

Concepts about religion

What is religion?

In Urdu and Arabic, the word Madhab is used for religion. Which is derived from Arabic roots مذهب, which means "to go" so مذهب Madhab means a passage. No doubt mazhab is a passage going to destination.

Whether you pass through any part of human history or look at any part of the world, there would be one thing common. People would have thought about many supernatural beings to worship. People feared their rage and displeasure and acted according to their will only. A Greek historian once said:

"Wandering in the land you will see those cities which do not have any walls signs of modern science, huge palaces, any emperors, treasures and cinemas but still you won't see any place without worshipping places, without prayers and other aspects of Religion".

Definition of Religion:

The human brain which has always placed an object of worship for him is commonly known as religion. Apart from this religious aspect the proper definition of religion is still unknown. Many great people have tried to define religion in their own ways, but their definitions and interpretations were always different from each other. And it does not cover all the aspects of the religion. For example.

According to Immanuel Kant, considering every prayer as the order of God is religion". According to Fried Schieler,"considering every individual thing as a part of the glorious thing and every limited thing as representing unlimited is religion."

Prof. A.N White Head says, "Whatever a human being does during loneliness is religion", at another place he says, "Religion is name of belief in that power

internal cleanliness to human beings ",At another place he also said," Religion is the name of worldly loyalty".

Professor Taylor has very simply defined religion as "belief in supernatural beings."

The concept of religions is different in different people, but there is one thing which is common in most of them i.e. belief in presence of supernatural power. So the common working definition is: to believe in supernatural beings(مافوق الفطرت هستیاں) and practice for their pleasure and/or according to their will.

The BASIC ELEMENTS OF RELIGION

(بنیادی عناصر)

There are some common elements which can be observed in in all religions, these are belief, practice, and ethics.

BELIEF: (عقیده) Belief and faith is fundamental element, without beliefs there is no religion, therefore people who practiced no faith were named as munafeeqeen in the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAW0.and the worst place in hell was announced as their reward in hereafter. Belief in religion is like roots for a tree.

PRACTICES: (أعمال صالحة) They are the second element of religion. This relates directly to divine revelation in revealed religions. Practices are of utmost importance in a Religion. They are for Religion like fruits for a tree, although there are fruits but of no importance, rather they are removed to utilize the place for another use.

ETHICS: (أخلاقیات) All the religions revealed and non-revealed teach good morality to their followers. However, they are objective in some religions and subjective in others.

The first two elements of religion deal with man's relationship with God while third deals with relationship with fellow men. i.e., about the social connections. The study of religious systems were present in other religion they are in many

different forms in many different religions but they are present in all .They do have common grounds

- they are relating to excelling nature.
- They play the role of social reforms which define that society.

NEED OF RELIGION

It is natural that individuals feel need for Religion in their lives. Because of the following facts:

1. They need to be in peace, to accomplish their natural needs and requirements of life like eating, clothing, living in their houses etc. For this purpose they need to live in peaceful environment to get their goals. Religion controls its followers in the circle of good morality, not to harm anyone. The Holy Prophet (SAW) says:

"A Muslim is one from whose hand and tongue other Muslims are saved"

2. When we think about this universe, we come to the conclusion that nothing in this universe has been created useless. Everything has its own function. What is function and duty of human being? The answer can never be known without guideline of religion. So religion is needed to know the purpose of creation.

3. After one knows the purpose of creation, he should struggle to fulfill that purpose. He should manage his lifetime to achieve this goal, religion is to guide him in this regard and he can know the way of life.

IMPACT OF RELIGION:

1. CREATION OF GOOD MORALITY:

Religion creates ethics in its followers. Every religion has good morality in its basic elements.

2. DUTIES AND RIGHTS ARE BALANCED:

Religion teaches its followers to fulfill their duties, no need to demand their rights as duties of a person are the rights of the others. In this way the duties and the rights are balanced

3. THE FEAR OF DEATH

A follower knows that he will get reward in hereafter if he spends a well-disciplined life according to his faith. Fear of death makes him more conscious

of his responsibilities. Fear of death is diminished for him because he knows that it is the only way to proceed to hereafter.

KNIDS OF RELIGION:

There are two kinds of religion, revealed and non-revealed. The revealed religion which has been revealed to the prophets which have the concept of Tawheed, risalat, akherat and etc like Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

Non revealed religions are those who have not been revealed but based on mankind experiences, superstitions and meditation like Buddhism, Hinduism etc.

CONCEPTS RELATING TO BEGINNING OF RELIGION:

There are two concepts related to start of religion. One is Irtaqai concept and other is one given by the religion itself.

1. IRTIQAI CONCEPT:

According to this concept, the beginning of humanity was dark and it was all ignorant period, and with the passage of time, human adopted religions. Some argue that it started with the love of their ancestors and some argue that it started due to some fear. The early man started believing in the power of earth quakes, storm etc. but with the passage of time they came to know that these things do not posses such powers.

2. REVEALED CONCEPT:

The religion point of view is that when God Created men and sent him to earth, He provided him with his material and spiritual needs. The first man seen on the earth had knowledge and was the prophet of God and whenever people got away from the right track, God sent prophets to guide mankind.

REVEALED RELGIONS:

This kind of religion started with Creation of Adam (A.S).

وإذ قال ربك للملكة إني جاعل في الأرض خليفة قالوا أتجعل فيها من يفسد فيها ويسفك الدماء ونحن نسبح بحمدك ونقدس لك قال إني أعلم ما لا تعلمون وعلم آدم الأسماء كلها ثم عرضهم على الملكة فقال أنبئوني بأسماء هؤلاء إن كنتم صادقين قالوا سبحانك لا علم لنا إلا ما علمتنا إنك أنت العليم الحكيم.

Allah sent Adam (A.S) to enforce the sovereignty of God. As the original concepts got corrupted, Allah sent prophet after Prophet until it was ended with the last prophet.

UNITY OF THE REVEALED RELIGIONS:

The fundamental message in all the revealed religions was same which is belief in oneness of Allah and other beliefs, the difference in the teachings of different religions is difference of rules and laws and customs due to different times and varying circumstances.

ISLAM

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ.

"O ye who believe! Enter into Islam completely and follow not the footsteps of the Evil one, for he is to you an avowed enemy". (11: 208)

The word Islam is derived from the Arabic root س ل م which means submission to the will of God and obedience to his Law. Thus only through submission, the will of God and by obedience to his Law can one achieve true peace. The true name of the religion is then Islam and those who follow this religion of submission to the will of God are Muslim. According to Islam everything in the world of every phenomenon other than man is administered by God made Laws. This makes the entire physical world necessarily obedient to God and submission to his Laws, which in turn means that it is in a state of Islam, or it is Muslim. The physical world has no choice of its own. It has no

voluntary course to follow on its own initiative but always the Law of the Creator. The Law of Islam is submission. Man alone is singled out at being endowed with intelligence and the power of making choices. And because man possesses the qualities of intelligence and choice, he is invited to submit to the will of God and obey his law. When he does choose the course of submission to the law of God, he will be consistently with the truth and thus in harmony with all the other elements of the universe. But, if he chooses disobedience; he will deviate from the Right Path and will thus incur the displeasure and punishment of the law.

The message of the holy Quran, the revelation from God is Islam. It is the religion of the entire universe, all the prophets who appeared from time to time before the Holy Prophet of Islam, prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were all Muslims and they gave the message of submission to the will of God.

QUESTIONS

What was the need of Islam as Religions of when Judaism and Christianity existed and prevailed at the time of its revelation?

ANSWER

If Islam had not come, truth would not have been brought to the world. it was Islam which revived the teachings of Apostles and taught people parity and cleanliness.

Outlined below are a few reasons for the necessity of Islam.

Completion: Before Islam, the other religions were not complete, they had injunctions suitable for that particular nations and areas. While Islam is a complete and comprehensive religion. Allah taala says in the holy Qura'n:

أَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا.

Today I completed your religion for you and and completed my blessing upon you, and I selected Islam for you as a religion.

Universality: Islam by its advent perfected religion, for teachings of previous revealed books were suited for their own time and had no universal appeal. The Quran filled that gap.

Corruption in the previous religions: True teachings of Prophets were corrupted by their followers which the Quran purified. 'For instance, Christians, by delving Jesus Christ, had built up the unstable and impossible structure of assigning partners to Allah, which was pulled down first. Islam brought the light of the sun of God's unity and presented the true form of God's Glory and mercy to the world.

Attributing sins to the prophets: Ahl-i-Kitab or the People of the Book had attributed many shameful acts to Prophets, calling some of them liars, cheats and adulterers and thus making all prophets sinners. Islam strongly refuted these charges and restored the real nobility and dignity of Prophets.

Changing in the previous books: The Ahk-Kitab or People of the book by interpreting their sacred Books, had manipulated them and so people's trust on all revealed Books was lost. The Quran exposed these manipulations and presented all the real teachings of previous Books anew.

The Quran set itself up as the criterion to support, what was right and reject what was wrong. We have no need of any previous Book for guidance as the Quran now includes teachings of all the Books revealed to Prophets.

Since previous Prophets and their revealed Books were for particular periods and their people, so they did not contain laws which were needed by people till the last day.

The gap was filled by the Quran and after completing the code of religion, proclaimed that needs of all humanity are served in it by which men will be benefited till the Day of Judgment

أَلْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا.

“This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam, as your religion" (V: 4)

QUESTION:

A Muslim understands that Islam is Allah's final message and through our prophet Muhammad (PBUH) it is now complete in every respect. Do earlier revelations speak of Islam?

ANSWER:

It is true that the Prophet (PBUH) and the message of Islam mentioned in the revelations which Allah had vouchsafed to earlier prophets and messenger. 'Indeed Allah tells us in the Quran that He had made a covenant with all prophets which stipulated that by the virtue of what He had given them revelation and wisdom, should a messenger who endorses the own messages be sent to them, they would believe in him and support him. All the prophets had agreed to this covenant and pledged themselves to support that prophet and Messenger.

It is clear from the Quranic Text and Prophet's Hadiths that he was Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who was named in the covenant. Obviously, a pledge given by other prophets is binding on their followers. This is only to be expected since Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the last of all Allah's prophets and messenger. He has been given the final and complete form of Allah's single message based on the belief in the oneness of Allah. Since it is the final form, it naturally supercedes all earlier forms. Hence, the need for that pledge.

We have a clear example of earlier prophet's mention of Islam and its messenger," Jesus, son of Mary said:

وإذ قال عيسى ابن مريم يا بنى إسرائيل إني رسول الله إليكم مصدقا لما بين يدي من التوراة ومبشرا برسول ياتى من بعدى اسمه أحمد.

O children of Israel, I am the apostle of God (sent) to you. Confirming the law (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of an apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmed" (LXI: 6)

It is universally known that Ahmed is another name of prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this case, Allah quotes prophet Jesus (PBUH) defining his own message and giving the news of that Mohamed (PBUH) the last of all messengers. This is given in no ambiguity terms. Indeed it could not be made

any clearer since the name of the messenger is given. Moreover it cannot be denied, since it is a statement by Allah himself, all this serves as a clear indication of what other messenger told their peoples and what may have been included in their own revelations. It goes without saying that a prophet or messenger always complies with Allah's commandments given to him. When a messenger is required to give the news of another prophet or-messenger, he fulfills that order without Hesitation. In this instance; it is Jesus (PBUH) who is quoted fulfilling that order.

It is part of the essential beliefs of the Islamic faith that Muslims do-believe in the prophets and messengers Allah sent to various peoples and nations throughout history. We believe that all those prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon, Zachariah and Jesus preached the same message of submission to Allah and worshipping Him alone as the only God in the universe. The basic message advanced by all these prophets, as well as others sent by Allah, was that man must worship Allah alone and must not associate with him any partners: Their teachings centered on the need to accept the oneness of Allah as the fundamental, undeniable truth. Teachers of different prophets may differ in matters of detail or the form of worship, but they all share in the view that, there can be no compromise in the basic principles of the oneness of God.

Allah tells us very clearly in the Quran; He says:

"The same religion has he established for you as that which he enjoined on Noah- The which we have sent by inspiration to thee and that which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion: and make no division thereof"

QUESTION

What will be the fate in the hereafter of those who have not received in this life the message of Islam?

ANSWERS

Let us remind ourselves that Allah is the most just of judges. He does not commit anyone to punishment when he does not deserve that punishment. It does not

give Allah any pleasure to inflict punishment on anyone. A person is punishable because of the evil of what he or she has committed.

We have the Quranic principle on which Allah says of himself.

(The apostles were sent) thus, for thy lord would not destroy for their wrongdoing men habitation whilst their occupants were unwarned (VI: 731) .

(The role of the messenger is to call on people to abide by Allah's law and to warn them against violating it. Those who have not received the message of Islam even today because they have been born in families of unbelievers in non-Islamic societies, are in the same position as those who lived before the message of Islam reached them.

QUESTION

How to embrace Islam and become a Muslim?

ANSWER

Adoption of a religion of Islam is very simple. Nothing is required except a declaration by the person concerned that he believes in Allah as the only god and in Mohammad (PBUH) as the messenger. What this declaration actually means is an acceptance that worship can be offered only to Allah. Many positions are to obey and implement. Allah laws whatever they are should be the law of any authority, government, parliament, social or tribal council clash with Allah's law, and then the latter must be implemented without any question. The prophet says what may be translated as follows: "no creature may be obeyed in violation of the laws of the creator".

Now how do we know Allah legislation? The second half of our declaration provides the answer to this question. Our acknowledgement of Muhammad (PBUH) as Allah's messenger means that we accept him as the man through whom Allah has conveyed to us the code of legislation. He wants us to implement it in our lives for our own benefits. It is true Muhammad (PBUH) that the Quran has been sent down to us as the book containing the divine constitution for human rights. Muhammad (PBUH) own pronouncements serve as an explanatory memorandum for the Quran, providing the detail for what the Quran states in general terms and giving us guidance on how to implement the Quran in our lives. Thus obedience to Allah necessitates obedience to Allah messenger. Indeed, Allah commands us

“ To take what the apostles assign to you and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you and fear God, for God is strict in punishment (LIX. 7)

Thus the declaration means that Allah is the only God to be worshiped, that obedience to him and submission to His law is an essential part of worshipping Him and that Muhammad (PBUH) His messenger, is the one who has taught us how to worship Allah and convey to us his laws.

Anyone who makes this declaration is a Muslim. The Arabic wording of the declaration is ASHADU AN LA ILAHA IL LALAH WA ASHADU ANNA MOHAMMADAN which means that there is no God except Allah and I further testify that Muhammad (PBUH) is His messenger. Once the declaration is made by anyone in full consciousness of its significance than the person making it is one of the Muslims. Anyone who is embracing Islam is strongly recommended however to have full abdion, that is complete path at the time He makes the declaration. This is a gesture which symbolize washing of all once past sins. For no one is held accountable for anything he or she did before adapting Islam. When one becomes a Muslim, one is required to do all things Muslim do and to refrain from all those which they were not allow to do. This should not prove difficult as many people do observe Islam’s teachings throughout the world. It requires however a fear measure of determination to conduct one’s life in a manner which is sure to win Allah’s pleasure.

QUESTION

If a man accepts another religion after he has been a Muslim, how does it affect his life and his marriage?

ANSWER

A person who become an apostate i.e. rejects Islam after having been a Muslim, servers all his ties with his Muslim family. His wife is immediately separated from him (If she is a Muslim) and they are no longer married. She is free to marry someone else after making sure that she is not pregnant by observing a waiting period.

On the other hand a Muslim woman cannot get married to a non Muslim, no matter what religion he follows, when her husband becomes a Muslim, that condition takes precedents over a marriage contract and cancel that all together.

QUESTION

Muslims and non Muslims: please clarify the position of the people of the book as regards being believers?

ANSWER

The religion of Islam is the final version of the divine message of mankind .it defines the believers as those who believe in Allah as the only god in the universe and believe in Muhammad (PBUH) as his messenger who has conveyed his message to man.

Thus to be a believer one must except the unity of Allah and acknowledge divine attributes as detailed in the Quran and believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH) if either of these two conditions is not fulfilled the person concerned is one a believer since atheists denied the existence of Allah, they are certainly non believers. Those who claim to believe in divine revelation which was vouchsafed by Allah to earlier Prophets, such as Christian and Jews deny the prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). Hence they cannot be classified as believers in Islamic sense of the word. They certainly believe in a book which has a divine origin but Allah tells us in the Quran that distortion crept into earlier revelations. They also tells us that He made a covenant with all His messengers that they will follow the prophet of Islam when he is finally sent to mankind. This covenant applies to the followers of those prophets. The fact that the people of earlier revelations or the people of the book as commonly called by translators of the Quran believe in such earlier revelation did not prevent their description as unbelievers in the Quran. Allah says

“Those who reject (truth), among the people of the book and among the polytheists, were not going to depart,(from their ways) until their should come to them clear evidence”

(XCV III:1)

Islam however extends those people especial treatment in recognition of the validity of the origins of their faith. Those who practice idol worship are polytheist, although they may claim to believe in one God. Arab in the days of ignorance that is before the advent of Islam worship idols. The Quran tells us that they used to say that they worshipped those idols only to bring them nearer to Allah. They recognize that Allah was the creator of the universe but they sought to get closer to Him through those idols who they claim to be partners of Allah. There argument was categorically rejected by Allah

They are then described in the Quran as polytheist. It is needless to say a polytheist is an unbeliever. He claims that Allah has partners and he does not believe in Allah's attributes. He also denies the message of Muhammad (PBUH). Any deviation of this word is rejected out write by Islam and its advocates are classified as non believers.

Apart from the people of earlier revelations, all unbelievers are treated in the same way. We need not make any distinction between them except on the basis of their attitudes towards the Muslim community

Having said that, I must explain that any person who denies something which is necessarily known as part of the faith of Islam is an unbeliever. Thus, If a person claims to be a Muslim and yet denies any of the essentials of the Islamic faith, such as denying the day of judgment or the existence of angels or any other matter which every Muslim knows to be the part of Islam is unbeliever, No matter how strongly he professes to be a Muslim

Characteristics of Islamic Shariah

1. Revealed

The first and the most important attribute of Islamic Shariah is that it is from Allah. Although obvious, this attribute is often forgotten.

Shariah was not made by people, nor was it an accumulation of peoples' experience. Its guidance, rulings, and teachings are from Allah, the Almighty, the Creator, the Most Merciful, the Ultimately Just.

This attribute makes it a real guidance, guidance from the One who created and the One who knows His creation, the One who knows what is beneficial to them, and what is harmful. Allah's names and attributes manifest themselves in His Shariah. Shariah is full of wisdom, mercy, and justice. Ibn Al-Qayyim says,

“Shariah is founded and based on wisdom and the benefit of people in this life and in the eternal life. Shariah is altogether justice, mercy, benefits, and wisdom. Any rule that departs from justice to oppression, from mercy to cruelty, from benefit to harm, and from wisdom to futility, is not from Shariah, even if it is included in Shariah by interpretation.”

It is really the light that illuminates our lives, {Allah guides to his light whomever He wills...} (An-Nur 24:35) and it is a soul to our hearts. Allah says about His book, {No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One full of wisdom, worthy of all praise.} (Fussilat 41:42)

2-4. Comprehensive, encompassing, and complete

Shariah is a comprehensive guidance that takes into consideration all

aspects of the human life. It gives us guidance from the day we are born till the day we die – it even relates to us before we are born and after we die.

Shariah shows its guidance wherever we are: at home, in the mosque, and at work. It rules our relationship with Allah, our Creator, within ourselves, with each other, our families, our communities, and the whole society.

Also, it teaches us how to deal with people, and even animals and objects. It applies to our physical needs, as well as our intellect and souls. It encompasses our sayings, feelings, and actions.

So, it is a comprehensive way of life. If you read the Quran and the tradition of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) you will be able to clearly see this attribute. Allah says,

وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تَبْيِينًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَدُشُرَىٰ لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

{... and We have sent down to you the Book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy, and glad tidings to Muslims.} (An-Nahl 16:89)

What is miraculous is that, despite its universality and its comprehensiveness, you will find it consistent and free of any contradiction. As Allah says about His book, {Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.} (An-Nisaa' 4:82) It is really, as the linguistic meaning implies, a way of life, the whole life.

5-6. Balanced and moderate

Shariah is also balanced and moderate: It balances between the body and the soul, between the intellect and the emotions, between this life and the eternal one. It balances between theory and reality, between thinking and acting, between the unseen and the apparent. Shariah promotes freedom, yet it commands responsibility.

Moreover, it places a balanced focus on the individual versus the community. It strikes a balance between copying and following, and creativity and innovation. It is really a balanced guidance.

The Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) always promoted this moderate and balanced understanding of Islam. He used to bring his companions back to this moderation whenever he saw any imbalance in their actions or thoughts.

The famous story of the three people who wanted to be excessive in their rituals by fasting every day, praying the whole night, and abstaining completely from marriage is a clear example of that. He commented on their act,

“I am the most fearing and the most conscious of Allah. However, I fast but also break my fast; I pray at night and sleep at night and I marry. Whoever turned away from my Sunnah (my tradition and way of life) does not belong to me.” (Al-Bukhari)

The Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) agreed to the advice Salman al-Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him) gave to Abu Ad-Darda' (may Allah be pleased with him) when he told him:

“Indeed, your body has a right upon you; your eye has a right upon you; your family has a right upon you; and your guest has a right upon you.” (Al-Bukhari).

He meant, you need to rest, eat, sleep, spend time with your family, and take care of your guests. These are rights upon you. These rights cannot be ignored while doing extra prayer, fasting, and recitation. Salman told this to Abu Ad-Darda' when he noticed an imbalance in his life.

7. Release from burdens

One important attribute of Shariah is that it came to make things easy and remove burdens. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was described in the Quran to be one who

{commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure); He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them.} (Al-A`raf 7:157)

Allah also says, {Allah intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to difficulties.} (Al-Baqarah 2:185) He described Muhammad as the {Mercy to the worlds.} (Al-Anbiyaa' 21:107)

The Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) describes himself as a “gifted mercy” (Ad-Darimi) and he says “Allah did not make me someone who makes things difficult for himself or others, but he sent me as a teacher who makes things easy.” (Muslim)

He (peace and blessings be upon him) would advise his companions to make things easy as he commanded Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari and Mua`dh Ibn Jabal when he sent them to Yemen, “Make things easy and do not

make things difficult.” (Al-Bukhari)

He gives the clear advice to people “Make things easy and do not make things difficult. Give the glad news and do not chase people away.” (Al-Bukhari)

Easy rulings

For that, Allah gives permission and easy rulings in almost all rituals when they create a burden: Tayammum can replace Wudu’ if water is missing; Salah can be shortened and combined in the case of traveling; one can pray sitting or lying down if it is difficult to stand; it is permissible to break the fast in Ramadan for the traveler, the sick, the pregnant, and the nursing mother.

Another aspect of the ease of Shariah is that it is simple to understand. Although the Quran and the tradition of the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) are deep, sophisticated, and command intellect, they are made easy for people to understand and reflect. Allah says about

His book, {And indeed, We have made the Quran easy to understand and remember.} (Al-Qmar 54: 17)

8. Synergetic

The teachings of Shariah are synergetic. They create synergy between people, where they help one another to promote the good and remove the evil. Shariah also establishes synergy between people and their leadership at all levels. Allah says,

{Believing men and women are supporters of one another, they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong ...} (At-Tawbah 9:71)

Nurturing the individual and community is done through the synergy between development and positive influence (also known as tarbiyah) from one side, and laws and regulations from another:

{We sent our apostles with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in

justice ...}(Al-Hadid 57: 25)

9. Practical

Shariah came to deal with human beings as they are. It acknowledges their needs and desires. Allah knows the humans He created and knows that they need to eat, drink, and get married. They have materialistic necessities and needs the same way they have their spiritual and emotional needs. Allah created the humans from mud and breathed into them their soul.

Therefore, Shariah acknowledges that humans are going to advance and decline, and people may be guided, or may go astray. It acknowledges the fact that people are weak and may disobey and they will need to learn how to repent.

Handhalah (may Allah be pleased with him), a companion of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), thought that he was a hypocrite

because when he was not with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) he felt a spiritual decline. The Prophet comforted him by acknowledging that this is the nature of human beings. (Muslim)

In regard to the practical nature of Shariah, Allah made everything permissible except a few harmful things. Allah opened a very wide door for repentance – all the time, no matter what the sin is. Allah says in the Quran that {Allah wishes to turn to you ...} (An-Nisaa' 4:27) and the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) says that Allah accepts the repentance from whoever repents before the soul is about to leave the body. (At-Tirmidhi)

Acknowledging differences

Shariah also acknowledges the differences between people, nations, and cultures. Therefore, the Messenger used to answer the same questions differently, depending on the circumstance of the questioner. He would deal with the elderly differently than the young, and would permit his wife, 'A'ishah, to play with young ladies in consideration of her age. He

would allow people to practice their culture as long as it does not contradict Islamic teachings[1]. Shariah also acknowledges the need for rest and entertainment to recharge the energy as long as it is done appropriately without sins.

10. Preserved

One important attribute of Shariah is that it is the last Shariah to humanity. It will continue to remain and reach generation after generation. For that, Allah preserved and protected its sources.

The Quran was sent down to a community known for its ability to memorize. The whole Book was kept in the memory of people.

The Quran reaches us through a long, yet strong, chain of narrators who memorized the Quran as it was revealed to the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him).

It was also written at the time it was revealed and was compiled in one

book a few months after the death of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). The enemies of Islam failed to introduce into the Quran even a single letter. Allah said, {We have sent down the Dhikr (the Quran) and We will preserve it.}(Al-Hijr 15:9)

The tradition of the Prophet was also preserved even after the deliberate attempts to corrupt it and introduce new things to it. Allah enabled Muslim scholars of the past and present to develop one of the most honorable sciences, that is, the science of Hadith, a science that is concerned with authenticating the tradition of the Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him).

The effort that was spent to distinguish the authentic traditions of the Prophet from those which are weak or fabricated is unprecedented in the history of humanity. One should feel the comfort and the pride that the Shariah is being protected by the One who sent it, Allah the Almighty.

More qualities

Shariah is independent of all other laws and systems. It was never influenced by humans or their experience. The similarity that we see between the teachings of Shariah and other teachings is due to those other teachings being influenced by Shariah, either before or after Islam.

Shariah is respected and glorified in the hearts and the minds of Muslims, who choose to follow it, since it is from their Creator.

Muslims follow the guidance of Allah willingly and excitedly as they believe that it will get them closer to Him and help them attain happiness and success in this life and the hereafter. They respond to the commands of their Lord and they expect His reward immediately and in the hereafter.

Shariah is eloquent and very effective in the way it is articulated. The Quran is the most eloquent book – it challenged and is still challenging people to come up with something similar to it. The Prophet's teachings and guidance were conveyed through a set of few eloquent words. His

words were concise and effective.

Fundamental Beliefs and Practices of Islam

The Articles of Faith in Islam:

Islam consists of submission and obedience to Allah, the Lord of the Universe. Since the only authentic source of knowing Him and His Will and Law is the teachings of the true Prophet, we may define Islam as that religion which stands for complete faith in the teachings of the Prophet and steadfast obedience to his ways of life. Consequently, one who ignores the medium of the Prophet and claims to follow God directly is not a Muslim'.

In earlier epochs there had been separate Prophets for different nations, and the history of prophethood shows that even in one and the same nation several Prophets appeared one after the other. In that age Islam was the name of that religion which was taught to a nation by its own Prophet or Prophets. Though the nature and substance of Islam was the same in every age and country, the modes of worship, codes of law and other detailed rules and regulations of life varied according to local conditions. It was not, therefore, necessary for any nation to follow another nation's Prophet and its responsibility was confined to following the guidance given by its own Prophet.

This period of poly-prophetism came to an end with the advent of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The teachings of Islam were made complete through him; one basic law was formulated for the whole

world and he was made a Prophet for all mankind. His prophethood was not meant for any particular nation or country or period; his message was for all peoples and for all ages. The earlier codes were abrogated by the advent of Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) who gave the world a complete code of life. This means there will be no new Prophets and no new religious code until the Last Day. Muhammad's (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) teachings are meant for all the children of Adam, the entire human race.

Now Islam consists in following Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him), that is, acknowledging his prophethood, believing in all that he has asked us to believe in, following him in letter and spirit, and submitting to all his commands and injunctions, the most fundamental of which is La ilaha illallah "There is no deity but Allah".

This brings us to the question: What has Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) asked us to believe in? What are the articles of Islamic faith? We shall discuss these articles and see how simple, how true, how lovable and how valuable they are and to what high pinnacle they raise the status of Man in this world and the world to come.

Tawhid: Faith in the Unity of God

Tawhid literally means 'oneness', and 'uniqueness'. The Arabic word توحيد is derived from its Arabic root (و ح د). The concept of Tawhid is that God is one and unique; and

that there is only one God, Allah to be Worshipped and obeyed.

The technical meaning of tawhid:

Allah is one in his being and attributes and he is the only one who is worthy to be worshipped and obeyed.

Kinds of tawheed:

1. In being
2. In attributes.
3. In worship

The doctrine is embodied in 'Sura Ikhlas' in the Holy Quran as follows:

قل هو الله أحد* الله الصمد* لم يلد ولم يولد* ولم يكن له كفوا أحد*.

"Say; He is Allah the one; Allah the independent of all; He begets not, nor was He begotten; and none is comparable unto Him".

The significance of this concept:

1. Most important teaching of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ

The most fundamental and the most important teaching of Prophet Muhammad (blessing of Allah and peace be upon him) is faith in the unit of God? This is expressed in the primary Kalmah of Islam as "There is no deity but Allah" (La ilaha illallah). This beautiful phrase is the bedrock of Islam, its foundation and its essence. It is the expression of this belief which differentiates a true Muslim from a kafir (unbeliever), mushrik (one

who associates others with God in His Divinity) or dahriyah (an atheist).

2. Differentiates Muslim from non-Muslim.

The acceptance or denial of this phrase produces a world of difference between man and man) the believers in it become one single community and those who do not believe in it form an opposing group. For the believers there is unhampered progress and success in this world and in the hereafter, while failure and ignominy are the ultimate lot of those who refuse to believe in it.

But the difference between the believers and the unbelievers does not result from the mere chanting of a few words. Obviously, the mere utterance of a phrase or two is not in itself important. The real difference lies in the conscious acceptance of this doctrine and complete adherence to it in practical life. Mere repetition of the word 'food' cannot dull hunger; mere chanting of a medical prescription cannot heal the disease. ..

In the same way, if the Kalimah is repeated without arty understanding, it cannot work the revolution which it is meant to bring about. This can occur only if a person grasps the full meaning of the doctrine and accepts and follows it in letter and spirit. We avoid fire because we know that it burns; we keep away from poison because we

know that it can kill. Similarly, if the real meanings of Tawhid are fully grasped, we avoid, in belief as well as in action, every form of disbelief, atheism and polytheism. This is the natural consequence of belief in the Unity of God.

Primary kalmia of Islam:

لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله

The Meaning of the Kalimah

In Arabic the word ilah means 'one who is worshipped', that is, a being which on account of its greatness and power is considered worthy to be worshipped: to be bowed to in humility and submission. Anything or any being possessing power too great to be comprehended by man is also called ilah. The concept ilah also includes the possession of infinite powers and conveys the sense that others are dependent on ilah and that he is not dependent on anyone else. The word ilah carries, too, a sense of concealment and mystery. The word Khuda in Persian, Deva in Hindi and God in English have similar connotations. Other languages also contain words with a similar meaning.

La illallah Literally Means

The word Allah, on the other hand, is the essential personal name of God. La ilaha illallah literally means "There is no ilah other than the One Great Being known by the name Allah.", It means that in the whole of the universe, there is absolutely no being

worthy to be worshipped other than Allah, that it is only to Him that heads should bow in submission and adoration, that He is the only Being possessing all powers, that we are all in need of His favors, and that we are all obliged to seek His help. He is concealed from our senses, and our intellect cannot perceive what He is. .

Now we know the meaning of these words, let us look more closely at their real significance.

Deity and Deities

From the earliest known history of man as well as from the oldest relics of antiquity that we have been able to obtain. It appears that we have been able to obtain, it appears that in every age man recognized some deity or deities and worshipped them. Even today every nation, from the most primitive to the most advanced, believes in and worships some deity. Having a deity and worshipping him is ingrained in human nature. There is something within man's soul which forces him to do so.

Rational vindication of the concept of Tawheed:

Position of Man

But the question is: what is that thing and why does man feel impelled to do so? The answer to this question can be discovered if we look at the position of man in this huge universe. Neither man nor his nature is omnipotent. He is neither self-sufficient nor self-existing; nor are his powers limitless. In fact, he is weak, frail,, needy and destitute.

Success and Failure

He is dependent on a multitude of forces to maintain his existence, but all of them are not essentially and totally within his powers. Sometimes they come into his possession in a simple and natural way, and at times he finds himself deprived of them. There are many important and valuable things which he endeavors to get, but sometimes he succeeds in getting them, while sometimes he does not, for it is not completely in his own power to obtain them. There are many things injurious to him; accidents destroy his life's work in a single moment; chance brings his hopes to a sudden end; illness, worries and calamities are always threatening him and marring his way to happiness. He attempts to get rid of them, and meets with both success and failure. -

There are many things whose greatness and grandeur overawe him: mountains and rivers, gigantic animals are ferocious beasts. He experiences earthquakes, storms and other natural disasters. He

Observes clouds over his head and sees them becoming thick and dark, with peals of

thunder, flashes of lightning and heavy rain. He sees the sun, the moon and the stars in their constant motions. He reflects how great, powerful and grand these bodies are, and, in contrast to them, how frail and insignificant the himself is!

These vast phenomena, on the one hand, and the consciousness of his own frailty, on the other, impress him with a deep sense of his own weakness, humbleness and helplessness. And it is quite natural that a primitive idea of divinity should coincide with this sense. He thinks of the hands which are wielding these great forces. The sense of their greatness makes him bow in humility. The sense of their powerfulness makes him seek their help. He tries to please them so that they may be beneficent to him, and he fears them and tries to escape their wrath so that he may not be destroyed by them.

Worst form of ignoranance

In the most primitive state of ignorance, man thinks, that the great objects of nature whose grandeur and glory are visible, and which appears to be injurious or beneficent to him hold in themselves the real power and authority, and, therefore, are divine. Thus he worships trees, animals, rivers, mountains, fire rain, air, heavenly bodies and numerous other objects. This is the worst form of ignorance.

Appearance of light and Knowledge

When his ignorance dissipates to some extent and some glimmers of light and knowledge appear on his intellectual horizon, he comes to know that these great and powerful objects are in themselves as helpless and dependent, or rather, they are still more dependent and helpless. The biggest and the strongest animal dies like a tiny germ and loses all his power: great rivers rise and fall and become dry the highest mountains are blasted and shattered by man himself, the productiveness of the earth is not under the earth's control - water makes it prosperous and lack of water makes it barren- Even water is not independent. It depends on air which brings the clouds. Air, too, is powerless and its usefulness depends on other causes. The moon, the sun, and the stars are also bound by a powerful law outside whose dictates they cannot make the slightest movement.

Belief in Mysterious Powers

After these considerations man's mind turns to the possibility of some great mysterious power of divine nature which controls the objects he sees and which may be the repository of all authority. These reflections give rise to belief in mysterious Powers behind natural phenomena, with innumerable gods governing various parts and aspects of nature such as air, light and water. Material forms or symbols are constructed to represent them and man begins to worship these forms and symbols. This, too, is a form of ignorance, and reality remains hidden to the human eye even at this stage of man's

intellectual and cultural pilgrimage.

Knowledge and Learning

As man progresses still further in knowledge and learning, and as he reflects more and more deeply on the fundamental problems of existence, he finds an all-powerful law and all-encompassing control in the universe. What a complete regularity is observed in sunrise and sunset, in winds and rains, in the motions of stars and the changes of seasons! With what a wonderful harmony countless different forces are working jointly. and what a highly effective and supremely wise law it is according to which all the various causes in the universe are made to work together at an appointed time to produce an appointed event! Observing this uniformity, regularity and complete obedience to one great law in all fields of Nature, even polytheist-finds himself obliged-to-believe that there must be deity greater_ than all the others, exercising supreme authority.

For, if there were separate, independent deities, the whole machinery of the universe would be upset.

Greatest Deity

He calls this greatest deity by different names, such as Allah, Parmeshwar, God, Khuda-i-Khuda'igan. But as the darkness of ignorance persists, he continues

worshipping minor deities along with the Supreme One. He imagines that the Divine Kingdom of God may not be different from earthly kingdoms. Just as a ruler has many ministers, trusted associates, governors, and other responsible officers, so the minor deities are like so many responsible officers under the Great God Who cannot be approached without winning the favors of the officers under Him. So they must also be worshipped and appealed to for help, and should in no case be offended. They are taken as agents through whom an approach can be made to the Great God.

Increase in Knowledge

The more a man increases his knowledge, the greater becomes his dissatisfaction with the multiplicity of deities. So, the number of minor deities begins to decrease. More enlightened men bring each one of them under the searchlight of scrutiny and ultimately find that none of these man-made deities has any divine character; they themselves are creatures like man, though rather more helpless. They were thus eliminated one by one until only one God remains.

The Elements of Ignorance

But the concept of one God still contains some remnants of the elements of ignorance. Some people imagine that He has a body as man have and is in a particular place. Some believe that God came down to earth in human form; others think that God, after settling the affairs of the universe, retired and is now resting. Some believe that it is necessary to approach God through the media of saints and spirits, and that nothing can

be achieved without their intercession. Some imagine God to have a certain form or image, and they believe it necessary to keep that image before them for the purposes of worship.

Such distorted notions of godhead have persisted and lingered, ' and many of them are prevalent among different people even today.

Concept of Godhead

Tawhid is the highest conceptions of godhead; the knowledge of which God has sent mankind in all ages through His Prophets. It was this knowledge with which, in the beginning, Adam was sent down to earth; it was the same knowledge that was revealed to Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (God's blessings be upon them all). It was this knowledge which Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) brought to mankind. It is Knowledge, pure and absolute, without the least shade of ignorance. Man became guilty of shirk, idol-worship and kufr only because he turned away from the teachings of the Prophets and depended on his own faulty reasoning, false perceptions -or biased interpretations. Tawhid dispels all the clouds of ignorance and illuminates the horizon with the light of reality.

The Realities of Tawhid

Let us see what significant realities the concept of Tawhid - this little phrase: la ilaha illallah embraces: what truth it conveys and what beliefs it fosters.

Limitless Universe

First, we are faced with the question of the universe. We are face to face with a grand, limitless universe. Man's mind cannot discern its beginning or visualize its end. It has been moving along its chartered course from time immemorial and is continuing its journey in the vast vista of the future. Creatures beyond number have appeared in it - and go on appearing every day. It is so bewildering that a thinking mind finds itself wonderstruck. Man is unable to understand and grasp its reality by his unaided vision. He cannot believe that all this has appeared just by chance or by accident. The -universe is not a fortuitous mass of matter. It is not a jumble of uncoordinated objects. It is not a conglomeration of chaotic and meaningless things. All this cannot be without a Creator, a Designer, a Controller, a Governor.

But who can create and control this majestic universe? Only He can do so who is Master of all. Who is infinite and eternal; who is All-Powerful, All -Wise, Omnipotent and Omniscient; Who is All-Knowing and All-Seeing. Hg must have supreme authority over all that exists in the universe. H' must possess limitless powers, must be lord of the universe and all that it contains, must be free from every flaw and weakness and none

may have the power to interfere with His work. Only such a Being can be the Creator, the Controller and the Governor of the universe.

Oneness of God

Second, it is essential that all these divine attributes and powers must be vested in One Being: it is impossible for two or more personalities having equal powers and attributes to co-exist. They are bound to collide. Therefore, there must be one and only one Supreme Being having control over all others. You cannot think of two governors for the same province or two supreme commanders of the army! Similarly, the distribution of these powers among different deities so that, for instance, one of them is all-knowledge; the other all providence and still another life-giver - and each having an independent domain - is also unthinkable. The universe is an indivisible whole and each one of such deities will be dependent upon others in the execution of his task. Lack of coordination is bound to occur. And if this happened, the world would fall to pieces. These attributes are also untransferable. It is not possible that a certain attribute might be present in a certain deity at one time and at another time be found in another deity. A divine being who is incapable of remaining alive himself cannot give life to others. The one who cannot protect his own divine power cannot be suited to govern the vast limitless universe.

The more you reflect on the problem, the firmer must your conviction be that all these divine powers and attributes must exist in one and the same Being alone. Thus, polytheism is a form of ignorance that cannot stand rational scrutiny. It is a practical impossibility.

The facts of life and nature do not fit in with it. They automatically bring men to Reality that is Tawhid, the Unit of God.

Concept of God

Now, keeping in mind this concept of God, look closely at this vast universe. Exert yourself to the utmost and say if you find among all the objects that you see, among all the things that you perceive, among all that you can think, feel or imagine all that your knowledge can comprehend - anyone possessing these attributes. The sun, the moon, the stars, animals, birds or fishes, matter, money, any man or a group of men - does any of them possess these attributes? Most certainly not! For everything in the universe is created, controlled and regulated, is dependent on others, is mortal and transitory; its slightest movements are controlled by an inexorable law from which there can be no deviation. Their helpless condition proves that the attire of divinity cannot fit their body. They do not possess the slightest trace of ^f divinity and have absolutely nothing to do with it. It is a travesty of truth and a folly of the highest magnitude to attribute divine status to them.

This is the meaning of La ilaha, (i.e. there is no god) no human and material object possesses t h e divine power and authority deserving worship and obedience.

But this is not the end of our quest. We have found that divinity is not vested in any material or human element of the universe, and that none of them possesses even the

slightest trace of it. This leads us to the conclusion that there is a Supreme Being, over and above all that our eyes see in the universe, Who possesses Divine attributes, Who is the Will behind all phenomena, the Creator of this grand universe, the Controller of its superb Law, the Governor of its serene rhythm, the Administrator of all its workings.- He is Allah, the Lord of the Universe and no one and nothing is associated in His Divinity. This is what illallah (but Allah) means.

This knowledge is superior to all other kinds of knowledge and the greater you exert yourself; the deeper will be your conviction that this is the starting-point of all knowledge. In every field of inquiry - be it that of physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, biology, zoology, economics, politics, sociology or the humanities, you will find that the deeper you probe, the clearer become the indications of the truth of La ilaha illallah. It is this concept which opens the doors of inquiry and investigation and illumines the pathways of knowledge with the light of reality. And if you deny or disregard this reality, you will find that at every step you meet disillusionment, for the denial of this primary truth robs everything in the universe of its meaning and significance.

Effects of Tawhid on Human Life

Now let us study the effects which the belief in La ilaha illallah has on the life of man and

see why he should always make a success of life and why one who denies it becomes a failure in life, both here and in the hereafter.

Universal Outlook

A believer in this Kalimah can never be narrow in out-look. He believes in a God Who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Master of the East and the West and Sustainer of the entire universe. After this belief he does not regard anything in the world as a stranger to himself. He looks on everything in the universe as belonging to the same Lord he himself belongs to. His sympathy, love and service are not confined to any particular sphere or group. His vision is enlarged, his intellectual horizon widens, and his outlook becomes as liberal and as boundless as is the Kingdom of God. How can this width of vision and breadth of mind be achieved by an atheist, a polytheist or one who believes in a deity supposed to possess limited and defective powers like a man?

Self-respect and Self-esteem:

This belief produces in man the highest degree of self-respect and self-esteem. The believer knows that Allah alone is the Possessor of all power, and that none besides Him can benefit or harm a person, or provide for his needs, or give an take away He or wield authority or influence. This conviction makes him indifferent to, and independent and

fearless of, all powers other than those of God. He never bows his head in homage to any of God's creatures, nor does he stretch out his hand before anyone else. He is not overawed by anybody's greatness. This attitude of mind cannot be produced by any other belief. For it is necessary that those who associate other beings with God, or who deny God, should bow in homage to some creatures, regard them able to benefit or harm them, fear them and place their hopes in them.

Humbleness:

Along with self-respect this belief also generates in man a sense of modesty and humbleness. It makes him unostentatious and unpretending. A believer never becomes proud, haughty or arrogant. The boisterous pride of power, wealth and worth can have no room in his heart, because he knows that whatever he possesses has been given to him by God, and that God can take away just as He can give. In contrast to this, an unbeliever, when he achieves some worldly merit, becomes proud and conceited because he believes that his merit is due to his own worth. In the same way pride and self-conceit are a necessary outcome and concomitant of shirk (association of others with God in F ES divinity), because a mushrik believes that he has a particular relation with the deities which does not exist between them and other people.

Virtuous and Upright:

This belief makes man virtuous and upright. He has the conviction that there is no other means of success and salvation for him except purity of soul and righteousness of behavior. He has perfect faith in God Who is above all need, is related to none and is absolutely just. This belief creates in him the consciousness that, unless he lives rightly and acts justly, he cannot succeed. No influence or underhand activity can save him from rheum. As against this, the kafirs and the mushriks always live on false hopes. Some of them believe that God's son has atoned for their sins; some think that they are God's favorites, and will not be punished; others believe that their saints will intercede with God on their behalf, while others make offerings to their deities and believe that by so bribing the deities they acquire the license to do whatever they like. Such false beliefs keep them enmeshed in sin and evil deeds; depending on their deities, they do not bother about their souls and living pure and good lives. As the atheists, they do not believe that there is any Being having power over them, to Whom they should be responsible for their good or bad actions; therefore, they consider themselves independent to act in whatever way they like. Their own fancies become their gods and they live like slaves of their wishes and desires.

Patience and Trust:

The believer never becomes despondent. He has a firm faith in God Who is Master of all the treasures of the earth and the heavens, Whose grace and bounty have no limit and

Whose powers are infinite. This faith imparts to his heart extra-ordinary consolation, fills it with satisfaction and keeps it filled with hope. Although he may meet with rejection from all sides in this world, faith in and dependence on God never leave him, and on their strength he goes on struggling. Such profound confidence can result from no other belief than belief in one God. Mushriks, kafirs and atheists have small hearts; they depend on limited powers; therefore in times of trouble they are soon overwhelmed by despair and, frequently, they commit suicide.

Determination and Perseverance:

This belief produces in man a very strong degree of determination, patient perseverance and trust in God. When he makes up his mind and devotes his resources to fulfilling the Divine Commands in order to secure God's pleasure, he is sure that he has, the support and backing of the Lord of the universe. This certainty makes him firm and strong like a mountain and no amount of difficulties, impediments and opposition can make him give up his resolution. Shirk; Kufr and atheism have no such effect.

Bravery in Man:

This declaration inspires bravery in man. There are two things which make a man cowardly: (i) fear of death and love of safety, and (ii) the idea that there is someone else

besides God who can take away life and that man, by adopting certain devices, can ward off death. Belief in La ilaha illallah purges the mind of both these ideas. The first idea goes out of his mind because he knows that his life and his property and everything else really belong to God, and he becomes ready to sacrifice his all for His pleasure. He gets rid of the second idea because he knows that no weapon, no man or animal has the power of taking away his life; God alone has the power to do so. A time has been ordained for him, and all the forces of the world combined cannot take away anyone's life before that time. It is for this reason that no one is braver than the one tempest of adversity and the mightiest of armies. Where can the mushriks, the kafirs and the atheists get such great determination, force and power from? They hold life the dearest thing in the world; they believe that death is brought about by the enemy and can be warded off by sinning away, from him!

Contentment and Complacency:

The belief in La ilaha illallah creates an attitude of peace and contentment, purges the mind of jealousy, envy and greed and keeps away the temptations of resorting to base and unfair means for achieving success. The believer understands that wealth is in God's hands, and He apportions it out as He likes; that honour, power, reputation and authority - everything - is subjected to His will, and He bestows there as He will; and that man's duty is only to endeavor and to struggle fairly. He knows that success and failure depend on

God's grace; if He wills to give, no power in the world can prevent Him from so doing; and if He does not will it, no power can force Him to. On the other hand, the mushriks, the kafirs and the atheists consider success and failure as dependent on their own efforts and the help or opposition of earthly powers. Therefore, they always remain slaves to cupidity and envy. They never hesitate to turn to bribery, flattery, conspiracy and other kinds of base and unfair means to achieve their

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angels. This is the second article of Islamic faith and is very important; because it absolves the concept of Tawhid from all impurities and frees it from the danger of every conceivable shadow of shirk (polytheism).

The polytheists have associated two kinds of creatures with God:

a) Those which have material existence and are perceptible to the human eye, such as the sun, moon, stars, fire, water, animals, great men.

b) Those who have no material existence and are not perceptible to the human eye: the unseen beings who are believed to be engaged in the administration of the universe, for instance, one controls the air, another imparts light, another brings rains, and

so on and so forth.

The alleged deities of the first kind have material existence and are before man's eye. The falsity of their claim has been fully exposed by the Kahmah - La ilaha illallah. This is sufficient to dispose of the idea that they enjoy any share in divinity or deserve any reference at all. The second kind of things, being immaterial, are hidden from the human eye and are mysterious; the polytheists are more inclined to pin their faith in them. They consider them to be deities, gods and God's children. They make their images and render offerings to them. In order to purify belief in the Unity of God, and to clear it from the admixture of this second kind of unseen creatures, this particular article of faith has been expounded.

Muhammad (blessing of Allah and peace be upon him) has informed us that these imperceptible spiritual beings, whom people believe to be deities of gods or God's children, are really His angels. They have no share in God's divinity; they cannot deviate from His commands even by the slightest fraction of an inch. God employs them to administer His Kingdom, and they carry out His orders exactly and accurately. They have no authority to do anything of their own accord; they cannot present to God any scheme conceived by themselves, they are not even authorised to intercede with God for any man.

To worship them and to solicit their help is degrading and debasing for man. For, on the very first day of man creation, God had made them prostrate themselves before Adam,

granted to him greater knowledge than they possessed and bestowed on Adam His own vicegerency on this 'earth in preference to them. What debasement can, therefore, be greater for man than prostrating himself before those who had prostrated themselves before him!

Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) forbade us to worship angels, and to associate them with God in His divinity. He also informed us that they were the chosen creatures of God, free from sin, from their very nature unable to disobey God, and ever engage- in varying out His orders. Moreover, he informed us that these angels of God surround us from all sides, are attached to us, and are always in our company. They observe and note all our actions, good or bad. They preserve a complete record of every man's life. After death, when we shall be brought before God, they will present a full report of our life's-work on earth, wherein we shall find everything correctly recorded, not a single movement left out, however insignificant and however carefully concealed it may be.

We have not been informed of the intrinsic nature of the angels. Only some of their virtues or attributes have been mentioned to us, and we have been asked to believe in their existence. We have no other means of knowing their nature, their attributes and their qualities. It would therefore, be sheer folly on our part to attribute any form or

quality to them of our own accord. We must believe in them exactly as we have been asked to do. To deny their existence is kufr for, first, we have not reason for such a denial, and, second our denial of them. would be tantamount to attributing untruth to Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him). We believe in their existence only because God's true Messenger has informed us of it.

Risalat (prophethood)

Literally, Risalat derived from the word Rasal which means to send. In Islamic terms, it means to convey the message of God to his worshippers. The word paighamber which is of Persian language has almost the same meaning i.e. "One who has a message."

From the point of view of religious as well as Islamic terminology, there is some difference between a prophet and a messenger. Nabee (Prophet) is a general word but the word Rasool (messenger) is a term exclusively used for a few members of people. Every messenger is prophet but every prophet is not messenger. A messenger is descended with a new book but the scriptures revealed on a prophet are the ones which confirm the teachings of a particular book. Often it so happened that a Rasool was considered the founder of a new religion later on by his followers. But this was not the case with prophets.

Since all the prophets were sent by God and conveyed the same message, they were the

members of the same Ummah. And as all the prophets preached Islamic principles, they were Muslims.

At this point, the word Islam and Ummah need some explanation. Islam means the universal laws of nature which every prophet tried to teach but after him his followers revised them according to their own needs and desires. Namely, the principles of Islam were common to all religion in the beginning due to this commonality; all these prophets belonged to the same Ummah, i.e. Islamic Ummah. The word Ummah does not; mean nation but a community which has no boundaries of countries and continents but it has its members in every nook and corner of the world.

With this clear-cut concept of prophethood, Islam teaches its followers to have faith in all prophets. Adam was the first prophet of God and Muhammad may peace and mercy of God be on him was the last of this series. According to one of the sayings of the Holy Prophet, there were sent one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets in the world. Fifteen of them were messengers out of whom; five were that of those who have been called the most determined of all.

Need and Significance of Risalat

Man is the vice-gerent of God on the earth. Like a slave who is always at the beck and call of his master, man is also bound to act in accordance with the will of God. This is

the only way for him to prove himself a true trustee of his Lord. Now the question is where he should go to seek the true and clear guidance and - direction, following which he could live in compliance of the orders of God. This is the first reason for God to send His prophets in the world.

The duty of the prophets is to guide the people to the right path (The path of God). They convey to them the direction of God and the fact as what he likes and dislikes.

Secondly, other means of seeking the will of God are always limited and are not free from pitfalls and doubts. E.g., one way is man's five senses. But their range is too limited that they can give the knowledge to the man which is within their range. These five senses can also be deceived. Another source of getting the knowledge of Godly orders is though meditation; but it is always not true as one cannot always make difference between Godly and satanic ideas which arise in the mind of a man interested in meditation. The third way to get knowledge of the will of God is collective use of thought. It is also an inappropriate way as the wisdom of God is prevalent over all the universe and man's limited wisdom can not be parallel to it.

In this situation, where all these sources cannot work, God who is the most merciful and beneficent to his creature himself solved this problem. He selected some of his

worshippers for the office of prophethood and revealed his orders on them. So it can be said that revelation is the only truest and the most reliable source of the knowledge of the will and orders of God which he conveys to the people by descending it through his prophets selected by his ousmself. If He does not do so, there is no logic for the people to be made accountable to him for their deeds.

Prominent Qualities of Prophets

In the Holy Qur'an, many qualities of the prophets have been described. In the following lines, we will discuss some of them which are most prominent and are common to all.

Human beings

All the prophets were human beings. They were neither angels nor giants. Which shows that they had all the capabilities of doing good as well as bad deeds. They used to feel hungry and thirsty like normal human beings. They married and had children. They adopted different occupations to earn their livelihood.

Best Among all Human Beings

There is no doubt about the fact that all the prophets were human beings but they were the best of all human beings. Their moral status was so high that even their enemies who did not have any belief in them admitted their gentleness, bravery, determination,

sympathy, humanitarian and other positive qualities of their character.

Emergence of Miracles

Every prophet was blessed with some extra ordinary powers of miracles. Miracle is an act which a prophet performs to make the none believers realise that the message he is conveying to them is of course descended on him is of God and he is just to convey it to them on His behalf. The prophet or messenger shows miracles just to prove before the none believers that he is true and the message revealed to him is also not only true but also of God. This is the philosophy of showing miracles to none believers. Otherwise, a person who has a considerate opinion needs no such demonstrations to make his belief firm on God and His messengers.

Innocence

A prophet is innocent. It means that he can commit sins and does have the capability and knowledge of sins but does not do so. It shows a complete refinement of their personality which transcends them when compared with all other men and angels. Because, as far as angels are concerned, they neither have the ability nor the knowledge of sins. And the people who are or are to be the followers of these prophets, to what ever extent they are refined they are but are always expected to be mistaken.

Knowledge through Revelation

The knowledge which a prophet acquires is not through worldly resources or through the ones mentioned earlier in this chapter, such as meditation collective thought five senses and so on. But on the contrary, their knowledge which they preach is based on revelation. For that they need not to be scholars or have any particular qualification. This is entirely up to God to see as to who is the most eligible for this purpose.

Common Teachings

A Muslim must believe that all prophets were sent by God and that all of them were true. This is because there is a complete commonality in their teachings. There may be some difference in details but their origin and spirit was the same. For example, each one preached that God is one and the office of prophethood is not due to their personal efforts. This is entirely the blessing of God. Similarly, all of them emphasized on having firm belief in the world here-after.

The Prophethood of Muhammad and its Salient Features

God almighty has been kind to the human-race since its creation. On one hand, He blessed the people with all- the things necessary for their existence, and on the other, He made the arrangement for them to know the right way through His direction by sending

His prophets in the world. Our Holy Prophet Muhammad is the last of this series. There is no prophet after him Namely, no prophet will come after him. He is a blessing for all the universe. Following are being given salient features of his prophethood which prove his superiority over the whole of this series of prophethood.

Completion of Prophethood

In the Qur'an as well as -in the Hadith, it has been clearly said that our Holy Prophet is the end of the series of Prophethood. Most of the prophets had been predicting for his advent but he himself did not predict the advent of any prophet. It can be said that he is the climax of prophethood fulfilling all the needs of Godly direction.

Possessing a Complete Record of Life

This is only with our prophet that the whole record of the history of his life is still safe. Even the greatest men including all the prophets remained deprived of this particular aspect.

Comprehensiveness

There is a complete comprehensiveness found in the life of our prophet. It means that he possessed all those qualities which other prophets had to a limited number.

A Complete Guideline for Us

The Holy Prophet is a complete guideline for us. As it is in the Holy Quran, "There is a best example for us in the life of the messenger of God". A man having any interest, any occupation, of any age and of any race can seek guidance from his practical life.

Universality

In the Holy Qur'an, it is said that God has sent our Prophet as a blessing for all the worlds. His message is universal. Unlike other prophets His Prophethood has no limits of the boundaries of any country or a particular race or nation.

The Miracle of Qur'an

The books and scriptures revealed on other prophets are the ones which have lost their original shape altogether as a result of frequent revision. But this is the miracle of the book of Muhammad (May peace be upon him) which is still found in its original form.

The Record of Hadith

When even the scriptures of other prophets have lost their original shape, there is no question of their own sayings. This is with our Holy Prophet alone that together with the book revealed on him, his own sayings are still safe and are free from all sorts of revision.

Free from Legendary Qualities

Muhammad is not a legendary character. What-ever he did and whatever he taught can be practiced. It means to say that since there is no authentic record of the life of all other prophets, some times their followers attribute to them some legendary qualities.

Scientifically True

Whether it may be the Holy Qur'an or the Hadith both are scientifically and according to ever continuing research true.

It can be said with surety that the more the world makes scientific progress, the more appealing the message of our Holy Prophet will be.

To conclude, the faith on Risalat is the second belief of a Muslim. We as Muslim are bound to believe that all prophets are true and have been sent by God himself. The prophethood of Muhammad is the one where this series of Godly direction culminated thus ending it for ever.

The Finality of Prophethood

The concept of the Finality of the Prophethood is the basic principle and the fundamental of Islam. It has given a deep imprint on the out-look, behaviour and feelings of the Muslims. If we go through the Old Testament and the New Testament, we find that every prophet foretold the advent of new Messenger. But we do not find such a reference in the Holy Book Qur'an on him other hand in the Quranic verses it is quite clear that the work of sending messages is over. The following verses are hereby quoted as a proof of the Finality of the Prophet:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you and have chosen for you a Code of life - al-Islam".

"Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Apostle of God ;and the last of the Prophets".

"Say (O Muhammad) O Mankind! Lo! I am the Messenger of Allah to you all (the Messenger) of Him unto whom belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth".

We also find the same view narrated in Ahadith. The following Ahadith are cited as quoted by; Mr. Abdul Hamid Siddiqi in his book "Prophethood in Islam":-

"There were the Apostles who led the sons of Israel to the path of righteousness. Whenever any Prophet dies, he was succeeded by another. But no prophet would come after me. This function would be performed by the Caliphs."

"My relation to the (long chain of) prophets (can be understood by) the parable of a palace, the palace was most beautifully built, superb and fine. There was left, however, the space of a brick. The people went round the palace and asked in amazement, why is that this space was not filled up? I have filled in this gap and I am the last of the prophets".

Abd al-Rehman ibn Jubayer said, "I heard Abd Allah bin Amr ibnal-Az saying this! One day the Holy Prophet came to us. The expression of his face indicated as if he was going to depart from us and said, I am Prophet Muhammad who can neither read nor write (he repeated these words three times) and there is no prophet after me".

"There is no prophet after me and there is no ummah after my ummah".

There are a few versions quoted by Maulana Maududi in his book "Tafheem al-Qur'an" about the great Islamic Jurists. Imam Abu Hanifa, a great jurist of Islamic Law has

remarked:

"Anyone who would demand from him any proof (of his Prophethood would become Kafir since the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has emphatically said: No prophet will come after me".

Alghazali has observed as follows: -

"There is complete agreement in the whole of the ummah on this injunction (there is no prophethood after me). It signifies the fact that no prophet is to be raised after Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This injunction is so clear and unequivocal that it leaves no scope not the least for any other interpretation. Anyone who interprets it in any other way, is an unbeliever, his writing is nonsensical and his interpretation is fit to be called a heresy and its writer a Kafir: since he is falsifying that very fundamental on which there is consensus in the ummah.

The opinion of Qadi Iyad as cited by the learned Author of the book "Prophethood in Islam" by Mr. Abdul Hamid Siddiqi: -

"Anyone who claimed to be a shareholder in the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) either in his own lifetime or after him is an apostate".

Imam Shari has said as follows:-

"Allah decided to send Muhammad (peace be upon him) to lead man out of chaotic condition. This was not a novelty, for since mankind was but one people. God sent Prophets to announce glad tidings and to warn people. The mission with which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was charged was a part of that carried on by the prophetic chain although it came to be the last link of it,

"Allah charged Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) with His Mission because he was the noblest and the most perfect of His creation. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was to inaugurate His mercifulness and to seal prophethood. He was to transmit Allah's word and to show man the way to the right path. The word which Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) received and transmitted was the genuine word. It was free from human modifications and universalization of all that Allah had revealed previously".

The Finality of the Prophethood can also be found in the following verses either directly or indirectly:-

"Verify in the Messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembereth Allah very much."

"Whose obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah. Lo! Those ho swear allegiance unto thee (Muhammad) swear allegiance only unto Allah. The Hand of Allah is above their hands. So whosoever breaketh his oath breaketh it only to his soul's hurt: while whosoever keepeth his covenant with Allah, on him will He bestows immense reward".

"The saying of (all true) believers when they appeal unto Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is only that they say! We hear and we obey, and such are successful. He who obeyeth Allah and His Messenger, and feareth Allah and keepeth duty (up to Him) : such indeed are the victorious".

"But may, by the Lord, they will not believe until they, make thee judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which you decide and submit with full submission".

"It does not become a Muslim man or Muslim woman when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair (for them) that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair: and whose is rebellious to Allah and His Messenger, he verify goes away in error manifest".

"And they say: We believe in Allah and the Messenger and we obey them after that faction of them turn away. Such are not believers".

"Say (O Muhammad to mankind): If ye love Allah follow me, Allah will love you and forgive your 'sins. Allah is Forgiving and Merciful".

"Say: If your fathers, and your sons, and your brethren, and your wives and your tribe and the wealth you have acquired, and merchandise for which ye fear that there will be slump and dwellings ye desire are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way, then waits till Allah bringeth His Command to pass".

In short the following factors show that Islam has given last and perfect ideology:-

Islam emphasises on the unity of God, His person as well as in His attributes. In Islam even the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who is considered to be the greatest amongst the human beings for all the times is but one of the created human beings and a servant of His Lord.

The teachings of all the past prophets have reached their perfection in the teachings of

the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This is quite clear from the following verse of Surah Al Maida:-

"This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favour to you and chosen for you Islam as the religion".

The teaching of the Holy Prophet has been assured to be preserved for the guidance of mankind till the end of the world The following verse supports the version:-

"Surely We have revealed the Reminder, and surely, We are its Guardian".

In Surah Al-Ambiya it has been said that the Prophet was sent for the guidance of the whole mankind till the Last Day. It is quoted as follows:-

And We have not sent you (O Prophet) but a mercy to all the nations".

There is also the same depiction in Surah AI-Saba which runs as follows:-

"And We have not sent you but a Bearer of Good News and Warner to all mankind".

The Prophet was sent as the last. This is said in Surah Al-Ahzab which is cited below.-

"Muhammad is not the father of any of you men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah and he is the Seal upon Prophets (i.e, the institution of Prophethood was sealed after him)."

Moreover the Holy Prophet himself announced that there will be no prophet after him.

Maulana Sayhid Abul Ala Maududi in his book "Prophethood" cited the following three conditions which are necessary for the advent of a new Prophet: -

"1. That the teachings of the earlier Prophets have been interpolated or corrupted or they have died and their revival is needed. In such a case a new prophet is raised so that he may purge the impurities from the lives of the people and restore religion to its pristine form and purity, or

That the teachings of a Prophet who has passed away were incomplete and it is necessary to amend them, improve upon them, or add something to them, when a new prophet is sent to effect these improvements.

That the earlier prophet was raised particularly for a certain nation or territory and a prophet for another nation, people, or country be required."

These are the three fundamental conditions which necessitate the raising of a new prophet. A careful perusal of the facts shows that none of these conditions exists today. The teachings of the last Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him), are alive, have been fully preserved, and made immortal. The guidance he has shown unto mankind is complete and flawless, and is enshrined in the Holy Qur'an. All the sources of Islam are fully intact and each and every instruction or action of the Holy Prophet can be ascertained without the least shadow of doubt. Thus, as his teachings are totally; intact, there is no need of any new prophet on this count.

Secondly, God has completed His revealed guidance through Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Islam is the complete religion for mankind. God has said that, "Today I have perfected your faith-religion-for you, and have completed My bounty upon you," and a thorough study of Islam as a complete way of life proves the truth of these Qur'anic words. Islam gives guidance for life in this world and in the hereafter and nothing essential for human guidance has been left out. The religion has now been perfected and there is no ground for new prophethood on the plea of imperfection.

Lastly, the Message of Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not meant for nay particular people, place, or period. He was raised as the World Prophet - the messenger of the truth for the entire mankind. The Qur'an has commanded Muhammad (peace be upon him) to declare! "O mankind, I God's Messenger to all of you." He has been described as "a blessing for all (the people of) the worlds" and his approach has been universal and human. That is why after him there remains no need for new prophethood and he has been described by the Qur'an as Khatam-un-Nabbiyyin (the last of the chain of the true prophets).

Now, therefore, the only source for the knowledge of God and His Way is Muhammad (peace be upon him). We can know of Islam only though his teachings which are so complete and so comprehensive that they can guide men for all times to come. Now the world does not need any new prophet; it needs only such people as have full faith in Muhammad (peace be upon him), who become the standard-bearers of his message, propagate it to the world at large, and endeavor to establish the culture which Muhammad (peace be upon him) gave to Man. The world needs such men of character as can translate his teachings into practice and establish a society which is governed by Divine Law, whose supremacy Muhammad (peace be upon him) came to establish.

This is the mission of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and on its success hinger the success of Man.