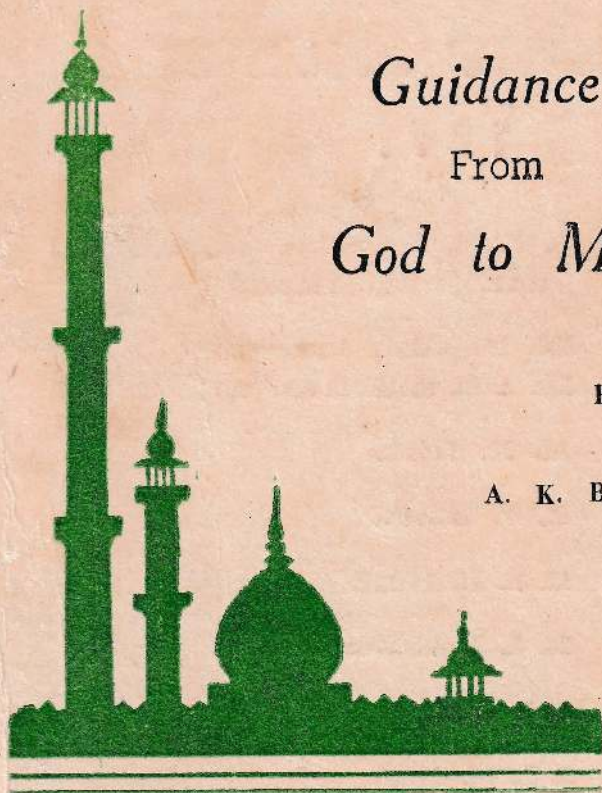


The Holy Qur'an

Guidance From God to Man

By

A. K. BROHI



Published by:

The Law Students' Muslim Majlis

CEYLON LAW COLLEGE,

COLOMBO - 12.

Publication No. 7

May 1971

With the best compliments of

W.

A. W. Kaniffar Esq.

LAW STUDENTS' MUSLIM MAJLIS

1971

<i>Patron:</i>	R. K. W. Goonasekera Esq., LL.B. (CEY) B.C.L. (OXON), PRINCIPAL
<i>Vice Patrons:</i>	Mr. M. Rafeek, ADVOCATE Mr. A. H. Mohideen B.A. (CEY), ADVOCATE.
<i>President:</i>	M. M. Zuhair.
<i>Vice President:</i>	M. F. Hussain.
<i>General Secretary:</i>	M. H. M. Ashraff.
<i>Asst. Secretary:</i>	M. L. A. Matheen
<i>Editor:</i>	A. J. Yusuf.
<i>Treasurer:</i>	S. L. M. Razick
<i>Auditor:</i>	K. Noordeen
<i>Committee:</i>	M. M. Iqbal. S. M. Mohideen R. M. Imam.

The Holy Qur'an

Guidance

from

God to Man

By

A. K. BROHI

Edited by : **A. J. YUSUF**

Published by

The Law Students' Muslim Majlis

CEYLON LAW COLLEGE,

COLOMBO - 12.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was Dr. H. W. Howes, a former Director of Education of Ceylon who once admitted (in a South African publication) that the "legacy of Islam is one of the greatest gifts to the human race, notably in Science, Philosophy, Architecture, Literature and Poetry. Nevertheless, as an almost life long student of Islamic institutions, I must point out that, unless one appreciates the vital force of the religious aspect, it is impossible to appreciate the richness of the cultural contributions of Islam."

What is true of the "religious aspect" is also true of the political, economic, judicial and social aspects of Islam. Unless one studies critically the totality of these aspects it would be plainly impossible to comprehend the ideology of Muhammed, the Prophet of Islam.

At a time, when fervent debates, discussions as well as re-thinking and reflection are taking place on the efficacy of the existing ideologies to create a better order of society, we submit this small publication dedicated as it is to the youth of this country.

The thoughts expressed in the pages following are that of A. K. Brohi, a distinguished Pakistani lawyer, a deep thinker and a scholar of the Qur'an in his own right. If read free of inhibitions, the reader will find within these covers a treasure trove of new genesis of genial thoughts to build a better order of society and to create a unique generation of human beings. Nonetheless, Brohi seeks only to introduce to you, the Qur'an and a reading of this article must of necessity be backed by further readings of the copious works on Islam.

M. M. ZUHAIR

President.

THE HOLY QUR'AN - GUIDANCE FROM GOD TO MAN

By A. K. BROHI

The Holy Qur'an claims to be a Book of Hidayat, i.e. Guidance for man. It is a Book that is available to whole mankind—indeed it addresses itself by and large, to the totality of mankind. Its message is, relevant to different parts of the world. Further, its message is valid for all times to come—in other words, it is not a Book that will ever be out of date. Such a claim, in principle at least, as can be appreciated, should be capable of being substantiated by appeal to historical evidence.

If the Qur'an is at all a Book of Universal Guidance in the sense that its message is relevant to all peoples in all ages and climes, it must have had in the course of these 1,400 years of its existence, a decisive impact on human history—in particular, it must have had a liberating and a transforming influence on the lives of those who may have come under its spell. I submit that clear historical evidence in support of the claim of the Holy Qur'an exists and I shall endeavour to offer a broad survey of it during the course of this article.

INTRINSIC TESTS. But before I do that, it is necessary to point out that over and above the test of historical evidence to which appeal could be made there are within the Divine Book itself, numerous indications which ought to enable a discerning and perceptive student to appreciate the truth of the claim of the Qur'an, namely, that it presents a message of universal significance. These "intrinsic" tests, it must be admitted, are valid within the framework of religious beliefs and practice sanctioned by Islam and are therefore available only to the faithful—that is to say, they are valid only for those who believe in the Divine Word and hold that it has been preserved down the ages without any alteration having been effected in its text.

The "extrinsic" test of history, however, which I propose to apply in an endeavour to outline the extent of the impact which the Holy Qur'an has made upon human history is a *sui juris* one, and, in my submission, if properly appreciated, it is bound to appeal even to those who, not being themselves believers, are nevertheless open to conviction upon the unimpeachable historical evidence that is furnished to us when we examine impartially and contemplate objectively **the remarkable revolution that has been wrought in human history by the message that is contained in the Holy Book.**

UNIVERSAL AND ETERNAL BOOK. From this perspective, I submit that the whole post-Muhammadan era of human history would appear to be a commentary on the claim of the Qur'an that it is a Book of Guidance for the whole of mankind and its teaching is relevant for all time to come. After all, God is, according to the Holy Qur'an, God both of the East and of the West and the truth revealed by Him has percolated deep into the warp and woof of the thoughtlife of all the peoples of the world—he they the inhabitants of the eastern or the western regions. And the Qur'an assures that where the truth appears the lie disappears for, verily it is in the nature of lie that in its confrontation with truth, it disappears.

The birthplace of the Prophet and therefore, the rise of Islam, is strategically placed in the "geographical" middle of the then prevailing civilizations of the times—the Greco-Roman civilization of the West and the Egyptian, Babylonian, Phoenician, Persian civilizations of the Near East and the Indian and Chinese civilizations of the Far East. The emergence of Islam from the landscape of Arabia in the larger vista of history is to be likened to the radiant light emanating from a brilliantly lit lamp placed in the middle of a world that had sunk into thick and impenetrable darkness. The Prophet of Islam, no wonder, is described in the Qur'an as a shining lamp and in that image is befittingly addressed as "Mercy" on all the peoples. Mankind cannot be grateful enough to him for what he had done for it.

The greatest Divine favour on man is that he has been taught the Qur'an: indeed the claim that God is Merciful is attested by no other credential than the one which says that He had taught the Qur'an to man (see chap: 55 vv 1 and 2). **The whole book,**

regarded from that point of view, is to be construed as a sort of instrument of instructions which has been issued to man in his capacity as God's vicegerent on earth to enable him to conduct his life's operations here below in such a manner that he is able to obtain success in this world and the reward of eternal bliss in the Here after.

PERFECT AND COMPLETE. The distinctive feature of the Holy Qur'an as a religious scripture lies in the undeniable fact that it affirms and completes the total process of revelation which has come from the Divine for the guidance of the human race. God says to the Prophet in the well known Sura AL-MAIDA, a sura which is one of the very last to be revealed to the Prophet: "This day I have perfected your religion and completed my favour" (chapter 5 V 3). Similarly, in Sura AL-ALA (chapter 87 VV. 14 to 19) Qur'an declares that the truth mentioned by it was also contained in the earlier scriptures-even as in the scriptures of Abraham and Moses. The process of revelation has begun since times immemorial and has been brought to mankind through the Prophets of universal religions by as it were a process of periodic instalments to stimulate its growth and development

The necessity for revelation is attested by the facts of life; the very condition of finitude in which we find ourselves calls for Divine help. In the short span of life that is ours, having regard to the limited range of our capabilities and powers of perception, it would be impossible for us without assistance from the Divine to understand our role here below and to plan wise and intelligent action with a view to servicing the essential needs of our being.

In order to be meaningfully aware of the necessity for revelation, one has merely to think of the obvious facts of man's dependence on the outer environment in which his lot is cast. Indeed, the very possibility of man's survival depends upon food and shelter which he has to provide to himself from the resources that are available to him from the world outside. If earth did not produce for him the food on which he lives, how can man at all hope to survive. Similarly, man finds himself in a universe which he knows has been there over millions of years before he himself arrived and, what is more, he is fully cognizant of the fact that it will continue being there after his own little "day will have been done" and he will have "vanished into the night" leaving things pretty much the same as they have always been. It is clear then that the Universe is necessary for his survival but he is not necessary for the life of the Universe.

SERVICEABLE MEANS. What is the meaning of the drama in which man is called upon to play his part; in particular, is he expected to play any part at all—and if so, whether his role is significant or is it some thing that is inconsequential? To questions such as these man must find answers, if he is at all going to fruitfully employ the opportunity and time that is at his disposal while his life lasts. Before the end over-takes him he must learn to regard his moments as a serviceable means for the fulfilment of the purpose for which he has been created—that, of course provided if there be any for which he has been created.

Reflection shows that even the most trained philosophers despite considerable bulk of time they have devoted in finding answers to these questions have found it difficult to return convincing answers. And yet while solution to these problems are being sought, the river of life of man is continually moving relentlessly on and every moment that elapses for the son of man seems to hurl him onto ever new vistas of experience and opportunity. Tragedy of life is that every moment that passes is gone, never to return. What must man do in order to fulfil the law of his being. Without knowing what that law is, what can he do. Such is the state of helplessness in which man finds himself that from all sides and quarters difficult questions crop up, questions to which there are no satisfactory answers available. Perchance the Qur'an refers to this very situation of man when it says: "Verily, We have created man in difficulty." Hence the need of "revelation." Religion provides answers to these questions of life on the authority of the Prophets of universal religion. Man has been guided by the Lord himself- as the Merciful Sustainer of the Universe. He has guided the whole of creation.

'SHOWING THE WAY' Qur'an as a Book of Guidance has itself commented upon the full implications of the concept of "Hidayat." "Hidayat" literally means "to guide" and "to show the way." In Sura AL-ALA of the Qur'an reference is made to all the relevant aspects of the process of development through which all the created beings pass. "Praise the name of the Lord, the Most High, who had created and then equilibrated all things, Who hath appointed their destinies and who hath guided them" (87:2)

This Hidayat in its wider sense, may be regarded as a principle of internal development of the species. To the lower animals have been given instincts and senses through which their instincts lead them on to balance or equilibrate themselves. And it is through seeing, hearing, feeling and smelling that they adapt themselves to their environment—and thus to sustain themselves and to procreate their species. **With man, additionally, Hidayat takes the form of conferment by God of the gift of reason upon him,—a sort of a capacity which controls and limits the expression of instinctive life of the animal in him.**

It is by means of this control which reason enables man to impose over his lower nature that he is elevated to a higher status. **Great as this gift of reason is, by itself it does not and cannot suffice—for reason only operates within the framework of instinctive life conditioned as it is by the sensory apparatus.** It has, therefore, its own limits, and beyond those limits it is dangerous for it to go. Thus the Prophets have brought Hidayat to man from the Divine in yet one more form. And this form has reference to the message concerning those injunctions, the disregard of which would involve man in wasteful friction with the Universe, nay, in veritable war against his own potentialities.

Armed by this Hidayat man is capable of being liberated from the narrower precincts in which his reason operates. He is able, thanks to this guidance, to contemplate his total destiny and regulate his individual conduct and the conduct of his fellow beings in the light of the revealed truth which has been brought to him by the prophets of the universal religions.

MIRRORING HIGHER TRUTH. It would appear that each succeeding phase of guidance is intended to limit the earlier one: **thus senses correct the instincts, reason corrects the senses and the revealed truth corrects the operation of reason itself.** The Prophetic consciousness mirrors for man the higher truth which is incapable of being attained by the operating of unguided reason. Man is informed of the limits within the circle of which he must move if he is to be saved. He is thus educated and pointed out the scheme of things in which he is to strive for the fruition of his appointed destiny.

The Qur'an, no wonder, says: "Truly, it is for us to show the way to man and truly ours is the future and truly the past." (chapter 92, v. 13—14). Similarly, it goes on to assert: "Whoso maketh effort, follows in Our ways. We will guide them; for God is assuredly with those who do righteous deeds." (chapter 29, v. 69.) Far more explicit than these references to man's dependence on Divine guidance are the following:-

"Say, verily guidance is from God. That is the true guidance and we are indeed to surrender ourselves to the Lord of all beings." (chapter 6, v. 71) Then again: "But until you follow their religion, neither Jews nor Christians will be satisfied with thee. Say, verily guidance is from God—that is the guidance." (chapter 2, v. 120).

The irreducible minimum requirements for the successful discovery of solutions of life's problems thus would appear to be two: First of all there is to be a question in the soul, a craving to find answers to the problems of life, a prayer at the altar of the Divine for the way being shown. And it is this that imparts to Surah-i-Fatheha the importance that has been assigned to it by those who have thought deeply about the strategy of the Qur'an; each time man has to pray he asks: "show us the way"—in other words "Grant to us the guidance." If a man with a pure soul, with a feeling heart, asks for guidance and proceeds to read the portion of the Qur'an that is bound to issue forth from the book, he will get an answer to his question. And secondly, one has to have the will to walk on the way that is revealed. For not the whole path would be shown to man if he would not even walk on that part of the way which is being shown to him. **Capacity to receive truth ultimately depends upon man's efforts to implement the truth that comes to him.** He who sees the way but would not negotiate it, will stay where he is. Indeed such is the law, the rest of the way will not be shown to him. The strategy of religion precisely consists in this that counts. Man, by the flickering light of his feeble powers which is all that is furnished to him by his meagre resources, cannot be expected to discover the way on his own, much less have the energy and inclination to follow the way. It is his faith in the revealed truth (that has come to him from the Prophets of universal religion) that is capable of coming to his rescue in this regard, and this is so because the natural reach of his personality is such that, in respect of essential questions of life it cannot, by it-

self find any valid answers. The process of revelation, as remarked earlier, has been consummated in the message that has been brought by the Prophet of Islam to mankind. So much is this true that it may be said that Islam itself provides for the education of the human race. Man has evolved and has been a witness to various phases of his own evolution. Different Prophets have brought different messages for their people, if only because having regard to the different conditions in which humanity has found itself, the message in question could be addressed to particular people in certain well defined epochs of human history. Only by some such teaching was it possible to secure man's further development.

AGE OF REALISATION. In Islam religion has been perfected. That is another way of saying that with Islam, the age of revelation has come to a close, and that the age of realisation of the principles of revealed religion has been inaugurated. That is why in all the earlier Scriptures references are to be found to the advent of the Prophet of Islam. Students of the Bible, for instance, know that Christ had said "I have great many things to say unto you, but cannot bear them now, He will guide you unto all truth; for he shall not speak of himself but of whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak." (John 16:12 to 14). Further, the New Testament bears testimony to this very truth: "Whom the heavens must receive until time of restitution, of all things which God has spoken by the mouth of all his Prophets since the world began. (Acts 11:18 and 22). The Holy Qur'an itself affirms this reference in chapter 61, v. 6, where it says, "and that Jesus, son of Mary, said: Oh! children of Israel, surely I am the messenger of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of Torah and giving the good news of the messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahamed."

FINAL MOST COMMUNICATION. That then, is the meaning of the fundamental tenet of Islam which enjoins that, the Prophet of Islam is the last Prophet. The Holy Qur'an thus embodies the final most communication from the Divine. After the Prophet of Islam came to mankind, the need for continuing the process of Divine communication itself has come to an end. For Islam signifies in the history of mankind that phase of human development which corresponds to the period of majority in the life of the individual. A few words by way of explanation of this distinctive feature of the Holy Book which consists in its address

being directed to the fully grown-up individuals are called for—and are offered in all humility, as an aid to those who would like to understand the grand strategy of the Qur'an for bringing about the moral and mental regeneration of mankind on earth.

The very fact that the Qur'an claims itself to be a book of Guidance assumes that it is not a book of Ten Commandments, as is, for instance, the Old Testament. The Prophet was called upon to purify the people, to teach them the book that is their destiny and to make them wise. (Chapter 2, v. 129 and 151; also 3, 163 and 62) He was to warn and to guide. The Qur'an, unmistakably places the burden of making a choice between good and evil, fully and squarely on the shoulders of man. It says: "Have we not shown to you the two ways"—the easy way and the difficult way.

The Qur'an further declares that nothing belongs to man except his effort that he is going to be judged by what he does here and now. Does this not suggest that the Qur'an assumes man to have reached a level of evolution where he is regarded as being capable of choosing between the right and the wrong. The Qur'an is also called "Furqan" which merely means that it is the book which helps one to discriminate between the scales of values, pointing out which acts are good, better and best and which ones are bad, worse and worst. All this shows that the Qur'an addresses itself to people who can choose!

POSITIVE PROOF One way of demonstrating the indispensibility of the message contained in the Qur'an to the modern world is to take up, one by one, the present day standards of excellence—that is, values and ideals which are accepted and upheld by enlightened section of contemporary humanity and to ask the question: **What is the genesis of those values and ideals? Whence have they come? And in particular, one must ask whether those values and ideals were at all comended or enjoined by pre-Islamic religious teaching.** If we were to reach the conclusion that the present day set of ideals and values which is considered worthy by a civilized man to adopt and accept was revealed for the first time by Islam, then the fact that even after 1400 years that message continues, at least in principle, to be followed still, would be proof positive of the claim that what Qur'an proclaims to the world is even today the acceptable gospel.

Negatively if it could be shown that what Qur'an enjoins is out of date today as far as the practice of the civilized people is in issue, or that some new values and ideals have gained currency in modern times which are not stressed by the Qur'an we will have to say that Qur'an was an ephemeral book and its message is out of date today.

If I were asked to state what are the values which the enlightened consciousness of mankind upheld in the mid-twentieth century, I would put them in the following order:

1. Equality, dignity and brother hood of man.
2. Value of universal education with emphasis on spirit of free inquiry and the importance of scientific knowledge.
3. Practice of religious tolerance.
4. Liberation of the woman and her spiritual equality with man.
5. Freedom from slavery and exploitation of all kinds.
6. Dignity of manual labour.
7. Integration of mankind in a feeling of oneness irrespective of their differences of race and colour (that is, the programme of securing integration of mankind on the basis of moral and spiritual principles)
8. The devaluation of arrogance and pride based on superiority of race, colour, wealth etc; and the founding of society on the principle of justice.
9. Rejection of the philosophy of ascetism.

ADEQUATE SUPPORT. Each one of these items on the agenda of modern man's heroic and noble endeavour, I submit, is fully and adequately supported by various injunctions of the Qur'an and ably illustrated by the kind of life that the Prophet of Islam himself lived.

The Prophet of Islam is exemplary precisely because he is a man-prophet. The Qur'an is never weary of making him say that he is a man like any other man except to the extent that the Wahi, that is, Holy Angel (Ghost in Christian terms) brings revelation to him. He is the one Prophet who is not only not interested in performing miracles, but makes the non-performance of miracles as his passport to main distinction. He does not claim any Divine origin. For himself he is content to be just an ordinary human

being. He lives a life of honest and earnest endeavour throughout his life. To the very end he preserves a high sense of moral rectitude and conducts the enterprises of life with great human dignity. He is an able warrior, an excellent soldier, a loving husband, a reliable friend, a wise ruler. He sacrifices life in all its aspects, omitting nothing from its embrace. He treats the whole earth as a prayer carpet, denies that the Arabs have any superiority over the non-Arabs. He makes one and only one decisive test about the grandeur, the loftiness and the greatness of the human soul which consists in its capacity to control itself so as to be able to practice righteousness. And even when he becomes the ruler of the whole of Arabia he never discards the old ways of simple life and incessantly enjoins upon himself and upon his followers the supreme necessity of giving away the good things of life to their fellow men who might need them. "So give," says he "that your left hand may not know what your right hand has given." He forbids his followers from renouncing the world. Indeed God is everywhere and his earth is very wide and man is to serve Him where ever he likes.

Adverting to the importance the Qur'an attaches to the educational process, the matter is too obvious to need any elaboration. The Book itself begins with an imperative to read: "Read in the name of the Lord Who created man from relationship (Chapter 96, vv. 1 and 2) "Read and the Lord is most generous who taught man by pen" (chapter 96, vv. 3 and 4). It emphasizes the value of the ink and the pen and what they write (chapter 68, v. 1). The Qur'an is full with repeated emphasis on the value of thinking, of pondering, of rationalisation, of discrimination.

SIGNS OF THE DIVINE. In a way, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the whole of the Book is concerned with outlining the methodology and technique by which man is to read the Book of Nature and to witness within himself the Signs of the Divine. The whole Universe is one and man is called upon to look at it and to learn from it. **How many times does not the Qur'an call upon us to look at the various phenomena in Nature and challenges us to throw our glance at the creations of the Lord and to say if we find any flaw therein.** Not content with asking us to throw our first glance at the Universe, we are invited to throw a second glance at the Universe. We are told that: verily our vision will return weary upon us and that we shall not be able to see any flaw in the Master's creation (See chapter 67, vv. 3 and 4).

Then we are called upon to see the Signs of the Lord in the rhythm of change that is discoverable in nature—between the night and the day, as though one is chasing the other. We are asked to notice the way in which the dead earth is brought to life by the rainfall. We are asked to consider the motions of the seasons, the sun and the moon, each one running its course. The Qur'an in the 13th chapter, verses 3 and 4, enjoins that there are signs in nature for people who reflect.

In the magical words of the Qur'an: "And He it is who spread the earth, made in it firm mountains and rivers. And of all fruits He has made it in pairs, two (of every kind). He makes the night cover the day. Surely there are signs in this for people who reflect. And in the earth are tracts side, by side and gardens of vines and corn, and palm trees growing from one root and distinct roots, they are watered with one water and we make some of them excel others in fruit. Surely there are signs in these for people who understand."

CONSTANT CALL. It was this constant call to see nature and to understand the secret of its operations which enabled the earlier Arabs to become pioneers of science and scientific methods. Nowadays, of course everything, is attempted to be explained by the historians of human culture as though Arabian science did not so much as exist. Everything is supposed to have been found for us by the Greeks!

The moral and intellectual flowering of the European Culture and civilization has had a source other than the one that is generally invoked by scholars. European itself is a "post-Protestantism" product. Of course every school boy in Europe is today taught to believe that Reformation was the result of Renaissance which in its turn is supposed to have been ushered in, thanks to the revival of learning that took place after the fall of Constantinople. Somehow, the dark ages of Europe suddenly ceased and the light of Renaissance came to be.

That is all taught, in the universities of civilized Europe and America in the name of liberal education; and as to the origin of this "Renaissance" itself all kinds of false explanations exist and continue to be concocted—but an honest attempt at historical analysis will, in the wise words of Dr. Robert Briffaut, show that:

"It was under the influence of the Arabian and Moorish revival of culture, and in the fifteenth century, that the real Renaissance took place. Spain, not Italy, was the cradle of the rebirth of Europe. After steadily sinking lower and lower into barbarism, it had reached the darkest depth of ignorance and degradation when the cities of the Saracenic world, Baghdad, Cairo, Cordova, Toledo were growing centres of civilization and intellectual activity. It was there that the new life arose which was to grow into a new phase of Human Evolution. From the time when the influence of their culture made itself felt, began the stirring of a new life.

"It is highly probable that but for the Arabs modern European civilization could never have arisen at all; it is absolutely certain that but for them it would not have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of European growth in which decisive influence of Islam is not traceable, nowhere is it so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the Modern World and the Supreme Source of its victory—Natural Science and the Scientific Spirit." (see his *The Making of Humanity*, pp. 188.90).

BROAD TOLERANCE. Not merely in the direction of intellectual evolution of Modern Europe alone is the influence of Islam, to be acknowledged and understood. "To the intellectual culture of Islam," says the same author "which has been fraught with consequences of such moment, corresponded an ethical development not less notable in the influence which it has exercised. The fierce intolerance of Christian Europe was indeed more enraged than humiliated by the spectacle of the broad tolerance which made no distinction of creed and bestowed honour and position on Christian and Jew alike, and whose principles are symbolised in the well-known apologue of the Three Rings popularised by Boccaccio and Lessing.

It was, however, not without far-reaching influence on the more thoughtful minds of those who came in contact with Moorish Civilization. But barbaric Europe confessed itself impressed and was stung to emulation by the lofty magnanimity and the ideals of chivalrous honour presented to it by the knights of Spain, by gentlemen like the fierce soldier, Al-Mansur, who claimed that, **though he had slain many enemies in battle, he had never offered an insult to any**—an ideal of knightly demeanour and dignity which twentieth century England might with profit perpend.

The ruffianly crusaders were shamed by the grandeur of conduct and generosity of Saladin and his chivalry. The ideal of knightly virtue adopted, the tradition of Noblesse Oblige was established. Poetry and Romances deeply tinged with Arabian ideas formed the only secular literature which circulated and appealed to the popular imagination; and a new conception of the place and dignity of women passed into Europe through the Courts of Provence from the Moorish World, where she shared the intellectual interests and pleasures of man. This, shocking as the paradox may be to our traditional notions, it would probably be only strict truth to say that Mohammadan culture has contributed at least as largely to the actual practical, concrete morality of Europe as many as more sublimated ethical doctrine" (see his *The Making of Humanity* pp. 307—09).

WOMEN HONOURED. Similarly, the position of the women in the pre-Islamic era is so pathetic that it is impossible to get the modern man to realise how much of advance has not Islam made in enjoining upon humanity the necessity of respecting and honouring the women. The Arabs found it difficult to let a daughter grow up in their house. This was supposed to be something derogatory to their status. They used to bury them alive. With Islam all this was prohibited. The daughter was admitted to be a sharer with her brother in the law relating to inheritance. This is rather significant considering that in as civilized a country as England, not until 1922, was a married woman entitled to own property.

Islam gave to the woman not only the right to inherit property but to own it even against her husband. . . . so much so that if a husband is guilty of misappropriating her property she is entitled to obtain a divorce from him on that account alone. As a widow she gets a share in her husband's property. The rights of wives are to be acknowledged by her husband and are clearly mentioned in chapter 2, vv. 228, to chapter 4, VV. 34 and chapter 2, v. 229. She was given a right to claim a divorce 1,400 years ago whereas under the Ecclesiastical law sanctioned by the Church of Christ it is impossible for her to obtain a divorce. The modern secular legislation which recognises divorce in Christian countries is an indirect acceptance of the wisdom of the Qur'an on this subject.

There was a time when of woman, it was said: "He for God and she for God in him" **But now with Islam the woman has been declared an independent personality as she has been made directly accountable to God.** The Qur'an has honoured the woman so much that there is a chapter in it entitled as "woman" and numerous references to her status and dignity are to be found therein. This was a radical departure from the position of pre-Islamic woman and, indeed, if only a comparative study upon that subject were made it would seem that her position in the frame work of Qur'anic teaching is much above even the present status of the woman anywhere in the world. Such triumphs as the cause of the liberation of the woman has made in the annals of human history, I submit, are directly traceable to the impact of the Qur'an.

HIGHEST POINT. Similarly, Islam came to terminate the age of slavery. Indeed the freeing of a slave is the highest point of honour to which the Qur'an invites man to (chapter 90. V. 13). Indeed Qur'an deals with the question of the emancipation of man so very comprehensively that it could be called the Testament of Human Liberty. Man is declared free and he is brought in such a direct relationship with God that even the 'priesthood' has been thrown overboard. How can man worship God freely unless he be free from political, economic, social and religious exploitation. God says: He is near to Us. Man is to be made free to be able freely to worship the Lord.

The whole world today believes in religious tolerance, and whatever be the extent of its conformity to the ideal postulated by religious and intellectual tolerance, all civilized countries the world over subscribe to man's inherent right to pursue, in the light of his own feeble powers and resources, the goal which he has kept before himself.

Indeed, Qur'an is the only religious Book, I know, which has, on the one hand, commanded the followers of Islam to spread their faith by resort to the use of beautiful words of persuasion and on the other hand prohibited them against the vice of being intolerant of other peoples' religious beliefs and practices. It candidly says that there is no compulsion in religion. Further, it enjoins the Prophet to say: "Your God and my God is one God," still further when all arguments fail and the detractor of Islam refuses to listen to

reason, the Muslim is admonished to say, even as the Prophet said to his detractors: "**You have your own religion and I have my religion,**" indeed, Qur'an has gone farthest in this direction when it declares "Revile not those whom they call on besides God, lest they, in their ignorance, spitefully revile Him. We have so fashioned the nature of man that they like the deeds they do. After all they shall return to their Lord and He will declare to them what their actions have been." (chapter 6, v. 109).

THE LARGE TRUTH. This sort of religious tolerance preached by Islam and practised by Muslims stems from, and is the consequence of, a large truth—the truth that the 'Din,' that is, the way of life commanded by God to be revealed by the Prophets to mankind has been in essential aspects one and the same. "To each amongst you, declares the Qur'an, "have We prescribed the law and an open way. If God had willed He would have made you all of one pattern; but He would test you by what He has given to each. Be emulous then in good deeds" (chapter 5, v. 48). Similarly, the Holy Qur'an points out the great truth, namely "To every people We have appointed observances which they deserve. Therefore let them not dispute this matter with thee; but invite them to their Lord for thou art on the right way" (chapter 22, v. 67).

To various peoples in different climes various prophets have been sent, all of whom have revealed the same "Din" (the way of life) to them although the observances sanctioned for the realisation of the "Din" in their own time have been different. "There hath not been people who have not been visited by the warners" say the Qur'an (chapter 35, v. 23). "And, indeed, the Prophet of Islam himself is nothing more than a warner and a guide" (Chapter 13, v. 7). "Several of these Prophets the Lord hath sent amongst the people as of old" (chapter 43, v. 6) Some of these Prophets have been mentioned by name in the Qur'an and of others, says the Lord to the Prophet "We have told thee nothing" (chapter 40, v. 78).

Indeed, the tolerance preached by Islam reaches its high water mark when the Qur'an declares in chapter 2, verse 59: "Verily, those who believe (that is Muslims) and they who follow the Jewish religion, Christians and the Sabeans. Whosoever believeth in God and the Last Day and doeth that which is right shall have their

reward with the Lord, Fear shall not come upon them, nor shall they grieve." Could spirit of religious toleration go any further?

SUPREME NECESSITY. The greatest contribution which the Qur'an has made to human history, in my submission, concerns the clarification it has offered of **the only foundational principle on which mankind as a whole can be brought to live together in peace and harmony.** Qur'an has emphasized over and over again the supreme necessity of mankind getting together, for after all "Have We not" says the Lord "created mankind as though it were oneself." The internecine warfares that have gone on between groups and groups, communities and communities, nations and nations and sects and sects **appear to stem from man's inveterate desire to uphold not what is Right, but merely to decide who is Right.**

The Qur'an invites all of us to adhere to the Law of God with a happy and apt metaphor. . . . of sticking to one and the same rope of the Lord. Qur'an admonishes us against forming cliques and being privies to schisms and developing spirit of partisanship. Indeed, Qur'an mercilessly denounces those who form sects and sponsor group formations and as to those who split up their religion and become parties to the founding of sects, it tells the Prophet: "Have thou nothing to do with them. Their affair is with God. Hereafter shall we tell them what they have been." (chapter 6, v. 160). It goes on to enjoin in another place: "But men have rent their great concern (the one religion which was made for all mankind), one among another, into sects and every party rejoicing in that which is their own" (chapter 23, v. 53).

These internal divisions and schisms which have disrupted the peace of the world result from mankind disregarding the supreme fact of its own constitution, namely, that all of us are from God and to God is our return. **Similarly, the racial pride is discounted by the Qur'an when it proclaims that all mankind is from Adam, and Adam is made up of dust.** Satan is exhibited as an accursed one precisely because he argues for the superiority of his high origin as contrasted from what he believes is the lowly origin of man. "Man after all," says he, "was created of dust whereas I am created of fire."

This sort of exclusivism which alone comes to a people purely out of a desire to claim superior and high quality of blood in their

being has been denounced by the Qur'an in no unmistakable terms and no matter what the detractors of the Prophet might say, the supreme fact of the post-Islamic history is that **Islam alone of all possible creeds has successfully devalued the importance of race, colour and privilege.** It has admonished its followers not to organize mankind into groups based on principles of blood or geographical contiguity or particular privilege which they might claim for themselves. According to Islam he alone is exalted who is a "muttaqi"—that is, **one who, is a self-controlled individual and who lets the law of God rule him.** All other trimmings and trappings of individual life are false credentials and mean nothing.

BROTHERHOOD OF MAN. Today in a world, divided by all manner of groupings and accursed as it is by the worship of a false God called "nationalism" **the realisation has come to mankind that the brotherhood of man is capable of being founded only upon aspiritual principle.**not on the basis of colour, race, privilege. That spiritual principle highlights the importance of organising the Brotherhood of man upon the only basis that he is a man.not because of what he has but because of who he is. Those who believe in the superiority of race are being roundly condemned every where: those who believe that greatness of a nation is measured by its economic and industrial potential are being hated everywhere and what is worse they are not even at peace with themselves. **Institution of pilgrimage sanctioned by Islam is the only illustration I know of the operation of the spiritual principle for securing integration of mankind; gathering of Muslims in Mecca every year is the only model upon which a move towards a supra-national synthesis of mankind can be stimulated.**

The spiritual principle upon which mankind can be grouped, according to Islam, takes the form of devotion to the ideal of justice. There are innumerable references in the Qur'an to the supreme necessity of establishing a just society, a just order. We individual men and women are invited to be just, to hold scales of justice evenly and are forbidden from employing false measures in weighing things or artificially tilting the balance in our own favour. We are called upon to advance the cause of justice by offering testimony should the need to do so arise, even against our own kith and kin, our own near and dear ones. There was a time when the highest ideal for man was to extend hope and offer comfort to persons who were suffering because of the inequitous and unjust

conditions to which they were subject. The religious duty was merely to comfort the victims of injustice with the assurance that God is with the lowly and humble and that because of their suffering they will be rewarded in the Hereafter.

ALL POWER IS GOD'S. Qur'an would not accept an organisational synthesis of mankind which is not based on the ideal of justice... which consists in giving to each nation or community what is its due. The Christian society in the conception of its present professions could only be founded by upholding the value of meekness, or rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is of God—of charity, of compassion—not upon the foundation of justice which consists in the enforcement of just laws by just people. Islam enjoins upon its votaries to inflict duly sanctioned punishments on the transgressors of the law and admonishes us to call upon the perpetrators of the wrong to compensate those who have been wronged by the unjust exercise of their power. It says all power is God's and any who has it, must exercise it not for his personal aggrandisement but in His holy name for the advancement of His purpose.

Qur'an's manifesto is thus there for all to see. Willy nilly it has been accepted in principle by the whole world. The world swears by its ideals and in fact cherishes the values sponsored by it. It is true that here, as elsewhere, there is great deal of discord between our 'professions' and 'performance.' It is further true that in the sphere of practice, the teaching of the Qur'an is least followed by those who call themselves Muslims. The Qur'an no doubt has been revered greatly by them. No book in the world down the ages has been adored more than the Holy Qur'an has been by the Muslims. The respect they show for the Book, however, is not the only response that is demanded by that Book. **Far more important is the claim of the Qur'an that the guidance furnished by it should be understood and applied to the details of our daily conduct.**

The Muslims have been somehow more busy in reading by rote the Qur'an than in understanding it—this I submit would seem to be contrary to the spirit of that great Book. If Qur'an is a Book of Hidayat, is it not obligatory for all of us to know what is contained in it, and what it has enjoined upon us. And how can we, I ask, know what it has enjoined upon us unless we are able to understand what it says. It is true that mere knowledge of Arabic is not enough

for the comprehension of the Qur'an. Were knowledge of Arabic sufficient the Arabs of today would be an authority on the Qur'an and their practice would be a reflection of its teaching. A superficial glance at the confusion in the Arab world of our own day shows that they are far from understanding the gospel contained in the Holy Book.

THE PRECONDITIONS. This is not the time to indicate in any measure of details what are the preconditions which have to be fulfilled before the Qur'an can have appeal to the heart of man. A great deal of discipline in the nature of internal purity and a great deal of devotion to the Lord Who has revealed it to mankind is required before mere knowledge of Arabic can be serviceable. It is true that knowledge of Arabic is not to be confused with close study of its syntax, of its grammar and of its lexicographical superfine distinctions. The Arabic of the Qur'an is simple—therefore such is its miracle that it cannot be understood easily by the sophisticated ones!

Qur'an is the best evidence that there is for all of us to believe that God exists, that Muhammad is His Prophet. It is also a Book of Hope in the sense that it presents to us the image of our Maker who forgives us and protects against our own follies.

In the end may I say this: Islam is not, in my understanding of it, very much concerned with what may be called as the ritualistic aspect of religious belief and practice. **Whatever ritual has been sanctioned by it, is admissible only on the basis that the believer consciously wills to perform it and is meaningfully aware of the symbolic character of what he performs. Unless religious practice is countenanced with a full awareness of why it is being countenanced there can be no real value in it.** A Muslim has each time to make 'niyat' (that is to say, form conscious intention) to pray or to fast or as a matter of fact, to do anything else that is sanctioned by religion.

CONSCIOUS ACTIVITY. As a matter of fact without the conscious formation of this state of mind designated by the term "niyat" there is no "amal" for, as the Prophet would put it, there is no "amal" unless it be accompanied by a proper "niyat." Indeed he went much further than even this when he said that conscious formation of intention to abide by the code of conduct commanded by religion is better than the conduct itself. All this goes

to show that practice within the framework of Islam is possible only with conscious believer; ritual as a mere mechanical activity is out of date—with Islam everything to be done is to be done consciously as an aspect of our obligation to serve the Lord and to fulfil His Law. If that be true, how can it be possible for any one to be a Muslim without understanding the rationale of that religious practice which has been enjoined upon him by his religion and the meaning and value of which has been set forth with remarkable clarity, lucidity and vigour in the Book in which he believes?

May the Spirit of the Book permeate in the body politic of Pakistan and make all the people of Pakistan models for the rest of the world to emulate: Every effort that is made by individual men and women and by larger groups in this direction would be a step in the right direction and would be in accord with the mission of the Prophets. It is in the service of the Lord that we, as Muslims, have been enlisted and all honour to those who are willing to become diligent crusaders in the realisation of the programme of world movement which was sponsored by the Prophet 1,400 years ago to redeem mankind from those vices which had overtaken it and from that ignorance which had paralysed it.

The prophecy of the Qur'an to the Prophet that he will find mankind marching in crowds on the way to the Lord has still to be fulfilled. To labour for that end is the highest duty that is cast upon those who claim to love the Prophet and to worship the Lord who sent him to us as our benefactor, our warner and our guide.

(COURTESY—MUSLIM NEWS INTERNATIONAL)

(First published in the February and March 1968 issues of the Muslim News International.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Editor expresses his thanks to all those whose help, support and cooperation made possible the publication of this booklet.

With best Compliments

of

HAMEED BROTHERS (Colombo) Ltd.

EXPORTERS, IMPORTERS, COCONUT OIL &

SCRAP RUBBER MILLERS,

GENERAL MERCHANTS

&

COMMISSION AGENTS

376, Grandpass Road,

COLOMBO-14.

Telephones

20832 & 28931

Use a Ceylon Gem
For your Engagement Ring
For advice on Ceylon Gems

Consult

J. M. M. RAJI

Phone

**Beruwala 896
Colombo 25165**

With Compliments

of

TAYLOR & MACKAY LTD.

Ship Chandlers & Exporters

Gafoor Buildings,

COLOMBO 1.

Cable "Taymak"

Phone 25161

With the Best Compliments

of

**S. T. R.
SALAY MOHAMED & CO.**

**245, MAIN STREET,
COLOMBO - 11.**

Phone : 20536

T'Grams "Perdeshi"

Printed at
ALBION PRESS LIMITED
157, Jayantha Weerasckera Mawatha,
Colombo — 10.