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**Special contributors:**

Amatul-Hadi Ahmad  
Farina Qureshi  
**Proofreaders:**  
Abdul Ghany Jahangeer  
Khan and Shaukia Mir

**Design and layout:**

Tanveer Khokhar  
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# EDITORIAL

Fazal Ahmad – UK

Being religious does not give us the sole right to judge others. If we believe that our religion is the only right path, our role is actually to be guides to our fellow beings and to show them a better way. If we are persecuted and prevented from practising our faith, then we can draw attention of others to restore our rights, but we cannot force others to adopt a certain way.

The speech at the Denmark Symposium highlights this fact in the context of the growing political tension that has unfortunately been labelled as the permission to use force. Muslims should follow the example of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> who set a precedent with his Madinah Charter in 622 CE to foster good relations between people of all backgrounds. He wept before God at the state of mankind and begged for help.

When religious communities could not tolerate the behaviour that they saw around them such as

in the town of Sodom at the time of Prophet Lot<sup>(as)</sup>, their duty was to advise them of a better way and warn them over taking the wrong course, but when this went unheeded, it was God who saved the believers from the town before it was destroyed. It was God's position to judge them, not man's.

In today's political turmoil, whereas East and West are vying for power and wealth, the common denominator amongst largely Muslims religious fundamentalists is that it is their right, or even their duty, to respond to one wrong with yet another. This is not the teaching that they have been given by their Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> or by their Holy Book, the Qur'an.

They would do well to focus on self-reformation before they try to reform others. The articles in this month's issue should give them food for thought.

# Notes & Comments

## Responsible Debt

We have just passed the Christmas festive season which has now become an annual retail bonanza. People are spending huge amounts of money on presents and festivities, often funded by borrowed money, and this trend is being seen across society in Europe and the USA. The rates of interest are low and are encouraging increased borrowing. People have taken on levels of mortgage payments and bank loans such that any increase in rates would put their houses and other assets at risk. Nations too have sometimes been forced to take on huge debts and are now indebted to the richer nations who can then impose unfair trade terms upon them to lock them into a long-term cycle of dependence.

Credit Cards are now being offered to children, and people are 'hiding' their debt by carrying multiple

credit and loyalty store cards and transferring debt from card to card every month. This is fostering a new culture in which carrying huge debt is seen as normal. This is very dangerous as young people now feel it is acceptable and indeed normal to carry huge debt and to decide which bills to pay and which to ignore. They are even starting to ignore certain bills such as those from utilities in the knowledge that they are unlikely to be pursued through the courts for payment.

Debt is so common in society that the question is often asked as to the level of debt which is considered responsible. Yet, is enough attention being paid to the lenders as to their responsibility in ensuring that their customers are not burdened with debt?

The money-lenders are sometimes

lending obscene amounts of money in the knowledge that their clients will often fail to repay the loans, and they can then asset-strip their clients to repay huge levels of interest. This leads to a spiral of debt and inability to pay, and it is often the very poor and most vulnerable members of society that are being caught in this trap. There have been numerous cases of people who see their repayment increasing as they fail to pay off the monthly interest, and can never get into a position to pay off the original loan amount. Indeed, they are then offered additional loans to pay off interest payments on other loans, or to 'consolidate' multiple loans. This is all the language of exploitation of the poor.

The moral teaching on this subject is that it is better to live within your means. It is also a duty to pay your debts, and it is immoral to withhold money from someone who is owed. Islam goes further to emphasise that it is a moral duty to pay off all debts. Muslims are unable to perform the pilgrimage (Hajj) until they have cleared all worldly debts. Likewise, the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> refused to lead the funeral prayers of one whose debts had not been

repaid. At the same time, Islam forbids the taking of interest. This is to protect people from unscrupulous money-lenders who trap them into the debt spiral discussed earlier, and also to encourage Muslims not to take on debts which they are unable to service.

In the modern era, a level of debt to finance temporary shortage is unavoidable, but being responsible requires both consumers and lenders to be cognisant of their ability to pay. The tradition of giving presents at Christmas was inspired by the spirit of making sacrifices for others. In the same way, Muslims make personal sacrifices during the month of Ramadan.

The older generations would have been reluctant to use credit cards, and they would not have been comfortable borrowing money to buy luxuries. Perhaps we need to return to their old-fashioned view of the world.

**Tanveer Khokhar – UK**

# *The Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> Nearness to God Almighty – Part 4*

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

## **Spiritual Ascent of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>**

The *Me'raj* (spiritual ascent) of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was his complete withdrawal from the world, and its purpose was to disclose the heavenly station of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. Every soul has a point in heaven beyond which it cannot proceed. The point of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was the 'Arsh. The Companion on high also connotes God. Thus, the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was honoured above everyone else.

*(Malfuzat, Vol. 2, p. 136)*

The journey of the Me'raj was not with the physical body, but was a vision of the highest type, which in effect was experienced in complete wakefulness. In such a vision, a person according to the capacity of his soul, can journey through the heavens with a body of light. As the soul of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> possessed the highest capacity, therefore, in his journey of Me'raj, he arrived at the highest point of the universe, which is described as the Great Throne. This journey was the vision in a sort of wakefulness. I

do not call it a dream, nor was it a vision of low status. This was a vision at the highest stage, which is clearer and brighter than wakefulness. I myself have experience of this type of vision. (*Izala-e-Auham, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 3, p.126, footnote*)

### **Meaning and High Station of the Seal of Prophethood**

The perfect man to whom the Holy Qur'an was revealed, was not limited in his vision, nor was there any deficiency in his sympathy in the sharing of sorrows. Both from the point of view of the time and of the place, his soul was charged with perfect sympathy. He was, therefore, bestowed a full share of the manifestations of nature and he was made *Khatam-ul-Anbiya'*, meaning not that no one would from then on receive any spiritual grace from him, rather that he possessed the seal of Prophethood and that without the attestation of that seal, no grace can reach anyone, and that for his people, the door of converse with the Divine would never be closed. Beside him, there is no

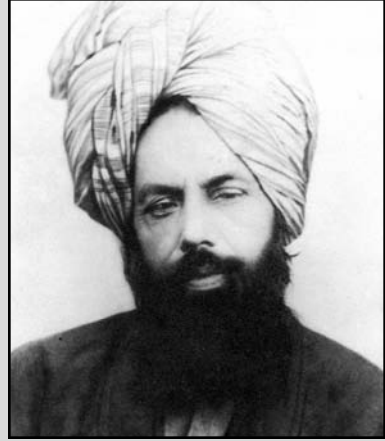
Prophet who possesses the seal of Prophethood. It is only by the testimony of his seal that a Prophethood can be bestowed for which it is a condition that the recipient must be a follower of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. His high courage and sympathy did not wish to leave his people in a condition of deficiency and were not reconciled to the door of revelation, which is at the root of all understanding, being closed. Yet, in order to preserve the sign of the closing of Prophethood, he desired that the grace of revelation should be bestowed through obedience to him and that this door should be closed to anyone who was not his follower. God appointed him *Khatam-ul-Anbiya'* in this sense.

Thus it was established till the Day of Judgement, that a person who does not prove being his follower through true obedience and who does not devote his full being to obeying him, cannot become the recipient of perfect revelation. Direct Prophethood has been ended with the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>; but Prophethood by

way of reflection, which means the receipt of revelation through the grace of Muhammad(sa) will continue till the Day of Judgement, so that the door of perfection of mankind should not be closed and this sign should not disappear from the world that the high resolve of the Holy Prophet(sa) desired that the doors of converse with the Divine should remain open till the Judgement Day and the understanding of the Divine, which is the basis of salvation, should not disappear.

*(Haqiqat-ul-Wahi, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 22, pp. 29-30)*

I affirm it with full confidence that the excellences of Prophethood attained their climax in the Holy Prophet(sa). The person who sets up a movement in opposition to him and puts forward some verity outside his Prophethood and withdraws from the fountain of Prophethood is false and an impostor. I say it plainly that a person who believes in anyone as a Prophet after the Holy Prophet(sa) and breaks the seal of



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

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad(as). In 1891, he claimed, on the basis of Divine revelation, that he was the Promised Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and by the scriptures of other faiths. His claim constitutes the basis of the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community.

his Prophethood, is accursed. That is why no Prophet can arise after the Holy Prophet(sa) who has not with him the seal of the Muhammadi Prophethood.

The Muslims who are opposed to us are involved in the error that they believe in the coming of an Israeli Prophet, who would break the seal of Prophethood. I say that it is a manifestation of the spiritual power of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and of his everlasting Prophethood that 1,300 years after him, the Promised Messiah has appeared under his training and instructions with the same seal of Prophethood. If this doctrine is *kuf'r*, I hold this *kuf'r* dear. But those whose reason has been darkened and who have not been bestowed any share in the light of Prophethood cannot understand this and hold it as *kuf'r*; whereas, this is a matter which proves the perfection of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his everlasting life.

*(Al-Hakam, 10 June 1905, p.21)*

There is no need to follow the Prophethoods and Books which passed before the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> as Muhammadi Prophethood comprises all of them, and beside it all ways are closed and all verities are included in it. No new verity will arrive after it as

there was no verity before it which is not included in it. Therefore, all Prophethood ends with this Prophethood; and so it should have been, for everything that has a beginning, has also an end, but the Muhammadi Prophethood is not deficient in beneficence. It is more beneficent than all other Prophethood. Following this Prophethood, one reaches God in a very easy manner, and by following it one is bestowed the bounty of Divine love and Divine converse more than was possible before.

Its perfect follower cannot be called simply a Prophet for this would be an insult to the perfect Muhammadi Prophethood. He can be called a follower of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and a Prophet, both together, for in this there is no insult of the perfect Muhammadi Prophethood, but its grace shines forth even to a greater degree.

*(Al-Wasiyyat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 20, p.311)*

We affirm that the person who moves away in the slightest



degree from the law of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> is a *kafir*. When anyone who turns away from following the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> is a *kafir* in our estimation, then what about one who should claim to bring a new law, or should make a change in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> or should abrogate any commandment?

In our estimation only that person is a believer who truly follows the Holy Qur'an, and believes it to be the last revealed Book, and accepts the law that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> brought into the world, as everlasting, and makes not the slightest change in it, and loses himself wholly in following it, and devotes every particle of his being to its cause, and does not oppose it intellectually or by his conduct. It is then that he would be a true Muslim.

(*Al-Hakam*, 6 May 1908, p.5)

**Istighfar of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>**

Most Christians, on account of their ignorance of the reality of *Maghfirat* – forgiveness – ima-

gine that a person who seeks *Maghfirat*, is disobedient and sinful. A deep reflection over the meaning of *Maghfirat* makes it clear that it is the one who does not seek *Maghfirat* of God Almighty who is disobedient and vile. As every true purity is bestowed by Him and He alone safeguards one against the storm of passion, it should be a preoccupation of His righteous servants to constantly seek *Maghfirat* from that True Guardian and Protector.

If we were to seek an illustration of *Maghfirat* in the physical world the best illustration would be that *Maghfirat* is a strong and unbreakable dam which is erected to hold back a flood. As all strength and all power belongs to God Almighty, and a man is weak in his soul as he is in his body, and seeks water from the Eternal Being all the time for the nurture of the tree of his being, and cannot keep alive without His grace, *Istighfar*, in its meaning that we have set out, becomes necessary and essential. As a tree puts forth its

branches in all directions, as if it spreads its hands towards the surrounding spring of water, pleading for help that its greenness should not decline and that the time of its flowering and putting forth fruit should not be lost, the same is the case with the righteous. To supplicate the Fountain of real life for the water of security to safeguard spiritual life, or to promote it, is described in the Holy Qur'an as *Istighfar*.

Reflect on the Holy Qur'an and read it with care and you will alight upon the reality of *Istighfar*. The dictionary meaning of *Maghfirat* is a covering which is designed to safeguard against a misfortune. For instance, water is an element that covers up the defects of trees and is thus *Maghfirat*. Consider what would be the condition of a garden which receives no water for a year or two. Is it not true that its beauty will be destroyed and there will be no sign left of its greenness? It will produce no fruit and no flowers. Its inside will be burnt up. Its green and

soft leaves will dry up and fall down; and dryness overcoming it, all its limbs will fall away from it like the limbs of a leper. Why will all these calamities overtake it? Because the water upon which its life depended was not available. This is referred to in the verse:

*A good word is like a good tree.*

(Ch.14: V.25)

As a good and noble tree cannot flourish without water, in the same way, the good word of a righteous person cannot flourish till a pure spring refreshes its roots by flowing in the stream of *Istighfar*. Thus the spiritual life of a person depends upon *Istighfar* through the stream of which the true spring reaches the root of humanness and safeguards it from drying up and dying.

The religion which does not set forth this philosophy is certainly not from God, and a person who claims to be a Prophet or a Messenger or righteous or pure-

natured and turns away from this spring is certainly not from God. Such a one derives not from God Almighty, but from Satan, the root meaning of which is death. He who does not desire to draw that true spring to himself and does not fill this spring to its brim from the stream of *Istighfar*, in order to make his spiritual garden flourish, is a Satan, that is to say, he will die for it is not possible that the tree should flourish without water. Every arrogant one, who does not desire to make his spiritual tree flourish from this spring of life is a Satan and will be ruined like Satan. There has been no righteous Prophet in the world who turned away from the reality of *Istighfar* and did not desire to flourish through this real spring. It is true that our lord and master Muhammad, the chosen one(sa) supplicated more than anyone else for this flourishing and therefore God caused him to flourish and be fragrant more than all other Prophets.

*(Nur-ul-Qur'an No. 1, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 9, pp. 356-358)*

## **Majesty and Humility of the Holy Prophet(sa)**

In the two blessed names of the Holy Prophet, Muhammad(sa) and Ahmad(sa) there are two separate excellences. Muhammad(sa) which means greatly praised, signifies majesty and greatness and carries the flavour of being a beloved one, for a beloved one is praised. It is necessary, therefore, that it should signify majesty. But Ahmad(sa) has the flavour of a lover for it is a lover's part to praise and he praises the beloved. As Muhammad(sa) signifies majesty and greatness, Ahmad(sa) signifies humility.

His life as a Prophet was divided into two parts; one spent in Makkah which extended over thirteen years and the other spent in Madinah extending over ten years. His Makkan life illustrated his name Ahmad. During that period his time was spent weeping before God, in seeking His help and in supplication. He who is fully informed of his Makkan life knows that the weeping and supplication that he carried out during that period no

lover had ever carried out in the search of his beloved.

His weeping was not for himself but was on account of his awareness of the condition of the world. The worship of God had disappeared and God Almighty, having put faith in his soul, had inspired him with a joy and delight. He naturally desired to communicate this delight and love to the world, but when he observed the condition of the world and the capacities and natures of the people, he was confronted with great difficulties. He wept over this condition of the world so much that he put his life in danger. This is indicated in the verse:

*Haply thou wilt grieve thyself to death because they believe not.*

(Ch.26: V.4)

This was his life of supplication and was the manifestation of his name Ahmad. At that time he was concentrating in a grand manner and the concentration manifested its effect in his life in

Madinah at the time when the significance of his name Muhammad was revealed, as is indicated in the verse:

*They prayed for victory, and as a result thereof every haughty enemy of truth came to naught.*

(Ch.14: V.16)

He who is familiar with the mode of expression of the Holy Qur'an knows that sometimes the Noble and Merciful One uses an expression for His special servants which is apparently derogatory, but which in its context signifies great praise. As God Almighty said with regard to the Holy Prophet(sa):

*And found thee lost in love for thy people and provided thee with guidance for them.*

(Ch.93: V.8)

The word Dhaall primarily means one who is misguided and the literal interpretation of the verse would be: God found you misguided and guided you; whereas, the Holy Prophet(sa) was

never misguided, and a Muslim who believes that at any time in his life the Holy Prophet(sa) was misguided, is a faithless *kafir* and would deserve punishment. The verse should be understood by reflecting upon the context in which it is placed, which is that Allah the Exalted first stated about the Holy Prophet(sa):

*Did He not find thee an orphan and take thee under His care, and found thee lost in love for thy people and provided thee with guidance for them, and found thee in want and enriched thee?*

(Ch.93: Vs.7-9)

Allah the Exalted found thee an orphan and helpless, and He gave thee shelter by Himself and found thee *Dhaall* (in love with Himself) and drew thee towards Him and found thee indigent and enriched thee.

*(A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 5, pp. 170-171)*

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

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

# Denmark

## SYMPOSIUM

*An address delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V, worldwide Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community during his European 2005 official tour at a Symposium in Denmark.*

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I will elaborate what the local Imam of the Mosque and the Integrations Minister have said just now according to the basic teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the teachings of the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup>.

In order to assess any faith, its basic teachings are examined. We, being Ahmadi Muslims, also try to find out the example set by the Founder at the time when the foundations of that faith were laid. So, that means that there are two things: the basic teachings of the Book and the second, the practice of the Founder of that faith. When we examine Islam by this yardstick, we shall have to discover what the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, the Book of the Laws of Islam, were when this Book was revealed to the Holy

Prophet Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>.

In different places, the Holy Qur'an contains such commandments that God Almighty requires man to obey and it also highlights those things that God forbids. Time does not permit me to present all the do's and don'ts set out in the Holy Qur'an, but what I have prepared, I may not be able to finish in this short address, but somehow I will try to be brief and comprehensive.

Whereas God has commanded man to obey His commands, He has also elaborated what those commandments are. And what are these commandments? God Almighty says that it is your fulfilment of two kinds of obligations. One is the obligation that man owes to the Creator to

worship Him and create a bond with that Living God Who is Omnipotent and the Fountainhead of all powers, Who responds to the prayers of His people and removes their difficulties, who nourishes and brings them up, Who is extremely kind and benevolent to His people and Who rewards their smallest effort. So all these favours demand that a man should be filled with gratitude and appreciation, should bow down before Him, and, compared to Him, should regard all other powers insignificant. This is why God has commanded: O ye people who call yourselves Muslims, it is your duty to not only worship Me in response to these bounties that I have bestowed on you but also to tell the world that the sole purpose of life is that man should worship the One God.

The second important obligation or objective for which man has been created by God Almighty and Whose teachings have been given to us by the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> is the obligation to

discharge the rights owed to the people. These include not only: to treat people with kindness; to remove their hardships; to adopt higher values; to urge others towards good works and refrain them from evil; to help the poor, feed the hungry; to discharge trusts honestly; to offer sacrifice in order to help remove the difficulties that people face; to forgive others; to be patient; to honour one's covenants; to co-operate with one another; to stay away from suspicion or speak ill of anyone; to excel in good works; to bear true testimony; but, in fact, God Almighty has gone so far as to say that the others have a right over you so much so that not even anyone's enmity should prevent you from dealing with them other than in absolute justice and you should not resort to lies to cause them harm. So this is the beautiful teaching that Islam gives.

There are many other commandments like these but I have chosen a few. Let me now quote you about some of the

commandments that I have mentioned from the Holy Qur'an so that you may understand that this is not at all a bad teaching but some extremists have given their own interpretation to it to serve their vested interests.

God Almighty has commanded us that a Muslim should enjoin what is good and forbid evil, and if you do that, in that lies your greatness as He says:

*You are the best people raised for the good of mankind; you enjoin what is good and forbid evil and believe in Allah...*

(Holy Qur'an, Ch.3: V.111)

Now, as stated in the Holy Qur'an, you have been created for the good of mankind. So it cannot be that one should be created for the good of mankind but nothing but mischief should come from him and mankind should suffer and be terrorised by him. In fact, God Almighty has taught the Muslims to work for the good of mankind and guide them towards that which is good.

Invite them towards God, your Creator, and fulfil the obligation that they owe to Him and His people. Each person should benefit from a Muslim. The Muslims should stop those who are involved in evil and cause loss and suffering to people and are killing God's creation without rhyme or reason. In this way, they should help the afflicted and guide the cruel person to stop. Only if you do this can you be a believer in God.

These, in a nutshell, are the fundamental commands that God Almighty gave to the Muslims and if we obey these commands, this is the adornment of a Muslim. In this commandment, a Muslim has been made responsible for the good and betterment of the entire mankind but there is no licence to take up the sword and reform people by force. Instead, Muslims should try to lead those who have gone astray from the path of God towards God Almighty as He has said:

*Call unto the way of thy Lord*



**‘ In this commandment, a Muslim has been made responsible for the good and betterment of the entire mankind but there is no licence to take up the sword and reform people by force. Instead, Muslims should try to lead those who have gone astray from the path of God towards God Almighty. ’**

*with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in a way that is best.*

(Holy Qur’an, Ch.16: V.126)

Thus if anyone is engaged in evil, explain to him in the best manner that he understands. If the recommendation is good, and the intentions of the counsellor are good and not foul or filled with hatred, then the effect of such advice will be good. Nowhere is there any teaching of using force in any advice or guidance. If war erupts between nations, nations are urged to unite and act against the despot or cruel nation, but the moment it stops being cruel, hostilities should stop. There is no teaching to keep annihilating that nation out of malice or rancour. Then there is no teaching to go and finish off its people indiscriminately in order

to destroy the power of a group or government. In the same way, no person living in any country has been authorised to kill people indiscriminately to obtain his personal rights or as a result of his show of strength. This is why the Holy Qur’an teaches:

*...Whosoever killed a person - unless it be for killing a person (that is to say who has murdered another) or for creating disorder in the land - it shall be as if he had killed all mankind.*

(Holy Qur’an, Ch.5: V.33)

So this is that holy teaching that Islam has taught us in order to maintain peace in the world: that to kill a person without a cause is like killing the entire mankind. Neither an individual nor a group has any right to take the law into

**“ If instead of wasting food or planning how to stitch the poorer nations into bondage, the well-to-do nations were to provide them with the food they need and educate the people of these poorer countries, especially in the African countries, so that they become good citizens, then mistrust and disorder would disappear from the world. ”**

his or its hand and engage in such an act. But if nations rain down shells from the skies which result in indiscriminate destruction of human lives, then their action too is like the killing of the whole of mankind. Such acts, sadly, are common in today's world. Everybody is involved in it, whether they be Muslim or Christian, the East or West. And this is happening because their love of the world and materialism has blinded them and made them forgetful of their God. Pride, arrogance and malice control their hearts. Suspicion and mistrust have grown.

Many quarrels and fights start in the world as a result of suspicions and mistrust. Islam teaches us to stay away from these because sometimes

suspicions that lead to quarrels and disputes make one sinful. Just take a look at the world today; there are many disputes whose roots lie in suspicions. Muslims do not trust some leaders of the West. Some people of the West do not trust Muslims. The wickedness of one person or a few crackpots is thrust on all Muslim followers even though an overwhelming majority is not involved in anything that causes harm or loss to others. But when after an incident, western nations accuse all Muslims for it, then an ordinary Muslim who had nothing to do with it would naturally react by talking ill of the West. In the same way, when western nations make an incident a basis for justifying cruelties against a Muslim country or coercing it, then some Muslim

cells or groups that have absolutely no connection with the fundamental teachings of Islam, engage in suicide bombings and take the lives of innocent people. If such mistrust and suspicions are cast away and by recognising each other as fellow human beings, they bridge people by removing the disparity of weakness and poverty, and sit down together, then this mistrust can be removed and peace restored.

This is the requirement of fairness and this is what justice demands. This is the teaching of Islam and Muslims should be the biggest role models of it because the sign of their being the best people is that all their actions are designed to restore the dignity of humanity.

By the grace of God Almighty, the Ahmadiyya Muslim community is pressed into conveying this message to the world and has been raising the slogan of peace, respect for humanity and love for all in all corners of the world. Having

succumbed to this feeling of love and affection and kindness for human beings, we are engaged in the service of humanity in poor nations of the world. Despite meagre resources, we try to provide food and water and educational facilities to poorer people out of kindness for humanity. If instead of wasting food or planning how to stitch the poorer nations into bondage, the well-to-do nations were to provide them with the food they need and educate the people of these poorer countries, especially in the African countries, so that they become good citizens, then mistrust and disorder would disappear from the world. This is the most appropriate method of reformation.

Now I would like to tell you what the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community taught us and what he expected from us. The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at (community), whom we accept as the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> and Mahdi and whose advent was in accordance with the prophecies made by the Holy

Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> has enjoined us to cultivate and act on that beautiful guidance. He said: If you want to be associated with me and if you want to join my Community, you will have to purify yourselves from cruelty and rebellion. He taught that the assumption of Jihad with force has ended with his advent. Perform your Jihad, he said, but in the manner that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> performed Jihad-e-Akbar and that Jihad is guiding people to Allah, exhorting others to righteousness, reformation of oneself and service to mankind. I give you an excerpt from his teachings.

The Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> enjoins,

‘I advise you to abstain from vice and treat humanity with sympathy and justice. Cleanse your hearts of malice and rancour and you will become like angels. What an unclean and impure religion it is that has no compassion for humanity and what an unchaste path it is that is littered with the thorns of malevolence. So, those of you

who are with me, do not be like those who wonder what religion means. Is it that your conduct should always be hurting humanity? No, religion means gaining that life which is within God; and that life has not been acquired, nor will it ever be acquired by anyone except when Divine virtues penetrate someone. For the sake of God, take pity on all so that Heaven may take pity on you. Come! I will show you a way by which your light will be superior to all other lights and that is that you give up all malevolence and jealousy and become compassionate to all mankind.’

*(Government Angrezi aur Jihad: Roohani Khazain vol. 17, p. 14)*

Then, the Promised Messiah<sup>(as)</sup> commands:

‘It is desirable that compassion for all mankind should be your principle, and your hands and tongues and notions in your hearts should

avoid all foul schemes, rebellious manners and breach of trust. Fear Allah and worship Him with purity of heart and desist from cruelty, trespass, embezzlement, bribery, defrauding others and favouritism. Avoid bad company. Divert your eyes from stares and save your ears from listening to slander and never think of causing harm to any religion or a nation or a tribe or any human being. Become true counsel to everyone and it is desirable that rebellious and evil people, people of bad conduct and wicked people should never be in your company. Avoid every sin and try to gain every virtue. Your hearts should be free of deceit and your hands should be clean of any cruelty and your eyes should be clean of any impurity and there should never be nurtured in you any plan of evil or rebellion' (*Kashful Ghata*; Roohani Khazain vol. 14, p. 187).

the beautiful teachings that the Ahmadiyya Jama'at always keeps in the forefront as guidance and this is the teaching that it is trying to spread throughout the world so that the world can recognise its Creator and fulfil the rights of each other thus creating an environment of peace and love in this world.

Finally, let me thank all the guests who spared their valuable time to attend this meeting. Thank you again.

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This is the summary of Islam and

# *Rebuttal of Maududian Philosophy*

*This is the third extract taken from the book Murder in the Name of Allah, and it deals with Maududi's misinterpretation of the Islamic concept of Jihad.*

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The Hindu rivalist movements took an aggressive turn in the early 1920s after the failure of the joint Hindu-Muslim khilafat movement. The Hindu Mahasabha, founded at Hardwar in 1914 by Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861-1946), joined the Arya Samaj in its campaign of shuddi (re-conversion) and purification of Muslims, initially in the Punjab, the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh), the Deccan and other parts of India. By forcing Muslims to 'wash away their pollution' with total immersion in a river or water-tank, Hindu gangs provoked communal rioting. Between 1922 and 1926 over 200 Hindu-Muslim clashes were reported. Verbal and written attacks on Islam and Islam's Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> became widespread. In their religious zeal, the writers of

shuddi literature made scurrilous attacks on the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. An Arya Samaj preacher, Pandit Kalicharan Sharma, wrote his own account. He emphasised the Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> alleged immorality and the fact that he married to 'correct' the view of history. His book, *Vichitra Jiwan (Strange Life)*, also stressed 'the spread of Islam by the sword.' All Muslims, according to Pandit Sharma, were intent on looting, arson and rape. In May 1924, a Lahore book-seller, *Rajpal*, published an Urdu tract by an anonymous author criticising the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. The tract, *Rangila Rasul (Playboy Prophet)* suggests that all great religious leaders are associated with sets of ideas and symbols. For instance, the founder of Arya Samaj, Swami Dayanand, had glorified celibacy and closely

identified his reforms with the Vedas. Similarly, the life and faith of the Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup> were linked closely with relationships with women. Rajpal was later murdered by two Muslim youths, which led to Hindu-Muslim rioting. Another Hindu wrote an article, 'A trip to hell', in *Risala-i-Vartman* describing the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> in hell and elaborating on his sufferings and 'sins'.

The Ahmadiis of undivided India immediately got themselves together and defeated the re-conversion movement on its own ground. The Imam of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam at the time, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad<sup>(ra)</sup>, also took a positive step. He decided that there should be inter-faith conferences where the leaders of different faiths should meet and explain their beliefs in order to pull down the walls of ignorance and prejudice. He set up an annual conference for just this purpose. It was called Yaum-i-Paishwayan-i-Madhahib (The Day of Religious Founders). On

that day, for instance, a Muslim would speak of the greatness of Krishna<sup>(as)</sup> or Buddha<sup>(as)</sup>, while a Hindu would talk of Islam's Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, putting right misunderstandings about him which were being spread by propagandists. The Ahmadi attitude during this unfortunate time of calumny and hatred was that non-Muslims should be educated and given the message of love and peace which the Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup> gave the world. Accusations and sectarian diatribes do not help a missionary preach his faith. He should instead emphasise the good points of his religion. The Imam of the Ahmadiyya Movement also persuaded the government of India – then British – to strengthen the law to protect the honour of religious leaders. The Punjab governor, William Hailey, who was briefed by Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad<sup>(ra)</sup>, recommended that the government of India change the law by banning material blatantly offensive to religious feeling.<sup>1</sup> The government accepted this recommendation. A bill was

accordingly drafted to add a new section to the Indian Penal Code, 295A, which made it an offence to insult or to attempt to insult the religious beliefs of any class of people. The bill was passed in 1927 by the Legislative Assembly.

But Indian Muslims were very upset and indignant at this time. A Muslim calligrapher, Abdul Rashid, outraged by such malicious attacks on the Holy Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> life, murdered Swami Shraddhanand, a shuddi leader. Rashid was tried and hanged. Thousands of Delhi Muslims went to the Delhi District jail to collect his body and he was buried as a martyr. This glorification of murder enraged the Hindus, who called Islam a religion of violence and force which relied on jihad and not reason or virtue.<sup>2</sup> A young journalist, Abul Ala Maududi, answered these accusations in a series of articles in *Al-Jamiyat*, the newspaper of the Jamiyat Ulama-i-Hind. These articles were subsequently published in book form as *Al-Jihad fil Islam*.

In the first part of this book, Maududi convincingly proved that the wars fought by the Prophet of Islam<sup>(sa)</sup> were defensive. He fought to establish freedom of conscience and opposed all attempts to suppress the peaceful work of preaching Islam. Having convinced the reader that Islam did indeed establish the freedom of conscience, the Maulana himself seems to cast doubt on his own argument by adding this rider:

That freedom of conscience is limited to faith and religion only. It does not mean that people have freedom to commit sin. Islam does not permit the use of force for conversion, but force may be used – in fact, should be used – to prevent people from doing wrong. Non-Muslim countries and cultures cannot be allowed to practise immoral deeds and force used to keep these countries free of vice should be clearly distinguished from that used to convert people to Islam.



Thus, the Maulana evolved a tortuous method of interpreting the Qur'an and the tradition (hadith) of the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> to prove his point. Maulana Maududi goes a little deeper in discussing the use of force and explains the purpose of verse 29 of Chapter 9 in the Qur'an. Quoting it out of context, he says:

The words: 'Until they pay the jizya' fully explain the purpose of war [prevention of vice]. If the words were: 'until they accept Islam' then, of course, one could say that Islam uses force to spread its faith. But the words, 'until they pay the jizya' are clear. Consent to pay the jizya ends the war. After this, the life and property of non-Muslims are inviolable, whether or not they accept Islam.

Maulana Maududi began writing his book to prove that Islam gives complete freedom of conscience and that the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> went to war because his opponents were suppressing that very freedom. This was in

answer to non-Muslim claims that Islam is based on two main principles: the forcing of people to do good and the prevention of them from indulging in vice. Since forcing people to do good is against the freedom of conscience, Islam refrains from it. But the Maulana is a little forgetful, for he quotes the Qur'anic words which say that a war should be stopped after non-Muslims have agreed to pay the jizya. How could a war, begun purely to prevent vice, ever be won if the enemy pays the jizya without promising to wipe out vice? The Maulana's aim was to impose the poll tax. Since an agreement had been reached for its payment, the second principle of Islam, prevention of vice, had been conveniently forgotten. The final part of Maulana Maududi's logic, however, nullifies the very purpose for which he wrote this book. He says:

When all methods of persuasion failed, the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> took to the sword. That sword removed mischief, the impurities of

evil and the filth of the soul. The sword did something more – it removed their blindness so they could see the light of truth – and it also cured them of their arrogance: arrogance which prevents people from accepting the truth, stiff necks and proud heads bowed with humility. As in Arabia, so in other countries, Islam's expansion was so fast that within a century a quarter of the world accepted Islam. This conversion took place because the sword of Islam cut away the veils which had covered men's hearts.<sup>3</sup>

This portion of the Maulana's reasoning defeats his promise that Islam establishes freedom of conscience. It also is repugnant to the spirit of Islam. One mistake leads to another. Finally, after 137 pages of sophistry, the Maulana declares: 'While it is incorrect to say that Islam converts with the sword, it is also wrong to say that the sword did not play any role in conversion'.<sup>4</sup>

The Maulana began his book with the declared intention of proving that the wars fought by the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> were 'defensive'. He fought to establish freedom of conscience, yet ends up joining hands with Islam's enemies. In doing so, the Maulana opens the doors for an orientalist onslaught. The prestige he enjoys among a small, but vocal, minority of Western-educated Muslims helps the orientalists, who bolster their anti-jihad arguments with the Maulana's brandished sword to 'play a role in the preaching of Islam'.

Less than two years after the Hijrah (the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madinah), his companions were confronted by a thousand Makkans, determined to blot out Islam, its Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> and his followers. It was dawn on Friday, 17th March AD 623 (17 Ramadan, 2 AH) when the Makkans with 700 camels and a cavalry of 100 horses began descending towards the valley of Badr from the slope of Aqanqal, twenty miles south of Madinah.

There were just 313 Muslims there to defend Islam. They had only two horses and were so short of arms that when Ukkashah's sword was broken during the fighting, the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> could only replace it with a wooden club, which he used instead. Their situation became so desperate that the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> cried out: 'Allah! If this small band of Muslims is annihilated today, no one will be left to worship Thee!'

As Montgomery Watt puts it, Abu Jahl was 'presumably hoping to get rid of Muhammad once and for all'<sup>5</sup>. Will Durant agrees with Watt: 'If Mohammed had been defeated his career might have ended there and then.'<sup>6</sup> Abu Jahl's hopes were, however, not fulfilled and the Muslims successfully defended themselves against the well-equipped and far superior Makkan forces.

Islamic history has preserved the names of all 313 Companions of the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> who defended Islam in the valley of Badr. One

wonders what role the sword played in converting these 300-odd Muslims. Among them were Abu Bakr<sup>(as)</sup>, Umar<sup>(as)</sup>, Uthman<sup>(as)</sup> and Ali<sup>(as)</sup>, who succeeded the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> as his caliphs. Was it the sword which removed the 'dross' from their hearts? Then there were Awf b. Harith, Umar b. Salimah, Muawwidh and many others who fell that day. The exact details of their conversion are not unknown. Can anyone say that the filth of their souls and the evil of their hearts were cleansed by the blade of a sword?

The three great Companions who later fought so valiantly to defend the faith were Sad b. Abi Waqqas, Abu Ubaydah b. al-Jarrah and Khalid b. Walid. None was converted to Islam by force. Hundreds of Emigrants (Muhajirun) and thousands of Helpers (Ansar) were converted and gave the persecuted Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> sanctuary. No sword was involved in their conversion. These converts were the fruits of Islam, the pride of mankind, the signposts on the path to ultimate

truth. What greater insult to them than to say their hearts were purified by the sword, or to suggest that it was ‘fallacious to say that the sword did not play any role in [their] conversion’?

What were these people before the advent of Islam? Before Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>, Arabia existed as a political unit only, as Will Durant pointed out. He said: ‘In the careless nomenclature of the Greeks, who called all the population of the peninsula Sarakenoi (Saracens), apparently from the Arabic sharqiun, ‘easterners’.<sup>7</sup> Previously they were called ‘Scenite Arabs’ – Arabs who lived in tents (from the Greek word skene, a tent. They lived in an arid land and communication problems meant there was tribal self-sufficiency. During the second millennium before the Christian era, the Arabs domesticated the camel, an animal perfectly suited to the desert. It provided milk for sustenance and urine for medicinal use. Its meat was tender and its hide and hair made tents and clothing. Even its dung could be used for fuel. It could go

for twenty-five days in winter without water and five in summer, small groups of nomads followed the camels, the camels being their most important resource. Aloy Sprenger summed up the whole pre-Islamic Saracen history by describing the Arabs as the ‘camel’s parasites’.

The Arab felt no duty of loyalty to any group larger than his own tribe, but the intensity of his devotion varied inversely to its extent; for his tribe, he would do with conscience what civilised people do only for their country, religion or race - i.e., lie, steal, kill and die.<sup>8</sup>

He was bound by no written laws and no state existed to enforce the law.

Arabs mourned the birth of daughters and hid their faces in shame. Sometimes daughters were killed at birth. If they survived, their natural charm might earn them a few years of love from husbands and lovers who would go to the ends of the earth to defend their honour. But

they were no more than pieces of property. They were part of the estate of their fathers, husbands or sons and were bequeathed with other belongings. They were also slaves, rarely friends of their fathers, husbands or brothers.

The Arab gave scant thought to life after death. He offered human sacrifice; he worshipped 'sacred' stones. The centre of this stone worship was Makkah. In pre-Muslim days, within the Ka'aba, were several idols supposed to represent gods. The great god of Makkah was Hubal, an idol made of cornelian. But in the Hijaz, three goddesses – Lat, Manat and Uzza – had pride of place as the daughters of God.

Well-built and strong, the Arab could live on just a few dates and some camel's milk. From the date palm, he made a wine which raised him up into poetic flights of imagination and romance. His life alternated between loving and fighting and he was quick to avenge insult and injury, not only for himself but also on his tribe's behalf.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was the law. Never-ending shame awaited an avenger if he could not kill his tormentor. A large part of his life was spent in tribal vendetta (Arabic *tha'r*). In the pre-Islamic Arab history *Ayyam ul-Arab*, (Days of the Arabs), was the name applied to the battles the Arabs fought among themselves. Particular days were called, for example, Day of Buath or Days of al-Fijar. These inter-tribal hostilities generally sprang from disputes over cattle, land or springs. One of the most famous was fought between the Banu-Bakr and their kinsmen the Banu-Taghlib over a she-camel, owned by an old woman from Bakr called Basus. A Taghlib chief had wounded the camel ... the resulting war lasted forty years! It ended only when both tribes had exhausted each other. Another famous war was the Day of Dahis and Al-Ghabra, which erupted over the unfair conduct of two chieftains in a race between a horse (named Dahis) and a mare (called Al-Ghabra). War broke out soon after the

Basus conflict ended and continued at intervals for several decades.

This was the social background in which Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> was brought up and these were the people whom God gave the first opportunity of embracing a persecuted prophet's faith.

To suggest that these fierce and warlike people – who would sound the battle cry at the drop of a hat – could have been converted by force is to contradict history. Moreover, it demeans the faith of those pioneers who put their lives at stake to defend Islam at the battle of Badr.

Usayd b. Hudayr, Sad b. Khaythamah, Asd b. Zurahah, Abdullah b. Rawahah, Sad b. Ubadah, Mundhir b. Amir, Bara b. Marur, Ubadah b. as-Sami, Rafi b. Malik and many other Helpers travelled all the way from Madinah to Makkah to embrace Islam. Even to hint that the sword played a part in their conversion is also to deny historical fact.

While in Christian history it is religion which converts swords into ploughshares<sup>9</sup>, Maulana Maududi's interpretation of Islamic history asks us to believe it is the sword which prepares the soil of the soul to receive religion's seed<sup>10</sup>. Was it the Holy Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> sword or a few verses of the Holy Qur'an which turned Umar b. Khattab – a sworn enemy of Islam into Islam's devoted servant?

In the early days of the Prophet's, persecution, Umar, a headstrong young man of 26, decided to kill the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>, thus wiping out the main cause of division among the Quraysh. On his way to the Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> house, he met Nuaim b. Abdullah, who sensed his evil intentions and said: 'O Umar! Go back to the people of thy house! Thy sister, Fatima, and thy brother-in-law, Saeed, have embraced the religion of Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>. And, without a single word, Umar went straight to his sister's house, where a Companion, Khabbab, was reciting the opening verses of the Surah, Ta-Ha (XX). As soon as

Umar went in, Khabbab hid in a corner and Fatima hid the pages of the Qur'an in her clothing: But Umar had overheard Khabbab's recital and attacked both Saeed and Fatima. When Fatima was covered in blood, he softened and asked to see the verses, He read them and exclaimed: 'How beautiful and how noble these words are!' And he went straight to Arqam's house, where the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was sitting with his Companions. He cried out: 'O Messenger of Allah! I have come to thee that I may declare my faith in Allah and His Messenger and in what he hath brought from Allah.'

Why is Maulana Maududi so determined to paint a violent picture of Islam? Why are there contradictions in his theory of jihad? A glance at the Maulana's background and the conditions under which he wrote his book, *Al-Jihad fil Islam*, can help us answer these questions.

Syed Abul Ala-Maududi spent his childhood and early youth in Hyderabad (Deccan) where the

Nizam still ruled in the style of the great Mughal and where his Hindu prime minister sang the praises of the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>.<sup>11</sup> At the crossroads, from north to south and east to west, it was the last stronghold of Mughal – predominantly Muslim – culture in India. In a state where the population was overwhelmingly Hindu (more than 80 per cent) and Muslims were a small minority just 10 per cent), the ruler though without effective power, still recalled the past glory of Mughal rule. It was an unreal world. The court, with its Paigah nobility, chamberlains, household troops, brocade sherwanis, ceremonial dastar (turban), bugloos (buckle) and gorgeous jewellery, was a reminder of the Delhi Court before it was ravaged by Nadir Shah (1739). There were Arab mercenaries with gilded daggers and long muskets and the regular army with all the paraphernalia of modern warfare. The rajas and maharajahs, some of them reigning over areas larger than the Hindu states of British India, occupied the highest places of

honour in the Nizam's government and were part of a surreal picture of Muslim tolerance and Hindu loyalty.

Though the Hyderabad culture was recognisably Indian based, it was largely Muslim in shape. 'Social organisation was still feudal, but not in any sense primitive. It was highly cultivated with a grace of manner, and, above all, a tolerance and mutual respect which could speak volumes to our generation if we could listen.'<sup>12</sup>

It was in this Hyderabad that the young Maududi's personality was formed<sup>13</sup>. Sensitive and impressionable, he started his journalistic career in 1918 by joining the editorial staff of the Medina (Bijnore). After working as editor of the Taj (Jabalpur) he took over the editorship of Al-Jamiyat (Delhi) in 1925. The shuddi movement was at its height and, as mentioned earlier, at this time the young editor of Al-Jamiyat started writing his articles. They were obviously

written under the pressure of his day-to-day work and they were all completed within six months.<sup>14</sup> Maududi began to write these articles 'more as a nationalist than a religious zealot', but on further study of Islamic literature – as much as he could read in six months and without Islamic schooling – he became a religious revivalist.<sup>15</sup> Both his articles in *Al-Jihad fil Islam* and the overall evolution of his own thought were very much piecemeal. He started writing the book as a nationalist Indian<sup>16</sup> and, as such, his aim was to prove to the Indian Hindus, and especially to Gandhiji, that Islam was not a religion of violence. In a speech at Jami Masjid, Delhi, the great Indian Muslim leader, Maulana Muhammad Ali Jowhar, said he wished that a Muslim would write a book pointing out that Islam had nothing to do with violence. Young Maududi was among the audience and decided to take up the task.<sup>17</sup> So, in the first instalments of his articles, he pointed out to Hindus that Islam was not a religion of the



sword. But our author was born and bred in a Muslim kingdom where the Hindu majority was under a Muslim leader.

The writer of two books on the history of Hyderabad<sup>18</sup> was steeped in the power of political authority. He soon contradicted his own arguments against the jihad of the sword. This Hyderabad Muslim was to assert: 'It is fallacious to say that the sword did not play any role in conversion.' The young journalist was neither a historian nor a scholar of religion. He could not understand that though Muslim dynasties ruled the Deccan for 600 years, the overwhelming majority of that area remained Hindu. Political power in Muslim hands has never helped conversion to Islam. The author of *Jihad fil Islam* was just 24 years old. And the Maulana, even at the age of 65, remained 'superficial'. As Prof. Fazlur Rahman observed:

Maududi, though not an alim, was nevertheless a self-taught man of considerable intelli-

gence and sufficient knowledge... He was by no means an accurate or profound scholar, but he was undoubtedly like a fresh wind in the stifling Islamic atmosphere created by the traditional madrasas.... But Maududi displays nowhere the larger and more profound vision of Islam's role in the world. Being a journalist rather than a serious scholar he wrote at great speed and with resultant superficiality in order to feed his eager young readers – and he wrote incessantly.... Not one of Maududi's followers ever became a serious student of Islam, the result being that, for the faithful, Maududi's statements represented the last word on Islam – no matter how much and how blatantly he contradicted himself from time to time on such basic issues as economic policy and political theory.<sup>19</sup>

The late Mufti Kifayatullah of Delhi held the same opinion. He said:

‘I know Maulana Abul Ala Maududi. He has neither learned from nor been disciplined by a scholar of repute. He is very well read but his understanding of religion is weak.’<sup>20</sup>

The late Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani foresaw the danger very clearly and said:

‘His pamphlets and books contain opinions which are anti-religious and heretic, though written with theological trappings. Lay readers cannot see through these trappings. As a result they find the Islam brought by the Holy Prophet repugnant; the Islam which has been followed by the Ummat-i-Muhammadiya for the last 1350 years.’<sup>21</sup>

In one of his letters, Maulana Qari Muhammad Tayyab wrote:

‘Having read Maududi Sahib's writings I have concluded that he did not acquire the disciplines of

Muslim legal philosophy and mysticism. He cannot write on them with authority.’<sup>22</sup>

The late Maulana Ahmad Ali Lahori also wrote in the same vein: Maududi Sahib wants to present a ‘New Islam’ to the Muslims. And Muslims will not accept a ‘New Islam’ unless the old Islam, which they have followed for the last 1,350 years, is not fully destroyed and it is proved that Islam has become irrelevant and impractical.<sup>23</sup>

Maulana Maududi, as we have seen, was neither an historian nor a religious scholar. He was essentially a journalist and he had the two basic qualities of a journalist: a good command of the Urdu language and the ability to write quickly. *The Al-Jamiyat* was a bi-weekly at that time and he had to write his column on jihad within two or three days, in addition to editing his newspaper. Having no background in research and no time for it then, he mistook the battle of Hunayn (30 January 630), which came soon after the submission of

Makkah (11 January), as a turning-point in Islamic history. Since Islam's enemies were decisively beaten at Hunayn, the Maulana concluded that it was this victory and the political power gained through it, which helped the conversion of the whole of Arabia to Islam. Maulana Maududi is not alone in drawing this conclusion. The orientalists, who see no moral or spiritual force in Islamic teachings and are unable to understand the great miracles performed by our Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> have always put Muslim expansion down to force. The orientalists divided the life of the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> into two sections, the first the period of Makkan persecution and second the period of conquest after his migration to Madinah. Our young journalist, Abul Ala Maududi, with his superficial knowledge of Islamic history, accepted this apparently simplistic but, in reality, very clever division of the Holy Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> life.

Armed conflict, war and threats

of war were forced constantly on the Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. After he migrated to Madinah, the pagans of Makkah and the Jews of Madinah, encouraged by the hypocrites, busily plotted against Islam. They inspired hatred against Muslims and worked pagan Arabs up to a fever pitch against the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup>. All the defensive actions the Muslims were forced to take obstructed the Prophet's<sup>(sa)</sup> basic mission. Muslims needed peace but, as our examination will show, that peace was deliberately disturbed to prevent them from spreading the new faith.

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### Notes

1. William Hailey, to the Government of India, 25 July and 12 August 1927, Government of India Home Political Proceedings 1927, 132.
2. *Al-Jihad fi'l Islam*, 93. In the second of the subsequent quotations, the words in square brackets have been added. The Arabic words are: 'an yadin wahum saghirun'.
3. Ibid., 138.
4. Ibid.
5. W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad

- at Medina (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1981), 15.
6. Will Durant, *The Story of Civilisation*, 11 vols. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1950); vol.IV, *The Age of Faith*, 168.
  7. *Ibid.*, 157.
  8. *Ibid.*
  9. 'They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.' *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 2:4.
  10. Maulana Maududi's original Urdu word is *qalbarani*, literally 'ploughing'.
  11. Maharaja Kishen Perhad Shad was a Persian and Urdu poet and was known for his *Nati-i-Rasul* (Hymns honouring the Holy Prophet<sup>(sw)</sup>).
  12. Harriet Rouken Lynton and Mohini Rajan, *The Days of the Beloved* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), ix. The book describes the life and times of Mahbub Pasha (1869-1911), the sixth Nizam of Hyderabad.
  13. He was born on 25 September 1903 in Aurangabad; Arif Batalwi, *Aik Maududi Das Islam* (Lahore).
  14. Mu Inuddin Aqil, *Tahrik-i-Pakistan aur Maulana Maududi*, (Karachi: Khayal-Nau, 1971), 27. Most of the biographical details in this book are taken from Muhammad Yusuf's *Maulana Maududi Apni aur Dusron ki Nazar Main* (Lahore: Maktaba Al-Habib, n.d.).
  15. Muhammad Yusuf, *op. cit.*, 363-4; and Mu Inuddin Aqil, *op. cit.*, 27.
  16. Maulana Maududi had earlier written a book on Gandhiji's biography but it was banned before its publication. Arif Batalvi, *Aik Maududi Das Islam*, *op.cit.*,10; see Mumtaz Ali Asi, *Maulana Maududi aur Jamaati Islam*, *Aik Jaizah*.
  17. Mu Inuddin Aqil, *op.cit.*,26; see Muhammad Yusuf,*op.cit.*,362-3.
  18. *Deccan ki Siyasi Tarikh and Daulat-i-Asifiyah aur Hukumat-i-Bartaniya*.
  19. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity - Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 116; emphasis added.
  20. *Maktube-i-Hidayat* (Deoband: Kutub Khana Izaziyah),21; see Maulana Muhammad Akhtar, *Maududi Sahib Akabir-i-Ummat-ki Nazar Main* (Bombay).
  21. Maulana Muhammad Akhtar, *Maududi Sahib Akabir-i-Ummat-ki Nazar Main*,*op.cit.*,9.
  22. *ibid.*, 15.
  23. *ibid.*, 48.

# PROPHETS

# of God

Part 1

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*This article was first printed in the Muslim Sunrise in 2003 and gives an brief introduction to some of the major prophets.*

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**By Daud A Hanif – USA**

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Our universe and all that it contains is the creation of Allah, the Wise. He has created everything with a purpose and to achieve that purpose He has provided all necessary guidance and means. He has created man in His own image and has made him the chief of His creation. Both good and bad have been made manifestly clear to man. He has also been blessed with wisdom by which he can find out the right path, can sift right from wrong and truth from falsehood. The Holy Qur'an tells us that man has been endowed with both spiritual

and physical eyes by which he can distinguish good from evil and has been given a tongue and two lips that he might ask for guidance, and above all God has placed before him a supreme object of his life that he may devote all his faculties and energies to achieve it.

Man has been granted the choice of both selection and action. Hence he is the master of his own destiny.

To achieve the object of life, God, out of His benevolence raises prophets, who serve as models. These prophets have been appearing in every people and in all parts of the world. Their mission has always been to guide mankind to its Creator, through their example and model. The guidance revealed through each prophet was designed to cater for the specific needs of the time and location; hence they were essentially temporary in nature. With the advancement and maturity of mankind God sent advanced and matured teachings suitable to their time. God's

guidance for human race commenced through Adam<sup>(as)</sup> and reached the zenith through Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup>. God says:

*This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed my favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion...*  
(Ch.5:V.4)

Thus the revelation of Law, or *Shariah*, was perfected and completed by Islam.

According to one saying of the Prophet Muhammad the number of prophets who were chosen to convey the message of God to mankind is 124,000. The names of all of them are not mentioned anywhere. However the Holy Qur'an states in very clear words:

*There is no people [in the world] to whom a Warner has not been sent.*  
(Ch.35:V.25)

It also mentions the following twenty-eight prophets by name: Adam<sup>(as)</sup>, Noah<sup>(as)</sup>, Abraham<sup>(as)</sup>,

Lot<sup>(as)</sup>, Ishmael<sup>(as)</sup>, Isaac<sup>(as)</sup>, Jacob<sup>(as)</sup>, Joseph<sup>(as)</sup>, Hud, Salih<sup>(as)</sup>, Shuaib<sup>(as)</sup>, Moses<sup>(as)</sup>, Aaron<sup>(as)</sup>, David<sup>(as)</sup>, Solomon<sup>(as)</sup>, Elias (Elijah)<sup>(as)</sup>, Jonah<sup>(as)</sup>, Ezekiel (Dhul-Kifl)<sup>(as)</sup>, Elisha (Alyasa)<sup>(as)</sup>, Idris (Enoch)<sup>(as)</sup> (Ch.19:V.57), Job<sup>(as)</sup> (Ch.4:V.164), Zechariah<sup>(as)</sup> (Ch.19:V.3), John (Yahya)<sup>(as)</sup> (Ch.3:V.40), Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> (Ch.3:V.46), Luqman<sup>(as)</sup> (Ch.31:V.13), Ezra<sup>(as)</sup> (Ch.9:V.30), Dhul-Qarnain<sup>(as)</sup> (Ch.18:V.84), Muhammad<sup>(sa)</sup> (Ch.48:V.30).

Belief in all the prophets and their messages is an integral part of the belief of every Muslim. The Holy Qur'an states:

*This Messenger of Ours believes in that which has been revealed to him from his Lord, and so do the believers; all of them believe in Allah, and in His angels, and in His Books, and in His Messengers, saying, 'We make no distinction between any of His Messengers...'*  
(Ch.2: V.286)

In prophethood all are equal but their ranks are different as is clear

from the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

*These Messengers have We exalted some of them above others; among them there are those whom Allah spoke; and some of them He exalted by degrees of rank...'*  
(Ch.2:V.254)

So wherever and to whichever people prophets have been sent, they are our (Muslims') prophets as well, and we hold them in great reverence. A brief history of a few of them is given for the benefit of the reader.

**Hadrat Adam<sup>(as)</sup>**

Adam<sup>(as)</sup> lived about 6,000 years ago. It is possible that he was born in present day Iraq. He is popularly believed to be the first man created by God upon earth. This view is, however, wrong. The world has passed through different cycles of creation and civilization, and Adam<sup>(as)</sup>, the progenitor of the present human race, is only the first link in the present cycle, and not the very first man in God's creation. Nations have risen and

fallen, civilizations have appeared and perished, and many other cycles of human civilization may have appeared and disappeared. Muhiyud-Din Ibn Arabi, the great Muslim mystic, says that once he saw himself in a dream performing a circuit of the Kabah. In the dream a man who claimed to be one of his ancestors appeared before him. 'How long is it since you died?' asked Ibn Arabi. 'More than forty thousand years,' the man replied. 'But this period is much more than what separates us from Adam<sup>(as)</sup>!' said a surprised Ibn Arabi. The man replied, 'Of which Adam<sup>(as)</sup> are you speaking? About the Adam<sup>(as)</sup> who is nearest to you or of some other?' 'Then I recollected,' says Ibn Arabi, 'a saying of the Holy Prophet to the effect that God had brought into being no less than a hundred thousand Adams (peace be upon them), and I said to myself, 'Perhaps this man who claims to be an ancestor of mine was one of the previous Adams.' (*Futuhat ii, p. 607*)

It does not, however, mean that the race, which lived before

Adam<sup>(as)</sup>, was entirely swept away before he was born. Most likely, there had remained a small degenerated remnant of the old race and Adam<sup>(as)</sup> was one of them. God then selected him to be the progenitor of a new race and the precursor of a new civilization. Created, as it were, out of the dead, he represented the dawn of a new era of life.

Allah, the Knower of the unseen has said:

*And when thy Lord said to the angels, 'I am about to appoint a vicegerent in the earth,' they said, 'Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood? We glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' He answered, 'I know what you know not.'*

(Ch.2:V.31)

In this verse God has used the word *khalifah* for Adam<sup>(as)</sup>. Khalifah in Arabic means a successor. It is, therefore, clear that men had existed and lived on earth before Adam<sup>(as)</sup> whom he succeeded. We cannot say

whether original inhabitants of America, Australia, etc., are the progeny of this last Adam<sup>(as)</sup> or of some other Adam<sup>(as)</sup> gone before him.

In short, the Holy Qur'an speaks of that Adam<sup>(as)</sup> who was appointed as Khalifah and the first Prophet of God, and who was raised for the guidance of mankind. God taught him the knowledge and made him leader of men. He was appointed a prophet in the gardens of Eden, which lay near Babylon in Iraq. It was a very fertile land abounding in its verdure and was referred to as Jannah, that is, the garden. Angels and other beings were commanded by God to obey Adam<sup>(as)</sup>. All obeyed except Iblis. An explanation of Iblis seems inevitable as a lot of controversy prevails about this entity.

'Iblis' is a being which contains little good and much of evil and which, on account of its having despaired of God's mercy owing to its disobedience, is left perplexed and confounded. Iblis is often considered the same as



Satan, but in some cases, also different from him. It must be understood that Iblis was not one of the angels, because, whereas he has been described in Ch.2:V.35 as disobeying to God, the angels, we are told, are ever ‘submissive’ and ‘obedient’ (Ch.66:V.7). God was angry with Iblis because he too was commanded to serve Adam<sup>(as)</sup> but he disobeyed (Ch.7:V.13). Moreover, even if there were no separate commandment for Iblis, the one for angels can be extended to all beings because angels are the custodians of different parts of the universe. The commandment given to them automatically extends to all beings. Iblis is an attributive name given to the evil spirit opposed to the angels. He has been so named because he possesses the qualities of being deprived of good, being left bewildered in the way, and of despairing of God’s mercy. That Iblis of Adam<sup>(as)</sup> was not the Satan spoken of in verse 37 of Surah Baqarah. It is apparent from the fact that the Qur’an mentions the two names side by side wherever the story of Adam<sup>(as)</sup> is given, but

everywhere a careful distinction is observed between the two. Wherever it speaks of the being, who, unlike the angels, refused to serve Adam<sup>(as)</sup>, it invariably mentions the name Iblis, and wherever it speaks of the being who beguiled Adam<sup>(as)</sup> and became the means of his being turned out of ‘the garden,’ it mentions the name ‘Satan.’ The distinction, which is most significant and which has been maintained throughout the Qur’an in at least ten places (Ch.2:V.35, and V.37; Ch.7:V.12, and V.21; Ch.15:V.32; Ch.17:V.62; Ch.18:V.51; Ch.20:V.117, and V.121; Ch.38:V.75) clearly shows that Iblis is different from ‘Satan’ who beguiled Adam<sup>(as)</sup> and who was one of Adam’s<sup>(as)</sup> own people. Elsewhere, the Qur’an says that Iblis belonged to a secret creation of God and, unlike the angels, was capable of obeying or disobeying God (Ch.7:Vs.12-13) (Commentary of Ch.2:V36).

### **The Law Introduced Through Adam (peace be upon him)**

Under the guidance of God Adam<sup>(as)</sup> built the House of God in

Arabia. He and his followers turned to it in worship. This house united them and kept them focused. It is the same house, which is presently called the Kabah in Saudi Arabia.

Basic rules for living in society were taught to the people through Adam<sup>(as)</sup>. The fundamental rights given to all people through Adam<sup>(as)</sup> are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an as:

*It is provided for thee that thou wilt not hunger therein nor wilt thou be naked; and that thou wilt not thirst therein, nor wilt thou be exposed to the sun.*

(Ch.20:Vs.119, 120)

In other words, provision of food, clothing, shelter and water to the people was fixed as the duty of the authorities. So through Adam<sup>(as)</sup> a social order for the progress and prosperity of its people as well as of the future generation was established. Adam<sup>(as)</sup>, as has already been stated, was appointed as the prophet in the Garden of Eden

near Babylon in Assyria or present day Iraq. He was allowed to use whatever pleased him but was forbidden to approach a tree – a particular family tree.

It appears Adam<sup>(as)</sup>, who had a great desire for the good of all people, approached the forbidden one also. They were an arrogant people who picked a quarrel with Adam<sup>(as)</sup> and his followers. It eventually ended in a fight and the people of Adam<sup>(as)</sup> had to migrate from Iraq to some neighboring country.

This lapse of Adam<sup>(as)</sup> has been highly exaggerated by Christian writers and cited as an unpardonable sin. Rather, a sin which every human being inherits. The Bible, being an interpolated book contains confused statements about the forbidden tree. In Genesis 2:17 we have:

‘But the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’

Contrary to this we have in Genesis 3:4-5:

‘And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.’

This statement of the serpent, God forbid, as opposed to God’s appears to be true. We have in Genesis 4: 6:

‘And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.’

This statement of the Bible makes it crystal clear that Eve and not Adam<sup>(as)</sup> committed the first sin. Therefore, if this sin is to be inherited, then all those who are born of woman including Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> must inherit it first. But there exist many other verses in the Bible that

prove that there were men like Malik Siddiq Saleem (Melchisedek, King of Salem) who were born without sin.

On the issue of Adam’s<sup>(as)</sup> sin the Holy Qur’an is very clear and unambiguous. It says:

*And verily, We had made a covenant with Adam beforehand, but he forgot, and We found in him no determination to disobey.*  
(Ch.20:V.116)

This verse shows that Adam’s<sup>(as)</sup> lapse was only an error of judgment. It was inadvertent and involuntary and not at all intentional or deliberate. To err is human. One becomes sinful if one commits it willfully and knowingly. Hence the theory of original sin and its inheritance is a castle built on a precipice.

The lapse of Adam<sup>(as)</sup> and Eve no doubt was inadvertent and accidental and hence not a sin. However they discovered that by acting on the advice of Satan or the serpent they had lodged

themselves in trouble with a certain evil family, and as a result had to migrate from that place. They, however, repented and turned to God Who granted Adam<sup>(as)</sup> His grace. God also turned to him with mercy and guided him (Ch.20:V.13).

Adam<sup>(as)</sup> conveyed the message of God to the people and was successful in his assignment. A progressive society governed by the divine rules was established in that land by him.

### **Hadhrat Noah<sup>(as)</sup>**

Noah<sup>(as)</sup> was an inhabitant of Iraq (Genesis 11:9). Very little is known of his childhood or youth. The Bible says that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. He was a just man and perfect in his generation and Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:9). He appeared about ten centuries after Adam<sup>(as)</sup>. The people of his time had become worldly and were involved in social and moral evils. They had forgotten the real Creator and had resorted to the worship of idols. They had many idols, the principal ones being

Wadd, Suwa, Yaghuth, Yauq and Nasr.

### **Prophet Noah<sup>(as)</sup> Visits the House of God**

Noah<sup>(as)</sup> visited the house of God built by Adam<sup>(as)</sup>. According to Al-Arzaki, Noah<sup>(as)</sup> carried out major repairs to the House of God after the Deluge (*Akhbar Makkah*) and performed the Pilgrimage (*Al-badaya Ch.1:V.119*). The worship of one God was revived in that area after long time, and the example of Noah<sup>(as)</sup> did indeed infuse afresh the love of God in his people.

### **Prophet Noah<sup>(as)</sup> Conveys Message of God**

God appointed Noah<sup>(as)</sup> for the guidance of mankind. The Holy Qur'an says:

*We sent Noah to his people and he said, 'O my people, worship Allah, you have no other God but Him. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of the great day.'*

(Ch.7:V.60)

On hearing this message the

chiefs of his people replied: 'We see you to be in manifest error.' Hadhrat Noah<sup>(as)</sup> then very politely told them:

*O my people, there is no error in me, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds. I deliver to you the messages of my Lord and give you sincere advice, and I know from Allah what you do not know. Do you wonder that an exhortation has come to you from your Lord through a man from among yourselves, that he may warn you and that you may become righteous and that you may be shown mercy?*

(Ch.7:Vs.62-64)

Despite the bitter opposition of the chiefs, Noah<sup>(as)</sup> continued his preaching. Only a handful of weak ones, the poor and the youth, believed in him. He preached to his people day and night, and spoke to them in public and in private. He reminded them of the great favors and bounties that God had bestowed upon them and also warned them of the evil consequences of the rejection of

the divine message. But all his preaching and warning, his sympathy and solicitude, were treated with ridicule, opposition and abuse. Instead of following him whose heart was full of love for them, they chose to follow their false leaders.

The chief of his people told him:

*We see thee in nothing but a man like ourselves, and we see that none have followed thee but those who, to all outward appearance, are the meanest of us. And we do not see in you any superiority over us; nay, we believe you to be a liars.*

(Ch.11:V.28)

Noah<sup>(as)</sup> tried to convince them and win them over for God. He advised them to seek forgiveness of the Lord, as He is a great Forgiver of sins. Enumerating the benefits of belief in One God he informed them, God would send down rain for them in abundance and would grant them increase in wealth and children. He will also cause gardens to grow and rivers to flow for them. He further drew

their attention to the great creation of the seven heavens in perfect harmony and placing of the moon in it as a light and the sun as a lamp. Lastly he drew their attention to their own growth out of the earth and their return to it and then their resurrection. But all his advice fell on deaf ears. Their chiefs persuaded them to continue the worship of idols saying Noah<sup>(as)</sup> was just a man like them who only sought to gain superiority over them. So when Noah's<sup>(as)</sup> exhortation and preaching throughout his prophetic life proved a voice in the wilderness, God revealed to him:

*Noah: None of thy people will believe except those who have already believed; grieve not, therefore, at what they have been doing. (Ch.11:V.37)*

### **Prophet Noah<sup>(as)</sup> Offers Special Prayer**

After the intimation from God that none of his people would believe in him any more, Noah<sup>(as)</sup> offered the following prayer to God:

*My Lord, leave not in the land a single one of the disbelievers as dwellers therein; for, if thou dost leave them, they will only lead astray Thy servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers. My Lord! Forgive me and my parents, and him who enters my house as a believer, and the believing men and the believing women; and increase Thou not the wrongdoers in aught but in ruin.(Ch.71:Vs.27-29)*

### **Prophet Noah<sup>(as)</sup> Builds the Ark** God commanded Noah<sup>(as)</sup> to build an Ark. The Holy Qur'an says:

*And build thou the Ark under Our eyes and as commanded by Our revelation. And address Me not concerning the wrongdoers. They are surely going to be drowned. (Ch.11:V.38)*

He immediately followed the instructions of God and prepared the Ark. The chiefs of his people ridiculed this move of his and termed it as an act of a lunatic. Noah<sup>(as)</sup> prayed to God saying:

‘I am overcome so come Thou to my help.’

### **The Deluge**

God heard Noah’s<sup>(as)</sup> prayers and soon after, at the appointed time, God opened the gates of heaven with water, which fell in torrents. And earth burst forth with springs and both waters met according to the decree of God. God further directed Noah<sup>(as)</sup>:

*Embark therein two of every kind, male and female, and thy family except those against whom the word has already gone forth, and those who believe.’ And there did not believe and live with him except a few. (Ch.11:V.41)*

And again:

*Embark therein. In the name of Allah be its course and its mooring. My Lord is assuredly Most Forgiving, Merciful. (Ch.11:V.42)*

Thus there appeared a great deluge in that part of the world. The might of the chiefs and their arrogance

was brought to naught by God. The deluge consumed all opponents of Noah<sup>(as)</sup> including his disbelieving son, while Noah<sup>(as)</sup> and his followers were saved. Their ark anchored at Mount Al-Judi. Judi (Djudi) is a lofty mountain mass in the district of Bohtan, about 25 miles north-east of Jazirah ibn Omar in 37 degrees east longitude and 30 degrees north in latitude. It owes its fame to the Mesopotamian tradition, which identifies it, and not Mount Ararat, the mountain on which Noah’s<sup>(as)</sup> Ark rested. Older exegesis identified the mountain which is now called Judi, or according to Christian authorities the mountains of Gordyene, as the apobaterion of Noah<sup>(as)</sup> (*Enc. of Islam*, vol. I, p.1059). Babylonian traditions also place Mount Al-Judi in Armenia (*Jew Enc.* under ‘Ararat’). The Bible admits that Babylon was the place where the descendants of Noah<sup>(as)</sup> lived (Gen. 11:9).

The story of deluge with some variation is to be found in almost all countries. The reason is that when the descendants of Noah<sup>(as)</sup>

and those of his companions who were the founders of human civilization spread to other lands (as they were more powerful than the people already living there) they either exterminated the indigenous inhabitants or absorbed them. Thus they must have introduced into all the countries they subjugated their own traditions and customs. Subsequently the tradition about the deluge must also have come to be introduced into other lands. With the lapse of time, however, the immigrants ceased to have any connection with their original home and the catastrophe consequently came to be regarded as a local occurrence, with the result that local names of persons and places came to be substituted for the original names. So the deluge was not a universal visitation, nor should the traditions of different lands be taken to point to separate floods (Short Commentary).

### **The Law Introduced Through Prophet Noah<sup>(as)</sup>**

The law introduced through Noah<sup>(as)</sup> has not been preserved.

However it appears that it contained basic principle of the Unity of God. The law of Noah<sup>(as)</sup> was suitable for his time. It was to be transformed and developed in due course to suit the future needs. The Holy Qur'an states:

*He has prescribed for you the religion which he enjoined on Noah...(Ch.42: V.14)*

The law introduced through him remained in force about a thousand years (Ch.29:V.15). Many prophets followed his law until God revealed the new one. It extended to the time of Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> who was of his party (Ch.37:V.84).

It seems that the first fifty years of Noah's<sup>(as)</sup> dispensation were years of all-round spiritual progress and regeneration. After that moral decadence and degeneration set in and his people gradually became degraded morally, till their degeneration became complete in nine hundred years.

*To Be Continued*



# The People of LOT<sup>(as)</sup>

*The people of Prophet Lot<sup>(as)</sup> who lived in Sodom are described notoriously in both the Holy Qur'an and the Bible. They performed acts that were not known before that time, but that have since taken on new vigour in the modern age. This article explores the people, their Prophet and the fate that befell them using information gleaned from both religious texts and recent archaeological work around the Dead Sea area.*

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By Fazal Ahmad – UK

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## Introduction

The story of the people of Lot<sup>(as)</sup> and their sins (homosexuality) that had not been seen before is covered in some detail in both the Holy Qur'an and the Bible. In the modern age, deviant sexual behaviour is becoming both more prevalent and accepted around the world, although religious communities do not accept homosexuality and other related behaviour as it is contrary to nature and the norms of decent behaviour described in religious texts and traditions.

The incidents related to the people of Lot<sup>(as)</sup> are the most graphic reminder of the fate of a people that failed to observe Divine Warnings and continued with their 'abominations'. The religious

texts are unequivocal about the disaster that befell them being a punishment for their sins rather than a natural event. So a closer examination helps to clarify our thinking on this subject.

There has been fierce debate over the location of these towns (the Bible talks of five towns) and what actually happened to them. Scholars from the Jewish, Christian and Islamic traditions are all interested in this story as it is part of their joint heritage, so we have a lot of information to sift through. This article will explore the subject in greater depth.

## Lot<sup>(as)</sup> and Abraham<sup>(as)</sup>

Prophet Lot<sup>(as)</sup> was a contemporary of Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> and was his nephew. Moreover, they knew

each other well. Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> had left the idol-worship of his father and tribe and migrated towards Arabia. Lot<sup>(as)</sup> must have been one of the earliest followers of Abraham<sup>(as)</sup>, and migrated with Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> to Canaan but then settled in the fertile plain next to the Dead Sea at the town of Sodom. The Qur'an specifically mentions Lot<sup>(as)</sup> as being an early companion of Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> when it says:

*And Lot believed in him  
(Abraham).  
(Ch.29: V.27)*

Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> was not connected with Sodom, but must have been in the same region as both the Bible and the Qur'an describe the angels as visiting him on their way to Lot<sup>(as)</sup>. The Bible also describes him looking at the scene of destruction the next morning which again suggests that there was a very close link between the two Prophets, and that they were in regular communication and lived near to each other. Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> is thought to have lived near Hebron at the time,

from where he would have been able to see smoke plumes from the destruction rising in the distance.

While Abraham's progeny, Isaac and Ishmael, were the ancestors of the Israelites and Arabs, Lot<sup>(as)</sup> became the ancestor of the Ammonites and the Moabites.

### **People of the Time**

At that time, around 4000 years ago, there were many settlements around the Dead Sea (Sea of Lot) which is now between Israel and Jordan. The Bible describes five cities which were linked in the area of Canaan, and these cities were Sodom, Gomorrah ('Amora in Hebrew), Admah, Zeboiim and Belar/ Zoar as described and mentioned in the Biblical books of Genesis and Deuteronomy. Collectively they are referred to as the Cities of the Plain.

The Plain near the Dead Sea also stood on the major trading route between Syria and Arabia. This stands on the modern Kings Highway that runs north to south through Jordan.

The people of Abraham's time worshipped idols. They worshipped the stars, and created images of their other deities. Many related civilizations such as the Nabateans left behind reminders at places such as Petra in Jordan. But idol-worship alone was not the crime associated with the towns of the Plain.

### **The sinful people of Sodom**

The people of Sodom are repeatedly described as performing abominations and immoral acts, hence the modern term 'sodomy' that takes its name from that town. The Qur'an is categorical about the crimes of the Sodomites as being homosexuality as it states in Surah Al-'Ankabut:

*And We sent lot; he said to his people, 'You commit an abomination which none among mankind has ever committed before you. Do you indeed come lustfully to men and cut off the highway for travellers? And you indulge in your meetings in all that is loathsome!'* But the only

*answer of his people was that they said, 'Bring upon us the punishment of Allah if thou speakest the truth.'*  
(Ch.29: Vs.29-30)

The retort to the practice of homosexuality is expressed by Lot<sup>(as)</sup> as:

*[Lot said] 'Do you, of all peoples, approach males, and leave your wives whom your Lord has created for you? Nay, you are a people who transgress.'*  
(Ch.26:Vs.166-167)

The abomination is even more clear in the following verse:

*And remember Lot, when he said to his people, 'Do you commit abomination while you see the evil thereof? What! do you approach men lustfully rather than women? Nay, you are indeed a people unmindful of consequences'.*  
(Ch.27:Vs.55-56)

The verse above also mentions two other types of crime; highway

robbery and committing crimes openly and unashamedly in public meetings and assemblies. However, the focus is the immoral behaviour which Lot<sup>(as)</sup> describes as '*an abomination which none among mankind has ever committed before you*'. Clearly, highway robbery was not a new crime, so his anger was at the indecency of his people.

The Bible is less clear on the crimes of the Sodomites:

'How great is the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah and how very grave their sin!' (Genesis 18:21)

And later, Jeremiah compares the later people to the sinful Sodomites:

'But in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a more shocking thing: they commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hand of the evildoers, so that no one turns from wickedness; all of them have become like Sodom to me, and its inhabitants like

Gomorrah.'  
(*Jeremiah 23:14*)

Ezekiel also describes the crimes of the Sodomites:

This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty, and did abominable things before me. (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

So the Old Testament is vague about the 'abominations' of the people of Sodom. It talks of lies, adultery, wickedness, pride, luxury and not looking after the poor. None of these crimes in themselves would be so outrageous to be called abominations and are described many times for other races and towns. For some reason, the Bible, which is often very graphic about crimes and sin, has diluted the sins of the Sodomites.

There is a reference in the New Testament of the Bible that is a little clearer in the Letter of Jude:

Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural lust ... (Jude 7)

Among Jewish and Christian scholars, the conservative elements stick to their understanding that the abominations refer to homosexual and perverted behaviour as described by ‘unnatural lust’. Liberal thinkers prefer to consider this as a state that some men are born with rather than developing through choice, and so they prefer to view the abominations as greed, arrogance and being inhospitable.

The Jewish tradition dilutes their behaviour as being depraved and greedy, and that their crimes were economic. The Babylonian Talmud describes some of the depraved laws upheld by the four judges of Sodom:

Now if a man assaulted his neighbour’s wife and bruised her, they would say to the

husband, give her to him, that she may become pregnant for thee. (*Talmud 109a*)

They are also described as taking money and clothes off travellers passing through the town. I wonder if this is where we get the name for *looting*? [*Editors note: The verb ‘to loot’ comes from the Hindi: Lootna (to loot) through the English of British India. It has nothing to do with Hadhrat Lu<sup>(as)</sup>.]*

There are many cities throughout history that could have been described as greedy and arrogant, but they did not face such an epic punishment. For them to be punished so severely, the Qur’anic account provides the clearest picture i.e. that they committed indecent acts that had not been witnessed in history before. The fact that the acts have taken on the name of that town speaks for itself.

### **Warnings**

God never punishes people without warning. If they had erred just as the people of Noah<sup>(as)</sup> and others had done before them, then

they were sent a Warner or Prophet. In this way, they were first told of their misdeeds, and given a chance to rectify them and follow the Prophet. If they failed to do that and rejected the Prophet, then they would suffer their fate. In the case of Sodom, they were sent Lot<sup>(as)</sup> as their Warner. But the people were rebellious. Their response to Lot<sup>(as)</sup> was:

*... Drive out the followers of Lot from your township. They are indeed a people who pretend to be pure’.*

(Ch.27: V.57)

In the Bible, Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> asks God if he would destroy the righteous in the city with the rebellious, and his response was:

‘If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake.’ (Genesis 18:26)

Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> continues to question God and learns that even if there were ten righteous men in the town, God would not destroy it. Clearly, the fact that angels were

despatched to warn Lot<sup>(as)</sup> to leave Sodom proved that he was among very few righteous people in the town who were all evacuated. It also indicates the gravity of the sins being committed in the town that such a fate awaited them. Lot<sup>(as)</sup> was distressed at the state of the people of the town and even said:

*‘Is there not among you any right-minded man?’*

(Ch.11: V.79)

### **Fate of Sodom**

The Qur’an mentions the fate of the towns as follows:

*So when Our command came, We turned that town upside down and We rained upon it stones of clay, layer upon layer, marked for them in the decree of thy Lord. And such punishment is not far from the wrongdoers of the present age.*  
(Ch.11: Vs.83-84)

And again we read:

*Then the punishment seized them at sunrise. We turned*

*their town upside down and  
We rained upon them stones of  
clay. Surely in this are many  
Signs for those who can read  
signs. And it (that town) lies  
on a road that still exists.*  
(Ch.15: Vs.74-77)

The Bible describes the fate of the town in the first book, Genesis:

Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. (*Genesis 19:25-25*)

The Bible goes on to describe the scene of destruction that Abraham<sup>(as)</sup> saw the next morning:

‘... and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah and toward all the land of the Plain and saw the smoke of the land going up like the smoke of a furnace.’  
(Genesis 19:28)

Even Josephus, the famous

Jewish historian of the 1st century CE wrote about these towns in his Jewish War:

Now this country is then so sadly burnt up, that nobody cares to come at it; ... It was of old a most happy land, both for the fruits it bore and the riches of its cities, although it be now all burnt up. It is related how for the impiety of its inhabitants, it was burnt by lightning; in consequence of which there are still the remainders of that Divine fire; and the traces of the five cities are still to be seen ..  
(*Jewish War, Book IV, Ch. VIII*)

On the strength of these verses, Jews, Christians and Muslims were in no doubt as to the punishment of the people of Sodom, and that it was a warning for future generations that reverberated throughout history. If the events are from around 1900 BCE, then even two thousand years later in 205 CE, the early Christian scholar Terullian wrote:

‘Its neighbours Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed by fire from heaven. The country still smells of that conflagration. And if there are apples there upon the trees, it is only a mirage. For when you touch them, they turn to ashes’.

*(Tertullian 4:48)*

It would be interesting to see if archaeology and geological research uncover the remains of this cataclysmic event.

### **Lot’s wife**

In both the Bible and the Qur’an, it mentions that the followers of Lot<sup>(as)</sup> were saved from the destruction except for his wife. In the case of the Bible, it suggests that she looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. So why was his wife specifically chosen to be punished, and how was she punished?

The Qur’an mentions the reason in a wider context as follows:

*Allah sets forth for those who disbelieve, the example, of the*

*wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two righteous servants of Ours, but they acted unfaithfully toward them. So they availed them naught against Allah, and it was said to them, ‘Enter the Fire, ye twain, along with those who enter it’.*

*( Ch.66: Vs.11)*

The verse is followed by the more positive examples of the wife of Pharoah and Mary<sup>(as)</sup> who both acted righteously and set positive examples.

The idea that she was turned into a pillar of salt is a little far-fetched and against the reality of nature. However, she would have been punished along with the other people of the town for her treachery against her husband. It is however interesting that on the southern shores of the Dead Sea just south of the settlement of Neve Zohar, there is a Mount Sodom (Jebel Usdum) which is a mount of salt. Perhaps the Bible is referring to that feature to illustrate the fate of the wife of Lot<sup>(as)</sup>.



## Evidence

The texts are quite unequivocal about the sinful nature of the people and the disaster that befell them. If we could find traces of these places, it would confirm the historical context of the accounts covered in the texts.

Most scholars agree that these events unfolded around the Dead Sea. Modern archaeological work has unearthed a lot of evidence related to the catastrophe that afflicted Sodom.

The Dead Sea area sits on top of a seismic region prone to earthquakes. There are also many bitumen mines in the Lisan Peninsula (a land area splitting the Dead Sea in the South) which would have been prone to fire hazards. Being in a seismic region, there is also a lot of trapped gas under the surface which finds its way to the surface



**Map of the Dead Sea Region**

through fissures around the mountain sides. Potentially, this combination of potential earthquakes, leaking natural gas and bitumen could be lethal.

More exciting is the news that at several locations around the banks of the Dead Sea, scientists have discovered balls of sulphur! Amongst the earliest to find these were William Albright and Melvin Kyle in 1924 while they were searching for the cities of

Sodom and Gomorrah. Dr. Kyle is quoted about his finds from his book on the expedition:

‘ ... we picked up pure sulfur, in peices as big as the end of my thumb. It is mixed with the mark of the mountains of the west side of the sea, and now is to be found scattered along the shore of the sea even on the east side, some four or five miles distant from the ledge that contains the stratum.’  
(*Explorations at Sodom*, p.52-53)

The interesting point here was that not only are there large sulphurous deposits around the Dead Sea, but that he found them in the form of sulphur balls and at some distance from their source. This would indicate that the sulphur was ignited and rained down as molten balls. Sulphur in such a pure form is not found outside this region. To find so many balls of sulphur scattered on the floor shows that there must have been a massive and explosive geological event that caused so many to rain down on a single place.

So if there had been an earthquake causing the earth to open up and release gas from one of the nearby fissures, it would have ignited the gas, and caused the sulphur to form balls of fiery stone which would have rained down on the towns and turned them into ash. This matches the accounts of the final destruction from the Qur’an and the Bible which refer to a rain of brimstones, and also matches the evidence to be found at these sites.

There are other theories such as that of Graham Harris and Anthony Beardow from 1995/1996 that the earthquake would have caused the land to liquefy and collapse into the Dead Sea (see Slayman ref.4). While technically this kind of phenomenon is also possible, it would not account for the rain of stones so clearly reported in these accounts.

There are many sites around the Lisan peninsula being associated with these events. Some scholars are looking on the Israeli side at the shoreline near Masada. There

is a Mount Sodom composed of rock salt just south of Neve Zohar. On the Jordanian side, Bab ed-Dhra is considered an ancient town dating from a similar time to Sodom, while the town of Safi is identified with the ancient town of Zoar that Lot<sup>(as)</sup> is mentioned retreating to according to the Bible when Sodom and Gomorrah were being destroyed.

Bab ed-Dhra is an excavation site for a town which was well established around 2400 BCE, but suddenly was left around 2065 BCE. It would have been contemporary to the towns of Sodom, but actually, the destruction of Sodom occurred after Bab ed-Dhra was left abandoned. Other scholars view signs of indicating that Bab ed-Dhra may have been Sodom, and nearby Numeira as Gomorrah. Perhaps people are looking in obvious places for signs of the cities, when in fact the scriptures describe the towns as having been turned upside down. This is a different type of punishment to other civilizations which were covered in sand and are easier to

uncover such as the ancient Egyptian temples and tombs.

Near to Safi is the recently discovered cave at Deir Ain Abata. Excavations sponsored by the British Museum in 1988 uncovered the Church of St. Lot that Christian pilgrims centuries ago visited believing this to be the Cave of Lot<sup>(as)</sup>.

There are several scholars who also believe that the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah are flooded and now lie under the Dead Sea. Certainly, people talk of being able to still see preserved trees under the water from a once flourishing land. There is also a Roman road that is partly flooded under the Dead Sea. The exact locations of these towns is still unknown and fiercely debated, but it is generally accepted that the towns would have been near the peninsula at the southern end of the Dead Sea.

### **Conclusion**

The events of the towns of Lot<sup>(as)</sup> are a reminder that God can use natural phenomenon to destroy a

race if they do not heed warnings. Although liberals may try to convince themselves that the crimes of Sodom were to do with greed, in itself, that would not have been sufficient a crime to be called an abomination or to merit such an exemplary punishment.

The Qur'an is specific about the nature of the abomination and that it had not been practised before in history. From an Islamic perspective, this dispels the idea that such behaviour might be 'natural' and beyond human control.

There seems to be clear geological evidence to support the nature of the disaster described in the Qur'an and the Bible as the scientist Dr. Kyle wrote:

'... geologists tell us that here, at some time which they cannot exactly fix, these gases were ignited by some means, also to them unknown, and there was a great explosion with first an upheavel, and then a subsidence of the strata.'

*(Explorations at Sodom, p.129)*

Finally, the destruction of Sodom and the other towns was meant as a reminder for all time, as the Qur'an declares:

*Surely in this are many Signs for those who can read signs. And it lies on a road that still exists.*

*(Ch.15: Vs.76-77)*

The road that still exists is the Kings Highway in Jordan, and the remains of the ashen towns are a reminder to us all of the fate of those retched people who shunned God's Law. Although the exact locations of the towns have not as yet been pinpointed, I am convinced that since they have been preserved as a warning for mankind, at the right time, further evidence will be made available to us.

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# *Letter to the Editor*

Dear Sir,

I am a practising Catholic with a degree in Religious Studies. I enjoy reading *The Review of Religions* and recently enjoyed the excellent article on Origen in the August 2005 issue. However, the author states that current Christian thinking believes that failing to accept Christ in this world leads to eternal damnation. The Catholic Church, which consists of the majority of the world's Christians, does not believe that.

The Vatican's 'Decree on the Church' having praised Muslims for their faith in the God of Abraham states that those who do not know Christ, yet aspire to do good deeds will, by God's Grace, gain salvation. Indeed, all those who through no fault of their own are not Christians or believers in God will gain salvation if they do good deeds.

The late Karl Rahner believes that all who show love have responded

to Christ even when they are not aware of it, thus they are 'Anonymous' Christians. The late Edward Arnold quoting the Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew Chapter 25, argues that to put others before oneself is to accept Christ even when this is not recognised. Relating to others is relating to Christ thus these are Implicit Christians.

The late Pope John Paul II believed that Christ's sacrifice enables all who co-operate with him by doing good to gain salvation. In his First Encyclical 'Redemptor Hominis', the Pope says that all men without exception have been redeemed by Christ. As a Catholic, I believe that it is morally obnoxious to believe only Christians enter heaven.

Peace and kind regards,

**Andrew Harvey, Carlisle, UK.**

**Reply:**

The proclamation of exclusive salvation for Christians comes

from adherents of different denominations that believe that salvation lies in a belief in the divinity of Jesus<sup>(as)</sup>, and without it there can be no heaven. However, it is wrong to assume that this is the view of all (or even the majority of) Christians.

Often, as evidence, they do not cite the words of Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> himself who was a most humble Prophet (according to Muslim belief), but rely on the analysis of St. Paul as recorded in his many letters as preserved in the New Testament.

Jesus<sup>(as)</sup> was born a Jew in Palestine. We may debate whether he came to bring a new religion or to reform Judaism, but we all agree on the Divine wisdom that he brought to his community.

We are pleased to learn that the Roman Catholics do not believe that one must exclusively be a practising Christian to gain access to God's promised reward in the hereafter.

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