As a result of constant discussion with the learned scholars in the field of religion, I have long felt the need of treating Islamic studies anew. I believe it is timely. It is the challenge of the age that we justify the very existence of any religion. The call of the time is demanding, and unless we heed and respond it properly, it will slip away, and history will condemn our negligence. The problem today is not of the choice between Islam and non-Islam, but the problem is of its very survival. Surely, it is a serious trial for the concerned scholars of Islamic studies. They can no longer repeat the past glories of Islam and relax upon its ancient laurels. They are no doubt, praiseworthy. But, the 'ostrich in sand' attitude can perish a religion with the passage of time. A religion need be surveyed from time to time, so that its survival value is retained.

However, the study of higher religions pose methodological problems. In case of other rudimentary cults, the simple methods of studying the culture and history, if any, could suffice, whereas in a developed religion, the fineries of complex society too are involved. After all, the thought and practice of civilised peoples cannot be cut off clearly from the subtleties of customs and beliefs. Subsequent progress in knowledge does not disturb the fundamental place of customs and beliefs in the body of a religion. As Robertson Smith pointed out at the end of the last century, ".....
it is a law of science that to know a thing thoroughly, we must know its in its genesis and in its growth. To understand the ways of God with Man, and the whole meaning of His plan of salvation, it is necessary to go back and see His work in its beginnings, examining rudimentary stages in the process of revelation.*

In the long and chequered career of human race, certain elements in society have a permanent survival value. Religion is one such institution, which may have had a slightly different or drastically primitive form than the present one. Social influence has played dramatic role and colouring the main features of a religion. With Islam, this impression is more emphatic and vivid. The religion called Islam, as it was preached initially and the practices that have flourished in its name are varying considerably. In the modern age, the latitude of variance is increasing with in leaps and bounds with every new decade. The questioning lot has not only challenged Islam in particular but the religion as such in general. It is the pious task of every man of religion particularly Muslim scholar to enlighten his brethren upon the intense necessity of religion in his life. A Muslim so unique, so distinguished and so sincere to his faith must not go astray and linger after the easy sensuous life, which has already cast its spell of temptation on masses.

* The Old Testament in the Jewish Church (London-1813), P-192.
III

It is a world which is illuminating technically and waning spiritually. It is a world which is changing rapidly, thanks to the research in science and technology. However, the progress in matter need not imply a regress in spirit. A synthetic and total development is a dream which science will definitely realise if the society respects the religion, and practices its fundamentals.

Instead, this century has witnessed the most unfortunate events, especially at the political level and that too, in the name of religion. Forty-five nations, more than one-fourth of those in the world, are currently engaged in wars, a defence research group has reported. Internal conflicts in the name of religion, more so Islam, are commonplace. Moreover, political leaders are pathetically interested in securing their own position in ranks of the powerful nations. Hence, they ruthlessly use the holy name of Islam and bargain their positions. At times, they interfere with the writings of Quran and interpret them to suit their selfish motives. Even for such a change, there is after an argument that Islam always stood for reason, change and flexibility. Under the garb of modernism and scientific approach, the very soul of a religion is often tampered with, and its genuine voice, silenced. Whenever there is an appeal to the world of Islam to revive the practice of Ijtihad, so that Islam remains relevant to the requirements of modern times, there has been consternation in orthodox circles. After all,
Islam has always laid down such prescriptions that man can never complain of any confusion or ambiguity. The present work is an attempt to expose the tenets of Islam, most relevant to the modern world. Keeping in view the western influence, the emphasis is exerted in practising Islamic code of conduct. For, in its following lies the general happiness of man. Islam is a religion of contentment. The nature of man with his greed for power, wealth and pleasures has driven him to insanity. In his folly, man has neglected his glorious culture and rich heritage of Islam.

There is an humble attempt to avoid verbosity which is quite common in subjects such as the present one. However, in order to make clear a point, or to emphasise it the author may have taken some liberty of expansion without being redundant. The consciousness throughout the work is the due awareness and elite concern of the modern Muslim/for Islam.

There are learned works on traditional Islam, and enlightened accounts of modern western influence on Islam. However, some such issue like the actual place that Islam has in modern world was long overdue. An account which considered the direct applicability of Islamic ideas, the extent of their genuineness and the attitude of Muslims in adopting them, would make a relevant addition to the advancing knowledge.
VI

The work will prompt further research along the lines of Islamic studies, especially the issues in the scientific discoveries and religion. Not that the two disciplines need to compare or contradicted. Such approach is baseless, and it violates the spirit of many facts of universe. This universe may be approached through various dimensions. Though, of course, religious approach would be the most integrated approach.

Islam has carved out the most convenient and efficient path to the interpretation of this universe and its master. This is the faith of the author.

Every religion of the world is a system of conduct and value. Some religions emphasize one aspect more than the other. Accordingly, they are recognized as divine religions or humanistic religions. These categories are not mutually exclusive and there is no apt example that leaps to the mind but Islam. Like other major religions of historic value, Islam is also an organic whole which is equally concerned with practical way of living and divine life. Truly speaking, Islam has no such bifurcation, and this very aspect of Islam raises its status in the eyes of renowned world scholars. Islam speaks of a life continuous. It has allotted all the attention to the betterment of life here on earth, and sufficient indications of life after death. In its Shariah, it has taken note of the major aspects of human life. With the change of time, Islam has continued to remain the religion that aspires reverence, awe and a sense of sublimation.
in man. Anticipating the variations of human life, it has left room for appropriate interpretation of strictness, which is really ingenious. Being revealed religion, it has the characteristics of Christianity and Judaism, though its unique structure is never mistaken for any of these. The greatness of Islam is fundamental, for it is the only religion which has no history of dualistic worship. Allowing some differences of opinions on the ways of practicing Islam, it has remained an uncontroverted fact that the unity of God has never been made the matter of dispute. Such is the quality of the unquestioned submission to one God. It has paid the dividends in the long run and all through. Despite spatial diversities, Muslims all over the world unite under this abstract banner of oneness.

The inherent nature of man tries to cling to divinity, although worldly currents drift him away. Hence, there is a ceaseless and silent battle between the divine and mundane, ever since the inception of mankind. In his ignorance, he followed tribal worship, till the merciful God sent a messenger to guide him properly. This Islamic faith in prophethood prevails amongst the Muslims of almost all creeds. Even after being enlightened through revelation, man fell short of making the best of his superior disposition; for there are men in the world who grope in the dark abyss of ignorance for want of proper light. It is the problem of those modern men, who, in their zeal for western ideologies, let their exorbitant part decay in books, or
mis-represented by the critics. With all the respect for objectivity, it should be remembered that a society without religion would be like a ship without an anchor. Muslim society has no need to begin from the scratch, when it can exclaim such rich heritage as Islam.

Though Islam is ultimately the result of revelation, it does present the hues and views prevalent in sixth century. Being the result of Arab atrocities, barbarism and ignorance, Islam was the essential need of the past and the relevant institution of the modern complex society. It will never cease to find application; such flexible is its structure. In this age of the survival of the fittest, nothing would be more befitting than to have a fresh look at this ancient religion. Present Muslim societies may not be satisfied in all respects with traditional interpretations, but that is no comment on Islam. On the contrary, the thought system, the practice and the value systems of modern Muslim societies have unsuccessfully tried to mould their lives in western casts. As a result, their own status in modern world is ambiguous to themselves. Their seeds of faith are too deep-rooted as to be affected harshly by western windfall. Nevertheless, the deed has been done, and the modern Muslim is never the same, pious, religious man that Islam ordained him to remain. Islam has given an elaborate account of living a virtuous life here on earth, and to be prepared righteously for the day of judgement after death. The glory of
human existence has been poignantly brought forth in Islam. The human virtues of politeness, meekness and forgiveness are just the part of the entire value system which does not differentiate between the utility and divinity. Right from birth to the day of judgement man is accountable for his deeds. This life is the chance given to man by the merciful so that he rests in the eternal stage of bliss everafter.

The basic contribution of universe supplies enough scope for a happy life. Apart from the permanent features of universe like harmony, beauty, natural order, human moral sense, struggle for survival and other fundamental instincts, there is a large vista of human interaction which is guided by human will, and affected in human action. It is this very field where man exercises his freedom that he needs some indications to follow. This function of religion may be efficiently performed only by making religion livable, followable and rational. Else, it will remain an ornamental piece of work, decorating the shrines, celebrating Idd and more often than not, creating conflicts. Islam possesses the quality of assimilating all that is the best in an age. It has served to remain the appropriate response to man's instinctive thrust for the truth, the good and the beautiful. The path of divinity is no more mystic and spiritual than everyday life lived righteously. A Muslim need not fear his fate in future if he has led a virtuous life. Today, however, this very apprehension of life after death is being
The concept of the day of judgement and the future of soul are the objects of sly mockery at the hands of modern youth. He is more concerned with his share of pleasure here and now, than with the treasure of happiness promised to him after death. Nor is he deterred in his un-Islamic actions by the woe of hell and its tortures. A pin-prick worries him more than the punishment after death. To this mentality and melody, there is no remedy. It is a cruel shock to the religious minded, to have realised that the Islamic ideas of the day of judgement, hell and heaven are bluntly interrogated and secretly negated by most modern Muslims. These are the very people whose shoulders lie the responsibilities of salvaging Islam. Instead of offering an acceptable interpretation of the metaphoric symbols like hell and heaven, they conveniently find solace in some kind of explanation. On, they have created around themselves, their own little cosmos of modern, westernised Muslims who do not think it necessary to bother about the state of Islam, as long as they are handled for their sophistication. A dangerous trend is fast in circulation and it promises to threaten those sections of Muslim community who for some reason, are yet Islamic.

Islam has come to stay as the major world religion. This status has been an appellation which is hard won. Many a religion of earlier origin lost all traces in the current of time. It is the very fibre of Islam with its enduring warp and woof that continuous to stand the challenge of time.

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