CHAPTER - VI

FUTURE OF ISLAM

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Modern challenge to Religion

This is an age of challenging authority in every walk of life: it may be parental authority, social authority, political authority or religious authority. The most critical period through which this age is passing, is made poignant still by the resistance of reason to accept any establishment submissively. Religion too had to pass the tests of time before it could hold its sway on the minds of people, or live in their hearts. The sacramental status of religion once considered to be the monopoly of the chosen class, has now become the common privilege of all. Any study in comparative religion has shown that beneath all variations and appositions, there are certain common fundamental assumptions that show them all to be the products of the same spirit. There is no need to postulate a principle outside this world to account for this spiritual unity. However, human beings are confined to an infinitesimal part of space, and such, they seem far removed from the main plan of the universe. Yet, it is the vanity of man which prompts him to consider himself as the final product of the evolution, and so he behaves. If he considers himself to be the unruled master, the situation would be a godless, and a-religious society. So far inspite of the strained relation between science and religion their estrangement is attempted to minimise, thanks to the comparative studies.

The values for which we struggle are only a flash in the pan and will disappear sooner or later. The cosmic process is bit a weaving and unwraving of forms in which the values we cherish find
precarious and brief embodiment. Ethical principles are but general rules for the guidance of human conduct and owe their significance to the developing society in which they arise. It is the function of religion to embody them in social life, so that each waft and weave of social life is indescribable without the inclusion of these values. Islam is one such religion in which the divine and the mundane are separated by any particular code of conduct. There is only one way of living and that is the best way. A religion may rightfully claim its sway over the definition of what may contribute the best way of living. In spite of the changing social standards, it is necessary to have some social standard, for, without such sanctions, life would seem meaningless. Hence, the myth of morality is invented, and they may not necessarily have any divine origin. As a matter of fact, the standards are quite celluloid and hence, they may be accepted at a particular period of time, and rejected at the other. This challenge to the values which the religion cherishes is often posed by those intellectuals who hesitate to accept even the authority of the conscience and call it as that which is purely socially oriented. It certainly does not need any reference to supernatural power. The point becomes poignant in case of the religions which believe in divine origination, and the word of God. Naturally Islam is entitled to the challenge that God does not command us into a prescribed mode of behaviour. And morality is nothing other than convention, and hence the society has a right to alter it. There is no such thing as 'objective moral values or ethical values' in
the sense that they may never be influenced by the individuals of the society. True that they may not depend on this or that member of the society. But morality is a working arrangement and its sanction is socially necessary. Thus, the entire question of theism from the moral point of view is questioned. Though of course, no amount of argument will logically satisfy the issue. The issue which is at stake is whether man's sense of duty requires a godhood. And if we accept as first premise, this very statement then the argument becomes fallacious.

The well-known challenges that the religion has to face today are mostly from science, mainly, scientific method, psychology and some schools of psychology. The strict method of science requires us to believe a proposition only when we are in a position to prove it. Any statement must possess the quality of being verified, if those who are interested care to verify it in whatever sense of the word. Now religion is one of those disciplines from where such statements are not forthcoming. If there is a question to their claim to credibility, there are three, rather awkward answers which are thus framed.

(a) It would be a blasphemy to challenge the divine authority.
(b) Religious doctrines carry the proofs of antiquity, which are handed down to us.
(c) They are deserving our faith because our ancestors believed in them.

In case of revealed religions, the authority has doubtlessly qualified himself for superior knowledge, and hence revealed
religions cannot be doubted their veracity. But, when for example, the New Testament and the Quran conflict, we cannot assume that the author of one is more authentic than the other. In such embarrassing situations, the modern challenge to religion supposes to have gained a point. The suggestion is that now we are deemed to turn to some other criterion than religious authority and that is rationality. If religion has not always presupposed any future conflicts, than the foresight of the authors comes into question. Moreover, it is just proper that religion should make room for rationality in which case, its superior authority is naturally affected. The supernatural nature of religion authority will have to be given up. It is the spirit of free inquiry, rather than the dogmas of any religion which will solve human problems.

Having challenged religion, this is the faith of the modernist.

Again, the whole question is about the establishment of truth. The discipline which follows one methodology and attains it, is equally a claimant to the status, as religion. However, there may be controversy regarding the various aspects of truth. In that case, if many-facet truth is an acceptable proposition, then there is no difficulty in stricking a peaceful co-existence between various disciplines. This ideal stage would necessarily rob religion of its unquestioned, solitary right to truth which was allotted to it by the interested section of the society. Now we have come to terms with modern views, and without regrets, that if the aim of science is getting nearer the truth, the aim of religion cannot be any different.
And yet, science can never replace religion. It cannot be a substitute for any discipline which claims truth-finding. For, over and above all the qualities, religion is principally a search for the spirit. That spirit, of which Truth is only a part, not the Whole. The 'Whole' consists of Truth, Beauty and Goodness whatever name we choose to give it. Truth alone would never satisfy the need for the divine. Truth in over-doses, could be satiating. We have instances of intense scholars losing mental balance, we have yet to come across a man, lost in religious pursuits becoming insane. That insanity, must it be so called is the ecstasy, and the world applauds it with a dignity, either expressed or implied.

In fact, the modern challenge to religion is the challenge to some of the doctrinal statements, that are attempted a translation into practice. Had they remained a decor of the book, they would hardly have stirred a leaf. But instead, these statements were further interpreted to suit the convenience of the situation, and hence, they lost their revered authenticity. Once the authenticity of few such practices was questioned, more often than not, the entire religion suffered a set-back. Islam is one such unfortunate example of faulty induction. Just because a religion is not followed or wrongly followed by the members of the society, the religion cannot be dubbed as erratic. It would be preposterous and an example of unpardonable immaturity if a society neglects such a throbbing and vital nerve-fibre of its soul for want of an appropriate conception of its functioning. No amount of rigorous
logic can ever reduce the human complex to the working of robot. No Freud, Spengler, or Eddington can translate the sublimity of human emotions into theories of behaviour, evolution or physicists determinism. The vastness of the variety of human response is a far-fetched calculation, when Hissenbury's principle of indeterminism stands glaring each human personality. We are individual to the very narrow of our bones, and we carry our personality distinctions right flown to our fingerprints.

The schools of behaviorism and psychoanalysis have tried to explain the human response to divinity in terms of behaviour and analysis of human personality. Psychoanalysis has allotted a considerable part to reasoning to human activities. Thinking is a process of rationalising rather than a process of reasoning. This is so, because of the structure of human personality. Human personality is, more than anything else, a playground of instincts. These instincts are kept in check by religious sanction. All responses are reduced to glandular secretion, than ethical strivings and religious aspirations are only illusions.

Moreover, the scriptures which affirm the absolutism of religions and announce themselves as infallible, such as the Vedas, the Bible and the Quran, are treated today, in the same critical and historical spirit as the Dialogues of Plato or the Inscriptions of Ashok. The obvious change is, that they are man-given documents, and hence liable to error. Islam in particular believes that not merely religious strictness, but every code of conduct and custom are supposed to have come from God. The practice was popular to Jew and Gentile, Greek and barbarian who readily attribute the
first formal institution to the Gods. Now it is a well established fact that all institutions are the result of human trial-and-error method for a better life-standard.

Religion with Godhead at the apex, has displayed the shrewdness of human mind with subtlety. Instead of claiming total responsibility for all his deeds, man has conveniently shifted it to the will of God. Quran is full of expressions which proclaim that nothing happens except as God, wills.\(^1\) Strangely enough, Quran bades man to perform actions which will bring him reward or punishment. Queer still is the fact that Quran states a number of verses which commend man to use his rationality in the choice of his deeds. The attempt to comprise the free human will and the autonomous will of God is an issue which loses emphasis when ample examples in favour of free will outnumber the instances cited for upholding the will of God.

Such criticism is not palatable to a staunch man of religion, be he a Christian, Jew or a Muslim. However, the challenge does glare a religion right in the face, it has shifted the importance of ethical and social authority from God of religion to Man of society.

Thus, the structure of religion is vulnerable. It would require a specific attitude of mind in order to appreciate the inner structure of this institution. It has evoked the deepest in man and help him clamber through the heights, to the apex of

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\(^1\) Basis of Islamic Culture, by Syed Abdul Latif, P-65. Also Quran 13:12, Quran 53:40, Quran 42:29.
mystical experiences. It has stirred the noble emotions like love, sympathy and charity, and helped build social structure on their basis. On the other hand, it has remained a pet toy of the politicians with which they play at their moments of crises. Religion is a singular institution which has universal appeal and uncontested grip over human masses. Critics have taken due notice of these factors, and hence, held out a warning to the elites of society and their founder fathers to beware of the negative contexts in which religion is verbally used. This shameful fact must be agreed upon, and avoided by modern men of religion.
The existence of a religion on this earth is a reality to encounter. A religion, in some forms, has always pervaded human life, be it primitive or refined. Many an act of cruelty, bravery, charity and nobility are performed in the name of religion. Though, more often than not, the followers do have some vested interest in performing a particular action in the name of religion. Religion itself is a misunderstood concept. Often, it is mixed up with rites and rituals. No doubt, it is the spiritual aspect which is profoundly expected in the constitution of religion. However, even some such acts of cruelty like animal sacrifice have found place in religion and have come to stay. This observation clearly indicates that it is not the profane or the sublime which characterises a religion but it is the consideration of the followers who claim to justify their means in the name of what they have weighted as divine.

The followers of a religion certainly make a bulk of the religious doctrines, which otherwise would have remained abstract messages of epics. Now, the actual practice of these doctrines in the decision of the followers. History bears evidence that the followers have made little difference to the fundamentals of religion. They may have succeeded in altering some of the customs, rites and rituals. The examples are ample, the form of worship, sacrifice and prayers have definitely changed with time. A Christian, a Jew, a Hindu or a Muslim of ancient times was far more adhered
to the word of Bible, Testaments, Geeta or Quran than their modern counterparts. In between, lie the entire structure of change and flux with which every institution is deemed right from its inception. For static state is a sign of decay, and those institutions including religious one, which proved stubborn to change were annihilated beyond redemption. Here, change is accepted in its healthy spirit of offering mobility, and thus help a religion lively and relevant. Had a Christian followed the strictness of marriage code, "Man and wife unto death", modern Christian would have lived up to the hell of marital relations, instead of relaxing happily from it. A Jew would have lived peacefully with all nations, instead of waging a non-conclusive war with the weak. A Hindu would never indulge into the temptation of crossing the threshold of his profession and poke nose in the affairs that are alien to his 'Swadharma'. The Sikhs would think twice before slaying their own brothers, instead of fighting as one nation. Examples could be multiplied, only to show that the followers have drifted away from the dictum of divinity to which their faith held them responsible.

At the inception of Islam, the initial followers was no one less than Khadija, the devout wife of the Prophet. To this unit membership was attached a member of followers that was inconsequential. It is only the current century that can boast of the huge quantity of followers in India, Pakistan, Gulf countries, Bangladesh and elsewhere in reasonably large number. Belonging to the times and contexts highly divine, they followed Islam in
the best way that was possible for them. It was too much to expect a pegan Arab attached to Islam in sixth century, to practice it with the adulterations of twentieth century. His very disposition would compel him to the way of life that was not influenced by external changes. There is no need to give undue credit to those followers who would maintain the religious piety for want of challenging circumstances. The real test of religiosity will lie in the midst of adverse situations. When a Muslim is yet able to retain his religious fibre, it is quite just that he is applauded for his tenure. Granted that the following of a religion is a duty and not a virtue, it must still be agreed on humanistic ground that human nature is vulnerable. It falls pray to ease and comfort sooner than to a life of discipline. Hence, if a modern Muslim has retained the fundamentals of Islam in face of the trying and tempting situations day after day, it is just apt, at least to encourage him along the path of religion tactfully, rather than criticise him constantly for some minor lapses. However, the general picture of the followers is not very pleasing, especially of those Muslims who are lettered, and consider themselves to be the torch-holders of the other ignorant masses. It is not the religion, certainly not Islam, which has erred, it is not even the external forces, over which we have no control, but it is the attitude of the followers which may have shown lack of courage and calibre to carry out Islamic dictates.
(iii) The quality of religious fibre

It is a subdued feeling of the intellectual class that the religion has remained ineffective in inculcating moral values in this age when new knowledge on traditional beliefs is refreshing and rational. There are also some intellectual snobs with him it has become a chronic obsession to defame religious beliefs, and ridicule religion. They consider it to be a sign of their accomplishment. It is old-fashioned to care for religion, and it is to criticise it. However, it is the result of imperfect education and shallowness which has created such superfluous society. This is the very society which rejects religion without even having proper calibre to understand and appreciate the reasons for its claims. It is easy to denounce than to accept; easier still, to doubt than to have faith.

Besides such followers with a negative view on religion, we are fortunate to claim a large number who, no doubt, have outgrown the ancient dogmatic faith, but are not willing to break away from tradition nevertheless. They crave for an adhesive that will cure them of their pseudo-separation caused by present times. Our concern should be with those who find themselves willing and yet incapable of belief. This is the difficult dilemma of modern Muslim. With education and environment, they have sharpened their minds and made their souls more sensitive. Their difficulties are genuine and their questions profound. Their doubt is no less than a way of expression of piety. In their protest, they reveal their loyalty. It is only the concerned who quarrel; the unconcerned are indifferent. As long as there is dialogue, disputes, disagreements...
and discussion, there is a room for the survival of a religion in its most dynamic spirit.

Within the fibre of religion is interwoven the human passion for truth, for righteousness, for justice. Even without a religion telling us, we strive for these values. If a religion has to teach that which is the deepest constitution of human spirit, it is a welcome gesture; a religion in proper perspective and right proportion, can appeal to the emotions sublime, by its choice of the media of communications, and religious leaders. Fortunately for Islam, it has not to grope ah-out in search of an ideal fatherhead. The very life and personality of the Prophet is so impressive that its impact alone can stir the divine urge latent in man. Religious fibre has always looked to the religious leaders for its colour, texture, charm and durability. Such is its fortification that it cannot be shattered to pieces despite fretful storms. Religion is not the product of shaky arguments and changing facts. It is the result of creative genius. The prophecy of the Prophet, and other leaders of other religion was an insight and not a deduction of intellect. Rationalism, no doubt, is preferable and far superior an attitude to dogmatism. However, it must be appropriately channelised to spiritualism. Human bondage is certainly ignoble but laxity is unpardonable. Islam has stressed human equality and rationalism through out Qur'an. But for lack of due interpretation its impact is not brought out with due emphasis. Nevertheless, the very strength, spread and popularity of Islam is an evidence in itself. Apart from the universal appeal it carries with it,
Islam has bestowed a tenacity worth observation. Islam did not have a royal origin like Jainism and Buddhism, hence it did not cater to the favourism of duteful masses. The Prophet was a commoner, and hence, carried with him all the limitations of a common class of society. Islam rarely received political support in its early times. It had to make its own presence felt amidst other Semitic religions quite prosperous and well established. Within the short period of about fourteen centuries, Islam has shown remarkable efficacy in remaining at the apex of popularity. The reasons are as simple as the religion, and simplicity is a quality which is difficult to achieve. With Islam, it is natural and not acquired, because the religion is smoothly and lucidly revealed to an apt person at an appropriate period of transition. Even those who care to question the authenticity of revelation, cannot but stand in perfect awe before the towering spiritual personality of the simple person like The Prophet. The awe itself is telling, it speaks of total submission to the Almighty which Islam hails. Islam is constituted of the leader and the message which are above all controversies. Mandane charges of social significance may be levied by some sectors, which question many codes of conduct mentioned in Quran. In the huge body of religion such misgivings if at all they are, make little difference to its fundamental structure. Islam has been founded on the principles which are palatable to any sensible human mind. Truly speaking, it is not only a religion for the Muslims, but a religion for all. Every human being with some religion attachment has followed Islam may be without naming it. Such is the quality of its religocity, that even if there are
no followers, for the sake of argument, Islamic principles will remain relevant as long as there is human existence on this earth. No other religion would be able to claim as much, because they may have based their religion on the criterion of piety, deservedness, sublimity and strictness which define persons with extraneous qualities. Religion then becomes a competition to enter in, win and deserve an award. Islam is defined for all alike, with no complexity to compete with, no strictness which try human endeavour. Its approach is tender, its code of conduct is endearing and its promises are human. There is nothing super-natural about it which taxes human imagination. Its concept of life, death, reward and punishment are real, relevant and earthly. It does not preach self-annihilation which will hold promise to some abstract state of bliss. Its statements are understandable and comparable to life experiences. Without becoming Mundane, Islam has remained spiritual, it is a religion whose fibre is not opaque but transparent. Every man has an opportunity to see through his present life so fully so as to foresee his future.
(iv) **The concept of Life after Death**

Every religion has given a thought to the concept of life after death. In order to have faith in the possibility of life after death, it is essential to believe in the concept of spirit or soul, and hold firmly its eternal life which does not end with the perishable body.

The major unrevealed and revealed religions of the world have had a definite ideal to achieve. Except Shintoism, whose ideal is the satisfaction of immediate wants and whose mission is nothing in particular, other religions are specific on these details. For instance, Hinduism is particularly concerned over the issues of ideal and mission of this life. It has been termed as 'Mukti', 'Koksha' or salvation from the cycles of births and death. It is ordained to every individual that he shall break the chains of his *karmas*, if he is to avoid repeated evils of birth and death. He is fully equipped and properly disposed at any moment of his life to realize that he is a pure spirit which has wrongly identified itself with the body and the world. The movement of realization is the moment of his salvation here on earth. There are elaborate accounts of the types of salvation in both, philosophical and popular Hinduism. However, salvation does remain the only ideal and mission of Hinduism. Same is the account of other religions like Jainism and Buddhism and others who had common Vedic fountainhead. The revealed religion like Judaism restricted its privilege

* Dr. Senchi Yate, The eminent Japanese scholars account on Shintoism.
to salvation to the Israelites. Christianity proclaims proudly its well-known mission of leading its followers into Divine Grace through the practice of Christian faith.

The concept of life after death has been the principal factor which has helped to survive religion. Amidst trying times, there are occasions when it is just not possible to remain satisfied with empirical explanations of every phenomenon. In spite of notable scientific data on human philosophy the science of soul or spirit is yet an enigma. Just brandishing the reference to other worldly or cultism, one cannot consistently argue for their non-existence. There is ample mystery that surrounds life on earth, and hence, life after death is a subject which vividiates imagination. Religion attempts to give an account of life which is the combination of the spiritual and the mundane. A basic belief in the reality of spirit or soul is essential. Without such presupposition, all talk of life hereafter deems meaningless. There have been such specific schools of thought especially in ancient India who did have a thorough materialistic view of life. They rebuked religion and mocked the concept of soul. Believing fully in the idea of material pervelence and superiority of matter alone, it was obvious that the life was without any religious basis. Religion accepts belief in God and spirit of man as an unwritten, unproclaimed and subtle prescription. It is taken for granted. It is an assumption which, if doubted would invalidate any divinity. Religion has profound faith in divine order. There is adequate explanation which justifies the law of causation here on earth. 'As you sow, so shall you reap' is the old maxim which
is accepted without any deliberations. Such a simple explanation is elementary, and universal, may it be any religion or any institution. By similarity and extension, this very doctrine is applied to or rather, carried across the boundary that separates life and death. Every explanation of the life after death is involves a very peculiar usage of the world 'life'. It is understood in the sense of the activeness and consciousness of the spirit without body. The spirit retains completely and succinctly, each and every impression of its life in embodied condition. On the basis of his deeds here on earth, he shall be judged for future reward or punishment. This is the general statement of the belief especially of revealed religions. Such religions have detailed out a programme of life after death till the Day of Judgement. Upon being judged by the Lord Almighty on that occasion, the soul shall be eternally blessed or eternally condemned. This life thus, remains the only chance for deciding the fate of the soul. Other Vedic religions do accept the concept of judgement, rather in a modified form of the law of Karma. They are, however, particularly unique in explaining the passage of souls through various forms of life previous and life hereafter, which are adopted as their share on the basis of their Karmas. Thus, in some form or the other, the concept of life after death has been accepted. All deistic religions believe that the affairs of the world are under the total control of a supernatural Being. His Will grants some concession to human will, and to a certain extent, Man does enjoy the freedom to exercise his will as he pleases. At least, he is
pleased to think that he has freedom of will. There is an unebated controversy over the issue of freedom of will and Divine Will. Some religions like Hinduism has evaded the whole concept of Divine Will by the flawless explanation of the Law of Karma. So much so, that some schools of Indian Tradition like Charaka, Jainism and Buddhism do not even think it necessary to accept the authority of Vedas. Their concept of God is also colourless, especially in Buddhism. Though Charvaka were totally materialistic, Jainism and Buddhism believed in God more for tradition than anything else. Divine interference in human affairs was in one way or the other kept in the background. The origin and end of this universe metaphorically explained as the divine play called "Lila". Christianity hold the concept of grace in high esteem, and hence, the performance of Christian duties and prayer have found a prominent place in deciding the fate of man both, here on earth and after death. The three semitic religions have more or less similar attitude towards life after death. They predict the Day of Judgement, upon which God would wind up the affairs of the cosmos. After that, there will be total prevelence of divine justice. The freedom of will given to man will be withdrawn. All contradictions of this life will melt away and the supremacy of moral law will prevail.

As per the supremacy of good deeds or evil deeds, judgement shall be passed in favour of Heaven or Hell. In Quran, there is a vivid description of life after death. It appeals to the common man, because the parallels drawn and the examples cited do not
vouchsafe any stretch of imagination. To the intelligent and
the rational minded, the limited role of allegory and metaphors
is quite palatable. Hence, Islamic concept of life after death
has enticed human nature of every generation, because it is very
becoming to the cult and climate of every age. Even if modern
Muslim finds it difficult to accept the colourful
of
Heaven and the horrible picture of Hell, he surely accepts the
maxim thus as you shall sow, so shall you reap. Since this life
is the solitary chance of choosing one's righteous life is own
fate, a man leading a righteous life is only helping himself.
This infallible supremacy of moral law which prevails on earth
and by implication even in life after death has justification
in Divine personality of God. Amongst innumerable divine qualities,
justice is one, and it is exercised fully on the Day of Judgement.
Those who have accepted Islam and lead a righteous life will be
rewarded suitably in Heaven and those atheists and wrong doers
must await their turn for Heaven after having passed through the
orgies of Hell. Total purity of soul is existable for Heavenly
occupancy. Quran describes Hell and Heaven spatio-temporally,
and hence there is time limit to the placement of Hell, or Heaven.
Quran holds out a promise for Heaven to one and all, for God, in
His kindness has provided for Hell only to purify the evil doers.
However, there is an idea of partial salvation in Quran for those
who believe in one God, but not in the Quran as the final revelation,
and Mohammad as the last Prophet. Though they may be spared the worst regions of hell, they will not enjoy the highest bliss of heaven.

The religious account of all life after death accounts for the belief in continuity of life after death and the triumph of value over disvalue. There is ample scope for modern Muslims to adhere to the tradition without appearing dogmatic or irrational. Provided that a man is committed to these beliefs, he may well remain non-committed to any particular concrete conception of life after death found in Semitic milieu of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. He may analytically make distinction between the life after death that actually remains his prediction, and the concept of life after death that a religion offers. There is, however, no need to believe that the two differ very widely, nor need it be accepted that they are identical. Any doubt regarding a particular explanation, need not be interpreted as total disbelief in life after death. Accepted that the material body is also an abode of spirit, which is not perishable, it logically follows that the spirit must survive the perishable body to some end.

Even without clinching to any established religious cult, it is possible for man to hold the undeniable value of justice. Such is the command of moral law which sublates every detail and discrimination. The Quran condemns those who prefer this perishable, transitory and imperfect world to the eternal and everlasting, unbounded and faultless life after Death which is free from every kind of evil, and meaningless, grief and distress, fear and loss and disease and ill-health.
Yet, belief in ethical doctrines and life after death is not a scientific hypothesis. They are believed on grounds other than mere logical. Though of course, the explanation of life after death is an existential interpretation of man on earth. Islamic faith in life after death consists of two correlated beliefs - the resurrection of the individual and his everlasting survival either in heaven or in hell and the Divine notice of man's mundane activities upon which final judgment is passed. If God's existence be accepted, the above beliefs do not raise any theoretical difficulties. Even about resurrection, it may be accepted without further elaboration that God, who initially creates an individual, can resurrect them after any length of time.

There are thinkers in favour of the explanation of life after death. Belief in life after death helps to solve many a difficulty raised by the presence of pain and evil in a universe which has been created by God in his own free will.

Any amount of deliberation will prove that the concept of life after death is more than a logical doctrine or rational account, a conviction which is socially oriented. In order to implement a general law of discipline, social systems of reward and punishment are instituted. Social order also need social sanctions. On similar pattern when world bestows teleology in many an aspect, it is but natural that the cosmic order must be obeying some law, which we may call, moral law. It is difficult to convince a modern rationalist to believe in life after death unless he initially
believes in the existence of God, in some forms or the other.

A very mundane factor which reinforces the pre-logical faith in life after death is man's love for life. A yearning to live forever is so deep rooted in man that he likes to believe that he will survive his perishable body.

Thus, these three factors namely the search for values and their permanent establishment, the belief that personal immortality is the postulate of morality and the passion to live forever supply all the impetus necessary for the belief in life after death.
Future of Islam and Universe: Islamic and Scientific Views.

The future of any religion is basically dependent on the followers. The older its history, greater are the challenges it faces from time to time. The calibre of its survival value is totally dependent on the very fibre that constitutes the body of the religion. Attempts have been made now and again to replace religion by some such institutes like humanism. Modern men, who are not totally disinclined to accept some basic human values, but are reluctant to accept religious doctrines, are attracted by some such currents.

Religion has a function to perform which no institution in particular, can carry out that efficiently. Of course, discipline through apprehension may be induced in man, but that is distorted. Apart from this, a man who accepts some restraint on himself in order to uphold and live up to that which is the highest, is certainly a balance personality. Truly religious men are admirably balanced. Needless to stress the point that loyalty is easier than discipline: more so, with the modern youth who is already distracted by modern life-style. An urge to perform something daring and different characterises youth all over the world. The easiest thing in the world is to persuade people, especially young people, to be materialistic, selfish, greedy and even delinquent when one has all the educational institutions, cinema, television, radio and the press at one’s disposal. Had it not been for the quality of contentment which Islam, in particular, preaches the poor lot would strain under the feeling of discontentment created by the
inevitable went in their lives. Else, even the youth will fix the ideas in their mind regarding material well-being. It is attractive to be persuaded towards wealth and fashion rather than virtue or piety. If the spectacular alternative to poverty ever remains the glare the comfort and the ease, then it requires no stretch of imagination to accept squarely that if the substitution for religion remains the materially prosperous life that modern age has to offer. Moreover it requires no effort to invite the young to be disrespectful instead of abide insolent instead of humble and contemptuous instead of tolerant.

A virtuous Muslim though, is rarely better-off, than his western counterpart. The fact remains that the Muslims have faced no better than most of the non-European people or culture. The impartial historians place Muslim civilization, which proclaims Islam as the supreme universal, eternal truth and the only route to salvation in this world and the Hereafter, on the same level as the pagan Chinese, Hindus, Buddhists, African animists and the hated and despised Jews. The Muslims have to admit with woe that they have lagged far behind even the heathens like American Indian tribes in putting up a strong opposition, despite its centuries old civilization.

Such considerations bring us to the crucial question which is latent in all account of Islam. The question is whether there is anything inherently wrong with Islam and its moral, cultural and social order.
The reply to this question brings us to the sharp distinction that need be made between Islam and Muslims. The ideal expectation would be to consider the two as identical. However, we must also accept the reality and admit that a Muslim is as vulnerable to worldly temptations as any other man. A Muslim has his share of laxity in maintaining the ideal Islamic standards. Muslims could not remain immune to the same weakness, short-comings, trials and temptations as other people. Their stride off the Qur'an is so wide that the Muslims have almost lost their laudable identity. A Muslim is virtually indistinguishable in their conduct and behaviour from a non-Muslim. Like all other traditional people in traditional societies, the average Muslim practices, his faith out of mere custom and tradition rather than any personal conviction. Most of his actions to deny are worldly goal-oriented, and are not performed to earn the pleasure of God and a rewarded life after death. His actions have come to remain a social formality, from which he has ceased to draw divine satisfaction. Added to all-over temptations offered by the western culture, is the Muslim illiteracy and lack of rationality in judgment which marks a sober mentality. Hence, masses could not appreciate fully, leave alone avail, the heights and the spiritual truths of Qur'an. If not totally forgotten, the message of Qur'an ceaselessly cry out for a sympathetic hearing. Islam is doubtlessly divine, and Muslim has never ceased to be human. This discrepancy between the ideal and the real has staked Islam, not only its spiritual origination, but its deserving status in the banks of the rational and balanced religion.
It need be remembered that Islam allows within proper limits, striving and endeavour in the path of life and knowledge provided that it is for the noble purpose, elevating humanity. In fact, it is maintained that God has hailed the believer who subjugates the external physical forces. However, even at the height of his power and glory, he is advised to repose his faith in God, submit to him and believe in the life hereafter. For, Islam does not regard the earthly life and the present world to be the highest goal of man.

The Quran says:

"The comfort of the life of the world is but little as against the Hereafter". (IX 138)

Further it says:

"This life of the world is but a pastime and a game. Lo! the home of the Hereafter - that is life, if they but knew" (XX IX: 64)

The Quran asserts that the life of this world is the bridge of the Hereafter and . . . . .

Contd....
Some misunderstandings are the sheer result of misinterpretation. Hazrat Ali, hence has suggested to meet people at the level of their own understanding. Transcendental truths may be presented to them in the modes and methods which they understand. He explains the point thus, "Do you want the teachings of God and His apostle to be confuted?" God and the Apostle are being confuted not because their precepts are absurd but only because they are obscurely presented.

Islam does command its own esteemed place in the ranks of the world religion. It has all the flexibility required of a religion to fit and adjust itself to the changing times. History is the witness of the fact that a religion truly noble, has never belittled human intellect but lived upto its challenges. Despite changes in the life-style, Muslims can no longer ignore the value of the transcendental truths in human life. However, life may change, there will always remain a place for transcendental truths. The whole existence must fall under one Divinity and one faith, else no scientific miracle will prove sufficiently powerful to save man from personal and social disintegration.

Today, Muslim world is facing a peculiar problem which slightly social and partially legal. In the past, 'Ulema' performed the function of checking the community from going astray. Their efforts were for revivalism. But now, the functions of 'Ulema' have been replaced by the states. It will be observed that the current Muslim countries alter or re-interpret the 'shariah' to suit the changing situation. On the other hand, the 'Ulema'
content that the 'Shariah' is immutable. Hence, modernization, reinterpretation or alteration of 'Shariah' is out of question. This conflict characterizes modern Islam, and it continues under various garbs of social reform. If unchecked, it may adversely harm the fine and sober times of religious fibre. It predicts a course of history which is not at all pleasing to the religious-minded.

The problem of saving modern world is graver than saving Islam. But 'What is it to save and from what'? The question is blunted, and the answer is evident. We have a colossal task of saving the entire existence from the threat of deadliest wars that are the results of human greed, understanding, sympathy and above all, fear of life hereafter and faith in the Almighty. The age expects the intellect to be more extravagant in sacrifice and set an example by maintaining the severest and the austerest standards of living.

The essential function of the religion is to stabilise the existing order by endowing the accepted social tradition with sacredness. The transcendent reference does give a permanent value to the social custom and belief by seeking divine sanctions. The struggle for existence demands co-ordination of purpose and activities, and religious sanctions supply the necessary dynamic. The conditions of life make adherence to explicit faith in tradition essential to the continuance of the group, but this inevitably tends to produce a static order. Islam in particular has not drawn any line of distinction between the sacred and the Mundane. Its code
of conduct is so well-manipulated and balanced that it requires no such external standards.
Future of Universe - Islamic & Scientific Views

Every religion prophesises upon the future of universe either metaphorically or with the help of attempted factuality. The Quranic view of the future of Universe is mentioned in the para

When the Sun will be wound up and the stars will be scattered (Quran 1:2)

With the help of the sun’s doom. It explains the scientific phenomenon of the cause of light and heat as hydrogen, which are truly responsible for the glory of the sun, stars and the moon. The constitution of sun is basically hot, and it remits tremendous heat. Due to this heat, hydrogen gas is gradually being converted into helium gas. With this slow, but steady change, it is not difficult to predict the total annihilation of the heat of the sun, at a future point of time.  

The sun is constantly losing energy and is losing its two billion tonnes of its weight every second. Consequently, the sun must necessarily lose its heat and remain a dark, dull, spot, although the sun, at present is 1,280,000 times larger than our own earth. This scientific account is in tune with the Quranic concept of the sun’s doom.

However, there are differences of opinion regarding future predictions which are the mark of diverse religious beliefs and

2 George Ganice : "Birth and Death of the Sun", PP-220-221
3 Margrate Ouhaid : "Zamin aur Khuda ki Khoj", P-54
cultural practices. Society does leave its impact upon the formation of religions doctrines.

Still objectively speaking, we can say that universe is constituted of basic features, which may be called its \textit{web} and \textit{woof}. They remain unchanged throughout the recorded and unrecorded human history, e.g. the law and order, harmony, \textit{symphony} and beauty in nature, man's sense of moral order as distinct from concrete moral codes, the struggle for existence, pain and suffering, hope and joy, birth and death, growth and decay. Natural sciences are just descriptive and physical sciences are interested in establishing cause-effect relationship. One such interesting human enterprise is to attempt future predictions either on the basis of science and technology, or religion and philosophy.

For instance, it has always fascinated man, this question about the future of Universe. All that is possible of any future predictions, is just their possibility. It may become an actuality provided that the hypothesis is almost mature beyond any challenge. There are two hypotheses which claim their efficiency in the prediction of the future of Universe. One, that the Universe will freeze continuously till it reaches zero temperature; and the other, that it will die in a fiery blast as its component parts rush together faster and faster until they all meet in an enormous fireball.\footnote{4} These hunches are not altogether guess works, but have some definite sponsor of some scientific theory.

\footnote{4 For details see Albert Einstein and L. Infeld, The Evolution of Physics.}
Or, will this constant mechanism of contraction and expansion go on forever, in a relentless succession? It is an ultimate question that man can ask and answer: the answer may have the overtones of theology and philosophy. Yet, astronomers somehow are optimistic beyond comprehension. They are confident that they will soon know the answer, credible enough to put before the world. They may be having their own reasons for their intuitions backed by their few past successes.

Recent physics assigns some mass to neutrons. They are no longer mere theorized concepts as believed in 1932, but have been actually indentified in 1956. Now, if their conclusions stand, then the balance between an ever expanding Universe and the one that will eventually contract, is duly tipped. Accordingly to the current atomic theory, each thimbleful of space in the cosmos contains about 100 neutrons. The mass of all neutrons could more than double the total mass, and perhaps provide enough gravitational pull to cause an eventual contraction. If that happens, Reines (heading the team of physical sciences from the University of California) thinks that "there was no beginning and will be no end". One is correctly reminded of the Advaita philosophy of Indians, wherein this Universe has no beginning nor an end. This scientist too prophesied when he announced his results at a physics meeting, "the consequences are theological".

5 For details see B. Russell, Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy, Principles of Mathematics, Mysticism and Logic.
As often is the case, progress in one area poses problems for another area, quasars, for instance, have become enigma, even theoretically. How to explain such an immense power which such a limited volume possesses? But the theorists now have a formidable candidate, the black hole. Though of course, they are no less mysterious than the quasars. They do not obey the normal rules of physics. They are, for instance, inherently invisible. Yet, most astronomers accept their existence. They are bizarre, and probably real.

In spite of the fact that the fundamental question regarding the future of Universe remains controversial, the evidence that does exist points towards an open Universe, how strongly is debatable. However, some astronomers hesitate to think likewise, backed by philosophy and religion. They have worded their doubt in what they call the anthropic principle. It states simply that the type of Universe that we can observe is a Universe that allows human life to be created and survive. If the Universe is open then it is perhaps the only one that ever existed. If we were to survive in an inhospitable cosmos, then our probability of survival would be one to ten. On the other hand, a closed Universe would keep on bouncing back and forth in a cycle of different Universes and then, the Universe that we inhabit would just be one of the many.

Not that this philosophy appeals to many. They would rather use their instruments than instincts or intuitions, to decide whether our cosmos is open or closed. Other questions about creation should

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6 Waismann. How I see Philosophy.
also be tackled likewise. An humble astronomer, full of awe and wonder would possibly utter, "We certainly do not understand cosmology, press reports notwithstanding". Knowledge is humbled before its own vastness. Nevertheless, the fact that cosmologists can seriously try to solve the problem of the fate of the Universe attests to their progress in recent years and to enter into a new era and prospects, that would read the future of Universe more and more accurately. It is worth observing that the very act of exact knowledge calles in for vaguries. When the future of Universe itself has remained problematic to man, he is much to dwarfed to tackle the question of future of a religion, because religion is a very complex dimension of human life. It is a challenge to all exactness and calculations, because, without it, a man feels uncomfortable and with it he is not exactly satisfied. Statistical data computarised with the help of most refined scholarship may perhaps reveal interesting and astonishing results. Future of any religion or future of Islam will then be predicted with better judgement aided by scientific sophistication.

\[\text{Cited in Y.G. Nighoskar's Concepts and Clarity, PP 40-43, (Baroda-1982).}\]
A religion for all

All religions have a goal which has some important base in the 'other world'. Some religions do emphasise the life on earth for the benefit and betterment of this very life. However, most major religions have particularly elaborated on the life hereafter. It is this concept of life hereafter which is mainly responsible for its major acceptance and minor criticism. That this relatively short span of life is insufficient to bear fruits of all actions, and hence the cycle of birth and death, is the claim of Vedic religions. While the semitic religions advocate a Day when their deeds will be judged just by the most just Being in proper perspective by the most just Being.

Islam has bestowed remarkable magnanimity when it promises salvation for all, Muslims and non-Muslims. Its concept of Just God is unwaveringly definite and objective, and thus, there is absolutely no room for any injustice or partiality. The very concept of Islamic brotherhood and prayer vindicates the point that all are equal before Him.

Islam has claimed a universal message when it has emphasised in the very fundamentals, the very roots of human value. Of course, all religions are the responses to the cosmic change and the nature of cosmos, as it is A divine guidance is also postulated so that every order, mystery and enigma is explained. Moreover, the concept of God is equally soothing and brings solace and nurtures a sense of being under the divine protection. Islam has envisaged
God of every human being. Such that He is of equal avail to all alike, irrespective of status, birth and deeds. Islam does not hail the saints nor does it condemn the common man.

It does not hold the other world in direct contrast or superior to this world. On the contrary, Islam has marked out a simple path which uplifts an individual from state to state. There is a continuity that travels in a direction to the life hereafter. Islam believes in One life chance, and hence, it sticks out a warning to all human beings, so that they are not lost to this singular opportunity of seeking permanent blessings. Islam has chalked out a very convenient path of earning an excellent life here on earth and hereafter.

The reasons for the spectacular spread of Islam are not far to seek. Islam had always remained catholic in its approach. It welcomed the peoples of many diverse religions, so long as they behaved themselves and paid taxes.

"I hope the time is not far off when I shall be able to unite all the wise and the educated men of all the countries and establish a uniform regime based on the principles of the Quran which alone are true and which alone can lead men to happiness".  

With such a religion, that has survived the tests of the severest of times, it could safely be predicted that Islam would remain forever, a religion for all.

8 Bonaparte et l'Islam Faras, France, PP 105-125 by Cherfilsd.
Moreover, the concern over jurisprudence in Islam is simply unique. The Law of God is binding on all alike, irrespective of western power and birth. The law is interwoven with the social system, and thus, the law has come to remain active, effective and applicable in day-to-day life.

Moreover, the nobility and tolerance of this creed which accepts as God-inspired all the real religions of the world will always be a glorious heritage for mankind. There is no doubt that Islam has already qualified itself to be declared as the perfect world religion. "The foundation itself is so strong and worthy that a magnificent religious structure would be permanently built up for the benefit of the entire mankind."

"On it could indeed be built a perfect world religion". 9

In this century of atom-analysis and nuclear energy, disintegration of human personality at individual level and dispersion at social level have become commonplace phenomenon. Yet, they need be decided in the interest of humanity, and hence, he prevented earnestly. Moreover, pluralism of culture has remained an added enigma. Any adhesive that places every segment together or any link that creates a sense of belonging to common human family, is the religion. Islam has never remained a mute spectator to any such human catastrophe, risking at times, its status and inviting condemnation. "For, even to-day, that which is at stake is far more important and urgent than any prestige issue.

Islam has accepted the challenge of the modern age and entered the dialogue to discuss the issue of re-establishment and revitalisation of basic human values. Islam invites participation of each and every individual so that the religion becomes a personal choice and a conscious commitment. Islam is the torch-holder amongst world-religions who accept that the dividing lines between different faiths no longer run in the same direction as before. It has made it crystal clear that if anyone, while being naturally convinced in his heart of the veracity of the Quranic message, wants to practice another religion for opportunistic or other reasons, this will not be accepted from him.

"In the next world he shall be among the losers". 10

It is this deep and permanent spirit that we must rediscover to-day in order to clear the path of a happy life which has been unduly polluted by some insane and immature decisions, regarding science and religion.

10 Quran 3:85