CHAPTER - V

ISLAM PROCLAIMS

(i) Not in contradiction with any religion - Surviving or non-surviving

(ii) Human approach and Universal appeal

(iii) Principles - A Modern Outlook
(1) Not in contradiction with any religion

In the constant flux which this world is, man has always craved for something of permanent value. In his zest for the search for permanence, for support and security, he tried one form of worship and the other. Aborigine cult was satisfied with the worship of totem, idols or nature Gods. This was the stage in anthropology when man was unsure of his own purpose of life and universe. He was crude enough to allot any teleology behind creation. It was only his fear of nature and natural calamities like earthquake, rains, hazards and epidemic that led him to worship. The elevated sense of reverence and gratitude would be too much to expect or infer from this tribes. With the advance of human knowledge, intellect was refined and man cultivated social sense and social qualities. Religion in the present form was the result of human progress and refinement. Despite the changing phase of the universe, where many a kingdom came into existence and perished, many cultures flourished and were extinct, there has remained but one institution which had not changed fundamentally that of religion. With the advent of each fresh society, there was a religion, which was suitable to it. No society has remained without some form of religion. With Islam, its story must recede to pagan Arabs who had their own confusions. Till Islam received its complete form as we follow it today, it had faced turbulences. Being a revealed religion, it carries the unanimous authority of the prophet, unlike some other major
religions of Hindu origin. Thus, the religious epic is also above controversy where compilation of verses is concerned. However, there may be differences of opinion in the interpretation of the text.

The concept of religion in different religions of the world is worth notice. It will be observed that they agree in the fundamental concept of religion as that which is the way of life, and that way of life sustains life itself. At times, religion is also the social order in which there is an appropriate scope for the development of each individual. Christianity understands religion as the etymological meaning of the word religion, which consists of 'Re' and 'Legere' or 'Ligare'. These words mean 'to re-unite'. Christianity believes that man is created after the image of God. The function of religion is to bring together bring closer one man and the other, and in turn, bringing the entire humanity closer to God. A Jain view on religion is ascetic still. A religion is that which relieves man of his suffering and blesses him with eternal joy. The Japanese Shintoism calls religion 'Kami-no-Michi'. 'Kami' means the divine irreducible elements and 'Kami-no-Michi' means the road of the divine elements which eventually is the road to God. Similar interpretation qualifies the Chinese 'Taoism'. 'Tao' is the word for path. Even the word 'Mazhab' connotes this meaning. It does indicate the concept of progress, of path, but such path which should be travelled

---

1 Kato, A study of Shinto (Tokyo), 1895, P-206 FF
with all awareness for ethics and morals. Then alone, will it lead to joy to bliss and to God. The word 'Islam' is also informative. It is derived from the word 'Salaam' and connotes peace.

Thus, there are various interpretations of religion in the major world religion. They indicate the general nature of the religious belief, and practice. Such path, which, not only should be contemplated, but must also be traded with full reverence and faith. This is the only dimension of life which exhibits uniquely, the unity in the quality of religious experience despite diversity of practices. Like other religions, past and present, Islam too strives to attain the lofty goals of religion.

A religion aims the inculcation of spiritual interest and meaning in the otherwise mundane and meaningless life. If followed faithfully, it promises identity with the Almighty. Amidst conflict, it serves as guide and bestows peace upon the afflicted souls. It eliminates all apprehensions of death, and enlightens man upon the life after death, which is full of hope. It does not treat soul as perishable, just like body. Hence there is the promise of eternal happiness for the soul. Religion enlightens man on the issues of this life, and elevates his spirits to the sublime. It behoves upon every man that he does not remain contented with his lower status here on earth, but aspire for religious heights. For and normal human being, with all his short-comings, joy, sorrow, conflicts and achievements, religion remains a necessity. It is all the more poignant in the present age, when man has facing a thorough change in all system,
including the value system.

With Islam, the problem has been two-fold. In the first place, it need uplift its society which is illiterate and poverty-stricken. In the second place then, it must train the followers along the path of religion. Such group of men then would be the apt and befitting example of any healthy society.

Religion functions at various levels of human life. Whatever be its field of action, that is, social, ethical or religious and the like, religious aims to bring out the best in man. The response of the integrated personality is the response of religion. It is this dimension of religion which Islam holds in esteem. It is unique to Islam, because Islam has incorporated in its fold that which is practically ethical, and which alone is the path to reach divinity, though there are sufi cults which have accepted the path of renunciation. An excellent example of the way a religion proliferates in individual life, to his minutest details, is Islam.

The accounts of the code of conduct have been dealt extensively elsewhere in this work. But, there yet remains an aspect of Quranic teaching which is followed but by the few outnumbered. This is an interpretation of Quran which is accepted and even followed by an important section of Moslems. Islam, just like other religions has its own aspect of mysticism. Muslim mysticism is founded on the elevated feeling of Divine pervasion with which the Prophet was vividly expressive. His devotion was characteristiclly fervent and ecstatic. His entire life was the concrete example of
his rapture in God's devotion. While such a kind of message may have been exemplified by the religions with the founders, Islam is particularly obvious because its founder was just one amongst the people, and not some inapproachable dervish of jungles leading an unusual life. The mysticism of Islam has not to rely upon some invented fetish and their supposed powers. Nor does it bade a solitary life in order to experience the moments of closeness or exhortation with God.

It is remarkable that the mystic element in Islam was not what the Prophet aimed at. As a matter of fact, he placed the performance of duties before religious speculations. No doubt that the mystical and the contemplative elements exist in all religions. Yet it varies from cult to cult, from context to context. The Hinduism may call it the total identity with God, the Christianity may call it being with God. Mystics and saints are no monopoly to any religion. The only common criterion on the basis of which they may be compared is the quality of their religious experiences. They cannot even be spoken alike in terms of their life and habits. The variation we come across will be amazing and incredible. Yet, the fact remains that there is an under-current of similitude which runs parallel in all religions and hence the possibility of the ecstasy in divine orientation. Superfluous descriptions of a religion may give the impression that it is only humanistic in approach, with a general apathy to supernatural. About Islam, there is also a nobler view that Quran carries a deeper and more inward sense with the words. This is
a genuine observation. There is no attempt to avoid the rigorous comprehension of the texts and the dogmas.

The mystic cult neither in Christianity nor in Islam is a new development. It was well prevalent in Rome and even Jews were quite aware of it. In the ancient India, it had swayed the country with unprecedented authority. Western countries were quite enchanted by it. Unfortunately, even the learned scholars like Sayeed2 Amir Ali, scholars that mysticism implied the abandonment of all commerce with the outside world, the renunciation of family ties and obligations, and the concentration of the human mind, and the concentration upon the abstract, to the exclusion of others. This is the essence of the mystic cult. It is a well understood theme, especially of mysticism of Islam and India in general, that the crux of it is in the spirit of detachment, and not necessarily renunciation. However, renunciation was preached for those to whom it suited, so as to find proper environment for mystic experiences. Islam has exemplified some aspect of it in Sufi cult. However, total self-elimination is not the standard of life recommended by Quran for the general mankind. This peculiar characteristic only few minds who are observed with the idea of absorbing (Fana filah) in God, their ownself. None can dissuade a mind charged with such sublime mission. However, if the experiences of such mystics are introduced to social welfare, they are regarded as the highest in the social value hierarchy. Essentially,

2 The spirit of Islam, P-459
mysticism is not a social value, but it is within the social structure itself that it is inspired, and can find application. In seclusion it can rapture a person and lead him to ecstasy. Yet, it is the Prophet, the Christ, The Gandhi, The Lincoln, or even the Vivekanand that society cares for; more so as social reforms than religious propagators. Such religious leaders have necessarily carries a deep concern for the welfare of mankind, both, in isolation, and in general. A subtle definition of religion was contrived by Whitehead, the mathematical philosopher, as that which the man does with himself in silence. Everything else, by deduction, would fall in the realm of his society. Thus, every religions has fundamentally dealt with the other worldly or spiritual fate of human soul, and have emphasised the need for its sure, secure and future, by leading a truthful life. It is Islam which has unambiguously proclaimed that every act of life here and now, is an important and indispensable section of total life, which consists of the present life, and life after death. There are no different standards for divine life and mundane life. There is only one standard, that which is the best standard and Quran has prescribed it.

Absorption in Godhood can be of social value only when there is a translation of truthfulness, and goodness, even in the normal activities of life. Society is a complex structure and total annihilation of social values is not desirable for a common man. Islam has taken due note of human psychology in prescribing the code of conduct. It has generously made allowances
for some peculiar contexts and cases, and ordained upon the wise men to thrash out the problem and offer a satisfactory code of conduct. No other religion has shown such magnanimity of approach to human personality with all its complexity. Thus the spiritual values may be applied for the solution of social problems, and should be maximally involved in life. The message of Quran is not total renunciation nor self-annihilation. It is the fulfilment of natural propensities in full confirmation with Islam. Quran has taught to maintain the balance between the extremes of all types. This is known as 'taqwa' or balanced life. It is that which characterises the mind - Quran builds, a mind which looks upon life as a gift from God, as a trust and a sacred privilege to be lived in the presence of divinity. The life of a muslim must be exemplery and such that it serves to guide those who are confused and at still at bay, for lack of proper guidance.

Unfortunately, the legacy of the past is rotting in Muslim homes, in books. Some verses from Quran may find recitation now and then, but that too, is a lip service. And still, inspite of the fact that Islam has been treated like guest in his own home, it has vitiated the Muslim mind ever since it was first preached. However, the religion that passes for Islam today is the Islam of the masses and of the ruling classes in almost all Muslim countries. Some scholars compare it to the Islam of the middle ages, and not exactly the Islam of the Quran and the Prophet. As we have noted, the influence of many a factor has made Islam undergo a social metamorphosis. Islam has changed colours, but
superfluously. Inherently, it has retained its fundamental spirit of doubtless devotion to one Godhood. Its outward form may be a trifle dishevelled. The light of hope to retain this religion in the face of adverse situations, is not extinguished, till every Muslim proclaims his reverence for Islam. Medieval Muslim history has made grand contributions to the history of Islam, through various disciplines like Arabs, sciences and Philosophy. Yet, it must be admitted that the common Muslim man was kept totally away from their benefits. They formed the exclusive concern of the intellectual elite and bore little relation to the social and religious life of masses who were kept down in ignorance and were simply shepherded by some chosen men of society. At times, such 'Ulema' were paid stipends by political interests, winning over the confidence of the masses. In the present century, some traces of it still prevail in Muslim countries.

It has been necessary to say quite a lot about the political and legal side of Islam because, as we have stressed Prophet Muhammad (S.A.) was more than a preacher of monotheism: he was the creator of a political community. This political dimension of Islam sets it apart to a great extent from the other great religions of the world. It is true that other religions have at various times taken on a political colouring. Confucianism is an example of a religion which is more concerned with the ordinary of society than with anything else. But consistently through Muslim history

3 Soothill, The Three Religions of China (London-1913), PP 31 FF
there has been concern both for the shaping of the community through the law and for the success of the community as an institution in the world.

The nearest analogue of Islam is Judaism. They are equally politically preoccupied. However, Islam could succeed in breaking the bonds of narrow nationalism, and spread far and wide. Judaism remained confined to a people of particular nation, or to those who claimed descent from that nation. After the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 until the creating of the modern state of Israel, Judaism was scarcely political. It was concerned with the religious survival of the chosen people. In Islam, on the contrary, the faith was nourished and sustained by power. Its destiny was manifest, not concealed. Hence even during the last two centuries, when the West has been so strong, and the Islamic peoples so weak, a profound tension has arisen in the Islamic mind. From one point of view, we might single out Islam's contribution to the religious experience of mankind as this it has been a demonstration of the way faith can be harnessed to the creation of a complex and successful community upon earth -- not a Utopian one, but a matter of fact one -- a community in which men's chief wishes, needs and ambitions are not denied, but channelled into a pattern of pious brotherhood. Not that Islam has never remained corrupt. It does have its share of this vice. At times, it has displayed a violence which would defame the teachings of Quran. Sometimes it has been socially unjust. Nevertheless, it has preserved the ideal which the Prophet set before himself of a people united in sensible and
sober brotherhood in which Quranic law will promote cohesion and justice.

From the standpoint of religious history Islam is important for its social dimension. Its institutions are not merely temples, churches, mosques, synagogues etc., but they are such that cover the whole life of the community. There is no place for a special institution within society devoted to the ends of the faith. For it is the whole of society which is devoted to the ends of the faith. Throughout the entire life, a Muslim is never out of religion as such.

However, it would be mistaken to stress the political side of Islam to such a degree that we lose sight of the religious experience that practice which have been nurtured within it. The Prophet was vividly aware of the majestic and gorgeous God. He could instigate the Muslim community into an impressive dedication to worship.

The concept of prayer in any religious comprises of pious dialogue with God. The manners and methods differ widely. In some religions like Christianity, they tend to remain more of Sunday gatherings than Sunday services.

A Hindu often prays on his own, though there are occasions for communal prayers. Islam has suggested both ways of worship; communal, and individual. However, the Quran favours communal worship, because it places every Muslim, king and beggar, on the same par in the eyes of Allah. Daily prayers of Muslims continuously express his awe before the Almighty, and thereby he gains
a sense of divine Presence. Islamic monotheism is superior and simpler to others.* It does not contain the Trinity doctrine of Christianity, or the major Hindu cults, who ultimately accept monotheism. The focus of address is directed solely to the invisible Creator.

Most major religions of the world are sacramental. For example, a Christian on an average adheres to sacraments for his religious life. At times it is difficult to differentiate between worship and the sacraments. But there is virtually nothing in Islam corresponding to this aspect of the ritualistic dimension. The ritual of Islam centres simply on prayers, conceived primarily as a mode of worship rather than of petitioning God for favours. In the pilgrimage, sacrifice is retained as one element. But this is in the way of adopting older practice and giving it a purified sanction within the new faith. But though there has been this concentration on the worship of the numinous and holy Being who rules over all and governs men's lives, the mystical impulse was not ultimately denied within the Islamic community.

Though the concept of religious or mystical experience has occupied a central place in all religions of the world, there are some trends sympathetic to mystical experience like Wahhabi. On the whole, Islam could remain pious, but some strands of religious experience have found place in Islamic piety.

* Except in the lax forms of the Shia.
However, in modern times, there has been a steady and marked drift back to the religion of worship, turning away from such mystical or religious experiences. Muslim mysticism was generally known as Sufism,\(^4\) Sufi a word derived from the term Soof, means wool.\(^5\) The Sufi wore wool because of the simplicity and the


\(^5\) On the origin of the word of 'Sufi' and its adoption, there are many different opinions among the learned. The following is a list of the various Arabic and other words which are supposed to be origin of the word of 'Sufi'.

(i) **Saff**

Saff means row (those Muslims who always tried to offer their Namaz (prayers) in the coveted first row of the 'five' daily congregations during the Prophet's time).

(ii) **Soof** means wool

(iii) 'Safa' which means cleanliness, particularly the purity of heart, soul and actions of a man.

(iv) **Ahl-i-Saffa**

During the life time of the Holy Prophet, there were certain ascetics whose sole occupation in life was nothing but continuous study and recitation of the Holy Quran, meditation, prayers and absolute devotion to God in the Prophet's historical mosque at Medina. (Kashf-ul-Mahjub, BH. P. Schukovski, Iran, pp. 34-35.

(v) **'Siyu Soofia'**

It is a Greek word which means divine knowledge.
austerity involved. This was one of the indications that the movement had its origin in ascetism. This aspect of Islamic religiosity was influenced by other religions where hermits and world-denying ascetic was a widely respected religious figure. Moreover, the ideal of self-denial which was right there amidst the Islamic virtues had found applications though, of course, in an extremely, un-Islamic manner. For, Quran has not encouraged ascetism as such. Though some scholars opine that just because

---

Following the above list, there have been many critical investigations by the learned to find out the origin of the word 'Sufi'. According to Abu Raihan at Beruni, (Abu Raihan-al-Beruni, India; an account of the Religion, philosophy, literature, geography, chronology, astronomy, customs, laws and astrology of India about 1030 A.D. by Dr. E. C. Sachu.) 'Sufi' is a Greek word approximately the meaning of the word 'philosopher'. Because, in Greek, 'Sufi' means philosophy, therefore, the philosopher was known as Falil-Sooa or the student of 'Falsafa' (philosopher). As there was a particular group of ascetics in Islam who followed a creed which was somewhat identical with the Greek philosophy, hence this group was generally called by the name of 'Sufi'. But Noldeke's arguments, on the authority of the Arabic and Greek rules of grammar which differ in the two languages, do not help to confirm Beruni's interpretation. According to the consensus of public opinion, however, the word of 'Sufi' is derived from 'Soof' which means wool, therefore, the Islamic mystics followed their sacred tradition and used the same dress of wool and were called Sufis (wearers of Soof).

Generally, this is the confirmed origin of the word 'Sufi', although its varied origins and meanings are differently interpreted by some great Sufis, according to their own experiences and view.
the Prophet had given a political dimension to ethical monotheism, attractions in world negation found place. Sufis mysticism had a trend which could be paralleled in Mahāyāna Buddhism. There was one Absolute, and it embraced and lay within the multiple phenomena of the world. A parallel found in Ibn Arabi, with a logic like that of Shankara, denied that there was such an event as becoming one with God, though it was not generally realized. The mystical experience was the realization of this union, but it did not bring it about. It did not need to.

The concept of punishment is prevalent in other religions as in Islam. Major cults of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and other religions with Upanishadic origin, accepted the law of Karma; even Christianity said 'as you shall sow, so shall you reap'. More or less, the theory of punishment was that of retaliation. The myths of hell and its tortures were also attempted in legends, and literature. Islam has elaborated its theory of punishment while interpreting Islamic Law. In the first two centuries, there were different interpretations of the Law. As a result, there were number of schools. They differed slightly in emphasis, but agreed that the Quran was the inspired word of God. Even then, with the change of times, it was not always easy to apply legislation intended for Arabian conditions. Nor had there been legislation of all possible conditions. Of course, there were gaps to be filled. And the Muslim elites diverged over the right technique to accomplish this task.
It is not unlikely that some such concepts and categories of heaven, hell and the Day of Judgement or life after death are explained colourfully by legends. At the doctrinal and mythological level, Islam has been tenacious in its conservatism. It is the characteristic of Islam that the faith was formed in a remarkably short space of time, during the latter years of Prophet's life. Some other religions were taught and preached by the founder themselves. For instance, it was after four centuries that the teachings of Bible could be named adequately. But in Quran, there was a clearly defined set of teachings. A follower need not over ambiguous references and indirect suggestions or depend on allegory, as in most scriptures of the world. The main structure of belief is already present. Quran being valued as an Eternal Book as such it was the supreme authority. It could not be tempered with or passed over lightly. To this day, Islam retains an incarnational attitude to its scripture. In their initial form, the teachings of Quran remain unchanged.

In comparison to all the world religions of today and yester years, Islam has attained the status because of the reverence for Quran and for all the clarity with which it attempts to conserve the prophetic message. Even-though, it passed through trying situations just like other faiths of the world, it could steer off its course to the present day. By and large, the three great Semitic faiths have been alike in their distrust of compromise with paganism. Islam has served as a unique experiment in a universal monotheism which is also blended with political and social dimension of human existence.
(ii) Human approach and Universal appeal

Those of us who have lived through the world wars, may have witnessed the devastation created by uncontrolled selfishness of man, best of all, a sense of consideration for others. This negligence on the part of powerful nations and men wielding power has led to the major world destructions. It was the pet hope of the victorious to resolve to peace everafter, and as a token of their will, a machinery called United Nations Organisation was set up. Needless to discuss its efficacy in preventing wars. That peace, which was cherished after two world wars, is still playing hide-and-seek with us. That which the religious authorities could only dream to achieve, science has materialised. It has reduced distances between men at best physically. The opportunity for mankind to be well-knit and fortify is really unprecedented. The Prophet said, "every man, a brother unto every other".  

The sense of security is universal, and hence follows the need to cultivate some fundamental virtues that will lead to peace. Every religion expresses this basic human sentiment and expectation to peace. Every religion has carved out a path, following which, the situations leading to conflicts will automatically be avoided. The whole drama of blood, terror and woe is acted and enacted with added fervour each time, only because some men are basically non-religious and thus, do not heed future consequences. To them, happiness in every form lies here on earth. The materialist outlook is responsible for creating want, hatred and apathy amongst

6 Al Dawud, Sunan, Kitabal-Taharat Bab-al-Wazu
men. Constantly, religion has been preaching to give up the evil, and accept the good. So simple are its dictions but as Napoleon remarked, "...... but the simple is the most difficult". Our difficulty, however, is of a more dire kind. It is rooted in the very ugly face of human nature, the vice of greed, selfishness and sadism.

The task of rooting out this evil is a spiritual function: it is for the religion to fulfil it. Unfortunately, there is an attempt to replace religion by some such a-religious systems like secularism and humanism, but in vain. This is an unwelcome change. Modernism, in any form, sans religion, will surely end up into a useless doctrine which is like a ship without anchor. No society can subsist without the spiritual face of religion. All pretex of arreligocitv has ended up in hopeless materialism from which there cannot be any retreat; such intoxicating and vain is the material competition in modern nations. Any attempt at peace are made by inadequately furnished nations, whose cry for brotherhood is taken for their weakness and apprehension. It is only religion which can offer spiritual base without which no theory will ever endure. These are the warnings leading to dangerous consequences if secularism or humanism bereft of spiritualism vitiates human life.

The only solace that man can seek is in the healing touch of religion. The unity of God stressed by Islam is to express itself in the unity of man or in the peaceful order of existence, whatever

Quran 7:172.
the name.

There cannot be any conflict in the economic uplift of the common man. Here, any ideology that shirks to solve the basic problems of men is sure to decay or worn out in the course of time. Material welfare may be attained by the rulers in power, by their palaces for their nations. Yet, it is the religion which deals with the paradoxical character of human nature. The task of every religion has been to save man from sinking in the scale of life.

There was no other humble attempt made for the revival and benefit of human society in general, than Islam. That too, on such an elevated plane as religion. There is hardly any need for the scholar of comparative religions to behold the superiority of Islam over other world religions. The superiority of Quran over the scriptures of the other world religions lay in its all embracing universality, in contrast to the narrow, rigid nationalism of most scriptures like Judaism, and Sikhism. This universality makes for the superior morality. As such, it has exerted a drastic effect on the historical development of these religious and civilizations shaped by them.

Islam appeals to the mankind in general, because it is the religion of contentment. The man who craves for nothing more than his lot, is the contented person, who will hardly disrupt the order of life. He does not complain his lot, at the same time, strives along the righteous path laid down in Quran. True to the spirit of Islam, he is at peace with himself and the world.
The search for absolute values is also satisfied by Islam. The trinity of Christianity, of Hinduism and the related religions, has found a full fledged application in Islam.

The true, the good and the beautiful are not so much reserved for the life here after. On the other hands, they will together form the reward of the virtuous life here on earth. Often, life on earth is rather untrue, evil and ugly due to many forces which exert simultaneously on human lives. In spite of such adverse situations a Muslim is ordained to live the life mentioned in Quran. The current lay between the scripture and the practice is the result of human negligence. As discussed elsewhere, it is often the way of comfort and each which a man opts for, since he has little faith in future, leave alone the life after death. The entire identification of the matter and the spirit is erroneous. Unless the spirit is recognised, there will be nothing to entice man along the path of Quran. Mere lip service to the fundamentals of Islam will entitle a man as Muslim, but certainly will not qualify him for the grand purpose of spreading peace. Even before any one can realize whether he is Muslim or not, he has always remained so at heart and temperament. So fundamental is the nature of this religion that no religious person can seriously deny his affiliation to Islam. So unique is the faith in Godhood that a parallel such as this is a vindication.

The mind of the Muslim almost all over the world is at a discount today. There is a lag between the life as enjoined on him by the Quran, and the life he has devised for himself. There is a
lag between the social and political institutions, which the Quran desires him to install, and the institutions which he has set up for himself and developed in the course of history. There is a lag between the purpose of the present day Muslim and the abiding purpose of the Quran -- the world purpose. There is, in short, a big lag between the universality of the Quran and the isolationist religiosity of the present-day Muslim. If one should probe the lives of those who profess to believe, in other sacred books-- better the task be undertaken by some ardent follower of each -- we shall not be surprised if similar lags meet the eye.

In his Ihya-ul-'Ulum, Ghazali records an incident in the life of Khalif Omar. The Khalif was travelling from Madina to Mecca. On the way one early morning he noticed a flock of sheep at the base of a hillock. A Negro boy was tending the flock. To test whether the teachings of the Quran had, at least in their elementary form, ever reached this Negro boy living in a remote corner of Arabia and to what extent he had reacted to them in his individual life, he asked him if he would like to sell one of the lambs in the flock. Promptly a definite 'No' was the answer. "But why?" asked the Khalif. "Why? -- Because it is not mine" rejoined the Negro boy. "It is my master's, and I am his slave". "What matters? said the Khalif. "Take this money, give that lamb to me; and go and tell your master that some wolf snatched away his lamb". The boy stared hard at the Khalif. The poor fellow did not know whom he was staring at.

"I can cheat my master over there on the other side of the hillock. But can I", he stressed, "cheat that Great Master who is overlooking both of us and listening". The boy was an illiterate boy. He had never read the Quran. But the atmospheric influence of its teachings had evidently touched his mind. He must have heard in some manner the Quranic words that God "knows what the soul of man whispereth to him" and that He is "closer to him than his jugular vein, and that "three persons speak not privately together, but He is their fourth; nor five, but He is their sixth, nor fewer, nor more, but wherever they be He is with them". He must also have heard that none can give away or sell anything which does not belong to him. What profound impression the reply of this Negro boy must have created on the mind of a man like Omar, that austere and mighty Khalif of Islam, can easily be imagined. "Tears rolled down his cheeks" says the narrative. Tenderly he asked the boy to lead him on to his worldly master, the owner of the flock. On meeting him the Khalif enquired: "How much did you pay for this slave?" "So much", replied the owner. "Here is that much, take it, and set the boy free".

Further still commendable is the catholocity of Islam. God expresses himself through all languages. So universal is its appeal that the Quran promises salvation not merely to the people of the Quran but to those who may follow some other religion. Any human

9 Quran, 50:16
10 Quran, 58:7
being irrespective of his commitments to any establishment is liable to salvation. This factor in Islam is so important that its relevance need not be over emphasized, especially in modern age of religious intolerance. Religious intolerance is the biggest blot on modern civilization. The larger the preaching of this message of Islam, the better purpose it will serve.

"Verily, they who believe (in the Message of the Prophet of Islam), and they who are Jews and Christians and Sabians—whoever believeth in God and the Day Hereafter, and doeth that which is right—shall have their recompense with their Lord; fear shall not come upon them, neither shall they grieve."¹²

Even those who are not established to any faith, are entitled to this reward.¹³

There was the prophetic attempt to minimize tensions between different belief groups. Believing in One God, the members would cultivate the feeling of belonging to one family. The common good is the altruistic concept, which, if fulfilled, would lessen the friction among Riz Powers which constantly threaten to annihilate peace. The Prophet has anticipated the social order where non-Islamic members too, would flourish: They who may accept God, but would fail to follow every detail of the religion.

To such, Islam has a promise to fulfill.

The concept of 'Family of God' is the strong presence which basically deduces the entire mankind to the same divine lineage.

---

¹² Qur'an 2: 256
The Prophet had visualized an ideal world order where every man Muslim or non-Muslim must belong to 'One Family' by the only relevant criterion of belief in the Unity of God. 'Kafir' is understood to deny this very doting concept of Quran and thus, is destroying the unity amongst men, consequently. Thus, Quran had attempted no compromise with the contradiction. It cannot foresee a scheme of society where unity and disunity may co-exist, leave alone their efficacy to promote peace on this earth. Still, the basic attitude of Quran to those who follow other faiths, is that of tolerance. Quran ordains every Muslim to accept everyone else in the good faith that some deny, the world will genuinely become one family of all men—and the faith that "God will bring them together".

".... God is our Lord and your Lord. We will have, what we have worked for, and you will have what you have worked for. So let there be no dispute between us and you. God will bring us all together and to Him is our final journeying".14

Those amongst men who revere the Word of God and live accordingly, are truly speaking, Vicegerents of God on earth. Their worth is measured by their deeds in the society to each and every creature on this earth who together form the Prophetic "Family of God".

Islam has appealed to the very core of Man's faith in the goodness of life. As a matter of fact, any religious person of any faith has accepted the message of the Prophet, either consciously or unconsciously. Such universal are the teachings of Quran, that

14 Quran 42:15.
no one on earth can seriously challenge. Hence, Islam may not genuinely be concerned over the issue of converting men to Islam, for some time, they are sure to come across the only alternative, which is Truth. If man is at peace with himself and with the world, if he is concerned with the present life as well as the life after death, then he has accepted Islam in its true spirit. "Unto their Lord will all be gathered" in the unfailing and universal Prophet that Quran holds out; it is the cardinal belief of Quran, the idea of Return to God. Therein, the message of fraternity on earth will find full realization, for every one will be treated as the member of a family whose Master is God. Islam has thus viewed the human life whose spans extend beyond the perishable body, to the realm of spirit. It has firmly stressed the importance of this life as a chance bestowed by the Almighty, so that the spirit may enjoy eternal bliss.

Here, Islam has not drifted from any world faith. The doctrinal concept of judgement, the Hindu concept of Law of Karma or the ideas of reward and punishment, may just be viewed as the common meaning that a religion attempts to give to the life after death. Islam has not fallen short of discussing in detail, even this ethereal phenomenon.

However, the scholars may bear in mind that the one single point upon which the edifice of religion rests, is this faith in life after death. It necessarily would presuppose further, that man is, beyond his perishable body, also a spirit. Having assured that the religion is preached to such masses, Islam would stand highest in its universal appeal.
(iii) **Principles - A Modern Outlook**

It is totally unwarranted that the basic concept of Islamic life be challenged its authenticity and relevance in modern life. Any amount of re-interpretation or explanation will ultimately land up in rationalisation of the un-Islamic actions. Granted some genuine physical difficulties in the implementation of the fundamentals of Islam, it still remains for a Muslim to seek satisfactory alternatives or substitutes. On the contrary, he is likely to carry with him the unavoidable and haunting feeling of incompetence. If he is sufficiently frank, then he would admit his lack of sufficient belief in their efficacy in fetching him heavenly pleasures. Or still, it may just be the case of persistent lethargy.

*Whatever* may be the reasons for not translating into action the code of conduct, it remains an undeniable fact that modern Muslim has deviated from Islamic standards, even from those which are the very basic.

Whether this drift is for the uplift of a Muslim or not is for the future to decide. Presently, the situation needs analysis that can justify the faith of a modern Muslim in Islam without exercising any coercion upon his fundamental faith in the Almighty. This aspect of human personality is difficult to refute, least to eradicate.

Often, a modern Muslim is at loss to decide as to what he should accept, and to what extent. The recent times tinged with the message of superior brain power has all the more been confusing. The difficulty is genuine, and it persists in almost all religions.
It is so because the human intellect functions to two general levels; one, at the level of its own personality make up, and the other, at the social make up, of which religion is one of the constituents. If some religious or ethical values do not harmonise with those values of the individual which, his intellect has accepted as basic then there is a dilemma, which results in a conflict. Now, if an individual is not capable of harmonising the two, then he remains a divided self, who is a chronic, religious hypocrit. The entire society populates them in every field of life. In case where such analysis is absent, an individual blindly follows a faith, and is quite content, though his contentment is the contentment of the frog in the well, who is foolishly happy with the 'vastness' of the well, unaware of the outside world. The validity of a religion is truly tested by its efficacy in evoking man's authentic commitment to its value system. The extent to which Islam has succeeded should be objectively judged by the quality of the followers rather than mere quantity. It is upon the former lot, that the future of Islam relies for its eternal status. However, the quantity is also necessary for receiving the basic message of the Prophet with implicit submission.

The inborn nature of man remains vulnerable to the dictates of divinity, in whatever form he may recognise. Neglect of this aspect in the study of human personality will give rise to the questions unanswerable and problems that are insoluble. Modern age must humbly accept the totality of man with all its facets instead of emphasising just one aspect like reason, to the bewilderment of other finer emotions. In such cases there is apt to remain
an implicit gap between the theoretical aspect of religion and its practical application. Hence it is necessary that there is smooth transition from the lofty religious ideals to the mundane activities. Else, a conflict will arise, and religion will have to accept the enforced place of dignified, unquestionable and pious institution which is totally averse to change. Any attempt at change will be marked as an act of blasphemy. A religion hence is deemed to evolve a sense of relevance and reverence in man. This alone should make a true test of religion. Any compromise with human intellect and rationality results into an unpardonable apprehension, or an intolerable revolt. Both these positions are extreme, and hence, must be avoided in the name of religion.

At times, some religious doctrines are genuinely obsolete for the very reason that man no longer apprehends consequences as seriously, as their statement. Hence, he has accepted a way of life, justifying his conduct. For instance, prayer has been bereft of its aweful hallow that Quran accounted for. Instead of observing strictly the obligatory prayer, there is a tendency to become apathetic to it. Today everyone argues that the practice of such prayers tends to become mechanical, and hence any sincere alternative of recognising the merciful God is welcome. Few realize the power of discipline and concentration which lays down the very fundamental dictum of any code of conduct in a religion. The advantages are far too great than any inconvenience. Hence, instead of leading a morally indifferent life, it is advisable to divert it to the call of the ancient saints who have emphasised rightly
the consoling and healing value of prayers. It should be performed in the true spirit of total attunement instead of segmented reward-seeking activity.

Fasting has likewise created sensation in the light of modern concepts of God and his qualities. There is no need to starve in order to please God, or that, one may not observe fast for any petty reason like weakness and general well-being. If it is described as a sacrifice, then fasting has truly not succeeded in convincing the Muslim today.

He may fast in public and eat in private. He may fast for any reason than the religious. In order to strike a balance between spontaneous hunger and mechanical fasting, religion has struck a balance to enable man to inculcate a sense of proportion and discipline. Modern Muslims abstains from fasting because the reason mentioned in Islam are not palatable to his adulterated life style.

Modern Muslim has conveniently rationalised the concept of wealth tax. He despises it in the name of sympathy, which limps the human dignity. Quran has hailed charity in all forms, public or private. However, modern legalisation of tax payment to the government, especially in Islamic states, has saved face of receiver. Instead of personal donation, these states tend to deduct some percentage, and utilise the fund for building up a welfare society.

The problem of poverty cannot be solved by the individual sacrifice. Just because a religion ordains austerity it need not be followed in the sense that the austerity of one man will solve the general problem of want. Instead of compulsory tax-
payment, the state should feel free to manage the huge personal property so that there is no unnecessary burden upon the poor, and the rich are not spared their appropriate tax just under the garb of five percent tax payment where they must pay even more.

Fasting, prayer and alms-giving are instrumental activities, whereas pilgrimage tends to remain ritualistic. With all the ritualistic activities of Islam are imbued with fresh interpretation, the reason of man. He does not consider it worth while to spend on an activity which he may look upon as just ritualistic. However, it should be admitted that the growth of a sense of group identity and of emotional identification with fellow believers all over the world through joint participation in symbolic activities is more welcome than segmentary unity. It is just true that Islamic brotherhood should be expanded to human brotherhood.

Apart from the new wave interpretation in some fundamentals of Islam, its value system has also been reshuffled, though very subtly and slightly.

Islamic concept of faith is quite vague if not ambiguous. Its vagueness is due to the qualities that constitute this value; they are, belief in God, angels. The Day of Judgement accepting all the prophets of God without any distinction, but Prophet Mohammad (S.A.) is the last of the Prophets, and finally accepting all revealed books of God without any distinctions, Quran of course, being final and perfect.

It is indisputable that none of these aspects of faith constitute a clear cut definition of faith. They are termed as unvarifiable metaphysical doctrines, whereas Quran condemns hair-splitting
A mature faith must consist of the values which are easily acceptable, practicable and meaningful to man rather than theorisation and speculation. Though of course, Quran has room for metaphorical statements though major part of it is positively categorical imperatives. May be accepted with hesitation at times, though of course, it need not imply that the person is a non-believer. A person may be man of religion and even a Muslim without strictly being able to follow the principles and the values.

It is only the spiritual void that is averse to faith. It is only the total negligence of any principle or value in life that marks a Kafir, and certainly not a believer, Muslim or non-Muslim. It must humbly be admitted that no religion can seriously proclaim to remain the final word upon the unaverse and its Master. Hence, the claim to selective salvation that was made by the ancient Jews and Christians was condemned by Quran. Unfortunately Islam itself became prey of human weakness to selfishness, and the custodians of Islam followed the suit. Faith has no colour, climate or creed. It flourishes anywhere and everywhere. Anyone sharing the authenticity of faith is a co-sharer in the common human destiny. It would simply be preposterous for a Muslim to claim the privilege of a higher spiritual status or merit merely because of belonging to the Islamic community founded by the Prophet.

Fear of God in Islam has been held responsible for piety. That, however, is one of the reasons, and it certainly reflects upon the attributes of God that a religion so authentically claims to have allotted to Him. Can God be retributive and fearful? Instead, the attribute of justice could conveniently solve the problem of the nature of God. Islam has made an outright rejection of any such discussion. Though the point mentioned above certainly chums the intellect of the most devout Muslim. Though, of course, Islamic value system includes higher type of piety, which means something more than mere divine apprehension. Positively, it ordains the cultivation of basic human values and their further refinement. The traditional Islamic value system includes this higher type of piety.16

One singular concept which will never lose its validity is the concept of brotherhood. With the value that respects human life, the value of brotherhood should also be earnestly preached and rigorously practiced. This idea should be understood and accepted in the intra-Islamic sense rather than in the inter-religious sense. The only criterion of judgement for superiority or inferiority in the rank of human value, is the piety. Mature opinion on brotherhood is certainly non-discriminative. Some common factors and life-style may suggest some segmentation indeed. But that is quite harmless and innocent as long as the wider concept

16 Morality having roots in the lower sense of Taqwa is certainly inferior to the sense of 'Taqwa' which is motivated by the love of God.
The concept of Justice is the natural consequence of accepting that every human soul has right to salvation. Islam commands impartial justice. Justice is closer to social consideration than anything other-worldly, or reward-seeking tools. Justice functions in all fields of life and yet none of the definitions of justice may claim to have exhausted its attributes. Islam is not against social strata or gradation by the criterion of power or wealth. Hence, no need fear Islamic inequality in any walk of life. But the equality, rank, status, power or property must be righteously earned than inherited. It must be appreciated and observed with full implications that no other religion has preached such polymorphous equality.