side, by His miraculous works and His Powerful and Mighty signs. To begin with, by way of prophecy He promises them His support and help and special guidance and then on the other side, in order to augment the greatness of His promises, He causes a whole world to oppose them. Those people use all their power and their deceit and all their devices to frustrate God's promises of support and help and supremacy which He makes to His favourites, but God brings to naught all their efforts. They sow mischief and God uproots it. They kindle a fire and God puts it out. They put forth their utmost efforts and God turns their designs against them.

The righteous ones of God are simple and straightforward and in the presence of God Almighty they are like children in the lap of their mother. The world opposes them because they are not of the world. All sorts of plans and

devices are resorted to in order to destroy them. Peoples combine to put them to trouble, and all unworthy ones shoot arrows at them from the same bow, and all manner of calumnies and charges are invented against them, so that somehow they might be destroyed and all signs of them might be wiped off, but God Almighty fulfils His words all through their lives. They are honoured with God's true word which is clear and conclusive, and they are given knowledge of hidden matters, which is beyond the power of man, through the clear word of God, the Mighty and Powerful. On the other hand, through miraculous events which establish the truth of that which they had been told, their faith is strengthened and is further illumined. Whatever need man's nature feels, it has of understanding for the purpose of the certain recognition of God, that need is filled is imparted through verbal and factual manifestation of the Divine so that not a particle of darkness is left.

This is the God through Whose verbal and factual manifestations, which comprise thou-sands of bounties and affect the heart powerfully, a person acquires a living faith and a true and holy relationship is established with God, which removes all personal dirt; and all weakness being excluded, inner darkness is dispelled by the fierce rays of heavenly light and a wonderful change is manifested. Therefore, the religion which does not present God as possessing these attributes and confines faith to ancient tales and fables and such matters as are not seen or heard, is certainly not a true religion. To follow such a fictitious god is like expecting a corpse to work like living beings. A god who does not prove his own existence afresh every time is as if he does not exist. He is like an idol which neither speaks nor hears nor answers questions, nor can he manifest his power in such a manner that even a confirmed atheist should not be able to doubt it. (*Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Part V, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 21, pp.31-32*)

“ The righteous ones of God are simple and straightforward and in the presence of God Almighty they are like children in the lap of their mother. The world opposes them because they are not of the world. All sorts of plans and devices are resorted to in order to destroy them. ”

OBJECTION: It is disrespectful to affirm that God speaks to man. What relationship can subsist between a mortal and the Eternal and Ever-Existing? What resemblance can there be between a handful of dust and Light itself?

ANSWER: This is a baseless objection. To meet it, it is enough to understand that the Noble and Gracious God has inspired the hearts of perfect human beings with untold eagerness for His own understanding, and has drawn them so powerfully to His love, affection and devotion that they have been lost to their own selves. To propose in such a case that God would not desire to converse with them would be tantamount to saying that all their love and devotion are vain and that all their eagerness is only

one-sided. Such a notion is utter nonsense. Can a seeker of One Who bestowed upon man the capacity to win nearness to Him and made him restless with His own love be deprived of the grace of converse with Him? Can it be true that to be lost entirely in the love of God is both possible and detracts nothing from God's dignity, but that the descent of revelation upon the heart of His true lover is impossible and improper and detracts from God's dignity? Man's plunging into the limitless ocean of God's love and stopping nowhere in that pursuit, is conclusive evidence that man's wonderful soul has been fashioned for the understanding of God. If it is not bestowed the means of perfect understanding, which is revelation, it would have to be said

that God did not fashion him for His own understanding. Even the Brahma Samajists do not deny that the soul of a man who possesses a true nature is hungry and thirsty for the understanding of God.

When it is agreed that a true man naturally seeks understanding of God, and it is established that the perfect manner of the understanding of the Divine is Divine revelation and nothing else, then if that means is impossible of attainment and to seek it is disrespectful, God's wisdom would be open to the criticism that He bestowed upon man eagerness for His Own understanding but did not bestow upon him the means of acquiring such understanding. In other words, He afflicted man with hunger but would not bestow upon him bread enough to satisfy his hunger, or that He afflicted man with thirst, but would not bestow upon him water enough to quench his thirst. Wise people will understand that such a notion amounts to failure to appreciate God's great mercies. It is a strange logic of

the Brahma Samajists which proposes that the All-Wise Who has made it the good fortune of man that he should be able to witness to the full the rays of Godhead in this very life, so that he should be drawn towards God by this powerful attraction, that that Gracious and Compassionate One does not desire man to arrive at his needed good fortune and at his natural goal.

(Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. I pp. 230-232, footnote 11)

Whatever God has desired for man, He has in advance invested him with all the faculties that were needed for its achievement. For instance, the human soul possesses a capacity for love. A person through error might love another person and might choose someone as the object of his love, but sane reason can easily understand that this capacity for love has been vested in his soul so that he should love his true Beloved Who is his God, with his whole heart and his whole power and his whole eagerness.

Can we say that this capacity for love, which is vested in the human soul, and whose surge is limitless and at whose height man is ready to lay down his life, is inherent in the soul from the beginning? If God has not created this relationship between man and Himself by vesting the capacity for love in the human soul then this capacity is a matter of chance; that by the good fortune of Permeshwar souls were inspired with the capacity for love and that if the chance had been otherwise and this capacity had not been found in the souls, nobody would have ever turned his attention to Permeshwar. Nor could Permeshwar have devised any plan in this behalf.

But it should be considered that the demand of Permeshwar for His own worship and for righteous action proves that He has Himself invested the human soul with the capacity for love and obedience. He, therefore, desires that man in whom He has vested these capacities should devote himself to His love and obedience; otherwise, how can Permeshwar desire that people should love Him and should obey Him and should act in accordance with His will.

(Naseem-e-Da`wat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol.19, pp. 385-386)

In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(sa)' or 'sa' after the words, 'Holy Prophet', or the name 'Muhammad', are used. They stand for '*Sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*' meaning 'Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him'. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or 'as' after the name of all other prophets is an abbreviation meaning 'Peace be upon him' derived from '*Alaihis salatu wassalam*' for the respect a Muslim reader utters.

The abbreviation 'ra' or (ra) stands for '*Radhiallahu Ta'ala anhu* and is used for Companions of a Prophet, meaning Allah be pleased with him or her (when followed by the relevant Arabic pronoun). Finally, 'ru' or (ru) for '*Rahemahullahu Ta'ala* means the Mercy of Allah the Exalted be upon him.

Raising the Standard of Worship

An address delivered at the Parklands Primary School, Nairobi by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V at the 40th Jalsa Salana (Annual Convention) of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission, Kenya.



Today, by the grace of Allah, the 40th Annual Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Mission of Kenya is being held.

Let me remind those taking part in this Convention and who call themselves Ahmadi Muslims and who claim that Allah has enabled them to believe in the Promised Messiah^(as) that they should always remember that it is not enough to believe in the Promised Messiah^(as) alone. Believing in the Promised Messiah^(as), of course, serves a very big purpose and it is

important that we should attain this goal. And, you may well ask, what is this great purpose? It is a Divine purpose for which God Almighty sends His appointed persons as His messengers and prophets and it is for this purpose that Allah sent the Promised Messiah^(as). This purpose is best expressed by the Promised Messiah^(as) who states:

‘The primary purpose of the advent of prophets, on whom be peace, and the glorious aim of their teachings and their preaching is that the

people should find their Lord and they should be saved from the life that is drawing them to Hell and destruction and which is also called a life steeped in sin. In reality, this is the main goal ahead of the prophets. So at this time too, the purpose of my coming and for which God has commissioned me and the movement that God Almighty has established, is the same purpose shared by all prophets. In other words, I want to tell and in fact show what God is and I want to guide you to the right way to avoid sin.”

(*Malfoozat* Vol. 3 p.11)

So it is very obvious that the purpose of our being an Ahmadi and being called an Ahmadi will only be served when we adopt the ways of the teachings of the Promised Messiah^(as) which in fact are the true teachings of Islam the understanding of which was given to him by God Almighty because of his complete love for the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa).

Let me explain this in another way. The basic teaching is to create a bond with God Almighty, to worship Him, to try to avoid all kinds of sin and to honour the rights of His human beings. Therefore, the foremost thing, as the Promised Messiah^(as) has stated, is the worship of God Almighty, righteousness towards Him (that is to say, to love Him so much as to fear anything that might invite Allah’s displeasure) and to recognise Him. If this is created in every Ahmadi, then know well that you have attained that goal.

Now, we have to see what worship is. In this connection, Allah says:

And continue worshipping thy Lord, till YAQEEN, that is literally to say, absolute belief, or in its broader meaning, a form of *death comes to thee*.

(Ch.15:V.100)

In other words, never tire of worship. Never let it cross your mind that I have prayed for such

a long time, that I have sought Allah's help in such and such a thing I need, yet He does not listen to me. What is the use of such prayers and such worship? An Ahmadi should never think in such a way. Such worship has no use. Pray so that Allah is pleased with you. When you worship God Almighty, pray with the thought in your mind that if Allah does not accept such and such prayer of mine, then there must be something in my desire that is not for my benefit. Your idea of worship should not be that if Allah listens to me and gives me everything that I ask for, then I will worship or else what is the use of praying to Him. The Promised Messiah^(as) says that you should not think like that but pray with a different kind of thinking in your mind. You can only be called a believer when every moment is spent by making sure that this world which is a false life is not ended and a new life cannot begin without a connection with God Almighty. Do not sit in comfort till such time that you are fully satisfied that God is pleased with

you. Hence, the Promised Messiah^(as) states:

‘It is vital that a believer should not tire of worship nor slacken till such time that this false life is reduced to nothing and in its place a new life that is everlasting and comforting begins to emerge. And, until the pain and anguish of this temporal earthly life is removed and creates in one a delight in one's faith and belief and a peace and tranquillity in one's spirit, rest assured that till one reaches that state, that belief is incomplete and wrong. This is why Allah Almighty has stated here that you should continue to worship till absolute faith is achieved and all veils and shrouds of darkness are drawn away and one understands that I am not what I used to be before, but now, there is a new country, a new world, a new sky and I too am a new creation.’”

(Al Hakm Vol.4: p.31 dated 31 August 1900)

So remember that if you want to attain closeness and nearness to Almighty Allah, to become recipients of His pleasure, to be granted such an everlasting life that is full of bliss and happiness, want to spend this worldly life filled with happiness and to gain nearness to God in the life after death and receive God's love, then become true worshippers of Allah.

The Promised Messiah^(as) says that till you leave behind the pleasures of the world and materialism, your worship is of no use. So make your worship also the means of getting nearer to God and praying to Him. When you reach that state within yourself that worldly matters seem meaningless in comparison to matters relating to the worship of God, then it can be said that your belief is of a standard where, apart from deriving the pleasure of Allah, you have no other desires. At that time, man begins to feel within himself that I am not what I used to be. Because of this worship, I feel that I have a new lease of life.

Now it seems that I am a being of some other world. Unlike other persons of this world, I do not have eyes fixed on this world at all times. The purpose of my existence is not merely to earn a living in this world but to discharge the duty of honouring the rights of the Creator. However, Allah does not prevent anyone from earning a livelihood, of trading, of doing a job, of farming or working in some other way. But to make these things the only purpose of one's life and to not pay attention towards the worship of Allah and to not even think about the Being that created and nourished one, are matters from which Allah stops us. Allah says that you can only be called My people when you continue to worship Me and never become tired of worshipping Me. So the Promised Messiah^(as) came to create these standards in us.

So as I have said, those of you who call yourselves Ahmadis should not sit back and rest thinking that having fulfilled the words of the prophecy of the

Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa), you have accepted the Promised Messiah^(as) and have now joined his Community. This is not enough, but a new country, a new world and a new sky will have to be found by you.

In this age when materialism is spread all over, sin is no longer treated a sin, when the ease and comfort of this world are all that matter, you will have to shape your actions and deeds in compliance with the commandments of Allah as Allah requires you to do. It is only when you have made this clear change within yourselves that you will be entitled to enter a new country or territory in which no one else lives other than those who seek Allah's pleasure. The world of your heart will be totally under the control of Allah's commandment.

Whenever you sow the seeds in such a soil, apart from the green crops of good deeds ever blowing in the wind, nothing else can grow. Over these, there should be such a sky that

provides its shade and showers nothing but blessings from Allah. So this is the standard of reformation that we have to create within ourselves.

As I said before, just observing the five daily prayers will not establish the standards of worship because there are some worshippers about whom the Holy Qur'an says that they are the means of destruction as it says:

So woe to those who pray...
(Ch.107:V.5)

Now, what can be a source of destruction and a curse for those who pray? It is because their prayers are only by way of show and so that people should say that such and such a Haji¹ is a very holy man. People should say that ever since he has returned from the pilgrimage, he prays a lot. However, the prayers observed for the sake of Allah should at least have a tinge or effect of the commands of Allah. Yes, perform the pilgrimage and observe the prayers, but if in

your daily dealings and your trade you are cheating people, then such a deed or such worship has no value before Allah.

If you seemingly observe the prayers but your neighbours are fed up of you, then your prayers have no value before Allah because Allah says be kind to your neighbours. The Companions of the Prophet^(sa) were very kind in their treatment of their neighbours. The Holy Prophet^(sa) himself always emphasised the rights of the neighbour so much so that the companions thought that the command would soon come that the neighbours are designated as inheritors of their estate.

A quality that Allah has identified about the people who worship Him is that they treat their parents with kindness. They are also kind towards their relatives and honour their rights. They also take care of the needy and the orphans and do not look down at them with pride and arrogance.



So worship is not limited to observing the prayers and performing the Hajj or pilgrimage but a true worshipper is the one who obeys the commandments of Allah and does not transgress nor exceed the limit against anyone. He tries his best never to usurp the rights of anyone or snatch the belongings of others. One who usurps the rights of another can be a rich man or a common labourer. If a common worker does not do justice to his work, then he too will be included amongst those who usurp the rights of others. If an employee does not do the work of his boss in a fair manner, then he too will be guilty of the offence. It will be

just as bad as when a rich man commits a sin by usurping the rights of a poor man. Or if a civil servant does not spend full time at his work, then he too is committing a sin and his acts of worship and his prayers will not serve him any purpose.

So, the truth of the matter is that as long as the manner in which a person deals and conducts himself is not in accord with winning the happiness and pleasure of God, and good deeds are not done other than for the purpose that Allah may be pleased, and worship is not for any purpose other than that Allah may be pleased, till then he cannot benefit from the bounties and blessings of the Almighty Allah. This is what we learn from the Holy Qur'an, the Ahadith, and the teachings of the Promised Messiah^(as). So every Ahmadi should try and raise his worship to this standard, because in its absence there can be no concept of Ahmadiyyat.

Understand this objective and change your lives in accordance

with this principle. These conventions that are held also serve the same purpose. The Jama'at² has no interest in showing its strength or standing by congregating people but the purpose of such Jalsas is so that those few weak souls in whom any shortcomings have arisen over the year, should be reminded what God wants and what Ahmadiyyat, that is true Islam, requires of them. We should change our lives accordingly.

The two or three days of the Convention should, therefore, be spent in supplications and worship. Pledge to purify yourself from every bad thing. Pray fervently and crying in the manner that a baby cries:

‘O Lord! Thou art the only One Who can cause these pious changes in our hearts. We have found this pure environment in which everyone is trying to reform oneself. We have discovered this environment in which all Ahmadis have gathered to

observe prayers. We have found an environment in which all those who have come together are listening to good things so that virtuous changes and reformation may occur amongst them. These good things that we listen to are nothing else except matters about Allah and His Messenger. So O Lord, grant us the opportunity to listen to these good things so that we may act on these good things and try and make them an integral part of our lives. O Allah! Let it not be that in these two days there is a temporary excitement in us but when we return homes, we forget Thee and we become forgetful about the times of worship. Let it not be that we should ignore the rights of Thy people.'

Moreover, there are new Ahmadis who have not been very long in this Jama'at. Conventions are also held for their *Tarbiyyat*, that is, training and reformation, so that good changes should begin to occur

amongst them. So whether they are new Ahmadis or old Ahmadis, if they have come to participate in the Convention with good intentions, then because such conventions and such gatherings that are intended for good deeds and making good plans, Allah showers His blessings on the participants. These blessings are so much that we cannot comprehend them.

There is a Tradition that describes such a gathering. Hadhrat Abu Hurairah^(ra) relates that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said:

'Allah has angels who go around looking for a gathering engaged in the remembrance of Allah, and when they find a company so occupied, they sit down there and cover it by extending their wings. The whole environment is blessed in abundance. When the people depart, the angels go up to the heaven where Allah asks them, although Allah knows everything, 'Where have you come from?' The

angels report, 'We have come from Thy servants who were proclaiming Thy Holiness and Thy Greatness. They were engaged in Thy worship and were repeatedly praising and glorifying Thee and were supplicating Thee.' Upon this Allah asks, 'What were they seeking from Me?' The angels respond, 'They ask of Thee Thy paradise.' Allah asks, 'Have they seen My paradise?' The angels answer, 'No, Lord, they have not seen Thy paradise.' Allah asks, 'What if they saw it?' Then the angels say, 'They seek Thy protection.' Upon this Allah asks, 'From what do they seek My protection?' They answer, 'They seek protection from Thy Fire.' Allah asks, 'Have they seen My Fire?' The angels respond, 'No, they have not seen it.' Allah inquires, 'What if they saw it?' Then the angels say, 'They seek Thy forgiveness.' Allah says, 'I forgive them and grant them whatever they asked of Me and I protect them from that

which they asked.' Upon this, the angels say, 'O Lord! There was amongst them so and so misled person who happened to be passing by and seeing the gathering engaged in the remembrance of God, sat down in it as a spectator.' Upon this Allah says, 'I forgive him also because those who take part in it are such people that even the one who sits amongst them can never remain unfortunate and deprived of blessings.'

(Muslim: Kitab Al-Dhikr, Chapter: Fadhal Majalis Al-Dhikr)

See how much grace and blessing is there for such gatherings where Allah is remembered, where plans are made for attaining the nearness to Allah and where plans are devised for kindness to humanity. So if you have come together with this thought, then you too are the fortunate ones upon whom the angels spread their wings of protection. The angels are praying for you.

Similarly, Allah is also pleased

that these of My mortal people, despite being tempted by the Devil, did not fall prey to the temptations of Satan and instead preferred to sit in gatherings devoted to My remembrance. In this age when there are all sorts of plots hatched by Satan and when the followers of Satan lurk and hide on every corner waiting to lead man astray, the significance of such gatherings becomes all the more important.

On such people who assemble for the remembrance of Allah, Allah showers His blessings in great abundance. Allah says that even though they have not seen My paradise but having believed in Me, are eager to go to paradise and though they have not seen the Fire because of their belief in Me, seek My protection from it. Allah says further that these people are remembering Me and are favourably inclined towards Me. Because of this opinion they hold about Me, I grant them everything that they desire of Me.

Then Allah forgave an evil person who happened to sit

amidst their company. But we should remember that it is the Law of God Almighty that He punishes sins also. This is why by doing good deeds and despite the means for forgiveness existing, it is important to remain resolute because true repentance is such that one should let perish the thought of any bad deed after such a realisation. Despite seeing evil, instead of being drawn towards evil, one should take a step towards God Almighty and should always seek His salvation.

So when you depart from this gathering, only go after making changes in yourselves towards piety and creating in yourselves righteousness and making these a permanent part of your lives. They should be such changes that after witnessing them in you, even your future generations should become holy. Your morals should be of such high standards that there should be no match for them.

I have been drawing the attention of the Jama'at for a long time

towards this but because this is the first time I am addressing you directly I repeat myself. Whether you are a commercial trader or a small businessman, whether you are an employee or a labourer, whether a proprietor or an officer, at every place and every moment, others should know that having accepted Ahmadiyyat, this person has caused a special change within himself. He has the badge of Ahmadiyyat on him. If he works in a government department, he would never accept a bribe. If he is a trader, he never mixes his commodities nor sells a faulty object. If he is an employee or a labourer, then no one works harder than him and he does full justice to his work. You have the capacities and faculties with which you can create a name for yourselves through hard work and sincerity. The only thing needed is attention and an Ahmadi must pay attention towards it.

Another important thing towards which much attention is needed is the *Tarbiyyat* or training of the

ladies. If we do not train the ladies and try and make them understand their faith in the same way that the men try and do it for themselves, then there can be no guarantee for the training of the future generations. So considerable attention needs to be paid to this aspect. In the Third World or the Developing World as it is now called, because of a lack of knowledge, a tendency grows amongst men that there is no need to teach the ladies anything about their faith or that they need not obtain any worldly education. Some ladies of rich families do acquire worldly education but are totally unknowledgeable about matters of faith. If this situation also exists amongst Ahmadis, then your future generations can never be trained in spiritual and moral matters. They will be of no use to their faith, nor will they be of any use to the country. Therefore, if you wish to have a radical progress and want to be leaders in secular and non-secular matters, then educate your ladies in religious and worldly matters. Their job is not just to go the market and sell

some goods and thus feed the families and look after your children. Looking after the children and their upbringing is indeed their responsibility but they have also a status in society. Therefore, it is the responsibility of men to take care of the ladies and to keep them with you in religious matters. So do not forget your ladies.

Likewise, I tell the ladies that the status of an Ahmadi lady is very high. Pay special attention towards the upbringing and training of your children. Create such an environment for your children that they get religious education and also pay attention to their worldly education. Every Ahmadi child, be it a boy or a girl, should march forward in education. Education should not be abandoned because of poverty. The Jama'at should arrange it and take care of this and the Jama'at will do so *Insha Allah* (Allah Willing).

If the ladies themselves scale new heights in their worship and pay attention to doing good and to

their supplications and are mindful that being Ahmadi they have to reform themselves and have not become Ahmadi merely because their husbands became Ahmadi, then definitely their future generations will be such that it would be beneficial for the world as well as for the country and the nation. The ladies will be pressed in the effort that we are believers in the One God before Whom alone we bow down. It will not have its sight towards the world. It cannot be that our people continue to beg always from other people and other nations. The thought should be in the heart that the command of the Lord Whom we worship is to adopt all good values.

Therefore, I urge again that in order to save yourselves and your nation, you will have to restore yourselves to the status that you enjoyed in the past when the economy of this country was very strong. In order to regain the standing of your nation and earn respect in the eyes of the world, you will have to adopt all those excellent values towards which

God Almighty has directed you and which are mentioned very clearly in the Holy Qur'an. You will have to abandon all those evils that Allah has forbidden and which are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. And most of all, in order to gather all the blessings of Allah, you will have to pay attention towards His worship which is His right. And every person of the house and every member of the Jama'at, man, woman and child, when you bow in the presence of Allah, then most certainly, you will be the ones to bring about a revolution in your lives and in your country and the world will witness that those whom we thought were of no value are not valueless but are our equals.

Allah enable you to recognise your status. May you all be the beneficiaries of the supplications of the Promised Messiah^(as) for those who participate in the Jalsa. Allah make the Jalsa a success in every way and bless it and that when you return home you return with a new spirit.

Finally, I wish to thank all the honourable guests who have taken their precious time to attend this Convention and have provided testimony of their brotherly love and affection. Allah reward them with His grace.

REFERENCES

1. One who has performed the Hajj or pilgrimage to Makkah.
2. Community.

(Reproduced at the exclusive responsibility of *The Review of Religions*)

The Hon. Vice President of Kenya Mr Moody Awori, declared open the Annual Convention and paid tribute to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community in Kenya which has erected 63 permanent mosques, 5 medical clinics and has translated the Holy Qur'an into 5 local languages.

Speech by

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra)

*at the Foundation Stone Ceremony of the
Fazl Mosque, London on 19th October 1924*

*With the Grace and Mercy of God.
He Alone is the Helper.*
Sisters and brothers.

We have assembled here today for a function which is unique in itself. It is to lay the foundation stone of a building erected to remember Him who is the Creator of all, and to give expression to our feelings of devotion and worship of Him Who is the centre of all. When we stand in His presence we forget all distinctions of age, rank, colour, east or west, for the nearer a man attains to Him the less he remembers the difference, and the more he realises the unity of mankind. So the house in which we have assembled here today, is a sign of the unity and brotherhood of man: it assures us of the fact that our source and our place of return is the same and that we should not fight with each other or create trouble merely owing to some

apparent differences.

Differences there have been in the world and they will continue to arise. Never was there a time, nor will it ever be, when these differences would disappear: for so long as there is in man the capacity to progress and advance, his needs must differ. Whatever advance we notice in the world is all the result of this fact. So difference, in this respect, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) has said, is the source of blessing and not a harmful thing. Evil creeps in only through over-zealousness in laying too much stress upon unity culminating in intolerance. As a matter of fact, the cause of human brotherhood has never suffered more than at the hands of its own warmest advocates whose zeal outran their sense of proportion, and who, consequently, adopted means which defeated their own object. The cause of unity has

indeed suffered more at the hands of its friends than at the hands of its enemies.

If difference is really as bad as it is painted, what is the function of toleration? Toleration and large-heartedness can only be exercised when there exist some differences. So what the world needs today is not so much the mitigation of differences as the inculcation of toleration at breadth of view, that is to say, people should learn to live on terms of mutual love and fellow-feeling, in spite of their differences of beliefs and opinions. There can be no doubt about the fact that there can be no real progress without the propagation of truth and that therefore everyone has a right to call people to the truth (as one understands it), but it does not mean that one has a right to enforce his views upon others and to impose his will upon the tongue and action of others before bringing about any change in their hearts. Nor should one begin to persecute others on the basis of mere differences of opinion.

Sisters and brothers, mosques are built for fostering its spirit of love and mutual amity. In the

terminology of Islam, a mosque is called 'Baitullah' (The House of God), that is such a place where no one has a right to disturb or evict another owing to differences of opinions, for it is the House of God and not the private property of any individual, and God is as much the Lord of His opponent as his. Says the Holy Qur'an: 'Who can be a worse tyrant than him who prevents people from entering the mosques, wherein the name of God is remembered? (Ch.2:V.115)

Once a deputation from a Christian tribe waited upon our Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa). They were having a discussion with him on doctrinal points. The argument grew long and it was their time to pray. They asked his permission to go out and say their prayers. He said there was no need for them to go out for they could pray in the mosque where they were holding the discussion. So we know from the Holy Qur'an as well as from the life of the Holy Prophet^(sa), that the doors of Muslim mosques are open to all those who want to worship God alone and that the Muslim mosques are the centres of unity.

In the same spirit and with the

same motives as I have described above, the Ahmadiyya Community intends to lay the foundation stone of this mosque, and before I do it I want to proclaim it throughout the whole world through you who have kindly assembled on this occasion that this mosque is built to worship and serve God alone, so that His love may become fully and firmly manifest and people may be drawn towards religion, without which there can be no true progress. We shall not, God willing, prevent anyone from worshipping God here provided he does not infringe the rules which are necessary for the upkeep of this House of God and provided also that they do not interfere with the worship of those who are building it. I have faith and hope that the spirit of toleration and large-heartedness which the erection of the mosque will create will help to remove all friction and strife and establish peace and unity and goodwill among men, and the days are not far off when people will give up all war and the ideas of war, and they will learn to live in peace and harmony, and the whole world will realise that with God as our One Creator it is necessary to be as brothers and sisters, and instead of being hindrances in the

way of progress of others, we will help and co-operate with each other.

Just as a father does not like that his children should fight among themselves, so does not God like that His creatures should be busy fighting against each other.

In fact, all quarrels and frictions are due to our straying away from God, so He out of His mercy sent the Promised Messiah, Ahmad^(as), the founder of this movement, to draw people to God, so that their attention being drawn away from internal friction they be drawn towards mutual understanding and harmonious living. The Ahmadiyya Movement is willing, with the grace of God, to make all sorts of sacrifices and endure all sorts of hardships until the time when all racial and political wars are ended and love reigns supreme. We hope that good people of all nations, whatever their creeds and beliefs, will help the Ahmadiyya Community in their efforts to promote peace. The signs are already visible, as assemblage here of distinguished people of various races and creeds clearly shows. So with ample hopes and full

expectation, I, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community which has its headquarters at Qadian, Punjab, India, lay the foundation stone of this mosque today the 20th Rabiul Awwal 1343 Hijri, to seek the pleasure of God so that His name be glorified in England and that the people of this country may also partake of the blessings which have been vouchsafed to us. I pray to God that He may accept this humble and sincere effort of all the members of the Ahmadiyya Community, both women and men, and that He may provide means for the growing prosperity of this mosque: and may He make it forever and ever a centre for promulgating the views of purity, piety, justice and love, and may this place prove a Sun of spiritual light radiating forth in this country and in all the countries around the blessed beams of the heavenly light of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa), the chosen one of God and the Seal of the Prophets and of Ahmad^(as) the Promised Messiah, the Prophet of God, the vicegerent, and the reflection of Muhammad^(sa).

FACTS & FIGURES

The appeal for the collection of funds for the building of the London Mosque was launched on 6th January 1920 by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II.

95,000 rupees was raised for this purpose of which as much as 6000 Rupess was collected on the very day the appeal was launched. The major contribution of 83,000 Rupess was made by the ladies of the Jama'at.

The one acre site for the mosque was purchased by Chaudhrey Fateh Muhammad Sayaal for £2,223 in August 1920.

The foundation stone for the mosque was laid at a ceremony attended by 200 guests. The foundations were dug by more than 15 volunteers, including two ladies and were led by Maulana Abdul Rahim Dard.

The construction work started on 28th September 1925 and took ten months to complete at a cost of £4,000.

The mosque was named the Fazl Mosque by Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II.

It was formally opened at 3.00pm on 3rd October 1926 by Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Qadir in the presence of 600 guests.

Maulana Abdur Rahim Dard was the first Imam of the London Mosque.

Asr prayers were the first prayers to be offered in the mosque.

GLIMPSES INTO THE QUR'ANIC CONCEPT OF THE ENVIRONMENT



By Maha Dabbous – UK

One of the issues that concerns the world at the present time is the problem related to the protection of the environment. We hear many voices alerting people to the dangers that threaten the environment, urging people to take immediate action to save the world from the bad effects of the modern way of living and to stop further pollution of the surrounding atmosphere and to draw their attention to any health hazards that may affect them. Many organisations have been founded to protect nature and wildlife. Others are urging people to be cautious when it

comes to selecting the food they eat and to abandon any foods that may in any way cause injury to their health. As a result, people are becoming more aware of the problem and they are now very particular in the choice of the food they eat and are even worried about the air they breathe.

Of course this is very sensible, as people around the world today are suffering from many problems and physical ailments caused by the pollution of the environment. Yet, if we are facing these kinds of troubles due to the pollution of our envi-

ronment, and if some of us are already becoming aware of the problem and are trying to find solutions, how can it be that the All-Knowing Creator of the Universe is unaware of the problem or that He has neglected providing solutions for it?

As every Muslim believes, the final and perfect universal Divine teachings that are ordained for mankind for all times to come, are all contained in the Holy Qur'an. Naturally, if there is any problem that is facing the world today, then undoubtedly there must be some reference to it in the Holy Qur'an, and there must be also some Divine guidance which, if acted upon, can solve this problem.

So now we will need to turn to the Holy Qur'an to find out what it tells us about this matter. But before doing so, it is first essential to define the meaning of the environment that we are referring to, and to understand its relationship with mankind.

The environment means the

surrounding conditions which come into contact with a certain object and have influence on it. As human beings are not merely physical objects but are also endowed with a soul that can be described as a spiritual being, the environment for them can be defined as the surrounding circumstances and conditions that affect them in any way, physically, morally or spiritually. So according to this definition, the environment of human beings is not just the surrounding physical world that affects their physical bodies, but it also includes all aspects that may affect their moral condition and that are responsible for their spiritual status.

The Holy Qur'an informs us that Allah has provided all necessary requirements for the healthy living of each and every creature on earth.

And there is no creature that moves on the earth but it is for Allah to provide it with sustenance. And He knows its place of temporary settlement

and its permanent abode. All this is recorded in a clear Book.

(Ch.11:V.7)

In this verse Allah is announcing that He provides not only for the physical nourishment of His creation, but He provides also for the spiritual sustenance of all creation; as understood from the phrase ('*And He knows its place of temporary sojourn or settlement and its permanent abode or dwelling*') which clearly points to the temporary life on this earth and the permanent spiritual dwelling in the hereafter.

Before man, Allah created other creations in the universe and many forms of life that continued to develop and expand through time. The creation of man came at a relatively later stage. When Allah willed to place a vicegerent in earth, He chose man for this purpose.

..I am about to place a vicegerent in the earth..

(Ch.2:V.31)

Man was that unique being who was chosen by Allah to be appointed as His representative on earth, to maintain order and to enforce the Divine law and to spread justice in the world. For this purpose, Allah created man, the apex and crown of all creations. He endowed him with great natural powers and qualities and the capacity to become the mirror in which the Divine attributes are reflected. In this way, man became fit to discharge the great responsibility for which he was created. To further help him attain this purpose, Allah exalted man above all the other beings and He made the whole universe subservient to man. The heavens with all its celestial bodies and the earth with all its treasures, the deep seas and the high mountains were all put at man's service.

Have you not seen that Allah has pressed for you into service whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and has completed His favours on you, both externally and internally?

And among men there are some who dispute concerning Allah, without knowledge or guidance or an illuminating Book.

(Ch.31:V.21)

But this does not mean that man is the master of the world. He is only acting as a guardian, appointed by the real Master Who created the universe. The whole universe, including man himself, belongs to Allah and Allah allows man to exploit what He has created for his sake, provided that he does this with the intention of fulfilling the purpose for which he was created.

And He has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth; all this is from Him. In that, surely, are Signs for a people who reflect.

(Ch.45:V.14)

The purpose of man's creation can be achieved through complying with the Divine rules and regulations which Allah

Himself has revealed to man in the form of the teachings of His religion. These Divine teachings are not a series of arbitrary orders that Allah has issued to force His will on mankind. There is great wisdom behind each of them and they are meant to help any individual in his progress, physically, morally and spiritually.

From this we can understand that the environment surrounding man was created even before him and was meant to serve him and enable him to achieve the purpose of his creation. Nevertheless, as we can all see today, the majority of human beings have strayed away from achieving this target. Not only did man fail to make use of what Allah provided for man's own good, but also man went on corrupting the provisions that Allah bestowed upon him, spoiling it for himself and for others as well.

And when he is in authority, he runs about in the land to create disorder in it and destroys the tilth and the

progeny of man; and Allah loves not disorder.
(Ch.2:V.206)

By doing this, the good and wholesome provisions that Allah made lawful for man, became harmful. As a result, these lawful provisions were rendered unlawful for human consumption because Allah allowed only the consumption of what was good and wholesome.

O ye who believe, eat of the good things We have provided for you, and render thanks to Allah, if it is He Whom you worship.
(Ch.2:V.173)

Allah has clearly instructed the believers not to be the cause of turning the lawful thing into an unlawful one.

O ye who believe! make not unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, and do not transgress. Surely Allah loves not the transgressors. And eat of that which Allah has

provided for you of what is lawful and good. And fear Allah in Whom you believe.
(Ch.5:Vs.88-89)

In this there is a clear indication for the believers to protect the environment in which they live. It is clear that the more they pollute their environment, the more things will be made unlawful for their consumption as they will become injurious and harmful for them. This does not only apply for the food that one eats; this is a general instruction that applies for anything provided for humankind.

But as we see today, the majority of human beings do not follow these simple instructions and instead, they continue to pollute their environment rendering it unwholesome and harmful for their own use. Allah has set His laws in such a way that the offender is the first to suffer the consequences. The corruption that humankind caused to the environment has now become visible and apparent to all, and the harm that humankind is

suffering as a result, has also become apparent to all. However, the materialisation of this damage in itself is a blessing in disguise. Allah's actions are always for our own good. He says:

Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what men's hands have wrought, that He may make them taste the fruit of some of their doings, so that they may turn back from evil.

(Ch.30:V.42)

The last phrase in this verse explains to us the reason why Allah has made visible to us this damage in our physical environment. Allah says that He made this corruption apparent to people (so that they may turn back from evil). Allah wants to draw man's attention to a more significant corruption that he has to deal with. It is the evil of his soul.

While the majority of the civilised population in the world today has become aware of the

importance of protecting the physical environment, there are only a few who are aware of the moral corruption of the environment, and there is hardly anybody who is even aware of the existence of a spiritual realm that is also affected by the environment.

However, this important issue was not neglected in the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Allah has taken care of protecting all aspects of the environment to ensure a healthy physical, moral and spiritual life for humankind. As we have seen above, His commands in the Holy Qur'an enjoin the believers to protect the environment in which they live. He also teaches them to care for the other creatures who share this environment with them.

And create not disorder in the earth after it has been set in order, and call upon Him in fear and in hope. Surely, the mercy of Allah is nigh unto those who do good.

(Ch.7:V.57)

However, special emphasis is always placed in the Holy Qur'an to the spiritual aspect of life:

This is the home of the Hereafter! We give it to those who seek not self-exaltation in the earth, nor corruption. And the (good) end is for the righteous.

(Ch.28:V.84)

Beside this the Holy Qur'an also explains the reasons and wisdom behind doing so and it guides its followers to the methods of keeping their physical, moral and spiritual states in a healthy condition all the time.

But we have to remember here that the Holy Qur'an expresses its teachings in physical terms and this is simply because physical objects can be perceived by the physical senses of man and therefore they become easy for him to comprehend. Yet the meanings of these Divine instructions must also be considered more deeply and it must be understood that these

physical examples are to be taken also metaphorically to illustrate the Divine guidance related to the moral and spiritual prosperity of man, in addition to his physical well-being.

And, indeed, We have set forth for mankind all manner of parables in this Qur'an that they may take heed.

(Ch.39:V.28)

As an illustration for this, let us now consider the teachings of Islam related to the consumption of meat. In the physical environment, Allah has created many kinds of animals for the service of man in different ways. One of the benefits which man can draw from these animals is to use their flesh as food because animal protein is beneficial as a part of man's diet. Therefore, a Muslim is allowed to use the flesh of some of these animals as a source of food. But at the same time, the flesh of these animals is only lawful for him after fulfilling certain conditions. First, the animal must be chosen from the group of animals whose

flesh is allowed as food. It must be alive and healthy at the time of its slaughtering. It must be slaughtered in a specific way with a sharp knife. The name of Allah must be pronounced before slaughtering the animal. The flesh of the slaughtered animal must also be cooked thoroughly to get rid of any trace of blood left in it. It is only after fulfilling all these conditions, the meat becomes lawful for a Muslim to consume.

But it should be remembered here that under certain circumstances, things which are lawful become forbidden because they become harmful. Islam enjoins the Muslims to eat only from what is good and wholesome. It teaches them to eat from what is pure and it forbids them to eat any unclean or impure food or partake of anything which might injure one's health. So any lawful food which becomes contaminated even by germs or becomes unsuitable for one's health in any way, becomes unlawful.

Now when we come to study the reasons behind these Divine instructions we will find that these are not meant only for the physical well-being of a person, but we will also find that it is for his moral benefit and spiritual welfare.

We all know that the consumption of some kinds of meat can cause negative effects on the human body and hence we understand why Allah has forbidden the consumption of such categories of meat. It is also obvious that the consumption of a dead or diseased animal can have dangerous effects on the physical health of a person. Likewise, the blood of the animal may contain harmful substances that can cause serious effects on the physical health. The process of slaughtering the animal ensures the free flow of blood out of its body and thus avoid such danger. Further extensive cooking gets rid of any traces of the blood of the animal which may have been left behind.

But the negative effects are not

only confined to the physical sphere. Food can also have an effect on the moral and spiritual state of human beings. It has been proven that there exists a deep and subtle connection between the food that a person eats and his actions. This fact has only recently started to be increasingly recognised by medical science, while the Holy Qur'an has acknowledged this, fourteen centuries ago.

The Holy Qur'an has taken the necessary precautions and prescribed directions and instructions relating to the food we eat. This has a great significance. The basic principle laid down by Islam is that as man must develop all his natural instincts and faculties, therefore he should partake of all kinds of food, except those that are likely to do him physical, moral or spiritual harm. The use of pure and good food produces healthy mental conditions which in turn produce good and righteous actions. Food exerts a powerful influence on man's morals. Even the habits of an animal can be

transmitted to man through eating its flesh. This is why Islam has subjected the food that is lawful for human consumption to certain limits and conditions and obviously it is for the benefit of man himself.

Concerning the flesh of animals that was made lawful for human consumption Allah says:

And of the cattle He has created some for burden and some for slaughter. Eat of that which Allah has provided for you, and follow not in the footsteps of Satan. Surely he is to you an open foe.

(Ch.6:V.143)

This verse clearly indicates that the food that man consumes has a direct effect on his ability to fight the insinuations of Satan as understood from the phrase 'follow not in the footsteps of Satan'. And Allah instructed His Messengers:

O ye Messengers, eat of the things that are pure and do good works. Verily, I am well-

aware of what you do.
(Ch.23:V.52)

Hence these regulations alert Muslims and exhort them to be careful in selecting their food and to examine its effect on their health before they decide to eat it. And this automatically urges them to be conscious about the condition of the environment that is surrounding them because it can have a direct effect on their food and can even make it unlawful for them to partake of it. This further stops them from doing anything that can cause harm or damage to their surroundings or injure their health in any way.

Moreover, the way by which the animals are slaughtered has also further effects on the moral and spiritual condition of a Muslim.

To sum up these benefits, Allah says concerning sacrificed animals:

Their flesh reaches not Allah, nor does their blood, but it is your righteousness that

reaches Him. Thus He has subjected them to you, that you may glorify Allah for His guiding you. And give glad tidings to those who do good.
(Ch.22:V.38)

Hence it is the righteousness of a person that is meant to be achieved by these actions.

From the above we can see that although these instructions were given in the physical sense, they have their effects on the moral and spiritual state of man as well. This applies to all the teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

In the environment of humankind, Allah has created everything that would be needed by man to accomplish his duties. At the same time, Allah revealed the directions which can guide man to the best means by which he can utilise these facilities. It is for man's own good that he should do only what is lawful and refrain from doing what Allah has forbidden. Only then will man ensure good physical, moral and spiritual health. For

this reason, it is the responsibility of man to protect his environment so that it continues to provide the beneficial means of his overall prosperity.

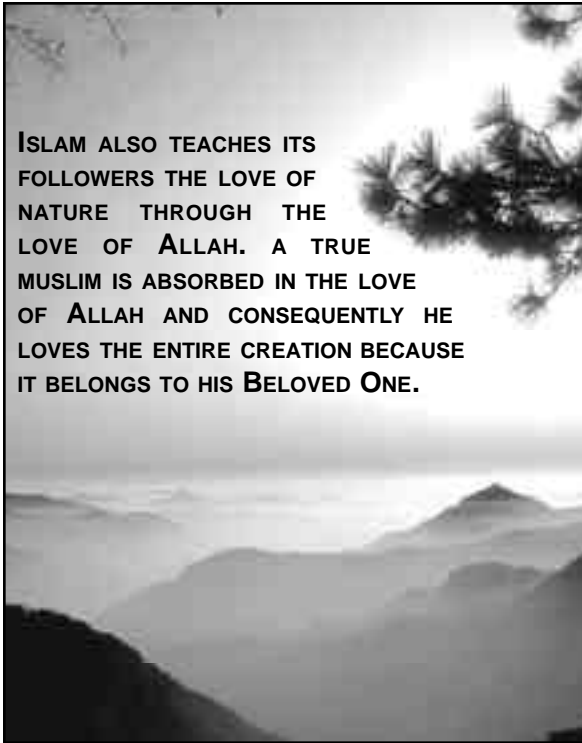
In addition to the above reasons, Islam also teaches its followers the love of nature through the love of Allah. A true Muslim is absorbed in the love of Allah and consequently he loves the entire creation because it belongs to his Beloved One. The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) demonstrated this fact in his own person. Beside his mercy towards mankind, he had mercy for all animals and creatures and even for trees and plants. This is why Allah addresses the Holy Prophet^(sa) in the Holy Qur'an saying:

And We have not sent thee but as a mercy for all the worlds.
(Ch.21:V.108)

The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) was a mercy for all the worlds including the animal kingdom, the plant kingdom and every other world that was created by his Beloved Creator of the universe.

He always showed gratitude to his Beloved for His great bounties and he was very careful not to destroy any of Allah's creation or let anything go to waste. Following his example, it is the duty of every person to look after all that Allah has created. It is in the interest of man to do so because everything was created for his sake and he can benefit from it in one way or the other.

As the real object of man's life in this world is his spiritual advancement, it is beyond any doubt that if Allah has made ample provisions for his physical needs, He could not have neglected the provisions for man's spiritual needs also. And as man very gladly accepts and uses all the physical provisions made for him, he should also not decline to make similar use of Allah's spiritual gifts. A human being is a body and a soul. If Allah has provided man with the food that nourishes his body and keeps him fit and well, he must have provided him also with the spiritual food which nourishes his soul and raises it to the



ISLAM ALSO TEACHES ITS FOLLOWERS THE LOVE OF NATURE THROUGH THE LOVE OF ALLAH. A TRUE MUSLIM IS ABSORBED IN THE LOVE OF ALLAH AND CONSEQUENTLY HE LOVES THE ENTIRE CREATION BECAUSE IT BELONGS TO HIS BELOVED ONE.

highest spiritual levels. As a person should be aware of his body's physical health, he should also be conscious of his soul's spiritual well-being. If Allah has provided man with a suitable environment to maintain the best health of his physical body, He must have provided man also with the perfect spiritual environment to ensure the highest spiritual station of his soul. Hence, it is the duty of man that as he should protect his

physical environment, he should also care about the purity of his spiritual environment.

To fully understand this, man must reflect on the physical objects in the universe because they symbolise spiritual aspects as well. The physical world materialises the spiritual one so as to make it easy for man to comprehend. The Holy Qur'an is full of illustrations to help us

in this regard. It will suffice to cite a few examples here.

If we study what the Holy Qur'an has mentioned concerning the plants in the physical world, we will learn some amazing spiritual lessons. As a matter of fact, the Holy Qur'an has likened human beings somewhat to plants when Allah said:

And Allah has caused you to

grow out of the earth like the raising of vegetation.
(Ch.71:V.18)

Allah also said about Mary – the mother of Jesus^(as):

So her Lord accepted her with a gracious acceptance and caused her to grow an excellent growth and made Zachariah her guardian...
(Ch.3: V.38)

According to the physical laws of nature, a plant can grow in a land if a healthy seed is sown in its soil which happens to be rich and fertile. In the same manner a human soul can develop spiritually if it is provided with the healthy spiritual seed of faith and the healthy spiritual soil in the form of a sincere heart that accepts the truth.

However, the power of making a seed grow into a plant might be hidden in the soil, but it does not come into play unless the soil receives water from heaven. The latent powers of the soil to grow vegetation together with the

soundness of the seed that is sown in it, will never produce anything without the help of water. Similarly the latent and inherent powers and faculties of man fail to find their real spiritual development and growth without the help of the spiritual water. Life on earth depends on water which descends from heaven in the form of rain. In the same way, the spiritual life cannot exist without the spiritual water which descends from heaven in the form of Divine revelation.

And He it is Who sends the winds as glad tidings before His mercy, and We send down pure water from the clouds, That We may thereby give life to a dead land, and give it for drink to Our creation - cattle and men in large numbers.
(Ch.25:Vs.49-50)

Continued next month

The Philosophy of Zakat

Part II

An Urdu speech delivered at the 1975 Annual Jalsa in Rabwah, Pakistan.

Translated by the Late Mr Muhammad Akram Khan Ghauri.

By the Late Maulana Sheikh Mubarak Ahmad, former Imam of the London Mosque

The blessings of paying the Zakat

The importance of paying the Zakat may also be judged from the fact that the Holy Prophet^(sa) always used to supplicate on behalf of those who paid it. Hadhrat Abdullah ibn Abi Aufa, God be pleased with him, has related:

‘When the people brought the Zakat offerings to the Most Favoured Prophet^(sa), he used to supplicate in these words, “O Allah, shower Thy mercy on the progeny of such and such a man, the son of such and such a man.” When my father brought his due Zakat to the Holy Prophet^(sa), he prayed, “O Allah, shower Thy mercy on the progeny of Abi Aufa.”’

The above Tradition has been reported both by *Bukhari* and *Muslim*. And there is another report which says: ‘Whenever anyone brought his Zakat to the Holy Prophet, he used to supplicate, “O Allah, shower Thy blessings on this man.”’

Why has so great an importance been given to Zakat? As I have already mentioned the basic aim and object of Zakat is sympathy for mankind; rendering assistance to the poor; to raise the standard of life of those who had been left unprovided for and to protect them from mental and social degradation arising for want of means; and by means of Zakat provide the path of progress and prosperity and also of national betterment and stability. Over and above all this, there is also the aim

through which every man may avail his birthright of partnership in all that Allah has created for the benefit of mankind. Pointing out this basic philosophy of Zakat, the Promised Messiah^(as) has explained:

‘What is Zakat? It is that which is taken from the well-to-do and given to the poor. This teaches us the sympathy of the highest order and shores up the Muslim peoples. It is incumbent upon the rich to pay. Even if it had not been made incumbent human sympathy demands that the poor must be helped.’

Zakat is the source of purifying the soul

I had explained that according to lexicology the basic philosophy of Zakat is to purify the soul and to polish it. The Holy Qur’an says:

Take alms out of their wealth, so that thou mayest cleanse them and purify them thereby...
(Ch.9: V.103)

The love of riches is ingrained in man’s mind and it possesses the strongest attraction for him. That is why it is the main cause for one to stumble and he throws all the Commands of God overboard. Regular and due payment of Zakat destroys in man the love of lucre and releases him from the bonds and the curse of capitalism. Indifference towards wealth gives protection from many evils and induces man to walk in the paths of virtue. He who does not bolster up his income through foul means also gives up this evil habit and saves his soul from such contamination as love of dirty lucre. He does not remain any more a prey to niggardliness and similar obnoxious habits. The Holy Qur’an says:

... And whoso is rid of the covetousness of his own soul- it is these who will be successful.
(Ch.59: V.10)

In other words, we could say that Zakat is the ‘healer’ of the disease of niggardliness. Love of

riches is weakened and the spirit of brotherly sympathy is born. This is because he pays Zakat in obedience to the command of Allah. In return he is rewarded with the love of Allah which is the main source of all virtues; and he gains the object for which he was created – perfect submission to Allah. The Holy Qur'an says:

And the case of those who spend their wealth to seek the pleasure of Allah and to strengthen their souls is like the case of a garden on elevated ground. Heavy rain falls on it so that it brings forth its fruit twofold. And if heavy rain does not fall on it, then light rain suffices. And Allah sees what you do.
(Ch.2: V.266)

The above verse explains the philosophy of Zakat. Those who spend to seek the pleasure of Allah find a place to stand on a firm rock and their hearts are filled with God's love and for this reason they become pure-hearted and righteous and they

gain admission to a haven where Satan has no access.

Zakat – means of purifying wealth

Zakat not only purifies the soul and inculcates good morals, it causes one's wealth and possessions to be purified. While explaining the meanings of the word Zakat, we also explained that when the Zakat portion has been paid, the remainder does indeed become purified as it provides protection from loss and ruin. This is because in the possessions of the wealthy there is a share of others also. Unless and until their share has been paid, the wealth remains impure and sullied. The Holy Qur'an says:

And in their wealth was a share for one who asked for help and one who could not.
(Ch.51: V.20)

The above verse clearly points out the fact that all wealth is earned through joint effort and they all have their share in it. There are some who are

connected directly with its earnings and there are those who are not so directly connected. They did not work but they still have their share in it. Let us, for instance, take the case of a rich man who makes a huge profit from working a mine. He has paid for the labour of all those who helped him in the working. Whatever he has paid them is due to them only for the labour they have put in. But according to the teachings of the Qur'an, they also hold a share in that mine because all the treasures of the earth were created for the benefit of all mankind – not for any single person. Therefore, even after having been paid for their labour, their share of the ownership of the mines still remains unpaid. One way of doing it would be to pay an additional amount, out of the profits, to the labourers or other workers. But even doing that would not absolve the miner of all his obligations. Yes, he did pay an additional amount to all those who gave him assistance in making the huge profit. But what about the share of those who

have not put in any labour in working the mine? The whole world has a share in the treasures of the earth.

Islam has, therefore, made it incumbent to pay the Zakat – a share from the earnings into the treasury of the government so that they would spend these for the benefit of the whole nation. In this way every man gets his due share directly or indirectly and he reaps the benefit of his share that God Almighty had granted him in His creation.

Therefore, the wealth from which the due share of the others has been paid becomes purified and when people understand and realise that due share of everyone has been paid they will not clamour for and claim any more for their rights. There shall be peace in the country; and the spirit of righteousness and doing good to others and culture and good behaviour shall be inculcated. This, as we all know, is most urgent and essential for national stability.

Hadhrat Shah Waliullah, Muhaddith of Delhi, while discussing the philosophy of Zakat, writes in his book *Hujjatullah-il-Balighah* :

‘It must be clearly understood that Zakat has been made incumbent an account of two reasons. Firstly, for the training of the soul; secondly, for fulfilling the social and national requirements. As regards the training of the soul it is quite clear that wealth is the root cause of social ills like niggardliness, selfishness, mutual enmities and other known immoralities. The true remedy for this is spending the wealth suitably and generously. This puts an end to niggardliness, selfishness dies out and instead of mutual enmity, a spirit of love is born and this mutual love is the true foundation of the highest moral behaviour and makes men treat each other with love and kindness. The net result of all this is that man becomes

virtue personified and this is what is called the training of the soul.’

‘Zakat is also the best remedy for all social and national necessities. This is because social administration cannot become stable unless it is backed by strong and stable finances. It is because with sound finance the government is in the position of looking after all the highest or the lowest requirements of the administration and fulfilling all the needs of the society equitably, and the poor, the needy, the weak, the orphans and the widows do not stand in need of going a-begging from others and are saved from all this humiliation and in this way the government may be able to look after them properly. All these duties of the government can be duly performed only when, along with the other resources, the government could safely depend upon the revenue obtained

through Zakat from the rich and the wealthy.’
(*Hujjatullah-il-Balighah*:
Vol.2, Ch. Zakat)

The means of sustaining and helping the poor

Zakat is the best means of assisting and providing sustenance to the poor of the nation. Through this, the poor and the have-nots can be properly and timely assisted. The command of the Holy Prophet^(sa) that ‘Zakat should be taken from the rich and given to the poor’ denotes that the basic principle of Zakat is sympathy for mankind and helping the poor. From the details given by the Holy Qur’an, it becomes quite clear that the underlying idea is the support of the poor. The Holy Prophet^(sa) was always very anxious to help the have-nots in their distress, their difficulties and in their scanty means and he, therefore, took the undermentioned steps in this matter:

The Holy Prophet^(sa) spent his own life like that of the have-nots and always supplicated, ‘O my

Lord God, so long as I live, I should be poor and take me to Yourself while I am still poor and on the Day of Resurrection raise me up with the poor people.’ He did not confine his help of the poor only to their spiritual enhancement but took practical steps to remove their poverty and want. He adopted practical means, the best and most effective of which was the institution of Zakat and which served as a sure guarantee for their sustenance and other needs. History provides us with an undeniable evidence how splendidly the institution of Zakat worked and helped the needy in such a manner, that in no time the social conditions were radically changed so much so, that few have-nots were to be found in the length and breadth of the Muslim Empire and people became so prosperous that when people went about in search of the needy they could not find one who deserved help.

Zakat is not only the most effective means of ending poverty and want in the society,

but is the best course of improving the moral conditions of the nation. Facts and figures provide us with an undeniable truth that poverty, destitution, hunger and want are the main causes of crimes. When individuals of a nation live in straitened circumstances and the empty purse looks them in their faces all the time, they are bound to commit crimes to put an end to their distress. It comes to our daily experience that merely because of their straitened means some people start thieving and robbing and start pick-pocketing and when in extreme poverty, they do not even hesitate to murder people and adopt this as a profession. This causes an upheaval in the country's peace.

Poverty does not only force people to commit crimes – thieving and robbing – but induces them to enter the walks of immorality. Poverty also tends to make one niggardly and mean, and the fear of God vanishes from the heart and only begins to think that the rich people are one's gods who would come to

one's rescue. The poor consider them to be their only benefactors, sustainers and patrons. They begin to fear them more than they ever fear God. How true is the saying: 'Poverty makes a man susceptible to disbelief and rebellion.'

These moral ailments and weaknesses suppress people's capabilities. The only way to improve matters is to find ways and means to remove poverty and hunger, want and scarcity. Islam has given us a viable remedy to remove poverty in the nation. This remedy is the system of Zakat which guarantees prosperity and happiness for the people who will accept it. When Zakat was the law and the people obeyed and paid the Zakat into the government treasuries, crimes were seldom committed and most certainly not for want and poverty. The moral state of the people was indeed enviable.

Zakat ensures economic prosperity

Zakat is not only advantageous in the moral and spiritual uplift of

man but is also a guarantee for economic betterment. The word Zakat also implies increase and growth. This, therefore, means God has made Zakat an important means of increase and multiplying of national wealth and betterment of social conditions. The Almighty God has said in the Holy Qur'an:

. . . thou mayest cleanse and purify them...
(Ch.9: V.103)

And again He says:

The similitude of those who spend their wealth for the cause of Allah is like the similitude of a grain of corn which grows seven ears, in each ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies it further for whomsoever He pleases and Allah is Bountiful. All-Knowing.
(Ch.2: V.262)

From the above two verses, it is evident that Zakat is the means of ameliorating social conditions and of making the nations

economically prosperous. This is very easily understandable because when the poor and the needy obtain financial assistance and the people get financial support in their difficulties and distress, they would naturally tend to stand on their own feet and try to become independent and would enter the highroad of success and prosperity.

Economic welfare and prosperity of the nation is never attained through the wealth of the nation going into the hands of a limited few capitalists. National prosperity means the happiness and prosperity of all the members of the nation collectively. When Zakat funds are distributed among the poor, the wealth of the nation shall pass from the hands of a limited few into the hands of the have-nots who form the majority. They shall in turn, by the means of this financial assistance, be able to make their own livings. The social and economic conditions are bound to become stable and rest on very firm footings.

It is often pointed out that in modern times revenue from Zakat alone cannot fulfil the needs of the poor and the needy. This is not untrue, because of the heavy expenditure of governments. Some of this is legitimate. It is for this very reason that Muslims are enjoined to give additional alms in the name of Allah, both collectively and individually. In this respect the Holy Qur'an says:

And spend for the cause of Allah, and cast not yourselves into ruin with your own hands, and do good; surely, Allah loves those who do good.
(Ch.2: V.196)

And again it says:

Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah, by night and by day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord; on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve.
(Ch.2: V.275)

And again the Holy Qur'an mentions:

Those who spend their wealth in the cause of Allah, then follow not up what they have spent with taunt and injury, for them is their reward with their Lord and they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve.
(Ch.2; V.263)

O ye who believe, render not vain your alms by taunt or injury, like one who spends his wealth to be seen of men, and believes not in Allah and the Last Day. His case is like the case of a smooth rock covered with earth, on which heavy rain falls and washes it clean, leaving it bare, smooth and hard. They shall not secure aught of what they earn. And Allah guides not the disbelieving people.
(Ch.2: V.265)

The evils of Capitalism and Communism

The biggest evil of Capitalism is that the wealth of the nation is amassed in the hands of a limited

few and the rest of the nation becomes a prey to want and poverty. It was on account of this iniquity that Communism gained its roots. It is based on the principle that no one really is the rightful owner of what he earns and the real master of the national wealth is the State which must distribute it according to the needs of the members of the community.

When we devote our mind to both these systems we are bound to come to the conclusion that both these systems belong to the opposite extremes. If Capitalism is responsible for the wretchedness and distress of a great number of the people living under it and due return is given to the real producer of wealth, Communism also completely ignores the labour and effort put in by the real producer of wealth. Under this system the person who has put in the labour to produce is totally deprived of its possession. The result is that the true zeal to work with earnestness dies out. Communism also fails to define human needs with

the state determining such needs.

The history of Capitalism tells us that the capitalist countries tend to rob the others so that they may get more and more rich. They openly trample over the rights of the others and usurp the rights of others as if it was their right to do so. They not only rapaciously grabbed the rights of individuals but also seized the wealth of other peoples and nations. As opposed to this, the Communist nations not only ravished and pounced upon the wealth and properties of individuals but also put them to torture and took away their lives mercilessly. But Islam does not at all favour tyranny and injustice. Islam neither allows the poor to be suppressed nor lets the rights of the rich to be swept away. Both the poor and the rich are God's creation. He, therefore, provides protection to them both and guides them to progress and prosperity.

Islam, unlike Communism and Capitalism, gives due regard to labour and upholds its dignity

and approves the right of ownership so that zeal and enthusiasm, for hard work and best results, is not lost. For this very reason, it has provided such a wise code of law as the Zakat so that wealth is not accumulated into the hands of a few men. It must keep in circulation and should never be allowed to stagnate. Under the Zakat rules, one-fortieth of one's savings and stock-in-trade must be paid after every twelve months. This is a great incentive for the man in business to see that he is earning and increasing his wealth otherwise the annual payments will ultimately eat up all his capital.

Moreover, when capital is employed in trade or industry, it naturally provides work for labour and it keeps on circulating among different classes of people. The businessman tries to pay the Zakat from profits and not from his capital and the farmer will try to work harder and produce more so that he is able to keep his head above water. That is the reason why Islam has imposed Zakat on

things which have the quality of increasing. Islam has laid the condition to pay the Zakat each year so that one could take the best advantage of his possessions. The Companions of the Holy Prophet^(sa), were fully aware of this point and engaged themselves in trade and business. During his Caliphate, Hadhrat Umar^(ra) had given special instructions to those who held in trust the property and wealth of the orphans, always to make investments so that their inherited wealth may not be eaten up by Zakat by the time they became of age and took over their properties.

It has, therefore, become quite evident that Zakat gives an incentive to work hard and produce more wealth. Expert economists have often said that nations which do not employ themselves in business and trade and produce more wealth are bound to become bankrupt if their capital lies stagnant and unused. But the Holy Prophet^(sa) had given this warning some fourteen hundred years ago in the

following words of the Holy Qur'an:

... And those who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah – give to them tidings of a painful punishment.

(Ch.9: V.34)

In this verse 'painful punishment' does not only mean punishment in the world to come. Nay, along with that punishment, withholding wealth and capital from circulation and hoarding money is bound to lead the nation to a certain economic disaster. Therefore, all those who hoard money and keep the national wealth idle, are guilty of bringing down their nation to ruin and degradation and they themselves begin to decay and ultimately totter to their fall.

The system of Zakat provides to the wealthy a great incentive to earn more and more in order to save it being eaten up by annual payments. In this way a good businessman not only increases his own wealth but also provides

work for others. But it is a great pity that very many people do not realise this fact and try to evade paying Zakat. They wrongly fear that this might cause a great loss. They do not understand that God enforced this law to induce men to make more wealth and become richer and richer.

There is an assurance from God Almighty for those who pay the Zakat that their wealth will not decrease, it shall, on the contrary, continue to increase. Therefore, those who pay it reap the benefit. God Almighty says:

Whatever you pay as interest that it may increase the wealth of the people, it does not increase in the sight of Allah; but whatever you give in Zakat seeking the favour of Allah – it is these who will increase their wealth manifold.

(Ch.30: V.40)

Value and worth of Zakat in the eyes of non-Muslims

Even a number of non-Muslims truly acclaimed the worth and

fruitfulness of Zakat and how it is beneficial to mankind; how it supports and sustains the poor and safeguards the rights of the high and the low; and how this system improves national prosperity and raises the moral and spiritual conditions of the nation. They regard the system of Zakat in Islam as a very outstanding feature of the faith.

‘Besides the institution of the pilgrimage, the payment of the legal alms is another duty that continually reminds the Muslim that the faithful are brothers (XLIX-10) – religious, theory that is very strikingly realised in Muhammadan society and seldom fails to express itself in acts of kindness towards the new convert, whatever be his race, colour or antecedents, he is received into the brotherhood of believers and takes his place as an equal among equals.’ (T. W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* Lahore edition, pp.415-416)

The famous German scholar, Joseph Hell, has also discussed the commendable commands of Islam in his book *The Arab Civilisation*. Having discussed the beauty and the admirable concept of social equality in Islam and the practical training given in the congregational prayers in the mosque or outside, he goes to express his very high opinion regarding the excellent system of Zakat in Islam:

‘Besides the common prayer, the conception of social equality was an innovation peculiar to Islam. Help and maintenance of the poor thus became a sacred trust. It was left no longer to individuals to give what they pleased, but the poor tax (zakat) became an obligatory duty and was collected in a central treasury, and administered therefrom.’ (Joseph Hell, *The Arab Civilisation*)

This, he points out, is a very important religious obligation. Every Muslim of means must pay the Zakat to the State and it

‘ Zakat enhances the spiritual, moral and economical standards of mankind. It is a devotion offered through one’s wealth which purifies the heart and cleanses the soul. ’

is their duty to disburse these funds where they deem to be fit. The payment of these alms has not been left to the whims and caprices of the individual paying the Zakat. The needy person receiving the aid does not feel under any obligation or humiliation to a private individual.

In summing up the benefits of Zakat, we must also remember that Zakat enhances the spiritual, moral and economical standards of mankind. It is a devotion offered through one’s wealth which purifies the heart and cleanses the soul. It also destroys the evils of Capitalism and underwrites the sustenance of the poor and needy. It provides dependable security for those who need assistance. It also creates the spirit of sympathy and brotherhood among men; maintains peace in the society and provides the opportunity for

the proletariat to obtain their birthrights in the national wealth. Zakat also guarantees human dignity and keeps the capital in circulation which in turn brings prosperity to the whole nation and foremost and above all the benefits, causes spiritual happiness and exultation for the individual and a pleasant and happy atmosphere to live in.

What we have said above is not a mere boast. It is a stark naked truth and history provides an undeniable evidence to its truth. Under the direct guidance of the Holy Prophet(sa), his Companions faithfully observed this divine command and so did those who followed them later for the next two hundred years. They truly inherited the spiritual qualities and the zeal of their fathers and obeyed all the commands and walked steadfastly in the paths of obedience and virtue. They paid

the Zakat as an act of devotion and seldom failed in their religious as well as their national duty. The result was that history recorded that poverty and want practically disappeared from the Muslim society. Muslim culture and the Muslim way of life became the hallmark of prosperity, progress and success in all fields. There was such a radical change in social conditions that those who at one time stood in need of assistance, began to contribute towards Zakat themselves. However hard the administration of the State searched for the poor and the needy, they could not trace them. They were pure-hearted and righteous practical Muslims and followed all the injunctions of the Qur'an faithfully and steadfastly. The result was that they not only became the benefactors and patrons of the then civilised world, they also became a people whom God loved because they had become the torch-bearers of truth.

We earnestly pray that God Almighty may grant us also the

very same true understanding of the system of Zakat and its importance. May He grant us the strength and determination to observe this vital command along with all His other commands, so that each and every individual of our society may get his rightful share with dignity and honour. May it so happen that we all live together in brotherly affection without any enmity or hatred for any of us and that there may be no restlessness, no rebuffs, no repulses and no tumults in our midst. May we all gather together around our God, seeking His pleasure. Amin.

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