PREFACE

The concept of soul has been a subject of serious contemplation in Eastern and Western Philosophy and religion. Soul is usually defined as a non-material and immortal substance housed in the physical body. The ultimate aim of life is to know the true nature of soul which is a part and parcel of the Divine. With this objective in view, I have tried to present the work in five chapters.

The first chapter of the thesis deals with a brief historical survey of the concept of soul in East and West. At the same time, the discussion on the concept of soul extends from its definition, and characteristics to nature of soul as developed in different religions and philosophical thoughts. Emphasis has been laid on Greek, ancient Hindu, Latin, Hebrew, Christian, Jaina and Buddhist viewpoints as briefly as possible. The thoughts of Homer, Hesiod, Orphicism, Pre Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian, Neoplatonic and Medieval theologians and philosophers about soul has been discussed as a background study for the study of soul in Islam.

In the second chapter, an attempt has been made to give a vivid picture regarding the concept of soul in Islam. The discussion covers the definition, origin, nature, and characteristics of soul in Islam on the basis of the "Holy Qur'an and teachings of the prophet Mohammad (s). The creation of Adam, the first soul, by Allah and the subsequent creation of other souls from Adam as his descendants have been discussed in detail. At the time of creation, the Almighty gave two opposite propensities of wickedness and goodness which determines the nature of the soul. The soul developing good qualities is united with Allah, where as souls developing wicked elements (Nafse ammara) are liable for punishment. A part from that the chapter also elaborates other kinds of souls, self reproaching soul (Nafse lawwamat) conscious of its evil deeds and the satisfied soul (Nafse Mutmaenat) and the non-human souls of animals, demons, angels and devils.
The third chapter deals with different conditions and stages of development of souls in Islamic religion and philosophy. In Islam the early life of man is not the first and the last stage. Because there was life before hand and there will be life afterwards. The different stages and conditions of soul have been catagorised under the following heads— soul before birth, the condition of soul from birth to death, and the future of soul after death and before salvation and demnation. At the same time the chapter has thrown light on the moral implications and psychological condition of soul. The influence of good and evil on soul, the condition of soul and the meeting of soul in dream has been discussed. Again, the condition of soul after death, the method of capturing soul from human body has been discussed with emphasis on soul after death in grave.

The fourth chapter deals with the fate of soul after death. In this chapter, emphasis has been laid on the Resurrection of the soul and the Day of judgement after which Allah sends the souls either to Hell (Jahannam) or to paradise (Jannat). The process of Resurrection and gathering of souls and the picture of the soul on the Bridge over Hell (Sirat) and importance of mediation (Shafayat) for souls' salvation have been discussed in detail. In course of the discussion, references have been drawn from the "Holy Qur'an" about Resurrection, Day of judgement, and soul in relation to body, God, Heaven and Hell.

In the fifth chapter an attempt has been made to carry out a comperative study of the philosophical thoughts of different religions regarding the concept of soul. And the concluding chapter summarises the whole discussion with emphasis on the importance and relevance of study and research on soul.

(Abdul Kader Ahmed)