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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Fazal Ahmad—London, UK

Integration of Muslims

Problems with extremists, terrorists, fundamentalists, and waves of protests and demands from Muslims living in the West have sparked demands from both the media and politicians for greater integration of Muslims in western society. So what is integration, and what level of integration would be appropriate?

Integration does not mean that we all need to look the same, dress the same and behave the same way. It does mean that we need to find common values and create a climate of mutual respect and tolerance. We need to communicate effectively with each other.

Muslims alone belong to a universal religion – no other religion can authenticate their universality from their teachings – and are best equipped to integrate in a global village. Muslims have and can integrate in so many ways. They can

become volunteers in their local communities to help the sick, the elderly, the disabled and the homeless. They can visit those in prison and give them hope. They can play an active part in charity work. Muslims have been doing this integration which is appreciated by all.

Muslims are encouraged by their faith to be loyal to their country. They are encouraged to obey and respect the Laws and institutions of these countries. In Europe or North America, the state has not made worship impossible or forced people to abandon their values.

Muslims are also directed by the Qur'an to show respect for all faiths and cultures. Moderate Muslims throughout the West have been promoting constructive dialogue between faiths just as this magazine has done for over a century.

Integration also means that

Muslims can adopt the good traits of the host communities such as honesty, environmental awareness, charity, liberal thinking and freedom of conscience that are all integral to Islam.

Integration does not mean that Muslims must abandon modest dress and adopt the dress code of the West. Integration does not mean that Muslims must adopt local customs of eating and drinking, particularly alcoholism and partying. If anything, abstinence from alcohol, although seen a while back as a hindrance to our integration, now is accepted as a virtue to which the rest of society should aspire.

The appalling activities of a tiny minority of political extremists who have hijacked the name of Islam have made life much harder for the vast majority of Muslims who are moderate and well-balanced. Western politicians are now being drawn into debates about what Muslims should wear and lecture Muslims

on how they must behave and bring up their children.

What is needed at this time is a sense of calm and unity among all decent people in society. This situation needs strong and responsible leadership on both sides to foster a climate of tolerance, security and mutual respect. Many Muslims already play an active and productive role in society, and this helps achieve true social integration unlike the unhelpful prodding of a minority of politicians picking on divisive issues such as veils, or deliberately insisting upon their right to freedom of speech that leaves the community feeling vulnerable and offended.

ESSENCE OF ISLAM:

Comprehensiveness of the Holy Qur'an – Part 13

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.

Comprehensiveness of the Holy Qur'an

The holy and perfect teaching is that of the Holy Qur'an which nourishes every branch of the human tree. The Qur'an does not stress only one side. Sometimes it urges forgiveness and forbearance on condition that they should be appropriate, and sometimes on proper occasions, it directs the punishment of an offender. In truth the Holy Qur'an is a picture of the Divine law of nature, which is visible everywhere. It is perfectly

reasonable that the word of God and the work of God should be in accord with each other, that is to say, as the work of God Almighty appears in the world, the true Book of God should teach in accordance with that work, and not that His work should manifest one thing and His word should manifest something else. We observe in God's work that there is not always forgiveness and forbearance but that He punishes offenders with diverse types of chastisement. Such punishment is mentioned in the

previous Books also. Our God is not only Compassionate but is also Wise and His torment is great. The True Book is the one which is in accord with this law of nature, and the True Word of God is that which is not inconsistent with His work. We do not find that God has treated His creation always with compassion and forbearance and that there is no chastisement. Even today, God Almighty has, for the chastisement of the wicked, prophesied through me the occurrence of a great and terrible earthquake which will destroy them.

(Chashma-e-Masihi, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 20, pp.346-347)

We had raised an objection to the current Gospels that the Gospels do not provide for the development of all man's faculties and that even the portions of them relating to moral qualities are taken from the Torah. This caused great humiliation to the Christian priests. To this some Christians replied that:



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 (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

His claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

‘Divine Books are concerned only with morals and that the punishment of offences is not appropriate for a Book of God, inasmuch as offences should be punished according

to changing circumstances which are unlimited and it is not proper that there should be a fixed law laying down penalties. Every penalty should be such as is in accord with the times and is helpful for the warning and restraint of offenders. Fixed penalties are not beneficial for the reform of people. In the same way, civil, criminal and revenue laws should not be fixed and rigid, as they would create difficulties under changing circumstances. For instance, they might adversely affect commercial conditions which have become current and cannot be avoided, or a penal law might not be helpful where offenders have become accustomed to one kind of punishment, or may not be amenable to it.’

I would say that this type of thinking proceeds from people who have not studied the Holy Qur’an with care. The directions contained in the Holy Qur’an with regard to civil, criminal and

revenue matters are of two types. One, which lays down the details of punishment or of procedure, and the other which only prescribes the principle and does not lay down any specific direction. The purpose of the latter is to provide guidance for the meeting of new circumstances. For instance, at one place the Holy Qur’an lays down the rule of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye, This is a detail. In another place, the principle is set forth:

And the recompense of an injury is an injury the like thereof. (Ch.42:V.41)

On reflection we find that this principle is laid down for the widening of the law in cases where the specific law cannot be carried into effect. For instance, if a person who has lost his own teeth breaks the tooth of another, he ceases to be amenable to the rule of a tooth for a tooth, for he has no teeth himself. In the same way, if a blind person should destroy the eye of another person, he cannot be deprived of

his own eye, for he has none. The Holy Qur'an lays down general principles to meet such cases and by doing so encourages everyone to deduce rules suitable to every case. It is a pity that the Torah does not follow this method and the Gospel is wholly deprived of this teaching. It only lays down a few moral exhortations, but they are not part of any code or system of law. The statement of the Christians that the Gospel has left legal matters to the intelligence of people is not a matter of pride, but one of remorse and shame, for whatever is not laid down as universal law and is not spelled out in terms of any regulatory principles, is liable to be misused and become an evil, however good its purpose might be.

(Kitab-ul-Bariyyah, Ruhani Kaza'in, Vol.13, pp.87-88)

God Almighty, Who knows the secrets of the hearts, is witness that if anyone is able to point out a defect in the teaching of the Holy Qur'an to the extent of a

thousandth part of a particle, or is able to point out an excellence in his own book, which is opposed to the teaching of the Qur'an and excels it, we would be prepared to submit ourselves to the penalty of death.

(Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol.1, p.298, sub footnote 2)

Holy Qur'an Accords with Human Nature

Of all the current revealed Books on earth, the Holy Qur'an is the only Book which is conclusively proven to be the Word of God. Its teachings for salvation are based entirely on truth and are in accordance with human nature. Its doctrines are so perfect and firm that strong proofs bear witness to their truth. Its commandments are based upon truth. Its teachings are free from every type of polytheism, innovation and worship of creatures. It is full of eagerness for the manifestation of the Unity of God and of Divine greatness and of the perfection of the Lord of Honour. It is replete throughout with the Unity of the

Divine and does not tolerate any kind of deficiency or defect or unworthy attributes in the case of the Creator. It does not impose any doctrine by mere authority, but sets down reasons for the truth of that which it teaches. It establishes every purpose with proofs and arguments. It sets forth reasons for the truth of every principle and carries the mind to perfect certainty and full understanding. It repels all evils that afflict people's doctrines, actions and words, and works with bright reasoning. It teaches good manners, the knowledge of which is necessary for every human being. It repels every corruption with as much force as that which inspires the corruption. Its teaching is straightforward and strong and secure, as if it were a mirror of the law of nature and is a true reflection of it. It is an enlightening sun for the insight of the heart. It expounds the details of the principles of reason and corrects its deficiencies.

Other books that are called revealed are in their present

condition deprived of all these perfect qualities and contain many wrong conceptions with regard to the Being and attributes of the Divine. The followers of these books profess strange doctrines. Some of them deny God being the Creator and All-Powerful and set themselves up as His partners in being eternal and self-existent. Some set up idols and images and deities as partners with the Divine and managers of His kingdom. Some fashion sons and daughters and grandsons and grand-daughters for Him. Some worship Him in the form of an alligator or tortoise. In short, they run ahead of each other as if the Perfect Being is most unfortunate that He has not been able to attain the perfection which reason demanded for Him. When I discovered people involved in such false doctrines and afflicted with so much error, my heart trembled and melted and I felt it a bounden duty and obligation to write this book for their guidance, which I shall fully discharge.

(Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani

Khaza'in, Vol. 1 pp.81-83)

Evidences of Truth and Superiority of the Holy Qur'an

The external evidence of the truth and superiority of the Holy Qur'an is of four types. One, that is derived from those matters which need to be reformed; and second, that is derived from those matters which need to be perfected; and third, which is derived from matters which manifest the power of God; and fourth, which is derived from matters relating to the unseen. The internal evidence of the truth and superiority of the Holy Qur'an is all derived from matters manifesting the Power of God.

Matters that need to be reformed are false doctrines which people have adopted in place of true doctrines and righteous action, and which have become so widespread that Divine favour should address itself to their reform.

Matters that need to be perfected relate to the teachings which are found in a defective condition in

all revealed books, and whose defectiveness and imperfection are manifested by comparison with perfect teachings and which, therefore, demand a revealed Book which should perfect them.

Matters which Manifest the Power of God are of two kinds. One, external, by which are meant matters which are created by God without any human planning and which invest every particle with that majesty, dignity and greatness, the acquisition of which is impossible according to reason and the like of which is not to be found anywhere in the world.

Secondly, internal. By these are meant those beauties of form and meaning of the revealed Book which cannot be matched by human faculties and which, by being in fact matchless and peerless, point to a Unique and All-Powerful One and are thus a mirror pointing to God.

By matters relating to the unseen are meant matters which proceed from the tongue of a person with

regard to whom it is certain that their exposition is beyond his power. That is to say, by comparing them with the circumstances of that person it becomes obvious that they are neither natural to him nor could have been acquired by observation or reflection; nor should it be possible to imagine that he could have obtained knowledge of them from one who was familiar with them. They may not be matters which are beyond the power of matters which are beyond the power of another person. Thus they are relative matters, that is to say, when they are attributed to some particular person they can be considered as relating to the unseen and when they are attributed to some other persons they have not this quality.

(Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 1, pp. 143-145)

Miracles of the Holy Qur'an

Some of the miracles and prophecies of the Holy Qur'an are such that they can be witnessed and experienced by us even in this age and no one can

deny them.

The miracle of the sign of chastisement which was shown to the disbelievers of that time is a sign to which we are also witness, the reason being that it is the necessary consequence of premises that are certain and which cannot be denied by anyone. The first premise is that this sign was demanded when the Holy Prophet^(saw) and his few companions were being persecuted in diverse ways in Makkah.

That was a time of such weakness for Islam that the disbelievers of Makkah mocked at the Muslims and said: If you are right, then how is it that you are suffering so much at our hands and God, upon Whom you rely, Who does not help you and why are you so small in numbers that you will be soon destroyed? If you are in the right why are we not chastised? What was said to the disbelievers in reply is set out in the Holy Qur'an at diverse places and that constitutes the second premise for the appreciation of the grandeur of

this prophecy. That was a time when the lives of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and his companions were always in danger and failure stared them in the face in all directions. At such a time, in answer to the demand of the disbelievers for a sign of chastisement, it was stated plainly that they would soon be shown the sign of the victory of Islam and their own punishment. It was said that Islam, which appeared as a seed at the time, would one day manifest itself as a large tree and that those who demand a sign of chastisement will one day be put to the sword and the whole of Arabia would be cleared of disbelievers. The sovereignty over Arabia would pass to the Muslims and God Almighty would so firmly establish Islam in Arabia that idol worship would be abolished forever and the state of fear of the Muslims would be replaced by security. Islam would grow strong and would become supreme till other countries would fall under the shadow of its victory which would extend to far regions and a great kingdom

would be established which would endure till the end of the world.

If a person considers both these premises and finds out that the time when this prophecy was made was a time of great distress for Islam, and the prophecy that was made was altogether opposed to the prevailing circumstances and appeared wholly impossible, and then looks at the history of Islam, which is well-known to enemies and friends, and sees how clearly it was fulfilled and how its fulfilment awed the hearts and how it was manifested with full power and strength in the east and the west, he would appreciate it as a miracle witnessed by himself regarding which he would have no doubt whatever left. The second miracle of the Holy Qur'an which we can appreciate as eye witnesses, is the wonderful changes that were manifested in the companions of the Holy Prophet^(saw) through the blessing of the following of the Holy Qur'an and the effect of the

company of the Holy Prophet^(saw). When we see what kind of people they were before they embraced Islam and what were their ways and habits, and then in consequence of keeping company with the Holy Prophet^(saw) and following the Holy Qur'an, how they changed from their low condition into a clean and pure condition in their beliefs, their morals, their conduct, their conversation, their behaviour and all their ways, we would have to confess that this great change, which invested their rusted personalities with a wonderful freshness and bestowed upon them light and brightness, was an extraordinary transformation brought about by the hand of God Almighty. This transformation was so extraordinary as to deserve being called a miracle.

A third miracle of the Holy Qur'an present before our eyes is its verities, insights and fine points with which its eloquent composition is replete. This miracle has been set forth very forcefully in the Holy Qur'an. It

is said that, if all men, high and low, were to combine together to produce its like, it would not be possible for them to do so (please see Ch.17:V.89 set out on page 14 of this issue [ed]). This miracle is proved by the fact that during the last 1,300 years, although the Holy Qur'an has been very widely published and challenges are being hurled right and left, yet no one has ever dared to take up the challenge. This proves clearly that all human faculties are unable to compete with the Holy Qur'an.

Even if out of the hundreds of excellences of the Holy Qur'an, only one is put forward and its match is demanded, it is impossible for any human being to put forward the like of it. For instance, one of the excellences of the Holy Qur'an is that it comprises all religious insights and there is no religious verity related to truth and wisdom which is not found in the Holy Qur'an. Is there anyone who can put forward any other book which has this quality? If anyone doubts the fact that the Holy

Qur'an is comprehensive of all religious verities, then such a doubter, whether Christian, Arya, Brahmū or atheist, can satisfy himself by examining the matter in his own way and we take the responsibility of satisfying him, provided he turns to us as a seeker after truth. All the holy verities that are contained in the Bible, or the words of truth and wisdom which we have seen in the books of philosophers, or the verities that have found place by chance in the Vedas or are still to be found in them which we have seen, or the wisdom and understanding which are set out in the hundreds of books of the Sufis, which we have come to know, are all found in the Holy Qur'an.

This perfect research which we have carried out in depth during thirty years has disclosed to us conclusively and certainly, that there is no spiritual verity which is helpful for the perfection of the soul and for the training of intellect and the heart which is not mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. This is not only our

experience, but is the claim of the Holy Qur'an, which has been tested not only by me, but by thousands of divines from the very beginning who have borne witness to its truth.

A fourth miracle of the Holy Qur'an is its spiritual effects inherent in it from the beginning. This means that its followers are accepted of the Divine and are honoured with the converse of God. Their supplications are accepted by God Almighty, and He responds to them with love and mercy, and He informs them of some hidden mysteries as He informs the Prophets and distinguishes them from other people by bestowing upon them signs of His support and help. This is also a sign which will continue till the Day of Judgement among the Muslims. It has been manifested throughout and is present even today. There are today among the Muslims people whom God the Glorious, through His special support, honours with true revelation and visions relating to hidden matters.

O ye who are seekers after truth! and O ye who are hungry and thirsty for true signs! consider justly and with a pure vision of what high degree are the signs which God Almighty has set forth in the Holy Qur'an and how they are present and perceptible in every age. The miracles of previous Prophets are now mere stories and we do not know to what degree they are true.

(Tasdiq-un-Nabi, pp.20-23 or Maktubat-e-Ahmadiyya, Vol.3, pp. 49-53)

Miracles of the Holy Qur'an

The miracles and extraordinary signs of the Holy Qur'an are of four types; (1) miracles relating to the intellect; (2) miracles relating to knowledge; (3) miracles relating to spiritual blessings; and (4) miracles relating to external causes.

The first three are miracles of the inherent qualities of the Holy Qur'an. They are very grand and are susceptible of obvious proof. They can be witnessed in every age like visible realities, but the fourth kind are external matters

which are not inherent in the Holy Qur'an. Of these is the miracle of the splitting of the moon. The true excellence and beauty of the Holy Qur'an are exhibited in the first three kinds of miracles. Indeed, this is the great sign of all Divine words that these three kinds of miracles should be found in them. In the Holy Qur'an all three are found in a high and perfect and complete degree, and they are put forward by the Holy Qur'an repeatedly as proof of its being matchless and peerless, as it is said:

Say, 'If mankind and the Jinn gathered together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even though they should help one another.'
(Ch.17:V.89)

Proclaim to these disbelievers that if all humans and genii, that is, the entire creation, were to agree to produce the like of this Qur'an, they would not be able to produce a book which combines the internal and external qualities

of the Holy Qur'an even though they all help each other in the effort.

At another place it is said:

...Nothing have We left out in the Book...

(Ch.6:V.39)

In other words:

...reciting unto them the Pure Scriptures. Therein are lasting commandments.

(Ch.98:Vs.3-4)

The Holy Qur'an comprises the sum and substance of all divine scriptures.

At another place it is said:

If We had sent down this Qur'an on a mountain, thou wouldst certainly have seen it humbled and rent asunder for fear of Allah. And these are similitudes that We set forth for mankind that they may reflect.

(Ch.59:V.22)

We have revealed this Qur'an to you; had it been sent down on a mountain, it would have been rent asunder in fear and awe of Allah. We narrate these illustrations so that people reflect upon the grandeur of the Word of God.

Besides this, large numbers of miracles of external changes are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Miracles of this kind are like ornaments for the beauty of the Qur'an with which handsome people are bedecked. It is obvious that what is beautiful in itself does not need any ornament though an ornament enhances its beauty to some degree.

These miracles that are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are of diverse types. One is that through the prayer of the Holy Prophet^(saw) God Almighty manifested His powerful control over the heavens and split the moon into two pieces. Secondly, the change that God Almighty brought about on earth through the prayers of the Holy Prophet^(saw) which appeared in the

form of a famine that lasted for seven years, whereby people were so overcome that they ground down bones and swallowed them. Thirdly, the miraculous control that was exercised on the day of the migration of the Holy Prophet^(saw) to safeguard him against the mischief of the disbelievers. When the disbelievers of Makkah resolved to kill him, God, the Glorious, informed the Holy Prophet^(saw) of their design and commanded him to migrate from Makkah to Madinah and gave him the good news of his victorious return. It was a Wednesday, the time was around midday, and the day was very hot, when this trial was manifested by God. In this situation of distress when the Holy Prophet^(saw) was about to leave his home town suddenly, and his enemies had surrounded his house with the design of killing him, a close relative whose being was compounded of love and faith laid himself down, under the direction of the Holy Prophet^(saw) on his bed, covering his face so that the spies of the enemies should not investigate the

departure of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and deeming the substitute to be the Holy Prophet^(saw) himself should continue to wait for killing him.

‘No one offers his head, or sacrifices his life for someone else. Love alone makes one perform this task with utmost sincerity’.

After the Holy Prophet^(saw) had left, leaving his faithful relative in his place, and his enemies discovered his departure, these wicked people pursued him with the intention of killing him somewhere on the way. At that time of distress, the Holy Prophet^(saw) was accompanied only by one sincere and faithful friend. But as ever, and also in the course of that dangerous journey, his Lord Who had sent this perfect and faithful servant of His into the world for carrying out a grand reform was with him. In order to safeguard this dear servant of His, He exercised wonderful control in many ways which are mentioned briefly in the Holy Qur’an. One of them was that none of his enemies

noticed his departure though it was morning time and his enemies were surrounding his house. As is mentioned in Surah Yasin, God Almighty put a covering on the eyes of all those wretches and the Holy Prophet^(saw) left unnoticed.

Another extraordinary manifestation that God, the Glorious, exhibited for safeguarding His immaculate Prophet^(saw) was that, though his enemies arrived outside the cave in which the Holy Prophet^(saw) was hidden with his companion, they could not see him for God Almighty had sent a pair of pigeons which built a nest the same night at the entrance to the cave and also laid their eggs there and by Divine command a spider also wove its web at the place, whereby the enemies of the Prophet^(saw) were misled and returned frustrated. Another miracle that occurred was that an opponent of the Holy Prophet^(saw) who was riding a horse on the way to Madinah, tried to approach the Holy Prophet^(saw) and through the latter's prayer the hooves of his horse sank into the earth and

he fell down, whereupon he asked for forgiveness of the Holy Prophet^(saw) and turned away. Another miraculous event that occurred was that when being provoked by their failure, his enemies advanced against the Holy Prophet^(saw) with a large army so that they might destroy the Muslims, who were small in number, and thus root out Islam, God, the Glorious, created confusion among the enemy forces at Badr in consequence of the Holy Prophe^(saw) throwing a handful of gravel at his enemies, and thus brought about their defeat. God Almighty caused this handful of gravel to make the enemy leaders blind and confused them and rooted them to the earth and made them fall down dead at the spots which the Holy Prophet^(saw) had specified in advance.

The Holy Qur'an mentions several other instances of Divine intervention and succour, that were miraculous in nature. The sum and substance of this is that God Almighty raised the Holy Prophet^(saw) at a time when he was

poor, an orphan, alone and helpless and then within a short period of time, which was even less than thirty years, made him victorious over a large part of the world and made him supreme over the Byzantine emperor and the kings of Syria, Egypt, and the countries between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Similarly, within a short period of time, He spread the Muslim victories as far as the Oxus river. The Holy Qur'an had foretold the spread of Islam in these countries. Considering the Muslims' lack of resources and their wonderful victories, wise and learned Europeans have testified that there is no other instance in the history of the world of such rapid advance as that of Islam and the Islamic kingdom. It is obvious that what is matchless is also called miraculous. In short, many external changes of a miraculous nature are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. Indeed, every part of this holy word announces aloud instances of Divine support.

(Surmah Chashm Arya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol.2, pp.60-67,

footnote)

Doors to Divine Understanding Opened by the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an opens three doors for bestowing the understanding of truth. One is the door of reason. The way of reasoning has been perfectly employed for the recognition of the existence of God and His attributes of Creation, Unity, Power, Compassion and Self-Subsistence. In the course of this reasoning logic and eloquence, physics and medicine, astronomy and mathematics, philosophy and the method of debate, have all been brought into play most appropriately whereby difficult problems have been resolved. This method is extraordinary and is a miracle of reasoning. Great philosophers who invented logic and laid down the rules of philosophy and occupied themselves much with physics and astronomy were not able, on account of the deficiency of their reason, to employ this learning in support of their faith. Nor were they able to correct their own mistakes or confer any religious benefit upon others. Indeed most

of them remained atheists or heretics or weak of faith, and those of them who believed in God Almighty to some degree mixed up error and truth and compounded the impure with the pure and thus went astray. It is thus miraculous that this Divine reasoning commits no mistake and has employed the learnings that we have mentioned for such a high purpose as no human being has attempted. It is enough proof that the statements of the Holy Qur'an with regard to the existence of the Divine and His attributes of Unity and Creation and other perfect attributes, are so comprehensive that they cannot be exceeded, nor is it possible for any man to put forth a new argument. If anyone doubts this, let him put forward some intellectual reasoning in support of the existence or the Unity or Creativeness or any other Divine attribute, so that we might point out from the Holy Qur'an the same arguments or even better ones for which we make ourselves responsible. This claim and this praise of the Qur'an are not mere words, but are true in

fact, and no one can put forward an argument in support of the true doctrine which the Holy Qur'an has not put forward. The Holy Qur'an at many places loudly claims perfect comprehensiveness for itself

The second door of Divine understanding which the Holy Qur'an has opened wide, is intellectual fine points which on account of their extraordinary nature could be called intellectual miracles. They are of many types. First, the knowledge of the insights of the faith, that is to say, all high insights in the matter of faith and all its holy verities and all the fine points of the knowledge of the Divine which are needed in this world for the perfection of the soul are fully set out in the Holy Qur'an; so also, all the illnesses of the self that incite to sin and its passions and all the remedies and requirements that are needed and all the ways of the purification of the soul and all the signs and characteristics and essentials and high moral qualities are fully dealt with. No one can set forth a

verity or Divine point or a way of reaching God or a rare or holy discipline or form of Divine worship which is not mentioned in the Qur'an. Secondly, there is knowledge of the qualities of the soul and of psychology which is found in such a comprehensive way in this miraculous Word that those who reflect can appreciate that this is not the work of any except the All-Powerful. Thirdly, there is the knowledge of the beginning, of the hereafter, and other hidden matters which are an essential part of the word of the Knower of the hidden, which comforts the hearts and proves the knowledge of the hidden possessed by the All-Powerful God. This knowledge is found in such detail and abundance in the Holy Qur'an that no other book can compare with it in this respect. Besides this, the Holy Qur'an has also pressed into the service of the faith knowledge of other subjects, in a miraculous manner. In this respect it has kept in mind logic, physics, philosophy, astronomy, psychology, medicine, mathematics, and the knowledge of composition,

and has used them for expounding and explaining the knowledge of the faith, or facilitating its understanding, or for drawing any conclusion from it or repelling the objection of some ignorant person. In short, all these subjects are set out in the Holy Qur'an for the service of the faith in such an extraordinary manner that every type of intellect can derive benefit from them....

The third door of the understanding of the Divine which the Holy Qur'an has opened is the door of spiritual blessings which can be called its miracle of effect. Every intelligent person knows that the country of the birth of the Holy Prophet^(saw) was a limited peninsula called Arabia, which was cut off from all other countries. Even a bigoted opponent, who has some knowledge, cannot deny that before the advent of the Holy Prophet^(saw) the people of this country led a wild and animal existence and were entirely unaware of religion, or faith, or

the rights of God, or the rights of man, and that through the centuries they had been steeped in idol worship and other impure notions, and had reached the extremes of debauchery, drinking, gambling and other vices, and did not regard theft, robbery, murder, infanticide, devouring the substance of orphans or trespassing against the rights of others as a sin. In short, every vicious condition and every type of darkness and heedlessness enveloped the hearts of the Arabs. Then, it is also known that the same ignorant and wild and impious people embraced Islam and accepted the Holy Qur'an and were completely changed. The effectiveness of the Divine Word and the companionship of the Immaculate Prophet^(saw) so changed their hearts suddenly within a short time, that after their period of ignorance they were enriched with the insights of faith, and abandoning the love of the world, they were so lost in the love of God that they abandoned their homes and dear ones, and their honour and

comforts for the sake of winning the pleasure of Allah, the Glorious.

Both these pictures of their original condition and of the new life, which they acquired after their embracing Islam, are set out so clearly in the Holy Qur'an that a righteous and good-hearted person's eyes are filled with tears at reading the account. What was it then which pulled them away from one world into another so rapidly? There were two things; one was that that immaculate Prophet^(saw) was most effective in his holy power such as never was nor will be. Secondly, it was the mighty and wonderful effect of the Holy Word of the absolutely Powerful, Ever-Living and Self-Subsisting God, which pulled a large population out of thousands of darkneses into the light. Without doubt, this effect of the Holy Qur'an is miraculous for no one can cite another instance in the world that a book had proved so effective. Who can give proof that another book brought about such a change and such reform as was brought about by the Holy

Qur'an?

Hundreds of thousands of the holy ones testify that by following the Holy Qur'an, Divine blessings descend upon the heart and a wonderful relationship is established with the Divine. Divine lights and revelation descend upon the hearts, and insights and fine points issue from mouths. They are bestowed a strong trust and a firm certainty and the delicious love of God, which is nurtured by the delight of meeting, is generated in their hearts. If their beings are ground down in the mortar of calamities and are squeezed in powerful presses, their essence would be found only to be the love of God. The world is unaware of them and they are far above and higher than the world. The treatment accorded to them by God is miraculous. It has been disclosed to them that God does exist; and that He is One. When they pray to Him, He hears them; and when they call on Him, He responds to them. When they seek refuge with Him, He runs to them. He loves them more than a father. He

rains down blessings on their homes. They are recognised by His overt and covert and spiritual and material support. He helps them in every field for they are His and He is theirs. These things are not without proof.

(Surmah Chashm Arya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 2, pp.72-79, footnote)

Scientific Advancement and Signs of the Latter Days - (part 2)

By Dr. Kaleem Malik – Chicago, USA

So now that the age of information and technology and knowledge have dawned, what next? What is the application of the potential of this knowledge? According to the Holy Qur'an, the sky is the limit.

The next verse states:

And when the heaven is laid bare. (Ch.81:V.12)

Enter now the age of space technology, advanced physics, astronomy and cosmology. And with the proliferation of knowledge, man will learn the secrets of space. Having already learned to fly, man sets higher ambitions of space travel to unlock the mysteries of extra-terrestrial life, planets, galaxies and other solar systems. Man has set up space stations to observe the heavens. Space stations in

themselves are a marvel of scientific achievement which allow man to peel back the universe, layer by layer.

Another verse of the Holy Qur'an states:

And by the heaven full of tracks. (Ch.51:V.8)

This verse describes the skies full of tracks. This too has literally occurred. At every airport, the air traffic controller is looking into a monitor which has charted out the course and track of every flight so as to conduct traffic. With the countless number of daily flights, the skies have indeed been charted as the Holy Qur'an states. In fact, in the next layer of skies above the altitude of commercial flights, are tracks charted by agencies, like NASA, to monitor pathways of planets,

galaxies and the universe, making it possible for man to probe into the vast expanse of space. Even the very hazards of space travel have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, describing the clear picture of cosmic rays.

1400 years ago, only the Qur'an exclusively stated that the universe was expanding. No other scripture even hinted at it. Allah says:

And We have built the heaven with might and We continue to expand it indeed.

(Ch.51:V.48)

In 1929, Edwin Hubble found proof that the universe is expanding. Through a sophisticated scale and tools, he was able to measure distances of 23 galaxies and their movement away from the earth. The further away these galaxies were, the further they were moving. In other words, the universe must be expanding. Some view this discovery (in our age) as the most important in astronomy –

which the Holy Qur'an declared 1400 years ago!

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an;

Remember the day when We shall roll up the heavens like the rolling up of written scrolls by a scribe. As we began the first creation, so shall We repeat it – a promise binding upon Us; We shall certainly fulfil it.

(Ch.21:V.105)

Such profound statements made 1400 years ago, are only today finding their elaborate meanings with the help of scientific advancement. These few words describe with clarity the concept of Black Holes, Supernova, the Event Horizon and ultimately The White Hole. Very briefly, the massive inward gravitational pull of colossal size stars causes them to collapse and shrink. The gravitational pull causes a complete collapse of the stars into a mass called a Supernova which now even crushes its very atoms and molecules into a mass of energy called the Event

Horizon. The inward pull of gravitation continues so that even light cannot escape, thus, the Black Hole. This Black Hole now grows as other stars are rolled up into it. In 1997, it was estimated that in our galaxy, anywhere between 2 million and 3 trillion solar masses existed in a single Black Hole. And there could be many Black Holes.

These terms may appear confusing initially but these discoveries today unravel many mysteries which the Holy Qur'an declared 1400 years ago. We have discovered that the universe is expanding and within it are Black Holes which suck up the stars and press them into sheets like the rolling up of scrolls. What happens then? Allah says:

As we began the first creation, so shall We repeat it...

(Ch.21:V.105)

Such a Black Hole, of all the solar masses compressed in it, can suddenly erupt and release the trapped masses leading to the

creation of another universe. Eruption of the Black Hole releases the packets of mass energy called the Event Horizon and gives way to a new light – now called the White Hole. So this is how the universe began, this is how it will be rolled up and this is how it will be repeated. All we can do is but stand in awe at the brilliance of the Holy Qur'an and this very age which has revealed such powerful secrets with the help of scientific and technological discoveries. Such is the age that has produced the Promised Messiah^(as).

Even the question of life on other planets has already been addressed by the Holy Qur'an:

And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and of whatever living creatures He has spread forth in both...

(Ch.42:V.30)

The verse does not speak of a possibility of extraterrestrial life, rather it declares a reality of

extraterrestrial life. Most research only talks of a possibility.

The verse concludes with a powerful charge:

...And He has the power to gather them together when He pleases. (Ch.42:V.30)

Wonder upon wonder is all we can say. The Holy Qur'an declares that not only is there life beyond the earth but Allah will bring together the meeting of life on earth with life elsewhere. The when, where and how is not revealed but today, for the first time, scientists are accepting a feasible reality of such a concept.

In 1996, a NASA news release and a publication of the *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, announced the discovery of a meteorite from Mars which strongly points to the possibility of life on other planets. Again, the signs of the Latter Days as we have been describing in the Qur'an and *Ahadith* are supported by such discoveries

that highlight the truth of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^(saw).

In the area of physics, it is worth mentioning the 1947 discovery of radio Carbon dating and improving x-ray techniques. As we already know, one of the tasks of the Promised Messiah^(as) was to re-establish the lost glory of God and smash the ideologies, which brought insult to God and 'humanised' the Almighty. It was his task alone to dismantle the myth of the Cross that transformed a mortal into God. The 2000 year old firmly established premise stated that Christ^(as) died on the cross, resurrected from the dead and was then ascended to the heavens, giving us the basic Christian premises of Atonement, Trinity, Resurrection, Ascension and bodily return in the Latter Days.

With one stroke, Almighty Allah demolished such a dogma by revealing to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) that the very corpse, the dead body of Jesus^(as) is actually buried in Kashmir,

after having lived a long and prosperous life. He followed this with powerful rational arguments to support this revelation. Today physicists, forensic specialists, surgeons, trauma experts and historians have overwhelming proof supporting the claim of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as).

The Shroud of Jesus^(as), which has been held sacred and protected and honoured has been recently rejected by the Vatican as not the actual Shroud of Turin. The reason it has now been denied is that scientists claim that whosoever was wrapped in the Shroud was very much alive. Sophisticated radiographic x-ray techniques produced for us a striking image of a person who was crucified. The images were allowed to be transferred on to the Shroud because, as the Bible tells us, after having come down from the cross, Jesus^(as) was applied brought healing ointments of herbs and myrrh which covered the wounds of his entire body. These ointments produced fumes which pene-trated this holy Shroud and today's technology is

able to reproduce these images. These images show a man with the appropriately described wounds to the wrists, feet, scars from probable thorns to his forehead, a stab wound to his right side and the many scars from flaglotion. These images are so powerful and clearly demonstrate blood trickling from these wound sites, establishing the fact that up to this point the heart was still pumping and he was still alive. Trauma surgeons, physicists, historians, forensic specialists and all who are fair-minded agree that whoever was wrapped in the Shroud was no doubt alive. Numerous Carbon dating studies on the Shroud have produced conflicting results with initial findings placing the age of this Shroud to be exactly at the time of Jesus^(as), while others are now saying it does not belong to that era at all. But one thing is agreed, the scientific community, which has weighed this evidence, has cast its verdict: the man of the Shroud was alive. No wonder the Vatican has denounced this holy Shroud.

It was without any such investigation that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), made this powerful claim that Jesus^(as) is actually buried in Kashmir. So, with one stroke the ideology of the Cross has been smashed. With the actual grave of Jesus^(as) in Kashmir, he could not have died on the Cross for the sins of man. So there is no atonement; he never resurrected, he was never ascended bodily and he is a mere mortal, a noble Messenger of Allah and not a part of this man-made trinity. Although the 'Jesus' debate has become hot lately, no one has been able to produce a more plausible and intellectually satisfying alternative to the events of the crucifixion, with reason, logic and scientific as well as historical backing, as has been done by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), more than one hundred years ago. This much we can say: science is yet to contradict his claim.

Returning to *Surah Al-Takwir* which has been clearly describing the events of the world in the Latter Days, it is stated:

And when Fire is set ablaze.
(Ch.81:V.13)

When the entire context of the *Surah* is revealing world events, this verse is also delivering a warning that fire refers to such terrifying wars as would create the impression that all hell has broken loose. This is the logical conclusion of the sequence of prophecies which take man through great heights and advancements and enable him to great material power and worldly gain. The result of this success is selfishness, pride, arrogance and the cost of God's pleasure which now have created such global tensions that inevitably have resulted in hellish wars one after another. The hellfire is the creation of man's own hands. The materialistic powers have been responsible for these wars and have demonstrated the might of the Anti-Christ – the Christian powers. Even the Bible reveals:

'Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines

and earthquakes in various places.’

(Matthew 24:7)

Within the last one hundred years, in more than two hundred and fifty wars around the globe, over seventy million people have perished. In this age, on any given day, there is an average of ten wars going on somewhere in the world. Such destruction has not occurred in the last six thousand years compared to that which we have seen in the last century alone. The nuclear weapons are enough to destroy everyone on the face of the earth a hundred times over. For the Promised Messiah^(as) to appear in such a hostile environment and do battle with this Anti-Christ to bring about the ultimate victory of Islam, he must come armed with the proper weapon. The Holy Qur’an has declared that the coming of the Promised Messiah^(as) would be likened to the coming of the Holy Prophet^(saw) himself – a complete reflection of the Holy Prophet^(saw) – and his weapon would be the sword of knowledge where the pen would be mightier than the

sword. This *Sultan-e-Qalam* (Master of the Pen) would produce such powerful arguments with reason, rationale and wisdom which would demonstrate the superiority of Islamic teaching over all other teachings and religions as stated in the Qur’an:

He it is Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it prevail over every other religion...

(Ch.9:V.33)

The promise of the spiritual re-advent of the Holy Prophet^(saw) is made in *Surah Al-Jumu’ah*:

And [He will raise him] among others from among them who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the Wise. That is Allah’s grace; He bestows it on whom He pleases; and Allah is the Master of immense grace.

(Ch.62:Vs.4-5)

That is Allah’s Grace; to appoint a messenger like he appointed the Holy Prophet^(saw) and, in the

Latter Days, He manifested this Grace again and has chosen to bestow it on Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian because He bestows it on whom He pleases.

We conclude with two categories of signs of the Latter Days with respect to scientific advancements which are presented last because they contain some frightening imagery as well as glad tidings of the Latter Days. The Holy Qur'an has not been silent on nuclear technology and the technology of medicine.

With regard to nuclear technology, the dangers and warnings of a nuclear holocaust are predicted. Today we know of the immensely dangerous energy in the tiny particles of atoms. Obviously an atomic explosion was inconceivable when the Holy Qur'an was revealed. Yet the Holy Qur'an states:

Nay, he shall surely be cast into the crushing torment. And what should make you know what the crushing

torment is? It is Allah's kindled fire, which rises over the hearts. It will be closed in on them in outstretched columns.
(Ch.104:Vs.5-10)

So sinful people are to be cast into the *Hutamah* (*crushing torment*) which means the smallest possible particle which cannot be broken down any further. This *Hutamah*, which sounds like an atom, is actually describing the very atom which in 1913 Rutherford and Bohr described. The smallest particle has a blazing fire built within it that is confined in extending columns and when man is cast into it, this fire will go straight to his heart without scorching his body. The verse describes the horror of the atomic explosion.

An elementary glance at the mechanism of the atomic explosion creates such wonder as to how the Holy Qur'an authored these descriptions 1400 years ago. What kind of a fire is this that burns the heart before scorching the body? Our

knowledge of splitting this atom has described this very phenomenon. During the explosion, there is a release of immense gamma rays, X-rays and neutrons. The X-rays produce great heat which rises in all directions at the speed of sound and creates the mushroom cloud appearance with which we are all familiar. This intense heat of the X-rays burns everything in its path. But it is the gamma rays which are actually moving faster than the X-rays at the speed of light and surpass the heat waves of the X-rays. These gamma rays produce such sheer force in vibration that kills the heart before the heat from the X-rays can scorch the body.

Describing the events, Allah says:

But watch thou for the day when the sky will bring forth a visible smoke that will envelop the people. This will be a painful torment.

(Ch.44:Vs.11-12)

Within 37 seconds of detonation,

this deadly smoke and mushroom cloud reaches three miles high and three miles wide destroying everything in its path and, within ten minutes, it is twelve miles high and twelve miles wide affording no shade or shelter.

In 1945, the B29 bomber, the Enola Gay, dropped a Uranium bomb on Hiroshima and three days later dropped a Plutonium bomb on Nagasaki. The poor victims did not know what hit them. Earlier in the war, it took thousands of conventional bombs to take a hundred thousand lives but only two of these bombs took 150,000 lives. The survivors of this tragedy testify to the description from the Holy Qur'an. Man has created this which was locked up to be used against him. Today even a child can recognise these descriptions of the *Hutamah* which science has now brought to light 1400 years later.

Lastly, although the technology of medicine has progressed in leaps and bounds, the general state of health has manifested

great catastrophes as well as advancements which no doubt signal the Latter Days.

Genetic engineering is a hot subject today but could not even be conceived during the time of the Qur'anic revelation. Yet the Holy Qur'an states:

...And he [Satan] said, 'I will assuredly take a fixed portion from Thy servants; and assuredly I will excite in them vain desires, and assuredly I will command so that they will incise the ears of camels and other cattle and assuredly I will bid them and they will alter Allah's creation...

(Ch.4:Vs.119-120)

It is our time alone that can lay claim to attempting to alter Allah's creation. This field of genetic engineering is only a few decades old and the scientists are already sounding alarm bells of worry and concern of potential disaster.

There are predictions of some

diseases that have global and deadly impact which also serve as signs for the Latter Days. The Holy Qur'an states:

And when the sentence is passed against them, We shall bring forth for them a creature (daba) out of the earth, which shall injure them because people did not believe in Our Signs.

(Ch.27:V.83)

The prophecy describes a very damaging 'insect' inflicted on those who do not believe in the Signs. Such grand scale diseases caused by insects were not familiar to the people of the Holy Prophet's^(saw) time. The *Ahadith* also point towards pestilence and *daba*. Tirmidhi records a plague at the time of the Anti-Christ. In fact, as a sign for the Latter Days and the coming of the Messiah, even the Bible records:

'There will be earthquakes, famines and pestilences in diverse places.'

(Luke 21:11)

These prophecies have all been fulfilled as we have witnessed millions of people suffering many epidemics as foretold. The Promised Messiah^(as) prophesied the plague that hit the Punjab, India, which not only substantiated his own claim but proved the truth of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^(saw).

Allah revealed to the Promised Messiah^(as):

‘A Warner came into the world but the world accepted him not, yet God shall manifest His favour and demonstrate his truth with powerful assault.’

The plague that struck India was one such powerful assault which took millions of lives. The plague phenomena also occurred in San Francisco from 1900 to 1909, although much less severe, it let its presence be felt. It is amazing to see that Signs to support the Latter Days and the coming of the Promised Messiah^(as) have been so global. In 1894, the predicted eclipses

occurred in India exactly as foretold and, in 1895, the phenomena repeated in the West for the Americas to see. Here again, the plague of India hit in 1898 to 1906 and also in San Francisco from 1900 to 1909.

The Holy Prophet^(saw) also predicted a rampant disease of the nose. In 1918, shortly after World War I, the Influenza epidemic claimed 20 million lives, while World War I claimed only 6 million. Influenza destroyed about 1.5% of the then population of the world. Then there was Smallpox which claimed millions after World War II. Some estimates suggest that Cholera claims about a million lives a year. Science has revealed today horrifying diseases that are caused by *daba* which we know now to include all micro organisms, bacteria, viruses, the fungus and parasites all of which have manifested their destruction and continue to do so in our age.

But to discover these organisms and classify them and study them and create cures and treatments

for them require the scientific knowledge for man to be familiar and acquainted with this *daba*. Our era responded with the microscope which continues to become increasingly sophisticated and has led to the subsequent development of vaccines and antibiotics. Penicillin became a common drug by 1948. In 1952, Salk produced the Polio vaccine and, in 1980, the World Health Organisation declared that Smallpox had been eradicated. No doubt, the health profession has made monumental strides with scientific advancements proving the truth of the Holy Qur'an and *Ahadith*. The Holy Prophet^(saw) has said:

‘For every problem, there is a remedy or for every disease, there is a cure.’

As pestilence and disease were predicted for the Latter Days, their cures and treatments have only now begun to take shape. However, medicine was humbled in 1981 when the nightmare of AIDS was finally identified. This

is yet another form of *daba*, a virus which has proven to prevail over a particular population. It is recorded in *Ibn Majah, Kitab-ul-Fitan*, that the Holy Prophet^(saw) said:

‘It never happens that permissiveness overwhelms a people to the extent that they display their acts of sex shamelessly and they are not uniquely punished by God. Among them, invariably, pestilence is made to spread and such other diseases, the like of which have never been witnessed by their forefathers.’

It is amazing how the Holy Prophet^(saw) has delineated the people of the Latter Days, specifically a particular type of people – those who are permissive and shameless of their overt sexual nature. Not only are the people identified and their flaw, the very method to punish them is a unique way. The Holy Prophet^(saw) says God will uniquely punish them so mankind can identify them and it

will be through the agency of pestilence never witnessed before.

The list produced in the last few decades of the number of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) is so overwhelming that a branch of microbiology and immunology is devoted to its study. Suddenly we are seeing in large numbers Gonorrhoea, Chlamydia, Trichomonas, Gardnerella, Herpes, the human Papilloma virus which actually leads to Cancer, Syphilis leading from primary syphilis to secondary syphilis affecting the heart to tertiary syphilis affecting the brain and so many others. As an emergency medicine physician, rarely does a shift go by without treating at least one patient with an STD. That is how staggering these figures .

Then, of course, there is AIDS. It is estimated that every fifth person in South Africa is infected with HIV and about 40 million will contract it around the world in the near future. These numbers are on the rise largely in Africa,

America, the Caribbean and parts of Asia. It is a fact that the developed nations which are the world's material powers have demonstrated such vile permissiveness as has never been witnessed in previous ages. The plague was not sex related but AIDS is definitely designed to punish sexual transgression. If people are permissive and shameless they will be immune from this destruction. People are under the false impression that AIDS is on its way out. On the contrary, we probably have not even seen the main thrust of this devastation.

Scientific advancements have, therefore, only served to highlight the Signs of the Latter Days. A far greater realisation is the appreciation of the Qur'anic prophecies, *Ahadith* and their implications for our age, with science substantiating their veracity.

In conclusion, we have only demonstrated a brief summary of Signs of the Latter Days and scientific advancement. The

surface is yet to be scratched. This much we can say with certainty that prophecies from the Holy Qur'an run ahead of human progress which will always lag behind and never catch up with the hidden secrets of the Holy Qur'an – hidden secrets which Allah alone knows and reveals what He wills at the appointed hour. Never has a scientific discovery of any age proven the Holy Qur'an wrong.

The ages have produced thousands of scholars, philosophers, religious divines and intellectuals who have generated scores of theories, speculations, myths and fantasies but Allah has allowed scientific advancement to make obvious to the world the truth systematically and at the appropriate time.

The expected Messiah, Imam, Reformer and Mahdi has come and with him are the Signs of the Latter Days with manifest truth. As Ahmadi Muslims, we are right in the middle of such a wonderful age where in every direction we see these obvious

Signs. The Promised Messiah^(as) writes:

‘Listen to the voice of the heavens, the Messiah has come, the Messiah has come. Listen to the earth, the successful Imam has appeared.’

Today the Signs of the heavens and the Signs of the earth are staring down hard at man to see if any fair-minded person can recognise them.



The Qur'an and Muslims Today - (Part 2)

By Dr. Abd-Latif Busari, Abuja, Nigeria

The Qur'an and Muslims Today

The fate that befell earlier revelations as previously mentioned is that over time the corrupting influence of man distorted their original message and introduced alien doctrines. According to Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^(ru), a common form of distortion of religious truth is the deification of a prophet by his latter day adherents, making him a god or son of god⁸ usually after his death. The distortion may not stop at religious practices; it may even be incorporated into the religion's scriptural texts. It is this latter type of distortion from which the Qur'an has, by divine ordinance, been protected. But distortion of religious practice or deviation from divine teachings has also crept into Islam. Muslims too now do and say things that are manifestly against Qur'anic teachings.

The relationship between the Qur'an and Muslims today will be analysed from two perspectives – their treatment of the physical text and

their adherence to its injunctions.

A cursory observation shows that the Qur'an, still exerts a very strong hold on the average Muslim all over the world, but this is manifested more in his outward display of respect for the text than to its real essence – its teachings. The average Muslim invariably respects the Qur'an, many refusing to touch it unless they first perform an ablution, perhaps in obedience to:

Which none shall touch except those who are purified.
(Ch.56:V.80)

The Holy Scripture occupies a pride of place in the Muslim home and no object is allowed to be placed on it. It is perhaps the most sacred physical object for today's Muslim. It is so highly revered that Muslims consider uncomplimentary remarks or mishandling of the Book a sacrilege.

But when we consider Muslim adherence to the sterling teachings

of the Holy Book, it is a different reality. There are countless examples across the world of Muslims making statements and doing things that negate Qur'anic injunctions. A few examples will serve as an illustration.

Muslims on Blasphemy and Apostasy

Blasphemy is any act, writing or speech that shows contempt or lack of respect for sacred objects or religious personages or God, while apostasy is abandoning one's belief or faith. While the first demonstrates a lack of regard for other people's religious sensibility, the second is a demonstration of personal choice. In spiritual terms, they are both condemnable. Islam of course frowns on the twin evils and regards them as grievous sins. Some relevant Qur'anic teachings on them are highlighted below.

On Blasphemy

And He has already revealed to you in the Book that, when you hear the signs of Allah being denied and mocked at, sit not with them until they engage in a talk other than that; for in that case you would be like them...

(Ch.4:V.141)

And revile not those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus, unto every people have We caused their doings to seem fair: Then unto their Lord is their return and He will inform them of what they used to do.

(Ch.6:V.109)

On Apostasy

Those who believe, then disbelieve, then again believe, then disbelieve, and then increase in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them nor will He guide them to the right way.

(Ch.4:V.138)

Whoso disbelieves in Allah after he has believed except the one who is coerced beyond the limit of his tolerance while his heart remains firm in faith - but those whose hearts are content with rejection, upon them will fall the wrath of Allah and for them is a great chastisement.

(Ch.16:V.107)

Of such [those who disbelieve after believing], the reward is that on them shall be the curse of Allah and of angels and of men all together. They shall

abide thereunder. Their punishment shall not be lightened nor shall they be reprieved. Except those who repent thereafter and amend. And surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.
(Ch.3:Vs.88-90)

It is clear from the above teachings that while Islam regards both blasphemy and apostasy as grievous sins, the Qur'an does not specify any punishment to be meted out by man against those who commit them. It regards blasphemy as being the result of ignorance and requires Muslims to avoid such people or their company. Muslims are also enjoined to preach to them to desist and repent in order to avoid God's wrath and punishment. According to the Qur'an, the apostate has earned himself God's curse and punishment, especially if he persists in disbelief. If the apostate repents and seeks Allah's forgiveness, he would be forgiven.

In the light of these teachings, the resort to various types of punishment by today's Muslims, ranging from excommunication to death for blasphemers and apostates, do not find any scriptural basis in the Qur'an. An apostate has chosen to

refuse to believe in God, according to a particular creed and it is for God to deal with him as He wishes. It cannot be right and proper for another man to arrogate to himself the power to compel his fellow man to retain a belief in God or in anything for that matter, if he chooses not to. But this is exactly what some Muslims today are seeking to do.

In the world today, the often violent attitude and response of many Muslims to blasphemy is a veritable cause of social tension between Muslims and their neighbours, while at the same time, it earns Islam and Muslims an unfair reputation in many other countries. Muslims are portrayed as intolerant and quick to draw their swords. Muslims should ask themselves if this kind of provocation by blasphemers occurred in the life of the Holy Prophet^(saw)? If it did, how did the Holy Prophet^(saw) handle it? Because it is in following the Holy Prophet's^(saw) guidance and advice in all matters that we can truly lay claim to being his followers. The Qur'an says:

And it behoves not a believing man or believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have

decided a matter, that there should be a choice for them in the matter concerning them...

(Ch.33:V.37)

We know it is a historical fact that the Holy Prophet^(saw) was the object of innumerable insults, abuse and invectives by the idolaters and hypocrites of Makkah, Taif and Madinah during his life. Instead of prescribing a punishment, we read several accounts in the *Ahadith* where he preached patience and forbearance in the face of such injuries or taunts. And in the Qur'an, the Holy Prophet^(saw) was reminded repeatedly by Allah that this was the experience of all the past prophets and none had escaped taunt, disrespect and even injury at the hands of the disbelievers of their time:

Alas for mankind! There comes not a Messenger to them but they mock at him.

(Ch.36:V.31)

And there is no record to indicate that the Holy Prophet^(saw) or any of the prophets before him meted out any punishment by themselves, as the Muslims of today are doing, often at the slightest provocation. The Qur'an only reports Allah

always telling them to patiently bear all the difficulties and that at His Divine time, He would deal with the disbelievers. We read thus:

Have patience, then, as had the Messengers of strong determination; and be in no haste about them. On the day when they see that with which they are threatened, it will appear to them as though they had not tarried save for an hour of a day. This warning has been conveyed; and none but the disobedient people shall be destroyed. (Ch.46:V.36)

Apostasy is treated in exactly the same manner in the Qur'an. That there was no earthly punishment for this sin is clearly borne out by the graphic description of apostates as we read in Ch.4:V.138 already quoted above. These unfortunate people had ample opportunity to continuously fall into and out of belief. It stands to reason that, if a death sentence had been passed or meted out to them, such people would never have had the chance of swinging from a state of belief to unbelief several times. The Holy Qur'an in Ch.3:Vs.88-90 (above) also acknowledges that it is possible for a person who

renounced Islam, to realise the error of his way and come back into the fold. Such an avenue would have been foreclosed if he was killed the moment he renounced Islam.

According to the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), the cardinal Islamic concept of 'no compulsion in matters of faith' (Ch.2:V.257), is clear and unequivocal and it cannot be interpreted as a one-way principle which only allows people to join the fold of Islam but forbids them from opting out, if they so wish. If people who are not Muslims are free to convert to Islam without let or hindrance, justice and fairness demands that if and when they decide to leave the fold, they should be free to do so. No doubt, blasphemers and apostates are disagreeable to Muslims as they are indeed to the believers of other religions but Muslims should remember the Qur'anic injunction which states:

O ye who believe! be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness...(Ch.5:V.9)

Clearly, in the matter of declaring death sentences, *fatwas* and the like on blasphemers and apostates, today's Muslims have not followed this Qur'anic injunctions.

Jihad and Muslims Today

The concept of Jihad is perhaps one in which the majority of Muslims – whether as individuals, groups or even nations – are at variance with the Qur'anic teachings the most. One may go as far to say that it is perhaps the most misunderstood of Qur'anic teachings today. The erroneous notion is so widespread that even the Oxford Dictionary defines 'Jihad' as 'holy war' and further explains that a Jihad '*is holy war fought by Muslims against those who reject Islam*'⁹. In other words, Islam has to be accepted by force! As one writer put it:

*'Unfortunately, throughout the last millennium, some extreme Muslim groups and leaders have interpreted the word Jihad as holy war and applied the word to all their wars whether they have been fought for political, economic or expansionist motives.'*¹⁰

The concept of Jihad as beautifully presented in the Holy Qur'an is clear. We read as follows:

And as for those who strive in Our path – We will surely guide them in Our ways. And verily Allah is with those who do good.
(Ch.29:V.70)

So obey not the disbelievers and strive against them with it (the Qur'an) a great striving.
(Ch.25:V.53)

Surely those who have believed and left their homes and striven with their property and their persons for the cause of Allah, and those who have given them shelter and help – are indeed mutual friends... For them is forgiveness and an honourable provision.
(Ch.8:Vs.73-75)

In the above verses and in many others where the word Jihad is used in the Qur'an, it always means 'striving in the cause of Allah', which of course can take many forms. Islamic scholars agree that any act undertaken for the advancement of one's soul is Jihad.

In this regard, striving has been categorised into three types – striving against one's base instincts, evil desires and propensities; striving with one's endowments e.g.

wealth or knowledge in propagating the truth of Islam; and striving against those who prevent Muslims from exercising their fundamental freedom of professing and practising their faith. It is the third form of striving that many Muslims today seem to emphasise to the neglect of the first two which, according to the Holy Prophet(saw), are actually greater in spiritual terms. The problem with this narrow and erroneous interpretation of Jihad as holy war is that it is giving Islam an unfair and unjust reputation as a war-like religion which procures converts by forceful means. Nothing can be farther from the truth. It is unfortunate that this could be happening now just when Western scholars are beginning to change their long held fallacious notion that Islam was initially spread by the sword. Today's Muslims seem to be playing into the hands of the enemies of Islam.

The poor understanding of today's Muslims with regards to this concept is easily seen in situations where two Muslim nations are at war with each other and each claims it is fighting a Jihad! For the avoidance of doubt, Islam, as portrayed in the Qur'an, is a religion of peace and its true

adherents are peace-loving and do not take up arms against anyone under any circumstance except against religious oppression. Such Muslims comply strictly with the following injunctions of the Qur'an:

And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors. (Ch.2:V.191)

Shariah and Muslims Today

The Islamic Shariah is derived from three principal sources, viz; the laws embodied in the Qur'an; the *Sunnah* or practice of the Holy Prophet(saw) and the traditions of the Holy Prophet(saw) as compiled in the authentic *Ahadith*. For Muslims, these three sources provide proper guidance on all the fundamental issues confronting mankind which is why the Qur'an directs:

O ye who believe! obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and those who are in authority over you. And if you differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you are believers in Allah and the Last Day...
(Ch.4:V.60)

Thus ultimate guidance is to be sought from the three sources and if there are matters in which differences of opinion occur, they are to be resolved in light of Qur'anic teachings or failing that in the light of the *Sunnah* and *Ahadith* or failing that still, the matter should be resolved by those charged with exercising authority among Muslims. The above is applicable in matters between the rulers and the ruled as well among the ruled themselves. The rulers in particular have to adopt Qur'anic teachings in exercising authority. When viewed critically, this is another area where many Muslims and especially Muslim nations have continued to deviate from Qur'anic injunctions.

For instance, the Islamic practice is to elect a Khalifa who is the spiritual head of the Muslim community. The electors who themselves are required to be God-fearing Muslims who comply with the teachings of Islam as set out in the Holy Qur'an, seek Divine guidance before making their choice. At the demise of the Holy Prophet(saw), this was how Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), Hadhrat Umar^(ra), Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) and Hadhrat Ali^(ra) became *Amir-ul-Mumineen* (Commander of the Faithful), one

‘THE POINT OF NOTE HERE IS THAT NO CHRISTIAN TEACHING SUPPORTS ANY OF THESE HISTORICAL ACTS WHICH, BY STANDARDS TODAY, WILL BE SEEN AS CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY. IN THE SAME WAY, *AL-QAEDA* AND SIMILAR ORGANISATIONS MAY CLAIM THEY ARE ENGAGED IN JIHAD BUT ISLAM REPUDIATES THEM.’

after the other. It was only after the caliphate of Hadhrat Ali^(ra), the fourth Khalifa, that the principle died out. Muawiyya who became the leader after Hadhrat Ali^(ra) as ‘Khalifa’ in 661 CE made the position hereditary and was himself succeeded by his son, Yazid. Although a few Muslim countries like Pakistan still make some pretensions at electing their leaders (that is, when such leaders do not get into power by *coup d’etat*), hereditary monarchy is practically the norm today across the Muslim world, from Saudi Arabia to Jordan, from Morocco to Syria and from UAE to Kuwait. It is so widespread that the impression created is that this is the recommended ‘form of government’ by Islam! Nothing can be further from the truth. While Islam may not have expressly forbidden this particular form of government nor recommended any particular form of government, it nonetheless lays down certain basic principles and tenets of good

governance such as social justice, equitable access to national wealth, responsible freedom of choice and effective consultation, all of which are in short supply in the so-called Muslim states of today.

Islamic countries that should ordinarily be models of good governance and unassailable integrity are instead reviled and mocked at for their backwardness. Western nations whose forebears actually learned statecraft from Muslim countries now turn round to scoff at Islam. This is because the inheritors of the Holy Prophet’s^(saw) legacies have abandoned their heritage and have chosen to ignore valuable and Divinely inspired Qur’anic injunctions and guidance. The point being made here is that while the Qur’an enjoins upon Muslims the adoption of Shariah in their social, religious, economic and political interactions, many Muslims and Muslim nations choose to ignore them and adopt something else.

Qur'an and Religious Terrorism

Those who coined the term 'Islamic Terrorism' and gave it currency do a great injustice to Islam and do so either out of mischief or ignorance of the history of world religions. The terror attacks on the World Trade Centre on 11th September 2001, the bombing of the commuter trains in Spain in March 2004 and the more recent bombs that exploded in the London underground and commuter buses in July 2005 were dastardly acts that were roundly condemned by the whole world with one voice. All were traced to the terrorist organisation – *Al Qaeda* or its offshoots – which profess belief in Islam and in their warped world view claim to be righting the wrongs done to Islam. But any Muslim with the most rudimentary knowledge of Islam knows these dastardly acts that resulted in the death of thousands of innocent lives – including those of children and women, and fellow Muslims – cannot find any basis whatsoever in Islam.

From religious history, there have always been two contending schools of thought about religion and violence. i) religion, because of its emotive influence on man, is the cause of violence and ii) religion

opposes violence, at least as seen in its teachings, but people hijack and use it to achieve pre-determined ends, through means that are violent. Where there is no mischief, this contention ought not to have arisen in the first place. What religion teaches and stands for should be known and clearly differentiated from what its adherents choose to do. Among the adherents may be extremists and malcontents who use their religion to justify such actions.

For instance, the Crusades, which took place intermittently from 1095 to 1798 CE, were instigated by some Popes. Apartheid as a state policy was endorsed and justified on Christian principles by the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. Even slavery that ravaged Africa until the early 20th century was equally so justified, to the extent that slave merchants sometimes went to Rome to obtain Papal blessings for their expeditions. The point of note here is that no Christian teaching supports any of these historical acts which, by standards today, will be seen as crimes against humanity.

In the same way, *Al-Qaeda* and similar organisations may claim

they are engaged in Jihad but Islam repudiates them, as the Qur'an in Ch.25:V.53 (above) and similar teachings already highlighted clearly show.

Concluding Remarks

By way of conclusion and as noted earlier, every Divine revelation in history has suffered the fate of gradual corruption of its teachings, with its latter day adherents deviating further and further in their religious practices. This had usually been the signal for the advent of another Prophet, who would either come with a new revelation or simply come to reform the people, calling them back to the guidance already with them and thereby settling the differences of opinion that had crept into religious practices. Viewed in this way, are today's Muslims any better than the recipients of earlier revelations in the treatment of their own revelations? Certainly not! Indeed, with the passage of time, if history is to be our guide, such deviation is likely to become more widespread, with different groups upholding different interpretations of Qur'anic injunctions.

As a result of the widespread deviation from Qur'anic teachings

and widespread corruption of religious practices amongst some Muslims, very few examples of which had been highlighted above, a section of the Muslim world believes that God has out of His Mercy and in line with His usual practice under such situations, raised a Prophet whose main duty would be to call people back to the true Islam, as preached by the Holy Prophet^(saw) centuries ago. The Imam of the Age raised for this onerous reforming task is Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian. He founded the Ahmadiyya Musli Community in 1889 and announced his advent in 1891, exposing the various Signs and arguments that would herald his advent as the Imam, as already prophesised.

May Allah open the eyes of mankind, especially Muslims all over the world, to enable each and every one to see where and how we are deviating from Qur'anic guidance and may He out of His Mercy grant us the wisdom and strength to mend our ways, in order for us to truly earn His pleasure.

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In this journal, for the ease of non-Muslim readers, '(saw)' or 'saw' 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*' which are words that a Muslim utters out of respect whenever he or she comes across that name. 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.

In keeping with current universal practice, local transliterations are preferred to their anglicised versions, e.g. Makkah instead of Mecca, etc.

Qur'anic Guidance on a Good Diet

By Dr. Latif Qureshi FRCP – Edinburgh, UK

Introduction

The importance of eating and drinking well is related to spiritual as well as physical well-being, and the Holy Qur'an provides a lot of guidance on what should and should not be consumed to maintain a balanced and healthy life. This article explores the subject in greater detail.

The Components of Diet

A good and balanced diet is very important for keeping the body healthy. The first component is fluid, mainly water, which keeps the body hydrated and is essential for all the vital functions that go on in the body.

The second consideration is the energy needs of the person also called the caloric requirements. These in turn depend on the age, sex, size and the amount of physical activities of that person and may vary from day to day. Glucose is the main fuel that

gives instant energy for vital processes going on in the body. Glucose is obtained mainly from the breakdown of much more complex carbohydrate molecules or starches that are found in various types of grains, vegetables and fruits. Glucose along with Oxygen continually circulates in the body tissues through the blood and is available to provide energy at all times of the day. Any food in excess of the energy requirement gets stored up in the body in the form of fat. This is because, weight for weight, fat gives out double the calories compared to the carbohydrates and other sources of energy when metabolised. It, therefore, requires less storage in the body.

The processes of growth, repair and replacement require additional building material called proteins. The human body is capable of making these proteins but requires building bricks

called amino acids for this purpose. Some of these are built within the body and others are obtained from meat and some vegetables particularly beans. There is a slight difference in the configuration of protein obtained from vegetable and animal sources. The vegetable source of proteins cannot fulfil all the growth requirements of the body and are deficient in certain types of amino acids that must be obtained from animal proteins.

A good diet should also supply minerals and electrolytes to the body. Calcium is the mineral that gives strength to the bones and is required right from the beginning of life in the form of Milk. Iron performs important functions in the body and there is an iron store in the body but the iron store needs to be replenished in the diet. Similarly there are many other minerals doing important jobs in the body such as Zinc, Magnesium and Cobalt. Meat, fresh fruits and vegetables supply all these items. Sodium and Potassium are important electrolytes that perform essential

functions within and outside the cells of the body tissues. Their concentration always remains constant within a certain range. There is an intricate system to maintain this very fine balance. The kidneys, bowels and many other organs play an important role in this regard. Common table salt, fruits and vegetables are good sources of these electrolytes.

Vitamins are of two types. There are those that can be stored in the body for long-term use and are known as fat-soluble vitamins. These are mainly Vitamins A, D and K. Milk and fish liver oils are good sources of A and D vitamins. The others are those that need to be supplied regularly as there is very limited reserve in the body. These are called water-soluble vitamins. These are Vitamins B complex totalling nearly twelve or more compounds and Vitamin C. Fresh vegetables and fruit supply these vitamins.

There are some substances included in the food that have prominent medicinal effects. Tea, coffee, non-alcoholic cola drinks,

alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, cigars and other tobacco products are used as part of the diet in many countries and have a prominent effect on the brain. Caffeine, an ingredient of tea, coffee and cola drinks stimulates the human brain. It gives a feeling of well-being and alertness due to its pharmacological effect on the brain. This may become habit forming and addictive in some people. Ethyl alcohol, an ingredient of alcoholic beverages, depresses the human brain. This initially gives an impression of euphoria and relaxation followed by disorderly brain functions with increasing amounts leading to loss of consciousness and even death. It is also an addictive and habit forming drug and has well-known toxic effects on the liver, heart, brain and other parts of the nervous system. Tobacco contains nicotine that has complex effects on the nervous system. It is also habit forming and addictive. It also contains many other chemicals found to be associated with dangerous poisonous effects such as cancer and heart disease.

All the food that we eat does not get digested but still serves other important functions in the bowel. Roughage and cellulose are such substances and are found in some vegetables, fruits and whole grains. They give bulk to the food and help to stabilize absorption of certain substances, specially the sugars, from the bowel.

Spices are often added to the food to make it more palatable. Onions, garlic, ginger, mint, parsley, clove, cinnamon, coriander, cardamom, paprika and similar substances are usually used for their stronger flavours and smells that sometimes mask the undesirable smells of other articles of diet, such as fish and sea food, and give their own distinct flavour to the dish. Other substances are added to the food to give it a more pleasant colour. Turmeric, saffron and red chillies are naturally occurring substances in this category, but now many new synthetic food colours are being used for this purpose. Honey, sugar and lactulose are used as sweetening agents and may also be used as preservatives

of food. Many chemical sweetening agents and preservatives are now commonly used in the food industry after approval.

A Balanced Diet

A balanced diet is one that fulfils the daily needs of fluids, energy, building processes, vitamins and minerals of the individual without causing any ill effects. Every person has needs tailored to their age, sex, height and activities. Hence a newborn baby's balanced diet will be quite different from that of an adolescent. Similarly a man working as a full time gardener will have different needs to one working in a sedentary office job. A pregnant woman will have different needs compared to one who is not.

The most appropriate and balanced diet for a newborn is provided in the mother's milk. It fulfils all the needs of fluid, calories, proteins, calcium and other minerals and some vitamins in the babies. It gives protection from many illnesses due to the transfer of protective

proteins from the mother to the baby in the milk. So this is the most balanced food for babies. As the baby grows older and the body stores of substances like iron are depleted they need to be replenished by suitably prepared food supplements.

The balanced diet for a pregnant woman must take into account the needs of the growing baby in the womb, but basically the principle is the same as outlined above. Increased physical activity is associated with increased utilisation of glucose and this has a beneficial effect on health. The increased activity, however, increases the need for energy and hence food.

A good balanced diet for children, adolescent, male and female adults and older people should contain sufficient clean unadulterated drinking water. The daily calorie requirements need to be met according to each person's circumstances by sufficient carbohydrates, fats and proteins. Fresh fruits and vegetables must also be consumed

regularly. Milk is a good source of calcium and proteins and is useful for children and the elderly. Seafood and fish are very good sources of proteins and also supply vitamins and oils that are beneficial for maintaining good health. The word 'balance' means that neither excess or deficiency in this regard is good for health. Too much or too little of any of these substances is associated with ill health. The substances with pharmacological effects should not be a part of a healthy diet. Similarly spices, colouring materials and preservatives are best avoided unless being used for some medicinal purposes.

So how does the Qur'an guide us on diet?

Food that can be consumed

There is a lot of guidance about diet in the Qur'an. One important thing mentioned is about what to eat and this is repeated at several places in the Qur'an but the following verse explains it very clearly.

O ye people! Eat of what is

lawful and wholesome in the earth...

(Ch.2: V.169)

The word used in Arabic is 'tayyab' translated as wholesome and good. This can also be translated as healthy, clean and pure. So the food and water that is consumed should be clean, pure and healthy. This is one very important principle of modern hygiene. Drinking infected fluids can cause serious diseases like cholera, dysentery, typhoid and hepatitis. Drinking water is now properly treated to kill all the germs contained in it, and Milk is pasteurised to achieve the same object. Raw or rotten vegetables and fruits can cause a lot of problems. Similarly meat or cream infected with germs can cause serious food poisoning. All these possibilities are covered by the guidance contained in the Qur'an:

They ask thee, what is made lawful for them. Say, 'All good things have been made lawful for you;...

(Ch.5: V.5)

Again the word used is 'tayyibaat' in the Arabic text.

The importance of water as previously quoted is as follows:

And We made from water every living thing...
(Ch.21: V.31)

Milk is mentioned as a good wholesome diet in the following verse:

And surely in the cattle too there is a lesson for you. We give you to drink of what is in their bellies, from betwixt the faeces and the blood, milk pure and pleasant for those who drink it.
(Ch:16: V.67)

This verse beautifully describes how cattle convert the grass and vegetable matter that they eat into a pleasant and nutritious drink that contains proteins, sugar, fat, calcium and vitamins. The importance of milk for babies and young children is described in the following passage:

And We have enjoined on man to be good to his parents. His mother bears him with pain, and brings him forth with pain. And the bearing of him and his weaning takes thirty months.
(Ch.46: V.16)

A mother's milk is sterile and does not need any pasteurisation or boiling before it is consumed. It is the best food for the newborn. Protective substances that prevent diseases are also transferred from the mother to the baby in the milk. There was a shift for a period to formula feed and other methods of artificial feeding but slowly the clinicians and scientist are realising the importance of breast milk. The Qur'an also mentions the time period during which nursing by the mothers may be necessary and useful, but there is considerable laxity in this regards depending upon individual circumstances:

And mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years, this is for those

who desire to complete the suckling. (Ch.2: V.234)

Another drink specially mentioned in the Qur'an is honey as quoted below:

And thy Lord has inspired the bee, saying 'Make thou houses in the hills and in the trees and in the trellises which they build. 'Then eat of every kind of fruit, and then pursue submissively the paths prescribed by your Lord. There comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying hues. Therein is cure for men. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who reflect.
(Ch.16: Vs.69-70)

The process of making honey is beautifully described. Different types of honey with different properties are described and we are invited to research this. We already know that honey has a beneficial desensitising effect on many people who have allergy to pollens and improves the sufferers from hayfever and asthma.

Grains and fruits as food are mentioned in the following verses:

*And the dead earth is a Sign for them: We quicken it and bring forth therefrom grain, of which they eat. 'And We have placed in it gardens of date-palms and grapes, and We have caused springs to gush forth therein,' 'That they may eat of the fruit thereof, and it was not their hands that made them. Will they not then be grateful?
(Ch.36: Vs.34-36)*

Fruits, oil and spices in the following verses:

And He it is Who brings into being gardens, trellised and untrellised, and the date-palm and cornfields whose fruits are of diverse kinds, and the olive and the pomegranate, alike and unlike. Eat of the fruit of each when it bears fruit... (Ch.6: V.142)

And We produced for you thereby gardens of date palms

and vines; for you therein are abundant fruits; and of them you eat. And a tree which springs forth from Mount Sinai; it produces oil and many a condiments for those who eat.

(Ch.23: Vs.20-21)

This verse appears to point to the olive tree, but there are many vegetable sources of oils and condiments and all of them could be included here.

Meat is mentioned in the following verses:

Do they not see that, among the things which Our hands have fashioned, We have created for them cattle of which they are masters? And We have subjected the same to them, so that some of them they use for riding and some others they eat.

(Ch.36: Vs.72-73)

And He it is Who has subjected to you the sea that you may eat therefrom fresh flesh. (Ch.16: V.15)

In the following verse food obtained from both the rivers and the sea are included:

And the two seas are not alike: this one palatable sweet and pleasant to drink, and the other, salt and bitter. And from each you eat fresh flesh...

(Ch.35: V.13)

So the variety of food allowed by the Creator to be eaten by human beings is a very large one, but it must be clean, healthy and appropriate for the person. Some individuals have allergies, and in that case a food, although allowed, is not wholesome for them and they should refrain from consuming it.

Despite this liberty about food we find another very important guidance quoted as follows:

...And eat and drink but exceed not the bounds; surely, He does not love those who exceed the bounds.

(Ch.7: V.32)

The validity of this vital instruction has been proven beyond doubt during the modern era. Most of the common ailments of the present day are caused by dietary indiscretion. Obesity is rampant in the Western world and is due to consuming more calories than needed. The excess food is stored as fat in the body and causes untold trouble for it. Sugar diabetes has similar reasons, one being consuming too much sugar and not undertaking enough activity. High blood pressure is thought to be due to taking too much salt; heart disease due to too much fat and so on. Hadhrat Muhammad^(saw) who followed the teachings of the Qur'an to the best of human ability has advised regarding this matter. It is recorded in his traditions that one should stop eating while still hungry.

Another very important aspect of consuming food is the realisation that it is provided by the Creator of all things and, therefore, gratitude must be shown to Him for this blessing. This is

particularly important because good, wholesome and clean food not only keeps the body healthy but also has a profound effect on the soul. He must therefore, be remembered at all stages of preparation and consumption of food. So the following guidance points to this fact:

Eat, then, of that over which the name of Allah has been pronounced, if you are the believers in His Signs.

(Ch.6: V.119)

Food that is forbidden

There is also detailed guidance on food that is forbidden for human consumption. This is contained in the following verse:

Forbidden to you is the flesh of an animal which dies of itself, and blood and the flesh of swine; and that on which is invoked the name of one other than Allah; and that which has been strangled; and that beaten to death; and that killed by a fall; and that which has been gored to death; and that which a wild

animal has eaten, except that which you have properly slaughtered; and that of which has been slaughtered at an altar...
(Ch.5: V.4)

These are very detailed instructions and there is a very sound and scientific basis for each. Eating the flesh of dead, strangled or injured animals can cause many serious diseases and they are all forbidden. Similarly, blood, which becomes a good culture medium for the growth of all types of germs once outside the circulation of the body of the animal, is forbidden. Modern research has discovered that the meat of swine causes many illnesses in human beings if the flesh is consumed improperly cooked. This is also forbidden. So this is amazing hygiene advice given more than fourteen centuries ago when the science of hygiene was not even born.

There is another angle to the Qur'anic teachings that is not described in any textbook of medicine or hygiene. As

mentioned earlier the close relationship between the human body and the soul is the basis of the advice in the Divine Scriptures. Every action that the body undertakes has an effect on the soul and vice versa. In this verse this relationship is explained in relation to the consumption of food. The purpose of eating is not only to keep healthy and well but also to become grateful to the Provider of these bounties. Hence animals that are also the creation of the same Lord have to be treated properly and slaughtered in the most painless and humane way. Food has an obvious effect on the body and this is reciprocated on the soul. This is a deep concept that becomes clear with careful consideration. The following verse highlights this point further.

And eat not of that on which the name of Allah has not been pronounced, for surely that is disobedience. And certainly the evil ones inspire their friends that they may dispute with you. And if you

obey them, you will indeed be setting up gods with God.

(Ch.6: V.122)

An exemption is, however, granted in situations of extreme emergency when some of the forbidden articles may be consumed:

Say, I find not in what has been revealed to me aught forbidden to an eater who wishes to it, except it be that which dies of itself, or blood poured forth, or the flesh of swine – for all that is unclean – or what is profane, on which is invoked the name of other than Allah. But whoso is driven by necessity [i.e. from starvation or famished beyond one's capacity], being neither disobedient nor exceeding the limit, then surely thy Lord is Most Forgiving, Merciful.

(Ch.6: V.146)

Fasting and Health

Although eating and drinking is a very pleasurable pursuit, yet in many religions including Islam,

fasting has been prescribed for their followers. This practice of fasting is prevalent in all major religions of the world. The guidance that we find in the Qur'an about this is contained in the following verses.

O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become righteous. The prescribed fasting is for a fixed number of days, but whoso among you is sick or is on a journey shall fast the same number of other days; and for those who are able to fast only with great difficulty is an expiation - the feeding of a poor man. And whoso performs a good work with willing obedience, it is better for him. And fasting is good for you, if you only knew. The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was sent down as a guidance for mankind with clear proofs of guidance and discrimination. Therefore, whosoever of you is present at home in this month, let him

fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, shall fast the same number of other days. Allah desires to give you facility and He desires not hardship for you, and that you may complete the number; and that you may exalt Allah for His having guided you and that you may be grateful.

(Ch.2: Vs.184-186)

The guidance in the Qur'an about fasting is that it is to be carried out by healthy adults. Eating and drinking is prohibited from dawn to the sunset. Fasting, however, is forbidden for those who are either sick or are travelling. They need to complete the number of days of fasting at another time when they recover from their illness or come back home from their journey. But those people who cannot complete this count of their fasting days because of chronic illness or some other reason are commanded instead to feed a poor man in lieu of this. Fasting has been prescribed for the benefit of the people and the

main purpose is to make them righteous. It is not to put them to any hardship.

This is basically the summary of this teaching as prescribed in the Qur'an. Now with modern research it has become clear that occasional and regular fasting has a beneficial effect on health. It has been found to be effective in restoring metabolism, lowering blood pressure, improving sugar utilisation in the body, reducing body weight and helping give up harmful habits such as smoking, drugs and alcohol. It also has many moral benefits such as feeding the hungry and the poor. It also teaches people to exercise patience, perseverance and gives an insight into the problem of those people who are less fortunate.

Intoxicants

Another accompaniment of diet is alcoholic drinks and intoxicants. Many plants, their fruits, seeds, sap, root and other parts have active medicinal properties. The Poppy plant is an

excellent example. Its fruits, seeds and sap oozing out of its fruit known as opium has been used in medicine for as long as human history. Even today the medicines obtained from its extracts are better than any another known drugs. It relieves pain, improves sleep, controls diarrhoea and relieves coughing. However, it is a depressant of brain functions and can be habit forming and addictive. Its abuse can cause untold human misery and ill-health. Yet despite this the value of the drug cannot be ignored.

Ethyl alcohol is a similar drug. It is obtained from the fermentation of various types of sugars and starchy material. In the past, many formulations of alcohol were used in medicine because of its properties of depressing brain functions. They were used to calm patients, improve sleep and dissolve certain active ingredients of other plants in the form of tincture and elixirs. Despite good uses, it is estimated that billions of pounds worth of damage occurs in the U.K. alone

due to excessive drinking. A lot of ill health like cirrhosis of liver, heart disease, alcohol dependence, traffic accidents, street hooliganism and deaths are caused by alcohol. It is now well-known that even small amounts of alcohol affect judgement.

Another very important drug is Cocaine. This is also a plant extract. This drug was used as a very effective local anaesthetic for a long time until better drugs were discovered. This has a stimulant action on the brain and as such gives a feeling of well-being. It also causes wakefulness and interferes with sleep. This effect on the brain causes it to have addictive properties and is habit forming. Unfortunately this is used as a pleasurable agent with very serious consequences. Caffeine is another stimulant of the brain that is a part of the diet of many people. It is a component of coffee, tea and cola drinks. It increases the activity of the brain and gives a feeling of being active. It can cause problems with the sleep and may be habit forming in some people.

It has an effect on the kidneys and increases the urine production and thus may make some people to go to the toilet more frequently.

Marijuana is another plant extract with hallucinogenic properties. It has variable effect on different subjects and in some persons may precipitate serious mental illnesses. This also has certain medicinal effects and has been tried in various illnesses including Multiple Sclerosis and is claimed to have some beneficial effects.

Tobacco is another plant and is widely smoked and ingested. It has well known pharmacological effects. One ingredient with pronounced effect on the nervous system is Nicotine. This gives a feeling of relaxation to the user of the drug and is the cause of its addictive properties. This drug is so widely smoked in the form of cigarettes that we now know a lot about its harmful effects. This has resulted in banning the advertisement of smoking on the media, not allowing smoking in public

places and transport and putting health warning on the container packets.

Guidance about intoxicants is contained in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

They ask thee concerning wine and the game of hazard, Say: 'In both there is great sin and also some advantages for men; but their sin is greater than their advantage'...

(Ch.2: V.220)

O ye who believe! intoxicants and game of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each one of them that you may prosper. Satan desires only to create enmity and hatred among you by means of intoxicants and games of chance, and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from Prayer. But will you keep back?

(Ch.5: Vs.91-92)

In these verses the command of

prohibition of alcohol and other intoxicants is given. The reason for the prohibition is also explained. The benefit of some of these drugs is acknowledged, but their harm is highlighted as the harm outweighing their advantage. It is also amazing that gambling is mentioned here too and we now know that this habit may also have similar addictive effects on people and cause serious harm. The governing principle in the Qur'anic teachings everywhere is that prevention of harm is always better and advisable rather than curing it afterwards.

Summary

The teachings of the Holy Qur'an about the human diet are based on Divine revelation. God Almighty is the Creator of the machine that is the human body and guides humans to eat and drink all clean and wholesome water, milk, honey, vegetables, fruits, grains, fish, seafood and permitted meat of cattle and birds that He has created for the benefit of mankind. He forbids drinking intoxicants and unclean

fluids and eating unclean food, dead animals, blood and swine or any other such food that is sacrificed to a deity other than Allah. This emphasises the point that eating and drinking is not only required for the health of the human body, but also has a profound effect on the health and well-being of the human soul.

References

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