Speeches, Articles and Sermons

Volume 1

by
Kalamazad Mohammed, Imam

www.aaiil.org
In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Speeches, Articles and Sermons

Volume 1

by
Kalamazad Mohammed, Imam
Freeport-Uquiré Muslim Association
(Fireburn Jama'at)
Uquiré Road, Fireburn. Tel: 673-3171
July, 2001

www.aaiil.org
Heartfelt thanks to Brother Hidayat (Dio) and Sister Jenny Mohammed; Brother Shaukat Ali and Sister Zahira Mohamed; and Brother Yamin Alibaksh for bearing the cost of this publication. May Allah shower His boundless mercy on them and their families and may He guide and protect them in every conceivable way. Surely Allah is with those who keep their duty and those who do good (to others) H.Q. 16:128.
Dedication

To my loving parents and grandparents: My Lord, have mercy on them, as they brought me up when I was little (H.Q. 17:24) or, to adapt John Wesley’s prayer: They covered my defenceless head with the shadow of their wings.

They gave me all they had, and more. Sometimes through misty eyes I look back wistfully... but I hope for the fulfillment of Allah’s promise both ways:

And those who believe and whose offspring follow them in faith – We unite them with their offspring and We shall deprive them of naught of their work (52:21).

May Allah bless them, their forebears, their progeny, their friends, their helpers and their community.

Kalamazad Mohammed
Contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................. ii
Dedication ........................................................................... iii
Foreword ............................................................................. iv
Allah is the Light .................................................................. 1
Muhammad – The Best Exemplar .......................................... 10
The Last and Living Exemplar ............................................... 26
Foundations of Islamic Culture and Civilization .................... 39
Id-ul-Fitr Sermon ................................................................. 74
Id-ul-Adha Sermon ................................................................. 83
Pride ................................................................................... 87
Sincerity ............................................................................... 96
Gratitude ............................................................................. 104
Foreword

by

The Webmaster of the 'Official' Website of the
Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at-e-Islam Lahore
(Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the Propagation of Islam)
http://www.aaill.org
http://www.ahmadiyya.ws

Over a year ago, I received a letter from a friend of mine, living in
Trinidad. Accompanying this letter was an article, entitled 'Gratitude',
which had been written by Kalamazad Mohammed, BA. Dip. Ed., the
esteemed author of this marvellous book, "Speeches, Articles and
Sermons". Upon going through the script of this article, it immedi-
ately dawned upon me, based on the article's concept and thought,
that it came from the pen of a truly sincere servant of Allah. Prior to
this, I had only once heard of the author of this book during a conver-
sation I was holding with Mr. Nasir Ahmad, ex-Editor of 'The Light'
(The Official Organ of the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the Propa-
gation of Islam). He spoke very highly of the author, and, I, too, would
soon be realizing the truth of his words. Since then I have been re-
ceiving a steady and impressive stream of "Speeches, Articles and
Sermons", all written by the author of this book. My respect for the
author has certainly grown over this short span of time, mainly due to
the deep sense of commitment that he holds for the propagation of
Islam.

Allah has rightly chosen the author, an English schoolteacher, for a
very noble task, viz., propagating Islam in modern English to the
masses, a task which he has been ably carrying out, with great zeal,
devotion and enthusiasm. In a time when our peaceful religious Move-
ment, the Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement for the Propagation of Is-
Islam, has been missing its great authors of the past, e.g., Maulana Muhammad Ali, Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, etc., the author has shown a beacon of light to the young Ahmadiyya generation, that has been in great need of religious scholars who can quench its spiritual thirst, in this materialistic age with all its adherent problems.

Nearly a century ago, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement (the Promised Messiah and Mahdi; and the Mujaddid or Renovator of the 14th century Hijrah), Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, was vouchsafed a prophecy by Allah: “I will cause thy message to reach the farthest limits of the world.” I can say with absolute confidence that the author, belonging to a small village in Trinidad, has indeed done his part in bringing this prophecy into a living reality.

The “Speeches, Articles and Sermons” that collectively form the pride of this book, touch all aspects of life, such as, morals, faith, heart-touching experiences from the lives of the pious people of the past, etc. They all give tremendous insight into the knowledge flowing forth from the Holy Qur’an, the Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and the literature produced by the religious sages of the past. I must also specifically mention the effort put in by the author to make accessible, through English rendering, the wisdom expounded by the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam in his books.

The core text of this book will certainly prove to be a manual par excellence for the masses around the globe, belonging to different castes, classes, colours, countries and creeds, to enlighten their minds pre-occupied by worldly woes.

The popularity of this book will be of paramount interest to me, since, as the Webmaster of www.aaaiil.org or www.ahmadiyya.ws, I have
already glimpsed through it. I have been making available, over this past year, the “Speeches, Articles and Sermons” contained within the covers of this book, on the Official Website of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at-e Islam, and I am overjoyed to say that thousands of people, ranging over 120 countries, the number of which keeps on increasing every day, Alhamdulillah, have read with great interest the literature penned by the most impressive author of this book, Masha-Allah.

I congratulate the author on this publication, and hope this heralds many more to follow. I also pray from the depths of my heart, that Allah may give the author many a chance to continue his dedicated service to Islam.

In closing, I recommend this book to every household as a handy companion in the never-ending quest to acquire the boundless knowledge of the most enthralling religion of all – Islam.

Webmaster
http://www.aaiiil.org
http://www.ahmadiyya.ws

8th October, 2000
Allah is the Light

The Holy Qur'an tells us that Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth and that He guides to His light whom He pleases. We are also warned that if Allah does not give us light, there is no other source of light for us and darkness will be our fate.

Four questions come to mind. To whom was this light given, why was it bestowed, can we ordinary human beings share in this light, and where is that light to be found?

Firstly, the Holy Qur'an tells us that the Holy Prophet was the greatest recipient of this light for he was siraj munir (a light-giving sun – 33:46). Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, explains that just as there is a physical sun for the bodies of human beings, so, too, there is a spiritual sun for the souls of mankind and that sun was no other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas), the resplendence of whose light Mirza Sahib extols in the following words:

“That light of high degree that was bestowed on perfect man was not in the angels, was not in the stars, was not in the moon, was not in the sun, was not in the oceans and the rivers, was not in rubies or emeralds, or sapphires, or pearls; in short, it was not in any earthly or heavenly object. It was only in perfected man whose highest and loftiest and most perfect example was our lord and master, the Chief of the Prophets, the Chief of all living ones, Muhammad, the chosen one, peace and blessings of Allah be on him. That light was bestowed on this man and, according to their ranks, upon all those who bore the same colour to some degree...this dignity was
found in its highest and most perfect form in our lord and master and our guide, the immaculate Prophet, the righteous one, testified to by the righteous, Muhammad, the chosen one, peace and blessings of Allah be on him” (A'ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam, pp. 160-161).

Secondly, why was that light conferred on the Holy Prophet with such dazzling splendour? The Holy Qur’an says: *Surely Allah commands you to make over amanat (trusts) to those worthy of them...* (4:58).

What is the meaning of *amanat* (trusts)? On one level, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains the word in this way:

“This section deals with the granting of kingdom to the Muslims, who are here required to entrust the affairs of State to people who are worthy of this responsibility. The words that follow, requiring judges to be just, corroborate this significance, the whole verse stating the reciprocal duties of the governed and the governors. Explaining the word *amanat*, I’Ab said that it means *duties*. The Prophet himself explained the word *amanat* as meaning *Government* or *affairs of State*. ‘The Prophet said, When the *amanat* (trust) is wasted, wait for the *sa’ah*, i.e. *the hour* or the *doom*. It was said, How will the trust be wasted, O Messenger of Allah? He said, When Government is entrusted to those unworthy of it, then wait for the doom’ (B. 81:35)” (*The Holy Qur’an*, Note 592).

On another level, Mirza Sahib gives the following meaning:

“The meaning of *amanat* is that perfect man gives back to Allah, Most High, everything which Allah had be-
stowed on him as gifts — all his capabilities, his intelligence and knowledge, his heart and soul, his desires, his love, his fears, his honour and dignity and all his physical and spiritual powers until he fulfils the verse: *Surely Allah commands you to make over amanat (trusts) to those worthy of them;* that is, he annihilates himself in Allah and bequeaths his life to His service and this glory is found to the highest, most perfect and most complete degree in no other person than our Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) as Allah Himself says in the Holy Qur’an: *Say: My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are surely for Allah, the Lord of the worlds. No associate has He. And this I am commanded and I am the first of those who submit (6:163 - 164)*. (A’ina-e-Kamalat-e-Islam).

An explanation of these verses is given by Mirza Sahib in the same book.

As regards prayer, he writes:

“First, God must be believed to be the One Who is to be worshipped, sought and loved. In serving Him, loving him, fearing Him and hoping from Him, no one must be taken as being His partner. Celebration, glorification and service of God, all the forms and commands in relation to serving Him, the commandments and prohibitions, and matters relating to the destiny ordained by Him, must all be accepted with one’s heart and soul. All these orders, limits, laws, and circumstances ordained for us, must be borne with complete devotion, in the most humble and lowly manner. And one must learn thoroughly all the pure truths and knowledge which are the means of realising His vast powers, the medium of discovering the elevated
glory of His dominion and kingship, and a powerful guide for recognizing His favours and blessings” (*The Meaning of Islam*, p. 4 translated from *A'ina-e Kamalat-e-Islam*).

Concerning sacrifice, he says that every personal desire must be given up in preference to the will of Allah and every gift of Allah, concrete and abstract, must be used for the glory, praise and service of the Almighty.

“That is, the person claiming to be a follower of Islam must prove that his hands, feet, heart and mind, his sense, reason, anger, mercy, gentleness and knowledge, all his spiritual and physical powers, his honour and property, his rest and comfort, and all that he has, from the hair of his head to the nails of his toes, both outwardly and inwardly, so much so that his intentions, the fears in his heart, and the feelings in his soul – all these have become as obedient to God as a person’s limbs are in his own control” (*Ibid*, p. 3).

In respect to our living and dying for Allah, it must be our conscious resolve that every cell that is born in our bodies must live for the sake of Allah and His creation and when it dies it must do so in complete fulfilment of this resolution. Or as Mirza Sahib writes:

“The other aspect of devoting one’s life for God is that it must be dedicated to the service, sympathy and help of His creatures, the bearing of their burdens, and the true sharing of their grief. One must bear hardship to provide relief to others, and for their comfort tolerate difficulty for oneself” (*Ibid*, p. 4).
Further:

“Service to the creation of Allah is like this. As regards all the needs of His creation, and all the various ways in which Divine providence has made some people dependent on others, one must do good with all the real, selfless and true sympathy that one can show, solely for the sake of Allah, and help every needy person with one’s God-given ability, exerting oneself to bring about reform and improvement in their life of this world and the next” (Ibid, p. 5).

The expression *awwalul Muslimin* (the first of the Muslims) has been variously interpreted, but Mirza *Sahib* gives this explanation as if coming from the mouth of the Holy Prophet himself:

“For the beginning of the world to the end of it there will never be another person as perfect as I am – no one would lose himself in Allah to the extent that I have nor would anyone return his trust to Allah as I have done.”

Remember that besides *peace and submission to the will of Allah*, Islam also means *paying the price in advance for a thing*, and our Holy Prophet had indeed fulfilled the trusts in advance in return for the *wasila* for which he has asked us all to pray that Allah may grant it to him as is reported in the *hadith*: “Ask Allah to grant me the *wasila*.” When asked what the *wasila* was, he replied: “The highest grade in Paradise which only one man will attain and I hope I may be he” (Robson’s *Mishkat*, p. 1236).

The third question is, how can we ordinary mortals be blessed with some of this light of Allah? The Holy Qur'an informs us in 33:21: *Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Latter day,*
and remembers Allah much, and in 68:4, in reference to the Holy Prophet, Allah says: And surely thou hast the most sublime morals.

Our Holy Prophet himself is reported to have said: “Allah has sent me to perfect good qualities of character and to complete good deeds” (Robson’s *Mishkat*, pp. 1236-37).

For those who desire to share in Allah’s light, the Holy Qur'an discloses the only possible way in this verse: Say, If you love Allah, follow me (the Holy Prophet). Allah will love you and grant you maghfirah (protection) from your sins. And Allah is Forgiving,Merciful (3:30).

Maghfirah means not only forgiveness of past sins, but also protection from committing sins because of human weakness and very significantly, suppression of a defective state – that is, more and more perfection or more and more light or as the Holy Qur'an says, light upon light (24:25).

The following two *ahadith* also inform us that without loving the Holy Prophet and following his way, there is no hope of receiving Allah’s Divine Light. The Holy Prophet said:

“None among you is a true believer unless I become dearer to him than his father, his children and the whole of mankind” (Bukhari).

“I leave with you two things; as long as you hold fast to them both, you will never be misguided: the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger” (Muwatta).

If there is any doubt in our minds, the Holy Qur'an removes it in the following promise (which is made in the clearest of words):
O you who believe, turn to Allah with sincere repentance. It may be your Lord will remove from you your evil and cause you to enter Gardens wherein flow rivers, on the day on which Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will gleam before them and on their right hands—they will say: Our Lord, make perfect for us our light, and grant us protection; surely Thou art Possessor of power over all things (66:8).

In extolling the excellence of following the Holy Prophet with love and fidelity, Mirza Sahib writes in the following excerpts:

“By walking under his shadow for ten days one obtains that light which before him could not be obtained in a thousand years....We have found every light by following the immaculate Prophet and whoever follows him will also find it and he will become so accepted of God that nothing will be impossible for him. The Living God Who is hidden from people will be his God and all false gods will be trodden under his feet. He will be blessed everywhere and Divine Power will be with him. Peace be on him who follows the guidance” (Siraj Munir, p. 82).

“It is my personal experience that to obey the Holy Prophet, peace and blessings of Allah be on him, with a sincere heart and to love him, ultimately make a person beloved of God. God creates in his heart a burning for His Own love and such a one, withdrawing his heart from everything else, leans towards God and his affection and desire remain only for God Almighty. Thereupon a special manifestation of Divine love falls upon him, and bestowing upon him the full colour of love and devotion, pulls him towards itself with great force. He then overcomes his passions and from every direction extraordi-
nary works of God Almighty appear as signs in his support and to help him” (Haqiqatul Wahy, p. 65).

Finally, we may ask: Where can that light be found in this earthly existence? Again, the Holy Qur'an answers in clear and explicit words:

(It is) in houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted and His name to be remembered therein. Therein do glorify Him, in the mornings and the evenings, men who neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of Allah and the keeping up of prayer and the paying of the poor-rate – they fear a day in which the hearts and the eyes will turn about (24:36-37).

In other words, according to Mirza Sahib, the prerequisite for that light of Allah is purity of heart. Sincerity of heart must come first; after that everything is open to us, and this is borne out by that statement of Allah to our Holy Prophet: The heavens and the earth, vast as they are, cannot contain Me, but the heart of a believer can.

In Kishti Nuh (The Ark of Noah) Mirza Sahib writes:

“Everybody claims that he is a follower of the true religion, but the religion of that man alone is true who obtains light in this very life itself. And everybody says that he will get salvation, but only he is justified in making this claim who is given light in this earthly life itself.”

He later prays that our hearts should be changed so that we become like stars on this earth filling the planet with the light and life which we get from Allah, Most High.
This is the light for which our Holy Prophet prayed and which he taught every believer to pray for in the following words:

"O Allah, pour light into my heart, pour it into my eyes, and into my ears. Pour it to my right and pour it to my left. Pour it in front of me, and behind me and give me light. Pour light into my nerves, and into my flesh, and into my blood, and into my hair, and into my skin, and into my tongue, and into my soul and increase my light, and transform me into light; and surround me with light. O Allah, bless me with light" (Syed Abdul Latif: Bases of Islamic Culture, p. 53).
Muhammad, the Best Exemplar

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things (33:40).

Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Latter Day and remembers Allah much (33:21).

He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions. And Allah is enough for a witness (48:28).

He it is Who raised among the illiterates a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His messages and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom – although they were before certainly in manifest error – and others from among them who have not yet joined them. And He is the Mighty, the Wise (62:2-3).

That the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) was the most pre-eminent of all the Prophets of Allah is a fact generally known and accepted by Muslims in every century and in every country. But a question mark still hangs over the question of whether he was truly the Last Prophet. Our Sunni and Shi'ah friends believe that the Israelite Prophet, Jesus (as), was taken up alive into Heaven (from the Cross) and that he will return in later times and, together with the Promised Mahdi, will wage a bloody war with the infidels in order to restore the glory of Muslims to its former state.
Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, **Mujaddid** of the fourteenth century **Hijrah**, Promised Messiah and **Mahdi**, has proven from the Holy Qur’an, the **Hadith**, historical records, his own researches, revelations, etc. that Prophet Jesus indeed did not die on the Cross but was saved by Allah and that he journeyed to Kashmir where he fulfilled his mission to the “Lost Sheep of Israel” and died at the ripe old age of one hundred and twenty years and that his tomb is still there in Khan Yar Street, Srinagar. (See **Masih Hindustan Men**.) I must point out here that Lahore Ahmadi literature is replete with proof of the above and Khwaja Nazir Ahmad’s **Jesus in Heaven on Earth**, a foremost example of erudite scholarship, is the definitive work on this subject.

Mirza **Sahib** has also pointed out that it is an insult to the honour of the Holy Prophet for another prophet to return to complete the work of Prophet Muhammad (**sas**). (No prophet, new or old, will appear, he affirms.) In fact, he says that if all Muslims should unanimously proclaim that Prophet Jesus is dead, then that will spell the death-knell of Christianity, but ironically it is we, Muslims ourselves, who are upholding Christianity and keeping it alive by insisting that Prophet Jesus himself will return. This erroneous view is in itself an enigma akin to the Christian dogma of the Trinity for it raises several troublesome questions: In what capacity will Prophet Jesus return – as a full-fledged prophet? Then the **Khatam-e-Nubuwwat** (Seal of Prophethood) would be broken. (Our Rabwah friends should ponder over the explanation of the word **seal** given here by the Founder.) Again, will he come back as an ordinary Muslim or as a **mujaddid**? In that case, will Allah demote a Prophet of His, or will He eject a Prophet from Paradise in contravention of His word in the Holy Qur’an? And then, what will be his age and his physical condition when he returns?

Mirza **Sahib** has given conclusive proof from the Holy Qur’an,
the Hadith and the writings of the mujaddids and saints of Islam that he was the Promised Messiah – the spiritual counterpart of the Prophet Jesus, the first Messiah, and he was also the Mahdi – la Mahdi illa 'Isa (the Messiah and the Mahdi are really one person and not two separate individuals as understood by other Muslims – and he was sent according to prophecy in the fourteenth century Hijrah as Prophet Jesus (as) was the Israelite Messiah in the fourteenth century after Prophet Moses (as), in order to lay the foundation for the final regeneration and triumph of Islam over all religions).

On the other hand, our Rabwah friends, following the lead of Mirza Mahmud Ahmad, have also found themselves in a “monkey pants” when they explain Khatam-an-Nabiyyin not as “the Last of the Prophets” but as meaning that by following the Holy Prophet, more prophets (perhaps thousands) will be made in future and as such, Mirza Sahib was a mustaqil and haqiqi (genuine) prophet.

Again, Lahore Ahmadi literature abounds with arguments and definitive proof to counteract this blemish on the Founder’s name and his Movement. I refer here specifically to An Nabuwwat fil Islam (Prophethood in Islam) and Akhiri Nabi (The Last Prophet, which is a part of Prophethood in Islam but was published separately) by Maulana Muhammad Ali (and translated into English by Maulana S. M. Tufail).

In this latter book, Maulana Muhammad Ali has directed his attention specifically to the above belief of the Rabwah group (that more haqiqi prophets will appear in this ummah) and he has taken the arguments of Mirza Mahmud Ahmad one by one and demolished them so devastatingly that I fail to understand how a person who has read this book can still accept the false teachings of the Rabwites. But, I guess a pir parast is impervi-
ous to reason, or perhaps there may be other considerations that overshadow strict adherence to truth.

This small but deadly book – deadly to the misguided doctrines of the Rabwites – contains six chapters, namely:

- The Question of Prophethood and Mirza Mahmud Ahmad
- The Meaning of *Khatam-an-Nabiyyin* in the *Hadith*
- Views of other Muslim Theologians and Companions of the Holy Prophet quoted by *Mian Sahib*
- The Saying of Hazrat A’isha, the Righteous
- Finality of Prophethood and the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement
- *Mian Sahib* explained *Khatam-an-Nabiyyin* as “Last of the Prophets” in 1910

From the above, you can guess at, if you have not read the book, the complete demolition of the Rabwites’ house of straw.

Besides the above, there are many other writings. For example, Hafiz Sher Muhammad’s *La Nabiyya Ba’di, The Ahmadiyya Case*, compiled and translated by Dr. Zahid Aziz (which I consider the Lahore Ahmadi handbook), and many others too numerous to mention, that contain quotations from the works of Mirza Sahib in which he denied to the end of his life that he was a *haqiqi nabi* as claimed by his son, Mirza Mahmud Ahmad, in his book *Haqqatun-Nubuwwat*, volume 1. It is interesting to note here that after Maulana Muhammad Ali replied with *An Nubuwwat fil Islam*, volume 2 never came into being.

The following selections from Mirza Sahib’s writings (after 1903) are a few references worthy of deeper scrutiny, especially by our friends from the other side.
Firstly, Rabwah missionaries are apt to shout at the top of their voices challenging all and sundry to produce a verse of the Holy Qur’an which supports the meaning of *Khatam-an-Nabiyyin* as “Last of the Prophets”. Well, Mirza Sahib himself has given us the verse which is: *This day I have perfected for you your religion and chosen for you Islam as a religion* (5:3) and he has added the *hadith, La nabiyya ba’di* as further proof. On the other hand, Maulana Muhammad Ali has requested that they produce even one verse of the Holy Qur’an or one reliable *hadith* to support their claim that *Khatam-an-Nabiyyin* means more prophets will come after the Holy Prophet (sas).

Secondly, he has established the criteria for judging a full-fledged prophet as opposed to a *majazi* (metaphorical) or *zilli* (reflective) or *juz’i* (partial) prophet. “A claimant to prophethood,” he says, “must believe in Allah, the Unique. He should claim that Allah sends down on him *wahy* (revelation) which he must impart to the people. He should also form an *ummah* (community) who regard him as a Prophet of Allah and he should also bring a Book from Allah” (*Akhbar al-Hakam*, no. 2, vol. 7, 10th June, 1903). We ask our friends: Does Mirza Sahib fall into the above category?

Thirdly, Mirza Mahmud Ahmad claims that there are three kinds of prophethood (in an earlier writing he asserted that there were only two kinds), and he quotes Ibn ‘Arabi to support his contention. But this is what Mirza Sahib has to say on this point:

“Mohiyyidin Ibn ‘Arabi has written that whilst prophethood with law is unlawful, prophethood without law is. But my belief is this – that the door of all kinds of prophethood is closed except reflection of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.”

In this connection, a woman once claimed to be a prophet, con-
tending that only the prophethood of men had come to an end. *(La nabiyya ba’di and not la nabiyyata ba’di.)* But, Mirza Sahib, quoting the verse: *Men are the maintainers of women* (4:34) negated that belief saying that women were also subsumed in many of the Qur’anic ordinances given to men. (*Akbar Badr*, no. 13, vol. 2, 17th April, 1903.)

Lastly, the opponents of Mirza Sahib proclaimed that they had issued the *Fatwa of Kufr* against him because, although he was claiming with his tongue to be a *zilli, majazi, haruzi, juz’i nabi* and a *mujaddid*, yet in his heart he considered himself a *haqiqi nabi*. Mirza Sahib took a solemn oath declaring that that accusation was not true.

We ask our friends again: What kind of prophethood was he denying when he took that oath? Or, Allah forbid, was he a dissembler as the opponents claimed and his own son wittingly or unwittingly supports?

Now we come to the second part of the topic with special emphasis on the spread and final predominance of Islam through the Ahmadiyya Movement.

The Holy Qur’an itself testifies to the exalted status of the Holy Prophet as the following verses attest:

*And surely thou hast sublime morals* (68:4).

*O Prophet, surely We have sent thee as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner and as an inviter to Allah by His permission and as a light-giving sun* ((35:45-46).

*Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excel-
... exempt from the wrath of God. Allah is the friend of him who hopes in Allah and the Latter Day and remembers Allah much (33:21).

And We have not sent thee but as a mercy to all the nations (21:107).

Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, in his book, *The Ideal Prophet*, has explained the above verses by elucidating the following points: The Prophet's message was the ideal one, his call was the perfect one, he was the ideal personality, the ideal character, the ideal exemplar, the possessor of the noblest of virtues, the ideal success (and this point in particular is shared by non-Muslim critics who acknowledge the Prophet as the most successful personality in the history of mankind).

To appreciate the magnitude of the Holy Prophet's task and his consequent greatness, one has to look at the state of the society to which he was sent and the result he achieved.

The Holy Qur'an says: Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what men's hands have wrought, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, so that they may return (30:41).

And according to historians, civilization was on the brink of collapse and disintegration. Man was only one step away from becoming perfect beasts albeit in human form. Darkness prevailed in every corner of the earth but Arabia was the darkest spot with every imaginable type of sin and immorality being prevalent. A quotation from a non-Muslim source will suffice to illustrate the point:

"From time beyond memory, Mecca and the whole Peninsula had been steeped in spiritual torpor. The slight
and transient influences of Judaism, Christianity or philosophical enquiry upon Arab mind had been but as the ruffling here and there of the surface of a quiet lake; all remained still and motionless below. The people were sunk in superstition, cruelty and vice.... Their religion was a gross idolatry; and their faith the dark superstitious dread of unseen things.... Thirteen years before the *Hejira*, Mecca lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had these thirteen years now produced! Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of men of Medina; but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life" (Muir, *Life of Mahomet*, ch. 7).

But look at the marvellous transformation wrought by the Holy Prophet in such a short space of time. Mirza *Sahib* tells us of this:

“A strange phenomenal event took place in the deserts of Arabia, when hundreds of thousands of the dead became alive within a few days, and those who had been corrupted through generations took on Divine colour. The blind began to see, and tongues of the dumb began to flow with Divine wisdom. Such a revolution took place in the world as no eye had seen and no ear had heard of before. Do you realize what this was? All this was brought about by prayers during the darkness of night of one who had been wholly lost in God and which created an uproar in the world and manifested such wonders as seemed impossible at the hands of that unlettered helpless person. O Allah! Send down blessings and peace on him and on his followers in proportion to his concern and suffering for the Muslim *ummah* (the people of Is-
lam), and shower upon him the light of Thy mercy for-
ever" (Barakatud-Du'a, pp. 10-11).

Non-Muslim historians concur with the above as the following quotation attests:

"Never has a people been led more rapidly to civilisation such as it was, than were the Arabs through Islam" (H. Hirschfeld, New Researches, p. 5).

But if we look at the condition of Muslims presently and also over the past centuries, the casual observer may be tempted to agree with the non-Muslim Western propaganda that Islam is a spent force, a barbaric religion of the Middle Ages, totally un-suited to the demands and exigencies of a modern society – that Islam had its Golden Age but it peaked in the past and will now suffer the fate of all past civilizations.

But that is only a superficial view. It is true that the Holy Prophet is physically dead and the so-called Golden Age of Islam lies in the past. Nevertheless, the Holy Prophet is still alive spiritually and his message will also live to the end of time and triumph over all religions because Allah has made provisions for this suc-
cess.

When Muslims were in the deepest despair, decay and deca-
dence, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad brought life and hope to Muslim hearts as prophesied by the Holy Prophet Muhammad:

"Most surely Allah will raise for this community at the head of every century one who shall revive its faith" (Abu Dawud).

And:
“What will be your condition when the Son of Mary will descend among you and he will be your Imam from among yourselves?” (Bukhari).

We are further directed:

“When you find the Mahdi, perform bai‘at (pledge of allegiance) at his hands. You must go to him even if you have to reach across icebound mountains on your knees. He is the Mahdi and the Caliph of Allah” (Ibn Majah).

And:

“Whoever from among you meets Jesus, Son of Mary, should convey my greetings to him” (Dar Manshoor).

We are also warned:

“He who dies in a condition that he has not recognized the Imam of his age, dies a death of ignorance” (Ahmad ibn Hanbal).

And as testimony to the truth of the Mahdi, the Holy Prophet prophesied:

“Surely two signs will appear which have never appeared before (as signs of truth for anyone else) since the creation of the heavens and the earth. In the month of Ramadhan, the moon will be eclipsed in the first of its night (of eclipse) and the sun will be eclipsed on the middle day (of its days of eclipse). Both these eclipses will take place in the same month of Ramadhan. And these two signs have never occurred before since Allah created the heavens and the earth” (Sunan Dar Qutni).

(See also Chapter 75 verses 7 to 9 and note 2610 of Maulana

It is interesting to note that these eclipses occurred twice in the life of the Mahdi and were seen both in the East and the West during the month of Ramadhan – 13th March (moon), 28th March (sun) in Qadian (1894) and 11th March (moon), 28th March (sun) in the West (1895).

But more than the above, the Holy Qur’an tells us:

_He it is who raised among the illiterates a Messenger from among themselves, who recites to them His messages and purifies them and teaches them the Book and the Wisdom – although they were before certainly in manifest error – and others from among them who have not yet joined them. And He is the Mighty, the Wise_ (62: 2-3).

Mirza Sahib has explained verse 3 as referring to the second advent of the Holy Prophet and said that this was fulfilled in himself and his companions. He explained in Tohfa-e Golarviyya that although religion was perfected and completed yet the perfection of the propagation of religion was not because conditions in the time of the Holy Prophet were not appropriate. But in this age, all the necessary arrangements are in place – scientific progress has made the world a global village and the means of spreading the message are multitudinous. But since the designated task was that of the Holy Prophet, it was necessary for him to return to complete his mission. However, the law of God precludes the reappearance of a person who has died, so to fulfil 48:28 of the Holy Qur’an, a person who is the zill of the Prophet in heaven or someone possessing a portion of the Prophet’s grace has to descend, and this is, of course, our Imam, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, who incorporates in himself, but to a much
lesser degree, all the excellence of the past prophets just as the Holy Prophet is the compendium of all the virtues of the previous prophets.

It was on this premise that he founded the Ahmadiyya Movement, which he prophesised would bring about the total dominance of Islam in the last thousand years of this Adamic Dispensation, in order to defeat the second manifestation of Gog and Magog and the Dajjal. Accordingly, he says that the mention of Dhul Qarnain in the Holy Qur'an is a prophecy of the conditions that will prevail in today's world and this is how he explains his journeys. This, of course, will help to underline the reality of our mission as Ahmadis.

In his first visit to the West, Dhul Qarnain reached the setting place of the sun and he found it going down into a black sea (or a black pool of mud)... (18:86). This, the Founder says, refers to the Western nations that were given the clear and pure teachings of the Injil (Gospel) and other scriptures but they corrupted and distorted them and turned them, as it were, into black mud.

He second journey was to the East. Then he followed a course. Until, when he reached the (land of the) rising sun, he found it rising on a people to whom he had given no shelter from it (18:88-90). These refer to the mass of the Muslims who have rejected all the mujaddids, and the present Imam of the Age in particular, and so are not privileged to remain under his shade and consequently are singed and scorched by the trials and tribulations, the shame and degradation, internal and external, that beset the whole Muslim world.

In his third journey: He followed a course. Until, when he reached (a place) between the two mountains, he found on that side of them a people who could hardly understand a word. They said:
O Dhu-l-Qarnain, Gog and Magog do mischief in the land. May we then pay thee tribute on condition that thou raise a barrier between us and them? He said: That wherein my Lord has established me is better, so if only you help me with strength (of men), I will make a fortified barrier between you and them” (18:92-95).

This, of course, refers to the Founder’s Jama‘at and we can see with dazzling clarity the only people who are safe from the depredations of the second coming of Gog and Magog are those who are truly under the protection of Mirza Sahib’s teachings, for he was told in revelation (in 1891): I shall make thee known with honour to the ends of the earth and shall exalt thy name, and he himself, gives us the good news:

“Listen all of you. This is a prophecy of Him Who has created the heavens and the earth that He will spread this Community in all regions and will make it supreme over all, through arguments and proof.... The days are coming, indeed they are near, when there will only be one religion that is honoured in the world. He (Allah) will bless this Movement abundantly and will frustrate everyone who seeks to destroy it. This supremacy will endure forever till the Day of Judgement” (Tazkiratus-Shahadatain, p. 64).

If we look at the paucity of members and means of the Ahmadiyya Movement and the internal dissension, that is, the deviation of the Rabwah group, then this may seem like an idle dream of a false visionary. But Mirza Sahib has told us that Allah does not need earth-shattering events or equipment to bring about a mighty revolution. Sometimes the weakest and most insignificant of creatures can perform His will with telling and devastating effect. And this is how he explains chapter 105 of the Holy Qur’an:
“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Hast thou not seen how thy Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? Did He not cause their war to end in confusion? And send against them birds in flocks? Casting at them decreed stones — so He rendered them like straw eaten up?

The birds which destroyed the first Abrahah were a foreshadowing of today’s Ahmadis who will similarly destroy the present Abrahah, that is, Gog and Magog and the Dajjal.”

To this effect, he has given us detailed instructions and counsel on how we can prepare the way for this crushing victory. He advises us, the members of his Jama’at, who consider and accept him as the Promised Messiah, to rid ourselves of unclean habits and all kinds of sinfulness, hidden and manifest, and to show sympathy to all mankind — to cleanse our hearts of spite, hatred, envy, malice, resentment; in short, of all things negative, and to imitate the angels in obedience and purity — the only way that leads to a pure religious life is to colour ourselves with Divine attributes. We must show compassion to all on earth so that Heaven may shower mercy on us. He invites us to a way of life that will make our light brighter than everyone else’s light, but that path demands the eradication of all kinds of envy and low passion and the inculcation of love for all in our hearts and the immersion of our identity in the ocean of the love of God. In addition, we must develop in ourselves the most sublime virtues, for this is the way to procure blessings, grace and favours from Allah and to gain acceptance of our supplications and to be blessed with assistance from the angels.

But this is not the work of a single day. Rather, we must make steady, consistent progress every day of our lives. “Leave off
idleness and sloth and choose the path of lowly tazarro’ (humility). In privacy, make deep supplication to Allah that He may keep your faith sound and that He should be pleased with you,” he exhorts.

We should take a lesson from the washerman who first places dirty clothes overnight in a kiln or furnace so that the heat cleanses the clothes of all kinds of impurities; then the next morning he carries them to the river, alternately beating them with a stone and washing them so that they come out as lily-white as they were in the beginning. In this way, we, too, must apply heat and beating and washing on our vile passion for our salvation lies in the purification of our souls, for Allah tells us in the Holy Qur’an:

*Successful is he who purifies his soul* (91:9).

*Mirza Sahib* also exhorts us thus:

“I have said many times that in the point of name, there is no distinction between my *Jama‘at* and other Muslims. You are Muslims and they, too, are called Muslims. You profess belief in the *Kalimah* (declaration of faith) and so do they. You claim to follow the Holy Qur’an and they, too, make the same claim. In short, as regards claims, both groups are equal. But Allah is not pleased with mere claims, and He is not happy until there is truth in what you say and in your actions there is proof of what you profess, and there is evidence that your condition is undergoing transformation.

I notice that there is a steady increase in the number of *bai‘at* (pledge)-takers but is everyone aware of the reality of the *bai‘at* and what it entails? This is the essence of the *bai‘at*: that there be discernible change in the per-
sonality of the taker and fear of God is born in his heart, and the true purpose of life having been discovered, he makes himself a true and worthy exemplar.”

He further exhorts us to engage in taubah (repentance) and istighfar (asking for forgiveness) continuously and with weeping hearts and make du’a (supplication) to Allah. In our daily lives, we must always obey the commands of Allah and the sunnah (practice) of our Holy Prophet. We should be careful in speech and must hasten towards the doing of righteous deeds and always be on the lookout for opportunities for beneficent service.

We must train ourselves to become like this: Allah’s will must become ours, His pleasure ours, and we must have no private ambitions and motives but everything must be done for His sake alone.

Finally, he warns his Jama’at that if there is no true brotherly love amongst members, then destruction is inevitable and Allah will raise others in our place.

In conclusion, I fervently hope and pray that we all uphold the conditions of the bai’at and do whatever we can to hasten the time of the final triumph of truth over falsehood and prove to the world the truth of the prophecies of the Holy Qur’an:

And say: The truth has come and falsehood vanished. Surely falsehood is ever bound to vanish (17:81).

He it is Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Religion of Truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all religions, though the polytheists are averse (9:33).
Allah, Most High, Himself bears eloquent testimony to the supreme status of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) as the following verses of the Holy Qur’an testify:

_Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal of the prophets. And Allah is ever Knower of all things (33:40)._  

_Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Latter day, and remembers Allah much (33:21)._  

_O Prophet, surely We have sent thee as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner, and as an inviter to Allah by His permission, and as a light-giving sun (33:45-46)._  

_And surely thou hast sublime morals (68:4)._  

_He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all religions (48:28)._  

The former Scriptures also prophesied his glorious advent and are suffused with glowing descriptions of his personality so much so that in the ancient Hindu Books, his coming is described as that of God walking upon earth.  

Non-Muslim writers, some of whom are even hostile to Islam, pay tribute to this unique personality. One quotation will suffice:
"An idea is a spark falling upon straw... (quoting Dumas). Thus was it with Muhammad. God was the spark, the vital spark of spiritual flame, and this humble but honest Arab trader was the straw that after twenty years of silent but tenacious smouldering, God had set a light to" (Bosworth Smith, *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, p. 344).

As Muslims, we all know that the Holy Prophet was the best of all creation and the most successful of all religious personalities in the history of the world. How can we get an insight into the mind of the Holy Prophet and the qualities that made him a living success for all times? We have to bear in mind that he combined in himself to the highest degree all the virtues of the preceding Prophets. Furthermore, his superiority lies in the fact that he had to face every circumstance of life and every temperament that it is possible to encounter.

I have tried to put myself in the place of a non-believer who has never heard of the Holy Prophet and also in the place of one who, because of upbringing and culture, has formed a negative stereotype of our Holy Prophet and I have tried to imagine what would make such a person understand the secret of his success and attract him to the religion of Islam.

A non-Muslim is apt to question the credentials of the Holy Prophet on three main areas:

- His motivation
- His consistency
- The relevance of his message to the present time

The first question that a non-believer may ask is this: What was the mainspring of the Prophet’s life force? To this we can say
with all truth and sincerity that it was his deep faith in God, his love for the Almighty and his selfless concern for the regeneration of mankind that kept him labouring a mighty labouring from the beginning of his life till the end.

As regards his strong faith in God, Maulana Muhammad Ali says:

“He had a deep conviction that God had a plan for the uplift of man, to bring into perfection not one nation or one people, but the whole world, and that no power could frustrate the Divine purpose” (Living Thoughts of the Prophet Muhammad, p. 40).

And:

“He was threatened with murder, and even Abu Talib, his uncle and his sole support, told him that he could no more withstand the united opposition of the Quraish. ‘Do not charge me,’ he said to the Prophet, ‘with a responsibility too heavy for me.’ But the Prophet stood adamant. He said: ‘Should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, in order to make me renounce this mission, I should not do it. I shall never give it up until it shall please Allah to make it triumph or I perish in the attempt.’ Failing in the attempt to persuade Abu Talib to hand over the Prophet to them, the Quraish now tried to win him over by temptation. They approached him directly: ‘If your ambition is to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much of it as you wish; if you aspire to win honour, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you have a fancy for beauty, we offer you the hand of the finest maiden of your own choice.’ The temptations were nigh irresistible. From a
destitute, helpless and persecuted man to a mighty poten
tate rolling in wealth and with beauty by his side was a big life. But he replied: 'I want neither riches nor po-
itical power. I have been commissioned by Allah as a warner to mankind, and I deliver His message to you. Should you accept it, you shall have felicity in this life as well as in the life to come; should you reject the word of Allah, surely Allah will decide between you and me.'” (ibid. p. 41).

Maulana Muhammad Ali also recounts an incident in the life of the Holy Prophet (sas) which exemplifies his unshakeable faith in God:

"On a certain journey, while resting under a tree all alone, an enemy came upon him, and unsheathing his sword, shouted: 'Who can save thee now from my hands?' Calmly, the Holy Prophet replied: 'Allah.' And the next moment the same sword was in the Holy Prophet's hand and he put the same question, on which he (the enemy ) assumed a tone of abject humility, and the Prophet let him go" (ibid. p. 38).

But what was the reason for this unswerving faith? The answer is this: He knew that his message was not a concoction of his mind nor was he speaking out of his own desire, but instead, it was a revelation from God, Most High, and as such there was no power that could deter him from his task.

As regards his love for God, nothing in the history of man can approach this poignant prayer of his when, rejected by the peo-
ple of Taif, pelted and bloodied, he turned to his Beloved as he retreated in sorrow and agony:
"O my God! To Thee I complain of the feebleness of my strength and of my lack of resourcefulness and of my insignificance in the eyes of people. Thou art the most Merciful of the merciful, Thou art the Lord of the weak. To whom wilt Thou entrust me, to an unsympathetic foe who would sullenly frown at me, or to a close friend to whom Thou hast given control over my affair? Not in the least do I care for anything except that I may have Thy protection. In the light of Thy face do I seek shelter, in the light which illumines the heaven and dispels all sorts of darkness, and which controls all affairs in this world as well as in the Hereafter. May it never be that I should incur Thy wrath or that Thou shouldst be displeased with me. There is no strength, nor power, but in Thee" (ibid. pp. 6-7).

In fact, every action of his was activated by his love for and devotion to God. He was never sluggish nor too tired to turn to Allah in prayer and he would do so even to the point where his feet would swell as he stood long and deep in salat (prayer). The recitation of the Holy Qur’an by someone else would immediately bring tears to his eyes, so deep was his love for God, His Word and, of course, His creation.

The Holy Qur’an tells us:

And We have not sent thee but as a mercy to (all) the nations (21:107).

It is true that Allah had charged him with nothing but the clear deliverance of the message, but his heart pined for the upliftment of his people who were sunk in the torpor of moral, intellectual and spiritual decadence and the Holy Qur’an itself bears testimony to this overriding concern of the Holy Prophet:
Then maybe thou wilt kill thyself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they believe not in this announcement (18:6).

And:

Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into error, most solicitous for you, to the believers (he is) compassionate, merciful (9:128).

Therefore, in his daily life, his love made no distinction, no differentiation as regards race, religion, class or gender.

Among his companions could be counted people of many races and all were able to achieve high rank, socially and spiritually. In fact, there was no limit to anyone, neither was there a superior or inferior race. All were equal in the eyes of God and in his eyes, too.

Although he made no compromise when he preached against the false beliefs of other religions, yet in his dealings with individual members of these religions he was careful not to hurt their sensitivity. He once reproved Abu Bakr for telling a Jew that he, the Prophet, was superior to Prophet Moses (as) even though the Jew had started the argument and even though he himself knew that he was superior to all the Prophets, for he did not want to hurt the Jew’s feelings.

He came as a mercy to all the nations and all the social classes but he was extremely solicitous of the poor and downtrodden who had nothing to fall back on to raise their self-esteem. And to the most downtrodden of these classes belonged the slaves. He urged good treatment and encouraged the freedom of slaves.
"If a person owning a slave sets him free, God will in recompense save every part of his body, corresponding to every part of the slave's body, from the torment of Hell," he exhorted. Furthermore, he made provisions (for example, from the zakat (poor-relief) fund of the state), for their education and emancipation.

And we all know that no man ever did as much to raise the position of women from that of degradation to one of dignity and honour in the home and the society at large. From being themselves considered property, he conferred on them the right of inheritance and gave them equal rights with men and equal opportunity for all-round advancement. Furthermore, the treatment of his wife was made the touchstone of a person's worth and nobility in the eyes of God and man, and his life abounded with examples of the most perfect treatment he meted out to his wives.

The second big question is: Was he consistent in his teaching and practice?

Firstly, the Holy Prophet hated hypocrisy. "The hypocrites are in the deepest depths of the Fire," he warned, and admonished: O you who believe, why say you that which you do not? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not do (61:2-3).

Instead, he exhorted mankind to be sincere in obedience to God and so whatever commands he received from Allah, he imparted to the people but, above all, he himself put them into practice, openly and secretly. "His life was the Qur'an," his wife, Lady Ayesha, testified, and who can know more of a man than a wife or a valet? And, of course, his servants all bore witness to the beauty of his character and temperament. Anas recalled how he worked as a servant to the Holy Prophet for ten years and al-
though he was young and apt to make mistakes, never once, he said, was the Holy Prophet harsh to him. *And those who restrain anger and pardon men* (3:133) was a guiding principle in his dealings with every class of mankind.

If he preached truthfulness, he himself steadfastly adhered to it. Even before he became a Prophet, he was known in Makkah by all and sundry as *Al Amin*, the Trustworthy, the True. It is interesting to note that later on in his life, when he claimed prophethood and preached against their idols, his opponents called him all kinds of names – magician, sorcerer, enchanter, madman, poet, and showered all kinds of abuse and vituperation on him but never once did they refer to him as a liar!

If he preached forgiveness, he practised it to a fault, and never in his life did he avenge a personal insult or injury. Instead, on record is the greatest act of forgiveness in the annals of man when he conquered Makkah and told his erstwhile enemies, as they lay at his mercy: “This day there is no reproof on you.” It was on this occasion, too, that he displayed a supreme act of humility when he rode into Makkah as the head of a conquering army, not with head raised high and chest pushed forward, but with head bent low over the saddle.

If he preached that mankind was a single race, he practised it to the hilt, and furthermore, left, as the sole criterion for judging the excellence and worth of a person’s character, his *taqwa* (piety). *Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful. Surely Allah is Knower, Aware* (49:13). He himself never discriminated against anyone on any grounds whatever, and in his farewell address he underlined the equality of the human race: “All of you are equal. All men, whatever nation or tribe they belong to, and whatever station in life they may hold, are equal.”
If he taught religious tolerance, he practised it to its limit, as the example of the Najran Delegation amply demonstrates. Not only was the discussion held in the Prophet’s Masjid (Mosque) in the most amicable atmosphere, but he also allowed them to hold their prayer service right in the Masjid even though they had requested permission to pray elsewhere.

Whilst it is true that he fought wars against his enemies, yet these were forced upon him and his small band of followers by the enemy who wanted to extirpate every trace of Islam and Muslims from Arabia. He bore persecution for thirteen years in Makkah without lifting a finger in self-defence or retaliation and it was only when he had to flee to Madinah and was pursued there was permission given by God to fight, but only in defence. *And fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you but be not aggressive. Surely Allah loves not the aggressors* (2:190). He followed this command to the letter so much so that never in his battles did he strike the first blow.

If he preached patience in adversity, he was the foremost in the practice of it and the circumstances of his life bear ample testimony to this. He was orphaned at an early age, suffered persecution in his native city and was later forced to flee with a price on his head; he lost near and dear relatives and friends and eleven children including Ibrahim, his only son whom he dearly loved, yet he never complained either to God or to man and never did he allow those sorrows to affect him in his relationship with others or in his task of reclaiming mankind – no bitterness, no resentment, no grievance – instead, a cheerful countenance and kindness to all.

As regards the dealing of justice to all regardless of whether it was family, friend or foe, the Holy Prophet stands head and shoulders above all other luminaries the world has known. It was this
quality – the ability to give redress to even the most abject of society – that endeared Islam to the hearts of millions in the past, present and I venture to say, will do so in the future also. This is what he preached: *O you who believe, be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness for Allah, even though it be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives – whether he be rich or poor, Allah has a better right over them both. So follow not your own desires, lest you deviate. And if you distort or turn away from (the truth), surely Allah is Aware of what you do* (4:135).

One example from among hundreds will be sufficient to exemplify the point:

“He was called *Al Amin* and no one, even his bitterest enemy, ever accused him of breaking his word. These are the injunctions he gave: *The believers are those who are keepers of their trusts and their covenant* (23:8) and *They fulfil the promise* (5:1)” Maulana Muhammad Ali’s Translation of the Holy Qur’an, note 620, p. 220).

When the Emperor of Rome questioned Abu Sufyan, the Quraish chief and an implacable foe of the Holy Prophet, whether the Prophet had ever broken a promise, he had no choice but to confess that the Holy Prophet had never done so. And so it was with the treaties he made with the enemy tribes. These treaties he considered as sacred documents, something the “civilized modern nations” of today can do well to consider and imitate, especially in light of what obtains in international relations, for these verses point to the heart of an insidious present-day problem: *And fulfil the covenant of Allah... and break not the oaths after making them fast.... You make your oaths to be means of deceit between you because one nation is more numerous than another is.... And make not your oaths a means of deceit be-
tween you... (16: 91, 92, 94).

Secondly, his consistency was evident not only in his faithfulness to what he preached but also in the many vicissitudes of his existence here on earth. Let a non-Muslim speak:

"On the whole, the wonder is to me not how much, but how little under different circumstances, Mohammad differed from himself. In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heraclius, we can still trace a substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man, whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them; the accidents are changed, the essence seems to be the same in all.

Power, as the saying is, no doubt put man to the test. It brought new temptations and therefore new failures, from which the shepherd of the desert might have remained free. But happy is the man who, living 'in the fierce light that beats upon a throne, and blackens every blot' can stand the test as well as did Mohammad" (Bosworth Smith, *Mohammad and Mohammadanism*, pp. 140-141).

And finally, the sceptic may ask: Can his teachings be applied to today's world and all its complexities? Let us remember that circumstances may change but human nature does not and whatever the criteria for success in the fifth century AD or the first century, they still hold good now and for all times. Also, let us not forget that those same principles built not only a strong individual, a strong community, a strong nation, but also a famous empire the like of which never existed before or after, and the like of which has been promised during the last thousand years
of this Adamic Dispensation. *He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of Truth that He may make it prevail over all the religions. And Allah is enough for a witness* (48:28).

To substantiate this point, let us examine just two quotations from two unbiased non-Muslim personalities of high stature in the Western world.

"It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder, the same pure and perfect impression which he engraved at Makkah and Madinah is preserved, after the revolutions of twelve centuries by the Indian, the African and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran... and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion" (E. Gibbon and S. Ockley, *History of the Saracen Empire*, p. 54).

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to possess that assimilating capability to the changing phases of existence which can make itself appeal to every age....

I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.... I have studied him (i.e. Muhammad), the wonderful man, and in my opinion, far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the saviour of humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world he would bring it the much-needed peace and happiness. Europe is beginning to be enamoured of the creed of Muhammad.
In the next century, it may go still further in recognising the utility of that creed in solving its problems, and it is in this sense that you must understand my prediction” (George Bernard Shaw, *A Collection of Writings of Some of the Eminent Scholars*, published by the Woking Muslim Mission, 1935 edition, p. 77).

Simple, humble, selfless and consistent in love for God and man and service to all, this “denizen of the desert” left no material inheritance but two things which he himself said will keep us safe and elevate us if we obey them – the Holy Qur’an and his Sunnah.

*Certainly We have revealed to you a Book which will give you eminence. Do you not then understand? (21:10)*

*Say: If you love Allah follow me: Allah will love you, and grant you protection from your sins. And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (3:30).*

May Allah bless us all and help us to follow our Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) as we strive to occupy the position entrusted to us by Allah, Most High, as *the best nation raised up for the guidance of mankind* (3:109).
The following verse of the Holy Qur’an (2:177) lays down in unambiguous language the moral and spiritual foundation of Islamic culture and civilization. These principles hold good for the individual, the community, the nation and also for the world at large, for the purpose of the Qur’anic message is to mould the individual as well as the world community into a God-fearing one. In other words, each person must dye himself in the colours of the Almighty as demonstrated by the various prophets who were sent to all nations on earth.

The greater part of the explanation of this verse is taken from Mian Naseer Ahmad Faruqui’s excellent collection of Qur’anic lessons compiled in the book entitled: *Ma‘ariful Qur’an*. Contributions from Maulana Muhammad Ali and Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib also serve to elucidate the concepts in the verse under discussion.

*It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book, and the Prophets, and gives away out of love for Him, to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free and keeps up prayer and pays the poor-rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict. These are they who are truthful; and these are they who keep their duty (2:177) - Maulana Muhammad Ali’s translation.*

*Mian* Naseer Ahmad Faruqui has given us an original explana-
tion of *East* and *West* as used in the verse above, and in his usual
dowering and compelling style, he has also presented an expla-
nation of the moral and spiritual foundation of Islamic civiliza-
tion and culture as given in the verse under discussion.

In addition, there is supplementary material which, one hopes,
will be of benefit to students and general readers alike.

To appreciate the originality of *Mian* Faruqui’s explanation of
*East* and *West* in the verse (2:177), let us first take a look at the
commentaries of five translators of the Holy Qur’an on the same
verse:

**Maulana Muhammad Ali**

“While discussing the subject of minor details of the law, a warn-
ing is given to the Muslims that they should not fall into the
error into which the previous people fell, who sacrificed the spirit
of religion for the outward ceremonial. The essence of religion
we are here told is faith in God and benevolence towards men.
The turning of the face to the East and the West refers to the
outward act of facing a certain direction when saying prayers.
This, though necessary, should not be taken as the real object of
prayer, which is in fact meant to enable one to hold communion
with the Divine Being and to imbue oneself with divine morals
as explained further on. But the words may also have another
significance. The Muslims were told again and again that all
opposition to the Truth would ultimately fail and they would be
masters of the land. But temporal greatness was not their real
object. They may conquer Eastern and Western lands but their
real aim was to attain righteousness and bring others to righ-
teousness” (p. 71, note 213a).

*The Holy Qur’an with English Translation* vol. 1 (Rabwah
Jama‘at)
“Every commandment must have an outward form as well as an underlying spirit. What, however, is really meant is the underlying spirit and not the outward form which mostly serves as an outer shell for preserving the inner kernel. To illustrate this principle, the verse refers to the commandment in relation to the turning of the faces to a particular direction while offering prayers. The verse points out that Islam has not directed the Faithful to face a particular direction during prayers because it considers such an act to be of any intrinsic virtue. The fixing of a special direction is merely meant to bring about uniformity, whereas what really counts is the purpose underlying it, which is perfection of faith and deeds. The Qur’an, accordingly, proceeds to give in a nutshell the Islamic teachings about these two subjects” (p. 227).

The Holy Qur’an, Text, Translation and Commentary by Allama Abdullah Yusuf Ali

“As if to emphasize again a warning against deadening formalism, we are given a beautiful description of the righteous and God-fearing man. He should obey salutary regulations, but he should fix his gaze on the love of God and the love of his fellow-men. We are given four heads: (i) our faith should be true and sincere; (ii) we must be prepared to show it in deeds of charity to our fellow-men; (iii) we must be good citizens, supporting social organization; and (iv) our own individual soul must be firm and unshaken in all circumstances. They are interconnected, and yet can be viewed separately” (p. 70, note 177).

The Message of the Qur’an, Translated and Explained by Maulana Muhammad Asad

“Thus the Qur’an stresses the principle that mere compliance with outward forms does not fulfil the requirements of piety. The reference to the turning of one’s face in prayer in this or that direction flows with the passages which dealt, a short while ago,
with the question of the *Qiblah*” (p. 36, note 143).

*The Running Commentary of the Holy Qur’an* by Dr. Allamah Khadim Rahmani Nuri (Explanations given in brackets.)

2:177: “(Whilst the Jews, the strictest of all formalists, and the Christians are making much ado about the question of the *qiblah*, and who are strangling themselves with the outward ceremonials while sacrificing the spirit of religion, you Muslims are warned that it is not virtue that you (simply) turn your faces to the East and West (sacrificing the real spirit of *Salat*, because virtue dwell not in the tongue but in the heart)” (p. 40).

Before going into Mian Faruqui’s *dars-ul-Qur’an* (explanation of the Qur’an) in depth, we must ponder over the meaning of *laissal birra an tuwallu wujuhakum qiblal mashriqi wal maghrib* (it is no big act of righteousness if you turn your faces to the East or the West) as he understands it. He says:

“Most, or rather all, the commentators of the Holy Qur’an interpret this as referring to the changing of the *Qiblah*. The first *qiblah* of the Muslims was the *Bait-ul-Muqaddas* (the Holy House) at Jerusalem, but when they migrated to Madinah it was changed and Makkah Mu‘azzamah was ordained as the new *qiblah*. So the commentators lent the following meaning to the above sentence – that by itself there was no great virtue in this (change), but of great merit were the things mentioned later (in the verse). But this meaning is defective for the following reasons:

(i) To connect this subject with the reference to the *Qiblah*, the commentators had to go four or five sections back, although in the intervening sections many other topics were dealt with and as I will show, between this section and the previous sections there is a very important connection as
regards subject matter. Wherever the change of the *Qiblah* is referred to (in the Holy Qur'an), so much importance was attributed to it that the Holy Prophet was individually and the Muslims were collectively ordered five times in succession to turn their faces to the Kab'ah at the time of *salah*, wherever they found themselves. So important is the *Qiblah* that in the *Hadith*, the Holy Prophet (*sas*) referred to the Muslims as *Ahl-e Qiblah* (People of the *Qiblah*) and he gave the order: *La tukaffir ahl-e qiblata* (Do not call the people who face your *qiblah* *kafirs* (unbelievers)). As turning one's face towards the *Qiblah* when reading *salah* is a distinctive mark of Muslims and certain proof of a person being a Muslim, then in light of the *Qiblah* being so important, to refer to it as *not of great merit* cannot be right.

If one were to accept the same meaning that the commentators give, then from a geographical standpoint, that interpretation, too, would be incorrect. The verse in question was revealed at Madinah Munawwarah. The first *qiblah*, that is, the *Bait-ul-Muqaddas*, is situated to the north of Madinah and the next *qiblah*, that is, the Holy Ka'bah, to the south. So to apply the verse: *It is of no great merit whether you turn your faces to the East or the West* even to the Muslims of Madinah is not correct, neither is it correct to apply it to all Muslims who lived all around the Ka'bah and still do, whether they reside inside Arabia or in other countries.

In fact, East and West are two well-known names into which the
world is divided. In English, also, the words East and West are used to refer respectively to Eastern and Western peoples and countries. If we delve into the history of the human race, we shall see that civilization and culture originated in the East, and not only because all religions were born in Eastern countries, and the foundation of civilization and culture is built on religion which is the medium for teaching high morals, but from the dawn of mankind, great empires flourished in the East. Knowledge and Science, however they were, existed in the East – fine apparel, a good standard of life, poetry, art (that is, literature), fine social graces, were all part and parcel of the East. In those days, Europe and America were in a barbarous or semi-barbarous condition. In the nineteenth century AD however, there was a reversal of fortunes in the West. Not only did the Western peoples spread over the whole world politically and militarily, but also in knowledge and expertise, especially in the sciences, they made such stupendous advances that the eyes of the whole world, and especially of the Eastern peoples, were dazzled.

The nineteenth century AD was the age when not only did the Eastern empires fall into decadence but the religious foundation upon which stood the edifice of civilization and culture also became hollow. Other religions had already become polytheistic and their Books had been lost or been corrupted and had long ago become soul-less, that is, lacking meaning and substance, but in Islam, not only was tauhid (the concept of the Oneness of God) alive, but the Holy Qur’an still existed in its full splendour and magnificence. But in the nineteenth century AD, the picture of Muslim religious leaders was such, with few exceptions, as has been delineated in the celebrated Musaddas of Maulana Altaf Hali. Abandoning the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith, Muslim religious leaders, except for a few, found themselves entangled in matters of jurisprudence and this naturally instilled in them an attitude of unbending conservatism and consequently an aver-
sion to change. Shortsightedness replaced the broad-mindedness and illuminating ideas of the Holy Prophet (sas) and Muslims were divided in seventy-two sects, and for petty and insignificant questions, severe differences arose, and they even fell into fights and quarrels. The result of this was that Muslims became averse to seeking Islamic religious knowledge and either they became Christians or they became enamoured of the Western way of life.

Now, when we look at the words of the Holy Qur’an, we see that it says: *It is not a great act of righteousness to turn your faces to the East or the West.* Man can see only in the direction in which he points his face and not in the opposite direction. Whither he goes, thither he pays attention. It is from there he learns and whatever affair arises there, he hears and learns from that ambience. In the early ages, when the East was the cradle of civilization and culture, the whole world directed its attention to that direction. But in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries AD the faces of people were turned to the West not only because the seat of power was now centred there and the Western nations were bent on spreading their civilization and culture to the rest of the world, but also because the marvelous advances of Western people in knowledge and science were dazzling the eyes of the whole world.

Even in the Indian sub-continent itself, people were divided into two parties. There were those people who claimed that the Eastern way of life was good, and that there was nothing good in Western civilization and culture. On the other hand, there were some who fell so much in love with the Western way, that whatever came from the West, whatever work the Western people were engaged in, they considered good and worthy of imitation. They had already become disillusioned with religion because of the sorry state of affairs mentioned above, but more so, because
wherever the amazing progress in Science had fascinated the hearts of people, there, in most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it had strongly drawn the Western man of science towards atheism and irreligion. But in spite of being distant from religion, the desire to reform and beautify himself is embedded in the nature of man. If not with religious education, then Western atheism and irreligion had to suffice.

The Holy Qur’an’s love for justice is perfect. Where the lovers of the Eastern way could see no merit in Western civilization and culture and Western people considered the Eastern style as obsolete and impracticable, the Holy Qur’an avers that both civilizations (whether Eastern or Western) certainly contained, or still contain, small points of merit, but these are not lofty virtues. For example, in Western culture, to say Thank you on every occasion or such kinds of minor matters of etiquette certainly exist, but these are not exalted virtues. Because these were not sterling virtues, the gold-plating, that is, the superficial glitter of Western civilization was quickly destroyed and so today in Europe and America all kinds of evil - unnatural acts, nakedness, alcohol and other kinds of intoxicants, are rampant. Crime is rising; family life has already been destroyed; the young generation has become rebellious. It was in this way that the various Eastern civilizations had finally succumbed to all kinds of evils. So, exalted virtues do not exist in worldly civilizations or man-made societies. Instead, they are derived from those principles which the Holy Qur’an has mentioned in this verse already under discussion” (2:177).

Mian Faruqui now explains in detail the divine universal tenets of Islamic civilization and culture enshrined in the verse under discussion (2:177).

The first of these, and indeed the most fundamental concept, is
man amana bil-Lahi (whoever believes in Allah). Belief in Allah, Most High, is not mere confession or acknowledgement that Allah exists, but since He did not create this entire universe in vain, but for higher purposes, therefore man, who is the masterpiece of this universe and the khalifa (vicegerent) of Allah on earth was certainly created for the highest purpose of all. And what is that purpose? It is to know Allah, Most High, and to achieve closeness to Him. It is obvious that only he who has dyed himself in Allah’s colours will be able to find Him and achieve union with Him. This is why the Holy Qur’an says in another place: Sibghatal Lahi. Wa man ahsanu minal-Lahi sibghatanw-wa nahnu Lahu ‘abiduna (Take Allah’s colours. And who is better than Allah in colouring? And we are His humble and obedient servants – 2:138). In the same vein, the Holy Prophet (sas) commanded thus: “Takhallaqu bi akhlaqil-Lahi (Inculcate the attributes of Allah, Most High, within you)”. How can we do so? By being humbly obedient to His commands which we find in the Holy Qur’an just as it is mentioned: Nahnu lahu ‘abiduna. Allah’s colours are manifested by His attributes and those are the most sublime morals.

In my commentary of Suratul Fatiyah, when explaining the expression al hamdulil-Lahi (all praise is due to Allah), I said that the concept of noble attributes and praiseworthy virtues entered the brain of man from his knowledge of the attributes of Allah, Most High, for man’s brain by itself is just like that of the animals and of the same material substance. On his own, it was impossible for him to devise such sublime moral and spiritual beauties unless Allah, Most High, had not given him knowledge of His attributes by means of revelation. Since this revelation started from the time of Prophet Adam, in this way, after a period of thousands of years, it is only Allah’s attributes which fashioned in the human mind moral beauties or values. The knowledge of the attributes of Allah given in the Holy Qur’an does not
exist today in any other revealed Book, either because these Books have been lost, or they exist only in translations which have been done over the course of centuries, or they have been corrupted through interpolation. The Holy Qur’an is the only revealed Book that was put into writing right at the point of revelation and it is the only one that is still preserved today in its pristine purity.

So, if man is to be a worthy khalifa (vicegerent) of Allah in this world, it is clear that Allah will require of him as vicegerent such high morals and spiritual powers of which He, Allah Himself, is Possessor. If man desires to draw closer to Allah and to achieve union with Him in the Hereafter, then it is also obvious that man will get nearer to Allah only to the extent that he has coloured himself in the colours of Allah, Most High. That is, to the extent that he has inculcated the attributes of Allah within himself.

Vested in Allah’s attributes are such magnificent moral and spiritual beauties that it is impossible to conceive of any civilization and culture that can surpass one that is founded on those virtues.

The true rewards and benefits of good deeds will be seen in the Hereafter, and so the first principle (after belief in Allah, Most High) that the Holy Qur’an commands is that we should have faith in the next life. As I had said in the explanation of yaumid-din in Suratul Fatiha, the word yaum has very extensive meanings; that is, it can signify the whole of the future life in which man will receive the fruits and rewards of goodness. But yaum can also mean from morning to evening; that is, a single day, or also, a particular period of time. So belief in the Last Day, if we are to choose from these meanings, will signify the Day of Accountability. The Holy Qur’an has repeatedly informed man that there will come a day when he will have to give an account of all
his actions, words and even the innermost thoughts of his heart, and his secrets, too. So, by Allah! How powerful is this belief in the Hereafter that if this conviction should find root in the heart of man, then all his deeds and words, nay, all the inner passions and desires of his heart will be purified! Then from this will emanate goodness and nobler morals and that is true culture – not a superficial and gold-plated one that soon loses its sheen.

What a great benefactor to man is Allah and how full of knowledge and gnosis is this Book, the Holy Qur’an. It says that in order to assist man to acquire the higher morals, three kinds of arrangements have been made.

Firstly, there are the angels. Angels are the intermediaries between Allah and man – a means by which Allah, Most High, inspires good thoughts in the heart of man. So, belief in angels, which this blessed verse mentions as the third principle of faith, was ordained so that man may know that there is an inspirer of good thoughts in his heart. Therefore man’s mind should always be on the alert so that whenever an impulse towards good arises in his heart he will recognize it as an angelic inspiration and knowing it to come from Allah, he should immediately act on it and should never squander this invitation to goodness, for there is no greater misfortune than this. To lose a good opportunity is to do harm to oneself for if the chance or the time is lost, it never returns.

The second provision that Allah, the Most High, has made for the guidance and benefit of man is the sending of a heavenly Book. The greatest angel, whose name is Gabriel, has brought this Book. Remember that angels were placed in the heart of man to inspire him to goodness, but since this inspiration is secret, there was every likelihood that this might escape his attention. In order to prevent this, Allah, Most High, conferred this
blessed favour on man that He always sent His revealed Word (Book) to the different nations in order to explain what things constituted righteousness that they should acquire, and what constituted evil that they should avoid. These were placed in man’s hand in black and white. But because different nations had either lost their Books, or they suffered from interpolations, or because of misunderstandings they fell prey to abrogation, Allah, Most High, bestowed this supreme bounty that whatever teachings in those Books were worthy of being saved, He not only collected them together in the Holy Qur’an but He also perfected and preserved them forever. This is why it is said: *fiha kutubun qayyimah* (98:4); that is, all those teachings from the previous Books that deserved to be made permanent have been collected in this Qur’an.

Again, it is said: *Wa anzalna ilaikal kitaba bil haqqi musaddiqal-lima baina yadaifi minal kitabi wa muhaiyyiman ‘alaihi* (And We have revealed to thee the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it of the Book and a guardian over it). Here, the word *kitab* (book) is used in the generic sense, that is, it verifies all the former revealed Books and whatever teachings should be saved from among them have been preserved in this Book; that is, whatever truth was lost because of the destruction of former revealed Scriptures or because of interpolation in them, has been sent down again through this Qur’an and whatever teachings in those Books were fit to be preserved, have been kept well-guarded by Allah in this Qur’an. In addition to this, Allah has perfected His religion and completed His favours to man (5:3) in this Book and the guardianship of this Book now rests solely on Allah, the Most High: *Surely We have revealed the Reminder, and surely We are its Guardian* (15:9).

For all these reasons, in the verse under scrutiny here, the word “Book” has been used in the singular to show that now there is
only one Book in which we need to believe and which we should accept as our guide and that is the Holy Qur'an. Those who accept this Book also accept the true teachings of the former revealed Scriptures. In any case, this is the only Book that is guarded and perfected, too!

So, in order to lead man to higher morals, not only were angels appointed to inspire his heart, but revealed Books were publicly given to him, and in these, lofty ideals of righteousness were placed before him in black and white. How to acquire goodness and avoid evil were also presented to man in a written form. But words are without life, and human example is a living thing.

Therefore, the third provision that Allah, Most High, has made to show man the way to higher morals is the example of the Prophets. Every nation considered its Prophet to be endowed with the highest virtues. A little of their example is met with in other books and stories. But it is only the Holy Qur'an that has collected the virtues of the other Prophets and mentioned them. Indeed, the most sublime example of the Holy Prophet (sas) has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, but the Hadith and other books on his life are so detailed that from the beginning to the end of the Prophet's life, his words and deeds are so well preserved that if he is referred to as the Living Prophet, there is no exaggeration in that.

The Holy Prophet (sas) put into practice all the teachings of his revealed Book and proved that they were capable of being imitated. Regarding the Holy Prophet (sas), his own wife, Lady Ayesha, the Truthful, gave the following verdict: "If you want to know what his morals were, then read the Holy Qur'an. All his virtues were those that were taught and inspired by the Holy Qur'an."
The stamp of approval of Allah, Most High, Himself, is recorded in the Holy Qur’an: *Indeed, thou dost possess the most sublime morals* (68:4) and also: *Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah. And whoever turns away, We have not sent thee as a keeper over them* (4:80). That is, the Holy Prophet (sas) followed all the commands of Allah with such perfection and with such devout submission that obedience to the Holy Prophet constitutes obedience to Allah, the Most High, Himself.

To acquire noble virtues, one should have faith in Allah, in the Hereafter, in the Angels, in the Holy Qur’an and in the Prophets. By these means, man can acquire all kinds of lofty morals and in a perfected form, too.

The foundation of Islamic civilization and culture as mentioned before rests on intrinsic and spiritual principles. Now let us examine our attitude to the provisions of this world’s life.

Other religions considered this life and its appendages as opposed to moral and spiritual values and encouraged people to renounce the world and to become monks, nuns, *sadhus* (Hindu ascetics) or mendicants. But by following this way, there can be no worldly progress and the human race will become extinct if everyone should eschew marriage as demanded by this policy of world abandonment.

Allah, Most High, has taught us by means of the Holy Qur’an that He did not create this world and its provisions in vain. Take the matter of wealth, for example. In acquiring it, the whole world labours not only from morning to evening but people even keep awake during the night in pursuit of it. The foundation of worldly civilization is based on the acquisition of wealth. Both are based on the idea of acquiring wealth for one’s own sake,
and this promotes greed, covetousness, evil ambition, lust, selfishness, stealing, dishonesty, and all kinds of other evils and crimes. On the contrary, wherever the Holy Qur’an has emphasized the earning of wealth from lawful sources, it has stressed the spending of wealth on others after, of course, fulfilling the necessary expenditure on self, wife and children. It is thus that man can rise above the level of the animals, for keeping everything for self, wife and children is a peculiarity of the animals. So, whether it is in Capitalism or Communism, what we are witnessing today is the triumph of the animal instinct.

In the verse under consideration, it is said: *wa atal mala ‘ala hubbihi* (and give away wealth out of love for Him), the meaning of which can be construed in two ways. Firstly, if *hi* in *hubbihi* is understood to refer to Allah, Most High, then the meaning would be that in order to acquire the love of Allah, man gives away his wealth to those in need; that is, just as Allah keeps on giving wealth and riches to His bondsmen, they, too, do the same to His creatures thereby impressing in themselves Allah’s attributes and thus making themselves qualified to receive His love.

However, the other meaning that can be deduced from *hubbihi* (out of love for it) is that *hi* refers not to Allah but to wealth. In my humble opinion, this meaning is more suited to the context, for, in spite of the fact that Allah has instilled great love for riches in the heart of man (if not, why would man engage himself in so much worldly labour and striving?), yet despite this great attraction to wealth, people still spend on others. That is, they put the knife to their own hearts or to their own animal desires and share their riches with others.

The Government, especially in Communist countries, also takes people’s wealth, but giving wealth in this way does not create those high virtues that Islamic civilization and culture engender.
Mutual sympathy and compassion are extremely praiseworthy virtues, and as man has a blood relationship with his family, therefore, to show sympathy and mercy to them is not only a natural expression, but to refrain from doing so is hard-heartedness and selfishness and cruelty of the highest order.

For this reason, spending wealth on family members takes precedence over all others. In another place, it is commanded: *And give to the near of kin his due* (17:26), which increases in proportion to the proximity of the relation or the degree of need. Lovers of this world’s life or those enamoured of wealth, that is, those who consider their wealth to be restricted to their wives and children, (this is on par with the animals), always try to excuse themselves by saying that the Government should provide for others. No government can adequately fulfil this task. If it were to do so, then it would only be taking away people’s wealth. In this way, sympathy cannot originate in the heart of man nor can the higher sentiment of mercy develop, neither is there blessing in it. Islam instructs us that we ourselves should also look after our relatives and other needy people, for we are in a position to know their condition better than any government official and it is our duty to create in our hearts human sympathy, higher feelings of mercy and exalted virtues. In this way, mutual love, too, will increase.

Besides family, those for whom mercy and compassion arise are the orphans and the needy. The meaning of *yatama* (the plural of *yatim*) is used in the Holy Qur’an to refer to widows also, for they are cut off from their husbands. Orphanhood and widowhood, besides occasioning great grief because of the death (of loved ones), are also harbingers of financial difficulties. Every pure-hearted man is moved to compassion by the plight of orphans and widows and sympathy for them rises in his heart. It is said that a practical demonstration of mercy is to compensate
them for the means of income that was cut off from them. This can even extend to a long period of time but to share in the sorrows of others is a virtue of extremely high rank.

The *miskin* (needy) are those unfortunate ones like the handicapped, the lame, the blind, the invalid or the poverty-stricken, who, because of their condition, are unable to work in order to support themselves, or *miskin* may refer to those who are in great need of assistance. For example, to buy a machine for a tailor who is so poor that he cannot purchase one himself, or to give a scholarship to a poor student to pursue his studies, are instances of giving help to the needy – and this engenders in the heart of man the noble virtues of sympathy and compassion.

We are asked to spend on wayfarers also. How can this be done? People think that in olden times this was possible, but I shall submit that the necessity for this nowadays is greater than it was at any other time. The reason is that in this age the need for travelling not only locally but between countries, that is, international travel, is more pressing than it ever was before. In addition to this, hotel rates are so exorbitant now that besides millionaires or those whose travelling expenses are paid for by their companies or by the Government, for the common man to stay in hotels entails burdensome expenses which are beyond the power of ordinary people to shoulder. Therefore, to put up a traveller in one’s home, today, is more a symbol of human sympathy and goodness than it was previously. Further, to procure Foreign Exchange is a troublesome affair. Again, sometimes on the journey a traveller’s money may be lost or stolen. In helping him financially there is the fear of whether the traveller will repay this debt or not when he returns home. It is recommended that, notwithstanding this possibility, we should still assist him. If he does not return the sum then it will be considered charity on one’s part. In this way, sometimes travelling becomes a mat-
ter of emergency and a person may not have the requisite sum in 
his possession at the time. Therefore, if help is given to him in 
this predicament, then that is an act of great righteousness.

Again, it is said that we should give also to those who ask. Many 
times when someone makes a request of us it provokes anger in 
us and the common objection is: “How do we know whether he 
is truly in need?” Well, if he does not truly deserve assistance 
then we should remember that Allah, Most High, gives to us 
when we are in good personal circumstances and even then He 
continues giving us more. Bear in mind that whatever commands 
the Holy Prophet (sas) has given to us in order to teach us the 
qualities of Allah, Most High, or whatever guidance the Holy 
Qur’an has shown us in order to teach us how to colour our- 
selves in Allah’s colours, we can acquire those attributes only if 
we give to him who asks even though we may be in doubt whether 
he is a needy case or not. In the noble Traditions, it is said that 
we should give assistance to a person even if he approaches us 
riding a horse. It is indeed true that, in any event, he is forbidden 
to ask, but then that is a matter between Allah and that person.

Finally, we are instructed to spend our wealth for the release of 
captives. People take this to mean procuring the freedom of 
slaves. Today, there are no slaves. True, if there should be pris- 
oners of war, then paying their ransom and getting them released 
is a very meritorious deed. But there is one kind of captivity that 
is very prevalent, and that is to be overburdened by debt. To 
fulfil the obligations of the one oppressed by debt, thereby free-
ing his neck, is an act of outstanding goodness. To seek a return 
of the sum is to devalue the deed.

It is said that to read salah (prayer) and pay the zakah (poor-
rate) are meritorious deeds. If salah is read properly and is not 
mere sitting and standing, not only does it generate a living faith
in Allah, Most High, but it cleanses the heart of man and purifies his deeds, as the Holy Qur’an says: innas-salata tanha ‘anil fahsha’i wal munkar (29:45). That is, if salah is read as it ought to be, with deep concentration and is not mere standing and sitting, then it would prevent us from committing indecent acts and evil deeds, because it creates the conviction that Allah is always with us and He sees us all the time, and He knows the innermost thoughts in our hearts, so we have to purify our hearts and actions by means of salah. We are also instructed that through zakah we must purify our wealth. The love of wealth gives birth to the biggest pollution in the heart of man. The paying of zakah, which is compulsory and is just a small amount, helps man to expunge the love of wealth from his heart and banishes this idol from it.

The next noble act mentioned is the fulfilling of covenants, and there are different kinds of covenants – between husband and wife, master and servant, in trade and industry or in other business transactions, intergovernmental agreements, etc. Nowadays, husbands, labourers and others make agreements and never fulfil them. They give their word that they will come on the next day but they never do. As far as government agreements go, governments never fulfil them until they are forced to. Rather, they seize every opportunity to break them. This lesson will become too lengthy else I would have told you of the losses our Holy Prophet (sas) suffered and all the difficulties he endured in fulfilling his trusts and covenants. But you must read his life story yourself.

Finally, the sabirin are mentioned – those who display the example of patience in the conditions mentioned above. Those virtues that I am going to mention now are special and very meritorious ones.” Translated from Ma’ariful Qur’an.
Three Kinds of Patience Explained

In the verse above, patience under differing circumstances is enjoined upon us in order to make us truly righteous. However, the English translation of the Arabic expressions cannot convey the full meaning of the original so Mian Faruqui has given us a further explanation of the subtle differences in these expressions.

Fil ba'asa'i (in distress) - To show patience in straitened circumstances, poverty or hunger. This does not mean that man should make no attempt to remove the hardship or hunger, but it means that if in spite of efforts to overcome poverty and hardship, man fails, he should still maintain fortitude and refrain from choosing the path of thievery, highway robbery, bribery or dishonesty. Today, the majority of people in the world live in poverty and straitened circumstances. Look how rich a country America is yet thirty percent of its population live in poverty and day by day the cost of living is rising. In these conditions, if man does not stoop to bribery, dishonesty, theft, etc. and holds on steadfastly to righteousness, then this is not only an endeavour of great resolution but also one that is worthy of great merit. On the Last Day, the Day of Accountability, which will be a severe one for the wealthy as both the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith have repeatedly reminded us, such a person will achieve salvation. In times of hunger, poverty and hardship, whatever example of honesty and God-fearingness such a man exhibits, is counted as a most sublime act of righteousness. Sabr (patience) itself, as I have mentioned, is one of Allah’s outstanding attributes, which such a man acquires.

Wad-darra'i (in affliction) – Patience in illness and sorrows. Through Divine decree man must suffer sickness and sorrow. If they do not go away despite attempts to get a healing remedy or supplications do not avail, then to endure them with steadfast-
ness is indeed a very commendable example.

_Hinal ba's (in conflict)_ – Patience in times of conflict. People take this to mean a confrontation with the enemy. This interpretation is also correct but conflicts come to man in many different colours. The Holy Prophet (sas) instructed us: “Fight against your low desires as you struggle against your enemy.” The fight against falsehood is a continuous imperative so that man may remain firm in the path of truth as he strains against falsehood. Satan’s insinuations are also ever present as he unceasingly tries to seduce man. When temptations arise, man must overcome them rather than succumb to them. These people are called the _truthful ones_; their actions and their hearts are in consonance and that is an extremely high level of truth. Further, their verbal professions of faith are verified by exemplary actions. Finally, they are designated _muttaqis_: that is, these are people who protect themselves from all evils and from satanic impulses and not only are their actions clean, but their souls, too, are pure. A rank higher than this is impossible.

**Some key words**

For greater appreciation, the following explanations of a few key words used in the verse 2:177 serve to furnish a greater insight into the depth and extensiveness of the concepts discussed.

_barra_ (infinitive noun: _birrun_) – he was pious towards his father or his parents and towards God. He was kind, good, affectionate and gentle in behaviour towards his kindred or good in his dealings with strangers. He was just, good, righteous, virtuous, honest, or he was amply, largely or extensively good or beneficent

_birrun_ – besides containing the above meanings, also signifies:
obedience to God and every incumbent duty, hence the pilgrimage to Makkah; regard for the circumstances of another; a gratuitous gift, or favour or bounty, or benefit (Lane)

ba'isa (One of those anomalous verbs in Arabic that connote praise and dispraise or one that has opposite meanings. The context will determine which meaning is applicable.) – he was or became mighty, strong in war or fight or very mighty or very strong in fight; hence:

ba'sa'u – might, strength, war, fight (or conflict). In the verse (2:177) ba'isa means: he was or became in a state of distress; straitened in his means of subsistence or in the conveniences of life; or in a state of poverty or in a state of pressing want

ba'sau – being in the above state

darra – to hurt, harm, injure, do evil to

darra'u – a hurtful state or condition; hardship, distress, straitness of condition or of the means of subsistence or of the conveniences of life (A subtle nuance – darra'u is that evil which relates to the person as disease, whereas ba'sa'u is that which relates to property, as poverty.)

raqaba – he looked, watched, waited for; he guarded, kept, preserved, took care of; he was mindful or regardful of

raqabatun (plural riqabun: neck) by synecdoche it is applied to the whole person e.g. dhanbuhu fi raqabatihi: his sin, crime, etc. be upon his own neck; or also by synecdoche: a slave, or a captive, e.g. a'taqa raqabatun: he emancipated a slave, male or female: (In note 217 of his English Translation of the Holy Qur’an, Maulana Muhammad Ali explains: Riqab is the plural
of *raqabah*, which literally signifies *a neck*, and then comes to signify by synecdoche, *a slave*, or *a captive*. Hence, *fil-riqab* means *ransoming of slaves*. The basis was thus laid down for the abolition of slavery.)

*ibn-us-sabil* from:

*sabalun* – a thing that one has let loose, let down; fall, made to hang down and to drag, or rain, especially rain issuing from the clouds and not yet having reached the earth

*sabilun* – a way, road, path and what is open, or conspicuous thereof (and Raghib adds: wherein is easiness)

*ibn-us-sabil* – the son of the road; he whom the road has brought (or as it arises) brought forth; the wayfarer or traveller; he who travels much or often; the traveller who is far from his place of abode; the person to whom the way has been cut short (so that he is unable to continue his journey) who desires to return to his country or town, and finds not what will suffice him; the traveller who is cut off from his property; the person who desires to go to a country, or town, other than his own for a necessary affair; the guest who has become disabled from proceeding on his journey, his means having failed him

*sakana* – it was or became still, motionless, stationary, in a state of rest, quiet, calm, or unruffled

*miskinun* – comes from *as-sukunu* (peace, tranquillity, etc.) according to some, because the person to whom it is applied trusts to, or relies upon others, so as to be, or become easy or quiet in mind; lowly, humble, submissive; poor, destitute, i.e. *possessing nothing*.

As can be gleaned from the above verse (2:177) and the exten-
sive commentary on it, besides belief in Allah, Charity (Sadqah), in all its manifestation is the other important element in the endeavour to colour ourselves with the Divine attributes. As a result, this section gives additional information not only concerning the place of Charity in moulding the Islamic personality but also the wide nature of its application.

In discussing chapter 2, verses 3 to 5 of the Holy Qur’an (Who believe in the Unseen and keep up prayer and spend out of what We have given them, and who believe in that which has been revealed to thee and that which was revealed before thee, and of the Hereafter they are sure. These are on a right course from their Lord and these it is that are successful), Maulana Muhammad Ali says:

“The main principles of Islam as laid down here are five: three theoretical and two practical. The three theoretical essentials are belief in God, in Divine Revelation and in the Hereafter; and the two practical are keeping up of prayer and spending out of what God has given to man.... Prayer is the means of the realization of the divine in man...while spending out of whatever has been given to man stands for charity in a broad sense, that is, for all acts of benevolence and doing good to humanity in general. For what God has given to man is not only the wealth he possesses but all the faculties and powers with which he has been gifted” (Religion of Islam, p. 376).

The following are some ahadith (taken from Robson’s Mishkat Al-Masabih, vol. 1) that illustrate the importance in Islam of spending freely on all God’s creation starting with one’s immediate relatives.

(1) “The best sadaqa is that which leaves competence; and
begin with those for whom you are responsible.”

(2) “Of a dinar you spend as a contribution in God’s path, or to set free a slave, or as sadaqa given to a poor man, or in support of your family, the one spent in support of your family produces the greatest reward.”

(3) “Sadaqa given to a poor man is just sadaqa, but when given to a relative it serves a double purpose, being both sadaqa and a connecting link.”

(4) “The most excellent sadaqa consists in your satisfying a hungry stomach.”

(5) Abu Huraira reported that a man said, “Messenger of God, who is most deserving of friendly care from me?” He replied, “Your mother.” He asked who came next and he replied, “Your mother.” He asked who came next and he replied, “Your mother.” He asked who came next and he replied, “Your father.”

(6) “The family of so and so are not my friends, my friends being only God and the good ones among the believers; but they have ties of relationship which I shall refresh by kindness.”

(7) “One of the finest acts of kindness is for a man to treat his father’s friends in a kindly way after he has departed.”

(8) “He who wishes to have his provision enlarged and his term of life prolonged should treat his relatives well.”

(9) A man came to God’s messenger and said, “Messenger of God, is there any kindness left that I can do to my parents after their death?” He replied, “Yes, you can invoke blessings on them, ask forgiveness for them, carry out their final instructions after their death, join ties of relationship which are dependent on them, and honour their friends.”

(10) “God will not show mercy to him who does not show mercy to others.”

(11) “He who strives on behalf of a widow and a poor person
is like one who strives in God’s path.”

(12) “I and the one who takes responsibility for an orphan, whether of his own kin or of others, will be in paradise thus” (and he pointed his forefinger and middle finger with a slight space between them).

(13) “Gabriel kept on commending the neighbour to me so that I thought he would make him an heir.”

(14) “All creatures are God’s children, and those dearest to God are the ones who treat His children kindly.”

(15) “If I had gold to the extent of Uhud I would not like to keep any of it more than three days, except what I put aside to pay a debt.”

(16) “If you spend, son of Adam, I shall spend on you.”

(17) “The generous man is near God, near Paradise, near men and far from Hell, but the miserly man is far from God, far from Paradise, far from men and near Hell. Indeed, an ignorant man who is generous is dearer to God that a worshipper who is miserly.”

(18) Aisha said that when some of the Prophet’s wives asked him which of them would join him soonest, he replied that it would be the one with the longest arm. So they took a rod and measured, and Sauda was the one among them who had the longest arm. They later came to know that sadaqa was the meaning of the length of the arm, for Zainab was the one who joined him soonest and she was fond of giving sadaqa.

The following ahadith are taken from A Manual of Hadith by Maulana Muhammad Ali.

(1) The Prophet said, “Sadaqa is incumbent on every Muslim.” His companions said’ “O Prophet of Allah! And what about him who has not got anything to give?” He said, “He should work with his hand and profit himself
and give in charity.” They said, “If he has nothing in spite of this?” He said, “He should do good deeds and refrain from doing evil – this is charity on his part.”

(2) On every bone of the fingers charity is incumbent every day: one assists a man in riding his beast or in lifting his provisions to the back of the animal, this is charity; and a good word and every step which one takes in walking over to prayer is charity; and showing the way to another is charity.

(3) The Messenger of Allah said, “A prostitute was forgiven – she passed by a dog, panting with its tongue out, on the top of a well containing water, almost dying with thirst; so she took off her boot and tied it to her head-covering and drew forth water for it; she was forgiven on account of this.” It was asked, “Is there a reward for us in doing good to the beasts?” He said, “In every animal having a liver fresh with life there is a reward.”

Allah, Most High, desires that man should do good naturally or spontaneously. The Holy Qur'an tells us in 2:184: *Fa man *tatawwa‘a khairan fa huwa khairul-lahu* (So whoever does good spontaneously, it is better for him).

ta‘a – he was or he became submissive, obedient; he obeyed
tatawwa‘a – he did a thing without its being incumbent or obliging on him; he did good beyond what was obligatory
tatawwa‘un – a thing that one does spontaneously, not made obligatory on him by an ordinance of God (Lane)

To do so, we have to rise above considerations of self, family, friend, foe, revenge, profit, etc. and do good as effortlessly, smoothly and as uncalculatingly as we breathe, eat, drink, sleep; that is, just as naturally as we answer the call of physical nature. The latter comes automatically, of course, but altruistic deeds
demand a strong desire, a clear goal, a well-defined method and an iron motivation and discipline complemented by the mercy and grace of the Almighty without which nothing is possible, notwithstanding even our superhuman efforts. *It is naught but a Reminder for the nations, for him among you who will go straight. And you will not, except Allah please, the Lord of the worlds* (81:27-29).

**Insights by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib**

The Holy Qur’an and the Hadith provide guidance for Muslims and so in the following explanations of the Holy Qur’an, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Mujaddid of the fourteenth century, gives us his unparalleled insights, elucidation and exhortations towards attaining the desired goal of doing good spontaneously as we strive to become viceregerents of Allah. He writes:

“Allah, Most High, has imposed on man two kinds of obligations – firstly, the duties we owe to Allah, and secondly, those we owe to His servants, and these have been explained at great length in the Holy Qur’an. In a particular verse, Allah, Most High, commands us: *Laud (or remember) Allah as you lauded your fathers, rather a more hearty lauding* (2:200). Here, there are two subtle points: the remembrance of Allah is compared with the remembrance of one’s ancestors. The secret is this – love for one’s forefathers is an intrinsic and innate one. For example, even when a mother beats her child, he still continues calling lovingly to her: “Ma! Ma!” Thus Allah is teaching man in this verse to create in his heart a relationship with Allah based on natural love for Him. If we develop a love like that, then obedience to His commands will became automatic. This is the true station of divine knowledge to which a man ought to aspire; that is, in order for us to develop a natural and intrinsic love for Allah, it is said in another
place: *Surely Allah enjoins justice and the doing of good (to others) and the giving to the kindred* (16:90). In this verse, Allah, Most High, mentions three stages which man ought to acquire" (*Malfuzat*, Book 8, p. 248).

Mirza Sahib then gives a short description of the three conditions of man and shows how these are mirrored by the three stages of goodness that the Holy Qur’an exhorts us to obtain.

To make the comparison easier, clearer and more useful, we give a summary from *The Teachings of Islam* of the three conditions of man followed by a description of the three stages of goodness.

**The three conditions of man.**
The first question relates to the physical, moral and spiritual conditions of man. The Holy Qur’an observes this division by fixing three respective sources for this threefold condition of man. In other words, it mentions three springs out of which these three conditions flow. The first of these in which the physical conditions of man take their birth is termed the *nafs al-ammara*, which signifies *the uncontrollable spirit*, or the spirit prone to evil. Thus it says: *Most surely (man’s) self is wont to command (him to do) evil* (12:53). It is the characteristic of the *nafs al-ammara* that it inclines man to evil, tends to lead him into iniquitous and immoral paths and stands in the way of his attainment of perfection and moral excellence. In short, man’s nature is prone to evil and transgression at a certain stage in his development, and so long as he is devoid of high moral qualities, the evil nature is predominant in him. He is subject to this state so long as he does not walk in the light of true wisdom and knowledge, but acts in obedience to the natural inclinations of eating, drinking, sleeping, becoming enraged or excited, etc. like the lower animals.
However, as soon as he frees himself from the control of animal passions and, guided by wisdom and knowledge, holds the reins of his natural desires and governs them instead of being governed by them – in short, when a transformation is worked in his soul from grossness to virtue – he then passes the physical stage and is a moral being in the strict sense of the word. The source of the moral conditions of man is called the nafs al-lawwama, or the self-accusing spirit (conscience), in the terminology of the Holy Qur’an. In the chapter entitled The Resurrection, we have: And nay! I call to witness the self-accusing spirit (on every dereliction of duty or on the slightest act of disobedience, being conscious of having offended) (75:2). This is the spring from which flows a highly moral life and, on reaching this stage, man is freed from bestiality. The swearing by the self-accusing soul indicates the regard in which it is held. For the change from the disobedient to the self-accusing soul, being a sure sign of its improvement and purification, makes it deserving of approba-tion in the sight of God. Lawwama literally means one who re-proves severely, and the nafs al-lawwama, or the self-accusing soul, has been so called because it upbraids a man for the doing of an evil deed and strongly hates unbridled passions and bestial appetites. Its tendency, on the other hand, is to generate noble qualities and a virtuous disposition, to transform life so as to bring the whole course and conduct of it to moderation, and to restrain the carnal passions and sensual desires so as to keep them within due bounds. Although, as we have said above, the self-accusing soul upbraids itself for its faults and frailties, yet it is not the master of its passions, nor is it powerful enough to practise virtue exclusively. The weakness of the flesh has the upper hand sometimes and then it stumbles and falls down. Its weakness then resembles that of a child who does not like to fall but whose infirm legs are sometimes unable to support him. But it does not persist in its fault, every failure bringing only fresh reproach to the mind. In short, at this stage, the soul is anxious
to attain moral excellence which is the characteristic of the first, or the animal stage, but does, notwithstanding its yearning for virtue, sometimes deviate from the line of duty.

The third or the last stage in the onward movement of the soul is reached on attaining to the source of all spiritual qualities. The soul at this stage is, in the words of the Holy Qur’an, the nafs al-mutma’innah or the soul at rest. Thus it says: *O soul that art at rest (and rests fully contented with thy Lord), return to thy Lord, well pleased (with Him), well pleasing (Him); so enter among My servants and enter into My garden* (84:27-30). At this stage the soul is freed from all weaknesses and frailties and is braced with spiritual strength. It is perfectly united with God and cannot live without Him. As water flows with great force down a slope and, on account of its great mass and the total absence of all obstacles, dashes down with an irresistible force, so does the soul at this stage, casting off all trammels, flow unrestrained towards its Maker. It is to this that the words of the verse quoted above refer. It is further clear from the words: *O soul that hast found rest in thy Lord, return to Him*, that it is in this life and not after death that this great transformation is worked and that it is in this world and not elsewhere that an access to paradise is granted to it. Again, as the soul has been commanded to return to its Lord (Supporter), it is clear that such a soul finds its support only in its Lord. The love of God is its food and it drinks deep at this fountain of life and is, therefore, delivered from death. The same idea is expressed elsewhere in the Holy Qur’an in the following words: *He will indeed be successful who purifies it and he will indeed fail who corrupts it* (91:9-10).

In short, these three states of the soul may be called the physical, the moral and the spiritual states of man. Of these, the physical state, viz. that in which man seeks to satisfy the passions of the
flesh, is most dangerous when the passions run riot, for it is then that they deal a death-blow to the moral and spiritual states of man, and hence this state has been termed the disobedient spirit in the Holy Word of God" (*Teachings of Islam*, pp. 3-7).

Let us now make the comparison between the three conditions of man and the three stages of goodness open to him.

**The three stages of goodness.**

1. **Halat ‘Adl (State of Justice).** "The stage of ‘adl (justice) can be compared with that of the muttaqi (the God-fearing servant) when he is at the stage of the nafs-ul-ammarah, that is, the spirit that is wont to command evil (or the animal stage). To reform this condition, the principle of justice has been instituted. Here, opposition from his inner passions is bound to arise in a man. For example, a person has to repay a debt but his nafs or inviter to evil makes the suggestion that he should renege on his payment and it so happens that the stipulated date of payment passes. What happens now is that the evil whisperer becomes bolder and more daring, inciting the defaulter with the suggestion that he cannot be legally called to account. But that is not correct behaviour. Justice demands that the debt obligation be duly fulfilled and no stratagem nor excuse be made to evade it.

It is sad, but I am forced to confess that many people do not pay much regard to these matters and there are even members of my jama‘at who pay scant attention to the repaying of their debts. This is contrary to justice. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) did not read the janaza prayer of such people (who failed to honour their debts). So every one of you should always remember that you should not be recalcitrant in paying your debts and you
should steer far from all kinds of treachery and dishonesty, for this is against the Divine command which Allah has revealed in the verse (16:90)” (Malfuzat, Book 8, pp. 312-313).

(Referring to this verse in another place, Mirza Sahib also explains ‘adl (justice) as doing good in return for good and nothing more; also, doing good only to those who do good to you and to no one else and he says that this is the lowest rung of the ladder of righteousness.)

2. **Halat Ihsan (State of Goodness).** “The second stage is that of ihsan or goodness. That person who has respect for justice and does not exceed the limits of propriety is given guidance and power from Allah and he makes greater progress in the doing of good, so much so that he does not only give as much as he receives, but for a little favour he receives, he gives a very great amount in return. But even at this higher level of goodness there is a hidden weakness, and that is that at some time or the other he may reproach someone for favours rendered. For example, a person may be feeding another for ten years, and the recipient may disobey him in a certain matter and he may reproach him thus: ‘I have been feeding you for ten years and yet you are ungrateful.’ He thus makes his deed null and void. In truth, in the hearts of the doers of good, there is a hidden desire for ostentation.

However, the third rank is exempt from all kinds of filth and pollution and that is the *ita’i dhil qurba* stage, that is, the giving to the kindred” (Malfuzat, Book 8, p. 313).

(Elsewhere he explains ihsan as doing good even to those who have not done any good to you. He also points out
that: (i) at this stage there is still a struggle within us be-
tween the inviter to good and the inciter to evil and that
sometimes good triumphs and at other times evil over-
comes us, just as it happens in the second or moral condi-
tion of man; and (ii) sometimes, too, the reproach is sup-
pressed for a long time but there is the ever-present dan-
ger that one day it will involuntarily escape and invalidate
our good actions.)

3. *Ita'i dhil Qurba ki Halat* (Giving to the Kindred). “The
stage of giving to the kindred is a natural condition; that
is, when goodness flows from a man as if it were an inher-
ent demand of his nature. For example, look at how a
mother nurses and fosters her child. She does not entar-
tain the thought that when the child gets older he will pro-
vide for her. In fact, she will rear him so sedulously that
even if some king or the other should command her to
refrain from suckling him and promise that if the child dies
she would not be called to account, she cannot cease nurs-
ing her child and not only will she disobey the order but
she may very well give the king a few choice words. And
that is because fostering her child is a natural obligation
and is not based on hope or fear.

In this way, when a man continues making steady progress
in righteousness and he reaches the stage where goodness
emanates from him as if it were a natural function, then
that condition is called the *nafs-ul-mutma 'innah* (the soul at peace).

In short, the meaning of *yuqimunas-salata* (they establish
prayer) is that until the soul is not at rest, it will be suscep-
tible to pulling and tugging. Sometimes the lower passions
will have the upper hand and sometimes the good impulses
will triumph. For example, a person may get up early in the morning and he sees that the water is cold but at the same time he is under an obligation to bathe (before performing prayer). If he listens to his lower self he will forego the prayer, but if he is courageous he will overcome his base passion" (*Malfuzat*, book 8, pp. 313-314).

May Allah help each one of us to attain the third condition of man as well as the third stage of goodness. In this manner we can all help in our own peculiar way to establish the moral and spiritual foundation of Islamic culture and civilization on earth.
Islam is a universal religion and the Holy Qur’an teaches us that our Creator, Allah, is One and that we, human beings, are a single species, a single family, in spite of superficial differences like colour, nationality, race, etc.

In fact, every institution in Islam, including Fasting, is geared towards not only a theoretical understanding but to a practical implementation of the unification of mankind under the umbrella of One God. In today’s sermon, emphasis will be placed on the Islamic teachings concerning the spirit of brotherhood that should permeate the hearts and limbs of every individual; for, as mentioned before, Fasting is one of the means used by Allah, Most High, to make us really transform this ideological concept into a real, tangible, practical and spiritual expression in our daily lives.

Firstly, we learn from the Holy Qur’an that Prophets were sent to every nation on earth and they were all given the message: *O ye messengers, eat of the good things and do good. Surely I am Knower of what you do. And surely this your community is one community, and I am your Lord, so keep your duty to Me. But they became divided into sects, each party rejoicing in that which was with them* (23:51-53).

As a result of this splintering of the human race into disparate groups, the last Prophet of God, Muhammad (sas), was sent as *a mercy unto all the nations* in order to unite mankind under the banner of One God. The following verses of the Holy Qur’an reveal the message of unity, which every Muslim is duty bound to fulfil to the best of his ability.
The Holy Qur'an says: *Mankind is a single nation* (2:213) and further informs us: *O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you. Surely Allah is Knowing, Aware* (49:13).

As a result, we are commanded: *And hold ye fast, all of you, to the rope of Allah and break not loose from it* (3:103).

The *Hadith* is replete with teachings, exhortations and commands on these all-important topics of brotherhood, unity, and love for all mankind. I shall quote a few sayings of our Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas). Firstly, as regards the universal brotherhood of man, our Holy Prophet teaches and instructs us:

"Mankind is a fold, every member of which shall be a keeper or shepherd unto every other, and be accountable for the welfare of the entire fold.

O Lord! Lord of my life and of everything in the Universe! I affirm that all human beings are brothers unto one another.

All creatures of God form the family of God; and he is the best loved of God who loves best His creatures.

Respect the ways of God, and be affectionate to the family of God" (Syed Abdul Latif; *Bases of Islamic Culture*, pp. 16-17).

As regards unity, the Holy Prophet says: "You will find all believers in God as firm and united together in ties of love and kindness as the limbs of a body. If one part of it gets pain, all other parts feel afflicted in sympathy."
If we human beings, believers in God, claim to love God, how then can we demonstrate the sincerity of our profession? The Holy Prophet tells us:

"Whoever loves another for the sake of God, in reality has expressed his love for God.

God says: If you wish to receive graciousness from Me, show graciousness to those whom I have created.

Treat kindly the dwellers of the earth and God will treat you kindly.

He who, for the sake of God, has loved another human being, that person verily has extolled the glory of God" (Syed Abdul Latif: *Bases of Islamic Culture*, pp. 20-21).

The Companions of our Holy Prophet imbibed these teachings of his and to what extent they practised them I leave you to judge as you listen to this incident from the earliest days of Islam as narrated by one of the Muslim soldiers:

"During the battle of Yarmuk I went out in search of my cousin, who was on the battlefront. I took some water with me, knowing it would do him good. I found him in the very thick of the fighting. Alas, he was dying. I ran forward to give him the little water I had. But, as I did so, another badly wounded soldier beside him gave a sigh, and my cousin turned his face and pointed for me to take the water to the other man first. I took the water to the other person whom I recognized as Hisham-bin-Abilas. But I had hardly reached him when we heard another groaning person nearby. Hisham also pointed to the man, indicating that I should give the water to him
instead. However, before I arrived, this third man had
died. Hastily I ran back to Hisham but he was also dead.
Hurriedly I made my way over to my cousin. Alas, he,
too, had passed away. (All of us came from Allah and
we will all return to Him.)" (Muslim Stories for Chil-
dren)

If it be objected that this shows love only between Muslims,
then what about the famous example of Salah-ud-Din (Saladin),
another celebrated son of Islam whom everyone has heard of
and who lived centuries after the death of our Holy Prophet
(sas)? It is related that during the Crusades, one of his greatest
enemies, the English King, Richard the Lion Hearted, was ill.
He sent him pears and peaches to eat and snow from the moun-
tain to cool his drinks. Salah-ud-Din knew the verse of the Holy
Qur’an, which says: We feed you for Allah’s pleasure only – we
desire from you neither reward nor thanks (76:9).

This lofty behaviour does not come easily. It has to be cherished
and nurtured in the family at home, and more so, in the larger
and more important family – the Jama‘at. The Jama‘at is a mi-
crocosm of the world community, for the same principles that
are needed to make us live a proper Muslim life internationally
are the very ones that we need to inculcate if we are to build a
united, cohesive, God-fearing jama‘at instead of a disparate and
motley group of individuals, each with his own agenda – prin-
ciples like those of tolerance and understanding, patience and
perseverance, gentleness and kindness, sympathy and empathy,
sensitivity and refinement.

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the fourteenth century Mujaddid
of Islam, in his own coherent, lucid, inspired, inspiring and heart-
penetrating style has given us certain guidelines for living a suc-
cessful life in a jama‘at as well as in the world community that
comprises both Muslims and non-Muslims. In his book *Kishti Nuh* (The Ark of Noah), he advises us to put God first in our lives and for His sake to be kind and merciful to humanity, for all are God’s creatures. He says:

“Do not oppress with your tongue, or hands or in any other way. Always work for the good of mankind. Never unduly assert yourselves with pride over others, even those who are placed under you. Never use abusive language to anyone, even though he may abuse you. Be humble in spirit, kind and gentle, and forgiving, sympathetic towards all and wishing them well…. Immediately compose all your differences and make peace among yourselves: forgive the transgressions of your brothers for indeed he is evil who is not willing to make peace with his brother…. In fact, if you really desire that God in heaven be pleased with you, then hasten to become one amongst yourselves as though you were brothers (and sisters) born of the same mother” (pp. 5-8).

In his *Malfuzat* (vol. 7), he gives us insight in how to acquire sensitivity and tolerance, understanding and tenderness and the divine attributes that are required for lifting ourselves from the stage of selfishness and crudity to that of social and spiritual sophistication. He writes:

“The truth is that everybody (in a *jama‘at*) is not at the same level of development. Allah, Most High, has Himself described the various classes of believers thus:

(i) *So of them is he who wrongs himself;*

(ii) *And of them is he who takes a middle course,*

(iii) *And of them is he who is foremost in deeds of goodness by Allah’s permission. That is the great grace*
(35:32)."

Secondly, it is also a fact that the Companions themselves (as) also made slow and gradual advancement both in their faith and in their actions. It is recorded that when our Holy Prophet (sas) went to Madinah he asked a companion for a piece of land on which to build a masjid, whereupon the companion made an excuse and said: "I need it for my own use."

What a grievous sin that was – that the Holy Prophet (sas) should request a piece of land to build a masjid and this person, a disciple to boot, should put his personal needs above those of the religion! But it was that same companion who later on willingly suffered martyrdom for the sake of Allah.

Progress always takes place by slow degrees. A person does something this year and in the next year he adds to it. However, if there exists any kind of evil thinking in our hearts, then we will be acting like someone to whom there comes for help a sick person who is beset by all kinds of illnesses, and after giving him medicine for a day or two we turn him out without paying the full attention that he deserves and so no cure is effected.

Our job is to make du‘a (supplication) for others night and day with humility, and to supplicate Allah for their welfare. It is not fitting for a preacher to take offence at the slightest thing and show repugnance to people. At this stage these people are deserving of mercy and Allah, Most High, is making preparations for their reformation. Moreover, everyone is not at the same spiritual level. Amongst the Companions there were some who were close to the status of prophethood and many at a lower level than that – just as one finds pearls in the sea and corals, too, and shells and other things like gold and various kinds of creatures. The same obtains in a jama‘at.
Jama‘at members should make du‘a if they see a fault in a brother. If they do not do so and instead talk about it and circulate it, then they will be committing a sin. What shortcoming is so great that it cannot be expunged? Therefore we should always help our brother by making du‘a for him.

Furthermore, we should not speak ill of, nor backbite our fellow jama‘at members. The Holy Qur’an instructs us thus: O you who believe, avoid most of suspicion, for surely suspicion in some cases is a sin; and spy not nor let some of you backbite others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You abhor it! And keep your duty to Allah, surely Allah is Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful (49:12).

When our Holy Prophet (sas) was asked what constituted backbiting, he replied thus: “That you talk about your brother what he dislikes…if what you say about him is true, still you would be backbiting him, and if what you say about him is not true, you will be slandering him” (Muslim).

We should realize that in a jama‘at there are people of varying temperaments and conditions. Some resemble people who are now recovering from a strong bout of illness, whilst others have acquired a bit of strength. Therefore, if weakness is discerned in someone, then he should be given good advice in private. If he does not heed it, then you should make du‘a for him, and if these two devices do not work, then he should be left to the will of Allah, Most High.

One should not therefore be quick to take offence at the faults of others, for we should remember that among the ranks of the qubbs and abdals there were many who had previously committed wrong deeds like fornication and theft. Therefore, we must not be too hasty to abandon a brother, for if a person’s child is
guilty of wrongdoing, he tries all methods available to reform him. The same treatment should be accorded a brother in faith.

The Holy Qur'an has not taught us to spread or publicize the defects of others. On the contrary, it exhorts us thus: *Exhort one another to patience, and exhort one another to marhamah (mercy)* (90:17).

By *marhamah* is meant that if one observes a blemish in someone, then offer him good advice and make *du‘a* for him. *Du‘a* has a very powerful effect and it is regrettable that a person should observe the fault of a brother and talk of it a hundred times without even once making *du‘a* for him. One should speak of the fault of another only after he has wept in supplication for him for at least forty days.

How eloquently the poet Sa‘di spoke when he observed that Allah, Most High, Who knows everything, conceals our shortcomings from public view but our neighbours who know nothing make a big hue and cry over our alleged defects. One of the names of Allah is *As-Sattar* – the One Who covers and hides the weaknesses of His servants - and we should therefore inculcate that quality of His in accordance with the dictum of the Holy Prophet – “Colour yourselves with the Divine colours.”

It is not our intention that you should become a protector or conniver of faults but what is discouraged is that you should circulate the defects of your brothers and malign them in any way, for our Holy Prophet *(sas)* has mentioned this as a sin.

*Shaikh* Sa‘di had two students – one who was very brilliant in his exposition of deep spiritual truths and insights whilst the other was of an envious disposition. The former complained to the *Shaikh* that whenever he made a commentary on any subject, his
colleague would burn with envy. The Shaikh replied that one student had chosen the road to Hell by his envy whilst the other had done the same by ill-speaking his brother.

In short, there can never be a jama‘at unless there exist mutual mercy, compassion, du‘a and the habits of concealing the faults of others” (Malfuzat Vol. 7, pp 77-79).

We hope and pray that these lessons will have been learnt or reinforced during the past month of Ramadhan and that their application will now become automatic in our daily lives as we plan and pray and anticipate the next month of Ramadhan, in sha ‘Allah.
There are two major festivals in Islam: *Id-ul-Fitr* (the Festival of the Breaking of the Fast), which comes after the month of Fasting, and *Id-ul-Adha* (the Festival of the Sacrifice), which is performed by pilgrims as part of the devotions pertaining to the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) and which is replicated by Muslims all over the world to coincide with this great event. This festival commemorates the willingness of the Prophet Abraham to obey the command of Allah to sacrifice his son, Ishmael, and the son’s readiness to submit.

As regards *Id-ul-Adha*, which is called the Greater *Id*, Ghulam Sarwar states:

"*Id-ul-Adha* begins on the tenth of *Dhu’l Hijjah* and continues until the twelfth day of the month. It is celebrated to commemorate Prophet Abraham’s readiness to sacrifice his son Ishmael on the command of Allah. Allah accepted Abraham’s devotion and obedience and asked him to sacrifice a lamb instead" (*Islam, Beliefs and Teachings*, p. 184).

An account of this incident is given to us in the Holy Qur’an in chapter 37. After escaping from his idolatrous tribe who had thrown him into a fire for his refusal to worship anyone or anything except Allah, the one true God, Prophet Abraham turned to his Maker for refuge and guidance. The following verses give us the rest of the narrative:

*And he said: Surely I flee to my Lord – He will guide me. My Lord, grant me a doer of good deeds. So We gave him the good news of a forbearing son. But when*
he became of age to work with him, he said: O my son, I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice thee; so consider what thou seest. He said: O my father, do as thou art commanded: if Allah please, thou wilt find me patient. So when they both submitted and he had thrown him down upon his forehead, and We called out to him saying, O Abraham, thou hast indeed fulfilled the vision. Thus do We reward the doers of good. Surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice (37:99-107).

The writer continues:

“This occasion of great importance comes every year during the days of Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah) and is observed by offering congregational prayer, as in Id-ul-Fitr.

After the prayer, the Muslims, who can afford it, sacrifice animals like goats, sheep, cows or camels to seek Allah's pleasure. The meat of the sacrificed animal is eaten and shared among the relatives, neighbours and the poor. This sacrifice expresses the inner feeling of a Muslim that, if need be, he will sacrifice his most loved possession for Allah. This is the lesson of the occasion.

We must remember here that what Allah wants is not the animal nor its meant or blood, rather He wants our devotion and submission to His command” (Islam, Beliefs and Teachings, pp. 184-185).

In this regard, the Holy Qur’an informs us:
And for every nation We appointed acts of devotion that they might mention the name of Allah on what He has given them of the cattle quadrupeds. So your God is One God, therefore to Him should you submit. And give good news to the humble, whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned, and who are patient in their afflictions, and who keep up prayer, and spend of what We have given them. And the camels, We have made them of the signs appointed by Allah for you—for you therein is much good. So mention the name of Allah on them standing in a row. Then when they fall down on their sides, eat of them and feed the contented one and the beggar. Thus have We made them subservient to you that you may be grateful. Not their flesh, nor their blood, reaches Allah, but to Him is acceptable observance of duty on your part. Thus has He made them subservient to you, that you may magnify Allah for guiding you aright. And give good news to those who do good to others (22:34-37).

According to Maulana Muhammad Ali:

"It will thus be seen that Islam has invested the principle of sacrifice with a new meaning. The institution of sacrifice has been accepted in one form or another by all the nations of the world. Like all other religious principles which are universally recognised, the principle of sacrifice finds a deeper meaning in Islam. The outward act is still there as of old, but it no longer conveys the meaning attached to it in some ancient religions, namely, that of appeasing an offended deity or serving as an atonement for sin. In Islam it signifies the sacrifice of the sacrificer himself, and thus becomes an outward symbol of his readiness to lay down his life, and to sacrifice all his interests
and desires in the cause of truth. The animal that is sacrificed really stands for the animal in man, so that the outward sacrifice of the animal reminds man of the necessity for the sacrifice of the animal within him. And one day, and one particular moment on that day, is chosen so that all Muslim hearts from one end of the world to the other may pulsate with one idea at a particular moment, and thus lead to the development of the idea of self-sacrifice in the community as a whole (The Religion of Islam, p. 365).

In conclusion, both festivals therefore transcend the natural expression of human happiness and emphasize the following points:

- Allah is One.
  Mankind is a single species and so all men are brothers in spite of superficial differences. In fact, man’s nature (fitrat) is unchanging and the essence of this nature is the worship of Allah.
- True and lasting happiness comes from performing our duty to Allah with love, praise and gratitude and treating His creation with cheerfulness, generosity and liberality.
- Self-purification, reformation and advancement are indispensable.
- A true Muslim is one who is willing not only to relinquish lawful pleasures in order to please Allah, as in Fasting, but is even prepared to give up his own life for the sake of Allah and His creation just as he sacrifices the animal on the day of the Sacrifices, for this is the ideal that the Holy Qur’an holds out to us: Say: My prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are surely for Allah, the Lord of the worlds (6:163).
And when We said to the angels, Be submissive to Adam, they submitted, but Iblis (did not). He refused and was proud, and he was one of the disbelievers (2:34).

And the angels submitted, all of them, but not Iblis. He was proud and he was one of the disbelievers. He said: O Iblis, what prevented thee from submitting to him whom I created with both My hands? Art thou proud or art thou of the exalted ones? He said: I am better than he; Thou hast created me of fire, and him Thou didst create of dust. He said: Go forth from hence! Surely thou art driven away: And surely My curse is on thee to the day of Judgement. He said: My Lord, respite me to the day that they are raised. He said: Surely thou art of the respited ones. Till the day of the time made known. He said: Then, by Thy Might! I will surely lead them all astray, except Thy servants from among them, the purified ones. He said: The Truth is, and the truth I speak— that I shall fill hell with thee and with all those among them who follow thee. Say: I ask you no reward for it; nor am I of the imposters (38:73-86).

In the above verses we read why Satan was rejected by Allah (istikbara) and also of his avowed intention to mislead whomsoever he can from the progeny of Adam.

[Istakbara comes from kabara which means he or it was or became great (big or large) in body and in years and in estimation or rank or dignity; and takabbara and istakbara signify he magnified himself, behaved proudly or insolently. In some places in the Holy Qur’an, e.g. I shall turn away from My messages those
who are unjustly proud in the earth. And if they see every sign, they will not believe in it; and if they see the way of rectitude, they take it not for a way; and if they see the way of error, they take it for a way. This is because they reject Our messages and are heedless of them (7:146), there are several connotations to the above words: “he endeavoured and sought to become great; he boasted of qualities he did not possess and feigned such qualities; he considered himself as the most excellent of the creation, and as having rights which others do not have” (Lane’s Lexicon).]

Part of Satan’s technique lies in his appeal to the vanity, self-conceit and pride of man in exciting egoistic desires in him and holding out promises of greatness and majesty in this world’s life – things which, according to the whisperings of Satan, can be achieved by man’s efforts alone and without any reference to the will or power or permission of Allah, Most High, as the following verses testify:

But the devil made an evil suggestion to them that he might make manifest to them that which had been hidden from them of their shame, and he said: Your Lord has forbidden you this tree, lest you become angels or become of the immortals (7:20).

He said: My Lord, as Thou hast judged me erring, I shall certainly make (evil) fair-seeming to them on earth, and I shall cause them all to deviate, except Thy servants from among them, the purified ones (15:39-40).

And incite whom thou canst of them with thy voice, and collect against them thy horse and thy foot, and share with them in wealth and children, and promise them. And the devil promises them only to deceive (17:64).
The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sas) has warned us of the sin of pride, the worst evil that man can commit, for it eventually leads to rebellion against Allah and disbelief in and rejection of Him.

“He who has in his heart as much faith as a grain of mustard-seed will not enter hell, and he who has in his heart as much pride as a grain of mustard-seed will not enter Paradise” (Muslim).

He has also given us a clear definition of what constitutes pride:

The Holy Prophet (sas) said: “He in whose heart there is as much as a grain of pride will not enter Paradise,” and a man remarked: “A man likes his garment to be beautiful and his sandals to be beautiful.” The Holy Prophet (sas) replied: “God, Most High, is beautiful and likes beauty; pride is disdainful what is true and despising people” (Muslim).

In his translation of Mishkat-ul-Masabih, Maulana Fazlul Karim gives a description of the three kinds of pride:

- Pride in relation to Allah, whereby man rejects his Creator
- A feeling of superiority over the messengers and prophets of Allah which leads to their rejection, persecution and even slaughter
- Pride in relation to all men; that is, feeling better than all others

He also lists seven objects in which pride is taken:

- Learning
- Divine service
- Ancestors and acquisitions
- Beauty or good looks and other physical accomplishments
- Wealth
- Strength and power
- Followers, helpers, students, disciples, relatives, wives and children

He also gives us some of the causes of pride – self-conceit, malice, enmity and show.

Throughout his writings, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Mujaddid of the fourteenth century Hijrah, has blessed us with much enlightenment on this subject, and in the following extract he places before us some practical examples and gives us special words of advice.

"So I advise my Jama‘at that they should avoid pride, for in the eyes of God, the Lord of Glory and Honour, pride is a most abominable thing. But perhaps you may not know what constitutes arrogance so take a lesson from me, for I speak through the spirit of God.

Every person who looks down on his brother because he is more learned, or more intelligent or more skilful is guilty of pride because he does not regard God as the Source and Fountainhead of all intelligence and knowledge, but assumes an air of superiority regarding himself. Does God not have the power to make him insane and to make his brother whom he considered inferior, greater in intellect, knowledge and accomplishment?

Arrogant, too, is the person whose wealth, power and glory make him contemptuous of his brother for he has
forgotten that it was from God that he received his rank and dignity. He is also blind for he does not know that the Omnipotent God can bring upon him an unexpected calamity that can bestow upon his brother, whom he regarded as lower than him, more wealth and riches than he had.

Proud, too, is the person who is vain over his physical health and strength or his beauty and elegance or his power and strength, and he mockingly and derisively applies to his brother a name tinged with disdain and exposes his bodily defects to all and sundry. He is ignorant of God, Who, in the twinkling of an eye, can visit him with such bodily infirmities that may make him worse than his brother, and He may bless him who was despised before with strength for a long period of time so that there is not decrease nor unsoundness in it.

Similarly, the one who relies on his own powers so that he is remiss in making 
\textit{du'a} (supplication) to Allah, is also a proud person for he has not recognized the Source of all power and strength and ascribes greatness to himself. So, dear friends, remember all these things and from no point of view should you become proud in the eyes of God and let yourself remain ignorant of it.

A person who superciliously corrects a brother for using a word wrongly also partakes of the sin of arrogance.

He who is reluctant to listen politely to the words of his brother and turns away his face in contempt is also guilty of arrogance.

If a person has a poor brother residing with him and he
looks down on him, that, too, is a manifestation of pride.

If someone looks with scorn and contempt at another who is making supplication to God, then he, too, has a share of pride in him.

He who refuses to render obedience to the messengers appointed by God is also party to pride, as is the person who does not ponder over their words and does not study their writings assiduously.

So strive hard to prevent even an ounce of pride from entering your heart so that you may escape destruction and that you and your family may attain salvation. Bow down to God and, however much it is possible to show love to another in this world, do so, and as much as possible fear your Lord to the limit of your capacity. Purify your heart and your motives and have compassion for the needy and the destitute” (Nuzulul Masih, pp. 402-403).

We must not believe that arrogance is the affliction of only the unbelievers and outright sinners. This is such an insidious evil that not even the saints of Allah are spared the subtle laser-like infiltration of Satan into the innermost recesses of their hearts. The following two incidents in the life of Hazrat Hasan Basri will serve to illustrate this point.

"Hasan was so humble that he considered himself inferior to all. One day on the bank of the River Dajla he found a man seated with a young lady and a bottle of wine in front of him. The thought crossed his mind: ‘How depraved is this man! Would that he were like me.’ Just then a boat appeared in the river at a distance from him,
and gradually began to sink in deep water. The man immediately jumped into the water and of the seven men in the boat who were drowning, he saved six, and then looking towards Hasan said: ‘If you are superior to me, then in God’s name save the seventh man. You save only one man, whilst I have saved six.’ Hasan could not do so. The man then addressing Hasan said: ‘Sir, this woman seated by my side is my mother, and that bottle yonder contains water. This scene was enacted to put you to a test.’ Hasan fell on his feet and said: ‘Just as you have saved six people, save me also from drowning in the waters of pride and vanity.’ He replied: ‘May God fulfil thy desire!’ Hasan felt as if his desire was fulfilled. Since then he became so humble that seeing a dog one day he remarked: ‘O Lord! For the sake of this virtuous dog, accept me as Thy slave’” (Tadhkiratul Auliya, pp. 12-13).

“Once Hasan went to Habib ‘Ajmi at the time of evening prayers. Hasan heard ‘Ajmi mispronouncing a word during the prayer. He considered it improper to say his prayers with him, and therefore said his prayers separately. During the night he dreamt the Lord saying to him: Hasan, if you had stood behind Habib ‘Ajmi and said your prayers, you would have earned Our pleasure, and that single payer of yours would have borne thee greater benefit than all the prayers taken together which you have offered in your lifetime. You tried to find fault with his pronunciation but looked not into the purity and excellence of his heart. Know it that We cherish a contrite heart much more than merely correct pronunciation of words’” (Tadhkiratul-Auliya, pp. 17-18).

What can we do to prevent this disease from overpowering us?
The Holy Qur’an is filled with advice for us and so, too, is the Hadith, and a practical elaboration of one of these techniques is given to us by Imam Ghazali as he teaches us the correct attitude to adopt if we are to guard against this deadly malady.

“Every one who considers himself better than one of the creatures of God, Most High, is arrogant. Indeed, you ought to realize that the good man is he who is good in God’s sight in the mansion of eternity; and that is something unknown to man, postponed to the end. Your belief that you are better than others is sheer ignorance – rather you ought not to look at anyone without considering that he is better than you and superior to you. Thus, if you see a child, you say: ‘This person has never sinned against God, but I have sinned, and so he is better than I’; and if you see an older person, you say: ‘This man was a servant of God before me, and is certainly better than I’; if he is a scholar, you say: ‘This man has been given what I have not been given and reached what I did not reach, and knows what I am ignorant of; then how shall I be like him?’ If he is ignorant, you say: ‘This man has sinned against God in ignorance, and I have sinned against Him knowingly, so God’s case against me is stronger, and I do not know what end He will give to me and what end to him.’ If he is an infidel, you say: ‘I do not know; perhaps he will become a Muslim and his life will end in doing good, and because of his acceptance of Islam something of his sins will be taken away, as a hair is taken from dough; but as for me – God is our refuge – perhaps God will lead me astray so that I become an infidel and my life ends in doing evil, and then tomorrow he will be among those brought near to God and I shall be among the punished’” (The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali, p. 146).
May Allah help us to heed the invaluable advice and teachings given to us above so that our hearts may be fortified with the love of the Almighty in order that we will be able to face and triumph over whatever may befall us in life, and yet be of use to mankind – something that pride naturally obviates. And may we never become like those unfortunate ones who reject religion and go so far as to oppose it and of whom it is mentioned in the Holy Qur’an:

_Hastening forward, their heads upraised, their gaze not returning to them, and their hearts vacant_ (14:43).

Instead, let us all strive to be like those described in this verse of the Holy Qur’an:

_But Allah has endeared the faith to you and has made it seemly in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you disbelief and transgression and disobedience. Such are those who are rightly guided – a grace from Allah and a favour. And Allah is Knowing, Wise_ (49:7).

Let us forever keep in mind that Allah does not love the proud (16:23) and that He has assigned the blessed Abode for... “those who have no desire to exalt themselves in the earth nor to make mischief...” (28:83).
The Holy Qur'an has placed great emphasis on the quality of sincerity in our thoughts, words and deeds and has laid it down as a pre-requisite of our spiritual fulfilment as we read in 98:5:

And they are enjoined naught but to serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience, upright, and to keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and that is the right religion.

The recompense of such is given in 98:8:

Their reward is with their Lord: Gardens of perpetuity wherein flow rivers, abiding therein for ever. Allah is well pleased with them and they are well pleased with Him. That is for him who fears his Lord.

Our Holy Prophet (sas), too, in answer to a question from his companions: “O Prophet, what is religion?” replied thus: “Religion is sincerity.” When asked to whom, he said: “To Allah and His Book, and to His Messenger, and to the leaders of the Muslims and their common folk” (Muslim).

When we human beings are insincere to our family and friends or to others in general, we are forced to live a life of deception, anxiety and fear and we do things that undermine the stability of our inner self and bring unhappiness to our own selves. For example, we always have to hide and cover up our intentions and are always afraid of being found out. Or we may have to do things to please others thus stifling our legitimate desires, concerns and ambitions and living an unfulfilled life, perhaps seething with an impotent rage at our own cowardice and
spinelessness. Of course, we may try to fool ourselves by rationalizing our behaviour to make it palatable for us to swallow. For example, we may consider ourselves as martyrs who are sacrificing our lives for others. Or, we may do things for show or for personal gain and so become very cold and calculating in our actions, and if we are not careful, we may end up becoming confirmed hypocrites who misuse even the sacred institution of prayer, as the Holy Qur'an tells us:

*And they come not to prayer except as lazy people (9:54).*

And when they do come, it does not benefit them for their motives are selfish and vain, as we read in 107:4-7:

*So woe to the praying ones, who are unmindful of their prayer! Who do (good) to be seen, and refrain from acts of kindness!*

In fact, if we behave like that, not only do we begin to use people conveniently, but we extend the same treatment to Allah, Most High, as can be seen when we fall into danger or suffer a calamity, whether physical, emotional or spiritual. We call to Allah for help in total sincerity but this earnestness is short-lived for it does not last after the tribulation is lifted. This false sincerity and its consequences are described in the Holy Qur'an in 10: 22-23:

*He it is Who makes you travel by land and sea; until, when you are in the ships, and they sail on with them in a pleasant breeze, and they rejoice at it, a violent wind overtakes them and the billows surge in on them from all sides, and they deem that they are encompassed about. Then they pray to Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience: If Thou deliver us from this, we will certainly be of the grateful ones. But when He delivers them, lo!
They are unjustly rebellious in the earth. O men, your rebellion is against yourselves – a provision (only) of this world's life. Then to Us is your return, so We shall inform you of what you did.

As a matter of fact, so blinded do we become by the falsity of our hearts and the selfishness of our motives that we even misunderstand and distort the favours of Allah to us and in our vanity we see them as further evidence of our own greatness, "specialness", and superiority over others, and a peculiar kind of boasting results. One example will suffice. A certain gentleman became suddenly ill at home and fell into a coma. Through Allah's grace, some friends were visiting him at the time and they had the presence of mind to rush him to the hospital where again he was fortunate enough to receive an emergency operation. When he recovered consciousness he was told by one of the doctors that if he (the patient) had come in to the hospital two minutes later he would have died and if the doctor had not stayed back at the hospital for a few minutes because he was expecting a telephone call, the worst would have occurred. Now, instead of giving thanks to Allah in complete humility and gratitude and devoting the rest of his formerly negligent life to the way of the Beneficent, he paraded this incident as conclusive proof of his own greatness and in his numerous repetitions of this super experience he caused people to remark jokingly and ironically: "Here he is making us feel jealous. We, too, wish that we can become ill as he was and take Allah's favours as an emblem of our own honour."

It is amazing how foolishly we behave when we seem to think that we can outwit Allah, the Almighty Who is Al Basir (The Seer), Al 'Alim (The Knower), Alimul ghāibi wash-Shahadati (Knower of the hidden and the manifest), Al Latif-ul-Khabir (The Knower of the Most subtle secrets, the Aware) and Who
has told us in unmistakable terms the we will be called to ac-
count for every thought, word, feeling and action whether se-
cret or open:

And whether you manifest what is in your minds or hide it, Allah will call you to account for it (2:284).

And if thou utter the saying aloud, surely He knows the secret, and what is yet more hidden (20:7).

And surely there are keepers over you, honourable recorders, they know what you do (82:11-13).

Every soul will know what it has prepared (81:14).

Allah’s knowledge is comprehensive as He tells us:

And with Him are the treaures of the unseen – none knows them but He. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. And there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor is there a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green or dry, but (it is all) in a clear book (6:59).

Far from deceiving our Creator, we cannot fool even human beings for long and our motives will soon come to light and make us laughing-stocks who are respected by no one. To un-
derscore this point, the Holy Prophet is reported to have said:

“If a man were to do a deed inside a rock which had no
door or window, his deed, whatever it was, would come forth to men.”

“If anyone has a good or evil nature, God will make ap-
parent some sign of it by which it will be recognized”
Another interesting example comes from real life. A certain lady got the bad news that her father had suffered a stroke and was helpless. She immediately burst into uncontrollable tears and had to be consoled by those present who were all impressed and touched by this show of love and affection for a parent. Not long afterwards though they were all disabused of this impression when it transpired that the tears were not of love but of bitterness as the lady felt that the onerous burden of looking after the father would now fall on her and the wounds of fatherly neglect were still fresh in her mind. Hence the tears.

Little do we realize that if we are true and sincere to Allah we would not have to "cover-up" our wrong-doings by justifying them or by using other defence mechanisms of the ego like denial, projection, rationalization, over-reaction, reaction-formation and escapism to ease our anxieties, fears and guilt feelings that occasion a terrible psychic strain and may lead to more serious emotional and psychological illnesses. The Holy Qur'an warns us of the consequences of these false artificial techniques and gives us guidance, hope and freedom in the following verses:

And those who, when they commit an indecency or wrong their souls, remember Allah and ask forgiveness for their sins. And who forgives sins but Allah? And they persist not knowingly in what they do (3:134).

And ask forgiveness of your Lord, then turn to Him, surely my Lord is Merciful, Loving-kind (11:90).

Say: O My servants who have been prodigal regarding their souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah; surely Allah forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Forgiv-
ing, the Merciful (39:53).

Our Holy Prophet, too, has warned us of the evils of trying to cover up or justify bad actions however trivial they may appear to us when he says:

"Mankind will not perish till they make excuses for their conduct to themselves" (Robson’s Mishkat, p. 1068).

When we are honest and sincere to Allah and to our own selves we shall find it easy and natural to be honest and true to others and so not only will we achieve self-respect and win Allah’s approbation, but we shall also earn the respect of others. This is one of the most fervent desires of a human being but it is also the most difficult to attain for it is based solely on intrinsic merit and not on extraneous considerations like worldly rank, status, knowledge, beauty, power, wealth, family etc.

Another noteworthy benefit is that we shall rid ourselves of the great insidious curse of ostentation against which our Holy Prophet has cautioned us:

"Whoever prays for show, commits polytheism; whoever fasts for show, commits polytheism, and whoever gives charity for show, commits polytheism" (Fazlul Karim’s Mishkat, vol. 3, p. 422).

Greatest of all, we shall attain that supreme and sublime state which the Holy Qur’an describes in the following words:

Nay, whoever submits himself entirely (and sincerely) to Allah and he is a doer of good to others, he has his reward from his Lord and there is no fear for such nor shall they grieve (2:112).
According to psychologists, fear and grief or anxiety and guilt are the root causes of all our emotional and psychological diseases. Freedom from fear and grief is regarded as the third and highest stage of the spiritual pilgrim and is called *liqa* (reunion with God) in Sufi terminology, the first two stages being that of *fana* (annihilation of selfish desires) and *baqa* (continuance on the right path). Of this last stage (*liqa*), Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, writes:

“For when a person reaches that high rank in knowledge, conviction, reliance (upon God) and love, where the reward for his sincerity, faith and fidelity does not seem to him to be mere imagination, supposition, or conjecture, but is as certain, definite, manifest, palpable and perceptible, as if he had received it, and he acquires such a faith in the existence of God as if he can see Him, and all fears about the future are lifted from view, and no trace is left of any past or present grief, and every spiritual favour appears to be present – this is the state which is clean of all murkiness, safe from every doubt, and above any pain of anxiety, and is termed *liqa* (*A* 'ina-e Kamalat-e-Islam).

This is the summit of our spiritual ascent but one must never forget that the first and last step in our climb is that of *sincerity*. To test the degree of our sincerity, Mirza Sahib has given a practical test which we can use at every stage of our spiritual ascension. He asks:

“When somebody sustains a loss in worldly affairs he is sad over it and feels the pain very much. However, if he suffers a loss in religious affairs, does he grieve over it and does he feel it with the same intensity as he does when the loss relates to worldly affairs?”
He then suggests:

"Let one's heart be the scale to weigh the sadness on the two sides and find out whether his grief over the worldly loss is greater than his grief over the spiritual loss, or not."

May Allah in His infinite mercy help us all to pass this test with flying colours: *All praise is due to Allah Who guided us to this! And we would not have found the way if Allah had not guided us... 7:43.*
Therefore remember Me, I will remember you and give thanks to Me and be not ungrateful to Me (2:152).

In the verse quoted above (2:152), Imam Ghazali has pointed out that so important is thankfulness that it is mentioned together with dhikr (remembrance of God), and he makes the point that the heart of man is hard like stone, rather, harder than stone, and the hardness can be removed only through gratefulness and fear of God and in particular, the fear of being separated from Him.

Before examining further the attribute of thankfulness, it is important that a few preliminary remarks from the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith be made on the subject.

**From the Holy Qur’an**
Allah has promised us in the Holy Qur’an (14:7) that if we are grateful He will give us more. “More of what?” we may ask. Imam Ghazali furnishes the answer when he says that Allah will grant us more of five things, and he quotes the Qur’anic verse in support of each blessing:

- **Wealth – If Allah wills He will make you free from want out of His grace.**
- Acceptance of our du’a – He can give you what you pray for if He wills.
- Provision – He gives provision to whom He wills without measure.
- Forgiveness – He forgives besides that to whom He pleases.
Repentance — He accepts repentance from whom He pleases.

These are the attributes of Allah as He says: He accepts gratefulness and is patient. (Al Ghazali, Ihya, Vol.1, pp. 87-88)

However, in spite of the countless favours bestowed on man, Allah laments that man is generally very ungrateful and, in fact, very few of His servants are ever grateful to Him for His boons.

In 14:34 (And He gives you all that you ask of Him. And if you count Allah’s favours, you will not be able to number them. Surely man is very unjust, very ungrateful), Allah mentions this weakness in man and the same sadness is expressed in 27:73 (And thy Lord is full of grace to men, but most of them do not give thanks), and in 40:61 (Surely Allah is Full of Grace to men, but most men give not thanks).

In order to encourage us to be grateful, Allah discloses part of His limitless love and mercy to us when He categorically states that if we are grateful He will not punish us. He first promises this in the form of a question in the verse: Why should Allah chastise you if you are grateful and believe? And Allah is ever Multiplier of rewards (Shakir), Knowing (‘Alim) (4:147), and plainly affirms it in 34:17: And We punish none but the ingrate.

We are also told that the reward for thankfulness is not distant but very close: And We shall soon reward the grateful (3:144).

From the Hadith
The Holy Prophet (sas) is reported to have said: “‘Praise be to Allah’ is the beginning of thanksgiving, for the man who does not praise Allah has not thanked Him.”
He underlines the high regard of the faithful ones when he gives the good news that: “The first to be summoned to Paradise on the Day of Resurrection will be those who praise Allah in prosperity and in adversity.”

Further, he suggests that gratitude is an essential part of a true believer’s good fortune when he says: “It is remarkable that everything turns out well for a believer while that applies only to a believer. If happiness befalls him, he gives thanks and it turns out well for him, and if misfortune befalls him, he shows endurance and it turns out well for him.”

But he also warns us in this hadith that gratitude is not for Allah alone but must first be shown to our fellow human beings. He says: “Whoever is not grateful to man is not grateful to Allah.”

How truly does a famous author reveal to us the sublime rank of gratitude when he says: “Gratitude is not only a great virtue; it is the mother of all virtues.”

What then is gratitude and how can we express it in the proper way? *Shukr* (thankfulness) comprises two categories – of man and of Allah.

As regards man, *shukr* comes from the Arabic verb *shakara* that means:

- To thank or to praise God for His beneficence
- To be grateful or thankful to God and to praise, eulogize or commend Him
- To acknowledge the favours of God and to act in a manner incumbent on him in rendering obedience to Him and abstaining from acts of disobedience
*Shukr* is of three kinds:

- With the heart or mind, which is the forming of an adequate idea of the benefit (that is, to appreciate the value of the gift)
- With the tongue, which is praising, eulogising or commending the benefactor
- With the members, or limbs, which is requiting the benefit according to its desert (that is, using the gift in the correct manner and not abusing or misdirecting it)

*Shukr* rests on five foundations:

- Humility of him who renders it to whom it is rendered
- His love of him (that is, the giver of the gift and appreciating his rank)
- His acknowledgement of the benefit (that is, not concealing it)
- His praising of the benefactor (in all circumstances)
- His not using the benefit in a manner which displeases the giver

(Lane)

As regards Allah, we must remember that two of His attributes are *Ash Shakir* and *Ash Shakur* which come from *shakara*, and they mean the One Who recognizes and appreciates the efforts of man, and gives rewards in abundance even for the smallest acts of goodness or for few good works so much so that the *Hadith* tells us that: “If you are content with the small provisions which Allah has given you, He will be satisfied with your few good deeds.” It also means the One Who approves, rewards or forgives without measure.
How did the Prophets of Allah show their gratitude to Him? It is narrated that a prophet was afflicted with a disease. He wept bitterly at the time owing to fear. When he was cured of the disease, he wept in a like manner. When questioned about it, he replied that he was weeping out of gratefulness to Allah as he was cured by Him.

One day, the Prophet Moses (as) said in his invocation: “O God. You created Adam (as). How did he express gratefulness to Thee?” Allah replied: “He knew that everything came from Me.”

Lady Ayesha reported that the Holy Prophet (sas) wept so much in prayer one night that his tears flowed down his breast. Bilal came and asked him: “O Prophet of God, why do you weep when your past and future sins have been forgiven?” The Holy Prophet replied: “Shall I not be a grateful servant?” It was then that 3:190 of the Holy Qur’an was revealed: *Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, Thou has not created this in vain! Glory be to Thee! Save us from the chastisement of the Fire.*

And how can we give thanks to Allah? It is reported that the Holy Prophet once asked a man: “How are you?” The man replied: “I am well.” The Holy Prophet repeated the question and the man answered with this addition: “I am well. I praise God and I am grateful to Him for it.” The Holy Prophet then said: “This is why I repeated the question.”

It is reported in another hadith that Allah told the Holy Prophet (sas): “When you understand that a gift comes from Me, I am pleased with that gratefulness.” (Al Ghazali, Ihya, vol. 1, pp. 88-93).
However, in my opinion, the key to showing gratitude to Allah is contained in this *du ‘a* of the Holy Prophet: "O Allah, grant me the strength to be grateful to Thee." This points to the fact that thanksgiving is incumbent on every atom of a human being. We must discover every God-given talent, every virtue in us, as the Holy Qur’an tells us: *And in the earth there are signs for those who are sure, and in yourselves, do you not see? (51:20-21)*.

The Holy Qur’an is also called *Adh-Dhikr* (the Reminder), that is, the reminder of every hidden potential and capacity within us. After discovering these abilities and aptitudes, we must then utilize them for our own self-development and self-expression (that is what is meant by *fa’ala*) in the manner prescribed by Allah so that righteous action becomes natural to us, as we are directed in this verse: *So set thy face for religion, being upright, the nature made by Allah in which He has created men... (30:30)*.

We must value the countless gifts bestowed on us by Allah and pray hard and work hard to develop them as we are instructed: *Certainly We have given thee abundance of good, so pray to thy Lord and sacrifice (108:1-2)*.

However, these natural as well as acquired blessings must be used not only for ourselves and our own families, but for all mankind, for that is the recipe for success individually and collectively, as the Holy Qur’an reminds us: *By the time! Surely man is in loss, except those who believe and do good, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to patience (103:1-3)*.

Finally, in order to preserve, reinforce and develop this quality of gratitude to the highest degree, we are advised to keep the company of the grateful ones, as the Holy Qur’an bids us: *Nay, worship Allah alone and keep the company of those who are*
grateful (39:66).

Even though as human beings we acknowledge the innumerable gifts of God, both tangible and intangible, yet we sometimes deviate from the path of gratitude. This transgression comes about from a variety of reasons, some of which are as follows:

*Man is created weak* (4:26), the Holy Qur’an tells us, and sometimes we do not truly appreciate the value of the gifts God has conferred on us. Sometimes through laziness we do not develop our talents. We may also forget our purpose on earth or may lack adequate education, or we may fall into evil ways through the temptations of Satan and his human friends. Some unfortunate ones even deny the existence of the Almighty and refuse the guidance of divine revelation, as the Holy Qur’an says: And Allah sets forth a parable: A town safe and secure, to which its means of subsistence came in abundance from every quarter; but it disbelieved in Allah’s favours, so Allah made it taste a pall of hunger and fear because of what they wrought (16:112).

The Holy Qur’an also points out another weakness of human beings when it says: *Surely man is kanud (ungrateful) to his Lord* (100:6). We all know that if you give a child something he likes every day for a hundred days he will show happiness and gratitude each time. But if one day you are unable to fulfil his need you know the response—something like: “You are bad. I don’t like you.” It seems as if this behaviour is not confined to children alone.

*(Kanud means: an ungrateful man or woman; a blamer of his Lord, one who remembers misfortunes and forgets favours, re-*
bellious, niggardly, avaricious. *Ardh kanud* means: land that produces nothing. (Lane))

Another weakness in human nature is to want more and more and more, never being contented and thankful but always feeling that a little bit more will make us happy. We fall into the “if only” trap. That is, “If only we have such and such, we will experience heaven on earth, all our problems will be solved and we will inhabit cloud nine forever”. An example of this kind of insatiable greed and the consequences of it are given in the Holy Qur’an when it mentions the fate of the people of Saba’: *Certainly there was a sign for Saba’ in their abode – two gardens on the right and the left. Eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks to Him. A good land and a Forgiving Lord! But they turned aside, so We sent upon them a violent torrent, and in place of their two gardens We gave them two gardens yielding bitter fruit and (growing) tamarisk and a few lote-trees. With this We requited them because they were ungrateful; and We punish none but the ingrate. And We made between them and the towns which We had blessed, (other) towns easy to be seen, and We apportioned the journey therein: Travel through them nights and days, secure. But they said: Our Lord, make longer stages between our journeys. And they wronged themselves; so We made them stories and scattered them a total scattering. Surely there are signs in this for every patient, grateful one* (34:15-19). They had a good land and a forgiving Lord, two flourishing gardens (self-sufficiency in food), safe trading in distant towns (economic prosperity), yet they said to the Almighty: *Our Lord, make longer stages between
our journeys. Eat of the sustenance of your Lord and give thanks, they were told, but they wanted more. Destruction, therefore, was their retribution.

The Russian short story by Tolstoy entitled How Much Land Does a Man Need? tells of a peasant who was never satisfied with the amount of land that he had. He was always grumbling, criticizing, carping and even quarrelling with his family and neighbours. A real kanud.

He always went in search of more land wherever he heard he could get it cheaply. One day a stranger passed through his village and gave him the good news that rich, productive land was being given away free in a certain region. “Free!” he said to himself. So he packed up his belongings and made for the place post haste.

The ruler and his people welcomed him warmly and informed him of the conditions: he could have as much land as the area he covered by walking from sunrise to sunset but there was a stern warning – he must return to the starting point before the sun went down. He walked and ran, walked and ran the whole day, but every time he thought of returning, he saw another piece of fertile land that he could not resist. At last, when he saw the sun going down, he started to hurry back to the place where the ruler and his group were encamped on a hill. The sun dipped just a few seconds before he could reach the tent and he fell dead.

The ruler smiled sadly and knowingly and told his people: “Bury him.” One of them said to the others: “It happens thus to all of them.”

How much land does a man need? How much of anything does a man need?
Brothers and sisters, in conclusion, let us all recall the example of Prophet Abraham as given to us in the Holy Qur’an.

_Surely Abraham was a model of virtue, obedient to Allah, upright, and he was not of the polytheists. Grateful for his favours. He chose him and guided him on the right path. And We give him good in this world; and in the Hereafter he is surely among the righteous (16:120-122)._
5. To neglect effort, or means, or the tools of work that Allah has provided for us, and to make du'a and sit down and wait for things to come, also amount to putting Allah to test. On the other hand, to plan is not against the will of Allah, but we must implore Him to guide us to the best plan and then to give us His help to implement it all the way through.

6. To be hurry and impatient for a desired answer and to feel despondent when it does not come and so abandon prayers as useless, will only lead to a life of misery, for this amounts to a rejection of Allah, Most High. Look how long it took for Allah to answer the du'a of Prophets Abraham and Ishmael! This was fulfilled in the coming of our Holy Prophet (sas) at least three thousand years after the du'a was made.

7. Du'a is so important that Allah will not care for us if we do not make supplication to Him (25:77).

8. Du'a is what lifts us from a state of utter helplessness to that of vicegerents of Allah on earth. Paradoxically, our weakness is the greatest source of our strength for we have recourse to the greatest Source of Power – Allah, Himself (27:62).

9. Allah may answer a request in four ways:
   (i) He may grant it immediately.
   (ii) He may refuse it at once.
   (iii) He may delay His answer.
   (iv) In His Wisdom and mercy, He may give us something better than what was asked for.

10. In regard to a du'a to remove a burdensome calamity from us, Allah answers in three ways:
    (i) He removes the difficulty quickly, or
    (ii) He gives us superhuman strength to endure it, or
    (iii) He makes the misfortune a means of intense delight to us for then we are forced to beseech Him in total helplessness, and when we are in that condition, we are close to Him and He, Himself, as it were, bears the pains and comforts our soul. That is why those who are advanced in spirituality actually make du'a for trials and tribula-
tions to befall them! The Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said: “Sorrow is my friend, for it brings me close to my Lord.” Thus we are commanded to make ourselves helpless before Allah in salah (even if there is no misfortune), and to consider Allah as Most Powerful and Most Merciful. That is the prerequisite to the granting of any request of ours.

11. Allah, Most High, treats us like a favourite friend. Sometimes He gives us what we ask for: “He gives you all that you ask for” and “Call upon Me and I shall answer you.” But we must not be one-sided, for Allah tells us that He will ask us for certain things, too, as we find in the Holy Qur’an: “And We shall certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits. And give news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them say: ‘Surely we are Allah’s and to Him we shall return.’” (2:155-156).

12. There are three ways of showing compassion to others; one is physical and the other is financial; but the third, du’ā, is the best, for it does not need worldly provisions and its scope is more extensive. As a result, it must become second nature for us to make supplication for others, including even our enemies. This will give us long life, as the Holy Qur’an says: “Whatever is of benefit to man, tarries in the earth” (13:17).

13. There is no contradiction between seeking physical means for the relieving of pain and making du’ā for the same, for Allah has reposed properties in physical things for the alleviation or removal of distress. For example, food relieves hunger, water assuages thirst, etc. Similarly, through Allah’s grace, du’ā helps to activate causes in the physical and spiritual worlds for the expulsion of pain and distress. Therefore, although Divine decree is a fact and it is absolute, yet there is much room for the use and benefit of du’ā, outside of those irrevocable decrees, and it is in this domain that du’ā comes into bloom. Even those who believe that everything is decreed before hand and therefore du’ā is of no avail, still visit
the doctors when they fall ill and they also look for outside help in other matters. Remember that from time immemorial, du'a and sadqah (charity) have been used by man to avert all but the irrevocable decrees of Allah.

14. Du'a and planning are not antithetical but are rather complementary and work, in fact, like blood brothers for the advancement of man, for planning is the natural corollary of du'a and du'a stimulates and attracts plans like a magnet. In fact, if Allah does not illumine our brain, no good plan can be born.

15. While it is true that without overtly and consciously making du'a some people succeed in their occupation only through what appears to be their brilliant planning, yet that success is only apparent and not real, for without du'a, every “success” is inevitably followed by pain, grief, sorrow and disgruntlement, for peace, security and tranquillity can never come through planning alone. Only through du'a can one get true happiness for du'a makes us recognize the Source of all favours and successes, and inspires in our hearts the sincerest feelings of humility and gratitude. On the other hand, the successes of others eventually increase them in pride, vanity, arrogance and hard-heartedness.

16. When a du'a is answered, it forges an unbreakable bond with Allah, and not only brings us closer to Him, but enables us to “see” Him in this very life. For just as Allah has told us to seek for signs of Him in the organization of the heavens and the earth (2:164), so, too, there are signs for His recognition in His acceptance of du'a. And just as a single flash of lightning can make us see our way out of a pit of darkness, so, too, can du'a illumine our lives and bring us face to face with Allah, Most High. But even more than that, du'a helps man to achieve the status of sainthood and to become an intercessor for lesser mortals.