

Copyright

Editor's Note

Professor Rao compiled this booklet in the 1970s. It has been widely distributed to introduce some basic principles to those with limited exposure to the truth about Islam. Although well received, some of the wording was a bit archaic or repetitive, and thus has been edited prior to reprinting in 2026.

Many of the sources Professor Rao quoted were from the late 1800s or early 1900s. Rather than considering those sayings outdated, it points to Islam's relevance throughout the ages.

We have aimed to keep changes to a minimal and allow the author's original style to remain intact as much as possible. We appreciate the opportunity to be entrusted with this task.

MUHAMMAD

The Prophet of ISLAM

Chapter One

The Beginning

According to Muslim historians, Muhammad was born in Arabia on April 20, 571. The name means “highly praised.” He is, to me, the greatest mind among all the sons of Arabia. He means so much more than all the poets and kings that preceded and succeeded him in that impenetrable desert of red sand.

When he appeared, Arabia was nothing but a desert. Out of nothing a new world was fashioned by the mighty spirit of Muhammad – a new life, a new culture, a new civilization, and a new kingdom which extended from Morocco to the Indies and influenced the thought and life of three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe.

Need for Understanding

When I thought of writing about Muhammad, the Prophet, I was a bit hesitant because it was to write about a religion one does not profess.¹ And it is a delicate matter to do so, for there are many persons professing various religions and belonging to diverse schools of thought and

¹The author is a professing Hindu.

denominations even in the same religion. Although it is sometimes claimed that a religion is entirely personal, yet it cannot be denied that it has a tendency to envelope the whole universe, seen as well as unseen. It somehow permeates, sometime or other, our hearts, our souls, our minds, their conscious parts, subconscious parts, unconscious ones or whatever part they contain or are supposed to contain. The problem assumes overwhelming importance when there is a deep conviction that our past, present and future all hang by the soft, delicate, tender-silked cord. If we further happen to be highly sensitive, the center of gravity is very likely to be always in a state of extreme tension. Looked at from this point of view, the less said about others' religion the better. This attitude implies that our religions be deeply hidden and embedded in the recesses of our innermost hearts fortified by an unbroken seal of our lips.

Man Is Gregarious

There is another aspect to the aforementioned mindset. Man lives in society. Our lives are bound with the lives of so many, willingly or unwillingly, directly or indirectly. We eat the food grown in the same soil, drink the water from the same spring, breathe the air of the same atmosphere. Even while staunchly holding our own views, it would be helpful, if for no other purpose, at least to promote proper adjustment to our surroundings if we also know to some extent how the mind of our neighbor moves and what are the driving forces of his actions. From this viewpoint it is highly desirable that one should try to know all world

religions in the proper spirit, to promote mutual understanding and better appreciation of our neighborhoods, immediate and remote.

Further, our thoughts are not as scattered as they appear to be on the surface. They are crystallized around a few nuclei in the form of great world religions and living faiths that guide and motivate the lives of millions that inhabit this earth of ours. In one sense it is our duty, if we have the ideal of ever becoming citizens of the world before us, to make a little attempt to know the great religions and systems of philosophy that have ruled mankind.

The Prophet – A Historic Personality

In spite of these preliminary remarks, the ground in the field of religion where there is often a conflict between intellect and emotion is so slippery that one is constantly reminded of fools that rush in where others fear to tread. It is also complex from another point of view. The subject of my writing is about the tenets of a religion, which is historic, and its Prophet, who is also a historic personality. Even a hostile critic like Sir William Muir speaking about the Holy Qur'an says that "there is probably in the world no other book which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text."² I may also add that Prophet Muhammad is a historic personality,³ every event of whose life has been most carefully recorded, and even the minutest

²Now 14 centuries.

³The Encyclopedia Britannica calls him the "most historical of all religious personalities."

details preserved intact for posterity. His life and works are not wrapped in mystery. One need not hunt for accurate information and embark on arduous expeditions to sift the chaff and husk from the grain of truth.

Past Misrepresentation

My work is further lightened because those days are fast disappearing when Islam was highly misrepresented by some of its critics⁴ for reasons political and otherwise. Professor Bevan writes in *Cambridge Mediaeval History*, "The accounts of Muhammed and Islam which were published in Europe before the beginning of the 19th century are now to be regarded as literary curiosities." My problem to write this monograph is easier because we are generally no longer fed this kind of history, and much time need not be spent on pointing out our misrepresentations of Islam.

For instance, the theory of "Islam and the sword" is no longer heard frequently in any quarter worth the name. The principle of Islam that there is no compulsion in religion is well-known and clearly stated in the Qur'an. Gibbon, a historian of worldwide fame, says, "A pernicious tenet has been imputed to the Muhammedans,⁵ the duty of extirpating all the religions by the sword." This charge of ignorance and bigotry, says the eminent historian, is

⁴Thomas Carlyle is quoted as saying, "The lies which well-meaning zeal has heaped round this man [Muhammad] are disgraceful to ourselves only."

⁵The author means "Muslims," for "Muhammedans" might imply worshippers of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), but no Muslim ever worships the Prophet. Worship is only for God Almighty.

refuted by Qur'an, by the history of Muslim conquerors, and by their public and legal toleration of Christian worship. The greatest success of Muhammad's life was affected by sheer moral force without the stroke of a sword.

Chapter Two

Mustafa, The Chosen One

"Who Restrain Their Anger" (Holy Qur'an 3:134)

Fighting among Arab tribes was common due to a slight provocation, such as a camel belonging to the guest of one tribe having strayed into the grazing land belonging to another. Both sides fought for forty years until they lost 70,000 lives in all, threatening the extinction of both groups. To such ferocious Arabs the Prophet of Islam taught self-control and discipline to the extent of praying even on the battlefield.

War for Self-Defense

When, after repeated efforts at reconciliation had utterly failed, circumstances arose that dragged him into the battlefield purely in self-defense, the Prophet of Islam changed the whole strategy of combat. The total number of casualties in all the wars that took place during his lifetime, when the whole Arabian Peninsula came under his banner, does not exceed a few hundred in all. He taught the Arab barbarians to pray, to pray not individually but in congregation, to God Almighty even amidst the dust

and storm of warfare. When the time for prayer came (and it comes five times a day), the congregational prayer was not to be abandoned or even postponed. A group had to be engaged in bowing their heads before God while another was engaged with the enemy. After finishing the prayers, the two parties exchanged their positions.

Battlefield Humanized

In an age of savagery the battlefield itself was humanized. Strict instructions were issued not to embezzle, cheat, break trusts, mutilate, nor kill women, children or the elderly. Trees were to be left standing and not burned. Monks or persons engaged in worship were protected. His own treatment of his bitterest enemies was the noblest example for his followers. At the conquest of Makkah he stood at the zenith of his power. The city which had tortured him and his followers, which had driven him and his people into exile, and which had unrelentingly persecuted and boycotted him even when he had taken refuge in a place more than 200 miles away now lay at his feet. By the codes of war he could have justly avenged all the cruelties inflicted upon him and his people. But what treatment did he meet out to them? Muhammad's heart overflowed with love and kindness, as he declared: "This day, there is no reproof against you and you are all free."

Bitterest Enemies Pardoned

One of the main objectives for war to be permitted in self-defense was to unite human beings. Once achieved, even his worst enemies were pardoned. Even those who had

killed his beloved uncle, Hamzah, whose body they mutilated, ripping it open and chewing on his liver, faced no consequences.

Theory Merged with Practice

The principle of universal brotherhood and the doctrine of the equality of mankind which he proclaimed represent the great contribution of Muhammad to the social uplift of humanity. All great religions have preached the same doctrine, but the Prophet of Islam put this theory into actual practice. Its value can only be fully recognized if international consciousness is awakened, racial prejudices disappear, and a stronger concept of the brotherhood of humanity comes into existence.

Peasant and King Equal Before God

Speaking about this aspect of Islam, Sarojini Naidu states: "It was the first religion that preached and practiced democracy; for, in the mosque, when the *adhaan* [Muslim call to prayer] is sounded and the worshippers are gathered together, the democracy of Islam is embodied five times a day when the peasant and king kneel side by side and proclaim, 'God alone is great.'" The great poetess of India continues, "I have been struck over again by this indivisible unity of Islam that makes a man instinctively a brother. When you meet an Egyptian, an Algerian, an Indian and a Turk in London, what matters is that Egypt is the motherland of one and India is the motherland of another."

Islam Civilized Spain and Is Answer to Today's Social Dilemma

In his inimitable style Mahatma Gandhi said: "Someone has said that Europeans in South Africa dread the advent of Islam – Islam, that civilized Spain; Islam, that took the torch of light to Morocco and preached to the world the Gospel of Brotherhood. The Europeans of South Africa dread the advent of Islam, as they claim equality with the white races. They may well dread it. If brotherhood is a sin, if it is equality of the colored races that they dread, then their dread is well-founded."

Pilgrimage (Hajj) – A Living Testimony

Every year during the pilgrimage season, the world witnesses the wonderful spectacle of this international exhibition of Islam in levelling all distinctions of race, color and rank. Not only Europeans, Africans, Persians, Indians, and Chinese all meet together in Makkah as members of one divine family, but they are all clad in one dress – every man in two simple pieces of white seamless cloth, one piece round the loin and the other piece over the shoulders, bare-headed, without pomp or ceremony, repeating: "Here I am, O God, at Your command; You are the One and the Only; Here I am." Thus, there remains nothing to differentiate the high from the low, and every pilgrim carries home the impression of the international significance of Islam.

In the words of Professor Hurgronje: "The League of Nations founded by the Prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity and human brotherhood on such

universal foundations as to show candle to other nations.” He continues, “The fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done towards the realization of the idea of League of Nations.”

Islam – A Beacon to a Drifting World

The Prophet of Islam brought the reign of democracy in its best form. Caliphs such as Umar, Ali (the son-in-law of the Prophet), Mansur, Abbas (the son of Caliph Ma’mun) and many other caliphs and kings had to appear before a judge as ordinary men in Islamic courts. We all know how Blacks continue to be treated by White races. But consider the status of Bilal, a Black slave in the early days of Islam 14 centuries ago who was entrusted with the office of calling Muslims to prayer. This was a position of honor! After the conquest of Makkah the Prophet ordered him to call for prayer from the roof of the Ka’bah, the most historic and holiest place in the Islamic world. When some proud Arabs painfully cried aloud, “O this Black slave; woe to him. He stands on the roof of the Ka’bah to call for prayer!”

As if to answer this outburst smacking of pride and prejudice, both of which Islam aimed at eliminating, the Prophet delivered a sermon in which he said: “Allah is to be praised and thanked for ridding us of the vices and pride of the days of ignorance. O people, note that all men are divided in two categories only: the pious and God-fearing, who are esteemed in God’s reckoning, and the transgressors and hard-hearted, who are lowly and contemptible in the eyes of God. Otherwise, all human beings are the progeny of Adam, and God created Adam from clay.”

This was later confirmed by the Qur'an in the following words: **"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."**

(Holy Qur'an 49:13)

Transformation Extraordinaire

Thus, the Prophet of Islam brought about such a mighty transformation that the noblest and purest among the Arabs by birth offered their daughters in marriage to Bilal, a Black slave. Whenever the second caliph of Islam (known to history as Umar the Great, the commander of the faithful) saw Bilal, he immediately stood in reverence and welcomed him. What a tremendous change the Qur'an and the example of Prophet Muhammad brought about among the Arabs, who had at that time been the proudest people on the earth. This is the reason why Goethe, the greatest of German poets, declared about the Qur'an: "This book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence." This is also the reason George Bernard Shaw said: "If any religion has a chance of ruling over England, nay, Europe, within the next 100 years, it is Islam."

Islam Emancipated Women

It is Islam's same democratic spirit that has emancipated women from the bondage of man. To quote Sir Charles Edward Archibald Hamilton: "Islam teaches the inherit sinlessness of man. It teaches that man and woman have

come from the same essence, possess the same soul, and have been equipped with equal capabilities for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainments.”

Women Have the Right to Own Property

The Arabs had a strong tradition that he alone can inherit who can smite with a spear and wield a sword. But Islam came as a defender of the weaker sex and entitled women to share in the inheritance of their parents, husbands, etc. Centuries ago it gave women the right to own property. It was 12 centuries later in 1881 that England, supposedly the cradle of democracy, adopted this institution of Islam, and an act was passed called The Married Women's Act. Yet centuries earlier the Prophet of Islam proclaimed that the rights of women are just as sacred as men's.

Chapter Three

Al-Ameen, The Trustworthy

The Golden Mean

Islam is not directly concerned with political and economic systems, but indirectly and in so far as political and economic affairs influence man's conduct, it does lay down some very important principles of economic life. According to Professor Massingnon, Islam maintains the balance between exaggerated opposites and has always in view the building of character which is the basis of civilization. This is secured by its law of inheritance, by an

organized and not optional system of charity called zakah, and by regarding as illegal all anti-social practices in the economic field like monopolies, interest, securing of predetermined unearned incomes, cornering markets, hoarding, and creating artificial scarcity of a commodity in order to force the price to rise. Gambling is illegal. Charitable contributions to schools, places of worship, hospitals, digging of wells, and maintaining orphanages are considered highly virtuous acts. It is said orphanages were first established by the Prophet's teachings. The world owes its orphanages to Muhammad, who himself was born an orphan. Carlyle says about Muhammad: "Good all this. The natural voice of humanity, of piety and equity, dwelling in the heart of this wild son of nature, speaks."

The Test

A historian once said a great man should be judged by three criterion:

1. Did his contemporaries consider him to possess courage and fortitude?
2. Did he rise above the standards of his age?
3. Did he leave a permanent legacy to the world at large?

This list may be further extended, but all three of these tests of greatness are eminently satisfied to the highest degree in the case of Prophet Muhammad. Some illustrations of the last two have already been mentioned. So what about the first condition?

Impeccable Character

Historical records show that Muhammad's contemporaries, both friend and foe, acknowledged his sterling qualities, spotless honesty, noble virtues, absolute sincerity, and total trustworthiness of the Messenger of Islam in all walks of life and in every sphere of human activity. Even the Jews and those who did not believe in his message accepted him as an arbitrator in their personal disputes on account of his scrupulous impartiality. They would say: "O Muhammad, we do not call you a liar, but we deny Him who has given you a Book and inspired you with a message." They assumed he was possessed and used violence to try and "cure" him.

But the best among him saw that a new light had dawned, and they hastened to seek that enlightenment. It is a notable feature in the history of the Prophet of Islam that his nearest relation, his beloved cousin, and his closest friends who knew him most intimately were thoroughly imbued with the truth of his mission and convinced of the genuineness of his divine inspiration. "If these men and women, noble, intelligent, and certainly not less educated than the fishermen of Galilee had perceived the slightest sign of earthliness, deception or want of faith in the teacher himself, Muhammad's hopes of moral regeneration and social reform would all have been crumbled to dust in a moment."⁶

⁶From *The Spirit of Islam* by Sayed Ameer Ali.

On the contrary, we find that the devotion of his followers was such that he was voluntarily acknowledged the leader of their lives. They braved persecution and danger. They believed, trusted, obeyed and honored him even when inflicted with the most excruciating torture and severe mental agony caused by excommunication and even death of their companions. Would this have been so had they noticed the slightest backsliding in their leader?

Undying Love for the Holy Prophet

Read the history of the early converts to Islam and every heart would melt at the sight of the brutal treatment of innocent men and women. Sumayyah, the first female martyr, was cruelly torn into pieces by piercing through with spears. An example was made of Yasir, whose legs were tied to two camels and the beasts were driven in opposite directions. Khabbab bin Arth was made to lie down on a bed of burning coal with the legs of the merciless tyrant on his chest to prevent him from moving and causing the fat beneath his skin to melt. Khabbab bin Adi was put to death cruelly by mutilation and cutting off his flesh piece by piece. In the midst of his torture he was asked whether he wished Muhammad was in his place while the latter was in his house with his family. The sufferer cried out that he was gladly prepared to sacrifice himself, his family and children were it to save Muhammad from the prick of a thorn. Scores of similar gut-wrenching incidents exist. But what do all of these show? Why was it that these sons and daughters of Islam not only surrendered to the Prophet their allegiance but made a gift of their bodies, hearts and

souls? Is not the intense faith and conviction on the part of the immediate followers of Muhammad the noblest testimony to his sincerity and utter self-absorption in the task assigned to him by the Almighty?

Followers of the Best Caliber

Many followers of Muhammad were not of low station or inferior mental caliber. Gathered around him from the early days of Islam were nobles of Makkah, men of position, rank, wealth and culture. And there was those from his own kith and kin who knew the ins and outs of his life. All four of the first caliphs, with their towering personalities, were converts of this early period.

The Encyclopedia Britannica states that “Muhammad is the most successful of all prophets and religious personalities.” This success was not the result of mere accident. It was not a windfall. It was a recognition of the fact that he was found to be of true merit by his contemporaries. It was the result of his admirable and all-compelling personality.

Chapter Four

As-Sadiq, The Truthful

Perfect Model for Human Life

The personality of Muhammad is complex and difficult to completely portray in a short booklet. I can only describe a glimpse of it. But imagine a dramatic succession of

picturesque scenes. There is Muhammad the Prophet, Muhammad the General, Muhammad the King, the Warrior, the Businessman, the Preacher, the Philosopher, the Statesman, the Orator, the Reformer, the Refuge of Orphans, the Protector of Slaves, the Emancipator of Women, the Judge... In all of these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is a hero.

Orphanhood is the extreme of helplessness, and his life upon this earth began with it. Leadership is the height of material power, and his life ended with it. From an orphan boy, to a persecuted refugee, then to a ruler – spiritual as well as temporal – of a whole nation and arbiter of its destinies, with all its trials and tribulations, with all its vicissitudes and changes, its lights and shades, its ups and downs, its terror and splendor, he has stood the fire of the world and come out unscathed to serve as a model in every phase of life. His achievements are not limited to one aspect of life but covers the whole field of human conditions.

Muhammad the Greatest

If greatness consists in the purification of a nation steeped in barbarism and immersed in absolute moral darkness by a dynamic personality who transformed, refined and uplifted an entire nation that had sunk as low as the Arabs and made them torchbearers of civilizations and learning, then he has every claim to greatness. If greatness lies in unifying the discordant elements of society by the ties of brotherhood and charity, the Prophet of the desert has got every title to this distinction. If greatness consists in reforming those wrapped in degrading superstition and

detrimental practices of every kind, the Prophet of Islam has wiped out superstitions and irrational fear from the hearts of millions. If it lies in displaying high morals, Muhammad has been admitted by friends and foes as Al-Amin and As-Sadiq, the trustworthy and truthful. If a conqueror is a great man, here is a person who rose from a helpless orphan and a humble beginning to be the ruler of Arabia, the equal of Khosros and Caesar, one who founded a great empire that has survived for 14 centuries. If the devotion that a leader receives is the criterion of greatness, then look at how the Prophet's name even now attracts millions of souls spread all over the world.

The Unlettered Prophet

He had not studied philosophy in Athens or Rome, Persia, India or China, yet he could proclaim the highest truths of eternal value to mankind. Although unlettered himself, he spoke with an eloquence and fervor which moved men to tears. Born an orphan and blessed with no worldly goods, yet he was loved by many. He had studied at no military academy, yet he could organize forces against tremendous odds and gained victories through the moral standards he marshalled. He was gifted with a genius for preaching. In the person of the Prophet of Islam the world has seen the rarest phenomenon on earth walking in flesh and blood, a man who embodied great leadership with humility.

Carlyle described Muhammad in *Heros and Hero-Worship*: "A poor, hard-toiling ill-provided man; careless of what vulgar men toil for. Not a bad man, I should say; something better in him than hunger of any sort – or these

wild Arab men, fighting and jostling three-and-twenty years at his hand, in close contact with him always, would not have revered him so! They were wild men, bursting ever and anon into quarrel, into all kinds of fierce sincerity; without right worth and manhood, no man could have commanded them. They called him Prophet, you say? Why, he stood there face to face with them; bare, not enshrined in any mystery; visibly clouting his own cloak, cobbling his own shoes; fighting; counseling, ordering in the midst of them; they must have seen what kind of a man he was, let him be called what you like! No emperor with his tiaras was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting. During three-and-twenty years of rough actual trial. I find something of a veritable hero necessary for that, of itself."

And more wonderful still is what the Reverend Bosworth Smith remarks: "Head of the State as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed reverence. If ever a man had the right to say that he ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of power. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life."

Muhammad – Untainted and Pure

After the fall of Makkah more than one million square miles of land lay at his feet. Yet he mended his own shoes and coarse woolen garments, milked goats, swept the

hearth, kindled fire and attended to other menial offices of the family. While some of the Prophet's companions in Madinah were wealthy, the Prophet's household did not share in that prosperity. Many weeks would lapse without a fire being kindled in the hearth of the leader of Arabia, their food often consisting of only dates and water. He slept on no soft bed but on a palm mat after a long busy day. He would spend long nights in prayer, standing before his Creator asking for strength to discharge his duties. On the day he died his assets were few, a part of which went to satisfy a debt. Throughout his life he was humble and lived simply.

Consistent Unto Death

Circumstances changed but the Prophet of God did not. In victory or defeat, in power or in adversity, in affluence or in indigence, he was the same man, disclosing the same character. Like all the ways and laws of God, prophets of God are unchangeable. Among them, Muhammad was the greatest.

"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man, Muhammad, moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls.

On the basis of a Book, every letter of which has become law, he created a spiritual nationality which blended together peoples of every tongue and of every race... The idea of the unity of God, proclaimed amidst the exhaustion of fabulous theologies, was in itself such a miracle that upon its utterance from his lips it destroyed all the ancient superstitions...

His endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death; all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was twofold, the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is, the latter telling was God is not...

Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational beliefs, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measure, we may well ask, 'Is there any man greater than he?'⁷

Chapter Five

A Perpetual Legacy to the World

More Than Honest

An honest man, as the saying goes, is the noblest work of God. Muhammad was more than honest. He was human

⁷Lamartine, *Historie de la Turquie*, Paris, 1854, vol II, pp. 276-277.

to the marrow of his bones. Human sympathy, human love was the core of his soul. To serve man, to elevate man, to purify man, to educate man, in a word to humanize man – that was the object of his mission, the be-all and end-all of his life. In thought, in word, in action he had the good of humanity as his sole inspiration, his sole guiding principle.

He was most unostentatious and selfless to the core. What were the titles he assumed? Only two: Servant of God and His Messenger; Servant first then a Messenger. A Messenger and Prophet, like many other prophets in every part of this world, some known to us and many not known. If one does not believe in any of these truths, one ceases to be a Muslim. It is an article of faith with all Muslims.

“Looking at the circumstances of the time and the unbounded reverence of his followers, the most miraculous things about Muhammad is that he never claimed the power of working miracles,” noted a Western writer. Miracles were performed but not to propagate the faith and were attributed entirely to God and His inscrutable ways. He would plainly say that he was a man like others. He had no treasures of earth or heaven. Nor did he claim to know the secrets that lie in the womb of the future. All this was in an age when miracles were supposed to be ordinary circumstances, at the beck and call of the commonest holy person and when the whole atmosphere was surcharged with supernaturalism in and outside of Arabia.

Scientific Orientation – A Legacy from Muhammad

Muhammad turned the attention of his followers towards the study of nature and its laws, to understand them and appreciate the glory of God. The Quran states: **“And We did not create the heavens and earth and that between them in play.⁸ We did not create them except in truth, but most of them do not know.”** (Holy Qur’an 44:38-39)

The world is not an illusion nor without purpose. It has been created with truth. The number of verses in the Qur’an inviting close observation of nature are several times more than those that relate to prayer, fasting and pilgrimage all put together. Under its influence the Muslims began to observe nature closely, and this gave birth to the scientific spirit of observation and experiments, which was unknown to the Greeks. On the other hand, the Muslim botanist, Ibn Baitar, wrote on botany after collecting plants from all parts of the world and was described by Mayer in his *Gesch der Botanika* as a monument of industry. Al-Biruni traveled for 40 years to collect mineralogical specimens, and Muslim astronomers made observations extending over decades. Aristotle wrote on physics without performing a single experiment and wrote on natural history carelessly without taking the trouble to ascertain the most easily verifiable fact that men have more teeth than animals.

⁸All creation is for a wise and just purpose. But men usually do not realize or understand it because they are steeped in their own ignorance, folly or passions.

Debt of the West to Arabs for Science

Galen, the greatest authority on classical anatomy, maintained that the lower jaw consists of two bones, a statement which was accepted unchallenged for centuries until Abdul Lateef took the trouble to examine a human skeleton. After enumerating several instances, Robert Briffalut concludes in his well-known book, *The Making of Humanity*: “The debt of our science to the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries or revolutionary theories. Science owes a great deal more to the Arab culture: it owes its existence.” The same writer concludes, “The Greeks systematized, generalized and theorized, but the patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive knowledge, the minute methods of science, detailed and prolonged observation, experimental inquiry, [these] were altogether alien to Greek temperament. What we call science arose in Europe as a result of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation, measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks... That spirit and these methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs.”

Chapter Six

Muhammad, The Messenger of God

Islam – A Complete Way of Life

It is the same practical character of the teaching of Prophet Muhammad that gave birth to the scientific spirit

that has also sanctified daily labor and so-called mundane affairs. The Qur'an says that God created man to worship Him, but the word "worship" has a connotation of its own. God's worship is not confined to prayer alone, but every act that is done with the purpose of winning the approval of God and benefits humanity comes under its purview. Islam sanctifies life and all its pursuits provided they are performed with honesty, justice and pure intention. It obliterates the age-long distinction between sacred and profane. The Qur'an explains that if you eat clean things and thank God for it, it is an act of worship. The Prophet similarly said that a morsel of food one places in the mouth of his wife is an act of virtue to be rewarded by God. In another tradition the Prophet is quoted as saying, "He who satisfies the desire of his heart will be rewarded by God provided the methods adopted are permissible." A person who was listening to him exclaimed, "O Prophet of God, he is answering the calls of passion; he is only satisfying the cravings of his heart." The Prophet replied, "Had he chosen the unlawful method for the satisfaction of this urge, he would have been punished. Then why should he not be rewarded for following the right course?"

Sublime Teachings

The concept that religion should also devote itself to the betterment of life rather than exclusively with spiritual affairs had led to a new orientation of moral values. Its abiding influence on the common relations of mankind in the affairs of everyday life, its deep power over the masses, its regulation of their conceptions of rights and

duties, its suitability and adaptability to the ignorant and wise philosopher alike are characteristic features of the teachings of the Prophet of Islam.

Based on Correct Faith and Right Actions

It should be carefully borne in mind that the stress on good actions is not at the sacrifice of correctness of faith. While some religions praise faith at the expense of deeds, and other creeds exhort various acts to the detriment of correct belief, Islam is based on correct faith and actions. Means are as important as the end, and ends are as important as the means. It is an organic unity. Together they live and thrive. Separate them and they both decay and die. In Islam faith cannot be divorced from action. Right knowledge should be transferred into right action to produce right results. A frequent expression appears often in the Qur'an: **"Those who believe and do righteous deeds – those are the companions of Paradise; they will abide therein eternally."** Not less than 50 times such words are repeated. Contemplation is encouraged, but mere reflection is not the goal. Those who believe and do nothing cannot exist in Islam. Divine law is the law of effort and not of ideals. It spells out for mankind the path of eternal progress from knowledge to action and from action to satisfaction.

God – There Is None Like Unto Him

The central doctrine of Islam is the unity of God. "There is no god but one God" is the pivot from which hangs the whole teaching and practice of Islam. He is unique not

only as regards to His divine being but also in His divine attributes. Islam avoids the view which divests the divine being of every attribute and rejects the view which likens Him to material things. The Qur'an states there is nothing like Him while affirming He is Seeing, Hearing, and all-Knowing. He is the King who is without a stain of fault or deficiency, the mighty ship of His power floats upon the ocean of justice and equity. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is the Guardian over all things, while no one else shares in these qualities. Islam negates the concept that anyone shares power with Him. He is ultimately in control of everything. He is above any need, the Creator, the Lord of the Day of Judgement. God says in the Qur'an, **"Say, 'Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Merciful. Whichever [name] you call – to Him belong the best names.'"** (Holy Qur'an 17:110)

Position of Human Beings in Creation

God explains the position of humankind in relation to the universe as follows: **"It is Allah who subjected to you the sea so that ships may sail upon it by His command and that you may seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful. And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth – all from Him. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought."** (Holy Qur'an 45:12-13)

He further describes Himself: **"Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent – [He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might,**

the Forgiving – [and] who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency. So return [your] vision [to the sky]; do you see any breaks?” (Holy Qur'an 67:1-3)

In spite of the free will which mankind enjoys to some extent, everyone is born and continues to live under certain circumstances beyond his control. For God creates as He wills, and humans are limited in comprehension of God's plan. He tests us in prosperity and in adversity, in health as well as in sickness... Each person's trials differ, but we cannot despair or resort to unlawful means. Every test will pass, and God will provide. Be grateful for His trusts, live in accordance with God and die in His path. It is not fatalism but living right, with mindfulness and effort. Do not consider this temporal life on earth as the end of human existence. There is an eternal afterlife. Death is only a connecting link, a door that opens up the hidden reality of the Hereafter. Every action in life, however seemingly insignificant, produces a lasting effect on one's soul. Every deed, every intent is being recorded and will be exposed on the Day of Reckoning.

This Life Is Preparation for the Hereafter

Some of the ways of God are known to us, while others remain hidden. What is not exposed in this life will be unrolled and laid open in the next. The virtuous will enjoy boundless blessings from God which the eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard, nor have the hearts of men conceptualized them. Conversely, those who wasted the opportunity in this life shall taste the treachery of what

they have done. They will be subjected to a course of treatment for their spiritual disease which they brought by their own hands. It is a terrible ordeal. The pain of Hell is unbearable. In this life one must fight the tendencies of the spirit prone to evil, tempting to lead us into wicked and immoral ways.

One reaches a higher level when the self-accusing spirit in your conscience is awakened and the soul is anxious to attain moral excellence and revolts against disobedience. This will lead you to the final stage of the soul at rest, content with God, finding its happiness and delight in Him alone. Once this level is reached, the soul stumbles less and struggles pass away easier. Truth is victorious and falsehood lays down its arms. Your house will not be divided against itself. Your personality will integrate around the central core of submission to the will of God and surrender to His divine purpose. The soul will then have peace. Upon returning to its Lord, God is pleased to reward His servants by entering them into Paradise.

Man's Destiny

Man's final goal is to find rest in his Lord; his Lord being well pleased with him and he being pleased with his Lord. Contentment, satisfaction and peace result from adhering to God's laws and commands. Sorrow and frustration do not overwhelm one striving in His path. Vanity disappears and is replaced with gratitude when one finds success.

Struck by this life philosophy, Thomas Carlyle wrote: "And then also Islam – that we must submit to God; that our

whole strength lies in resigned submission to Him whatsoever He does to us, the thing He sends to us, even if death and worse than death, shall be good, shall be best; we resign ourselves to God.” “If this be Islam,” says Goethe, “do we not all live in Islam?” Carlyle answered, “Yes, all of us that have any moral life, we all live so. This is yet the highest wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our earth... The word of such a man [Muhammad] is a voice direct from nature’s own heart; men do and must listen to that, as to nothing else; all else is wind in comparison.”⁹

⁹Quoted from *Heroes and Hero-Worship*.

Non-Muslim Verdict on Muhammad and the Qur'an

1. "I believe in one God, and Mahomet, the Apostle of God' is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honors of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue. And his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion."
Edward Gibbon and Simon Ockley, History of the Saracen Empire, London 1870, p. 54
2. "Muhammad was the soul of kindness, and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him."
Diwan Chand Sharma, The Prophets of the East, Calcutta 1935, p. 122
3. "Four years after the death of Justinian, A.D. 569, was born at Mecca in Arabia the man who, of all men, exercised the greatest influence upon the human race... Mohammed." *John William Draper, MD LLD, A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe, London 1875, Vol 1, pp. 329-330*
4. "I doubt whether any man whose external conditions changed so much ever changed himself less to meet them." *R.V.C. Bodley, The Messenger, London 1946, p. 9*
5. "That his [Muhammad's] reforms enhanced the status of women in general is universally admitted." *H.A.R. Gibb, Mohammedanism, London, 1953, p. 33*
6. "In little more than a year he was actually the spiritual, nominal and temporal ruler of Medina, with his hand on the lever that was able to shake the world." *John Austin, "Muhammad the Prophet of Allah" in T.P.s and Cassel's Weekly for 24th September 1927*

7. "Next to the Bible¹⁰ it [the Qur'an] is the most esteemed and most powerful religious book in the world." *J. Christy Wilson, Introducing Islam, New York 1950, p. 30*
8. "It is more read than any other book in the world. The Christian Bible may be a world bestseller, but nearly 250 million¹¹ followers of Prophet Mohammed read or recite long sections of Alcoran five times a day, every day of their lives, from the time they can talk." *Charles Francis Potter, The Faiths Men Live By, Kingswood, Surrey 1955, p. 81*
9. "The Koran is the Mohammedan Bible and is more revered than any other sacred book, more than the Jewish Old Testament or the Christian New Testament." *J. Shillidy, D.D., The Lord Jesus in the Koran, Surat 1913, p. 111*
10. "Well then, if the Koran were his own composition, then other men could rival it. Let them produce ten verses like it. If they could not [and it is obvious that they cannot], then let them accept the Koran as an outstanding evidential miracle." *H.A.R. Gibb, Mohammedanism, London 1953, p. 33*
11. "So there has been no opportunity for any forgery or pious fraud in the Koran, which distinguishes it from almost all other important religious works of ancient times... It is exceedingly strange that this illiterate person should have composed the best book in the language." *Basanta Commar Bose, Mohamedanism, Calcutta 1931, p. 4*

¹⁰Coming from a Christian critic of Islam, we do not take exception to coming in "second place."

¹¹The latest estimate is 2 billion Muslims worldwide.

12. "The picture of the Muslim soldier advancing with a sword in one hand and the Koran in the other is quite false." *A.S. Tritton, Islam, London 1951, p. 21*
13. "History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated." *De Lacy O'Leary, Islam at the Crossroads, London 1923, p. 8*