

# Characteristic Teachings of the Holy Qur'an

*by*

SADR-UD-DIN

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## INTRODUCTION

THE teachings of the Holy Qur'ān are not addressed to a particular people or nation; the rules and principles enunciated therein pertaining to religion, statecraft and social dealings are of universal nature. The Most High God is the *Rabbul-'Ālamīn*, i.e. the Lord and Cherisher of all the nations of the world, which constitute, as it were, His one big family. He showers His blessings, physical as well as spiritual, upon the entire human race without any discrimination or distinction, and there is not a people that have been deprived of His favour and grace. The whole mankind is, in His sight, but one single nation, as He has said :

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً

i.e. "all the human beings constitute but one single community and all of them are equally dear to His heart" (the Holy Qur'ān, ii, 313). Good and righteous persons are found among all the peoples of the world. Apostles and prophets who pointed out and preached the way of God's will and pleasure were raised among them all, and it is for this reason that all the revealed religions and all the prophets of the world are to be held in high esteem and reverence. These religions have been provided with truth and guidance, and people, by shaping their lives in accordance with these truths, become good, righteous and worshippers of the One True God.

Accordingly, the Holy Qur'ān teaches that God is One, that the entire human race is also but one community, and that the teaching imparted by the different prophets, too, is principally one and the same ; all the nations of the world

should, therefore, coalesce and combine. On this broad basis the Holy Qur'ān has built a brotherhood which is neither Arabian nor Iranian in its nature, nor Indian nor Pakistani. It is of a cosmopolitan colour in which rules and laws of real equality function, and that can easily be perceived by any person. And it is for the purpose of making these bonds of brotherhood among human beings still more powerful that Islam has laid it down as a cardinal principle of faith that a Muslim should repose his belief in all the prophets of all the nations, and respect them from the core of his heart without any reservation.

### **Nearness to God**

The law of the attainment of nearness to God, as preached by the Holy Qur'ān, is also of universal nature, and this law may briefly be stated in the following manner : the Most High God becomes pleased with him who conforms his life to the Divine Will, cherishes fear of God and does good to His creatures. Such a person becomes also the beloved of mankind, as stated in the verse :

الْيَهَّ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمَ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهُ

i.e. "Pure and chaste beliefs and principles are acceptable to God, and good and benevolent deeds raise man's dignity and enhance his honour" (xxxv. 10). The noblest birth or the staunchest adherence to a religion would be of little value if truly honest and really beneficial living were lacking. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) has said in this connection :

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنَّ أَبَاءَكُمْ وَاحِدٌ

i.e. "All ye nations of the world, your God is one, and one also is your father, and you are all members of one commu-

nity and brothers to one another." In continuation of this he proclaimed :

لَا فَضْلَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَيَّ عَجْمِيٍّ

i.e. "An Arab, as such, has no distinction whatsoever nor any superiority over the non-Arab" ; and likewise :

لَا لَأَسْوَدٍ عَلَيَّ أَحْمَرَ

i.e. "A coloured man has no superiority over the white, nor the white over the non-white." There is only one criterion by which a man's superiority and greatness is to be judged :

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاكُمْ

i.e. "The noblest of you all, in the sight of God, is he who is the most God-fearing and righteous" (xlix. 13). So, this conception too, like other Islamic conceptions, is of universal application. And it has been said elsewhere in this context :

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ

i.e. "Surely God is with those who are God-fearing and those who do good to others" (xvi. 128).

### Islamic Democracy

Just as the law of the attainment of nearness to God is universal, and just as the idea of Islamic brotherhood is universal, in the same way the conception of Islamic democracy is also of such universal and catholic nature that it can well be imitated and followed as an excellent pattern. Muslims are called upon to elect from among themselves their ruler who, then, carries on and conducts the affairs of the State with their counsel and consent. He is also held responsible before

the people for his actions. The Islamic democracy upholds and maintains the freedom of every individual, and safeguards the rights of every person. The Islamic democracy, on account of its justice and fair dealing, ensures peace and amity, and safeguards the honour and respect of a human being.

—*The Author*

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## I. THE QUR'ANIC ALPHA

THE Holy Qur'an opens with the statement :

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ

which constitutes a very significant announcement. This verse declares in plain terms that the Creator and Architect of this universe is one, and that He is the ultimate cause of its support and sustenance. Since He exclusively is the true Originator, He knows full well the needs and requirements of all the different beings and entities constituting the universe. He has said :

خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ

i.e. "He created everything ; He is, therefore, the Knower of all things" (vi. 102). And furthermore :

خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِمْ كَافٍ

i.e. "He created all things and, therefore, He is the Maintainer of all things" (vi. 103). How immensely vast and extensive are the different zones of this universe, in which there are microscopic particles as well as gigantic heavenly bodies, like the sun, huge animals like the elephant and also tiny insects like gnats and creatures even smaller than gnats ! Each of these great zones is called '*alam*' in Arabic, which means a world bearing the mark of the Creator, of which the plural number is '*alamin*'. The Sustainer and Supporter of these '*alamin*' has been called *Rabbul-'Alamin*. He has taken it upon Himself to



make suitable provision for the needs and requirements of every 'alam. This gives us an idea of the limitlessness of His power and of His consummate and complete knowledge about all things that constitute the universe. His creation offers to the view multifarious and marvellous patterns of handiwork that reflect His boundless power and measureless knowledge and wisdom. And each species of these created beings is found in such an immensely large number that it is very difficult, and in some cases impossible, to count them. For the nourishment and nurture of this countless and multiform creation the Beneficent God provides all the essential and necessary means on a very wide and extensive scale; and these supplies, as He has Himself said, never fall short and never fail:

ان من شئ الا عندنا خزائنه

i.e. "There is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it" (xv. 21). Undoubtedly, the act of creation, that is, the act of bringing into being, is an extremely difficult task. The production of all the requisite means, in their proper quantity for the upbringing and subsistence of the 'alamin is no less a difficult job. A mention of all these acts of Divine favour and excellent Divine attributes has been made in a succinct form in the sacred verse under review (i. 1):

الحمد لله رب العالمين

When a man acquires knowledge of God's perfect excellences and His boundless favours, he bows down involuntarily before the Supreme Being, singing songs of His praise and glory.

### Unity of Mankind

Side by side with the mention of the unity of God in the sacred verse under review a mention of the unity of mankind has also been made. And just as the light of Divine

Unity illuminates every nook and niche of the human mind, even so does the belief that the same God has created every nation of the world and conferred upon members of each nation, without any distinction whatsoever, external and internal powers and faculties, and that there is no nation on the surface of this earth which, to the exclusion of others, has been made the sole recipient of God's favours and blessings. Our observation is that the sun shines equally upon all the nations of the world, and the cloud sheds its life-giving rain indiscriminately upon all. Our observation, likewise, is that illustrious leaders of excellent integrity have been born in every nation which fact leads us to the logical conclusion that the Just and Loving Creator has endowed each nation with similar talents and faculties. Students belonging to dark races receive instruction in different universities of Europe and some of them outshine and surpass the white students, proving thereby that the Most High God has endowed the people of all the nations with mental faculties of the same order. Just as He rains His bountifulness upon a Muslim, in the same way He pours His grace and blessings upon a Hindu, a Sikh, a Christian and a Jew. In short, we are all of us equal partners in the limitless favour and benevolence of God Almighty, and His mercifulness spreads over and encompasses us all in the same manner. He is our Creator and our Lord, and we are, one and all, His creatures and servants. The whole of humanity is a big family of which the Most High God is the Supreme Creator, the Merciful Master, the Sustainer and the Benefactor, and it is to this effect that the Holy Prophet has said :

الْمَخْلُوقِ عِيَالُ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ أَحْبَبْتَهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَنْفَعَهُمْ لِعِيَالِهِ

i.e. "All God's creatures are His family; and he who does

most good to God's creatures is the most beloved of God." When a man has acquired such an enlightenment, he begins to love all the creatures of God :

"He prayeth well, who loveth well

Both man and bird and beast."

Such a person looks upon and considers a Hindu or a Sikh as his own brother, and in the same way he regards Jews and Christians as his brothers, for they are all members of his God's great family. A man of such cosmopolitan vision would never harbour feelings of animosity towards others. In short, while the verse just mentioned creates in human mind a true and correct belief with regard to the person of the Divine Being, it also enjoins love for all mankind and dispels all kinds of prejudice and narrow-mindedness.

These truths of universal nature, if acted upon, can create real peace in the world. Thus the verse (i. 1):

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

is remarkable for its profundity and comprehensiveness, containing as it does an allusion to God Almighty as the Creator and Lord of all beings and the universe of infinite dimensions, together with a reference to all the nations of mankind. It would be impossible to find a parallel to this verse in respect of its all-inclusive wisdom. It gives in a nutshell the purpose of religion, which is the formation of sincere and selfless relationship with the all-loving God and His creatures ; and if a man should fail to strive for the attainment of this object, all his worship and devotion would be futile.

## II. THE HOLY QUR'ĀN: A MODERN BOOK

It is quite obvious that the book which can meet and fulfil the vital needs of the present age is the Holy Qur'an. Every serious-minded person of the present day desires to establish unity and concord among all the nations of the world; he cherishes the belief that without universal fraternity the world cannot have even a glimpse of peace and harmony. Such a person of goodwill sometimes proposes that selection be made from the Heavenly Books of all the nations, and that just as a beautiful bouquet is prepared by collecting different flowers, "daisies pied and violets blue," in the same way, a nice and attractive bunch of flowers be made by gleaning selected principles from all the sacred Books. At another time he offers the suggestion that a conference be convened of the accredited scholars and religious divines of all the nations so that by putting their heads together they may devise ways and means for sowing the seeds of union and mutual goodwill among all the nations. Several conferences with this end in view have actually been convoked during this century, and in these conferences valuable and learned discourses have been delivered by great scholars. But all that these efforts have succeeded in doing up till now is to draw the attention of the peoples of the world to some extent to the vital need of union and understanding. These conferences have, however, failed to achieve to any considerable degree the prime purpose of uniting humanity into one single whole. Undoubtedly, the persons participating in such conferences have had a lofty aim before their eyes, and a sincere and honest yearning in their hearts. What is, then, the reason that their efforts

have not been crowned with success so far? The reason is not far to seek. These conferences have in view a unity only of superficial nature and fall short of creating an intellectual and spiritual revolution. Their emptiness, in this respect, turns their meetings into failures. They are, as a matter of fact, not equipped with those principles which can create intellectual revolution in human mind, and until this mental revolution comes into play, real and true brotherhood cannot be established. The Holy Qur'ān, it may be stated in full confidence, does bring about this mental revolution which alone can bind all the nations of the world with the ties of peaceful union.

### **A Single Achievement**

It is an incontrovertible historical fact that the sublime teaching imparted in the very first verse of the Holy Qur'ān:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ  
 /                      /                      /

amalgamated into one single whole all the warring tribes of Arabia, and also many peoples of different religions of the world. Islam united into a brotherhood of equality the Jews who had adhered to the belief that they were the only chosen people of God and that salvation was their birthright, the Christians who used to think that salvation could be achieved only by reposing faith in the blood of Christ upon the cross, and that noble and virtuous deeds could in no way help in getting admittance into heaven, and the idolaters of Arabia, who, like the Hindus, held fast to the belief that it was only the adoration of their idols that could gain deliverance for them in the next world. Islam wrought a mighty revolution in the beliefs and principles of all these peoples. The acceptance of Islam's universal principles was followed by a splendid spiritual reform, uniting them indissolubly into one single people. In this way, by coming into the

fold of real brotherhood, they obtained real happiness and true contentment of mind, and became ultimately the cause of blessing for the world. Even to-day, by means of the lofty teachings of the Holy Qur'ān, mental revolution can again be wrought and the different nations of the world can again be united into one universal fraternity. If those people who desire eagerly to establish real peace and contentment in the world adopt the Qur'ānic principles and give them out to the world with all earnestness, they would surely achieve the object of their desire and be regarded as the benefactors of the world.

### The Sovereign Remedy

This principle of unity and universality, which has been set forth in the very first verse of the Holy Qur'ān, has been re-stated in another way in the middle verse of the same chapter. There is in :

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

an important proclamation that God is the Cherisher and Sustainer of all the nations of the world. He is Lord not only of material objects, but also of all spiritual worlds. The middle verse of this brief chapter says:

اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ

اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ

which means: "We seek such guidance getting which we may be able to acquire the spiritual inheritance of the sacred personalities and spiritual teachers of all the nations of the world" (i. 5, 6). And who are those great personalities who made their appearance in nations other

than the Muslims and held out to them the torch of light and guidance, making them godly and pure? Of them a mention has been made in the Holy Qur'ān in these words (iv. 69):

أُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ  
وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ

i.e. the sacred personalities on whom descended the favours of God are the prophets of other nations who, having been blessed with Divine communion, gave the right sort of guidance to human beings, and they are, furthermore, the truthful and pure ones of other nations, and the faithful and loyal ones who were favoured with a vision of God and laid down their lives in proof of His existence, and the good and righteous ones who had been endowed with all kinds of good qualities to serve as pure and perfect models for other people. In short, a Muslim is taught to offer, in the course of his worship, such a prayer by means of which liberality and largeness is produced in his mind, as well as true love and respect for all the religious personalities of the world, and an ardent desire to follow in their footsteps. Moreover, by means of such broad-based doctrines real affinity and unity can be created among the nations, and there is, before the present-day world, no more vital problem than how to create this true and noble unity.

These teachings of the Holy Qur'ān are capable of satisfying the needs and requirements of the present age. These principles which the Holy Qur'ān promulgates proved to be useful in times gone by for every country, age and people, and will also prove to be so in the future. It is, therefore, necessary that those people who have the good of

humanity at heart will, in view of this vital need, not only adopt these principles but also devote their full attention to the propagation of these truths in the world.

We have made in the foregoing lines a mention of only two verses of the opening chapter of the Holy Qur'ān. This chapter is recited daily in their worship by all Muslims wheresoever they may be, in order that these principles of Islam may be indelibly imprinted on their souls, and ever remain fresh before their eyes. The marvellous comprehensiveness and usefulness of this prayer is easy to appreciate.

To this opening chapter or *Sūrah Fātiḥah*, the Holy Prophet has given the title of *al-Asās* (i.e. the basis) indicating that the basic teaching of Islam is contained therein. There is yet another name which the Holy Prophet has been pleased to give it. It is *al-Kanz* which means a very precious treasure. And there is no denying the fact that the whole wealth and riches of the world cannot impart that useful instruction about God, and create that true love and sympathy, universal brotherhood and equality of mankind, which the basic teaching contained in this chapter can bring about.

### Al-Baqarah

The second chapter of the Holy Qur'ān, which is entitled *al-Baqarah* (the Cow), opens with the following four verses :

الم - ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ  
 الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا  
 رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ - وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ  
 وَمِمَّا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ - أُولَٰئِكَ



عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ -

i.e. "I am God, the All Knowing. This Book, there is no doubt in it, is a guide to those who are God-fearing, who believe in the Unseen, and are steadfast in prayer, and spend on others out of what We have bestowed upon them; and who believe in that which has been revealed to thee (O Muḥammad!) and that which was revealed to prophets before thee, and are certain of the Hereafter. These are upon guidance from their Lord, these are the ones who prosper" (ii. 15).

In these verses a very important lesson has been taught. It was the custom in the writings of old that before entering upon the discussion of the main theme the writer used to spin a long yarn by way of introduction. But in modern age unnecessary introductions and forewords are set aside and the subject in hand is dealt with outright. Writers are preferred now-a-days who clearly express in a few introductory sentences the main purport of their writings. This manner of writing, which is the characteristic feature of the modern age, was adopted by the Holy Qur'an fourteen hundred years ago. In the subject-matter discussed in this Book, also, the needs and requirements of the present age have been fully kept in view, so that, just as the manner of its writing is very much appreciated by the modern man, in the same way the principles propounded in it can be easily recognised by him as of great import and significance to the world.

The Author of the Holy Qur'an is the All-Knowing God Who has brought into being the entire universe, and, for this reason, has a complete knowledge of every part and particle of it. He has likewise a perfect understanding of human nature and needs. He says :

خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

i.e. "He created everything, and He is knower of all things" (vi. 102). On the basis of this perfect knowledge of human nature and needs, He has revealed the Holy Qur'ān for the good and guidance of humanity.

### The Great Announcement

In the statement (ii. 1) :

أَلَمْ ذَٰلِكَ الْكِتَابُ

appears the term **الم** which Hazrat Ibn 'Abbās has interpreted in this way :

أَنَا اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ

i.e. "I am God the Creator of this universe, and, as such, possess full knowledge of every particle of it, as well as of all the needs and requirements of humanity." On the basis of this all-comprehensive knowledge this Book (the Holy Qur'ān) has been revealed to give guidance to the whole world. God, Who, as stated earlier, is the Lord of all the nations of the world, has revealed the Holy Qur'ān for the guidance of the entire human race. But He goes on to explain that just as rain falls on every part of this earth, but only that piece of land receives the best benefit which is suitable and fit for the purpose of sowing, and takes in the necessary quantity of rain water, in the same way, although the teaching contained in this Book (the Holy Qur'ān) is for the good and guidance of the whole human race, yet only those persons can derive full benefit from this Sacred Book whose conscience is not dead and who are morally and spiritually awake. The words :

وَهُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

appearing in the verses quoted earlier point to and express this very idea, namely, full benefit from the teachings of the Holy Qur'an can be derived by those only who are God-fearing. It goes on to explain that the truly God-fearing are those who, even in the most secluded and solitary places where there is no human eye to watch them, find and feel the presence of God, and their every action bespeaks that in all cases and conditions they have the All-Knowing God before their eyes, believing that He watches them, and has His ever-open eye not only on their deeds but also on their innermost intentions and secret designs. Such a faith falls to their lot only after the achievement of this sublime knowledge that the Most High God has, out of His grace, conferred upon them the great gift of life for the sustenance and support of which He has harnessed the earth and the heavens into their service. Faith of this type illuminates their hearts, and they engage themselves in His worship with all sincerity and devotion ; and the words

يَتَّقِيهِمْ وَيَتَّقُونَ الصَّلَاةَ

i.e. "They are steadfast in prayer" (ii. 3) describe this condition. God's worship creates in the minds eagerness and zeal for the service of His creatures, as indicated by the words that follow :

وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

i.e. "They spend out of their wealth for showing sympathy to God's creatures and achieving thereby His pleasure" (ii. 3). Since wealth fulfils the needs of man, he begins to love it with all his heart, and finds it difficult to part with it. It

is for this reason that spending wealth in the way of God, that is, for the good of His creatures, has been made a test for measuring man's sincerity and faithfulness. Says the Word of God :

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا

وَأَسِيرًا

i.e. "They give food, out of love for God, to the poor and the orphan and the captive" (lxxvi. 8).

Briefly, when the knowledge of God enlightens every nook and niche of the human heart, man bows down, with all his heart and with all his soul, in worship and obedience before God and feels pleasure in spending out of his wealth for the good of God's creatures. And these are, it is clear, the main objects and aims of religion—that man may be illumined with Divine Knowledge, that he may have true sympathy and affection for His creatures and spend out of his wealth for their good.

### **Cosmopolitan Principle**

It needs no saying that spending out of one's possessions for the good of the people becomes possible only when the human heart throbs with brotherly love and kindness for one's fellow-beings, and when a man expresses this sympathy towards his fellow-beings selflessly the hearts of others, too, become reciprocally full of love and regard for him. Although it is obligatory, according to the Islamic teaching, that the people should be treated with charitableness and beneficence so that the nation's solidarity may grow from strength to strength, yet these fine feelings generally remain limited within the boundaries of one's nation. These precious principles, however, can be

put into proper action on a universal scale by holding in high esteem the religious personalities of all the nations of the world, and reposing belief in the Books which had been revealed to them. In this way the circle of one's brotherhood and affection will become worldwide with the result that others will become willingly prepared even to sacrifice their dear lives for the sake of such benefactors. If we treat the spiritual leaders of other peoples with veneration, a reciprocal feeling of love will be engendered in other people's mind. When a Muslim announces that Moses, Jesus Christ, Bhagwan Krishna, Mahatma Buddha and Zoroaster are prophets for him as much as for their followers, this cannot but produce a reciprocal attitude of love and regard for the Muslims among others.

Hatab, a Muslim missionary to Egypt, made the following announcement before His Majesty Muqauqis, King of Egypt :

لَسْنَا نَنْهَاكَ عَنِ دِينِ الْمَسِيحِ وَلَكِنْ نَأْمُرُكَ بِهِ

i.e. " We require not nor exhort that you should renounce Jesus and his religion, but on the other hand, we affirm that it is obligatory on us all to have faith in him." Islam does not teach that the Jews or the Christians, the Hindus or the Sikhs, the Buddhists or the Parsees should give up their own prophets before coming into the fold of Islam. On the other hand, the Muslim believes in the truth revealed through all the religious teachers of all the nations of the world, and it is on this ground that Islam builds the foundations of real worldwide brotherhood among human beings.

The verses referred to above contain among them the following words :

وَالَّذِينَ يَوْمِنُونَ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا

أَنْزَلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ

i.e. "And those who believe in what has been revealed to thee (Prophet Muḥammad) and what was revealed to the prophets before thee" (ii. 4).

It is an article of faith with the Muslims that they believe in the Book revealed to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him), and in the same way they believe that those Books are true which had been revealed by the Most High God in different languages, through different prophets for the good and guidance of different nations. When all the nations of the world are endowed with this kind of faith the establishment of a real brotherhood and an atmosphere of profound peace and tranquillity will become inevitable. And blessed indeed are the people who have this lofty object before their eyes, for, says the Word of God :

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى

i.e. "These are the people who are on the right course," and

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

i.e. "These are the people who shall be successful" (ii. 5). Such is, therefore, the important announcement made in the second chapter of the Holy Qur'ān, which is as useful as it is rational and reasonable. Just ponder over the succinct and terse wording of this announcement, and also on its comprehensive significance, utility and wisdom, and it was for this reason that the Almighty God says :

وَإِنَّهُ لَقرآنٌ كَرِيمٌ

i.e. "It is a bounteous Qur'an (lvi, 77) meaning that the Qur'anic teaching contains real munificence from which the world will derive a great benefit.

There is yet another announcement in which all the nations of the world have been addressed (xlii 15) :

قُلْ آمَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأَسْرَتْ  
 لَا عَدْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ - اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ - لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا  
 وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ لَا حِجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ - اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ  
 بَيْنَنَا وَاللَّهُ الْعَاصِمُ -

The Holy Prophet was commanded by the All-Loving God to make the above announcement the first sentence of which means: "I believe in all the Books that have been revealed to all the prophets, at all times, and in all languages, for the guidance of nations everywhere." The importance of this announcement is clear. It creates large-heartedness and a broad vision, and cleans the mind of all the dust of prejudice. The words, "I believe in what Allāh has revealed of the book" need careful consideration. They signify that whichever Book, right from the time of Adam up to the present age, has been sent down by God should be regarded as true. Heavenly Books, it should be remembered, had been revealed to different prophets in their own languages for the guidance of their respective peoples. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an :

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانِ قَوْمِهِ

i.e. ("And We sent no messenger but with the language of

his people so that he might explain things to them clearly" (xiv. 4). The language of the Torah was Hebrew, and that of the Gospels of Jesus was Aramaic, and the Veda was revealed in Sanskrit whereas the Zend Avasta in Persian. It was further stated in this connection :

لِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ

i.e. "A guide had been sent unto every nation" (xiii. 7). And it is said in still another place in the Holy Qur'an :

رَسُولًا فَدَلَّ عَلَى صِصْنِهِمْ عَلِيكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ ورسلا لم

ذَقَصَصِهِمْ عَلِيكَ

i.e. "We have sent messengers of whom a mention has been made in the Holy Qur'an, and there are others also of whom a mention has not been made" (iv. 164).

It should, therefore, be kept in mind that a guide has appeared in every nation of the world who brought with him a Heavenly Book, and that the languages of these Books, for natural reasons, were different. All these facts the Holy Qur'an has expressed in two small words *مِنْ كِتَابٍ* signifying that we should repose our belief in each and every Book that was ever revealed by God.

The second sentence of this great proclamation that the Holy Prophet was asked to make reads thus :

وَأْمُرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمْ

i.e. "I am commanded to do justice among you", implying that in the blessing and grace of God we are all equal partners, and that (ii. 139) :



اللَّهُ رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ

i.e. one and only one is our Creator and Sustainer Who, without any discrimination among individuals or nations, brings about the physical as well as spiritual development of all; He is the Loving Creator and Merciful Benefactor of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is also ordained in this universal law that God will judge and reward every human being according to the quality of his own deeds, irrespective of the religious group to which he professes adherence. This law which shows no favour or partiality to any person runs thus in the language of the Qur'an (ii. 139):

لِنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلكُمْ أَعْمَالِكُمْ

i.e. if the Muslims do good deeds they shall reap a good reward, and likewise, if non-Muslims do good deeds they will also reap a good reward; in the same way, if Muslims commit evil actions the result will be woeful for them, and if non-Muslims commit evil actions the result will be grievous for them also and so will be the case with non-Muslims.

God is not like a whimsical dictator bestowing and then withdrawing His favours without reason. What deprives us of the blessings of God is the evil desires which beguile us to the commission of evil deeds. The law of moral requital is the same for Muslims as well as non-Muslims. In short, all the nations have been told that the Lord of them all is one and the same and for them all His law too is the same. When this uniformity and universality of moral law comes to be accepted by all, all causes of contention among human beings will be removed and a hitherto non-existent feeling of fraternity and common responsibility to the same God will unite the hearts of

human beings everywhere. Then, as God says in the words :

أَللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا

i e. "He will bring all human beings together" (xlii. 15).

These teachings mentioned in the foregoing pages show beyond the least shadow of doubt that the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him) was raised for the guidance of the whole human race and not for any particular section of it only, and that the principles taught by the Prophet appeal profoundly to all human hearts, persuading all men to live in harmony and peace with one another. These principles created, during the Prophet's life-time a radical change and revolutionised human minds so thoroughly that peoples from different religions and different nations came together under the Prophet's banner. There were, among them, idolaters of Arabia, Jews and Christians, and many from Persia, Syria, Egypt and Africa as well.

### III. THE INTERNATIONAL RELIGION

THE Holy Qur'an has laid down, in the following verse, the basis of a worldwide religious system :

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ  
 بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكُمْ أَنْ لَا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ  
 شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا سِوَى اللَّهِ

i.e. "Say, O Prophet, to the People of the Scriptures (followers all revealed religions) that they should come to an agreement with the Muslims not to serve any but God, not to associate aught with Him, and not to take others for lords besides God" (iii. 63).

In this sacred verse, the followers of all the religious systems of the world have been addressed, and a factor common to them all has been made the basis for their unity. That common factor is the doctrine of Divine Unity. Almost all the religious systems of the world believe in the existence of God. The Holy Prophet, therefore, in order to bring humanity on one platform, made the belief in the oneness of God the fundamental basis for the unification of mankind. Apart from the belief in one God no other issue has been raised so that there may be no hindrance in the way of concord and peace between Muslims and non-Muslims. From this declaration an appraisal can easily be made of the divinely-inspired urge in the Prophet's mind to bring together all peoples and to lay the unshak-

able foundation for world peace and amity.

### Religious Prejudice

Of all kinds of bias, religious prejudice is the most dangerous. It sets one nation against the other. Atrocities and outrages without number that destroyed life and property to an immeasurable extent have been perpetrated in the name of religion by fanatics. Religious prejudice sows in human mind the seeds of malice and acrimony, breeding wranglings and disputes of all kinds. The Holy Prophet has said in this connection that religion has come into the world to make man God-fearing and God-minded, and that it is also one of the chief purposes of religion to create in human mind feelings of love and sympathy for others, and an ardent desire to spend out of one's possessions for the welfare of others. With this great end in view the Holy Prophet taught that God was the Lord of all the nations, the Creator, Sustainer and Benefactor of all peoples of the world, that the entire human race is God's great family, and that, therefore, he who renders the greatest service to the members of His family is the dearest and nearest to God. Side by side with the promulgation of these great truths, a condemnation has also been made of the religious prejudice, so that its harmful nature may be understood, and man may be able to refrain from it. On this point the Holy Qur'ān says :

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ الْأَمَنُ كَانَ هُودًا

أَوْ نَصْرِي - تِلْكَ أَمَانِيهِمْ قِيلَ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ

أَنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ - بَلَىٰ مِنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ

مَحْسَبِنَ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ - وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا  
 هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

i.e. "The Jews say that none shall enter Paradise except the Jews, and the Christians say that none shall enter Paradise except the Christians. Nay, but whosoever surrendereth his purpose to God while doing good, his reward is with his Lord; and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve" (ii. III-III2).

It is an important article of faith with the Jews that excepting themselves no other people would be allowed to enter the Garden of Paradise, for they believe themselves to be the chosen people of God and think that salvation is for the children of Israel alone. In the same way, the Christians cling fast to the belief that no religious system of the world can achieve salvation for a person unless he believes in the atonement of mankind's sins through the blood of Christ shed on the cross, and that no human being, howsoever good he may be, can achieve nearness to the Divine without believing in the vicarious expiation for the sins of mankind by Jesus Christ. The Christians believe that they alone are the sons of God and that this distinction has not been bestowed on any other people. It has been stated in the Holy Qur'an with reference to this Christian belief :

نَحْنُ ابْنُو اللَّهِ وَآحِبَّاؤُهُ

i.e. "And the Christians say: We alone are the beloved sons of God" (v. 18).

These beloved children of the Most High God do not consider the other peoples of the world to be on equal foot-

ing with them. On the other hand, the present-day followers of Christ in the West look upon other peoples as their serfs whose lands and labour these children of God feel they have the right to exploit for their own benefit. Similarly, the Hindus believe that they are the beloved people of Brahma, and that the land where they live is the beloved land of Brahma, and that all the nations living outside their preferred land are untouchable and unclean with whom it is a heinous sin for them to have any dealings whatsoever. This doctrine, which is on the face of it false and fallacious, has proved to be harmful not only to other peoples but also to the Hindus themselves. Such narrowness of outlook creates feelings of ill-will between man and man. Is it not obvious that there are in nations other than the Hindus as well righteous individuals who render selfless service to their fellow-beings? The inhuman effect which this narrow doctrine of the Hindus has had on the six or seven crores of untouchables living in India is a fact which cannot be denied. Just as the Christian whiteman of some countries cannot even think that a dark skinned negro, despite his having embraced the whiteman's religion, can take his tea in the whiteman's restaurant, or receive education in the whiteman's school, or listen to the Word of God in the whiteman's church, in the same manner, a Hindu will not allow the untouchable to enter the sacred precincts of his temple, or to draw water from his well, or to cross the door of his house, or even to walk on his road. If an untouchable is found guilty of a crime, he, according to the religious law of the Hindus, should suffer double the penalty prescribed for the superior castes for the same crime. Thus religion based on narrow concepts has done incalculable harm to the dignity and welfare of mankind.

### **Religious Sectarianism should be Uprooted**

In accordance with the principle that all prophets

preached religion which was essentially the same, the Holy Qur'an declares that the followers of all the prophets, if they believe in God and do good works, will enter Paradise:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَالَّذِيْنَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصٰرَىٰ  
 وَالصّٰبِئِيْنَ مَنۢ مِّنۡ اٰمَنۡ بِاَللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَعَمِلۡ  
 صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ عِنۡدَ رَبِّهِمْ - وَلَا خَوْفٌ  
 عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ

i.e. "Lo! those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee, Muḥammad), and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabians—whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does right—surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve" (ii. 62).

The Holy Qur'an declares that there was not a people to whom a prophet had not been sent, and then goes on to name some of the prophets:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اصْطَفٰٓى اٰدَمَ وَاٰلَ نُوْحًا وَاٰلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَاٰلَ عِمْرٰنَ  
 عَلٰى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ - ذَرِيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِنۡ بَعْضٍ وَّاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ

i.e. "Lo! God chose above all His creatures Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān (for revealing His messages). They were descendants one of another. God is Hearer, Knower" (iii. 32-33).

For the betterment of the human race, the All-Loving God has been raising prophets from time to time, for it

is only He Who can point out the way of rectitude. The Holy Qur'ān says

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ

i.e. "God Almighty has taken it upon Himself to guide mankind on to the Right Path" (xvi : 9). It is further proclaimed (lxlii. 12).

إِنَّ عَالَمِينَآ لِلْهُدَى

i.e. "It is of course Our concern to send Books unto Our messengers for the good and guidance of the human race"). Such has been the practice of God, and it was by virtue of this Divine practice that He conferred His guidance upon Adam, and treated Noah in the same way, and showered His blessings upon Abraham, and similarly on the family of 'Imrān, the father of Moses. To these Houses, from time to time, God entrusted responsibility to preserve and propagate His message, so that the people, by obeying the Word of God, should be able to walk in the way of God's will. God Almighty, therefore, says (iii. 33) :

ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِن بَعْضٍ

i.e. these prophets were descendants one of another, that all of them belonged to the same spiritual lineage. From this, the greatest of all basic principles becomes clear that the All-Merciful God deals with all the nations of the world with the same kind of love and compassion. It is not, therefore, meet that one nation should swagger of its superiority over the others, or that one nation should hold another nation in hatred and abomination. Says the word of God :

لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّن قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا



خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ

i.e. "Let not people laugh at people, perchance they may be better than they themselves are" (xlix. 11).

No nation should presume that it alone has been chosen by the Almighty God to be the recipient of His blessings, and that all the other nations are, as compared to them, inferior. Such an idea would be contrary to God's will as revealed in His Books. God is the Lord and Cherisher of all the nations, and not only of a particular people. He has not deprived any nation of His blessings and grace. Besides being Merciful and Kind, He is also Just :

وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ

i.e. "God is not in the least unjust to His servants" (iii. 181).

In the verse (iii. 32) quoted earlier, the word *أَصْطَفَىٰ* makes it crystal clear that the spiritual guides of all the nations were clean of all kinds of evils to which the majority of human beings are prone. By establishing the honour and sinlessness of the spiritual teachers of all the nations of the world the Holy Qur'ān makes inter-religious and international amity an absolute certainty.

There is yet another sublime purpose for which the term has been used : that all those stories imputing moral laxity to some of the holy prophets that have found their way into some sacred scriptures are baseless and false. For instance, it has been alleged that the Prophet Ishmael was a boorish savage, that the Prophet Moses was accused by his own sister of moral dereliction, that Solomon, when he became old, was prevailed upon by his wives to take to the worship of idols and in the same way a highly immoral and

wicked act has been imputed to the Prophet Lot in the Bible. But in the Holy Qur'ān God has exonerated each of these prophets of all these false accusations and proclaimed through the term أَصْطَفَى that the prophets were absolutely beyond all moral ills. This absolvment by the Holy Qur'ān of the prophets of all religions from false allegations aimed at discrediting them and the Divine message they all represent is a great step in the direction of universal understanding and fraternity of mankind.

We quote another verse dealing with the same subject :

That the Most High God has treated all the nations of the world equally with His love and compassion has been reiterated in this sacred verse. It has been stated that all the prophets are of the seed of Adam. And, then, a mention has also been made of the seed of particular prophets of the nations ; for example, of the seed of Abraham and the seed of Israel. In the course of time the seed of Abraham and Israel has spread over a large part of the world and has become divided into groups and nations different from one another in many respects. In order to give these different groups the message of peace and love and to unite them into one brotherhood, God has said :

أَوْلَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ  
 مِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَةِ  
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْرَائِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا

i.e. "We adorned and enriched the spiritual guides of all the nations with Our blessings, and deprived no nation of this

grace. It is, therefore, essential that a nation should not claim pride and superiority over other nations, nor look upon them with scornful eyes, but all the nations of the world should live in concord with one another" (xix. 58).

The following verse further adds to the above theme :

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا  
 وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
 وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا  
 فِيهِ

i.e. "God ordained for you the religion which He enjoined upon Noah and which He has revealed to thee (Muḥammad), and which He enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying : Establish the religion, and be not divided therein" (xlii. 13).

In this verse it has been intimated that not only did God shower His blessings on the prophets of each nation and favoured them with His communion, but that the same religion that He communicated to Noah, Moses and Jesus has also been revealed to the Holy Prophet Muḥammad. In short, the religion of all the prophets and messengers of God is one and the same. Moreover, it has been stressed upon the followers of all prophets that they should abstain from dissension among themselves. Hence the prophets cannot be held responsible for the disharmony that prevails among their followers to-day. It is their followers who have created this disunion and discord, and it is really to be regretted that they should

have done so after having received revelations of truth from God on this point.

### **National Prejudice**

An Israelite and a Hindu cherish feelings of pride and superiority in respect of their nations, and this pride, on their part, has also an admixture of a very bitter kind of prejudice, which has created feelings of malice and acrimony among the nations. How can these people, whose own hearts have been warped to that degree, create conditions of peace and unity among the nations of the world? Neither an Israelite nor a Hindu can impart to the world the sublime lesson of universal brotherhood and unity. The Hindu, as stated above, holds in abomination even those who live on his own land. There are seventy or eighty million people on their soil whom the Hindus contemptuously call "the untouchables". And this attitude of the Hindu is so obdurate that even their greatest man, Mahatma Gandhi, could not persuade his countrymen to allow elementary human rights to "the untouchables". The privileged classes of the Hindu community, it is really painful to observe, could not absorb even such an enlightened "untouchable" as Dr. Ambedkar. For many years Dr. Ambedkar struggled very hard to have the status of the "untouchables" raised to the level of the privileged castes but his efforts were absolutely fruitless. Dr. Ambedkar, at last, in utter despair of the Hindu world, embraced Buddhism as his faith.

There are four castes among the Hindus: the Brahmins, the Kashatriyas, the Vaishas and the Sudras or untouchables. The Brahmin commands power and respect of the highest degree. Without him no religious function can be performed. The Kashatriya, too, is a high and honourable caste among the Hindus. The people of this caste believe that they have been created to govern and rule; so they consider others to be beneath them in all respects.

From what has been stated above one conclusion emerges with convincing force: that national and class prejudices breed arrogance in relation to others and become the cause of other people's debasement.

In the twentieth century national prejudices have been the cause of a great deal of bitterness and violence. The western nations believe that they have been created to rule over the eastern peoples and it is also their firm conviction that the people of the East cannot rise to the levels of culture attained in the West. In London to-day the coloured people of the East are being looked down upon very much in the same way as the "untouchables" suffer repugnance at the hands of high-caste Hindus in India. In South Africa the white people have been since long depriving the coloured people of their basic human rights. America, too, fares no better in this respect. Americans may call their land vaingloriously as "God's Land", but it is a matter of fact that the condition of the negro in that land of God is such that he can in no sphere of social or national life move on terms of equality with the whiteman. The negro receives this treatment despite the fact that he too professes the Christian religion like other Americans and is expected to work and fight for the welfare of his country whenever the need arises. France, even to-day, dares to disregard all principles of humanity and civilisation and is engaged in systematic extermination of the Algerians fighting for the liberty and honour of their nation.

In fine, whichever nation of the western world you may turn your eyes to, you will see the same shameful spectacle. The teaching of Jesus, it is but obvious, has been cast to the winds by the western people. Every Christian country of the West sends out legions of preachers to convert the people of the East to Christianity; but to enslave eastern nations, to grab all that they have earned by the sweat of their brow, is quite legitimate in the eyes

of the westerners. This is in utter defiance of the teachings of Jesus.

There is yet another dangerous doctrine created by the West which goes under the name of Nationalism, and has been the cause of keeping one nation at daggers drawn with the other. The British, of all the nations of the world, are the people who have given the greatest impetus to nationalism. This disease of British making has also penetrated into the East so that both the worlds, the western as well as the eastern, have fallen into its clutches, with the inevitable result that international peace and harmony has been smashed into a thousand pieces. In a word, Europe, with all its vaunted culture, has done a great disservice to the world. Making a wrong use of science, Europe is at present holding the world in terror of dread and destruction. Peace has unfortunately been dealt a deadly blow and destroyed.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) gave his attention to the finding of a solution to the problem of national and class hatreds and achieved marvellous success with regard to it. Whereas, on the one hand, God apprised the Prophet of the dangers of national prejudice, which sets man against man, on the other hand, He also revealed unto the Prophet the Divine treatment for the eradication of this widespread epidemic. The remedy is contained in the following verse :

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَ

أَنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا -

إِنَّا أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ - إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

i.e. "O mankind! Lo! We have created you from a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct. Lo! God is Knower, Aware" (xlix. 13).

The whole human race has been addressed in this proclamation, which says: Ye people of the world, just ponder over the fact that having been born of the same parents you are all but members of one and the same community. Gradually you spread over different parts of the world receiving different impressions and imprints from different tracts of land. For example, the climatic effects of warm plains and cold hills created in you dissimilarity of features and physiognomy, and for the same reason your colours and your speeches also became different. Moreover, geographical causes produced in you different habits and peculiarities. It was on the basis of these facts that you chose different names for the identification of your groups. But the essentials of your humanity did not change despite your living in different places. You are so many sections of one and the same human family, and it should be clearly understood that by the adoption of different tribal names the real fact of human nature does not change. The people of hills naturally become accustomed to the life of labour and hard work. They have to go out for hunting to procure their food, and the distinctive qualities of bravery and hardihood are, in this way, evolved in them. Sometimes they make oppressive use of their strength and strike terror into the people of the plains by plundering and pillaging them. Similar traits are also developed in the people of islands. Very much like the hillmen, the islanders, too, make wrong use of their prowess and start committing piracy on the high seas, and become, in this way, a permanent danger to the weaker section of the human race. In like manner, people

who have taken up their abode in colder countries begin to take pride over the white colour of their skins, and look with contempt upon those people who, an account of the different climate in which they live, have coloured skins. God Almighty, therefore, says to people living everywhere : Your tribes, races and nations are convenient labels by which you may know certain differing characteristics. It is wrong to make these differentiating characteristics the ground for considering yourselves superior. Your species and your humanity is one and the same ; your nature as human beings is also the same. Superiority cannot be claimed merely for belonging to a particular tribe or clan nor for having a particular skin. It can be achieved only through righteousness and fear of God. Greatness can be attained only by that nation which possesses lofty character and has welfare of humanity at heart. But the nation lacking in these qualities will not be able to acquire exalted stature. This is the universal law of life, in accordance with which nations as well as individuals will be tried and judged. It matters not whether a man is a Hindu or a Sikh, a Jew or a Christian ; whether he is a man of the West or of the East—all will be adjudged in the light of this Great Law. A man may have his residence anywhere on the surface of this earth : if he is honest and true he will surely deserve respect and regard in the eyes of God. And to every individual who leads a life of rectitude this law holds out guarantee of honour and glory.

### **The Last Pilgrimage**

The Holy Prophet, on the occasion of his last pilgrimage to Makka delivered the following sermon to the large concourse of people who had come to hear him :

آيَايَهُهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنَّ أَبَاكُمْ



وَاحِدٌ - لَا فَضْلَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَيَّ عَجْمِيٍّ وَلَا لَأَسْوَدٍ عَلَيَّ  
 أَحْمَرَ وَلَا لِأَحْمَرَ عَلَيَّ أَسْوَدًا إِنْ أَكْرَمَكُمُ عِنْدَ  
 اللَّهِ اتَّقَوْكُمْ

i.e. "Ye people, your God is one, and one also is your father (Adam); that is to say, you are all members of the Great Family of the All-Loving God. Therefore, there should be amongst you goodwill and affection, sincerity and harmony, and it should be clearly understood that no Arab as such has any kind of superiority over the non-Arab, nor a coloured man over the white, and likewise no non-Arab as such has any kind of preference over the Arab, nor any white man over the coloured man. There are many different nations among you, and true unity can be established and maintained among you only if you agree to believe that real superiority, in the sight of God, lies not in the fact that you are members of a particular nation or that you have a particular person of eminence as your progenitor, but that the true and real superiority, in the eyes of God, belongs only to that nation or individual who is the most God fearing and who does the noblest deeds!"

This is the one criterion of superiority and excellence for mankind. Indulgence in national pride cannot, in any way, be regarded as an argument of superiority and greatness. Such a pride, on the other hand, is positively harmful and breeds hatred and contempt for the other nations, and often becomes the cause of a great disaster. It disunites and scatters the members of God's great family, sowing in the minds feelings of ill-will and animosity. This is displeasing to God. It is in order to eradicate this disease

and bring peace to the world that the Holy Qur'an enjoins upon us the observance of right conduct and fear of God as the only true criterion of superiority before God.

This sermon reflects the Prophet's mind. Unlike some of the leaders of European countries, the Holy Prophet of Islam did not tell his people, the Arabs, that they were the best people in the world, and that they had, therefore, the right of imposing themselves over other nations. He made, instead, an announcement of quite the opposite kind, declaring that the Arabs had no superiority over any other nation, and that if the other nations were more imbued with the fear of God and rendered great service to His creatures, they would occupy a higher place in the estimation of God. For the attainment of superiority, he observed, there is only one means, viz. to have firm faith in God and to cleanse the self by abstaining from all kinds of ugly thought and behaviour, and, besides that, to be inspired to the degree of intoxication with the zeal for utmost service to the human race. This principle about which the Holy Prophet spoke on the occasion of his last pilgrimage to Makka before a huge gathering of his devoted disciples is, obviously, beautiful, beneficial and of universal nature. This sublime teaching went deep into the hearts of the people. This emphasis on the oneness of humanity and the practice of virtue as being the criterion of superiority among individuals as well as nations is a great service which the Holy Prophet has rendered to the cause of mankind.

This excellent teaching of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) raised the moral level of the nation to a high degree. It was quite a new kind of teaching, addressed to the conflict-ridden tribes of Arabia. The tribal chiefs, like the wealthy members of European aristocracy, did not like to mix freely with the poorer people, nor did they like to attend the meetings in which the Prophet mixed

with the poor people on a footing of equality. Such an action was repugnant to their customs. So they complained to the Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib, that his nephew in permitting the poor people to attend his meetings had violated the traditions of Arabia and that if he continued mixing with the poor and downtrodden they would not suffer themselves to be present in those gatherings, nor accept his teachings of this type. But how could the Prophet who had God-given, unflinching resolution in all such matters, and who believed his teaching to be beneficial for the human race, exclude from his company the poorer people for the rich and the proud?

The Holy Prophet, while he established true fraternity and equality among the nations, also bestowed his benign attention on those poor people who had been in the position of servants and slaves in private households. He said in respect of them:

اِخْوَانِكُمْ خِوَالِكُمْ

i.e. "Your servants are your bretheren." And again :

فَمَنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ إِخَاهُ تَحْتَ يَدِهِ فَلَيْسَ مِنْهُ

مِمَّا يَأْكُلُ وَيَلْبَسُ مِمَّا يَلْبَسُ

i.e. "The man, under whom God has placed his fellow-brother, should look upon and regard his servant or slave as his own brother, and give him the same food to eat which he eats himself, and the same clothes to wear which he wears himself."

The result of this teaching and training was that the entire nation was blessed with a new outlook. A spiritual and moral revolution came over every heart and mind. It was indeed a marvellous achievement, a wonderful phenomenon that the Prophet brought about.

## Deputations

When authority to rule came to be vested in the Prophet, deputations of different nations began coming to him. This year is called, in Islamic history, the year of Deputations. These deputations were from Christians, Jews and idolatrous tribes. Each deputation was received and treated with honour and respect, for the Prophet's heart was infinitely large and free from every prejudice or bias. He regarded the whole human race as God's one great family, ever keeping in view that Divine Commandment contained in the Holy Qur'an :

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

which means : "We have made human race worthy of respect and honour" (xvii. 70). Every deputation was lodged in the Masjid-i-Nabvi (The Mosque of the Prophet) to show that because the All-Loving God was the Creator and Sustainer of all the nations of the world, the doors of the house of His worship were open for the entire human race. Moreover, the lodging of the peoples of other religions in the Mosque was a mark of high regard shown to every deputation that waited upon the Holy Prophet.

## Honourable Treatment of the Jews of Yemen

The province of Yemen was populated by Jews. The Holy Prophet appointed Mu'ādh bin Jabal and Mūsā Ash'arī respectively as the Governor and Chief Justice of Yemen. When the Prophet came out to see them off after their appointment, he made them mount their horses, while he himself walked besides them on foot for some distance to give them last minute instructions. This is what he told them :

"You should always remember that the people of Yemen whom you are going to govern are people of the Scripture

(followers of a Revealed religion). They are, moreover, people of faith and of knowledge and wisdom. Treat them with kindness and do not be hard upon them. Your administration and actions should not become the cause of hatred and contempt in their minds, but whatever you do as rulers should, on the other hand, create happiness and hope among them. Oppress not, nor tyrannise over any of the Jews, and always be afraid of the cry of an oppressed soul. The cry of an oppressed man, whether he is a Muslim or non-Muslim, goes straight to God Almighty and no obstacle stands in the way. The cry of distress of a non-Muslim can draw the wrath of God Almighty on a Muslim ruler. When you assume the reins of government you should abstain from disobeying the commandments of God. And remember above all that life of iniquity and sin draws the chastisement of God Almighty. The grabbing of wealth and property should not be the object of the Islamic administration."

These words of wisdom and guidance spoken by the Holy Prophet throw light on many different issues. These instructions show a way of ending all national and religious prejudices. They prescribe so succinctly and beautifully the manner in which a Muslim ruler should behave in relation to his subjects. They prove that the Prophet had come as a mercy to all the nations of the world, and that real brotherhood and equality, goodwill and peace can be established among the nations by adopting the Prophet's principles and practices.

### **Rule over Egypt**

Just as the Holy Prophet gave directions for just and kind treatment of the Jews of Yemen, in the same way he left instructions for a sympathetic treatment of the Christians of Egypt. He observed:

سَتَفْتَحُونَ مِصْرَ اسْتَوْصُوا بِأَهْلِهَا خَيْرًا فَإِنَّ

لَهُمْ ذِمَّةٌ وَمَا وَرَحِمَةً

i.e. "You will soon be conquering the land of Egypt. Whenever that happens remember to treat the people of Egypt with kindness and benevolence for, once they have become the citizens of the Islamic State, they will be the Muslims' *Dhimmī's* or covenantees. (A *Dhimmī* or covenantee is the non-Muslim citizen living in an Islamic State.) The *Dhimmīs* have the covenant of God and His Prophet for the protection of their life, honour and property. Thus it will be your binding duty as rulers to protect the life, honour and property of the Egyptian Christians."

There were the same laws for the Yemenite Jews, the Egyptian Christians, as well as the Muslims. According to the laws of Islam no discrimination is permitted between Muslims and non-Muslims. The Muslim ruler *vis-a-vis* his subjects does not have any exceptional privileges exempting him from the consequences of his misdeeds. The non-Muslims had an opportunity in Yemen, Egypt and many other places of witnessing this principles in action. The son of 'Amr bin al-Āṣ, the conqueror and Governor of Egypt, maltreated and manhandled an Egyptian Christian. When the report of this incident reached Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, the Caliph of the Muslim State, he summoned the Governor and his son to his court at Madina. The son was flogged publicly for his misbehaviour and the Governor was reprimanded in the following words:

مَنْ دَانَ كُمْ تَعَبَّدْتُمْ النَّاسَ الَّذِينَ وَلَدَتْهُمْ

أَسْهَاتِهِمْ أَحْرَارًا

i.e. "Since when have you begun to make people your slaves, although their mothers brought them forth free?"

Such a display of justice and equity was a thing unheard of by the people of Egypt. The aggrieved person was a poor Christian, and the Governor of the country a Muslim. The public punishment of the Governor's son was in their eyes a startling proof of the equality before law of everyone enjoined by Islam. This incident created an unforgettable impression on the Egyptians and became established as an example of what true justice and equity should be. Because of experiences such as these the people of Egypt became faithful and loyal subjects of the Islamic State.

### All Religions are True

All the religions of the world contain truth and guidance. As stated in the foregoing pages, God is the Lord of all the nations. His grace is not limited to any particular people, nor has He deprived any nation of His blessings and boons. His prophets appeared among all the nations of the world and His kindness rained upon all in the form of Heavenly Books. The Holy Qur'an endorses the teachings of all these Books as true and beneficial, saying :

اَنَا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ

i.e. "We sent down and revealed the Torah" (v. 44) and

فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورٌ

i.e. "There is light and guidance in its teachings" (v. 44). In the same way it is said of the Christian Gospel :

وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ

i.e. "We conferred the Gospel upon Jesus" (v. 46) and

وَمِنْ آيَاتِنَا أَن نُّنَزِّلَ عَلَيْكَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورًا

i.e. "Therein, too, We have revealed light and guidance for the illumination of mankind" (v. 46). And furthermore it is stated in this connection:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ - نَزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ -

i.e. "God Almighty, Who is the fountainhead of all life, its Sustainer, Supporter, who raises it to the point of perfection, is one and only one, without a partner or an associate. The Great Creator of the universe has revealed unto mankind the Qur'ān which is full of wisdom and truth. It confirms the eternal truths that had been in existence previously. It testifies that the Torah and the Christian Gospel had been revealed by the Almighty God." (iii. 2).

Moreover, it is also the function of the Holy Qur'ān to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and for this reason it has been given the title *al-Furqān* (the criterion between the true and the false). It points out the spurious insertions which the people have made in the earlier Holy Books of God. Besides being *al-Furqān*, the Holy Qur'ān is also the *al-Muhaiman*, i.e. it protects and preserves the teachings of all Heavenly Books.

### The Religion of Nature

God is the creator of every sphere of the universe, and gives guidance for the harmonious functioning and development of them all. Every section of God's creation, we know



through experience, is busily engaged in the performance of the function assigned to it with the greatest precision and nicety, and the result of it is that every realm of this universe is conferring its blessings on mankind. That is because God's creation is a perfect system. The All-Loving God has not only brought this universe into being, but has also infused the necessary insight into the nature of every part of the universe for the fulfilment of the purpose of its creation. Just have a look at the stars and planets of the heaven. They, no doubt, lack the power of will, nor have they been endowed with the spirit of rendering conscious service to others or of increasing or decreasing their speeds at their own discretion. But in their nature has been instilled guidance which they are ever busy carrying out. They have been tied up in a splendid system by the blessing of Him through Whose grace this world abides in existence. It is also obvious from a study of the system that there are laws underlying it. These are the laws of astronomy. All these facts and evidence go to prove that God has invested every realm of this universe with the necessary direction and guidance so that they may be able to fulfil their appointed tasks :

وَ اَوْحٰى اِلٰى كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ اَمْرَهَا

i.e. "God has infused into every planet His instructions" (xli. 12).

In the same way, guidance for the production of honey has been placed in the nature of the bee. God says in the Holy Qur'an :

وَ اَوْحٰى اِلٰى رَبِّكَ اِلَى النَّجْلِ

i.e. "God has inspired guidance in the bee" (xvi. 68)

In addition to instinctive knowledge regarding the production of honey, the fundamentals of social and co-operative living having value for mankind as well, have been ingrained in the bee. Likewise, love for water has been created in the nature of a duck, and she runs to and plunges into water as soon as she sees it. But if a hen should jump into water she would lose her life. It is not in the nature of a sheep to live on flesh and to keep watch after the manner of a dog, nor can a tiger be made to live on grass like a sheep and give up his ferocity. The hawk and the pigeon have both been endowed with the quality of soaring high in the air, but whereas a pigeon cannot be taught to pursue and prey, a hawk cannot be kept back from hunting and killing, which forms part of his nature. In the same way it will be stupidity to fit out a cavalry of bullocks instead of a cavalry of horses.

In short, the right kind of guidance has been implanted in the nature of all beings, from the smallest ant to the huge elephant, in keeping with their different modes of existence. In the same way, proper guidance has been instilled in different parts of the vegetable kingdom. One part of this kingdom produces food for animals, the other for human beings, another fruits, another flowers, another medicinal herbs and still another timber for houses and furniture. This shows that God created every realm and sphere of this universe and conferred upon it necessary tendencies so that the purpose of its creation might be fulfilled. This great truth has been revealed in the Holy Qur'an in the following words:

رَبَّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى

i.e. "God Almighty has created everything in the universe and has impregnated all things with guidance regarding the ways of attaining their prescribed ends" (xx. 50).

A few examples in this connection have also been cited. For example :

وَ اَوْحٰى اِلٰى كُلِّ سَمَاءٍ اَمْرًا

i.e. "God has sent His *wahī* (inspiration or message of guidance) to every planet in space according to the requirements of its existence" (xli. 12).

The outer space has countless stars and planets in it. All these heavenly bodies function in obedience to Divine commandment, raining hundreds of blessings on this earth, though in themselves they have neither the power of will nor the spirit and zeal to serve others. In a word, the Almighty and Merciful God has revealed His guidance to every article and atom of the earth and the heaven, and it is on this account that the earth is full of all kinds of blessings and wealth. The Holy Qur'an says:

هُوَ الَّذِى فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِلٰهٌ

i.e. "The God of the earth and the heavens is one, and His laws are of a uniform and universal character, and it is on this account that there is, in the world, every kind of joyous activity, cheerfulness and beauty" (xliii. 84).

The most precious part of the universe is man, and it was for the sake of his benefit that God created the heavens and the earth, appointing man His vicegerent on this planet, and infusing goodness and virtue in his nature, as stated in the Holy Qur'an :

وَنَفْسٍ وَّ مِمَّا سَوَّاهَا فَالْتَمٰهُمْ فِى جُورِهَا وَ تَقَوَّاهَا

i.e. "We have created human life with potentialities of the highest perfection and created in man the power to

distinguish between right and wrong. We have also placed goodness in human nature."

For the development of mankind God has revealed knowledge and guidance through His prophets and messengers. Says the Word of God in this connection :

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ

i.e. "The giving of true and correct guidance the All-loving and All-mighty God has taken into His own hands" (xvi. 9).

The Holy Qur'an, therefore, teaches mankind the true religion of Nature :

فَطَرَتِ اللَّهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ

لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَائِمُ

i.e. "So set thy purpose for religion as a man by nature upright—the nature framed of God, in which He has created man. There is no altering the laws of God's creation. That is the right religion" (xxx. 31).

God has created in human nature love for goodness and virtue, and disgust for what is evil, and these qualities of goodness and virtue are not confined to any particular people, but are found in individuals of all nations and races.

Another universal principle of great import has been taught by God Almighty in the verse just quoted.

Is there any person in the world who does not desire to live a life of honour and respect? It should be understood that honour and respect is in God's hands. The rule that governs it is that only he is honourable, in the sight of God, whose principles are based on truth, justice and solicitude for the welfare of mankind. The effect of good deeds, based on such principles, is that they raise a man to the height of

greatness and spiritual glory. For the achievement of nearness to God and the highest position of honour and excellence, there is no other way except the doing of good deeds and selfless service of humanity.

### Good People in all Nations

God raised His prophets in every age, and revealed His laws through them for the human race to pursue the right path, and therefore good and righteous people came to be in every nation. The Holy Qur'ān has mentioned this fact so that largeness may be created in the hearts of men, and the darkness of prejudice may be removed from among human beings. The Holy Book says (v. 54) :

اِنَّا اَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرَةَ فِيهَا هُدًى وَنُورًا

i.e. "Unto Moses We revealed the Torah in which We gave light and guidance to enable the children of Israel to walk on the right path." But whereas a section of them derived benefit from God's guidance, others paid no heed to it, and rather than carry out and obey the Divine commandments they began to break and violate them. To those who followed the guidance of Moses God has given the honourable name of *Ṣāliḥīn* i.e. the righteous, and to the heedless, the disgraceful name of *Fāsiqīn* i.e. the transgressors. This point is further stressed in the following verse :

لَيْسُوا سِوَا سِوَاءٍ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ اُمَّةٍ قَائِمَةٌ

يَسْتَلْبِثُونَ آيَاتِ اللّٰهِ اِنۡءَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسۡجُدُونَ

يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَاَسۡمٰرُونَ بِالۡمَعۡرُوفِ

وَيُنذِرُونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُصَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَئِكَ  
مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ -

i.e. "It is not fair to condemn all of them, when among them are to be found also such people as follow closely the commandments of their Creator and recite His word at night time, and who worship and adore Him. They are good and righteous themselves, and enjoin good upon others also, and forbid evil. Such persons are among the righteous." (iii. 113). The sacred verse goes on to say :

وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ

i.e. "In the performance of good deeds they vie with one another" ; and again :

وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْهِم بِالْمُتَّقِينَ

i.e. "God knows those who are God-fearing and doers of good" (iii. 114).

In the verses quoted above the Jews have been complemented. Likewise a mention has been made of the teaching of Jesus and of those people who derived benefit from it:

وَاتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ

i.e. "We revealed unto Jesus the Gospel in which was provided light and guidance; and those people who conformed their life to the teaching of Jesus became worthy of honour in the sight of God" (v. 44).

We read in the Holy Qur'an :

وَاتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي قُلُوبِ الَّذِينَ

تَتَلَوُهٗ رَأْفَةً وَرَحْمَةً وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ابْتَدَعُوهَا مَا كَتَبْنَاهَا  
 عَلَيْهِمْ إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ رِضْوَانِ اللَّهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا  
 فَآتَيْنَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْهُمْ  
 فَاسِقُونَ

i.e. "...and We gave him the Gospel and We put compassion and mercy in the hearts of those who followed him. And (as for) monkery, they innovated it—We did not prescribe it to them—only to seek Allāh's pleasure, but they did not observe it with its due observance. So We gave those of them who believed their reward, but most of them are transgressors" (lvi. 27).

In this sacred verse the Christians have been commended. They have, it is said, utmost mercy and compassion in their hearts, so there is good reward for the faithful among them too. But those among the Christians who pay no heed to the Divine commandments will be held guilty the same way as followers of other religions, and the number of such people is large. As for monasticism adopted by the Christians, although this way of worship had not been ordained by God, it was pursued by the Christians with the object of seeking Divine pleasure. But they did not observe even monasticism with right observance. God gave those of them who believed their reward, but most of them were evil-livers.

The Holy Prophet has said in this connection :

لَا رَهْبَانِيَّةَ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ

i.e. "There is no monkery in Islam". Islam does not prescribe

that man, in order to seek God, should renounce the world or withdraw to a place of seclusion. In this matter, too, Islam gives the right guidance to all peoples of the world. The mistaken view that man, in order to obtain closeness to the Divine, should abandon his responsibilities in the world prevails among many peoples. Numberless Hindu Sadhūs, Buddhist Bhikshūs and Roman Catholic monks and nuns have taken to this kind of unnatural life. The Holy Prophet of Islam, who had been raised for the guidance of the entire human race, disapproved of this custom in the saying quoted above.

A few more facts may be mentioned in this connection. We read in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمِن قَوْمِ مُوسَىٰ أُمَّةٍ يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَيَبْنِيهِ  
يَعْدِلُونَ -

i.e. "And there are among the followers of Moses those who lead with truth and establish justice therewith" (vii. 159).

This verse, like many others, inculcates that good deeds of followers of other religions should be acknowledged and respected. It creates love among the people of different religions and purifies their minds of prejudice against others. We quote another sacred verse from the Book of God which declares in unequivocal terms that righteous people are found not only among Jews and Christians, but also among all other nations of the world, and that every people and every country has its own noble-natured, truth-loving, honest and just persons:

وَمِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا أُمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِالْحَقِّ وَيَبْنِيهِ  
يَعْدِلُونَ -



i.e. "Among Our creation there are everywhere such people who guide with truth and do justice" (vii. 181).

It is clear from the verses quoted above that the Holy Qur'an bears teachings of cosmopolitan character. And it is this precious principle which cures narrow-mindedness and obliquity of the mind, and serves to create instead mutual goodwill and love among all nations.

### **Righteousness and Rectitude do not depend on Blood-relationship**

Truth and virtue are valuable wheresoever they may be found. Likewise, wrong-doing and evil must be condemned irrespective of the family affiliation and religious profession of the person guilty of it. Even if the kith and kin of the holy prophets did anything wrong they would receive punishment in accordance with their faults, and if nobleness and virtue be found even among the family of a sworn enemy of God and man it would surely be acknowledged and rewarded. Says the Almighty God in the Holy Qur'an :

ضَرَبَ اللهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا امْرَأَاتِ نُوْحٍ وَّ

امْرَأَاتِ لُوطٍ

i.e. "Those who rejected God and His prophets may be likened to the wicked wives of the Prophets Noah and Lot" (lxvi. 10) For their transgression the wives of Noah and Lot suffered punishment, and the fact of their close nearness to those holy personages could not save them. The wife of Pharaoh, on the contrary, notwithstanding her being the spouse of a cruel and arrant atheist, was held in honour in the sight of God on account of her belief and good deeds. For the enlightenment of those who think arrogantly that because of their being the children of Abraham they will not be called upon to

account for their deeds, the Holy Qur'an contains the following useful narrative :

وَإِذَا بَتُلَىٰ أَبْرَاهِيمَ رَبَّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ قَالَ  
 إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ أِمَامًا قَالِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي قَالَ  
 لَا يَنْبَأُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ -

i.e. "When Abraham was put to trial in certain matters, he acquitted himself wonderfully well, and was, therefore, honoured by his Lord, Who said : 'Lo! I have appointed thee a leader of mankind.' Abraham thought of his progeny and said : 'Will my offspring also inherit this gift?' Upon this God answered : 'My covenant does not include wrong-doers'" (ii. 124).

The mere fact of being the offspring of a holy man does not entitle them to inherit the blessings of God. Should the offspring of a holy personage commit sins he shall certainly be deprived of God's goodly gifts. It is, therefore, wrong to think that since one is the offspring of a certain holy man, his sinful living will not be punished. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) has pulled people out of such mistaken notions of immunity from the consequences of actions and placed before them the true laws of Divine punishment and reward.

### Divine Colour

The Prophet said that if one likes to be close to God and to establish communion with Him, one should imbue oneself with Divine attributes. God is Holy and Pure and we should, therefore, purify ourselves of all kinds of uncleanness, both external and internal, if we wish to become one with Him.

People who have to appear before earthly kings have to put on a dress which is in keeping with the custom of the court. During royal audience people have to observe the proper etiquette and even when they come out of the presence of the king they maintain an attitude reflecting their loyalty to him. In the same way men of God find joy in devoting all their attention for the gaining of Divine presence and pleasure. The Holy Qur'an says:

رَجَالٌ يَجِبُونَ أَنْ يَتَّطَهَرُوا

i.e. "Men of God are ever eagerly anxious to be pure of vain ambition and greed, and to keep away from hatred and ill-will" (ix. 108).

In a word, they scrupulously abstain from all kinds of reprehensible actions and habits and harbour in their hearts a strong desire for God's love and for welfare of His creatures.

### **The Qur'an establishes Universal Brotherhood of Mankind**

Of universal character is the religion founded by the Holy Prophet, and even so is the Islamic brotherhood established by him. This brotherhood is particularised neither for the people of the East nor for the people of the West. This brotherhood is all-comprehensive and worldwide and does not recognise any natural or geographical delimitation. Distinctions neither of race nor of pelf and power are allowed in Islam. There is, in the Islamic society, one and the same law for the prince and the peasant, so that the Prophet said of himself:

أَتَى أَخَافُ أَنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمِ عَظِيمٍ

i.e. "Should I violate any law and disobey God I shall have to fear punishment on the day of judgment."

An announcement was made by the Almighty God in respect of the Prophet's wives to the effect that since their responsibility was much greater than that of other women, punishment in their case, should they violate any commandment of God, would be doubled. In the same strain the Prophet spoke to his daughter Fāṭima, saying :

يَا فَاطِمَةُ لَا أَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ مِنْ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا

أَغْنِي عَنْكُمْ مِنْ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا

i.e. "I have not been vested with any power to provide you with any special privilege or to exempt you for responsibilities such as apply to others. It is only noble deeds that can be of use before God. I, therefore, stress upon you once again: Do good deeds, do good deeds."

In obvious contrast to the fraternity and equality of all mankind established by Islam, there still prevails in some parts of the world the doctrine that the king can do no wrong. The democratic equality which the Prophet of Islam established fourteen hundred years ago serves as a model which deserves to be followed even to-day and which is capable of eradicating the vast amount of social injustice and disregard of human rights to be found in the world to-day. The king and the peasant stand shoulder to shoulder in the mosque at the time of worship. The rich and the poor are expected by Islam to sit together as brethren to partake of their meals. Similarly the Muslims irrespective of their status in the matter of property or wealth are expected to participate in religious and social ceremonies on equal footing. If the Muslims, during their lifetime, share each other's sorrow and pain, after their death also they, both the rich and the poor, are buried in the same graveyard.

**The Problem of East and West, Language and Colour**

Just as racial distinctions and religious prejudice have created disunity among the creatures of God, in the same way the lack of understanding between the East and the West, and the differences of colour and speech have become the cause of oppression on God's creatures. The people of the West believe that they have a right to rule over the eastern nations, and it was in pursuance of this wrong belief that the West enslaved the people of the East, and exploited them for their own advantage. There is a very valuable lesson in the Qur'anic words:

لِلّٰهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ

i.e. "The people of the East as well as the people of the West are both the creatures of the All Loving God" (ii. 115), and

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ

i.e. "He created and sustains both the people of the East and the people of the West, and has bestowed upon both similar powers and faculties, and is the benefactor of both alike" (iv. 17). It is, therefore, proper that the rift between the East and the West should be removed. The Muslims during the period of their sovereignty over the East and some parts of the West did away with all differences that had existed formerly between the people of the East and the West. The Christian subjects of the Muslims saw that there was, in the practice of their Muslim rulers, the same observance of democratic and equal rights which was found in their precepts and principles; and the people of those countries, therefore, accepted the teaching of Islam voluntarily. It was for this reason that the people from Egypt right up to Morocco adopted Islam and the law and culture of the Muslims. The Egyptians

had seen many a civilisation which they had given up one by one. But Islam together with its civilisation and culture took imperishable roots, on account of its usefulness and rationality, in the Egyptian mind. The same kind of good and gracious treatment the Muslim rulers meted out to the peoples of Spain and Byzantium who, then, became their faithful subjects. And it was on account of this good treatment that the Muslim rule lasted in Spain for seven centuries, whereas in Turkey Islam is still a living force. Just as the conflict of the East and the West is disgraceful, in the same manner the problems of colour and language are proving to be baneful to humanity. The Prophet of Islam, who had before him the aim of reforming the whole of humanity, devoted his attention also to the eradication of discrimination based on differences of colour and speech. His universal outlook brought him astonishing success in this field also.

In the civilised city of London to-day it is considered permissible to treat a coloured man with hatred and contempt. A coloured man, in the first place, has to face a lot of difficulty in securing a place for his residence in London, and if he should somehow succeed in getting one, he is forced, by various unfair means, to run away from there. The state of affairs in America in this matter is no better. Both the countries, Great Britain and America, which take pride in their democracy, have failed miserably in rising above racial prejudice. But the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) declared such discrimination to be a complete contravention of Islamic ethics. Bilāl was a dark-skinned negro, whereas the Prophet had very fair colour. When Bilāl embraced Islam, the Holy Prophet pressed him to his bosom and appointed him the *mu'ādhhdhin* of his mosque. Bilāl rose to such a high status of honour among the Prophet's companions that 'Umar the Great said of him:

كَانَ عُمَرُ يَقُولُ سَيِّدَنَا أَبُو بَكْرٍ اَعْتَقَ سَيِّدَنَا بِلَالٌ

i.e. "Our chief Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr gave freedom to our chief Ḥaḍrat Bilāl." And even to-day in the city of Damascus in Syria where Bilāl lies in eternal rest, he is spoken of in respectful terms as :

سَيِّدَنَا بِلَالٌ

i.e. "Our master Bilal." To do honour to the negro race it is said in the Holy Qur'an :

i.e. "God raised a prophet from among them ; his name was Luqmān" (xxx. 12). There is, in the Holy Qur'an, a whole chapter entitled *Luqmān* which honours the Prophet Luqmān and his people, the Ethiopians. This shows that the Holy Qur'an stresses indiscriminately the honour and respect of individuals as well as nations, and thus creates largeness of mind. The Holy Qur'an says :

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافِ  
السِّنِّتِكُمْ وَاللُّوَانِكُمْ اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَآيٰتٍ  
لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ

i.e. "Just as the creation of the earth and the heavens, their stability and system of support, is, for the people of knowledge, a strong argument for the existence of God, in the same way the differences of colour and speech among human beings point to the perfect knowledge and wisdom of the All-Loving God" (xxx. 22).

Men of knowledge do not make such superficial

differences the cause of dispute. In this verse the term 'ālamīn has been used. The word, 'ālim means one who is possessed of knowledge. By making use of this term an appeal has been addressed to the people of knowledge and wisdom to ponder over the truth which is the same for all in spite of the apparent differences. In regions where the heat of the sun is intense the colour of human skin becomes dark and in the climes which are not so hot the colour naturally becomes fair. And when those endowed with the true sight ponder over it, they see clearly that the colour of the skin makes no difference to the human nature underneath it. Human nature, in both cases, remains one and the same, as stated in the Holy Qur'an:

فَطَرَتَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا

i.e. "Human nature is one and the same in all human beings" (xxx. 30).

All human beings hold up to reprobation falsehood, selfishness, cruelty, oppression and unrestrained indulgence of appetites. All appreciate truthfulness, human sympathy, generosity and justice. The Holy Prophet, by promulgating the sameness of human nature everywhere and the universality of moral principles has led mankind out of the quagmire of dissension and showed people the way to peace and tranquillity.

Just as the colour-prejudice brings death and destruction as its consequence, the language problem stirs up ill-will among the people. The Sikhs of India, for instance, have made Punjabi the basis of their demand for the creation of a Panjabi-speaking province. Not only in the East Punjab but also in other parts of India linguistic disputes are becoming more and more frequent. The British also take pride in their English language and have thrust it down the



throats of the people who have been under their rule.

In brief, the problem of the East and the West and of colour and language prejudice has smitten human race with many a kind of harm. Differences, perhaps, can never be wholly wiped out, but the sufferings which people have to undergo on this account can be and must be prevented. That linguistic differences should not become a cause of dispute among human beings, the Prophet of Islam created a mental revolution among the people of the world, telling them that the Creator, the Lord and the Benefactor of all the nations of the world is one and only one and that He likes all languages. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ

i.e. "And We sent no messenger but with the language of his people" (xiv. 4). The All-Loving God does not like that His great family, the human race, should be at daggers drawn among themselves on account of these superficial and shallow differences, and become unmindful and negligent of the essential truth.

The Most High God raised the Holy Prophet of Islam for the guidance of all the nations of the world. So He gave him knowledge of all the ailments with which humanity was afflicted, and also revealed to him the cure for those maladies.

### **Reverence for Mankind**

Every member of the human race, the Prophet taught, is worthy of honour and respect. In the sacred verse,

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

i.e. "We have honoured the children of Adam" (xvii.70) it has been decreed that people should pay respect to and revere

man. The term "children of Adam" connotes all the peoples of the world, the followers of all religions, men, women and children, the rich and the poor. Although the Most High God has created all mankind equal and free, yet some are held in bondage by others who exploit them for their own benefit. Sometimes an is reduced to the sub-human level of the "untouchable" sometimes he is subjected to dishonour and disgrace as a despicable "Gentile". Often it has come to pass that people who earn their livelihood by rendering service to others have been given the place of the lowest humiliation in society. But God Who is the Creator of all the regions and realms of this vast universe, and loves all His creature alike, has ordained that each and every individual of the whole human race is worthy of respect and regard. This proclamation of the Almighty God bears a glad tidings for the oppressed section of mankind. The Holy Prophet who always took the lead in carrying out every commandment of God elevated the depressed classes to a level of equality with the highest around them. It was undoubtedly a very important but at the same time a very difficult undertaking which the Holy Prophet accomplished. In our own time we saw that Mahatma Gandhi put up a strong struggle to raise the untouchables to the status of human beings, but he failed in his purpose. Mahatma Gandhi was a man of such exalted personality that every Hindu held him in high honour from the core of his heart, yet this great leader, with all his power and influence, could not succeed in raising the sixty or seventy million untouchables to the status of human beings.

It is clear from this that the work of uplifting a down-trodden and depressed people is indeed very difficult. And, it should be remembered that the people who opposed Mahatma Gandhi's noble efforts to raise the status of the untouchables were not savage barbarians. They were highly

educated people with a very old civilisation, yet they were not prepared to allow the so-called untouchables to enter the sacred precincts of their temples, or draw water from their wells, or step into their drawing-rooms. The high-caste Hindus told Mahatma Gandhi that to admit the "untouchables" as their equals would be to strike at the very roots of Hinduism and the Hindu social order.

The attitude of the Jews towards other races is not much different from that of the high-caste Hindus towards the "untouchables". According to the *Dictionary of the Bible*, a "Gentile" or a non-Jew is a faithless heretic in the eyes of a Jew. The same book goes on to say that the Jew has the utmost scorn for the non-Jews, calling them by the disgraceful appellation of "dogs". From the Gospels of Christians it appears that Jesus, who was a Jew by birth, had the same contemptuous attitude towards the Gentiles whom he also called "dogs". We find the following in the Gospel according to St. Matthew :

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, *thou* Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast *it* to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table" (Matthew, 15 : 22-27).

The same Gospel reports Jesus as referring to the non-Israelites as "dogs and swine":

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (St. Matthew, 7:6).

It appears that Jesus did not consider the Gentiles and

Samaritans to be worthy of his message. At any rate he expressly ordered his disciples that his Gospel should not be preached to these non-Israelite races :

"... Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into *any* city of the Samaritans enter ye not : But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (St. Matthew, 10 : 5-6).

The Holy Prophet of Islam, on the other hand, made no distinction between man and man. People of all races and nations were equal in his sight, and he had come to lead them all to the right path. He restored the downtrodden and depressed sections of mankind to the status of honour in which God had created them. He described all human beings as equal members of God's large family, adding that the most beloved of God was he who made the greatest effort to raise the downtrodden and serve mankind generally.

The verse :

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

i.e. "Surely God has honoured the children of Adam" (xvii. 70), while it raises the dignity of man, also deals a death-blow to the dogma that man is sinful by nature.

Both the Hindus and the Christians regard man to be sinful at birth. The former declare that man must pass through countless births, appearing sometimes in the body of a cat, sometimes in that of a dog, sometimes as an untouchable, sometimes as a Brahmin, before he can become pure and deserving of salvation. The Christians believe in the original sin and declare that in order to save sinful humanity the Son of God had to appear in the human form to pay the penalty for the sins of men and appease the wrath of God by his death on the cross. The Holy Qur'ān rejects all such irrational and degrading doctrines, and describes man as the "vicegerent of God". It says that God has instilled into man's nature love

for good and hatred for evil. And, though sometimes he gives in to his evil inclinations and disfigures the beautiful soul given to him by God, he knows that what he is doing is wrong, and even despises himself for that. He has the God-given power within him to subdue and conquer evil inclinations. It is meritorious in his eyes to meet the needs of the poor and to spend his wealth to remove their distress. The opening of hospitals for the treatment of the sick gives him satisfaction. To deliver the weak from the oppression of the tyrant is also an act of merit in his eyes. Accordingly the Holy Qur'an says:

فَطَرَتَ اللهُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا

i.e. "Human nature has goodness for its essence" (xxx. 30).

Man has been endowed with freewill. In the exercise of his volition he is free to make the right or wrong use of it. Very often man makes a wrong use of his freedom of will but that does not mean that he is sinful by birth. Freedom of will is a very valuable gift that the Most Merciful God has conferred upon man, and it is on account of this great gift that man has been called man and enjoys superiority over all the other animals. The wrong use of his volition is no doubt harmful in the same way as the wrong use of money, fire or electric power is harmful. But it will be an error to infer from this that evil has been placed in the constitution of gold, fire or electricity. Likewise, if man creates with his own hands unhealthy and uncongenial conditions for himself and his fellow-beings by making a wrong use of his powers and faculties, it will not be correct to deduce from that that evil has been ingrained in the nature of man. Is it not a fact that in every nation there have been inspiring men who sacrificed willingly their own life and property for the sake of their faith, country and nation? Have we not heard or read about

men who gave up their own hearths and homes to go to far-off lands to serve the cause of the poor and backward people without any selfish aim in view? The existence of such men in all countries and religions proves that man is noble and good by nature and that the dogma of Inherent Sin is wrong.

Man is the culminating point in the evolution of life. It is difficult to believe that the All-Loving and All-Good Creator of man has put evil in the nature of the best of His creation or that He has condemned all the children of Adam to be born with the stain of sin on their nature for the transgression of their first parent. With regard to God's creation the Holy Qur'an says that all kinds of excellences are found in it. It is stated :

اَحْسَنَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ وَبَدَا خَلْقِ الْاِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ

i.e. "He has made everything that He has created beautiful and with a purpose and the creation of man is an example in point" (xxxii. 7).

Every human being is created out of clay. He eats grains, fruits and vegetables created out of earth. These things produce flesh and blood in the human body. In the same way, goats and sheep are created out of clay. Their milk and meat is taken by man. This food also produces blood in him, and the human child is born out of this blood. In this creation out of clay evolves the soul which has mental faculties and spiritual powers by means of which man can control and use for his purpose everything of the universe. It is obvious that in the clay there is neither volition nor imagination, reason nor intelligence, knowledge nor wisdom, yet the Most Merciful God turns the inanimate clay into the shape and form of a human being, furnished with intellectual talents which shows that He has the power of creating wonderful things.

The Christian is therefore, evidently wrong when he

argues :

- (1) that sin is ingrained in the nature of man ;
- (2) that God planned to have a son who was to deliver mankind of the sin ;
- (3) that the Son of God appeared in a human body and was hanged upon the cross to pay the penalty for the inherent and acquired sins of man and deliver and save those who believe in him from eternal damnation.

All the three dogmas are unacceptable to reason on the following grounds :

(1) Man cannot be said to be sinful by birth, for if he has the inclination to do evil he also has the tendency to fight against evil and do good. In fact, his nature is such that he censures himself for doing what he knows to be wrong. He has the power, if he exerts himself, to conquer the evil inclinations in him. The existence of selfless and pious men and women in all countries and religions is a proof of the fact that human nature is not inherently sinful. To say that man has been created in sin is to cast a slur upon the Creator. The belief that God has condemned the entire human race to be born in sin because of the transgression of Adam would make God unjust and cruel.

(2) To attribute to God a son—a Divine Being who comes out of Him and exists as a separate person—is to deny the perfection of God. Then to say that God punished His innocent son to atone for the sins of mankind is to deny both justice and mercy of God. How can the death of one man wipe out the sins of the entire human race ?

(3) Does the sacrifice of Jesus give the licence to those who believe in him to commit evils with impunity ? If the sinful followers of Jesus are to be punished for their sins, in spite of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, then was not the death of Jesus on the cross in vain ? Could God not forgive the faults of humanity, if He wished to do so, without having recourse

to such a meaningless scheme? Is He not the All-Loving and the Most Merciful, the Pardoner and the Forgiver of sins?

The Christian dogma of the Original Sin and the whole superstructure of theology built on that basis is faulty. Islam came, under these circumstances, holding out its helping hand to the bewildered humanity, and said that man was pure and sinless by birth.

### **Islam : A Complete Democratic and Corporate Social Order**

Islam is not only a scheme of salvation in the next world, but also a comprehensive and practical system for ordering every aspect of life on this earth. Just as the Holy Prophet gave the world a very rational and useful religion, and established a brotherhood which has no parallel in human history, in the same way he laid the foundation of an extremely sound form of government.

#### **Islam, the First Democracy**

The first man who established the democratic form of government on this earth was the Holy Prophet of Islam himself. Most of the rulers who lived before or even during his time were autocratic. The kings of Iran, Syria and Egypt lived luxurious lives and did whatever they liked with the resources of their countries. Most of their subjects led the unhappy life of slavery and servitude. But the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) not being influenced by the conditions of the surrounding potentates allowed full participation to the people in the affairs of the State.

In Europe, even after a thousand years or more, it was despite the kings' most violent resistance that the first beginning towards democracy became possible. But in the political system instituted by the Prophet of Islam every person was a free and equal participant in the affairs of the State. Everyone knows that the Prophet had to suffer inhuman persecution before he was able to install Islamic political system.



Many of his kith and kin were lost during the struggle. The Prophet himself was seriously wounded in the battle of Uhud. All this the Prophet suffered for the sake of human welfare.

### The Importance of People's Opinion in the Political System of Islam

The Holy Prophet founded a State in which affairs were decided in accordance with the will of the people. He established a parliament, as directed in the Holy Qur'an :

وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ

i.e. "In the affairs of the State take counsel of the people" (iii. 158).

In that parliament decisions were taken according to the majority vote of the people, and sometimes it so happened that decisions were taken contrary to the Prophet's opinion. But on such occasions the Prophet accepted the opinion of the majority in preference to his own. This he did in order to establish the principle that it is necessary even for the greatest of human beings to subordinate his personal views to the view of the majority. This is democracy in the truest sense of the term.

There is yet another important demand of democracy, viz. that the head of the State should be elected according to the will and vote of the people, and that he should be answerable for his actions to the people. When Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr was appointed the first Caliph of Islam, in his very first speech to the people he described, in distinct terms, the relationship that existed between him and the nation. He said :

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي وَلِيُّكُمْ وَلَيْتَ أَمْرَكُمْ وَلَيْتَ بَخِيرِكُمْ

اَطِيعُوْنِي مَا اَطَعْتِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاِنَّ زَغْتَ فِقْوِ مَوْنِي

i.e. "O ye people, the leadership of the nation has been placed in my hands, although I am not the best among you. I will have the right to your obedience only as long as I am found obeying the commandments of God and His Prophet. If I go astray it will be your responsibility to put me on the right path."

The people replied :

اِنَّ زَغْتَ لِقَوْمِنَاكَ بِاَسِنَّةٍ رَمَا حَنَا

i.e. "If you are found to deviate from the right path, we shall put you right with the sharp points of our spears."

Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr made another proclamation that he would not rest satisfied until he wrenched from the oppressors' hands the right of the weaker persons. This resolve of Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr was based upon a saying of the Holy Prophet :

i.e. "That nation cannot be happy and blessed in which the weaker person cannot get his right from the stronger one."

The Holy Propet and, after him, Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr following in the Prophet's footsteps, made it known to the people that in the periods of their rule the rights of the people would be fully safeguarded and if the rights of any person were violated it would be their prime duty as heads of the State to have the rights restored.

Such guarantees of equal rights and justice create confidence among the people and make them peaceful and law-abiding citizens. Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr, in obedience to the Prophet's orders, vouchsafed the right of free expression of opinion to the people, and every man, big or small, could express his mind without any fear or hesitation.

Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, the second Caliph, made a proclamation to make it clearly understood that a Muslim head of the State was responsible for his actions before the people. Like Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr, he, too, kept this important principle ever before his eyes that the right of no subject of the State should be violated. Both these Caliphs adhered to their principles strictly, knowing that they were responsible for their actions before the people, so that whenever they were called upon to answer for any of their actions they did so with a smile on their face and never, even by mistake, expressed any kind of resentment, directly or indirectly, against the objector, for resentment on the part of a ruler closes the door of his reformation. Ḥaḍrat 'Umar said :

مَنْ رَأَى فِي عَوَجًا فَلْيَتَوَمَّهْ

i.e. "If a person should see any deviation in me, it will be incumbent on him to remove it."

He was once delivering a sermon from the pulpit when a man from among the audience stood up and said :

"We shall neither listen to you nor obey you until you clear your position on a matter about which doubts have risen in our minds. The sheets of cloth, received a few days ago, were distributed among us so that each one of us received one sheet. The shirt which you are putting on is evidently made of that cloth. But one such sheet was hardly enough to make the shirt of a tall man like you. We have, therefore, come to have some doubts about you. Please clear your position on this point."

Ḥaḍrat 'Umar asked his son 'Abdullah, who was sitting among the congregation, to answer the objection. 'Abdullah testified : "One sheet was given to me as my share. I gave it to my father so that he could have two sheets to make a shirt for himself." The objector then said :

i.e. "Now we are prepared to listen to you and to obey your

orders." Neither Ḥaḍrat 'Umar frowned upon the objector, nor did anyone else in the audience.

On another occasion when Ḥaḍrat 'Umar was suggesting that smaller doweries should be settled upon wives, a woman who had been listening to the sermon, silenced him, saying:

يَا اِبْنَ الْخَطَابِ اللّٰهُ يَعْطِينَا وَاَنْتَ تَمْنَعُنَا

i.e. "God says that dowery can be large or small, but you are preaching against it." And the woman recited the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān:

وَاْتَيْتُمْ اِحْدَاهُنَّ قِنْطَارًا فَلَا تَاْخُذُوْا

"And if have given, as a dowery, even a heap of gold to a woman take nothing back from it" (iv. 20).

Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, when he heard this valid objection, instead of being annoyed with that woman, admitted his mistake there and then and commended her with the remarks:

اِنَّ نِسَاءَ الْمَدِيْنَةِ اَفْقَهُ مِنْ عُمَرَ

i.e. "Even the women of Madina have more understanding of religion than 'Umar."

In short, the Holy Prophet founded the democratic State in the true sense of the term, which means that the ruler should be elected by the vote of the people, and that he should be responsible to the people for his actions and utterances, and that he should be so conscious of his duty as never to tolerate the violation of any right of even the humblest man in the State. The Holy Prophet, as also his four successors, proved by their actions that every subject of the State was at liberty to hold an opinion against the

highest person in the State and express the opinion with full freedom and without any fear. The Prophet and his immediate successors further proved by their actions that under their rule the rights of the people were fully safeguarded and preserved.

### People's Share in Public Treasury

Islam was the first religion to specify in clear terms the share of the common man in the public treasury. Neither for himself nor for his kith and kin did the Prophet set apart any specific property, and whatever he did he did for the common people and the poor in need of assistance by the society. The Prophet said :

اَلَا تَنْصُرُونَ وَ تُرْزَقُونَ بِضَعْفِ نُكْمٍ

i.e. "It is on account of the poor and the weak that God gives you help, wealth and sustenance."

اِرْحَمُوا مَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ يَرْحَمَكُمْ مِنْ فِي السَّمَا

"Be kind to the inhabitants of the earth so that the Lord of the heavens may be merciful to you."

The Prophet impressed on the people that if they liked to get closer to the All-Loving God, they could find Him among the poor.

Below are given a few of the Qur'anic verses which give details as to how the share of the poor in the public treasury should be determined :

وَ اعْلَمُوا اَنْمَّا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَاَنْ لِّلّٰهِ

خُمُسُهُ وَ لِّلرَّسُولِ وَ لِّلَّذِي الْقَرْبَىٰ وَ الْيَتَامَىٰ

وَالْمَسَاكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ

i.e. "And know that whatever you acquire in war, a fifth of it is for God and for the Messenger (i.e. for the State, to be used for the common weal) and for the kinsman who has need, and orphans and the needy and the wayfarer" (viii. 4).

It can easily be seen that a share has been set apart for rendering help to the orphans, the needy and the wayfarer. Another verse says:

مَا آفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَى -

لِللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ

وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ

مِنْكُمْ -

i.e. "Whatever God restored to His messenger from the people of the towns, it is for God and His messenger (i.e. for the State, to be used for the common weal), and for the near kinsman who has need and the orphan and the needy and the wayfarer, so that it become not a commodity between the rich among you" (lix. 7).

The verse just quoted prescribes conditions which forbid the appropriation of wealth and spoils of war by a few persons only. Regarding the spending of Zakāt or the Islamic yearly poor-tax, which is equal to one-fortieth of the total economic assets of a person, the Holy Qur'ān says:

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ

عَلَيْهَا وَالْمَوْلَى لِقَةَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَالْغَارِمِينَ  
 وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ فَرِيضَةً مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ  
 عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

i.e. "Zakāt is only for the poor and the needy, and those who work to collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of God, and for the wayfarer; a duty imposed by God. God is All-Knowing, All-Wise" (ix. 6).

This commandment also contains some instructions for those responsible for the conduct of the State. It is the duty of the State to arrange for the collection of Zakāt from all Muslims and to disburse it according to the Qur'ānic law. The aim behind the Zakāt is indicated in the following saying of the Prophet:

تُؤْخَذُ مِنَ اغْنِيَاءِ نَبِيِّهِمْ وَتُرَدُّ عَلَى فُقَرَاءِ نَبِيِّهِمْ

i.e. "The tax should be taken from the rich and should be distributed among the poor."

That such social aid can be a very effective instrument for making useful citizens out of the poor and the needy is obvious.

### **The Collection of Zakat**

Islam inculcates the establishment of a corporate system of life, which requires that the work of the collection of Zakāt (obligatory charity or the poor-rate) should be carried on a regular basis, and, in order to reap the maximum benefit from it a regular department be created to ensure regular payment of the Zakāt to the public treasury for the

proper utilisation of these funds in an organised way. In addition to the verses quoted above, the Holy Prophet announced another important principle:

مِن مَّاتٍ مِّنكُمْ وَ تَرَكَ مَالًا فَلِوَلَدِهِ - وَ مِن  
 مَّاتٍ مِّنكُمْ وَ تَرَكَ دَيْنًا أَوْ ضِيَاعًا فَلِيَ وَ عَلَيَّ -

i.e. "If a deceased member of the Islamic State should leave behind property or wealth, it will go to the deceased person's inheritors. But if the deceased person should leave behind, instead of wealth and property, a debt to be paid and small children to be looked after they should all come to me; the bringing up of the children as well as the payment of the debt will be my responsibility."

These proclamations of the Prophet promulgate to the world the philosophy of a corporate and collective existence. Receiving benefit from the Zakāt is not charity; it is a right of the deserving members of the community. The Prophet used to say that in the distribution of wealth among the people he laid none of them under any kind of obligation for he was only the purse-bearer, the real bestower of dole and benefaction was the Most Merciful God Himself. His own words are:

إِنَّمَا أَنَا قَسَامٌ وَ خَازِنٌ وَ هُوَ الْمَعْطَى

### The Defence of the Community

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

i.e. "All the believers are in reality brothers among themselves" (xlix. 10).



In order to make this corporate existence successful from every point of view the Holy Prophet issued the directives a mention of which has been made in the foregoing lines. Besides the economic aspect there is another side of the life of the community which concerns the defence of the country, the religion and the nation. As regards this vitally important matter the Prophet has commanded that it is obligatory on all members of the nation, without any exception, that they should take an active part in the defence of the country, and that neither life nor property should be spared in the rendering of this important service. The Prophet himself set an example for his followers in this respect and took an active part in defensive wars which were imposed on him and his followers by the enemies of Islam.

While Islam strongly condemns aggression and violence, it, nevertheless, regards it the highest duty of Muslims to fight in defence of the country and religion and to stop the persecution of helpless old men, women and children. In this connection the Holy Qur'an says :

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يَقَاتِلُوكُمْ  
وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ ○

i.e. "Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! God loves not aggressors" (ii. 190).

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ ظَاهِمِينَ وَإِن  
اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ○

الَّذِينَ أَخْرَجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ  
 إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ  
 النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفُتَّتْ صَوَامِعُ  
 وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتُ الْمَسْجِدِ  
 يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا

i.e. "Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and God is well able to assist them; those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly only because they said: Our Lord is God—for had it not been for God's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of God is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down" (xxii. 39-40).

i.e. "How should you not fight in the way of God and of the feeble among men and of the women and the children who are crying: Our Lord! take us out of this town whose people are oppressors! Oh, give us from Thy presence some protecting friend! Oh, give us from Thy presence some defender!" (iv. 75)

The Holy Prophet used to say:

لَوَدِدْتُ أَنِّي أُقْتَلُ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَحْيَى ثُمَّ أُقْتَلُ ثُمَّ  
 أَحْيَى ثُمَّ أُقْتَلُ -

i.e. "My mind yearns that I may be slain in the way of God; and if I were to be returned to life again, I would again like to be sacrificed in the way of God; and if I were resurrected

once again, I would do the same thing again."

This preparedness to sacrifice themselves for the truth was also reflected in the relatives and close associates of the Prophet. The selfless sacrifices of Ḥamza, 'Alī, Ja'far, Zubair, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, Abdur Raḥmān bin 'Auf, Khālid bin Walīd, Abū Mūsa Ash'arī, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, Sa'd bin Abī Waqās, Mu'adh bin Jabal and Sā'd bin Mu'adh are well known in the history of Islam. In brief, the heart of everyone, big and small, among the Muslims, throbbed with the desire that the opportunity to earn martyrdom be granted him.

The term "conscription" or forcible recruitment against one's will is inapplicable to the military system founded by the Holy Prophet. Whenever the need arose the Muslims voluntarily joined the forces of the State to defend their country and way of life.

### The Government

The Prophet received the Divine commandment, directing <sup>ا</sup>شاور<sup>و</sup>هم<sup>ف</sup> في<sup>ا</sup> الامر<sup>ا</sup> i.e. the affairs of the State should be decided in accordance with the will of the people. Accordingly, as stated in the foregoing pages, the Prophet established the democratic form of government and instituted an Advisory Body, the function of which was to represent the viewpoint of the people in all matters relating to the conduct of the State. Furthermore, the Prophet established another important principle that the headship of the State shall not be the sole inheritance of any one family, but the reins of government should be entrusted to persons best able to hold them, their selection to be made freely by all members of the community.

The following Qur'ānic verses contain rules for the guidance of the head of the State:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَاسِرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْاِحْسَانِ وَاِتِّعَاءِ

ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ -

i.e. "Surely God bids to justice and doing of good to others and giving to the kinsmen, and He forbids indecency and evil and tyranny and oppression" (xvi. 90).

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ أَنْ تُوَدَّعُوا الْأَمَانَاتَ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا

i.e. "Lo! God commands that you entrust public offices to those worthy of them" (iv. 58).

The Prophet in one of his recorded sayings stressed this point as follows:

إِذَا وَسَدَّ الْأَمْرُ إِلَىٰ غَيْرِ أَهْلِهَا فَأِنْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ

i.e. "When the government of the country is placed in unworthy and wrong hands, destruction and desolation knock at the door."

And for those thought worthy of this great responsibility, the Qur'ānic direction is:

إِذَا حَكَمْتُمْ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ أَنْ تَحْكُمُوا بِمَا لَكُمْ

i.e. "When you occupy the seat of justice, you should decide and adjudge with justice" (iv. 58).

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ

وَشُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلِوَعْدِهِ أَوْ لِنَفْسِكُمْ أَوْ لِبَنِي الْإِقْرَبِينَ

إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَىٰ بِهِمَا

i.e. "O you who believe, be you securers of justice, witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents and near relatives, whether the case be of a rich man or a poor man, for God is nearer to both than you are. So follow not passion lest you deviate from the path of justice" (iv. 135).

فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَىَٰ أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا - وَإِنْ تَلَوْا  
وَاتَعْرَضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا -

i.e. "While giving witness or pronouncing judgment distort not the evidence, nor turn away from truth, for if you do any such thing then lo! God is ever informed of what you do" (iv. 135).

### Attitude towards Other Nations

i.e. "O you who believe, be you upright for God, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of any people for you move you not to be equitable. Deal justly—that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to God; surely God is aware of the things that you do" (v. 8).

From these commandments it is clear that just as justice and equity have to be kept in view in deciding the affairs of the Muslim subjects, the same principles of justice and equity should govern the attitude of the State towards its non-Muslim subjects and in their dealings with other non-Muslim States, even with avowed enemies.

When Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, the second Caliph, lay on his death-bed, he repeated, by way of his last will, the sayings of the Prophet for guidance of his successor, and said :

أَوْصِيْتُ بِذِمَّةِ اللَّهِ وَذِمَّةِ رَسُولِهِ أَنْ يُوْفَىٰ لَهُمْ

بَعْدَهُمْ وَإِن يَاقُمَا تَلَّ مِن وَّرَائِهِمْ وَإِن لَّا يَكْفُرُوا  
فَوقَ طَاقَتِهِمْ -

i.e. "I leave behind my last will for the Caliph who will, after me, sit upon the seat of Caliphate, that the covenant of God and His Prophet with the Dhimmis (i.e. non-Muslim subjects) should be fulfilled and, if it should become necessary, even war may be waged against the enemies of non-Muslims living in a Muslim State for their safety and protection."

The Prophet said to non-Muslims: "I have been commanded to do justice to you." The verse quoted below contains another commandment of God for the Holy Prophet to do justice to non-Muslims and Muslims alike, without showing any kind of favour or partiality:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ  
النَّاسِ بِمَا آرَأَيْكَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَكُنْ لِلْخَافِينَ خَصِيماً

i.e. "O Prophet, surely We have revealed to thee the Scripture with the truth, so that thou mayest judge between the people by what God has shown thee. And be not an advocate for the dishonest" (iv. 105).

This commandment, although it appears to be of a general character, had also a reference to a well-known historical event. Tumah, a Madinite Muslim, had stolen a coat of mail and in order to cover up his crime had concealed it in the house of a Jew. The people of Madina, who had given refuge to the Prophet and his followers and placed their houses and belongings at his disposal, were inclined to shelter Tumah, their co-religionist and fellow-citizen, and to prosecute the Jew. They approached the Prophet in the form of

a deputation and tried to have all the blame thrown on the Jew. But, despite the fact that the Prophet was under obligation to the Madinites he decided the case in favour of the Jew and against Tumah. This is an illustrious example to show that Muslims and non-Muslims stand on equal footing before Islamic law in so far as their rights and obligations in relation to the State are concerned.

### **Moral revolution Brought about by the Prophet**

The Holy Prophet purged the nation of the evils of drunkenness and gambling, and purified them of the vice of lust and loot. He created in the minds of the people a living faith in the existence and omnipresence of God, as ordained in the following words:

هُوَ سَمِعَكُمْ اِيْنَمَا كُنْتُمْ - اِنَّهٗ يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ وَ  
 جَهْرَكُمْ - وَذُرُوْا ظَاهِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَبِاطِنَهٗ

i.e. "Wherever you may be, and whatever business you may be concerned with, you should know and believe that God is with you, and that He knows your secret thoughts and intentions as well as your open words and deeds" (lvii. 4; vi. 3), "avoid sins both open and secret" (vi. 121); the Prophet brought about a profound revolution in the minds and morals of the people, so that they began to love goodness and hate evil. Their men and women began to look upon purity of character as the brightest jewel of their life. They became truthful and righteous and sincere well-wishers of one another. This moral reform was in accordance with the Qur'anic injunction that the duty of the Muslim was: "to enjoin and preach the worship of the All-loving God, to adopt righteousness and truth, to shun falsehood and fraud, to live a pure and chaste life, and to strengthen mutual relations."

In fact, according to the Holy Qur'ān, the object of religion is to elevate man morally and to make him love and serve his fellow-creatures.

### **Intermediaries**

The Holy Prophet was the first to teach that man should have a direct relation with the All-Loving God without any intermediary, and that every man should himself acquire an understanding of religion, and live up to it. Islam has no priestly class. Anyone from among the Muslims who is considered to be the most pious in the community and who possesses the best knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān can lead the congregational prayers. The pious Caliphs, who immediately succeeded the Prophet, were chosen to lead the prayers and to deliver the sermons. The persons in the congregation were so well informed about religion that whenever they found the Caliph making a mistake they would correct him. When Sālam Mawla Abī Ḥudhaifa emigrated and reached Madina he was appointed to discharge the duties of the Imam and a man of 'Umar's greatness and personality used to say his prayers after him. Suḥaib of the country of Syria, who was commonly called Suḥaib Rūmī, was also appointed, on account of his profound knowledge of the Holy Qur'ān, to perform the functions of an Imam, and it was he who conducted the funeral service of Ḥaḍrat 'Umar, notwithstanding the fact that in the gathering there were some of the most distinguished personalities.

The Islamic doctrine and worship are absolutely free from rites and rituals. Islam teaches simple and sober truth and requires everyone to understand religion for himself and to live up to it. Along with the rites and rituals Islam also abolished the institution of priesthood. The Holy Prophet has, in doing this, rendered a very valuable service to humanity.

### **Pelf and Capitalism**

There is yet another baneful disease which is eating



into the very vitals of human race. It is economic injustice. The Prophet bestowed his attention upon it as well and, warning the nation of its evil effects, rectified it. Capitalism, at present, is raging over the greater part of the world like an epidemic, and the entire world is smarting painfully under its cruel lashes. Protest against it has been appearing in various forms in the West, sometimes in the form of Bolshevism, and on another occasion in the form of Fascism. Up till now Europe has not been able to stem the spread of such ideologies, and some western thinkers have now been forced to admit that the efficacious treatment for maladies like Capitalism and Communism is found exclusively in Islam.

## IV. THE PURITY OF THE TEXT OF THE HOLY QUR'ĀN

GOD says in the Holy Qur'ān :

اِنَّا نَحْنُ اَنْزَلْنَاهُ اِلَيْكَ ذِكْرًا وَاِنَّا لَجَاعِلُوْنَ

i.e. "We have revealed the Holy Qur'ān, which awakens and stirs the human soul, and We shall save it from corruption" (xvi. 9).

The Holy Qur'ān has indeed come down to us, despite the passage of centuries, in a perfectly pure and preserved condition. It is admitted on all quarters that the Holy Qur'ān exists to-day in exactly the same condition in which the Prophet had originally given it to the people. It will thus be in the fitness of things to make a brief survey of the factors which have led to the preservation of the purity of the text of this heavenly Book.

### **The Qur'ān Treasured in Memory**

The Holy Qur'ān, it should be remembered, was revealed piecemeal according to the needs of the time, during a period of twenty-three years, as stated in the verse:

اِنَّا اَنْزَلْنَاهُ الْقُرْآنَ تَنْزِيْلًا

i.e. "We did not reveal the Qur'ān all at once, but sent it down in portions, keeping in view the requirements of the time" (lxxvi. 23).

The object of such a procedure was the gradual moral and spiritual development of the people.

The other thing to be remembered is that the pre-Islamic Arabs were an unlettered people. Their knowledge depended upon the strength of memory. Nature had gifted the Arabs

with a very retentive memory. They remembered by heart their tribal poetry and could repeat from memory the genealogical trees of their clans and tribes together with the important events of their history. Meetings were held on the occasions of their festivals and fairs in which each clan recited its pedigree along with the memorable actions and achievements of the ancestors. The same skill was later on applied to the memorisation of the Holy Qur'an.

As soon as a verse or verses were revealed to the Prophet, he not only committed them to memory himself, but also had them written down in his presence. The names of his amanuenses have been preserved in the records of Islamic history, and the foremost of them all was Ḥaḍrat Zaid bin Thābit. It has been recorded that the Prophet, as soon as a verse or verses were revealed, used to send for Zaid bin Thābit to have the revelation written down by him. And those persons also who sat at the Prophet's feet day and night imprinted the fresh revelation on the tablets of their memory. In this way, hundreds of the Prophet's companions learnt the whole of the Qur'an by heart with great enthusiasm and love.

### **Ḥaḍrat Abu Bakr, Not the Collector**

The real collector of the Holy Qur'an was, thus, the Holy Prophet himself who set in order and arranged its verses and chapters under Divine direction. Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr, after the Prophet's demise, had the Holy Qur'an, which of course was in a perfectly preserved condition, transcribed into the shape of one volume from original records which had been made in the presence of the Prophet on pieces of leather, shoulder-bones, flat stones and even pieces of broken pottery. He entrusted this work to Ḥaḍrat Zaid bin Thābit who, with the help of other companions and those who had learnt it by heart, performed this duty with great love and enthusiasm.

### Hadrat 'Uthman, too, not the Collector

Ḥaḍrat Uṭḥmān had a few copies of the Holy Qur'an prepared from the written manuscript of Ḥaḍrat Abū Bakr's time, and placed these authenticated copies at the Islamic centres of learning in Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Iran and Egypt. And since then up to the present day, copies of that original manuscript are being published and propagated all over the Islamic world. In view of these facts Muslim as well as non-Muslim scholars everywhere agree that the Holy Qur'an exists even to-day in exactly the same condition and shape in which the Prophet had given it to the people.

### Preservation of the Prophet's Sayings

Like the Holy Qur'an, which is the Word of God, the opinions and statements of the Prophet, as recorded by his contemporaries, have been a source of inspiration and guidance for the Muslims. The Prophet's own practice or conduct is called *Sunnah*, which literally means the path or the way. The Sunnah includes the Prophet's dealings with other persons, his administrative practice, his striving in the way of God, his compassion and generosity, his loving kindness for all mankind including his enemies, his preparedness always to face all kinds of dangers and hardships in the way of God, his sublime qualities and moral excellences, and the directions of law given by him. The task of the preservation of the Prophet's Sunnah on a perpetual basis the All-Loving God has taken upon Himself, of which the *modus operandi* has been announced by Him in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an :

مَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنفِرُوا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ

مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِّيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَ

لِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ

i.e. "It is obviously impossible for all the Muslims to go to the Prophet to acquire knowledge from him. Of every tribe, therefore, a party only should go and stay in the Prophet's company so that they may gain sound knowledge in religion from him, so that when they go back to their people, after the achievement of this object, they may impart to them what they have learnt from the Prophet" (ix. 122).

In pursuance of the Divine commandment quoted above people came to the Prophet and sat at his feet and learnt what God had revealed to him. And when they went back to their respective places they talked about and discoursed on the Prophet's teaching and about his excellent moral qualities. In this way the Prophet's Sunnah in all its details reached the outermost corners of Arabia and the entire peninsula adopted the religion which had been established in Madina. A good many Muhājirs and Anṣār always flocked around the Prophet, made a day-and-night observation of his life, and listened to his utterances. There were, among them, a large number of men and women who had become profound scholars and savants in religious learning. Yet another big group of devoted disciples who had been deriving benefit from the Prophet's company continuously for twenty-three years had taken up their abode in an annexe of the Mosque, watching and listening to the Prophet day and night. The minds of all these people were full of love for the Prophet and they acted according to his precept and example with the utmost zeal and respect. It is clear from these facts that the Sunnah of the Prophet has also been safeguarded and preserved much in the same way as has been the Holy Qur'ān. And these very people, carrying with them the true religion and the Prophet's Sunnah, went to different parts of the world and many tracts of land came

under their influence. The effect of the Prophet's example thus spread to other countries as well. To-day from Egypt right up to Morocco the same religion and Sunnah is followed as is seen in Makka and Madina; and the same religion and Sunnah is talked about and discussed in parts of Russia and China, India and Pakistan, Iran and Indonesia.

In short, just as the Holy Qur'ān has been preserved by means of a Divine plan, the Holy Prophet's Sunnah has also been protected and preserved, and it was with reference to this great fact that the Prophet said at the time of his departure from this world:

تَرَكْتُ فِيكُمْ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَسُنَّةَ رَسُولِهِ

i.e. "I have left two things among you, and you will not stray as long as you hold them fast: one is the Book of God, and the other the Sunnah (the sayings and example) of His Prophet."

If his Sunnah had not been established on a perpetual basis, he would not have made such an important announcement. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) is an historical personage of such a high degree that all the details of his life, from birth to death, have been recorded to the minutest detail both by his friends and foes. Says God, commending the manner of His Prophet's life: "Follow the Prophet's example." But the details of this good example are not found in the Holy Qur'ān. On the other hand, all his deeds and directions, moral qualities and excellences have been carefully preserved in the pages of history, and if they had not been so preserved, the Most Merciful God would not have enjoined upon us to make his life the guiding principle and the leading light for us all. The Holy Qur'ān directs us in the following words to study the life which the Prophet lived among the people of Makka

before the Call. The Holy Qur'an asks the Prophet to tell his people :

وَلَقَدْ لَبِثْتُ فِيكُمْ عُمُرًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ -

i.e. "I have spent forty years of my life among you. Keeping the details of this life before your eyes, ascertain and decide what kind of moral character and habits I possess, and what are my aims and objects. My life is an argument upon the truthfulness of my claim" (x. 16).

The utterances of God and His Prophet prove conclusively that the Prophet's Sunnah of the period prior to the Call as well as his Sunnah of the period of prophethood have both been thoroughly safeguarded and preserved. God has taken steps, under a Providential plan, for the protection and perpetuation of His Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet; for, through both of them have been taught the eternal truths and universal principles for the guidance of human race.

### **A Word to the Learned**

God Almighty says that the truths taught by the Holy Qur'an, for the reason of their being useful and rational, will come as a palpable reality before the people of knowledge and learning, and that they will see, with the help of their God-given enlightenment, that the directives given by the Holy Book are true. He says:

وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ  
إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ

i.e. "Those who have been given knowledge shall see that

what has been revealed to the Prophet from God is the truth" (xxxiv. 6).

Can there be any sensible man in the world who would decline to accept the Qur'ānic teaching that the Creator of everything is the One True God Who is running all this splendid universe with perfect excellence? For, there is found, among all the heavenly bodies and planets and what exists between the earth and the sky, mutual link and co-ordination. The homogeneousness and uniformity that is found in the laws of Nature are due to the fact that the reins of this great government are in the hands of One and the Same Supreme Being. But for the Supreme Intelligence which governs the world everything would have fallen into chaos. Briefly, the Qur'ānic principle that the Creator and Controller of this universe is the One True God Who has neither a partner nor an associate, cannot but be true. Very much in the same way, another Qur'ānic principle that the Lord of the worlds, the *Rabbul 'Ālamīn*, showers His blessings equally, without any discrimination whatsoever, upon all the nations of the world, is correct and acceptable in the opinion of those who have been gifted with light and learning. In God's sight all the nations of the world are but one community, as He has Himself said :

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً

“Mankind is a single nation” (ii. 213).

And the Holy Prophet has also said :

الْمَخْلُوقُ عِيَالُ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ أَحَبَّهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَنْفَعَهُمْ لِعِبَادِهِ

i.e. “The entire humanity is God's great family and the most beloved of God is he who tries to do the greatest service to God's creatures.”



And who among the people of knowledge and wisdom will refuse to accept the Qur'anic principle that through belief in the Unity of God unification among the human race should be established? And will any person disagree with the Qur'anic principle that God has raised His prophets among all the nations of the world for their good and guidance and that it is, therefore, necessary to repose faith in all the prophets of the world and to revere and respect them all with a sincere heart? It cannot be denied that world peace and unity will, through the belief in the universality of prophethood, grow stronger and still stronger. Likewise, will any sensible person refuse to agree with the Qur'anic truth that just as the material laws of God are universal and worldwide, in the same way His spiritual laws are also universal and all-comprehensive and that the doors of getting into the Divine presence are equally open for all.

Addressing the people endowed with knowledge and wisdom, the Holy Qur'an says that they would acknowledge and accept the principles taught by the Prophet, for these truths have been ingrained in their nature. The Book says:

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ فِيْ صُدُوْرِ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوْا

الْعِلْمِ -

i.e. "The Qur'anic teaching has been implanted in the hearts of those who are granted knowledge. Hence, wherever there are people of knowledge and learning the teaching of Islam will find recognition and acceptance" (xxix. 49).

It is for this reason that the people of knowledge and learning in England, Germany and America have been, through the efforts of Muslim missions, entering into the fold of Islam in large numbers.

In the same way it will be acknowledged by all human beings that the brotherhood established by Islam is ideal and unique and that it should be universalised and spread all over the world, and that the democratic State founded by Islam is also ideal and exemplary. And, again, all will acknowledge that the true teaching about the attainment of nearness to God is exclusively the Islamic teaching which inculcates that only that life which is tempered with God's fear and adorned with noble deeds is acceptable to God and that those who adopt this kind of life will certainly achieve nearness to the Creator of all things.

In conclusion it may be stated that Islam encompasses all aspects of life, contains injunctions which are practicable for the whole of mankind and aims at the salvation of man in both this life and the next.