A decorative, ornate frame with a scalloped top and bottom and pointed corners, enclosing the text. The frame is drawn with a double-line border.

The Essence Of Islam

PART I.

By

A. M. MOHIADDIN ALWAYE

FOREWORD

The Essence of Islam, which is originally a text book for the Islamic Studies Course (English) at the University of Al-Azhar is intended to be a short account of the Islamic Faith, based on the clear verses of the Quran and the teaching of the Prophet Muhammed. Islam means submission to the One Lord of the Universe and living a life of right action. The entire teaching of the Quran is based on this Cardinal idea. It declares that, as the law of nature is the same through, Divine Guidance is also the same for mankind. Hence the teaching of all the Messengers of God were basically the same. The object of true religion is reform and welfare of mankind.

I hope that booklet may help the English reader to understand the real teachings of the Quran so that he may be able to distinguish it from whatso often goes by the name of Islam. It appeared to me that previous Editions of this booklet met with great interest and profited to those English readers who wish to understand the fundamental beliefs and main teaching of Islam. Hundreds of copies were distributed in countries of Asia, Africa and Europe through interested individuals and Organizations. May it be a humble addition to Islamic literature in the English language.

بِسْمِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

AL-QUR'AN (The Qur'an)

The Holy Qur'an has been referred to as "Al-Fur-qan" الفرقان (the Distinguisher), "Al-Kitab" الكتاب (the Book), "Kalamullah" كلام الله (the Word of God), "Nur" (the Light) and "Al-Huda" الهدى (the Guidance). It has been revealed to Prophet Muhammad in parts at different times and occasions during a period of 23 years. The Holy Qur'an was divided into 30 parts and 114 chapters (surah). Some of them are very long and others very short.

Some of the chapters were revealed in complete form and others in portions. The chapters of the Qur'an are divided into Meccan and Medinite.

All the Surah of the Qur'an had been recorded in writing before the death of the Prophet. Many Muslims had committed the whole Qur'an to memory in his lifetime.

The arrangement of the chapters was made under the direction of the Prophet himself. The Qur'an is the eternal miracle of Islam. It is the Divine guidance to all mankind. This guidance is alike for all, without distinction of time, place, colour or race. The Qur'an calls this universal path ISLAM. It means complete and unqualified submission to God. The entire teachings of the Qur'an are based on this cardinal principle. The Qur'an has stressed the universality of divine guidance and proclaimed that there have been countless Messengers of God in various places and at different times.

As the law of nature is the same throughout, divine guidance is the same for mankind in all ages and in every place.

The Qur'an reminded the people that the essence of all religions is to worship directly the one God, the Lord of the universe and the cherisher of all mankind.

It, therefore, placed before mankind the universality of true religion and proclaimed that Islam was intended to unite mankind, not to divide them.

The call of the Qur'an is basically addressed to rational understanding : it invites man to look at every thing in the universe and to reflect upon it carefully.

THE ESSENCE OF THE QUR'AN AL-FATIHAH (The Opening Chapter)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ	١
الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِیْنَ	٢
الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ	٣
مَلِكِ یَوْمِ الدِّیْنِ	٤
اِیَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِیَّاكَ نَسْتَعِیْنُ	٥
اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمَسْتَقِیْمَ	٦
صِرَاطَ الَّذِیْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَیْرِ الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّیْنَ	٧

1. In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.
2. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.
3. The Beneficent, the Merciful.
4. Owner of the day of judgment.
5. Thee (alone) we worship; Thee (alone) we ask for help.
6. Show us the straight path.
7. The path of those whom Thou hast favoured, not (the path) of those who Thine anger nor of those who go astray.

This "Surah" is revealed at Mecca. This is the most prominent in the Qur'an, as it named "Ummul-Qu-r'an", (the Essence of the Qur'an). All that has been stated at length in the Qur'an about the fundamentals of Islamic Faith, has been said in this brief chapter. This chapter is considered as the central piece of Islamic literature. It is an essential part of Muslim prayers. This short and simple "Surah" sets before mankind in the clear verses the following lessons :

1. God is the Cherisher of the Universe. His grace and gifts are for all mankind not for a particular group or nation.
2. God gives man all he needs and He sustains him materially and spiritually. He is the sustainer, cherisher, nourisher and protectore.
3. There is a day of judgment. God is the supreme and only judge of that day. Every one must be prepered to face the consequences of his actions in this world and he should expect only justice and due result of his deeds.
- 4 a true Muslim rely on God only and he can not bow before anyone else or ask for help. This belief also raises human dignity and self-respect to the highest level.

Who can understand the meaning of these seven brief verses of this chapter he will have grasped the fundamentals of the Islamic Faith.

It is in the form of a prayer with simple words.

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

« لا اكراه فى الدين قد تبين الرشد من الغى فمن يكفر بالطاغوت ويؤمن بالله فقد استمسك بالعروة الوثقى لا انفصام لها ،
والله سميع عليم » .

(البقرة ١٥٦)

There is no compulsion in religion. The right direction is, henceforth, distinct from error. And he who rejects “Satan” and believes in Allah grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allah is Hearer and Knower).

- Surah 2, Verse 256 -

In this verse Qur’an declares that there should be no compulsion in religion. The Qur’an has also repeated that the belief in all prophets is an essential part of Islamic Faith. As the Holy Qur’an says:

« ان الذين يكفرون بالله ورسله ويريدون ان يفرقوا بين الله ورسله ويقولون نؤمن ببعض ونكفر ببعض ويريدون ان يتخذوا بين ذلك سبيلا اولئك هم الكافرون حقا واعتدنا للكافرين عذابا مهينا .
والذين آمنوا بالله ورسله ولم يفرقوا بين احد منهم اولئك سوف يؤتيهم اجرهم وكان الله غفورا رحيما » .
(النساء ١٥٠ - ١٥٢)

(Lo ! Those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and seek to make distinction between Allah and His messengers and say : We believe in some and disbelieve in others and seek to choose a way in between. Such are disbelievers in truth, and for disbelievers we prepare shameful doom. But those who believe in Allah and His messengers and say : We believe in some and disbelieve them, unto them Allah will give their wages and Allah was vere Forgiving, Merciful).

- Surah IV, Verses 150-152 -

After establishing the necessity of belief in all prophet imperatively the Qur’an declares that all believers are one community:

« وان هذه امتكم امة واحدة وانا ربكم فاتقون ، فتقطعوا
امرهم بينهم زبراً كل حزب بما لديهم فرحون » .
(المؤمنون ٥٢ - ٥٣)

(And lo ! This your community is one community and i am your Lord, so keep your duty unto me. But they (mankind) have broken their religion among them into sects, each group rejoicing in its tenets).

- Surah XXIII, Verses 52,53 -

The above Qur’anic verses call the believers to work for communal amity and harmony. In

TRUE RELIGIOUS

« ليس البر أن تولوا وجوهكم قبل المشرق والمغرب ولكن البر من آمن بالله واليوم الآخر والملائكة والكتاب والنبیین وآتى المال على حبه ذوی القربى والیتامى والمساکین وابن السبیل والسائلین وفى الرقاب وأقام الصلاة وآتى الزکاة والموفون بعهدهم اذا عاهدوا والصابرين فى الباساء والضراء وحين الباس أولئك الذین صدقوا وأولئك هم المتقون » .

(البقرة ۱۷۷)

(It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and Scripture and the Prophet; and giveth his wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphanse ans the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free; and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those wo keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribluation and adverity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the Godfearing).

- Surah 2, Verse 177 -

The above Qur'anic verse has dealt fully with the essence of religious principles. It mentions the principles of Islamic Faith, Practical Devotion, the basis of social and national life and moralities. Islam calls man to follow his original nature a designed by God. As the Qur'an says :

« فاقم وجهك للدين حنيفاً فطرة الله التى فطر الناس عليها
لا تبديل لخلق الله ذلك الدين القيم ولكن أكثر الناس لا يعلمون » .
(الروم ۳۰)

(So set they purpose for religion as a man by nature upright - the nature (framed) of Allah, in which he has created man. There is no altering (the law of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not).

- Surah 30, Verse 30 -

We have seen in this verse that the true religion is to follow man's original nature. The Holy Qur'an gives a perfect constitution and an excellent guidance to mankind in all walks of life; as the Qur'an says :

« وأن هذا صراطى مستقيماً فاتبعوه ولا تتبعوا السبل فتفرق بكم عن سبيله » .
(الأنعام - ۱۵۳)

(This is my way; leading straight; follow it; and follow not other ways, they should scatter you from his (straight) path). 6:153

There is but one true path, the universal path for all mankind, and the Qur'an calls it Islam. That is the path of true and divine guidance. This guidance is alike for all, without distinction of race, colour, country or nationality. So the Quran called upon men to sweep away all artificial differences and factions.

HUMAN RELATIONS

One of the basic facts of Islam is the common origin of all mankind and it condemns any form of discrimination, whether it is class division or racial prejudice, between man and man. It is not a religion of any particular nation or any special group but is a universal religion founded on the bases of fraternity, justice and equality. These bases are clearly represented in the teaching of Islam and in its social, economical and political systems.

The holy Qur'an discarded all kinds of artificial barriers of discrimination on the basis of race, colour or inherited nobility. God says :

« يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ » (الحجرات - ١٣)

(O mankind ! Lo ! We have created you, male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo ! The noblest of you in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.) XLIX : 13.

Islam organizes the course of human relations only on the basis of moral conduct and good deeds.

THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

The belief in the existence of God and His Oneness.

The first basic principle of Islam is faith. The basis of Islamic faith is to believe in God. This faith is realized by the first sentence of "Shahada" of the witness : (there is no god but Allah).

The belief in the Oneness of God is the key of Islamic faith. The Holy Qur'an says :

« قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ، اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ، لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ »

(Say, he is Allah, the One. Allah, the eternal, the absolute, he begeth not, nor is he begotten. And there is none like him) : he is the creator of this universe. And there is no creator but he, no partner to him. He is the only one who is distinguished by worship and he is the sole cherisher of humankind.

Nobody is asked for help or mercy save him. His mighty being is beyond limited human comprehension. He is the all kind, all knowing, he known all things both secret and open. He is merciful and beneficent, he is the source of peace and safety. Qur'an describes attributes of almighty, Allah in this verse.

« الله لا اله الا هو الحي القيوم لا تأخذه سنة ولا نوم له ما فى
السموات وما فى الأرض ، من ذا الذى يشفع عنده الا باذنه يعلم
ما بين أيديهم وما خلفهم ولا يحيطون بشيء من علمه الا بما شاء .
وسع كرسيه السموات والأرض ولا يؤوده حفظهما وهو العلي
العظيم » .

(البقرة ٢٥٥)

(Allah - There is no god save him. The Ever-living the self subsistent by whom all subsist. Slumber over takes him not, nor sleep. To him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. Who is he that can intercede with him but by his permission ? He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And they encompass nothing of his knowledge except what he pleases. His knowledge extend over the heavens and the earth and the preservation of them both tires him not. And he is the most high, the Great).

-Surah 2, Verse 255-

THE EFFECTS OF THE BELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AND HIS ONENESS

The believer in the oneness of God will have no fear from anybody and he will not submit himself to any thing but the Real Lord of this Universe. One who believes that ther is no god but Allah is, undoubtedly, knows that there is no harm and benefit except through him. All authority and power are only to him. He is the granter of mercy and prosperity; he is the owner of life and death.

This belief creayes in soul of man courage and bravery, because hewill have no fear of any power and will not be subject to any one but the Cherisher of the worlds. Also this belief creates in him humility, for he knows that there is no power and distinction except from God. He can not feel pride over others because he realizes that there is no distinction between man and amn except through good actions.

This faith also creates in him will of power for his is not dismyed by misfortune nor despire nor despire. He knows that the power of God is above all the powers. Those who believe in the supreme authority of God will be free from greed, envy, and he will follow the way of truth in his all actions because he is sure that his creator knows every thing. He is nearer to him than himself. The Prophet Muhammad commanded.:

« أعبد ربك كأنك تراه فان لم تكن تراه فانه يراك » .

(Serve your God as if you see him, if you see him not, he sees you). The belief in the existence of God and his oneness obliges one to act according his laws anndorders and he will hasten to do good services and actions for the benefit of all humankind.

THE BELIEF IN THE ANGELS

The second basic principle of Islamic faith is the belief in the Angels, as the Holy Qur'an says :

« آمن الرسول بما أنزل إليه من ربه والمؤمنون كل آمن بالله
وملائكته وكتبه ورسله لا تفرق بين أحد من رسله ، وقالوا سمعنا
وأطعنا غفرانك ربنا وإليك المصير » .
(البقرة ٢٨٥)

(The Messenger believeth in that which has been revealed unto him from his lord (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah and his angels and his' scriptures and his messengers. We make no distinction between any of his messengers and they say : we hear, and we obey. (Grant us) thy forgiveness, our Lord. Unto thee is the joureying).

-Surah 2, Verse 285-

In this clear verse, we are ordered to believe in the existence of the Angels. But we are not told about the reality of them and how they were created. One of the clear verses of the Qur'an describes some functions of the angels which is as follows:

« الحمد لله فاطر السموات والأرض جاعل الملائكة رسلا أولى
أجنحة مثنى وثلاث ورباع ، يزيد في الخلق ما يشاء ان الله على كل
شء قدير » .
(فاطر ١)

(Praise be to Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth who appointed the angels messengers having wings two, three and four. He multiplieth in creation what he will. Lo ! Allah is able to do all things).

-Surah 35, Verse 1-

The Holy Qur'an also speaks about the angels as unseen and immaterial creatures carrying different functions according the will of God in his universe. Some of them are to convey God's message to his prophets and some of them are directed to assist the prophets and the believers. They always obey the orders of Allah. Since the Holy Qur'an tells us about the angels, it will be our obligation to believe in their existence.

THE BELIEF IN THE SCRIPTURES

The third basic principle of Islamic Faith is the belief in the messages revealed from God to his Prophets through the Angels.

The divine Messages are contained in the divine books which include the bases of faith, the ways of worship and the lawful and unlawful things.

Therefore, Islam requires faith in the divine books, which were revealed to the prophets of God, whether it is the Holy Qur'an which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad or the scriptures of Abraham, the Torah of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus.

The difference between the Holy Qur'an and previous scriptures may be summarized in the following points :

1. The original texts of the previous scriptures were lost. What remained of them were mere translations. But the Qur'an is the only Divine Book which is still preserved in all its original language word by word.
2. Other scriptures were mixed with commentaries of interpreters so, that it is difficult to distinguish in them between God's words and human interpretations. The case is not so with regard to the Qur'an.
3. Other scriptures were not received by their followers through authentic and successive transfer from generation to another, as in the case of the Qur'an. The Pentateuch of Moses were not all written in Moses' days some of it were authored after him by five centuries, some by seven centuries and even some other parts by more centuries. The case is the same in regarding the main four Gospels in the New Testament.
4. The message of the Qur'an is directed to human kind in general and in all times.
5. The language of the scriptures were old and extinct while the language of the Qur'an is in the living Arabic. Other scriptures were not safe--from change.

THE BELIEF IN THE MESSENGERS

The fourth basic principle of Islamic faith is the belief in all the prophets and messengers sent by God to bring forth humankind from darkness into light. As Islam required its followers to believe in the Angels. Who are the agents of God to his Messengers; it is also required them to believe in the prophets who are the messengers. They should believe in all of them and those who disbelieve in one of them are considered disbelieving in all of them. God, the Almighty says in his Holy Book:

« ان الذين يكفرون بالله ورسله ويريدون أن يفرقوا بين الله ورسله ويقولون نؤمن ببعض ونكفر ببعض ويريدون أن يتخذوا بين ذلك سبيلا أولئك هم الكافرون حقا وأعدنا للكافرين عذابا مهينا »
(النساء ١٥٠)

(Lo ! Those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and seek to make a distinction between Allah and his Messengers and say : we believe in some and disbelieve in others, and seek to choose a way in between those are disbelievers in truth; and we have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating chastisement). - 4 : 150 -

Therefore, Islam demanded the belief in all messengers and what was revealed to them. The distinction in them is a disbelief in Islam. The Holy Qur'an says :

« والذين يؤمنون بما أنزل إليك وما أنزل من قبلك »
(البقرة ٤)

(And who believe in that which is revealed to you and that which was revealed before you)
And -Surah 2, Verse 4-

« قولوا آمنا بالله وما أنزل اليينا وما أنزل الى ابراهيم واسماعيل واسحق ويعقوب والاسباط وما أوتى موسى وعيسى وما أوتى النبيون من ربهم لا نفرق بين أحد منهم ونحن له مسلمون »
(البقرة ١٣٦)

(Say : we believe in God and in that which is revealed to us and in that which was revealed to Abraham, and Ismael and Ishaq and Jacob and the tribes, and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus and in that which was given to the prophets from their Lord. We do not make any distinction between any of them and to him do we submit).

-Surah 2, Verse 136-

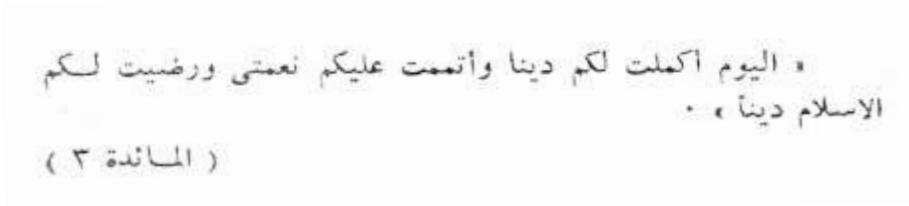
Islam also required to believe that Muhammad is the last of all prophets, and that his message is for all humankind. The Qur'an says :

« ما كان محمد أبا أحد من رجالكم ولكن رسول الله وخاتم النبيين »
(الأحزاب ٤٠)

(Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of God and the last of the prophets).

And :

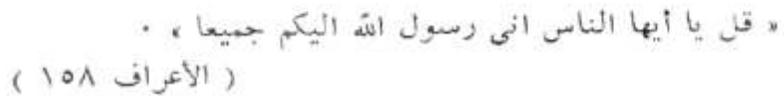
-Surah 33, Verse 40-



(This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed my favour to you and chosen for you as a religion Al-Islam).

-Surah 5, Verse 3-

Thus the Holy Qur'an stated that the message of prophet Muhammad is not only the last of all divine messages and that he is the last prophet, but stated also that his message is general to all nations till the end of this world. We read in the Qur'an as follow :



(Say : O mankind ! Surely, I am the messenger of God to you all...).

-Surah VII, Verse 158-

THE BELIEF IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

The fifth basic principle of Islamic faith is the belief in the day of Judgment. This day is the end toward which every one will be returned. The Holy Qur'an says :

« وَأَنْ لَيْسَ لِلإِنسَانِ إِلا مَا سَعَى وَأَنْ سَعْيُهُ سَوْفَ يُرَى ، ثُمَّ
يُجْزَاهُ الْجِزَاءَ أَكْفَى ، وَأَنْ إِلَى رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهَى » . (النجم ٣٩ - ٤٢)

(And that man can have nothing but what he strives for. And that his striving will be seen. Then he will be rewarded for it with the fullest reward. And that to your Lord is the Goal).

-Surah 53, Verse 39-42-

The Holy Qur'an states that the life of everyone with its reward or punishment, abiding in paradise or Hell, depends upon the course of his life in this world. The Almighty Allah says :

« فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ ، وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ
شَرًّا يَرَهُ » . (الزلزلة ٧ - ٨)

(So he who does an atom's weight of good will see it ; And he who does an atom's weight of evil will see it).

-Surah 99, Verse 7,8-

Therefore, the belief in the day of Judgment is the most vital force that incites man to perfection and elevation in this world, in order to attain the highest grade in the hereafter. The conditions of life in the hereafter should be understood that they are different from those of this life.

SALAH (Prayer)

Prayer is the first worship obligated in Islam. It is a perfect and organized institution. It is not mere words of appeal or praise of God but it is both action and speech fulfilled by meditation with heart, tongue, and whole body. Islam laid out some conditions in order that the prayer be valid, that is, cleanliness of body, dress and place. Prayer should be performed facing the direction of "Ka'ba" in Mecca in definite times every day.

The times of prayers are :

1. Fajr - (Dawn prayer). The set time for this prayer is from dawn until sun rise. It is two Rak'a (bowing).
2. Zuhar - (Noon prayer). This prayer consist of four "Rak'a". The time for performing them is from mid-day up to mid-afternoon.
3. Asar - (Afternoon prayer). This is also four "Rak'a", to be performed between mid-afternoon and sunset.
4. Magrib - (Sunset prayer). This prayer is three "Rak'a", from after sunset until twilight.
5. Isha - (Night prayer). Isha is four "Rak'a", to be performed from twilight until dawn.

Wudu (ablution) is a prerequisite action for the prayer (Salath). The parts of ablution are : 1. Washing the face. 2. Washing the hands up to the elbows. 3. Rubbing of the heda. 4. Washing the feet up to ankles.

The "Rak'a" (bowing) consist of the following conditions :

1. The recitation of the "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is Greatest).
2. The recitation of the "Faith".
3. Bowing from the hips, the hand placed on the knees.
4. Straightening up.
5. Prostration with face to the ground.
6. Sitting back on the heels.
7. A second prostration.
8. Recitation of the Tshahhud (Bearing Witness) in the final "Rak'a".
9. The final part of prayer is turning the head to the right side, saying : "Assalamu Alaikum" (peace be upon you).

Through prayer we are connected with the Lord of the universe, who is overwatching everything in the universe. The prayer is a soiritual force which will help us in our all walks of life and will be a source of happiness and peace. It occupiei the most important positio in the religion of islam. The prophet Muhammad says:

Prayer is the pillar of the religion.

And:

« الصلاة عماد الدين »
« ان اول ما ينظر فيه من عمل العبد يوم القيامة الصلاة » :

(The prayer is the first thing will be questioned about in the day of Judgment). The prayer reminds people of their Lord as he said in his Book :

(طه - ١٤) « واقم الصلاة لذكري »

(...And keep up prayer for my remembrance ...)

-Surah 20, Verse 14-

ZAKATH (The Poor-due)

The second worship obligated in Islam is Zakath. It is one of the pillars of Islamic Religion. Zakath is mentioned in several places together with prayers. This emphasises the importance of this worship. The Qur'an says :

« واقموا الصلاة وآتوا الزكاة واركعوا مع الراكعين »
(البقرة ٤٣)

(Establish worship, pay the poor-due, and bow your heads with those who bow (in worship)).

-Surah 2, Verse 43-

This mention of Zakath in the Qur'an is coupled with prayer in more than twenty verses. Zakath is not a charity but it is a right of the poor person who feels that it is a sort of help and a tax of brotherhood which being paid at certain fixed time of the year.

The object of Zakath is welfare of all members of the society as well as the state. Because Zakath has taken care of the needy and the poor. The welfare of individuals reflects on the welfare of society and on the state as a whole. Thus we find that Zakath aims at the good of mankind and it frees people from domination of money and creates in them moral and spiritual satisfaction.

The difference of the amounts and rates of Zakath of wealth is due to the difference of efforts and expenses which are paid toward the earning of that wealth.

SIYAM (Fasting)

Fasting is the third worship obligated in Islam. It is an old worship prescribed in all religions. The Qur'an says :

« يا ايها الذين آمنوا كتب عليكم الصيام كما كتب على الذين
من قبلكم لعلكم تتقون » . (البقرة ١٨٣)

(O you who believe ! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed on those before you, so that you may guard against evil).

-Surah 2, Verse 183-

This worship creates power of will and patience in man and teaches him the lessons of self control and keeping system in all walks of life. It will help him to keep his duty to his Lord and to face difficulties of life.

The month of "Ramadan" is chosen for the fast, because the Qur'an was revealed for the guidance of mankind in that month. As the Qur'an says :

« شهر رمضان الذي أنزل فيه القرآن هدى للناس وبينات
من الهدى والفرقان فمن شهد منكم الشهر فليصمه (البقرة ١٨٥)

("Ramadan" is the month wherein the Quran was revealed as the guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month).

-Surah 2, Verse 185-

Fasting creates discipline in the life, and unity of intention and action among the Muslims and teach them keeping duty towards Allah and humanity with order and regularity.

HAJJ (The pilgrimage)

Hajj is the fourth and the last worship enjoined on Muslims. It is a unique journey through which the Muslims reach, with his soul and body, "the land made safe" (Mecca). The pilgrims, there, go round the sacred house (Ka'ba) which is the symbol of the unity of Islam and Muslims. Every Muslim is ordered to face the direction of "Ka'ba" in his daily prayers, and he should visit and perform certain worship there once in his life time, if he is able to it. The Holy Qur'an says:

« ان أول بيت وضع للناس للذي ببكة مباركاً وهدي
للعالمين ، فيه آيات بينات مقام ابراهيم ومن دخله كان آمناً والله على
الناس حج البيت من استطاع اليه سبيلاً »
(آل عمران ٩٧)

(Lo ! The first sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Becca (Mecca), a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples; Wherein are plain memorials (of Allah's guidance), the place where Abraham stood up to pray; and whosoever entereth it is safe. And pilgrimage to the house is a duty unto Allah for mankind, for him who can find a way thither).

-Surah 3, Verse 97-

Hajj may be considered a world conference for all Muslim nations. There, Muslims meet in the service of God, forgetting all differences of colour, race, language, and nationality, binding with the love of God and strengthening the brotherhood.

PROPHET MUHAMMAD THE PERFECT EXAMPLE FOR HUMANITY

Prophet Muhammad (Allah's choicest blessing on him) believed in teaching his message by example more than by speeches and precepts. There is not a single order or rule from God that did not find complete manifestation in his own action. The Holy prophet practised rather than preached. His actions were the virtual translation of the teaching of Qur'an. How can the precepts and principles, that are not practised by their own teachers, infuse into others any enthusiasm of any acceptance? The people are not to be guided by those who only preach.

Muhammad was the perfect and complete example of Qur'anic principles and rules. In his own life every phase of human morals and human values found complete manifestation. His whole life was an eloquent and practical commentary on the Holy Qur'an. Both the records and experiences satisfy all that could be demanded of a real great leader who came to guide the humanity to the right path, that is the path of Allah.

From childhood, Muhammad climbed to the summit of glory. The most furious storm of hardship and calamities failed to move him an inch from his position and the mission which he prized above all things. He held fast to the verse of Qur'an :

« فان مع العسر يسراً ، ان مع العسر يسراً »
(الانشراح ٥ - ٦)

(Surely with difficulty is ease). His spirit remained unmoved by the turns of fortune's wheel.

The followings are some of his great characters and noble qualities.

Sincerity and simplicity were the key-notes of the character of the prophet Muhammad. High morals were ingrained in his very nature. They were something which grew in him from his very childhood and they became the compelling feature of his character. He was not only peace-lover by nature but also a peace-maker. War was alien to his nature. He was by sheer force of circumstances, driven to take up arms. It was due to this intrinsic virtue in him that he preferred the "peace of Hudaibiyya" to continued bloodshed though according to terms of that Truce, the concessions obtained by Muslims were almost Nil, and they were treated as conquered.

As a ruler also Muhammad entered into treaties with enemies, who would at times demand his assent to terms that were derogatory to his personal honour, even then he would accept them and act on them under all circumstances. Even before he had received the messengership, his integrity and impartiality had become proverbial. He was referred to by all, friends and foes, as "AL-AMIN", the trust worthy. People would bring their disputes to him to be settled.

The Prophet was a living example for the spread of Justice and equality, Muslims or non-Muslims, friends or foes, high or low, all were, alike to him.

THE LEGALITY OF WAR IN ISLAM

The holy Qur'an stated that the message of the prophet Muhammad is general to all nations till the end of this world. The early muslims ardently believed that they were doing a great service to other people by guiding them to a faith that secures for its adherent the happiness of the two worlds. Although they were ready to give up their lives for propagating and conveying the people the message of God in peaceful way. The use of force in spread of Islam is contrary to the very spirit of Quranic principles, as it stated :

« لا اكراه فى الدين » •

(There is no compulsion in religion). In the Islamic point of view fighting is not the thing to be liked and sought and peace should be clung to as far as that is possible. This great human idea of a true Muslim is embodied in the following verses of Qur'an :

« كتب عليكم القتال وهو كره لكم » •

(البقرة ٢١٦)

(Fighting is enjoined upon you, although it is something disliked by you.) 2 : 216.

« وان جنحوا للسلم فاجنح لها » •

(الانفال ٦٢)

(But if they lean toward peace. You also lean to it(peace). 8 : 62.

THE CONCEPTION OF 'JIHAD' IN ISLAM

The word 'Jihad' is mentioned many times in the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. In none of them can it be, said to mean only fighting. We find the tern 'Jihad' used in them, as it used in Arabic lexicography in general, to mean "strive hard" or "desirable struggle" in different fields of life. It is also recalled that the term 'Jihad' is included in verses revealed in Mecca before Muslims migrated to Medina where they were able to defend them-selves by force.

One of those Meccan Verses in which 'Jihad' is mentioned as follows:

« فلا تطع الكافرين وجاعدهم به جهاداً كبيراً » •

(الفرقان ٥٢)

(So obey not the disbelievers, but strive (Jihad) against them herewith, a great endeavour). This verse refers to the Qur'an as means of a mighty striving and not to sword.

The prophet said to his companions, after returning from a military operation : 'Now we have returned from the minor 'Jihad' to the major 'Jihad' . And the defined, when asked, the major Jihad : "it is the striving against tempting desires."

As far as the text or theory of Jihad, we have seen that it did not signify only fighting for the faith and did not mean war.

THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

The teachings of Qur'an fundamentally changed the position of women in the society. Islam has broken her fetters and assured her equality to man. It established a balanced course of relation between man and woman : and it announced that :

« والمؤمنون والمؤمنات بعضهم أولياء بعض »
(التوبة ٧١)

(The believers, men and women are protecting friends one of another) 9:71. So far as natural rights and responsibilities are concerned Islam admits no discrimination between man and women. It stressed her equality to man and explored her personality.

The Qur'an says :

« ولهن مثل الذي عليهن بالمعروف وللرجال عليهن درجة »
(البقرة ٢٢٨)

(They (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in a just manner and men have a degree above them). 2 : 228.

This degree does not mean superiority of man on woman in human rights but it is degree of guardianship and responsibility of family and natural laws. Otherwise the woman in the opinion of Qur'an, is man's partner in all walks of life.

ISLAM AND EDUCATION

The religion of Islam establishes its faith on the foundation of thinking and meditation. The Qur'an, therefore, demands vigorously for knowledge and research. The Quranic urge for knowledge is not confined to particular field. It excels the learned people and gives to them utmost preference to those who do not know:

« قل هل يستوى الذين يعلمون والذين لا يعلمون ، انما يتذكر اولو الالباب »
(الزمر ٩)

(Say. Are those who know equal with those who know not? But only men of understanding will pay heed.) 39 : 9.

The prophet Muhammad enjoined the acquisition of knowledge upon all Muslims both males and females. The Holy Qur'an says :

« ومن يؤت الحكمة فقد أوتى خيراً كثيراً »

(Whosoever is given knowledge is given in reality, much goodness). The prophet says:

« أطلب العلم ولو بالصين »

“Acquire knowledge even if you must go to china to find it”. It is reported that he had said : “The pen is mightier than the sword, and a drop of ink from the writer's quill is more sacred than the blood trickling from the wounds of a martyr”.

WHY MAN IS CREATED ?

Everything in the universe is subject to a particular law and order, and part of a well ordered systems. There is nothing without beneficent ultimate purpose and good reason. The Qur'an says :

« خلق الله السموات والأرض بالحق ، ان في ذلك لآية
للمؤمنين »
(العنكبوت ٤٤)

(God has created the heavens and the earth with good purpose. Verily, in this there is a sign for those who believe) XXIX: 44.

The doctrine of purposeful creation is applied to man in a special way. The Lord who has Created, Cherished, Nourished and Fashioned man through many stages and forms will not leave him without purpose or aim. God says :

« أيعسب الإنسان أن يترك سدى »
(القيامة ٣٦)

(Does man think that he will be left aimless?)

So, man is created to be the agent (Khalifa) of God on the earth. He upholds justice among the people, he inhabits the earth and reforms it. The Holy Qur'an says:

« واذ قال ربك للملائكة اني جاعل في الارض خليفة »
(البقرة ٣٠)

(And when thy Lord said unto the angels : Lo ! I am about to an agent (Khalifa) in the earth).

This agency of man on earth requires first of all that man should know his Lord in a real knowledge and serve him sincerely. As the Qur'an says :

« وما خلقت الجن والانس الا ليعبدون »

(I Created the Jinn and humnankind only that they might serve Me.)

Man by his nature and by his position in the universe is created for the service of God alone and nothing else. What differentiates man from the animal species is his capacity to this knowledge. By this knowledge he excels other kinds of creatures. It is the service of God and piety which entitles man to be the agent of God on earth and makes him the most noble in the sight of him.

Thus we wre reminde that the man is the purposeful product of God. He is not the product of chance and he has not an unguided destiny.

EXCERCISE

1. When and how the Qur'an had been revealed ?
2. What is the universal path that Qur'an sets before mankind ?
3. Why the opening chapter of the Qur'an has been called "the essence of the Qur'an" ?
4. What are the basic lessons of Al-Fatihah ?
5. 'Islam calls man to follow his original nature as designed by God'. Explain this cardinal idea of Islam in the light of Quranic Verses.
6. How does Islam establish unity and harmony among people ?
7. What is the first basic principle of Islamic Faith ?
8. What are the effects of the belief in the oneness of God ?
9. How do you believe in the angels and what are the functions of them ?
10. What is the difference between the Holy Qur'an and the previous scriptures ?
11. What is the difference between the message of the prophet Muhammad and that of the other prophets ?
12. How do you explain that Muhammad is the last of all prophets ?
13. Explain the belief in the Day of judgment and its effects in the life of man.
14. What is the worship obligated in Islam and how it should be performed ?
15. What is the object of 'zakath' and how important is it ?
16. Why the month of 'Ramadan' is chosen for fasting and what are the effects of the fast in the life of man ?
17. How do you explain that the 'Hajj' would be considered as a world conference of Muslims and the symbol of the unity of them ?
18. Explain the conception of 'Jihad' and the legality of war in Islam ?
19. What is the position of women in Islam ?
20. How does Islam organize the course of human relations ?
21. Why man is created ? Explain the doctrine of "purposeful creation of man" in the light of Quranic verses.