

The object of this publication, produced by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, is to educate, enlighten and inform its readers on religious, social, economic and political issues with particular emphasis on Islam.

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Editorial

Much has already been and continues to be written about the 11th September terrorist attack in America. By the time we go to print, opinions would have changed at about the same dynamic pace as subsequent events unfold before the world. As things stand today, it is quite obvious that we are in the throes of a spiral and that whatever emerges from it would be a changed world. Lest we be misunderstood, let us make it quite clear that we condemn this heinous act. No matter who committed it, it was a monstrous act of evil that took the cycle of violence to a different level.

Meanwhile, while the world grapples with a definition of terrorism, there are some signs that the Western media has begun to at last understand that the teachings of Islam do not promote violence and terrorism. The words 'Islamic terrorism' and 'Islamic Jihad' have begun to be challenged by many learned people and have begun to be understood as completely different words.

Ahundred years before the September terrorist strike in America, the Founder of this magazine and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, told Muslims that their ill-conceived concept of Jihad as a holy war against the infidels was incorrect. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) who claimed that he was the Promised Messiah and the Reformer of the Age explained that killing some innocent lady and her mother waiting at a railway station was no Jihad. However, his contemporaries declared him a heretic and a disbeliever. These clerics awaited a bloody Messiah who would march Muslim armies against the Jews and Christians and engage in a war. These clerics then went around and taught their followers that the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam had denied Jihad and was thus a non-Muslim. According to them, without Jihad, Islam could not spread.

Nonetheless, the Ahmadiyya Community stuck to its principles. The community was ostracised by the followers of these misguided clerics and became a victim of their violence. Armed gunmen invaded Ahmadiyya mosques in Pakistan and mercilessly massacred those who had assembled to observe their obligatory prayers, not once but several times.

Neither the media nor the politicians in the East or West batted an eyelid.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim community had put almost all its resources to publishing translations of the Holy Qur'an into many languages and sent missionaries to various countries to spread the message of Islam. By winning the hearts of the world towards the inner beauty of Islam, it had begun to find new members. Soon these efforts began to pay rich dividends and conversions began to take place at a dynamic pace. Just last year alone, more than eighty million new members embraced the community's teachings of Islam. Eighty million is no small number. No other religious group has this level of conversion. This conversion took place without the sword. The clerics on the other hand could render no explanation for this dynamic growth to their followers. The Messiah had returned and had won the hearts of the Christians and Jews without shedding a drop of blood.

Today, those same followers who followed their Medieval-minded clerics blindly have begun to understand that giving currency to the use of force cannot bring about the spread of Islam. The terrorising of bystanders and the killing of innocent people cannot be Jihad no matter how noble the cause. Suicidal acts designed to cause the maximum loss of life amongst non-combatants is unjustified and cannot be tossed into the lap of a religion, least of all a universal religion such as Islam.

What Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) and his successors continuously warned against has today established itself as a sad and bloody reality. However, there is a ray of hope. All those who have contributed to the atmosphere of violence, betrayal and their personal rigid interpretations of doctrine should stop asking for belligerent action in the name of faith and get back to the roots of their faith which promote peace and tolerance. The US-led reaction to this evil and their response to other evils will determine whether justice prevails or this cycle is promoted to a further level or halted once for all.

One can only hope.

Notes and Comments

There is no place for terrorism in Islam

The terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon has been committed by people calling themselves Muslims. Despite the fact that U.S. President George W. Bush and the British Prime Minister Tony Blair clearly stated that Islam was not responsible for this vicious attack on innocent civilians, there is no doubt that a large number of people in the world have always thought that terrorism forms an integral part of the Islamic religion; and the attack on America has only reinforced their doubts.

There is no place for terrorism in Islam. Suicide bombings are a flagrant contradiction of the Qur'anic injunctions: 'And kill not your own selves. Surely Allah is Merciful to you.' (Chapter 4, part of verse 30) 'And do not cast your own selves into ruin' (Chapter 2, part of verse 196). Islam strictly forbids the killing of innocent people: 'No hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.' (Chapter 2, part of verse 194). These three verses alone are sufficient to prevent any Muslim from crashing aeroplanes into any building, or from sending suicide bombers to blow up innocent men, women and children.

In every part of the world there are extremists who try and justify their cause in the name of religion. Catholics and Protestants regularly make the headlines in the West. Hindu fundamentalists often come under the spotlight in the East. But public opinion rarely condemns their respective religions for the crimes they commit in the

name of those religions. It is most unfortunate for Islam that every time madmen commit violence in the name of Islam, the religion of Islam is blamed by the world. The cry of Jihad is sadly so widespread throughout the Muslim world today that it is now commonly understood by non-Muslims to mean the violence practiced by Muslims against humanity.

It is time for the world to understand the true nature of Islamic Jihad. The Holy Founder of Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be upon him) defined the most sublime Jihad as the struggle of man to overcome evil within himself. The lesser Jihad is the struggle to combat evil around oneself. This second form of Jihad is what is erroneously called 'Holy War' by the media today. In Islam, Muslims are forbidden from becoming aggressors. They are permitted only to defend themselves after they have been unjustly treated by others: '*Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged.*' (Chapter 22, part of verse 40). Thus, in Islam, only defensive wars are permitted. In Islam, every effort is made to protect the peace of not only the Muslims, but also the followers of other faiths: '*And if Allah did not defend some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques wherein the name of God is oft remembered.*' (Part of verse 41, chapter 22). So Muslims are expected to go to the extent of fighting in order to protect Christian monasteries and churches, Jewish

synagogues and Muslim mosques.

Even in defensive wars, the instructions of the Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be upon him) are clear: *'You will meet those who remember God in their houses of worship. Have no dispute with them, and give no trouble to them. In the enemy country, do not kill any women or children, nor the blind, nor the old. Do not pull down any tree; nor pull down any building.'* (quoted in *Halbiyyah*, Vol. 3). So the only Jihad permitted in Islam is the war of the oppressed against the oppressor, the war waged to protect peace of all people irrespective of their religion or creed.

The Holy Qur'an clearly declares that if the enemy expels the Muslims from their homes and forcefully prevents them from freely practising their religion, then the Muslims can take up arms to defend themselves and to protect freedom of conscience: *'Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made...those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly, only because they said: "Allah is our Lord"...*' (Parts of verses 40 and 41, chapter 22). So how can any true Muslim in the world claim that the violence of terrorists is Jihad? Theirs is a political war.

It is no surprise that the Taleban are supporting people who stand accused of terrorism. They are rigid extremists who call themselves Muslims, but who have not the slightest regard for Qur'anic teachings or for the human decency contained in the Holy Book of Islam. In Islam, it is forbidden to even make fun of the gods of other faiths, and no one can force another to abandon his faith: *'And if Allah had*

enforced His will, they would not have set up gods with Him. And We have not made thee a keeper over them nor art thou over them a guardian. And revile not those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance...' (Chapter 6, verses 108 and 109).

Many people of the Muslim world today chose to follow a clergy whose idea is rigid and often extreme. The irreligious ideas of these extremists have often led Muslims to fall into the trap of terrorism all over the modern world of Islam. To find the true Islam today, one has to go to the writings of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of India, whose community, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, stands alone in the world today in propounding the actual teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be upon him) and thereby showing that Islam truly is the religion of peace. Muslims around the globe would be well advised to learn their basics from the Ahmadiyya understanding of Islam, if they sincerely want to be freed from the evil of terrorism and extremism.

Abdul Ghany Jehangeer Khan – UK

Jihad

From the writings of the Promised Messiah^(as), this article was written in 1900. A copy of the translation was held by the India Office Library, London, but has been missing for some time. The translation produced below is found in the book *A Study of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's Exposition of Jihad* printed in 1993 by Islam International Publications Ltd.

Translated by Tayyba Seema Ahmed

The philosophy and true nature of *jihad* is a complex matter and a delicate issue, the lack of understanding of which has caused people of this age and the middle ages to fall into serious error. To our great shame, we have to admit that as a result of these dangerous errors, we have allowed opponents (of Islam) an opportunity to raise telling objections against a religion as pure and as holy as Islam which is a mirror of the laws near to nature and which discloses the greatness of the living God. One should be aware that the word *jihad* is derived from the word *juhd* — which means to strive and hence is used metaphorically for religious wars. It seems that the word *Yuddha* which is commonly used amongst Hindus to mean war, is in reality a corruption of the word *jihad*. Since Arabic is the mother of all languages, out of which all others emerged, it would be reasonable to say that the word *Yuddha* which in Sanskrit means war, is in actual fact

the same as *Juhd* or *jihad*. Later, the letter *jim* was replaced by *Ya* and with some further alteration was spoken with a *tashdid*.

Now we would like to answer the question of why Islam needed *jihad* and what *jihad* is. It is quite clear that from its very birth, Islam faced great difficulties and all nations became its enemy. Now it is quite a commonplace fact that when a prophet or messenger is sent from God, his followers appear to people to be promising, truthful, righteous and progressive in the eyes of others. As a result, the existing nations and religious groups necessarily begin to bear a kind of jealousy and enmity within their hearts against them. This feeling is particularly expressed by the religious experts and leaders, since the existence of this by the religious experts and leaders, since the existence of this 'man of God' leads to an alteration in their revenue and dignity. Their pupils and

disciples begin to free themselves from their snare as they observe in that person all the virtues of faith, morality and knowledge with which he has been endowed by God. Consequently, those possessing sense and discrimination begin to understand that the afore-mentioned scholars no longer command the respect that was once accorded to them arising out of their educational distinction, piety and abstinence. Hence, exalted titles such as Najm-ul-Umma, Shams-ul Umma, Sheikh-ul-Mashaikh and so forth no longer benefit them. Therefore people of sense shun these scholars as they do not want to lose their faith.

Due to the losses faced by the group of religious scholars and specialists, they have necessarily always been jealous of prophets and messengers of God. The reason for this is that during the period of the prophets (anbiya) and messengers of God, their flaws became exposed, since in actual fact they are wanting and deficient and possess little spirituality within them. Their enmity towards the prophets of God and the righteous arises simply out of their own selfishness, and it is entirely due to this selfishness that they devise plans to injure them.

Indeed, in many instances, they actually sense that they have come under the wrath of God, by unjustly harming a pure-hearted man of God. Their guilty conscience tells them that the bad deeds that they continually practise against the righteous are sinful, but still the fierce fire of their blazing jealousy keeps dragging them deeper into the pits of their enmity.

It was these very reasons which in the time of the Prophet not only kept the scholars of the pagans, Jews and Christians from accepting the truth, but also caused them to be extremely hostile. Hence they became obsessed with the issue of how to wipe out Islam from the face of the earth, and because in the early period of Islam there were so few Muslim, their opponents, out of a naturally inherent pride, which they fostered in their hearts and minds, considered themselves superior in numbers and rank, and showed severe enmity towards the Prophet's companions. They did not want this heavenly plant to take firm root in the earth, and they in fact fought tooth and nail to destroy these righteous people. Their paramount fear was that this religion might become firmly established and that

its progress would in turn become the seed of destruction for their nation and religion. Out of this fear, which became terribly imprinted upon their hearts, they instigated extremely vicious and cruel acts and proceeded to murder numerous Muslims in an horrific manner.

For a lengthy period of time, spanning thirteen years, their ways remained unchanged and many people faithful to God, the pride of humanity, were cut to pieces by their swords. Their orphaned children and poor helpless women were slaughtered in the streets, yet despite this, God commanded Muslims absolutely not to retaliate against evil. Accordingly, those chosen righteous people so behaved. Whilst the streets ran red with their blood they did not utter a sound. They were slaughtered like animals, yet they did not protest. God's pure and Holy Prophet, upon whom the heavens and earth shower their blessings, was stoned on so many occasions, and yet even whilst he was stained with blood, that upright mountain of truth tolerated all this maltreatment with love and an open heart. Because of these meek and humble manners and humility the mischief of his adversaries

increased daily since they perceived this holy congregation to be their prey.

Then God Almighty, who desires not that cruelty and oppression remain unlimited on this earth, took thought of his oppressed creatures and his rage was inflamed against the wicked. He then spoke through the Holy Qur'an to his poor afflicted people and informed them, 'I am watching everything that is happening to you and henceforth I give you permission to retaliate. I am God the Almighty and I will not allow your oppressors to escape without punishment'. It was this commandment that in other words came to be known as jihad. The very wording of this commandment, which is still preserved in the Qur'an today reads as follows:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقْتَلُونَ
بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ
عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ
الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ
دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ

Permission to fight is given to

those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged, and Allah indeed has power to help them. Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly..

(Al-Hajj: Vs.40-41)

That is, God heard the cries for help from the victims of cruelty who were being slaughtered and unjustly made homeless.

They were given permission to fight for the defence of their rights. God is Omnipotent and aids such victims. However, this order was only intended for a limited period of time and was not everlasting. It was applicable to that time when converts to Islam were being slaughtered like goats and sheep. But sadly, after the time of the Holy Prophet, (peace be upon him) and the Khilafat, people committed very grave errors in trying to understand the philosophy of jihad, the essence of which is explained in the above quoted verse. Hence the slaughter of God's people was wrongly considered to be a mark of religious virtue.

It is a strange coincidence that Christians erred with respect to the

rights of God and Muslims to the rights of man, that is to say, in the Christian faith, by making a humble man God, the rights of the Almighty and Everlasting were violated, He who has no equal on earth or in the heavens. In the same vein, Muslims, by unjustly wielding the sword against human beings, violated the rights of man, and called this jihad. In other words, the Christians pursued one pathway of violating rights and the Muslims another. It is an unfortunate aspect of this period that both faiths view their own violation of rights to be preferable, to the extent that each and every group is advocating its own doctrine as being the more favourable violation of rights. Each considers that its own belief provides the sole path to heaven. Whilst the sin of violating God's rights is greater than all of this, it is not my intention at this point to discuss this dangerous act of which the Christians are guilty but to make Muslims aware of the continuing violations that they are committing in relation to man.

We must remember that the manner in which today's Muslim scholars called the maulvis, understand and preach jihad to the public is in no way correct. The only outcome of

their passionate and inflammatory sermons is to turn the common people, with their savage instincts, into wild beasts and to deprive them of all the virtues of humanity, and such was the result. I have no doubt that the sins committed through all the murders of these ignorant people, being driven by their baser selves unaware of the reason why in early Islamic times fighting was necessary, will fall upon the shoulders of the maulvis who teach these principles in a veiled fashion, from which tragic acts of bloodshed ensue. When these maulvis come face to face with the rulers of the time, they greet them with such humility that it is almost as if they are willing to prostrate themselves before them. However, when they sit amongst their own audience, they repeatedly proclaim that this country is *dar-al-harb* ('abode of war'), and the people should maintain within their hearts the obligation of *jihad*. Only a few men are not of this type. The vast majority of them adhere so strongly to this doctrine of *jihad*, which entirely contradicts the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith, to such an extent that they apply the label of *dajjal* to anyone who objects to the doctrine of *jihad*. They advocate

that such a person should be killed. This is the *fatwa* under the sentence of which I have been for a considerable period of time. Some of the maulvis of this country have given to me the label of *dajjal* and *kafir* (infidel), and fearless of the law of the British Government, have printed a *fatwa* against me stating that this man should be killed and that to loot his belongings even to abduct his womenfolk is a most commendable action. What is the reasoning for this? It was because I am the Promised Messiah, that I preach against their interpretation of *jihad* and totally disprove their concept of the 'bloody mahdi' and 'bloody Messiah' for whom they wait with great anticipation, believing that his advent will be accompanied by bloodshed and plunder, this is the target of their rage and hostility. However, they must remember that the doctrine of *jihad* which they possess within their hearts is completely incorrect and represents the first step towards the demise of human compassion.

They are in complete error to suppose that since *jihad* was considered lawful in the early days of Islam, then why should it be unlawful now. To this I have two

UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES DID OUR HOLY PROPHET^(SA) RAISE THE SWORD AGAINST ANYONE UNLESS THEY RAISED THE SWORD FIRST AND MERCILESSLY KILLED INNOCENT MEN, CHASTE WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN SUCH AN AGONISING MANNER THAT EVEN UPON HEARING SUCH ACCOUNTS TODAY, ONE FEELS GREAT SORROW AND GRIEF. SECONDLY, IF ONE ACCEPTS THAT THERE EXISTED IN ISLAM A DOCTRINE OF JIHAD AS ADVOCATED BY THESE MAULVIS, THEN IT MUST BE STATED THAT THIS IS NO LONGER VALID IN THIS DAY AND AGE.

answers. Firstly, this whole concept is far removed from the truth. Under no circumstances did our Holy Prophet^(sa) raise the sword against anyone unless they raised the sword first and mercilessly killed innocent men, chaste women and children in such an agonising manner that even upon hearing such accounts today, one feels great sorrow and grief. Secondly, if one accepts that there existed in Islam a doctrine of jihad as advocated by these maulvis, then it must be stated that this is no longer valid in this day and age. This is because it is written that when the Promised Messiah makes himself manifest there will be an end of the jihad of the sword and religious wars, as the Promised Messiah will not wield the sword or any other earthly weapon in his hand. Prayer will be his weapon and conviction of

belief will be his sword. He will lay the foundation of peace and will make the goat and lion drink from the same waterhole. This age will be one of peace, gentleness and human sympathy. How regrettable it is that these people do not reflect that thirteen hundred years have passed since the words *yadda ul-Harb* issued from the mouth of the Holy Prophet^(sa) in regard to Promised Messiah. It meant that when the Promised Messiah comes he will bring an end to wars. The verse of the Holy Qur'an points in the same direction (Al-Muhammad v.5). That is to say, fight until the advent of the Promised Messiah. This is *Yadda ul-Harb*, Consult the Sahih Bukhari which is deemed to be the most authentic book after the Holy Qur'an, read it carefully, and you will find the same point.

I address all Muslim scholars and maulvis, listen to what I say, I speak the absolute truth when I say that this is not the time for *jihad*. Do not disobey God's Holy Prophet^(sa). The Promised Messiah that was awaited has arrived and he orders that henceforth religious wars which entail warfare by the sword and result in killing and bloodshed are prohibited. Therefore, not to refrain from causing bloodshed but to continue to preach in this vein is not the way of Islam. Whosoever believes in me will not only refrain from this preaching but will also condemn this custom and will realise that this practice is evil and one which will incur God's wrath.

At this point it also saddens me to have to write that, on the one hand, the ignorant maulvis have concealed the true meaning of *jihad* from the common people and have contrived plans to teach the public how to plunder, fight and murder human beings, all under the banner of *jihad*. On the other hand, the [Christian] priests have carried on in a similar manner. They have published thousands of tracts and notices in Urdu, Pushto and so forth, and have distributed them all over Hindustan, the Punjab and the Frontier

territories, saying that Islam was spread by the sword and that to wield the sword is Islam. The result of all this was that the common people on seeing these two testimonies of *jihad*, namely that of the maulvis and that of the priests, went further in their bestial passion. In my view, it is also the duty of our gracious government to put a stop to the dangerous fabrication of these priests which results in unrest and rebellion within the country. It is impossible that the people of Islam will leave their faith as a result of these improper fabrications by the priests. In fact this kind of preaching will ultimately serve as a perpetual reminder to the masses of the issue of *jihad* and continually arouse their dormant passions.

Now that the Promised Messiah has come, it is the duty of every Muslim to abstain from *jihad*. If I had not come, then perhaps this misunderstanding could have been excused; but now that I have come, and you have seen the day that was promised, those who use the sword in the name of religion, have no justification before God Almighty. Whosoever has eyes, reads the Hadith and studies the Holy Qur'an, can easily understand that this

practice of *jihad* which has been adopted by many barbaric people of the present time is not Islamic *jihad*. These are in fact illicit actions based upon the passions of the lower self and upon a crude desire for paradise which has spread amongst Muslims.

As I have just stated, in his time, our Holy Prophet^(sa) set a precedent whereby he never raised the sword, but rather, suffered a long time at the hands of the *kafirs* (infidels) and displayed a patience that not every man is capable of. Similarly, his companions firmly abided by this principle, as they were ordered to suffer and be patient, and so they believed with great faith and patience. They were trampled under foot yet did not utter a sound. Their children were torn to pieces before their very eyes. They were tortured to death through fire and water, but they refrained from responding to all this evil as though they were innocent young children.

Can there be any example in history where any prophet or his followers exercised this level of restraint whilst possessing the ability to retaliate, and yet listened to God's command and showed such meekness and refrained from

combat as they did? Who has any proof that in this world there exists another group that, despite being brave, united, well-armed, able to fight and possessing all the qualities of bravery and manliness, avoided any kind of retaliation against a blood-thirsty enemy for thirteen years?

The patience shown by our most beloved Lord and Master and his companions was not due to their powerlessness. In fact, the devoted companions who showed such restraint in this time of patience had the same hands and arms that they used after the command to perform *jihad* and frequently a thousand young men defeated one hundred thousand veteran soldiers of the enemy. This took place to show the people that the patience exercised in Mecca by the Muslims in face of their enemies' shedding of blood did not arise out of cowardice and weakness, but was the result of their surrender to God's command and hence they were prepared to be slaughtered like goats and sheep. Without doubt such patience is beyond human power. Even if one studies the history of the whole world and all the prophets, one cannot find such an abundance of

virtues in any other community or in the followers of any other prophet. If we listen to stories about patience from the past, then immediately it crosses one's mind that the conditions of the time indicate that the reason for this patience was in actual fact cowardice or lack of power to retaliate. But for a group which actually possessed military skill, who were brave and stout hearted, and then, for such pain to be inflicted upon them, for their children to be slaughtered, for them to be wounded by spears and yet still not retaliate against this evil, this is the heroic quality that was exercised in a perfect fashion by the Holy Prophet^(sa) and his companions for a period of thirteen years continuously. This kind of patience which continually involved facing such trials and tribulations and spanned the long period of thirteen years is indeed unique. Whosoever doubts this should come forth and give us an example of another instance of such patience from righteous people of the past.

At this point it is worth remembering that during this period of oppression inflicted upon his companions, our Prophet^(sa) did not instruct them with any plan to save

themselves arising out of his own reasoning, but in fact persistently stated that they should bear all their sufferings with patience. If anyone suggested some form of retaliation, he restrained them and said, 'I have been ordered to exercise patience'. Thus the Holy Prophet^(sa) insisted upon patience until the command to retaliate came down from heaven. Try and find an instance of comparable fortitude amongst the people of former or latter days. If it is possible, find such an example amongst the people of Moses^(as) or the apostles of Jesus^(as) and then impart your findings to me.

In short, when Muslims have such an example of patience, avoidance of evil and noble conduct before them of which the whole world is proud, then what kind of ignorance, misfortune and evil practice is it which has now led to a complete abandonment of this example? May God guide these ignorant maulvis who have greatly deceived the herd-like populace with such views and preach that such practices provide the key to paradise, a view that clearly is oppressive, cruel and transgresses all human morals. Can it possibly be a pious act that when, for instance, a person, who is

walking in a bazaar minding his own business and with whom we have so little connection that we do not even know his name nor he ours, and yet we, with the intention of killing him, should take out a pistol and fire it at him? Can this be a pious act? If so, then wild animals have surpassed human beings in their religious capacity!

God be praised! How righteous those people were who so retained the spirit of the prophets within them that when God ordered them in Mecca not to fight evil and to exercise patience even if hacked to pieces, they obeyed this command like suckling infants and hence became as weak and humble as if they had no strength in their hands nor power in their arms. Some were killed in such a manner that two camels were made to stand in one place, then the victims' legs were tied, one to each camel and then the camels were made to run in opposite directions. They were immediately torn apart, in the same way as a carrot or a radish is split open. But alas, the Muslims and particularly the maulvis have ignored these incidents and now think that the whole world is for them to hunt. Just as a hunter stalking a deer in a forest

quietly moves towards it and at the right moment fires his gun at it, so are many maulvis. They have not read even one word on the subject of human compassion. According to them in fact, the killing of an innocent person without reason by means of a pistol or rifle is deemed to be Islamic. Where are those people, who, like the companions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) will tolerate such torture and remain patient? Has God commanded us, that without reason or proof of an offence, we should, catch a stranger off his guard and cut him to pieces with a knife or shoot him? Can such a religion be from God, which advocates that guiltless, innocent creatures of God should be killed without being preached to and that from this you will enter paradise? How sad and shameful that a person with whom we have no previous enmity and with whom we are in fact not even acquainted, who is purchasing items at a shop for his children or is engaged in some other lawful activity should be attacked, and that we without reason or cause, by firing a gun at him have made his wife a widow and his children orphans and have made his house one of mourning. In which Hadith or verse of the Qur'an is this behaviour

prescribed? Can any maulvi reply to this? Upon hearing the word *jihad* these ignorant people have used it as an excuse to fulfil their base purposes. Or perhaps they are simply inclined towards bloodshed through sheer madness.

To reiterate my earlier point, in the time of our Holy Prophet^(sa), Islam only raised the sword when commanded to do so by God. It did so only after so many Muslims had been sent to the grave by the swords of the unbelievers. Finally God's wrath was roused to desire that those who killed by the sword should themselves perish by the sword. God is most gracious, kind and extremely tolerant, but ultimately He is wrathful for the sake of His faithful followers. I am astonished that in an age when no one kills Muslims for their religious beliefs, then by what command do they kill innocent people? Why do their maulvis not restrain these people who through their misguided actions bring the name of Islam into disrepute?

Can any one calculate what an untroubled existence the Muslims have under this British Government? There must be many

people alive today who witnessed something of the period of Sikh rule. Let them inform you of the state of Islam and the Muslims under their rule. An important practice of the Islamic faith is the call to prayer, yet even this was considered to be in the nature of a criminal act. No one even dared to call the azan in a loud voice, for if they did they faced the lances and spears of the Sikhs. Now, did God act wrongly in freeing the Muslims from the uncalled-for interference of the Sikhs and delivering them to the sanctuary granted by the British Government? One might say that it was with the arrival of the British Government that the Muslims of the Punjab were granted the blessings of Islam anew. Since a good deed demands a good deed in return, we should not just reject this favour bestowed upon us in the place of the Sikh rule by God after thousands of prayers.

At this time I especially advise my Jama'at who accept that I am the Promised Messiah, that they should always refrain from these impure practices. God has sent me as the Promised Messiah and has cloaked me with the robe of the Messiah, the son of Mary. Hence, for this reason, I advise you to refrain from evil, to

perform the duty of sympathy to all human beings and to respect their rights. Purify your hearts from malice and spite. Thus will you become like the Angels.

What a filthy and unholy religion it is that does not teach humanity! What an unholy path it is that is filled with the thorns of base malice! So, those of you who follow me, do not be like this. Think what you gain from religion. Is it that perpetual harming of others should become your second nature? NO! In fact religion is to try and attain the life which is the nature of God and that has not been attained by anyone, nor will it ever be, unless God's attributes enter man. For God's sake have mercy on mankind so that heaven has mercy on you. Come, I will teach you a way that will make your light outshine all other lights. This is the path that shuns all base evils, jealousy and advocates sympathy to mankind and requires one to become completely immersed in God and thus to attain the height of spiritual purity. This is the way that leads to miracles and results in prayer being answered and causes Angels to descend for one's aid. But this cannot be achieved in one day. Keep striving relentlessly until your soul

becomes pure. Learn a lesson from the washerman, who first boils his clothes in a cauldron and continues to do so until the effects of the fire causes all the dirt and filth to separate from the clothes. Then he awakes in the morning, goes to the water and soaks his clothes in water and repeatedly beats them against the stones. Only then does the dirt that was in the clothes and had become part of the clothes, then altogether leave the clothes. The clothes become as white as they were when they were brand new. This is the way in which the human soul becomes white. Your whole salvation is dependent on this cleanliness. God draws attention to this in the Holy Qu'ran (Al-Shams: 10)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ رَزَقَهَا

That is to say, the soul that achieves salvation is the one which is cleansed of all filth and impurities. See, I have come to you with an order: Henceforth the *jihad* of the sword is at an end, but the *jihad* of cleansing souls remains. These are not my words but this is the Will of God. Recall that Hadith in Sahih Bukhari which refers to the Promised Messiah, *yadda-ul harb*.

that is to say, when the Messiah comes he will bring an end to religious wars. Thus I order all those who have entered my army to stop dwelling on these thoughts; to purify their hearts; to excel themselves in human kindness; to be sympathetic to the afflicted; to spread peace throughout the land, so that their faith will spread in turn. Do not wonder how this will happen. For just as God, in meeting physical needs, without the means of common intervention, has used elements and all things of the earth in the inventions of the present age and has made trains that far outrun horses, similarly, God, without the help of human hands, will now use His Angels to fulfil spiritual needs. May great heavenly signs be made manifest and many splendours created which will open people's eyes. Ultimately people will understand that it was a grave error to elevate human beings and other objects besides God to the status of God. Continue to watch patiently because God is more mindful of His unity than you are, spend your time in prayer lest you be written down as amongst those who are disobedient. O you who yearn and thirst for righteousness, listen, for these are the days you were

promised in the beginning. God will not protract these episodes. Just as the lamp on top of a minaret spreads its light far and wide, or just as lightening that flashes in one part, of the sky illuminates all parts, so will it be in those days. In order to fulfil the prophecy that the proclamation of the Messiah, like the light of the tall minaret, will spread to the four corners of the earth, every tool has been provided on earth. The railways, the telegraph system, the steamships, the excellent postal service and easy means of travel have all been set in motion. All this has been brought into existence in order to fulfil the prophecy that the light of the Promised Messiah's message will reach each and every corner of the earth like lightening. The minaret of the Messiah mentioned in the Hadith actually refers to the light and proclamation of the Promised Messiah which will spread as does the call and light from a high minaret. Hence the railways, the telegraph system, the steamships, the postal service and other means of facilitating preaching and the facilitation of travel are all special signs of the time of the Messiah, as mentioned by most of the prophets and as is

stated in the Holy Qur'an. (Al-Taquid: V.5)

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ

That is to say, the time of the common call which signifies the time of the Promised Messiah will be one when camels will become obsolete. Thus a time will come when a new means of travel will come into being, removing the need for camels. It is also mentioned in Hadith:

يُتْرَكُ الْقَلَاصُ فَلَا يُسْعَى عَلَيْهَا

that is, in that time camels will be rendered useless⁽¹⁾. This sign was not given for the time of any other prophet. So be thankful to God that preparations are under way to spread the light across the sky. In the earth there is a ferment of earthly blessings, that is to say, in travel and at rest and in everything else, you are experiencing such a case that was denied to your forefathers. It is as if the world has become new. Out of season fruit can be bought all at the same time. A six months journey can be completed in a few days. News from a thousand miles away can be received in a moment. Machines and contrivances exist for

the facilitation of every task, and if you wish, you can travel on board trains as if relaxing in a summer house. Since such a miraculous revolution has taken place in the earth Almighty God desires that a wondrous revolution should also take place in the heavens. Both of these are the very signs that were indicated as a revelation in my book *Barahin-e-Ahmadiyya*, which was written twenty years ago. This is as follows:

إِنَّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا

(Al-Anabiya: V.31)

That is to say, the heavens and the earth are both bound together like a knot, the secrets of which are hidden. In the time of the Promised Messiah we have witnessed the unravelling of the previously hidden secrets contained in the heavens and earth.⁽²⁾

Finally let it be remembered that although I have written in detail on this subject in this pamphlet, the existing practice current among the Muslims of attacking those who are of other religions and which they

call jihad is not the jihad of Islamic law but is plainly against the law of God and His Prophet and is a grave sin. Yet since among some Muslim nations there is an ancient custom of adhering to this practice, it is therefore not possible for them, to easily abandon this practice. It is in fact highly possible that they become mortal enemies of anyone who offers such advice and they may wish to kill that person, fired by the zeal of a ghazi for the faith. I can think of one solution and that is if His Majesty the Amir⁽³⁾ of the land of Kabul, who has an influence over the tribes of the Afghans perhaps unmatched by past Amirs, should gather the best known ulema and arrange a meeting to discuss the true nature of *jihad*. Then through the ulema the public should be cautioned as to their misconduct. In fact the ulema of this country should compile a few pamphlets in Pushto and then have them published and made available to the ordinary public. No doubt this type of action will have a great effect on the people and the passion that the maulvis instill amongst the common people will gradually lessen, and no doubt it will be a grave misfortune for the subjects of the Amir if he does not bring this point of essential

importance to their attention. The ultimate result for that government which remains silent over these maulvis' fatwas will be disquiet and trouble, because nowadays it is the habit of these maulvis and mullahs to give the label of unbeliever to an individual or a group over minor religious differences. Eventually the same fatwas of *jihad* that are issued against the unbelievers are issued against themselves. In the light of this the Amir Sahib himself cannot remain safe from these *fatwas*. It is possible that these maulvis may at any time cast out the Amir Sahib from the circle of Islam by taking offence over some trivial issue, and then he too will be the subject of those very same *fatwas* of jihad which he had caused to be issued against the unbelievers. Those people who possess the power in their hands of labelling a person a believer or unbeliever and then issuing *fatwas* of *jihad* against them, are without doubt a dangerous group of whom the King himself should not remain unworried. Without doubt these people are the fountain of rebellion faced by every government. The poor common people are under the power of the maulvis who hold the key to their hearts and can turn them whichever

way they choose and at any moment can raise a tumult.

So it is not sinful for the common people to be freed from their duties and for them to have the true nature of *jihad* gently explained to them. In no way does Islam teach that Muslims should behave like robbers and bandits and use *jihad* as an excuse to fulfil their innermost base desires; for since the ordinary public are aware that Islam does not permit the carrying out of *jihad* without the order of a King, there is a danger that those people who are not aware of the reality of the situation may presume that all these actions result from the command of the Amir. It is therefore the essential duty of the Amir that he should as far as possible try his utmost to put a stop to these wrongful *fatwas*. In this way the King will exonerate himself as clearly as the shining sun and he will be blessed with a heavenly reward. After observing the duties owed by creatures [to God], there is no greater pious act than that of releasing the oppressed from the swords of their aggressors. Since it is mostly Afghans who commit these acts and wield the sword with the intention of becoming *ghazis*, and there are many of them in Amir

Sahib's country, for this reason God has given Amir Sahib the opportunity to leave this great reform in the record of his Amirship. He should try his utmost to free the Afghan people from these barbaric practices which have given Islam a bad name. Failing this, since this is the time of the Promised Messiah, God will without doubt provide such means as to make the earth, which was full of tyranny and bloodshed, to be filled instead with justice, peace and reconciliation. Blessed are the Amirs and Kings who play some part in this.

After writing all this, I would particularly like to submit a request to my gracious government. Although I am aware that this government is wise and intelligent, even so it is my duty to put forward any pious suggestions that come to mind which are beneficial to the government and the common people. What I wish to say is that, in my opinion, it is an actual and certain fact that the barbaric practices which exist amongst the Frontier Afghans and which daily result in the killing of some innocent person or other, are due to two reasons, as I have already stated:

1. Those maulvis who believe as part of their faith that as a result of killing non-Muslims and especially Christians, they will attain a great merit and great heavenly blessings which cannot be attained from prayer, from Hajj, from Zakat or from any other good action. I am well aware that these people continually preach to the public in secret. If they listen to such sermons day in day out, then their hearts, which are little different from those of animals, become deeply affected. They become like beasts of prey and not even a shred of mercy remains within them. Consequently they cause such bloodshed as to make one shudder. The Frontier and Afghan territories are full of the type of maulvis who regularly preach in this way. I am indeed of the opinion that the Punjab and Hindustan are not free of these kind of maulvis either. If our noble government accepts that all the maulvis of this country are guiltless and free of this line of thinking, then I suggest that they think again.

I am of the opinion that the majority of the ignorant and short-tempered common mullahs of the mosques are not free of these evil thoughts. If their opinions were in accordance

with God's Holy Book, then I would consider them helpless, because to a certain extent man is indeed helpless in matters of faith. I speak nothing but the truth when I say that just as they forget what they owe the government and are thus just the government's hidden enemies, in the same way they are also culpable and disobedient to God. For I have explained in detail that in no way does God's word teach us to spill the blood of innocent people like this, and whosoever shares this opinion has turned his back on Islam.

2. In my opinion, the second cause of these criminal acts of bloodshed which are carried out under the pretext of becoming a *ghazi*, is those priests who have continually emphasised beyond all limits that *jihad* is compulsory in Islam and that to kill other communities is part of the Muslim faith and is a most meritorious act. I believe that the people of the Frontier were not even aware of the issue of *jihad* until reminded of it by the priests. The proof that I have in support of this contention is that there were few or indeed, one might say, no incidents of this kind until the publishing of the newspapers, magazines and books by the priests. In fact when

the rule of the Sikhs was lifted from this country and the British Government replaced them, ordinary Muslims including the people of the Frontier were very pleased with this change. When Reverend Pfander published his book *Mizan-ul-Haq*⁽⁴⁾ in 1849 in the Punjab, Hindustan, and border territories, not only did he use offensive language to attack Islam and the Prophet of Islam^(sa), but he also spread the rumour that in Islam, the killing of non-Muslims is not only lawful but is also a most meritorious act. On hearing this the beasts of the Frontier who have no knowledge whatsoever of their religion, suddenly awake and come to believe that their religion advocates that the killing of non-Muslims is a meritorious act. After deep thought I have realised that most of the incidents on the Frontier and the turbulent hostility which has been created among the people of the Frontier is due to the books of those priests in which they have used excessively harsh language and continually reminded people of *jihad*. Ultimately after the great publicity received by *Mizan-ul-Haq* and its poisonous effect, our Government had to pass Act No. XXIII of 1867, in order to check the

ghazi-like ideas of the Frontier people. This act was printed for six Frontier tribes and there were great hopes that as a result the incidents would thereby come to an end. But sadly thereafter the violent and filthy books and writings of Rev. Imad-ud-Din⁽⁵⁾ of Amritsar and some other foul-mouthed priests, did great damage to internal good will and reconciliation. Similarly books by other priests, which we need not consider in detail, did no less in sowing the seeds of enmity in the hearts of the people. Thus these people proved to be a great obstacle for our noble government in its attempts at reconciliation. It was a highly commendable act of the government not to forbid Muslims to write in reply to these books. The Muslim reply to these harsh books was rather bitter, but even so it was a striking testimony to the nature of the government. The disturbances that they expected as a result of these defamatory books completely failed to materialise due to the well-intentioned and fair manner adopted by the government. Thus, although we have to state with regret that the maulvis of Islam in pursuing the wrong meaning of *jihad* taught the tribes of the Frontier to redden their swords with the blood of honourable

officers of the British Government, and in this way have unjustly harmed our beneficent government, yet at the same time, I regret that the mullahs of Europe, ie. the priests, inflamed the passions of the ignorant as a result of their harsh and unjust writings. By raising objections against *jihad* a thousand times, they instilled the notion amongst the barbaric Muslims that their religion advocates that *jihad* is an act which provides an immediate pathway to paradise. If these priests did not harbour any ill intentions within their hearts, then they should have realised the truth for themselves and compared the *jihad* of Moses^(as) and Joshua to the *jihad* of our Holy Prophet^(sa) and then remained silent.

If we suppose, for example, that the cause of instigating this passion amongst the public belongs solely to the Muslim maulvis, then our sense of justice compels us to affirm that the writings of the priests in which the Muslims are seen in a suspicious light, play a part in this seditious behaviour. It is regrettable that some foolish people sit to one side after carrying out a mischievous act and the British Government is left to face the difficulties. In my opinion, the best way to dispel these difficulties is to adopt the

example of the present Ottoman Government. This is that, for an experimental period of a few years, every group should be strictly forbidden to use vicious language, be it explicit or implicit, in their writings or in their sermons against another religion. However it is permissible to talk of the beauty of one's religion as much as one likes. In this way fresh seeds of enmity will cease to be sown, old issues will be forgotten and people will instead be inclined towards mutual love and reconciliation. When the barbaric people of the Frontier see the friendship and harmony between the nations, then they too will become impressed, and in turn will show as much sympathy to Christians as a Muslim does to his brother.

A second suggestion is that those maulvis of the Punjab and Hindustan who oppose the issue of *jihad* should write tracts about it. Then having translated them into Pushto, they should have them distributed amongst the Frontier tribes. Without doubt this will have great repercussions. But, a condition for all these tasks is that they should be carried out with an honest heart and enthusiasm and not with hypocrisy.

References

1. [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's note:] I have written repeatedly that the Promised Messiah is not the Prophet of the Israelites but has come with his nature and disposition. Since in the Torah our Prophet (peace be upon him) has been declared to be similar to Moses, it was necessary that there should be a Messiah at the end of Muhammad's era just as there was at the end of that of Moses.
2. [Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's note:] Is it not true that in this day and age the knots of the earth have been unravelled and thousands of new truths, special things and devices have been made manifest? So why should heavenly knots remain tied? Regarding the heavenly knots, previous Prophets also prophesied that women and children will obtain God's divine message and that will be the time of the Promised Messiah.
3. The Amir of the Afghans at this time was still Abdur Rahman (1881-1901). He was placed on the throne after the second Afghan war (1878-80) and was recognised as the Amir of Kabul on the sole condition of having no political relations with any foreign power except the British.
4. Mizan-ul-Haq (The Balance of Truth) was written by Rev. Karl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-65). This was his first book on Islam and Christianity. A greater part of the book deals with the proofs of the integrity and inspiration of the Bible whilst attacking the inspiration of the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) claim to prophethood.
5. Rev. Imad-ud-Din was one of the many priests who published extensively during this period. As a former Muslim, Imad-ud-Din had a familiarity with Islam and was thus considered particularly threatening.

Islamic Perspective – Part II

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the Fourth Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam, from time to time offers to people of all nationalities, faiths and beliefs the opportunity of raising questions and issues that are of interest to them. Presented below are answers to questions that were raised in a session held in Mannheim, Germany, on 25 August 2001 and in a previous session held in London. (The first two questions were raised in the session held in Germany and the final question was raised in a previous session held in London).

Compiled by Amatul Hadi Ahmad

Questioner:

Why is there so much fighting in Islamic countries?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad:

It is the fate of every religion that with the passage of time its followers become responsible for creating a great deal of conflict and strife within that religion. You will yourself be able to understand that during the two world wars; for instance, it was the Christians who were fighting against Christians. Such conflict among the followers of a religion is the consequence of moving away from the original teachings of a religion. When the followers of a religion become distanced from the original teachings of their religion, they forget their original beliefs and true practices. Jesus for instance taught that if someone slaps you on one cheek, you should offer the other. This, however, is not what happens in

the Christian world of today. If someone ‘slaps’ another person on one cheek, it is likely to be followed by a vengeance that is harsher and much more severe than the original act. This is a sign of decadence, a sign that the followers have become distanced from the original teaching. The same is the case in the Muslim world. Muslims, too, are going through a period of decadence, having ignored the original teachings of Islam; they have become distanced from the true essence of Islam. Consequently, there are numerous internal conflicts where one sect opposes another. The ongoing tension between the Shi’a and the Sunni sects is but one example. There are many other instances where Muslims are waging a war against other Muslims, and one sect is opposing another. This is a sign of the decline of the beliefs and practices of Muslims [as they have become distanced from the true

values and principles of Islam].

Question:

What are the differences between the Ahmadiyya Muslims and the other Muslim sects?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad:

There are many aspects that unite us in faith and in belief with the non-Ahmadi Muslims which are basically the fundamentals of Islam that we believe in one God, we believe in the Messengers, we believe in the Books, we believe in the hereafter and so on. These are the uniting beliefs of all the Muslims of the world. However, there are some who differentiate and create a difference between them and us as if we do not belong to the same faith.

The first difference which the Christians can understand well is about the personality of Jesus Christ, (peace be upon him). We do not believe Jesus^(as) to be a literal son of God. We believe that the term ‘son of God’ has been used in relation to him as a term of endearment and he was but a creation of God. The first difference, therefore, is about the entity or the nature of Jesus Christ^(as). Although all Muslims generally believe that Jesus was not the son of God, however, they attribute to him some characteristics that are beyond the physical reality of a human being.

They believe that he has gone up to the heavens alive and is still living there, in the fourth heaven, awaiting his physical return to this earth. Like Christians they believe he has gone up to the heaven alive but their beliefs become slightly different from the Christians in that the Muslims believe that he will return to earth but this time he will be a Muslim and will believe in the Imam Mahdi who will have appeared before him. Hence, the differences between the Muslims and the Christians are rather confused but still the Muslim concept of Jesus Christ is very different from that of the Christians.

According to the Ahmadiyya point of view, however, many references are to be found in the Ahadith (i.e. the traditions of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) regarding the nature of the second advent of Jesus Christ (peace be upon him). According to these traditions Jesus^(as) during his second advent is supposed to perform certain duties which are, in fact, a metaphoric representation but the non-Ahmadi Muslims generally believe these to be literal. For instance, it is said that during his second advent, Jesus would kill the swine. Non-Ahmadi Muslims believe that this is not a metaphorical statement made by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), but that it was a

literal statement that was going to be fulfilled literally. Their belief then takes on a form which implies that as soon as Jesus^(as) descends back onto this earth, after two thousand years, instead of reforming the Muslims of the time, he would instead go into the wilderness to seek out and slaughter all the swine. He will continue in this search of swine from country to country. How long will all this take – Allah knows better – but, according to the beliefs of the Muslims, he will make a full circuit of the earth, seeking out all the swine and slaughtering them. All this is obviously so absurd that human nature revolts against such a concept. However, such is the mind of the Mullah that they take literally what the Holy Prophet^(sa) meant to be metaphorical. By the killing of swine, the Holy Prophet^(sa) only meant the nature of some people which resembles that of boars and swine. It was not actual swine that were to be ‘killed’ by Jesus during his second advent, it was his campaign against the swine-like nature of some people that was being referred to by the metaphor.

The Holy Prophet^(sa), further stated that Jesus^(as), during his second advent, would then turn to breaking the cross that had once broken his body. [The non-Ahmadi Muslims

here believe that] to carry out this task, Jesus would once again travel all around the world in search of all the crosses possessed by people – be they in buildings or worn by people around their necks – Jesus^(as) was to literally break all the crosses. Just consider the enormity of such an endless task – no sooner would one cross be destroyed, the Christians could go on to make a new one! However, this is all absolutely absurd and the human mind rejects it as stupid but the mind of the Mullah accepts it as reality and that is the difference between the non-Ahmadis and the Ahmadi Muslims who believe that by the ‘breaking of the cross’ is meant only that Jesus^(as) during his second advent will present such a strong argument against the ‘cross’ that he will break the ‘cross’ not literally but metaphorically.

However, having performed this duty, regardless of the time it takes, Jesus^(as) will, according to this belief, return to the Muslims but before he can turn to the issue of their reform, there is still one further matter to be attended to. According to some traditions of the Holy Prophet^(sa), it is stated that during his second advent Jesus^(as) would marry and have progeny from that marriage and the non-Ahmadi Muslims interpret this literally and believe that Jesus Christ^(as), who by this time would be nearly two

thousand years old, would marry and take a virgin girl to be his wife. [An interesting question arises here as to who would give his daughter in marriage to such an ancient man – perhaps some Mullah would!] and once he is married, his wife would bear his children. Once again, obviously, this is also a very absurd understanding of the prophecy of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) but the Mullahs, believe in such an interpretation and their story ends with Jesus^(sa) having a new life on earth, being married and having many children. This, however, is an absurd understanding of the saying of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa).

This Hadith or tradition of the Holy Prophet^(sa) needs to be understood in its metaphorical form. Here, the Holy Prophet^(sa) is referring to the ‘Jesus’ who in his second advent would metaphorically resemble the historical Jesus Christ. It is this person who would marry and have progeny as did Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian who claimed to be the second advent of Jesus and he married and had progeny while the actual Jesus [of Nazareth] is not reported as having married and did not have any progeny.

Questioner:

How did the idea of the physical ascent of Jesus enter the Muslim ideology?

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad:

The idea of physical ascent of Jesus^(as) infiltrated the Muslim world very gradually. It was about three hundred years after the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) that it penetrated Muslim thinking. As to why it infiltrated Muslim thinking is a very important question that needs to be carefully addressed. The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) had prophesied that, some time in the future, Jesus Christ^(as) would ‘descend’ although he did not mention from where he would descend. He never stated that this ‘descent’ would be from As-Sama, that is from the heavens, but he did state that Jesus^(as) would ‘descend’. The Holy Qur’an states, regarding the Holy Prophet^(sa) himself that he ‘descended’. The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) is the only Prophet who has been referred to in the Holy Qur’an as having ‘descended’. The Holy Prophet was, therefore, fully supported by Qur’anic usage of the term, to refer to the future ‘descent’ of Jesus Christ^(as). Hence, his statement to the effect that there would be no Prophet between him and the time of ‘descent’ of ‘Jesus Christ’. It was because the word ‘Jesus Christ’ was a

personal name indicating the historical Jesus who had lived many centuries ago, that gradually the Muslim scholars came to believe that if Jesus Christ is mentioned by name, it had to be the one who appeared (in Nazareth) among the followers of Moses^(as), that it had to be the person of Jesus Christ. Consequently, this idea became so entrenched in their beliefs that gradually it became part of their doctrine. Moreover, in order to justify the notion of the ‘descent’ of Jesus Christ^(as), they also began to claim that Jesus Christ^(as) must also have ascended physically [up to heaven], their argument being that he could not descend unless he had ascended in the first instance. They accepted his ascension up to heaven but in the process completely overlooked the fact that nowhere in the Holy Qur’an has it been mentioned that Jesus Christ^(as) was raised bodily to heaven. The only reference that can be found in the Holy Qur’an that is similar to this is the following verse that states:

On the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself
(Ch.4: v.159)

That is to say God did the rafa’a of Jesus Christ to Himself. We, the Ahmadis, point out that the misinterpretation of this verse does

not in any way help the cause of the Muslim scholars who believe in the physical ascent of Jesus^(as) because the question then arises as to where was God when He raised Jesus^(as) to Himself? Was not God present where Jesus^(as) was physically? Does God not occupy the entire universe? Was God not present above Jesus^(as), below Jesus^(as), to the right of him and to the left of him? It is a fact that no body can move physically to God as God is not a physical body and bodies can only move in the direction of bodies. This is an inviolable law – it is as good today as it ever was. You can try the experiment yourself – that which is a body cannot move towards a spirit. A body can only move in the direct of a body. Hence, the interpretation given to the above verse by Muslim scholars, that God lifted Jesus^(as) physically to Himself, would indicate that God was not present where Jesus^(as) was prior to his ascent, that God was somewhere in the heavens, in mid-universe. This would have to be the result of their argument because if God had lifted Jesus^(as) to Himself, God should have continued lifting him to the boundaries of the heavens. However, according to the Muslim clerics, Jesus^(as) was left somewhere in the middle of the heavens as if God occupies only that space! They do not understand because they are prejudiced. They

want to prove a point in which they already have an entrenched belief.

According to the Holy Qur'an, the word 'Nuzool' or 'descent' does not indicate a physical descent and the word 'rafa'a' does not indicate physical ascent. These are the two words that are causing confusion in the argument. These are, in fact, Arabic words and as such their usage should be understood in accordance with the Arabic lexicon. The word 'rafa'a', or ascent in the direction of God, when used in the Holy Qur'an, does not imply a physical ascent towards God. Neither has it been used by the Holy Prophet(sa) in his statements regarding this subject, with the implication of physical ascent. The greatest 'rafa'a' was the ascent of the Holy Prophet(sa) himself. However, it was not a physical ascent but a spiritual one.

These are all aspects that need to be considered further in greater detail but unfortunately the shortage of time in today's venue does not permit this. However, I hope the questioner will understand this issue from our point of view that these ideas infiltrated Muslim thought not in the first few centuries of Islam but later on. The process of infiltration was further helped by the Muslims who had converted from Christianity. We also

believe that there was a deliberate attempt on the part of the hypocrites, that is those people who became Muslims but in fact wanted to destroy Islamic values from within. This combination of factors put the Muslim scholars onto a path that could never reach a resolution. Unfortunately, this is what we find even today.

The fact is that Jesus Christ(as) never ascended physically, hence, he would never return by descending physically. To whose advantage – to the advantage of the clerics who rule the world of Islam as despots and demagogues. Unless Jesus(as) returns, their authority cannot be snatched away from them and because such a Jesus would never descend so they will continue to enjoy their despotic rule of the world of Islam as they are doing today. Although these issues are peripheral to this question, they need to be pointed out. Consider for yourself the fact that the ascent of Jesus(as) has no meaning. Prior to Jesus(as), God did not adopt the method of physical ascent to maintain the spiritual community. It has never been the case prior to Jesus(as) that a person was raised, ascending bodily, and then descending according to the wishes of the people of the time. How can such an event occur now when it has never occurred before?

However, [to explain this issue more fully] we can quote the example Elijah. The earlier scriptures state that Elijah would one day descend bodily. The scriptures are very clear about this. Elijah is assumed to have ascended bodily to heaven and it is clearly prophesied that Elijah would descend on the same fiery chariot upon which he ascended. All the Christians would support this prophecy and that it is clearly stated in the scriptures. However, when Jesus^(as) claimed to be from God, the people around him asked him about Elijah. How could they believe in the so-called Christ until Elijah returned? Was their demand right or wrong? It was absolutely right. Elijah must descend before the advent of Christ and they, quite rightly, asked where he was. In response, Jesus^(as) pointed to John the Baptist^(as). He told the people that John the Baptist^(as) was the awaited Elijah whether they wished to believe this or not. Hence, the issue has been resolved once and for all. If Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib of Qadian^(as) is right in his claim that he is the spiritual manifestation of Jesus then Jesus^(as) is right [in his interpretation of earlier scriptures regarding Elijah]. If Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib of Qadian^(as) is wrong, then Jesus^(as) is wrong. They are both responding to the same situation! I don't know why the

Muslim clerics seem unable to understand this? How can they reject Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib^(as) and accept Jesus Christ^(as) who had issued the verdict that people regarding whom there is a truthful prophecy regarding their 'descent' back to this world at some later period, would appear again but never in the form of a physical descent. The claim of such a prophecy is fulfilled in the form of another person who is born among the people of that time. The names of the parents of such a person are different from the names of the person whose manifestation he represents – even his own name is different from the earlier person, yet such a person fulfills the prophecy. It is true that the prophecy of the Holy Prophet^(sa), regarding the future Messiah, stated that it was 'Jesus son of Mary' who would 'descend', and this is no different from the earlier prophecy regarding the 'descent' of Elijah. Hence, it is this similarity between the two prophecies and their claims that prove that the Ahmadiyya interpretation is correct.

Fasting

This month, Muslims will embark on a month of fasting, abstaining from food and drink during daylight hours for a period of thirty days. The holy month of Ramadhan holds great significance in the Muslim calendar. The following essay was first published in the book 'Islamic Worship' by Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan.

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 Ramadhan 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 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. And when my servants ask thee about me: I am near. I answer the prayer of the supplicant when he prays to me. So they should hearken to me and believe in me, that they may follow the right way.

(Ch.2: vs.184-187)

The idea of the fast has been inculcated in all religious disciplines which are based on revelation, though strict conformity to the ordinances relating thereto is no longer insisted upon. Indeed, within some disciplines the fast has been reduced to a purely symbolic observance. In Islam the ordinances relating to the fast are clearly stated and defined and to the degree of their applicability they are strictly

observed. A tendency towards greater rigidity is sometimes encountered and has to be checked and countered through exposition of the true purpose of the fast and of the meaning of the regulations and their spirit.

Subject to the permissible exemptions, the observance of the fast is obligatory upon every adult Muslim during the month of Ramadhan, the ninth month in the lunar calendar current in Islam. As the lunar year is shorter by about eleven days than the solar year, Ramadhan rotates through the year and seasons, arriving eleven days earlier every year. Thus in every part of the earth it progresses through every season in turn. In the tropics, when Ramadhan falls in the summer season, not only are days longer than in the winter but the fast entails additional hardship on account of the heat, as normal occupations and pursuits have to be carried on and in the intense heat and dryness a severe degree of thirst may have to be endured through several hours each day. The fast is, however, in no sense a penance. It is a physical, moral and spiritual discipline, and the object is the promotion of righteousness and security against

evil. Through the experience of the fast the worshipper is impelled to exalt Allah for His having provided guidance to mankind.

Outside Ramadhan, a voluntary fast may be observed at any time, except on the two festival days. The Holy Prophet^(sa) often observed a fast on Monday and Thursday; but he did not approve of a voluntary fast being observed on a Friday.

A fast is prescribed as an expiation or as an alternative penalty in respect of certain crimes or defaults, but in those cases also the object is the promotion of physical, moral and spiritual values. For instance, if a person on Pilgrimage to the House of Allah is unable to offer the sacrifice of an animal as prescribed, he should observe the fast for three days during the course of the Pilgrimage and for seven days after returning home, making up ten altogether (Ch.2,v.197). The expiation of an oath is a fast for three days (Ch.5,v.90). The alternative penalty for killing game while on Pilgrimage is a fast for the number of days corresponding to the number of animals killed. The alternative penalty for manslaughter is a fast for two consecutive months

(Ch.4, v.93) and the same is the penalty for *Zihar*, a frivolous declaration by a husband that henceforth consorting with his wife would amount to consorting with his mother, a hateful method of pronouncing a divorce, practised in pre-Islamic days, abolished by Islam (Ch.58: v.5).

A vow of silence (Ch.19, v.11) during a certain period has also been described as a fast (Ch.19: v.27).

The observation of a fast, whether obligatory or voluntary, or by way of expiation or as a penalty, is subject to the same regulations. The period of the daily fast extends from the first flush of dawn, normally about an hour and a quarter before sunrise, till after sunset. During this period neither food nor drink, nor any kind of nourishment may pass through the lips of a person who is observing the fast. Nor should any drug or other substance be swallowed or injected into the system. The fast may, however, be discontinued in case of emergency and should be terminated if the person observing the fast becomes sick. Nor should there be any consorting between husband and wife or any approach to it. The fast

must not be continued beyond sunset, even if nothing is immediately available for terminating the fast save a few drops of water, a pinch of salt or sugar, a bit of stale bread, or a dried date, etc.

If during the fast, food or drink should be swallowed in complete forgetfulness of the fast, that would not vitiate the fast and the fast should be completed till nightfall. Should, however, something be swallowed through carelessness, even involuntarily, the fast is vitiated and cannot be continued.

It is customary and is considered desirable that a light breakfast should be taken immediately before the commencement of the fast. The breaking of the fast after sunset should not be made an occasion for gorging oneself with food and drink. This would be in contravention of the spirit of the fast and would be a departure from the example of the Holy Prophet^(sa) which must be adhered to. It could also prove harmful to health.

The month of Ramadhan is a period of intensive training in beneficent values. Abstention from food and drink and conjugal relations for a

THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN IS A PERIOD OF INTENSIVE TRAINING IN BENEFICENT VALUES. ABSTENTION FROM FOOD AND DRINK AND CONJUGAL RELATIONS FOR A CERTAIN NUMBER OF HOURS EACH DAY THROUGH A MONTH IS A VALUABLE EXERCISE IN ENDURANCE AND STEADFASTNESS. BUT THAT IS ONLY THE OUTER SHELL, AS IT WERE, OF THE FAST. YET EVEN THIS HAS A GREAT SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE. IT BRINGS HOME TO THE WELL-TO-DO SECTOR OF SOCIETY THE MEANING OF HUNGER AND THIRST.

certain number of hours each day through a month is a valuable exercise in endurance and steadfastness. But that is only the outer shell, as it were, of the fast. Yet even this has a great social significance. It brings home to the well-to-do sector of society the meaning of hunger and thirst. Privation ceases, in their case also, to be a mere expression and becomes an experience shared in common with all. The consciousness that a large number of their fellow beings have to go hungry most of the time is sharpened and there is a greater eagerness to share with them the bounties that Allah has, of His Grace, bestowed on them.

The true purpose of Ramadhan, as of all forms of Islamic worship, is to draw people closer to Allah. Though normal pursuits and occupations are

carried on as usual, the emphasis on moral and spiritual values and concentration on them are intensified, and everything is subordinated to the main purpose. The hearing, the sight, the tongue, the mind are all under stricter control. For instance, not only vain talk, but much talk is eschewed, so that there should be greater concentration on remembrance of Allah and reflection upon His attributes.

The Holy Prophet^(sa) said:

‘He who abstains from food and drink during the period of the fast but does not restrain himself from uttering a falsehood starves himself to no purpose.’

It is related of him that during Ramadhan his own concern for the care of the poor, the needy, the sick

and the orphan was intensified manifold, and that his charity knew no limit.

The study of the Qur'an and reflection over the Divine Signs recited therein takes up the greater part of the time that can be garnered by reducing the other demands upon it to a minimum. Divines and scholars carry on discourses on the Qur'an throughout the month. Voluntary prayer during the latter part of the night is deemed obligatory during Ramadhan, but may be offered individually or in congregation. For the convenience of those who may find it difficult to proceed to the mosque at that hour to take part in the service, a congregational service is held after *Isha* (the Evening Service). Whether held after *Isha* or before *Fajr*, (the morning prayer) the follow-up passage after the Fatiha assumes considerable proportions. The service comprises eight *raka'as*, offered in four units of two *raka'as* each, and is led by an Imam who is a *Hafiz*, that is, one who has learnt the whole Qur'an by heart. During this service the recitation from the Qur'an is made in sequence and the recitation of the whole of the Qur'an is completed during Ramadhan. This

entails the recitation of approximately one twenty-eighth of the Qur'an in the course of the daily service, one-eighth of that portion being recited as the follow-up passage after the Fatiha in each *raka'a*. The Imam, of course, recites from memory and the congregation follows the recitation with rapt attention.

That is another unique feature of Islam. No less than seventy times is the Scripture of Islam referred to in the Revelation itself by the name Qur'an. The word means that which is repeatedly read, recited, proclaimed. It is the only scripture which is in its entirety expressed in the words of the revelation. It is thus the only one which is literally the Word of God. Its very name is a prophecy that it will be widely and repeatedly read, recited and proclaimed. Its text, in the words of the revelation, is preserved intact and in its proper sequence in the memories of millions of its devotees from generation to generation. Hundreds of millions read and recite portions of it in prayer services and otherwise in the course of the day and night around the globe. During Ramadhan the number is greatly augmented. Numberless people read

it through by themselves during that month. Others hear it interpreted and expounded. A much larger number hear it recited from beginning to end in the course of the service just described. All this in the very words of the revelation in which it was sent down close upon fourteen hundred years ago! That in itself is a matchless Divine Sign and Testimony.

During the last ten days of Ramadhan, many people go into retreat, as it were, in a mosque and devote the whole of their time, not occupied by the obligatory and voluntary services, to the study of the Qur'an and the remembrance of Allah. This period of complete devotion of a worshipper's time to the exercise of the purely spiritual values, is the culmination of the physical, moral and spiritual discipline instituted by Islam. To carry such a discipline further would be a sort of asceticism or monasticism which is not approved of in Islam.

Complete abstention from food and drink during the period of the fast does not constitute so great a hardship for a Muslim as adherents of other disciplines may be disposed

to imagine. Muslim children are brought up in an atmosphere of respect for and devotion to the values indicated by the faith. Very early they begin to exhibit an eagerness to practise them. Parents have often to restrain young children from observing the fast. They are trained into endurance of the rigours of the fast through a gradual process spread over many number of years. A child of twelve or thirteen may be permitted to observe the fast on three or four day intervals during one Ramadhan. The following year he may be permitted to increase the number to eight or ten. In the third year he may be content with fasting on alternate days. In the fourth year he would be ready to assume the full obligation.

Another very helpful factor is furnished by the dietary regulations of Islam. In the matter of food the prohibitions are: blood, the flesh of an animal that dies of itself and is not slaughtered for food, the flesh of swine and the flesh of an animal on which the name of any other than Allah has been invoked, meaning thereby sacrifices made to idols or other gods and offerings made to saints or to any being other than Allah. The first three categories are

prohibited because they are harmful for the body, and that which is harmful for the body is necessarily harmful for the spirit. The last prohibition relates to something which is manifestly harmful morally and spiritually inasmuch as it involves association of others with Allah.

A relaxation is made in the case of a person who is driven by necessity and to whom no other means of sustenance and nourishment is, for the time being, available. Such a one may partake of a prohibited article of food, consuming only as much as he may consider necessary for his immediate need. In such an instance priority is given to the need of maintaining and sustaining life, as against the possibility of such harm, if any, as might result from the consumption of a minimum quantity of the forbidden article (Ch.2, v.174)

Liquor and all intoxicants are forbidden. It is recognised that some people may derive some pleasure or advantage from the use of liquor or other prohibited article, but it is pointed out that the harm resulting from their use is far greater than any pleasure or advantage that might be derived from them (Ch.2,v.220).

The prohibition, however, is clear and absolute.

O ye who believe, liquor, gambling, idols and divining arrows are only an abomination of Satan's handiwork. So shun each of them that you may prosper. Satan's design is only to promote enmity and hatred between you through liquor and gambling and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from Salat. Will you not then desist?

(Ch.5, vs.91-92)

It needs to be remembered that in the matter of any pleasure or advantage to be derived from liquor or any other intoxicant, and the harm that may result from their use, it is not only an individual or a class that has to be considered; society as a whole must be taken into account.

It may well be that the harm resulting to an individual or to a number of individuals may not be overtly manifested, but there is no denying that society as a whole suffers grave harm from the use of liquor and other intoxicants. The purpose of the Qur'an is not only to furnish guidance for the individual,

but to furnish guidance to the individual as a member of society and, indeed, to mankind as a whole. These are the prohibitions, but not all that is permissible may be used as food and drink in all circumstances. Of that which is permissible only that may be used as food and drink which is clean and wholesome (Ch.2, v.168). This has a relative aspect also. Articles of food and drink over a wide range may be wholesome for a healthy adult but they may not all be wholesome for a child or for an invalid. But even that which is permissible and is clean and wholesome may be partaken of only in moderation.

Children of Adam, look to your adornment at every time and place of worship, and eat and drink but be not immoderate; surely, He loves not those who are immoderate.
(Ch.7, v.32)

Within these limitations there is neither harm nor sin in eating and drinking of the good things provided by Allah out of His bounty, so long as the objective is that life may be sustained and health promoted for the purpose of carrying out Allah's will through firm faith in the

guidance that He has sent down and action in conformity therewith.

There is no harm for those who believe and work righteousness in respect of that which they eat, provided they are mindful of their duty to Allah and believe and work righteousness, again are mindful of their duty to Allah and have firm faith, and yet again are mindful of their duty to Allah and carry it out to the utmost. Allah loves those who carry out their duty to the utmost.

(Ch.5: v.94)

Here, then, is a gradation which is elastic and yet takes full account of the immediate as well as the ultimate purpose of food and drink. That which is harmful on the whole is forbidden altogether, except in the case of extreme necessity, when the preservation of human life must take precedence even at the risk of some, possibly only temporary, harm. The exemption or relaxation in such a situation is only in respect of the minimum quantity that would suffice for the immediate need. Under this restriction the possibility of harm would be slight, and once the immediate need has been met the

prohibition would continue to operate. Of that which is permissible only that which is clean and wholesome may be consumed as food and drink, but only in moderation. That again is a relative matter to be determined with reference to the requirements of each individual and class. Finally, not only the immediate purpose of food and drink, but also the ultimate purpose, namely, the promotion of the moral and spiritual values must be kept in view.

It will thus be appreciated that a Muslim's freedom in respect of food and drink, as indeed in respect of all matters, is controlled by beneficent regulation, and is disciplined. During Ramadhan the regulation and discipline become stricter in order to intensify the effort for the achievement of the ultimate purpose. That which is forbidden as being harmful, whether in the matter of food and drink or in respect of any other activity, is to be abstained from at all times. In the month of Ramadhan there is to be abstention during the period of the fast even from that which is lawful and permissible; food and drink which sustain life, and marital intercourse which promotes the continuance of

the species; the purpose being to win the pleasure of Allah. It also has a symbolic aspect. By observing the fast the worshipper makes a pledge or covenant that if in the course of carrying out his duty of complete submission to the will of Allah he should be called upon to put his life in jeopardy or to sacrifice the interests of his progeny, he would not hesitate to do so. Such a discipline practised through a whole month every year should ensure that the participant would, during the remaining eleven months of the year progressively achieve greater and greater adherence to moral and spiritual values.

It must never be overlooked that the whole purpose of fasting, whether obligatory, as during the month of Ramadhan, or voluntary, as at other times, is to promote righteousness, which means the progressive cultivation of spiritual values. The same applies when the fast is observed as an expiation or a penalty. The spiritual recompense of proper observation of the fast is high indeed. The Holy Prophet^(sa) has said:

‘There are appropriate spiritual rewards for all worship and

righteous action; the ultimate reward of the person who observes the fast solely for winning the pleasure of Allah is Allah Himself.’

The month of Ramadhan is one of the months of the lunar calendar. It begins with the appearance of the new moon and ends with the appearance of the new moon. As soon as the new moon of Ramadhan is sighted a joyous surge of anticipation inspires the hearts of young and old. The season of closer communion with the Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, Most Compassionate, Most Forgiving Lord of the worlds. Originator, Creator, Fashioner and Maker, Master of the Day of Judgment has opened and we have been accorded once more, by His Grace, the good fortune of witnessing it and the privilege of striving to enrich ourselves through the continuous opportunities it provides of seeking the pleasure of Allah. All praise to Allah for His unending bounties! Greetings and felicitations are exchanged all round. All is bustle and solemn preparation. Mosques begin to fill with eager worshippers for the *Maghrib* service, to be followed after a brief interval by

‘Isha and then *Taravih* during the eight *raka’as* of which the congregation is privileged to listen to the recitation of the Holy Book from the very beginning to the end in proper sequence, evening after evening till by the end of the month the whole Qur’an has been recited. The greater part of the night is passed in supplication and in praise, glorification and remembrance of Allah. Those who prefer to offer the eight *raka’as* of voluntary prayer during the latter part of the night rather than in the evening as *Taravih* occupy themselves with it as the time approaches for a light breakfast in the solemn pre-dawn hour. The Muezzin’s call to prayer with its first *Allah-o-Akbar* (Allah is Great) is the signal for the commencement of the fast and preparation for the *Fajr* prayer.

Thereafter the normal daily routine is followed with a heightened consciousness of the duty owed to Allah and to His creatures, one’s fellow beings. Praise, glorification and remembrance of Allah for, as it were, the infra-structure of all activity and greater attention is directed towards caring for the poor, the needy, the widowed, the orphan, the sick, the distressed, the

neighbour, the wayfarer, etc. Courses on the Holy Qur'an are given in mosques and seminaries. Towards the close of the day the heart experiences a glow of gratitude to the Divine that His Grace has enabled one to approach the end of the fast having spent the night and the day in striving to conduct oneself in conformity to His will.

The Muezzin's call to prayer for the *Maghrib Salat* is the signal announcing the end of the fast, which is terminated with a mouthful of water, a cup of tea, a dried date or two, or even a pinch of salt should nothing else be immediately available and with the supplication:

Allah, for Thy sake I observed the fast, putting my trust in Thee, and I have ended it with which Thou has provided. Thirst is quenched and the arteries are refreshed and I look for my recompense to Thee, if Thou shouldst so will. I beg of Thee Allah, of Thy mercy that encompasseth all things, that Thou may be pleased to forgive me my sins.

The *Maghrib* prayer follows within

a few minutes and thereafter the evening meal is partaken of. It is considered very meritorious to invite others, but more particularly the poor, the needy, the orphan to the breaking of the fast and the evening meal. These two need not to be, however, separate occasions. A simple meal may be taken at the time of breaking of the fast, thus preceding the *Maghrib* prayer. An elaborate meal designed as a compensation for the period of abstention is not only contrary to the spirit of the fast but tends also to upset the digestion. In this, and indeed in certain other respects, the spirit of the fast is not respected and observed as strictly in certain parts of the Muslim world as could be wished. There is, however, general eagerness to do so as the benefits to be derived therefrom are patent.

The *Isha* service and *Taravih* complete the rhythm and tempo of life during Ramadhan. When the month begins to approach its end the general mood is one of pensiveness which promotes eagerness to take full advantage of all remaining days to make up for any shortcomings and fallings off during the earlier periods. Numberless people experience closer communion with

their Maker and Creator during this blessed month, the intensity and frequency of which continue to increase as the month progresses.

The fast terminates with the appearance of the new moon. The new moon may be visible after sunset of the twenty-ninth day of the fast, but if not the fast must be continued the next day, thus making a total of thirty days during the month. It may be that on the thirtieth evening visibility may be very poor due to atmospheric conditions, and the moon may not be visible. That would make no difference and Ramadhan would terminate at sunset on that day, as it is recognised that a lunar month cannot extend beyond thirty days. The same rule governs the commencement of the month.

The day following the last day of Ramadhan, determined as above, is observed as the festival of the termination of the fast. It is one of those occasions when even a voluntary fast may not be observed. In conformity with the spirit of Islam, the only celebration prescribed for the festival is an additional service during the forenoon comprising two *raka'as*

and an address by the Imam. The service may be held in one of the bigger mosques of a large city, but in view of the large numbers involved is generally held in the open. It is customary, following the example of the Holy Prophet^{sa}, to take a light breakfast after sunrise before setting out for the service, and also to vary the route home on returning from the service.

The festive character of the occasion is proclaimed through exchange of visits, feeding the poor, visiting the sick and glorification of Allah and celebrating His praise in thankfulness to Him for the guidance provided by Him, particularly with regard to all that pertains to the observance of the fast and for having enabled those upon whom the fast was obligatory to observe it duly.

The Jinn

by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad

This is an extract taken from the book Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth written by the author.

Prepare now to undertake a journey upon the wings of scientific vision into the ancient past to explore the nature and identity of the jinn. The Qur'anic concept of jinn has been briefly discussed before in 'Life in the Perspective of Qur'anic Revelations'. The Arabic lexicon mentions the following as the possible meanings of the word jinn. It literally means anything which has the connotation of concealment, invisibility, seclusion and remoteness. It also has the connotation of thick shades and dark shadows. That is why the word 'jannah' (from the same root word) is employed by the Qur'an to denote paradise, which would be full of thick, heavily shaded gardens. The word jinn is also applicable to snakes which habitually remain hidden from common view and live a life secluded from other animals in rock crevices and earthen holes. It is also applied to women who observe segregation and to such chieftains as keep their distance from the common people. The inhabitants of remote, inaccessible mountains are likewise referred to as jinn. Hence, anything which lies beyond the reach of common sight or is invisible to the unaided naked eye, could well be described by this word.

This proposition is fully endorsed by a tradition of the Holy Prophet^(sa) in which he strongly admonishes people not to use dried up lumps of dung or bones of dead animals for cleaning themselves after attending to the call of nature because they are food for the jinn. As we use toilet paper now, at that time people used lumps of earth, stones or any dry article close at hand to clean themselves. We can safely infer therefore, that what he referred to as jinn was nothing other than some invisible organisms, which feed on rotting bones, dung etc. Remember that the concept of bacteria and viruses was not yet born. No man had even the vaguest idea about the existence of such invisible tiny creatures. Amazingly it is to these that the Holy Prophet^(sa) referred. The Arabic language could offer him no better, more appropriate

expression than the word jinn.

Another important observation made by the Qur'an is in relation to the creation of jinn. They are described as having been born out of blasts of fire (from the cosmos).

وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَّارِ السَّمُومِ

*And the Jinn We created before that (the creation of man)
from blasts of fire (iiaris-samiim).¹
(Ch.15: v.28)*

Here the adjective used to describe the nature of the particular fire from which the jinn were created is Samiim, which means a blazing fire or a blast that has no smoke². We find a similar statement in another Qur'anic verse:

وَخَلَقَ الْجَانَّ مِنْ نَّارِ سَمُومٍ

*And the Jinn He created from the flame of fire.³
(Ch.55: v.16)*

Having established that the word jinn applies here to some type of bacterial organisms, let us again turn our attention to the verses quoted above that speak of the jinn as having been created out of fire. The prime candidates for the application of these verses seem to be such minute organisms as drew the energy for their existence directly from hot blazes of lightning – *Samum* – and cosmic radiation.

Dickerson inadvertently agrees with the Qur'anic view when he observes that the most ancient organisms:

‘...would have lived on the energy of lightning and ultraviolet radiation
...’⁴

This scenario of cosmic radiation is not specifically mentioned in the work

of other scientists in their search for the pre-biotic organisms. But they too have corroborated the idea that whatever organisms existed before biotic evolution must have drawn their energy directly from heat. Of all the categories of bacteria classified as the most ancient only 'prokaryotes' and 'eukaryotes' were mentioned by previous generations of scientists. However, that conclusion proved to be a hastily drawn one, according to Karl R. Woese and his colleagues. They observed:

‘Simply because there are two types of cells at the microscopic level it does not follow that there must be only two types at the molecular level.’⁵

For the benefit of the lay reader the difference between the two bacteria, known as the prokaryotes and eukaryotes, is explained in terms as simple as possible. It relates to the presence or absence of a nucleus in them. The prokaryote type of bacteria, despite having a well-defined cell membrane, have no distinct nucleus. The eukaryotes on the other hand, possess well-defined and well-developed nuclei occupying the centre of each cell.

It was considered that these were the only two ancient forms of bacteria which gave birth to others and evolved into organisms which could be referred to as the ancestors of life. However, Woese published the findings of his pioneer research in *Scientific American*, June 1981, claiming that archaeobacteria, could be rightly considered as the earliest form of organisms. He and his colleagues informed the scientific community that they were a third distinct line which preceded all others. Thus it is they who should be entitled as the most ancient ancestors of life. Woese and his collaborators continued to pour strong evidence into this discovery and as the ice began to thaw, according to Woese:

‘Although a few biologists still dispute our interpretation, the idea that archaeobacteria represent a separate grouping at the highest level is becoming generally accepted.’⁶

Again he writes:

‘This implies that the methanogens are as old as or older than any other bacterial group.’⁶

According to *The Hutchinson Dictionary of Science*:

‘... the archaebacteria are related to the earliest life forms, which appeared about 4 billion years ago, when there was little oxygen in the Earth’s atmosphere.’⁷

But the author of *Genetics a Molecular Approach* states:

‘Since 1977 more and more differences between archaebacteria and other prokaryotes have been found, so much so that microbiologists now favour the term archaea, to emphasize that these organisms are distinct from bacteria.’⁸

The organisms referred to as jinn in the Qur’an seem to fit the above description. But, though scientists unanimously describe these bacteria as possessing the potential of drawing their energy from heat, they are not mentioned as having been originally created directly by the cosmic rays and blasts of lightning by any scientist other than Dickerson. The rest however, continue to unveil more mysteries with further research.

‘... in undersea vents, hot springs, the Dead Sea, and salt pans, and have even adapted to refuse tips.’⁹

On the issue of antiquity, though Woese and his colleagues have no doubt that the archaebacteria are the prime claimants. According to some scientists they may have evolved from some unknown parenthood simultaneously.

But these are issues which fall outside the domain of this exercise. Whether the other bacteria evolved out of them or not is irrelevant to the discussion. The relevant point is that all forms of most ancient bacteria draw their energy directly from heat. This is a tribute of no small magnitude to the Qur’anic declaration made over fourteen hundred years ago:

وَالْحَآءُ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ

And the Jinn We created before that from blasts of fire (naris-samum).¹⁰
(Ch.15: v.28)

According to the accepted scientific studies, direct heat from fire had to play a vital role in the creation and maintenance of pre-biotic organisms. This, in fact was the only mode of transfer of energy for the consumption of organised forms of existence during this era. As they multiplied during their uninterrupted proliferation lasting over billions of years, their death must have polluted the oceans while they decayed and fermented turning the oceans into the primordial soup. This will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

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Business, Corporation and Governance Models in the Islamic Economic System

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Why an example of any present Muslim Country cannot be a model

Many Muslim countries today, unfortunately, have forgotten the teachings of Islam. They have lost the spirit of Islam. All faculties and aspects of life have been affected due to ignorance in understanding the true meaning of Islam. As such matters relating to economics and commerce are no exception. Therefore it is no use to present an Islamic country as a model for economics nor for that matter can we present their governing practices of business as a model for corporate governance. On the other hand all Muslim nations of today are good examples for constructive criticism from the point of view of the philosophy of the teachings of Islam. The most prominent reason for the above fact, sadly to say, is that the majority of Muslim nations are unjust and it is known that injustice automatically breeds corruption and distortion to any kind of jurispru-

dence. Instead of equality in economic terms as called for by Islam, there is inequality prevailing in all aspects of life. A privileged or ruling class, often placing itself above the law, devours the social, economic and political fabric of society. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an;

Verily Allah commands you to make over the trusts to those entitled to them, and that, when you judge between men, judge with justice. And surely excellent is that with which Allah admonishes you! Allah is All Hearing and All Seeing.

(Ch. 4: verse 59)

Islam, it must be kept in mind, establishes its system of jurisprudence by winning hearts through love, convincing minds by arguments and preaching. The concept of Islam being spread through force or being established by force is a totally false

and foolish idea. Thus, when we see countries enforce religion authoritatively an ugly picture is presented, totally unrelated to the spirit of Islam. Allah decrees in the Holy Qur'an;

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong; so whosoever refuses to be led by those who transgress, and believes in Allah, has surely grasped a strong handle, which knows no breaking. And Allah is All Hearing, All Knowing.

(Ch. 2; verse 257)

No religion may be implemented by force, yet, in a number of countries, Islam is associated with compulsion in one form or another. Islam is being used as a tool to fulfil the worldly desires and motives of the ruling class or those clerics who seek worldly power. The system practised in most Islamic countries is totally in contrast to what Islam teaches. The principles of economics, which the Islamic system stands for, have not been fully implemented and are mostly ignored by Muslim countries generally. Therefore naturally the economic environment is developing in an opposite way to a true Islamic system. Hence in the world of today there is not a model which may be presented as an example for an Islamic

economic system or a model for corporate governance.

Modelling of an Islamic Economic System

The only choice we are left with is to go back to the roots of the teachings of Islam and on the basis of these true teachings a model may be projected which is in compliance with the true spirit of Islam.

Islam prohibits interest (Riba) in any form, which is clearly expressed in the Holy Qur'an;

Those who devour interest do not rise except as rises one whom Satan has smitten with insanity. That is because they say, 'Trade also is like interest' whereas Allah has made trade lawful and interest unlawful. So he to whom an admonition comes from his Lord and he desists, then will that which he received in the past be his; and his affair rests with Allah. And those who revert to it, they are the inmates of the Fire; therein they shall abide.

(Ch. 2; Verse 276)

Allah further says in the Holy Qur'an with regards to interest;

O ye who believe! Fear Allah and give up what remains of interest, if

you are truly believers.
(Ch. 2; Verse 279)

These injunctions automatically eliminate the possibility for financial institutions to exist in the form and kind that they do at the present time. Moreover on the capital saved with individuals over and above their consumable needs, is levied an annual capital tax ('Zakat'). For Zakat, the obligatory alms, Allah has stated in the Holy Qur'an;

Surely, those who believe and do good deeds, and observe Prayer and pay the Zakat, shall have their reward from their Lord, and no fear shall come on them nor shall they grieve.

(Ch. 2; Verse 278)

Under these circumstances individuals have only two alternatives, either to employ their money in personal businesses or to pool their resources to establish small or big business enterprises. Injunctions about 'interest' and 'zakat' in this matter help to create capital to turn the wheels of economy. This will promote joint ventures, partnerships, and formation of small companies or large public share holdings. Whatever may be the structure of the business, it will be run strictly on the basis of 'profit and loss sharing', without any debt

financing. Lending to the business in every case would be through equity sharing and thus sharing profit and loss. Now this would not only require the lender to be very cautious while choosing who to finance, but it will also require a high standard of honesty and integrity on the part of the entrepreneur in need of financing. The market will work to eliminate the dishonest ingredients; staying afloat will be the honest ones and the ones who have earned the reputation of goodwill. This exactly was the case in the days of the Holy Prophet^(sa), and it carried on for a few centuries after him among the Muslims.

Hadhrat Imam Abu Hanifa^(ra) was one of the most highly revered jurists in Islam; his system of jurisprudence is followed by the largest number of Muslims today. He was also an astute businessman. People used to throw money at him, some would leave pouches full of money at his doorsteps with the message, 'For God's sake employ it and let us share the profit'⁽¹⁾. This is but only one example and there are many more.

So business enterprises which come into being under the influence of the Islamic economic system may have any structure, whether corporations, partnerships or whatever, for trade

and commercial activities. According to Islam they will all be legitimate operations (Holy Qur'an, Ch. 2; verse 276). The basic difference between the western concept of such business entities and the Islamic concept is that in Islam they do not need to be identified as limited or unlimited, as the company does not borrow, all its funds being financed by equity participation.

Advantages of Islamic Business Enterprise over the Western Style Corporations

Equity sharing being the only form of raising finance also has a social as well as an overall economic advantage. For instance, the westernised business, raising finances on an interest basis, must keep paying interest during recession periods even if the business is making huge losses. Such adverse situations provide them with very short breathing period to survive under difficult circumstances. The only choice left is to declare themselves bankrupt, which hurts the whole society and economy. However in an Islamic business entity under the same circumstances when the production or business activity has to be lowered due to the crisis, then the lender (equity sharer) will also have to share the burden of it. The lender will not be paid anything or may have to bear the loss of his/her equity. But

such companies in turn are provided with much greater breathing periods. Like those animals that in order to conserve energy when the source of the energy has decreased, hibernate during winter periods. Likewise the Islamic system provides the possibility of hibernation while the western capitalist system has no provision for this. An example of this regard was the lorry drivers' strike in France, during November 1996. German lorries unwillingly also had to be stranded in France for days. After only eleven days of business crisis, German transport companies came under tremendous pressures. Boyes (from Bonn, Germany) in *The Times* article (29/11/96) reported, 'Many small German transport companies say they face bankruptcy as a result of the strike'⁽²⁾. Here it is interesting to note that only eleven days loss of revenue pushed into crisis situation the small transporters who had taken loans on an interest basis to finance their businesses. This example strongly endorses the above argument.

Borrowing 'Structure' From History

The forms of business entities as practised in the historical Islamic era were developments of pre-Islamic practices of the Arabs, generated out of their historic culture and traditions.

After the advent of Islam, the Holy Prophet^(sa) did not abolish or prohibit these entities. Therefore the Arab Muslims adopted them as part of Islamic business practices. But it must be kept in mind that Islam without being mechanistic provides the spirit in which to carry out businesses. Therefore it is important to understand the concept; then with the true spirit of Islam it may be practised under whatever name.

Two major forms of business will be discussed. Besides these forms of enterprise, there are many other business activities undertaken in an Islamic system but they do not relate directly to the subject of this dissertation. Namely, some of them are 'Murabaha' (trade financing), 'Ijara' (lease of hire), 'Ijara wa iqtana' (hire-purchase), etc. It is necessary not to fixate upon the names and descriptions of Islamic business entities, but to understand the concept of these practices. The driving force behind all is the Islamic 'Sharia' (law), which provides the guidelines for understanding these concepts. Two of the main ingredients of this concept are, proportional sharing of profit or loss and complete elimination of interest in any form or disguise.

1. Mudaraba

The origin of *Mudaraba* is in trade. Trade historically has been the foundation stone of doing business. Other Arabic terms used to designate *Mudaraba* are *Qirad*, and *Muqarada*. The terms are interchangeable with no essential difference or connotation. When Arab Muslims started trading with the west, the same business activity adopted by the west was named 'Commenda' or 'Commendam'. *Mudaraba* is derived from the expression making a journey (al-darbfil-ard ; 'strike on ground' meaning walking on the ground or to travel for the purpose of trade). It is an arrangement where investors entrust capital to agents who trade with it and the profit is divided usually equally or at a 'pre-agreed' basis between the agent (al-mudarib) and the investor. In the case of loss the agent is not liable and the whole loss is borne by the investor. The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa), before his claim to prophethood, traded and also acted as agent in such arrangements. In his case the investment was provided by Hadhrat Khadija^(ra), who upon receiving reports of the Holy Prophet's^(sa) honesty and high moral dealings from her servant, made a marriage proposal to him and became his wife.

Investors may select agents or agents

may select investors, it could be either way, depending on the reputation of the agent or desire of the investor. Both parties may impose conditions which can be negotiated but have to be agreed upon before the signing of the contract. For instance

Hadhrat Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib (Holy Prophet's^(sa) uncle) narrates that when he used to give property in commendam, he stipulated on the recipient not to travel with the property by sea, nor to cross a valley or purchase with it live animals and if he did he would be held liable⁽³⁾. Hadhrat Abbas^(ra) also obtained the Holy Prophet's^(sa) approval for imposing conditions upon his agents to whom he entrusted his money⁽⁴⁾.

1. Application of Mudaraba in Present Day Business

Applying this concept in the present day, 'al-mudarib' or agent will be the manager or management, while investors will be the owners of entrusted or invested capital. As such we can see that the separation of ownership or management was not initiated with the creation of 'joint stock' companies in the 19th century. Muslims and prior to them the Arabs of sixth and seventh century A.D., were already familiar with such business arrangements. Although the investor had the provision of applying

conditions relating to the use of his funds, the agents usually enjoyed complete freedom under normal trading circumstances from any liability for the capital in the event of partial or total loss⁽⁴⁾. This naturally elevated individuals, such as Hadhrat Abu Hanifa^(ra), who were known for their high level of integrity and honesty and morals on the business scene to take the role of 'mudarib'.

2. 'Musharaka' / 'Mufawada' / 'Inan'. (Equity Participation or Partnership)
'Musharaka' is a partnership formed to carry out some specific project. So Musharaka would be for a limited duration. If it is a perpetual partnership till partners agree to part, then it is known as 'Mufawada' or 'Inan'. Mufawada connotes a general mandate of partnership that is an arrangement in which each party confers upon his colleagues full authority to dispose their joint capital in any manner intended to benefit their association⁽⁴⁾. Profit is distributed (or loss is shared) among the partners in proportion to respective capital contribution. Providers of capital are entitled to participate in management but not necessarily to do so.

The Role of the Bank in the Islamic Economic System

In the present age one of the challenges in practising of *Mudaraba* would be bringing together of investors (financiers) and agents. Islam does not approve of the of the stock market concept as practised in the present day, which, although acting as an efficient way to bring provider and user of capital together, also bears numerous negative practices which are against the basic teachings of Islam. Such anti-Islamic practices include short selling of stock, margin trading, futures trading and of course the borrowing of money on interest for the purpose of short term trading. The solution is a middle financial body, which can play a combined role of *Al-mudarab* (agent) as well as the investor. Therefore a 'bank', in an Islamic perspective. Banks may invest in *Mudarabas* or *Musharakas*. *Musharaka* financing from a banking point of view is somewhat akin to equity financing of the western financial system.

The Holy Prophet^(sa) even before his claim to being a prophet was known among the Arabs as *Amin*, due to his exceptional honesty and truthfulness. Because of his reputed integrity and honesty, people would leave their belongings (money and goods) in his

custody when leaving for a journey and also otherwise, with the right to demand the same from him at any time in the future. They would always get their property (*Amana*) back in the same condition as and when they desired. So *Amin* is the highest praise of complementing an extremely honest person who would keep money or goods in his deposit and return it back, as and when demanded, in the same condition.

Banks in an Islamic system exist on a non-interest basis. They perform the function of *Amin* as well as that of the investors. This may be explained with the help of the following simple structure; the Bank in a true Islamic economy would consist of depositors and investors,

A - Depositors

Depositors would typically be the people using the bank to collect their salaries/incomes etc., but needing such deposits for consumable needs within one year.

B - Investors

Individuals with surplus capital willing to invest in the hope of making profit above the rate of *Zakat*. The initial capital provider who starts the bank will also be categorised with the investors without any difference or distinction as far as investors'

privilege is concerned. The investment could be on the basis of perpetuity, fixed long/medium/short term.

Services

Besides providing general services the bank will advance and invest its liabilities (equities) in the following two manners:

(i) *Qard-e-Hasan* (loan without interest to individuals for exigencies and emergencies, in the Persian form of the Arabic expression). This is a loan available for the needy for exigencies and emergencies. The borrower is obliged to repay the lender the principal sum borrowed on the loan. It is left to the discretion of the borrower to reward the lender for his loan by paying any sum over and above the amount of the principal.

(ii) Investments in non-financial firms.

These investments will purely be financed out of investment funds at the disposal of the bank from 'B-Investors'. The investment basis could be *Mudaraba*, *Musharaka* or *Mufawada*. Whatever the type of investment the bank will always be a stable shareholder if not 100% owner. Moreover these investments will need to be matched with the bank's investors in respect of perpetuity,

fixed long/medium/short term stock.

Profit or Loss Sharing

The accumulated effect of profits and/or losses out of the diffused and dispersed investment will provide a net periodical figure of a 'profit' or 'loss'. After adjustment of administrative costs and operational expenses of the bank, this figure if of loss will be equally shared by the 'B-investors', thus reducing the value of their respective capital invested by a same ratio of loss. The profit likewise will be proportionally distributed among all the investors, thus increasing the value of their capital investment in the same ratio. This distribution will typically take place after *al-mudarab* (the agents/management) of the bank get their share of the profit, on the basis of pre-agreed contract.

Appropriation of Profit

The dividend will be the actual share of net profit earned by the investors. It may either be paid in cash or investment shares, depending upon the desire of every individual investor, or as per contractual agreement. Under no circumstances the bank or any other business under the Islamic system would be allowed retain appropriate profits, except for the individual investors willing or agreeing to do so. Under which

circumstances they would be issued respective proportional investment shares in the enterprise. Among investors there could be no classes. As Islam believes in equality of rights, the only difference can be in their respective proportion of investment.

The Bank in other Institutional Roles

The Islamic system is opposed to the concepts of institutional investors in some forms as exist in western financial markets today, such as insurance companies, pension funds and mutual funds. This is mainly due to interest bearing undertakings. However an Islamic alternative is *Al-Takaful*, the difference is that it is not a separate business entity but is part of an Islamic bank. *Takaful* which means mutual support is the basis of the concept of solidarity among Muslims.

The Islamic banks act as management companies. The participants pay installments. The bank invests the accumulated funds in its usual investment operations. The profit and principal is used to provide coverage to its participants for contingencies and material losses. After settling all claims and making adjustments for administrative costs and management's share, the policy-holders are entitled to a share in profit. However if not enough

revenue is collected to meet the claims made during the year, the policy-holders are called upon to pay the differences. This scheme, besides its material benefits, is able to achieve solidarity and co-operation under the condition of contract.

Banks and Corporate Governance

The Islamic economic system ensures wider distribution of wealth. It puts barriers in the way of its amassing in the hands of a few and seeks the social and economic welfare of all the population of the world.

Once this is achieved the position would be that the capital would be widely divided in fractions among a major portion of the world population. In order to have resort to it, a middle body will have to be formed, with means, knowledge and better information to invest this vastly distributed capital into the main economy. It will first collect this capital, and then invest it into productive activities. This body, as already discussed, would be both *Mudarib* for the people from whom it will collect this capital and will also be an 'investor' for the *Mudarib* in the production sector. This would result in the creation of many banks but their existence and success will depend upon the same principle of 'integrity and honesty'. They would

provide a source of stable shareholders and their interests would be long term.

Anyhow, the banks in Islam, in whatever form or under whichever title they exist, will be playing a central role in the business activities and corporate governance. In this respect an Islamic system thus envisioned could be closer to German or Japanese systems. As far as non-financial firms are concerned, for them banks will remain the most convenient and major source from where to raise finances. The differences being that unlike German or Japanese banks the investment will not be divided into the category of debt and equity. It will all be equity, even one day investment will be equity participation when sharing the risk of loss or benefit of profit. The interest factor, in any form will be completely negated. Interest is the primary factor, which makes the institutions capitalist, or it can be said that it makes these tools of capitalism. The concept of Germany's *universalbank* will apply to Islamic banks but, in a broader sense as compared to the German concept.

The present situation from the corporate governance viewpoint in 'bank-clients' relationships and practices in Islamic banks is quite

explicitly portrayed by Wilson:

'Many family businesses in Muslim countries are reluctant to seek public quotations as they fear, probably correctly, that family control might be lost. Often, finance for expansion is sacrificed and business remains small because of such worries. There is clearly a venture-capital gap which the Islamic banks could help meet through "Mudaraba" financing; under these arrangements where a separate company is set up by the bank and its clients, there is no risk of the client losing control of his original business. Indeed, "Mudaraba" finance seems the ideal financial vehicle in such circumstances. Even under "Musharaka" arrangements, however, an Islamic bank is merely interested in obtaining a return not in company control'⁽⁵⁾.

This is quite true and it happens, as all Islamic banks formed up until now have been from the regions which previously had been under British rule (following its system of banking) or are influenced by the American system of banking. In both these cases, the banks traditionally play a very passive role as far as the governance issue is concerned. The

relationships with clients are typically at arms length. Banks of Pakistan, Dubai Islamic Bank (U.A.E.), Faisal Islamic Bank (S.A.), Al Rayan, Al Sharif, Al Misr (Egypt), National Bank of Abu Dhabi (U.A.E.), Al Baraka Islamic Investment Bank (S.A.), Kuwait Finance House (Kuwait) are only some of the present Islamic Institutions as an example. However, as it was noted earlier, investors entrusting their capital may bound 'Mudarab' (agent/manager) with conditions. This was Arab practice, prior to the advent of Islam and continued amongst the Muslims with the approval of the Holy Prophet^(sa). This definitely opens up the way for investors to interfere in the governance of the firm, where ownership and management have been separated. Therefore, it is not possible to agree entirely with Wilson's argument [5, pg.13] that 'Mudaraba' only signifies a sleeping partnership from the bank's (investors) point of view; it may or may not.

The Role of the Stock Market in the Islamic Economic System

It has been discussed how the banks will play the role of stable shareholders. This does not eliminate the possibility of stock market operation or development. Islam does not forbid any form or shape of

business activity unless it falls outside the sphere of Islamic 'Sharia'. From that viewpoint some activities of the present day stock market will certainly be prohibited. However, any means of bringing the user and provider of capital together (whether through stock markets, banks, mutual partnerships, etc.) are all legitimate as long as they follow the injunctions of Islamic economic system.

It must be accepted that the general speed of loading or unloading stocks will not be as quick as in western stock markets. The speed of operation of today's stock market is a direct result of speculative activity. There is a developed and thriving class of speculator, inventing exotic tools to play the 'game of hazard'. Any type of gambling is prohibited in Islam. An Islamic business can never become subject to speculation. This leaves only the serious lenders and serious users of funds in the market, almost face to face with each other. The Islamic system promotes the idea of long term stable shareholders, which leads to diminished velocity of share transfers. This might not promise a 'market liquidity', but it can certainly prevent events such as the October 1997 stock market crash from happening. The research and study suggest that the very reason for the crash was speed and so called

sophistication of the market (*The Economist*, 1987).

Stock Market and Corporate Governance

Another thing that cannot be allowed in an Islamic stock market is the discrimination of shares. A Stock market operating under Islamic rules will not be permitted to differentiate between investors through various classes of shares. All investors must have rights on the basis of “one share, one vote”, with every one having identical rights, no preference, no distinctions, no ‘A’ or ‘B’ class shares. The reputation in terms of ‘honesty and integrity’ of a particular agent (*Mudarab*), i.e. managing executive, will be the underlying strength of any listed or unlisted company’s shares.

Moreover the significance of the stock market will also depend upon the traditional practice of any particular business market; for instance in Germany, joint stock companies cater only for 20% of all business turnover and out of these only one-fifth are listed on the stock market. So if the USA, for example, follows Islamic Sharia then the ‘Glass-Steagal’ Act will certainly go out the window. In fact according to *Business Week* (2/12/96), ‘The 1933 Glass Stegal Act inhibits banks from buying brokers (equity in non-

financial firms) and vice-versa. But by Christmas the federal reserve board is expected to enact a rule change that would make it much easier for commercial banks to acquire even the largest brokerage firms.’⁽⁶⁾ Change is already underway in the USA in that respect. Having experienced problems in corporate governance and having tried to improve board effectiveness by putting institutions in the shoes of stable shareholders, the USA has felt the need to change regulations and allow banks to play the role of stable shareholders (as in the German or Japanese systems). This is done so as to improve the ‘long-termism’ phenomenon and thus give a boost to their declining competitiveness. Nonetheless under the present circumstances it is only a temporary solution as far as Islam is concerned.

Creditors

Any form of business credit which does not provide time for hibernation (discussed earlier) for the business enterprise is not in Islam. Therefore in the case of the creditors, it is obvious that major fixed interest loan creditors cannot exist. All long term financing must therefore be of equity sharing/partnership type. This would naturally create in the creditor a wider concern for the business than that of repayments alone. Credits will not be

advanced to one who is not expected to repay except as an act of charity⁽⁷⁾ which Islam encourages.

In the absence of the interest factor the worth of the credit period is extinguished only the loss of opportunity cost may be recovered, which may be included by the lender while quoting his price. A delay in repayment due to unforeseen crises would not mean that the borrower would have to pay back more than already agreed in the contract. A long-term credit will be considered as a form of equity sharing/partnership. In case of insolvency of the borrower, creditor will get his respective share from the insolvency proceeds. If at the time of agreement, the creditor and borrower agree that the credit will not be an equity participation then, of course, in the event of insolvency the creditors must first be paid in full and after that if any proceeds are left, they will be proportionally distributed among investors.

Model of Corporate Governance in Islam

It must be remembered that Islam seeks the welfare of the community and to ensure the achievement of this welfare, it puts the responsibility both on the investors (lenders) and management (borrower) equally. An economic unit in Islam cannot be a

separate legal entity. However, this does not threaten the uninvested property of the owner (borrower and lender jointly), as there is no threat of recourse for outstanding debts with accumulation of interest in case of liquidation. This is so because Islam requires the lender to participate in the risk of the business and equally to take a share in the profit or loss of the venture. Individuals may borrow upon the strength of their personal credibility, to invest in a venture, but then it will be that individuals' own responsibility to repay his lenders irrespective of performance of the underlying business venture.

Earlier, an effort was made to propose the structure and prominent outlines of an Islamic model of business, corporations and governance. Considering the above in line with the guidance of the Holy Qur'an, the issues about, 'executive-salaries', 'the role of directors', 'hostile take-over activities', etc. become trivial matters, which will be automatically taken care of by the system, which prohibits some of the prevalent practices of the current western system. Practices which hurt the welfare of mankind in general are against the Islamic.

Islam is the flag bearer of solidarity among mankind; it seeks to unite the whole human race without difference

and discrimination on the grounds of race, nation, clan, class, family etc. It wants to see the whole of mankind linked together like rings in a chain, with everything retaining its originality, individual identity of culture, traditions, habits, dress and colours, but together representing one soul, one spirit. The same would be the case in the matter of corporate governance. The Japanese system of 'keiretsu' and 'Zaibatsu' will exist, but it will not be fortified exclusively for themselves, for it will be open, and all nations will be welcomed to participate in it for the cause of mutual benefit. Germans will have their supervisory board but it will not function solely to protect the management from going astray, and it will certainly care for the interest of minority shareholders. The Chinese may have their family enterprises, but outside family employees will be made to feel as part of the family. The French will have their 'dirigiste' system but it will not exist only to strengthen the 'ruling class', nationalism or the role of PDG (chief executive). It will ensure the welfare of every individual who is part of the corporation or society. Anglo-saxons may have their 'market based system' but the presence of stable shareholders will ensure elimination of destabilising practices. Italian capitalists will prefer to share their

power and wealth, not only providing rights and voice to the minority shareholders, but ensuring the prosperity and development of the lower classes. The likes of Potanin in Russia will not be working to amass wealth and power for their class, but all irrespective of their classes will be invite to have their long due and rightful share in it.

It is beyond the scope and capacity of this article to go into the mechanistic details of drawing a universal model of corporate governance. The guiding injunction of the Islamic economic system will deliver a model with lasting solutions to the problems concerning corporate governance encountered in any models of the world. The new discovered models driven by the spirit of Islam may differ in appearances, according to respective diversities in culture and traditions of different regions, but nonetheless they will be like different pearls joined by a single string.

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