



The
Call of the
Quran

A MUSLIM'S MOST
SACRED DUTY

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

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Divine Planning

Adam was the first man as well as the first prophet. The generations succeeding Adam (according to some traditions) adhered to the path of monotheism and true religion for about a millennium. Adam's people later came under the influence of polytheism (2: 213). The Prophet Noah was then sent to reform the descendants of Adam who inhabited the green, luxuriant land lying between the Tigris and Euphrates.

Despite Prophet Noah's prolonged efforts, Adam's progeny, with the exception of a very few, remained resistant to renouncing their polytheistic religion. Consequently, the Great Storm came and swept away all human existence from the earth. Now the human race made a fresh start with the followers of Noah. But again, this new generation, with the passage of time, digressed from the path of monotheism to the path of polytheism. This went on, repeatedly, for many centuries. God continued to send prophets in succession (23:44), but far from showing any willingness to accept their message, people laughed His apostles to scorn (36:30).

This process continued for thousands of years until polytheism came to be firmly rooted in human existence. Anyone born in the societies of those days came under the influence of polytheism from his surroundings. Religious rituals, social ceremonies, national affairs, governmental organizations, —all were founded on polytheistic beliefs. Ultimately, the situation deteriorated to the extent that any child born in this world opened his eyes in an atmosphere of idolatry and when he closed his eyes for the last time, it was in that same atmosphere. The practice of idolatry, once having set in in history, became ineradicable. It is this state of affairs, which finds expression in this prayer of Noah: ‘Lord, do not leave a single unbeliever in the land. If You spare them, they will mislead Your servants and beget none but sinners and unbelievers.’ (71:27).

Prophet Abraham, who lived between 1800 and 2000 B.C., attempted to reform society in ancient Iraq, but met the same fate as that of the prophets preceding him. Then God devised a new plan for the guidance of man. It meant preparing a human race by exclusive divine arrangement, totally detaching them from the sphere of polytheistic influence, so that they would find it easier to accept the message of monotheism. Then people so conditioned were to be used, as per the divine plan, to encounter and rout out the forces of

polytheism in order to change the course of history.

Accordingly, Abraham was commanded to leave populated areas like Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Palestine for the desert land of ancient Makkah and settle his wife and little child Isma'il there. Being an uncultivable valley, this area was totally devoid of human population, hence completely free from ancient polytheistic culture. This is what is meant by Abraham's prayer: "Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near Your Sacred House, so that they may observe the prayer" (14:37). That is to say, Abraham consciously chose a place which was beyond the influence of polytheism, so that there might arise a generation, nurtured in an environment free from polytheistic influences, who would become true worshippers of the one God.

The effect of such detachment from a cultural continuity is illustrated by an example from the life of the writer who belongs to an Urdu-speaking area. My parents spoke Urdu, which is the mother tongue of my children. Now it happened that my eldest son took up residence in London in an area with a predominantly English-speaking population. As a result, my grandsons now only know English and cannot express themselves in Urdu. On my visit to London, I had to converse with them in English.

My grandsons were in this linguistically deprived state precisely because they had been brought up in an environment completely cut off from the continuous traditions of Urdu. This would not have been possible had these children been brought up in Delhi. *

This is on a parallel with the story of Abraham, Ishmael and his mother Hajira. The dream shown to Abraham (37:102) was a symbolic one. Abraham, however, with his extreme sense of obedience, stood ready to execute his dream. In ancient Makkah there was neither water, nor vegetation nor any resources to sustain life. Settling his wife and child in such adverse circumstances appeared to invite their death. But the plan of giving birth to a generation detached from the polytheistic traditions could be carried out only at a place devoid of sustenance, because only then would it be devoid of human population. Abraham's dream ostensibly entailed the economic and social sacrifice of his children, but it was actually a way of realizing the divine plan to prepare the desired generation.

Since this plan had to materialize under the veil of cause and effect it was constantly being watched. Abraham himself stayed in Palestine but would keep going at intervals to Makkah for the purpose of supervision.

* These grandsons now live in India and are fully conversant with their mother tongue under the influence of the present environment.

Initially, Hajira and Ishmael were the only inhabitants in the valley. Later, with the appearance of Zamzam, some gypsies belonging to the Jurhum tribe settled there. When Ishmael grew up, he married a girl of that tribe. According to traditions, once when Abraham went to Makkah from Palestine, Ishmael was not at home. Abraham enquired of his wife how everything was going on. His wife told him that they were leading their lives in a very bad state. Life was full of hardship. As Abraham took his leave, he asked her to convey his regards to Ishmael and to ask him to change the doorsill of his home. When Ishmael returned and heard the message from his wife, he realized that the visitor must have been his father and that his message symbolically implied that he should divorce his present wife and marry another woman of the Jurhum tribe. To Abraham that woman was not worthy of mothering the generation under preparation.

After some time, Prophet Abraham again visited Makkah. This time too Ishmael was away, but his wife was at home. When Abraham asked her how things were going on, she thanked God for everything and talked of contentment, saying that life fared well for them. When he left, Abraham asked her to convey his regards to Ishmael and to give him the message that he should keep the doorsill of his house. On his return, Ishmael received the message of his father and

rightly understood its symbolism: that this woman was capable of leading a life in accordance with the divine plan assigned to Abraham to prepare the generation desired by God. (*Tafsir Ibn-Kathir*)

In this way, in that hostile, aloof environment, a new generation began to be formed. What were the characteristics of this race? The two most prominent characteristics were their being in tune with nature and possessing the human quality of manliness.

The only thing to influence man in this rugged, hostile, Arabian Desert was nature: vast wilderness, high mountains, starlit sky. These natural phenomena gave man the message of the unity of God. They were perpetual reminders to man of God's greatness and omniscience. These pure, divine surroundings nurtured a generation which, in the words of Abraham, had the real capacity to become an Islamic community, that is, one which could surrender itself completely to the Will of God. The nature of this community was preserved intact in its original state; hence it was fully capable of accepting the religion of nature.

It was then the most suitable environment for nurturing that characteristic which is called al-Muruwah (manliness) in Arabic. Life was full of hardships in the mountainous and rocky surroundings of ancient Hijaz, and in that setting innate human qualities had acquired the maximum importance,

as external props were totally non-existent. There, man possessed only one thing, and that was his own existence. In such an environment, it was but natural that man's inner qualities should be cultivated to the maximum. In this way a nation, characterized by manliness to an amazing extent, came into being through a process spanning two thousand years. In the words of Philip K. Hitti, the whole of Arabia was converted into a nursery of heroes the like of which had never been found before or after in history.

The hour had come with the dawn of the 6th century to bring to completion the plan of breaking the continuity of *shirk* (idolatry). It was then that Prophet Muhammad was born among the Ishmaelites. These are the words of the Quran:

It is He who has sent His Apostle with guidance and the Faith of Truth, so that he may exalt it above all religions, much as the pagans may dislike it. (61:9)

This verse shows that the main mission of the Final Prophet was to remove the religion of polytheism from its place of domination and establish the religion of monotheism in its place, giving it a position of dominance in the world. This dominance was to be of an intellectual and ideological kind. That is, a dominance similar to that gained by scientific knowledge over traditional knowledge in modern times.

This was the most difficult plan ever conceived in

history. In the 7th century it was the hardest of tasks to stamp out polytheism and replace it with monotheism as the predominant ideology. It was just like uprooting a tree with all its roots and branches. It entailed severe difficulties and could be performed only with meticulous planning and strenuous effort.

To secure this goal the Final Prophet was provided by God with two special supporting factors. One was the divine proclamation:

You are the best nation that has ever been raised up for mankind. (3:110)

As a result of a two thousand years long process, a most competent group was prepared for the purpose. As mentioned above, this group had retained its nature (i.e. that with which it had come into existence, preserved intact and free from all the corruptions of civilization) and also possessed in perfect form, a high moral character and manly attributes. It was the people selected from this group who, after their acceptance of Islam, came to be known in history as the companions of the Prophet.

The other special divine succour is hinted at in the early verses of chapter 30. Prior to the advent of the Prophet, there had existed two great polytheistic civilizations in the world, the Byzantine and the Sassanid. The major populated part of the globe at the time, was directly or indirectly, under these two

empires. For monotheism to prevail over a vaster world, a confrontation with the polytheistic empires was inevitable. God did bring this about during this period and the confrontation of these two empires continued for generations. First the Persians rose and, destroying the power of the Romans, occupied a large part of their empire. Then the Romans rose to avenge their defeat by destroying the might of the Persians. That is how, when the Companions rose unitedly under the guidance of the Prophet, they rapidly conquered most of the inhabited part of Asia and Africa, subjugating polytheism, and securing for monotheism its rightful place.

To quote Professor Philip K. Hitti:

The enfeebled condition of the rival Byzantines and Sassanids who had conducted internecine warfare against each other for many generations, the heavy taxes consequent upon these wars, imposed on the citizens of both empires, and undermining their sense of loyalty...all these paved the way for the surprisingly rapid progress of Arabian arms.

(Philip K. Hitti, History of the Arabs, London, 1970, pp. 142-143)

Historians in referring to this turning point have generally represented the foregoing events as having taken place in the natural course. Whereas this extraordinary turn of events was the result of a divine plan specially conceived of by God for the support of

the Final Prophet.

An article titled 'Islam', penned by a Christian writer and published in an American Encyclopedia, has this to say:

Its advent changed the course of human history.

It is quite true that after the Islamic revolution of the first phase (of Islam), human history saw such tremendous changes as had never been seen. The actual reason for all these changes was that the continuity of polytheism came to an end, yielding place to the continuity of monotheism. *Shirk* (polytheism) was and is the root cause of all evils, while monotheism was and is the source of all virtue. Hence the occurrence of this fundamental change opened for man the door of all virtue, which had hitherto remained locked.

Now the age of superstition gave way to the age of science. The foundation of human discrimination collapsed, giving place to human equality. Dynastic rule was replaced with democratic rule. Where natural phenomena all over the world had become objects of worship, now for the first time they were treated as subjects of research and investigation. This paved the way to the revelation of nature's secrets to man. It was indeed the monotheistic revolution, which laid the foundation for bringing about the modern age of advancement. Abraham's prayer, 'Lord, preserve me and my descendants from serving idols. Lord, they

have led many men astray' (14:36), had been answered.

Now the question arises as to how people were misled by these idols. What qualities did these inanimate objects possess which helped them in this regard? We can understand this secret if we have a look at the idols prevalent during Abraham's time and referred to in Abraham's prayer.

The idols were of the sun, the moon and the stars. It has been proved historically that these bright, heavenly bodies were objects of worship everywhere in the civilized world of Abraham's time. This gives us a clue as to how and why these idols managed to lead the people astray.

Although God is the greatest reality, He is invisible to the eye. On the contrary, the sun, the moon and the stars, shining brightly, are visible to every eye. Due to their brilliance people came under their spell and began worshipping them. These brilliant bodies captured human thought to such a degree and so dominated people's minds that even governments, nay, empires began to be founded on their basis. The emperors of that age ruled over people by declaring themselves to be the descendants of sun and moon.

This age was brought to an end by monotheism gaining supremacy through the Final Prophet. This was carried out in two stages. The first stage is referred to in the Quran in these words:

And fight with them until there is no more persecution (*fitnah*) and religion should be only for God; but if they desist, then surely God sees what they do. (8:39)

Fitnah in this verse means religious intolerance, which in ancient times had become a form of oppression. Polytheism had become aggressive because it was the bedrock of all governments and as such enjoyed full state patronage. In such a situation, whenever the call to monotheism was raised, it was but natural for the rulers to feel strongly that such a call, in holding their right to rule suspect, posed a challenge to their sovereignty. Therefore, they wasted no time in crushing the *dayees* of monotheism. This was the actual cause of ideological aggression in ancient times.

Prophet Muhammad and his companions were commanded by God to fight for the extirpation of polytheism to put an end to the *dayees* of monotheism being the targets of polytheistic aggression. That is to say, that *shirk* and politics were separated from one another. The Prophet and his companions launched this campaign with full force and devotion, and it was due to their unceasing efforts that the power of *shirk* was given a death blow. Subsequently, in most parts of the inhabited world of the time, the polytheistic system was subjugated, thus putting an end to the aggressive status of *shirk* forever. Now for all time polytheism and political power were thrust into separate arenas.

The second stage of the domination of monotheism over *shirk* is mentioned in this verse of the Quran:

We will show them our signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own souls, until they clearly see that this is the truth. (41:53)

The first phase of this mission aimed at putting an end to the practice of deriving political theories from natural phenomena.

This goal was fully achieved in the seventh century. The second stage aimed at removing the veil of superstition from the phenomena of nature and casting upon them the light of knowledge. This second stage began with the era of prophethood (of Prophet Muhammad) and later reached its zenith in the present scientific revolution.

The present world is a manifestation of the attributes of God. Here man finds his Creator in the mirror of His creation. By making a profound study of creation, he witnesses God's power and greatness. The ancient idolatrous concepts had, on the contrary, rendered all material things of this world mysteriously sacred. The superstitious ideas, which had come to surround them, came in the way of research being carried out on the multitude of objects in this world. When the entire world came to be held as God's creation in the wake of the monotheistic revolution, this mentality of holding everything sacred vanished. Now everything began to

be studied objectively.

As a result of this investigation, the truth about the hidden system of nature and its functioning in the world began to be revealed. Ultimately, in the form of the modern scientific revolution, the prophecy mentioned above in verse 53 of chapter 41 was quite finally fulfilled.

The facts unraveled about the universe through modern scientific studies have definitively brought to an end the age of superstition. These newly discovered realities have simultaneously benefited humanity in two ways, one being that religious beliefs are no longer just dogma, but facts established through human knowledge itself.

The other benefit to mankind is that these scientific revelations about nature provide an immense source for increasing the faith of the believer.

Although partial in extent, whatever has been revealed by science regarding the universe is so amazing that, on learning it, the believer's hair stands on end. His mind receives the light of the realization of the Lord. His eyes become wet with tears from awe and fear of God. He is elevated to the plan of *ihsan*, a state of worship in which man feels as if he is seeing the Almighty. There is a hadith to this effect, asking the believers to worship God as if they were actually seeing Him.

Revival of Islam in the Modern Age

In modern times the history of human belief has once again reached almost the point that it was at fifteen hundred years ago. In ancient times *shirk* so dominated human thought that it became an inseparable part of the historical process, leading to a situation where every child born was an idolater. Now, by a process spanning the last several hundred years, atheistic thoughts have come to vitiate human thinking. In all intellectual activities atheistic thinking has so prevailed that once again in human history atheism has set in as a historical process. Now every child born in any part of the world is under its influence. Atheism is the dominant “religion” of today. Hence the revival of Islam in modern times will not be possible so long as atheism continues to enjoy its ideological dominance.

To render the revival of Islam possible in modern times, it will be necessary to employ the same methods as were formerly adopted when *shirk* dominated world thought, i.e., the conditioning of individuals and the subjugation of the opponents of truth.

For the first task to be accomplished, our own human resources are sufficient. But for the other task, God has once again in modern times, just as in the first phase of Islam, taken appropriate measures on a very large scale. The need of the hour is to exploit these opportunities so abundantly created for us.

1. A workforce is a pre-requisite for the successful outcome of any Islamic revival campaign at the present time. The basics are the same as those needed to execute the mission entrusted to Abraham, although the training of the individuals may differ in view of the requirements of our age.

The individuals required for launching a campaign of Islamic revival in modern times are not just ordinary Muslims, but those for whom Islam has become the ultimate answer to a great exploratory quest. What activates a person more than anything is this event of discovery: all of a sudden a new personality is born within him, marked by conviction, courage, determination, manliness, generosity, the spirit of sacrifice and the desired unity—all qualities required for the performance of great tasks, and all part of the questing spirit.

All the best qualities found in western nations in modern times are linked with this urge to explore. The western nations may be said to have discovered the world in the scientific as opposed to the traditional sense, and it is this urge to understand all aspects of truth, which has produced individuals of such high caliber in western nations.

The same was true of the companions of the Prophet in the first phase of Islam. God's religion came to them as a discovery: Islam as against *jahiliyah* (period of ignorance); monotheism as against *shirk*;

Akhirah (Hereafter) as against this present world. It was this, which was responsible for producing those extraordinary qualities in them. If today the campaign of Islamic revival is to be effectively launched once again, such people will have to come forward as conceive of Islam as a fresh discovery rather than as an inheritance by birth.

2. Islam came to the world fourteen hundred years ago, setting in motion historical processes marked by cultural grandeur and political conquests. Those who call themselves Muslims today are the products of those processes. But any group of people, which has such a brilliant past, is invariably pre-occupied with its recent history. It fails to go back through history to drink afresh from the original springs of inspiration.

This is true of Muslims today. The Muslims of present times, consciously or unconsciously, are deriving their religion from history instead of from the Quran and *sunnah*, the true sources of Islam.

This is why Islam has become for the Muslims of today a matter not of responsibility but of pride. This psychology so pervades their thoughts and actions that its effects are visible everywhere. Islam as set forth in the Quran and the hadith stands out as a religion of responsibility and accountability, but if viewed in the mirror of its cultural and political history, it appears to be an object of pride and glory. All the great

revolutionary movements of Muslims in modern times have been influenced by this sense of pride. That is why they all lost their original luster after very brief periods of activity. This is because a sense of pride leads one to showy activities, while a sense of accountability leads one to genuinely serious action.

For any campaign of Islamic revival to be effectively managed, its promoters should have derived Islam from the original teachings in the Quran and the hadith rather than from the cultural and political history of later times. Only those who have derived their religion from the Quran and the hadith can sustain a true campaign in all seriousness and with a sense of responsibility.

Those who derive their religion from history will only glorify their own sense of pride, and no result-oriented action will follow from their activities.

Muslims in modern times have turned into a defeatist nation, thanks to the entire Muslim world suffering from a persecution complex. This is what ensues from deriving religion from history. Awed by the grandeur of the history of the “Red Fort” and “Granada”, they chose to derive their Islamic identity from these objects of historical significance, and since in present times these things have been taken over by other nations, they have never ceased in their lamentations. Yet, if they had considered divine

guidance to be their religion, they would never have felt themselves the victims of deprivation. For divine guidance is something which can never be taken away by anyone.

Since we consider those things to be Islam, which may be taken away by others, we have become compulsive bewailers of our own fates. How strange it is that we are engaged in lamenting over a very small loss, and demanding reparations, while completely unaware of the far greater treasure of which we are still in possession.

Muslims consider Islam as an emblem of their national greatness, and as a result of this mentality, they are engaged in clash and confrontation with other nations all over the world. That is why, when they find people robbing them of their glory, they rise against them. This reaction can range from verbal castigation to armed confrontation. This negative attitude continues to mar Muslim relations with others. Whereas, if they had received Islam as a matter of divine guidance, they would have felt that they had something to give to other nations. They would have considered themselves as the giver and the others as the taker. They would not then have become obsessed with recovering the irretrievable. The actual relationship between Muslims and other nations should be that of *dayee* and *madu*, not of depriver and deprived. But the result of holding

the historical Islam to be the true Islam is that other nations are now seen simply as rivals. So long as this rivalry continues between Muslims and other nations, no real work of Islamic revival can be started.

It is not possible in the very first stage to cleanse all Muslims of this antagonistic psychology. Yet at least one such team should be assembled, the members of which have rid themselves of this mentality of rivalry. This transformation in thinking will help them to regard other nations as their *madu*, instead of as their material competitors and national adversaries. To establish the relation of *dayee* and *madu*, it is essential to forget all complaints and grudges, and to be willing to bear all kinds of material losses. This relation of *dayee* and *madu* can be founded only on the basis of unilateral sacrifice on the part of the *dayee*. There is no doubt about it that this is the most difficult of tasks, one for which one has to forfeit a great deal.

The willingness to make sacrifices and other such attributes must be possessed by those who come forward for the mission of Islamic revival. For the preparation of such individuals in modern times, again the same planning is required as was carried out in the first phase.

In modern times we are in need of a high standard training centre with all the latest facilities. Set up in the

pure surroundings of nature, far from the corrupting centres of civilization, such a training centre would respond fully to this exhortation of the Quran:

... some should stay behind to instruct themselves in religion and admonish the others when they return, so that they may take heed. (9:122)

The training of talented individuals in such an isolated location would be the equivalent of the setting of Hagar and Ismael in barren, uncultivable terrain, so that their religiosity would grow and be strengthened.

For this proposed training centre to give the maximum benefit, parents like Abraham should be willing to sacrifice talented children, in the sense of taking them away from the lure of economic opportunities and putting them in surroundings where, even by giving of their best, they would have nothing in return save the concept of reward in the Hereafter. The successful running of such a training centre would be akin, in the words of Philip Hitti, to producing a nursery of heroes.

But unless a considerable number of such individuals are made available, no real steps can be taken towards the revival of Islam. That is to say, a group of intelligent, talented individuals of the nation should be brought to a different, special environment, set apart from mundane things, where they are given training and education specially to prepare them to

successfully undertake the revival of Islam in modern times, thus becoming warners and givers of good tidings for the peoples of the world.

In order to facilitate the Islamic revolution in its first phase, God made the special provision of setting the mighty Roman and Persian empires—the greatest opponents of monotheism—on a collision course, and consequently weakening them so considerably that it became easy for the Muslims to subjugate them.

This same succour of God for the believers has taken another form in modern times, i.e. the flow of such information about the universe as proves religious realities at the level of miracles. The superstitious way of thinking dominated the world in ancient times, as a result of which man had formed strange opinions about divine creation. The universe has been called the 'miracle of God' in the Quran. But this divine miracle lay hidden under the veil of superstition. One of the results of the Islamic revolution is that the phenomena of nature, which had been subjects of worship, now became subjects of research and investigation. In this way, for the first time in human history, the occurrences of nature began to be studied in a purely academic manner. This fresh approach went on gaining ground until it spread to Europe where it was given the great boost which helped it develop into the scientific revolution of modern times.

It is as if science, having removed the Veil of Superstition, has proved the miracle of the universe to be a miracle of God. By displacing the phenomena of nature from the status of objects of worship, man has ultimately been able to set his foot on this moon, which has been worshipped throughout human history from the time of ancient man, who considered it an object of divinity.

If the new arguments furnished by science are properly employed, the call of monotheism can be presented to the world on the same, if not a greater scale, than that for which miracles had earlier been given to the prophets as a testament to the uniqueness of the Creator.

All things of the heavens and the earth are there to remind man of God. But man, on his own began to deify those things. This was a major deviation from God's original intention.

In modern times we have witnessed another kind of deviation as regards scientific information. The facts that have come to light through scientific investigations are all proofs of the divinity of God. They are there to remind man of God. But the atheists of modern times have distorted those very revelations of science, which were proofs of the existence of God, to show that there is no God. By giving the wrong direction to these facts, it was held that the entire system functioned on its own through a mechanical process of action and

reaction, cause and effect.

The universe discovered by science was, however, an extremely meaningful and purposeful universe, as modern discoveries have shown, it is not a haphazard assemblage of matter. Rather it is a highly organized and sophisticated factory of a very superior standard. All the things of the world inevitably move along the purpose-oriented course which will produce the best results. The discovery of organization and purposefulness in all things is certain proof that the hand of God, albeit invisible, is behind the working of the universe. But what the atheist thinkers did was divert the courses of scientific discovery towards atheism. They held that whatever has been proved is an end and not the cause. But what is the proof that it is an end? It is quite possible that it may simply be an effect. The atheists nevertheless maintain that, it is not necessary that there must be a mind which, through will, is guiding events deliberately towards a particular end or conclusion; it may be possible that, through the blind, interplay of some physical and chemical forces, certain things on their own are being produced which may, by chance, be meaningful. When this meaningless explanation itself has been produced through the exercise of will (human will in this instance), how strange it would be to believe in the functioning of a meaningful universe without a will behind it.

After the emergence of science, atheist thinkers have, on a very large scale, attempted to point science in the direction of atheism. On the contrary, the attempts of religious thinkers to utilize scientific evidence to support the claims of religion have been extremely few and far between. Over the last one hundred years thousands of books of a high academic standard have come out which aim, quite wrongly of course, at producing atheism out of science, while few academic efforts worth mentioning have been made on the part of religious thinkers. One of these books, *The Mysterious Universe*, by Sir James Jeans, is notable for the impact it has had on both religious and scientific thinking: In this book the author has ably demolished through purely scientific arguments, the principle of causation as the acceptance of the mechanical substitute for God.

In the latter half of the present century innumerable new facts have come to the knowledge of man, which prove the truth of religious beliefs on an extremely elevated plane. But so far, no religious thinker has come forward to harness, this scientific information in support of religious truths. If this work could be performed at a high intellectual level, it would amount to an academic miracle in support of the religion of monotheism.

As we learn from the Quran, the prophethood

of all the prophets of the past was doubted by their contemporaries (11:62). Initially, the same fate befell Prophet Muhammad. (38:10)

However, the Quran declared: ‘Your Lord may exalt you to a position of praise and glory’, (17:79). This divine proclamation meant that his prophethood would pass from the stage of doubt to the stage of full acceptance. The stage of *Mahmud* (worthy of praise) is the final stage of recognition and acknowledgement.

Whenever a Prophet is born, his good faith becomes a subject of doubt to his people. “Is he really a prophet, or does he just claim to be one?” To the end, such thoughts keep coming to people’s minds. Prophethood, in its initial stage, is merely a claim. It has no such in-built proof as people will be forced to acknowledge.

That is why, whenever a prophet comes to any community, he becomes in their eyes a controversial personality, established historical proofs not having been gathered in his support. Supportive arguments do come into existence, but always only after a certain time has elapsed. Generally, the Prophets did not reach this second stage of full acceptance.

All other prophets came to the world and also left the world in what was a period of controversy. They were not, therefore, able to leave behind them a group of sincere and dedicated individuals who could preserve their traditions and prophetic sayings.

If these prophets were never wholly acknowledged by their contemporaries, either at the outset or in the later stages of their careers, it was because their teachings were never fully borne out by advances in human knowledge.

Of all the prophets, the only exception in this respect is that of the Final Prophet, although, like the other prophets, he too began his prophethood amidst controversy. It was at a later stage that he achieved such extraordinary success, and along with his companions, came to hold sway over a major part of the globe. In a period of less than a century his religion, Islam, had subjugated the great empires of Asia and Africa.

The Prophet of Islam emerged successful in all the challenges he faced: all his predictions proved true and all the powers that confronted him were vanquished. These events during his lifetime established his reputation not just in the eyes of his contemporaries, but for all time to come. Throughout the history of the Prophets he alone secured such extraordinary success that his prophethood soon left all controversy behind, reaching the stage of firm establishment referred to in the Quran as *mahmud*. His sayings as well as his achievements remained so perfectly preserved that there could be no room for any doubt.

In the present world the *dayees* of the True Religion have an exclusive advantage such as no other *dayee*

group had ever possessed in the earlier phases of Islam history. That is, we are in a position to present the call to monotheism before the world from the pre-eminent position of established prophethood.

We are the inheritors of the certainties of established prophethood, while the followers of other prophets are still floundering in controversy.

God has provided all kinds of favourable opportunities for presenting the divine message before the nations of the world. If, in spite of all such provisions, Muslims do not perform this task of bearing witness to the Truth, or if they engage in communal, political and worldly disputes with other nations, they will find themselves on the Day of Judgement in the serious predicament of being unable to justify this lapse before their Lord and Creator.

The Call to God and Unity

The Muslims' unity is their greatest strength. The best means of achieving this unity is the call towards God. The Quran says that God has chosen Muslims to promote the cause of true religion. Furthermore, the religion brought to them by the Prophet is to be conveyed by them to other communities. In this context the Quran commands them to hold fast to the rope of God and be united around the one God:

So that His messenger may be
A witness for you, and you
Be witness for mankind.
So, attend to your prayers,
Give *zakat*
And hold fast to God;
He is your Protector—
The Best to protect
And the Best to help! (22:78)

The emphasis on unity, while entrusting Muslims with the task of inviting other peoples to the religion of God, indicates the close link between the call to God and unity. In fact, this call or invitation leads to harmony and unity, which in turn enables Muslims

to effectively perform their task.

The traditions of the Prophet also testify to the interdependence of the call to God and unity. Miswar Bin Makhrama narrates that once the Prophet came to his companions and said to them, 'God has sent me as a blessing. Convey it to people on my behalf, and do not enter into dispute with each other as did the disciples of Jesus with him.'

The companions of the Prophet responded to this by saying: 'O Prophet of God, we shall not differ from you on any matter. Give us your commands and send us on our assigned missions.'

By virtue of their knowledge of true religion, the companions of the Prophet fully understood the responsibilities and implications of calling people to God. They were also aware of the character that they ought to possess for discharging such a responsibility.

History tells us that a mutual bond of brotherhood and unity existed among Muslims as long as they engaged themselves in the task of inviting people to the truth. But the moment they deviated from this path, they fell a prey to unending dispute and dissension. Subsequently, they were withdrawn from their designated duty of inviting people to God because of having lost their unity—the greatest strength of a community or group in this world.

An Example from an Early Islamic Age

According to most sources, the Prophet passed away on 12 Rabial-Awwal of 11 A.H. Two weeks before his demise, the Prophet assembled a special army to encounter the Romans (Byzantines.). The Prophet included in this army all the leading companions with Osama bin Zayd bin Harith as their commander. The contingent was dispatched to Syria where a battle had taken place between Romans and Muslims at Mawta. Seventeen-year-old Osama was the son of a slave. Yet he was the most suitable person to lead this contingent. And all the more so, because earlier at the battle of Mawta (8 A.H.) the Romans had slain his father and he was now burning with the fire of vengeance. Osama set out on the mission assigned to him by the Prophet, making a halt at Juruf, a suburb of Madina and the location of the present Islamic University.

While Osama was camping with his army in Madina, he was informed of the Prophet's demise. He thereupon returned with his contingent to Madina to attend the last rites of the Prophet.

Abu Bakr Siddiq was appointed the first caliph with the unanimous approval of the Prophet's companions. Following this appointment, the Muslims had a consensus to hold back Osama's army at Madina itself. Due to the sad demise of the Prophet and the

rising sedition of hypocrites, uncertain conditions prevailed all around. People were in favour of first consolidating the new Islamic state in Madina and only then launching any outside campaign.

In spite of general opposition, the first caliph did not approve of even a short delay in the dispatch of Osama's army, saying that on no consideration would he untie the knot tied by the Prophet of God, even though birds might snatch them up, beasts might devour them and dogs might drag the feet of the pious wives of the Prophet.

In order to underline the importance of this act, Abu Bakr accompanied Osama as far as Juruf. Osama went on horseback, while Abu Bakr marched beside him to give the necessary instructions. Despite Osama's repeated requests, Abu Bakr refused to ride, preferring to go on foot.

Both the Prophet of Islam and his first caliph resorted to such actions as matters of pressing need. The exigency in the present case was that of providing the Muslims with a field of action outside the land of Arabia to demonstrate their spirit of struggle in the cause of Islam. Whenever Muslim energies were not directed to this external target, they were soon enticed into internal factional conflicts, wrongly labelling such action as *jihad* in a bid to justify their misdeeds.

The External Target

When the Arabs entered the fold of Islam under the influence of the movement launched by the Prophet, they were full of Islamic zeal. They wanted the religion they had discovered as the greatest truth to be shared with other people. This zeal required an outlet for its expression. The timely dispatch of Osama's army was aimed at providing Muslims with a suitable sphere of action. Seeing the Romans' aggression as the occasion for a military encounter, the Prophet in his last days was able to divert the Muslims' zeal towards the communication of the divine message among non-Muslim communities. Hence, the energy wasted in internal disputes was utilized for fruitful activities in outer spheres. Had it not been so, the Muslims of Arabia would have indulged in fighting among themselves on the pretext of reforming each other, as is evident from the prevailing situations in almost all Muslim countries. The infighting among Muslims themselves would have halted the historical process of Islam before it had even begun. But for the prudent decision of the Prophet to direct Muslims' ardour towards external fields, Islamic history would have been an elegiac recital instead of a record of the exemplary deeds of the champions of Islam. Involvement in a lofty cause is a guarantee of noble character. But Muslims had

lost this very nobility of character in their detachment from the cause of propagating God's message among the people.

Very soon after this military action had been taken against the Romans, in the times of the first pious caliph, the Persians (Sassanids) turned hostile to the Muslims forcing them to resort to confrontation. This afforded Muslims a large sphere of Islamic action spreading over Asia, Africa and Europe, as these two empires, the Roman and the Persian, dominated most of the populated world.

This stance taken by the Muslims against the Romans and Iranians was not aimed at any political gain or territorial expansion: its sole purpose was the propagation of the message of Islam. Muslims, imbued with a divine instinct, had left their homes to convince people to give up the worship of their fellow men and to become true worshippers of God. Past events are testimony to the fact that both Rome and Persia were the main targets for the propagation of the message of God, but the aggression demonstrated by the two empires forced Muslims to use military power against them. There were, however, nations like Ethiopia, Maldives, Indonesia and Malaysia who desisted from wielding arms against the Muslims, thus allowing Islam to flourish in these countries.

The process of the popularization of Islam among

the earlier non-Muslim nations began soon after the death of the Prophet and continued successfully for about three decades.

This entire span of time witnessed the Muslims' concerted and united efforts to communicate the message of Islam among other nations.

Year of Unity

The process of popularizing Islam through the collective efforts of Muslims was hampered in the last days of the third pious caliph 'Uthman ibn 'Affan when Muslims, in an excess of zeal over the internal crusade, diverted their attention to the domestic sphere. There they entered into conflict with their own rulers in the name of political reform. The internal dispute heightened to such an extent that the people of a particular Muslim sect did not shrink even from assassinating their own caliph.

Even the killing of caliph 'Uthman could not put an end to Muslims' internal strife, for now they were divided into two groups over the requital for the murder of Caliph 'Uthman. This deadly fight between the two factions continued for years. Deviation from the general cause of calling people to Islam harmed Muslims in two ways; on the one hand the process of dissemination and promotion of Islam came to a complete halt, while on the other the Muslims'

strength began to be pitted against their own people. Islam, once a binding force, now became the banner under which internal battles were fought.

Having experienced ten long years of strife and conflict, the Muslims were reunited in the year 41 A.H. And for that reason, it is known in the history of Islam as the year of reunion. This blessing of unity came to the Muslims through Hasan ibn 'Ali about whom the Prophet had predicted that he would be the harbinger of peace and reconciliation between the two great factions of Muslims.

Hasan was appointed the fifth caliph after the death of his father 'Ali. Seeing that the caliphate had generated internal conflict, he unilaterally renounced his right to it to avoid exacerbating the differences existing among Muslims.

The two warring factions of Muslims were led by Hadhrat Hasan and Hadhrat Mu'awiyah. Hadhrat Hasan's withdrawal from the office of the caliphate had, in a way, sealed up all possible internal strife and redirected Muslims' endeavours towards the spread of Islam. The caravan of Islam once again after a delay of ten years set out on the path of progress. The reign of Mu'awiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (40-60 A.H.) witnessed the spread of Islam to an extent unparalleled in the centuries-long history of the religion. It was during

his time that Islam extended as far as Samarqand, Afghanistan, Tunis and Rhodes Island, enroute to the Bosphorus Strait, the last being the gateway for the Muslims' entry into Constantinople. In short, Islam made all-round progress in this period of overseas expansion.

A Lesson from History

The caliphate of Mu'awiyah has been made the subject of severe criticism. Some say that Mu'awiyah was the first ruler to introduce kingship into Islam. But, regardless of this criticism, it should be noted that the two-decade long rule of Mu'awiyah gives us an important lesson. Any sincere effort to deter Muslims from internal strife and conflict, even if it is at the cost of introducing monarchy to a political institution, will always bring fruitful results in favour of Islam. Internal conflict leads Muslims to make destructive use of their Islamic spirit, yet, once distracted from the path of factional feuds, their zeal finds an active outlet in the efforts of spreading Islam.

Factional conflicts among Muslims are highly deplorable. An attempt, therefore, to save Muslims from internal strife encourages them to eschew unlawful acts and harnesses their Islamic spirit to the popularizing and spreading of Islam. The energy or collective force that might otherwise be used in destructive activities is then devoted to the progress and consolidation of

Islam. The target of Muslims' reform and the inculcation in them of the exalted qualities of a noble Islamic character from which they had earlier been diverted by factional feuds, is automatically achieved.

Had the Muslims' crusading spirit been directed to the external sphere as in its earlier days, world history today would have been quite different.

The Call to God is the sacred mission of the Muslim community. This mission basically entails conveying the message of God to non-Muslim nations. This is the same mission which is also called *shahadah ala an nas*. After the line of Prophets came to an end with Prophet Muhammad, the Muslims were charged with the responsibilities of prophethood. Now the Muslims have to perform the same task of conveying the message of God to non-Muslims for which the prophets were sent by God to the world.

'*Dawah*', or the propagation of Islam among non-Muslims, gives the proponent the opportunity to devote himself to outside activities. For the fulfillment of his task, he turns his zeal outwards. Externally targeted, the crusading spirit is then optimally exercised.

The accomplishment of the mission of calling people to God by Muslims brings divine grace to them and develops in the community all those exalted qualities that are considered to be the key to unity.

The history of Islam presents ample proof of the

above-mentioned facts. The period of thirty years after the death of the Prophet, when Muslims were engaged in the task of propagating Islam in the outer sphere, was marked by complete unity in the Muslim ranks. But with the beginning of internal conflicts in the last days of caliph 'Uthman, the process of the spread of Islam hung fire for ten years. However, the task of propagating Islam was resumed by Muslims when internal conflict came to an end as a result of the voluntary withdrawal of 'Hasan ibn Ali from the caliphate, and it continued on course for the next twenty years. Again, it was permanently disrupted due to conflict between Banu Umayya and Banu Hashim on the issue of political reform after Amir Mu'awiyah's death (60 A.H.).

Muslims are now paying the penalty for having given up the cause of spreading Islam, thanks to their unceasing internal conflict over the centuries. These conflicts are ostensibly taking place in the name of Islam, but in fact nothing is more un-Islamic in the world of God than this lamentable disunity.

The call to God is basically the title of the Islamic mission to convey the message of God to non-Muslims. (The technical nomenclature for the same task to be carried out among Muslims is reform or *islah*). In case one is extending the message of Islam to a non-Muslim, he will neither explain the implications of *aamin bil sirr* or *aamin bil jahr*, (i.e. pronouncing

aamin in prayers loudly or silently), nor will he touch upon peripheral issues on which there is no consensus among Muslim sects. In a controversial situation, the only option for the Muslim will be to present to his addressee the principal tenets of Islam, like belief in one God, or *tawhid*, Prophethood, the life hereafter and human equality. In short, the general call to Islam entails the popularization of the purely basic teachings of the religion.

It is an accepted fact that there is no contradiction in the fundamentals of religion. On the contrary, there are considerable differences among the people of various sects on juristic issues, which are peripheral to religion. Therefore, whenever Islam draws the public attention, the basic aspects, which are unanimously agreed upon, are given due prominence, while the controversial aspects are kept in the background.

It is a natural principle that whenever a community devotes itself to the cause of calling people to God, it is blessed with unity and solidarity. People's attention, in such circumstances, is centred upon the basic and widely accepted precepts. To raise peripheral issues would mean creating differences among them. Whenever people devote their energies to promoting the basic teachings of Islam, there is inevitably a closer understanding among them. This approach eliminates conflict and paves the way for unity. To sum up, the

introduction of peripheral and lesser issues leads to confrontation, whereas adherence to basic issues creates an environment favourable to integration.

Unity Despite Diversity

To call people to God in today's world is to represent God. Those who perform this service are destined to be the best rewarded in the life hereafter, for no other task in this world is of such magnitude. But, for the call to be effective, there should be unity among the callers. Now, there have always been differences between human beings. Even when people are united, it does not mean that there are no differences at all. In fact, unity results from integration, not *without* differences but *despite* differences.

The companions of the Prophet evinced an exemplary unity that enabled them to bring about a great revolution throughout the world. However, their unity was not of the sort that recognized no differences. There were, indeed, considerable differences among them, both on religious and worldly matters. But, in spite of all such personal differences, they were united on the central cause of promoting Islam.

“Unity in diversity,” the watchword of national integration, implies in practice the greatest sacrifice a human being can make. This sacrifice requires the vast

generosity that induces the individual to tolerate a loss for the good of his fellow beings. It calls for the courage to recognize the excellence of others, despite personal differences. It demands that one be selfless enough to bow to men of higher qualities and capabilities, and that one be exalted enough in character to submit to the opinion of others. Voluntary self-sacrifice goes hand in hand with good heartedness. It means offering the best seat to another, standing aside while others forge ahead, and remaining in obscurity so that others may stand in the limelight. Such individual sacrifice is the bedrock of collective unity.

Inviting people to embrace the message of God has great significance for man. All other things are inferior to it. The most frequent reason for the differences between the members of any given society is the lack of a great common purpose. The moment a great goal emerges before them, they will themselves withdraw from petty disputes and will thus achieve the greatness of an over arching unity.

Witness of the Universe

In surah *al-Anaam* of the Quran there occurs a description of flatterers who ask the Prophet to show a miracle to prove the credibility of the message brought by him from God. The Quran says that faith does not depend on miraculous events but on man's ability to derive inspiration and deduce messages from such signs as can be perceived with open eyes. Anyone who possesses this quality of perception will realize that the miracles he demands are already in existence. Can there be a greater miracle than the existence of the universe with all its diverse manifestations? And does it not confirm the truth of the message of God brought by the Prophet? No miracle can convince a person who is determined not to learn a lesson from the events taking place before his very eyes.

The Quran cites as further examples of God's miraculous creation the other creatures, like birds and animals also living, besides man, in the world. At other points the earth and the sky too become parts of this ecology. In surah *Bani Isra'il* God suggests that these creatures have many lessons to teach men. They

are, like men, creatures of God. They too have their way of life as man has his.

However, as compared to the human world, the greater part of the rest of the world, comprising vegetation, natural objects and animal life, is in a completely different category. For billions of years that part has been continuously pursuing a definite course, with none of its elements showing the slightest deviation from its predestined function. It is man who does not accept or abide by a pre-ordained scheme of things; every human being has the desire to act according to his own free will.

What does the Prophet demand from you other than the avowal that there is one single Creator of the world? The prudent course for you would be to eschew pride and stubbornness and obey the Creator. If you seriously think about the universe around you, you will realise that the entire expanse of the earth and the sky is evidence of the truthfulness of the call to God. The phenomenal world where man lives is itself an expression of submission to its Creator. How does man, who is a negligible part of the vastness of nature, justify his rebellion against his Maker?

Every particle of the expanding universe is performing its respective function. Each move on a set course, clearly indicating that some powerful and omniscient Being is controlling it by His will. The

taking to a separate course of action as a matter of human volition in this vast universe is a pointer to man's deviation from total assimilation with the rest of the universe.

The entire universe is in consistent progress and motion. None of the major orbiting bodies ever collide with each other. To indulge in conflict is a purely human characteristic. The entire universe, for all its incessant action, heads towards a positive goal. Man, on the contrary, opts for such courses of action as lead to chaos and destruction.

Two separate water bodies do not trespass upon each other's territory. Even a herd of bulls moves and feeds within its defined territories. One does not cross over into the other's land. It is man who does not want to abide by any laws. Honeybees accomplish their constructive work with exemplary discipline and by the strict division of labour. But man creates disorder by breaking rules. Ants and birds rely on their own labour for their subsistence instead of snatching others' food, whereas man exploits his fellow beings in order to fill his own belly.

No wild animal attacks and kills its own kind, but man does not shrink from shedding human blood. Even reptiles harm other creatures only when they have to defend themselves. Man oppresses his fellow beings irrationally, and adopts gluttonous ways in all

his affairs, while animals eat, copulate or build abodes just to satisfy the basic need and urge.

Animals engage themselves in their own specific spheres, while man is fond of interfering in others' spheres. Scores of sheep intermingled with another flock will gather around their own shepherd whenever he calls them. But the human being is different from all other animals. When man is called to God and His Prophet, he deliberately ignores the call.

Man's existence, be it as small as a grain of mustard, is a part of the universe. Therefore, no course other than that followed by the greater universe will do man any good. Where man chooses a separate path, despite such clear guidance, he deprives himself of the bounties inherent in the universe and deserves to be displaced from it. All universal phenomena should derecognize him. He should be denied of all the blessings of the universe and remain in a state of eternal deprivation.

Those who are not ready to co-exist with nature, have no right to benefit from its advantages. Nature with its entire wealth should be given to only those human beings who not only coexist with nature but also obey the Creator, in the same way as nature has been doing since time immemorial. Those who take to the course of rebellion against God should receive no share in the comforts and pleasures afforded by nature in the form of light, air and water. They have no right

either to build a house for themselves in this world, or to eat off the fat of the land, or to enjoy themselves in any other ways. Justice demands that all possible paradisial comforts of nature be bestowed on those obedient to God, while the disobedient deserve to be deprived of all divine favours.

Moral Concept of Islam

Ethics is the subject matter common to both religion and philosophy, yet it is approached by them in basically different ways. Religion presents moral principles as divine dictates while philosophy simultaneously looks into both 'what' and 'why.' The latter preoccupies itself with questions like why it is that what is morally true is after all true.

This difference of approach has created a considerable gap between the two disciplines. In religion, ethics is defined as a known and indisputably established set of moral principles. Being a divine dictate, it is quite exact in form and content. On the contrary, right from the early Greeks of pre-Christian times down to the modern western thinkers of the twentieth century, no philosopher has been able to formulate precise ethical criteria of human action. Every distinguished philosopher has established his own school of thought but has failed to give to the world a commonly accepted moral code.

Our point of view is that human limitations are a permanent obstacle to our finding an answer to the

question 'why.' Therefore, we have chosen a practical solution rather than depend upon the uncertain outcome of philosophical dialogue. Here, our stress will be on explaining in plain terms the basic concept of ethics as presented by Islam.

Cosmic Approach

The Quran says that God created seven tiers of the sky, and that no imperfection will ever be detected in God's creation. (67:4)

God created a great universe humming with a multitude of activities going on in a disciplined and orderly fashion with no irregularities. The performance of each and every part of it is par excellence.

Divine Ethics

Nature is controlled by God, while in human life the course of action is determined by man's own intention. If man has been exempted from following the same system as has been decreed by God for the rest of the universe, it is because God has placed him on trial in this world. God has given man such freedom to prove whether he has the will and capacity to remain on the straight and narrow path. That is why the Prophet took care to urge his fellow men to "follow divine morals."

The Islamic ethic is based on the concept of

morality being a universal reality. God has determined similar standards of conduct both for man and for the rest of the universe, and nature in its entirety serves as a model for human conduct. What Miguel de Cervantes has said about a good painter is also true of a good man. He says:

Good painters imitate nature, bad ones vomit it.

The part of nature distinct from man is obliged by divine decree to abide by—in scientific language—the law of nature. The existence of this law is confirmed by the Quran when it speaks of the earth and the sky being subject to divine dictates. The Quran further makes it obligatory for man to follow these same dictates. There is, indeed, a single divine law to be observed by men and nature alike. Where man has to do this of his own free will and by his own intention, nature does so out of compulsion.

The same principle of Islamic conduct is professed in the third chapter of the Quran:

Do they seek for other than the religion of God, while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed to His Will? (3:83)

This verse clearly indicates that God wishes to see human life resting on the same principles that He has laid down for the rest of nature. Human life too should reflect the same obedience to rules that nature manifests for our benefit time and time again.

Unity and Organization

It is set forth in the Quran that there is a path for man determined by God. So, all men should follow the same divine path. The same rule is applied in the Quran to the honeybee. God commanded the honeybee to follow the divine path and the way honeybee works demonstrates that it remains on that divinely determined path. Such behaviour should be imitated by man, for the lifestyle of the honeybee is an ideal example of social organization. The process of preparing honey involves the participation of thousands of honeybees, who work in close co-ordination with their fellow bees, each bee performing its tasks in a highly disciplined and organized manner. The co-operative spirit, self-discipline and organization being prerequisites for the smooth running of all social structures, human beings should pattern their social living along exactly the same lines, albeit in accordance with different sets of circumstances. The Quran describes this concerted and organized activity as divinely approved action.

No Interference

The Quran says:

The sun is not allowed to overtake the moon, nor does the night outpace the day. Each in its own orbit runs. (36:40)

This verse points to a divine law prevailing on the planets and in space. It enjoins every heavenly body

to move in its respective orbit and not to encroach upon the orbit of another heavenly body. It is, in a way, a physical allegory of a divinely approved social principle. By using the analogy of the stars and the heavenly bodies, God demonstrates the law that He wishes to see incorporated in human life with conscious effort.

This suggests that every human being has to function in his own particular sphere without trespassing upon the domain of any other individual.

This Quranic law is illustrated by an incident, which took place in a western country, shortly after it had won freedom. One of its citizens came out on to the street, vigorously flapping his arms. In his excitement he hit the nose of a passerby. The latter asked the freedom-lover why he had hit him on the nose. He retorted by saying that his country was now free and that, in consequence, he was free to do whatever he wanted. The passerby politely remarked, "Your freedom ends where my nose begins."

Every individual in this world has freedom of action. Yet this freedom is not limitless. People are bound to act within the confines of their own spheres and to enjoy their freedom without disturbing the peace and freedom of others. This is basic to proper conduct as laid down in the Quran. God's confinement of the movement of different heavenly bodies to their respective orbits provides a paradigm on which to

base the human code of conduct.

One of the Quranic verses suggests in figurative language that man should not be stony-hearted:

Thenceforth were your hearts
 Hardened, they became
 Like a rock and even worse
 In hardness, for among rocks
 There are some from which
 Rivers gush forth; others
 There are which when split
 asunder send forth water
 and others which sink
 For fear of God, and God is
 Not unmindful of what you do.

In other words, man should be large-hearted enough to embrace the truth whenever it is revealed to him, and when confronted with man's oppression of man, his heart should be rent with agony. He should, moreover, adopt a submissive rather than a rebellious posture.

Just as a fountain of water gushes forth from among the rocks, so should the spirit of submission to the truth flow from man's heart. And just as the trees and mountains bow to the will of God, so should man submit totally to God's command. Indeed, man's surrender to God should have all the speed and finality of the landslide.

Soft Spokenness

The Quran says that birds sing the praise of God with the words *Subhan Allah*: (All praise is due to God)

Do you not see how God is praised by those in the heavens and on earth and the birds (of the air) with wings spread? He notes the prayers and praises of all His creatures and has knowledge of all their actions. (24:41)

At another place, the Quran describes a donkey's braying as the worst possible sound. Therefore men, should refrain from speaking in the strident tones of the donkey, and express themselves rather with gentleness and moderation.

And be modest in your gait, and lower your voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass. (31:19)

It suggests that God loves a voice that is graced by the sweetness of a bird song, not one like the braying of an ass, which is an affront to the hearer's ears.

Of all human organs, the tongue is the most valuable, as it is the means of exchange of ideas among human beings. There are two ways of using this organ: one pleases by virtue of its sincerity, rationality and politeness, e.g. in the bringing of good tidings; the other is marred by abrasiveness, taunts and sarcasm, and in tone is like "the braying of an ass," which can never be to the

liking of the hearer. The Quran disapproves of the latter manner as being uncouth and insists that man's speech should have an agreeable effect on the hearer.

Forgiveness

The misbehaviour of Joseph's stepbrothers towards him was deeply tormenting for his father Jacob. Naturally, he had serious grounds for complaint against Joseph's brothers. But rather than express his grief to the wrong-doers, Jacob turned in anguish to God, although his anguish had been caused by men.

This diversion of negative reaction away from the blameworthy and towards the Almighty is paralleled in the physical world in a number of explicit ways. Seasonal rainwater is usually excessive. If the entire amount of this water stayed in the fields and inhabited areas, it would cause widespread disaster. But this does not happen, for the excessive amount of water is directed by nature into rivulets and rivers, leaving behind the water actually required.

Subscribing to the same law of nature in social life, man should divert all of the detrimental elements of his emotions towards God.

Community life leads, among other things, to mutual complaints and bitterness. If these complaints

were expressed before the persons thought responsible, the whole of society would be turned into a battlefield. In such a situation man should adopt the same course of action as that taken by nature, namely, the diversion of all excessive emotions to God's account and thereafter the devotion of oneself to positive social uplift. Nature teaches us to keep with us always a 'diversion pool' to which may be diverted the negative emotions occurring in our hearts towards others, thus enabling us to lead a balanced life.

Good for Evil

It is stated in the Quran that one of the characteristics of the favourite devotees of God is their ability to forgive, even when they are angry. The Prophet taught his followers to treat gently even those who misbehaved with them. In other words, man should return good for evil, and remain pacific in the face of provocation.

This altruistic conduct finds a close parallel in the physical world in the symbiotic relationship established by God between man and the tree. To continue to exist, man must continually breathe in air, retaining the air's oxygen and exhaling its carbon dioxide. If the tree were to imitate this progress, the world would become unlivable, because the air would become polluted with poisonous gases. But God has so ordained things that the tree will do the opposite of man, i.e. it will breathe

in carbon dioxide, thus cleansing the atmosphere, and will breathe out oxygen, thus supplying human beings and animals with the basic fuel of life.

The model for the behaviour demanded of man by the Quran is to be found in the reciprocal bond between man and tree. But where the tree plays its part automatically in the natural course of things, man in the social sphere must deliberately, and of his own free will, choose to return love for hatred, comfort for pain, forgiveness for anger, and gentleness for provocation. In short, a negative attitude should be responded to by positive behaviour. Such conduct having no room for 'tit-for-tat' logic, you should never hesitate to give oxygen to one who gives you carbon dioxide.

Summary

The standard of conduct maintained by God through His direct control over nature has to be exhibited by man in his personal life under his own control. The pattern of action laid down by God in the rest of the world on the physical level should be reflected in the world of man on the human plane.

What is found in the physical world in the form of iron is required in the human world in the form of firmness of character. The stream trickling down the mountains is synonymous, in the human world, with gentleness and soft-heartedness. All that exists in the

physical world as predictable in character corresponds to the fulfillment of promises on the human level. Whatever exists in the physical world in the form of fine texture and fragrance has its counterpart in the human world in good behaviour and fair dealing.

The absorption of carbon dioxide by trees and the emission of oxygen that helps man breathe imply that man in his practical life should do good even to those who do evil to him. This is because natural objects do not contradict each other; all of them are engaged in performing their assigned functions with utter devotion. The same principle applies to human life, where man should devote himself to positive efforts and completely abstain from destructive actions. Nature pursues the principle of recycling and decomposition. Waste materials are recycled and turned into gases. Leaves when separated from branches do not decay but turn into manure. The implications of this for human life is of great importance, as it suggests that the wealth spent by a man should be re-utilized by his fellow men. The efforts initiated by one should be beneficial for others too. Many things are taking place in nature on a grand scale. Every component is performing its respective function precisely and regularly without receiving any apparent reward. The same selfless devotion, with no thought of reward, is expected from men in the performance of their duties. High mountains and all

vertical objects cast their shadows low down upon the earth. Seen symbolically, this should prompt human beings to acquire the habit of modesty. One should neither boast of one's achievements before others, nor consider oneself superior to others.

Islamic conduct is, indeed, synonymous with natural conduct. This conduct is maintained in nature unconsciously while, in human life, it is controlled by the individual's own conscious efforts and determination.

The Call of Dawah in the Modern Age

God has assigned a whole series of duties to Muslims, ranging from turning themselves into true worshippers of their Creator to working towards the reformation of backsliders. All these responsibilities are entirely binding upon them. But their primary religious obligation is to convey the message of God's true religion to all non-Muslim nations. This should not be seen in the context of a purely national struggle, but as a global obligation handed down by the Prophet to Muslims everywhere, to be fulfilled after the termination of his prophethood.

God has associated with the task of *Dawah* work all kinds of goods in this world and in the Hereafter for the Muslim ummah. According to the Quran, the way to protect themselves from wrongdoers is to call them to tread the path of God (5:67). It is for the successful fulfillment of this duty that believers will be distinguished in the Hereafter by being given the position of God's witnesses. The Quran describes them as those who will stand in the most elevated places (7:46). This is the greatest honour which may

be conferred on the callers of truth in the life of the Hereafter.

However, calling people to surrender to God is no easy task. It amounts to a re-enactment of the history of the Prophet and his companions, who were unremitting in their efforts to bring to ordinary men and women a clear perception of the great hidden realities of the Almighty. It is to achieve on the human level what had formerly been achieved on the prophetic level.

But first the *dawah* worker must himself understand the true nature of the message he brings to mankind, otherwise his activities will be irrelevant to God's cause and may even prove counterproductive. Then, in bringing others within the fold of Islam, he must also appreciate in what sense and in how many ways there has been a change in conditions as far as the propagation of religious ideas is concerned. For our predecessors, the invitation to the truth meant putting an end to idolatry—replacing polytheism with monotheism. Nowadays, the invitation to God means putting an end to atheism.

With the end of idolatry, a new phase was launched in world history and, for a thousand years, human thinking went on developing along rational lines to the point where, in the sixteenth century, the emergence of the western sciences came to mark the beginning of yet another new era. In the present century, science,

having made such rapid and tremendous strides, may be said to have reached its zenith. It is ironic that when science can now provide the means to re-affirm religious truths, atheism should have come to dominate human thinking and actions. Academically speaking, religion has become an adjunct of atheism. It has no independent status of its own.

The German statesman, E.F. Schumacher, sums up contemporary attitudes to religion in the following anecdote: "On a visit to Leningrad some years ago (August 1968) I consulted a map to find out where I was, but I could not make it out. I could see several enormous churches, yet there was no trace of them on my map. When finally an interpreter came to help me, he said: 'We don't show churches on our maps.'" (E. F. Shumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, London, 1981, p.9)

This instance is a telling reflection of modern conditions. In today's world when all sciences, including history, physics, botany, zoology and astronomy have been quite elaborately developed, God has been ousted from the academic and intellectual domain. Nowhere does the name of God occur. A man of insight perceives the signs of God everywhere—in every nook and cranny of the earth, and right throughout the furthest reaches of the universe. But in the empirical sciences, God is a nonentity. Students of these sciences find no trace of

Him anywhere.

Given these conditions, the task of propagating the message of the oneness of God is to re-inscribe the name of God on the map of human thought. But it would require a worldwide intellectual revolution to spur man into coming to terms once again with the truth about his Maker. Only then will man understand and be convinced of the unity of God and the reality of the Hereafter. Our predecessors succeeded in breaking the dominance of idolatrous thinking, replacing it with the monotheistic system of thought. Now we must likewise break the hold of atheism in order to re-establish monotheism as the dominant intellectual imperative. To under-estimate either the concept or the task of propagation, which it entails, would be displeasing in the eyes of God and His believers.

The relationship of dayee and madu

Another important issue is the restoration of the bond between Muslims and non-Muslims as that of the *dayee* with the *madu*. As Muslim Ummah, the former are the communicators of the religion of God to other communities, who are their *madu* (congregation). The greatest mistake made by Muslims today vis-à-vis other communities is to regard them as their national and material rivals, and to engage them in economic and political disputes all over the world. When Muslims

seek their rights from such peoples, they negate their status as *dayees*. The *dayee*, according to the Quran, should seek no reward from his congregation.

If we wish to be accorded a position of great honour as God's chosen witnesses, we must be willing to forgo rightful claims on other communities. The object of this sacrifice would be to establish the relationship of *dayee* and *madu* on a sound and peaceable footing.

The Hodaybiyya peace accord (6 A.H.) is a good example of such a strategic withdrawal. In this instance, Muslims acceded to all the national and economic demands of their rivals on a unilateral basis (the enemy did not meet any of the demands of the Muslims) in the drawing up of this treaty. Yet soon after this accord had been finalized, God revealed the following verse:

“Verily, We have granted you a manifest victory.” (48:1)

Why did God describe an apparent defeat as a clear victory? It was because the accord subsequently reached had shifted the field of encounter between the Muslims and the non-Muslims to a sphere in which the Muslims had a distinct advantage. In the face of non-Muslim aggression, encounters between Islam and non-Islam had formerly taken place on the battlefield. Islam, being militarily the weaker because of reduced numbers of fighting men and inferior weaponry,

was not in a position to prevail against the enemy. A number of battles after the emigration had failed to resolve outstanding issues. But now, with the terms of the treaty guaranteeing that there would be no further fighting for a period of ten years, encounters now took place in the arena of the peaceful propagation of the faith. The *dawah* mission, which had had to come to a standstill because of the continuous fighting over the years, was now resumed in full force, and the idolaters now found themselves bereft of weapons with which to resist the onslaught of the truth of monotheism. In consequence, the Arab tribes entered the fold in such great numbers that the power of polytheism was considerably diminished. Ultimately, Mecca was conquered within just two years of the signing of the treaty.

In the present era, Muslims everywhere have been fighting wars with other communities for material ends, but thanks to their own shortcomings, they have been defeated on all fronts and left behind in every field by other nations. What they need to do is to close all fronts and change the field of encounter by reaching an understanding with their antagonists of the kind arrived at in Hudaybiyyah. By making this sacrifice of their own volition, Muslims will be able to divert other communities from the material field of encounter to the sphere of purely intellectual activity. In the first

phase of Islam, this change was brought about by the Muslims unilaterally laying down their arms; now this change can be affected by unilaterally putting an end to the campaign for Muslim rights.

The sacrifice of national interests is difficult even to contemplate. Yet in such a loss there is gain. The day Muslims acknowledge this, a chain of events will be set in motion leading to the victory of Islam. In the material sphere Muslims may have conventional weapons as opposed to the modern weapons of other communities, but in the intellectual field they are equipped with the Truth. The prejudice and bigotry which are the mainstay of other communities can never withstand Reality for long.

According to the Quran, God taught man by means of the pen. This underscores the significance of literature for the purpose of the Islamic call. In Islam, the production of literature does not entail just the compilation, publishing and distribution of a number of books. What it signifies, in effect, is the material process of casting the light of the Quran far and wide over the whole of humanity. This means communicating the word of God—revealed originally in Arabic—to speakers of a multitude of different languages in other communities. The onus of translation, which is no easy task, clearly devolves upon ordinary mortals, as is implied in the following verse of the Quran:

“We sent not a messenger except to teach in the language of his own people, in order to make things clear to them.” (14:4)

It would perhaps be appropriate to say, placing the matter in the eternal rather than the temporal perspective, that just as God taught mankind by means of the pen in Arabic, it is now up to human beings to teach their fellow men by the pen in other languages.

Tradition has it that the famous Arab poet, Labid, gave up composing poetry after hearing recitations from the Quran. When asked why he no longer composed poetry, he exclaimed, “What! After the Quran?” This suggests that the Quran had made an intellectual conquest of the people of its time. Today, we are once again in need of an Islamic literature, which is capable of capturing people’s minds.

To produce works which will make the right kind of impact in a world which is now flooded with both religious and secular literature from a great variety of sources may now appear well-nigh impossible. But this is not the insuperable problem which it appears to be, for God has His ways of turning the impossible into the possible. In order to support the *dayee* of truth, God has brought about a new revolution in human history - the scientific revolution. This has given man access to new possibilities of advancing arguments in support of unseen realities. We can even go so far as to

say that it has become possible for us today to present to our hearers, miraculous arguments which were earlier only acceptable when put forward by prophets of God.

It is a great truth that the universe is a superb miracle wrought by God. In its entirety, it presents an indisputable argument in support of its Creator's existence and His stupendous attributes. However, in ancient times, the nature of this miracle remained unapprehended or was little understood, and that is why God gave His prophets the power to perform miracles. (It is worth noting that the Quran uses the common word '*Ayah*'—signs—to denote both the prophets' miracles and the signs of nature in the universe.) However, Prophet Muhammad's contemporaries, despite their demands, were never shown miracles of the kind demonstrated by the earlier prophets. Instead, the Prophet would draw the attention of his congregation to the Quran's pronouncements on the universe. They were then exhorted to look at and ponder over the omnipresent signs of their Maker. As the Quran was revealed before the age of science, the signs referred to therein were considered sufficient proof of the truth of the Prophet's teachings. The Quran, having been handed down to posterity as a work of eternal truth, continued to be read in the new age of science,—when miracles were no longer demanded as proofs of

either natural or supernatural claims,-as God's signs had passed the test of scientific scrutiny. Whereas in ancient times, unusual and spectacular miracles were depended upon to convince the reluctant believer, this service is nowadays performed by science, which has given us empirical and inferential explanations for the 'secrets' of nature.

For the nations of today it continues to be desirable that the call to true religion should be extremely clear and understandable to all, in order that it may have the greatest possible impact. Muhammad was God's final Prophet, and with the termination of prophethood for all time, what should be the means employed for the propagation of God's message to mankind, so that it should be irrefutable?

The modern revolution in thinking provides the answer to this question. Through this revolution, it is now possible to prove the teachings of True Religion on the basis of established scientific criteria. Of prime importance in this is the methodology used. Research in various fields of modern science has reached the conclusion that inferential argument, which is employed by the Quran, is in its nature just as valid as direct argument. This means that at the present time human knowledge has accorded the Quranic methodology (indirect argument) exactly the same importance as that applied to the world outside the

sphere of religious learning, i.e. the sciences and other secular disciplines.

In the wake of latter-day developments in modern science, what had earlier been a matter of external information, i.e. information revealed to the prophets, has now come within the province of human investigation. The discovery, for example, in modern science of the laws of the universe is a pointer to the existence of God. Similarly, scientists' findings that, parallel to the existing, visible world, there exists an invisible world which physicists call antimatter, clearly proves the existence of the Hereafter. Yet one of the most important things conceded by modern science is that man, because of his limitations, cannot arrive at absolute reality. This is a clear indication that man needs revelation for his guidance.

As for requiring miracles as manifestations of the divine power, should we not consider the generation of electricity by bringing together a magnetic field and motion as wondrous a divine miracle as the supernatural brilliance of Moses' hand, which was a signal to the Egyptians that he was truly God's emissary? The sailing of huge ships over fathomless seas and the flight of aeroplanes with their passengers in the vastness of the atmosphere are also as breathtaking divine miracles as that of a river parting its waters - again a miracle granted to Moses - so that people could walk in safety across the river bed. And

then creating machinery and power tools out of inert matter is surely just as strange a divine miracle as a stick turning into a writhing snake.

The fact remains that, so far as their probative value is concerned, the miracles given to the prophets in ancient times, in support of the veracity of their message, exist in abundance throughout God's universe. Since in the remote past, these miracles had not come to the knowledge of man, God had to demonstrate them when it was crucial to his moral development. The scientific investigations of today have merely unveiled those same marvels of nature, which have always sufficed to reaffirm man's belief in God and the Hereafter.

The scientific revolution has indeed shed the light of rationality on God's miracles. And religious truths of the stature of miracles are now supported by scientific discovery to the extent that the miracles themselves need not be performed. By acquiring an in-depth knowledge of these scientific findings, we can in large measure reinforce the call of *dawah*. If we can present this call supported by miracles in the garb of scientific arguments, the world will indubitably be witness once again to men of the stature of Labid—a renowned poet of his time—being forced to call out, “Is there any reason to deny the truth any longer when the truth is as clear as daylight?”

Scientific argument has come in our times to replace conviction by miracles, modern science having academically authenticated all religious teachings, or at least made them comprehensible in present-day terminology. The *dayees* of Islam, however, have yet to turn the findings of science to good account.

Favourable conditions

Inviting people to God's religion is one of the most difficult of tasks. But God, by His special grace, has made the path smoother for us, by making such advances in the course of human history as have opened new and better opportunities for us to spread His word. The result has been that in our times, this historical process having reached what might well be its zenith; it has become possible to do with the pen what had earlier been done with the sword.

This act of facilitation has three main aspects to it, all of which are foreshadowed in passages of the Quran. For example, believers are enjoined to pray:

Lord, do not lay on us the burden you laid on those before us. (2:286) This prayer has been answered in the sense that *dawah* work may now be performed in an atmosphere conducive to the free expression of different opinions, whereas in the past, and certainly in the time of the Prophet, there were stringent curbs on freedom

of speech. Those who proclaimed the Oneness of God were regularly subjected to such forms of persecution as stoning, burning, and the tearing of their bodies apart. The reason for this was that earlier governments were based on polytheism. That is, the kings of ancient times ruled in the capacity of representatives of their assumed gods. Whenever there was, any move by enlightened persons to demonstrate that polytheism was baseless; the kings felt that the very bedrock of their royal power was being rocked. That was why they spared no effort to crush any movement launched in the name of monotheism.

As a forerunner to the inception of this new age of enlightenment, the Quran had urged all right-thinking people to “fight against (religious persecution) so that religion is only for God” (2:193). And, indeed the revolution brought about by the Prophet of Islam caused idolatry to be re-defined as a matter of unenlightened personal faith, thus depriving it of the status of an institution. The ensuing separation of idolatry from politics effectively terminated that era in which the upholders of polytheism could muzzle by nefarious means the public acceptance of *tawhid*, the Oneness of God. With superstition and personal cults vanishing under the influence of Islam, the very foundations of hereditary monarchy were shaken.

As a result of freedom of opinion having become

accepted as the sacred right of the individual, the principle of autocratic rule yielded pride of place to the rule of the people, culminating in the spread of democracy throughout Europe and the rest of the world. This global intellectual revolution ushered in a new era in human history in which there were vast opportunities for the *dayees* to practice *dawah* freely all over the world without any hindrance.

The second aspect of God's easing of the way for propagators of the faith was the introduction of the concept of monotheism in order to demythologize the natural phenomena of the universe, thus clearing the way to their becoming the legitimate objects of rational investigation. Polytheism had formerly stood in the way of their being scrutinized, holding them to be objects of religious reverence. This investigation blossomed over the centuries into modern scientific research, which has examined these phenomena in great detail, finally setting its seal of approval on them as proofs of the existence of a Supreme Creator. These proofs remained mostly undiscovered before this revolution took place, although the Quran had many centuries earlier declared: "We shall show them Our signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own souls, until they see clearly that this is the truth" (41:53). These developments represented a great leap forward in the intellectual field, which

spread to Europe, where in its more propitious atmosphere, it culminated in the great modern scientific revolution. (The study of nature which has provided scientific affirmation of the truth of the call of the Quran has been dealt with in detail in my book, *God Arises*).

The third way in which God facilitated matters for *dayees* was to establish the prophethood of Muhammad (pbuh) for all time and with such finality as would admit of no controversy down the centuries. The praise heaped upon him—during his lifetime and re-echoing down the ages—reflecting the sincere appreciation of his followers—gave a sure indication of the unique place, which God intended him to occupy in history. The Prophet's predecessors, who had been sent by God to each and every nation at intervals throughout the ages, were all true emissaries bringing the same divine message to mankind. Yet, in the annals of history, for a variety of reasons, their prophethood never became historically established, so that across the centuries, as well as for the modern man, their prophethood has remained controversial. The call to Islam was easier to give when emanating from an established prophethood than when issued by prophets who were not able to gain general recognition due to the lack of support from their people.

The Prophet's status during his lifetime, and for all

posterity, was defined in this verse of the Quran:

“Your Lord may exalt you to a position of praise and glory.”
(7:79)

Dr. Nishi Kant Chattopadhyay (Muslim name: Mohammad Azizuddin) was a highly educated Hindu, born in Hyderabad at the end of the nineteenth century. Urged on by his quest for truth, he learnt Hindi, English, German and French and studied all the religions and faiths. But none of these could satisfy him. One of the main reasons for his dissatisfaction was that none of these religions stood up to the test of history. Thus, there were no grounds for regarding them as authentic.

Finally, he resorted to the study of Islam. And he was astonished to find that the teachings of Islam were still preserved in their original form. The Islamic personalities, far from being mythological characters, were genuinely historical figures. He writes:

In the Prophet of Islam there is nothing vague and shadowy, mythical or mysterious, as, for instance, in Zoroaster and Sri Krishna, or in Buddha and Christ. The very existence of those prophets has been seriously doubted and even totally denied; but nobody, as far as I am aware, has ever ventured to reduce the Prophet of Islam either into a “solar myth” or into a “fairy tale.” Then he goes on to observe, “Oh, what a relief to find, after all, a truly historical prophet to believe in.” (From *Why Have I accepted Islam?* A lecture delivered

on the 26th August 1904, in Hyderabad).

This is the status described in the Quran as the 'position of praise and glory' (17:79), that is, the position of historical prophethood. This verse of the Quran indicates that the Prophet of Islam, unlike other prophets, would not be an unknown personality. His teachings would be preserved for all time to come. This is a great advantage for the *dayees* of Islam in modern times, since it enables them to achieve unopposed victory in the field of *dawah*.

The urge to find God is something which man is born with. It remains inherent in his nature. That is why he is eternally seeking the truth. In this he resorts to human sciences, but it is all to no avail. Then he turns to religions, only to find that in their present ill-preserved form, they are lacking in historical credibility. Here we are in a position to tell the seekers after truth that what they have been questing after has been available with us all along, that is, the Quran and the hadith in their pristine form. And if they are in that pristine form, it is because they have been so carefully and reverentially preserved. The Prophet of Islam may be regarded as the definitive source of divine truth, because his life and teachings have been fully authenticated by historical records. It is this absence of controversy, which has been the mainstay of the Prophet's reputation at all times. This is a very

great blessing of God, in that, it has made it possible to perform *dawah* today from the strongest possible position.

Working towards the normalization of relations

Islamic *dawah* at the present time, i.e. communicating the message of God, is so great a task when contemplated on a global scale, that enormous resources and highly favourable conditions are required if it is to be a success. Such resources are available and such conditions do exist in Muslim countries but can be of avail only when national regimes do not set themselves up in opposition to the call of Islam. Even where the situation is entirely favourable, *dawah* can be successful only if the *dayees* have no political axe to grind under the guise of missionary activity.

In 1891, the Japanese Emperor Megi (1868-1912) sent a message addressed to Sultan Abdul Hamid II of Turkey, requesting him to send Muslim preachers to Japan in order to introduce the Japanese to Islam. Sultan Abdul Hameed chose Syed Jamaluddin Afghani for this important assignment and assured him of full official support in this venture.

This same Syed Jamaluddin Afghani, who commanded such great respect and was assured of all official support by the king, was later on imprisoned

by the same king. He even died in prison. The reason being that Syed Jamaluddin Afghani was involved in a political conspiracy aimed at dethroning the Sultan, whom he considered an agent of western imperialism. A man who could have started a new chapter in Islamic history by introducing Islam to Japan, ended up by merely adding his name to the prison records.

This is true of all Muslim rulers. If you engage yourself in Islamic *dawah*, they are ever ready to extend their full support to you, but if you wage political campaigns directed against them, they refuse to co-operate.

Unfortunately, the example set by Syed Jamaluddin Afghani is being constantly repeated by Muslims in our times. Muslims everywhere are engaged in political battles with their rulers on one count or another, to the extent that the word 'Islamic *dawah*' has, for Muslim rulers, become almost synonymous with subversion.

Such nefarious practices have led not only to the loss of full co-operation by Muslim governments in the *dawah* mission, but also to a situation in which, even when individuals or groups attempt to engage in *dawah* work, quite independently of official support, the government treats such efforts with extreme suspicion and creates obstacles to their being a success.

It is high time to divorce from *dawah* work any political machinations designed to destabilize or even

unseat Muslim rulers, whether it be in the name of Islam or for any other cause, so that in every Muslim country, Islamic missionaries may benefit from the cooperation of their national governments. Only with such aid will it be possible to bring about on the desired scale a revival of Islam, the introduction of non-Muslims to Islam and the reform of Muslims themselves.

Furnishing a task force

Present opportunities for the satisfactory discharge of Islamic *dawah* are better now than ever before, and if they are to be availed of, a task force must be raised. To this end the Quran enjoins the preparation of select individuals by giving them training exclusively directed towards their gaining a deeper understanding of religious matters. When by dint of intensive study of the subject, they have become thoroughly versed in the message they have to convey, and the proper strategy for its communication, it will be their duty to spread themselves across different nations in order to disseminate the concept of the oneness of God and warn people of the Hereafter. The Quran specified, “it is not right that all the faithful should go to war at once. A band from each community should stay behind to instruct themselves in religion and to admonish their men when they return, so that they may take heed.” (9:122)

There are, of course, a number of madrasas and educational institutes for Muslims, in different parts of the world. But not one of them is devoted to the specific purpose of training and educating people with purely *dawah* requirements in mind. And true *dayees*, whose motivating force is to serve the cause of God, can never be turned out by merely having classical literature and modern sciences imparted to them, no matter how well qualified their teachers may be, or how high the standards of their chosen institute of learning. It is a matter of the greatest urgency then that an institute of an appropriate nature should be established, whatever the cost of setting it up and running it may be in terms of today's economy. It is only after having been satisfactorily trained in such an institute that *dayees* will be able to effectively disseminate the message of divine religion and bring people to an understanding of what awaits them in the Hereafter.

It is imperative, however, that such trained individuals should not only be equipped with knowledge of religion, but that they should also be imbued with a sense of purpose. Knowledge unaccompanied by a sense of purpose is no better than a meaningless accumulation of information. But when knowledge comes with the inner illumination of high intention, it is raised to the plane of divine realization. It is only devotion to a noble cause which can produce the high

thinking and fine character which will enable trainees to perform their duties towards the call of God. And it should not be forgotten that such sincere and dedicated people are needed in the attainment of worldly as well as religious goals.

An advertisement, published in *The Times* (London), in 1900, appeared in ordinary print in a small box, quite unaccompanied by any pictures of female figures or anything else to lend it visual appeal. It ran as follows:

‘Men wanted for Hazardous Journey. Small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success.’ Sir Ernest Shackleton.

This advertisement was for a gruelling expedition to the Antarctic. So many people responded to it that the sponsors had to make a selection from them. It was such courageous people who brought the scientific revolution to the West, thus paving the way for its global leadership.

The above example was a worldly one, but the same holds true for those brave people who forged the history of Islam. On the occasion of the second oath of Aqbah, the representatives of the Medinan Muslims came to meet the Prophet. The following conversation which they had with him is a fine example of the courage and sense of self-sacrifice, which brought ultimate success

to Islam. Here we reproduce a part of this conversation as recorded by Ibn Hisham:

Ka'b says that we (the Medinan neo-Muslims) went to perform pilgrimage, and we fixed in advance a meeting with the Prophet at Al-Aqbah during the night on the second day following the pilgrimage. When we had performed the pilgrimage, and the night came when the meeting with the Prophet was fixed, so we left with our companions; when one third of the night had passed, we set off on our mounts quietly leaving under the cover of night. We had kept this appointment secret and had not informed the unbelievers among our own tribe. When we reached al-Aqbah, men and women ascended the mountain and there awaited the arrival of the Prophet. There were seventy-three men and two women. The Prophet arrived with his uncle al-Abbas, who had not yet converted to Islam. Then Ibn Abbas addressed them thus: 'O men of Khazraj, do you know for what you are entering into *bayah* (*allegiance*) with this person (i.e., the Prophet)?' They replied 'Yes, we know.' Abbas said, 'By entering into a covenant with the Prophet, you are making a covenant to wage war against all blacks and whites, (that is, when the antagonists of Islam, of both inside and outside of Arabia attack the Muslims, you will have to defend him at all costs). You will suffer losses both in lives and in goods. If you are going to desert him then you had better now say so and leave him, alone. As by God, if you acted like this, it would amount to humiliation both in this world and the next. But if you think that you will fulfill your covenant in spite of the loss of your elders and leaders and other influential

people (as they may be killed in the ensuing battles) then only may you take this matter in your hand. By God, therein (accepting the Prophet despite his having enemies all around, as their leader and extending him and the Muslims their total cooperation) lies the goodness of both this world and the next.' The Ansars said, "We accept him in spite of all possible losses in terms of lives and wealth." Then they asked the Prophet, "O Prophet of God, if we prove our loyalty, what shall we receive in return?" The Prophet replied, "Paradise." Then they said, "Extend your hand," and when the Prophet did so, they all (73 of them) entered into *bayah* with him.

It was people of such extraordinary courage and awareness who put an end to the continuity of *shirk*, thus altering the course of human history. Today once again the need has arisen to give the same impetus to human history as was given by our predecessors when they initiated the age of monotheism by putting an end to the age of idolatry. Now we have to put an end to the age of atheism in order to replace it with the age of monotheism. This is an extremely noble task for which people of high caliber, are required. The need of the hour is to set up an institution where individuals are given the required training and education. In the words of Dr. Philip K. Hitti, Islam is again in need of a 'nursery for heroes.' Without such a band this stupendous task cannot be fulfilled. The proposed educational centre will serve as such a nursery, a training ground where Islamic missionaries are cast in the heroic mould.

Dr. Nishikanta Chattopadhyaya (Islamic name: Muhammad Azizuddin), whom I have already mentioned, expressed the need for such a centre in a lecture given in our Hyderabad in 1904: I feel sure, that if a comprehensive Islamic mission were started in Hyderabad (India) to preach the simple and sublime truths of Islam to the people of Europe, America and Japan, there would be such rapid and enormous accession to its ranks as has not been witnessed since the first centuries of the Hijra. Will you, therefore, organize a grand central Islamic Mission here in Hyderabad and open branches in Europe, America and in Japan? (*Why have I Accepted Islam?* Dr. Nishikant Chattopadhyaya).

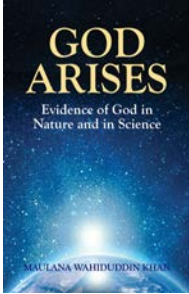
Today, our most urgent need is the establishment of a *dawah*-cum-training centre. It is fully ninety years since this thought was given expression to by this man of noble character, but it has yet to become a reality. If a great centre, as envisaged, could be established, the new history of Islam, for which we have been striving for so long, would once again begin to take shape, provided that in its functioning, it remained aloof from all kinds of politics and controversial national issues.

¹ By Hyderabad is meant any suitable place in India

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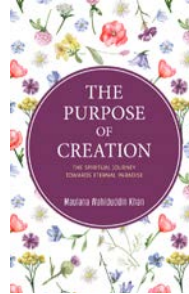
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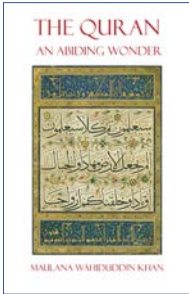
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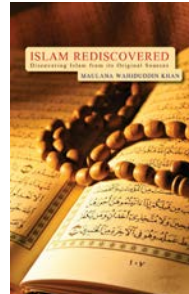
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The book explains that the Quran is the preserved book for divine guidance and salvation as it is completely preserved in original form, as revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century.

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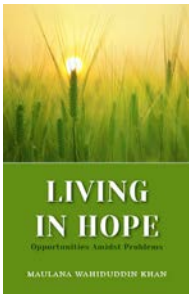
Islam Rediscovered



The book presents Islam as it is, drawing on its original sources rather than judging it by the later day interpretations and commentaries or the practices of present-day Muslims.

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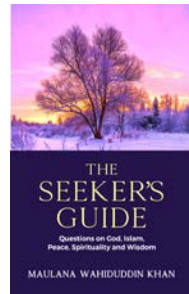
Living in Hope



The book explains that according to the creation plan of God, this world is a world of possibilities and not a world of frustration. In the events of the life of man, from every failure emerges the chance of new success.

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The Seeker's Guide



The author answers various questions pertaining to the ideology of life, spirituality, wisdom, nationhood and global issues.

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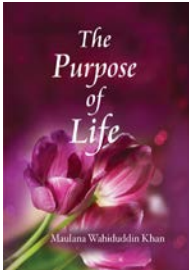
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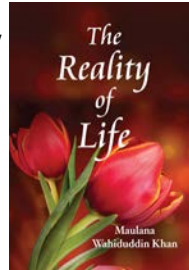
The Purpose of Life



The book explains the creation plan of God, told by God through His prophets throughout human history, that this life is a test. After death, God will mete out rewards or punishments commensurate with the record of human beings on earth.

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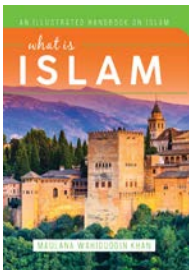
The Reality of Life



The book explains that man harbours unlimited desires in his heart, but these desires remain unfulfilled. Desires can only be fulfilled in eternal Paradise if one lives one's life as per the creation plan of God in this world.

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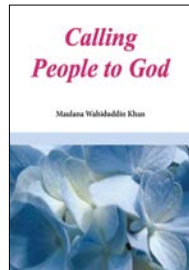
What is Islam



The book explains that everything in the universe except man has been compulsively subjected to God's will. It is only man whom God wants to submit to His Will of his own choice.

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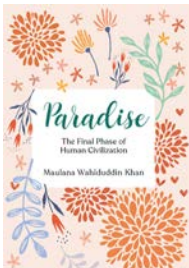
Calling People to God



The book explains the essence of dawah work which has been termed in the Quran as 'the call to God'. The Call to God aims at bringing people closer to their Creator and Sustainer.

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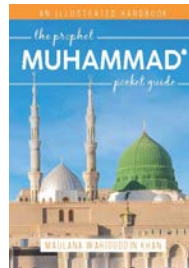
Paradise: The Final Phase of Human Civilization



The book explains that man has been seeking a Paradise on earth for thousands of years and only those who live a God-oriented life in this world will inhabit eternal Paradise in the hereafter.

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The Prophet Muhammad Pocket Guide



An easy to understand pocket reference book on the life of Prophet Muhammad explaining the significance of his life, with special focus on his teachings and its relevance in the present world.

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MORE LEAFLETS OF MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

LEAFLETS

The Creation Plan of God



The leaflet explains the creation plan of God, that the real aim of creation is to select those who are fit to inhabit the world of Paradise. Evil people will not be selected to inhabit Paradise.

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The Discovery of God



The leaflet explains that the discovery of God means discovery of a Being who is at once Creator, Master and Sustainer of all creation. Everything has been made by Him and Him alone, and receives eternal sustenance from Him.

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Peace in the Quran



The leaflet explains that Quran avers that 'reconciliation is best' (4:128), and judging by the consequences, the way of peace is far better than that of confrontation. Violent activism should not be indulged in if peaceful activism is an option.

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Peace in Islam



The leaflet explains that Islam is a religion of peace in the fullest sense of the word. The concept of Islamic violence is so obviously unfounded that, prima facie it stands rejected.

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The Ideology of Life



The leaflet explains the ideology of life for man. It elaborates that a successful life in this world is one based on the concept that the present life is where we can only sow and we shall harvest in the next world.

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Man Does Not Stand Alone



The leaflet explains that in this vast universe, man's only source of support is God. Discovery of God for man is the most important reality of life. Conviction in God provides man with universal support.

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In addition to its being the duty of every Muslim man, woman and child to study the Quran and follow it, the communication of its message to non-Muslims is also obligatory. It is pre-eminently the responsibility of the Muslims to convey the Message of the Quran to other nations. Therefore, the Quran urges them over and over again to carry out this task: 'By means of this (Quran), strive with them, with the utmost strenuousness.' In his last sermon, Prophet Muhammad also urged his followers to convey the message of the Quran 'even if only a single ayah.' Therefore, the greatest need of the hour is to acquaint non-Muslims with this message in a language and style which is understandable to them, as the Prophet—and through him all the believers—is enjoined in the Quran: 'O Messenger, proclaim all that is revealed to you from your Lord. Unless you do it fully, you have not conveyed His message (at all). God will protect you from all people' (5:67). Thus we must perform this task in all sincerity till the Last Day; therein lies our entire success both in this world and in the world to come.



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was an Islamic scholar, spiritual guide and an Ambassador of Peace. Having received international recognition for his work, the Maulana authored over 200 books and recorded thousands of lectures giving the rational interpretation of Islamic concepts, prophetic wisdom and the spiritual meaning of Quran and Islam in the contemporary style. His English translation of the Quran is widely appreciated as simple, clear and in contemporary style. He founded *Centre for Peace and Spirituality International* in 2001 to re-engineer the minds of people towards God-oriented living and present Islam in the modern idiom based as it is on peace, non-violence and spirituality.

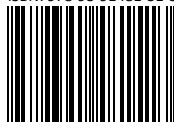
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