

G M Syed

**Religion &
Reality**

(A translation of *Jeeain ditho aahey moon*)

About the book

This book is a revised version of Saen G.M. Syed's original effort, published in 1986. This edition is a humble effort to represent Syed's views on life, religion and Sufism. However, no work of this type can be error-free. Should the readers find anything that is out of context or ambiguous, we should be only too pleased to I acknowledge our shortcomings and rectify them in later editions. Himself a Sufi, he had great love and to, admiration for Sufis and men of letters. He was known for his refined manners and great hospitality.

This book is a modest tribute to a great son of Sindh who served his motherland for 76 long years. He began his public career in 1919 and it continued till his death in 1995. Hindus, Buddhist, Jains, Christians, Koreans and Muslims participated in his last rites to pay homage to the departed soul. He will be remembered for his erudition, great urbanity, generosity and above all his untiring devotion to the cause that was dearest to his heart - Sindh - He loved Sindh, He lived for Sindh and died for Sindh. Mr. Syed used to say that the basic message of Sindh was non-violence, co-existence and co-operation. History will remember him as eminent ambassador of peace, goodwill and tolerance. Our thanks are due to Zafar Iqbal Mirza, Prof. Syed Ghulam Abbas, Syed Afzal Haider, Dr. Zia-ul-Haq Shah and Mr. Rashid Haider Rizvi and many others without whose unflinching co-operation this book would not have been possible.

Khadim Hussain Soomro

DEDICATION

I am dedicating this book to the great saint and mystic of Sindh, Hazrat Shah Enayatullah Sufi, who is also known by the title of Shah-i-Shaheed. He sacrificed everything which he possessed and is waged a war against religious prejudices. To quote a Persian couplet:

سر در قدمِ یارِ فدا شد چه بجا شد
این بارِ گران بود، ادا شد چه بجا شد
[شاه عنایت شهید]

[Gone is my life in the way of Lover. Verily, it was a great burden for me.]

جیڈانہن کریان برک، نیدانہن صاحب سامہون۔

Wherever I see,
I find clear manifestations of Truth
(Shah Latif)

ڈسٹ ڈسین جی، نہ ہمہ کی حق چنیں،

Should you acquire the ability to recognise Truth,
You, too, shall see nothing but God.
(Shah Latif)

Ghulam Murtaza Syed

Introduction

By nature, I am a man of strong feelings. That is probably why I have been deeply inclined towards religion. There was a time when I was a strict observer of prayers and fasts. My chief practices were night vigils, prayers, rigors of self-confinement, visits to the shrines of saints, association with dervishes, seeking guidance from sublimated spiritual men, making offerings, persuading people to offer prayers, constructing mosque, preaching religion, etc. All the time, conventional religious beliefs and prejudices clouded my mind. I believed that my own salvation and that of the whole mankind lay in being deeply religious. Those who did not agree with my viewpoint, I considered them accursed and doomed. However, I began to shed my prejudices when I was exposed to the followers of other religions, held discussions with them studied their scriptures and pondered over reality in its broader context. Thus, the veil of hatred and narrow-mindedness, which had obstructed my vision, was lifted. Finally, there appeared big cracks in the isolated fastness of my Puritanism.

An account of this change and its cause has been given in my book entitled *My Story in My Words*. (*Apni Kahani Apni Zibani*) Suffice it is to say that, in addition to Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's religious approach and his belief, the scientific, stud of materialism, history and philosophy, broadened my vision. At last, the experience of temporal love changed the course of my feelings. Thirty-five years ago, I related this experience in the closing pages of my essay entitled "Worldly Stages" (Majaazi Marhalay) in the following words:

Love had played its magic on me. Diversity was lost in Unity, yet an inner voice told me that it was not my final goal. Gradually, the evanescence of life dawned upon me and I perceived that 'I do not love the temporary'. It was the stage when the sordidness of sensual desires became clear to me, and finally, craving for lust subsided. Feelings too, lost their intensity. I reverently said good-bye to wordy love. Then I started looking for a higher object for devotion. That was indeed a painful task. Before that, I had seen Reality in its worldly shape and it was somewhat comforting. Now all was blank and the invisible was the higher object. Nothing appealed to the eyes as an acceptable substitute. Restless was the heart. At last, I became an ascetic. I renounced the world. Free of all temporal bonds, I began to devote my time to the contemplation of God. During the days of my renunciation and devotion to God, I perceived a new image of worldly love. My heart began to throb. I had been long in pursuit for that object. This time it appeared in the form of an ideology rather than an individual. It led me from unity to diversity. "Formerly, Marvi was pining for her beloved, Khet. However, afterwards, in place of Khet, she began to remember her relatives and countrymen. Marvi was a native of Thar. Her love had centered round her people. My country is Sindh; my love revolves round my countrymen. This was a development of worldly love. In other words, the feeling of love remained the same, but the beloved changed; intoxication was the same, but the pleasure was different; the wine was the same, the cup-bearer was different."

After that, the change that occurred in me can be measured from my addresses to various societies of the Sufis in Sindh. On the occasion of the conference held at the village called Dhuthro, I declared: "Man's material and spiritual development is not possible without creating a spirit of universal peace and tolerance. For this, the land of Sindh has an exemplary message: a truly generous respect for mankind. Our venerable ancestors and great saints regarded it as real worship and, for centuries, our people have been a living, proof of the truth and success of this message."

"It is a fact that the Valley of Sindh has always been an island of tolerance for conflicting faiths and cultures. I dwelt at length on this aspect in my address as President of the Reception Committee of the All India Muslim League's session held at Karachi in 1943. Some passages from it are being reproduced here. Friends' Glorious has been the past of this land. I hope its future will also be the same. Due to a variety of reasons, the history of this region has been glittering indeed. This land is the birthplace of several ancient civilizations; the archaeological remains at Mohen-jo-daro are a

witness to this fact. Several ancient races intermingled here. The relics of Dravidians, Aryans, Semites and Mongols are easily to be found here. Like the mingling of different races, an amalgam of different religions and philosophies took place here, this is not to be found elsewhere. Buddhism was born in India, but it flourished here. When Islam appeared in Sindh, Buddhism was still extant. The people of this place had not yet forgotten Gautam's teachings on Nirvana. Islam added a positive element to the teachings of Buddha.

"The philosophies of Vedanta and the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud) first interacted on each other in this land. The principle of Unity influenced the thinking of the Hindus, reducing their interest in idolatry. Similarly, being influenced by the spiritual and common popularity of the bhajan and kirtan the Muslim dervishes made music part of their discipline. Thus, the Hindus and the Muslims came nearer to each other and were tolerant of each other. The teachings of Bhagat Kabir and Guru Nanak are a shining proof of this tolerance. Shah Abdul Latif of Bhit has a distinguished place as a teacher of the unity of human brotherhood and religions. It is due to this that the inhabitants of the Valley of Sindh, professing different religions and beliefs, are living together with love and amity. Religious or sectarian prejudices, caste differences and the impulse for violence are absent in this land as perhaps nowhere else." I spoke of the greatness of this land to my distinguished guests not to refresh their memory: my Object was to propose some ways for making the future of this land bright.

"Gentleman! It is not unknown to you that the collective life of humanity, passing through various stages of evolution, is advancing towards its final goal, and this goal is the unity of thought and action. It is my firm conviction that religious, ethical and philosophical ideas, politico-economic forces and movements, have served as so many means of achieving this important objective. History is a witness to this evolutionary struggle through which scattered and small families developed into clans and a combination of various clans in their turn became nations. "

In different periods, groups of human beings have used different methods, of achieving unity among themselves. As a fundamental and common value, the unity of language, culture, belief and other interests have played an important part in creating such unity.

"Popular ideas in the modern age have led to conflicts instead of promoting peace. Instead of laying stress upon the foundations of unity, they, give importance to peripheral matters. Beyond doubt, these relative values have unified large groups in the past; but at last, history rejected them as counterfeit coins."

"Unless some lasting solution is found for rooting out political, economic and religious prejudices, there can neither be lasting peace nor unity in the world. To reach this goal, it is necessary to have mental discipline and ability, which is cultivated in a particular environment and with a specific historical tradition. The people of Sindh are most suited for it, because they have set a living, example of tolerance and fellow feeling. Therefore, their example deserves to be followed."

"This is not only in the present day world that the people of this place, despite their religious, sectarian and political differences, have a sincere and whole-hearted respect for humanity. This is a Centuries-old tradition here. History bears testimony to the fact that all the races and cultures which come to this land, got integrated. All the beliefs and ideas which had converged here, lost their exclusivism and finally they blended into each other with love and amity." "I hope that this tradition will not only continue but will grow from strength to strength. The land of Sindh has to play a significant role in the achievement of a last peace in the world."

I expressed these ideas, my faith in Sindh's message of love has grown only firmer. What are the ideological moorings of this message? How have our saints made us grasp them? I spent the greater part of my life trying to find an answer to these questions. Therefore, this book represents the essence of my long pursuit of truth.

My findings may be regarded as personal conclusions of a truth-seeker. People have the right to agree or disagree with me, in the light of their own knowledge and experience. I do not claim a monopoly on truth. To err is human; and I am a human being. However, whatever I have written in this book, I have done with the utmost honesty. The ocean of truth 'is a collection of unlimited drops. The vast garden of ideas has borrowed its beauty from flowers of a million hues. This effort may be regarded as one such effort at garnering truth.

I have a feeling that the orthodox will not like my ideas. It is possible that they may brand me either a renegade or a communist. Similarly, perhaps those young men may not be able to digest my ideas, which were exploited and misled in the name of conventional beliefs. Thus, they are disgusted with religion and are now inclined towards materialism. There is every likelihood that some may call me a conservative or a 'Sufi mullah'. In this connection, I deem it necessary to state that, by getting this book published, I do not mean to woo people to my ideology, nor do I intend to irritate any one. My sole objective has been to call a spade a spade and to state facts in its barest form as I happened to observe them. Therefore, the title of the book is suggestive. As the poet says:

من ہائے ہوئے میکنم کے بشنود یا شنود

[I cry even if my wails go unheard].

I hope that believes in the Qur'anic tenet: "For me my faith, and for you yours" and the progressive men reposing their belief in the freedom of expression will read these words with an open mind. I understand that all religious, philosophies, ideas and branches of learning are parts of that Omniscient Being called God. If a person gets a drop out of this Unbounded Sea, he can justifiably be proud of his good fortune. However, if one has his fill, even then he cannot claim perfection. The possession of Absolute Knowledge is not for any single individual to claim.

[Whichever way I went, I saw wonders without end and the path (to truth) is limitless].

Wisdom is acquired through continuous contemplation, knowledge, experience sublimation of self and action. According to my ability, I too have endeavored to garner some pearls. Jewelers may evaluate them as precious ones or mere shells. However, without much fear of the censure of critics, I am presenting to my readers the results of the efforts of a lifetime. According to the theory of evolution, each age has brought about new revelations. In future, too, this process is likely to continue. Hence, to regard any religious or worldly law as final or any faith or doctrine as lasting is against the fundamental principle of the laws of evolution. I see the light of truth in every religion. I consider all religious beliefs as part of Nature. The fundamental aim of all religions is to promote peace, progress and prosperity of mankind. In my view, a Sufi should not necessarily be the follower of any particular theology. He can make use of every religion, philosophy, learning and experience. However, a Sufi is essentially non-committed. His love transcends every law and limit. He believes in:

[Every country is mine, since it belongs to my God].

To me, Sufism is like a lovely bouquet radiating love and truth: a bouquet in which flowers of various hues and fragrance are beautifully assorted. The Sufi culls from all religious beliefs, philosophies and branches of learning the underlying unity of the scheme of things. He cannot imprison himself in a narrow cell. He sincerely follows the saying of the Prophet: Accept the good wherever you get it from and reject all that which bad.

The Sufi perceives a purpose and a plan in the creation of the universe. He considers knowledge and vision to be the essence of all religions. He deems all that as unnatural, which leads to hatred, enmity, disturbances, violence, chaos and confusion. To raise the voice of truth against all such things is the very aim of a Sufi. As an ordinary traveler on the path of Sufism, I am presenting this book with this objective in view.

Chapter 1-Religions: Their Historical Background

A treasure trove of knowledge about the world and the universe has been acquired from various branches of learning. This knowledge has primarily been gained through research. In these efforts are included the evolutionary stages of human life- and the history of religion. The branches of learning which have unraveled truth are geology, geography, anthropology, ethnology, philology, archaeology, sociology folklore, mythology, philosophy, history, etc.

Gone are the days when truth about religion could, be known only through the revealed books, commentaries and traditions. In modern times, knowledge of religion has become a science. The research efforts of those learned men who devoted their lives to studying the above-named branches of learning on different religions, cannot be ignored. Research on religion may be divided into two types:

- Research on the special departments of particular religions.
- Research on the history of all religions, their origin, and their constituent elements, their aims and objectives.

In the first category of researchers, there are Commentators, traditionalists, jurists and priests, that is, the learned men belonging to religions and sects. Among the researchers of the second type are pantheistic Sufis, historians, philosophers and scientists. If the results of the researchers of both types are scrutinized, it would be clear that the first kind, inspired by its specialization in some spheres, is confined to a limited field, while that of the second type transcends all limits. It was really through the contributions made by the second type of learned men and thinkers that a complete history of almost all religions was written in the light of the researches of the above-named sciences. Similarly, these men of learning thoroughly discussed the causes of the origin of religion, its basic purpose and constituent elements. Thus, basic unity in diversifies, discovered and presented to the world.

Since I am not writing a thesis on the history of religions, a comprehensive discussion of the matter will be out of place here. My purpose is to present briefly those truths regarding the origin of religion and the history of its development which have struck me as significant in order to make what follows easier to understand.

According to the scientists, life has existed on earth for millions of years. The primary life consisted of amoebae, after which there came fish, creeping animals, birds, quadrupeds. Life, evolving through these stages, finally chiseled man into shape. This is the height of physical evolution. Man rightly deserves to be called the best of all creation. Like the body, intelligence had also to pass through evolutionary stages. Finally, from inorganic and organic matter, it came to inhabit in man at last.

How long human being has existed on earth? Scientists have given clear evidence of the fact that primitive man lived in forests and on hills as a brute. The early man had no idea of cultivation, rearing of cattle, use of fire or even of covering his body. He used to wander about naked. His food was tree leaves, wild fruit, raw meat and fish. He had no permanent dwelling- place. In order to protect himself from scorching heat or freezing cold, he took shelter in caves or hollows of trees.

When did he get the power of speech? What was the nature of his first conversation? What were his moral values? What were the limits of his consciousness? Attempts have been made to answer these and similar other questions. As a result of these researches, many interesting and wonderful facts have come to light. Research is continuing. It is hoped that more useful information, backed by scientific evidence will be forthcoming in future.

Now think of religion. Is any of the existing faiths older than four or five thousand years? Has any religion conveyed any information about anything on the origin of life and man? Has it revealed any truth about the, earth and the universe? Has it thrown any light on the physical features of the earth and life? If so, can all these facts stand scientific scrutiny? Modern science tells us that the primitive man had to face many hazards at every step. He found himself completely helpless in the face of these dangers the very thought of which frightened him. The fear of some objects had permanently settled in his mind. For example: sudden changes in Nature such as extreme cold or heat, heavy rains, floods, storms, earthquakes, volcanic, eruptions, etc.

Fear of beasts and hidden forces

The primitive man came across such animals in forests and rivers as the horse, the elephant, the rhino, the bear, the dragon and the crocodile. He regarded some hidden and mysterious powers responsible for his troubles and travails. Such powers, he named as genie, giants, spirits and devils. The primitive man also devised ways and means to ward off the baneful influence of these powers. Casual accidents such as epidemics, attacks by groups that are famines that are more powerful, sudden death, physical disability, disputes about possessing- women and problems concerning the means of subsistence faced him every day of his life. The primitive man considered himself perpetually insecure. Fear, despair and superstition dogged him. At last, he set about to get rid of them. He had two important problems: safety of life and satisfaction of mind and soul. For achieving the first objective, he came to some good conclusions after thousands of years. For example, he began to tame animals for getting milk and meat. This brought economic relief to him and saved him from the troubles and dangers of the hunt. He got accustomed to storing grain. During famines or periods of food shortages, he began to depend on stored-up grain. He learnt the skill of making arms from wood and stone. Thus, hunting down wild beasts became easier for him. The primitive man also learnt to produce fire. He used it in cooking grain and meat, for saving himself from the rigors of cold and for providing light. All these things made the life of the primitive man easier. The grip of fear and anxiety on his mind was somewhat loosened. It also instilled in him courage to take steps towards social change. This became the starting point for human development.

For his other important objective satisfaction of mind and soul, the primitive man achieved greater success than before. Observations, experiments, thinking and contemplation of thousands of years had given birth in his mind to some beliefs and superstitions. The important one of these was that every living being this world had a soul, which continued to live even after the end of temporal life. This created in his mind a vague idea of life after death. He began to consider useful and harmful things as powerful spirits. Thus, he started worshipping some of the trees, mountains, heavenly bodies, the elements etc.

The primitive man could not see most of the powerful spirits as physical beings, nor was he capable of forming any clear concept of them. However, because of certain manifestations, he had come to believe in them, he regarded those spirits as the cause of natural disasters and casual happenings as a potential reason for his own troubles. During this first stage of material and mental development, man was savage. The qualities of love, mercy and forgiveness were still far from him. The practices of savage life had convinced him that the visible spirits which he called gods, goddesses, genie and devils, were fierce violent and dangerous. Those spirits could be propitiated only by flattery, humble of devotion, offerings, sacrifices, incantations, rituals, vigils and magic. This way of thinking led to the invention of worship and prayer.

At some places, there was worship of the moon and the stars; at others of the rivers, the hills, the seas, trees, clouds, the trees, fire etc., were regarded as gods. To seek clemency from them, a series of acts of worship was started. This

continued and man began to consider the spirits of dead animals, relatives and enemies as participants in his affairs. In order to turn the good and evil influences of these objects to his own advantage, the primitive man introduced various kinds of prayers, practices, recitations and rituals. In addition, his thinking on the material causes of creation led him to worship human limbs. The phallus came to reflect the extreme degree of sex worship.

During the same period of the creation and worship of gods, some animals were considered as good or bad. The animals, which proved useful, helpful and beneficial for a clan, were regarded as good. As they were considered friendly, they were treated with respect. Later those animals were regarded as manifestations of invisible powers and were worshipped as gods. Similarly, the animals, which proved harmful, troublesome and unprofitable, were considered evil. They were regarded as manifestations of evil spirits. Consequently, they were hated and shunned. In the books of anthropology, the good animals are called 'totems' and the evil ones as 'Taboos'. Every clan selected its own totems and taboos. The result was that some animals, being regarded as good and evil in one clan, were not considered so in other clans. Further, the totems of one clan were the taboos of another. The reason is obvious. Every human group lived in different circumstances and had different experiences. Animal love or animal worship developed to such an extent that, in order to assert their superiority' many clans started to trace their origins in favorite animals. For example: the Red Indians of California called themselves the descendants of wolves. Some well known Turkish and Mongol tribes of Tartars claimed that their ancient mother from whom they had descended, was a blue-eyed she-wolf. Some aborigines in America regarded the birds, the quadrupeds and fish as their ancestors. To this day, they are called by those names. Vatican, the famous clan of Africa, claims its descent from a boar. Some ancient inhabitants of Malaya regarded themselves as having developed from a race of Semen or apes. The inhabitants of New Guinea claim that they are sons of a fish and of a white parrot. The famous Bani Asad tribe of Hejaz and the Kehar clan of Sindh call themselves descendants of a lion.

In the past, this was the practice of tracing one's lineage to animals. Even today, the practice of naming men after favorite animals is still common. Besides, many civilized nations today use their totemic animals many civilized with great honor as their national sign. For example, the bear of Russia, the dragon of China, the eagle of Germany, America and the lion of Britain.

The nation of regarding the animals as good and evil subsequently led to the belief in lucky and unlucky stars and planets. At last, it created two great powers: 'Good' and 'Bad', 'Right' and 'Wrong', 'Truth' and 'Falsehood'. The conflicting powers of 'God' and 'Satan', 'Ahriman' and 'Yazdan', born of such division of actions or attributes. Thus, it was the sum-total of human consciousness or an outcome of mental restlessness, where, after thousands of years of his physical evolution, man reached this stage through a continuo struggle for the satisfaction of spirit and mind.

Why did the consciousness of man impel him to go farther? Why did he feel restless? Why did his mind and soul crave for fulfillment? Has this craving any relative value? Has the human conscious reached its Zenith? If not, will it ever be able to do so? These are important questions. Of these, the easiest is about the craving of mind and soul for fulfillment. Even today, man appears to be as restless as he was in the past. He is yet struggling for self-fulfillment. The greater is the effort, the farther the goal recedes.

Both the bright and the dark sides are before me. I do not deny that much of the darkness has disappeared. However, at the same time, a new dawn is yet awaited. The fact is that the light of all the rising suns has remained confined to a particular sphere. No doubt, their rays kindled some nooks and corners, but instead of removing darkness, they set houses and towns on fire. There is no denying the fact that some light does appear when houses are put to the torch. But

if it was the proper way of dispelling darkness then, despite many houses and habitations having been set ablaze, why' is there a blanket of darkness ever here? Why does the ghost of prejudice, hatred and violence continue to stalk the world? Why is there competition in the use of horrible weapons of mass destruction?

However, it is not darkness alone, which has its lengthening its shadow all over the world. A single precept or a belief, too, produces a flash of light and it dispels darkness. To add more brightness to light is the real task of the men of consciousness. All hopes for good must depend on it. But what is the belief? In answer to this question, you will hear several answers. Many tall claims will be made. Dozens of leaders of new and old beliefs will try to entice you. This is seemingly a very confusing situation. The result is that doubts engulfs the mind what to accept and what to reject. Even then, the right choice is not so difficult. The touchstone is that whenever you find that, the exponents of an ideology or a belief preaching hatred and inciting people in alluring words against opposing ideologies or beliefs, insisting on narrow-minded prejudices, expressing the spiritual power of their belief as indispensable not only for their own countrymen but for the people of the whole world, they are counterfeit coins. The spiritual veracity of such a faith must be in doubt. A genuine message, which can satisfy the urges of a human being, is that which is free from prejudices of race, color and religion. It primarily teaches the lesson of love. It -draws its sustenance, from the concept of brotherhood. A true faith is that which looks at man and his affairs and problems entirely from the humanitarian point of view. This true message cannot be anything but love and tolerance for conveying this message; there is no need for power, influence, or violence. Prejudice and base feelings are anathema to it. It must not be adulterated or its sweetness will turn into bitter venom.

People like me, who believe in love, toleration and fellow feeling, is not without hope, that humanism will ultimately prevail. The eternally restless spirit of man will find its cherished goal. Thus, the human soul will find peace. This faith, belief, or hope is not based only on a pious wish, but also on the solid foundation of love which are not a relative term but a necessity. Even in the past, the mind and soul of man had been restless in its pursuit. Man is still restless and shall remain so unless he has attained peace. The obstacles in his way are savage sentiments. These obstacles can be overcome by the progress of civilization and culture. The first condition is the spirit of toleration or the respect of man as a whole. We can fulfill this condition by controlling our brute passions.

Now there remain these questions: Why did man crave for advancement? Why did he feel restless? Why did his soul and mind feel yearn for satisfaction? There is only one plausible answers to these questions: "Experience of life." Different stages in human consciousness and thought are in fact the result of good and bad experiences. They are the result of action and reaction of brute instincts. The entire history of human thought and life is in fact the history of struggle between the savage and the civilized instances of man.

The following instincts are of fundamental importance in this connection:

1. Instinct of acquisition.
2. Instinct of race-preservation.
3. Instinct of self-preservation.
4. Instinct of repulsion.

5. Instinct of elation or self-display.
6. Instinct of pugnacity or self-assertion.

The following is a brief description of the role each instinct has played in the life of an individual:

Instinct of acquisition

Under this instinct, man has tried to satisfy the needs of his daily life. It has also impelled him to seek pleasure. Consequently, there arose a conflict between the individual and the group. This conflict gave birth to numerous problems in corporate as well as individual life. Constant tension and confusion led to jeopardizing peace. At last, after the century-old bitter experience, different tribes collectively evolved certain social principles and Forms in order to overcome their problems. In this way, social principles gradually began to be evolved and acquired a sacrosanct status.

Instinct of race-preservation

In the beginning, under this instinct, man used to satisfy his sexual desires without feeling ashamed. After millions of years, his mind conceived the idea of keeping society clean, thereby avoiding mutual disputes and maintaining the purity of race. Hence, on the basis of certain superstitious beliefs, arguments and personal feelings, he laid down some principles. Later, these principles served as a solid foundation for the ethical and religious code to be adopted by tribes and nations. How did these laws grow in different tribes and societies? How did they gain religious and moral sanction? On these questions, the learned men of the present age have worked, providing valuable information through their researches.

Instinct of self-preservation

From the beginning to this day, man has primarily been governed by an urge to preserve himself and his belonging. The inherent dangers challenging the safety of life goaded man into seeking refuge in superstition. As we have already seen, this dependence on superstitious was rooted in the instinct for self-preservation. This has led to a great deal of violent wars and uncertainty.

No doubt, to counter this state of uncertainty and to promote peace, the movements of non-violence and coexistence were also initiated. However, Prejudice, selfishness and mutual distrust have thwarted all attempts at achieving lasting peace.

This atmosphere which is charged with fear and hatred, does not merely exist on the -international plane. In almost all countries of the world, a horrible contact is going on. People of one nation or race, followers of one religion or sect, are fighting one another. The prayerful are bent upon exploiting and usurping- the rights of the weak. In this game of barbaric blunder, the preservation of life and property, dignity and honor appears to have become extremely difficult.

Instinct of repulsion

This instinct is based on the feelings of loss, pain, jealousy, rivalry and inferiority complex. If you look into the causes of hatred, which move individuals, tribes and nations, you will discover that there, is no greater danger to the safety and well-being of humanity and culture than hatred. That is why prophets, saints, reformers and sages have preached mutual tolerance, love and amity. They founded religions, propounded new philosophies and social values on solid foundations so as to promote peace, binding human beings love and brotherhood.

Fellow feeling and respect for humanity are the outcome of such efforts. These efforts brought into existence our cities and nations where men of different beliefs, sects, colors and races live. It is a different thing that narrow-minded and bigoted men keep on fanning the flame of hatred and continue to ignite the fire of dissension and disorder. The most furious fire is the fire of religious and sectarian hatred. It is easy to light. Its flames stay longer and the range of its destruction is considerably wider. What an irony that the founders of religion used it as a means for promoting human brotherhood and for fostering love and friendship. But their followers sow seeds of discord and hatred.

Instinct of elation and self-display

There is a proverb that Nature has deprived no one of beauty and intellect. Hence, we see that no man considers himself inferior to others. Everyone regards himself a paragon of beauty and intelligence. To a certain extent, this self-confidence is necessary and good. But when this feeling degenerates into self-deception, man becomes vain, and, in order to assert his authority on others, he takes recourse to force and violence. The ego of individuals sometimes destroys social values. An inflated ego, therefore, becomes a great obstacle in the way of peace and progress. To control the vice of egotism in man, certain religions have prescribed self-control and asceticism but these too have failed to deliver the goods.

Instinct of pugnacity or self-assertion

Some animals are carnivorous and social herbivorous. Man is a combination of the two. In him the gregarious habit has developed because of vegetarianism. But he gets incited at the slightest provocation. It is due to his being carnivorous. The instinct of pugnacity forces him to be violent. Therefore he fights and sheds blood. These acts of violence he calls heroism and bravery. The powerful oppressing the weak, the fighting tribes dominating the less aggressive ones, the conquest of a foreign land on the basis of military superiority, the rich exploiting the poor, are the results of this instinct.

Because of its unhealthy effects and inducement to emotionalism, some religions have called the consumption of meat as an act of savagery. They have found it detrimental to society. Hence, they have advocated vegetarianism and non-violence. Other religions regarded pugnacity as a natural instinct and therefore, they recommend people to make the best use of it. However, man has not so far been able to get rid of the baneful effect of the excess of emotion.

From the study of the influence of instincts on the evolution of human intellect and beliefs, it becomes clear how religions and superstitions have originated and how religion, through different revolutionary stages, has acquired its present form. If all these stages are critically analyzed, the following results are obtained:

1. Religious beliefs were the product of fear and doubt, which impelled the primitive man into superstitions.
2. To dispel doubts, magical charms, incantations, and sacrifices were the methods, which were employed in the beginning, the purpose of which was either to vanquish or flatter vague hidden powers.
3. All the existing religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Jainism, Zoroasterianism, Taoism, have in some form or the other the elements of primitive beliefs and rituals. For example: faith in the earthly spirits, heavenly bodies, material objects, living creatures; the control of hidden forces; making- of sacrifices and offering-s to propitiate them; trust in the spell of some words; burning of incense, wearing of threads and charms; ideas regarding lucky and unlucky numbers. All these tenets are rooted in primitive beliefs.
4. Modern organized religions are no more than five thousand years old at the most.
5. Just like religions and the modern social laws are investigated, it will be discovered that the origins of most of them can be traced to the ancient customs and rituals.
6. The same is true of modern moral precept research; many a prevalent moral precept will appear to have its roots in the old tribal values.
7. Religions had their origin in the worship of many *gods*. Then followed Dualism (Ahriman and Harmazud), then Trinity (Father, Son and *Holy Ghost*) and finally Unity where a single God came to be worshipped. These are various stages in the evolution of religion.
8. In the earl religions, gods were regarded as vengeful and cruel. The concept of a compassionate and benevolent God was a later product.
9. Religious beliefs, faith in superstitions, rituals and prayers have lost much of their sanctity after the scientific inventions and the rise of intellectualism.
10. According to the theory of evolution which the Quran, all religions have been evolving one after another or one along with the other. Besides, their practices have been changing according to the demands of time.
11. The origination of modern organized religions their commentators have also made changes in ancient beliefs, practices, prayers and ritual accordance with the exigencies of times and dictates of social conditions. Some old things retained and new ones were added so as to start changing requirements. In this way, world religions came into existence, and much room was left for further changes (Ijtehad) in them.
12. The claim made by the founders of religions that they were gifted with supernatural wisdom and knowledge and had the power of revelations, was for impressing the importance of their good messages on the people.

Comprehension of these fundamental points make it abundantly clear that just as families form tribes and tribes form nations or as small villages constitute a district, a division, a province, and a country; so have the ancient beliefs, customs, modes of prayers of different tribes, with some changes here and there, gave shape to universal religions.

A broader view also makes it manifest that the basic feelings which gave birth to religion are fear and hope which in turn have given birth to beliefs about pleasure and pain, reward and punishment, good and evil, life and death, worship, prayer. This is the reason that Just is various learned men have propounded different theories about knowledge and science, various prophets, god-incarnates and reformers have expressed their views on the origin of the Universe, the existence of spirits, life after death, reward and punishment, life and its purpose.

It is absolutely clear that the way the founders of religions have brought about changes in the social and moral laws according- to the chancing demands of society, so have they amended or rejected the previous precepts in order to create a harmony with the intellectual urges of their times. Not only that each religion inherited the legacy of another, it also ushered in progressive reform. Thus, every, religion widened the scope of human brotherhood, removed the obstacles in the development of society, and became the *raison d'être* for the promotion of peace and prosperity.

So long as a religion kept on performing its real role, its leaders and followers continued to retain the warmth of Generosity not for themselves, but for others too. They did not feel offended if questions of 'what' and 'why' were posed to them. Similarly, free inquiry and differences were not regarded as an affront. To win others to their side, only practical examples and cogent arguments were used. But when religion became a mere ritual and it no longer remained a dynamic force, its custodians and commentators stagnated and they became archaic. Traditional concepts as well as old moral and social ways of life were regarded as eternal. Eyes were closed to the progressive demands of societies and the use of reason was forbidden.

The cumulative result was that the followers of religion were confined to within the limits of narrow-mindedness and bigotry. So great was their alienation that they became groups striving for economic benefits. Again, just as powerful nations dominated the weak ones, so did larger religious communities devour smaller ones. Thus, they assumed the form of religious imperialism.

These two kinds of imperialism are different only in one respect. Just as international imperialism exploits the weak nations on the basis of its superiority in power and wealth so does religious imperialism dominate a weaker sect or a minority community.

We see today that groups of professional commentators exist in almost every major religion. In order to safeguard their vested interests, these people consider it necessary to claim that the solution of all the problems of humanity is possible only and only through their religion. Other religions are not only incapable of doing so, but their followers are bound to go to hell. They pose as if they have a monopoly of 'truth' and that they have the exclusive right to decide as to who will go to heaven or hell.

Such thoughts may be of some importance to particular group, but for the purpose of the unity of mankind, universal peace, social progress, these ideas are opposed to the real spirit and high ideals of religion. They lay the foundation of bigotry, hatred and conflict and are highly detrimental to the progress and prosperity of the human race. If malice and prejudice are not banished, we may face a disaster of unprecedented proportions.

Chapter 2 - The Constituents of Religions

The facts highlighted in the last chapter may be summarized as:

- In his primitive stage, man became a victim of various kinds of fear and superstition. Therefore, for his security and satisfaction, he conjured up certain ideas and magical charms according to his comprehension and means. Later, these things were to be responsible for the birth of magic and incantation.
- Experience led to change and the development of human knowledge, consciousness and living conditions. Gradually, time came to exist a belief in spirits and hidden powers.
- To ward off the anger of the hidden forces or to seek their mercy, the primitive man began making animal sacrifices and started to worship, pray and perform rituals.
- The idea of good and evil, luck and bad luck was associated with some particular thing or animal. As unbridled instincts hindered the growth of social life, some social and moral laws were framed in order to regulate human conduct. At last, these factors led to the birth of organized religion. This analysis makes it explicitly clear that, in the beginning, the cause of the birth and objectives of religion were similar to that of magic. This is perhaps the reason that there is not much difference between the means, which the two adopted for the fulfillment of their objectives.

Take this for example, the sacrifice of man or animals, sprinkling of blood, burning incense. Believing in the efficacy of the repetition of certain words, sitting within a circle and controlling genie and evil spirits by means of long incantations, considering as a result of the wrath of the hidden powers. Ill-treating a patient and curing his disease through magic and offering food to the spirits. All these methods are common to both primitive religions and magic. On the methods of magical Incantation, Sir John Fraser's book is indeed a work of standard and elaborate research. After going through it, there remains no doubt that in the belief and practice of magic and religion many things are common.

Which of these two came first, is a question of which the learned men have differed. The majority believes that magic is older than religion. But there is a consensus of opinion that, in magic, man discovered the virtue of relying on his own courage, prowess and ability to confront the elements and hidden forces. Religion, on the other hand, created in him a feeling of helplessness and dependence.

This basic difference in magic and religion afterwards put the two on different paths, pursuing its own methods, reached the stage of reason and science. Religion progressed, but to the extent of heavenly spirits, the Day of Judgment and life after death. It passed through various stages of worshipping a multiplicity of gods and finally Oneness of God. But in spite of this contrast, the objectives of the two were the service, progress and prosperity of mankind.

Now let us try to find out the constituents of universal religion. After pondering over the realities and after thrashing out recorded facts, I have discerned the following aspects:

1. Belief and knowledge about the universe and spirits which we may call as divinity
2. Principles related to morality and self-control, which we may term as ethics

3. Religious rites, obligations and prayers.
4. Social laws, which are, called theology or jurisprudence.

Since knowledge of Divinity is the first and most fundamental branch of Religion I wish to make a comparative study here.

1. Divinity

This aspect of Religion throws light on the following facts:

- a. Existence of the universe and knowledge of its components.
- b. Belief in the existence of spirits and continuation of life.
- c. Explanation of the plan and purpose of creation.

(a) Existence of the universe and knowledge of its components

I shall divide this subject into three parts. One, the genesis and organization of empyrean; secondly, the genesis and evolution of earth and living beings; and thirdly, the birth and evolution of man. Genesis and Organization of Empyrean as far I know, all religions of the world have either kept quiet about it or they have accepted incorrect views of the physicists of then- time. The theories of the physicists of ancient India, the Middle East, Greece, Egypt and China which were accepted by Religion, has been proved wrong by recent research work and some of them have been modified and improved. Hence, to claim today that the founder of one's own Religion or scripture has given final and eternal information on this subject, is either sheer ignorance arrogance.

In the world of today, if somebody says that the sun revolves around the earth, the earth is not round. But flat and it has seven stages, that seven skies exist on each other like roofs and the stags are studded in the ceiling of the sky, people will undoubtedly laugh- at him, even if he may cite a holy book or the sayings of the founder of a Religion. Modern astronomy and physics have completely gone out of the sphere of religious belief and have entered the domain of scientific research. On this issue, no religion can now challenge the findings of modern scientists.

Birth and evolution of earth and living beings much like astronomy, religions and their propounds have failed to throw any light on this subject, too. For the acquisition of knowledge on this subject, man is bound to be guided by science.

Birth and evolution of man.

World religions have given two theories or beliefs about the birth of man. On the basis of harmony in these beliefs, we can put them into two groups. One group includes Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the other comprises Hinduism and Jainism.

According to the first group, God created the universe in six or seven days molded Adam out of clay in His own image and infused a soul into him. Adam was the prototype of man. According to these belief scholars of these religions, Adam came into existence seven hundred thousand years ago at the most. Thus, it can be inferred that, before Adam, there existed no human race on earth. Modern scientific knowledge disproves this theory in toto. Positive proofs have been found that man has inhabited the earth for millions of years. The evidence given by science in this regard cannot be rejected by anyone but an obstinate bigot. The religions of the other group accept the existence of human life for millions of years. This acceptance is in conformity with modern scientific findings. But their belief about the birth and evolution of man does not go beyond mythological surmises.

Only the modern science gives a clear idea, which are based on experiments and well-supported proofs? Although these theories cannot be regarded as final or complete, they are more dependable than the religious beliefs of the two groups. Besides religions have ceased to produce any work or research in this regard while science is busy in its pursuit with full devotion and determination. So we have no choice but to depend on the guidance of science alone. The sciences of geography, archaeology, biology is and psychology is serving us better than religions.

(b) Belief in the existence of spirits and continuation of life

For a clearer explanation, I divide this subject into two parts:

- (i) Existence of spirit.
- (ii) Continuation of life.

(i) Existence of spirit

The concept about spirit as something abstract and separate from the body is very ancient. In the primitive it origination from superstitious beliefs. In the light of reason and experiment, modern scientific knowledge has proved that most of the ancient beliefs and theories are erroneous. But this is such a problem about which science has not yet given any logical explanation. In this connection, the following verse of the Holy Quran appears to have expounded an eternal truth. The Holy Prophet was told: *[People ask you about the soul, tell them that it is one of the secrets of God, and man can know but little about it].*

In the beginning, the spirit was considered to exist in innumerable things. But gradually, this concept was confined to the angels, devils, genie, evil spirits, human beings and other living creatures. Most of the religions now do believe in the spiritual nature and power of the sun, the moon, the stars, the planets, the mountains, the trees, the seas the rivers, etc., although their own mythologies are replete with tales of a spiritual nature about these phenomena. It is possible that further success of the scientific researchers could considerably decrease the existing number of spirits.

However, faith in spirit is more ancient than the birth of modern religions. World religions have advanced certain theories about it. On the other hand, modern science has not so far been able to produce any solid proof to contradict that there is no spirit. Hence, we find that even today, most of the champions of modern science believe in the original and eternal existence of the spirits.

(ii) Belief in the continuity of life

About the belief prevalent regarding the genesis of spirit and continuity of life among the primitive men and in the old religions, research is still going on in the light of modern science. It is probable that more may be discovered in the near future. At present, there are four theories about it:

Theory of revealed religions.

Theory of unrevealed religions.

Vedantic and pantheistic theory.

Materialistic or atheistic theory.

Theory of revealed religions

Judaism, Christianity and Islam proclaim that the Almighty God created spirits on the Day of Creation. From there, only one under divine command sent each soul. It stays in the world in an ordained body and for a prescribed period. After that, it goes to purgatory. On the Day of Judgment, all the spirits will re-enter their bodies, and then they will be tried for their good and bad deeds, and will finally be sent to Heaven or to Hell.

According to this belief, every spirit is created as singularly exclusive from the very beginning. It remains in the world of the spirits for millions of years. It comes for short time in this world and then goes back.

Theory of unrevealed religions

I put into this group Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. According to these religions, spirit is created as an entity but they do not fix any time for it. They believe that both spirit and matter are eternal. For millions of years, spirit has been assuming the shapes of different bodies' accordance to its actions. First it enters into stones, then into vegetables, further into animals and finally into the human body. In this process of sublimation, if it performs good deeds, it is freed from the process of incarnation, that is, it achieves salvation. But if the deeds are not good, punished by, it is being subjected to transmigration. What happens to the spirit after salvation, is not explained by these religions.

Vedantic and pantheistic theory

These two names appear to be different but they represent an identical theory. Apparently, one is used for the Hindu and the other for the Muslim way of thinking. But truly speaking the theory ascribed to these names, is not the work of either. From the beginning to this day, conscientious men in every nation have been advocating it.

According to this theory, spirit and matter did not exist separately in the beginning. The real existence was that of God. Spirit and matter are the attributes and manifestation of the Real and the Absolute. The idea about the separate existence of the spirits of men and animals was but a delusion. Their existence is like the radiant rays of the sun and like the drops

of a deep ocean which is God. These beams and drops do not lose their individual existence. The origin and source of all is the Absolute. The Muslim mystics have explained the following verse of the Quran, which says:

[All of us have come from God and unto Him shall we return].

Sachal Sarmast, a great saint and mystic poet of Sindh, expresses this idea thus:

[The Beloved to see His own spectacle].

Ghalib has also expressed the same idea:

[This world is nothing but the manifestation of the eternal beauty of the Beloved where we would have been had He not been a narcissist].

[He himself is His own rival before the mirror. Otherwise He has no contender here].

One, who has savored the sweetness of this idea, gets free from narrow sectarian prejudices, ceremonial beliefs and lifeless prayers of the organized or unorganized religions. He regards love and welfare of humanity as his creed. At the same time, he is gifted with an insight to perceive all those who sow the seeds of discord among men in the name of Heaven and Hell. He speaks out spontaneously with unbounded faith:

[He created man so that he should be compassionate. Otherwise, He had enough angels to do his bidding].

Bedil was very true when he said:

[One, who dives into the depths of the Ocean of reality, Will wash off the page of faith and heresy].

Materialistic or atheistic theory

In the light of both logical arguments and scientific experiments, the exponents of this theory have pondered over Reality. They deny the separate existence of spirit on the basis of their own method of deduction. They consider matter as the only reality. They regard life and death as the arrangement or disturbance of the inner harmony of matter. According to Chakbast, a great poet,

[What is life but the arrangement of elements? And death comes when these elements are scattered].

Life springs when matter is systematically arranged. It appears in the shape of an intelligent individual and gains individuality, and when the elements lose their individual balance, individual dies. But, as experiments have proved matter never perishes. It is eternal, and its systematized arrangement, it is gives birth to manifold shapes and lives.

This view of the materialists is analogous to that of the Vedantics. Both contradict life after death and life Hereafter. Both regard the world as eternal and unending. Both give importance to equality and welfare of man. The only

difference is that the materialists deny the separate existence of spirit and the Vedanta's take spirit and matter to be the two qualities of one Exalted Being.

(c) Explanation of the plan and purpose of the universe

At present, there exist two concepts about the universal order. According, to one, the universe has come into existence under a plan and its system is working, in accordance with a specific law. According to the other concept, the genesis and system of the universe is based on accidents. The first idea is supported by the philosophy of idealism while the philosophy of materialism approves of the second. All the world religions uphold the first concept. As a result, they believe in the existence of a Creator and a pattern and coherence in the universe and call him God.

Faith in God is the foundation or foremost condition of religions. But different religions have presented different concepts regarding the existence and attributes of God. The following three concepts are noteworthy:

- a. Concept of a personal God.
- b. Concept of an impersonal God.
- c. Concept of a God beyond imagination.

A general account of these three concepts will not be out of place here:

a) Concept of a personal God

In the beginning, when man lived as a beast, his immature mind was not good at reasoning. Therefore, he regarded every powerful, useful or harmful thing as a God. Such things included heavenly bodies like the sun, the moon, the stars, and the elements. Besides them, there were hidden powers of gods and goddesses. Also fierce animals, powerful men, magicians and religious leaders were included in this category. The evolution of this concept passed through four stages:

1. Period of polytheism.
2. Period of dualism.
3. Period of trinitarianism.
4. Period of Unitarianism.

Period of polytheism

This is the most ancient stage in the conception of God. But man took thousands of years reaching it, and he had to pass through different stages of thought and belief. According to my knowledge, for centuries in the beginning, man

continued to regard the wild animals, strong men and magicians as gods. Afterwards, for a long time, he remained under the delusion that elemental forces were the gods. Then he thought about the heavenly bodies and started worshipping the sun, the moon and the stars for centuries. Gradually, hidden forces and spirits influenced his thought. Therefore, he acknowledged every material object as a divine force. The king, the patriarch and the reformers were taken as gods or gods-incarnate. Many miracles were attributed to them. The period of in theological stories began during which various tribes welded into a nation an idol representing each tribe were placed in the common temples or places of worship. The gods of that period were considered as the embodiment of fury and wrath.

Period of dualism

Later, when man made some more progress, the idea of wrathful and malignant gods was modified into merciful and compassionate gods. In the beginning, this idea did not reduce the number of gods. It divided new the gods into two categories: the merciful gods and the malignant ones. Subsequently, this conceptual change led to the decline of invisible gods. Invisible gods gained currency. This is how dualism evolved. The concept of God and Satan is the product of this idea.

Period of Trinitarians

After dualism, trinitarianism is considered as a more developed form of the personal god. Before dualism, there prevailed the idea of wrathful gods. During the period of dualism, the idea of merciful gods gained currency. Although the concept of God and Satan had reduced the number of the pantheistic gods to two supreme but hidden forces, even then these forces were seen as defying each other. There was no possibility of a compromise between them. The idea of trinitarianism was more appealing to the human mind because it had a certain freshness and novelty about it. Thus, of its unending restlessness, the human mind found solace in this concept for the time being.

Brahma, Vishnu' and Shiva of the Hindu mythology; Isis, Orisis and Horus of the Egyptian mythology; Father, Son and the Holy Ghost of Christianity were born of this belief.

Hindu trinity

1. Brahma = supreme god
2. Vishnu = savior of the world
3. Shiva = god of destruction and regeneration

Egyptian trinity

1. Isis = sister & wife of Orisis
2. Orisis = Horus
3. daughter of Orisis = nature goddess

Christian trinity

1. Father
2. Son
3. The Holy Ghost

Period of Unitarianism

After trinitarianism, the concept of a single God captured man's imagination. This was the most developed image of a personal god in which all the powers and qualities of the past gods were attributed to one great being. Allah, Ishwar, God and Jehovah are different names of this Supreme Being. It should be borne in mind that these four concepts about gods were, of a personal or material nature. The idea of an impersonal god is a later development. In the Torah, the Bible, the Quran and the Vedas, an image of God, similar to that of man, is presented. Similarly, a specific place has been assigned as His abode. Human qualities have also been attributed to God.

b) Concept Of impersonal god

By impersonal god is meant one who is absolutely non-material, purely spirit or essence. This is an abstract concept. At the very early stage of religion, this concept was confined to a few great men. Later, when the preachers of world religions got under the influence of rational knowledge, especially in the advanced countries, they too set forth the idea of an impersonal god in the light of the Greek, Egyptian, Iraqi and Iranian philosophies. Before presenting this concept, I consider it necessary to explain briefly the meaning of soul and body.

Body or matter

Philosophically, whatever comes under the purview of the five senses - touch, sight, taste, smell and hearing which simultaneously, comes within the range of time, space and cause, is called body or matter. Ancient thinkers believed the body to be a compound of four elements - fire, water air and earth. Modern scholars regard these basic elements as compounds. They have been able to discover around 90 elements so far.

Soul or spirit

According to the philosophical definition, whatever is not felt by the senses and transcends time, place and cause is called spirit or soul. The materialists and most of the scientists do not believe in the separate existence or immortality of soul. But those who know reality the thinkers, Sufis and saints - rationally believe in it. On its basis, they have faith in an impersonal god.

As regards the concept of the impersonal God, such believers regard Him as Timeless, Spaceless, Causeless, Formless, Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient and Absolute. According to this idea, God is the Supreme Power who has created everything in the universe. Further, He is the Provider, the Sustainer and the Nourisher of everything. He puts soul into a body and then takes it out. However, He neither possesses His own spirit and body nor does he beget or is begotten. This idea of God is a developed form of dualism and trinity. The beliefs on the logic of this developed idea of God. The concept of Wahdat-ul-Shahood (myriad manifestations of the Oneness of God) in Islam also gains strength from it. But this concept makes room for further questions such as believer and infidel, truth and falsehood, sacred and profane. These questions serve as a potential source for religious learning called theology. The bigotry of belief in the oneness and plurality of God is the outcome of the same idea. The same bigotry leads to dissent ions among the followers of various religions. At the same time, it leads people to archaism.

c) Concept of God beyond imagination

This idea presents God in such great and all-embracing terms that He gets beyond all comprehension. Intellect as a whole fails to perceive Him. Even the seer and the saint are astounded to observe His manifold -ruminations and myriad manifestations. The knower of truth, however, feels and finds Him everywhere, in every object and in each form. But he cannot define Him in a definite or precise manner. Whatever be the approach of logic and science in this regard, of all the ideas pertaining to the evolution of the concept of one, God, this appears to be the most comprehensive and credible.

Great men of faith, believers in monotheism and pantheism, knowers of truth have been conforming to the same belief for ages. According to it, reality is only one Truth. All other things are His attributes. He is the ultimate source of all Power, Knowledge and Beauty. After this belief, every form of distinction, hatred and petty prejudice becomes meaningless.

As against plurality, the belief in the unity of God is the outcome of the same idea. This belief gives birth to the following views:

I. Body and soul, are manifestations of the same personality

The great saint and poet of the valley of Sindh, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, Preaches the same idea in these words:

[Sound and echo are one. According to reality, there is no difference between them. The interesting point is that at first, the two converge, but when they are heard, they appear to be two].

2. All human beings belong to one brotherhood:

This means that every individual deserves equal treatment love and respect. No one has the right to regard himself superior to others. It is inhuman to create hatred or work against the interests of a group of persons on the basis of color, creed and caste. Shaikh Saadi says in this context:

*[All men are like different limbs of one body. It is because .all are born of the same substance. If any part of the body is in pain, the whole body feels it. **Similarly**, you must have regard for the pain of every human being. If you have no such feeling, you are not worthy of being called a human being].*

3. Unity is latent in the diversity of religion:

The real aim of all religions is service to humanity. So do the real followers of all religions desire. Thus, the outward differences or claim to exclusivity are but peripheral. One who meddles with them, he goes astray from the real objective. On the other hand, one who steadfastly holds this objective dear cares the least for such differences and demarcations.

Bedil says aptly in his famous poetical work called ***Wahdat-Nama***:

[However different be the traditional inter operations of faith and infidelity, their objective is one and the same. The Hindus and the Muslims are the manifestation of the same Holy lord. As the stars disappear when the sun has risen, so does knowledge of the real Being makes naught the value of apparent difference]

4. There appears to be a plan in the creation and Organization of the universe

Scientific research has proved that the organization of the universe is based on some known principles and laws. The sun, the moon, the earth and all other planets are moving around well-defined orbits. There is a principle of harmony among them Chances and accidents are also based on some principles. All these things give evidence of a great plan. The following verse of the Holy Quran lends strength to this idea:

[This universe has not been made for nothing].

Truth-seeking saints and thinkers also saw a clear plan in the creation of the universe and called it the will of God, law of Nature and law of evolution. They regarded its origin as love or power of integration.

5. Man is the manifestation of God

In support of this idea, the mystics have quoted the following lines from the Holy Quran:

[There is no God but Allah - whatever exists is Allah; none but Allah has real existence]

[We are of God and unto Him shall we retain].

Shah Latif has explained the verse "And in their heart, they see not in this way thus:

[The Beloved is within you. Why do you wander in search of Him? Understand the words of God and cherish them. The discerning do not seek their Beloved outside of themselves].

This view regards human dignity and respect as the Divine purpose, promoting at the same time the unity, peace and progress of the entire human race. These gives man great self-confidence, demanding at the same time from him respect for humanity. Chakbast has put it beautifully:

[It matters not if inaccessible is the empyrean; the highest ascent of man is to be a human being].

Observance

This aspect of religion is related to the following:

- a) Good conduct.
- b) Self or desires.

c) Intelligence or wisdom and knowledge.

d) Good conduct

In this part of observance, importance is given to sound human conduct. Not only in the modern religions, but also in the primitive ones when much of savagery and ignorance existed, good human conduct had more or less the same importance. What is the definition of ethics or morality?

Hundreds of books have been written on this subject in the modern era. A detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this work. Albeit, in a few words, I can say that ethics means 'the law of good deeds'. Now the question arises as to what should be the criterion of these laws? How far can the ancient laws be followed? We can find out correct answers to these questions only when we are able to know:

1. What are the incentives to morality?
2. What are their basic principles?
3. Are moral laws universal or can they be modified according to the demands of time and circumstance?

Incentives for morality

The scholars of ethics have divided these incentives into two parts. The basis of one part rests on high spiritual or emotional ideas; the other is based on mutual good. The first part gave birth to religious morality and the second to modern rational ethics.

Basic principles of morality

Experts are agreed that peace, progress and prosperity of an individual or a nation are the real basis of the principles of morality.

Ethical laws

If this problem is viewed in its historical perspective, it will be known that ethical laws have had their origin in religion or in tribal customs. According to the first, small religion tribes gradually merged into great religious groups. This gave birth to a religious morality in which some traditions, new laws under the changed circumstances and rational learning were included.

The religious laws of the Hindus, the Buddhists, the Christians and the Muslims were evolved in this way. The religious laws adopted by these world religions were not all created by them. Manusamriti, the ancient book of the Hindus, shows that its theological laws were enacted according to the religious laws and the living conditions as they then existed. But some were codified to meet the exigencies of time. The moral laws of the

Buddhists were enacted on the basis of rational reasoning. Instead of formulating new religious laws, the Christians adopted the corpus of old Roman law. The Muslims made their religious code by modifying and improving ancient Arab customs according to their requirements. They neither rejected all old laws nor made new ones of their own. Religions employed two methods in order to follow these laws, one curative, and the other preventive, which is also called defensive. Since it is concerned with preaching, teaching and self-control, it will be discussed in detail under the same headings. Similarly, the first method, which concerns with theology, will also be taken up later.

As religious proclivities were responsible for the birth of composite religious laws. Similarly, the social laws of tribes constituted the warp and woof of national laws. By accepting some and rejecting others, by modifying some for the requirement and in the larger interests of the nation, composite types of constitutions of different countries were enforced with certain additions. Therefore, it becomes clear that all-moral law, whether religious or social, are changed according to circumstances. In future, too, according to the law of evolution, moral laws will be changed in accordance with social chances.

The obstacles, which the bigoted advocates of world religions wish to put in the way of making these changes, cannot be lasting. These narrow-minded people cannot succeed in their unnatural attempt. But their bigotry is sure to harm their own religious orders. Today, anyone who has the ability to understand the factors responsible for the changes and their speed knows very well that the day is not far off when mankind will agree to adopt a single constitution. In such, an eventuality, all laws belonging to all nations and all religious will be integrated.

b) Self or emotional desires

In religious ethics, sublimation of self has a special place. Self, in other words, may be called emotional desires. The have been divided into three parts:

1. The baser self.
2. The rational self.
3. The contented self.

A description of each of them will not be out of place.

1. The baser self

This is concerned with the natural desires or instincts of man. A brief account of the instincts has already been given in the first chapter. Modern scholars of psychology have written hundreds of books on them. In this book, the space is too limited to summarize their findings. The gist of all of them can be put into one sentence: the fulfillment of unchecked emotional desires endangers unity, peace and progress as a whole. Further, unrestrained desires create feelings of selfishness, discord, prejudice, violence and self-deceit in the individuals. As a result, society degenerates.

2. The rational self

This is a more developed stage of self, which teaches man how to make the best use of his intellect and experience. Sacrifice and selfishness, unity and discord, love and hatred, persuasion and coercion, pride and humility, prejudice and tolerance, self-deception and realism are distinguished through it. Further, it guides man to differentiate between what is beneficial and what is harmful for him. But moral problems are not solved by the mere recognition of good and evil. What is needed is strength of character and courage of conviction. These are acquired through proper training and sublimation of self. For acquiring right education and self-control, the mystics have recommended four methods: guidance from the company of teachers right knowledge prayers and love. But before I discuss the right type of education, I think it necessary to explain what the guidance and company of a teacher mean.

Guidance and company of a teacher

From the earliest clays, the system of gaining knowledge directly from a teacher has been in vogue in all-religious hierarchies. Even today, millions of men are related in some way or the others, to teachers, preceptors, monks, priests and guides.

Evil body knows the services rendered by this institution in exorcising the evil of prejudice and encouraging tolerance in the past. But today, the conditions are different. Very few men benefit from this institution, it lost its utility long ago and has been reduced into a tradition rather than a movement. Much like the theologians, it is not free of vested interests. Therefore, no good can be expected from this institution. It can neither impart moral education nor can it help. A mystic therefore felt constrained to say:

[Gone are the cupbearers. Empty are the cups of the wine of love].

Pained at this alai-minor situation and at the dearth of men noble intent, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai said:

[Alas! those who could evaluate gems have gone. Their places have been taken by those who have no ability to value even a piece of an ordinary cup. Everywhere one sees only blacksmiths now].

Teacher: an institution

Just as students have to attend school, college and university for a number of years to attain knowledge, so have men belonging to all religions have been receiving moral and spiritual education since time immemorial. This education is mostly through self-control, which is also called the sublimation of self. These institutions are called by various names such as 'Khanqah', 'Ashram' etc. Higher moral values in addition to purity of self were sought at such places. The valuable service, which this institution rendered, and the respect, which it commanded, none other have so far been able to achieve. But its popularity and respect unfortunately proved to be chiefly responsible for its decline.

People went to the monks and priests for the fulfillment of their wishes. They went to them because they wanted to be blessed with children, wealth, and relief from diseases and for the solution of other problems. Instead of overcoming greed, the teachers unfortunately started deceiving people and claimed that they held the keys to all the secrets of Nature. They deceived the innocent people through prayers, charms, incantation recitations, etc. Thus, those institutions, too,

became centers of fraudulent practices. It was there that different methods of cheating were employed and vested interests were served. The perpetrators of such wrongdoing gained the same position, which the magicians had enjoyed during the primitive ages. In religion observance, there is no place for such ridiculous practices. To claim that one can control the forces of Nature is nothing short of hypocrisy.

The extent of such hypocrisy in modern times is far greater than in any previous era. They are neither men of sound learning nor do they possess insight. Their institutions are centers of exploitation of simple men and women. In these, institutions, if any education is imparted, it is that of ignorance, superstition and distorted beliefs. They have nothing but ritualistic worship, recitations, hermitage and incantations. Even then they claim themselves as the paragons of morality in the source of spiritual bliss. I do not contradict the claim, but the following lines from Ghalib are revealing:

[So what if every star the firmament is a heart? Would that there were one heart but full of feeling].

3. The contented self

This is the stage when the self attains the highest perfection. One, who attains this height, becomes a model for others. He, whose self rises to such a level, achieves perfection and his heart is free of pride, vanity, and greed ambition, craving for worldly possession malice and violence. The pretty prejudices of faith, nationalism, color and cast being to seem hollow and meaningless. On the other hand, he comes to regard unit of mankind, peace and progress of the entire human race as the sole objective of his life. Not only that he holds fast the virtues of love, tolerance and humanism, but he also preaches others to imbibe them. In the words of Shah Latif Bhitai:

[Everything in the city of the beloved is sweet. There is nothing bitter if you taste it but sincerely.]

The man of contented self regards simplicity, truthfulness, genuine feelings and practice as the real criteria of life. He rejects equivocation. As Bedil says:

[Those for whom words as everything, are lost in the maze of formalities. They are not destined to ascend the heights of love.]

Those who are gifted with a contented self, occupy the highest place in the realm of knowledge and wisdom, love, other refined feelings and pragmatism. Such men can lead others, indeed.

Mind or intellect and knowledge

Much like moral education and the sublimation of self, the development and training of mind is given primary importance in the field of rituals as well. According to scientific research, Nature has been bountiful in bestowing upon the plants and animals some decree of intelligence. The scientists call it "mind". Botany and zoology have thrown much light on it. As compared to all other living things, man has certainly been more fortunate because he has been gifted with the highest intelligence among all living beings.

Intelligence nourishes knowledge and knowledge sharpens intelligence. Eminent scholars and men of learning have divided knowledge into four branches:

1. Fanciful or illusive knowledge
2. Intuitive knowledge
3. Rational or comparative knowledge
4. Experimental knowledge or science.

1. Fanciful or illusive knowledge

This is a kind of knowledge, which depends on the superficial observation, or illusion of things. For example, it may be inferred from the observation of a moving object that its driving- force is in its inner soul. It was because of this illusion that in the primitive era, the sun, the moon, the stars, the clouds, the rivers, the winds, the fire, etc., were considered the manifestations of spirits. Similarly, various types of sounds such as the thunder of clouds, the rippling of water, volcanic eruptions, the rustle of wind and the sound of tree branches swaying to the wind were attributed to the hidden forces.

The primitive belief about magic and religion was based on this illusive knowledge. It further led to the belief of considering certain animals as propitious and ethers as unpropitious. The same belief worked in associating effects with certain worship forms of worship and sacrifice. Even today, despite the lapse of hundreds of thousands of years, many people are in the crutches of primitive superstition.

2. Intuitive knowledge

For centuries, men have believed in intuitive Knowledge. The prophets, saints, philosophers, poets and men of lore have always been its votaries. They agree that, like other lores, hard work or experience does not gain it. It is a divine gift. As the poet says:

[Not by force but by divine dispensation is this blessing attained]

There is no denying the fact that some people have unusual ability and talent. The founders of religions, the philosophers, the theoreticians, the discoverers and the inventors of myriad things were men of the same type. However, it is generally observed that some of these men of extraordinary talent are regarded as the possessors of super-natural powers. Innumerable false stories regarding their prophecies and miracles are woven around them.

If such myths were taken to be true, it would mean that the entire system of the universe is but a plaything in the hands of a few individuals. Therefore, it would tantamount to making fun of the laws of Nature. With these notions, the belief -geminated and very many prophets, gods-incarnate, seers, monks and priests were regarded as timeless and spaceless. They were also regarded all embracing and free of all imperfections.

The custodians of religions have been the preachers of this belief. Therefore, the words of some men of extraordinary talent are taken as absolute truth, and testing of those words on the touchstone of reason is deemed as a sin. Thus, a kind of intellectual dictatorship comes into being. The greatness of the prophets, of 'L-he saints and of the revivalists of religions cannot be denied. However, considering them as the final authority on every subject does create a monopoly of

a particular group. The doors of reason, arguments and morality are closed and a particular group in every religion comes forward with vested interests.

An interesting fact is that every group preaches its own creed, presenting it as a symbol of peace, progress and unity of man. But what is really deplorable is that each group regards its own faith as truth and the rest as false. Then each group endeavors to vindicate its own faith and condemns the others. The result is that it becomes an instrument of bigotry violence and decadence.

3. Rational or comparative knowledge

This knowledge is rests on intellect and reasoning. Philosophy, logic, dialectics, etc., are its branches. Rising from Greece and spreading to India, China, the Middle East and Rome- this branch of learning has been a prime source of information and has been largely responsible for the development of the modern world. Men attached to religions have also used it to a limited extent. However, since this knowledge may, prove as a potential danger for the conventional beliefs and faiths a majority of the custodians of religion has declared it inferior to intuitive Knowledge. Hence, they have instructed their followers to keep away from it. Some groups with vested interests use it for the intellectual exploitation of others For example, the capitalists, the socialists, the fascists and the conservatives have employed it for their own selfish ends. This knowledge is organized on metaphysical lines.

4. Experimental knowledge or science.

This knowledge is based on mathematical analyses and experiments of physics. It is not necessary that the results deduced from this source of knowledge be treated as the last word. However, just as most mathematical formula are invariably correct, the results of scientific inquiry are also accurate and reliable. Which of the above branches of knowledge will be most useful for mankind? If we give serious thought to this question, it will be known that illusive knowledge is the product of our primitive past and is useless for the present age. Neither can it give satisfaction to the cultured and progressive men, nor can it find any solution to the present day problems. Obviously, the three kinds of knowledge step toward the expansion of human knowledge. However, to regard and of them as infallible, is against the law of Nature. All branches of knowledge are means to this encl. Hence, it is not good to depend either on intuitive or on rational or scientific knowledge. A broad-minded use of every kind of knowledge is, beyond doubt, beneficial for human beings. The prophets, saints, philosophers, poets and reformers have been extraordinary and venerable. However, each of them had laid emphasis on a particular sphere of activity. The invention of television, radio, airplane, electricity, atomic energy and X-ray or other feats of excellence was not their work. Therefore, the claim of the pundits, moulvis and priests that their religions provide solutions to all human problems and that their creeds represent the ultimate philosophy of life negates the law of evolution. Such a claim has no other purpose except safeguard the vested interests of a few and help tighten their stranglehold (over the masses).

Such knowledge as we possess today is the result of millions, of years of human endeavor. The quest for betterment is the basis of social progress. If this fundamental truth is ignored and the past theories are regarded as immutable, there will be no room for further inquiry and research. It will amount to blocking progress and social well being. It -will also be contrary to the preaching of religions.

If we wish, we can find out the basic unity and the principle of evolution in religion sectarianism, theoretical differences and the apparent conflicts in the field of scientific research.

No knowledge, theory or belief gains anything of it is considered limited or static. Its excellence lies in its continual flow. It should freely accommodate new discoveries and inventions, having the ability to cater at the same time to the new demands and urges.

No nation, individual or religion has the right to claim the monopoly of knowledge, wisdom or welfare of humanity and its salvation. Truth is like a limitless sea. Whoever gets a drop of it, can justifiably feel proud of his good fortune. However, it behooves him not either to show it off or to capitalize on it or deprive others of their natural right to it. The best course for us is to like those aspects of knowledge and beliefs. This strengthen the unity of mankind, promote world peace and social progress. Each branch of learning and ideology should discard all that which fans hatred and prejudice and leads to discord. At the same time, it impedes social profess. Further, it is induces men to work for transient personal gain.

Religion ceremonies, duties and prayers

The third part of religion is prayer. Different religions have different modes of prayer. As already seen, they all have their origin in the primitive era. In the beginning, the purpose of prayer was to control or submit to the hidden powers. However, when human intelligence, society and religion professed, prayer came to have the following purposes:

1. Seeking the will of God.
2. Self-control.
3. Contentment.
4. Salvation.
5. Redemption.

A full account of prayers and ceremonies will be presented in the fourth chapter. Here I would only say that owing to the acknowledged supremacy of reason, prayers have lost their importance in the eyes of the modern man. To men of intellect, the very idea of Divine approbation or censure has become meaningless, since Providence is above such mundane considerations. So far as the sublimation of self through prayer is concerned, all of us do so. There are the outcomes of the purified self. Pious and noble souls never miss their prayers. It is also said about prayer that it lightens the heart and the worshipper is so much elevated spiritually that he develops the ability to perceive God, the Prophet and the saints. A little thinking reveals that this is erroneous. It is not possible to visualize God. He is not only much beyond the limit of human perception but also much above human intellect and imagination.

The same is true the matter of seeing the Holy Prophet. At the most, one can see him in a dream. However, how can one benefit from this ceremonial sight where Abu Jehal remained steeped in ignorance even in the presence of the Apostle?

The Prophet is an eternal reality. He is a blessing for all man kinds. Only that person is likely to gain from his image who has love for humanity, whose heart is free of vice and narrow-mindedness and who works sincerely for the welfare of humanity.

The third purpose of prayer is contentment of the heart. Beyond doubt, millions of people find prayer soothing even today, despite being poverty-stricken or suffering from different maladies. Scientists, philosophers and atheists may call religion an opiate. However, it is a fact that for innumerable people prayer serves as a psychological shield.

The fourth advantage of prayer is hope for salvation. The seers find no merit in prayer, which is made for saving oneself from Divine retribution on the Day of Judgment. Besides, the blurred concept of salvation, which is held by the moulvi, the pundit and the priest, is negated by the Sufis. According to Ghalib:

[We know the truth about Heaven. This self-delusion is not a bad idea].

The fifth purpose of prayer is redemption from sin. The idea is not only fraught with danger but is also harmful. This concept of religion has provided a shield to tyrants, black-marketers, smugglers, usurpers and other unscrupulous men. The belief that the worst sins can be forgiven by God if we pray hard enough is against the spirit of religion.

Apart from prayers as prescribed by different religions, certain things have acquired the status of worship in some quarters. For example, discourse, thinking, contemplation, self-immolation, dance, ecstasy, music and similar other things. It is said that these are also the means to give solace to the heart. Let us accept it, too. However, from this analysis of the purpose of prayer the only thing that comes out is commitment, which is personal and short-lived. Hence, one may ask if all ado about prayer is for this brief and temporary personal gain. No, certainly not.

If we could know the real spirit of prayer as prescribed by all religions and do not get tangled into the outward form regarding it as the ultimate goal, the truth as revealed by Shaikh Saadi will dawn upon us:

[To satisfy a human heart is the greatest Hajj. One heart is better than thousands of Ka'bas].

The best -and the real prayer is the mellowness of heart, love and passion. Great is the efficacy of such a prayer. With such prayers, all human beings can achieve lasting peace and satisfaction in life. The dervish and truth-seekers believe in this type of prayer. What is love and passion? How can love transcend worship? I would like to throw light on these aspects.

Love and passion

The Sufis, poets, saints and yogis have always, in their own way, conveyed the message of love. The main theme of their message has been love. As Ehsan Danish has said:

[Love is the basis of Life. All the light of the world spring from it].

It is no exaggeration or flight of the imagination. It is the truth. In human society, at every step of the evolution of faith and mind, the feeling of love has been the manifestation of the constructive pursuits. That is why seers and saints feel diffident about such philosophies. Where by befogs religion words. Therefore, they regard love as the soul of religion.

God-loving saints have divided love into two parts one worldly, the other divine. In fact, they are two branches of the same tree. One may be called a ladder or a bridge to the other.

Religion and reality

Worldly love

Worldly love has been most misunderstood. Either it has been called sheer lust or the personal passion of an individual. The main cause of misunderstanding is lack of knowledge regarding its form or shape. In fact, it has three forms:

1. Love for paramour
2. Love for the nation and the homeland.
3. Love for humanity.

Love for paramour

This is the first stage of worldly love. There are three reasons for this sort of love: sexual desire, feeling of companionship and compatibility.

Sexual desire

Like other living beings, Nature has also endowed man with the instinct of procreation. Owing to this instinct opposite sexes, get attracted towards each other. This attraction may also be called sexual desire. Since it is a natural desire, its fulfillment is neither a sin nor a flaw. The sexual act becomes a sin or an evil when the doer departs from the accepted laws and norms of his or her society. At the same time, his or her objective may not be permanent communion but temporary sexual pleasure. Such an unbridled act may endanger social peace and harmony.

It is, therefore, in the best interest of a society to recognize the natural sexual urge for procreative purposes, which is fulfilled by permanent association with the opposite sex. It not only leads to familial unit but also promotes peace and progress. At the same time, it balances corporate life.

Feeling of companionship

By nature, man is gregarious. Loneliness is a curse for him. Therefore, solitary confinement is considered as a severe punishment. The basis of group-life is social togetherness. This feeling impels man to find out for himself a permanent companion, a mate who shares with him the burden of life and provides him with peace and comfort. Therefore, the necessity of such a mate motivates him to lead a 'couple life'. In this form, the need for a companion or a beloved is confined only to the feeling of companionship, creating thereby the basic social unit the family.

Compatibility

The mutual love, which is engendered by unity of thought and harmony of mind, is more lasting, more constructive and more invigorating than either sexual desire or feeling of companionship. This is the reason that many people give compatibility great consideration while selecting a life-partner. They look for such a match for years and years. However, such unions are generally very rare. The Hindus believe that those couples who have been enamored of each

Religion and reality

other during previous births enjoy such a union. According to Muslim dervishes, such pairs were made on the Day of Creation. Shah Abdul Latif refers to it in the words of Sohini:

[The day the Creator created spirits, the day that the spirits made their pledge ever since that day, I have made Mahiwal mine. How can he fall behind who was made eternal from the beginning?]

Love for nation

At this stage of temporal love, the beloved's love sublimates into a love which is collective and meaningful. In the first stage, Marvi pines for her beloved country. In the second, it is not her country but her tribe, people, and she becomes restless when she thinks about them. The second stage of love is far nobler than the first. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai impresses the sublimity of this love through the character of Marvi in these lines:

[Oh Soomra; (the ruler of Omer kot) If I die like this in the desire to return to my homeland in your prison you will be so as kind as to send body to my relatives for burial, and fumigate my body by burning the grass of my country. If my body reaches Malir, (the native place of Marvi), I shall believe that I have got a new life]

[You may have any opinion about them, my countrymen; they are dear to me just as they are]

[Don't think that being away from them, I shall stop loving them. My body is in your palace, but my heart is in Thar (the country of Marvi), in every corner of which my countrymen are living.]

[All your gifts are as nothing to me. I can not exchange the love of my country for silver and gold].

The dervishes have compared this stage of love with complete immersion of self. This love induces one to be wedded to the national interest and shun petty personal considerations.

3. Love for humanity

This is the highest form of worldly love. At this stage, man becomes free from all narrow Prejudices of group, faith and nation. He looks at the world from the humanistic point of view. It is as if the part is lost in the whole, diversity in unity and individuality collectivity. To quote from Ghalib:

[It's the good fortune of a drop to give itself up to the river].

It is from this stage that divine love begins. One who reaches not this stage, even if he poses to be a highly virtuous being cannot attain an iota divine knowledge. How can a man who is not free from -religious prejudice, parochial feeling, discrimination on the basis of color and race, consideration of high and low reach this stage through prayer and penance, especially when his heart is tainted by fear and greed, vanity and arrogance, cruelty and exploitation?

The Sufis who understand the meaning of the term *Rahmat-ul-lil-Aalameen* regard it as a specific attribute of the Holy Prophet, are immersed in love for the Messenger of God. For the grace of the Prophet, it is necessary to be above every prejudice and distinction. Without love for humanity, it is meaningless to claim love for the Prophet.

Divine love

Divine love is considered much higher than temporal love. It is, therefore, regarded as love of God. The Muslim priest adopting prayer and the rosary as his way of life. The Sufi dancing to the beat of the drum, the spiritual guide (pir) lost in meditation, the yogi practicing self-restraint through regular exercise, the clergyman dedicated to the glory of the Church and the ascetic renouncing the world, all claim divine love. These claims are not only highly exaggerated, but false. Kabir the great Hindi poet, says:

[Everyone walks but a little distance no one takes the limitless rout. On this limitless plane Kabir cries as he stands.]

The recognition of God is, in fact, the real objective of divine love. It is rather the acme. It is not given to everyone to attain it. But it is not impossible, either. One, who knows the way of self-abnegation and self-recognition, can reach that stage. The Sufis (mystics) have defined both the states as halfway to God. They have named these states as 'negative' and 'Positive'. A brief discussion of them will not be out of place here:

Self-abnegation

This state has generally been misunderstood. Some have regarded it as annihilation of the self; some have described it as prayer and exercise; some have taken it as renunciation of the world and some have perceived it as death. However, the majority has construed it as the sublimation of the self. For example, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says:

[If you want to follow the path of virtue, give up greed at once. Chasten your thoughts by getting rid of desire and prejudice. Only this way you can ascend and sublimate].

For Shah Abdul Latif, the worst evil is greed and he says that a devotee must rid himself of this evil. If we go into details, we shall know how true the great saint was. In human society, the root cause of all trouble is greed or selfishness. The self-deception of individual-worship gives birth to it. It is widely seen that worldly love plays an effective role as compared to prayer and exercise or counseling and admonition in order to free oneself from the clutches of self-deception. For instance, its first stage is the need of a life-partner through which the individuality gets melted into a love, a family and a tribe. At the second stage, familial and tribal feeling gets integrated into the national feeling and, at the third stage; the national feeling transcends into an international feeling where the sole objective is to serve the interests of the entire human race. This way the individual's identity gets merged into the collective whole. This is the real meaning of the negation of self or losing one's identity. One, who gets to this stage, cares not for any other thing.

Sachal Sarmast considers liberation from checks and restraints as the primary condition for attaining divine knowledge. He says:

[And break the Shackles of ideas. Only then will you begin to marvel (at things)].

Self-recognition

The first stage of worldly loves which is the 'negative state' which leads to -self-recognition. At this stage, the heart becomes the reflector of everything and, to the eye, every hidden thing becomes manifest. Every object now appears to be different and in its original color. Sachal Sarmast describes this state in the following words:

[Wonderful is the sight of that color which appears after colorlessness. Moses and Pharos are different from each other].

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai speaks through Sassi, one of his immortal characters:

[When I talked in my heart to my soul I found that there was no mountains nor anything else. I am now a Punoo myself. I suffered the pangs of separation when I was Sassi].

This state of love is called ecstasy. At this stage, the devotee not only gets divine knowledge, but he also becomes a part of the Real, the Absolute. It is also called the 'State of Mansoor'. In this context, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says:

[He is This, He is That, He is Negative, He is Positive, He is Beloved, He is breath, He is Enemy, He is Helper, too. He is everything. There exists naught except Him].

At this stage, somebody raised the cry "Baqa Billah" (only God exists) and somebody uttered *Ana-al-Haq* (I am right - 'God'). Again, like Ghalib, somebody said:

[The drop as I am, I w as big as the river, But I am not a claimant like Mansoor].

As the Holy Quran says:

[Such sayings, which are practicable, are of no use].

One should lead a practical life, and at the same time try to reach the Ultimate Reality. The right thing will be when these realities and sub limitations are made common and the whole world gets the maximum advantage out of them. Everything should be done for the collective good, and everyone should be made to act. Action is indeed much nobler and higher than prayer. All religions lay stress on it. In the words of Allama Iqbal:

[Action makes life, - it leads to Heaven or Hell].

The sum and substance of these lines is that the source of the sublimation of self, peace of mind and knowledge of the reality is love - love for mankind. The best prayer is service to humanity. It not only tells about dignity of man, but at the same time, it paves the way for peace, progress and prosperity of mankind.

Jurisprudence

This aspect of religion is related to the conventional and social codes. The religion is which are no longer dynamic and have become static; their advocates generally lay on centuries-old conventional and social codes. The preachers of some of religions regard these codes as the real religion. But since human society and its urges are not always the same and since time keeps on changing most of the laws and codes of the past have lost their usefulness now. Therefore, despite the obstinacy of the misguided is preachers, many countries are enacting new laws in consonance with modern requirements. Most ancient law codes have now become obsolete.

Today, the Christian who talks of tire Biblical period or the Hindu who talks of the period of Manusamurti or the Muslim who talks of the early days of Islam, is either ignorant or is incapable of reading the writing on the wall. In addition, if he is not ignorant, he is using religion to promote his vested interests.

Chapter 3 - Unity and Diversity of Religion

Men, who believe in religion, can be divided into two groups. One group believes in the diversity of religions and therefore, attaches great importance to religious differences. The other group regards these differences as superficial. However, at the same time, it tries to find out the unifying factors, which are common to all religions. One of these two groups has a positive approach and negative one. Which of these groups fulfills the divine will and which acts contrary to it, which of them works for the betterment of mankind and which does not, are questions which will have to be discussed in some detail.

Theory of variation

As should have been evident from the preceding pages all religions have had their origin in superstition and dogma. Similarly, social and moral codes, prayers and observances went a long way to shape them. These beliefs and rituals were prevalent in the tribal societies of the past. It was but natural those different societies should adopt different ways to satisfy their inner urges. This way, innumerable major and minor religions came into being. A large number of them vanished with the passage of time because they were either not practicable or lacked the power to retain their hold. However, if the mushroom growth religions in the past are ignored we cannot lose sight of the major religions of the world, which are still surviving. At the same time, if the sects of these religions are taken into account, their number will run into hundreds. Therefore, inter and intra-religious differences cannot be ignored

With regard to these distinctions, there appear to be two attitudes. One of them is that of integration or centralization. The other is that of disintegration or decentralization or religious unity or diversity. In politics, people give priority to their personal gains others serve group interests. However, at the same time, there are men who work for society as a whole. Similarly, there are a large number of men in the field of religion, too, who don't possess the power to look too far ahead and they content themselves with remaining confined to certain formalities of religion. However, there are very few who are dedicated to the service of humanity. Thus, to the first group, belong the overwhelming majority of the believers. Whose limited vision does not allow them to comprehend anything more than that all religions differ, whereas the other group of believers, though comparatively much smaller in number but far superior in intellect, finds that all religions are beads of the same rosary. In this way, the first group stands for religious diversity while the second one advocate's unity and accord. I shall not dwell at this stage on the second group but throw light as to why and how religions sprang up. Since religious groups are formed voluntarily on the basis of certain beliefs, initials, social and ethical codes, each one of them is organized on the following lines:

1. The founder of religion and his close companions are projected as supernatural beings. It is the duty of the followers to emulate the founding fathers.
2. The teachings of the founder of each religion and his close associates are treated as works of transcendent intellect. Their teachings are regarded as eternal truth and the pillars of their faith.
3. Religious and social codes as prescribed by the founder of each religion and his associates. They are regarded as the way to salvation.
4. Each religious group becomes convinced that only its own faith is rightfully and legitimate and all other religions and sects are false and spurious.

Therefore, it rejects all other religions and sects as false. Thus, we see that each religion adheres to its own set of beliefs and social conduct. It cannot also be denied that religious groups are without their own vested interests. In such a situation, it is natural for a variety of sects to emerge and to try to establish their own supremacy. As a big continent is divided into countries and a country is further divided into divisions and sub-divisions, sects and schisms are bound to exist so long as religions continue to exist. As the right of self determination is internationally recognized today, all religions are must enjoy their freedom with their set beliefs, modes of prayer and observances. People believing in any faith should be free to adhere to their values and religious mores according to their own light differences in faith and modes of prayer should not be the cause of conflict. Peace is disturbed when a religious or sectarian group tries to impose its own ideas on others and, for justifying its own action, uses force and violence. This subverts the real spirit of religion and religious groups become the means of exploitation. There are still some men who force others to conform to their beliefs. In their endeavor to spread their religion or sect, they employ violent methods, too. This, they call jihad. However, such a practice is absolutely against the teachings of Islam. In the Qur'an, there is explicit mention that there is no compulsion in matter of religion. At another place, the same injunction is couched in different words: *For your, your own religion: for me, mine*. No one can deny that Islam has forcefully advocated religious tolerance and accommodation of other faiths. The famous saying of the Prophet of Islam, Differences are great blessings for my followers and the Qur'anic words, It has specific injunctions for each nation and faction are sufficient proofs in this regard.

If there be religious tolerance, the diversity of religion is very likely to lend grace to this world as the assortment of variegated flowers makes a bouquet all the more beautiful. It is not only the beauty of the bouquet on which the eyes of the beholders feast but, at the same time, each beholder derives much pleasure from the fragrance of the flower of his choice. To my mind, all religions are like a bouquet wherein each religion is like a beautiful flower. A flower has its own identity; but in a bouquet, its identity gets merged with those of the other followers.

One who understands Islam in its true perspective does not regard even the most insignificant object in Creation as mean and contemptible. On the other hand, he tries to make the utmost use of everything. The true believer is one who believes man to be the vicegerent of God and His best creation. Further, he does not ignore the fundamental facts that:

- (1) Religion is created for man and not man for religion.
- (2) One should try to get the maximum advantage from all faiths, philosophies, precepts, ideas and sciences.
- (3) No faith, precept or idea is eternal nor can be equally useful for all ages. Religious laws go together with the law of evolution. These laws can neither be unnecessarily stretched nor truncated. However, if any faith, philosophy or idea obstructs the progress and prosperity of mankind, it tends to become unnatural and is finally discarded.

Theory concerning the unity of religions

As I have stated earlier, there have been men throughout history who have risen above petty prejudices and religious differences they have whole-heartedly devoted themselves to the promotion of peace and progress of the human race. These great men have reflected over the mysteries of Nature, over man 's existence, over his past and future. They have also tried to understand the evolution of society and have also perceived unity in the diversity of religions.

Arcane knowledge

It is an admitted fact that talent and intellectual of people have differed from age to age. Some are cultured, learned and men of insight; others are uncultured, ignorant and bigoted. People in the second category have always been in a large majority while the first type of people has been very little in number. Not only in talent have these groups differed but this difference has been reflected in their beliefs, viewpoints and in all other walks of life. One made ephemeral and superficial things as the basis of religion; the other group found the fundamental principles of religion of supreme value. The one worked for the present, the other for the future.

Some of the teachings and preaching of the prophets are for the masses and some for the elite. This is so because some of the teachings meant for men of learning are beyond the comprehension of the common people. As intellect and power of comprehension differ from person to person, religious concepts, beliefs, duties and responsibilities are also different.

After some time, when religions and their sects acquire the shape of bodies with vested interests, it becomes expedient for their leaders or exponents to dominate all others. In an endeavor to perpetuate power, the rulers, religious leaders and capitalists of kindred faith help each other since their interests converge. They do not encourage anything which promotes the spirit of tolerance among the masses or which weakens superstition and prejudice. They keep on nurturing these evils because; they consider them as a means for safeguarding their own interests. Through these evils, they incite people against such men who are generally dedicated to the well being of the masses. This is the reason why the saints unlocked their innermost secrets to a select few and refrained from propagating them at the mass level. These saints can be divided into two groups:

(a) The introvert saints.

(b) The extrovert saints.

The introvert saints (Salik)

The saints in this group have' expressed their thoughts through sings and symbols. According to the circumstances, they adopt a way of expression, which does not hurt the susceptibilities of the people, and yet, at the same time, the learned men see the light.

The introvert saints were fully aware of the menacing terror of the vested interests and vicious prejudices created by men in power. These vested interests were against the common weal. This becomes all the more virulent when, in the first place, society is dominated by men of low morality; secondly, the servile masses, being under their baneful influence, have no capacity for tolerance. In this state of affairs, the saints could not be altogether silent, but they could not freely express themselves, either. It is for this reason that they adopted this way to kill two birds with one stone. At every step, they felt threatened by the men with vested interests. Therefore, they selected signs and symbols for communicating with the elect. They succeeded in conveying their message and were safe from the mischief of the exploiters.

The Extrovert saints (Majzoob)

These saints were guided more by passion than reason. They disseminated knowledge openly and fearlessly. They knew very well that their teachings would strike at the roots of superstitions and narrow-mindedness. As a result, the fury of exploiters would be let loose. In spite of these odds, the saints had confidence in the justness of their mission and in the innate love people had for justice. Although the masses have little analytical power, and it is time-consuming to sift truth out, the fact is that the masses are generally exploited because they are gullible and lack memory. However, they are essentially good-natured and have feeling hearts. The extrovert saints felt that the masses would not immediately listen to them, but when the exploiting priests and rulers made them the target of their aggression, they would really wake up. This was the reason that the extrovert saints openly preached their faith regardless of the consequences. With great fortitude, they not only suffered the atrocities of the exploiters, but also proved that punishment was no remedy. Advocating the cause of such valiant souls, Ghalib says:

[O Judge! useless is the charge of love; punishment further stokes the desire to sin in me.]

Beyond doubt, one who adopts this way, is either a lunatic or a person unmindful of the consequences of his actions. But the exploiters are not content with mere punishment of the saints; they are bent upon usurping their freedom. That is why the extrovert saint has a burning desire for making the maximum use of time. Waiting for the future, he is not ready to pass the present in silence. Therefore, he takes a rebellious course. To the extrovert saint, whatever chance is available, he makes the utmost use of it. He preaches truth and preaches it most fearlessly. He is ever conscious of the fact that time is fleeting.

Now the question arises as to what was that which the introvert saints taught through signs and the extrovert saints preached openly, thus exposing and jeopardizing the vested interests of the professional priests and the ruling classes. In my opinion, the sun and substance of this kind of preaching was that the Creator is the Real Being and, except Him, there exists nothing. All other manifestations are His own Attributes". As Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says:

[He is neither a Lover nor a Beloved; neither the creator nor the Created. Talk only to him who can comprehend.]

Apparently, this is a simple matter. But if we believe in it with all sincerity, everything appears to be a manifestation of the One and the same being. The duality of the Creator and the created disappears. Religion, color, race, nation and motherland lose their identity and human beings become one. All arguments of hatred, prejudice and enmity become futile. Religious concepts of reward and punishment Heaven and Hell lose their importance. Since the paid priests and the rulers cannot thrive on the promotion of these beliefs, they regard such an education as being antagonistic to religion and faith.

Only the saints and the seers could get anywhere near Divine Knowledge. Among the Muslims, Hazrat Ali was the only one who knew the secrets of the Holy Prophet. The saying of the Prophet of Islam. I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gateway is a reflection of the same verity. In fact, this is the very principle of this creed. In it, the knowledge about realities or secrets is transferred from teacher to disciple. This kind of knowledge is gained through companionship and through love. Among the men of learning, the Vedantists, the pantheists and the mystics have shed ample light on this subject. Among the old philosophers, Plato and, in the present times, Spinoza and neo-Platonist philosophers have also discussed the issue at length. In the East, Swami Vivekanand and some other among the Hindus and Mohiuddin Ibne Arbi among the Muslims, have tried to prove it in a philosophical way. Further, Sarmad, Shah Enayat, Sachal Sarmast

and a few others have been the preachers and torchbearers of this creed. In other religions too, such noble men have existed.

Readers are urged to bear in mind the fact that the lovers of truth and the spiritual guides have always been opposed to religious bigotry because it breeds ill feeling and hatred among men. However, the rulers and the monopolists of religion always defied these saints and their teachings. Therefore, they employed all means at their command to suppress the teachings of the saints.

Among the Muslims, Imam Ghazali and Mujaddid Alif Thani have presented philosophical arguments in the favor of the establishment of the religious 'state. Among the Hindus, the scholars of Arya Samaj have laid stress on Aryan culture". Similarly in the Christian world, there were movements as "Renaissance" and "Reformation".

In this book, I shall keep myself confined to the origin and development of the concepts of Wahdat-ul-Wajud and Wahdat-ul-Shahood. Other religious movement can be understood in their light.

Wahdat-ul-Wajud

The profounder of this concept, among the Muslims, was Sheik Mohiuddin bin Ali Ibne Arbi. He is known -by the title of Sheik-ul-Akbar. Ibne Arbi was born in southern Spain in A.H. 565 corresponding to A.D. 1164 in the city of Meritha. It is said that he was a descendant of Hatim Tai. In A.H. 586, he became a disciple of Shaikh Abu Bakar bin Khazab in Lisbon, the capital of Portugal. In those times, Sultan Mohammed was the Governor of eastern Spain. After finishing his early education, Ibne Arbi went to Sayut where he gained further education at Cordova. Then he went to Fez in Morocco. Therefrom, he migrated to Alexandria in Egypt, and finally, he settled in Damascus in Syria. He died there in A.H. 638 (A.D. 1240). He was buried in JabaI Qasian in the cemetery of Qazi Mohiuddin.

In Islamic mysticism, he expounded the precept of Wahdat-ul-Wajud in a philosophical manner. After-wards, this concept spread all over the Muslim countries. However, it would not be right to say that it did not exist before him. The Muslim mystics believe that it was taught to Imam Ali by the Prophet and, from him, it kept moving from generation to generation. Mansoor, Hallaj, Shams Tabrez and Khawaja Fariduddin Attar openly preached it. However, Ibne Arbi first made philosophical exposition. His famous book, entitled *Fasusul Hukum* is a work of immense value and is worth reading.

The theory of Wahdat-ul-Wajud is also called the theory of "All is He" which means, "the only existence is the Absolute or All-existent". This 'Absolute-existence' is God. Nothing exists but Him. The universe is a manifestation or a shadow or His light, which is, called the world of attributes and this world has no existence beyond Him; the slogan of the advocates of this theory is "There is no existence except Allah".

As inseparable the reflection of man's face in the mirror, his shadow on earth, the echo of his voice; similarly, His attributes are not different from Him and they are the reflections of the Real being.

As regards the effect of this theory on conventional religion and politics, a discussion on the subject will not be uninteresting. Since, according to this theory, the reality of everything is One, instead of hatred and discord; its believers find a universal bondage of love and amity. They expose the secret of unity, which is hidden in diversity. This theory

cuts at the roots of religious bigotry dividing men and creating many differences among them. It also leaves no room for exploitation in the name of religion. Thus, it criticizes the rulers, the exploiters, and the monopolists of religion and all those who suck the blood of the people in the name of their faith. Such classes, when they see that their interests are at stake, get secretly united and employ all means in order to stifle the voice of truth-lovers. It is an irony that religious monopolists have always obstructed the teachings of the truthful. It is also a fact that whenever a professional religious group tried to exploit the religious sentiments to the extreme, thus spreading bigotry and narrow-mindedness, the believers of Wahdat-ul-Wajud also assumed an equally serious stance. As the poet says:

[Pull down a temple or demolish a mosque, But don't break the heart, for in the heart lives God.]

Abdul Hamid Adam expresses the same feeling thus:

[Pleased I am to see a deserted mosque, Like mine, the House of God, too, is in a shambles].

The Mansoor of Sindh, Hazrat Sachal Sarmast, pained at the bigotry of the so-called religious men, said:

[Until the pulpit, the mosque, the minaret are destroyed Truth shall not dawn on you, Sachal.]

Wahdat-ul-Shahood

Another name of this concept is "Everything is from Him." According to it, all existing things are the creation of God. The Absolute is God. He is above all creation and is Holy and High. The world of attributes cannot be associated with Him. Spirit and matter are two separate things.

First of all, this theory finds expression in virtue and vice, atonement and sin, reward and punishment. Then it advances further, and adding intensity to the collective belief of faith and infidelity, it influences social and political life. Religious institutions consider it their duty to liberate people from "infidelity" and set them "on the path of truth. In order to bring people to their fold, the monopolists of religion first use preaching, and subsequently, force. To them, unity is sheer superstition and innumerable manifestations as the Absolute Reality. On this basis, they accept the distinctions of high and low.

So far as it is a question of organizational set-up among like-minded individuals and groups, it is useful. However, the fact is that beliefs never remain confined to their authors. Later, these beliefs create social disturbance and discord. History is a witness that, after a stage, the adherents of a concept Lakes to extremism. This idea or kindred ideas lead to sects and schisms. Within a religious order, or a race that creates violence. Blind following of a sect has sometimes brought to surface the fascists who have disturbed world harmony. The growth of this concept in religion has been extremely detrimental to the freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, democracy and broad mindedness. Fascism has, in fact, given birth to many divisions such as high and low among the individuals, superiority and inferiority complexes among the races.

So far as I think, both the concepts have retarded human progress. People interested in Wahdat-ul-Wajud should also read, in addition to their own literature, works on Yoga, the Bhagvad Gita, *addresses* by Swami Vivekanand and of Swami Ram Tirath, the writings of Plato, Spinoza, the neo-Platonists, etc.

Rational or scientific method

In the chapter devoted to the 'History of Religion'. It has been discussed how religions originated and how their customs, rituals and laws evolved with the passage of time. Through research on these evolutionary stages, scientists have tried to prove that beliefs and codes, born of hope and fear, have developed gradually. This development will continue in future, too. Like chemistry and biology, the scientists also treat religion as a field of learning related to the social and intellectual evolution. Despite being divided into different beliefs and codes of conduct, religions have a fundamental unity and are ever developing. As the theories and generalizations in other branches of learning were rejected or accepted after trials and experiments, similarly there has been acceptance and rejection of religious beliefs also and this will continue. The social codes or set of beliefs are not eternal in any religion. It is the law of evolution that forces everything to change.

According to the mystics, Islam is also natural, progressive and evolutionary in its laws. It has opened new vistas according to the exigencies of times. Its fundamental principles are world peace, unity and progress of mankind. That is why the title of the Prophet of Islam is "Blessing for the worlds" and the God of Muslims is "Preserver of the worlds" whose mercy and blessings are for the whole world. The Qur'an says:

[Those who have believed meaning thereby that those who have become Muslims, and those who have followed Judaism, Christianity and other religions and have believed in God and the Hereafter and have done good deeds, will be rewarded by God and they will get salvation.]

In spite of this clear Qur'anic enunciation. The assumption that only some or special sects or followers of only one religion have the right of salvation, and among them. Follower are usurpers, adulterers, tyrants, corrupt and unscrupulous men, is not only wishful thinking but also against all norms of natural justice as well.

According to the Muslim mystics and scientists, true religion, ever since its beginning, has been the same and shall remain the same. It's various expositions and forms are only surface-deep. In a garden, just as various flowers add to its beauty, so do variegated beliefs add to the luster of religion. The option should be given to the individual which particular flower to choose. Nobody should be allowed to monopolize the orchard i.e. religion. Nor should any one object to the choice of a flower by anyone. The whole orchard is the common property of all mankind. No one can be deprived of the right to its use.

A question arises as to how these conflicting ideas in unity and diversity of religions can be got rid of. We see that by now, two attempts have been made in this connection. The one is positive the other negative. As regards the positive attempts some men have thought that the best points of all religions be put together. However, many men have endeavored to force upon the world their own beliefs or sectarian prejudices.

Both of these attempts have, historically speaking, failed. The attempts made by Guru Nanak, Kabir, the Muslim mystics, Raja Ram Mohan Rai have led to the formation of more religious groups. On the other hand, the great religions of the world which include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, in spite of converting millions of people and gaining the status of international faiths, could not unite the human race, nor could they root out prejudices and differences. It is vain to think that, in future, all the people of the world will come into the fold of a single religion. The means by which religions spread are power, preaching and birth rate. In the world of today, there is no religion, which either wields so much power or has such an appeal so as to attract the whole human race. The expansion of a religion

largely depends upon the birth rate of its followers. However, it too has its limit. A religion can be reckoned a force when all its followers adopt a composite economic and political system and they rally round a single personality. However, for the major religions of the world, it has neither been possible, nor can it be possible in future.

In these conditions, there remains only one way of promoting peace, progress and welfare of mankind coexistence. Institutionalized religions should give up vested interests. Religion should be regarded as the personal right of an individual. Narrow-mindedness and bigotry should be shunned, and there should be a broad band co-operation in the larger interest of peace and prosperity. To sum up:

[If you want communion (with God) be at peace with the high and low. Let the Muslims call Him Allah and the Brahmins Ram.]

Chapter 4 - Two Interpretations of Islam

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad writes in the preface to "The Life of Sarmad, the Martyr"

"In Asia, politics has always been working from behind the veil of religion. Thousands of events of bloodshed were cloaked with religion. During the thirteen hundred years of Islam, the pen of the jurists has been like a naked sword. The blood of thousands of lovers of truth was shed on their verdict. Read the history of Islam of any period and you will get thousands of such examples that wherever any ruler decided to shed blood, the pen of the jurist and the sword of the general were with him. Not only the Sufis (mystics) and national leaders were made the targets, even those scholars who were critical and realistic, were made to suffer hardships at the hands of jurists, and they were relieved of their misery only after being beheaded".

The present age is in no way different. Men of understanding know the way, in which men have been misled in the name of Islam. Shah Latif says:

[If I reveal of fraction of Truth, everyone will be stunned and mountains will be flown into smithereens. Trees will be gnarled and grass with cease to grow.]

However, if we think seriously on this problem, we shall discover that all the ills are due to an erroneous interpretation of Islam. I think that the time has come when truth should be most clearly put before the people.

In our country, people are openly misled in the name of Islam. From times to time, cries of instituting a theocratic State are raised with all hypocrisy. This baseless and misleading stunt has so much confused the problems of the country that the situation has become really alarming. The well wishers of the country are worried, but it is of no avail. There is only one way to change the situation; Islam should be interpreted in its right perspective. This way alone, can one draw the right conclusions?

Beyond doubt, for achieving peace, progress and prosperity, religion occupied the highest place in the past. These were the objectives of the major religions of the world. However, unfortunately, these objectives were put aside and religions were used to promote the vested interests of either individuals or groups of exploiters. As a result, despite the outward progress of religions, there exists among men discord in place of unity, hatred in place of love, superstition in place of reason, confusion in place of order. It is evident that religions were not an end in themselves, but they were the means to attaining unity, peace and progress of mankind.

Islam is also one of the world religions. Like the followers of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and Communism, the Muslims also believe that their religion, apart from being a complete code of life, has the best philosophy. Thus, it is the only way to salvation for the human race. According to this claim, two interpretations of Islam have been presented like other religions.

One interpretation has invariably been made by the exploiting rulers and the so-called scholars with their own vested interests to protect. The other interpretation has been that of the Sufis (mystics) who gave solace to the teeming millions and were the true well wishers of people.

The first group was responsible not only for the birth of various religions and sects, but also for creating differences among them. On the contrary, the second group has been striving to unify men divided on account of religious

differences into the bond of love, signifying the basic unity underlying religious diversity. Here is a resume of the interpretations presented by the ruling classes and their appointed religious commentators:

1. They regard Islam as the last and the only true religion in the world, insisting that all other religions are false and discredited.
2. They stress that Islam is the panacea for all ills and it is a complete code of life.
3. They consider the Qur'an as the storehouse of all knowledge and teachings for this world and the Hereafter. So they emphasize on the understanding of the Qur'an, the word of God as revealed to the Prophet. They believe that it offers a solution to all the problems of all ages and that their solutions are final and eternal.
4. They insist on calling Prophet Mohammed not only the last of all the prophets, but also as the last reformer and guide.
5. They prescribe some of the words and acts of the Holy Prophet as binding in all cases. They claim that the Muslims are the favorite creatures of God. Their fanciful mind leads them to think that, as a single nation the Muslims are the chosen people. Further, they are destined to lead the world. This leadership shall continue till Doomsday.
6. Not only that, they consider Islam as the only true and legitimate religion; they regard all those outside its pail as misguided and accursed. They consider it their religious duty to show the misguided ones the right path and spread Islam all over the world. At the same time, they regard preaching and fighting for their religion as righteous acts.
7. In order to keep religion and politics under their thumb, these exploiters insist on yoking together the spiritual and temporal spheres. They regard the Caliphs as the representative of the Prophet. Similarly, they consider the Muslim king as the "Shadow of God", insisting on his obedience and claiming that this obedience is a religious obligation. In the same way, they consider the interpretation of the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet as the sole right of their favorite scholars.

As compared to this group, the interpretation given by the Sufis (Muslim mystics) is summarized as under:

1. God, the Almighty, has kept sending His messengers to each and every tribe and nation in every age. The basic aim of the preaching of the prophets has been to promote human well being. Despite the apparent differences in their laws, this reality is magnified from the religious order of each of them. Islam, too, has conveyed the message as a manifestation of the same reality.
2. Every man is a vicegerent of God in this world. Thus, he exudes divine lights. Just as sunlight or air can't be the monopoly of any particular tribe or nation, similarly the message of universal brotherhood peace and welfare of mankind cannot be the exclusive preserve of a particular religion or sect. To associate it with a particular religion or sect is to negate the laws of Nature and the spirit of Islam.

3. Religion means leading life according to voluntarily accepted beliefs to preach the tenets of any religion through government or collective organizations, to force it on people by law or power is against the right of individual freedom, which is given by God. Only that preaching can be appreciated which has respect for the individual's rights and which is based on mutual understanding, love tolerance and service. Good preaching is that which aims at winning hearts. Good manners make good preaching. It is, therefore, necessary that politics and religion be kept apart. Religion is a personal and affair of individuals; it has nothing to do with collective or national matters.

4. By associating the natural religion with one group, calling that group a nation, and confining it to some social customs is against the fundamental objectives of religion. Every man of firm faith and good character is loved by God, whatever his religion. Similarly, God does not love a man, who is wicked and bad in conduct, even if he pretends to be follower of Islam. Hence, in the eyes of these mystics, the narrow bounds of religion are born of wrong and misleading objectives.

5. The Sufis (Muslim mystics), therefore, believe that all that which is based on selfishness or all that, which creates bad blood and ill-feeling among fellow men and all that which obstructs unity, peace and human progress is gross infidelity; even if it is done in the name of Islam.

After presenting the main points of the interpretations of the two groups, I shall now offer some arguments in favor of the interpretation of the second group, which will show up the falsity of the first. If the state of affairs is not analyzed with jaundiced eyes. The problem is impartially studied in its real perspective, we shall know that the real cause of the backwardness of many Muslim countries like Pakistan is the absolutely erroneous interpretation of Islam by the A exploiters and the credence simple-minded and gullible masses have lent to that interpretation. This practice is not the product of the present times; it has been in existence ever since the death of the Prophet. The Prophet, besides being the Messenger of God, was an administrator of rare ability. Therefore, in his person were combined the tasks of Prophet hood and that of an administrator, which he performed most commendably. However, after his demise, Prophet hood ended. People were divided into two groups on the propagation of religion and the conduct of state affairs. Ever since then, two interpretations of Islam began to be made. One group, as conditions suited it, advocated the organization and propagation of religion through government while the other, regarding religion as a personal affair, laid emphasis on making Islam attractive through good preaching and good conduct. It advocated the separation of religion from politics.

The first group, putting religion and politics together made warfare as its basic policy. The members of this group diverted the whole attention of the Muslims towards conquest and material wealth, which was acquired by loot. Further, they employed force, coercion, concession and temptation so as to bring the non-Muslims to the fold of Islam. Through the converts made by such means, they measured the progress of Islam. The second group on the other hand, did not believe in increasing the number of Muslims in this way. Instead of attaching importance to the customary beliefs and traditional mode of life, this group laid emphasis on reflecting over the mysteries of Nature and the purpose of creation. Men belonging to this group devoted their lives to the service of humanity and they won the hearts of the people by personal example. They voluntarily devoted themselves to the task of training talented and conscientious individuals. Much above the craving for fame and false ostentation, they abstained from power and other worldly temptation, thus preferring simplicity as a way of life.

Since the ignorant, the narrow-minded, the superstitious and the power-worshipper have been in majority, the interpretation of the ruling class has prevailed. Similarly, since the number of the conscientious, the selfless, the fearless

and people caring not for power and pelf has always been comparatively small, the interpretation of Islam of the second group has had limited appeal.

The moderates in the second group, however, continued to preach despite the ruthlessness of the ruling classes and the unschooled sentiments of the masses. Whatever they could not preach openly, they conveyed through symbolic and language. However, to this group also belonged those who did not believe in expediency; and caring the least for consequences, they settled for nothing less than truth. Such persons the rulers and commentators of religion regarded as rebels. They were denounced by the rulers and the so-called custodians of religion they were subjected to privation and penury, torture and death Hazrat Imam Hussain, Mansoor Hallaj, Shams Tabrez, Sarmad, Shah Enayat Sufi and Makhdoom Bilawal are just a few names in the brilliant galaxy of such lovers of truth. Ibne Abbas, to quote Bokhari, once said:

[The Prophet that if I reveal them today, I shall be killed has told me such things.]

Hafiz Shirazi expresses this in the following words:

[There should be no expediency in unraveling the truth. Those who tell the truth have never cared for any expediency; otherwise, truth should have never dawned.]

The exponent of truth, Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says in this context:

[O Friend! my secret should not come to my lips. Men of poor understanding shall not be able to understand it,

But they will become deadly enemies.]

This state of affairs is an undeniable proofs of the fact that due to conquest. Coercion and corruption, the number of those who were Muslims only in name went on increasing but the number of those who knew the real teachings of Islam and who practiced Islam has always been limited. This is the reason why, in the opinion of the historians, the so-called Islamic governments of most of the Muslims countries had no relation with the real teachings, objectives and spirit of Islam. The same situation is prevailing even today.

Now let us test the interpretation of the exploiters on the touchstone of reason and logic so as to determined its merits and demerits. As stated in the previous chapter, the first specific slogan of this group of opportunists is that Islam is the last and the only true religion. I shall, therefore, seek to answer two questions here: What is religion? What is the reality of this slogan?

This subject is very wide. Innumerable books have been written on it. Many more are being written. I have already thrown sufficient light on the issue. However, to refresh the reader's memory, I recount the points again.

Historical and scientific research has brought the fact to light that man has been living on earth for millions of years. In contrast to it, three religions of the world namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam trace the beginning of man to Adam. It is said that God molded Adam out of clay and infused soul into him. After that, the human race began. Being the prototype, Adam, was the first man and also the first Prophet of God. According to this belief, the genealogical order

which the Muslims present; Adam was created only 7,500 years ago. This is entirely against scientific and historical research and is, therefore, fallacious.

With regard to the existence of man, which of the two contradicting facts is to be believed? That which is a mere conventional belief or the fact which is based on knowledge and research? As a matter of fact, the world has advanced so much that except for the ignorant or those who are confined to their narrow limits, no one can dare refute scientific evading. The hold of science has become so strong that the religious scholars have started interpreting the old conventional beliefs in new ways. However, by means of recent scientific research, the existence of man for two hundred thousand years has been proved. We cannot say at this stage that age of how much more the evolution of man will take.

Believing in the evidence of historical and scientific research, I am convinced that man has existed on this planet for millions of years. I believe in scientific investigation, which shows that man evolved from the shape of animals to his present physical and mental state. Beyond doubt, it should have taken him millions of years to reach this stage of development. In the early stages, man must have led a nomadic life in the regions where water was available but his life was altogether savage. I agree with the viewpoint of the anthropologists that, during that stage of development. His increasing power of speech and physical needs, coupled with developing mental prowess, gave birth to certain beliefs and rituals which were born out of the instinct of profit and loss but were based on superstition and fear. Those primordial beliefs can rightly be called as the beginning of religion. Undoubtedly, the original beliefs and doctrines were different in every region. However, the cause of their genesis and the need for adopting them was the same. Afterwards, as time rolled on, man came out of the stage of savagery. He passed through different stages such as the nomadic, pastoral, commercial and industrial. Then he entered the age of Science. His original beliefs as well as customs went on changing as he gained in knowledge and experience.

All the great religions of the present times such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam were born within five thousand years. Even before these religions, there had been religious beliefs and rituals. This is the reason why investigations show that all the present religions appear to be based on the beliefs, customs, prayers and laws of ancient times. The above-named four religions are called major because their followers are in millions and they are spread over various parts of the world.

It cannot be denied that these major religions made big changes and additions to the beliefs and customs of their predecessors. However, these 'big changes' are confined to a limited conception of God, life after death, etc. In addition to the changes in these concepts, no change could be made. Superstitions, customs, social and moral laws were either kept intact or cosmetic changes were made in them. The founders of great religions knew very well the psychology of the people and had reached the conclusion that their love for convention, ignorance and backwardness would not allow them to be responsive to innovative ideas. Therefore, they refrained from making radical changes in customs and superstitions.

This is the condition of almost all-great religions. Even many of the beliefs and laws of Islam are borrowed from ancient tribal beliefs and laws. Some of these laws existed not only during the primitive Arab period, but even earlier. Most of the customs and concepts have become so outdated that they have no use in the present time, nor do they satisfy an informed and rational mind. There is no need of continuing any one of them because they appear to be ridiculously useless in modern times. For example, according to the Islamic interpretation of the exploiters and opportunists, the following beliefs are regarded as the pillars of Islam:

1. Belief in a personal God.
2. Belief in the creation of man, life after death, purgatory, Day of Judgment, Doomsday, Paradise, Hell etc.
3. Circumambulating of Kaaba on the eve of Haj, stoning the three devils at Mana, running which is called Sae.
4. Animal sacrifice.
5. Circumcision.
6. Regarding some animals as propitious or unpropitious and some as lawful and others as unlawful.
7. Making offerings for the soul of the dead.
8. The use of incantations, charms etc., for the solution of material problems.
9. Offering of prayers on graves for the fulfillment of one's desires.
10. Prayers and vigils.

Because, in the above lines, I have called some of these beliefs and customs as having been borrowed from the pagan Arabs and also from the superstitions and ceremonies of the primitive ages, I consider it my duty to substantiate my argument.

1. Concept of a personal God

Man needs to invoke some greater force for redress when he finds himself in a state of helplessness, trouble, fear and illness. It was for this reason that, from the very beginning, he started believing in powers he could invoke in exigencies for his psychological satisfaction. Modern research proves that for obtaining psychological satisfaction, he sometimes worshipped animals like a lion or a snake; and during some phase of his evolution, he prostrated himself before the sun, the fire, the river and other objects, treating them as gods. Genie, ghosts and other supernatural elements were no exception. Getting along this way, human psychology inclined towards human worship. There is enough historical evidence to show that there was a time when the magicians, reformers and kings were worshipped as gods. Idol-worship originated from there.

The idol-breaking religions of later ages regarded the wooden and stone images as superstitions, but could not get rid of the personal or physical concept of God. They conceived God sitting in some form or the other in the skies, creating and destroying creatures, distributing food to, and snatching it from, the people, noting their actions and rewarding and punishing them. Hence, they began worshipping and praising Him.

In a verse in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, it has been said "God made man in His own image." There is also Arabic saying "Allah made man in His own shape." This concept of a personal God is revealed from the 'Islamic belief' of the opportunists according to which God is on the seventh canopy of Heaven, seated on a throne. He has hands, feet, eyes, ears, face and body. He is the Creator of the universe, Distributor of food to the creation, Master of reward and punishment Destroyer and Preserver. The last Prophet, Mohammed, met him on the seventh heaven on the eve of his Ascent. On the Day of Judgment, He will descend to earth men's actions before sending them to heaven or consigning them to hell. Noted commentators of Islam such as Imam Malik bin Uns, Imam Ahmed bin Hambal, Imam Daud bin Ali, Imam Abu Timya, Imam Abu Qayyum, Ibne Haitham, Allama Shaukani and many others hold the same belief. (See *the Religion of Islam* by Mohammed Abdul Ghani).

Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Prophet can be cited in support of this belief. Some of them are given below:

[God is seated on the roof of skies]

[When God came, the angels came in rows with Him.]

[When, in the night of the Ascent, Mohammed approached God, He came down and, between them, there was a distance of two bows or even less.]

[The hand of God was on his hand.]

[The radiant and blessed face of God will remain.]

[The day when the thigh of God will be unveiled.]

From some well-known sayings of the Prophet, the bodily concept of God is manifested. In Bokhari and Muslim, Abu Huraira related:

[On Doomsday, the fire of Hell will not subside until God has thrust His leg into it so as to extinguish it]

[Our God descends from the sky to earth each night.]

In Bokhari and Muslim's books on the traditions of the Holy Prophet, it is related by Abdullah bin Masood:

[On Doomsday, God will put all the skies on one finger and earth on the other].

Hence, these references prove that the majority of Muslims believes in the physical or personal concept of God. No doubt, ever since Muslim philosophers and Sufis have refuted this idea, some of the religious scholars also have come round to sharing this belief. However, among the Muslims, there is no dearth of people who attribute such human qualities to God such as seeing or hearing, being pleased or displeased, etc. There are also a few religious scholars who

denounce all those who do not believe in the personal attributes of God. However, such concepts do not lend force either to the greatness or universality of Islam.

2. The Concepts of the creation of man, life after death, Doomsday, Heaven, Hell etc.

About these matters, too, the opportunists insist on adhering to old superstitions. They believe that, on the Day of Creation, when God said "Be", the whole universe came into existence at once. Along with it, the spirits also came into being. From the spirits, God asked if they recognized Him. They replied in the affirmative. The spirits have been living in their abodes ever since. According to the allotted time, some of them come and inhabit the bodies of men and then go into purgatory where they will live till Doomsday. The spirits in purgatory wander about here and there as in the world. Sometimes they visit the earth to see their relatives. The offering of food, clothing, etc. reaches them.

When will Doomsday be? There is no clear data fixed for it. However, some of the indications about Doomsday are that people will leave villages and go to the cities. Before the dawn of that day, an angel will blow a trumpet. The noise of which will shatter the earth into pieces; the mountains will melt and appear like balls of cotton, the earth will be flattened, then rains and rivers will flood it; spirits will come back to their bodies; all men, like insects, will cover the surface of the earth. The sun will come as far down as the height of one and a quarter spear; all mankind, along with its prophets, will be lost in uncertainty; all will have to cross a bridge. Those who have made sacrifices or have got mosques built, will cross easily, the sinners will not be able to do so and will be cut down. On the other side of the bridge, in a vast plain, God will be sitting on a throne with a balance before Him to weigh the sins of every man. Those who have committed sins will be consigned to Hell while those, whose virtues outweigh their sins, will be sent to Heaven.

About Paradise, it is said that there will be palaces of silver, gold and gems, lovely gardens in which canals of milk and honey will flow. To serve the dwellers of Paradise, there will be houris, and handsome male attendants. In contrast with the beauty of Paradise, Hell has been painted as extremely horrible. It is said that it will be all fire. The condemned will be tortured in Hell in various ways and they will be consumed by fire there.

Except for the Muslims, all other men practicing different religions will be thrown into Hell; of the 73 sects of Muslims, seventy-two will also go to Hell, only one sect will reach Paradise. Just as the majority of men face hardships in this world and a few capitalists as well as landowners roll in luxuries; similarly, a large number of the sufferers will be in Hell and some will be comforted in Heaven.

These beliefs are the very edifice of the interpretation of the Islam of the exploiters and opportunists. They have painted God as such a ruthless and cruel tyrant that He will chastise the whole human race merely because it had not followed the ridiculous preaching of the opportunists. According to their interpretation, The God, the Nourisher and the Sustainer of all mankind, will turn out to be the patron of a particular sect of the Muslims in the hereafter.

History tells us that many such beliefs have been borrowed from primitive religions and superstitions. Inside the pyramids of Egypt, which were created before the advent of Judaism and Christianity, there exist carvings and statues which point out the primitiveness of such beliefs. Old mythologies, too, are based on similar ideas. In view of these realities, I do not understand how these beliefs can help prove that Islam is either a natural faith or that it is the only religion of the world guaranteeing salvation.

3. Circum-ambulating of Ka'ba, stoning of Satan, kissing of stone, etc.

Most of these rituals were common among the pagan Arabs and some of them existed even before Abraham. The square building of the Ka'ba is said to be the ancient temple of the Arabs which was later refurbished and sanctified by Abraham as well as Ismail so as to convert it into a place of worship. It is said about the black stone that it came from an ancient temple. Some researchers also believe that it was the sign of one of the ancient gods called "Zohra" which was placed in a corner, in spite of the purification of the old temple. At a fixed time, people used to go there on pilgrimage every year and it was a well-known place of worship. Much like the ancient customs of worship of the sun god, it was circumambulated even at that time.

About the custom of throwing stones at the devils, it is said that it is a mark of hatred and protest against the gods disliked by the ancient Arabs and that this is a pagan practice. About the custom of running between Safa and Marwa. It is said that Hajra, the Egyptian wife of Abraham was left there all alone. There she gave birth to Ismail. Perturbed as she was, she ran to find in search of water. Hence, by the grace of God, a spring of water gushed forth from that spot. The ceremony of running is performed to commemorate Hajra's anxiety.

In these rituals, there appears to be significance except that they are old conventions. They cannot, therefore, be deemed as obligations. In order to prove Islam as a complete code of life, the last and the final religion, which guarantees salvation to all mankind, emphasis on these ceremonies and rituals should not be deemed necessary.

4. Animal sacrifice

The Qur'an tells us that Abraham had a dream in which God asked him to offer sacrifice of his son. When he woke up, he tried to slaughter Ismail under divined orders. However, the angels saved the boy and placed a ram in his place instead. The tradition of animal sacrifice originated from that event. The Bible, too, relates this incident but, instead of Ismail, it gives the name of Isaac. However, in both the Holy Books, the sacrifice has been said to have been made under Divine orders.

The study of ancient religions reveals that the custom of sacrificing animals had been existing thousands of years earlier than Abraham. As a matter of fact, animal sacrifice existed in almost all the ancient religions. Historical research shows that this custom is one of the superstitions of the primitive days. The sacrifice was offered and a man from the tribe was slaughtered so as to appease angry gods or to propitiate them. In those days, God was thought to be such a ferocious being that he would not be satisfied without human blood.

Abraham's concept of God was analogous to this old belief. Therefore, in order to seek His favor, he was ready to sacrifice his son. In the eighteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis, it is written that, at Mamra, Abraham beheld God along with two angels. It was noon. He welcomed all the three, entreated Him to 'stay, with the angels, washed their feet and feasted them with the meat of a robust calf. After the feast, God communicated to him the tidings that his wife, Sarah, would bear him a son. Both of them had considerably advanced in age, so much so that Sarah had ceased to have menses. However, this prayer yielded them a child whom they named Isaac. At the time, Abraham was a hundred years old and Sarah was ninety. Thus, it becomes evident as to what idea Abraham had of God, but it was in keeping with the general thinking of his age.

In those days, God was regarded as a tyrannical force that was fond of human flesh and blood. The concept of a Merciful and Compassionate God is a much later development. One is at a loss to understand as to why in the world of today, the ritual of sacrifice occupies a significant position in Islam when it is claimed that Islam is superior to other religions.

5. Circumcision

Some people call this ritual as that of 'Islamizing' a male child but the fact is it had existed long before the advent of Islam and the Jews practice it as well. It began with Abraham. In the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Genesis, it is related that God appeared before Abraham when he was ninety-nine years old and said:

I promise to grant thee a son who will be the father of kings. They will worship me as God. Therefore, I wish thee to get circumcised and direct thy descendants to get circumcised.

Hence, Abraham got himself circumcised and his son, Ismail, too. Ismail was then thirteen years old. The Muslims and the Jews allowed this practice to continue in their religions as a tradition of Abraham.

Recent research has shown that circumcision did exist among the savages of the primitive era. The ancient tribes of Australia, New Zealand, Africa and America practiced it, and they had no concern with Abraham.

The worship of the 'male organ of god Shive' in India and the worship of the phallus in Greece and in other regions clearly indicates that this ritual is in some way or other related to the concept which was prevalent before the age of Abraham. However, to consider this ritual of the primitive age as a religious duty in Islam and to regard it as a great blessing in this world as well as a source of salvation in the Hereafter is strange, to say the least.

6. Regarding animals as clean or unclean

To regard some animals as clean and some as unclean is an essential religious requirement of the Muslims. The dog and the swine are considered unclean. Even the Jews regard these two animals so. However, the concept of propitious and ominous animals is neither the discovery of the Jews or of the Muslims. It existed among the Semitic Arabs much earlier than the advent of the two religions.

The origin of this concept can be traced to the era of savagery when man lived in forests and, being extremely superstitious, saw an omen in everything. In the morning when he went out in search of food, his effort was to protect himself from beasts and calamities. His urge for seeking food was the dominant factor. Different things, he regarded as signs of his success or failure. In this connection, familiar animals and birds, and their chirping and movements were good or bad omens for him. At the start of his errand, if he came across an animal which, according to his experience or the experience of his ancestors, was considered as a harbinger of success, it was regarded as propitious. However, if the animal did not do so, it was supposed to bring bad luck. This practice of treating animals as good or bad by the primitive man, the anthropologists have defined as totem and taboo. On the basis of this superstition later on, many tribes made images of the propitious animals. They kept those images with them so that they could glance at them each morning or at the start of their errand. Afterwards, these favorite animals began to be worshipped. Similarly, ways were adopted for killing the ominous animals or avoiding their baneful influence. The worship of animals such as the lion, the elephant,

the cow, the snake, the crocodile, the eagle etc. is still in vogue among different tribes. Some tribes and their members are named after their favorite animals and many people see different omens even today in animals such as the cat and the fox.

Research about loathing the swine shows, that, thousands of years ago, the natives of Frigia and Lydia in Asia Minor worshipped Aetus and his wife, who were god and goddess. In their mythological tales, it was related that the boar killed the god when he went for the hunt. Therefore, for this reason, the worshippers of that god regarded this animal as taboo. The people of that region were Semites succeeding generations of the Semites, much like their ancestors, had the same hatred for animals. As the Jews and the Muslims belong to the Semitic race, they also did the same. (For further details, see *Golden Bough* by John Frazer).

As a matter of fact, the swine had become so loathsome among the Arabs, and its hatred had been so deeply rooted in their minds that Islam, too, could not overrule it. On the other hand, Islam confirmed it by declaring it unlawful. However, it is a proven fact that this was neither originated by Islam nor has it such a religious significance so as to be regarded as a fundamental tenet of Islam.

7. Offerings and requiems for the dead

I have already said that among the old beliefs accepted by Islam, one is that, after death, the spirit of man will stay in purgatory till Doomsday. There it roams about, eats, drinks and fulfills its needs in the same way as in this world. Hence, it is incumbent upon the descendants of the dead to arrange for his food and clothing. It is said that offerings of food and clothes made in the name of the dead benefit the deceased in purgatory. With the same beliefs, certain ceremonies such as *Soyem* (the third day of demise) and *chehlum* (the fortieth day of the demise) are observed. During this period, recitation from the Qur'an is made for the eternal peace of the departed. Requiem are held and food is offered to the needy and the destitute. At the same time cloth is distributed among the priests, the poor and the beggars. There also exists a belief that the soul of the dead comes back to his house and when it notices certain ceremonies being observed for its redemption, it is pleased. In the contrary case, it gets annoyed and returns cursing its survivors.

If we seriously study these ceremonies or beliefs, we shall know that they were not introduced by Islam but had been existing for centuries. The excavations of old tombs have revealed that, in the primitive days, the belief was common that the dead continued to have needs as they had in life. The articles discovered from the Pyramids of Egypt evidenced that the same belief of ancient people led to bury with the dead edibles, cosmetics, arms, carriages, etc. At places, attendants and wives of the dead were also buried alive so that they could serve the dead just as when they were alive. Once upon a time, this custom was common in China. When Chengez Khan, the Great Mongol, died, his wives were also buried with him along with other articles. The custom of *Satti* among the Hindus in India had the same purpose. In short, there has been homogeneity in the beliefs and rituals among the people of different religions and regions. The Muslims, too, continued to follow the old beliefs but in a different form. They held the ceremonies of distributing food and clothes, of recitals from the Qur'an and requiems. The Hindu ceremonies of *Chaintha* and *Paat* are different shapes of this concept.

It is strange that the Muslims say that everyone will be rewarded or punished according to his actions. However, on the other hand, it is also claimed that alms and offerings made for the dead, absolve him of sin and pave the way for his salvation. If this belief is given weight, personal acts have then no importance. This concept gives unbridled freedom to the wealthy to commit the worst of sins but earn redemption by providing food to a few priests and beggars. Thus, their

inventors will save them from the punishment to be meted out to them on the Day of Judgment. Such ~i belief can in no way be said to belong to a religion which may be deemed as the final and the only faith whose followers are regarded as the best people.

8. Prayers, charms, incantations, etc.

For overcoming economic stringencies, belief ii] prayers, charms and incantations is also considered Islamic. Many books have been written on this subject and, in support of this belief, references are made to the Qur'an and the traditions. Beyond doubt, due to Wahabi teachings and also because of the modern compulsions many people have given up these practices. However, a large number of men are still clinging to them. Charms and incantations constitute the source of income for a majority of the so-called priests and occultists.

In fact, these beliefs are also pre-Islamic and are reminiscent of the primitive age. The difference is that, in the primitive age, magical incantations were intoned to achieve the desired effect. Today, the holy verses of the Qur'an and the names of God are recited. In the magical charms, impressions of other type were made, now figures are marked according to the Arabic alphabet. The names of the Qur'anic verses or of angels are also written. The custom of incense-burning or taking a sacrificial animal or other things around a patient's bed is nothing but primitive in nature.

Whatever the importance of such superstitions in the past, they are not only useless but also ridiculous today. If magical charms, incantations and recitation of verses are regarded as an inseparable part of the Islamic faith. To achieve mundane objectives, then despite the claim that Islam is the final religion of the world, the Muslims will forever remain subservient to others for the fulfillment of their needs and can never attain high status or glory. This belief obstructs the struggle for life and leads to escapism.

9. Offering prayers and holding requiems on tombs

Visiting the graves of relatives or of saints and holding requiems and offering sweets is a common practice among the Muslims. About what happens in the grave, it is believed that after the dead person is buried, two angels named Munkir and Nakir enter it, and having made the dead come to life again, they put to him some questions, such as: Who is thy God? What is the name of thy Prophet? What is thy religion? This is the reason that every Muslim is made to recite the Kalima when death approaches. After the burial, such words as "Allah is my God", "Mohammed is my Prophet" and "Islam is my religion" are engraved on his tomb so as to enable him to answer Munkir and Nakir properly

Such beliefs about the dead have come down to us from the primitive days by which the deads were supposed to participate in worldly affairs. They were worshipped and were supposed to be protectors and helpers of the living. We come to know the full facts about these beliefs from the accounts of primitives of Australia, New Zealand, America and Africa. In Japan, dead relatives are still worshipped. In Egypt, China and Central Asia, the dead was buried after mummification. The general belief was that, even after death, body and soul remained one and if the body was preserved, the (lead would have no difficulty in rising on the Day of Judgment. Along with the shroud, some instructions for the dead were also written on papyrus. In some sects of Islam, the custom of writing on the shroud some verses and a contract and burying them with the dead is reminiscent of the same ritual. Inscription of verses on the graves is considered good by all sects of Islam. The visit to the graves of saints, to entreat, to place wreaths or Chadars to get the head tonsured, to use myrtle, to beat drums or to blow the conch are various shapes of ancient customs. To claim some of these rituals as Islamic is to negate the greatness of our faith.

10. Prayers and exercise

According to the opportunists, prayer is the fundamental worship and fasting is a compulsory exercise. These two are among the five fundamental tenets of Islam. Great stress is laid on them and they are considered a vital part of Islam. Most people have been believing that prayer and fasting are the very objectives in themselves and their rules call for nothing except bowing and prostrating. Similarly, fasting is confined to its mere observance within the prescribed time limit. After offering prayers and observing fasts, Muslims think that all their wishes, no matter how outrageous or criminal will come true. It is as if the sheer observance of these tenets does not ennoble individual or collective conduct, but the observance of their tenets, creates a craving for personal desires.

This makes it evident that the beliefs or rituals, which the opportunists have considered as the soul of religion, are reminiscent of ancient traditions, which serve neither any lofty purpose of this world, or of the Hereafter. Further, these beliefs and rituals have no utility on the basis of which Islam may be considered either superior to other religions or the last and final faith.

In fact, such beliefs and ceremonies have conventional value and the law of evolution is as applicable to them as to any other field of human endeavor. Human intelligence, knowledge, customs, beliefs and codes of life have been progressing on the basis of experiments and social change. Therefore, in moral and social codes, in religious beliefs and *rituals*, changes are sure to take place in future according to changing needs and requirements. Therefore, to regard temporary rituals and beliefs as immutable is contrary to the law of evolution. To confine things to the conventional beliefs, whose beginning and end are not fully known, is not only ignorance of the law of Nature (evolution) but also a proof of lack of intelligence. To regard conventional beliefs, as real Islam is a well thought-out plan of the opportunists so that they may retain their hold on the Muslim masses and people and keep them embroiled in petty affairs so that they may continue to be exploited. The opportunists are not concerned about Islam in the pursuit of their personal ends.

Beyond doubt, Islam can be called a world religion. It is because the number of its followers runs into millions and they live in almost every part of the world. By this definition, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Communism can also be called world religions. However, by calling Islam a world religion, if it is meant that the welfare of the whole world depends on its acceptance, especially, on the interpretation of Islam as made by the opportunists, it is not only self-deception but also an affront to the real teachings of Islam.

Whatever I have said in the foregoing pages can be summarized thus: in the beginning, the purposes of all religions were the same - peace, progress and unity of mankind. Thus, the beliefs and rituals of all religions were almost identical. However, as regional needs, vested interests and environment demanded change, the outward appearance and contours of religions changed. In the opinion of truth-lovers, these changes occurred only in such beliefs and rituals, which had been purely exhibitivite and which were practiced by the illiterate people or those who were convention-bound. These beliefs and rituals have never had any value for the truth-lovers. The real objective and common ideals of religions have always been before them. They have full faith in the abiding truth of religions.

The following verses of the Qur'an are clearly opposed to the narrow interpretation of Islam, which is made by the opportunists. These verses confirm the point of view of the truth-lovers:

Addressing the Holy Prophet, God says:

[Believers are they who believe in what was revealed unto you and what was given to those before you.]

It means that, in the eyes of God, a true Muslim is that who does not differentiate between the books and teachings of previous prophets and the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Had there been any difference among them, God would not have enjoined the Muslims to believe in the Books that were revealed before the Qur'an.

[Among the Muslims, Jews, Christians and followers of other religions those who believe in God, the Day of Judgment and perform good deeds, they shall reap due reward and attain salvation.]

By reposing faith in God, it is meant that there be faith that the universe is created under a plan and God is its Creator and Administrator. Similarly, by reposing faith in the Day of Judgment, it is meant that there be faith in evolution and future of man. By good deeds, it is meant that all efforts be made for the progress, peace and unity of mankind.

[It means that Prophet Mohammed and true Muslims believe in what was given to them by God. All of them believe in God, His angels, His Books and the veracity of His prophets. They know that there is no difference and contradiction in the teachings of all of His prophets].

From this verse, the truth becomes abundantly clear that in the background of different prophets and books, the Oneness of God is immutable and that it is essential to repose faith in the evolution of religions. So, it becomes clear that, unlike the claim made by the opportunists, Islam cannot be regarded as a negation or contradiction of other religions. If it is thought to be so, it will be contrary to the spirit of Islam.

THE SECOND CLAIM OF OPPORTUNISTS

The second claim of the opportunists is that their interpretation of Islam offers a solution for all the problems facing the human race and it is a complete philosophy of life. Before discussing this claim, I think it is necessary to answer two important questions:

- a) What are the problems of the human race, which can be solved through Islam?
- b) What complete philosophy of life does Islam present?

The problems of the human race

These are two kinds of problems: fundamental and temporary.

Fundamental problems

For men in every age and region, the fundamental problems of hatred, violence disaffection, ignorance superstition, poverty, hunger etc., have existed for centuries. If it is claimed that Islam can offer a solution to these problems, then the

interpretation of the opportunists does not make any sense. The correct solution can, of course, be found in the interpretations of the truth-lovers and the Muslim mystics. The interpretation of the opportunists, on the other hand, not only gives birth to many problems but also complicates them further. Not only among other men but even among the Muslims, the interpretation of the opportunists fans the flames of hatred and discord, thus sowing the seeds of rigid sectarianism. The so-called priests spare no time in vindicating these explanations because the opportunists pay them. Therefore, in return for the money received from the opportunists, the Muslim priests create an atmosphere, which is charged with hatred and animosity. They also incite their co-religionists to take recourse to violence and assault their opponents, promising Heaven in the Hereafter in return. Emphasizing their dogmatic faith and exhibitionist rituals, they exhort people in the name of God and the Prophet not to adopt a rational and healthy outlook. They make free use of all the inventions of the West in their daily life, but keep on denouncing all the modern sciences, which have made them possible. Thus, they decree against the study of these sciences by the Muslims. Therefore, the question arises as to how Islam, as interpreted by such unscrupulous people, can solve the problems of the Muslims and of the whole human race except by serving the vested interests of the so-called Muslim priests and their masters? Further, in order to conceal their ignorance, the opportunists claim that their version of Islam alone can be the panacea when all humanity has embraced it. It is as if problems cannot be solved without all human beings converting to Islam, even if they get annihilated in the process.

In changing conditions, new problems will continue to crop up in every country and in every age. For the solution of these problems, a rational approach in keeping with changing requirements will have to be made. To prescribe one and the same medicine for all diseases amounts to ignorance or self-deception. Take, for example, the problem of poverty. In the Islam of the opportunists, there exists no other solution except extorting money in the name of Zakat (ceases), alms and abolition of interest although modern economics has no relationship with the economics of Islam. Similarly, there is a great deal of difference between medieval and modern social life. A detailed discussion will follow in the coming chapters. In these lines, I wish to say that all those men who, ignoring the urges of the present times, regard Islam as a solution for all human ills and problems and thus affirm the interpretation of the opportunists, either deliberately try to hoodwink the people or have jaundiced eyes. As such, their vision is completely blurred. A critical study shows that the interpretation of Islam made by the self-seekers gives birth to a special theory which:

- a) Throttles democracy and paves the way for dictatorship.
- b) Creates hatred and ill feeling among men in the name of religion and sect.
- c) Impedes rational and scientific inquiry on the basis of supernatural or metaphysical elements.
- d) Pollutes the peaceful atmosphere and induces co-religionists for waging a war against people with different beliefs.
- e) Advocates the right of retaining private property, thus thwarting plans through which the poverty of general masses can be eliminated.
- f) Distracts the attention of men from the real issues of life, purveying primitive beliefs and rituals as true religion.

- g) Creates fascist tendencies in the Muslims misguiding them into thinking that they are the chosen people ordained to rule the world.
- h) Lays great stress on formalism and ritual making the followers deviate from the *cardinal* principles of Islam.
- i) Strengthens conventionalism, completely losing sight of the demands of the law of evolution.
- j) Negates the feeling of brotherhood and of human dignity, creating simultaneously an atmosphere, which is charged with discord and hatred.

Secondary problems

These problems vary and are caused by regional and geographical conditions. For instance; the difficulties and problems of the cold countries are different from those of the tropical ones. The days and nights in the regions adjoining the Poles are very long. In these conditions, the fixed duration of twelve to fourteen hours cannot be practicable. For example, it will be difficult to offer five prayers and observe a one-month fast in a region where, for twenty-four hours or more, the sun neither rises nor sets. This proves that problems change according to time, space and other conditions. Therefore, their solution should be also different. A single principle or formula cannot be applied to all regions.

The same holds true with regard to cultural conditions in different regions in different stages. The primitive man lived under different conditions and had different requirements. He lived in the hollows of trees. He took shelter in the caves. He lived all naked. He was ignorant of fire weapons instruments and mode of cultivation. His daily search for food, safety from wild animals, helplessness against natural calamities, lack of permanent abode and means of subsistence had compelled him to pass each moment of his life in the agony of perpetual fear and superstition. To suit these conditions and to satisfy his inner self, he invented certain beliefs and rituals. After that stage, developing gradually, man entered the Bedouin phase of his evolution. During that period, he started rearing animals to get milk and meat. This led him to the pursuit of new pastures. He was also exposed to certain new challenges and clash of interests. For the solution of his problems, man adopted the tribal pattern of collective life. However, the problems of the stage of development were certainly different from those of the primitive age. With the passage of time, he got disgusted with nomadic life and started permanent habitation along riverbanks. During that period, he learnt cultivation, started living in small groups and built cottages. In those days, cutting of forests, bringing virgin land under the plough, garnering grain, braving the elements and for protecting his village, he had to evolve methods other than those he had employed in his Bedouin days. After-wards, human society passed through other stages such as commercial, technical and scientific. Now the question arises: will the problems of the present stage of evolution not be different from those of the agricultural stage? Further, for the solution of the present-day problems, will not new demands and urges be given due consideration?

However, inspite of it, it is claimed that the opportunists' interpretation of Islam with all its rituals is the solution of the problems of every age. It is nothing but ignorance and self-deception. The problems of life have always been changing under the exigencies of time and will continue to change in future as well. The laws framed fourteen hundred years ago for solving the problems of that time cannot be applied to the problems of today or those of tomorrows. Such an insistence would be against the eternal dignity of Islam. Just as the cure for every disease is according to the nature of the malady and the condition of the patient, so is the solution of a problem in accordance with the needs and demands of time. To seek a solution for the problems of all times and all regions is the very negation of the limitless variety of Nature.

In this connection, many hue and cries is raised in the name of the Shariat and the Sunnah. Although many such things are revealed from the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet, which prove that, in the domain of wordily affairs and conventional beliefs, he liked people to think and act according to their power of intellect, comprehension and experience.

For instance, somebody once asked him about the Day of Judgment. He frankly answered "I don't know". However, if you ask a Muslim priest the same question, he will arrogantly and authoritatively give such details of the old mythological belief as if he had personally knowledge of it. In fact, by the Day of Judgment is meant a happy future for man and for this world. This meaning is not my own interpretation, but ~t was given by Shaikh-UL-Akbar Mohiuddin Ibne Arbi, a great scholar, researcher and philosopher of the Muslim world. He says:

[The term called 'the life to come' is in the process of perpetual happening the world is neither to come to an end completely nor is determined its limit: Doomsday is ever continuing. This world and life Hereafter are only the different names of the new manifestations appearing under the forces of time and space. These are reflections of changing shapes. One shape disappears; another comes into being, This change will continue forever. Today is the Doomsday for yesterday; and for today, it will be tomorrow].

From the answer as given by the Holy Prophet it is proved that regarding this traditional belief, he did not wish to prophesize and, therefore, left it to the people to decide for themselves. In the same way, there is another narrative that once the Messenger of God happened to pass through a date orchard. At that time, the grove keepers were busy in cross-fertilizing the trees. The Holy Prophet forbade them from doing so and said, *Nature will itself perform this task*. The grove-keeper obeyed. However, that year, the dates not were much print. When the Prophet was told about it, he said:

[In future, you cross-fertilize the dates according to your wish and experience. My job is Prophethood. It suits me not to interfere in every affair].

This instance makes it abundantly clear that he gave due weight to the opinion of the experts in their chosen fields and he allowed them the fullest freedom to express their opinion.

It is an open secret that the Prophet of Islam performed his duty in a dual capacity,' as a political and social administrator and as a prophet of God. This is the reason why he made two different pronouncements about himself. When he discharged his duties as an administrator, he said, *Verily, I am a human being like you*. Having said this, he confessed that acts of human virtue and otherwise could be committed by him. Therefore, in this capacity, he regarded himself a creature of God, as every other man. He, therefore, prayed to God to save him from faltering and committing transgressions. In other capacity, he claimed to be very close to Providence and the Ascent confirmed his exalted position. In the latter capacity, he was "Ahmad" without the letter "m" and "the city of knowledge" too. Therefore, to confuse the two positions is to distort reality.

This distinction makes it clear that the injunctions made by the Holy Prophet or as revealed in the Book regarding the permanent or temporary problems or the social conditions of the age, are not of lasting nature. After social condition had changed, these injunctions lost their utility. To regard them as binding for all ages and conditions is against the spirit of Islam, and the laws of Nature and the will of the Prophet.

*Without the letter "m", the word "Ah mad" is to be spelt as "Ahad" which means 'Unique'.

Ahad is one of the attributes of God.*

So as to further expose the drawbacks of the interpretation of Islam as made by the self-seekers and opportunists, it will be better to judge them in the light of the problems of our own times. Let us see if a correct solution of the problem lies with them. In my opinion, the following are the main problems in the present-day world, which have caused a lot of chaos and confusion:

a) Despotism or dictatorship

b) Poverty

c) Vested class interests

d) Force and violence

a) Despotism or dictatorship

Of all the systems that mankind has experienced the despotic system has been the most horrible. With the increase in the number of weapon of mass destruction in the modern world, the probability of a holocaust cannot be weapon of ruled out. This dangerous tendency can be overcome by promoting brotherhood, the spirit of tolerance and respect for human freedom and dignity. Can these virtues be inculcated in the followers of a faith, which is based on prejudice, narrow-mindedness and extremism?

Despotism is a system under which a group belonging to a certain race, creed, color, political or religious belief may impose its will on others, claiming that its ideology is the only remedy for the well being of the whole human race. At the same time, it may reject or regard as inferior the arguments and experiences of others, coercing them accept its ideology. No one should be allowed the right of dissent nor should its command be disobeyed or any argument is entertained, howsoever convincing it may be. A particular person or group may assume power or leadership and others are forced into blind conformism.

Now take a look at the opportunists, their preaching, their feelings and their behavior in the light of it. Don't they discard all other ideologies and beliefs, only upholding their own ideology and faith as legitimate? Don't they create an atmosphere charged with religious frenzy only to intimidate and cow down their adversaries? Haven't they monopolized Islam, the interpretation of the Qur'an and the exegesis by force? There will be no other answer to such questions except in the affirmative. This proves that ideology; faith, feeling and behavior of the opportunists are governed by despotic tendencies.

According to the real teachings of Islam, dictatorship is not only an evil of the worst order but it is also most detrimental to the life of a nation. As far as Islamic teachings go, man is the vicegerent of God on earth and all human beings are bound by ties of equality, fraternity and brotherhood. No doubt, administrative responsibilities can be different, but on account of them, no one can be a permanent ruler and be entitled to any' distinction or a special status. Similarly, no one is a subject or an inferior being forever. This is the reason why the Holy Prophet, despite being the Apostle of God and the administrative head of the Muslim State, had no trappings of power with regard to his living, dress and public

dealing. He used to live like a commoner. He mixed with the common people and answered their questions with all politeness. He held respect for humanity so dear to his heart that he did not like even a Bedouin to stand up to honor him. Beyond doubt, he shunned all such negative values, which created division between man and man on the basis of color, creed and caste. He taught the lesson of equality, fraternity and humanism. The Prophet of Islam set mankind on the path of unity, progress and prosperity.

The Muslim mystics have shed light on this aspect of Islamic teachings. However, since this jeopardized the vested interests of the exploiters, they hatched plots against them, regarded them as heretics and finally got them sentenced. The dictators of the present age are also inflicting punishment on all those who stand for liberalism. How true was Shah Waliullah when he said:

[Discard all the worthless systems and adopt new modes of life in the light of reason.]

However, the interpretation of Islam by the opportunists has always been in favor of dictatorship.

How can the commentary (on Islam) of the self-seekers be expected to shield people and their interests?

b) Poverty

In the world today, the problem of poverty, which the largest segment of human society is suffering from, is of utmost importance leaving aside other countries, if Pakistan is to be viewed, the largest number of its people are deprived of food, clothing, housing, medicines and job opportunities. They are denied basic necessities of life. Only five per cent of the total population of the country is prosperous.

According to the interpretation of the opportunists, the solution lies in the abolition of interest and those who are in a position to give charity and Zakat. But the question arises: can charity and religious Zakat create sufficient means by which poverty can be eliminated and the basic necessities of life provided to every citizen? The answer has to be a big "NO".

It is evident that Zakat is levied on money, silver, gold and heads of cattle. It is neither determined on property nor on income. These days, no one keeps cash in his house. People either keep their money in banks or invest it in business and industry. The banks advance the deposited money on loan to business and industry. In case of the abolition of interest, people will neither deposit money with the banks nor will the banks be able to advance loans. Therefore, investment will come to a halt. There will be a cessation of all commercial activity and the country will suffer immeasurably.

At present, two economic systems are in vogue -capitalism and socialism. The capitalistic system exists in banks, industries and big private enterprises by virtue of which only a few prosper, but the majority of men get poor. In the socialistic system, the concept of private property does not exist. Production and means of production are controlled by the state. Therefore, the state becomes responsible for providing food, clothing and housing to the people. Islam negates both systems. On the one hand, it is against the abolition of private property and by abolishing interest, it calls for realization of 2.5 per cent as Zakat and puts restrictions on its expenditure on the other.

As compared to the past, state machinery has become very large. For its operation and smooth functioning, large sums of money are needed. This money is acquired taxes on different items. Taxes are imposed on commodities directly or indirectly or by both methods. If people pay different taxes and they are made to pay Zakat at 2.5 per cent of the principal amount each year, they will not only get overburdened, but commercial activity will very likely collapse. Further, people will have to relapse into the primitive ages.

As far as charity is concerned, it cannot be accounted at all. It is purely a voluntary act. For its realization, neither can a rule be framed nor can one be forced into being charitable. However, it has become evident that the self-seekers and their version of Islam offer no practicable solution for the eradication of poverty, which has the majority of our countrymen in its grip. Nor do these self-seekers have the ability to solve the problems facing the people.

c) Class interest

The third formidable problem, which the world is presently confronted with, is the exploitation of the people by a class with vested interests. To this, Class belongs to the capitalists; the religious leaders fed on the charity and contributions of the capitalists, the imperialists and their agents. These people keep on trying to get hold of the government in one way or the other, leadership, wealth, production and its distribution. They try to make the most of these sources for their own benefit. Consequently, the majority is doomed to perpetual poverty. In order to perpetuate their power, the exploiters try to thrive on the slogans of individual freedom and religion. The Russians and people in other countries got fed up with religion and fraud in the name of individual freedom because these slogans did not deliver the goods. On the other hand, they shielded the interests of the exploiters. At the moment, Pakistan is the only country in the world where exploitation of religion is at its highest. Efforts are being made to present the real Islam through its misinterpretation. Undue advantage is taken of the simplicity of the people and their innate love for Islam. Thus, to benefit the vested interests of a class, slogans are being raised for the Islamic system, Islamic constitution, Islamic education, Islamic leadership Islamic society, etc. Behind these emotion-charged slogans, religious and sectarian feelings are also fanned against those who are the well wishers of the country and the people.

There is no denying the fact that the slogan of Islam did play its role in the genesis of Pakistan, but despite that Quaid-I-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah, discarded theocracy and the role of religion in affairs of state in his speech delivered in the Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1947. After scores of years, religion is being revived today so as to demean and degrade the Muslims. Hectic efforts are being made to run the country on religious lines. It is evident that, as in the past, the fruits of this slogan will go to the bureaucrats, industrialists landlords, traders and the Muslim priests who are living on the crumbs of these industrialists and traders. Very true was Sachal Sarmast when he said:

[Until the pulpit, the mosque and the minarets are not destroyed, O Sachal truth shall not prevail.]

This analysis proves that the self-seekers and their misinterpreted Islam are themselves the exponents of class conflict loot and plunder. Further, they have no formula for saving the world from the clutches of misery.

d) Force and violence

The fourth important problem of the world today is the use of force and violence. It is a matter of grave concern that instead of settling disputes through negotiations and mutual understanding, violent means are employed for their

solution. So long as this tendency prevails, there will neither be internal harmony and peace within the countries nor will there be a guarantee of safety from the menace of atomic destruction. Because of some of his qualities, man is the best and the noblest of all creation. However, brutality is the vice, which, at times, turns him to be worse than animals. To compel someone to accept a particular creed or way of life on the basis of brute force or terrorism is such a savage feeling for which there exists no place in a cultured society. The good men of every age have regarded violence as contemptible.

The past, history of man is full of grave and tragic events, which were caused by violence. Today, man has advanced in almost every walk of life. He has, by and large, attained control over the forces of Nature. Large and beautiful cities have sprung up all over the globe, but the way the human population is concentrated, the use of brute force can prove a thousand times more destructive than at any time in the past.

The foundation of the two major religions of the world was laid on non-violence. One of them is Hinduism and the other is Christianity. The high-caste Hindus do not eat meat because of their belief in nonviolence. Their ancestors used to say that torturing animals was nothing short of a sin. However, history is witness that their descendants, by resorting to violence, converted millions of men into untouchables. Mahatma Gandhi attained freedom for India through the weapon of non-violence, but in his free country even today, the Hindus very often let loose the orgy of communal violence.

For the Christians, the teaching of Jesus Christ, were if somebody hit you on the right cheek, turn to him the left cheek. Meaning thereby that, violence should not be retaliated with violence and that effort should be made to win the heart of the enemy through love, affection and good conduct. Millions of men in Europe, Canada, America and other parts of the world are the followers of Christ. Do they really subscribe to his teachings? Are they not the same people who have set up military bases all over the world and have subjugated more than half the people on this planet? Are they not the same people who were responsible for two World Wars in which millions of innocent people were killed and seriously wounded? Is it not a fact that despite their *admission of* colossal devastation in the two wars and posing themselves as the champions of peace, they have discarded its use, and in spite of subscribing to the Charter of the United Nations, they are bent upon stockpiling deadly weapons? In these circumstances, hope could be pinned only on Islam, which is basically, and essentially a religion of peace. However, it is equally deplorable that the color, in which the opportunists have painted Islam, has presented it as an advocate of violence. In this context, significant is the meaning of Jihad (holy war) as interpreted by the opportunists. In Islam, there exists no concept of an offensive war. It is always defensive. However, unfortunately, the interpretation of the self-seekers gives the impression that, in Islam also, the use of force is not only justified but also it is expedient as well. The Muslims have, as a result of this extremist belief, suffered a lot. Notwithstanding the glaring differences among Muslim mystics, Muslim rulers and the self-seekers have not desisted from provocative publicity of this belief.

In Pakistan, the self-seekers are engrossed in grinding their own axes in the sacred name of Islam. To usurp the rights of the smaller provinces against the wishes of their people. To trample democracy, to divert the attention of people from the real issues of life. To deprive men of their rights, to fan the flames of religious and sectarian feelings. To serve the vested interests of the rulers and a few bigoted obscurantists. to let loose a reign of terror in order to browbeat the opponents, to raise false and hollow slogan about religion, to impede new and progressive forces and to thwart all attempts of the saner element to create a truly egalitarian society are some of the 'achievements' of this group. According to the creed of the mystics or the real spirit of Islam, such cruel acts are not only the un-Islamic but unadulterated hereticism. Force and violence breed discord and disunity while Islam preaches love and peace. It regards coercion or the use of force as sin.

So grossly unjust and impervious to reason are these misguided obscurantists that if a Muslim finds it hard to be in agreement with their interpretation of Islam, they instantly condemn him as a renegade. This form of excommunication is the only device, which these opportunists have so far been able to discover. It means that Islam is not the order of God but is a limited company and they are its directors and proprietors.

People believing in the true ideology of Islam and the Muslim mystics have their faith in Jihad (holy war). But their faith is absolutely different from that of the opportunists. Unlike the obscurantists, they do not believe in usurping the rights of the people and in crushing their opponents, but in controlling themselves. They seek their enemy not outside their being but from within themselves. They deem selfishness, self-worship, violence, bigotry and hatred not only their own enemies but also the enemies of Islam. For a mystic, every man is a manifestation of divine virtues. He hates no one even the lowest.

According to the obscurantists, religion is not a personal affair of man: the Muslim priests and the rulers are also assigned a role. This interpretation safeguards their interests. Consequently, the priests and the rulers other affairs of the people. As they try to measure all the affairs by the yardstick of religion, they exploit men in the worst manner, making their lives most miserable.

The Western countries denounce the socialistic system on the plea that it makes no provision for human freedom and men has no greater value than that of a gadget in a machine. However, perhaps they do not know that in a Muslim society, which is governed in the light of the interpretation of the self-seekers, the condition of a common man is far worse than that in the socialist system. In socialist states, individual freedom is restricted for the collective good of society. However, in fake Islam, the same thing is done to serve the interests of a coterie of men. In a socialist country, the majority of the Communist Party interprets the Marxist ideology on the basis of intellect, social utility and cogent arguments but very few enjoy the monopolistic right to interpret Islam like the opportunists. Even there, no room for argument or opposition exists.

In the light of these facts, it has become evident that Islam as interpreted by the self-seekers has nothing to offer nor can it save oppressed men and women from force and violence. Further, the self-seekers and their Islam are a great obstruction in the way of peace and unity, brotherhood and mutual understanding among people.

THE REAL PHILOSOPHY OF ISLAM

In the above lines, important points have been discussed and there remains no room for confusion that the real philosophy of Islam is entirely different from that of the obscurantists. The real Islamic ideology is far above fake belief and rituals and the distinction of caste, creed and color. Similarly, the real Islam is free from the vices of hatred and prejudice, petty sectarian and communal feelings, class exploitation, violence and force. It does not clash with the law of evolution. Fundamentally and essentially, Islam preaches universal love and peace, equality and fraternity. For other affairs of life, it permits men of learning and intellect to modify their ways according to changing social requirements. The claim of the opportunists that their version of Islam is immutable for every age and place for each aspect of life and segment of society, and that they have every right to interfere in the affairs of an individual or of society is nothing but a conceited notion. Such an attitude is, in fact, against the teachings of Islam.

THE THIRD CLAIM OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

The third important claim of the self-styled interpreters of Islam is that the Qur'an is the final source of information and guidance in this world and the Hereafter. They vehemently plead that:

- a) It is the Book of God.
- b) It contains all worldly and heavenly wisdom.

a) The Book of God

There is a great deal of difference between a Muslim priest and a Muslim mystic. The priest lays great stress on the belief that, the Qur'an, as a document was first authored by God and then revealed piecemeal through Gabriel to the Prophet. The Messenger of God repeated it and his companions either jotted it down or memorized it. Thus, this idea of the priest is based on the personal concept of God. At the same time, this concept is UN-Islamic and reminiscent of the primitive days.

As regards the skies, it is said that their number is seven. Like roofs, they are laid on each other. According to the modern scientific researches, there exist no such skies. Further, the belief that God authored the Book at a particular place is to limit Him. Then He sent the Qur'anic text to the Prophet through a messenger called Gabriel. These are mundane thoughts, which are woven around the concept of God.

To the mystic, the Holy Qur'an is that divine blessing which was revealed by the Holy Prophet during sublime moment and in a state of heightened inspiration. According to their concept, God is timeless and spaceless. He is far above the comprehension of human beings. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Omnipresent. For communicating His message, he neither needs a document to be first written and then sent through a messenger, nor does He require material means for the delivery of His message.

b) Contains all worldly and heavenly wisdom

According to the claim of the Muslim priest, there exist directions in the Qur'an for the solution of the problems of all ages. It means that it may furnish material even on matters constitutional in accordance with the needs of modern states. It may also provide guidance in economic, social, political, scientific and technical fields. The Qur'an is the source of all knowledge and contains a solution for all individual and collective problems from day of its revelation till Doomsday. On the basis of this assertion, the priest establishes his monopoly on Islam, claiming that his leadership is essential. But in order to find even an iota of truth in the jargon of the priest, when we study the Qur'an, we get four types of verses:

- a) Clear verses revealing the fundamental principles.
- b) Symbolic or figurative verses.
- c) Verses regarding injunctions of a temporary nature.
- d) Verses regarding secondary problems.

a) Clear verses revealing the fundamental principles

In these verses, the following points are elucidated:

1. God has appointed His prophets and messengers at all times and in all religions. These representatives have guided men according to the requirements of a given period in time.
2. There has been a unity and uniformity in the messages of all prophets.
3. As a religion, Islam is all-natural. It is in consonance with the law of evolution.
4. All the worldly objects - body and soul, religious faiths, knowledge and information, keep on developing every day according to the law of evolution.
5. The fundamental objective of religion and that of divine guidance is to promote universal peace and unity, fellow, feeling and brotherhood.
6. Antipathy to the law of evolution breeds hatred and prejudice.

b) Symbolic or figurative verses

The symbolic verses are of a type in which:

1. The tales about the prophets and about the old tribes are narrated.

2. The description is given of the creation of Adam, the genesis of the world, the making of the canopy and the seat of God. At places, the visage, hands and feet of God are mentioned.

3. A description of Heaven, Hell and Doomsday is given.

The symbolic or figurative verses are not vividly clear. To insist on their overt meaning, is to undermine the majesty of Islam, especially in the eyes of men of learning. It is because of the fact that such tales are generally legendary and are proved incorrect in the light of reason and intellect.

c) Verses regarding injunctions of temporary nature

These are the verses, which were revealed about the prevailing conditions then or about emergencies. When the conditions changed, those commands did not remain in force. For example, holy war or Jihad (for preaching purposes), keeping captured men and women as slaves, seizing or looting the belongings of the infidels or killing them must now be regarded to have been rescinded.

d) Verses regarding secondary problems

Which various terms of punishment are specified, keeping in view the social norms of the Prophet's time in these verses? For example, the amputation of the hand of a thief, death penalty for murder, stoning to death for adultery or a hundred lashes as the case may be, are the sentences. The nature of these secondary problems and their demands differ according to prevalent social values. Values also change with time. Neither do the rules and laws retain their old shape nor do old injunctions retain their validity.

This law of Nature works on all religions, which have come into existence through the revealed books. It is because the revealed books reflected the social urges of their time. The conservative Muslim priest admits that owing to the changes in social norms, each succeeding divine book was an improvement on the one preceding it. Therefore, he considers the injunctions contained in other divine books as canceled. But, on the other hand, he does not acknowledge that in the Qur'an, too, there are injunctions for only a specific period which do not suit the changed conditions of the present times, although certain injunctions were outdated in the world of Islam itself centuries ago. The Muslim priest does not relent in his persistence only because he fears that such an acknowledgment may perhaps loosen his hold on society. To overcome this fear, he wants to see the Muslims much more backward as compared to the men in the rest of the world and he also wants them divided into innumerable sects. In his interpretation of Islam, there exists nothing, which may satisfy the urges of the modern scientific age. However, he makes a lot of claims regarding the solution of problems of not only earthly life but that in the Hereafter.

Beyond doubt, like other divine books, much can be gained from the Qur'an regarding certain fundamental things and, at places, it may act as a guiding force for humanity. However, in many other domains of life, we shall have to give due importance to intellect and experiment along with the cultural and social requirements of changing times.

THE FOURTH CLAIM OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

Those who present Islam in their own color, also lay much stress that the Holy Prophet was not only the last prophet, but that he should also be considered as the last reformer and guide. Further, they plead that all the teachings and guidance ceased with him. In this context also, the versions of the Muslim priest and the Muslim mystics are different. The priest pleads that:

1. The Prophet presented a new religion. Consequently, all the previous religions were discarded. No other legitimate religion will come into existence in future.
2. Prayers, exercises, beliefs, rites, moral and social codes are the real essence of the teachings of Islam or the teachings of the Prophet. These create distinction between a Muslim and a non-Muslim.
3. The Holy Prophet is the leader and guide only of the Muslims.
4. The Muslims alone can be his favored followers.
5. The Messenger of God was assigned this role to deliver to the world a spiritual message and a permanent system of life.
6. Mohammed was the last Prophet. No prophet shall ever succeed him, nor shall the world need a guide and a reformer after him. His religion shall last till Doomsday

However, the faith of the mystic is as follows: -

1. Fundamentally speaking, the Holy Prophet introduced no new religion. Islam blossomed into its real shape under the law of evolution. It has been the religion of all the previous prophets.
2. The mission of the Prophet of Islam was not to give birth to new dissension and discords. His mission was to promote the feelings of love and brotherhood, removing thereby every form of prejudice.
3. To limit the universal teachings of the Prophet of God to certain overt beliefs, rites and formal codes, is to undermine his lofty mission and ideals.
4. To regard the Holy Prophet as the leader of only the Muslims is to contradict a fact. He is the leader, the guide and the messiah of all humanity.
5. Every virtuous being in this world is his follower; all those who are not virtuous do not belong to him.
6. The life of the Holy Prophet had two aspects. One was 'revealed' and the other was 'concealed'. The overt aspect showed him as he administrator, the Commander-in-Chief and the performer of all duties as a human being. This objective was fulfilled during His lifetime. It was temporarily and short-lived. The real object of his

Prophethood lay in the covert aspect of his life, which included his preaching of love and brotherhood, his moral and spiritual training of men and his striving for the progress and prosperity of humanity. Beyond doubt, this objectives is of permanent value and this was the very purpose of his Prophethood. The mystic has been trying to follow the latter aspect of the Prophet's life and has adopted a creed considerably different from that of the opportunists and exhibitionists.

7. By the Holy Prophet, the mystic means that the human mind has attained to such a stage of development that, after the last Messenger, God no longer needs to guide man with revelations or super-intellect. After the Holy Prophet, the veil between the Creator and the created has been lifted and the Almighty has conveyed His eternal and final message of love to humanity after him, there remains no need for any other divine message.

Therefore, the Muslim mystic believes that in the light of this faith, all overt religious laws and injunctions have lost their validity with the passage of time. Democratic governments have the power to enforce them. In the conduct of these affairs, the mystic deems the intervention of the priest as illegitimate. He believes that the clergy very often raises the slogan of establishing a religious government because it is a device to serve his selfish motives. Religion, as a matter of fact, is a personal affair of man which is between him and his God. The intervention of others acting as intermediaries is to ridicule the faith and the finality of Prophethood. The mystic regards Islam as a universal message of peace and brotherhood. He does not like to get himself involved in petty religious differences lest the real objective should be lost sight of.

THE FIFTH SLOGAN OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

The fifth slogan of the fundamentalists, who try to interpret Islam in terms of their own liking, has been that the Muslims are the chosen people of God. Therefore, it is their birthright and the foremost duty to lead the entire world. The real purpose of this slogan has been to misguide the simple-minded Muslims to prepare them to make sacrifices, thereby paving the way for the opportunists to grab power and amass wealth. On the other hand, the mystics have regarded the enslavement or exploitation of the weak against the teachings of Islam.

The mystic knows very well that most of those considered, as "the chosen creatures of God" have never adopted such ways, which the Almighty approved. It was because of differences and contradictions that a large number of sects cropped up. Each sect declared the followers of other sects as infidels or renegades torturing and shedding the blood of their opponents mercilessly. Barring others, these men brutally massacred Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Holy Prophet, along with his relatives and friends. The dead bodies of the martyrs were trampled under horses' hooves and their heads were spiked on spears for exhibition in towns and villages. Hundreds and thousands of the followers of the Prophet, saints, pious and upright men were first subjected to extreme torture and then they were done to death. In subsequent ages Mansoor, Sarmad, Shams Tabrez, Makhdoom Bilawal, Shah Inayat Sufi and scores of similar great men were killed by no one but by the Muslims.

Whenever a Muslim ruler decided to get rid of an upright man, his paid priests and his men-at-arms always supported him. Muslim history is replete with such events. One who tries to feed the Muslims on such hollow slogans or sheer sentiments, claiming them to be the superior beings or to be world leaders is either ignorant of Muslim history or is deliberately trying to deceive the people for personal gain. Such a person may enjoy popularity or command respect among the men of his own creed, but such popularity is short-lived because, with each passing day, the Muslim masses

are becoming more and more conscious. The day is not far off when such exploiters will be fully exposed and will have no place in society.

Apart from the creed of the mystics, if the claim of the opportunists is judged in the light of reason and experiences it will fall flat on its face. A glaring example in this respect can be cited - the Punjab riots of 1953. The Government of Pakistan had constituted an inquiry commission consisting of two High Court Judges, Mr. Justice Mohammed Munir and Mr. Justice Rustam Kiyani. In their report, the learned members of Commission stated that the reputed religious scholars, who appeared before them as witnesses, had no unanimity of opinion regarding the Islamic State and the Islamic way of life. Further, each of them held a different opinion of Islam from the other. The scholar of a sect declared that the followers of other sects were misguided infidels. The learned judges expressed their opinion that if the evidence of those scholars was to be relied upon, no one could be called a Muslim.

This is the plight of the faith of these so-called Muslims, but if you look at their actions, you will come across innumerable men who are not only downright corrupt but were also lairs, hypocrites and tyrants of the worst order. These men keep on sucking the blood of the poor and the indigent. They are also inimical to each other. In such a sad state of affairs, how can the Muslims be called a nation, which is based on the unity of thought and action? Such a nation has neither existed in the past, nor does it exist today nor can it exist in future. This slogan has been invented only to serve the vested interests of the ruling class, which has nothing to do with Islam in practice. In the context of the modern world. This slogan has become even more absurd because there is hardly a single Muslim country, which can be compared with any of the advanced countries of the world. Thus, when all Muslim countries are backward, how can the Muslims be regarded as "the chosen people of God" or men born to lead the world? Such a conceited notion is nothing but self-deception and ignorance.

On the very basis of such a concept of nationhood, the Pakistan Movement was initiated in the sub-continent. In 1943, a pamphlet was distributed on behalf of the Sindh Muslim league, which made the following points. It was claimed that the creation of Pakistan was essential because: -

1. It would be the Kingdom of God on earth.
2. Its citizens would enjoy equal rights and there would be an equitable distribution of wealth.
3. Only the chaste, the upright and the God-fearing men would run the government.
4. All religions and all sects of Islam would enjoy complete freedom.
- 5 It would be the responsibility of the government to eliminate poverty, oppression, ignorance and economic exploitation.
6. Civil liberties would be guaranteed and free legal aid would be provided by the State to every citizen.
- 7 Virtue alone, not power and pelf, would be the criterion for human dignity.

Now, judge for yourself. Which of these promises was fulfilled after the creation of Pakistan? At first glance, you will know that the evils which we were assured would be uprooted, exist even to this day. Not only that: many more evils have raised their head. Pakistan has unfortunately become a hunting ground for its rulers and martial law has become the order of the day. The condition of the masses is deteriorating day by day. No good has so far come out. On the other hand, owing to the broad-based movement for the genesis of this country, which was based purely on sentiments, the following were the consequences:

1. As a result of dislocation, millions of Hindus and Muslims become homeless.
2. Hundreds of thousands of men were brutally murdered. Thousands of women were abducted and property worth millions of rupees was destroyed or damaged.
3. The feelings of hatred and enmity have infected the two peoples to the extent that both are at daggers drawn with each other and, instead of ameliorating the conditions of their peoples; they squander money on the purchase of arms. Further, in order to browbeat each other the two nations dance to the tune of the great Powers.
4. As a result of bad blood between the two countries, the feelings of brotherhood, tolerance and mutual respect have vanished altogether.

When we try to find out the root-cause of these ill feelings, we learn that nothing but extremism is the main reason for worsening relations between the two countries. On our side, mainly the explanation and slogan of the opportunists who have always exploited Islam for their own ends create bad blood. These mischievous and slanderous slogans have continued to dupe the people. Their attention is distracted from the vital issues of life and they are entangled in such problems, which pay rich dividends only to the rulers and the opportunists. Thus, Islam which has a universal appeal and which conveys a message of love and peace has been debased into an instrument of hatred, coercion and violence.

The ugly situation which has resulted from this accursed idea in Pakistan, can be summarized thus:

1. On an account of religious discrimination, even in the political affairs of the country, the non-Muslims are feeling extremely insecure about their future. In fact, they appear to be disillusioned.
2. Some Muslim sects, the liberal Muslims and the followers of mysticism have become disenchanted because of an atmosphere charged with religious frenzy.
3. Crude theocracy and its increasing terror have retarded objective and scientific research in the country. At the same time, it has prevented new discoveries and inventions.
4. To serve the vested interests of a particular group, the small provinces are gobbled up in the name of so-called unity. The people of these small provinces are being exploited. Under the pernicious One Unit system, the people of the small provinces were deprived of their civil rights. They were also economically, socially and culturally exploited.

5. The people of East Pakistan, * despite being in majority, were deprived of their just and legitimate rights.
6. Even after decades, there has been no settlement with India on the problem of Kashmir, nor has Afghanistan been approached for a solution of the Pakhtoonistan problem. Consequently, we are forced to spend money on a huge army, which is becoming a ruling army.
7. The rulers' have kept on feeding the people on false slogans. These slogans are unnecessarily given the shape of political problems.
8. The people are politically conscious but attempts are made to benumb their consciousness and slogans are being vociferously raised to run the country on religious lines. Besides the laws of inheritance and marriage contract, traditional Islam has no concern with the laws of modern governments nor can Islam, as interpreted by the Muslim priest, guide a technical and scientific society.
9. As a result of the misunderstanding about Islam caused by the interpretation of the Muslim priests, young men are feeling disgusted with religion. These young people have started feeling that Islam is an instrument of force, coercion and exploitation.

**East Pakistan formed a part of Pakistan when this book was written.*

Allama I.I. Kazi, opposing the misconceived notion that Islam belongs to a particular group or region, says:

[A true Muslim adapts himself to each and every society because of his lofty thoughts and noble virtues. In the past, such men spread the teachings of Islam to every nook and corner of the world of course without weapons and an army). Today) efforts arc being made to restrict the followers (of this natural religion to a particular area. Islam came as a force to spread and not to be restricted. Such an attempt is based on lack of understanding of the real teachings of Islam. It also reflects the cowardice of those who are called Muslims].

A great Muslim scholar and the founder of the Khaksar Tehrik, Allama Enayatullah Khan Mashriqi, have written in more explicit words in his famous book entitled *Tazkira*.

The present grouping of people is artificial and unnatural. Every virtuous being, whichever religion he apparently belongs to, is a Muslim. In the same way, each bad man is a non-Muslim.

THE SIXTH SLOGAN OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

Those who interpret Islam in the light of their vested interests very often raise the cry: [Islam is the only means of salvation for mankind. Therefore, it is necessary to wage war for its expansion.

If this slogan is analyzed, it will appear to be as shallow and misleading as other slogans raised by the opportunists. This slogan is raised only to dupe and mislead the simple-minded Muslims so that the self-seekers may fatten at the cost of the masses.

I have stated in the preceding pages that after the Holy Prophet, there has never been a unified concept of Islam nor will it ever exist. Therefore, the question arises as to what type of Islam will rid the world of its troubles so that it must be forced upon all nations. Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi, an eminent scholar, commenting on these slogans of the Muslim priests, said:

Some of the Muslims in India have such a misconceived notion with regard to their nationality, which has no basis in reality. We have been thinking about an Islamic party for a long time. However, there is neither any plan about it in our minds nor does any such party exist anywhere in the world. We have confined ourselves to such a world of imagination that we have not only become all ignorant of the history, progress and struggle for freedom of all other Muslim nations but, in our own country we do not have a clear-cut and well chalked-out plan.

In the present age, where the Muslims are lagging behind in almost every walk of life, is it not self-deception to claim that they are born to rule the world? How can the Muslims rule the far more civilized, cultured, developed and powerful nations of the world? What is there in Muslim priesthood which will be a source of inspiration to the people as a whole? Is the entire world mad so as, to accept the leadership of the poor, the illiterate and the superstitious? In addition, when the nations of the world do not come to the fold of Islam of their own free will, what power do the monopolists of Islam have to force them to accept their leadership?

In fact, the greatness and sanctity of Islam in the modern times demands that priesthood should be done away with as early as possible. It is also evidently clear that priesthood is a curse, whether it is defended by the philosophy of Allama Iqbal or by the writings of Maulana Maudoodi. The efforts being made to propagate an idea based on hatred, narrow-mindedness, violence and fascism in this day and age is a curse inherited from our primitive past.

In addition to it, the concept of preaching and spreading theocracy in these times is as ridiculous as a mouse claiming the hunting down of a lion. Even those Western Powers, which enjoy superiority over all other countries of the world, by all means appear to be shunning force in their dealings with the weaker nations. These Powers have at least apparently learnt to adopt the principle of co-existence. The Russian Communists, whose fundamental faith had been to export their way of life to other regions of the world through sheer force, gave up the idea. They, too, opted for other ways such as cooperation or aid in social, cultural and economic fields. In the world of today, the only countries which believe in the employment of force are Communist China, Pakistan and Israel. It is obvious that in the present atomic age these countries cannot subjugate the entire world. At the most, the rulers of these countries can suppress their own countrymen who do not conform to their views. Thus, they may perpetuate their power with the help of these enticing slogans.

THE SEVENTH SLOGAN OF THE OPPORTUNISTS

"Religion and politics are inseparable". This is the seventh important slogan of the opportunists. The main objective of this slogan is that a dictator or a group of despotic men should be the rulers in a Muslim country.

Attempts are being made to run the affairs of the country in the light of the tainted interpretation of the opportunists who act as the pied pipers of the rulers. History is witness that such types of governments have proved to be extremely repressive and exploitative. They are also immune to reason and argument, justice and fair play. In modern terminology, this kind of government is called fascistic.

Hundreds of interpretations of the Qur'an and the Sunnah are in vogue and the Muslims are divided into various sects. Which sect is right and which is wrong? Who is going to decide it? In addition, can such a decision be made or not? Whatever may be the claim of some persons under their compelling vested interests, it is all-futile.

Leave the fundamental differences. There exist a lot of differences of secondary nature and there appears no hope of patching them up. For instance, take the family laws as implemented by the government. One group passionately pleads that anti-Islamic while another group hails them as Islamic, advocating their implementation with the same degree of vehemence. To top it all, both the groups glamour for the establishment of the Islamic government. There appears a glaring contradiction in the thought and Muslim history is a testimony to the fact that the mullahs (priests) have always played in the hands of the rulers and they have always justified such actions which have brought a bad name to Islam.

Except for the exploitation of the masses, there exists nothing in priesthood, which may be of any value to the modern style of life. Further, religion is created for man; man is not created for religion. When the laws of religions lost their utility because of changing conditions of life, how can things, which have merely conventional importance, benefit society?

I consider priesthood (mullahism) to be a hydraheaded evil. People should be made to know that it is a dangerous means of safeguarding the illegitimate interests of dictators and perpetuating their power. The self-seekers are using Islam as a stunt. To analyze the situation in its real perspective is the need of the hour. The Muslim masses of this country should realize as to why other Muslim countries have done away with priesthood. Why is it that in Pakistan alone there is an outcry for the Islamic system of government?

The simple folk, who are misled in the name of Islam, are ignorant of history. Had they even a modicum of knowledge about history, they would have known that religion and politics do not go together. Whenever politics is mixed with religion, nations and communities have to suffer untold miseries. In the light of historical evidence, the Hindus, the Christians and some of the Muslim countries have at last abandoned this course. The champions of politics allied with religion are not only the enemies of Islam but also the enemies of all those whom they will be fool easily. Further, by their constant harping on religion, they will soon make the people sick of it. In Russia and other countries, the growth of atheisms or disgust with religion was the result of the undue hold and narrow-minded actions of the clergy.

The mullahs in this country raise slogans for the implementation of an unadulterated Islamic system on the one hand while they support democracy, which was introduced by the Greeks and successfully practiced by the British on the other. Further, these clergies put a condition that the high officials and functionaries of the government should be well versed in religious learning. At the same time, they plead that everyone who has attained a certain age is entitled to vote and contest elections irrespective of caste and creed. They also regard the emancipation of women and their education as against the teachings of Islam. However, at the same time, they grant women the equal right to vote. They make tall talk about Islamic culture. At the same time they hit their enemies below the belt and use provocative language against them. They pronounce photography as unlawful in Islam but persuade the Press to get their own photographs published. Similarly, the mullahs proscribe dancing and music, but they enjoy them a lot on their own radio and TV sets. They condemn Western civilization but, with the sole exception of their dress, they make utmost use of comforts and luxuries, which are invented by the West. For example, they use things such as soaps, towels, flush toilets, clocks, telephones, cars, TV sets, dinner sets, sofa, tables, chairs, etc. They may probably be considering that these things do not belong to Western culture but, at the same time, they extort money in the name of religious ceremonies and rituals and think that this is sacred.

The mullahs know very well that the degree which society has changed. They can neither enact nor implement such harsh laws like amputation of hands of the thieves, stoning the adulterer, slaughtering their opponents, forcing others to keep beards, making men to pray by force and confining women to the seclusion of their homes. However, in spite of their helplessness, they keep on playing the same tune. All these contradictions of mullahism prove that these slogans are meant for hoodwinking the simple-minded Muslims and, having played with the sentiments of the masses, they try to derive the maximum benefits for the themselves.

History is witness that, because of religious domination, the Brahmins (high-caste Hindus) turned millions of men into untouchables. Siiiiil~4y, in the name of religion, the Christian priests burnt millions of men and a large number of men were killed in the Crusades. Muslim history is also replete with such atrocities. The Caliphate was established in the same of Islam and Ijma (consensus) but the Caliphate degenerated into kingship. When the policy of a ruler was opposed, it was regarded as opposition to religion. Thus, sects came into being in quick succession. There existed a lot of bad blood among them and, for centuries, much human blood was shed in the name of religion. Humanism and fellow-feeling lost their appeal. The vanquished were ill-treated. They were tortured to death. The ways of torture were, however, different. Sometimes they were buried in the walls alive, sometimes they were done to death after their limbs being chopped off and sometimes their bodies were trampled under horses' hooves. Then their heads were spiked on spears; their women and children were driven to different places as captives. Most dictators and kings to crush their opponents proudly adopted these and many other tyrannical measures.

The martyrdom of Hazrat Usman, the battles of Amir Moavia with Hazrat Ali, the most poignant tragedy of the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain. The slaughter of 120,000 people at the hands of Hajjaj bin Yusuf. In addition to his numerous battles in which thousands of people were killed. The destroyed the Omayyad graves and those of their supporters by Abu Saffah Abbasi. The bloody battles between the Abbasids and the Fatmids, the destruction of Baghdad and other parts of the Muslim world by the Mongols, downfall of the Moghuls in India after Aurangzeb are some of the events. This occurred in the name of religion and was caused by the extremist policies of some sects of Islam. Thus, it comes to be said. "Islam was daubed in its own blood". Despite all these gory and horrible events, this has been the stunt of mullahism that murderers, plunderers and tyrants are remembered by such honorific. As Amirul-Momineen (leader of the faithful), Ghazi (great warrior), Zil-lil-lah (the shadow of God), etc, and those who dedicated their lives for the honor and greater glory of mankind, those who were chaste and upright are condemned and downgraded. Mansoor was put on the gallows, Shams Tabrez was skinned alive, Sarmad was assassinated, Shah Enayat was martyred and Makhdoom Bilawal was done to death after being tortured, but the misguided mullahs never take their names. The example set by Imam Hussain provides the greatest strength and inspiration to every freedom fighter and to the righteous but the mullah does not speak about him.

Our rulers, who are wedded subservient to their vested interests, give out that they are believers in the principle of a peaceful solution to the problems. This is only to deceive the world. This way the rulers pose themselves as the champions of freedom, justice and human rights But they pay no heed to the principle of granting autonomy to the smaller provinces like Sindh, Balochistan and the NWFP whose legitimate rights they have been usurping ever since the creation of this country. In fact, all that glitters is not gold. To set up a dictatorial system of government, to crush the opposition by force, to deprive the people of their fundamental rights, are the outcomes of mixing religion with politics.

In the present times, when all the religions are struggling for their survival and are engrossed in safeguarding the beliefs with regard to the existence of God, individual liberty and life after death are concepts which can prove as deterrents against the challenge of atheism. Atheism is bent upon uprooting the fundamental beliefs of religions, thereby liberating

people from the shackles of superstition. Its attendants are intellect and science. In such a state of affairs, it behooved the custodians of religions to discard bigotry superstition, hatred and narrow-mindedness and adopt a more positive approach by presenting religion in an attractive manner and projecting it as a symbol of the dignity of man, of individual and collective liberty. Thus, they could have encountered the rising tide of atheism and agnosticism. As compared to the believers in other religions, the followers of Islam, especially the Muslims of Pakistan should have come forward. Because in no other part of the world, as in this land, is such a hue and cry raised in the name of Islam and because nowhere else do there exist as many claimants and monopolists of Islam as in Pakistan.

However, we see that everything is being done contrary to the urges of the time. To combat atheism, not only that no cogent arguments are being advanced but that, as a result of the negative attitude, those holding different opinions in politics, are being victimized. In this way, ground is being rapidly paved for atheism. Whether religion retains its magnificence or loses it, they are not bothered. They stand for self-interest and nothing else.

However, if we are to save out people and the greatness of Islam from impending doom, if we wish that the noble ideals and humanity should flourish, if we want to get rid of tyranny and violence, hatred and prejudice, selfishness and avarice, we shall have to keep religion and politics apart. Further, we should in no case rely on the interpretation of the Muslim priests, but be guided by such interpretation of Islam which is capable of solving the problems of the present-day world and that, too, in accordance with the current demands.

The mystics interpretation of Islam

At different places in the Holy Qur'an of such:

[Upright men who have perfect knowledge and they are also described as the]

[Those who ponder over Reality]

Such men are regarded as those who truly know of God, understand the Holy Book and Islam. For instance:

[God has revealed unto thee (the Holy Prophet) the Book. In that some verses are of permanent and fundamental value and the rest are metaphorical. Further those whose hearts are vitiated, follow the metaphorical verses and interpret them according to their wishes and create discord as well as disharmony. Although they do not know the real meaning of these verses, they interpret them. The real meaning is either known to God or to those who have perfect knowledge and say that they have been able to repose faith through knowledge transmitted by God. Those who meditate and reflect utter these words]

[That is the Book for the righteous. Verily they seek guidance and wisdom from the Book].

[Many people have preceded you. Go around the world and try to find out what they have paid for their misdeeds. These directions are for those who are good and upright.]

Now a question arises as to who are these upright men of learning of whom the Qur'an speaks. Hardly a person is to be found in the entire world that regards himself completely bereft of beauty and intellect. The Muslim priests may very well claim that they possess all the requisite attributes and it is they that the Qur'an refers to. However, self-praise is no recommendation. They are the persons who are described at other places in the Book of God. The righteous men are indeed those who are clearly defined. They are those:

1. Who do not incite trouble, nor do they create hatred and prejudice through the metaphorical verses of the Qur'an. The follow the verses of fundamental value promote fellow-feeling and peace in the world.
2. Who do not form any opinion, arrive at any decision, or profess any faith unless they have very well thought over the matter.
3. Who seek knowledge about the tribes and nations of the past either through study or through observation. Further, they look into the causes of the rise and fall of nations and learn a lesson from them.

It is an established fact that all people of the world do not possess uniform intellect, talent and ability. Some are superstitious and ignorant, some are happy-go-lucky and a few are learned. Similarly, some are hardhearted and cruel; some are kind and benevolent. One is a self-seeker; another is selfless and sacrificing. However, there exist men of contrasting shades of character. The same contrast in men exists with regard to tendencies and modes of behavior. This contrast has existed ever since the creation of man.

Among the followers of each religion, two types of men have fundamentally existed as a result of this contrast. A group of men attaches great importance to the outer form of religion while the other group regards its inner spirit and real objectives of paramount importance. To the first group, belong such men as magicians, sorcerers and priests of all religions. However, the fold of the other group, there are prophets, postle sages, saints and persons of very great intellectual, more and spiritual prowess. Since the superstitious and the ignorant have always been in majority, religion has always been encumbered with rituals, because it was this way that their desires were fulfilled. Thus, rituals became very common. But since wise men are perceivers of truth have always been small in number (they have kept their preachings confined only to conscientious and thus their ideas have not gain wide currency.

However, if the achievements of the men of this group are to be viewed, the effects of their teachings will be seen everywhere in the world. These effects are largely visible in Greece, Egypt, Arabia, China and India. Notwithstanding the differences in caste, creed, color and country, the fundamental beliefs and principles of this group have been almost uniform all over the world.

Muslim mystics have laid the foundations of their faith on love and knowledge about God. This love and knowledge are limitless. However, like life, they are always moving and evolving. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai was right when he said:

[Limitless is the taste of sorrow and love knows no bounds. Love is not measurable. It is an end in itself]

According to the Muslim mystics, whatever the guidance the Holy Prophet provided for the betterment of individual and social life, it acquired the shape of jurisprudence. Similarly, all the guidance given to the men of conscience and learning assumed the form of observance. To the mystics, the Holy Prophet is the city of knowledge, and the lustrous figure of Hazrat Ali is that of the gate of that city. All the ways of observance find their way in through that entrance.

The Two groups of Muslim mystics

Muslim mystics belong to two groups. One group consists of such great men who founded their order on the basis of the Caliphate and allegiance. In this way, they chastened their souls and strengthened the moral fiber of their followers. The second group comprises such righteous men who tried to perceive truth and dedicated their lives to the promotion of peace, progress and well-being of mankind.

The first group

This group of the Muslim mystics has four orders namely, the Qadari, the Suharwardi, the Chishti and the Naqshbandi. The great saints of these orders served the people in their own ways. They not only rendered valuable services by morally uplifting the masses, but they also tried to inoculate in men feelings of endurance and fortitude. It was because of their teachings that sectarian hatred, prejudices were reduced largely, and religious tolerance was largely practiced. The saints of these orders also preached that we should desist from using force and coercion. At the same time, they stressed the need for self-control. Amity towards everyone and hatred towards none was the very essence of the mission of the saints belonging to all these four orders.

Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi, Hazrat Shibli, Hazrat Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, Hazrat Shaikh Abu Najeeb Suhrawardy, Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Ajmeri and Hazrat Khawaja Bahauddin Naqshbandi are venerable saints of these

orders. These great men not only impressed men of letters but they also succeeded in attracting a large number of common people. These saints ignored the maze of *outward* religious rituals and yet at the same time, they reformed people by their pragmatic methods. In fact, they contributed a lot to the improvement of the morals of the common man.

The second group

In this group, there are such saints who did not deem it necessary either to establish institutions in formal way nor did they confine their teachings to particular institutions. The outward beliefs and rituals of religion lost their value in their eyes. To them, rituals were detrimental to religion. They pursued knowledge freely and tried to reach to the core of all problems. They reflected on serious questions such as: What is life? What is the purpose of life? What is the truth about life and the Hereafter?

In this connection, these saints gained considerably from the treasure of knowledge bequeathed by the old philosophers and jurists of Egypt, Iran, Greece, Arabia and India. Through extensive research, inquiry, analysis and comparison, they discovered the secret of the fundamental Unity of God, which lay hidden under the multiplicity of religions and faiths. This is the reason why, in their search for Truth they worked with unrelenting courage and perseverance. They found the outward form of faith and rituals of no value and expressed with utmost clarity the truth about the Ultimate Reality.

The saints had known that the real purpose of religion was service to humanity. However, the real purpose was thwarted and service to mankind was denied because conventional belief and lifeless rituals had come in the way. Therefore, religion ceased to be a force. Instead of love, it sowed the seeds of discord, prejudice and hatred. Thus, in the name of religion or sect, a cleavage was created between man and man each religious group became an exploiting group and the vested interests of each group clashed with other groups. Instead of being an island of peace, the world had become a pit of discord. Therefore, the saints found no other course to adopt except to preach unity. They dedicated their lives to this noble mission.

From, among these saints, there emerged two groups: extrovert and introvert saints. Both believed in the 'Oneness of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajood). Love and pursuit of the knowledge of God inspired both.

The only difference was in the method of expression. The extrovert saints believed in no *expediency* ~d, along with the open preaching of the Oneness of God they bitterly criticized the clerics. On the other hand, the introvert saints employed similes, metaphor symbols and other subtle methods to express their ideas. To the first group belong such saints as Mansoor Hallaj Khwaja Fariduddin Attar, Shams Tabrez, Shaikh Mohiuddin Ibne Arbi, Sarmad, Shah Enayat Shaheed Sachal Sarmast, etc. In the second category too, there is a galaxy of notable saints such as Maulana Rumi, Shah Waliullah, Shah Latif Bhitai and many others.

THE FIRST BELIEF OF A MYSTIC

All Muslim mystics are believers in the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud). Therefore their first and foremost

Faith is that "in the background of the diversity of religions, there exists the Oneness of God". This faith has two facets:

- a) God has sent His messengers to all regions and in all ages for the guidance and well-being of mankind.
- b) Some of the teachings of the prophets have not only been uniform, but of fundamental and permanent value, while some teachings have about the problems and ills of their own times.

a) The Arrival of the messenger in all ages

On the basis of this belief, the Muslim mystic does not believe that the genesis and control of the whole universe is the result of an accident. The question: Is the purpose of the creation of the universe all meaningless? rings constantly in his ears. The mystic sees a plan, a design and a system in the universe. He also has no doubt about the Controller who is in charge of this universe. One may call the Controller by any name. Beyond doubt, there is a Force. The Holy Prophet has called this Force Allah. Other religions, too, have named that Power. The followers of religions believe that material things are caused to exist and events take place according to the Will of the same Power. Things retain their original shape for some time and then they perish. Their shapes are either changed into other shapes or they get merged into other things. This system continues forever. The mystics have deeply reflected on the planning and the purpose of this Power, thus acquiring the most precious gem from the Unbounded Sea. However, they have neither prided on the well-earned wealth, nor have they monopolized it, nor yet have they shirked from guiding people to that Power. On the contrary, they have invited everyone to Him, urging him to try his luck. As Shah Latif Bhitai explicitly says:

[Worship the Sea. Where there is plenty of water, there are hundreds of pearls in the sea. If you get the smallest of them, you will become rich beyond measure].

As the chain of the universe and the events, taking place in it is unending the discoveries about the universe and the changes taking place in it. Except for God, no one has absolute knowledge of events and the universe.

As the Qur'an says:

[O Prophet! men ask you about the soul (the secret of Nature). Tell them that it is the secret of God. People can know but very little about it].

It is a fact that prophets, philosophers, seers, scientists and learned men achieve a few drops from the un-bounded Ocean. This endeavor for the attainable and unattainable keeps them satisfied and, at the same time, restless. In this way, eagerness goads them to discovery and research promotes education. This process continues in every age.

b) The teachings of great men

The teachings of great men in every age consist of two parts: The first part is related to the reality about the universe and the purpose of life. The other deals with the organization and development of human society according to current requirements. The nature of problems, which comes under the purview of the first part, is fundamental and eternal. The problems of the second part are of a secondary and transient nature.

The reality about the universe

This topic is very wide and deals with questions such as worldly goods, creation of things, spirit and matter knowledge of the secrets of Nature and their reality. The mystic compares them with an unbounded sea or a limitless desert. He gets lost in their depths. The more he tries to delve, the more he is wonder-struck and except for bewilderment, he finds nothing. However, he keeps on marching ahead. In the words of Hafiz Shirazi:

[No-one knows where the abode of the beloved is. But it is so near that one can hear the chimes of a bell].

There is no denying the fact that, who looks for truth does not ascend to the highest point of divine secret, howsoever rigorous or determined may be his endeavor. However, at every step, he feels a new pleasure when a new dimension unravels itself to him. His curiosity is whetted and he feels that his struggle is not rewarded. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai explains this feeling thus:

[Let me not find my Beloved because if I find Him, my obsession for Him will begin to die down.]

The purpose of life

The real purpose of life for a mystic lies in continued struggle on the evolutionary path of the universe. He regards love and attachment as a sound basis for evolution and struggle. This, he feels, is the soul of every religion. Love is a force which attracts every object and which is the ultimate source of the achievement of all objectives. He cares not as to when these objectives will materialize. The only passion of his life is to tread the right path with all sincerity and perseverance, and at the same time, he may invite others to take the same path. He is never frustrated by the vicissitudes of life nor does he lose hope for a bright future. He is fully confident of the truth of his belief.

[It will be not to late if you could meet the beloved on doomsday].

Teachings of secondary and temporary value

Regarding the organization and development of human society, there have been teachings of great men in all ages. However, these teachings are of a secondary nature and, at times, of temporary value. These teachings are of three kinds: pertaining to faith, to mutual relations of human beings and to prayers as well as rituals.

As regards faith, ever since the primitive era, man's mind has been deeply influenced by the concepts of reward and punishment, fear and temptation. These ideas were so profound and so universally established that they could not altogether be done away with. The great men were very well aware of the fact. Therefore, they instantly wiped out every

superstition, which they could. However, the ideas, which were deeply rooted and could not be easily brushed aside, these great men, by the force of their personalities, made them relevant to the requirements of a prevalent social order. Those who had money and power exploited the masses in the name of superstition because they were interested in perpetuating themselves in power. And those who, instead of power and pelf, were gifted with blessings of intellect and knowledge, tried their best to root out superstition and rendered valuable services in order to better the lot of human beings.

The men in power borrowed most of the old tribal conventions because of their own personal interests. With the help of these conventions, they managed national and social affairs. Afterwards, these conventions assumed the shape of laws. Similarly, ideas about atonement and sin, good and bad, reward and punishment as enunciated by the religious leaders, came to be established as the religious code (Shariah). Incentives of both social and religious codes are fundamentally based on optimism and hope. The only difference between them is that the reward or punishment as granted by the rulers is received in this world and during the lifetime of an individual. However, the reward or punishment as promised by the religious men is to be reaped after death. These rewards and punishments are in the shape of Heaven and Hell.

Sometimes these temporal and spiritual institutions ran counter to each other, but later, because of the identity of their interests, both cooperated with each other. Thus, power rested with the temporal lords, and the position of the religious leaders remained secondary. This was the reason why the spiritual lords had to be subservient to the temporal lords, and as the exigencies of the time demanded, religious men had to interpret religion in accordance with the wishes of the rulers. Besides, the general masses had to obey the rulers because they could not afford to displease them. The rulers exploited the common man. So did religious as leaders. The people were ground under the crushing wheels of temporal and spiritual lords. This process continued for a very long time. In Pakistan, it is unfortunately still going on. In other parts of the world because of the increasing exploitation of rulers and religious leaders, people have revolted against them because there is a limit to human endurance.

During the last five hundred years, the world has changed radically. Social life in most countries has changed beyond recognition. People departed from conventionalism and gave serious thought to the governance of their mundane affairs. Thus, the need for a constitution arose. Consequently, democracies came into being, first in Europe and later in other parts of the world. Religion was divorced from politics. Religion came to be considered and treated as the personal affair of man. Superstition, dogma and faith were judged on the touchstone of reason, logic and intellect. Most countries have adopted this way of life. But Pakistan is the only exception where, despite enormous changes on the social and national level, some groups, for their own selfish motives and through their paid agents (priests), are bent upon misusing religion as a means of political exploitation. As stated earlier, most of the superstitions, dogmas and rituals as defended and propagated by the Muslim priests, have lost their value in the modern context. If the majesty and dignity of Islam are to be preserved, then there can be no room for these superstition dogmas and rituals. However, the rulers and the priests appear to be striving for the preservation of these evils because it is through them that they prosper. Therefore, they keep on supporting these evils. Abdullah Khwab has rightly said:

[Kingship and clergy are essential to each other. Both have yet to understand the Qur'an].

Against the Muslim priests, such a complaint is not being made for the first time. Even in the past, voices were raised against their corruption. The main guilt of the priests is that, throughout the ages, they have been the agents of kings and potentates. Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says:

[As if the Priest's mothers has lost something and has lost her, gall bladder the mullahs have rolled in dust even after knowing God].

In a similar vein Sachal Sarmast has said about these hypocrites:

[Religions and the past have confused People. They have shackled them. This was neither, in the hadith or in the Aayaat]

The people do not believe in them but in the mullahs who hold them in chains. In the words of Allama Iqbal:

[The religion of a mullah is to sow discord in the name of God].

Teachings concerning mutual relations

The teachings of the great men are fundamentally related to ethics, which is called jurisprudence in religious terminology. There have been social and moral laws in every age, region, religion and faith. The study of anthropology reveals that with the passage of time, changes have occurred in society and in moral codes. Religious laws are not immune to changes and the evolutionary process. Prophets, saints and philosophers have always initiated changes in conformity with the requirements of time. However, despite this established fact, the self-centered priest has always played a diabolical role and has obstructed the way to progress and change. In Pakistan, the Muslim priests are making hectic efforts to introduce the Islamic order. It means that they are striving to re-introduce the way of the Bedouin in an age of science and technology.

The common men and simple-minded Muslims appear to be carried away by such slogans. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of every right-thinking person to fight obscurantism. Therefore, I have been stressing this point that all laws are the products of time. No laws are eternal, nor can they ever be so. Laws also change according to changing social conditions. This is the Law of Nature and it is binding on all religions.

Another important reason is that the masses, being uneducated, are psychologically convention-ridden and are not easily prepared to renounce the age-old faiths *and* rituals handed down to them by their ancestors. In addition to it, the masses generally live in the past. The fourth reason is that they lack self-confidence and, therefore, are not able to solve their problems. Therefore, they seek escape in romanticizing the past. The exploiters try to make the most of these weaknesses of the masses.

The exploiters firmly believe that in case they succeed in harmonizing religion with politics, their interests will be safeguarded and, the danger of mass awakening will no longer exist. Secondly, they will enjoy future domination in religion and politics. Then they will be able to further enlarge their interests. One, who impedes their way, will be discredited as a criminal in this world and in the Hereafter. It is an irony of fate that now when an acute need is being felt to make the judiciary independent of the executive, even religion is being entrusted to the latter.

This is the problem that our society is confronted with today. Escapism is no solution. Nor should we try to seek refuge in the misty past. Had there been some attraction in the past order, our forefathers would not have given it up. The need of the day is for us to become self-confident and self-reliant. We should try to understand the problems of our age and, as our forefathers molded laws in accordance with the conditions of their time, we should modify them according to our requirements. This way we can serve our people and ourselves. The following points deserve our immediate attention:

1. Ways and means must be found to remove poverty and unemployment. Efforts should also be made to raise the standard of living of the people
2. The prevalent political systems of the world will be studied and the best among them be selected and adopted, keeping in view the objective conditions prevailing in the country.
3. Moral and social codes will be given a new shape according to the demands of modern society.

The true well-wishers of the country and the people, the lovers of Islam and the benefactors of the Muslims, the mystics and highly educated people grounded in science and technology, regard all the three points as essential.

Insistence on prayers and rituals

Psychologically speaking, man has proved to be more emotional and sensitive as compared to other animals. Adversity, loss, sorrow, torture, fear, anger etc. affect his peace of mind. He consequently feels restless. As medical experts have to work on physical ailments, so have the seers and psychologists to cure man of mental suffering. In the past, there existed primitive methods of treatment. Most of those methods have since been discarded. Not only that they are considered as highly primitive. In the psychological field, there did exist methods in the past that did satisfy people. Such methods were like worshipping idols, singing hymns in their honor, prayers and supplications, requiems, sacrifice of animals, charms, spells, etc. However, in the modern times, these things have lost their utility. Among the Muslims, most of these things are still in practice. Out of them, prayer is regarded not only as the most important but also as a mandatory obligation. It is regarded as the first and foremost tenet of faith. As one of the basic pillars of Islam, prayer is binding on all the 'Muslims. As the poet says:

[On Doomsday, extremely horrible as it will be, tile first question to be asked will be about prayer.]

Notwithstanding the salutary effect of prayers, which once upon a time brought about a happy change in the feeling and demeanor of the worshippers is no longer there and prayer has become only a mechanical act. Further, it is no longer considered as a means but an end in itself. However, some advantages are still associated with it. It is claimed that.

1. Prayer earns the pleasure of God.
2. Prayer sublimates one's self.
3. Prayer gives satisfaction to the heart.
4. Prayer leads to salvation.
5. Prayer saves one from sin

1. Prayer earns the pleasure of God

The basis of this faith rests on the concept of a personal God. According to this belief, God is also visualized as a human beings. He gets angry or is pleased. It is also said about Him that He scrutinizes all human actions, some of which please Him while some pain Him. Prayer is, therefore, believed as the right of God, and one, who wishes to propitiate Him, must submit to Him.

It is also claimed that God creates man. He grants him life. God nourishes man, protects him from dangers and accidents. All divine blessings are but for man. Therefore, man should be thankful to Him for His countless blessings on which his life depends. Prayer, in fact is a gesture of man's obedience to God and an expression of gratitude to Him.

To the mystic, the concept of a personal God is unacceptable. On the contrary, he believes in a God, who has neither a body nor a shape, who is timeless and spaceless. Who is immune to human feelings, emotions and other traits. He is Self-existing and selfless. He is neither procreated by anyone nor has He given birth to anyone. He needs neither the world nor its dwellers. He is impervious to the feelings of propitiation and anger.

He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. He is much nearer to man than his jugular vein. The mystic further believes that, except God, nothing exists in the whole universe. Whatever is visible, is the reflection of His Self or of His Attributes. His Attributes and self are one and the same. This is the stage where a mystic cares not for prayer and like Bedil, he says:

[Those who have abandoned all desire have nothing to do with prayer. They do not see that on which the world has set its eyes. They do not read the Book nor do they hear the Azan. Not interested in eternal life, they have gone beyond Eternity].

2. Prayer sublimates self

By sublimation of self, is meant restraining animal instincts and feelings. Now we have to find out as to what the baser feelings are which are essentially to be controlled. What are human desires feelings and emotions? How are they created? A detailed discussion on the subject is not feasible here. In this context, I shall only say that complete freedom from natural desires is, in the first place, beyond human nature. Secondly, if there are some men who have subordinated their passions, even this will bring no good to society. This extreme measure, not based on moderation, will make people dull and insipid. There should be a role for passions in the life of an individual to the extent that Nature warrants it. The mystics have divided self into three categories: the baser self, the normal self, and the contented self.

The baser self

This is the worst and the lowest category of self. Under its influence, the desires in an individual are unbridled and, like a beast; he feels no qualm of conscience in their fulfilment. All social maladies and all man-made catastrophes are the product of this category of self. In the primitive ages, the baser self was the most dominant one. Now, after thousands of years of experience of its baneful effects, much of it has been controlled but it is still reflected in the prejudices of caste, creed and colour or in the intoxication of power and self or in other types of evil deeply ingrained into human nature.

The normal self

A person having a normal self possesses the power to distinguish between right and wrong. He has full regard for the established norms of his tribe or society. There is no denying the fact that during different ages and in different tribes and societies, there have been different standards of 'good' and 'bad'. Therefore, a man of normal self generally puts some restraint on his passion. However, it does not mean that he becomes completely devoid of passion or that his passion is fully restrained. There is every likelihood that at moments, he may become a victim of internal conflict and thus try to grab something secretly for his personal gain. Further, for the satisfaction of his self, he may find some pretext or the other.

The contented self

This is the most sublimated stage of self, which can be achieved by very few people. Those who have reached this stage possess extraordinary wisdom and knowledge. Their will power is so strong and ability of action is so enormous that they are the masters of their self and keep away from evil deeds. However, they cannot be barred from casual falterings. Men of contented self are also liable to err.

Now the question arises that if prayer sublimates self, then a person of which category of self is profited. It is obvious that men of contented self do not need any further sublimation. Therefore, its usefulness remains for the persons of normal and baser self. However, the persons of these two categories may only be profited when they perform prayers with all sincerity, concentration of mind and submissiveness. Further, the worshipper may also know about the meanings of the words, which he is uttering, and the act, which he is performing. He may be fully confident that the object he is worshipping is present before him. He is so much inspired while in prayer that he may fall into a trance.

Look all around honestly. How many people are there who offer prayers in such a way? Is it not right that with the exception of very few, all are the slaves of their passions and the possessors of normal and baser selves? In their personal lives, they are cheats, frauds, smugglers, bribe-seekers, adulterers, usurpers, thugs, hypocrites and persons of bad conduct, but they offer prayers, as a matter of compulsion. In such a condition, is it not proved that prayer does not reform the conduct of bad people? It was for this reason that Sultan Bahu felt constrained to say:

[Prayer is a womanly act Fasting tantamount to saving bread. For pilgrimage, only those go to Makkah who are good for nothing. Those who make a call for prayer are men of easy virtue. Those who have reached the Ultimate Reality, care no for such things].

Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai says this in his own inimitable style:

[Fasting and prayers are good acts but that which leads you to the Beloved is something else].

In this context, Bullah Shah says succinctly:

[O mother! fasting, prayer and pilgrimage is detracted me from the Beloved].

3. Prayer gives satisfaction to the heart

It is an established fact that at misfortune moments or in a state of sorrow or helplessness, men feels an acute need for help from some supernatural power. At this moment of distress, worship or prayer satiates the heart. In this state, many people approach gods, goddesses, rivers, animals, God and many other objects, entreating them or Him for help. Whether his distress or difficulty is overcome through such entreaties, is a different matter. However, doubtless, one's heart feels satisfied. Worship and prayer are, therefore, used as a sedative, a tranquilizer or a balm. However, it is also an acknowledged fact that excessive or untimely use of a medicine loses its efficacy and as in case of addiction, a medicine is no longer effective. In the same way, excess of worship and prayer loses its efficacy.

4. Prayer will lead to salvation

The fourth advantage of prayer is described as salvation. However, the mystic, as presented by the priest, does not share the idea of the Day of Judgement. The mystic knows that Heaven; Hell, Doomsday, etc. are all symbolic. These symbols are used for making those men righteous who cannot mend their ways without temptation or fear. Such things, in fact, are non-existent and worshipping non-existent things is meaningless. Besides, a mystic is intoxicated with the love of God. Every act of his is in consonance with the wishes of the Beloved and for His love, not for greed or for striking a bargain on the Day of Judgement. For a mystic, worship and prayer are for the sake of a glance at the resplendent glow on the face of the Beloved and not for any ulterior motives.

5. Prayer saves one from sin

The fifth advantage of prayer, as claimed by the priest and the exploiter, is neither acceptable neither to a mystic nor to those who know the truth. They know it that social transgressions committed society cannot be atoned for by prayer. If the contention of the priest is accepted that prayer is the key to salvation, then divine justice will appear ridiculous. Every black-marketer, blackmailer, smuggler, hoarder, usurper, robber and murderer will hope for the mercy of God if he is praying regularly. Those who hold such a view are perhaps not aware that God cannot be coaxed or bribed through worship and prayer. Those who have pained or persecuted His creatures in any manner are sure to be punished.

It is understandable that worship and prayer may be of some use for penance and abstaining from acts of transgression in future, but what about past misdeeds. Can God forgive one who has committed heinous crimes and acts of transgression? Through those crimes and transgressions, many innocent here suffered. If God does so, it will be against His own norms of justice. In fact, the crimes, which are being committed today, are the result of this distorted and crooked notion. In the present-day world, it is observed that smugglers black-marketers, drug-dealers and similar other persons of shady character contribute generously to the building of a mosque or other works of public utility. It is because they are under the impression that such philanthropic acts will lead them to Heaven. A mystic regards such men as hypocrites. It was about these hypocrisies that Sultan Bahu said:

[After reciting the Qur'an, the reciters become arrogant and the priests take pride in their prayers. They flaunt their books wherever they go. Wherever, they see a chance for gain they start reciting the Qur'an in a loud voice. God belongs to Bahu, those, who have stolen nothing in this world].

Other rituals too, like worship and prayer, have become conventional and lifeless. The mystic regards all such worship, prayer and rituals as useless. Similarly, pilgrimage, sacrifice of animals, visit to the graves, offerings in the name of the dead, spells and magic are useless conventions.

THE SECOND BELIEF OF A MYSTIC

To a mystic, all human beings are like a single body whose different limbs cannot be severed from each other. To him, real humanity is that each man may share the sufferings of another. To compartmentalize humanity into religions, sects, groups and nations is against the Laws of Nature and against the Will of God. A mystic is convinced that the real dignity of man is much higher than the petty differences of caste, creed and color. Such differences are not only artificial but also harmful. To quote Shaikh Saadi:

[All human beings are different limbs of one and the same body. It is because they are born out of the same substance. When one limb aches, the other parts of the body also become restless].

A Muslim mystic speaks in the same vein:

[You came into this world to seek consummation of your love and not for making material gains].

That is why the mystics have been conscious of the fact that if religion is allowed to be used politically, then priests will start exploiting the masses. They will grab power and do everything unfair in the name of God, the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet. The domination of priests in the first place, gives undue support to the vested interests; secondly, it obstructs human freedom and progress. Islam, as the mystic has understood it, has come into existence not to create groups with vested interests, but to uproot all evils. Islam considers man as the vicegerent of God and is opposed to every kind of distinction which is made in the name of caste, creed and color. Islam is the foremost champion of freedom, which is the fundamental right of man. Thus, the Muslim mystic is in fact a naturalist and is against every form of restraint and compulsion. This is the reason that many an extremist mystic renounced the world and went out of the priest's sphere of influence.

The Muslim mystic considers all the formal and exhibitionist aspects of all religions as worthless. He has, therefore, no concern with them. He always tries to delve into the inner spirit of religion, ignoring its outer form. To him, intellect and love are the two facets of one and the same image. For his guidance and for the guidance of others, he tries to seek refuge in intellect and love. Nothing else does attract him, nor does he need any other thing. The mystic likes not to be attached to such petty and conventional things as have lost their value. Thus, he is progressive in outlook. He likes new things, which are required at a given point in time. He perceives Nature as ever moving, ever-changing and revolutionary. Therefore, it is necessary to keep pace with change. Nothing is static or morbid for him. Since everything is moving, therefore, it is living. The mystic perceives the sun, the moon, the earth, the stars, and the planets in motion. Further, climatic change, the blowing of the wind and the flow of water convinces him of the eternal evolutionary process. His eyes see human beings, animals and plants coming into existence; then growing with the passage of time; and finally, decaying. Other human beings, animals and plants replace the decaying. Except for God, nothing is eternal. How can one be expected to believe in static being or a system that has closely watched this continuous change?

This is the reason that when a ruler or a priest commands a mystic either to do or not to do a thing in the name of God or the Holy Prophet, he gets to the bottom of the intention behind the command. To the mystic, such a command betrays a dictatorial attitude and it is motivated by personal gain. A mystic is, therefore, a rebel. He construes truth to be as much within the reach of everyone as sunshine or air. No individual, group or nation has the right to monopolize truth. His fundamental principles rest on the basis of life and death. He is fully conscious of the secrets of life and believes in:

[We are like a wave and in our death lies solace, We are alive because for us there is no rest]

THE THIRD BELIEF OF THE MYSTIC

As stated earlier, a Muslim mystic is convinced that the combination of religion and politics is absolutely wrong. In his opinion, religion springs from within; it cannot be imposed from outside. It is, therefore, the personal affair of an individual. When a person is individually born, he also (lives individually; for his good deeds or misdeeds he himself is accountable in life; for his faith, he is supposed to be accountable on the Day of Judgement. This being so, how far are the others justified in interfering in his faith and imposing their own faith on him? Therefore, the mystic regards that every individual is free in matters of belief and may follow any religion according to his wisdom, intellect, wish, liking and experience. The mystic reposes full faith in the following verse of the Book of God:

[There should be no compulsion in matter of belief]

To sum up, a Muslim mystic believes in nonviolence. Whether it is politics or religion, thought or action, he prefers non-violence in all affairs of life. He thinks that all religions are on the right path. One who, despite an apparent diversity, adds to the grace and strengthens the basic unity, perceives the Light (of God). It does not matter which religion or sect he belongs to or which ideology he upholds. However, one, who gets entangled in the petty differences of religions or sects, loses sight of the Light. Therefore, the mystics have endeavored in many ways to unify religions. A few examples are given below:

1. Shaikh Badruddin Samawa tried to cohere Islam and Christianity in Turkey.
2. In India, Bhagat Kabir and Guru Nanak tried to weld Hinduism and Islam.
3. In India, Raja Ram Mohan Roy did a lot for cementing ties between Hinduism and Christianity.
4. Hung Sio Chian made concerted efforts in China to bring Taoism and Christianity together.
5. In India, Moghul emperor Akbar the Great tried his best to create uniformity in Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity and the fire-worship.
6. Dara Shikoh, a great Moghul prince, endeavored to put together the collective values of all religions.
7. In Sindh, great saints such as Sachal Sarmast and Shah Enayat fought against religious and sectarian hatred and prejudices.

Such efforts were made all over the world and in all times. This is proof positive that the mystics are fundamentally and universally the friends of mankind.

THE FOURTH BELIEF OF THE MYSTIC

Equality of man is the fourth belief of a mystic. To prefer a group of persons or to regard them as superior beings on the basis of religion or sect is contrary to the mystic's credo. Therefore, he considers priesthood (mullahism) as a curse. The following verses of the Holy Qur'an support his views:

[The upright ones and men of good conduct are dear to God. Those who profess faith and give a good account of themselves, they deserve perpetual happiness and bliss].

This is the reason that the mystic regards every good-natured and simple-minded Muslim as a true believer. At the same time, he regards every self-seeker, intrigue and hypocrite as a non-Muslim, whatever will be the apparent faith of such a person. Therefore, according to the same principle, he is against any preferential treatment for or domination by, the traditional Muslims.

THE FIFTH BELIEF OF THE MYSTIC

The mystic does not distinguish between Muslims and infidels on the basis of "formal Islam and rejection of formal Islam". His belief is that the values of Islam and those of the infidels, which are according to the divine will, and the dictates of Nature, are as under:

Muslims

Selflessness
Accord
Love
Non-violence
Humanism

Infidels

Selfishness
Discord
Hatred
Force and violence
Narrow sectarianism

The values, which Islam sanctions and which are held dear by the mystics have already been explained. I shall therefore, confined myself here to the values nurtured by the infidels.

Selfishness

To a mystic, each such thought or action which creates distinction between man and man thereby advocating on the one hand for the preferential rights or vested interests of a group of individuals and usurping the legitimate rights of other people is nothing but selfishness. In the same way, any such thing which gives undue advantage to a certain sect or group is nothing short of selfishness. Further, the use of force for the enforcement of a certain belief is nothing but sordid selfishness. Similarly, any such thing by which a certain nation or tribe thrives at the cost of others is all selfishness.

Discord

According to the mystic belief, only God has real existence. All other beings and objects are subject to decay. It is, therefore, absolutely wrong to regard diversity as reality. It is equally wrong to create any such distinction. On the basis of this belief, he feels that any prejudice or hatred created in the name of religion or sect is a heinous crime. Islam is fundamentally a religion of peace. Anything, which becomes a bone of contention between sects groups, tribes and nations, is against the very spirit of Islam. The Muslim priest may, ever, try to draw influences from the Holy Qur'an so as to serve his vested interests, but the fact remains that it is contrary to the real spirit and message of Islam.

Hatred

Fundamentally and essentially, love is the mystic's creed. His whole existence is for the fulfilment of a noble objective love. It is the alpha and omega of his life. Love is life and hatred is death. Thus, any thought or action which impedes the message of love or which creates a gulf among individuals, sects or men of different religious denominations, is nothing but hatred. Such hatred is unjust even if it is created in the name of God.

Where love exists, there is no place for hatred. The mystic, therefore, regards hatred to be the root-cause of all evil. Hatred is that fire which burns everything. It creates a gulf between man and man. It leads to bloodshed and destruction. Therefore, in the eyes of a mystic, love, natural religion and law of evolution are one and the same thing. Similarly, hatred, hypocrisy obscurantism and hereticism are one and the same. That's why the mystic speaks out against the Muslim priest when he perceives the latter sowing the seed of hatred and discord:

[No liar can unfathomed the secrets of Love]

Force and violence

A mystic is against every form of hatred, prejudice, aggression, force, coercion and violence. He considers each one of them as evils of the worst order. These evils not only negate love, which is the very essence of the creation and existence of man, but they also throttle humanism. The mystic, therefore, wants such a society to flourish in which:

- a) There exists no difference between the rich and the poor.
- b) There exists no difference between the interests of the rulers and the ruled.
- c) There exists no difference among men on the basis of caste, creed and colour.
- d) Everyone should be free to pursue his personal beliefs.
- e) There should be no clash of interest among individuals, sects or groups of individuals.

Therefore, co-existence is the word, which the mystic has adopted as his mode of life. Another cardinal principle of his life is religious tolerance. 'They are the very edifices of humanism. To sum up, he wants the following verse of the Holy Qur'an translated into action all over the world:

[Verily for you is your religion; for me is mine].

Chapter 5 - Mysticism as I Understand It

The word 'Tasawwuf' meaning 'mysticism' has been in use in Muslim society for a very long time. But the set of beliefs, objectives and mode of life for which the Muslims employ this word, have been used for almost the same purpose by men of other religions, too, though with different names. Throughout different ages, philosophers, scholars and men of letters have worked and contributed a lot to mysticism all over the world. The following are the names of the scholars or the schools of thought, which they belonged to:

1. Plato (the protagonist of the philosophy of idealism), Neo-platonic thinkers, Spinoza and other philosophers.
2. Vedantic saints.
3. Unity-loving Christians, those of the Christian clergy whom renounced the world and the stoics.
4. Some of the Buddhist monks.
5. Some of the Jainist monks.
6. The Muslim mystics who were the believers in the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud).
7. Theosophists.
8. Modern humanists.
9. Kindred men or organizations trying to promote spiritualism.

A large number of Muslim thinkers have regarded Tasawwuf as the philosophy of Islam, the spirit of Islam, the religion of love, a creed for the sublimation of self and a means of self-revelation. But some thinkers have gone one step further and have defined mysticism as Islam itself. In the same way, eminent men of other religions have extolled and practiced it.

But it is a fact that as religions unfortunately degenerated because of the reprehensible conduct of their followers; similarly, mysticism lost much of its light. As the Muslim priest lays much stress on conventional religion and justifies all means so long as his coffers are being filled and his opponents are being crushed in the same way, most of the so-called mystics are lost in the morass of mundane pursuits. Some among them are men who have gone astray. Their vested interests are of paramount importance to them. They try their best to roll in comfort and luxury but preach to the masses about contentment, forbearance and dependence on God. Some of these so-called mystics have further debased themselves by converting the august institution of mysticism into a profession. The malady has become so acute that magic incantation, exorcising evil spirits and black magic are being treated as part of mysticism.

Just as educated young men in our country are feeling disgusted with religion as a result of the exploitation of Islam at the hands of the clerics and obscurantists, mysticism, too, appears to have lost its charm and appeal. For example, the worship of holy men (pir-parasti) fake miracles, lust in the name of beauty-worship, sluggishness in the name of the renunciation of the world, total absence of self-sublimation, complete lack of self-recognition and economic exploitation

are some of the curses which the self-styled and self-seeking mystics have fallen prey to. The result is that people have become apathetic to mysticism.

As stated in the preceding chapters, I have laid much emphasis on objectives, which are of fundamental value. In these very objectives, to my mind, lies hidden the common good of the human race. These objectives are unity, peace and prosperity. I have reflected for a very long time as to how and from which pool to gather men who wish to work for the achievement of these objectives. Beyond doubt, the interpretation of real Islam was sufficient for me. But, unfortunately, so defamed has, been the interpretation of the Muslim priest become that if I adopt Islam as an instrument for fighting social ills, men belonging to other religions are sure to object. This is the reason that I have chosen mysticism as the medium for the promotion of these values. I am confident that, despite the faltering of some of the so-called mystics of the present times, it is likely to enjoy universal appeal.

I am not interested in a particular name. But as ideas can only be communicated through words and symbols, that is why I have selected "mysticism as a cure for all the present problems and ills of mankind. In the modern metaphor, mysticism can be defined as humanism. In my opinion, the foundations of mysticism can be laid on the following great ideals:

1. The concepts of the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud) under which ultimate Power in the universe belongs to God. All other things are but His reflections. However, this thought demands a lot of circumspection because; extremism may prove to be misleading. For example, this individual and social decline against Islam which is the religion of Nature as also against the laws of evolution. It is also against the Divine Will under which created the universe, which operates under definite system. What is the Divine Will? As a Sindhi sage says:

[When God decided to give expression to His being, He enjoyed Himself by creating the Universe and by appearing in the shape of man].

Which is to say that love of life alone is the Divine Will. Calling the Hereafter as a mosque and the Kaaba and being (life) as a bar Hafiz Shirazi says:

[My Mentor has left the mosque and come to the bar. O followers of my faith, what should we do under the circumstance?].

And then Hafiz answers his question himself:

[For devotees like us, what is there in the mosque when our Lord and Master are in the bar].

In short, therefore, if the reason for the creation of the universe is the bar room, which is to say it is to meet the obligations of life, one's true role can only be submission to the Will of God. Therefore, an addiction of one's responsibility in the struggle of being is either ignorance of the objective of life or a deliberate act of defiance of Divine will.

The second major danger arising out of the extreme form of this notion would an end to the distinction between the benign and the malicious good and bad, repressor and the repressed. This would be disastrous for society. The laws of

nature and the objectives of life reject this tendency altogether. According to the laws of evolution, we must struggle to merge the part with the whole. And when the highest objectives of life are total unity among human beings it becomes imperative to give precedence to right knowledge, self-reform and good behaviour. As Shah Bahu says:

[If one becomes a dervish without acquiring the right knowledge, he becomes an infidel. Should such a person pray for a hundred years, he will not understand God nor will the veil of error be removed from his eyes and his heart will remain a temple of ignorance].

2. Another important principle of mysticism is that the Real and the Absolute be considered much beyond human imagination and thinking. Such a belief is sure to relieve men of the concept of a personal and impersonal God. The concept of a personal God leads to idol-worship while the concept of an impersonal God leads to duality

3. The third basic principle of mysticism is the study of the plan of creation of the universe and its system. Without it, mysticism remains incomplete. If the prevailing situation in the world is to be examined, one will know that in major parts of the globe, there is confusion worse confounded. There is no justice, no equality, and no equitable distribution of wealth. For example:

a) Despite hard labour, millions of men are deprived of necessary food, adequate and shelter. On the other hand, a handful of people have control over the entire wealth and the means of production in the world. Thus without labour, they are living in luxury.

b) Very many people are born with robust health and they die ~t a mature age. But the many more who are congenitally weak or diseased. Throughout their lives, they remain physically or mentally ill. Some lose their limbs as a result of accidents or serious ailments. Thus, they are exposed to suffering and die premature deaths.

c) On the one hand, tall talk made is about refinement and good culture while horrible wars are waged in which not only valuable lives are lost, but property is also damaged on the other. Brute power is let loose in its worst form. All moral values are reduced to naught.

d) A few men are handsome while many are ugly. Some are men of intellect but many are devoid even of common sense; some are kind-hearted and friendly to fellow-beings, while a large number of men are hard-hearted and inimical to others.

In view of this contrast in human nature, there are people who feel compelled to think that if this universe had come into being under a plan, its system would have been based on justice and harmony, making no room for chaos and confusion. But, on the other hand, the design of the universe shows that there is a designer. You may call that U designer by any name. The movement of the stars and the planets within their orbits; day followed by the night and night followed by day; the change in seasons; the procreation of living beings and their decay after a certain period of time the change of water into vapours and the metamorphosis of vapours into snow are some of the positive proofs that there does exist a force.

The order and disorder to be found in this world or the universe lead to two concepts. One of them is that although the forces of 'good' and 'evil' are in perpetual conflict with each other, there is a plan and a purpose in the creation of the universe. The other concept is that the creation of the universe is the result of an accident and, therefore, everything is accidental as such.

The mystics believing in the Unity of God (Wahdat-ul-Wajud) have thought over both the theories. But they have not wholly accepted either of them. They have also acknowledged the plan in the creation the universe and yet they have perceived the absolute good inherent in the law of evolution. Some of them have looked askance at the disorder prevailing in the world! Regarding it as the inscrutable way of God. But some have regarded these disorderly conditions as purely temporary. According to their beliefs, this disorder is not lasting but in this whole affair, one thing is explicitly clear that the negative attitude, which is developed because of the disorderly conditions and human suffering of mankind, is the result of the personal concept of God. According to this concept each event is caused when God is pleased or displeased.

The same personal concept of God gives birth to the belief about Heaven and Hell, miracles and supernatural elements. The priests regard themselves as the agents of God. Their will is God's Will and, on this plea, they start meddling into the mundane and spiritual affairs of people. In this way, the concept of divine justice becomes a mockery. Since the mystic (Toes not believe in the concept of a personal God, therefore he thinks that all such concepts and beliefs are inconsistent with reality.

4. To regard the whole human race as a single body is the fourth important principle of mysticism. According to this principle, he considers all human beings as equal with regard to their rights despite the fact that they differ in their nature and, at the same time, their languages, cultures, colour, races, religions and ideas are heterogeneous. The mystic occupies such a lofty place in love that he finds all the divisions of faith as superficial. From a flying plane different objects appear to have been shrunk on the surface of the earth but these objects also appear integrated with each other'. In the same way all the distinctions and differences of men appear to a mystic as different parts of a single whole. Therefore he wishes to see all humanity welded together by love and fraternity.

5. The fifth important principle of mysticism is the unity of all religions. Believing in the unity of mankind the Muslim mystic finds at the background of all religions coherence and a unifying force. Faithlessness and faith, he considers as two branches of one and the same tree. He holds a different view from that of a Muslim priest in this connection. The priest denounces people belonging to other religions and sects, declaring them as infidels. But the mystic regards all religions and sects alike. For him, atheism is certainly different from religion. But again, he considers atheism and religion as two sides of the same coin. To him, religion stands for evolution and atheism as the standard-bearer of revolution. Thus, both lead to the same goal although there is much difference in this methodology.

6. To regard knowledge and love as the real spirit of religion is the sixth important principle of mysticism. For him, love is the nexus, which creates understanding and harmony among men promoting thereby fellow feeling and universal peace. Knowledge leads men to the path of progress. It is only through love and knowledge that the feelings of prejudice, hatred, selfishness and egotism can be overcome. In this way, peace, progress and prosperity can be achieved.

7. The seventh important principle of mysticism is respect for culture. A true Muslim mystic is essentially a man of feeling. But he never neglects intellect. Therefore, he tries to make the maximum use of intellect and feeling. Through both, he wants to humanize and discipline

Human beings. He likes everything, which falls within the purview of modern culture. As the mystic is progressive in outlook, he wishes society to move forward with every passing moment. He is, therefore, always imbued with the spirit of constructing things anew. He hates all that which is stagnant and morbid in life and society.

For the achievement of these objectives, the mystic has dedicated his life. He wants to capture the hearts of men through love. He uses no language except the language of love. He has a particular sphere of work, which gives the desired results only in an atmosphere of co-existence. The mystic is of the view that human society has reached a stage of evolution where all affairs of state should be in the hands of elected and democratic governments. In affairs of state, no religious or sectarian group should be allowed to meddle.

The mystic also holds the view that every individual should be free with regard to his faith and belief. It is not the duty of a state either to propagate or safeguard any particular faith. Any intervention on the part of the state or religion or sect in the personal beliefs of an individual is infringement of human right and liberty. In the same way, the mystic is a votary of human rights and liberty. In the same way, the mystic is a votary of non-violence. He does not approve the use of brute force because violence breeds violence. To a mystic, bloody revolution is of no significance because anything, which is achieved through fear, is not lasting.

The mystic is against selfishness. In fact, selfishness is the product of the baser spirit. It makes man lowly and mean. It gives birth to the idea of duality. Egotism and self-centered behaviour lead to violence and lend support to imperialism and capitalism. They create hatred and discord among men. Egotism also gives birth to such misleading ideas as high and low, superior and inferior. Thus, it paves the way for inequality. The mystic, therefore, shuns it.

To the mystic, nothing is of greater importance than a sound and healthy society. Music, dancing, poetry, literature and all that, which make a society healthy and stable, are, therefore, its essential ingredients. Similarly, he does not consider that truth is the monopoly of a particular religious or sectarian group or of a particular tribe or nation. He is, therefore, non-aligned. He does not believe in blind conformism in religion, economics or political ideology. In the last, the mystic is wholly against a state which claims to profess or propagate a certain faith or belief. It leads to fascism and decays soon. These are the cardinal principles of mysticism, which if followed can turn a strife-torn world into a much better and happier place to live in. I hope that before or after making further experiments in violence and hatred and exploitation and self-interest man shall have, the world shall have to act upon these principles. It is likely that individuals or groups may, for their own reasons misinterpret or groups may, for their own reasons misinterpret what I have said and reject these principles in hatred or with prejudice. However, I am sure that sooner or later, they shall have to give my ideas due consideration because, as the poet says:

[The ignoramus does what the wise man does But after making a lot of blunders]