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Editorial

Allah Alone is the Knower of the hidden and the manifest. As He wills, He reveals His knowledge and wisdom to His chosen servants. However much he may meditate or deliberate, man cannot discover the deep secrets which are beyond the scope of his mind and his senses. However wise he may be, he cannot uncover hidden secrets which are beyond the scope of his reason. Just as the light of the sun comes from heaven and not inside the eye of man, similarly the light of revelation comes down from Allah Alone.

Much is known of the wonderful organisation of the honeybee, about the nutritional goodness of honey and its multiple healing properties. The work ethics of the honeybee impress even a casual observer and are

discernible by the naked eye. The manner in which it collects material and builds its honeycomb, the way it maintains the temperature of the honeycomb, the honeybee's choice of diet, how each drop of honey is created from floral nectar and how honeybees and honeycombs are hygienically maintained in sharp contrast to other insects notorious for carrying germs and viruses, are but a few examples of the fantastic behavioural wonders of the honeybee. Yet the naturalists who specialise in this subject fail to see that such an insect could not have evolved without a designer and with a specific purpose in mind.

It was the Holy Qur'an that uncovered the mystery of the honeybee with this declaration:

And the Lord has inspired the bee saying, 'Make thou houses in the hills and in the trees and in the

trellises which they build. Then eat of every kind of fruit and then pursue submissively the paths prescribed by your Lord.' There comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying hues. Therein is cure for men. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who reflect.

(Ch. 16: v.69-70)

Why the Holy Qur'an singled out the honeybee from amongst the innumerable species of insects and animals in the world is the theme of this month's feature. It provides a categorical rebuttal to the naturalists who deny a Conscious Designer in the evolution of life.

This enlightening article challenges the naturalists to explain how the internal mechanisms of the honeybee could have slowly unfolded into existence by themselves. There has to be more to it than meets the eye, the article maintains. This extra-

ordinary organisational skill and wonderful aptitude and the fact that the honeybee cannot improve on it demonstrates that some other Being is the fountain-head of its natural instinct. That Being has imparted this intelligence and intuitive knowledge to it and it simply functions as a slave to His command.

In this edition, for the convenience of non-Muslim English readers, (sa) or ^{sa} after the word the Holy Prophet or the name Muhammad, are used. They stand for salallahualaihiwasallam and abbreviated as 'sa', meaning peace and blessings of Allah be upon him. Likewise, the letters '(as)' or ^{as} after the name of all other Prophets is an abbreviation (meaning, peace be upon him derived from alaih salato-wasalam) for the respect a Muslim readers utters.

Notes and Comment

September 11, Moving On

There are few events that are so monumental that they become ingrained in our memory and remain with us forever. These are events that are so striking that people distinctly remember where they were when they heard about them. In years gone by people have often talked of the start or end of world wars, of assassinations of world leaders, of atomic bombs, of new modes of transport and of man reaching out to the stars. Such memories evoke a whole host of feelings. Where we have progressed and overcome hurdles we are filled with pride, hope, aspiration, excitement and a real sense of purpose. But where we are faced with threats to our individual or collective security, we are shocked, hurt, saddened and mixed feelings of grief, anger and possibly helplessness overcome us.

Such historic moments are rare indeed but it is only when one can experience this for oneself does one realise the power of such occasions - they are engraved so deeply into our memory that even decades later the memories and thoughts of such events revive the very same feelings that we experienced as if it only happened yesterday. The horrific events of September 11th 2001 were such a moment.

The people who carried out the attacks will be held accountable by God for their actions. It was without any question an act of murder that resulted in just under three thousand deaths. The saddest fact is that many have claimed that this was carried out in the name of God, and in the same way that some people in, say, Northern Ireland use God as their excuse to justify their actions, many have hinted that

this too was a religious act. So it appears that it was not only the planes that were hijacked on September 11th, but religion too was once again hijacked for the sake of propaganda. Islam, it was said was the motive behind such actions. But nothing could be farther from the truth.

As a Muslim it is my duty to protect the dignity of religion and to safeguard the teachings of not just Prophet Muhammad^(sa), but all prophets. As a Muslim it is my duty to speak up and defend the truth of all prophets and their real message of peace. It is an article of my faith to believe in all prophets and so as a Muslim those who follow Moses^(as), Jesus^(as), Krishna^(as) and in fact any prophet of God I consider as my brothers and it is my duty to give them every support that will allow them to practise their religion freely and in peace. As a Muslim it is my belief that life is sacred and that killing people is against the teachings of Islam, as is suicide. As a Muslim it is

my belief that God stands as the final judge and that those who believe in God - be they Muslims or not - and do good deeds will have their share of reward. It is my belief that no religion teaches violence, that no religion teaches hatred, that no religion teaches injustice. It is my belief that there is only One God and all prophets that came brought the same message of love and peace and of belief in God. It is my belief that all humans will be held accountable for their deeds in the Hereafter and that the greatest struggle that we all face - day in and day out - is the struggle to overcome any inclinations that take us away from the path to God. This is the foundation of peace and it is the greatest struggle of all - one that is practised by us all in our lives and this is what is described in the Qur'an - the Holy Book of Islam - as *Jihad*.

When I look back on September 11th, I remember it as a day when many people of different religions died and a

time when many people of different religions were also brought together to help each other and to rebuild their community. But if anything is to be really learned from such times it is this, that there are many places in the world that face horrible situations: where people are killed indiscriminately, where starvation and poverty are commonplace and where nobody seems to ever come to their aid. We must remember them also as we remember those who lost their lives in New York.

We and the people of New York should engage in Jihad (in other words, the struggle for self-improvement) and resist being overcome by revenge or anger for that too takes man away from God. We must engage in Jihad and strengthen our belief in God developing a greater understanding of His message. We must engage in Jihad and become better people so that we are deemed fit to be called human beings that share a compassion for people every-

where and move forwards with justice and equality. There is no quick solution to world peace but if each one of us fights our inner demons and improves our life then peace will be the natural outcome - it is a great struggle, a great jihad, but one that is worth every inch of it for the sake of peace. This is what Islam teaches us all and it is what we must all strive for unerringly and without fail.

For the sake of peace, the world should strive to make September 11th, despite all its horror, a turning point for peace, not war.

Rashid Ahmad Cheedoo, UK

Our guest editor is a Regional Amir in the UK. He is a retired teacher and resides in Cornwall.

The 'Blind Watchmaker' Who is also Deaf and Dumb - part IV

This is an extract taken from the book Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth, written by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad.



Enough of computer games! Now we take up the case of the honey-bee. How by the application of Darwinian principles could the internal mechanism of the honey-bee have been conceived without a designer with any specific purpose in mind? How genes could have fashioned and created the honey-bee with all its fantastic behavioural wonders is equally incomprehensible. Can any scientist explain how this internal mechanism gradually evolved with all its functional abilities? The way it sees, the way its eyes and vision are modelled in perfect unison with its outer world of flowers and fruits is, in itself, a grave challenge to the naturalists who deny design. What forces, if any, shape them and how could they have, slowly unfolded into existence by themselves? That is not all there is to it. The manner it builds its honeycomb and collects material for it also requires a lot of explaining on the part of the naturalists. Just to find material is common to all living animals but to create that material to suit a precise purpose is rare. This is exactly what the honey-bee does.

'Flakes of wax are removed by the enlarged first tarsal joint of the hind leg from four paired glands on the underside of the abdomen and passed forward for construction manipulations by the front legs and mandibles ... The wax

is mixed with saliva and kneaded to the proper consistency and degree of plasticity at which it can best be molded.’¹

Why should an insect with a mind which cannot conceive the scientific intricacies of the material world suddenly begin to employ them to its own advantage? Thus a slow, gradual building of the honey-bee’s mind as well as its intuitive knowledge of how it should build its dwelling and what material has to be employed, must have been ciphered into it by someone who knew. But there is far more to this than meets the eye. The cells of which the honeycomb is constructed are all hexagonal with walls which meet at exactly 120 degrees.

‘The comb itself is one of the marvels of animal architecture. It consists of a regular back-to-back array of hexagonal cells, arranged in parallel series, each comb a precise distance from its neighbor.’²

Bees display fantastic engineering skills and their building gives the impression that they have been equipped with most sophisticated measuring instruments:

‘The precision and strength of the newly built comb is remarkable. For example, cell wall thickness is 0.073 ± 0.002 min, the angle between adjacent cell walls is an exact 120° and each comb is generally constructed 0.95 cm from its neighbor.’³

Born out of similar eggs, the offspring are divided into three different professional groups; the queens, the workers and the drones. The queen is capable of laying thousands of eggs in a day.

‘The aptly named queen reigns over the nest, surrounded by attendants and fed the rich food she requires to perform

her few but crucial tasks in the colony. Her slim lines hide the huge ovaries which make her an extraordinary egg-laying machine, capable of laying thousands of eggs a day, and her calm behaviour masks her powerful pheromones, chemical signals to recipient workers which control many of their behaviours and provide part of the social glue which holds honey bee life together.'⁴

The drones who are also specially fed by the worker bees have strong masculine bodies. They only perform one function - mating with the queen, after which they die.

The main body of the colony consists of worker bees who collect pollen and make honey. They also array themselves around the rim, always watchful, always ready to defend the colony. Their functional ability to fly at an instant's notice depends however on their body temperature which must be maintained at 35°C. Temperature is no problem in the centre of the honeycomb which is protected from all sides but at the rim their temperature begins to fall because of the effects of the open air. They counter this problem by fanning their wings from time to time to build frictional energy.

The bees' nest, when built in the hollows of trees or in narrow caves, has a single entrance so air cannot ventilate it and the level of carbon dioxide and other gases in the air cannot be automatically maintained. Carbon dioxide tends to increase in proportion threatening the survival of the bees. To offset this danger, worker honey-bees keep moving, group by group, to the exit and sit there in a position with tails directed outwards. In that position they rapidly fan their wings so that fresh air wafts the stale air out. They do this for 10 seconds and are replaced by another batch of workers if needs be. They repeat the same feat when the temperature rises higher than 35°C. The well-

maintained fanning at such times largely succeeds in controlling the temperature. They begin fanning simultaneously and stop simultaneously. In addition to fanning, they haul water instead of nectar into the honeycomb and deposit it around the cells which contain larvae sensitive to heat.

The honey-bees' choice of diet, the way each drop of honey is created from floral nectar, how the saliva must be mixed with it to provide it the viscosity it requires to become honey, is a marvel in itself. With every tiny spot of this mixture on their tongue, they have to stick it out repeatedly to finally mature it. For each drop of honey thus created, they have to make repeated sorties to the field in search of nectar. This goes on day in and day out until they fill the section of the honeycomb which is specifically reserved for this purpose. Somehow they know how to differentiate between ordinary honey and royal jelly which they manufacture entirely for the queen to be fed upon. Royal jelly has that special quality which provides the queen the reproductive energy for the rapid laying of eggs. Each day the queen can lay eggs equal to her body weight which is much more than the body weight of ordinary honey-bees. Again, royal jelly has the uncanny quality of increasing the age of the queen a hundred times longer than that of ordinary bees. The entire colony of some eighty thousand individuals are the queen's subjects. No better discipline can ever be displayed by human monarchies.

Apart from the tasks mentioned above there has to be a surveillance system, with competent workers, to find suitable new sites for the next colony to be built when the old colony is to be abandoned. The surveyor honey-bees who perform this task and the manner in which they do so are to be counted among the greatest wonders of life's behaviour. They span out in search of suitable well-protected sites which should also be close to some rich fields of nectar. Such sites may be situated at different

distances from the floral fields and may be comparatively less or better suited for the new colony to be built. Comparing and analyzing all the information brought in by different surveyor bees has somehow to be done by the queen to judge the comparative merits of the site of her next colony. This information is conveyed to the queen by the surveyor bees in a manner which completely defeats comprehension. In fact the whole exercise is unique in the entire animal kingdom. It should have baffled the minds of the most advanced natural scientists as to how this strange communicative system could have come into existence without a designer and an executor. But do they ever ponder over these things, one wonders! Each surveyor when it returns to the colony performs a fantastic dance. Aligning itself in a precise direction it begins to dance and conveys all these messages through that dance and its directional posture to the queen. The information the dance communicates could not be conveyed better or more precisely in human language. It tells the queen what it has seen, where it has seen it, how far it is situated and how far from that site is an adequate floral field. It conveys the distance involved from the colony to the new site and from the new site to the floral field. It also describes the site itself in perfect detail, how well it is protected from natural interference, whether it is a hollow of a tree, a crevice in a rock or a spot on the stem of a tree well-surrounded by protective branches. Each surveyor takes its turn and the queen waits till all have finished. Only then does she decide what to do and takes flight in the exact direction of the site she has chosen. How the transfer is finalized and a new colony is finally built is another fantastic story.

At the end we must mention how honey-bees and honeycombs are hygienically maintained in a manner which puts to shame modern hospitals and clinics. In sharp contrast to the mosquito, the notorious carrier of viruses and germs, the honey-bee was

OF ALL THE INSECTS WHICH PERVADE THE WORLD, GOD HAS PICKED JUST THIS ONE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WHEN HE COMMUNICATES WITH AN ANIMAL BELONGING TO AN ORDINARY SPECIES, HOW ITS STATUS IS LIFTED BEYOND COMPARISON TO THAT OF THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SAME SPECIES. WHAT IS A HONEYBEE AFTER ALL, BUT A FLY. YET WHAT A FLY!

discovered by researchers to carry no viruses or germs on its body. Having been utterly surprised they launched a new research programme to discover why this was so. This revealed an amazing story of how the bees manufacture their own disinfectant material by collecting it from certain resins of plants, now known as propolis. This material has the amazing quality of destroying all bacteria and viruses. The honey-bees having built their combs, paste this material on the rim of the entire comb. Each bee when it returns to the comb, steps first on that rim so that all viruses and bacteria which may have adhered to its tiny feet are destroyed by the propolis before it enters the colony.

We have discussed the honey-bee in some detail here while in the reference to the eight fantastic animals mentioned earlier we did not enter into an elaborate discussion. We have done so mainly because the Holy Qur'an specifically mentions the honey-bee in a manner which should resolve the riddle of life for naturalists. We have selected the case of the honey-bee for them to ponder and search far and wide to identify the creative forces which modelled them. Of course, the naturalists who specialise in this subject know far more than we do about the honey-bee and its complex world. To be quite honest, we doubt if they could lightly dismiss the case of the honey-bee and the wonders related to it merely to chance.

Let them lay down their arms and admit that there has to be a Creator. In the Holy Qur'an it is that Creator Who speaks and resolves the mysteries of life once and for all. With reference to the honey-bee the following is the Qur'anic statement:

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ۗ ثُمَّ كُلِي مِن كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلُلًا ۗ يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ مُّخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

And thy Lord has inspired the bee, saying, 'Make thou houses in the hills and in the trees and in the trellises which they build.

'Then eat of every kind of fruit, and follow the ways of thy Lord that have been made easy for thee.' There comes forth from their bellies a drink of varying hues. Therein is cure for men. Surely, in that is a Sign for a people who reflect.⁵

(Ch.16: v.69-70)

Of all the insects which pervade the world, God has picked just this one to demonstrate that when He communicates with an animal belonging to an ordinary species, how its status is lifted beyond comparison to that of the other members of the same species. What is a honeybee after all, but a fly. Yet what a fly! It is only after the message is delivered to the honey-bee at the earliest stage of its creation and is imprinted in an intuitive language upon its genes that it begins to function as it does. It does not have to perform its functions consciously with a conscious control of its mind. The genes that teach it what to do have no mind of their own. But He who has created them has a mind and the genes simply function as slaves to His command. He has spoken Himself to demonstrate to the world that when He

specifically chooses even an insignificant insect, it becomes supreme in the entire world of insects. It becomes a source of healing and cure, unlike other insects which carry and spread disease. They are poles apart in their function of life.

As far as the curative properties of honey are concerned, this is an ongoing research and the researchers who have already discovered some wonderful things about it are expecting far more yet to be revealed. Whatever medical science has identified so far is summed up in the following:

'Currently, honey treatment is used for gastrointestinal, some cardiovascular, pulmonary, renal, skin, and neural diseases of the oral cavity, ear, throat, nose inflammatory affection of female genitals, and of the cervix of the uterus.'⁶

One healing quality of honey which British scientists have discovered to their amazement is its ability to cure such eye sores as were otherwise considered incurable. Many a patient has been saved from total blindness by its application.

'Patients with ulcerous blepharitis and blepharoconjunctivitis, under the influence of honey experienced that the itch and a sensation of sand in the eye disappeared; reddening of conjunctivas reduced or disappeared, ulcers of eye-lids edges, epithelisation of erosions and ulcers reduced in the duration of the treatment. With patients suffering from ray dystrophic processes, as a result of honey treatment, comeal epithelisation improved, photophobia disappeared and sight improved.'⁷

Is there not a message in this for the naturalists to reflect upon?
How we wonder, hoping against hope!

To conclude our discussion, we reaffirm that the naturalists' denial of purpose in the design of the living is only because it would invariably lead to God. They would much rather prefer a deaf, dumb and blind agent to have created everything. They are purposefully deceitful because the blind principles of Darwinism are not creators. These principles only begin to operate when the creation is performed by other hands. They are powerful principles like the laws of physics. Yet all the laws of physics, chemistry and dynamics put together could not have created even a single poor man's shack complete with plumbing, a small kitchen and a toilet. Of course these laws are employed for such construction, but the employer has to be a conscious person with a brain. The brain is the master which employs the laws of nature.

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Decree and Destiny

Presented below is a compilation, in translation, of excerpts taken from *Malfoozat* relating to the topic of decree and destiny. *Malfoozat* is the title of the ten volumes that contain the collection of discourses, speeches and addresses of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

(Translated by Amatul Hadi Ahmad)



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

In 1891, Hadhrat Mirza Ahmad claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths.

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

[Translator's Note: All references to the verses of the Holy Qur'an are given in Arabic as they occur in the text. The English translation, presented in italics, is taken from the translation of the Holy Qur'an by Hadhrat Maulvi Sher Ali Sahib^(ra). Where the Promised Messiah^(as) has himself stated a certain interpretation of the Arabic verse, this is incorporated in the main body of the text].

Allah has not revealed the secrets of the system of His decree and determination of destiny but there are to be found within it [through its manifestation] numerous points of wisdom. It is my experience that no one can attain to a high spiritual station merely through one's own striving. It is the tribulation from Allah that one

has to bear which brings one closer to God. Who can strike oneself harshly with a rod? Allah is Most Gracious and Ever Merciful [therefore the tribulation that comes from Him is not without due rewards]. I have discovered this myself that after making one undergo a little pain, Allah endows great rewards and blessings. The next world is eternal - those who have parted from us cannot return but we will be with them very shortly. The wall of this world [separating it from the next] is not a solid one and even that is ever crumbling. The point to ponder over is this that there is nothing in this world that can be taken with us to the next and, moreover, one does not know when it is that one may have to go. Whenever a person goes, the timing will be thought not to be right and he will go empty-handed - it is only the good deeds that will go with a person. However, it is not uncommon to find that some people at their death-bed still wish to be reminded of exactly how much they

possess - even at such a time their concern is with material things.

There are many even in our Community who behave in this manner and their worship of Allah has conditions attached. There are others who write to me for prayers and state that if they acquire so much money or that some other wish of theirs is granted to them, they would become members of the Community. Such foolish people do not consider what possible need would Allah have for their initiation into the Community! Our Community should have the faith of the Companions of the Holy Prophet of Islam who offered their own heads in the path of God. [Volume 9, pp. 381-383]

[During a general conversation when some people raised the point that an impending doom may be averted by giving alms and making charitable donations], the Promised Messiah^(as) stated: This is correct. However, some people raise objections as to

IT IS THE CASE THAT SOME DIVINE INTENTIONS ARE ONLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF CREATING FEAR [OF GOD] AND TO REMIND PEOPLE OF THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER. THROUGH PRAYER AND THE GIVING OF ALMS AND CHARITABLE DEEDS, MANY FEARS AND DANGERS ARE AVERTED.

why are there two parts of what is termed divine decree. The answer to this is that our experience is witness to the fact that sometimes extremely threatening situations arise and a person loses all hope but when the means of prayer, alms and charity are employed, such a threatening situation is at last averted. Hence, it has to be believed that the divine decree that is known as *Mo'allaq*, that is, the 'suspended decree' does exist. If it were the case that this type of decree does not exist and only the 'inexorable decree', the decree *Mubram*, existed and that prayer and the giving of alms had no effect, why is it that extremely dangerous situations are averted [through prayer and the giving of alms]?

It is the case that some divine intentions are only for the purpose of creating fear [of God] and to remind people of the efficacy of prayer. Through prayer and the giving of alms and charitable deeds, many fears and dangers are averted. Efficacy of prayer is like the relationship between male and female where, only if at the appropriate time the relevant conditions are fulfilled and there is no intervening deficiency, [the desired result be would achieved] and [the undesirable outcome] of the matter averted. However, when the divine decree is of the inexorable and inevitable type, that is it is decree *Mubram*, then it so happens that the relevant and appropriate means of prayer are not achieved. One wishes

to pray but full concentration is lacking and the heart does not develop the necessary emotions of pain and sorrow. There is lack of concentration upon the appropriate prayer also in prostration during the performance of *Salat*. All such things point to the fact that the ultimate result of the situation being faced will not be good and this is the decree that is known as *Mubram*, that is, the inexorable divine decree.

[*Here a person added his comment that when Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan Sahib's son was very seriously ill, Huzur (that is, the Promised Messiah) received a revelation that it was a Decree Mubram and that death has been decreed. However, with Huzur's intercession that decree was averted*]. The Promised Messiah stated:

Sayyed Abdul Qadir Jeelani^(ra) has written that some times it so happens that the decree that is *Mubram* has been averted through his prayers.

Regarding this, a renowned religious scholar, Sheikh Abdul Haque Muhaddith Dehli, raised the issue that the decree that is *Mubram* cannot be averted so what does it mean? He eventually answered the point himself that the decree *Mubram* is also of two types: one is truly *Mubram* and the other appears to be like *Mubram* but in fact is not.

The truly *Mubram* decree cannot be averted under any circumstance as for instance is the fact that a human being will eventually face death. This decree cannot be averted even if a person wishes to stay alive to the end of time. The other type of decree that is not in fact *Mubram* [but appears as if it may be] is when a dangerous situation becomes very grave and it appears that the danger will not be averted. Such a situation is referred to as being 'like *Mubram*' - [but it is, in fact, *Mo'allaq* and can be averted through prayer and giving of alms]. The truly *Mubram* decree is such that

MOST PEOPLE DO NOT REALISE THE TRUE NATURE OF PRAYER NOR DO THEY COMPREHEND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRAYER AND DIVINE DETERMINATION. ALLAH ALMIGHTY OPENS THE WAY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE RECOURSE TO PRAYER AND DOES NOT REJECT THEIR SUPPLICATION. THERE IS PRAYER AND THERE IS DIVINE DECREE AND DETERMINATION - ALLAH HAS APPOINTED APPROPRIATE TIMES FOR BOTH.

even if all the Prophets together prayed for it to be averted, it cannot be averted. [Volume 7, pp. 87-88]

The Holy Qur'an has set out certain matters for the establishment of the grand principle that Allah Almighty is One and is the source and goal of everything from which some foolish critics have deduced the doctrine of compulsion. Allah is the ultimate cause of everything and is the Provider of all means. This is the reason why Allah Almighty has, in some cases, described Himself as the cause of all causes in the Holy Qur'an, without mention of intervening means. However, a study of the Holy Qur'an would reveal that other intervening means have also been clearly specified so that

man should pay heed to them. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an specifies punishment of evil and lays down penalties. If there were to be an unalterable system of Divine decree and determination and man was to be under absolute compulsion, what justification was there for these punishments and penalties?

It should be remembered that the Holy Qur'an does not confine everything within the system of physical causes but seeks to lead mankind to belief in the pure Unity of God. Most people do not realise the true nature of prayer nor do they comprehend the relationship between prayer and Divine determination. Allah Almighty opens the way for those who

have recourse to prayer and does not reject their supplication. There is prayer and there is Divine decree and determination - Allah has appointed appropriate times for both. [Through prayer] an aspect of the attribute of Providence has been granted by Allah to those who worship Him, as Allah states in the Holy Qur'an:

ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

Pray unto Me; I will answer your prayer...
(Ch.40: v.61)

That is why I have always stated that the God of the Muslims responds to their supplication but the god who has not created a single particle or who died from ill treatment at the hands of the Jews, how can he respond?

It is not wise to attempt reconciliation between choice and compulsion on the basis of logic and reasoning. It is a vain attempt to comprehend the

mysteries of Divinity. It is also disrespectful. [As stated in a saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa): 'The way of the seeker is all respect'].

Divine decrees and determination have a very close relationship with prayer. Prayer averts the operation of a suspended decree, that is, decree *Mo'allaq*. Prayer is most certainly an effective means of averting dangers and difficulties. Those who deny the efficacy of prayer are under a misconception. The Holy Qur'an sets out two aspects of prayer. In one aspect Allah Almighty enforces His Own Will and in the other aspect He responds to the prayer of a servant. In the verse:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْ

And We will try you with something of fear and hunger...
(Ch.2: v.156)

Allah Almighty requires

obedience to His will. The meaning is that man's response to an absolute Divine decree must be:

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ

Surely, to Allah we belong and to Him shall we return... (Ch.2: v.157)

The time of the upsurge of the waves of the grace and mercy of Allah Almighty is indicated in the Holy Qur'an: *Pray unto Me; I will answer your prayer.* (Ch.40: v.61)

A believer should have knowledge of both these aspects. The Sufis say that a person's absolute dependence upon Allah does not become perfect without his being able to distinguish the proper place and occasion for supplication. It has been said that a Sufi does not pray till he recognises the appropriate time for supplication. Sayyed Abdul Qadir Jeelani^(ra) has stated that prayer can turn a callous person into a truly good

person. He goes so far as to say that through prayer extreme dangers that appear as if they may be operating under the absolute decree are averted.

In short, it should always be remembered in connection with prayer that sometimes Allah Almighty requires obedience to His Will and at other times He grants the supplication of a servant of His. In other words, he deals with His servant like a friend. The prayers of the Holy Prophet^(sa) were accepted on a grand scale and corresponding to this he holds the highest position in bowing to the Will of Allah and in accepting it cheerfully. [*Malfoozat*, Volume 3, pp.224-226]

The Islamic Concept of Jihad

By Bilal Atkinson - UK

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

The Arabic word Jihad appears in this verse of the Holy Qur'an and the word 'strive' has been used in its translation into English. The word Jihad is a relatively short word but it has huge implications within Islamic society as a whole and especially for the daily life of the individual Muslim.

Jihad, as ordained by Islam, does not consist of killing and being killed but in striving hard to win the pleasure of Allah. Individually and collectively, Jihad is essential for the advancement of our souls.

It does not, for one moment, mean that we are ever ready to pick a fight or wage wars.

Nothing could be further from the truth and reality. The word Islam means peace and all our efforts and energies should be spent in creating peace and harmony amongst ourselves, our communities and society at large.

According to the *Oxford English Reference Dictionary* (1995), the meaning of the word Jihad is given as 'Holy War'. It incorrectly states that 'a Jihad may be undertaken to defend Islam against external threats or to spread religion among non believers.'

Holy and war are words definitely not synonymous with each other. In fact they are at odds with each other, for there is nothing holy about the effects and horrors of warfare.

It is very unfortunate in this day and age that the word 'Jihad' has been so misinter-

preted by the Western nations and in particular their media. In a way, this misinterpretation is explainable because unfortunately throughout the last millennium, some extreme Muslim groups and their leaders have interpreted the word 'Jihad' as Holy War and applied the word to all their wars whether they have been fought for political, economic or expansionist motives. As a result of this misnomer, the religion of Islam has been wrongly accused of procuring converts to the faith by forceful or belligerent means. The word Jihad has been used in two senses in the Holy Qur'an:

Jihad-fi-Sabeelillah - Striving hard in the way of Allah

Jihad-Fiallah - Striving hard in Allah.

The first meaning refers to the waging of a defensive war against the enemies of truth when they seek to annihilate religion while the second means to strive hard to win the pleasure and nearness of Allah.

The latter meaning seems to possess a higher spiritual significance than the first.

Jihad is of three kinds:

1. Striving against one's baser self, that is, against one's own evil desires and propensities.
2. Striving by way of writing, speaking and spending one's wealth to propagate the truth of Islam and exposing its beauties to the non-believers.
3. Striving against the enemies of truth which includes fighting in self-defence.

The Holy Prophet^(sa) has termed the first two kinds of Jihad as the *Jihad Akbar* (greater Jihad) and the third as the *Jihad Asghar* (lesser Jihad). Once when he was returning from fighting he is reported to have said:

You have returned from the smaller Jihad (fighting against the enemies of

Islam) to the greater Jihad (waging war against one's baser self). (Khatib)

We will initially explain the lesser Jihad or Asghar Jihad before the greater Jihad or Akbar Jihad.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was forty years old when the Divine call came to him. His first revelation and instruction from the Holy Qur'an was:

Recite in the name of your Lord Who created; Created man from an adhesive clot. Recite! And your Lord is the Noblest. Who taught by the pen. Taught man what he knew not.
(Ch.96: vs.2-6)

This first instruction makes it quite clear that the Holy Prophet^(sa) was commanded by Allah to spread the message of Islam by both oral and written means and not by force of any kind, neither by the sword or other aggressive measures. The very first word means to convey the message, to

proclaim to the whole world the revelation and teaching of Allah's word through the auspices of the Holy Qur'an.

Soon afterwards the Prophet^(sa) was commanded to proclaim widely and openly that which was being conveyed to him. His attempts to convey Allah's message to those around him in Mecca only drew hostility and ridicule. Initially only four persons believed in him and when this became known to the Meccans they began to laugh and mock. As more verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed, more people became interested and drawn to this new message, especially the young, the weak and oppressed of Meccan society. Women especially were drawn to this new religion as it offered them both dignity and honour amongst their fathers, husbands and sons, something which they had never experienced before as in most respects they were treated worse than animals.

WHAT MADE THESE PEOPLE ACCEPT THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa), A MAN WHO, AT THE TIME WAS WITHOUT POWER OR WEALTH? HE CERTAINLY DID NOT WIELD A SWORD TO COMPEL THEM TO ACCEPT HIM AND HIS MESSAGE. THE ONLY 'SWORD' THE HOLY PROPHET^(sa) POSSESSED WAS THE HOLY QUR'AN, A SPIRITUAL SWORD, A SWORD OF TRUTH, WHICH NATURALLY TURNED THE HEARTS OF UNBELIEVERS WITHOUT ANY AGGRESSION.

The continuing success of the Holy Prophet^(sa) brought about a backlash against him and the early converts. The Meccans embarked on a course of persecution which grew more cruel and more savage as time passed. They were afraid that the new religion would become firmly established and that their own religion and culture would be ruined.

Out of this fear, it was the Meccans, the disbelievers, who drew their swords and took delight in slaughtering the true and faithful servants of Allah over a long period. The streets of Mecca became red with the blood of the Muslims but they did not retaliate. Their humility and steadfastness encouraged their persecutors

to be even more cruel and they subjected the Muslims to more extreme modes of torture and floggings. Many parents had to endure the sight of their children being slaughtered before their very eyes and some parents were crucified in front of their children.

What made these people accept the Holy Prophet^(sa), a man who, at the time was without power or wealth? He certainly did not wield a sword to compel them to accept him and his message. The only 'sword' the Holy Prophet^(sa) possessed was the Holy Qur'an, a spiritual sword, a sword of truth, which naturally turned the hearts of unbelievers without any

aggression. Such was the beauty, the glory and magnetism of Islam and Muhammad^(sa), who practised and preached Islam, who oozed goodness and love, that they willingly gave their lives to its cause. However, it was the non-Muslims and especially the Meccans who raised their physical swords to attack the Muslims in order to compel them to return to their old religion and customs.

After the migration of the Holy Prophet^(sa) to Medina, the cruelties of the unbelievers from among the Quraish exceeded all bounds. They started to murder those helpless converts left behind in Mecca including women and orphaned children. Although the Prophet^(sa) and many of his companions had migrated to Medina, they too were not left in peace. They were continuously harassed in that place also.

By this time the emerging religion of Islam was surrounded by enemies on all

sides and was threatened with complete annihilation. It is in this regard that the first commandment on the lesser Jihad was revealed to the Holy Prophet^(sa):

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.

(Ch.22: v.40)

According to scholarly opinion, this is the first verse that gave Muslims permission to take up arms in self-defence. The verse lays down principles according to which Muslims can wage a defensive war. It clearly sets forth the reasons which led a handful of Muslims, without arms and other material means, to fight in self-defence after they had suffered with great restraint, ceaseless persecution in Mecca for years and had been pursued with relentless hatred to Medina where they were continuously harassed and harried.

The primary reason the Muslims gave for now taking up arms was that they inferred that 'they had been wronged'. They had suffered untold persecution and war was actually forced upon them.

The very next verse of the Holy Qur'an also lends support to this inference in that it states that permission to fight was given after the Muslims had been driven out of their hearths and homes. It states:

Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah' - And if Allah did not repel some people by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty.
(Ch.22: v.41)

The Holy Qur'an specifically makes it clear that this type of Jihad is that of fighting only against those who first attack Muslims and other verses of the Qur'an lend support to these conditions. Muslims can only raise their swords to defend themselves against those who first raise hostilities against them and then only if they are oppressed and have been wronged. This is the spirit and essence of Islamic Jihad that has been so maliciously mis-portrayed. It is totally wrong to assume or assert that the Holy Prophet(sa) offered people the choice of conversion or death, Islam or the sword.

The Jihad with the sword which the Holy Prophet(sa) and early Muslims had to wage under their own peculiar circumstances was a passing phase in the establishment of the foundations of Islam. Those who sought to destroy Islam by the sword, perished by the sword. Unless a people or nation wage war against

Muslims in order to exterminate Islam, no fight or war in which Muslims are engaged can be called Jihad.

The object of the Muslims taking up arms was never to deprive anybody of their homes or possessions or their freedom. It was solely to fight, in self-defence, to save Islam from extermination and to establish freedom of conscience and thought as well as helping to defend other places of worship belonging to different religions from being desecrated or destroyed.

In short, the primary objectives of the wars of Islam were to establish freedom of belief and worship and to fight in defence of honour and freedom against unprovoked attacks and this will always be the case, if the time ever arises again.

Early Muslims had no choice but to go to war because they were constrained to do so. Aggressive wars were and are still forbidden by Islam. The

political power of Muslim Nations must never ever be used for selfish and grandiose ambitions but for the improvement of the poor and the promotion of peace and progress.

There can be no greater example of this than when the Holy Prophet^(sa) and his followers victoriously returned to Mecca. He addressed the Meccans and said:

You have seen how true the promises of Allah have proved. Now tell me what punishment you should have for the cruelties and enormities you committed against those whose only fault was that they invited you to the worship of the One and Only God.

To this the Meccans replied: *'We expect you to treat us as Joseph treated his erring brothers.'* Hearing their plea, the Prophet^(sa) immediately declared: *'By God, you will have no punishment today and no reproof.'* (Hisham)

The Holy Qur'an states: -

And fight them until there is no persecution and religion is wholly for Allah. But if they desist, then surely Allah is Watchful of what they do.

(Ch.8: v.40)

This verse shows that fighting was to be continued only so long as there was persecution and until men were free to profess the religion they liked. If the opponents of Islam stopped fighting then the Muslims were to stop.

If any people were ever deserving of any punishment, it had to be the people of Mecca. If Islam was spread by the sword, then this occasion of the Holy Prophet's^(sa) victorious return to Mecca would have been the perfect time to wield the sword for punishment and conversion. But no, the people of Mecca were not converted by force - they were converted by love. Love of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and love of the emancipating,

enlightening and civilising teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

The Holy Qur'an states:

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong.

(Ch.2: v.257)

This verse warns Muslims in the clearest and strongest of words not to resort to force for converting non-Muslims to Islam. It also gives the reason why it should not be used, intimating that the true path has become distinct from the wrong one and therefore there is no justification for using force. The Holy Prophet^(sa) is clearly warned by Allah not to use force in an attempt to reform society. His status is made clear in the following verses of the Holy Qur'an:

Admonish, therefore, for thou art but an admonisher; You are not a warden over them.

(Ch.88: vs.22-23)

Amazingly, this last verse was revealed in Mecca in the early years of the Prophet's^(sa) call and he was warned in advance that he would gain great power but should not use it for imposing his will on others.

Essentially, the Holy Prophet^(sa) did not convert by the sword, but by his righteousness, purity, love and devotion to Allah, which completely overwhelmed his enemies, so much so that those whose intentions were to murder him, were later to lay at his feet and give their lives to save him from his oppressors.

During his last pilgrimage the Holy Prophet^(sa), in the closing words of his Farewell Address, said:

Even as this month is sacred, this land inviolate, and this day holy, so has Allah made the lives, property and honour of every man sacred. To take any man's life or his property, or attack his honour, is as unjust and

wrong as to violate the sacredness of this day, this month, and this territory. What I command you today is not meant only for today. It is meant for all time. You are expected to remember it and act upon it until you leave this world and go to the next to meet your Maker.

In conclusion, he said:

What I have said to you, you should communicate to the ends of the earth. Maybe those who have not heard of me may benefit more than those who have heard. (Sihah Sitta, Tabari, Hisham and Khamis)

The Holy Prophet's^(sa) great concern for the welfare of the whole of mankind and for establishing peace throughout the world knew no bounds.

It is such a tragedy that for the last thousand years or so, many Muslim leaders and Muslim nations, have to a large extent, ignored the true

teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^(sa) to satisfy their greed and lust for power and material gains. They have fought against each other for these worldly gains and through their injustice, have persecuted the innocent and acclaimed the guilty. They have treacherously betrayed their own countrymen and their fellow Muslim nations and accepted monetary gain, power or property from the enemies of Islam. Most of the spiritual and temporal leaders have misled their own people and brought wholesale corruption of body, mind and soul. In this day and age, some young Muslim men and women have been foolishly 'brainwashed' into believing their acts of barbarism, terrorism, suicide and murder will gain them martyrdom. In short, they have brought dishonour to the door of the religion they profess to love. The name of Islam is now equated with terror instead of peace. Most countries of the world have fought political battles but it seems Muslim

countries have only ever fought Jihad and in doing so, they have slaughtered one another.

In this regard, it is impossible for me not to mention the events which occurred in New York last September or for that matter the ongoing events in Afghanistan and the Middle East, where so-called 'Islamic Jihad' is being waged indiscriminately by extreme Muslim organisations against non-Muslim nations.

The Holy Prophet^(sa) warned that the Muslims in the Latter Days, and especially their leaders, would be far removed from the true Islam and that some would be the worst of creation. These leaders are misleading young, intelligent, Muslim men and women. They have trained and indoctrinated them into believing that if they give their lives, in what they erroneously believe is in the cause of Islam, they will immediately gain Paradise as martyrs of the Faith.

What lies and what deceit! All Muslims should ask them, 'On whose authority do they make this claim?' O you young Muslims who are being asked to commit such terrible acts. If, as they say, you will become a martyr and enter Paradise, then surely they should lead the way if what they ask you to do is such a meritorious act. Again, ask of them: 'Why do you say what you do not do?' (Ch.61: v.3)

Far from being a meritorious act, it is an act that is an outrage to the name of Islam and a defiance of the commands of Allah.

The Holy Qur'an clearly states:

O ye who believe! Devour not your property among yourselves by unlawful means, except that you earn by trade with mutual consent. And kill not yourselves. Surely, Allah is Merciful to you.
(Ch.4: v.30)

The words, 'kill not yourselves', prohibit and outlaw acts of suicide. On the other hand, is the murder of innocent people such a meritorious act that will gain a Muslim entry to Paradise? Far from it, it is an open door to the Fire of Hell.

Abu Zaid ibn Thabit ibn Dhahak relates that the Holy Prophet^(sa) said:

He who takes a false oath that if he is not telling the truth he might become a follower of a faith other than Islam is already as he describes himself. He who kills himself with an instrument will be tormented with that instrument on the Day of Judgement. A person cannot offer as a vow that which does not belong to him. Cursing a believer is equal to slaying him.
(Bukhari, *Book of Good Manners*, Chapter - Calling Bad Names and Cursing)

So those men and women who

call themselves Muslim and who are contemplating suicide or encouraging others to commit suicide, with a weapon or a bomb, and in doing so, slaughter innocent people, take heed of this verse of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith of your Master. It is not martyrdom you shall have but the Fire of Hell. Modern day terrorism is contrary to the vision and interpretation of the real spirit of Islamic Jihad. Political wars do not become Jihad. The cry of Jihad is heard again and again and from many different quarters. But what was the Jihad to which Allah and His Prophet invited Muslims? And what is the Jihad to which we are invited today?

The Holy Qur'an mentions another Jihad called Jihad-e-Akbar. It states:

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

The great and real Jihad, according to this verse, is to practise and preach the Message of the Qur'an. Ahmadi Muslims have accepted the claim of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as), to be the Mahdi and Messiah. He claimed to be a Messenger and a Prophet of Allah, totally subordinate to the Seal of all the Prophets, Muhammad^(sa) the Holy Prophet of Islam. He was born in Qadian, India, in 1835 and died in the year 1908. Innumerable signs in his support were given by Allah Almighty and a revelation that his message, that is, the true message of Islam, would reach all corners of the earth.

In one of his many addresses to the people of the world, the Promised Messiah^(as) stated:

You should understand it well that the need of the time is not the wielding of the sword; it is the pen that has to be used. The doubts that our opponents have expressed about Islam and the assaults that

different sciences have made, have drawn my attention to the fact that equipped with the weapon of the pen, I should enter the battlefield and show them the miraculous bravery of Islam and its powers.
(Malfoozat, Vol.1, p.57)

He clearly states that now is not the time for the wielding of the sword but the wielding of the pen. What does this mean and how do we enter the battlefield to extend an invitation to people to see the real beauties and teachings of Islam?

One of the answers lies in the meaning of *Jihad-Fiallah* or the *Akbar Jihad*, the greater Jihad, that is, the Jihad or struggle against our own individual evil designs and propensities and especially our struggle against Satan. This is the true Jihad, an individual Jihad to reform ourselves into pious and godly people and to reform the Satans within us into righteous Muslims so that

we are able and well equipped to attract others to the faith. The Holy Qur'an states: -

And whoso strives, strives only for his own soul; verily, Allah is Independent of the entire universe.
(Ch.29: v.7)

This verse gives a very apt description of a Mujahid, that is, a person who strives in the way of Allah. High and noble ideals with consistent and constant effort to carry them out in actual practice is what in Islamic terminology is called Jihad and the person who possesses these noble ideals and lives up to them is a Mujahid in the true sense of the word.

We have to be a perfect model of Islam and for that we need to know the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the practices of the Holy Prophet^(sa).

The Holy Prophet^(sa) says that the best expression of perfect faith is that other people are always protected by our power

IT IS IMPERATIVE FOR EVERY MUSLIM THAT THEIR BEHAVIOUR SHOULD BE EXEMPLARY AND NOBODY SHOULD EVER COME TO HARM BY THEM IN ANY WAY. THESE THINGS ARE PART OF OUR FAITH AND ARE, IN FACT, FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALLAH.

and live in peace. The best Islam or religion is that people are safe from us and that we never harm them with our hands or tongue. (*Bukhari, Book of Belief*)

This tradition is a perfect summary and guide to our life in society. It is imperative for every Muslim that their behaviour should be exemplary and nobody should ever come to harm by them in any way. These things are part of our faith and are, in fact, fundamental to our relationship with Allah.

As true believers, we know that the most important goal of our lives is to reach Allah. Our lives are short and before we realise it, they are half gone. We learn from the Holy Qur'an that such a relationship

with Allah can be established, but it also says that we need to strive for it. When we look at our physical lives, we can see what kind of striving we go through to achieve success. Surely a similar degree of striving in Allah's way will lead us to a meeting with Him.

We should look into our hearts and see how much time and effort we spend in spiritual matters during the course of the day. Do we spend half or even a quarter of the time spent for worldly efforts? Do our hearts truly yearn for the love of Allah like they yearn for the luxuries of the world? Do we spend a significant amount of time in prayers, in reading the Holy Qur'an, in spending in the way of Allah with our wealth and our time? Do our hearts weep for the

welfare of our brother and sister human beings and do we make the effort to go to them in all humility and pass on Allah's Message?

Do we observe the rules and regulations in Allah's Book? There is no doubt that there are no better or perfect rules or guidelines for our own good and advancement. These rules and regulations are for our convenience. Who can know the best path to Allah, except Allah Himself? We must follow Divine Law to make sure we are protected from exterior and interior evil influences and to enhance our spiritual journey. This is where changes are required in life-long habits and styles. Thoughts and ideas may need to be altered and modified. This may be arduous or painful but all strife and struggles are painful and sometimes tiresome.

All people who live by Allah's rules and strive constantly in His way, themselves become walking examples of godly people. They stand out from

the multitude. There is a complete change, both internal and external in their personality, so that people stand in respect and awe of them, because a Divine glow and light shines from their faces. They are a living proof of the Qur'anic verse:

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

The word Jihad encompasses all the positive activities a Muslim should try to achieve and we should all as Mujahids continuously reform ourselves in all that is good. To strive in the cause of Allah requires great resolve and steadfastness and this cannot be achieved without true faith, true understanding and belief in a Supreme, All-Powerful Being and in the certainty of a Life after Death.

If a Muslim believes that his faith is the true faith, if his

religion is the true religion, then, if he practices his faith in accordance with its true teachings, he should never be afraid of those who seek to draw him away from his faith. On the contrary, he should welcome them into his home and by his righteous words and deeds, they will, Allah willing, be converted to his faith.

Before becoming an Ahmadi Muslim over 14 years ago, I tried for almost two years to convert my Ahmadi friend to Christianity. Far from taking or adopting a hostile attitude, he taught me so much about the truth of his own religion in words and practice, that I soon not only fell in love with Islam, I loved the man as a true brother loves his own blood brother. He always put his religion and his religious obligations before anything else, including his family. By his righteous words and deeds and by adopting the practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa), he was able to successfully call not only me, but many other Englishmen to the true Islam. He performed

the true Jihad, not by force, but by gentle persuasion. He had many setbacks on the way, but his patience, steadfastness and most of all his love for his Creator enabled him to be a most successful Caller unto Allah.

It is so painful to witness the injustice meted out by some Western nations against Muslims and Muslim nations. It is even more painful to witness the actions of so-called Muslims who declare Jihad against anyone who does not agree with their interpretation of the teachings of Islam and who commit atrocities and shameful acts in the name of Islam. How can they expect to attract non-Muslims to Islam?

Finally, the Promised Messiah^(as) has stated:

Ignorant maulvis, may Allah guide them, have grievously misled the common people and have told them that such action which is sheer wrong and cruelty and is opposed to all moral values

is the key to paradise. Can it be good action to shoot down an utter stranger who is walking through the street on some errand and who has done us no harm? If this kind of thing is virtuous, wild animals possess more virtue than such men. Glory be to Allah, how righteous were those and how truly inspired by the spirit of the Prophets who, when they were commanded in Mecca not to resist evil though they might be cut to pieces, behaved like hum-ble and weak suckling babies as if their hands and their arms possessed no power at all.

How grievous and shameful it is that an utter stranger who has done us no harm and who is occupied in some lawful errand should be shot down without any cause and his wife made a widow and his children made orphans and his dwelling turned into a house of mourning? Which hadith and which verse of

the Holy Qur'an authorises such an outrage? Can any maulvi furnish an answer to this question? Ignorant people who have only heard the word Jihad make it an excuse for the fulfilment of their selfish desires.

I have brought you a commandment which is that Jihad with the sword has been ended, but the Jihad of the purification of your spirits must continue to be waged. I say this not on my own but in order to proclaim the design of Allah. (Essence of Islam pp. 260-261).

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The Blessings of Khilafat

The advent of a prophet has, since the creation of man, always been a manifestation of Divine mercy and a source of many blessings. On the demise of the prophet, there is a second manifestation of Divine mercy and bounty in the form of the institution of Khilafat. The institution of Khilafat is a unique Divinely established system. Khilafat is the office and realm of the Khalifa or successor to the prophet elected as the supreme leader of the community of believers. He commands the highest moral position of his time and in him is vested absolute authority in all affairs religious. This article provides a brief overview of some of the major achievements of the Successors to the Holy Prophet^(sa) and Promised Messiah^(as) demonstrating how the institution of Khilafat has been instrumental in the establishment of the spiritual and political hegemony of Islam.

By Tommy Bockarie Kallon

All prophets, without exception, are but mortal human beings. However, although the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) passed away like all prophets before him, his message was to endure till the end of days. Thus, Allah Almighty promised in the Holy Qur'an that Islam would be nurtured and fortified through the dedicated efforts of his rightly guided spiritual successors or Khulafa, so that his opponents would not rejoice in the reflection that after his demise, Islam would wither and pass into the limbo of history. We read in the *Ayat-ul-Istikhlaf*, that is, the verse of the Holy Qur'an which deals with the subject of Khilafat:

Allah has promised to those

among you who believe and do good works that He will, surely, make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors from those who were before them; and that He will, surely, establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security and peace after their fear.

(Ch.24: v.56)

The promise of the establishment of Khilafat is clear and unmistakable. As the Holy Prophet is now humanity's sole guide for all time, his Khilafat must continue to exist in one form or another in the world till the end of time. This is, among many

others, the Holy Prophet's^(sa) distinct superiority over all other prophets and messengers of Allah.

In accordance with that promise, on the demise of the Holy Prophet^(sa), when all the believers were struck with shattering bewilderment, Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra), was elected as the First Khalifa in Islam. The Islamic Empire was soon beset with many internal disorders and external threats. There arose many false prophets from within who seized the opportunity to instigate a rebellion and, from beyond, the external enemies threatening the security of the Islamic State. Hadhrat Abu Bakr^(ra) led both by precept and by example and was able to crush all forces of revolt and disorder thereby fully safeguarding Islam from discord and disintegration. By the end of his Khilafat, the Muslims were united again under one standard. When we take due cognisance of the enormous loss the Muslims suffered with the departure of the Holy Prophet^(sa), the void that was created by his demise and the unenviable responsibility, as it were, of stepping into his shoes, we can safely conclude that this was no mean achievement and was due

entirely to the blessings that emanated from Hadhrat Abu Bakr's leadership.

After his demise, Hadhrat Umar^(ra) assumed the mantle of Khilafat and, by the grace of Allah, Muslims enjoyed many blessings under his humble and tolerant leadership. Indeed, his Khilafat represents a golden period in the history of Islam. His tireless energy, his selflessness, sympathy, scrupulous discharge of duty, his strong sense of even-handed justice and his zeal in the service of Islam are universally recognised and marvelled at even today as they were fourteen hundred years ago. He initiated many schemes for the welfare of the Muslims. It was Hadhrat Umar^(ra) who first introduced the system of old age pensions, now prevailing in the West. Children without guardians were brought up at the expense of the state. Education was made compulsory for boys and girls. The weak and disabled were granted allowances from the public treasury and in general, people grew in prosperity under his leadership. We read with just pride that Hadhrat Umar^(ra) would traverse his state at night in disguise to ascertain and attend to the needs

of his citizens. No wonder he was blessed so much so that during his Khilafat the two mighty Roman and Persian empires that once threatened Islam were utterly defeated.

However, victory would not spoil him. He always encouraged his armies to adhere to the teachings of Islam and show tolerance, justice and kindness to all peoples who came under Muslim rule. For their part, his armies translated into action all his admonition which won over the hearts of the conquered and made many friends in the territories.

In addition to the many conquests, the Khilafat of Hadhrat Umar^(ra) yielded many other blessings. He established the Majlis-e-Shura, a consultative body of advisors to the Khalifa. He displayed a unique genius in organising the civil administration of the Muslim Empire. Every country was divided into provinces, a police force was established, canals were dug, public treasuries were started and the Muslim calendar of Hijra which has been a great help in the preservation of history was introduced.

After the demise of this great personality, Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) was elected as the third Khalifa. He, like his two predecessors proved to be an admirable leader and guide, successfully expanding the Muslim Empire still further. A general wave of revolt and invasion swept though the Muslim Empire but by the sheer grace of Allah and a result of the blessings of Khilafat these rebellions and invasions were promptly quelled.

Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) made many contributions in the cause of public welfare. He supervised the erection of many new buildings, roads and bridges. Mosques and guest houses were also constructed in different towns under his direction. The Holy Qur'an, in its present standard form, was compiled during his Khilafat and under his direct supervision, this perhaps, is his most important contribution to the cause of Islam. Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) was a simple and kind man who never wavered in his integrity, honesty and piety. He showed great tolerance and utmost patience even towards the end of his Khilafat when various groups wanted to depose him. He refused to discard the robe of Khilafat invested in him by Allah

Almighty but at the same time he refused to fight them in order to avoid shedding the blood of innocent Muslims. His assassination ensued but there can be no doubt Hadhrat Uthman^(ra) laid down his life for the integrity of Khilafat and in the best interests of Islam.

The death of Hadhrat Uthman is certainly one of the saddest chapters in the history of Islam. Unity among all Muslims was shattered. Internal feuds became the order of the day as Muslim turned against Muslim. Hadhrat Ali^(ra) was elected as the fourth Khalifa six days after the death of Hadhrat Uthman^(ra). He announced that his top priority was to restore law and order in the state and to this end showed enormous restraint and tried his best to avoid fighting and bloodshed in the face of popular demands by some influential Companions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) for him to bring to justice the assassins of Hadhrat Uthman. As Medina had degenerated into a lawless society, Hadhrat Ali^(ra) moved the capital from Medina to Kufa in Iraq. Unfortunately, however, his Khilafat was beset by disruption and disarray. Hadhrat Ali^(ra) tried

to pacify the Muslims but it seems that the anti-Khilafat malaise which had set in was incurable. Civil wars broke out and the whole debacle culminated in the martyrdom of Hadhrat Ali^(ra).

'The value of a shade is not known until the tree is cut down', an old African adage maintains. With the assassination of Hadhrat Ali^(ra), that brilliant beacon of guidance and unity, that glorious fountain of blessings and mercies was lost. Muslims discarded the robe of Khilafat and with it all its countless blessings. The system of monarchy, devoid of all spiritual glory, was instituted in the place of Khilafat with various dynasties arising over many centuries. Civil wars and internecine feuds greatly weakened the Muslims. Nations that in the past trembled and bowed before them now confronted them with insolence and invariably succeeded in humiliating the Muslims. Islamic influence and world dominion began to diminish until the time came when other religions, though based on false doctrines, began to dominate the true religion of Islam.

The re-establishment of Khilafat amongst the Muslims has to date

been one of the greatest challenges facing the Muslims. Present day Islam is torn with internal strife and external intrigues and is in dire need of a leader, a man of integrity who would take charge of the institution of Khilafat and under Divine guidance lead the Muslim nation. Various movements to establish Khilafat amongst orthodox⁽¹⁾ Muslims have arisen in the past and recently in our time as well. It is a sad but historical truth that all have met with failure. This is because they are devoid of any Divine guidance and are based solely on human endeavour with self-indulgence and personal desire for power at the heart of their foundation.

Khilafat is a spiritual dominion of Allah Almighty and its establishment is never brought about by any political or pseudo-religious movement. Whenever Khilafat is established by Divine design, it has been through a prophet of Allah. History furnishes not a single instance where Khilafat was established without the advent of a prophet preceding it. The Khilafat promised in the Holy Qur'an is in the footsteps of a prophet. The Holy Prophet^(sa) is reported to

have said:

'Prophethood shall remain among you as long as Allah shall will. He will bring about its end and follow it with Khilafat on the precepts of prophethood for as long as He shall will and then bring about its end. A tyrannical monarchy will then follow and will remain as long as Allah shall will and then come to an end. There will follow thereafter monarchical despotism to last as long as Allah shall will and come to an end upon His decree. There will then emerge Khilafat on the precept of Prophethood.'

(Masnad Ahmad)

From this prophecy of the Holy Prophet^(sa) it is clear that the Khilafat which would come into being after him would consist of two eras - one would follow immediately after his death and between that and the other would intervene a period of suppressive, oppressive and cruel regimes. On the demise of the Holy Prophet^(sa), that blessed institution of Khilafat was established as prophesied. It was to be re-established only with the advent of the Promised Messiah^(as) and Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, was a faithful servant of Allah and a devoted follower of the Holy Prophet^(sa). He claimed that he had been appointed by Allah Almighty as the voice articulate of this age; that he is the Messiah foretold in the Traditions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and the Mahdi promised in his Sayings. He claimed that the prophecies contained in all the different religious books about the advent of a Divine Messenger in the latter days have also been fulfilled in his person; that God has raised him for the advocacy and promulgation of Islam in our time; that God has granted him insight into the Holy Qur'an and revealed to him its innermost meaning and truth.

By his work, his message and his example, he glorified the Holy Prophet^(sa) and demonstrated the superiority of Islam over other religions so that the Holy Prophet^(sa) could be accepted as the Seal of the Prophets by all the peoples of the world. At a time when fanaticism, obscurantism and bigotry had become the hallmark of Muslim thinking, he displayed before the wondering eyes of seekers after truth, a vast

and seemingly limitless treasury of knowledge, philosophy and wisdom from the Holy Qur'an. The moral and spiritual values inculcated by the Holy Qur'an and illustrated in their perfection by the Holy Prophet^(sa) were revived by him, so that men could profit not only from his precept but also from his example.

On his demise, obituaries from open-minded Muslims and non-Muslims alike paid rich tribute to his messianic qualities, purity and righteousness. However, his unthinking opponents rejoiced in his death hoping that what they considered a grave heresy would now die a natural death and be relegated to history.

At that critical hour, his most devoted follower - an eminent divine, a reputed physician, a discerning mystic and a scholastic commentator on the Holy Qur'an - was unanimously elected to the office of Khalifatul Masih. By the grace of Allah, in that capacity he navigated the ship of Ahmadiyyat to safe waters fully safeguarding it from disintegration. His name, Nooruddeen, that is, the Brilliance of Faith, was synonymous to his brilliant services in the name of faith.

Hadhrat Maulvi Nooruddeen^(ra) had a living faith in Allah Almighty and relied on Him totally for all his needs. As Khalifatul Masih, his role was variegated and multi-faceted. In spite of his indifferent health, he would carry out his manifold functions with a benign countenance displaying an enviable devotion to duty. He would diagnose and prescribe for each of his patients, give directives, advise and counsel to office bearers, hold lectures on the Holy Qur'an, Ahadeeth and Islamic Thought, dictate responses in refutation of the critics of Islam and deliberate projects for the propagation of Islam. But his most important distinction was his unerring maintenance and fortification of the institution of Khilafat in the face of persistent opposition from his dissenters who sought to undermine his authority and create disorder in the Community. Nothing and no one could affect either his high resolve or the urbanity of his disposition. In a loud and unambiguous voice he proclaimed: *'I declare with all the emphasis at my command and call Allah to witness that I shall not discard the robe with which He has invested me.'*

On his demise, that robe of Khilafat was bestowed upon Hadhrat Mirza Bashiruddeen Mahmood Ahmad^(ra). Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) was the Promised Son of the Promised Messiah. His birth was in fulfilment of a glorious prophecy of the Promised Messiah that he would be granted a son whose qualities and excellence would be truly outstanding. He was elected to the exalted office of Khalifatul Masih at the tender age of 25 and, by the grace of Allah, his tenure of office was blessed with enormous success beyond the pale of expression. With extremely limited funds, he guided the community to previously unfathomable heights. Notable among the numerous schemes he launched are the *Tahrik-e-Jadid* and *Waqf-e-Jadid* which have been instrumental in establishing the Community in almost all countries of the world. It was his unique genius that launched the auxiliary associations so that today all members of the Community, under the auspices of their particular association, are bound together in affectionate ties of brotherhood and sisterhood and carry out programs designed to inculcate moral and spiritual values.

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) established the *Majlis-e-Shura* within the Community, a consultative body that meets annually to deliberate and advise the Khalifa on important policy matters. The Qadha Board, a judicial system, providing the Community with a very fair, economical and dignified way for its members to settle their internal disputes, in accordance with Islamic law and jurisprudence, was set up by him. He initiated *Jalsa Seerat-un-Nabi* and Religious Founders' Days to celebrate the life of the Holy Prophet^(sa) and the lives of all founders of great religions.

Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) also showed a keen understanding of complex political and social issues successfully guiding the community through two fearsome world wars and a migration *en masse* to Pakistan after the 1947 partition of the Indian sub-continent from where he started the whole city of Rabwah from absolute scratch in a most inhospitable land.

His books and pamphlets which number more than 200 expose him as an eminent divine and an expert diagnostician of eternal

verities. The greatest blessing of his Khilafat, perhaps, is his *magnum opus*, the *Tasfeer-e-Kabeer*, an exhaustive commentary on the Holy Qur'an. This ten thousand-page commentary contains a deep esoteric understanding and exposition of thousands of spiritual truths and hidden secrets, many of which had never been presented before.

His Khilafat, spanning two and fifty years, truly represents a golden period in the history of Ahmadiyyat and of Islam. In spite of manifold duties and multifarious engagements, he strove hard to maintain the Community at the highest level of activity, both in respect of self-improvement and in respect of propagating the message of Islam. For this purpose, he called in aid all his great talents; he had recourse to continuous advice, exhortation and admonition; he set a high and shining personal example and spent a good part of his nights in earnest supplication to the Divine.

When Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II^(ra) passed away, his eldest son, Hadhrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad^(ra) was elected as Khalifatul Masih III. During his seventeen years of

Khilafat, with his unique administrative ability and his distinctive plans of far-reaching benefits, he was able to strengthen and expand the Community remarkably. Some of the salient features of his Khilafat include the *Fazle Umar Foundation*, to promote activities in the field of research work, education, missionary engagements and economic welfare of the Community and the *Nusrat Jehan Scheme* under which scores of schools and hospitals have been established in West Africa, purely for the service of humanity and without any profit motives. Through the success of this scheme, millions of Africans have embraced Ahmadiyyat and still continue to do so. But perhaps he would be remembered most for that simple yet highly pragmatic *modus vivendi* he bequeathed the Community, namely, the motto: *Love for All, Hatred for None*.

Today we are passing through the golden era of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV. He, like his predecessors, has, under Divine direction, launched various schemes to mobilise the Community efforts for the global spread of Islam. During his tenure of office which, on 10th June

2002, completed a glorious 20 years, the Community has been extraordinarily blessed with its membership growing from 10 to an amazing 150 million world-wide. Under his directives, thousands of mosques, mission houses, clinics, hospitals, schools and colleges dedicated to the service of Islam have been established. Homeopathic dispensaries have been set up all over the world, under his auspices, providing millions with cures to various ailments free of charge. Among his numerous books is his thesis, *Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth* which has been acclaimed as perhaps the greatest literary achievement of the last century. His devotion to the Holy Qur'an is confirmed by his personal supervision of numerous translations and accurate revisions of translations of the Holy Qur'an in diverse languages, he himself producing a fluid translation and commentary in the Urdu language.

Muslim Television Ahmadiyya, the world's first global satellite Muslim broadcasting channel simultaneously providing live translations in up to eight languages, was the brainchild of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV. It is

impossible to enumerate all the blessings that MTA International has brought in its wake. It provides, to a global audience, an invaluable source of knowledge, it teaches various languages, discusses various topical issues and their relation to the moral and spiritual well-being of man and, in general, is essential viewing for students of religion and philosophy every-where. The key to its success is without doubt the personal appearance of Khalifatul Masih in many of the programmes so that Muslims and non-Muslims alike from the world over can benefit from his broad knowledge, wisdom and percipience. It is through MTA that we have been able to witness historic scenes like the International Bai'at Ceremony at the Annual International Convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community where, in one year alone, up to 81 million new Ahmadi Muslims from over a hundred nations of the world simultaneously took the oath of allegiance at the hands of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih through live satellite transmission.

It should be patently obvious by now that Khilafat is not only a very blessed institution but also a

very important institution of Islam and unquestionably calls for the highest degree of obedience. A Khalifa is elected through the Will of Allah but by the act of the believers. In other words, at that critical hour when the election of a Khalifa is due, the minds and deliberations of the faithful are guided by Allah Almighty to the appointment of His choice. Inasmuch as the Khalifa is elected in accordance with the Divine Will, disobedience to him is in fact tantamount to the disobedience of Allah and, by the same token, obedience to Allah Almighty and obedience to the office of Khilafat are simply the obverse and reverse of the same coin.

This, in itself, is a necessary and sufficient condition for the continuation of this great Divine institution. In a community otherwise showered with so many Divine blessings, Khilafat is undeniably the most important bounty to the members of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. The Khalifa plays a pivotal role in uniting all members of the Community under one banner. To all members he is, at all times, a deeply loving father to whom they can look up to for guidance,

advice and encouragement, to all intelligent and reasonable people of goodwill he proves himself a wise friend and counsellor and to the afflicted he is, without discrimination, a ready source of comfort, consolation and relief.

It is only through the blessings of Khilafat and through Divine Grace that Islam has made progress in the past as it continues to do today and, Allah willing, will continue to do for years and centuries to come. Prophethood is a seed after which the instrumentality of Khilafat spreads its munificence throughout the world. After the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa), through the devoted works of the rightly guided Khulafa, Islam spread throughout the then known world. Today, under the guidance of the Khalifatul Masih, the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam is spreading and spreading exponentially all around the world, despite all the efforts of hostile fanatics, both individual and governmental, whose purported objective is of exterminating Ahmadiyyat from the surface of the earth.

Through the blessed institution of Khilafat-e-Ahmadiyya, the promise of Allah in the Holy

Qur'an: '*He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them*' is being fulfilled. The days are fast approaching when we shall observe the unification of mankind under the banner of Islam and we shall witness the final and universal manifestation of the Unity of Allah.

References:

1. Orthodoxy, used here to characterise Muslims of non-Ahmadi persuasion, is only in following the sociological usage to indicate the majority group. It does not, in any normative, suggest heterodoxy on the part the Ahmadiyya Community.

Islam and Human Rights

Rafiq Hayat - Amir UK

It is a sad fact that generations of European writers have presented Islam to the Western audience in the most negative manner. In the works of an overwhelming majority of European writers, Islam is portrayed as a religion with deep moral faults, preaching violence and extremism.

Admittedly from time to time a fresh start has been attempted by some fair-minded Western Europeans ready to look at the religion of Islam with objectivity and honesty. However, more often than not, their views are negated by overwhelming negative publicity in the media.

September 11th, 2001 is still fresh in our minds. This awesome tragedy perpetrated by a few fanatics for their political gains had nothing whatsoever to do with Islam. Many decent people around the world who saw the event unfold in front of their eyes on TV screens felt the same way, irrespective of their religious background.

No true Muslim can ever condone

this act of terrorism. Islam expressly forbids suicide, genocide, fratricide and any killing of innocent people. Sanctity of life is guaranteed in Islam as laid down in Article 3 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights: *'Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.'* Suicide bombing and related acts of terrorism have no place in the Islamic teachings and whoever uses the name of Islam to justify such acts, commits a calumny of grossest proportions.

September 11th took our politicians by complete surprise and their initial reaction was of uncertainty and confusion. Various statements were made in the heat of the moment and later withdrawn. Luckily, the general public is much more mature and not as gullible as the media thinks and they refused to believe every word that was printed in the media or uttered by the politicians. They want to know the truth and they want to know about Islam. The new awareness of the people imposes a great responsibility on us that we

furnish them with honest information about the true Islam.

All the histories of civilisation written in the Western media mention a thousand years as Dark Ages, conveniently omitting that during that period the Islamic civilisation had brought about a tremendous revolution in all spheres of life. The arts, philosophy, humanities, sciences and medicine flourished in that age, from which the later civilisations benefited.

The same is true with the issue of human rights. World history records that December 10th 1948 was a landmark in the march of human civilisation when the United Nations proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. No one can deny the credit that is due to the United Nations because it was the first time ever when the consensus of the contemporary nations of the world, for once unanimously agreed to give the dignity and assurance to human race that they possess inviolable fundamental rights. With 30 articles, this Charter is one of the most comprehensive in assuring the equality of man without any prejudice to colour, creed and

race. 1400 years ago, Allah Almighty, through His Divine Commandments revealed the most comprehensive Charter of Human Rights in the Holy Qur'an through the Prophet of Islam^(sa).

It is impossible in such a short article to quote the Qur'anic injunctions to show that all 30 Articles of the Declaration have been mentioned in detail. Let us take the very fundamental Articles 1 and 2 that lay stress on the freedom, equality and dignity of man.

It is a unique feature of Islam that it holds all faiths in respect and reverence. Islam bases itself on the truth that the Divine guidance has been promised to man throughout the ages. Muslims believe that all great faiths had the same divine origin and must therefore be respected. Belief and respect of all the past prophets of God is part of faith for every Muslim. Allah Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an:

Say ye! We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and his children, and what was given

to Moses and Jesus and what was given to all the Prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between any of them and to Him we submit ourselves. (Ch.2: v.137)

Again the Holy Qur'an stresses:

And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel which contained guidance and light, fulfilling that which was revealed before it in the Torah... (Ch.5: v.47)

Belief in all the Holy Books stresses the common origin of man having been created by the common Creator and the diversity that we observe all around us is part of the Divine Design and is, indeed, an expression of Divine Wisdom. The Holy Qur'an says:

And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. In that surely are Signs for those who possess knowledge. (Ch.30: v.23)

This diversity reflects the richness in Allah's creation and must not be seen as an indication of inferiority, which confers special privileges to some at the expense of others.

O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognise one another. Verily, the most honourable among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (Ch.49: v.14)

Part of diversity in the divine scheme is the diversity of man's intellect. This leads, among other things to diversity of faith and creed. This has often been considered a source of conflict. If we follow the Qur'anic teachings, this conflict should not arise. No compulsion is permissible in so vital a matter as the fundamentals of faith. It is part of the dignity with which man has been endowed by his Maker that his conscience must be free. By its very nature, it cannot be compelled. It is proclaimed by the Holy Qur'an unequivocally:

There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong.
(Ch.2: v.257)

And say, 'It is the truth is from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.
(Ch.18: v.30)

Surely, if anyone rejects the truth, he suffers the disadvantage. But whatever disadvantage he may suffer, he cannot be forced in the matter of his choice. This is the most fundamental freedom given 1400 years ago; and if there is to be any hope of peace between mankind, this freedom must be scrupulously observed. The Holy Qur'an goes so far in establishing this freedom that it proclaims that even God Himself, Who indeed possesses the power to do so, would not force anyone in the matter of conscience. Whatever a person does in this respect must come from his free choice.

Let me, therefore, send this message to all the Muslim countries who deny this fundamental injunction of Allah Almighty, that they should revise

their policies. Otherwise they lose the right to call themselves Muslim nations.

It is an enduring characteristic of the Holy Qur'an and Islamic teachings that all issues are addressed at the very fundamental and basic levels: equality of man, freedom of thought, freedom of faith etc. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly draws attention towards the ties of kinship binding humanity together in having created mankind of one species. The spirit of brotherhood is emphasised again and again and shows from the repeated injunctions of the Holy Prophet^(sa) himself. He is recorded as saying, '*None of you can be a believer unless he desires for his brother what he desires for himself.*' He urged his followers, '*Go to the aid of your brother whether he be oppressor or oppressed.*' On being asked how an oppressor may be helped, he replied, '*Stop him from his course of oppression.*'

Similarly Islam deals with other issues. Islam gives everyone the right to life, liberty and security. As mentioned earlier, Islam forbids suicide and infanticide.

The sanctity of life of other persons can be measured from the verse of the Holy Qur'an:

On account of this, We prescribed for the children of Israel that whosoever killed a person... it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and whoso gave life to one, it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind. (Ch.5: v.33)

The rights of orphan are preserved as well as of other relatives. The Holy Prophet^(sa) of Islam, in his last address at the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage in the plains of Arafat, advised and admonished,

'Your persons, your properties and your honours are declared sacred like the sanctity attached to this day, this month and this place. Let them not be violated!' (Hanbal V, p411) This farewell address of the Holy Prophet^(sa) is a complete Charter of Human Rights stressing the equality of man irrespective of colour, creed or race. It lays down the duties and obligation of one person towards the other and even the obligations of the State towards its people. When he concluded his address, he charged all those

present to convey what he had said to those who were unable to hear him. In his words, *'Maybe, one who is not present today may even be more mindful than the one who is.'* His address is considered as his testament and because of his instructions and the contents of this address, wide publicity continues to be given.

Article 4 of the Charter prohibits slavery and slave trade. From the very beginning, the Holy Prophet of Islam^{sa} looked at the slavery and slave trade with distaste and abhorrence and he took the strongest measures to eliminate this loathsome practice. One needs to look at the historical, political and social perspective before realising the importance of abolition of this form of servitude from the society of the 7th century. The Holy Qur'an is replete with injunctions about the abhorrence of slavery and the rights of prisoners of war. Even making war on others is strictly forbidden except when it is in defence to repel or halt the aggression. Even during the fighting, Muslims are forbidden to use unduly aggressive means.

Fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight

against you but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.

(Ch.2: v.191)

Muslims are often portrayed as violent and war mongering. The fact is that Muslims are only permitted to take up arms in defence of freedom of conscience and when their rights are violated. As the Holy Qur'an lays down:

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, only because they said, 'Our Lord is Allah'. And if Allah did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. And Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed powerful, Mighty.
(Ch.22: v.40-41)

Muslims never indulge in war mongering. They are only allowed to defend themselves. Their *Jihad*

is always a defensive war against those who declare war on them.

Similarly, Islam lays down the laws about dispensation of justice. It lays down duties for the litigants and strict rules for the Judges. Islam provides safeguards against the arbitrary use of executive or administrative power. There are checks and balances in every dimension of life that has been covered by the Articles of the Charter of Human Rights.

Article 16 of the Declaration elaborates on the rights of men and women. I would like to dilate on the distorted European view of the position of women in Islam. It is erroneously presumed that women have no rights in a Muslim society or that they are somehow considered inferior. The Holy Prophet^(sa) consulted his wife Hadhrat Khadija^(ra) and his later wives and his daughters once they had grown up, on all aspects of Islamic community and they acted as advisors to the new converts. They engaged alongside men in the public observance of religious rituals and worshipped together with men in the mosque. Women accompanied their husbands, fathers and

brothers in the battlefield against the enemies of Islam. There is no question that the first Muslim community under the guidance of the Holy Prophet^(sa) was built by men and women. The Holy Qur'an unequivocally gives spiritual equality:

Surely, men who submit themselves to God and women who submit themselves to Him, and believing men and believing women, and obedient men and obedient women, and truthful men and truthful women, and men steadfast in their faith and steadfast women, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity, and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Him - Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a great reward. (Ch.33: v.36)

Muslim women were given the entitlements to those rights 1400 years ago that have been laid down in Article 16 of the Charter.

They were entitled to ownership and were permitted to inherit property and wealth in their own rights without any encumbrance. This facility was denied to women of Europe until recently. Muslim women were granted equal rights of consent in the matter of their marriage and divorce. In fact women are considered equal in all respects. All this is fully realised in the Canon Law. But God, in His wisdom has equipped them differently for the fulfilment of their role in the society. In structure and physique, man is stronger than woman, who is more delicate and possesses greater sensitivity. Were it not so there would have been little cause of attraction between the two. As Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

And one of His Signs is this, that He has created wives for you from among yourselves that you may find peace of mind in them, and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that surely are Signs for a people who reflect. (Ch.30: v.22)

The measure that has been taken by the Europeans to be the symbol of women's inferior status is the veil. Special rules applied

to the wives of the Holy Prophet^(sa) against the intrusion of the curious, but for women in general, the Holy Qur'an says simply that they should draw their head-dress over their bosoms or pull close to themselves part of their dresses when in presence of men from outside their family.

And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and they not display their beauty and embellishments except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head covers over their bosoms, and that they display not their beauty and embellishment save to their husbands...
(Ch.24: v. 32)

O Prophet! tell your wives and your daughters, and the women of the believers, that they should pull down upon them of their outer cloaks from their heads over their faces. That is more likely that they may thus be recognised and not molested. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful.
(Ch.33: v. 60)

The wording and commandments

amount to little more than a requirement to dress modestly - something, it must be added, is expected of men as well:

Say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Surely, Allah is well aware of what they do.
(Ch. 24: v. 31)

Another issue is Article 25 of the Declaration. It declares that everyone has a right to a standard of living adequate and worthy of human dignity including food, clothing, housing, sanitation and medical care. Although the society has set up institutions to overcome poverty and disparity among different nations, among the affluent and the destitute, the gap has widened and created an unpleasant divide between the so-called North and South. In the 1960's our hopes were raised when Premier Heath and Chancellor Kohl took this initiative within the European Union to close this gap. However, almost twenty-five years later the situation has only deteriorated and the gap has increased. The poor nations, instead of prospering, have been weighed down

with interest incurred on their debts. There are too many reasons for the defective or rather ineffective result of these aids and assistance.

Developed countries have double standards and tend to exploit poor nations through their aid programs. Some of the problems in Africa, especially where they experience drought, can be resolved simply and with minimal expenditure. A British MP has mentioned of his visit to Burkina Faso that he was surprised to see the projects being undertaken by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in remote areas where we are installing tube wells to supply water for irrigation projects. Each well costs approximately \$3000 and can support up to 300 individuals. Therefore, if the West truly wanted to assist poor drought ridden African countries surely as an initial step, they should be investing in such projects rather than sending sacks of maize stamped with USA just to get media attention.

If politicians are sincere then they should divert attention to these basic requirements of the third world and unless we can address this inequity and provide proper

aid, we would continue to see conflict in the world.

Islam put the first effective concept of the Welfare State. Within a few years of the organisation of the first Islamic State, the provisions of basic necessities were assured. The Holy Prophet's^(sa) exhortations and his own example had infused a sense of brotherhood that sharing everything, even in the face of adversity, became a unique Muslim characteristic. The Holy Qur'an bears witness to this practice. Of the Ansars of Medina and early refugee settlers, it says:

And those who had established their homes in this city before them and had accepted faith, love those who come to them for refuge and find not in their breasts any desire for that which is given them.....

(Ch.59: v.10)

It is the measure of this remarkable sharing and brotherliness that by the time of the Abbasid Khilafat, there was hardly anyone in the Islamic Empire, Muslim or non-Muslim, who was in need of any charity. This revolution is indeed the proof

of the effectiveness of the Islamic values, as laid down in the Holy Qur'an and explained by the Holy Prophet^(sa). The basic objectives of this Article can be achieved at macro level to a high degree under Islamic teachings. Sharing, rather than lending on high interest and aiding by educating and relieving poverty by building infrastructure for essential supplies would be the answer.

There are 30 Articles in the Charter of Human Rights but they cover only certain aspects of human life and man's relationship with man. But all this requires legislation, administrative and judicial powers to be implemented.

Religion goes far beyond these limited ideals. Religion tries to concern itself with totality of life - life in this world and in the Hereafter. The religion of Islam addresses the problems of man more comprehensively than ordinary declarations can. The Holy Qur'an, in dealing with all issues of life is unique in that its treasures are inexhaustible. The Holy Qur'an rightly claims:

And if all the trees that are in the earth were pens and the

ocean were ink, with seven oceans swelling it thereafter, the words of Allah would not be exhausted....
(Ch.31: v.28)

The message of the Holy Qur'an is for all times and for all people. That is why Allah has promised to safeguard and preserve the message. The Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) realised that the message, however comprehensive and pristine, may get distorted by human shortcomings. That is why he gave the assurance that Allah would continue to raise someone among his people, at the beginning of each century, to revive and resurrect the faith. The Holy Qur'an also assures us:

He it is Who has raised among the Unlettered people a Messenger from among themselves who recites unto them His Signs and purifies them and teaches them the Book and wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest misguidance. And among others from among them who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the Wise. That is Allah's Grace; He bestows it on whom He pleases; and

Allah is the Master of immense grace. (Ch.62: v.3-5)

The verse forecasts the advent of a prophet among the Muslims. This prophecy was fulfilled in the person of Hadhrat Ahmad^(as) of Qadian, who under Divine revelation claimed himself to be the Promised Messiah, the Awaited One, in all religions. Thus his advent fulfilled the promised rebirth of Islam as described in the Holy Qur'an:

And among His Signs is this: that you see the earth dried up, but when We send down water on it, it stirs and swells with verdure. Surely, He Who quickened it, can quicken the dead. Verily He has power over all things. (Ch.41: v.40)

We notice the growth of verdure in the Islamic world, indeed in the whole world and perceptible and imperceptible changes have been taking place. Islamic society has a long way to go before it can claim to observe all the articles of human rights as laid down in the Holy Qur'an. That change will come about not with force, not with coercion, not with violence but with love, with persuasion and with a change of heart. This is the

mission entrusted to the Promised Messiah^(as). The message of the Holy Prophet of Islam^(sa) was of friendship and unity. Similarly the message of the Promised Messiah^(as) is one of love and amity and hatred does not feature in the plans of Islamic revival. We respect the freedom of conscience of people belonging to any religion - Sikhism, Hinduism, Christianity or Judaism.

But there is a message for others as well. It is high time that confrontation gave way to mutual respect and tolerance. Unless the West begins to form a more sympathetic and wholesome view of true Islam, the medieval rancour will continue, breeding hatred, violence and turmoil. If the West learns to respect the Holy Prophet^(sa) and the religion of Islam, it can hope to be respected in return. It is hoped this contribution will go some way towards the building of this understanding. All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.

<p>The author is the National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the UK and the former Editor of the Review of Religions and the former Chairman of MTA International.</p>
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Ramadan - Part 1

Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad - Translated by Khalilur Rahman Mullick and Hamida Farooqui. Transcribed by Fauzia Bajwa

Shortly, 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 has great significance in the Muslim calendar. What follows is a synopsis of a series of Friday sermons, originally delivered in Urdu by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, discussing the philosophy and importance of fasting. The Editorial Board takes full responsibility for any errors that may have occurred in the process of translation and transcription.

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

whosoever of you is present at home in this month, let him fast therein. But whoso is sick or is on a journey, shall fast the same number of other days. Allah desires to give you facility and 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, say: 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: v.184-187)

The above verses can be translated in various ways. When a river passes through a narrow place, its depth is not visible; but when it reaches an estuary and spreads far and wide, one becomes aware of the large quantity of water in the river. Similarly with the word of Allah, a verse may apparently have a narrow and restricted meaning, but when interpreted correctly it is seen to encompass a wide array of subjects.

The Arabic word *Yuteequ* is derived from the word *taqat* or power. When it is used in this form of the verb, it carries both a positive and negative connotation, and has to be interpreted according to the context. *Yuteequnahu* means those people who have the power and ability, *Yuteequna* means those people who do not have the power and ability. In the context of these verses, the question that now arises is: the power and ability to do what? In other words, a determination has to be made as to where the preposition 'hu' applies. The fast and the expiation (*fidya*) are mentioned alongside each other - is *Yuteequnahu* to be

applied to the fast or to the expiation? Or could it apply to both? One possible interpretation is that those people who have the capability to pay *fidya* should do so, but it is not obligatory on everyone. It is a deed which is recommended, but is not compulsory, as is the fast. If a person is able, he should pay *fidya* as well as observe the fast, and in this interpretation *Yuteequnahu* applies to both fasting and expiation. Another interpretation would be linked to the fast - those who have the strength to fast, but find themselves in circumstances that prevent them from doing so - such people should pay *fidya*. Here, *Yuteequnahu* applies just to the fast. The Promised Messiah^(as) has stated that *fidya* enables the person who cannot fast during Ramadan to fast at a later date; in other words, it is a way of seeking Allah's help in fulfilling the obligations of the fast. Again, linking *Yuteequnahu* only to the fast, the meaning would be that those with the ability should fast (during Ramadan), but if they cannot afford to pay the *fidya*, they are under no obligation to do so.

Now, to go onto the negative connotation i.e. *Yuteequna*, in this context the application would only be to fasting, not to *fidya*. In other words, those who are unable to fast due to long-term illnesses should gain consolation by paying *fidya*; they will then benefit from some of the blessings of Ramadan. So in summary, depending on his circumstances, a person may fast and pay *fidya*, or fast and not pay *fidya*, or defer the fast and pay *fidya* during Ramadan, or, being a long-term patient, just pay *fidya*.

The above verses say: '*fasting is better for you, if only you knew.*' So the conclusion is that of all the options offered, fasting is the best option. All other virtues will be blessed with ample rewards, none will go unnoticed by Allah. But one should not take the fast lightly, and should not look for excuses to avoid fasting. *Fidya* is not an alternate to the fast, unless one is suffering from a long-term illness.

Allah states that Ramadan is the month in which the Holy Qur'an

was revealed. When commentators reflect on this, they are perplexed by the fact that the Holy Qur'an was revealed over a number of years, not in the short period of thirty days. This Qur'anic statement can be interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, it could refer to the fact that the revelation of the Qur'an commenced in the month of Ramadan while the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) was meditating in the Cave Hira. Another possible meaning is that every Ramadan, the angel Gabriel would repeat the Holy Qur'an with the Prophet Muhammad^(sa). In those days the Qur'an was not recorded in book form, and even to this day, memorisation relies on repetition. So, during Ramadan the angel Gabriel would ask the Prophet Muhammad^(sa) to repeat the Qur'an to the extent that it had been revealed. Another school of thought is that Ramadan captures the essence of the Qur'anic teachings, and hence is the month which provides a synopsis of the Qur'an.

The Qur'an is described in these verses as a guidance for

THE QUR'AN IS DESCRIBED IN THESE VERSES AS A GUIDANCE FOR MANKIND, AND AS ITS REVELATION TOOK PLACE IN RAMADAN, THERE IS A DEEP LINK BETWEEN THIS HOLY MONTH AND GUIDANCE. NOW THIS RAISES AN INTERESTING POINT. THE VERSES HERE ARE ADDRESSING ONLY THE BELIEVERS, SO HOW CAN RAMADAN BE DESCRIBED AS A GUIDANCE FOR THE WHOLE OF MANKIND? THE ANSWER CAN BE FOUND IN THESE VERY VERSES, WHERE IT IS STATED THAT PREVIOUS GENERATIONS HAD ALSO BEEN COMMANDED TO FAST.

mankind, and as its revelation took place in Ramadan, there is a deep link between this holy month and guidance. Now this raises an interesting point. The verses here are addressing only the believers, so how can Ramadan be described as a guidance for the whole of mankind? The answer can be found in these very verses, where it is stated that previous generations had also been commanded to fast. It is the law of Allah that all nations who received revelation from Allah were commanded to fast in one form or another with the initial instructions being issued in Ramadan. The Ka'aba is also described by the Qur'an as a guidance for mankind. Originally, the whole of mankind belonged to the faith of the Prophet Abraham^(ra), and the

Ka'aba was their place of gathering. Later, differences arose, but ultimately the whole of mankind is destined to be reunited under the banner of Islam, and hence Ramadan becomes a guidance for the whole of mankind. The Qur'an is the perfect and complete guide, and a unique feature of Ramadan is that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) has laid down very comprehensive instructions regarding the conduct of man during this holy month. Prior to this, no other religions were given such a detailed code of conduct for fasting. The Holy Qur'an is a book which presents the most illustrious signs and the Ramadan described therein takes man to his highest stage and grants him distinction by providing him with over-

whelming arguments. So the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Ramadan presented in the Qur'an provides general guidance as well as guidance of a much higher status, and this has been called the '*clear proofs of guidance*' which grant distinction to the believers. All these blessings have been brought together in the month of Ramadan. Having put forward all the arguments in favour of Ramadan, Allah again issues an invitation to partake of fasting. It is as if Allah is saying 'Now you understand how magnificent this month is, We once again advise you to fast.'

Some people are commanded to abstain from fasting and they are those who are journeying and those who are sick. They are told to defer the fast until they are able to undertake the rigours of fasting. The philosophy of piety is not that Allah places people in hardship for the sake of suffering. During the fast, one does suffer but suffering in itself is not virtue and is not what is aimed for. Rather, it is seeking the pleasure of Allah that is virtue. If one has to bear difficulties in the pursuit of

virtue then that virtue is of a higher order.

Next, these verses command mankind to exalt Allah for the guidance that He has given as this will enable them to become grateful to Him. Ultimately, the goal of fasting and every other form of worship is to attain nearness to Allah. In these verses, Allah informs those of His worshippers who ask after Him, that '*I am near.*' Although Allah is present everywhere, to feel His presence man needs to develop certain spiritual powers. First and foremost, man must decide that he sincerely wants to reach his Lord; then he must supplicate to Allah with love and humility and he will find that Allah responds. Thus a dialogue between man and his Creator is established which results in him feeling close to Allah. But man must pay heed to Allah only then will Allah respond to his calls. This is how the goal of Ramadan is reached.

Having discussed the importance of fasting and the blessings of Ramadan, Allah then says '*believe in Me*'. Now the whole discussion began with an address to the believers, so why is it

concluded with this appeal? The answer is that having undergone the rigours of fasting, faith takes on a new colour. First one undertakes a journey towards one's Lord, one suffers hardship for His sake and supplicates to Him, then a dialogue is established between Allah and man - man feels close to Allah and this is true faith. So the journey started with faith and resulted in a higher level of faith. Those who believe in Allah are guided by Allah. This guidance results in an increase in one's wisdom. In fact, only holy people are truly wise. Many worldly people are proud of their own intellect but none of their decisions are made with reference to God. The decisions that they make sometimes happen to coincide with the Will of Allah and these prove to be successful. But wherever their interest is opposed to that of Allah, they follow their own self-interest and the resultant benefits are short lived. There are many nations who commit grave errors in their political decision-making simply because they are deprived of the light of Allah.

There is much to be achieved during Ramadan and only thirty days in which to do so. On the one hand, the holy month only lasts for a short period and on the other hand, it comes just once a year, and should not be wasted. It is a wonderful opportunity to please Allah and the hardship is minute in comparison to the blessings. Those who have true knowledge of virtue take stock of their weaknesses and seek forgiveness for them.

Hadhrat Abdur Rahman bin Auf^(ra) reports that the Holy Prophet Muhammad^(sa) said 'Ramadan has excellence over all other months and whosoever establishes this month with full faith and self analysis, his sins will be removed without trace.' This is a great glad tidings which is linked to these limited number of days, and by following this formula of the Holy Prophet^(sa), one is bound to avail of the blessings of Ramadan. All articles of faith should be fulfilled, for example, performing good deeds for the sake of Allah and performing salat are articles of faith. Self-

analysis must be done alongside virtue for this safeguards virtue. Keeping a strict account of one's intentions will ensure that the spirit of Ramadan is fulfilled. Ramadan means to find God, to take all piety to its highest point; anything that contradicts the spirit of Ramadan takes one away from righteousness. During Ramadan it is especially important to concentrate on worship, piety and remembrance of Allah.

The Holy Prophet^(sa) is reported to have said that Medina is like a furnace. Iron emerges purified from a furnace but after a while rust develops. So the Holy Prophet^(sa) advised his companions and other Muslims to visit Medina regularly to remove the rust that had developed as a result of being distanced from his pious company. The Promised Messiah^(as) also repeatedly invited Ahmadis to visit Qadian and the wisdom behind this is the same as that included in the words of the Prophet Muhammad^(sa). Muslims are required to pray five times a day and through this repetitive worship one is able to remove one's impieties. Then there is

the worship of Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca. This is obligatory and is sufficient to cleanse a person of a lifetime of impieties. Ramadan is repeated every year and the wisdom and philosophy of Ramadan should be remembered alongside it. Abu Huraira^(ra) relates in *Bukhari* and *Muslim*, that the Holy Prophet^(sa) said that during the month of Ramadan the gates of paradise are thrown wide open and the gates of hell are closed and Satan is put into shackles. There is another Hadith which states that the doors of mercy are opened during Ramadan. Visibly there are no signs of improvement in the moral condition of the world; rather than looking externally for signs of progress one should look inside oneself. Every man has his own universe, his own heaven and his own earth. The above mentioned Hadith is linked to this internal universe. A person who brings about changes in his inner-self and who adopts the virtues associated with this month, which incidentally are made easy during Ramadan, the doors of his heaven are opened and the doors of his hell are closed.

If this does not happen, if Ramadan has no positive impact, then the Hadith does not apply to that person's universe. Now, why do the gates of paradise and mercy open more during Ramadan in comparison to the rest of the year? The reason is that an atmosphere of virtue and piety comes into being during this month. People pay more attention to worship and are more inclined to offer sacrifices and to do good. Ramadan is a season in which hearts are inclined towards righteousness. It is important to avail of this atmosphere of piety. Gradually the doors of paradise will open and the doors of hell will close. The gates of heaven and hell mentioned in the Hadith are the gates of one's own inner world. The shackled satans are the satans of man's own self. As a result, even a pious person progresses in virtue. To achieve such progress, man is dependent on God's Mercy. For his part man has to struggle hard to remove impieties from himself but his efforts and supplications attract the mercy of God. Abu Sayed Khudri reports that the Holy Prophet^(sa) said that anyone who

fasts during the month of Ramadan, recognising and fulfilling all its requirements and protecting himself from all that he should shun (i.e. does not commit sins), such a person's fast becomes a recompense for his previous lapses.

A Hadith can be found which state that helping a poor person break his fast will bring salvation. These Ahadith must have been falsified by Sufis and mystics - it seems a great contradiction that on the one hand, people are required to suffer the strict discipline of Ramadan for salvation and on the other hand all that is required of them is to help a poor person break his fast. Any Hadith which contradicts the Qur'an and the nature of the Holy Prophet^(sa) should be rejected. Being kind to poor people is virtue and to help a poor person break his fast is a symbol of piety which does not remain restricted to that one deed. Allah rewards the virtuous person by enabling him to do more good, removing his sins by a gradual process. It is reported that the Holy Prophet^(sa) used to spend gener-

ously in charity but during Ramadan his charity gathered the strength of forceful winds. The practice of the Holy Prophet^(sa) was to help the poor and needy in many ways, which included breaking the fast. To ignore the needs of the poor until the time of Iftari [ending of the fast] and then to just give them a few morsels to eat and claim that this will earn one salvation is a mere fallacy.

The Holy Prophet^(sa) said that everything has a path and a door, and the door of worship is Ramadan. One interpretation of this Hadith is that a person unable to worship during Ramadan will be unable to worship during the rest of the year. So the door of worship is open. Only after passing through it will the gates of heaven open. Having passed through the door of worship, there is no turning back. One has to remain steadfast. Without worship one has no spiritual life. It is the daily food and drink for the soul and without it there can be no notion of a spiritual world. The way to be steadfast in worship is to derive pleasure from it.

People become drug addicts just for a few kicks. To become habitual in worship one has to enjoy it. This can be achieved by seeking Allah's help. First one has to become steadfast in prayer and then ask for Allah's help in finding pleasure in worship. Without discovering the true meaning of prayer, a person's life remains barren. As a result of true worship one's heart and whole life becomes adorned. As Allah says in the Qur'an: their light walks in front of them and becomes a guide for others. No matter how virtuous a person is, without a spiritual life he cannot be at peace. Islam says that whosoever bows to Allah and prostrates before Him is in peace. Although there are many noble people among the disbelievers, they are nonetheless deprived of the benefits of the higher meanings of Islam which are linked to the submission of man to Allah.

The Holy Prophet^(sa) has said that if a person finds peace in Ramadan, then the rest of the year will be peaceful for him. It is like the case of a bullet fired from a rifle - its course is set in

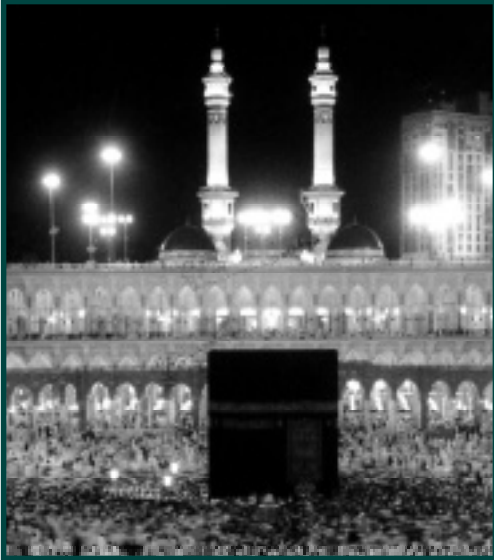
the direction that the rifle points to. So every effort should be made to maintain the pious habits developed during Ramadan and one should continue on the course set during that holy month. The rest of the year would then be peaceful.

Hadhrat Abu Huraira^(ra) reports that the Holy Prophet^(sa) said that Allah has no need for the fast of one who does not abstain from ill habits or falsehoods. A person nullifies his fast by indulging in evil. On the one hand, people are willing to forego those things that are lawful and on the other, they are not willing to abstain from unlawful acts. What a contradiction! To some extent all people suffer from this malady, if not in major sins then in minor sins. The most destructive of diseases is the telling of falsehoods. It is an acid which dissolves all piety. Great problems arise as a result of dishonesty - divorces, business losses etc. One should undertake a Jihad against falsehood and uproot all seeds of dishonesty from within oneself. A person may be

truthful in his day-to-day life, but when in a testing situation, he may lie to save his skin. This seed of falsehood must be destroyed. Dishonesty is found in many walks of life - there is welfare fraud, the misuse of government benefits, income tax fraud etc. The thieves of falsehood hide in every man's heart and in reality he worships them more than he worships Allah. At a time of difficulty even idolators call on Allah - when in a difficult position, a believer should turn to Allah and not rely on falsehoods to save himself. One needs to reflect upon oneself deeply, uproot dishonesty and only then can faith in the Unity of Allah find a place in one's heart. Ultimately, peace is faith in the Unity of Allah.

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