

A Book of Religious Knowledge

**Third Edition
Revised and Expanded**



Waheed Ahmad

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6. Comparative Religions

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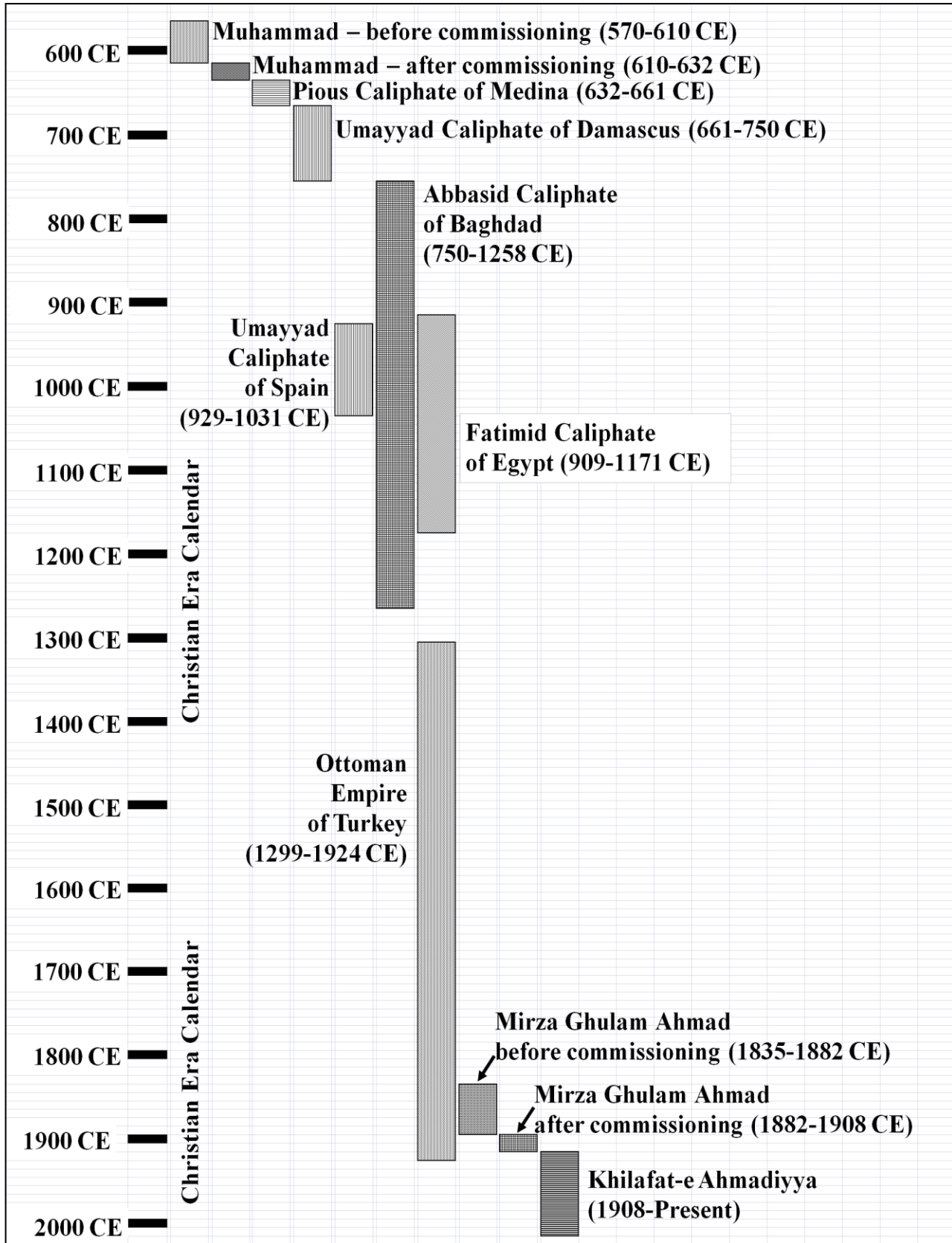
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Chart showing Caliphates and Empires in Islamic History



FOREWORD

The present book constitutes the third and much expanded edition of the original work published first in 1988 and then in 1995. The four thousand five hundred copies initially published are now out of print. Over the past two decades the writer has received several requests to republish the book and to expand upon the original content.

The publication of the First Edition of this book in 1988 grew out of the weekly instructions given over a three year period to the Ahmadi children of Vancouver in their Sunday school. It was indeed the enthusiasm displayed by these children and their obvious eagerness to learn more about their faith which encouraged the writer to undertake the initial preparation of this book. It is for this reason that the writer dedicates this book to the Ahmadi children of Vancouver, Canada. May God bless them and ever increase their appetite for learning. Our children are our most precious asset and their proper education and upbringing should not be taken lightly.

This religious study material is prepared primarily for the benefit of young Ahmadi Muslims who are living in countries where English is the primary language of instruction. The study of any religion is a fairly demanding task and the religion of Islam is no exception. An effort, therefore, has been made to present this religion, its history and relationships with other faiths in as systematic a manner as possible. Wherever possible, information is supplemented by tables, charts and maps which are always easier to understand than the written word.

The purpose of this book is to give the reader a broad outline of the religious knowledge pertaining to Islam and make available, in one volume, all necessary information which otherwise may have to be looked up in a number of different books.

For the sake of simplicity many beliefs and historic events have been dealt with rather briefly and consideration of space has caused many details to be omitted here and there. Nevertheless, the treatment of the various subjects presented here is quite adequate for most students. For those who wish to pursue further reading on these subjects, a selected bibliography is given at the end of the book.

This book is divided into six Sections, as follows:

Section 1 gives a brief outline as to what constitutes a religion before embarking upon a detailed review of the religion of Islam that includes its beliefs, acts of worship, codes for social and moral behaviour, institutions, concept of brotherhood, philosophy of life, sources of law, and misunderstandings about this faith. A special feature of this section is the inclusion of a chart showing all the Qur'anic and Biblical prophets arranged chronologically.

Section 2 is devoted to familiarisation with the Holy Qur'an and is intended to impart general knowledge about how the Holy Book of Islam came into being and what it contains.

Section 3 covers the life of the founder of Islam—the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him¹)—from his birth in 570 C.E. to his demise in 632 C.E. The section includes an

¹ It is customary among the Muslims to send salutations upon the Prophet Muhammad every time his name is taken orally or written down. In writing, the salutation is sometimes written in full and sometimes it is abbreviated and shown with a superscript such as ^{'pbuh'} meaning peace be upon him or by its Arabic equivalent ^{'saw'} —*salallahu alaihi wa sallam*. The reader should note that a salutation is also sent whenever the name of any prophet is taken.

overview of the land and people of Arabia, the character of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and the spread of Islam.

Section 4 deals with the Successors of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and the various Caliphate dynasties that followed. This section also includes Muslim contributions to the fields of science and philosophy and the development of sects in Islam. Some important groups among the Sunni and Shi'a branches are reviewed.

Section 5 is on Ahmadiyyat and the renaissance of Islam in the Latter Days and discusses as to what is Ahmadiyyat, what are the important differences between the Ahmadi and Sunni beliefs, what is meant by the term "Promised Messiah", similarities with Jesus Christ, institution of *Mujaddidiyyat* in Islam, preparation of the land of India, and a brief outline of the life of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}—the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam—including his major achievements and a list of his writings. This section also includes the system of Khilafat after the Promised Messiah^{as} and brief life sketches of the five Khalifas after him.

Section 6 is on the study of Comparative Religions and covers the various classifications of religions, their origin, essential beliefs, modes of worship, religious philosophies, wisdoms, and comparison with the religion of Islam. The review covers ten major religions of the world that include: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity. The section on Christianity also includes the development of sects and denominations in this religion.

At the end of the book is given an explanation of some Arabic and Urdu terms, which is followed by a bibliography and suggestions for further reading.

English rendering of the various Qur'anic verses presented in this book is based on the translation by Maulawi Sher 'Ali.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation and gratitude to all those persons who read the manuscript and made valuable comments and suggestions for its improvement. Foremost among the reviewers were Maulana Taha Syed and Maulana Umar Akbar in Canada. Their comments and remarks have helped immensely in removing several mistakes and improve the final draft. I would also like to extend my sincere gratitude to Mr. Lal Khan Malik, Amir, Jama'at Ahmadiyya Canada, and Sheikh Abdul Wadood, National Secretary, Isha'at, for arranging the reviews and following up on them. I must also acknowledge the valuable assistance provided by Maulana Munir-ud-Din Shams, Additional Wakilut-Tasneef, London, for arranging a thorough review of the final draft that resulted in further corrections and improvements. All responsibility for any remaining errors or omissions rests solely with the writer.

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This salutation takes the form of *alaihi salam*—on him be peace. Likewise, the Muslims send salutation of *radhiallahu anhu* (may God be pleased with him) on the Companions of the prophets and of *rahmahullahu anhu* (may God have mercy on him) on other saints and godly persons in Islamic history.

Section 1

THE RELIGION OF ISLAM

WHAT IS RELIGION?

The known history of mankind has always had some kind of religion. Even the primitive men living in caves and jungles believed in something beyond what they could perceive with their primary senses. These belief-structures have ranged from the primitive and animistic to the well developed and organised major creeds. Some of these religions are of recent origin but most of them are fairly old. Some ancient faiths have almost died out while several other religions are still practised in the world with their followings running into the millions. Some of the more notable creeds that are still prevalent include: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Before we embark upon the study of Islam and other religions of the world in this book, we must explain what we mean by the word *religion*. Religious scholars and social scientists have determined some common elements in the world's various religions that include:

- A set of beliefs
- A set of formal or ritual worships
- A code of ethics that includes what to do and what not to do, and
- A philosophy that binds all the above elements together

To summarise the above, *Religion is a system of beliefs, worships, social and moral codes and a philosophy of life*. These, then, are the four basic and fundamental aspects on which the foundations of every single one of the world's great religions are based. Despite many obvious differences among the various creeds, the above premises are common to all religions. In the absence of any one of these premises, an ideology cannot be classified as a religion.

Traditionally, religions are defined as having those sets of beliefs, ideologies and practices that are held or carried out in a theistic framework in which God plays a central role. The English word "religion" is derived from the Latin root *religio* which means holiness, sacredness or reverence for God. All religions are considered to be of Divine origin where important aspects of the faith have been communicated by God to man through the agency of revelation and inspiration. Many religions of the world clearly fit into this description. These include Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

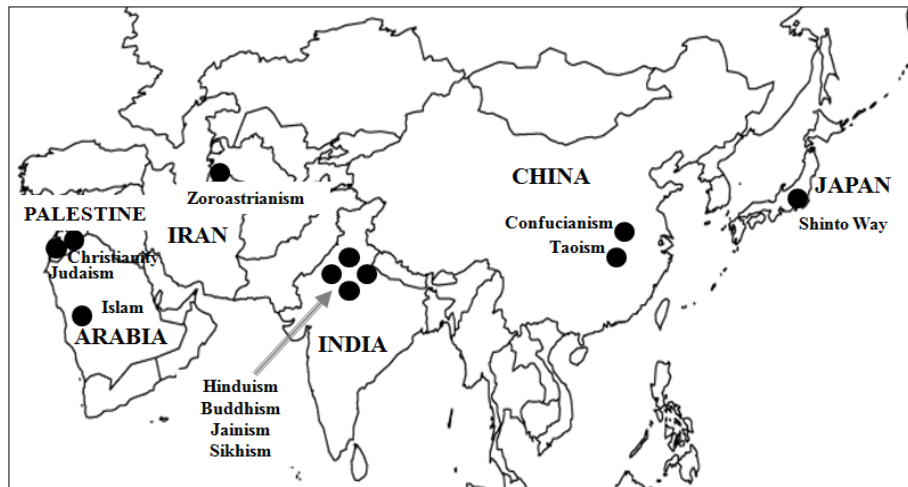
Some other ideologies—such as Confucianism and Taoism—have been traditionally viewed by scholars only as wisdom and philosophy, without including them in the sphere of religion. However, modern research has shown that there is enough evidence for their teachings to be considered of revelatory origin. The present lack of emphasis on the person of God in these teachings is simply due to changes that have taken place over the past twenty-five centuries. The study of ancient religions is very much like the study of archaeological findings where a researcher is forced to visualise the original condition of the artefact before the ravages of time took their toll.

The Shinto Way is included in the present study essentially due to the fact that a large segment of the Japanese population follows these traditions as their folk religion. There does not appear to be any single founder of this religion which appears to be based on Japanese traditions and mythology. The Sikh religion is considered by its followers to have been founded by Baba Guru Nanak in the sixteenth century CE. However, most of its elements are derived from Islam with some remnants of Hindu traditions. The Baha’i faith is not included in the present study. Initially proclaiming to be a sect of Shi’a Islam, Baha’ism now portrays itself to be an independent religion, claiming a following of about seven million people worldwide.

The concepts and rituals in man’s religion have continually evolved and became more rational and sophisticated as time went on. The primitive animistic beliefs of the Cave Man and the Bush Man gave rise to the modern religions of the past four thousand years. These major religions of the world originated in five geographic regions of the world, as follows:

Religion	Originated in	Religion	Originated in
Confucianism	China	Shinto	Japan
Taoism		Zoroastrianism	Iran
Hinduism	India	Judaism	Near East
Buddhism		Christianity	
Jainism		Islam	
Sikhism			

These are the great religions of the world that are not only responsible for all our accumulated wealth of wisdom, philosophy, ethics, and social and moral codes, but have influenced the culture, language and moral attitudes of almost every person living today.



Unfortunately, the last three centuries have witnessed a steady decline in our esteem and respect for religion in general. Newly armed with the tools of empirical investigation and rational thinking, we began to look down upon anything that could not be analysed in the laboratory or described with a neat mathematical equation. Due to our naiveté, we took religion and science to be two competing fields and, in our haste, rejected the former.

We human beings have been gifted with two important traits: a mind that can work out the physical intricacies of this universe and a soul that can perceive the subtle vibrations of a Higher Presence. While we hone our scientific skills to make further discoveries in the universe, let us not deprive the need of our soul to reach out and touch—so to speak—the very Source of this universe.

It should be mentioned that not all human beings follow a religion. Throughout history, there has been a class of people called atheists who denied the very existence of God.

Likewise there are people who call themselves agnostic and hold that the presence of a Supreme Being can neither be proved nor disproved. Furthermore, in many parts of the world, religious beliefs exist simply as folk religion and mythology. These primitive or tribal religions do not claim to have revealed books. There is a strong relationship between the existence of folk religions among the tribes and the lack of secular advancement in their past or present. It is estimated that nearly 80% of the world's population follows one of the eleven major faiths. Latest estimates of the religious population of the world are as follows:

Religion	Population	Religion	Population
Christianity	2.2 billion	Sikhism	25 million
Islam	1.6 billion	Judaism	15 million
Hinduism	1.0 billion	Jainism	4.2 million
Buddhism	498 million	Shinto	4.0 million
Chinese Religions	394 million	Zoroastrianism	2.6 million

MANY CREEDS OR ONE RELIGION?

Even a superficial study of the world's major religions would reveal the great diversity that exists in their beliefs and modes of worship. If we add to this the additional variation contributed by sectarian and denominational differences, we obtain a truly dazzling kaleidoscope of moral, social and spiritual perspectives that are now present in the world. However, many a sage has remarked that different religions are merely different roads that all converge upon the same Reality. Thus, a deeper examination of these religious and denominational viewpoints reveals that there is a lot more that is common among them than is generally accepted by the public. It is quite true that despite their apparent differences, all religions aim to provide a basic framework for man's social, moral, intellectual and spiritual development. This development is part of an evolutionary process in which all the prophets have played a key role in reviving man's lost contact with God. As we distance from the advent of a prophet, spiritual and moral deterioration sets in, and the need for a new prophet becomes evident. The present age is also indicative of this situation and calls for a reformer to re-establish the lost contact with God.

WHAT IS ISLAM?

Originating in the land of Arabia, Islam is the last of the great religions of the world. It contains in it the essential principles and teachings of all earlier faiths. It is a strongly monotheistic creed with the worship of One God as its central theme. It was founded by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} some 1400 years ago and establishes the continuity of God's revelation that had descended on earlier prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

One important point to be considered when talking about Islam is that this religion is not called 'Muhammadanism', as is often mistakenly understood in the West. Many European writers have named this faith after its founder, in the same way in which Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Christianity are named. Islam, however, is one of the few religions of the world that is named after a fundamental principle. In the Arabic language, the word 'Islam' is derived from the root *slm* that carries the meaning of 'peace' and 'submission'. This is so because Islam is a religion of 'peace' with humanity, and 'submission' to the will of God. It is truly remarkable that this is the only religion that carries

its entire philosophy in its short, two-syllable name. In fact, it can be stated quite categorically that any aspect that does not comply with the above two root meanings, is a total deviation, innovation or novelty, and does not belong to the religion of Islam. In the philosophy of Islam, all earlier prophets and their followers were in fact ‘Muslims’—since they all submitted to the will of God at the coming of the new revelation or prophecy. This universal perception, that all religions of the world are somehow one entity, is unique to Islam.

In a more limited sense, however, Islam does represent the formalisation of this faith by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, fourteen centuries ago. Thus, with its extensive beliefs and worships, its detailed moral and social codes, and with its very rational philosophy, Islam is the religion, the creed, and the way of life of nearly 1.6 billion people in the world.

The entire philosophy of Islam can be summed up in two short phrases that cover the rights of God and man:

- To worship God, and
- To be kind to God’s creation

These are the two fundamental principles of Islam that also sum up its entire essence. The first is the basis of man’s relationship with God while the second is the basis of man’s relationship with fellow human beings and other creatures on this planet. The first represents man’s submission to the will of God and the second represents peace with humanity and other life forms. It is reported that if anyone ever asked the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} as to why he was sent, he would always reply:

“To establish the Unity of God and to join ties of relationship.”

Islam is an extremely structured system in which all its tenets and practices are very clearly defined in its Holy Book—the Qur’an, and by its founder—the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The system operates by laying down a set of essential beliefs for the follower and then exhorts him or her to act in a certain manner that is designed to fulfil the individual’s ordained purpose in life. The beliefs form the foundation on which the individual builds his two important relationships: one with God and the second with fellow human beings.

Islam is not a new religion in the sense that most of its teachings are those that were also given to the earlier peoples such as the Jews and the Christians. Islam, however, does bring together in one place the best of all earlier teachings and presents them in a perspective completely unknown before. Islam offers far greater insight into the various attributes of God, the purpose of sending messengers, the nature of the Day of Judgment, and man’s relationship with God.

Finally, the religion of Islam is not a mere collection of rites and rituals but a complete system of strong moral convictions, true humility brought to the worship of God, carrying out of service to humanity with full sincerity, giving up of worldly desires in favour of spiritual achievements, a moral courage in undertaking what one believes to be right and in abstaining from what one believes to be wrong, and a genuine fear of displeasing God.

The study of Islam in this book is undertaken under a number of headings that include: Islamic beliefs, acts of worship, codes for moral behaviour, Islamic institutions, purpose of man on earth, sources of Islamic law, and the Philosophy of Islam.

ISLAMIC BELIEFS

In the philosophy of Islam, there are two aspects to man's actions: his beliefs or *Iman* and his actions or '*Amal*. The former pertains to what we think in our minds and the latter relates to what we actually do. The beliefs are the foundation of Islam, hidden from view but supporting the superstructure of all our actions. The belief—or faith—is concerned with our thoughts, our principles and our convictions. For our actions to be meaningful in the Eyes of God, they must be based on proper beliefs. In the religion of Islam, *Iman* also constitutes acceptance of the truth brought by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The rejection of this truth amounts to *kufir* or disbelief.

Every religion carries a core of basic beliefs that support its superstructure. Islam shares all its fundamental beliefs with other major religions of the world. In fact, there is not a single important belief in Islam that does not already exist in some form in another religion. The beliefs in Islam are not based on mythology, superstition or irrational conviction. They are presented in the Holy Qur'an in a systematic way and are supported by logical and cogent arguments. In Islam, a belief must make sense to the believer; otherwise it becomes a superstition or dogma. Although a Muslim maintains a number of beliefs, there are six articles of faith in which he *must* believe. These include:

1. Belief in One God,
2. Belief in the Angels,
3. Belief in all the Divinely appointed Prophets and Messengers,
4. Belief in all the Scriptures or Holy Books of the world,
5. Belief in the Day of Judgement, and
6. Belief in God's decree and plan in the universe.

1. Belief in God

Belief in God is the foundation of the religion of Islam and is central to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. In the religion of Islam, God is that Supreme Being that exists by Himself and is infinite in all perfections. In this respect, the God of Islam is no different from the God of Krishna, Zoroaster, Abraham, Isaac, Moses, David or Jesus.

The proper name of God in the Arabic language is Allah. The word 'Allah' existed among the Arabs even before Islam. While the Arabs accepted Allah as the supreme deity, they also subscribed to a pantheon of lesser gods in the form of animals and stones. The general word for god or deity in Arabic is *Ilah*. The concept of a Supreme Being has existed in earlier religions and in this respect the word Allah in Arabic represents:

El, of the Canaanites

Yhwh (Yahweh or Jehovah), of the Hebrews as the proper name of God

ELOHIM, of the Hebrews as a general word meaning god (since the word Yahweh was not pronounced due to its sacredness, the Hebrews substituted the words Elohim (God) and Adoni (my Lord) during the reading of the Torah.

Elaha, in the Aramaic language of Jesus Christ

Yazdan or **Khuda**, of the Persians

Brahman, in Sanskrit

Waheguru, (meaning Wonderful Lord) of the Sikhs

Ahura Mazda, (the Lord of Light and Wisdom) in the Avesta language of Zoroastrianism

Shangdi or **Zhenzhu**, in the Chinese language

Deus, in Latin

Theos, in Greek

Dieu, in French

Gott, in German, and

God, in the English language

Although the proper name of God in Islam is Allah, we know Him generally through His many attributes. God’s true nature is incomprehensible and completely beyond our reach and understanding. We cannot know as to what exactly He is and how exactly He exists. Our knowledge of God is limited to His various attributes and manifestations. In the philosophy of Islam, God’s attributes fall into two categories: Immanent (*tanzeehi*) and Interactive (*tashbeehi*).

The **Immanent** (or inherent) attributes of God concern strictly His own Self, in isolation from anything else. These attributes describe God as Eternal, Self-Subsisting, Self-Sufficient, Ever-Living, and Everlasting. These immanent attributes do not require the existence of a universe or creation. God held these attributes even when nothing was in existence, or nothing may be in existence some day. These Immanent attributes are shared with no one else in the universe, nor is man or anyone else expected to emulate them.

The **Interactive** attributes of God—as the word implies—relate to the manner in which God deals with His creation. In this interaction between God and what He has created, He displays a number of consistent traits. Thus, He is not only the Creator, Originator and Fashioner of all things, but also their Nourisher, Provider, Protector, Sustainer and Preserver. His perception and knowledge extends as easily to the inter-atomic spaces as it does to the astronomical distances separating the galaxies. In this respect He is All-Seeing, All-Knowing, All-Aware, All-Hearing and Watchful. In dealing with His creation, God is Benign, Gracious, Merciful and Compassionate. He is the One Who gives life and He is the One Who causes death. For human beings, He is a very personal God Who is Just, Generous, Loving, Forgiving, Patient and Oft-Returning. He exalts and abases; honours and avenges. He listens to our supplications, forgives our excesses and guides us to the right path. Such Interactive attributes may be shared with other creatures to a limited extent and Man is definitely expected to emulate them in his own character.

Where His power and control of the universe is concerned, God is said to be: High, the Mighty, the Sublime, the Sovereign, the Majestic, the Powerful, the Exalted, the Strong, the Master and Controller of All Things.

In the teachings of Islam, nearly one hundred different attributes exist that describe various aspects of God (see Table below). The position of God is so central to this religion that He is referred to in the Holy Qur’an through his name, attributes or pronouns, nearly as many times as the total number of verses.

Table listing the various attributes of God

Al-Ahad (الأحد)	The One	Al-Mudhill (المدلل)	The Abaser
Al-Akhir (الأخير)	The Last	Al-Muhaimin (المهمين)	The Protector
Al-Awwal (الأول)	The First	Al-Muhsi (المحصي)	The Reckoner

Al-‘Adl (العدل)	The Just	Al-Muhyi (المحيي)	The Giver of Life
Al-‘Afu (العفو)	The Pardoner	Al-Mu‘id (المعيد)	The Restorer
Al-‘Ali (العلي)	The High	Al-Mu‘izz (المعزز)	The Honourer
Al-‘Alim (العليم)	The All-Knowing	Al-Mujib (المجيب)	The Responder
Al-‘Azim (العظيم)	The Great	Al-Mu‘min (المؤمن)	The Guardian of Faith
Al-‘Aziz (العزيز)	The Mighty	Al-Mumit (المميت)	The Bringer of Death
Al-Badi‘ (البدیع)	The Incomparable	Al-Muntaqim (المنتقم)	The Avenger
Al-Ba‘ith (الباعث)	The Resurrector	Al-Muqaddim (المقدم)	The Expediter
Al-Baqi‘ (الباقی)	The Everlasting	Al-Muqit (المقیت)	The Nourisher
Al-Bari‘ (البارئ)	The Originator	Al-Muqsit (المقسط)	The Equitable
Al-Barr (البر)	The Beneficent	Al-Muqtadir (المقتدر)	The Dominant
Al-Basir (البصير)	The All-Seeing	Al-Musawwir (المصور)	The Fashioner
Al-Basit (الباسط)	The Expander	Al-Muta‘ali (المتعالی)	The Most Exalted
Al-Batin (الباطن)	The Hidden	Al-Mutakabbir (المتكبر)	The Majestic
Ad-Dhar (الضار)	The Distresser	An-Nafi‘ (النافع)	The Benefactor
Dhu-al-Jalal wa-al-Ikram (ذوالجلال والإكرام)	The Lord of Majesty & Bounty	An-Nur (النور)	The Light
Al-Fattah (الفتاح)	The Opener	Al-Qabid (القابض)	The Constrictor
Al-Ghaffar (الغفار)	The Forgiver	Al-Qadir (القادر)	The Powerful
Al-Ghafur (الغفور)	The All-Forgiving	Al-Qahhar (القهار)	The Subduer
Al-Ghani (الغني)	The Independent	Al-Qawiy (القوي)	The Strong
Al-Hadi (الهادي)	The Guide	Al-Qayyum (القائم)	The Subsisting
Al-Hafiz (الحافظ)	The Preserver	Al-Quddus (القدوس)	The Holy
Al-Hakam (الحكم)	The Judge	Ar-Rafi‘ (الرافع)	The Exalter
Al-Hakim (الحكيم)	The Wise	Ar-Rahim (الرحيم)	The Merciful
Al-Halim (الhalim)	The Forbearing	Ar-Rahman (الرحمن)	The Gracious
Al-Hamid (الحميد)	The Praiseworthy	Ar-Raqib (الراقب)	The Watchful
Al-Haqq (الحق)	The Truth	Ar-Rashid (الرشيد)	The Guide to the Right Path
Al-Hasib (الحاسب)	The Reckoner	Ar-Ra‘uf (الرحوف)	The Kind
Al-Haiy (الحي)	The Living	Ar-Razzaq (الرزاق)	The Provider
Al-Jabbar (الجابار)	The Compeller	As-Sabur (الصبور)	The Patient
Al-Jalil (الجليل)	The Sublime	As-Salam (السلام)	The Source of Peace
Al-Jami‘ (الجامع)	The Gatherer	As-Samad (الصمد)	The Eternal
Al-Kabir (الكبير)	The Great	As-Sami‘ (السميع)	The All-Hearing
Al-Karim (الكريم)	The Generous	Ash-Shahid (الشهيد)	The Witness
Al-Khabir (الخبير)	The All-Aware	Ash-Shakur (الشكور)	The Grateful
Al-Khafid (الخافض)	The Abaser	At-Tawwab (التواب)	The Oft-Returning
Al-Khaliq (الخالق)	The Creator	Al-Wadud (الودود)	The Loving
Al-Latif (اللطيف)	The Subtle	Al-Wahhab (الوهاب)	The Bestower
Al-Majeed (المجيد)	The Glorious	Al-Wahid (الواحد)	The Unique
Al-Majid (الماجد)	The Magnificent	Al-Wajid (الواجد)	The Finder
Al-Malik (الملك)	The Sovereign	Al-Wakil (الوكيل)	The Trustee
Malik-al-Mulk (مالك الملك)	The Owner of Sovereignty	Al-Wali (الوالي)	The Patron
Al-Mani‘ (المانع)	The Shielder	Al-Waliy (الولي)	The Friend
Al-Matin (المتين)	The Firm	Al-Warith (الوارث)	The Inheritor
Al-Mu‘akhkhir (المؤخر)	The Postponer	Al-Wasi‘ (الواسع)	The Boundless
Al-Mubdi‘ (المبدئ)	The Originator	Az-Zahir (الظاهر)	The Manifest
Al-Mughni (المغني)	The Enricher		

In Islamic theology, the one most emphasised Immanent aspect of God is of course His uniqueness, oneness or unity:

Say, “He is Allah, the One;
Allah, the Independent and Besought of all.
He begets not, nor is He begotten;
And there is none like unto Him.” (Al-Quran, 112:2-5)

In these four short lines, one can appreciate the extremely clear, unambiguous and logically perfect statement about God in Islam. He has to be One since superlatives cannot be shared. He has to be Eternal since he needs to exist by Himself. He cannot be begotten, nor would He beget, so that He alone remains the sole God. And of course, there is none like unto Him—for He excels in all things good and beautiful—He is undoubtedly Unique.

Some more of God’s attributes are described in the following words in the Holy Qur’an:

“Allah—there is no God but He,
the Living, the Self-Subsisting and All-Sustaining.
Slumber seizes Him not, nor sleep.
To Him belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth.
Who is he that will intercede with Him except by His permission?
He knows what is before them and what is behind them;
and they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He pleases.
His Throne extends over the heavens and the earth;
and the care of them burdens Him not;
and He is the High, the Great.” (Al-Qur’an, 2:256)

Similarly, the Qur’anic Chapter, *Al-Hadid*, describes some more attributes of God, as follows:

“Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allah;
and He is the Mighty, the Wise.
His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth;
He gives life and He causes death;
and He has power over all things.
He is the First and the Last,
and the Manifest and the Hidden,
and He knows all things full well.
He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods,
then He settled Himself on the Throne.
He knows what enters the earth and what comes out of it,
and what comes down from heaven and what goes up into it.
And He is with you wheresoever you may be.
And Allah sees all that you do.
His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth,
and to Allah are all affairs referred.
He causes the night to pass into the day
and causes the day to pass into the night;
and He knows full well all that is in the breasts.” (Al-Qur’an, 57:2-7)

In the Islamic philosophy, God’s actions are neither frivolous nor lack purpose and design. Islam tells us that they are driven by equity, justice and the requirements of wisdom. Having brought His creation into existence, God deals with it with compassion, mercy and

care. Thus, one of the most often repeated phrases in the Holy Quran is that ‘God is Compassionate and Merciful’.

In the religion of Islam, God is ultimately responsible for all happenings and interactions in the universe. He is not only the Creator of the universe and Nourisher of all life forms, but He is also the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and the Master of all masters. Not a leaf stirs among the woods and not a photon moves among the heavens without His knowledge and implicit consent. It is to this all-pervading presence of God that the Muslim Holy Book, the Qur’an, refers to in the following words:

“... so whithersoever you turn, there will be the face of Allah.” (*Al-Qur’an*, 2:116)

In the grand scheme of things, and for yet not fully understood reasons, God in His wisdom created Man. According to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}:

“I was a hidden Treasure. I created the worlds because I desired to be known.” (*Hadith Qudsi*)

For every possible need of His creation, we find in God an appropriate attribute. To fulfil our physical requirements, He is the Nourisher and the Provider. To fulfil our psychological needs, He is the Companion, the Friend and the Refuge. He is our Supporter when we are dejected, our Hope when we are defeated, our Guide when we are strayed and our Light when we are lost. He is our Refuge, our Home, and our Place of Return. If we deviate from His dictates, we find Him concerned, watchful and sometimes reproving. If we repent and turn unto Him, we find Him Kind, Compassionate and Forgiving—taking us back into His open Arms. He speaks to us today just as He spoke to His chosen people in the days of old. He is ready to take ten paces towards us if we are only willing to take but one step towards Him. He is willing to honour the bond of love even if we fall short in our obligations to maintain this relationship. His Wing of mercy and His Arm of protection are always with us—in good health as well as in adversity. Not only is He our Lord, but also our Friend, our Companion, and our Beloved. Fortunes in this world are made and lost; friendships in this world are made and end in parting; but a bond of love once forged with the Creator lasts forever!

In summary, Islam presents some of the most convincing, logical and philosophically rational concepts regarding the Supreme Being. The Islamic concept of God is extremely simple, straightforward and completely devoid of ambiguity, mythology and inconsistency. Although the God of Islam is an invisible Being, we can see His Face amidst the petals of a blooming rose. Although God in Islam is a non-corporeal Being, yet we can see His Hand behind the motions of the farthest galaxies. Although the God of Islam is beyond the limitations of space and time, yet we can feel His presence in the confines of our own hearts.

The theology of Islam is strongly monotheistic and is free of animistic beliefs, legends and mythology. It presents the Supreme Being in a clear, logical, and rational manner—describing His attributes in considerable detail. The basic philosophy of all worship in Islam is to emulate the attributes of God in one’s own self and to try to please Him in every possible way. Great emphasis is placed in this religion on developing a personal relationship with God—a relationship that is based on respect for God’s powers and understanding of His attributes.

2. Belief in the Angels

All Near Eastern religions believe in the concept of angels as supernatural beings or spirits acting as God's functionaries. The concept of their nature, however, varies from religion to religion. In the Abrahamic religions, the angels are considered celestial beings that perform their functions between Heaven and earth. In the religion of Islam—as in Judaism and Christianity—angels are considered God's messengers and the 'powers' through which God acts. Thus, bringing of Divine communication, conveying of warnings, giving of good news, guiding of people, affording protection and acts of destruction—all such undertakings that are ultimately attributed to God, are considered to have been carried out through His functionaries, the angels. In Islam, the angels have sometimes been likened to the forces of Nature and sometimes as spiritual beings. However, as to their true nature, we know very little.

The Arabic word *malak* for angel is derived from the root *mlk*, carrying the meaning of possession, mastership, sway, authority, power and ability to carry out something. The Hebrew word '*malach*' for angel carries the same sense. In the Holy Qur'an, angels are also referred to by the word *rasul* meaning 'messenger' as they convey God's message to the people. Likewise, the English word 'angel' that is derived from the Greek *Angelos*, also means messenger or envoy.

In Islamic theology, angels do not have the choice of right and wrong; they carry out the command of God and cannot disobey it. In this respect, the angels act more like the forces and powers of nature.

Some of the angels mentioned by name in Islamic theology include: Jibril (Gabriel in the Bible) who brings revelations to the prophets; Mika'il (Michael in the Bible) who is in charge of sustenance; Israfil (Raphael in the Bible) who shall blow the trumpet on the Day of Judgment; 'Izra'il (Azriel in Judaism) who is popularly known as the Angel of Death; Ridwan who guards Heaven; and Munkar and Nakeer who will question the dead in their graves.

3. Belief in the Prophets

Perhaps the most unique aspect of Islam is its recognition of all bona fide religious founders and prophets in the world. Thus, a Muslim believes not only in the prophets of ancient Israel, but also in the prophetic traditions of India, China, Iran and other parts of the world. Belief in all the prophets is an article of faith in Islam. This universal truth is expressed in the Holy Qur'an as:

“And for every people there is a Messenger.” (*Al-Quran*, 10:48)

The Arabic and Hebrew word for prophet is *nabi* which is derived from the root *nba*, meaning to announce or give news of unseen matters. The prophets are called 'nabi' because they give good news to the believers, warnings to the disbelievers and make prophecies about future events. The English word 'prophet' is derived from the Greek word *prophetes* and carries the same sense of prophecy making that is present in the Arabic equivalent. It should be understood that while prophets of God do make prophecies, their function is not limited only to this act.

In the Holy Qur'an, the prophets are also referred to as *rasul* or messenger. This is because they are the message-bearers of God's commands to human beings. The words 'prophet' and 'messenger' are used interchangeably in the Holy Qur'an without any distinction. Some scholars have tried to create a difference between the two terminologies stating that the word *rasul* is applicable to Law bearing prophets. This, however, is not supported by the Qur'anic evidence.

The basic function of the prophets is to convey God's message to the people that they receive through the process of revelation, inspiration, visions and dreams. Historic evidence indicates that prophets in all communities and religions are honest, kind, highly enlightened and peace-loving individuals who have undertaken the task of reforming their peoples and guiding them on the right path. They are not always the most powerful, the most secularly-educated and the richest persons in the worldly sense. Their message is generally considered radical by the populace and they are invariably opposed, threatened and sometimes driven out of their homes. In turn, they display a remarkable show of fortitude, patience and perseverance in continuing their work of teaching, preaching and reforming their communities.

Table listing the Biblical and Qur'anic prophets in the Near East

Period	Old Testament	Qur'an	Remarks / Historical reference
1. THE EARLY PROPHETS			
4000 BC	Adam	Adam	The first prophet. Exact period unknown.
	Enoch	Idris	Grandson of Adam. Also Akhnukh and Hanuk in Arabic.
	Noah	Nuh	Prophet of the Great Flood. Nuh is Niyuh or Jal-Plavan Manu (Manu of the Great Flood) in Hindu traditions.
2. THE HOUSE OF ABRAHAM			
2165 BC	Abraham	Ibrahim	From the progeny of Noah; built the Ka'ba with his son, Ishmael.
	Lot	Lut	Nephew of Abraham
2075 BC	Ishmael	Isma'il	Abraham's son from Hagar
2065 BC	Isaac	Ishaq	Abraham's son from his wife Sarah
2005 BC	Jacob	Ya'qub	Son of Isaac
1914 BC	Joseph	Yusuf	Son of Jacob. Hebrews followed Joseph to Egypt.
?		Hud	Likely an Arabian prophet, sent to the people of 'Ad
?		Salih	Likely an Arabian prophet, sent to the people of Thamud
?		Shu'aib	Likely an Arabian prophet, sent to the people of Midian
3. MOSAIC PERIOD — Chronology of Moses is uncertain.			
1525 BC	Moses	Musa	Exodus of Jews from Egypt in 1479 BC or 1290 BC; Moses may have been born around 1525 BC or 1336 BC (these dates are explained later).
	Aaron	Harun	Brother of Moses
4a. PROPHETS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM OF ISRAEL			
1040 BC	Samuel		Two books of the Old Testament (OT) are named after him
1020 BC	Gad		Advisor to Prophet-King David
1010 BC	Nathan		Establishment of the United Kingdom of Israel
1010 BC	David	Dawud	The second king of Israel. Writer of the Psalms.
971 BC	Solomon	Sulaiman	Wrote the Proverbs & the Song of Solomon in the OT.
4b. PROPHETS IN THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL			
931 BC	Ahijah		Prophesied the break-up of the Kingdom after Solomon
920 BC	Iddo		His writings are referred to in 2 Chronicles but did not survive
890 BC	Jehu		A Prophet-King.
875 BC	Elijah	Elias	Taken up alive to Heaven in Jewish belief. Expected to return.
860 BC	Micaiah		
851 BC	Elisha	Al-Yasa	Successor of Elijah.

788 BC	Jonah	Yunus	Also known as Dhul-Nun (of the whale). A book in the OT.
767 BC	Amos		A book in the Old Testament (OT).
755 BC	Hosea		A book in the OT.
737 BC	Oded		Capital Samaria conquered by Assyria in 722 BC
4c. PROPHETS IN THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH (Contemporaneously with the Northern Kingdom)			
931 BC	Shemaiah		
900 BC	Azariah s/o Oded		Some scholars equate Biblical Azariah with the Qur'anic 'Uzair.
895 BC	Hanani		
865 BC	Jahaziel		
840 BC	Obadiah		A book in the OT.
825 BC	Joel		A book in the OT.
740 BC	Isaiah		A book in the OT.
734 BC	Micah		A book in the OT.
650 BC	Nahum		A book in the OT.
635 BC	Zephaniah		A book in the OT.
635 BC	Huldah		
625 BC	Jeremiah		A book in the OT.
620 BC	Habakkuk		A book in the OT.
605 BC	Daniel		A book in the OT. Fall of Jerusalem 586 BC. Israelites exiled.
593 BC	Ezekiel	Dhul-Kifl	A book in the OT.
?	Job	Ayyub	A book in the OT.
520 BC	Haggai		A book in the OT.
520 BC	Zechariah		A book in the OT.
480 BC	Ezra	'Uzair	Some scholars equate Qur'anic 'Uzair with Biblical Azariah.
433 BC	Malachai		A book in the OT. The last prophet of the OT (d. 415 BC).
5. THE CHRISTIAN ERA			
?	Zechariah	Zakariya	The father of Yahya (John the Baptist)
3 BC	John the Baptist	Yahya	Baptised Jesus Christ
4 BC	Jesus	Isa	Put on the cross; escaped to India; buried in Kashmir.
6. THE DAWN OF ISLAM			
570 CE		Muhammad	Died in 632 CE

In the Abrahamic religions—that include Judaism, Christianity and Islam—Adam was the first known prophet. In the Islamic teachings, however, he was not the first man as human beings already existed. Adam did, however, mark that stage in human evolution when man could be taught the difference between right and wrong and could be held accountable for his actions.

The religious tradition of the Near East is by far the richest in the world and most of the prophets that are known to the world appeared in this area. The Holy Qur'an mentions some twenty-six prophets by name that appeared in the Near East while the Bible mentions some fifty or so such persons. An overview of the prophetic tradition in the Near East indicates six distinct periods which are shown graphically in the Table on the previous pages and are described in some detail below.

1. The Early Prophets

The earliest known prophet was, of course, Adam. Historians place the time of his advent around 4000 years Before Christ and believe that he lived in the fertile area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers known as Mesopotamia ('between rivers' in the Greek language). Contrary to popular belief, Adam was not the first man. People already existed

before him. Modern research in the science of evolution demonstrates this fact very clearly that human beings evolved, over an extremely long period of time, from simpler and more primitive life form. Adam marks that specific stage in this evolutionary process at which God started to communicate with human beings and gave them the first moral and social commandments.

Among the early generations of Adam rose such notable prophets as Idris and Nuh. Idris is also known as Akhnukh and Hanuk in Arabic and is likely the same prophet as Enoch of the Bible. Both the Bible and the Holy Qur'an give detailed accounts of the Great Flood that came during the time of Noah and took many lives while Noah and his followers took refuge in an Ark that he had built according to Divine command.

2. The House of Abraham

After a period of few known prophets, we come to the time of Abraham in around 2165 BC which marks the establishment of one of the most noble families in history—the House of Abraham. The Prophet Abraham has the distinction to be the Patriarch of not only the Israelites but also the Quraish of Mecca among whom the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was born. Three major faiths of the world—namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam—appeared among his progeny.

A contemporary of Abraham was the Prophet Lot whose people were guilty of a great abomination and were punished by God.

The two sons of Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, were both prophets. Abraham and Ishmael are credited with the building of the Ka'ba at Mecca. From Abraham's second son Isaac, his grandson Jacob and great-grandson Joseph were both prophets. The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} is reported to have remarked that the Prophet Joseph had the noblest ancestry or lineage among all the people as his father, grandfather and great-grandfather were all prophets.

The Prophet Jacob received the title of *Isra'il*, meaning one who wrestles with God, in the Old Testament based on a dream of his in which he saw himself wrestling with God (Genesis 32:28). It is for this reason that the descendents of Jacob are referred to in history as *Banu Isra'il*—the Children of Israel (or simply Israelites).

The account of the Prophet Joseph is narrated at some length in the Holy Qur'an. Because of their envy for him, his brothers abandoned him in a waterless well from where he was rescued and taken to Egypt by some travellers. There he was sold to a nobleman as a slave. After being wrongfully accused of indecency by the nobleman's wife, Joseph was thrown in prison. While there, he earned a reputation for correctly interpreting dreams and came to the notice of the king who eventually released him and appointed him his governor. His appointment in Egypt encouraged many Israelites to migrate to that land from their homeland in Canaan. After the death of Joseph, the later kings of Egypt began to mistreat the Israelites who spent the next three hundred years in bondage and servitude under their Egyptian masters.

The time period of the three Arabian Prophets—Hud, Salih and Shu'aib—is not known accurately. Most scholars place them after Noah and before Moses. No Biblical counterparts are known of these three. The Prophet Hud was sent to the People of 'Ad, the Prophet Salih was sent to the People of Thamud, and the Prophet Shu'aib was sent to the People of Midian. The Holy Qur'an mentions the destruction of the 'Ad and the Thamud as a result of their rejection of the prophets sent to them.

3. The Mosaic Period

The period of slavery of the Israelites ended with their exodus from Egypt under the command of Moses who appears to be the most majestic figure of the Old Testament. The Torah or the first five books of the Old Testament are also known as the Books of Moses and the law that he gave to his people is known as the Mosaic Law.

The account of Moses is also narrated in the Holy Qur'an with some detail. He was born among the Israelites in Egypt who were being persecuted by the Pharaoh. His mother, in fear of him being taken away and executed, placed him in a reed basket and set it afloat in the River Nile. The Pharaoh's wife spotted the floating basket and decided to adopt the baby. Thus, Moses was brought up in the Pharaoh's palace. After he grew up, he accidentally killed a soldier of the Pharaoh and, being afraid for his life, took flight to the land of Midian where he got married and lived for several years. On his way back to Egypt, Moses had a spiritual experience of the 'Burning Bush' where he spoke with God and got appointed as a prophet. At Moses' request, God also appointed his elder brother, Aaron, as a prophet to assist him. His task was to liberate Israelites from the tyranny of the Pharaoh. In order to prove that he was commissioned by God to liberate them, he showed the Pharaoh some Divine signs. The Pharaoh, however, rejected the signs and instead decided to exact his authority over Moses. During the secrecy of the night, Moses took the Israelites out of the city under Divine command and took them, miraculously, across an arm of the Red Sea. The Pharaoh and his soldiers tried to follow them but were overtaken by the tide and drowned.

For the next forty years, the Israelites moved from place to place in the Sinai Peninsula, never settling down in any one location for long. In the Israelite history, this period is known as the Wanderings in the Desert. Finally, the Israelites reached the land of Palestine promised to them in God's revelations. Moses, however, died before crossing the Jordan River and the Israelites entered their new homeland under the leadership of Joshua, the successor to Moses.

Biblical scholars and Egyptologists differ greatly with respect to Moses' chronology and the corresponding Pharaohs that lived during Moses' lifetime. The oldest date of Exodus is believed to be 1479 BC, at the end of the reign of Thutmose II (1492-1479 BC). Thutmose II had an unusually short life span and is reported to have died very young. His mummified body lies in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Based on this date for the Exodus, Moses may have been born during the reign of either Amenhotep I (1541-1520 BC) or Thutmose I (1520-1492 BC).

Some scholars believe that the Exodus took place nearly two centuries later, in 1290 BC, at the end of the reign of Ramses I (1292-1290 BC). It is reported that Ramses I died rather suddenly and his tomb was built in a hurry. His mummified body was brought to North America in 1860 and was kept on display at the Niagara Museum. The body was finally returned to Egypt in 2003.

4. The Kingdom Prophets

After their exodus from Egypt, the Israelites lived for a long time in the Canaan-Palestine area under a tribal system. Then, around 1043 BC, Saul became the first king of Israel. Around the same time, the first prophet, Samuel, was raised among the Israelites after the Mosaic period. Two of the Old Testament books, Samuel-1 and Samuel-2 are named after him. After Samuel came David, the first prophet-king of the Israelites. David consolidated the Israelite kingdom by uniting the various feuding tribes and considerably extended the

political territory. Two other prophets, Gad and Nathan were contemporaries of David and used to advise him on important matters.

David's son, Solomon, was also a prophet-king who followed after his father's death and became famous for his wisdom and justice. It was Solomon who built the Temple at Jerusalem towards which the Muslims used to face during their Prayers before the commandment came down to face the Ka'ba.

The six-hundred year period starting from the Prophet Samuel to the last Israelite Prophet, Malachi, is named as the Kingdom period since it was the first time in history that the Israelites had a kingdom of their own and exercised dominion over their own land. Israel thus became a state ruled by a hereditary king who in turn was bound by the Law of Torah and God's Covenant with the Chosen People. From a religious point of view, this six-hundred year period was the most glorious in the Israelite history when many prophets were raised among them, one after another. There was hardly any time when they were not blessed by the presence of a prophet among them.

During this six-hundred year period, some thirty prophets were raised among the Israelites including such well-known names as Elijah (Elias), Elisha (Yasa), Jonah (Yunus), Daniel (Daniyal), Ezekiel (Dhul-Kifl), Job (Ayyub) and Ezra² ('Uzair). Of all the Old Testament characters, none has been kept more alive in people's memory than the Prophet Elijah. He is described in the Scriptures as appearing mysteriously from an unknown background, fighting as a soldier in the way of God, helping the downtrodden, performing many miracles, and is said to have vanished up into the heavens in a blazing chariot. By Jewish tradition, Elijah is still alive and will reappear one day to usher in the Messiah and the final deliverer of mankind. By Christian and Islamic tradition, Elijah has already returned (in a metaphoric sense) in the person of John the Baptist. Malachi was the last of the Israelite prophets and with his death in 415 BC, the Old Testament comes to a close. The Jews today do not believe in any prophet after Malachi.

The newly established monarchy in Israel, however, did not last very long. There were strong rivalries between the northern and southern Jewish clans which eventually shattered this fragile alliance. After the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam became king but the United Kingdom of Israel broke up into two parts: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Northern Kingdom lasted until 722 BC when its capital, Samaria, fell to the conquering Assyrians. The Southern Kingdom of Judah lasted until 586 BC when its capital, Jerusalem, fell to the conquering Babylonians.

5. The Christian Era

The four hundred year interval between the death of Malachi and the birth of Jesus Christ is known in history as the 'Silent Years'. During this inter-Testamental³ period no prophets are known to have come in the Israelite areas. The silent years came to an end with the appearance of three prophets: Zechariah, John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.

In the Holy Qur'an, the mention of Zechariah's name is made along with other prophets implying that he, too, was a prophet of God. The Christians also regard Zechariah as a

² There is some disagreement among the scholars of Islam as to the equivalency of 'Uzair with the Biblical prophets. According to some, the Qur'anic 'Uzair is the Biblical Prophet Ezra (480 BC) while according to others 'Uzair is equivalent to the Biblical Prophet Azariah (900 BC) who was the son of Oded.

³ The inter-Testamental period refers to the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

prophet and his name is mentioned in the New Testament. It should be noted that the Zechariah of the Old Testament is a different prophet who lived from 520-490 BC in the Southern Kingdom of Judah and was a contemporary of the Prophet Haggai.

Zechariah's son, John the Baptist, was born about the same time as Jesus Christ and his mission was to herald and announce the coming of the Messiah. According to Jesus, John the Baptist represented the second coming of the Prophet Elijah. John the Baptist was eventually imprisoned by King Herod for denouncing his marriage to his brother's wife, Herodias. According to Christian belief, John the Baptist was executed by Herod Antipas although this outcome is disputed by some.

Jesus Christ was born among the Israelites and the New Testament traces his ancestry to the Prophet David. His given name was Isa and his title, *al-Masih* means 'the Anointed' one. The name Jesus Christ is the Greek rendering of his Hebrew name '*Isa al-Masih*'.

Although Jesus Christ's teachings were essentially the same as the Old Testament's, the Jews of his time rejected his claim to prophethood. This was because the Jews were still waiting for the second coming of the Prophet Elijah, as promised by Malachi in the Old Testament (Malachi 4:4-5). Jesus started his mission when he was about thirty-one years old. By the time he was about thirty-four, the opposition to his mission by the Jews and the Romans reached such an extent that he was put on the cross.

Of all the prophets in history, the life of Jesus Christ is perhaps the most controversial. There are four distinct beliefs today regarding his crucifixion and what happened to him afterwards:

(a) The Jews believe that Jesus died on the cross and, therefore, was not a true prophet because, according to the Bible, one who is crucified is accursed by God (Deuteronomy 21:23).

(b) The Christians of today believe that Jesus died on the cross and that his corpse was placed in a tomb. But after some time he was resurrected, visited his disciples on a few occasions and, soon afterwards, ascended to heaven. The Christians still await the second coming of Jesus Christ as the final deliverer of mankind.

(c) Common belief among most of the Muslims of today is that Jesus was not put on the cross at all, and that someone else resembling Jesus was crucified in his place. Jesus, instead, is supposed to have been raised to heaven, body and soul. The majority of Muslims also await the second coming of Jesus Christ.

(d) The belief of Ahmadi Muslims, based on the Bible and other historical evidence, is that Jesus was indeed put on the cross but only for a few hours. He was then taken down while still alive and was hidden in a tomb by his followers. After fully recovering from his wounds, Jesus left the Palestine area moving eastward to Afghanistan and eventually to Kashmir to fulfil his mission of preaching to the "lost sheep of the House of Israel". He is said to have died in Sri Nagar, the present day capital of Kashmir, where his grave exists in *mahalla* Khanyar. The Holy Qur'an mentions his death in verse 5:117 and of his migration to an elevated place in verse 23:51. There is more on this subject under the heading of Christianity in the Section on Comparative Religions.

It should be noted that Jesus Christ did not intend to found a new religion and told his followers that the Mosaic Law still applied to them. He impressed upon the people to acquire certain qualities such as charity, forgiveness, humility and a special love for God, which were fast disappearing among the Jews. The Christianity of today, with beliefs in the Trinity and the Eternal Sin, owes its origin to later developments and cannot be attributed to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

6. The Dawn of Islam

The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was born some six centuries after the birth of Jesus Christ and no other prophets are believed to have come during the interim period. A detailed account of his life is given in Section-3 of this book.

The majority of Muslims today believe that the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} is chronologically the last prophet and that no more prophets can come after him and that God's age old tradition of sending prophets to humanity has come to an end. On the contrary, the Ahmadi Muslims believe that the door to prophethood is still open with the condition that any new prophet must be a follower of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and not bring any new law of his own. We will read more about this controversial issue in Section-5 on Ahmadiyyat.

The prophets in other lands and religions

So far we have talked only about the prophets mentioned in the Bible and the Holy Qur'an that have appeared in the Near East. What about the prophets of other religions and nations? According to the Holy Qur'an:

“... and there is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent.” (35:25)

“And for every people there is a Messenger.” (10:48)

The Muslims, therefore, believe that earlier religions were also founded by God's messengers and that prophets came in earlier dispensations as well. Unfortunately, history of mankind has not kept a complete record of how many prophets or messengers of God have actually come to the world and what exactly did they accomplish. Many religions have come and gone, and historical records of many surviving religions are incomplete. At the same time, there is considerable debate among the religious scholars themselves as to who is a prophet and who is merely a saint or a wise man. Again, modern research into the lives of many so called wise men and philosophers is turning up evidence that these people received revelation and believed in and advocated the existence of God among their followers.

The modern study of comparative religions is helping a great deal in recognising common elements that exist among the various religions. By far the most common element in all religions is the presence of these great religious Reformers and Teachers. As stated earlier, these persons are known by various titles in various countries. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that these persons not only believed in God but also preached their message to the people.

Table showing the prophets of other lands and religions

Prophet	Religion	Country	Period
Sri Krishna	Hinduism	India	Circa 3000 BC
Sri Ram Chandar	Hinduism	India	?
Gautama Siddhartha Buddha	Buddhism	India	560-480 BC
Mahavira	Jainism	India	540-468 BC
Fu Hsi	Chinese faiths	China	Circa 2850 BC
Yu the Great (Sage King)	Chinese faiths	China	2200-2100 BC
King Wen of Zhou	Chinese faiths	China	1152-1056 BC
Lao Tzu (Lao Tze)	Taoism	China	604-524 BC
Confucius	Confucianism	China	551-479 BC
Mencius	Confucianism	China	371-289 BC
Zoroaster (Gr. Zarathustra)	Zoroastrianism	Iran	1050-950 BC
Socrates	?	Greece	469-399 BC
Luqman (status disputed)	?	Abyssinia	Circa 1100 BC

The recognition of prophets outside these three major religious centres—India, China and the Near East—is woefully lacking. A great deal of research is required to study the history of other nations and lands and to discern the role that certain men may have played as prophets and reformers. One such person that has recently been recognised in this role is Socrates (469-399 BC). Although little is known of this Greek philosopher other than what has been recorded in the dialogues of Plato and the writings of Xenophon, modern scholarship has started to view his role more and more as that of a prophet. It appears that his preaching of One God was in fact the basis for the charge against him that he was corrupting the minds of the Athenian youth. It was for this crime that he was sentenced to drink poison.

Although the Holy Qur’an is not explicit on the subject, many scholars believe that Luqman mentioned in the 31st Chapter was an African Prophet, perhaps from the land of Abyssinia.

4. Belief in the Revealed Books

Almost all religions accept the fact that God communicates with the human beings to impart knowledge, wisdom and the law. The mechanism of such communication is variously described as revelation, inspiration, dreams and visions.

Because of its acceptance of all prophets and messengers sent to humanity, Islam also accepts the validity of all Revealed Books or Scriptures. In the Holy Qur’an, reference is made to five revealed books:

- *Suhuf* (Scrolls) of Abraham — (87:20)
- *Taurah* (Law) of Moses — (3:4; 5:45)
- *Zabur* (Psalms) of David — (4:164)
- *Injil* (Gospels) of Jesus Christ — (5:47), and
- *Qur’an* (Recitation) revealed to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} (6:20)

Of the **Scriptures of Abraham**, nothing is known today. To begin with, these revelations were likely not put down in writing considering their antiquity. Secondly, some of the content may have been amalgamated in the Old Testament writings.

Table showing the 39 books of the Tanakh or the Hebrew Bible of Judaism

Categories	Books
Torah or Pentateuch (5 books)	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
Nevi'im (Prophets) (21 books)	<u>Former Prophets</u> (6): Joshua, Judges, Samuel (1 & 2), Kings (1 & 2). <u>Latter Major Prophets</u> (3): Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. <u>Minor Prophets</u> (12): Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.
Ketuvim (Writings) (13 books)	<u>Poetic books</u> (3): Psalms, Proverbs, Job. <u>Five Scrolls</u> (5): Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther. <u>Other books</u> (5): Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles (1 & 2)

The **Torah of Moses** comprises the first five books of the Tanakh or the Hebrew Bible and includes: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. Together, these five books are also known as Pentateuch. The Torah was passed down the generations by the word of mouth until it was finally written down some hundreds of years after Moses. The Tanakh or the Hebrew Bible contains, besides the five books of the Torah, 21 books under Nevi'im (Prophets) and 13 books under Ketuvim (Writings). Thus, there are a total of 39 books in the Tanakh or Hebrew Bible.

While the Jews call their Holy Book Tanakh, or Hebrew Bible, the Christians call it by the name of 'Old Testament', referring to the old covenant that God made with the Prophet Abraham.

The Protestant version of the Old Testament has exactly the same 39 books as in the Hebrew Bible, though in a somewhat different order. The Catholic version of the Old Testament, however, has seven additional books: Tobias, Judith, Machabees (1 & 2), Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, and Baruch, for a total of 46 books. The Eastern Orthodox version of the Old Testament has all the books in the Catholic version plus five additional books: Esdras, Maccabees (3 & 4), Prayer of Manasseh, and Letter of Jeremiah, for a total of 51 books.

It should be noted that the seven additional books of the Old Testament that are accepted only by the Catholic Church and the five additional books accepted only by the Eastern Orthodox Church are considered **Apocrypha** (meaning obscure) by the Protestants who do not regard them as canonical.

The original and authoritative Hebrew version of the Jewish Bible is known as the **Masoretic Text** (MT). This is the version used by Protestant translators of the Old Testament. The Masoretic Text was largely prepared by a group of Jews known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries CE to standardise the vocalisation of the Hebrew Bible.

The word **Septuagint** (meaning seventy) is used for the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Koine Greek (common Greek) language around the 3rd century BC. Also denoted by the Roman numeral LXX (70), the work was carried out by seventy Jewish translators. The Koine Greek was the common-man version of the Greek language that had become the lingua franca in Alexandria, Egypt and Eastern Mediterranean.

The **Vulgate** is a Latin translation of the Bible that was commissioned by the Pope in 382 CE. This translation is the one officially adopted by the Roman Catholic Church.

The **King James Version** (KJV) or the Authorised Version (AV) or King James Bible (KJB) is the English translation of the Christian Bible (Old and New Testaments) that was prepared for the Protestant Church of England in 1611 CE.

The **Douay-Rheims Bible** (DRB) is the earliest English translation of the Bible that is used by the Roman Catholic Church. It was prepared during 1582-1609 CE. More recently, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) made in 1966, and its further revision under New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) carried out in 1989, are used by the Catholics.

The **Zabur of the Prophet David** is believed by many scholars to be the book of Psalms included in the present day Tanakh or the Old Testament.

According to the Christians, God made a new covenant with Jesus Christ (as opposed to the old covenant with Abraham) and thus their Scriptures are called the **New Testament**. Literally, the word ‘Gospel’ means good news or tidings. In this sense, the Gospels are equivalent to the Arabic word ‘*Injil*’ used in the Holy Qur’an for the revelations sent unto Jesus Christ. Today, the four books of the Gospels contain not only what Jesus taught himself but also narrative accounts of his life, teachings, death and resurrection, by four different persons with some significant variations and conflicts in their texts. These biographical accounts were written down several decades after Jesus had left the land of Palestine. The Protestant version of the New Testament contains 27 books, as follows:

Table showing the 27 books of the New Testament of the Christians

Categories	Books
Gospels (4 books)	Mathew, Mark, Luke and John
Apostolic History (1)	Acts
Pauline Epistles (13)	Epistle to the Romans, Corinthians (1 & 2), Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians (1 & 2), Timothy (1 & 2), Titus, Philemon.
General Epistles (8)	Epistle to the Hebrews, Epistle of James, Peter (1 & 2), John (1, 2 & 3), Jude.
Apocalypse (1)	Revelation

Besides these four books that are commonly referred to as the Gospels, the New Testament of the Christians also includes the Acts, which describe the origins of the Church, and the Letters (Epistles), which represents the beginnings of Christian theology. The 27 books of the New Testament deal with the first century of Christianity and were put to pen, by several authors, between the first and second century of the Christian era. While Aramaic was the lingua franca of Palestine at the time of Jesus Christ, the oldest versions of the New Testament exist only in the Greek language. Much later, they were translated into Latin and other European languages.

All Christian denominations such as Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Protestants accept the same 27 books of the New Testament.

The **Holy Qur’an** revealed to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} is the only Scripture in the world that has not been corrupted by the hand of man and has not suffered any deletion or addition over the past fourteen centuries. The texts of all other holy books in the world are contested and variant versions exist.

While only five Scriptures are mentioned by name in the Holy Qur’an, the Muslims believe in the Holy Books of all revealed faiths. It should be noted, however, that the present day form of these Holy Books may be different due to inadequate preservation of the original

texts. The lack of proper writing and recording implements, destructions by wars, ravages of time, multiple translations, and editing and interpolations by human hand have all affected the authenticity of the original Scriptures.

Following is a list of some of the **Holy Books of other faiths**:

- Zend-Avesta, of Zoroastrianism
- Vedas, of Hinduism [Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda]
- Tripitaka & Pali Canon, of Buddhism
- Agamas, of Jainism
- The Five Classics and Analects, of Confucianism
- Tao Te Ching, of Taoism
- Kojiki & Nihon Shoki, of Shinto faith
- Guru Granth, of Sikhism

In the biography of the Prophet, Ibn Hisham reports that a book of the Prophet Luqman (*Majallah Luqman*) was shown to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} by Suwaid al Samit. The Prophet approved of the content but said that what he had, (the Qur'an), was better.

5. Belief in the Day of Judgment

Islam lays great emphasis on the Hereafter as opposed to the life of the present world. After belief in One God, belief in the Day of Judgment is the most emphasized doctrine in the Holy Qur'an which draws a vivid picture of the happenings on this day. The Islamic concept of the Hereafter begins with a Day of Destruction that is followed by a Day of Resurrection in which all human beings are revived to a spiritual life, followed by a Day of Gathering when all resurrected souls shall be gathered, followed by a Day of Reckoning when all human actions will be judged. This will lead to the rewards of Heaven and the retribution of Hell. The imagery of Heaven and Hell painted in the Holy Qur'an is largely based on metaphoric and allegorical language since no human eye has seen the reality and has come back to describe it. The greatest reward in Heaven will be the nearness and pleasure of God while the greatest torment in Hell will be the distancing and displeasure of God. According to Islamic philosophy, Hell is not an everlasting place.

The Day of Judgment is referred to by many names in the Holy Qur'an, some of which are mentioned below:

<i>As sa'at</i> , the Hour	<i>Yaum al qiyama</i> , the Day of Resurrection
<i>Al qariah</i> , the Calamity	<i>Yaum al fasl</i> , the Day of Distinction
<i>Yaum al akhir</i> , the Last Day	<i>Yaum al jami'</i> , the Day of Gathering
<i>Yaum ad din</i> , the Day of Judgment	<i>Yaum al talaqi</i> , the Day of the Meeting

The Holy Qur'an mentions many signs of the coming of the Hour but its exact timing is known only to God. Following is a description of the Day of Judgment taken from *Surah al-Qariah* in the Holy Qur'an:

The great Calamity!
 What is the great Calamity!
 And what should make thee know what the great Calamity is?
 The day when mankind will be like scattered moths

And the mountains will be like carded wool.
Then, as for him whose scales are heavy,
He will have a pleasant life.
But as for him whose scales are light,
His mother will be Hawiyah⁴. (*Al-Qur'an*, 101:2-10)

6. **Belief in God's Decree**

Islam clearly advocates human free will although it recognises its limits vis-à-vis God's ultimate decree and design. While human beings have considerable freedom to act rightly or wrongly, their actions cannot interfere with the broad plan that God has in store for the universe. The wisdom of Man's actions, therefore, lies in aligning them to the will and purpose of God.

In the Islamic teachings, human free will extends to a very large part of one's life and one's area of influence. In this sphere, one is completely free to do whatever one wishes and reaps appropriate rewards for the actions. However, this sphere of influence is not unlimited. Beyond this sphere extends the area of God's decree or His own Will. In this area, man has no free will to act. As a simple illustration, one is free to kill another human being. Although one may suffer appropriate consequences for such an action, nevertheless, one is free to carry it out and the action would fall within the sphere of human free will. However, if one decided to kill ALL human beings that live on this earth, the action may not be achievable since it may go contrary to God's own design and decree for the human race.

Due to poor understanding of the Islamic concept of God's Decree, many people consider Muslims as fatalists. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Muslims try as hard as anyone else in the world to attain their desired objectives. As it says in the Holy Qur'an itself:

“And there is nothing for man but *the fruits of his endeavours.*” (*Al-Qur'an*, 53:40)

Other important beliefs

While belief in the above six articles of faith is mandatory for all Muslims, they also maintain many other beliefs based on an understanding of the Holy Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. Some of these beliefs are:

- A Muslim believes that every person is born innocent and free from sin. Sin is a conscious breach of some ordinance of God brought to one's attention either by the Holy Qur'an, or by the Prophet, or by one's own natural instinct or disposition (*fitrah*) which is a God-given faculty. Only when a person reaches maturity of understanding and can distinguish between right and wrong, does he become accountable for his actions.
- A Muslim believes that God does not hold anyone responsible unless He has shown him the right way. This is the reason why God has sent so many messengers and revelations. God always sends His guidance and warning before inflicting His

⁴ Meaning Hell.

punishment on people.

- A Muslim believes that faith is not meaningful if it is followed blindly, without reasoning or understanding. A person should use his powers of reasoning and reflect upon God's teachings.
- A Muslim believes that every person is responsible for his own deeds and that no one carries the burden of another. On the Day of Judgment, no intercession may be accepted on behalf of another and each soul will be rewarded according to what it had earned.
- A Muslim believes that all prophets were sent by God and that no distinction should be made among them in this respect.

ISLAMIC ACTS OF WORSHIP

To worship means: to venerate, to show reverence and devotion, to adore, to admire and to love. Worship of God, in some form or another, is common to all religions of the world. The purpose of worshipping God in Islam is to evoke His help and guidance in leading a purposeful life in this world, and to acquire His attributes.

When we praise a thing, we wish to acquire it and appreciate its attributes. Praising God is appreciating His attributes and awakening a desire to acquire them: to be merciful when the situation demands, to be firm when the situation requires. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} said, "Create in you the attributes of God". Mere recitation of God's praise by the tongue, therefore, is not sufficient.

In the broader sense of the word, worship is obeying and pleasing God. The various ritualistic worships described below are nothing but means of training the soul and disciplining one's self. The five fundamental acts of worship in Islam, known as the Five Pillars, are described below:

1. A Declaration of adherence to Islamic faith,
2. Saying of a formal, prescribed Prayer, five times a day,
3. Keeping of Fasts during the month of Ramadhan,
4. Giving of obligatory alms (*Zakat*), and
5. Performing of the *Hajj* or Pilgrimage

1. Declaration of Faith (*Kalima*)

The first step towards accepting the faith of Islam is to declare it. The Declaration of Faith or the *Kalima* carries in its two short sentences the entire essence of Islam:

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

La ilaha illallahu Muhammad-ur rasulullah

"There is none worthy of worship except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

Since the early days of Islam, the reciting of the *Kalima* marked the act of conversion to the new faith. The word *Kalima* literally means a word or spoken thing.

2. The Prayer (Salat)

There are two types of Prayers in Islam: *Du'a* or Silent Prayer, and *Salat* or formal Prayer. The word *Du'a* comes from the Arabic root *d'u* which means to call, summon or ask. The Silent Prayer can be performed at any time, using any language, and for any length of time. The word *Salat* comes from the Arabic root *salla* which means to pray or invoke blessings and mercy. The formal Prayer needs to be performed at specific times during the day, has specified wording and must be said in the Arabic language. In this book we shall focus on the formal Prayer only.

The performing of the *Salat* was the first duty enjoined upon the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and the keeping up of Prayer is the most frequently repeated injunction in the Holy Qur'an. In Islam, no one day is set aside exclusively for Prayer such as the Sabbath (Saturday) for the Jews and Sunday for the Christians. For Muslims, Prayer is made a part of everyday life. There is a *Salat* in the morning before sunrise; another just after midday; a third one late in the afternoon; a fourth after sunset; and a fifth later in the evening. The names of these five Daily Prayers are as follows:

<i>Fajr</i> Prayer	In the morning before sunrise
<i>Zuhr</i> Prayer	In the early afternoon
<i>'Asr</i> Prayer	In the late afternoon
<i>Maghrib</i> Prayer	Just after sunset
<i>'Isha</i> Prayer	Later in the evening

There are certain times during the day when the performing of the *Salat* is prohibited. The reason for this prohibition is that there are some people in the world who worship the sun and these times happen to be important in the daily cycle of the sun. These prohibited times are:

- When the sun is rising
- When the sun is directly overhead, and
- When the sun is setting

Each Daily *Salat* comprises some obligatory and some non-obligatory or voluntary prayers, as follows:

- *Fardh* Prayer: these are obligatory for all Muslims
- *Sunnah* Prayer: although not obligatory, these Prayers were regularly offered by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and, therefore, should be performed by the Muslims
- *Nafil* Prayer: these Prayers are completely voluntary

Each Prayer starts with *Qiyam* (the standing position) and includes *Ruku'* (bowing), *Sajdah* (prostration) and *Qa'dah* (sitting postures). Together, these four postures constitute a single *Rak'at*.

The various Daily Prayers comprise two, three or four *rak'at* as shown in the Table below:

Table: The *rak'at* in the various Daily Prayers

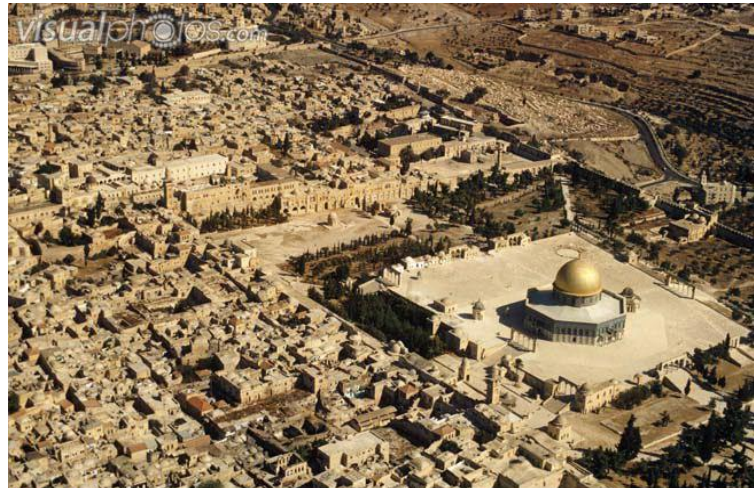
	Sunnah	Fardh	Sunnah	Witr
Fajr Prayer	2	2		
Zuhr Prayer	4	4	2	
‘Asr Prayer		4		
Maghrib Prayer		3	2	
‘Isha Prayer		4	2	3

In the very beginning when the performing of Prayer was enjoined upon the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, there were only two *rak'at* in each Prayer. Later on, two *rak'at* were left for the shortened Prayer said during a journey and the normal *rak'at* were increased to the ones given in the above Table.

In addition to the five Daily Prayers, Muslims are exhorted in the Holy Qur'an to get up in the middle of the night to offer the *Tahajjud* Prayer. It is a non-obligatory Prayer and is offered in four units of two *rak'at* each.

The Muslims are enjoined to offer all Daily Prayers in congregation as far as possible. On every Friday, there is a special congregational Prayer called the *Jumu'a* Prayer which is performed in place of the *Zuhr* Prayer. This Prayer has to be led by an Imam who also delivers a *Khutba* or a sermon before the Prayer.

During their Prayers, the Muslims are enjoined to face the Ka'ba. The direction of Ka'ba from any given place is known as the *Qibla*. In the early days of Islam, Muslims used to face the



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Original site of *Bait al Muqaddas* (Temple of Solomon) where a mosque (Dome of the Rock) was built by the Umayyad Khalifas in 691 CE.

Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem that is known to the Muslims as *Bait al Muqaddas* (the Sacred House) or *Masjid al Aqsa* (the Distant Mosque). The original Temple was built by the Prophet Solomon in the 10th century BC but was destroyed by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, in 587 BC. A second temple was built at the site in 516 BC but it, too, was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE during the Siege of Jerusalem. After arriving in Medina, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} received the revelation in which he was commanded by God to face the Ka'ba in Mecca during Prayers, which then became the *Qibla* of the Muslims. During the Caliphate of the fifth Umayyad Khalifa, ‘Abdul Malik, a domed structure called the Dome of the Rock was built and completed in 691 CE. The Dome of the Rock stands on the Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem.

Besides the five Daily Prayers and the *Jumu'a* Prayer on Friday, there are other Prayers in Islam which are performed at special occasions:

- *Salat-ul 'Id*: performed at the occasion of 'Id-al Fitr and 'Id-al Adha ('Id Prayer)
- *Salat-ul Kusuf & Salatu-ul Khusuf*: performed on the occasion of solar and lunar eclipses (Eclipse Prayer)
- *Salat-ul Istisqa*: performed when the need for rain is extreme (Prayer for rain)
- *Salat-ul Janaza*: part of the funeral services for the deceased (Funeral Prayer)

Adhan or Call to Prayer

Before each congregational Daily Prayer, the *muedhin* (caller) calls the believers to the Prayer:

Transliteration	Translation	Repeated
<i>Allahu akbar</i>	God is Great	4x
<i>Ash-hadu an-la ilaha illallah</i>	I bear witness that there is no deity but God	2x
<i>Ash-hadu anna Muhammadan rasulullah</i>	I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God	2x
<i>Hayya 'ala ssalat</i>	Hasten to Prayer	2x
<i>Hayya 'ala al-falah</i>	Hasten to prosperity	2x
► <i>As-salatu khairum minan naum</i>	The Prayer is better than sleep	2x
<i>Allahu akbar</i>	God is Great	2x
<i>La ilaha illa-Allah</i>	There is no deity but God	1x

► This phrase is included only in the Fajr (morning) Prayer

Wudhu or Ritual Ablution

Before offering the *Salat*, a Muslim is enjoined to perform *Wudhu* which is a ritual act of cleansing the body and the soul. It is only in this purified state of mind and body that true worship can be performed. The ablution involves washing the hands three times, rinsing the mouth and the nose three times, washing the face and the right and left forearms three times, passing wet hands over the head, ears and neck and then finally, washing the right and left foot three times.

If one is unable to find clean water, *tayammam* may be performed in the place of *Wudhu*. The *tayammam* is performed by lightly putting one's hands on some clean dust and wiping the face and hands in a symbolic act of performing the ablution.

Etiquettes of Prayer

In the performance of the Prayer, certain etiquettes must be observed:

- One must walk calmly and gracefully towards the mosque; one should not run even if the Prayer has started
- In a congregational Prayer, the first ranks should be filled in first
- One must concentrate on the Prayer and try not to get distracted
- One must follow the Imam (the person leading the Prayer) in all his movements

- If one joins the Prayer in the middle, one should follow the Imam till he finishes the Prayer and then get up and complete the missed *rak'at*
- One must not pass in front of a person who is saying his Prayer

Transliteration and Translation of the Prayer (given for one rak'at only)

Transliteration	Translation
<i>Allahu Akbar</i>	Allah is Great
Qiyam or standing upright	
<i>Subhana kalla humma wa bihamdika wa tabarakasmuka wa ta'ala jadduka wa la ilaha ghairuk.</i>	Holy art Thou O Allah and all praise is Thine and Blessed is Thy Name and exalted is Thy state and there is none worthy of worship except Thee.
<i>A'uzu billahi min ash shaitan ir rajim.</i>	I seek refuge with Allah from Satan the accursed.
<i>Bismillah ir Rahman ir Rahim, Alhamdu lillahi Rabbil 'Alamin Ar Rahman ir Rahim Maliki yaumiddin iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in ihdinas-sirat al mustaqim sirat all-azina an'amta alaihim ghairil maghzubi alaihim wal az-zaalin (Amin).</i>	In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the worlds; The Gracious, the Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment; Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we ask for help; Guide us in the straight path, the path of those upon whom Thou bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who incurred Thy wrath, nor of those who have gone astray (Amen).
<i>Bismillah ir Rahman ir Rahim, Qul huw allahu Ahad Allah us Samad Lam ya lid wa lam yu lad wa lam ya kullahu kuffuwan ahad.</i>	In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. Say, He is Allah, the One; Allah, the Everlasting; He begets not, nor is He begotten and there is none like unto Him.
Ruku or Bowing	
<i>Subhana Rabbi al 'Azim</i>	Holy is my Lord, the Great (said three times)
Standing upright again	
<i>Sami Allahu leman hamida Rabbana wa lak al hamd — hamdan katheeran tayyiban mubarakan fih.</i>	Allah hears him who praises Him; Our Lord, all praise is Thine— praise that is abundant, pure and full of blessings.
Sajdah or Prostration	
<i>Subhana Rabbi al 'Ala</i>	Holy is my Lord, the Most High (said three times)
Qa'dah or Sitting Posture	
<i>Rabbighfirli, war hamni, Wahdini, wa aafini, warfa'ni, waj burni, war zuqni.</i>	O Lord, forgive me, and have mercy on me, and guide me, and grant me security, and raise me up, and make good my shortcomings, and provide for me.
Sajdah or Prostration	
<i>Subhana Rabbi al 'Ala</i>	Holy is my Lord, the Most High (said three times)
Second Qa'dah or Second Sitting Posture (also in the last raka'at)	
<i>At tahiyyatu lillahi was salawatu, wa tayyibatu.</i>	All salutations are due to Allah and all Prayers, and all things pure.

<i>As salamu alaika ayyu han nabiiyu wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh</i>	Peace be upon thee O Prophet and the mercy of Allah and His blessings; And peace be upon us and on all righteous servants of Allah.
<i>As salamu alaina wa ala ibadillah is-salihin.</i>	
<i>Ash hadu an-la ilaha illallahu wa ash hadu anna Muhammadan abduhu wa rasuluh.</i>	I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger.
<i>Allahuma salli ala Muhammadin wa ala ali Muhammadin kama sallaita ala Ibrahim wa ala ali Ibrahim inna ka Hamid un Majid.</i>	O Allah, bless Muhammad and the people of Muhammad as Thou blessed Abraham and the people of Abraham. Thou art indeed the Praiseworthy, the Exalted.
<i>Allahuma barik ala Muhammadin wa ala ali Muhammadin kama barakta ala Ibrahim wa ala ali Ibrahim inna ka Hamidun Majid.</i>	O Allah, bless Muhammad and the people of Muhammad as Thou blessed Abraham and the people of Abraham Thou art indeed the Praiseworthy, the Exalted.
<i>Rabbana atina fid-duniya hasanatanw wa fil akhirati hasanatanw wa-qina azaban-nar.</i>	Our Lord, give us in this world good things and in the hereafter good things and shield us from the torment of the fire.
<i>Rabbi ja'lni muqim as salati wa min zurriyyati Rabbana wa taqabbal du'a. Rabban-aghfirli wali walidayya wa lilmu'minina Yauma yaqumul hisab.</i>	My Lord, make me observe Prayer, and my children too, Our Lord, accept my Prayer. Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and all believers on the Day of Reckoning.
Taslim or Salutations, first to the right and then to the left	
<i>Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullah</i>	Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah
<i>Assalamu alaikum wa rahmatullah.</i>	Peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah.

3. Fasting (Saum)

The third act of worship in Islam is fasting during the Islamic month of Ramadhan by all able, adult Muslims. The Arabic word for fasting, *Saum*, is derived from the root *sam* which means abstaining or refraining. The fasting begins before daybreak and continues till sunset. During this period, a Muslim abstains from all food, drinks, conjugal relations, vulgar speech and foul acts. Fasting in some form or another has been practiced by almost all religions:

- The Buddhists observe fast during times of intensive meditation
- The Hindus practise fasting in a variety of forms and on a number of occasions that suit the observer. A fast is usually kept from sunset to sunrise the next morning.
- The Jains also observe fast from sunset to sunrise the next morning. Fasts are kept singly, on ten consecutive days, or for an entire month.
- The Sikhs do not keep fasts on religious basis as it has no spiritual benefit according to them. They may, however, keep fasts purely for health reason.

- The Taoists keep fasts with abstention varying from certain food stuff to consuming any kind of food.
- The Jews also fast for six days of the year from sunset to sunset, and for four days of the year from sunrise to sunset. Fasts are also kept on other days and to seek repentance. The Old Testament refers to many prophets keeping fasts such as: Moses, David, Joel, Jonah and Isaiah.
- The Christians observe fasts according to the denomination to which they belong. The fasts of Lent observed by the Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox are for forty days to commemorate the fast observed by Jesus Christ during the temptation in the desert. In these fasts, one abstains from a particular item or items only such as meat, milk, or certain delicacies. The purpose of fasting in Christianity is not to suffer but to guard against gluttony and impure thoughts, speech and deeds. Fasting should also be accompanied by increased prayer and almsgiving. Some Christian denominations also keep fasts other than the Lent on certain days during the year. In the Protestant churches, fasting is left to the discretion of the individual and there are generally no church edicts in this matter. Thus, fasting is generally less popular among the Protestants.

The purpose of fasting in Islam is summarized below:

- By fasting, a Muslim obeys the command of God which is a justification for fasting in itself
- Fasting is a mini sacrifice of one's physical needs and makes one feel better spiritually
- Experience shows that other worships like *du'a* and Salat are more enjoyable and spiritually more beneficial, when one is fasting
- It is during a fast that we find out how the hungry and poor people in this world really feel
- Even on purely medical grounds, fasting is an excellent activity and a good training for the body

Persons who are either sick or on a journey, are exempted from the fasts of Ramadhan. They must, however, make up these missed fasts at another time. Those people who are chronically ill or too old to keep fasts are allowed to feed a poor man for every fast that they miss.

Muslims, who are not exempted as mentioned above, are required to fast for 29 or 30 days of the month of Ramadhan; the exact number of the days depends on the appearance of the new moon. Fasting starts with the sighting of the new moon of Ramadhan and ends with the appearance of the new moon of Shawwal.

Aside from the obligatory fasts of the month of Ramadhan, a Muslim may keep voluntary fasts at any time he wishes as long as these fasts do not interfere with his normal duties or fall on the festive day of Eid or on a Friday.

4. Zakat or Prescribed Alms

Charity towards man, in the widest sense of the word, is the cornerstone of the Islamic society and a constant theme in the Qur'anic teachings. There are two kinds of charities in Islam: the obligatory and the voluntary. The obligatory charity is called *Zakat* while the voluntary charity is called *Sadaqa*.

The Arabic word *Zakat* is derived from the root *zka* which means purification. The concept of *Zakat* was not totally new to Islam; similar almsgiving had been enjoined upon the Israelites and the Christians as well. In Islam, the *Zakat* takes the form of a prescribed contribution based on a person's wealth and income. The rate of contribution varies with the kind of property owned but, on an average, works out to two and one half percent of the total value. The proceeds of *Zakat* are supposed to be devoted towards:

- Relieving poverty and distress
- Helping those in debt
- Providing comfort and convenience for travellers
- Providing stipends for scholarships
- Providing ransom for prisoners of war
- Propagation of Islam
- Meeting the expenses for the collection of *Zakat*
- Other things beneficial for the society (9:60)

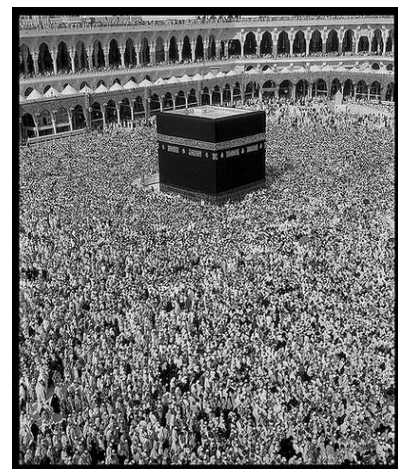
Zakat, therefore, is a duty enjoined by God in the interest of the society as a whole. While on one hand these charitable contributions provide for the needs of the society, on the other hand the act of giving in the name of God purifies the heart of the contributor from selfishness and greed.

5. Hajj or Pilgrimage

The last act of Islamic worship is the performing of the Hajj or the Pilgrimage to Mecca. The Arabic word Hajj is derived from the root *hajja* which means to betake oneself to an object of reverence. A Muslim is obligated to perform this pilgrimage at least once in his lifetime if economic, political and security conditions are favourable. The focal point of this pilgrimage is the Ka'ba, which was rebuilt by the Prophet Abraham some 4,000 years ago. Today, the Ka'ba stands in the middle of a large courtyard of *Masjid al Haram* or the Sacred Mosque. The courtyard of *Masjid al Haram* contains, besides the Ka'ba, the *Maqam-e Ibrahim*—the Station of Abraham—and the fountain of Zamzam.

The Hajj is performed during the Muslim month of Dhul Hijjah which comes two months after the festival of 'Id-al Fitr. The various ceremonies of the Hajj are given below.

- (1) Entering into the state of *ihram* by wearing only two



Ka'ba inside the courtyard of the Sacred Mosque at Mecca (courtesy of: monz at flickrhivemind.net)

seamless white sheets. This is done by the pilgrims when they reach certain designated places close to Mecca known as *Miqat*.

(2) Saying of *talbiyah* starting at the place where the *ihram* is worn. *Talbiyah* consists of saying aloud the following:

“Here we come, O God, here we come
 No partner have You, here we come
 Indeed, praise and blessings are Yours, and the Kingdom too
 No partner have You, here we come.”

(3) On entering Mecca, the pilgrims perform the first *tawaf* or circuits which consist of going around the Ka’ba seven times in an anticlockwise direction.

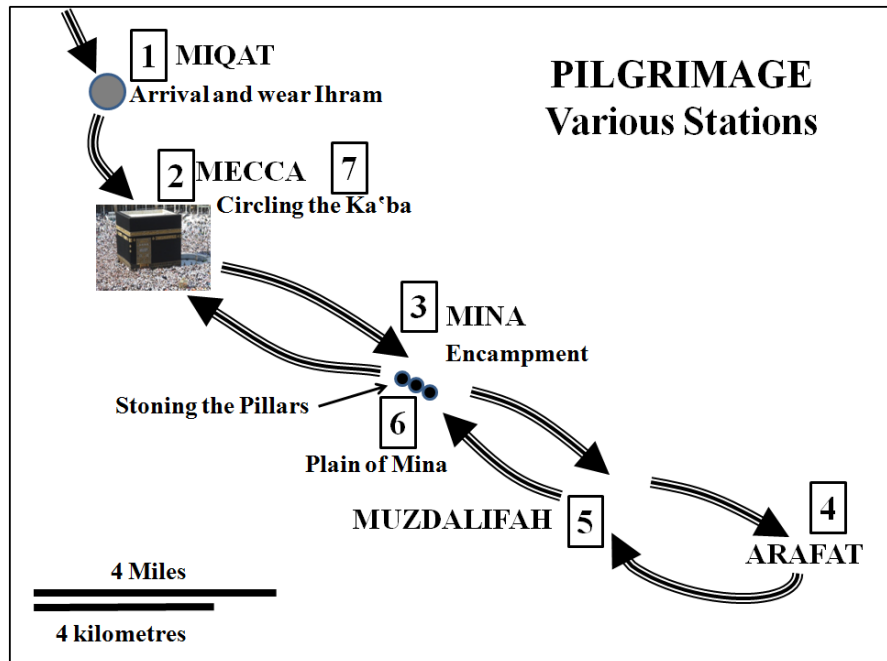
(4) After completing the *tawaf*, the pilgrims perform the *sa’iy* which consists of walking briskly between the two little hills of Safa and Marwa located near the Ka’ba. These are the two hills where Hajra (Hagar) ran in search of water when her husband, Abraham, had to leave her there on Divine command.

(5) After performing the *sa’iy*, the pilgrims move to Mina, a plain located about four miles east of Mecca, and spend the night there.

(6) Next morning, the pilgrims leave for the Plain of Arafat located nine miles southeast of Mecca. They arrive there in the early afternoon, say the combined *Zuhr* and *’Asr* Prayers and listen to a sermon given by the Imam. The pilgrims stay in the Plain of Arafat only till sunset. This is the same plain where the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} delivered his farewell sermon.

(7) After sunset, the pilgrims leave Arafat and come to a place called Muzdalifah. In the Holy Qur’an, this place is referred to as *al Mash’ar al Haram*, the Sacred Monument. On reaching Muzdalifah, the pilgrims say their combined *Maghrib* and *’Isha* Prayers and spend the night there. In the morning, after saying the *Fajr* Prayer, the pilgrims return to Mina once again.

(8) The pilgrims reach Mina on the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah. This is the busiest day of the pilgrimage. The first ceremony that is performed at Mina is the throwing of small stones or *rami al jimar* in which the pilgrims throw stones at three pillars in a symbolic act of striking the devil.



Various Stations during the ceremony of Hajj

(9) The tenth day of Dhul Hijjah is also the day when pilgrims sacrifice their animals. This day is also celebrated all over the Muslim world as the festive day of 'Id-al Adha.

(10) After performing the sacrifice the pilgrims have their heads shaved or their hair clipped. After this they emerge from the state of ihram by wearing their everyday clothes.

(11) Clad in their everyday clothes the pilgrims perform another *tawaf* (circuits) of the Ka'ba. This tawaf is called *tawaf-i ziarat*.

(12) Before the tenth day of Dhul Hijjah ends, the pilgrims perform another *sa'iy* between the hills of Safa and Marwa.

(13) After this the pilgrims return once again to Mina where they stay until the twelfth or thirteenth day of Dhul Hijjah. During these two or three days the pilgrims continue to perform the ceremony of *rami al jimar* or throwing of stones.

(14) On the afternoon of the twelfth Dhul Hijjah (or of the thirteenth) the pilgrims return to Mecca for the last ceremony of the pilgrimage. This ceremony consists of the farewell *tawaf* (circuits) of the Ka'ba after which the entire pilgrimage is completed and the pilgrims are free to leave anytime.

While the Hajj may only be performed during the prescribed dates of the month of Dhul Hijjah, a Lesser Pilgrimage called '*Umrah* may be made individually at any time during the year.

Although not part of the prescribed pilgrimage, many pilgrims carry on to Medina and visit *Masjid al Nabwi* or the Prophet's Mosque. It was in the compound of this Mosque that the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was buried.

CODES FOR SOCIAL AND MORAL BEHAVIOUR

So far we have looked at Islamic beliefs and acts of worship, both of which deal with man's relationship with God. Now we come to social and moral codes in Islam which relate to man's conduct with fellow human beings. These codes are based on the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and must be followed by all Muslims for the establishment of a peaceful and harmonious society. The underlying principle in Islam for all social behaviour is the love for fellow being and service to humanity. In God's revelations to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, as much emphasis was laid on service to humanity as on the worship of God, perhaps more on the former. In the eyes of God, worship is completely meaningless if one harbours ill will and malice against fellow beings. Moral commandments in the Holy Qur'an fall essentially into two categories: those that direct the follower to do virtuous actions and those that direct the follower to refrain from evil deeds. Following is a brief list of some of the virtues promoted in Islam:

Virtues Promoted in Islam

Calling unto God: Preaching and calling others unto God is an oft repeated command to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} in the Holy Qur'an.

Charity: While Zakat is an obligatory charity enjoined upon all Muslims, the voluntary charity is called *Sadaqa*. This is given to the deserving for the purpose of gaining Gods pleasure. It must, therefore, be free from show, ulterior motive, personal gain or putting the recipient under any obligation. Charity of any kind should be given out of good things and not out of improperly acquired wealth nor from items that are useless and are going to be

discarded anyway. This voluntary charity is not limited to fellow Muslims; if needy non Muslims exist in the society, they should be given a share.

Covenants: Great stress has been laid in Islam on honouring agreements and trusts. Muslims are enjoined to fulfil all covenants, whether they are with God or with fellow man. Islam teaches great respect for the law, both religious and social. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and his Companions always stood firmly by their agreements and treaties even under the most trying conditions. There was not a single instance when they broke their pacts with any other nation or group. The trusts and agreements can take a variety of forms. They may include treaties or pacts between nations, or the trust that an employer places in his employee to look after the business, or the trust that is implicit in all marriage contracts, or business transactions that may be carried out between two parties, or the trust which the electors place in their nominees. These are all trusts that must be discharged honestly.

Good Companionship: Islam is perhaps the only religion that considers the opportunity to have good companions as a blessing of God. Thus, mutual relations of brotherhood and keeping company with the virtuous and noble people is highly emphasised in Islam.

Gratefulness: Being an attribute of God Himself, gratefulness is highly enjoined upon the Muslims for the many favours and blessings that we receive every moment.

Greeting: It is the Islamic way to greet fellow beings with salutations of peace (*As-salamu alaikum*—peace be on you).

Honesty and Justice: In Islam, all people whether rich or poor, strong or weak, men or women, have equal rights. Islam strongly forbids the violation of anyone's rights and enjoins all Muslims to carry out justice. In the discharging of justice, no special favours are to be granted to either party and bonds of friendship or kinship are not allowed to influence one's decision.

Kindness to parents and children: In the moral code of Islam, kindness to parents occupies a very high position. Complete obedience to parents is enjoined upon Muslims as long as this does not conflict with one's duty to God. Similarly, parents and elders are urged to show mercy to the young. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} is reported to have said:

“He is not one of us who does not show mercy to our young ones and respect to our elders.”
(Tirmidhi)

The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was fond of children and always wanted the Muslims to excel among other communities in showing kindness to children. It is also a charity in the eyes of God to attend to the children's educational needs, spiritual welfare and their general wellbeing.

Kindness to orphans: Great emphasis is laid in Islam on looking after the orphans. Muslims are enjoined to keep the properties of the orphans in trust and to hand those over when the orphans are mature enough to take care of the properties themselves.

Similarly, Muslims are enjoined to look after the needs of the wayfarer and the neighbour. Islam does not favour the idea of looking after one's own needs and requirements only. In Islam, an individual is part of a social whole and is urged to share his or her good fortune with other fellow beings.

Kindness to animals: While the rights of fellow man are indeed paramount, the religion of Islam does not ignore the rights of the animal kingdom. A verse of the Holy Qur'an clearly draws one's attention to this fact:

“There is not an animal on the earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but they are communities like you.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 6:39)

Man, therefore must treat all animals with great kindness and compassion. Man employs many animals for his own use and even eats their meat. In Islam, the beasts of burden and animals used for riding or ploughing the fields must not be over-worked or pushed beyond their normal limits of endurance. Similarly, animals that make up the human diet should be killed or slaughtered in the most humane manner.

Love of God: Developing genuine love of God is the essence of the religion of Islam. Islamic teachings have been instrumental in producing some of the greatest lovers of God in history.

Loyalty: Fidelity and allegiance to God, the Prophet and to one's country are particularly mentioned in the Holy Qur'an and the Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.

Meekness and Humility: The Muslims are urged to be meek and humble and to refrain from any element of pride and haughtiness.

Obedience: Obedience to God, the Prophet and those in authority is mandatory in the religion of Islam.

Patience and Steadfastness: Fortitude and perseverance are the oft-repeated commandments in the Holy Qur'an. Despite great hardships, opposition and persecution, the Prophet of Islam displayed an excellent example of being patient and steadfast in his mission.

Peace and amity: The very name of this religion is based on peace and friendship. Thus, the establishment of friendly relations and peaceful co-existence are highly emphasised.

Piety and Righteousness: Like other religions, Islam lays great emphasis on developing a genuine fear of God and carrying out of good deeds. Whenever the Holy Qur'an commands one to believe, it also commands one to carry out good deeds.

Reflection & Pondering: The Holy Qur'an invites the reader to reflect and ponder upon God's creation. Islam encourages the adherent to believe in its tenets based on reasoning and not to follow them blindly.

Repentance: Being naturally inclined to erring, man is encouraged in Islam to seek repentance and forgiveness for his sins and excesses. In this context, God is portrayed by the Holy Qur'an as Forgiving, Oft-Returning and Guide to the Right Path.

Seeking of Knowledge: As God Himself is All-Knowing and Wise, the seeking of knowledge and wisdom are greatly promoted in the religion of Islam. It was in fact such directives that encouraged the medieval Muslims to excel in the fields of science and philosophy.

Spending in the way of God: Spending one's wealth in the way of God is an oft-repeated command in the Holy Qur'an. Such acts cleanse our soul and remove worldly attachments to material possessions.

Striving in the cause of God: Muslims are encouraged to strive in the cause of God with their possessions, abilities and life.

Trust in God: Not being able to see the future, the Muslims are commanded to place their trust in God for the best outcome.

Truthfulness: History tells us that even the bitterest enemies of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} acknowledged his truthfulness and called him *as-Sadiq* and *al-Amin*. Being so truthful and honest himself, he laid great emphasis on truth as the basis of a high moral character. The Qur'an also mentions truthfulness as the most prominent quality of a Muslim. A Muslim always speaks the truth even if it goes against his own interests or the interests of his relatives or friends. Giving of false testimony, therefore, is strongly prohibited in Islam.

Evils Censured by Islam

Along with the promotion of virtues, the Holy Qur'an constantly reminds the reader to shun all vices and abstain from all evils. Following are just a few examples:

Adultery: Out-of-wedlock relations are highly condemned by Islam and the acts are also subject to social retribution.

Attachment to Worldly Life: Islam places a great deal of emphasis on the Hereafter and considers worldly life transient and a pastime and forbids attachment with material things.

Disorder and Corruption: People are constantly reminded in the Holy Qur'an not to spread disorder and corruption in the land.

Drinking and Gambling: Both drinking and gambling lead to many evils and their practice is shunned in Islam.

Falsehood & Dishonesty: Much like in other religions, falsehood and dishonesty are strongly condemned in the religion of Islam.

Going Astray: Islam encourages the believer to follow a straight path and to avoid going astray or leading others astray.

Idolatry: One of the most strongly condemned evils in the Holy Qur'an is associating partners with God and indulging in idol worship. Being a strongly monotheistic religion, Islam forbids the placing of anyone else alongside of God as His equal.

Interest and Usury: The taking and giving of interest and usury go against the Islamic principle of charity and are strongly condemned in the Holy Qur'an. As an alternate means of making livelihood, the Holy Qur'an advocates trade and business. In the Islamic philosophy, a borrower who is already in hardship should not be expected to repay an additional sum as interest. A lender should only take his original loan back or, better still, forgive it if he can afford to do so.

Miserliness & Niggardliness: With such emphasis on charity and spending on the way of God, Islam condemns miserliness and niggardliness of heart when it comes to helping other human beings.

Pride and Haughtiness: Arrogance and conceit are perhaps the worst emotions that get in the way of finding truth. It was the sense of self superiority that led Satan to disobey God's command to prostrate in front of Adam.

Suspicion and Conjecture: Muslims are commanded to shun suspicion and conjecture as it leads to unfriendly relations and causes corruption of one's heart.

Taunt, Derision, Backbiting & Slander: All these acts create friction in social dealings and hurt other people.

Wrongdoing: All wrongdoing is condemned in Islam whether it affects other people or one's own self.

Islamic Manners and Etiquettes

There are certain manners and etiquettes that a Muslim follows when conducting his affairs in the society. Following are some examples:

- When two Muslims meet, they greet each other by saying *Assalamu alaikum*, meaning 'peace be upon you', and *wa alaikum assalam*, and 'upon you be peace'.
- When Muslims undertake any activity—such as eating, travelling or working—they always start it with the name of God, saying: *Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim*, meaning: 'With the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful'.
- When Muslims terminate an activity, such as the eating of one's meal, they say *Alhamdu Lillah*, meaning: 'Praise be to God'. This phrase is also said at many

other occasions when expressing gratitude to God.

- When a Muslim talks about carrying out some activity in the future, he always adds the phrase *insha Allah*, meaning: ‘God willing’.
- When a Muslim receives a favour or a gift, he thanks the person by saying *jazakomullah* meaning: ‘may God reward you’.
- When a Muslim hears sad news, particularly of someone’s demise, he says *inna lillahi wa inna ilaihi raji’un* meaning: ‘we belong to God, and unto Him is our return’.
- When a person sneezes, he says *Alhamdu lillah*, meaning ‘Praise be to God’; the person who hears him sneeze, says *yar hamu komullah* meaning: ‘may God have mercy on you’.
- When a Muslim wants to enter another’s home, he first greets the dwellers and then asks for permission to enter. It is prohibited to enter someone’s home without his permission or knowledge.
- A Muslim does not talk evil against somebody particularly at his back. This act of backbiting is not only impolite but also sinful and cowardly in Islam. If a genuine complaint exists against someone, it should be brought to that person’s own attention.

ISLAMIC INSTITUTIONS

As the Qur’anic revelations came down during the life of the Prophet Muhammad^{bbuh} relating to social interactions and dealings, a number of institutions developed that merit a brief review:

Chastity and *Hijab*

Chastity in both men and women is highly emphasised in Islam as it is conducive to harmonious and peaceful living and promotes spiritual development of the individuals. Thus, free interaction between men and women is disapproved and any face-to-face dealing requires that the two lower their gaze. In addition, adult women are required to clothe themselves in such a way as not to entice the other gender with a display of beauty and adornments.

Marriage

Marriage between man and woman is the cornerstone of family life in Islam. People are encouraged to marry and be fruitful. In the religion of Islam, marriage is a contract between husband and wife with some explicit and several implied conditions. The husband is expected to provide for the family and give it shelter and security. The wife is expected to

manage the household and instil good moral character in the children. To make the marriage successful, Islam recognises that man is generally strong and forceful and woman is generally weak and docile. Nevertheless, a happy marriage requires much give and take between the husband and wife. Open communication and respect for each other go a long way towards making a peaceful coexistence. In the Holy Qur'an, men are strongly admonished to treat their wives gently.

Divorce

Divorce is allowed in Islam but is regarded as the worst of all permissible things. It is the final resort after all efforts at reconciliation between the parties have failed. Appropriate regulations exist in Islam that apply to divorcing parties. Both, the husband or the wife are allowed to seek divorce.

Inheritance

Islam has well developed regulations that govern inheritance. Women can inherit property from their fathers, husbands and brothers. Persons are encouraged in Islam to make appropriate wills which should be duly witnessed and preferably written down. If no will exists, the estate of the deceased is divided according to Islamic regulations pertaining to inheritance.

Lawful and Unlawful Foods and Drinks

Good, pure and wholesome food is considered not only good for the body but also for the soul. In this context, there are four things the eating of which is forbidden in Islam. These are:

- That which dies of itself,
- Blood,
- Flesh of swine, and
- That on which the name of anyone other than God has been pronounced.

Animals that die of their own are not fit to be eaten because they may be diseased or rotting. Eating of blood is prohibited on the grounds that it is a sign of barbarity and primitiveness. Pork is forbidden on the grounds that it carries many diseases and its consumption is counter to spiritual progress. Eating of the last mentioned item is prohibited on spiritual grounds. It is not proper for a Muslim to be eating something on which the name of someone other than God has been invoked. At the time of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, and in some places even today, it was a common practice to prepare food as an offering to a deity. Muslims are forbidden to eat such foods. Except for the four things mentioned above, Muslims are allowed to eat everything that is clean, pure and agreeable.

Drinking of intoxicating liquors was prevalent among the Arabs at the time of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. The Qur'anic injunction explained that liquor contained more harm than good and the Muslims were commanded to shun this abomination. Muslims, therefore, are not permitted to consume alcoholic drinks. Although not explicitly mentioned in the Holy

Qur'an, taking of drugs for the purpose of getting "high" or intoxicated is forbidden based on the general philosophy expressed in Islam.

Fighting and *Jihad*

Fighting in battle and war is permissible in Islam only if it is carried out for defensive purpose or for the establishment of peace in the land. Even then, there are very strict rules that must be followed such as not to harm children and women and not to burn down fields and orchards.

The Islamic institution of *Jihad* is the least understood and the most talked about aspect of Islam in the world today. There is great misunderstanding among the non-Muslims that Islamic *Jihad* is a holy war directed towards the unbelievers for the sole purpose of converting them into Muslims. Nothing, in fact, could be farther from the truth.

Literally, the Arabic word *jihad* means 'utmost effort' or 'striving'. The Muslims are commanded in the Holy Qur'an to strive in the way of God. This struggle could be in the form of propagation of faith or defence of Islam. It may or may not include armed conflict with the unbelievers. In Islamic terminology the effort to preach Islam to non-Muslims and the struggle to overcome one's baser inclinations and desires are all called *jihad*. If the struggle does indeed take the form of an armed conflict, it must be in self defence and in accordance with all the rules and regulations laid down in the Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.

For a long, time the early Muslims suffered persecution and torture at the hands of the Meccans. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and the Muslims never retaliated, simply because there were no commands from God to this effect. Finally, when persecution had reached its peak, permission to fight in self defence was granted to the Muslims. However, the purpose of fighting was limited to establishing freedom of worship and removing oppression and iniquity. Muslims were strongly enjoined to spare the lives of women and children, to treat the prisoners of war with kindness, to restrain at all times from any excesses, and to restore peace as soon as possible. This is the true concept of *jihad* in Islam.

Much is made by the Western writers of the various battles fought by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} in his life. These writers fail to note that these battles were fought either in self-defence or for the establishment of peace in the area. Fighting was so abhorrent to the Prophet's nature that he never considered it anything but a necessary act. For this reason, he imposed all kinds of restrictions upon his soldiers. An example of his exhortation in this respect is given below:

"Do not use fraud or deception. Do not kill children. Do not oppress the peaceful inhabitants of the country. Spare weak women. Have pity on suckling infants and the sick. Do not destroy the houses; do not overrun the fields; do not devastate the orchards; and do not cut down the date-palm trees."

Penal Laws and Punishments

Besides enjoining voluntary acts of righteousness, Islam contains penal codes to deal with gross violations of social trust. It is strictly prohibited in Islam to violate the life, property or honour of another person. According to the many commandments of the Holy Qur'an and the various Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, the above three things are

made sacred for the Muslims and are not to be violated. The wilful violation of these limits placed in Islam can be punished by the society.

ISLAMIC BROTHERHOOD AND EQUALITY OF MAN

The faith of Islam lays great emphasis in the equality of man and the development of a bond of brotherhood among the Muslims. The concept of brotherhood is not only designed to unite all Muslims into a common clan, but also all humanity into a common family and all creation into a common class. The true concept of brotherhood transcends artificial boundaries of colour, creed and ethnic affiliation. These man-made criteria of relative superiority completely lose their meaning in the religion of Islam. In fact, the faith of Islam goes to great lengths to actually dissolve such elitist notions.

The unique concept of human fellowship presented by Islam is acknowledged by the British social anthropologist, Robert Briffault (1876-1948), in his book, *Making of Humanity*, in the following words:

“The ideals of freedom for all human beings, of human brotherhood, of the equality of men before the law of democratic government, by consultation and universal suffrage, the ideals that inspired the French Revolution and the Declaration of Rights, that guided the framing of the American constitution and inflamed the struggle for independence in the Latin American countries, were not inventions of the West. They find their ultimate inspiration and source in the Holy Quran. They are the quintessence of what the intelligentsia of medieval Europe acquired from Islam over a period of centuries through the various societies that developed in Europe in the wake of the Crusades in imitation of the brotherhood associations of Islam.”

The Islamic philosophy of human fellowship is based on the premise that all men are equal in the Eyes of God. Islam, therefore, allows no discrimination on the basis of skin pigmentation, social rank or worldly possessions. In this context, the German Orientalist, Theodor Noldeke (1836-1930), writes:

“Whoever went to Islam, received the same rights and undertook the same duties as the highest and nearest. There are no reserved pews in a mosque. Islam has been more successful in mitigating colour prejudice than other universal creeds. The Muslim Negro Africans are not treated as untouchable by their Arab co-religionists, but the Christian Negroes are shunned like the plague by the European Christians.”

A similar viewpoint is affirmed by the British Orientalist, Professor H.A.R. Gibb (1895-1971), in his book, *Whither Islam*:

“The ethics of Islam, its conception of social and personal morality are infinitely higher, infinitely more perfect than the corresponding conception within the Western Civilization. Islam has banned human hatred and opened the way for human brotherhood and equality but the Western Civilization is still unable to look beyond narrow horizon of racial and national antagonism.

“Islam has never known classes and class warfare within its society; but the whole of European history since the time of Greece and Rome is full of class struggle and social hatred.”

If any distinction is at all accorded to a person in Islam, it is based on his or her level of piety and righteousness. As the Italian Orientalist, Professor Laura Vaglieri (1893-1989), writes in her book, *An Interpretation of Islam*:

“Each Muslim was distinguished from other Muslim not by reason of birth or any other factor not connected with his personality, but only by fear of God, his good deeds, his moral and intellectual qualities.”

In like manner the British novelist and scholar, H.G. Wells (1866-1946), recognises the contribution of Islam in removing social prejudice and discrimination, in his *Outline of World History*:

“Islam created a society more free from widespread cruelty and social oppression than any society had ever been in the world before.”

It is truly surprising that many people, who are otherwise devoted to their worship of God, lack a sense of their relationship with fellow man. In reality, service to humanity is a much harder task to accomplish than long hours spent in the devotion of God. It is to this fact of human nature that the Holy Qur’an refers to when it states:

“And We showed him two ascending paths of nobility.
But he did not follow the path of ‘Aqabah.
And what should make you know what the ‘Aqabah is?
It is the freeing of a slave,
Or feeding in a day of hunger
An orphan near of kin,
Or a poor man *lying* in the dust.” (*Al-Quran*, 90:11-17)

Similarly, the importance of righteous deeds, vis-à-vis worship, is clearly explained in another chapter of the Holy Qur’an, in the following words:

“Hast thou seen him who rejects the religion?
That is the one who drives away the orphan,
And urges not the feeding of the poor,
So, woe unto those who pray,
But are unmindful of their Prayer,
Those who show off,
And they deprive people of even small benefits.” (*Al-Quran*, 107:2-8)

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

In common with other religions, Islam has a certain philosophy of life that addresses Man’s role in the scheme of things and the purpose of his existence. The first aspect of Man’s life relates to his role on earth while the second aspect relates to his goals and objectives in life. The first one is a responsibility entrusted by God while the second one opens the door for his spiritual development.

The Role of Man on Earth

In the allegorical account of man's creation in the Holy Qur'an, God says to the angels that He is going to appoint a vicegerent on earth. While the angels seem to question such wisdom, God advises them that He knows what they do not:

And when your Lord said to the angels: 'I am about to appoint a vicegerent in the earth,' they said: 'Wilt Thou place therein such as will cause disorder in it, and shed blood? — and we glorify Thee with Thy praise and extol Thy holiness.' He answered: 'I know what you know not. (*Surah Al-Baqarah* 2:31)

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اِنِّىْ جَاعِلٌ فِى الْاَرْضِ خَلِيْفَةً ۗ قَالُوْۤا اَتَجْعَلُ فِيْهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيْهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ اِنِّىْۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ

While the above verse and account has often been interpreted to refer to Adam as the first Prophet of God, it in fact refers more appropriately to the progeny of Adam and to the human race and mankind in general. While Adam's indiscretion with reference to the forbidden tree is explicitly mentioned in the Bible and the Holy Qur'an, there is never any mention of him causing any disorder or shedding anyone's blood by himself.

While commenting on this verse, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad makes a very interesting point that both views—that of the angels and that of God—were in fact correct. No doubt that Man was going to commit disorder and shed blood of other people; but the inherent wisdom behind the creation of Man was not fully apparent to the angels at the time.

The account of Adam in the Holy Qur'an is full of many meanings, interpretations and perspectives and the scholars have written a great deal on this subject. However, the one aspect that we would like to discuss at some length here pertains to Adam's progeny or mankind being the *khalifa* or vicegerent of God. The concept of *khilafat* or vicegerency carries the notion of exercising power and authority under the name of someone else. Thus, the appointment of mankind as the vicegerent of God bestows perhaps the greatest honour upon the human race and carries in it a grand prophecy. The question arises as to what is the role of mankind as vicegerent of God?

When a human being acts as the *khalifa* of a prophet, he is empowered with both spiritual and temporal dominion over his community. This kind of vicegerency is very common in history and is easy to understand. What kind of empowerment is then involved when mankind acts as the vicegerent of God? The Supreme Being of the universe possesses infinite powers. He is the Creator and the Destroyer; the Giver of Life and the Bringer of Death; the Nourisher, the Provider and the Protector. He is the Honourer and the Abaser; the Constrictor and the Expander; the Mighty and the Merciful. In the appointment of Man as God's vicegerent, God has empowered him in all such attributes—of course to the extent that Man is capable of exercising them considering his own limitations.

For nearly thirteen centuries after the Holy Qur'an was revealed, mankind remained nearly oblivious to its role as God's vicegerent in the temporal sense. The sphere in which mankind could exercise its benevolent and destructive powers were rather limited. It could indeed kill many people or animals but it could never conceive of being able to destroy an entire species; it could lay an entire field to waste but it could not extend such malevolence to the entire country or continent. Thus, both the benevolent and malevolent acts of mankind remained limited to rather small spheres.

The last hundred years or so, however, have completely changed the existing status quo. Mankind's scientific and technological progress has suddenly given it immense powers to be used for good or bad purposes. Its destructive powers are not limited to simply burning down a field but allow it to make entire continents uninhabitable through the thousands of nuclear devices possessed by many nations. Its powers to pollute are not confined to a single well or pond but in fact extend to destroying large aquifers in the ground, making vast lakes undrinkable, and contaminating the Oceans with non-degradable debris. Our powers to kill are not limited to a few hundred or a few thousand animals but we have actually sent a number of species to the path of total extinction and our lifestyle is endangering many more that depend upon us for their very survival.

We have gained immense temporal powers on this earth and our progress in the fields of science and technology is only in a stage of infancy. In another century, our ability to wreak havoc on this planet will increase manifold. One simply shudders at the thought as to what our capability might be say in a thousand years. In the above verse, God is not simply asking us to be a good citizen on earth—to share our wealth and resources with other life forms. God, in fact, is asking us to be a good *custodian* of this planet—to act in His name and carry out His work as His appointed vicegerent on the planet. For this purpose, He has made the forces of nature subservient to man. To use a cliché, exercise of great power requires use of good judgment and great wisdom. Unfortunately, our record to date is not all that commendable.

The numerous attributes of God mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are there to encourage us to emulate these traits and to be like Him when acting as His vicegerent. Thus, it is no coincidence that the three attributes of Nourisher, Gracious and Merciful outnumber all other attributes combined together in the Holy Qur'an. As vicegerent of God on earth, mankind is expected to provide for and nourish all other life forms under its custodianship and deal with them in a merciful and kind manner. In this regard we are not only our brother's keeper but the warden of all living things on earth. Not only this, but our stewardship also extends to the environment in general which in turn provides proper habitat to earth's vast flora and fauna.

The Goal and Objective of Man's Life

It is apparent from what we have studied so far that the worship of God and the service to humanity occupy a prominent place in a Muslim's life. A Muslim leads a balanced life in which his relationship with his fellow beings is not sacrificed for the sake of his relationship with God, and vice versa.

Beyond the superficial, however, there is a deeper, more subtle purpose in life. Although worship of God and service to humanity are highly emphasized in Islam, these are just the means to achieve the real objective. The real purpose in life is to find God. This is the real reward that Islam promises a believer.

A Muslim should make a clear distinction between the means and the end. All the worships we have talked about are necessary but are not the end by themselves. All the acts of righteousness we have talked about are very good and creditable but are not the end by themselves. All the articles of faith we have studied are extremely important but are not the ultimate objective. These are all but the means to achieve the real objective which is God Himself. He is the real objective and all else are just the means to obtain Him. All one's efforts must be devoted towards the achieving of this specific goal. Those fortunate ones who

found God achieved their real objective in life and also the highest reward that Islam has to offer in this world.

Other religions have beliefs and acts of worship and social and moral codes, as well. But the concept of God they present is of an impersonal Supreme Being Who is aloof from His creation and can only be reached through intermediaries. Islam, on the other hand, offers a very personal God with the possibility of a very personal relationship with Him. This relationship is so special that it cannot be truly likened to anything else in this world. This relationship has the intimacy of two lifelong friends, the love of two young lovers and the affection that exists between the mother and her child. Establishment of this special relationship with God is really the true theme of the religion of Islam. This, then, is the relationship for which all worldly possessions could be given up; this, then, is the relationship for which one's life could be sacrificed.

And let us tell you something: God is there for the taking! He is so close to us that we cannot even imagine; and He is so eager to be befriended that we would be really surprised. All that is needed on our part is some effort to take Him. We have learned the basic outline of what we have to do: our beliefs should be correct and our convictions strong; our worship should be sincere and done with full attention; and our actions should be unselfish and based on love for humanity. If one does all this, in due course of time one will find God.

The fruits of this relationship with God are unlimited. With God on our side we will have great confidence and will not be afraid of anybody or anything in this world. Our prayers will be heard with great frequency; we will feel peace and contentment in our hearts; we will obtain great insights into the strange workings of this physical and spiritual universe of ours; and finally, if we are really fortunate, God may bless us with His communion and converse. And when that happens, we have pretty well achieved all the spiritual delights that we could possibly get in this life; to get more, we will have to wait for the next one.

In summary, the individual's life in Islam is very important with all its obligations and potential for moral and spiritual advancements. It is truly a masterpiece of God's creation. As a vicegerent of God, Man is chosen because of his eminent and unique position among God's diverse creatures. At the same time, the religion of Islam shows Man the path to obtain God's nearness and pleasure. Thus, when Man discharges his trust and achieves communion with God, he represents his greatest achievement on earth. One's life, therefore, cannot be taken lightly.

This, very briefly, is the purpose and philosophy of life in Islam.

THE SOURCES OF ISLAMIC LAW

In the previous sections we have seen that the entire life of a Muslim including his beliefs, his worship and his social and moral conduct are structured on the basis of definite rules and regulations. Now we will briefly talk about the source of all these codes and directives. Basically, there are three sources from which we obtain all our Islamic laws and principles:

- The Holy Qur'an,
- The Tradition: the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, and
- *Ijtihad*—exercise of judgment.

1. The Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an is the real foundation on which the entire structure of Islam rests. The Qur'an is the absolute and the final authority in any discussion related to Islamic principles or codes. One could even say that the Holy Qur'an is the only source and that the other two sources—Tradition and *Ijtihad*—are directly or indirectly derived from the Qur'anic teachings.

The Quran, however, deals with the essential. It leaves the details to the Tradition and *Ijtihad*. We will read more about the Holy Qur'an and its teachings in Section 2, and now we move on to the other two sources of Islamic Law.

2. The Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}

After the Holy Qur'an, the most important Islamic textual material is the Tradition, which includes the *Sunnah* (actions) and *Hadith* (sayings) of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}.

As the Qur'an deals mainly with the broad principles of Islam, the details were frequently supplied by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} through his actions and sayings. Since written communication was not very common in those days, the transmission of the actions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} took place from one person to another by the word of mouth. It was many years after the demise of the Prophet that a systematic compilation of his practices and sayings started to take place. Extreme care used to be taken in tracing these accounts back through various narrators and establishing their authenticity.

It was about two hundred years after the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} that the six most authentic compilations of the Tradition existing today were made. Together, these six compilations are known as *Siha-i Sitta* meaning the Six Authentic Ones. The names of these books and their compilers are given below:

Table listing the six compilers of the most authentic Hadith

	Compilation	Compiler	Hijra calendar	Christian Era
1	<i>Sahih Bukhari</i>	Imam Isma'il Bukhari	194-256	810-870
2	<i>Sahih Muslim</i>	Imam Muslim bin Hajjaj	199-261	815-875
3	<i>Jami' Tirmidhi</i>	Imam Abu Isa bin Tirmidhi	209-279	824-892
4	<i>Sunan Abu Dawud</i>	Imam Abu Dawud Sulaiman	202-275	817-889
5	<i>Sunan ibn Maja</i>	Abu 'Abdullah bin Yazid ibn Maja	209-273	824-887
6	<i>Sunan Nasa'i</i>	Ahmad bin Shu'aib al Nasa'i	214-303	829-915

These six books on Tradition classified the sayings and actions of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} under various subjects, and thereby made these compilations easy to use. These books are easily available today and make extremely informative and interesting reading. Of the six collections mentioned above, *Sahih Bukhari* holds the first place in many respects, while *Sahih Muslim* is generally accorded second place. *Sahih Bukhari* was not only the first such compilation of Tradition but has also set the standard by which the others are judged.

Besides the six most authentic and earliest compilations of the Prophet's Tradition, following are some more that are frequently consulted by Muslims:

- *Muwatta* by Imam Malik (711-795 CE)
- *Musannaf* of ‘Abdur-Razzaq as-Sana‘ni (743-826 CE)
- *Musnad* Ahmad bin Hanbal (780-855 CE)
- *Sunan al Darimi* ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abdur-Rahman Al-Darimi (797-869 CE)
- *Sahih ibn Hibban* of Abu Hatim ibn Hibban al Busti (d. 965 CE)
- *Al Mustadrak* by Hakim al Nishaburi (933-1012 CE)
- *Sunan* Abu Bakr Al-Baihaqi (994-1066 CE)

The early scholars of Tradition developed sound principles in the light of which the authenticity of any given narration could be verified. These principles related to the unbroken chain of transmission, the trustworthiness of the narrators and the apparent genuineness of the text itself.

It must be remembered that there is a clear distinction between the Qur’an and the *Hadith*. The Qur’an is the Word of God. *Hadith*, on the other hand, is the word of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, as narrated by various persons. Generally speaking, Muslims will follow the *Hadith* if it does not conflict with the teachings of the Qur’an. If there is an apparent contradiction between the teaching of the Qur’an and the *Hadith*, then the *Hadith* must be considered suspect. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} is reported to have said, “If you find anything foolish ascribed to me, discard it. For it is not from me”.

3. *Ijtihad* or the Exercise of Judgment

Ijtihad, or the exercise of judgment, is the third source of Islamic principles and codes. To enable you to understand the importance of *Ijtihad*, we will narrate an actual *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}:

On being appointed Governor of Yemen, Mu‘adh bin Jabal (602-640 CE) was asked by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} as to which rule would he follow. Mu‘adh replied, “The law of the Qur’an.” “But if you do not find any direction therein?” asked the Prophet. “Then I will act according to the Sunnah of the Prophet,” replied Mu‘adh. “But if you do not find any direction therein?” he was asked again. “Then I will exercise my judgment (*Ijtihad*) and act on that,” said Mu‘adh bin Jabal. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} approved of this.

This is the true example of how human judgment should be used in the matter of religion. Muslims believe that the most accurate and perfect form of knowledge is that which is given to man through the process of revelation. To properly understand God’s revelation, however, some human reasoning and judgment is always required. As long as the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was alive, he provided this judgment and explained many of the rules and regulations given in the Holy Qur’an. After his death, the people continued to carry out this threefold approach to the Islamic principles. Whenever a problem arose, the Muslims tried to find its solution in the Holy Qur’an. If it was not mentioned in the Qur’an, they searched the Prophet’s *Sunnah* and *Hadith*. Not finding the solution there either, they used their best judgment based on the general philosophy and principles of Islam. This process of using human judgment in elaborating Islamic principles or solving problems is called *Ijtihad*. Such judgment may emerge out of a collective consideration by the entire Muslim Community in which case it is called *Ijma’*. In the absence of a consistent opinion within the Community, *Ijtihad* may be exercised by a learned Muslim scholar in which case it is referred to as *Fatwa* or religious

edict. In some cases an individual may exercise his own judgment if a better opinion is not available.

THE FOUR SCHOOLS OF LAW IN ISLAM

As we discussed in the previous section, there are three main sources of Islamic law which govern and regulate all aspects of a Muslim's public and private life. These laws relate to religious worship, prohibitions, and all contracts and obligations that arise in social life such as inheritance, marriage, divorce, punishments, conduct of war and the administration of the state.

The science of these religious laws is called *Fiqh* and the expert in this field such as a jurist is called a *faqih* (plural: *fuqaha*).

We read that *Ijtihad*, or the exercise of judgment, is a valid source of Islamic laws in areas where the Holy Qur'an and the Tradition are not explicit. But the exercise of this independent judgment, the Muslims believe, should be left in the hands of proper scholars of the Holy Qur'an and the Tradition. The vast Majority of Muslims give this right of independent reasoning to only four ancient Muslim theologians and jurists who lived in the first three centuries of Islam. These four *fuqaha* are:

- Imam Abu Hanifa of Kufa (699-767 CE)
- Imam Malik bin Anas of Medina (711-795 CE)
- Imam Muhammad al Shafi'i of Medina (767-820 CE), and
- Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal of Baghdad (780-855 CE)

Although a number of other jurists also became popular during their times, only the above four are now recognized by the vast majority of Sunni Muslims. These four great jurists and theologians tried to systematize the Islamic law into a comprehensive rational system which covered all possible legal situations. The four prominent schools of Islamic law are named after their founders and are called: the Hanafiyya, the Malikiyya, the Shafi'iyya, and the Hanbaliyya schools of religious law.

Most Muslims regard these four schools as equally valid interpretations of the religious law of Islam. These schools are in good agreement on all essential aspects of the religion of Islam. They all acknowledge the authority of the Holy Qur'an and the Tradition as the ultimate sources of the Islamic law. Only in areas and situations where these two sources are silent, do the four schools use their independent reasoning in which they may differ with each other.

1. The Hanafiyya School

The earliest school formed was by Imam Abu Hanifa (699-767 CE) of Kufa. It generally reflects the views of the jurists of Iraq. Abu Hanifa did not compose or write any books on law himself but his numerous discussions and opinions, as recorded by his disciples, form the basis of this school.

As a theologian and a religious lawyer, Abu Hanifa exercised considerable influence in his time. His legal thought is very consistent, uses high degree of reasoning, avoids extremes,

and lays great emphasis on the ideas of the Muslim community. The Ahmadi Muslims generally follow the Hanafiyya School of law.

Other areas in which this school has a following include Turkey, the countries of the Fertile Crescent, Lower Egypt, and India.

2. The Malikiyya School

The next school of law in order of time was the one founded by Imam Malik bin Anas (711-795 CE) of Medina and reflects the views and practices associated with that city. Imam Malik served as a judge in Medina and compiled all his decisions in a book form called *al Muwatta* (the Levelled Path).

Like the jurists of Iraq, Imam Malik preferred to depend more on the Tradition associated with the Companions of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} than with the Prophet himself. The adherents of this school are predominantly in North African countries.

3. The Shafi'iyya School

The third school was founded by Imam al Shafi'i (767-820 CE) who was a disciple of Imam Malik. Imam Shafi'i placed great importance on the Tradition of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and explicitly formulated the rules for establishing the Islamic law. He was a great thinker, had an unusual grasp of principles and a clear understanding of the judicial problems. This school is strong in Lower Egypt, Syria, India, Malaysia and Indonesia.

4. The Hanbaliyya School

This school was founded by Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (780-855 CE) of Baghdad. Imam Hanbal did not establish a separate school himself; this was rather done by his disciples and followers.

The Hanbaliyya was the most conservative of the four schools. Its rigidity and intolerance eventually caused its decline over the years. In the eighteenth century, however, this school was revived with the rise of Wahhabism and the growing influence of the House of Sa'ud. Today Hanbaliyya School is followed only in Saudi Arabia.

The Hanbalis insist on the literal injunctions of the Qur'an and the *Hadith* and are very strict in the observance of religious duties.

Although the Muslims generally apply the Islamic law according to the principles and details laid down by the four ancient jurists, legal situations keep arising from time to time for which there are no clear answers in these ancient schools of law. To cope with this changing aspect of Islamic society, particularly in the light of new facts, specialists in the field of Islamic law are asked to give their decisions using the traditional tools of legal science. Such a decision is called a *fatwa* and the religious scholar who gives this decision is called a *mufti*.

THE NAMES OF ISLAMIC MONTHS

In their religious practice, Muslims follow the Islamic calendar which consists of twelve lunar months. The average length of a lunar month—counted from New Moon to New Moon—is 29.531 days. By comparison, the length of a Solar Month is 30.417 days. Thus,

the lunar month is shorter by 0.886 days per month which adds up to a total of 10.63 days during the entire year. Since fractional days cannot be counted in a month, lunar months are either 29 days or 30 days long. The Islamic month begins with the sighting of the New Moon and lasts until the sighting of the next New Moon. Each Islamic day lasts from sunset to sunset. On an average there are 354.4 days in a lunar year. The fact that the lunar year has approximately 10.63 days less than the solar year, brings an Islamic anniversary ten and a half days ahead each year in the solar calendar. It is for this reason that the month of Ramadhan comes about 11 days earlier each solar year. This allows the Muslims to experience the fasts at different times of the year.

Following are the names of the Islamic months. The Sacred Months, in which no fighting is permitted, are marked by an (S) below:

1. Muharram (S), first month of the Islamic calendar	7. Rajab (S)
2. Safar	8. Sha'ban
3. Rabi ul Awwal, the month of the Holy Prophet's birth, Hijrat and demise	9. Ramadhan, the month in which the Holy Qur'an began to be revealed; month of fasting.
4. Rabi ul Akhir	10. Shawwal. On the first day of this month 'Id ul Fitr is celebrated
5. Jamadi ul Awwal	11. Dhul Qadah (S)
6. Jamadi ul Akhir	12. Dhul Hijjah (S), the month in which the Hajj is performed and 'Id ul Adha is celebrated.

Historically and traditionally, the beginning of Islamic lunar months is established by the actual sighting of the New Moon. With advancements in the knowledge of astronomy and the fact that atmospheric conditions do not always allow for such sightings, many Muslims are now turning to calendars based on astronomical calculations.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT ISLAM

Today, Islam is not only one of the most misunderstood religions in the West, but it has endured a long history of systematic misrepresentation of its teachings and a persistent attack on the character of its founder. Perhaps no other faith in the history of mankind has suffered at the hands of such deliberate propaganda and inadvertent misconceptions as Islam has.

To a majority of people living in the West, Islam is perceived as a religion of pagans and infidels who practise polygamy, debauchery and slavery. In the Western mind, this religion is synonymous with holy wars, harsh punishments, and opposition to progress and scientific enquiry. Muslims are widely considered as fatalists, with men given to excessive pleasure seeking and women confined to seclusion. Some of the worst slander and defamation by the Western writers has been directed at the very character of the Prophet of Islam.

The history of such prejudice against Islam is in fact very old. One of the earliest documented condemnations of Islam occurs in the works of the Syrian monk, St John of Damascus (d. 749 CE). In the writings of St John of Damascus, Islam is confused with pre-Islamic paganism and the idol of Aphrodite is associated with the Ka'ba.

A hundred years after St John of Damascus, the anti-Islamic banner was picked up by Nicetas of Byzantium, in the ninth century. Much of his Latin work called *Anatrophe* is given to criticising the Qur'an, without even trying to understand as to what it really says.

Distorting the Qur'anic arguments, Nicetas tried to prove that the God of Muhammad was in fact the devil.

In the land of Spain, two friends named Saint Eulogius (d. 859) and Alvarus (d. 861) undertook a deliberate and systematic misrepresentation of Islam, the Holy Qur'an and the character of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.

In the eleventh century, a writing appeared in the Arabic language under the pseudonym of Abdal Masih that disparaged the character of the Prophet of Islam. This writing has received widespread circulation in the West and was republished by the well-known British Orientalist, William Muir (1819-1905), as late as in the nineteenth century, for the use of Christian missionaries against Islam.

Misrepresentation of Islam and verbal abuse of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} reached their peak during the period of the crusades. These Christian holy wars were waged against the Arabs for nearly two centuries to win back the Holy Land from their rule. The events surrounding the crusades turned out to be very unfortunate for both religions and the seeds of mistrust and suspicion sowed in these conflicts lasted for many centuries.

Misconceptions about Islam continued to spread throughout the period of the European renaissance and well into the modern times. It is truly difficult to find a single Western writer who would refrain from taking an occasional pot shot at Islam or its founder. Even the writings of such apparently learned men as William Muir, Edward Gibbon, Max Muller, J.M. Rodwell and Thomas Carlyle, give away their deep-seated prejudice and bias against the religion of Islam.

Partly out of ignorance and partly out of prejudice, the West has never cared to even call the Muslims and their faith by their proper names. Until well into the twentieth century, the Western scholars have repeatedly referred to the religion of Islam as Muhammadanism and its followers as Muhammadans. Needless to say, such titles are extremely repugnant to the Muslims who, unlike the Christians, only worship God—and not the founder of their faith.

But centuries ago, the Muslims were not even called Muhammadans in the West. For a long time, the followers of Islam were simply referred to as heretics, pagans and infidels. In the early translations of the Holy Qur'an into the Latin language, the word Muslim was never translated as one who 'submits' to God. In one such translation carried out by a medieval theologian, Robert of Ketton (1110-1160 CE), every possible circumlocution was used to avoid truly translating the word 'Muslim' into Latin. Frequently, the word Saracen was substituted in the Latin translations wherever the word Muslim occurred in the Holy Qur'an.

The American novelist, James A. Michener (1907-1997), sums up the Western perception of Islam in his article, *Islam: The Misunderstood Religion*, in these words:

“Many Westerners, accustomed by their history books to believe that Muslims were barbarous infidels, find it difficult to comprehend how profoundly our intellectual life has been influenced by Muslim scholars in the fields of science, medicine, mathematics, geography and philosophy.”

Misunderstandings about Islam have arisen due to inaccurate and misleading accounts propagated over hundreds of years—some of them quite deliberately. Norman Daniel confirms this view in his book, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*:

“Faced with a choice between alternative stories, more or less favourable to Muhammad or to Islamic institutions, the medieval historians of Muhammad and critics of his religion acted on the assumption that whatever seemed least creditable, was most likely to be true.”

The celebrated British dramatist, George Bernard Shaw (1865-1950), is far more critical of the actions of Christian missionaries when he writes:

“The Christians and their missionaries have presented a horrible picture of Islam. Not only that, they also carried out an organized and planned propaganda against the personality of Prophet Mohammad and the religion he preached.”

G. Lindsay Johnson also confirms the prejudicial perception of Islam in Christian minds in his book, *Two Worlds*:

“The ignorance displayed by most Christians regarding the Muslim religion is appalling ... Mohammad alone, among the nations at that time, believed in one God to the exclusion of all others ... Most of the absurdities which Christians would have us believe to exist in the Quran were never uttered by Mohammad himself, nor are they to be found in a correct translation of the work.”

Although Western Orientalists have done much to introduce the subject of Islam to a population that, otherwise, would have remained totally ignorant of this religion, their motives have not always been purely scholarly or altruistic. The well known Swiss journalist Roger du Pasquier writes in his book, *Unveiling Islam*:

“One is forced also to concede that Oriental studies in the West have not always been inspired by the purest spirit of scholarly impartiality, and it is hard to deny that some Islamicists and Arabists have worked with the clear intention of belittling Islam and its adherents.

In recent times, the West’s prejudice against Islam has taken on a very ugly shape and this faith is being increasingly portrayed as synonymous with terrorism. Any criminal act by any Muslim anywhere in the world is automatically assumed to be driven by the Islamic teachings.

The world needs to understand that the faith of Islam neither preaches unjustified aggression nor pardons acts of terrorism. Nevertheless, every effort is being made today to portray Muslims as terrorists and to show Islam as a religion of violence and aggression. If there are indeed any acts of aggression by the Muslims, they are either politically motivated or purely criminal in nature. In both cases, they have little to do with the ideology of Islam. Yet, Islam continues to be portrayed by the media and the press in the ugliest manner that is conceivable.

Section 2

THE HOLY QUR'AN

WHAT IS REVELATION?

The process of revelation and inspiration is widespread in the world and can be seen in the secular as well as religious spheres. Many discoveries and solutions to many complex problems have been attributed in history to such phenomena. The existence of revelation, inspiration, dreams and visions can be seen in every religion in the world. In this context, Muslims believe, God imparts Divine truths and commandments to man for his understanding and guidance. The knowledge received in this manner is considered to be the truest form of learning.

Divine revelation can be of many kinds. It may comprise ordinances, laws and injunctions. It may be prophetic in nature and bring knowledge of future events. It may bring great insights into matters of material or spiritual nature. It may convey God's goodwill, pleasure and love; or it may be the medium of God's warning, displeasure and rebuke.

The nature of revelation varies according to circumstances and the spiritual station of the recipient. Muslims believe that of all the revelations and divine communications, the most complete, the most perfect and the most comprehensive is the Holy Qur'an.

WHAT IS THE QUR'AN?

The Qur'an is a compilation of the verbal revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} over a period of twenty two years. The language of the Qur'an is Arabic and the word Qur'an is derived from the root *qra* which means to read or recite. Thus, Qur'an is something that is read or recited. Besides its proper name, the Qur'an is also known by the following names:

<i>al Bayan</i> : The Explanation (3:139)	<i>al Kitab</i> : The Book (2:3)
<i>al Burhan</i> : The Argument (4:175)	<i>al Mau'iza</i> : The Admonition (10:58)
<i>al Dhikr</i> : The Exposition, the Exhortation (15:10)	<i>al Muhaimin</i> : The Guardian (5:49)
<i>al Furqan</i> : The Discriminant (25:2)	<i>an Ni'ma</i> : The Blessing (93:12)
<i>al Hadith</i> : The Saying (39:24)	<i>an Nur</i> : The Light (7:158; 64:9)
<i>al Haqq</i> : The Truth (17:82)	<i>al Qayyim</i> : The Guardian (18:3)
<i>al Hikma</i> : The Wisdom (17:40)	<i>ar Rahma</i> : The Mercy (17:83)
<i>al Huda</i> : The Guidance (72:14)	<i>ar Ruh</i> : The Word (42:53)
<i>al Hukm</i> : The Judgment (13:38)	<i>ash Shifa'</i> : The Healing (10:58)
<i>al Khair</i> : The Goodness (3:105)	<i>at Tanzil</i> : The Revelation (26:193)

Besides the above names, there are several qualifying adjectives that the Holy Qur'an uses for itself that include: *Karim* (Honourable), *Majid* (Glorious), *Hakim* (Wise), *Mubarak* (Blessed), *Mubin* (Manifest), *'Azim* (Great), *Mukarram* (Honoured), and *Mutahhara* (Purified).

The diction of the Qur'an could be best described as poetic prose and its language is a model of linguistic purity and stylistic elegance. The Holy Qur'an asserts that it is the literal word of God and the responsibility for its safeguarding rests with God Himself. For this reason, the text of the Holy Qur'an has been spared the usual loss of material and corruption that takes place over long periods of time and to which all the other Holy Books of the world have fallen victim.

The Holy Qur'an is considered to be the finest example of Arabic literature. Not only did it have a strong influence on the development of Arab culture and literature, but it has helped greatly in preserving Arabic as a living language while many other Semitic languages died out over time. The Holy Qur'an is clearly intended for recitation and its text, even when it is prose, lends itself to very melodious recital. The diction of the Holy Qur'an is most unusual and totally unlike other Scriptures of the world. The Holy Qur'an is an epitome of brevity of words and enormity of meanings. It frequently omits in writing what can be clearly understood by the reader because of the context. As well, the language of the Holy Qur'an generously employs idiom, metaphor, simile and allegory to convey its message in the most transcendent, inspirational and eloquent manner.

Even the enemies of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} accepted the elegance of the Qur'anic language. Similar tributes to the Holy Qur'an have been offered by many European writers:

George Sale (1697-1736), the British Orientalist and translator of the Holy Qur'an into English, has this to say about it in his *Preliminary Discourse*:

“The style of the Koran is generally beautiful and fluent... and in many places, especially where the majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent...”

Another English Orientalist, Edward Henry Palmer (1840-1882), who also produced an English translation of the Holy Qur'an, says in his *Introduction*:

“That the best of Arab writers has never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qur'an itself is not surprising.”

F.G. Steingass (1825-1903), the German Jewish Orientalist, writes this about the Holy Qur'an in his *Dictionary of Islam*:

“We may well say the Qur'an is one of the grandest books ever written... Sublime and chaste, where the supreme truth of God's unity is to be proclaimed; appealing in high-pitched strains to the imagination of a poetically-gifted people where the eternal consequences of man's submission to God's holy will, or of rebellion against it, are pictured... the language of the Qur'an adapts itself to the exigencies of everyday life, when this everyday life, in its private and public bearings, is to be brought in harmony with the fundamental principles of the new dispensation.

“Here therefore its merits as a literary production should, perhaps, not be measured by some preconceived maxims of subjective and aesthetic taste, but by the effects which it produced in Muhammad's contemporaries and fellow-countrymen.”

Benjamin Bosworth Smith (1784-1884), the American Protestant Episcopal Bishop, writes this about the Holy Qur'an in his book, *Muhammed*:

“It was the one miracle claimed by Muhammad—‘his standing miracle’ he called it; and a miracle indeed it is.”

The well known lexicographer, Edward William Lane (1801-1876), says this about the Holy Qur'an in the Introduction of his book, *Selections*:

“The earliest Mekkan revelations are those which contain what is highest in a great religion and what was purest in a great man.”

Another European scholar, Hirschfeld, writes this in his *New Researches*:

“The Qur'an is unapproachable as regards convincing power, eloquence, and even composition... And to it was also indirectly due the marvellous development of all branches of science in the Moslim world.”

As the Scriptures of Islam, the Holy Qur'an lays down for the Muslims the law and commandments, codes for their social and moral behaviour, and contains a comprehensive religious philosophy. It is the ultimate source of the Islamic law and a complete guidance for the follower.

THE FIRST REVELATION

The beginning of the Holy Qur'an took place in the year 610 CE when the first revelation was received by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} while he was meditating in the cave of Hira on Mount Jabal al Nur. The Angel Gabriel brought this revelation and made the Prophet repeat after him:

“Recite in the name of thy Lord Who created,
Created man from an adhesive clot;
Recite! And thy Lord is the Noblest,
Who taught by the pen
Taught man what he knew not.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 96:2-6)

These five short lines, now part of *Surah al-'Alaq*, the 96th Chapter of the Holy Qur'an, mark the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic mission that lasted some twenty-two years. The incident was unusual not only because it started a moral and spiritual revolution that enveloped Arabia and the adjoining lands, but also because it took place after nearly five centuries of Divine silence. The drought of Divine munificence was finally lifted with a drizzle of God's grace and mercy upon mankind. Over the next two decades, this drizzle turned into a heavy downpour that watered the spiritually dry landscape of the world and ushered in a new era in the history of mankind.

No special instructions were given to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} at the time of the first revelation. Such instructions started to come down gradually in subsequent revelations that began to define the Prophet's mission more clearly:

“O thou who hast wrapped *himself* in a robe,
Stand up *in Prayer* at night except a small portion thereof—
Half of it, or make it a little less than that

Or make it a little more than that—and recite the Qur'an slowly and thoughtfully. Verily, We are charging thee with a weighty Word.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 73:2-6)

“O thou that has wrapped *thyself with thy* mantle!
Arise and warn.
And thy Lord do thou extol
And thy garments do thou purify
And uncleanness do thou shun,
And bestow not favours seeking to get more *in return*,
And for the sake of thy Lord do thou endure patiently.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 74:2-8)

THE LAST REVELATION

The last whole *Surah* to be revealed is considered to be *Surah al-Nasr*, the 110th Chapter of the Holy Qur'an. This is a 'Medinite' *Surah* in the sense that it was revealed *after* the Hijra. But this Chapter was actually revealed at Mecca, during the time of the Prophet's last Pilgrimage.

The very last verse with which the Qur'anic revelations came to a close however, belongs to *Surah al-Ma'idah*, the 5th Chapter of the Holy Qur'an. This verse was also revealed during the Farewell Pilgrimage, immediately after the Prophet's Sermon on the Mount:

“This day have I perfected for you your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 5:4)

THE OPENING CHAPTER OF THE HOLY QUR'AN (*SURAH AL-FATIHAH*)

The Holy Qur'an opens with *Surah al-Fatihah* which was revealed at Mecca and formed part of the Muslim formal Prayers from the very early days. It is the most sublime example of a prayer and also acts as a preface to the Holy Qur'an, containing its entire essence in its few short verses.

1. In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.
2. All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds,
3. The Gracious, the Merciful,
4. Master of the Day of Judgment.
5. Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help.
6. Guide us in the right path—
7. The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed *Thy* blessings, those who have not incurred displeasure, and those who have not gone astray. (*Al-Qur'an*, 1:1-7)

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ [1]
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ [2]
الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ [3]
مَلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ [4]
إِلَيْكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِلَيْكَ نَسْتَعِينُ [5]
اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ [6]
صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ
غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ [7]

The most common name of this Chapter is of course *Fatihah al-Kitab*, meaning the Opening Chapter of the Book, from which it became abbreviated to *al-Fatihah*. In the Holy Qur'an itself, there is reference to this Chapter in the following words: “*We have indeed*

given thee the seven oft-repeated verses and the great Qur'an." (15:88). This Chapter has been given several other names of which some are given below:

<i>Al-Hamd</i> : The Praise	<i>Al-Qur'an al-'Azim</i> : The Great Qur'an
<i>Al-Shifa'</i> : The Cure	<i>Al-Sab' al-Mathani</i> : The Oft-repeated Seven Verses
<i>Al-Ruqya</i> : The Charm	<i>Umm al-Qur'an</i> : The Mother of Qur'an (most important part of the Qur'an)
<i>Al-Kanz</i> : The Treasure	

It is very interesting to note that a reference to its seven verses and its being the opening Chapter were prophesied a long time ago in the New Testament book of Revelation:

“And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud; and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire;

“And he had in his hand a little book open; and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

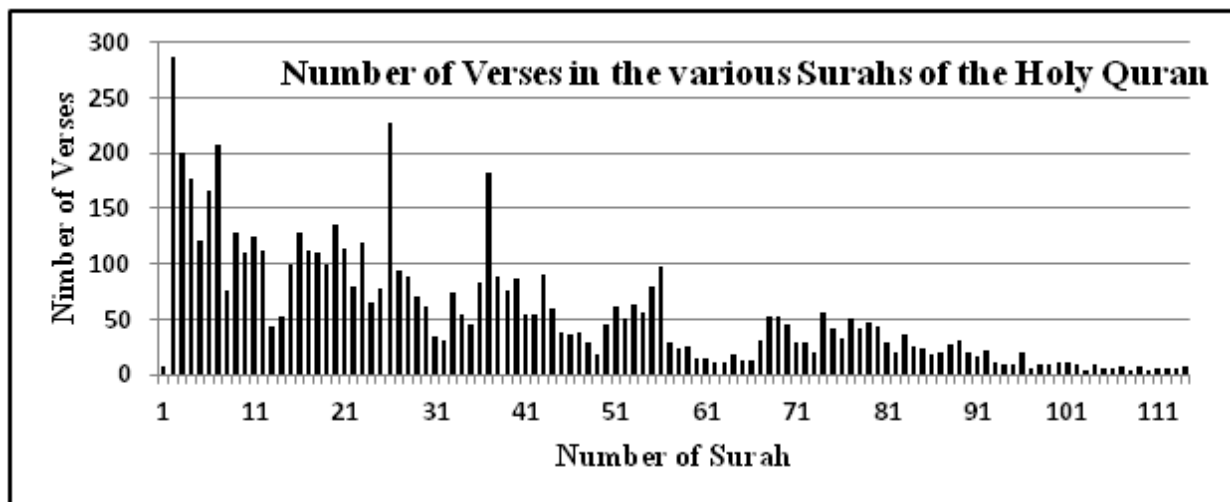
“And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.” (Revelation 10: 1-3)

The Hebrew word for ‘open’ is *fatoah* which is the same as the Arabic word *fatiha*.

SURAHS AND VERSES

The Qur'an is divided into *Surahs* or Chapters and each Chapter consists of individual *Ayaat* or verses. Literally, the word *Ayat* (singular) means ‘sign’ in Arabic while the word *Surah* is derived from the root *sur* meaning wall, fence or railing. In Arabic, the word *Surah* is practically reserved for Qur'anic Chapters. In total, there are 114 *Surahs* and 6,348 verses in the Holy Qur'an.

Figure showing the number of verses in the various *Surahs* (Chapters) of the Holy Qur'an



The *Surahs* are of varying lengths, some consisting of a few lines while others run for many pages. *Surah al Baqarah* is the longest Chapter comprising 287 verses while *Surah al*

Kauthar is the shortest with only four verses including the *tasmia* or invocation at the beginning of the Chapter. Except for the short 'Opening Chapter' which has been placed at the head of the Holy Qur'an, the long *Surahs* are generally in the beginning while the short ones are generally towards the end. This is not a rigid principle as there are many exceptions to it. Because of the presence of long *Surahs* at the beginning of the Holy Qur'an, about half the text of the entire Qur'an is contained in the first 18 Chapters while the other half is contained in the next 96 Chapters. The Figure below shows graphically the number of verses in each *Surah*.

Each *Surah* in the Holy Qur'an has a name given to it. These names are not necessarily revealed but have been introduced by scholars, scribes and lay persons for the sake of reference. These names are usually taken from some prominent word which occurs in the *Surah*.

At the beginning of each *Surah*, except one, stands the following invocation:



Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

The one exception is *Surah at Taubah*, the 9th Chapter of the Holy Qur'an. Many scholars view this Chapter as part of the previous one. In *Surah an-Naml*, the 27th Chapter of the Holy Quran, the invocation 'In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful' is mentioned twice: once in its usual place at the beginning of the *Surah* and the second time in verse 31, in reference to the opening line of the Prophet Solomon's letter to Queen Sheba.

The printed copies of the Holy Qur'an also show another type of division that is called *juz* or part. For the convenience of the reader, the Holy Qur'an has been divided into 30 exactly equal parts so that the recitation of the entire Qur'an can be completed during a single month. Likewise, thematically related verses are grouped into a *ruku'* or passage.

MECCAN AND MEDINITE CHAPTERS

In the printed copies of the Holy Qur'an, the title of each *Surah* is followed by the name of the place where the Chapter was revealed. The place names used are 'Meccan' for all *Surahs* revealed before Hijra (622 CE) when the Prophet lived in Mecca, and 'Medinite' for all *Surahs* revealed after Hijra when the Prophet had migrated to that city. Many of the *Surahs* are composite, and a Chapter marked Meccan may contain some verses from the Medinite period, and vice versa.

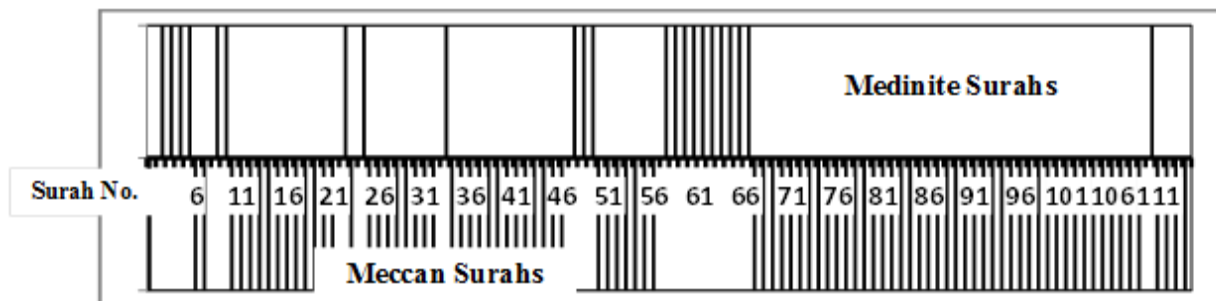
During the twenty two year period of the Qur'anic revelations, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} lived in Mecca for twelve years (610-622 CE) and in Medina for ten years (622-632 CE). Of the 114 *Surahs* of the Holy Quran, about 92 were revealed in Mecca and 22 in Medina. Generally speaking, there are three characteristics which distinguish Meccan *Surahs* from the Medinite ones:

1. The Meccan *Surahs* deal mainly with faith, while the Medinite *Surahs* deal mainly with action or the implementation of faith.

2. Meccan *Surahs* are generally prophetic, while the Medinite *Surahs* deal with the realisation and fulfilment of the prophecies.
3. Meccan *Surahs* emphasise Man's relationship with God, while Medinite *Surahs* emphasize Man's relationship with fellow man and lay down rules and regulations for social and moral conduct.

The Chart below shows the distribution of Meccan and Medinite Chapters in the Holy Qur'an. The early Meccan *Surahs* are shown below the horizontal axis while the later Medinite *Surahs* are shown above the line. The numbers refer to the *Surah* number.

Figure showing the distribution of Meccan and Medinite *Surahs* in the Holy Qur'an



THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

The Holy Qur'an, in its present form, was not revealed all at once. It came down in fragments and its piecemeal revelation took some twenty-two years to complete. Sometimes these revelations would include a single verse and sometimes an entire *Surah*. As the verses were revealed, the Prophet asked the various scribes to place them at appropriate places within the previously revealed text.

The present-day arrangement of the Holy Qur'an does not follow a chronological order. It is neither arranged according to the order in which the verses and the *Surahs* were actually revealed, nor do its contents follow the chronological order of history. The Holy Qur'an's verses and *Surahs*, however, are arranged in a unique order that is well suited to making repeated admonitions and exhortations to the listener or reader. In the course of making these admonitions, the Holy Qur'an states various arguments, points of view and proofs to substantiate them. For this reason, there is considerable repetition of historical events as well as moral and social commandments.

As well, the early Meccan and later Medinite *Surahs* are frequently intermixed. There is a clustering of some long Medinite Chapters in the very early part of the Holy Qur'an (*Surahs*: 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9) and then around the middle (*Surahs* 57-66). Some scholars also include *Surah* numbers 76, 98 and 99 into the Medinite category.

Although the Holy Qur'an is not arranged in a chronological order or by subject matter, there is a definite continuity between the various Chapters. If we were to observe closely the closing lines of some *Surahs* and the opening lines of those immediately following these, we would detect a continuity of the underlying theme.

WRITING AND RECORDING OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

During the early Meccan period, the Holy Qur'an was preserved by the Muslims by memorising the revelations as they were received by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. As the Qur'anic revelations came down in small segments, it was an easy task. Such practice of memorisation was normal at the time and the pre Islamic Arabic poems were treated in the same way. However, as the revelations grew in number and as some of the Muslims who had memorised the Holy Qur'an started to be lost in battles, particularly during the Medinite period, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} appointed several scribes to write down the Qur'an, among whom Zaid bin Thabit is perhaps the most well known.

As the Qur'anic verses were revealed in passages of varying sizes and belonging to different *Surahs*, the text of the Holy Qur'an did not exist in the form of a single book during the life of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. It was during the Caliphates of Abu Bakr and 'Umar that the task of collecting the Qur'an in one volume was entrusted to Zaid bin Thabit. During the time of 'Uthman, the Third Caliph of Islam, an authorized version of the Holy Qur'an was established which was then used for making multiple copies. These duplicate copies were sent to various parts of the Muslim world to be used as standard texts for further copying.

In the pre-Islamic period, the script used for writing Arabic was extremely primitive and the poets of the day commented very negatively on its appearance. The script was significantly revamped and decorated for the writing of the Holy Qur'an. The Arabic script has kept on evolving over the past fourteen centuries and many varieties have arisen over this period for writing normally as well as in calligraphic and decorative style. Some of the scripts that have been used are called: Hijazi (Ma'ili), Kufic, Diwani, Naskh, Ta'liq, Nasta'liq, Shikasta, Shafi'a, Thuluth, Tauqi', Muhaqqiq, Ruq'ah, Rihan, Ghubar, Manshur, Tughra, Gulzar, Bihar, Larza and Hilali.

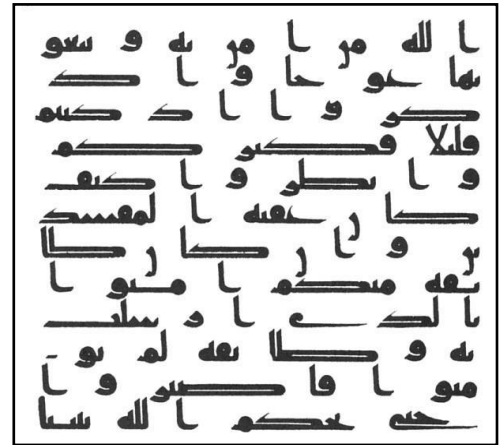
In the very early copies of the Holy Qur'an, no diacritical marks were used. The diacritical marks were introduced for two purposes:

1. To distinguish among letters with the same general shape, such as:

- با, ت ta, ث tha
- ج jim, ح ha, خ kha
- د dal, ذ dhal
- ر ra, ز zay
- س sin, ش shin
- ص sad, ض dad
- ط ta, ظ za
- ع 'ain, غ ghain

2. To indicate vowel marks (*harakat*) such as:

fatha, kasrah, dammah, maddah, sukun, tanwin, shaddah and dagger *alif*.



An example of a seventh century Kufic script without diacritical marks (7:87-88).

An example of a seventh century Kufic script without diacritical marks is shown in the Figure that represents partial verses 87-88 of *Surah Al-A'raf*.

The text of the Holy Qur'an has remained unchanged over the past 1400 years. The millions of copies of the Quran circulating in the world today are all identical. And this is not strange since God says in the Holy Qur'an that He Himself will guard this book:

“Surely it is We Who have revealed the Exposition, and surely it is We Who are its guardians” (15:10)

CRYPTIC LETTERS IN THE HOLY QUR'AN

At the beginning of twenty nine *Surahs*, following the invocation, stand either a single letter or a group of letters of the alphabet. These letters are known as *Muqatta'at* or abbreviations. Of the twenty eight letters of the Arabic alphabet, fourteen have been used in this way. The table shows all the letters of the Arabic alphabet with *Muqatta'at* appropriately highlighted by bolding and shading:

Table showing the Arabic alphabet and *Muqatta'at* in bold text with shading

ا alif	ب ba	ت ta	ث tha	ج jim	ح ha	خ kha
د dal	ذ dhal	ر ra	ز zay	س sin	ش shin	ص sad
ض dad	ط taw	ظ zaw	ع 'ain	غ ghain	ف fa	ق qaf
ك kaf	ل lam	م mim	ن nun	ه ha	و wa	ي ya

Following is a list of all the *Surahs* that contain these cryptic letters:

No.	Surah	Muqatta'at used				
		1 letter	2 letters	3 letters	4 letters	5 letters
2	al Baqarah			alif-lam-mim		
3	Al-'Imran			alif-lam-mim		
7	al A'raf				alif-lam-mim-sad	
10	Yunus			alif-lam-ra		
11	Hud			alif-lam-ra		
12	Yusuf			alif-lam-ra		
13	al Ra'd				alif-lam-mim-ra	
14	Ibrahim			alif-lam-ra		
15	al Hijr			alif-lam-ra		
19	Maryam					kaf-ha-ya-'ain-sad
20	Ta Ha		ta-ha			
26	al Shu'ara			ta-sin-mim		
27	al Naml		ta-sin			
28	al Qasas			ta-sin-mim		
29	al Ankaboot			alif-lam-mim		
30	al Rum			alif-lam-mim		
31	Luqman			alif-lam-mim		
32	al Sajdah			alif-lam-mim		
36	Ya Sin		ya-sin			

38	Sad	sad				
40	al Mu'min		ha-mim			
41	Ha Mim al Sajdah		ha-mim			
42	al Shura					ha-mim-'ain-sin-qaf
43	al Zukhruf		ha-mim			
44	al Dukhan		ha-mim			
45	al Jathiyah		ha-mim			
46	al Ahqaf		ha-mim			
50	Qaf	qaf				
68	al Qalam	nun				

The Holy Qur'an has used the *Muqatta'at* as singly or in groups of up to five letters, in fourteen different combinations, as follows:

Alif-lam-mim (3)	alif-lam-mim-sad (4)	alif-lam-ra (3)	alif-lam-mim-ra (4)
kaf-ha-ya-'ain-sad (5)	ta-ha (2)	ta-sin-mim (3)	ta-sin (2)
ya-sin (2)	sad (1)	ha-mim-ain-sin-qaf (5)	ha-mim (2)
qaf (1)	nun (1)		

The significance and meaning of these mysterious letters is not known with certainty. According to some scholars of the Holy Qur'an, these letters are abbreviations of certain words. For example:

- Alif-lam-mim stands for *anallaho 'alamu*, meaning I am Allah, the Most Knowing
- Alif-lam-ra stands for *anallah ar Ra'i*, meaning I am Allah, the Most Seeing.

According to Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih II, the *Muqatta'at* are keys to the subject matter of the various Chapters wherein they occur. As well, when the *Muqatta'at* change, the subject matter of the Holy Qur'an changes as well. According to some scholars, the *Muqatta'at* can be interpreted under the ABJD numerical system (described in the following section).

ABJD NUMERAL SYSTEM IN ARABIC

Long before the advent of Islam and the invention of Arabic numerals, the Arabs had assigned a numerical order to each letter of the Arabic alphabet. The letters were then used like 'A', 'B', 'C' in English or i, ii, iii, iv in the Roman numeral system. In the numerical system, the Arabic alphabet is not arranged exactly the same as the current order. The values assigned to the various letters are shown in the Table below:

ا	ب	ت	ث	ج	ح	خ
1	2	400	500	3	8	600
د	ذ	ر	ز	س	ش	ص
4	700	200	7	60	300	90
ض	ط	ظ	ع	غ	ف	ق
800	9	900	70	1000	80	100
ك	ل	م	ن	ه	و	ى
20	30	40	50	5	6	10

- The numbers 1-10 are represented by the letters: alif-ba-jim-dal ha-wa-zay ha-taw-ya
- The numbers 20-90 are represented by the letters: kaf-lam-mim-nun sin-'ain-fa-sad
- The numbers 100-1000 are represented by: qaf-ra-shin-ta tha-kha-dhal dad-zaw-ghain

The Arabs also used the letter values for numerology and deriving mystical and hidden meanings in Arabic words and phrases. According to the Arabic letter value system, the

nineteen letters in the invocation  add up to 786 as shown below:

$$2+60+40+1+30+30+5+1+30+200+8+40+50+1+30+200+8+10+40 = 786$$

Thus, instead of writing the usual invocation in the beginning of a letter or document, many Muslims simply write the number 786 at the top.

It is reported in the books of Tradition that, after listening to the recitation of the *Surah al-Baqara* that begins with the *muqatta'at* 'alif-lam-mim', some Jews advised the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} that his period was going to be only 71 years [1+30+40]. The Prophet replied that there is also 'alif-lam-mim-sad' in the Holy Qur'an. The Jews said that it points to a period of 161 years [1+30+40+90]. To this the Prophet replied that there is also 'alif-lam-ra' in the Holy Qur'an. The Jews said that it points to 231 years [1+30+200]. The Prophet then advised them that there is also 'alif-lam-mim-ra' in the Holy Qur'an which adds up to 271 [1+30+40+200]. At this the Jews gave up, saying that the matter was getting too confusing and confided to their own companions that perhaps all these numbers may be added together for the period of his dispensation.

WHAT DOES THE HOLY QUR'AN CONTAIN?

To the Muslims, the Qur'an is the Word of God and contains complete guidance for mankind. Much of the Holy Qur'an is about God, His attributes and man's relationship with Him. But it also contains directives for its followers, historical accounts of certain prophets and peoples, arguments for accepting Muhammad as a genuine Prophet and good news for the believers and warnings for the disbelievers. The Holy Qur'an also constantly exhorts and admonishes the reader to act righteously and shun evil. Broadly speaking, the contents of the Holy Quran fall into seven main categories:

1. The nature of the Spiritual World
2. The Law and Commandments
3. Historical Accounts
4. The Wisdom
5. The Prophecies
6. The Prayers
7. Admonitions and Exhortations

One by one we will discuss these various aspects of the Holy Qur'an.

1. The Nature of the Spiritual World

The central theme of the Holy Qur'an is, of course, the doctrine of One God. The God of the Qur'an is All-Powerful, All-Knowing, Merciful and Compassionate, and the sole Creator of the universe. He is the One Who gave us life, and when we die it is to Him that we will return. He not only listens to our prayers, but provides for our needs without our asking; He is a Generous and Gracious God. In *Surah al Hashr*, some of God's attributes are described as follows:

“He is Allah, there is none worthy of worship except Him;
The Knower of the unseen and the seen;
He is the Gracious, the Merciful.
He is Allah, there is none worthy of worship except Him,
The Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace,
the Bestower of Security, the Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted.
Holy is Allah *far* above that which they associate *with Him*.
He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner.
His are the most beautiful names.
All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him,
and He is the Mighty, the Wise.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 59:23-25)

Besides containing illuminating facts about the various attributes of God, the Qur'an explains the rest of the spiritual world in considerable detail: the nature of angels and jinn; the concept of the Day of Judgment; the Resurrection and Reckoning; and the nature of Hell and Heaven. All these elements pertain to the realm of the unseen and much of the language used in explaining them is metaphorical.

Scriptures of other religions also talk about these spiritual things, but the philosophy contained in the Holy Qur'an is far more rational, meaningful and capable of standing up to the test of time.

2. The Law and Commandments

Most of all, the Quran is the Law for the Muslims. It lays down commandments for worshipping God and contains numerous codes for the social and moral behaviour of its followers. In this respect, the Qur'an supersedes all previous Laws given to earlier prophets. The commandments in the Holy Qur'an clearly tell the Muslims what to DO and what NOT to do. The following are some of the 'positive' commandments in the Qur'an:

- Worship One God (2:22)
- Pray to the Lord in humility and in secret (7:56)
- Observe the Daily Prayer (2:44)
- Enjoin Prayer on your household (20:133)
- Keep the fasts during the month of Ramadhan (2:184)
- Pay the Zakat (2:44)
- Spend secretly and openly (14: 32)
- Perform the Hajj and 'Umra (2:197)
- Perform ablution before the Prayer (5:7)
- Obey God and His prophets and those in authority among you (4:60)

- Ask forgiveness of God (4:107)
- Seek refuge with God from Satan, the cursed (before reciting the Holy Qur'an) (16:99)
- Be patient (3:201)
- Follow the way of Abraham (16:124)
- Strive in the way of God (2:191)
- Vie with one another in good works (2:149)
- Eat of the good and pure things (2:173)
- Give the orphans their due (4:3)
- Make peace between the parties that fight each other (49:10)
- Call the people to their Lord with wisdom and exhortation (16:126)
- Fulfil the covenants (16:92)
- Discharge the trusts (4:59)
- Observe justice (4:136)
- Keep the oaths and fulfil the promises (5:2), (5:90)
- Be good to others (16:91)
- Be good to the parents (2:84)
- Look after the kinsman, the poor and the wayfarer (2:84)
- Give full measure and full weight (7:86)
- Guard your chastity (24:31)
- Face the Sacred Mosque during the Prayer (2:150)
- Seek help through perseverance and Prayer (2:154)
- Give the women their dowries (4:5)
- Greet each other with a greeting (4:87)
- Invoke blessings on the Prophet (33:57)
- Keep silent when the Qur'an is recited (7:205)

Similarly, prohibitive commandments in the Holy Qur'an forbid the Muslims from:

- Associating any other deity with God (2:23)
- Reviling other people's deities (6:109)
- Making friends with people with whom God is angry (60:14)
- Killing other people (6:152; 17:34)
- Stealing other people's property (5:39)
- Devouring the property of the orphan (17:35)
- Eating certain forbidden foods (2:174), (5:4)
- Consuming alcoholic drinks (5:91)
- Giving false testimony (2:284)
- Taking interest (3:131)
- Uttering unseemly speech in public (4:149)
- Indecency and manifest evil (16:91)
- Gambling (5:91)
- Marrying idolatrous people (2:222)
- Entering homes before asking for permission (24:28)
- Spreading disorder in the earth (7:57)

- Letting one people deride another people (49:12)
- Becoming disdainfully proud (17:38)
- Becoming divided (3:106)
- Exceeding the limits in the matter of religion (4:172)
- Using compulsion in the religion (2:257)
- Being suspicious, spying and backbiting (49:13)
- Following the footsteps of Satan (24:22)
- Killing children for fear of poverty (17:32)

Besides the above mentioned DOs and DON'Ts, there are many other commandments in the Holy Qur'an which control the institutions of marriage, divorce, inheritance, fighting and punishments. All Muslims are supposed to follow these commandments. The wilful violation of any of these commandments constitutes sin, and the violation of some of the social commandments can even be punishable by the society.

3. Historical Accounts

The Holy Qur'an contains historical accounts of many earlier prophets and peoples. The purpose of narrating these stories is to show mankind how loving and faithful God can be to His true servants and chosen people and also how utterly destructive His wrath can be upon those who disregard His Commands. These historical accounts mentioned in the Holy Qur'an are also prophetic in the sense that they imply recurrence of similar incidents in the future.

The various prophets whose lives are narrated in the Holy Qur'an in some detail include Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Joseph, Moses, David, Solomon and Jesus, to name a few. A complete list of the prophets mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is already given in the Section on Islam under the heading of Belief in Prophets. Some of the earlier peoples that are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an include:

- Bani Isra'il, the Israelites
- The people of 'Ad to whom the Prophet Hud was sent
- The people of Thamud to whom the Prophet Salih was sent
- The people of Midian to whom the Prophet Shu'aib was sent
- The people of the Wood
- The people of the Hijr
- The people of Tubba
- The people of the Elephant
- The people of the Ditch

Many *Surahs* of the Holy Qur'an are named after the Prophets such as Yunus, Hud, Yusuf, Ibrahim, Luqman, Muhammad, and Nuh. These *Surahs*, however, are not exclusively devoted to the accounts of these prophets and also contain other narratives and commandments. The only *Surah* that is entirely devoted to the account of one prophet is *Surah Yusuf*.

The Qur'an also gives an account of many incidents that took place during the life of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. However, not many contemporaries of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} are mentioned by name. The only two persons whose names appear in the Holy Qur'an are Zaid,

the freed slave and adopted son of the Prophet and Abu Lahab, an uncle and arch enemy of his. Zaid's name occurs in *Surah al Ahzab*, verse 38, and Abu Lahab's name occurs in *Surah Lahab*, the 111th Chapter of the Holy Quran. The Prophet's own name, Muhammad, is mentioned only four times in the Holy Qur'an; at all other places he is referred to as the Prophet, the Messenger, the Warner, the Witness, the Reminder, the servant of God or by other similar title.

4. The Book of Wisdom

From the point of view of universal appeal, the Holy Qur'an is a Book of Wisdom. Any person, whether he is a Muslim or not, can benefit from this treasure of God's wisdom. Below are given some samplings of this wisdom:

- And everyone has a goal which dominates him; vie, then, with one another in good works... (2:149)
- ... But it may be that you dislike a thing while it is good for you, and it may be that you like a thing while it is bad for you. Allah knows *all things*, and you know not. (2:217)
- ... No soul is burdened beyond its capacity... (2:234)
- A kind word and forgiveness are better than charity followed by injury (2:264)
- If God helps you, none can overcome you; but if He forsakes you, then who is there who can help you beside Him (3:161)
- Every soul shall taste of death... (3:186)
- If you keep away from more grievous of the things which are forbidden to you, God will remove from you your minor evils (4:32)
- Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you be in strongly built forts (4:79)
- ... The bad and the good are not alike, even though the abundance of the bad may cause thee to wonder... (5:101)
- And if Allah touch thee with affliction, there is none that can remove it but He; and if He bestows upon you fortune then He has power to do all that He wills. (6:18)
- And worldly life is nothing but a sport and a pastime. And surely the abode of the Hereafter is better for those who are righteous. Will you not then understand? (6:33)
- And if thou obey the majority of those on earth, they will lead thee astray from Allah's way... (6:117)
- ... And no soul earns aught *of evil* but carries its burden against itself. And no bearer shall carry the burden of another... (6:165)
- O children of Adam, We have given you garments to cover your nakedness... but the garment of piety is the best of all garments (7:27)
- And beware of an affliction which will not smite exclusively those among you who have done wrong... (8:26)
- And know that your possessions and your children are but a trial and that it is God with Whom there is a great reward (8:29)

- God deprives no people of the favours, until they change their own condition (8:54)
- O Prophet, Allah is sufficient for thee and for those who follow thee of the believers (8:65)
- And when affliction befalls a man, he calls on Us, lying on his side, or sitting, or standing; but when We relieve him of his distress, he walks away as if he had never beseeched Us to attend to the misery afflicting him... (10:13)
- Certainly, God wrongs not men at all, but men wrong their own souls (10:45)
- And if Allah touch thee with harm, there is none who can remove it but He; and if He desire good for thee, there is none who can repel His grace. He causes it to reach whomsoever of His servants He wills... (10:108)
- ... Surely, virtues drive away evils... (11:115)
- ... For none despairs of Allah's mercy save the unbelieving people. (12:88)
- And how many a sign is there in the heavens and the earth, but men pass them by, turning away (12:106)
- ... Aye! it is in the remembrance of Allah that hearts can find comfort (13:29)
- Those who prefer the life of the present world to that of the next, and hinder men from the way of God, and seek to make it crooked, have fallen into deepest error (14:4)
- And if you try to count the favours of God, you will not be able to count them (14:35)
- It is for Us to give life and death; and it is We Who are the sole inheritor (15:24)
- He who follows the right way follows it only for *the good of his own* soul: and he who goes astray, goes astray only to his *own* loss. And no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another... (17:16)
- And say not of anything, "I am going to do it tomorrow," unless Allah should will... (18:24-25)
- Wealth and children are an ornament of the life of this world. But lasting good works are better in the sight of thy Lord (18:47)
- ... But of all things man is most contentious (18:55)
- If the ocean became ink for the words of my Lord, surely, the ocean would be exhausted before the words of my Lord came to an end (18:110)
- And God increases in guidance those who follow guidance (19:77)
- And We created not the heaven and the earth and all that is between the two, in sport (21:17)
- God cannot be questioned for what He does (21:24)
- Every soul shall taste of death (21:36)
- Man is created of haste (21:38)
- Repel evil with that which is best... (23:97)
- Bad things are for bad men, and bad men are for bad things. And good things are for good men, and good men are for good things... (24:27)
- And whatever of the things *of this world* you are given is only a temporary enjoyment of the present life and an adornment thereof; and that which is with Allah is better and more lasting... (28:61)

- And call not any other beside God. There is no god but He; everything else will perish. His is the Judgment, and unto Him shall you return (28:89)
- Among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversities of your tongues and your colours. In that surely are Signs for those who possess knowledge (30:23)
- ... Thou wilt never find a change in the way of Allah (33:63)
- Whoever desires honour, then *let him know that* all honour belongs to Allah... (35:11)
- Is not God sufficient for His servant? (39:37)
- Say, "O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls! Despair not of the mercy of Allah, surely Allah forgives all sins. Verily, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful." (39:54)
- Man does not tire of praying for good; but if evil befalls him, he despairs, giving up all hope (41:50)
- When We bestow a favour on man, he goes away, turning aside; but when evil befalls him, behold! he starts offering long prayers (41:52)
- Whoso desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We give him increase in his harvest; and whoso desires the harvest of this world, We give him *thereof*, but in the Hereafter he will have no share. (42:21)
- And whatever misfortune befalls you, is due to what your own hands have wrought... (42:31)
- ... And truly when We cause man to taste of mercy from Us, he rejoices therein. But if an evil befalls them because of what their hands have sent forth, then lo! man is ungrateful. (42:49)
- Verily, the most honourable among you, in the sight of God, is he who is the most righteous among you (49:14)
- ... Conjecture avails naught against truth (53:29)
- No soul that bears a burden shall bear the burden of another (53:39)
- Man will have nothing but what he strives for (53:40)
- The reward of goodness is nothing but goodness (55:61)
- ... And whoso is rid of the covetousness of his own soul—it is these who will be successful (59:10)
- It is most hateful in the sight of God that you should say what you do not do (61:4)
- ... And he who fears Allah—He will make for him a way out, and will provide for him from where he expects not. And he who puts his trust in Allah—He is sufficient for him... (65:3-4)
- God will soon bring about ease after hardship (65:8)
- Verily, getting up at night is the most potent means of subduing the self and most effective in respect of words of prayer (73:7)
- Verily, he truly prospers who purifies himself (87:15)
- You prefer the life of this world, whereas the Hereafter is better and everlasting (87:17-18)
- As for man, when his Lord tries him and honours him and bestows favours on him, he says, "My Lord has honoured me." But when He tries him and straitens

for him his *means of* subsistence, he says, “My Lord has disgraced me.” (89:16-17)

- We have surely created man to (face) hardships (90:5)
- Surely, man is ungrateful to His Lord; and surely, he is very keen for the love of wealth (100:7 & 9)
- Mutual rivalry in seeking worldly gains, diverts you from God (102:2)

5. Prophecies in the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an contains numerous prophecies which cover a wide span of time. Some of these prophecies were realised within days of the original revelation while others took months or years. Many were fulfilled after the death of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and some relate to events, inventions and discoveries of the present day. Some of the prophecies even concern events of the distant future, up to the Day of Judgment. As God says in the Quran:

“For every prophecy there is a fixed time” (6:68).

Below are given some of the prophecies as examples:

1. Holy Prophet's triumphant return to Mecca

... It may be that thy Lord will raise thee to an exalted station.

And say, “O my Lord, make my entry a good entry and *then* make me come forth with a good forthcoming. And grant me from Thyself a helping power.”

And say, “Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away *fast*. (17:80-82)

Most surely He Who had made *the teaching of* the Qur'an binding on thee will bring thee back to *thy* place of return... (28:86)

2. Byzantines' victory over the Persians, and the Muslims' victory in the Battle of Badr

The Romans have been defeated,

In the land nearby, and they, after their defeat, will be victorious

In a few years—Allah's is the command before and after *that*—and on that day the believers will rejoice,

With the help of Allah. He helps whom He pleases; and He is the Mighty, the Merciful. (30:3-6)

[There are two prophecies in this verse: the first relates to the victory of the Byzantines over the Sassanids; the second relates to the victory of the Muslims in the Battle of Badr.]

3. Muslim victory at the Battle of the Ditch

They are a host from among the confederates *which will be* routed here. (38:12)

Do they say, “We are a victorious host?”

The hosts shall soon be routed and will turn their backs *in flight*. (54:45-46)

4. Pilgrimage after the Treaty of Hudaibiya

Surely has Allah in truth fulfilled for His Messenger the Vision. You will certainly enter the Sacred Mosque, if Allah will, in security, *some* having *their* heads shaven, and *others* having *their* hair cut short; *and* you will have no fear. But He knew what you knew not. He has in fact ordained for you, besides that, a victory near at hand. (48:28)

5. The Suez and the Panama canals

Verily, He will merge the two oceans, joining them together.
Between them is *now* a barrier; they encroach not *one upon the other*.
Which, then, of the favours of your Lord will you twain deny?
There come out from them pearls and coral.
Which, then, of the favours of your Lord will you twain deny? (55:20-24)

6. Safeguarding of the Holy Qur'an

“Verily, We Ourselves have sent down this Exhortation, and most surely We will be its Guardian.” (15:10)

7. The Latter Days

It shall be so even when Gog and Magog are let loose and they shall hasten forth from every height.
And the true promise draws nigh; then behold, the eyes of those who disbelieve will fixedly stare, *and they will say*, “Alas for us! We were indeed heedless of this; nay, we were wrongdoers!” (21:97-98)

When the sun is wrapped up,
And when the stars are obscured,
And when the mountains are made to move,
And when the she-camels, ten month pregnant, are abandoned,
And when the beasts are gathered together,
And when the seas are made to flow forth *one into another*,
And when people are brought together,
And when the girl-child buried alive is questioned about,
“For what crime was she killed?”
And when books are spread abroad.
And when the heaven is laid bare,
And when the Fire is caused to blaze up,
And when the Garden is brought nigh,
Then every soul will know what it has brought forward. (81:2-15)

6. Prayers in the Holy Qur'an

Besides the formal Prayer called *Salat*, Muslims are enjoined to pray to their Lord for all their spiritual and worldly needs. These Silent Prayers or supplications can be offered at any time during the day and in any language convenient to the believer.

All prayers in Islam are addressed directly to God, without going through the agency of any intermediary. The Holy Qur'an teaches its reader the proper words for prayer and supplication. This is achieved by direct exhortations to the believers as well as by examples of the prayers of earlier prophets and peoples.

The mother of all prayers—*Al-Fatihah*:

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.
All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds,
The Gracious, the Merciful,
Master of the Day of Judgment.
Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help.
Guide us in the right path—
The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed *Thy* blessings, those who have not incurred displeasure, and those who have not gone astray. (1:1-7)

Prayer of Adam and Eve, after they had disobeyed God's command:

“Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves; and if Thou forgive us not and have not mercy on us, we shall surely be of the lost.” (7:24)

Prayers of Noah:

“Embark therein. In the name of Allah be its course and its mooring. My Lord is assuredly Most Forgiving, Merciful.” (11:42)

And say, “My Lord, cause me to land a blessed landing, for Thou art the Best of those who bring *men* to land.” (23:30)

Prayers of Abraham:

And *remember the time* when Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundation of the House, *praying*, “Our Lord, accept *this* from us; for Thou art All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

“Our Lord, make us submissive to Thee and *make* of our offspring a people submissive to Thee. And show us our ways of worship, and turn to us with mercy; for Thou art Oft-Returning *with compassion and* Merciful.

“And, our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from among themselves, who may recite to them Thy Signs and teach them the Book and Wisdom and may purify them; surely, Thou art the Mighty, the Wise.” (2:128-130)

And *remember* when Abraham said, “My Lord, make this city *a city* of peace, and keep me and my children away from worshipping idols.

“My Lord, they have indeed led astray many among mankind. So whoever follows me, he is certainly of me; and whoever disobeys me—Thou art, surely, Most Forgiving, Merciful.

“Our Lord, I have settled some of my children in an uncultivable valley near Thy Sacred House—our Lord—that they may observe Prayer. So make men's hearts incline towards them and provide them with fruits, that they may be thankful.”

“Our Lord, certainly, Thou knowest what we conceal and what we make known. And nothing whatsoever is hidden from Allah, whether in the earth or in the heaven.

“All praise belongs to Allah, Who has given me, despite *my* old age, Ishmael and Isaac. Surely, my Lord is the Hearer of prayer.

“My Lord, make me observe Prayer, and my children, *too*. Our Lord! do accept my prayer.

“Our Lord, grant forgiveness to me and to my parents and to the believers on the day when the reckoning will take place.” (14:36-42)

“My Lord, bestow wisdom on me and join me with the righteous;
And give me a true reputation among posterity;
And make me *one* of the inheritors of the Garden of Bliss;
And forgive my father; for he is *one* of the erring;
And disgrace me not on the day when they will be raised up,
The day when wealth and sons shall not avail;
But he *alone will be saved* who comes to Allah with a submissive heart;” (26:84-90)

“Our Lord, in Thee do we put our trust and to Thee do we turn *repentant*, and towards Thee is the *final* return.

“Our Lord, make us not a trial for those who disbelieve, and forgive us, our Lord; for Thou alone art the Mighty, the Wise.” (60:5-6)

Prayer of Lot:

“Help me, my Lord, against the wicked people.” (29:31)

Prayer of Joseph:

“O my Lord, Thou hast blessed me with a share of sovereignty and taught me the interpretation of things. O Maker of heavens and the earth, Thou art my Protector in this world and the Hereafter. Let death come to me in a state of submission *to Thy will* and join me to the righteous.” (12:102)

Prayers of Moses:

“My Lord! open out for me my heart,
And ease for me my task,
And untie the knot of my tongue,
That they may understand my speech,
And grant me a helper from my family—
Aaron, my brother;
Increase my strength with him,
And make him share my task,
That we may glorify Thee much,
And remember Thee much.
Thou possessest full knowledge of us.” (20:26-36)

“My Lord, I have wronged my soul, therefore forgive me.” (28:17)

“My Lord, deliver me from the unjust people.” (28:22)

“O my Lord, a beggar I am of whatever good Thou mayest bestow on me.” (28:25)

Prayer of David when facing Goliath:

And when they (David and his party) issued forth to *encounter* Jalut and his forces, they said: "O our Lord, pour forth steadfastness upon us, and make our steps firm, and help us against the disbelieving people." (2:251)

Prayer of Solomon:

"My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and to do *such* good works as would please Thee, and admit me, by Thy mercy, among Thy righteous servants." (27:20)

Prayer of Job:

And remember Job when he cried to his Lord, *saying*, "Affliction has touched me, and Thou art the Most Merciful of all who show mercy." (21:84)

Prayers of Zechariah:

"My Lord, the bones have indeed waxed feeble in me, and the head glistens with hoariness, but never, my Lord, have I been unblessed in my prayer to Thee.
"And I fear my relations after me, and my wife is barren. Grant me, therefore, a successor from Thyself,
"That he may be heir to me and to the House of Jacob. And make him, my Lord, well-pleasing to Thee." (19:5-7)

And *remember* Zachariah when he cried to his Lord, *saying*, "My Lord, leave me not childless, and Thou art the Best of inheritors." (21:90)

Prayers of Jesus and his disciples:

Said Jesus, son of Mary, "O Allah, our Lord, send down to us a table from heaven spread with food that it may be to us a festival, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a Sign from Thee; and provide sustenance for us, for Thou art the Best of sustainers." (5:115)

Prayers of the believers:

And of them there are some who say, "Our Lord, grant us good in this world as well as good in the world to come, and protect us from the torment of the Fire." (2:202)

"Our Lord, do not punish us, if we forget or fall into error; and our Lord, lay not on us a responsibility as Thou didst lay upon those before us. Our Lord, burden us not with what we have not the strength to bear; and efface our *sins*, and grant us forgiveness and have mercy on us; Thou art our Master; so help us Thou against the disbelieving people." (2:287)

"Our Lord, let not our hearts become perverse after Thou hast guided us; and bestow on us mercy from Thyself; surely, Thou alone art the Bestower.

"Our Lord, Thou wilt certainly assemble mankind together on the Day about which there is no doubt; surely, Allah breaks not *His* promise." (3:9-10)

Those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and *lying* on their sides, and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth: "Our Lord, Thou hast not created this in vain; *nay*, Holy art Thou; save us, then, from the punishment of the Fire.

"Our Lord, whomsoever Thou causest to enter the Fire, him has Thou surely disgraced. And the wrongdoers shall have no helpers.

"Our Lord, we have heard a Crier calling *us* unto faith, 'Believe ye in your Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord, forgive us, therefore, our sins and remove from us our evils, and in death join us with the righteous.

"Our Lord, give us what Thou hast promised to us through Thy Messengers; and disgrace us not on the Day of Resurrection. Surely, Thou breakest not Thy promise." (3:192-195)

And those who say, "Our Lord, grant us of our spouses and children the delight of *our* eyes, and make *each of* us a leader of the righteous." (25:75)

"Sufficient for us is Allah—and His Messenger; surely Allah will bestow on us of His bounty; to Allah do we turn in supplication." (9:59)

Prayers taught to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}:

"O my Lord, increase me in knowledge." (20:115)

And say, "My Lord, I seek refuge in Thee from the incitements of the satans. And I seek refuge in Thee, my Lord, lest they come near me." (23:98-99)

And say, "My Lord, forgive and have mercy, and Thou art the Best of those who show mercy." (23:119)

Prayer of the weak:

... The weak—men, women and children—who say: "Our Lord, take us out of this town, whose people are oppressors, and make for us some friend from Thyself, and make for us from Thyself some helper" (4:76)

Prayer for parents and children:

"My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in *my* childhood." (17:25)

"My Lord, grant me *the power* that I may be grateful for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me and upon my parents, and that I may do such good works as may please Thee. And make my seed righteous for me. I do turn to Thee; and, truly, I am of those who submit *to Thee*." (46:16)

Prayer by the expecting parents:

"If Thou give us a healthy righteous child we shall surely be of those who are grateful." (7:190)

Prayer while travelling on a ride:

“Holy is He Who has subjected this to us, and we, by ourselves, were unable to harness it.
“And to our Lord surely shall we return.” (43:14-15)

7. Admonitions and Exhortations

It is the persistent theme of the Holy Qur'an to admonish and caution the reader as to the danger of neglecting God's commands and risking His wrath and displeasure. At the same time it encourages the reader to do good and partake of God's pleasure and rewards. Man is constantly reminded of the transient nature of the present world and to look forward to the permanence of the Hereafter. The Qur'anic exhortations and admonitions are always accompanied by strong arguments as to why man should behave in the manner instructed by God. In this regard, constant mention is made of earlier people who were blessed with God's favours and were given dominion in the land, as well as those people who denied their prophets and were consequently wiped off the face of the earth.

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

The Holy Qur'an has been translated into many languages of the world. The oldest English translation of the Qur'an is by Alexander Ross which was published in 1649, more than three hundred and fifty years ago. A list of some of the well known English translators of the Holy Qur'an, with the dates of their publications against their names is shown in the Table. Translators belonging to the Ahmadiyya Community are marked by asterisks (*).

Table listing the various English translations of the Holy Qur'an

No.	Translator	Year	No.	Translator	Year
1.	Alexander Ross	1649	29.	M. Farooq-e-Azam Malik	1997
2.	George Sale	1734	30.	M. Muhsin Khan & M. T. Al-Hilali	1999
3.	J. M. Rodwell	1861	31.	Abdalhaqq Bewley & Aisha Bewley	1999
4.	E. H. Palmer	1880	32.	Fazlollah Nikayin	1999
5.	ʿAbdul Hakim	1905	33.	Zohurul Hoque	2000
6.	Mirza Abul Fazl	1910	34.	T. Winter, U. Hutchinson & others	2000
7.	*Muhammad ʿAli	1917	35.	Tahere Saffarzadeh	2001
8.	Ghulam Sarwar,	1929	36.	M. J. Gohari	2002
9.	Marmaduke Pickthall	1930	37.	Nooruddeen Durkee	2003
10.	ʿAbdullah Yusuf ʿAli	1934	38.	Sayyid Ali Quli Qara'i	2003
11.	Richard Bell	1937	39.	Thomas Cleary	2004
12.	A. J. Arberry	1955	40.	M. A. S. Abdel-Haleem	2004
13.	*Sher ʿAli	1955	41.	Edip Yuksel, Layth Saleh & others	2007
14.	N. J. Dawood	1956	42.	Laleh Bakhtiar	2007
15.	ʿAbdul Majid Daryabadi	1957	43.	Alan Jones	2007
16.	Mir Ahmed ʿAli	1964	44.	ʿAli Unal	2007
17.	Muhammad Asad	1964	45.	Mufti Afzal Hoosen Elias	2007
18.	Syed Abdul Lateef	1968	46.	Muhammad Taqi Usmani	2007
19.	*Malik Ghulam Fareed	1969	47.	Ahmad Zaki Hammad	2008
20.	*Pir Salahuddin	1969	48.	Tarif Khalidi	2008
21.	*M. Zafarulla Khan	1971	49.	Usama Dakdok	2009

22.	Hashim Amir 'Ali	1974
23.	Rashad Khalifa	1981
24.	T. B. Irving	1985
25.	M. H. Shakir	1985
26.	Ahmad Zidan & Dina Zidan	1993
27.	Mir Aneesuddin	1993
28.	Syed Vickar Ahmed	1995

50.	Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri	2009
51.	Yahiya Emerick	2010
52.	Nazeer Ahmed	2011
53.	Shabbir Ahmed	2012
54.	Assad Nimer Busool	2012
55.	Talal Itani	2012
56.	'Abdur Raheem Kidwai	2013

COMMENTARIES OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

Besides the simple translation of the Arabic text into various languages, there exist a number of books which also contain detailed explanatory notes and interpretations of the Holy Qur'an. Such a book is called *Tafsir* or Commentary of the Holy Qur'an. It should be noted that a commentary and interpretation is largely a matter of individual opinion. Some of the best known Commentaries of the Holy Quran are in the Arabic language. A list of some of the better known Commentaries is given below:

Commentaries in the Arabic Language:

Name of Commentary	Author	Period C.E.
<i>Tafsir al-Tabari</i>	Imam ibn Jarir Tabari	838-923
<i>Tafsir ibn al Kathir</i>	Ibn al Kathir	1301-1373
<i>Al Kashaf an Haqa'iq at Tanzil</i>	Al Zamakhshari	1074-1144
<i>Al Tafsir al-Kabir</i>	Imam Fakhruddin Razi	1149-1209
<i>Tafsir al Qurtubi</i>	'Abdullah al Qurtubi	1214-1273
<i>Anwar al Tanzil</i>	Nasiruddin Baidawi	d. 1286
<i>Al Bahr al Muhit</i>	Ibn Yusuf al Gharnati	1256-1344
<i>Tafsir al Jalalain</i>	Jalaluddin al Mahalli & Jalaluddin as Sayyuti	1388-1459 1445-1505
<i>Durre Manthur</i>	Jalaluddin Sayyuti	1445-1505
<i>Fatah al Qadir</i>	Ibn 'Ali Shaukani	1759-1834
<i>Ruh al Ma'ani</i>	Abul Shihab al Alusi al Baghdadi	1802-1854
<i>Fatah al Bayan</i>	Siddiq bin Hasan Qinnauji al Bukhari	1832-1890

Commentaries in the Urdu Language

<i>Tafsir Kabir</i>	Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad	1889-1965
<i>Majma al Bayan</i>	Muhammad 'Ali	1874-1951

Commentaries in the English Language

<i>Commentary on the Quran</i>	Rev. E. M. Wherry	1843-1927
<i>Tafsir-e-'Usmani</i>	Shabbir Ahmad Usmani	1886-1949
<i>The Holy Qur'an with English Translation and Commentary</i>	Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad	1889-1965
<i>Ma'ariful Qur'an</i>	M. Shafi Usmani	1897-1976
<i>Israr-ut-Tanzil</i>	Ameer Muhammad Akram Awan	1934-
<i>Tafsir Ishraq Al-Ma'ani</i>	Syed Iqbal Zaheer	???

Section 3

LIFE OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The earliest primary source for the life of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} is *Sirat Rasul Allah* (Life of the Messenger of God) written by Ibn Ishaq (704-770 CE) who was born some 72 years after the death of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. While the original writing by Ibn Ishaq has perished, much of its contents have survived until today in two other works edited after him. The first is *Sirat-un Nabi* (Life of the Prophet) written by Ibn Hisham (d. 833 CE) and the second is *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (History of the Prophets and Kings) written by al-Tabari (838-923 CE), which is usually referred to as *Tarikh al-Tabari*. The original work by Ibn Ishaq was based entirely on oral traditions that had reached him. Considerable historical material is also available in the books of *Hadith* (Tradition of the Prophet) of which the six most authentic ones were compiled by Imam Isma' il Bukhari (810-870 CE), Imam Muslim bin Hajjaj (815-875 CE), Imam Abu Dawud (817-889 CE), Abu 'Abdullah ibn Maja (824-887 CE), Imam Isa bin Tirmidhi (824-892 CE), and Ahmad al Nasa'i (829-915 CE).

ARABIA AND ITS PEOPLE

The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was born in Mecca⁵, Arabia, in 570 CE. We shall present a brief overview of the land of Arabia, the history of its people, and the conditions that were prevalent at the time of his birth before embarking upon the life of the Prophet himself.

The Land of Arabia

The land of Arabia is a large, rectangular shaped peninsula that is bounded by water on its three sides and land on the fourth. To the east is situated the Persian Gulf, to the south the Arabian Sea, to the west the Red Sea, and to the north lies Palestine and the Syrian desert. With water on three sides and formidable deserts on the fourth, the Arabs used to refer to their land as *Al-Jazira*, or the Island.

To the north-east, the Arabian land mass is bounded by two major river systems: the Euphrates and the Tigris that drain northern Iraq, Syria and southern Turkey. The arcuate strip of land that begins with the mouths of these two rivers on the Persian Gulf and extends along their channels through Ur, Sumer, Babylon, Akkad and Haran and then turns south-westward along the land of Phoenicia and Canaan on the Mediterranean Ocean, is known as the Fertile Crescent. Throughout history, this highly fertile strip of land, that is otherwise surrounded by deserts and barren hills, has been eagerly contested and fought for. Several cultures and empires that flourished in the Fertile Crescent have left their indelible mark in

⁵ The old name of Mecca was Bakka. While some consider the two names to be synonymous, others believe the word Bakka applies only to the Ka'ba and the sacred ground around it. There is also mention of the valley of Bacca in the Old Testament (Psalms 84:6). According to recent Biblical scholarship, the word Bacca applies to a waterless valley.

history and include: the Sumerians, the Assyrians, the Akkadians, the Babylonians, the Phoenicians, and the Canaanites.

Most of the Arabian Peninsula is a desert land of scorching sun with oases and settlements scattered here and there. There is not a single river in Arabia which flows perennially and reaches the sea. None of its streams are navigable. Longer than man can remember, Bedouin tribes have inhabited this region, constantly moving in search of food and pastures. Caravan routes crisscross the desert in all directions.

Other than some cities near the sea, much of the land of Arabia is given to deserts and extremely arid landscapes which have made it unattractive to invading foreigners in the past. For the very same reason, civilisations in the surrounding countries have had little impact on the nomadic lifestyle of the desert dwellers who have maintained a culture of political independence. These Bedouins were ruled by tribal chiefs and several tribes would make loose alliances. Proper monarchical governments existed only in the larger cities on the periphery of the Arabian deserts. To the south-west lay the kingdom of Yemen while to the north lay the principedom of Ghassan that included the southern regions of Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

While some Arabs had adopted a nomadic lifestyle—constantly moving from place to place, others lived a sedentary or settled life in small towns and oases, the latter being wet and fertile patches where ground water was near the surface to support vegetation. The nomadic Arabs raised livestock which they brought to the towns, while the town people engaged in farming and caravan trade.

Around the time of Muhammad's birth, Mecca enjoyed a certain eminence among Arabian towns. It housed the Ka'ba—the ancient house of worship built by Abraham—and it lay on the trading route from Yemen in the south to Damascus and Mediterranean Ocean to the north. Two commodities that were produced in Yemen and were in great demand in the north were Myrrh and Frankincense. Myrrh is a resin from a tree belonging to the genus *Commiphora*. It was used extensively in natural medicines and for embalming mummies. Frankincense (*lubban* in Arabic) is an aromatic resin from a tree belonging to the genus *Boswellia*. It is used widely, even to this day, as incense and an additive in perfumes. The Meccans became skilful in running huge caravans to Yemen in the fall, to bring Myrrh and Frankincense, and then take them north to Damascus in the spring. On the return journey, they would bring back from Damascus silk and textiles. The Meccans also exported some gold that was mined locally in Hejaz. Such caravan trade was very beneficial to the economy of Mecca and many a nobility were involved in these ventures.

Outside of Arabia, several civilisations had flourished over the course of time. The nearby land of Egypt had seen the rise and fall of the Pharaohs and the Hyksos dynasties; the ancient land of Mesopotamia saw the appearance of the mighty kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon; the land of Israel witnessed a United Kingdom under David and Solomon and then its break up into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Across the Mediterranean Ocean, the Hellenistic civilisation of Greece and then the empire of Rome ushered in a period of great intellectual activity, political sophistication and a system of well organised states; and across from the Red Sea lay the kingdom of Abyssinia, a land known to the Arabs as Habsha. After the fall of Rome, the base of the Roman Empire had moved to Constantinople under the Christian king, Constantine I, where the Byzantine culture and civilisation flourished for nearly a thousand years. The beginning of the third century CE saw the establishment of the Sassanid Empire of Iran that extended well into modern day Afghanistan, Syria, southern Turkey, and the Caucasus region.

Surprisingly, throughout these great upheavals in the neighbouring countries, much of the land of Arabia lay stagnant and dormant. Any empire-building activity that took place in the Arabian Peninsula was either limited to the region of Yemen in the south (by the 'Ad, the Thamud, the Minaeans, and the Sabaeans), or well north of modern day Arabia near Jordan (by the Nabateans).

There are many opinions as to the origin of the word 'Arab'. Some believe that the name is derived from an ancestor named Ya'rab who was the son of Qahtan and the grandson of the Prophet Hud. According to another account, the Arabs were called Gharab (meaning west in Semitic language) by the Mesopotamians as they resided west of Mesopotamia. The word *Gharab* then morphed into the present day *Arab*. In the opinion of the well known Arab historian and geographer, Al Mas'udi, the word Arab was applied to the Ishmaelites of the Arabah Valley. The word *Arab* has several meanings in the Semitic language including 'desert'.

The Semitic Race and the Great Migrations

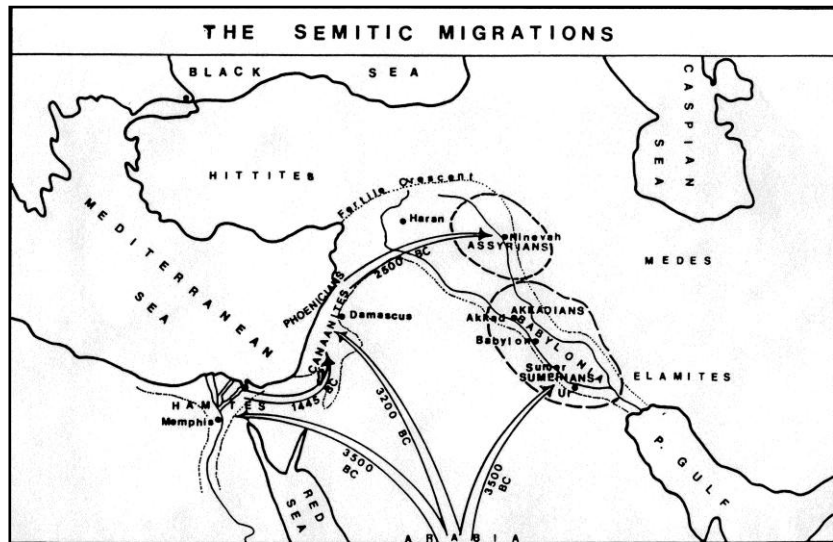
The Arabs belong to the Semitic race. Of all the various races in the world, the Semitic people have perhaps contributed the most to the spiritual development of Man. Arabia, the birth place of Islam, is considered to be the probable cradle of the Semitic race. In the course of time these Semitic people migrated into different parts of the Fertile Crescent and became known as the Babylonians, Assyrians, Chaldaeans, Amorites, Phoenicians, Canaanites, and the Hebrews of history.

It was the people of the Semitic race who gave the world its three greatest monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The term Semite is derived from Shem, the eldest son of Noah and the progenitor of the Semitic people.

According to historians, the first migration of the Semitic race occurred around 3500 BC and carried these people from their original homeland in Arabia (perhaps around Najd) to the regions of Egypt, Canaan, and Mesopotamia.

One branch of the Semitic people went to Egypt which was then populated by the Hamitic people, a branch of the white race. The amalgamation of the Hamites and the Semitic migrants produced the Egyptians of history.

Another branch of the Semitic people went to the south-eastern part of Mesopotamia—the land lying between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers—which was then populated by the Sumerians. The admixture of these two peoples gave rise to the Babylonians of history.



Map showing the various Semitic migrations from 3500 to 1445 BC.

Another branch of the Semitic people settled down in the Canaan region, and later, on the coastal strip of Sidon and Tyre, and gave rise to the Canaanites and the Phoenicians of history.

Around 2500 BC, another migration of the Semitic people, called the Amorites, started from the Canaan-Phoenicia area and reached the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent, producing the Assyrians of history.

The early civilisation in the Tigris-Euphrates area consisted of city states. The first known king of Sumer was Etana (3000 BC), while Akkad was ruled by the Akkadian dynasty founded by Sargon I.

Then, around 2100 BC, Hammurabi of the Amorites united the entire Akkad-Sumer region and renamed it as Babylon. Hammurabi was a great administrator and legislator. He established a proper code of conduct for the people which is known today as the Code of Hammurabi. This code is perhaps the oldest code known to man and deals with the rights and duties of the various classes of people living in the Babylonian Empire.

After the death of Hammurabi, the Babylonian Empire started to decline till the 8th century BC when it was conquered by the Assyrians from the north. The Assyrians were a group of Semitic people who had established themselves over the northern region of Mesopotamia. Through warfare and aggression, the Assyrians conquered a vast territory, including Babylonia.

In 722 BC, Sargon II, an Assyrian king, conquered Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Sargon II carried away as captives the most influential men of the Ten Tribes of the Hebrews. These captives are known in history as the Lost Ten Tribes.

Sennacherib (705-681 BC) and Ashurbanipal (668-626 BC) were the other two famous kings of the Assyrians. Ashurbanipal was the greatest king of Assyria and the entire western Asia acknowledged his authority. On his death, the Assyrian Empire started to decline and in 612 BC, Nineveh, the capital of Assyria fell to the conquering Medes of Persia.

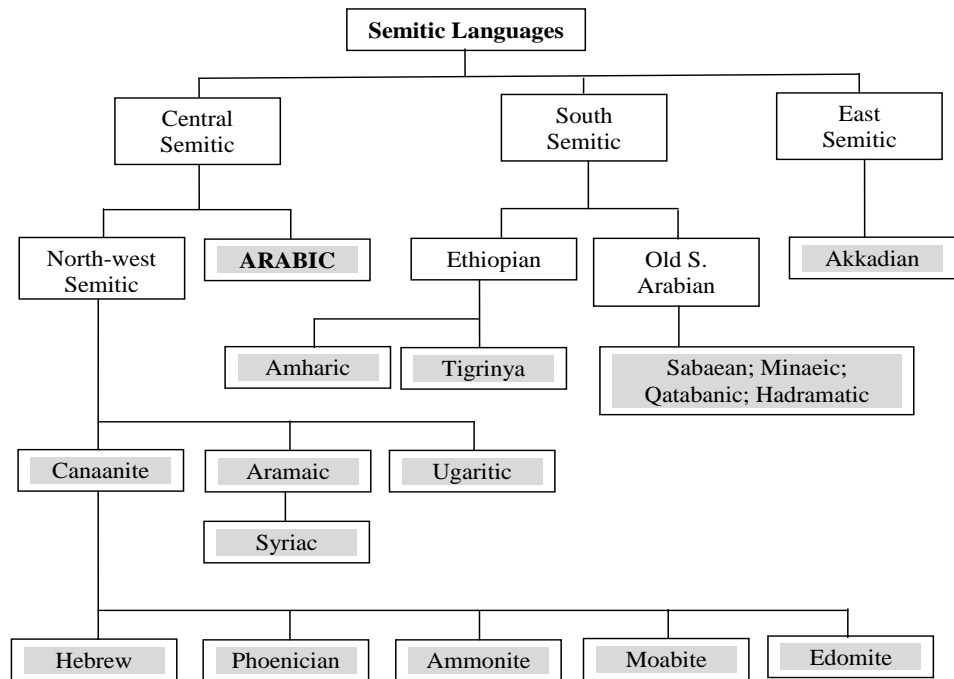
On the fall of Assyria, the Babylonian Empire again rose to prominence under the Chaldaean dynasty (625-538 BC). Nabopolassar was the founder of this New Babylonian dynasty and his son, Nebuchadnezzar, was its greatest king. It was under him that Babylon recovered its ancient splendour and glory. In 586 BC, he defeated the Hebrew king of Judah, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and exiled the Jews from the city. It was Nebuchadnezzar who built the Hanging Gardens of Babylon for the pleasure of his wife. In 539 BC, the Chaldaean Empire was overthrown by the Medes of Persia under their king Cyrus. Cyrus then allowed the exiled Jews to return to Jerusalem and start the restoration of their sacred city and the temple.

The branch of the Semitic race known as the Hebrews lived in the Canaan region around 2100 BC. When the Prophet Joseph became governor of a province of Egypt, many Hebrews migrated to that land. However, the later kings of Egypt mistreated the Israelites who spent the next three hundred years in bondage and servitude under their Egyptian masters. Finally, around 1445 BC, the Israelites left Egypt in an Exodus under the direction of Moses and eventually returned to their original homeland in the Canaan area. The later history of the Hebrew people is described in some detail in this book in the section on Judaism.

Semitic Languages

All the Semitic peoples share not only a common ethnic heritage but their languages also form a common speech group. To the Semitic languages belong the Akkadian (the language

of ancient Babylon and Assyria), Canaanite (of which ancient Phoenician and Hebrew are variant forms), Aramaic (which survives today in the form of Syriac), Amharic (spoken presently in Ethiopia), Arabic (the largest spoken language in the Middle East), and South Arabian language (that comprised:



Sabaean, Minaeic, Qatabanic and Hadramatic languages of Yemen and south Arabia). A common feature of all these Semitic languages is a system in which words are derived from roots which normally consist of three consonants. Among the living languages, Arabic language today is considered to be the closest to what scholars believe was the primitive form of the Semitic speech. The chart shows the relationships of the various Semitic languages.

The People of Arabia

Scholars of Arab history divide the people of Arabia into three categories:

1. **Ancient Arabs:** who have died out and little is known of their history. These include: ‘Ad, Thamud, Tasam, Jadis, Emlaq and some others.
2. **The Qahtanian Arabs:** who originated from the progeny of Ya‘rub bin Yashjub bin Qahtan.
3. **‘Adnanian Arabs:** who originated from the progeny of Ishmael, the eldest son of Abraham. Abraham was born in Ur, in Mesopotamia, on the west bank of the Euphrates River. From there he migrated to Palestine and made it his home and married his wife Sarah. It is reported that an Egyptian lady of noble descent, Hagar, was placed at Sarah’s service but Sarah gave her to Abraham as a wife. After the birth of Ishmael to Hagar, Abraham took the two to present day Mecca which was a desolate and waterless location at the time and left them there at God’s command. Many years later, Abraham returned to Mecca and, with the assistance of Ishmael, built the Ka‘ba. The tribe of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, the Quraish, traced their ancestry to the ‘Adnanian Arabs descended from Ishmael.

The Religions of Arabia

Most of the Arabs had accepted the prophethood of Ishmael and followed the religion of his father, Abraham. Over the course of time, however, their beliefs weakened until one Arab chief witnessed the worship of idols on a trip to Syria and brought back with him the statue of Hubul and placed it in the Ka'ba. Eventually, the Ka'ba became filled with idols and images and it is reported by historians that at the onset of Islam, the Ka'ba contained nearly 360 such icons, presumably one for each day of the year. As Mecca enjoyed considerable importance in pre-Islamic Arabia due to the Annual Pilgrimage, the presence of large number of idols inside the Ka'ba made the Arabs forget their Abrahamic teachings and adopt pagan and animistic beliefs.

Although Allah was the Supreme God of the Arabs, they also believed in a number of other deities considered intermediaries. Following is a list of some of the principal deities of the Arabs before Islam:

- **Allah**, the Supreme God
- **Hubul**, the chief of the minor deities, brought from Syria
- **Al Uzza**, identified with the planet Venus, was located in the valley of Nakhla
- **Al Lat**, a female deity was located at Ta'if worshipped by the tribe of Thaqif
- **Manat**, a large sacrificial stone, worshipped near Qadid on the Red Sea
- **Taghut**, an idol in the shape of a lion
- **Wadd**, a statue in the form of a man, kept at Daumatul Jandal
- **Suwah**, an idol in the form of a woman, kept at Riyat
- **Ya'uq**, worshiped in the form of a horse, at Hamdan (in Yemen)
- **Nasr**, worshiped in the form of an eagle, at Humair
- **Yaghuth**, an idol worshiped by the tribe of Murad at Jurash
- **Isaf**, an idol of a man that stood on Mount Safa
- **Naila**, an image of a woman on Mount Marwa
- **Duwar**, a favourite idol with the young women
- **'Am Anas**, worshipped by the people of Khaulan
- **Sa'ad**, in the form of a large stone, was worshipped by Bani Malkan
- **Dhul Khalsa**, kept at Tabala
- **Fils**, worshipped by Bani Taiy
- **Ruza**, worshipped by Bani Rabi'a
- **Dhul Ka'bat**, worshipped by the tribes of Bakr and Taghlab at Sandad

Of the above deities, al Uzza, al Lat and Manat are mentioned in *Surah al-Najm* (53:20-21), and the names of Wadd, Suwah, Ya'uq, Nasr and Yaghuth are mentioned in *Surah Nuh* (71:24).

Aside from the idolatrous Arabs, there were Zoroastrians, Sabians, Hanifs, Jews and Christians living in Arabia.

Zoroastrianism was the ancient religion of Iran founded by the Prophet Zoroaster. By the onset of Islam, Zoroastrianism was followed in the entire Sassanid Empire encompassing Iran, Iraq, southern Turkey, Bahrain and parts of present day Afghanistan. [Some European

scholars refer to Zoroastrianism as Mazdaism or Magianism. The New Testament makes reference of the three Magi who came from the east in search of baby Jesus.]

Sabians are believed to be a monotheistic people who followed Zabur (identified with the Biblical book of Psalms) revealed to the Prophet David of ancient Israel. The Sabians lived in Chaldea (southern Babylonia), Syria and Yemen. With the spread of Judaism and Christianity in Arabia, the Sabians⁶ went into decline leaving only minor and insignificant populations here and there.

Hanifs were a small group of monotheistic people prior to Islam who traced their religion back to the Prophet Abraham and maintained some elements of the original Abrahamic faith. They rejected the worshipping of idols and making sacrifices to them, refrained from consuming running blood, and condemned the burying alive of baby girls. The Tradition of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} indicates that his natural religious inclination was towards the Hanifite beliefs before the advent of Islam. Some of the Hanifs who lived around the time of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} included: Zaid ibn 'Amr (who actually died before the onset of Islam), Sa'id ibn Zaid (son of Zaid ibn 'Amr and married to 'Umar bin Khattab's sister, Fatima), Waraqa bin Naufal (according to some he converted to Christianity), 'Ubaidullah ibn Jahsh (a cousin of the Prophet and the son of his aunt, Umama), Hamza bin 'Abdul Muttalib (an uncle of the Prophet) and 'Uthman bin al-Huwairith (who migrated to Abyssinia and converted to Christianity). Because the Hanifs were already following the tradition of Abraham, they readily accepted Islam when it was presented to them by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.

The Jews had migrated to Arabia from their homeland in Israel initially in 586 BC when Jerusalem was destroyed by the conquering Babylonians and many of their chiefs were exiled. A second wave of Jewish migration took place after the Roman occupation of Israel in 70 CE which brought the Jews to Hejaz, Yathrib, Khaibar and Taima. By the advent of Islam, several Jewish tribes lived in Arabia including: Khabir, Mustaliq, An-Nadir, Quraiza and Qainuqa.

Christianity came to Arabia through the colonising activities of the Eastern Roman Empire based in Constantinople. By the advent of Islam, significant populations of Christians existed in Abyssinia, Egypt and Ghassan (southern Syria).

Social Life of the Arabs and their Traits

The pre-Islamic Arabs had failed to participate in the many civilisations that had surrounded their land. Thus, they had failed to produce architecture, centres of commerce and learning, or any noteworthy contribution in the fields of science and philosophy. Nevertheless, they were not totally barbarian. While inter-tribal feuds were the way of life, the Arabs possessed many praiseworthy qualities in them. These included: strong sense of personal honour and tribal pride, generosity, loyalty, hospitality, bravery, keeping of covenants, love of Arabic poetry, independence, fortitude, strong will and determination, and a simple unostentatious lifestyle. The tribal culture demanded strong family bonds and a deep-seated attachment with the members. 'Unity of blood' played a very important role in

⁶ The Sabians mentioned in the Holy Qur'an (2:63 and 5:70) alongside the Believers, the Jews and the Christians, should not be confused with the 'Sabaeans'. The latter were an ancient people speaking the Old South Arabian language who lived in the land of Saba in Yemen. For further clarification, the word Sabians used in the Qur'an begins with the Arabic letter '*sad*' while the word Sabeaen begins with the Arabic letter '*sin*'.

their life and they followed the motto: “Support your brother whether he is an oppressor or oppressed”.

Alongside the above virtues, the Arabs were notorious for many vices. Relationships between the tribes were very fragile and often erupted in warfare. Seeking of vendettas was considered highly honourable and such enmities lasted several generations. Loss of life and property in inter-tribal hostilities had eventually led the Arabs to set aside four months in the year when all fighting was forbidden. These prohibited months included: Muharram, Rajab, Dhul-Qadah and Dhul-Hijjah.

The Arab society was also stratified on the basis of ethnicity, colour and wealth. The Arabs looked down upon the other races and people. Slavery was common with absolutely no rights for the enslaved. The Arabs took great pride in their drinking prowess and many Arabic poems were given to such themes. Gambling and games of chance were common, particularly with the divining arrows. Adultery and prostitution were widely accepted and wives were permitted to cohabit with other men for the purpose of conception. Marriage was defined loosely with no restriction on the number of wives. Men could marry two sisters at the same time, or the wives of their fathers if divorced or widowed. Perhaps the greatest evil of which the Arabs were guilty was the burying alive of baby girls for fear of poverty and the lack of any condemnation of such acts by the society at large.

Thus, around the onset of Islam, the Arab culture was a strange mixture of some admirable qualities and extreme moral defects. However, their vices and sinful ways turned out to be superficial, largely due to the lack of moral and spiritual direction. Underneath their rough facade lay a solid and upright character which was ready to manifest itself with the advent of Islam and propel them to the forefront of history and civilisation.

THE BIRTH OF MUHAMMAD AND HIS EARLY LIFE

The Political Scene at the time of Muhammad’s Birth

While much of the Peninsula of Arabia was ruled by different tribes with their own recognized territories, the world outside was much more organized. To the east existed the Sassanid Empire of Iran, to the north the Christian Byzantine Empire and to the west, across the Red Sea, was the Kingdom of Abyssinia.

The Sassanid Empire came into being in the year 226 CE and the Sassanid dynasty ruled over Iran for four centuries. The last notable king of the dynasty was Khusrow Perviz who ascended the throne in 590 CE. He was a contemporary of the Byzantine Emperor, Heraclius, and the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The official religion of the Sassanid Empire was Zoroastrianism, a monotheistic faith founded by the Prophet Zoroaster around 1500 B.C. Ctesiphon, located on the eastern side of the Tigris River was the imperial capital of the Sassanid Empire. It was one of the great cities of ancient Mesopotamia and had taken the lead from Constantinople which was the seat of the Byzantine Empire. Today, the ruins of Ctesiphon lie some 35 kilometres south of the city of Baghdad.

The Byzantine Empire (also called the Eastern Roman Empire) consisted of Syria, Palestine, Egypt and part of south-eastern Europe. The Empire was named after Byzantium, a Greek city on the Bosphorus which is a narrow strait connecting the Black Sea with the Mediterranean. In 327 CE, Byzantium was made the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire by Constantine the Great and the city was renamed Constantinople. Today, the city of Constantinople is called Istanbul. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, Falvius

Heraclius Augustus was the Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire. He had ascended the throne in the same year that the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} received his first revelation, 610 CE.

Across the Red Sea, the kingdom of Aksum (Abyssinia) was ruled by Ashama ibn Abjar who was commonly known as al-Najashi (the Emperor). The word 'Negus' is the Anglicised form of Najashi. At the time, the Kingdom of Abyssinia was at its height and an ally of the Byzantine Empire. Like the Byzantine Empire, the religion of the Abyssinian Kingdom was also Christianity.

The land of Yemen to the south of Arabia came out of the Aksumite (Abyssinian) rule in 570 CE and began to be governed by the Sassanid Empire through a viceroy.

The two major powers in the area were of course the Sassanid Empire of Iran and the Byzantine Empire of Constantinople: one in the east and the other in the west; one Zoroastrian and the other Christian. Both Empires were eager to extend their territory and influence. Thus, throughout the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, these two Empires fought with each other, sometime gaining ground and sometime losing ground to the other.

To many historians, the year 570 CE marks a boundary between the ancient and the new worlds. The following was the situation in the rest of the world, outside of Arabia and the Middle East, at the time of the Prophet Muhammad's birth in 570 CE:

- In India, the golden rule of the Gupta Empire was on the decline and after their last known king, Vishnugupta, the Empire disappeared by 600 CE
- In China, the Northern Qi and Zhou dynasties and the Southern Chen dynasty, fought with each other plunging the land in chaos and bloodshed.
- In Italy, the Lombard invaded the land, after the Ostrogothic Empire had been destroyed by the Byzantines, and began to settle down there.

The Event of the Elephants

It is reported that some two months before the birth of Muhammad, in the year 570 CE, Abraha al-Ashram attempted to invade Mecca with the intention of destroying the Ka'ba. Abraha was the viceroy in Yemen for the Kingdom of Aksum (Abyssinia). He had built a



Map showing the political scene at the time of the Prophet Muhammad's birth.

large cathedral called al-Qullais in the capital city of Sana'a and wanted to divert the annual flow of pilgrims going to Mecca towards his own city. Abraha's army rode on elephants and in Arab history the year 570 CE is known as the Year of the Elephant. Abraha did not succeed in his mission. His army was struck by an epidemic of disease and a terrible storm while camped outside of Mecca, ready to destroy the Holy Shrine. The Qur'anic *Surah al Fil* refers to this event.

The Prophecies regarding Muhammad's advent

The advent of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} took place according to several prophecies in the Hebrew Bible of the Jews, the New Testament of the Christians, the Purans and Rigveda of the Hindus, and the Zend-Avesta of the Zoroastrians.

In the Old Testament book of Genesis, God says to Abraham regarding his son Ishmael:

“And also of the son of the bondwoman (Hagar) will I make a nation, because he (Ishmael) is thy seed.” (Genesis 21:13)

Then, again in Genesis, it states:

“And God was with the lad (Ishmael); and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran.” (Genesis 21:20-21)

In the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, God says to Moses:

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall harken; (Deuteronomy 18:15)

“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. (Deuteronomy 18:18)

“And he (Moses) said, ‘The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them (Children of Israel); he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints; from his right hand *went* a fiery law for them.’” (Deuteronomy 33:2)

In the above Biblical verses, God:

- promises to make a nation from the seed of Ishmael and to be with him,
- tells that Ishmael will dwell in Paran (Faran in Arabia),
- will raise a Prophet from the brethren of Israelites (meaning the Ishmaelites),
- says that the new Prophet will be like Moses (a Law Giving Prophet),
- will put His own words in the Prophet's mouth (will reveal to him),
- and says that he shall come from Paran (Faran) with ten thousand saints (the number of Muslims at the Conquest of Mecca).

In the New Testament book of John, Jesus says:

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;” (John 14:16)

It says in Bhavishya Puran (part III: 3,3 5-27):

“... Then the king went along with Mahamada, the preceptor of mleccha-dharma, and his followers to the great god, Lord Shiva, situated in the desert.”

The Epistle of Sasan I in the Zoroastrian religious text of Dasatir mentions a prophecy regarding the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. The sum and substance of the prophecy is that when the Zoroastrian people will forsake their religion and will become dissolute, a man will rise in Arabia whose followers will conquer Persia and subjugate the arrogant Persians. Instead of worshipping fire in their own temples, they will turn their faces in prayer towards Ka'ba of Abraham which will be cleared of all idols. They (the followers of the Arabian prophet) will be a mercy unto the world. They will become masters of Persia, Madain, Tus, Balkh, the sacred places of the Zoroastrians and the neighbouring territories. Their prophet will be an eloquent man telling miraculous things.

The Birth of Muhammad

The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was born in 570 CE, on the 12th day of the lunar month of Rabi'ul Awwal. Belonging to the Hashimite branch of the tribe of Quraish, his father's name was 'Abdullah and his mother's Amina. His grandfather, 'Abdul Muttalib (whose name at birth was Shaiba), was the chief of Mecca at the time of Abraha's invasion. It was his grandfather who named him 'Muhammad' meaning Praiseworthy.

It is reported that 'Abdul Muttalib had taken a vow at the Ka'ba that if he had ten sons, he will sacrifice one at the altar of the Ka'ba. When his tenth son Hamza was born, 'Abdul Muttalib drew lots and 'Abdullah's name came up. 'Abdul Muttalib promptly proceeded to the Ka'ba to sacrifice him. When his elder children tried to keep him away from this heinous act, a diviner was called who suggested that lots be drawn again with 'Abdullah on one side and ten camels on the other (blood money for a life was commonly set at ten camels at that time). It is said that the lot again fell against 'Abdullah. This procedure was repeated with the addition of ten camels each time until the number of camels reached one hundred when the lot finally fell against the camels that were then sacrificed, setting a new standard for the blood money to be paid for a life. Ibn Hisham, the biographer of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, attributes the following saying to him: “I am the offspring of two slaughtered ones, meaning Ishmael and 'Abdullah.”

'Abdullah was married to Amina bint Wahb, a respected lady from Yathrib, and the marriage ceremony took place in Mecca. It is reported that 'Abdullah went to Syria with a trade caravan and died in Yathrib (Medina) on his way back and was buried there. 'Abdullah's death took place a short time before the birth of Muhammad.

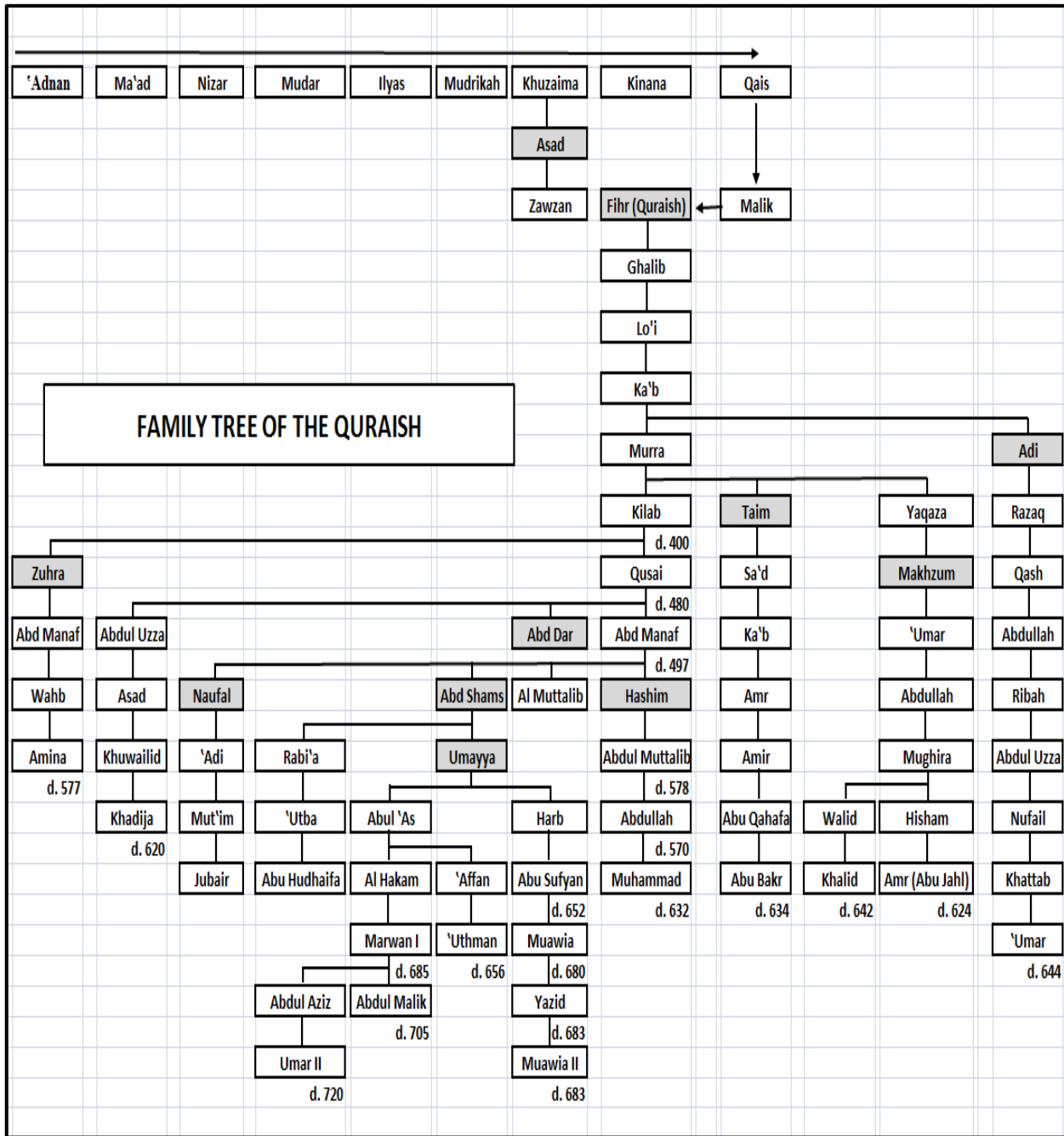
The Arabs prided in their genealogical knowledge and the historians have reported the following twenty-two generations from 'Adnan to Muhammad.

'Adnan—Ma'ad—Nizar—Mudar—Elias—Mudrikah—Khuzaiman—Kinana—Qais—Malik—**Fihir** (also known as Quraish)—Ghalib—Lo'i—Ka'b—Murra—Kilab—Qusai—

‘Abd Manaf—**Hashim** (d.497 CE)—‘Abdul Muttalib (original name Shaiba)—
‘Abdullah—Muhammad (571-632 CE)

The tribe of Quraish took on the name from Fihr who was also known as Quraish. The Hashimite branch of the Quraish began with Hashim, Muhammad’s great grandfather, who died in 497 CE.

The Family Tree of the Quraish and Muhammad



‘Abdul Muttalib had ten sons and six daughters who were the paternal uncles and aunts of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The ones who are prominent in Islamic history are listed in the Table. Five sons of ‘Abdul Muttalib died before the mission of the Prophet

Muhammad^{pbuh} began in 610 CE and have little reference in historical records. These include: Al Harith, Az Zubair, Ghidaq, Maqdam and Safar (Zarar). The two daughters who do not appear prominently in Islamic history include: ‘Atikah and Arwah.

Table showing some of the prominent children of ‘Abdul Muttalib

Of the ten sons of ‘Abdul Muttalib, five are listed below who appear prominently in Islamic history:		
‘Abdullah	545-570	The Prophet’s father; died before the son’s birth
Abu Talib	549-619	Did not accept Islam but gave protection to the Prophet
Abu Lahab	d. 624	Became an enemy of the Prophet Muhammad ^{pbuh}
‘Abbas	566-653	Accepted Islam only after the Conquest of Mecca in 630 CE
Hamza	568-625	Accepted Islam after a short delay; martyred at Uhud in 625 CE
Of the six daughters of ‘Abdul Muttalib, the four prominent ones are listed below:		
Umama	?	Wife of Jahsh. The Prophet married her daughter, Zainab bint Jahsh
Safiya	560-640	Wife of ‘Awwam ibn Khuwailid; had son named Zubair ibn ‘Awwam
Barrah	?	Mother of Abu Salama. No information whether she accepted Islam.
Umm al Hakim	b. 546	Mother of Talha. Died before the onset of Islam.

The Early Life of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}

According to the general custom of the Arab society of the time, Muhammad was given to a wet nurse named Halima of the Banu Sa’d tribe to live in the desert in the style of the Bedouins. This custom was believed to promote healthy frame and allow the child to pick up good manners and pure speech. The Bedouins were highly regarded for the purity of their speech and freedom from vices that usually developed in sedentary societies. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} used to tell his companions:

“I am the most Arab among you, for I am of the tribe of Quraish and I have been brought up among the tribe of Banu Sa’d.”

It is reported that Muhammad initially lived for two years with Halima whose worldly fortunes suddenly took a turn for the better. After the period of weaning was over, Halima took Muhammad back to his mother Amina in Mecca but requested that the young child be allowed to return with her for another two years. Amina consented to this arrangement.

While Muhammad was still with Halima, he had a spiritual experience in which he saw an angel who ripped open his chest, washed his heart of all impurity and closed his chest again. It is reported that Muhammad stayed with Halima until he was four or five years old when Halima brought him back to Mecca to live with his mother, Amina.

When Muhammad was about six years old, Amina decided to pay a visit to Yathrib where her husband, ‘Abdullah, was buried. She took young Muhammad with her. After spending about a month in Yathrib, she embarked on her journey back to Mecca but died on the way in Abwa due to illness.

After the passing away of his mother at age six, the custodianship of young Muhammad was taken up by his grandfather, ‘Abdul Muttalib. It is reported that Muhammad’s grandfather loved him greatly and always gave him a preferential treatment compared to his own children. However, the guardianship of ‘Abdul Muttalib lasted only two years and by the time Muhammad was eight years old, his grandfather passed away.

After this, Muhammad’s uncle, Abu Talib, took charge of the young boy and brought him up alongside his own children, notable of whom were Ja’far and ‘Ali. Although Abu Talib

refrained from accepting Islam, he afforded full protection and patronage to Muhammad for forty years until his own death in 619 CE.

When Muhammad was twelve years old, he accompanied Abu Talib on a trading journey to Syria. When they reached Basra, at the southern tip of Syria, they met a monk named Bahira. The monk took one look at the young Muhammad and prophesied that he will be a prophet of God. When queried as to how he knew this, he pointed to the birth mark below his shoulder which later came to be known as the seal of prophethood.

The Sacrilegious Wars

The Arab tribes were constantly immersed in hostilities that flared up in the form of armed conflicts now and then. One such episode took place when Muhammad was about fifteen years old. The conflicts were termed *Fijar* or ‘sacrilegious’ since fighting took place during the otherwise prohibited months. This time, the fighting broke out between the tribes of Quraish and Banu Kinana on one side and Qais ‘Ailan tribe on the other side. Young Muhammad did not take up any arms during the conflict and his role was limited to picking up enemy arrows that fell on their side.

After the fighting was finally over, some energetic youths from the various tribes made a pact among themselves to maintain peace and order in the area and help the poor and the oppressed people. Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was a member of this agreement which was named *Hilf al Fudhul*, or the Alliance of Fudhuls, in memory of an ancient society instituted with similar objectives by four persons named Fadhl, Fadhal, Mufadhhal and Fudhail.

Muhammad’s job and Marriage to Khadija

Muhammad had no regular job to attend to. He frequently worked as a shepherd while he was still in Halima’s care and even after returning to Mecca. Muhammad was well known for his honesty, truthfulness and trustworthiness. When this reputation reached Khadija bint Khuwailid, who was a rich widow in Mecca, she sent for him and asked him to do business on her behalf by taking a trading caravan to Syria. She also gave him a servant to take along.

On return from the journey, Muhammad offered her much more profit than she was used to from such trading undertakings. As well, her servant who had accompanied Muhammad on the trip, reported his extreme good manners and character. Being a widow, Khadija had received several marriage proposals but had declined. On learning the qualities of Muhammad, she confided to a friend of hers who went and broached the subject with Muhammad. He accepted the proposal and asked his uncles to formalise the matter.

Prophet Muhammad’s children from Khadija

Son:	Qasim	Died in infancy
Son:	‘Abdullah	Died in infancy. Also known as Tahir and Tayyab.
Daughter:	Zainab (600-629 CE)	Married to Abul ‘As bin ar-Rabi’. No children.
Daughter:	Ruqayya (602-624 CE)	Engaged to ‘Utba, son of Abu Lahab, who broke the engagement. She then married ‘Uthman bin Affan. No children.
Daughter:	Umm Kulthum (603-630 CE)	Engaged to ‘Utaiba, another son of Abu Lahab, who broke the engagement. She also married ‘Uthman, after the death of Ruqayya. No children.

Daughter:	Fatima (605-633 CE)	Married to ʿAli, bin Abu Talib. She had two sons: Hasan and Husain, and two daughters: Zainab and Umm Kulthum.
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At the time of their marriage in 695 CE, Muhammad was only twenty-five years old while Khadija was nearing forty. From his marriage to Khadija, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} had six children: two sons and four daughters. All the Prophet’s sons died in infancy. The four daughters reached womanhood and got married but all died before reaching the age of thirty and three of them died during the life of the Prophet himself. Only Fatima outlived her father and that by only six months.

After the birth of his first son, Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} took on the *kuniya* of Abul Qasim, meaning the Father of Qasim, and was usually addressed by the people by this name.

The Ka’ba and a Dispute Resolved

Even before Islam, Mecca had earned a position of eminence among Arabian towns for hosting the sacred shrine of the Ka’ba. Known also as *bait al Atiq* (the Ancient House) and *al Masjid al Haram* (the Sacred Mosque), the Ka’ba is a near-cube-shaped building of about 13 metres (43 feet) wide and 13 metres (43 feet) high. It has a very high base or sill with the single door set in the north-eastern wall at an elevation of 1.9 metres (6.2 feet) from the surrounding ground. The Ka’ba is aligned with its corners approximately facing the cardinal points of a compass—north, east, south and west. Three pillars inside the Ka’ba support the ceiling and the roof. In the eastern corner of the building, a black stone is set in the wall. The stone is believed to be of meteoritic origin and dates back to the time of Abraham. What is the exact significance of this stone and why Abraham had it placed in the wall of the Ka’ba, is not known with any degree of certainty. Since the time when Abraham and Ishmael raised its foundations, the Ka’ba has gone through several reconstructions and the drawing below shows its present-day size and design.

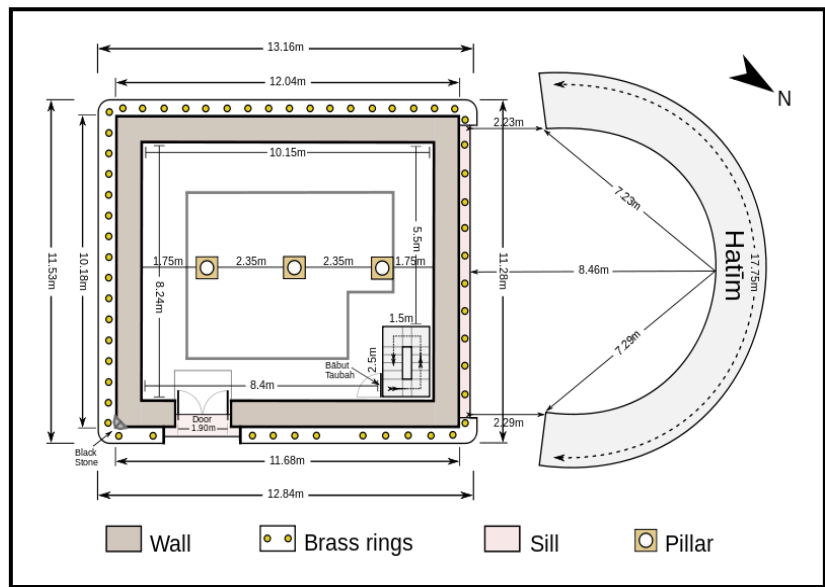


Figure showing the layout of the Ka’ba (courtesy of: wikimedia Commons).

The Ka’ba is aligned with its corners approximately facing the cardinal points of a compass—north, east, south and west. Three pillars inside the Ka’ba support the ceiling and the roof. In the eastern corner of the building, a black stone is set in the wall. The stone is believed to be of meteoritic origin and dates back to the time of Abraham. What is the exact significance of this stone and why Abraham had it placed in the wall of the Ka’ba, is not known with any degree of certainty. Since the time when Abraham and Ishmael raised its foundations, the Ka’ba has gone through several reconstructions and the drawing below shows its present-day size and design.

In the year 605 CE, when Muhammad was thirty-five years old and some five years prior to the commencement of his ministry, the Ka’ba was seriously damaged by a flash flood caused by a rare and heavy downpour. The Quraish of Mecca decided to dismantle the cracked walls and rebuild the sacred shrine with all the families of the Quraish assisting in this effort. As the walls rose from the ground and the time came to replace the sacred black stone in its place in the east wall, a dispute broke out. Each of the four most influential branches of the Quraish wanted this honour exclusively for themselves and the construction of the Ka’ba came to a halt. After many days of suspended work, the Quraish assembled

again and decided to entrust the matter to the judiciousness of fate. “Let the first person to come through the gate of *al Suffa* be the arbitrator in our dispute,” Abu Umayya bin Mughira called out to the Quraish. When they saw that it was Muhammad, they exclaimed, “There comes *al Amin*,” referring to his appellation as ‘the trusted one’. Muhammad quickly grasped the situation and asked that the black stone be placed on a sheet of cloth. He then asked the four families of the Quraish to hold each corner of the cloth and raise the stone to its place. Thus Muhammad, through his wisdom and penchant for maintaining peace, averted the conflict and resolved the dispute in a manner acceptable to the Quraish.

Muhammad’s Disposition before Commissioning

Muhammad had built a solid reputation for his truthfulness and honesty even in his youth. Many persons would leave their valuables with him in trust whenever they embarked on long journeys. He was known among the people as *Al-Amin*, meaning the trustworthy. As he matured, he became increasingly more thoughtful and meditative. Not given to idleness and gregarious activities, he preferred to spend his time in contemplation and solitude. While much of his tribesmen followed the pagan customs and beliefs prevalent among the Arabs at the time, he instinctively leaned towards the Abrahamic teachings of his forefathers and pursued what were then known as the Hanifite beliefs among the Arabs. As well, he was repulsed by the vices in which the Arabs routinely and happily indulged including drinking, gambling and womanising. Most abhorrent to him, however, was the worshipping of idols and the sacrifices that were made on stone altars. Despite being a young man, he maintained modesty, chastity and virtuous living. He was always eager to help others; extremely gentle at heart; very hospitable to his guests; extremely mindful of the plight of the poor, the orphans, the widows and the slaves; laconic in speech and given to smiling rather than laughing aloud.

Ibn Hisham reports that the commencement of Muhammad’s prophet began with the seeing of true dreams.

COMMISSIONING AND LIFE AT MECCA

The First and Early Revelations

After his marriage to Khadija, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} became very reflective. It became his practice to retire to a cave named Hira on Mount Jabal al-Nur located about two miles (3.2 km) from Mecca and spend his time in meditation and contemplation. The small cave measured only twelve feet by five feet (3.7m by 1.6m). The practice of such solitary retreats was common among earlier prophets and men of God.

Sometimes he would spend several nights in this cave and on one such occasion, had an extraordinary experience. One night, in the



Mount Jabal al-Nur near Mecca (courtesy of: albumislam.com).

year 610 CE, he was lying, wrapped in a mantle, when the Angel Gabriel visited him. Four times the Angel embraced him tightly and said: “Read.” Each time the Prophet replied: “What shall I read?” Then the Angel replied:

“Recite in the name of thy Lord Who created,
Created man from an adhesive clot.
Recite! And thy Lord is the Noblest,
Who taught by the pen,
Taught man what he knew not.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 96:2-6)

The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was nearly forty years old at the time of this first revelation which marks the beginning of his prophethood. These five verses of the first revelation are part of *Surah al 'Alaq*, the 96th Chapter of the Holy Quran. The night of the first revelation occurred towards the end of the month of Ramadhan and was later named *Lailatul Qadr* or the Night of Destiny.

When the vision in the cave vanished, the Prophet awoke full of fear. He realized that a big responsibility was being given to him which he was not sure he could carry out. He hurried back to his home and narrated the incident to his wife Khadija, saying: “Weak man that I am, how can I carry the responsibility which God proposes to put on my shoulders?”

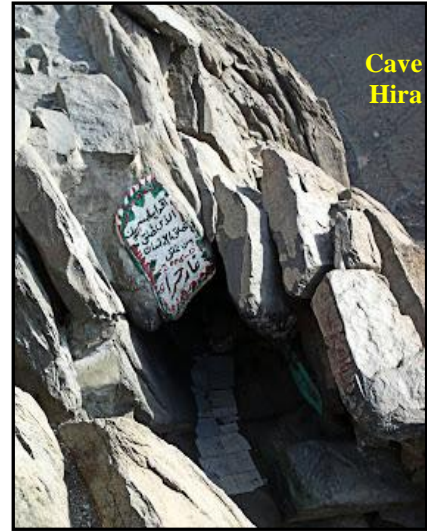
Khadija replied at once: “God is witness, He has not sent you this Word that you should fail and prove unworthy and that He should then give you up. How can God do such a thing, while you are kind and considerate to your relations, help the poor and the forlorn and bear their burdens? You are restoring the virtues that had disappeared from our country. You treat guests with honour and help those who are in distress. Can you be subjected by God to any trial?”

Having said this, Khadija took the Prophet to her cousin, Waraqa bin Naufal, who was a Christian hermit. When Waraqa heard the account, he said: “The angel who descended on Moses, I am sure, has descended on you. Your people will oppose you and will turn you out.”

When the Prophet asked Waraqa, “Would they drive me out?” the latter replied, “Anyone who came with something similar to what you have brought would be treated with hostility; and if I should remain alive till the day when you will be turned out, then I would support you strongly.”

Waraqa, however, died a short time later. He did not live long enough to see either the fulfilment of his own ominous words when the Muslims would be tortured and driven out of Mecca, nor the eventual success of the new faith that would spread like lightening from the Atlantic coast of northwest Africa to the Indus and Oxus Rivers in the east.

Although the first revelation marked the beginning of the prophetic mission of Muhammad, it did not contain any special instructions for him. Such instructions started to come down in subsequent revelations in which he was asked to intensify his prayers and was told of the great responsibility that was being placed on his shoulders:



Cave of Hira on Mount Jabal al Nur
(courtesy of: albumislam.com).

“O thou who has wrapped *himself* in a robe,
Stand up *in Prayer* at night except for a small portion thereof—
Half of it, or make it a little less than that
Or make it a little more than that—and recite the Qur’an slowly and thoughtfully.
Verily, We are charging thee with a mighty Word.

So remember the name of thy Lord, and devote *thyself* to Him with full devotion.
He is the Lord of the East and the West;
there is no God but He; so take Him as *thy* Guardian.” (*Al-Muzzammil*, 73:2-6, 9-10)

“O thou that has wrapped *thyself with thy mantle!*
Arise and warn,
And your Lord do thou extol,
And your garments do thou purify,
And uncleanness do thou shun,
And bestow not favours seeking to get more *in return*,
And for the sake of thy Lord do thou endure patiently.” (*Al-Muddathir*, 74:2-8)

***Fatratul Wahiy* or Interruption of Revelation**

After the first few revelations, there was a significant break before the Holy Qur’an began to be revealed on a more or less regular basis. There are differences of opinion as to how long the break lasted with some scholars saying it was only a few months with others extending the period up to two years. In any case, this break in the initial revelations sat heavy on the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} who eagerly awaited for the revelations to resume. In history, this break is called *Fatratul Wahiy* or Interruption of Revelation. Most scholars agree that this break ended with the arrival of *Surah Al-Duha*:

“By the growing brightness of the forenoon,
And *by* the night when it becomes still,
Thy Lord has not forsaken thee, nor is He displeased *with thee*,
Surely, *every hour* that follows is better for thee than *the one* that precedes.
And thy Lord will soon give thee and thou wilt be well pleased.
Did He not find thee an orphan and give *thee* shelter?
And He found thee wandering in search *for Him* and guided thee *unto Himself?*
And He found thee in want and enriched *thee*.
So the orphan, oppress not,
And as for the beggar, chide him not,
And as for the bounty of thy Lord, do relate *it to others.*” (*Al-Qur’an*, 93:2-12)

Preaching in Mecca and the Opposition

At first the Prophet reported his visions and revelations to a few close relatives and friends. A number of these believed in him and embraced the new religion. The very first person to accept Islam was, of course, his wife Khadija. This was followed by ‘Ali bin Abu Talib (the Prophet’s cousin), Zaid bin Haritha (the freed slave of the Prophet), and Abu Bakr (a close friend of the Prophet). These were followed by ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan, ‘Abdur Rahman bin ‘Auf, Zubair bin ‘Awwam (nephew of Khadija), Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas (cousin of the Prophet’s mother, Amina), Talha bin ‘Ubaidullah (a cousin of Abu Bakr) and Abu ‘Ubaida

ibn al Jarrah. Then, as commanded, the Prophet took his preaching to his own clan. One day he climbed on top of Mount Safa, in Mecca, and called out: “O people of Quraish! O people of Quraish!”

Hearing his call, the people of Quraish gathered around him and asked what the matter was. The Prophet said: “If I told you that there was an army behind this hill, would you believe me?” They all replied: “Indeed, for we trust you, and we have never known you to tell a lie.” The Prophet then said: “Know then that I am a Warner and I warn you of a severe punishment. O Banu ‘Abdul Muttalib! O Banu ‘Abd Manaf! O Banu Zuhra! O Banu Taim! O Banu Makhzum! O Banu Asad! God has commanded me to warn my nearest kinsmen, that I can guarantee to you no good on earth or in heaven unless you witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah.” Hearing this, the Prophet’s uncle, Abu Lahab, got up and said: “Perish thou this very day! Was it for this that thou assembled us here?”

Ibn Hisham reports that for nearly three years, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} carried out his preaching secretly, presenting the new faith essentially to his clan members and very close acquaintances. After this period, however, the Prophet took his preaching to the people of Mecca at large. He spoke to them around the Ka‘ba and he talked to them in the streets of Mecca. His message to the people in each case was very simple: “God is One. There is none worthy of worship except Him. He has no associates. He is the sole Creator of the Universe. God is Unseen and All Powerful and to portray Him with figures and statues is not right. Muhammad is God’s Messenger just like Abraham, Moses and Jesus...” In short, the Prophet asked the people to give up idol worship, return to the worship of One God and be kind and charitable to the poor.

The Meccans, however, rejected the Prophet’s message and displayed considerable hostility to him and his followers. The Meccans did not like to be told that the religion of their forefathers was absurd. Moreover, Mecca enjoyed a certain status in Arabia due to the Ka‘ba and the annual pilgrimage. The Meccans saw in Islam a real threat to their own social and political power and did their utmost to oppose this new faith. As a result, they called him a sorcerer, a poet, an oracle and one possessed.

The chief among these opponents were:

- **‘Amr bin Hisham** of Banu Makhzum tribe who was known among the Muslims as Abu Jahal, ‘the father of ignorance’
- **Abu Lahab**, the Prophet’s uncle, of the Banu Hashim branch of the Quraish
- **Umm Jamil bint Harb**, the wife of Abu Lahab
- **‘Uqba bin abi Mu‘it**, of Banu Umayya branch of the Quraish
- **Umayya bin Khalf**, head of the Banu Jumah branch of the Quraish
- **Ubaiy bin Khalf**, the brother of Umayya bin Khalf, of the Jumah branch of the Quraish
- **Nadhr bin Harith**, of the ‘Abd Dar tribe

The tragic end of Abu Lahab and his wife is foretold in the Holy Qur’an in Surah al-Lahab. The second and third daughter of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}—Ruqayya and Umm Kulthum—were engaged to the two sons of Abu Lahab. Soon after the Prophet began his preaching, Abu Lahab forced his sons to break the engagements prior to the finalisation of the marriages.

There were some among the Meccans who opposed the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} militarily but refrained from mocking and insulting him. These included: Abu Sufyan of Banu Umayya; Ikrima bin Abu Jahal; and several others.

There were also several prominent and influential Meccans who, though they refused to accept Islam, remained within the boundaries of human decency in treating the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. Chief among them were: Mut'im bin 'Adi of Banu Naufal tribe who was responsible for terminating the boycott against the Hashimites and providing protection to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} on his return from Ta'if; Abul Bakhtari who was also opposed to the boycott against the Hashimites; and 'Abbas bin 'Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's uncle.

While the nobility of Mecca turned a deaf ear to the Prophet's call, the poor and the oppressed were strongly attracted to his teaching. Slaves, young men and hapless women collected around the Prophet. These people appreciated the Islamic principle of human equality and they saw a new hope for themselves in this religion.

The acceptance of the Prophet's teachings by the poor made the chiefs of Mecca all the more angry and vengeful. The Meccans were a class-conscious society and the chiefs of Mecca could not even think that the poor and the slaves could have the same rights as themselves. The Quraish, therefore, started to ill-treat the Prophet and his followers. The brunt of their wrath fell upon the converted slaves and the poor people of the lower classes who had no patron or protector. These helpless people were abused, persecuted and tortured but rarely did anyone renounce his religion. Bilal, a black slave, was made to lie on hot sand, and heavy stones were put on his chest. Yasir, a poor man, was tortured till he died, and his wife, Sumayya, was murdered by Abu Jahal. Many a slave was rescued from persecution by the rich and influential Abu Bakr who would buy them and set them free.

The Prophet himself was under the protection of his uncle, Abu Talib. This, however, did not stop his opponents to maltreat him whenever they got an opportunity. On one occasion the Prophet was saying his Prayer at the Ka'ba when a person, on the instigation of Abu Jahal, brought the innards of a camel and dumped them on his back. The Prophet was in the state of prostration and could not lift himself up due to the heavy weight. One of his daughters eventually came to his help and pushed the burden aside. Similarly, in the streets of Mecca the Prophet was a perpetual target of fun and mockery. However, he remained steadfast in his mission to convey the message of God to the people and to warn them of the Day of Judgment, when they will all be held accountable for their deeds.

In light of the constant persecution and threats to their lives, the early Muslims were asked by the Prophet to conceal their conversions. The Prophet used a house—Dar al-Arqam—in the mountains to meet with his followers secretly and instruct them in the Qur'an and Islam.

The First Emigration to Abyssinia

When oppression in Mecca reached its extreme, the Prophet advised his followers to seek refuge in a foreign land. As a result, in the fifth year of the Prophet's mission (614 CE), a small party of Muslims, consisting of eleven men and four women, set out for Abyssinia across the Red Sea. The Kingdom of Abyssinia was ruled at the time by a Christian king named Negus (Najashi) who was well known for his justice. The party included: 'Uthman bin 'Affan, his wife Ruqayya (daughter of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}), Zubair bin 'Awwam (nephew of the Prophet's wife, Khadija), 'Abdur Rahman bin 'Auf, Abu Salma and his wife Umm Salma.

The first emigrants stayed in Abyssinia only for a short time. While there, they received false information that the Quraish of Mecca had accepted Islam. The emigrants returned to Mecca only to find out that the news was false and they began to face even severer hardships.

***Al Mi'raj* (The Spiritual Ascent)**

In the fifth year of his call, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} had a spiritual experience known as *al Mi'raj* or the 'Ascent' in which the Angel Gabriel took him to the heavens. There, he met a number of earlier prophets in the seven levels of the Heaven and eventually found himself in the presence of God. It was in this vision that the five Daily Prayers were enjoined upon his followers. The Tradition of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} gives a detailed account as to how the number of Daily Prayers was reduced from fifty to five.

The Second Emigration to Abyssinia

As the persecution of the Muslims continued at the hands of the Meccans, the Prophet again advised his followers to take refuge in Abyssinia. In the sixth year of the Prophet's Call (615 CE), some 101 Muslims, including 18 women, immigrated to Abyssinia. The group included: 'Uthman bin 'Affan, his wife Ruqayya, Zubair bin 'Awwam, 'Abdur Rahman bin Auf, Abu Salma and his wife Umm Salma. Most members of this second group of emigrants stayed there until the Prophet's own migration to Yathrib and returned to Medina around 628-629 CE.

When the Quraish learned of this second emigration, they sent a delegation to the King with the request to expel the Muslims from his Kingdom. 'Amr bin 'As was the head of this delegation. They told the King that the Muslims had started a new religion in opposition to their ancestral faith as well as to Christianity. The King summoned the Muslims to his court and demanded an explanation. Ja'far bin Abu Talib spoke on behalf of the Muslims:

“O King, we were a people in a state of ignorance and immorality, worshipping idols, eating the flesh of dead animals, committing all sorts of abominations and shameful deeds, breaking the ties of kinship, treating guests badly and the strong among us exploited the weak. We remained in this state until Allah sent us a Prophet, one of our own people whose lineage, truthfulness, trustworthiness and integrity were well-known to us. He called us to worship Allah alone and to renounce the stones and the idols which we and our ancestors used to worship beside Allah.

“He commanded us to speak the truth, to honour our promises, to be kind to our relations, to be helpful to our neighbours, and to cease all forbidden acts.... We believed in him and what he brought to us from Allah and we follow him in what he has asked us to do....

“Thereupon, O King, our people attacked us, inflicted the severest punishments on us to make us renounce our religion and to take us back to the old immorality and the worship of idols. They oppressed us, made life intolerable for us and obstructed us from observing our religion. So we left our country, choosing you before anyone else, desiring your protection and hoping to live in justice and in peace in your midst.”

Negus was greatly impressed by this eloquent speech and asked Ja'far if he had anything to read from what the Prophet had brought. At this, Ja'far recited in a very melodious voice the first part of Surah *Maryam* which deals with the story of Mary and Jesus. Listening to

this, Negus remarked: “The message of your Prophet and that of Jesus came from the same source....” The King then offered his protection to the Muslim migrants and refused to hand them over to the Quraish delegation. Facing their defeat, the head of the Quraish delegation, ‘Amr bin ‘As, told the King that the Muslims did not regard Jesus as highly as the King was being led to believe. At this the King asked Ja‘far as to what did he say about Jesus, the son of Mary.” To this, Ja‘far answered: “We only say what has been revealed to our Prophet. Our Prophet says that Jesus is the servant of God and His Prophet. He is God’s spirit and His word which He cast into Mary.”

Hearing this, Negus exclaimed, “By God, Jesus the son of Mary was exactly as your Prophet has described.” Then, addressing the Muslims, the King said, “Go, for you are safe and secure. Whoever obstructs you will pay for it and whoever opposes you will be punished. For, by God, I would rather not have a mountain of gold than have anyone of you come to any harm.” Negus then ordered his courtiers to return the gifts brought by the Meccan delegation that returned to Mecca unsuccessfully.

The Quraish ask Abu Talib to Restrain the Prophet

At the rapid success of Islam, the Quraish became frightened. They went to Abu Talib and offered to give all sorts of riches to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} on the condition that he gives up his mission. Abu Talib called the Prophet and told him about the wishes of the Quraish. On hearing this, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} replied:

“O my uncle, if they were to place the sun on my right hand and the moon on my left, I will not give up preaching the truth of One God. I must go on doing so until I die.”

Conversions of Hamza bin ‘Abdul Muttalib and ‘Umar bin Khattab

In the sixth year of the Prophet’s call, Hamza and ‘Umar bin Khattab accepted Islam. Both men were brave and highly influential in the Meccan society and their conversion brought great moral and physical support to the Muslim community.

Returning from a hunting trip one day, Hamza learned that the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was being maltreated at the Ka‘ba by Abu Jahal. He immediately proceeded to the site in defence of his nephew and on arriving there, announced to everyone present that he accepted the faith of Islam.

One day, before he accepted Islam, ‘Umar bin Khattab decided to end the spread of the new faith and the resulting division that it was causing among the Arabs. With sword in hand, ‘Umar went out seeking the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. On his way he met a person who, after learning of ‘Umar’s intention, told him to first put his own house in order as his sister and brother-in-law had both accepted Islam. Surprised at this news, ‘Umar went directly to his sister’s house instead where he found his sister and brother-in-law, Sa‘id bin Zaid, reciting verses of the Holy Qur’an. Observing this scene, ‘Umar flew into a rage and began quarrelling with his brother-in-law. His sister came to her husband’s defence but ‘Umar hit her as well and she fell down bleeding from her face. Seeing this, ‘Umar calmed down a little and after some reflection, asked them to give him what they were reading. ‘Umar’s sister asked him to first perform the ablution before she would hand over the sacred parchment to him. Reading the verses from *Surah Ta-Ha* (Chapter 20) brought a surprising change in

‘Umar. He immediately stood up and went out looking for the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, this time to announce his own acceptance of the faith and to give him his full allegiance.

It is reported that the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} had once prayed: “O Allah! Strengthen Islam through either ‘Umar bin Khattab or ‘Amr bin Hisham (known as Abu Jahal).”

Before ‘Umar’s conversion, Muslims used to meet secretly in homes and never dared to say their Prayers at the Sacred Mosque for fear of public hostility. One day ‘Umar and Hamza took the Muslims to the Ka‘ba in two groups and, to the bewilderment and chagrin of the Quraish nobility, performed their Prayers openly at the site.

Boycott of the Hashimites

Seeing the influence of the Prophet spreading everywhere, the Quraish took punitive measures against the Hashimite branch of the tribe of Quraish—the branch to which the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} belonged. In 617 CE, the 7th year of the mission, leaders of two Meccan tribes: Banu Makhzum and Banu ‘Abd-Shams proclaimed a total boycott of the Hashimites who were forced to retire into a valley on the outskirts of Mecca known as Shi‘b of Abu Talib. During this period the Hashimites were cut off from all food supplies. Also, no one would trade with them or talk to them or have marriages with them. Not all the Hashimites were Muslims but the entire clan endured this difficult situation for the sake of their Muslim kinsfolk. This state of affairs lasted for nearly three years.

Finally, five⁷ decent members of the enemy revolted against this terrible situation and the boycott was eventually lifted. After the lifting of the boycott, there was a temporary relaxation of hostilities against the Muslims. Exaggerated reports of this temporary improvement in the situation reached Abyssinia, whereupon some of the Muslim emigrants returned to Mecca including the Prophet’s daughter, Ruqayya, and her husband, ‘Uthman.

The Year of Sorrow

In the year 620 CE, not long after the lifting of the boycott, the Prophet suffered two great personal losses. The Prophet was 50 years old when his wife Khadija (555-620 CE), and his uncle Abu Talib (549-620 CE), passed away one after the other.

When Abu Talib was on his deathbed, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} entered his room and tried to persuade him to accept Islam before he died. He thus addressed him in the following words: “My uncle, you just make a profession that there is no god but Allah, and I will bear testimony before Allah (of your being a believer).”

Abu Jahal and Abu Umayya were also present in the room and addressed Abu Talib, saying: “Would you abandon the religion of ‘Abdul Muttalib?”

The Prophet repeatedly asked Abu Talib to accept Islam while the other two repeatedly asked him to remain on the religion of his father and forefathers. In the end, Abu Talib refused to accept Islam. Hearing this, the Prophet remarked: “By Allah, I will persistently beg pardon for you till I am forbidden to do so (by Allah).” It was after this incident that the following Qur’anic revelation was received by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}:

⁷ These five were: Hisham bin ‘Amr, Zuhair bin Abi Umayya, Mut‘im bin ‘Adiy, Abul Bakhtari bin Hashim and Zama‘a bin Aswad.

“It is not for the Prophet and those who believe that they should ask *of God* forgiveness for the idolaters, even though they may be kinsmen, after it has become plain to them that they are the people of Hell.” (*Al-Qur’an*, 9:113)

Before he became a Muslim himself, the Prophet’s uncle ‘Abbas once remarked to the Prophet: “You have not been of any help to your uncle Abu Talib though he used to protect you and get angry on your behalf.” The Prophet replied, “He is in a shallow fire, and had it not been for me, he would have been at the bottom of the (Hell) Fire.”

In the Arab society of the time, one needed the protection of someone powerful to ward off enemy attacks. As long as Abu Talib was alive, he provided protection to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and his enemies were prohibited from rendering any bodily harm. The death of Abu Talib, however, removed this protection and made the Prophet vulnerable.

Just two months after the death of his uncle, the Prophet experienced the loss of his wife, Khadija. At the time the Prophet was 50 years old and she was sixty-five. Khadija had been married to the Prophet for twenty five years and gave him moral support and encouragement through the most critical period of his life. Once, during an emotional moment, he is reported to have said this about Khadija: “She believed in me when none else did. She embraced Islam when people disbelieved me. And she helped and comforted me by her person and wealth when there was none else to lend me a helping hand. And I had children from her only.”

The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was highly grieved at the loss of both these persons and the year of their deaths is known in Islamic history as the Year of the Sorrow.

The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} Visits Ta’if

When life became very difficult in Mecca and people would not listen to him, the Prophet decided to go to Ta’if and preach to the people there. Ta’if is located some 100 km (62 miles) south-east of Mecca at an elevation of 1880m (6165 feet), on the flanks of the Sarawat Mountains. The city was dominated by Banu Thaqif⁸ tribe and its walls housed the statue of Allat⁹, known popularly as the Lady of Ta’if. Around 620 CE, the Prophet set off for Ta’if accompanied by Zaid bin Haritha, his freed slave. The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} stayed in Ta’if for a several days and preached to its chiefs without any success. The chiefs of Ta’if set vagabonds and street boys at the Prophet who hooted him, pelted him with stones and finally drove him out of the city. Both Zaid and the Prophet were wounded. The Prophet was grieved and dejected at this treatment when an angel appeared and asked him if he wished his persecutors to be destroyed. The Prophet replied, “No. I hope one day their children will accept Islam and worship the One God.”

On his way back from Ta’if, the Prophet rested in a vineyard which belonged to two Meccans, ‘Utba bin Rabi’a and Shaiba bin Rabi’a. They were his opponents at Mecca but on this occasion were sympathetic and sent him a tray full of grapes carried by a Christian slave, named ‘Addas. The Prophet asked the slave as to what his religion was and where he was from. ‘Addas replied, “I am a Christian and come from Nineveh.” Upon this the Holy

⁸ It were the Thaqif and Hawazin tribes of Ta’if that battled at Hunain immediately after the Conquest of Mecca.

⁹ It is reported that Allat was also venerated in Carthage under the name of Allatu. In 630 CE, Abu Sufyan destroyed the statue of Allat at Ta’if during a campaign against the city.

Prophet^{pbuh} said, “You belong to the city of the righteous Jonah son of Mathew.” Upon this ‘Addas asked him if he knew anything about Jonah. The Prophet remarked, “He is my brother. He was a prophet like me.” The Prophet also told ‘Addas about his own mission and teachings. Hearing this, ‘Addas kissed the Prophet’s hand and paid homage to him. When his masters admonished him for this act of his, ‘Addas responded, “He has revealed to me a truth that only a prophet could do.”

It was the custom in Arabia to seek the protection of an influential person when one was afraid for one’s life. As long as Abu Talib was alive, he extended such protection to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. However, he had just passed away prior to the Prophet’s visit to Ta’if. Thus, when the Prophet reached the outskirts of Mecca, he decided to seek someone’s protection. First he sent a man to ‘Abd Yalil bin ‘Abd Kalal but he refused. Then he sent a man to Akhnas bin Shuraiq seeking his protection. The latter responded that he was an ally of the Quraish and could not provide protection to Muhammad. The Prophet then sent the messenger to Suhail bin ‘Amr, but with a similar result. Finally, the Prophet sent the man to a notable in Mecca, Mut‘im bin ‘Adi¹⁰, who agreed to provide the requested protection. The Prophet then entered Mecca while heavily guarded by Mut‘im’s men who were fully armed.

The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} never forgot the favour that Mut‘im had rendered to him that day. After the Battle of Badr when a large number of Meccan men had been taken as prisoners, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} declared publicly that if Mut‘im were still alive and had asked for the release of the captured Quraish members, he would not have denied his request.

The First Pledge of Aqaba

During the season of a pilgrimage, the Prophet met a group of six men from Yathrib. He explained to them his mission and asked for their help in spreading his message in their home town. The people of Yathrib had already heard the Jews speak of the advent of a new prophet and were reasonably familiar with the concept. Thus, upon hearing Muhammad’s invitation to Islam, they immediately accepted it, adding, that perhaps through him their currently feuding and fractured tribes may see unity and peace. Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet’s biographer, reports one member of the Yathrib group saying this to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, “Nowhere are people more divided by enmity and spite as we are in Yathrib. Perhaps God shall unite us again through you.” The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} sent one of his Companions, Mus‘ab bin ‘Umair, with the six men to Yathrib to teach the new converts and the residents of the city the Holy Qur’an and Islam. Mus‘ab bin ‘Umair thus became the first missionary sent out by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} for preaching. On their return to Yathrib, these people spread the news that a prophet had risen among the Meccans whom they had willingly accepted. During the next pilgrimage season, in the year 621 CE, a group of twelve faithful followers came from Yathrib. The Prophet met these people at a place called Aqaba, where they all took an oath at the Prophet’s hands, never to worship anything except God. This is known as the First Pledge of Aqaba.

¹⁰ Mut‘im bin ‘Adi never converted to Islam in his lifetime. However, he was a very noble and chivalrous Meccan who was also responsible for ending the boycott against the Hashimites.

Al Isra' (The Night Journey)

In the year 621 CE, the eleventh year of the Prophet's call, he experienced another spiritual event. The Prophet at the time was staying with his cousin and daughter of his uncle Abu Talib, called Hind (Umm Hani). In a spiritual vision during the night, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was transported from the Sacred Mosque in Mecca to the Prophet Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem which was known to the Muslims as *Bait al Muqaddas* (the Holy Sanctuary) or *Masjid Al-Aqsa* (the Distant Mosque). While there, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} performed his *Salat*, leading many other prophets of the past. This vision, although purely spiritual, was so vivid and realistic in its nature that the Prophet could easily describe the city of Jerusalem and the caravans travelling on the way, to the amazement of the disbelievers.

It should be noted that many historians have assumed that *Mi'raj* and *Isra'* took place during the same night in the eleventh year of the Prophet's call. However, their descriptions in the Tradition and the Holy Qur'an indicate that they were two distinct events that were separated by many years. While both events were purely spiritual visions, some Muslims do take them to be physical and real.

The Second Pledge of Aqaba

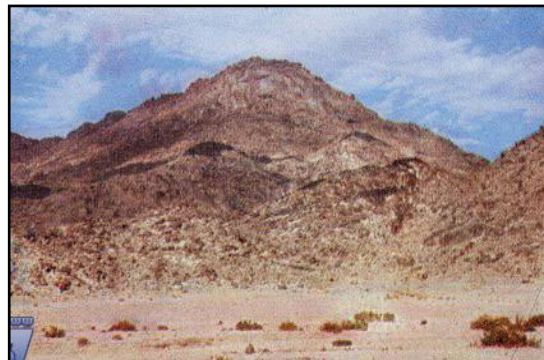
In the following year, in 622 CE, some seventy three people came from Yathrib, at the time of the Annual Pilgrimage to Mecca. These people secretly met the Prophet in the valley of Aqaba and offered an oath of allegiance to him. These new converts to Islam pledged to help and protect him if needed. They also extended him an invitation to come to Yathrib.

MIGRATION AND LIFE AT MEDINA

***Hijrat* or Migration to Medina**

After the second pledge of Aqaba, the Muslims in Mecca started to migrate to Yathrib in small groups where they enjoyed greater freedom to practise their religion. Soon, hardly any of the Prophet's Companions was left in Mecca except Abu Bakr and 'Ali. When Abu Bakr asked for the Prophet's permission to emigrate, he said, "Go not away, for God may give you a companion." Abu Bakr understood that he must wait for the Prophet and started making necessary preparations.

After the death of his uncle Abu Talib, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} had sought the protection of Mut'im bin 'Adi in Mecca. Sometime after the Second Pledge of Aqaba, Mut'im bin 'Adi also passed away and the Prophet was left visibly vulnerable. When the Quraish realized that they could not stop the flow of conversions to the new faith, they became furious and decided to murder the Prophet. The leaders of the Quraish gathered together and devised a plan under which each clan was to nominate a person. All the persons thus selected were to fall upon the Prophet at a given moment and strike him a mortal blow at the same time. In this way all the clans would share



Mount Thaur (courtesy of: ezsofttech.com)

equally in the killing of the Prophet which would make it difficult for the Hashimites to avenge his death. When the Prophet learned of the evil intentions of the enemy he, in the company of Abu Bakr, quietly slipped out of Mecca during the secrecy of the night. Thinking that the Meccans will be looking north (towards Yathrib), the two went south and took shelter in a cave on Mount Thaur located near Mecca.

Thus, having lived all his life in the city, the Prophet left it on June 13, 622 CE (corresponding to 26th day of the Islamic month of Safar). When someone informed the assassins waiting outside the Prophet's house that he had in fact slipped out, they rushed in only to find 'Ali sleeping in the Prophet's bed.

For three days and three nights, the Prophet and Abu Bakr hid in the Cave of Thaur. According to prior arrangement, a freed slave of Abu Bakr, 'Amir bin Fahira, used to bring his grazing goats near the Cave every evening so the two could drink some goat milk. The Meccans mounted an extensive search for the two using trackers but to no avail. Once they came extremely close to the mouth of the cave in which the two were hiding at which Abu Bakr whispered to the Prophet, "What if they look inside through the crevice?" The Prophet calmly replied, "Abu Bakr, what can befall two who have Allah as the third One with them."



Cave of Thaur
(courtesy of: ezsoftech.com)

On the last night, according to plan, two swift camels belonging to Abu Bakr were brought to the cave by 'Abdullah bin Arqat. Abu Bakr offered the better of the two camels to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The latter replied: "I do not ride a camel which is not mine." When Abu Bakr offered the camel again, the Prophet accepted it on the condition that he be allowed to pay its full price later on. The party, including the Prophet, Abu Bakr, his freed slave ('Amir bin Fahira) and the guide ('Abdullah bin Arqat) rode towards Yathrib which is located about two hundred miles north of Mecca. Of the several routes leading to Yathrib, the party chose a more westerly route, close to the coastline of the Red Sea that was the shortest but the hardest to traverse.

When the Meccans discovered that the Prophet and Abu Bakr had escaped, they offered a reward of a hundred camels for the capture of the two, dead or alive. Tempted by the reward, a Bedouin chief, Suraqa bin Malik, went in pursuit of the party. When Suraqa bin Malik sighted the party, he, according to the superstitious Arab custom of the time, consulted his arrows which bade ill luck. The temptation of the reward, however, made him continue the pursuit. At this time his horse stumbled and he fell down. This was another sign for him. When eventually he caught up with the party, he told them of his evil intentions and the sudden change of heart. The Prophet let him go but made him promise not to reveal the party's whereabouts to anyone. Suraqa later narrated this incident, saying, that he was then convinced that the Prophet was a true one and that he would definitely succeed in his mission. Suraqa requested the Prophet to write him a guaranty of peace when the Prophet became supreme. To this the Prophet agreed. At that moment the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} received a revelation and asked Suraqa: "Suraqa, how will you feel with the gold bangles of the Khusrow on your wrists?" Amazed at the prophecy, Suraqa asked, "Which Khusrow? Khusrow, the Emperor of Iran?" The Prophet replied, "Yes."

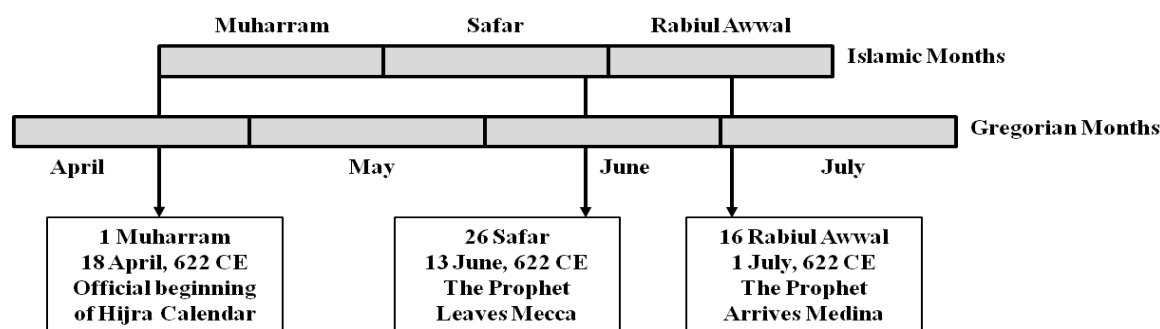
Sixteen or seventeen years later this prophecy was literally fulfilled. During the reign of the second Caliph, ‘Umar bin Khattab, the Muslims conquered the Kingdom of Khusrow. When the spoils of the war were placed in front of ‘Umar, he noticed the gold bangles which Khusrow used to wear on state occasions. Remembering the Prophet’s words to Suraqa, he decided to make a visible fulfilment of the prophecy. He called for Suraqa and bade him wear the bangles. To this Suraqa protested since the wearing of gold by men was not permitted by the Prophet. ‘Umar, however, said that the occasion was an exception and that Suraqa will have to wear the bangles. To this Suraqa finally complied. The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was no longer in this world but the Muslims who were present saw the prophecy of the Messenger of God fulfilled in front of their own eyes.

Coming back to the migration, the Prophet continued his journey towards Yathrib, reaching its outskirts—the hamlet of Quba—on June 27, 622 CE (corresponding to 12th of Rabi’ul Awwal).

The news of their escape from Mecca had already reached Medina and the people were eagerly awaiting their arrival. When the trio reached the outskirts of the city, they sat down on the ground to rest while the local populace gathered around them, observing with great curiosity. Due to his better attire, the people mistook Abu Bakr to be the Prophet and looked at him with reverence. Realising their misunderstanding, Abu Bakr quietly stood up and held a piece of cloth above the Prophet’s head, shading him from the sun. Only then did the people realise as to who was the Prophet and who the companion!

The Prophet stayed in Quba for three days and also laid the foundation of the first mosque ever built by the Muslims. Then he went on to Yathrib where the people of the city had turned out in large numbers to welcome him. A number of well-to-do and influential people in Medina offered to house the Prophet in their own home, including the relatives of his mother Amina. The Prophet, however, let his camel decide as to where it would stop. The good fortune fell to the lot of Abu Ayyub Ansari at whose place the Prophet stayed for seven months and also built a mosque and his own home on the ground nearby. His entry into Yathrib (Medina) took place on July 1, 622 CE (corresponding to the 16th day of the Islamic month of Rabi’ul Awwal).

Hijra and Gregorian dates pertaining to the Migration from Mecca to Medina



After leaving Mecca, it took the Prophet some 15 days to reach Quba and another four days to reach Medina. The latter is located some 320 kilometres (200 miles) north of Mecca. This emigration of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} from Mecca to Yathrib is called the *Hijra* (meaning migration) and took place in June-July 622 CE, some twelve years after the beginning of his mission. With this migration the Meccan period of humiliation, persecution

and restrictions finally came to an end and the years of success, religious freedom and the spread of Islam began.

In 639 CE, some seventeen years after the Migration, the Second Khalifa ‘Umar bin Khattab instituted the Hijra Calendar that counts the dates with reference to the Hijra of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} in 622 CE. The letters AH are used to indicate After Hijra. The very first year after migration is numbered 1 AH. Since the Islamic New Year begins with 1st of Muharram, it was decided to begin counting the dates from 1st of Muharram of the year 622 CE (which actually corresponds to April 18, 622 CE). However, the 1st of Muharram had already passed by about 75 days when the Hijra actually took place on 16 Rabi‘ul Awwal. For this reason, the actual beginning of the Islamic Calendar and the actual date of the Prophet’s migration are not the same.

The first Sermons at Medina

The Prophet arrived in Medina on Friday and the very first sermon that he delivered with the *Salatul Jum‘a* went as follows:

“O people! Send something (good works) forward for yourselves. You should know that everyone of you will be overtaken by death and will leave his flock without a shepherd. Then his Lord will converse with him without an interpreter or a veil behind which he could hide: ‘Did not My Messenger come to thee and preach unto thee? I gave thee wealth and My bounty. What have thou done for thy self?’ Then he will look to his right and left and will see nothing. Then he will see Hell in front of him. Let him, who can, shield his face from the Fire even with a piece of date; and he who cannot find such, then with a good word; for the reward of a virtue shall be ten to seven hundred times. Peace be upon you and the Messenger and mercy and blessing of God.”

The very next Sermon delivered at Medina went as follows:

“Surely, praise belongs to Allah Whom I praise and beseech His help. We seek refuge in God from the evils of our selves and the sins of our actions. He, whom God guides, none can lead astray; and he whom He leads astray, none can guide. And I testify that there is none worthy of worship except Allah—He is One, there is no partner with Him. Surely, the best discourse is the Book of Allah. He has prospered to whose heart God has glorified it, and has made him enter Islam after disbelief, and who has preferred it over all other human discourses. Indeed, it is the best and most eloquent discourse. Pray love what Allah loves and love Allah with all your heart and weary not of the Word of Allah and its mention. Of the things that God creates, He chooses and selects. What He chooses from the actions, He calls *khira* (choicest); what He chooses among the people, He calls *mustafa* (chosen); and what He chooses among the discourses, He calls *salih* (good). Of the things given to men some are lawful and some unlawful. So, worship God and do not associate any partner with Him; fear Him as He ought to be feared; and tell the truth as it is the best of your utterances. Love one another for the sake of God. Indeed God is angered when His covenant is broken. May peace be upon you and the mercy God.”

Life at Medina

With the arrival of the Prophet, Yathrib changed its name to Medina-tun-Nabi, the City of the Prophet. In the course of time it was shortened to al Medina, the City. On arriving at

Medina, the Prophet took up residence at the house of Abu Ayyub Ansari. Soon he sent his freed slave, Zaid, to Mecca to fetch his family and relatives. The Prophet also bought a vacant piece of land nearby and laid the foundation of a mosque. After this he built houses for himself and his companions.

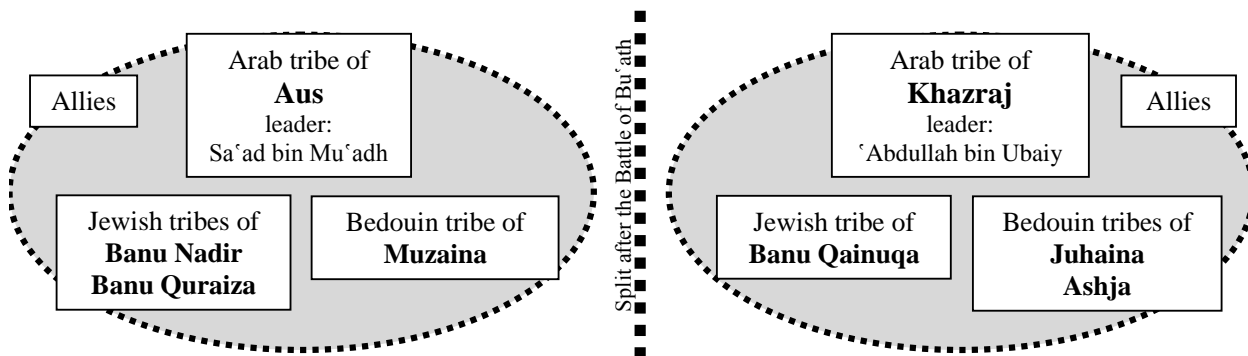
The faithful followers of the Prophet, who had left their homes and other worldly possessions back in Mecca and had come to Medina for the sake of Islam, were known as *Muhajirin* or Emigrants. Their love for the Prophet was unbounded and they were also very dear to the Prophet. They numbered about seventy men at the time of the Prophet’s arrival in Medina.

The new converts at Medina, who had aided the Prophet at a most difficult time, were called by him *Ansar* or Helpers. They numbered about one hundred. The Prophet formally established ties of mutual brotherhood between individuals of the two groups and asked each man among the Ansar to ‘adopt’ a brother from among the Muhajirin—“In the way of God, each two of you should become brothers”. This action not only welded the social ties between the two groups but also helped economically the refugees who had been deprived of all their possessions.

Constitution of Medina

On his arrival at Medina, the Prophet devoted himself to the organisation of the city. The Jews of Medina were divided into three branches: Banu Nadir, Banu Quraiza and Banu Qainuqa. Prominent among the Arab tribes were Aus and Khazraj—the former being significantly larger than the latter. They had moved from Yemen in the 5th century CE after the destruction of the Great Ma’rib Dam. Also living around Yathrib were other Bedouin tribes that included: Muzaina, Juhaina and Ashja. The Yathrib population was strongly fractured and polarised into two camps, particularly after the Battle of Bu’ath fought in 617 CE, just five years prior to the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The Aus and their allies had come out triumphant in the Battle. At the time of the Prophet’s arrival in Yathrib, the tribe of Aus was ruled by Sa’d bin Mu’dah and the tribe of Khazraj by ‘Abdullah bin Ubaib bin Salul. One reason that the Yathrib delegation had invited the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} to come to their city during the Pledge of Aqaba was to implement peace and reconciliation among the various warring factions.

Alliances and rivalries at Yathrib at the time of the Prophet’s arrival



With the Muslims, the Jews and the idolatrous Arabs, the city of Medina was divided into three religious groups. The Prophet realized it quickly that a peaceful state could only exist if it was based on goodwill and support of all sections of the society. The Prophet, therefore, formulated a charter for the people of Medina which is also known as the Constitution of Medina. According to this charter blood feud was abolished and all rights were given equally to all people. Some of the important elements of this charter were:

- All parties signing this charter will form a common nationality.
- All parties to this agreement will remain united in peace or in war.
- If any party was attacked by an enemy, others would defend it with their combined forces.
- No party shall give shelter to the Quraish of Mecca or make any secret treaty with them.
- The various parties to this agreement will be free to profess their own religion.
- Bloodshed, murder and violence will be forbidden.
- The city of Medina will be regarded as sacred and any strangers who came under the protection of its citizens will be treated as citizens of Medina.
- All disputes will be referred to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} for decision.

***Adhan* or the Call to Prayer**

In the early days of the Prophet's stay at Medina, whenever the time of Prayer came, the Muslims assembled in the Prophet's Mosque without being called. Since there were no clocks or watches in those days, the Muslims could not come to the Prayer at any fixed time. In the second year after Hijra, around the year 623 CE, a strong need arose to have the Muslims called to the Prayer at a fixed time. Various means to achieve this objective were considered by the Prophet and his advisors. The Jews used to call their people with a horn while the Christians used the bell. Even the lighting of fire, following the style of the Zoroastrians was considered.

One day, a Companion of the Prophet by the name of 'Abdullah bin Zaid advised him that he saw a person in his dream calling people to Prayer using certain words. Upon asking, he narrated the words which the Prophet liked and asked him to teach them to Bilal, a freed Abyssinian slave, who gave the first *Adhan* in history. Bilal used to ascend to the roof of the house adjacent to the Prophet's Mosque and deliver the Call to Prayer from there. When 'Umar bin Khattab heard the *Adhan* for the first time, he came to the Prophet Muhammad and told him that he heard the exact same words in his own dream the previous night.

The Change of Qibla

While at Mecca, the Muslims used to say their *Salat* (ritual Prayer) facing *Bait al Muqaddas* (the Holy Sanctuary) in Jerusalem which was the site of the ancient Temple of Solomon. This practice continued in the early period of the Prophet's arrival in Medina. It was in the seventeenth month after his Hijra to Medina that the commandment to face the Ka'ba was received. It is reported in the Tradition that the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was already leading the Prayer facing Jerusalem to the north when he received the relevant revelation and immediately turned around to the south, almost one hundred and eighty degrees. This

mosque came to be known among the Muslims as *Masjid al Qiblatain* (the Mosque of the two Qiblas).

The Incident at Nakhla

In January 624 CE, one and a half years after Hijra, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} sent nine persons towards the valley of Nakhla in order to observe the movements of a Quraish caravan. Such caravans were generally accompanied by armed guards and posed a potential danger to the Muslims. ‘Abdullah bin Hajash was appointed the leader of this scouting team. It was the sacred month of Rajab when fighting was not permitted among the Arabs. When the reconnoitring group reached Nakhla and spotted the caravan, they conferred among themselves as to their course of action. Some of the Muslims did not like breaking the sanctity of the sacred month while others were opposed to letting the Quraish escape unchecked. Finally, a consensus was reached to fight with the enemy. During the fighting that ensued, Waqid bin ‘Abdullah of the Muslims shot an arrow that killed ‘Amr bin Hazrami of the Quraish. The Muslims took two prisoners and some booty and returned to Medina.

When the Prophet learned of this incident, he was highly grieved and refused to accept any part of the booty presented to him. The two Meccan prisoners were eventually returned to the Quraish in exchange for the two Muslims captured during the fighting.

The Battle of Badr

After losing the opportunity to kill the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, the Meccans were really angry at the spread of Islam in Medina. The Meccans started to interfere with the Muslims’ right to pilgrimage and also instigated the people of Medina against the Prophet. They changed their normal caravan routes and started going through tribal areas around Medina to rouse the tribes against the Muslims.

In the year 624 CE, two years after the Hijra, Abu Sufyan was bringing a commercial caravan back from Syria. The Muslim scouts were keeping an eye on the caravan just in case it posed any threat to Medina. After Abu Sufyan saw the Muslim scouts he became frightened and sent a messenger to Mecca to bring an adequate force to safeguard the caravan.

When the chiefs of Mecca learned that their goods laden caravan was in possible danger, they quickly gathered a well armed and well equipped army of more than a thousand warriors. The army set out from Mecca under the leadership of Abu Jahal to confront the Muslims. When the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} learned of the Meccans’ intentions, he explained the situation to his Companions and waited for their advice. One Companion, Miqdad bin Aswad, said: “O Messenger of Allah! We are not like the companions of Moses who said to him, ‘Go thou and thy God fight the enemy, but here we shall sit.’ We shall go wherever you command us. We shall fight on your right and on your left and in front of you and behind you.”

The Prophet continued to wait to hear the viewpoint of the Ansar. Perceiving this, Sa’d bin Mu’az, the chief of the tribe of ‘Aus, said: “O Messenger of Allah! It may be that you are waiting for an expression of *our* view. We have believed in you as a true Prophet of God and have placed our hands in your hand in absolute commitment. Go wherever you will, we shall be with you... If you command us to jump in the sea, we shall jump into it and not one of us will hold back...”

The small army of some 314¹¹ Muslims set forth from Medina and camped for the night at a place called Badr, a few miles south west of Medina. Early on the morning of March 13, 624 CE, the Prophet arranged his small army into ranks and files and delivered a brief address on *Jihad*, fighting in the cause of God:

“Shoot your arrows and use your swords carefully. There are some people among the enemy who have joined them under coercion and they bear no enmity towards us. There are others to whom we owe gratitude for their kind treatment when we were persecuted in Mecca. If a Muslim finds any one of them at his mercy, he should spare him.”

Then the Prophet^{pbuh} retired to his tent and earnestly prayed to God in these words:

“O God! Pray fulfil the promise that you have made with me. O God! If these few persons are wiped out today, then You may not be worshipped until the Day of Judgment.”

Then, according to the Arab custom, three leaders of the Quraish named Sha'iba, 'Utba and Walid bin 'Utba challenged three Muslims to a one-on-one combat. Their challenge was accepted by 'Ali, Hamza and 'Ubaida. 'Ali and Hamza overpowered their opponents but 'Ubaida and Walid exchanged several blows and both fell down, severely wounded.

After these single combats, a fierce battle broke out in which both sides fought bravely. While the Quraish were fighting for their false pride and glory, the Muslims were fighting in the cause of Islam and for their very existence. Two young Ansar attacked Abu Jahal and mortally wounded him. Very soon the Quraish were routed and took to their heels. They were chased by the Muslims and some of them were made prisoners.

The Muslims lost fourteen men in the battle of Badr while the Quraish lost seventy. The very first person to be slain among the Muslims in a pitched battle was Mihja bin Salih, a freed slave. He was given the title of 'Chief of the Martyrs' by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. A number of the Quraish were taken prisoners by the Muslims. Among these were: 'Abbas (the Prophet' uncle), 'Aqil bin Abu Talib (brother of 'Ali) and Naufal ibn al Harith (a cousin of the Prophet). The Prophet ordered his followers to treat the prisoners of war with kindness. The Prophet decided to liberate the prisoners on payment of ransom. Those who could not pay the ransom but were literate were allowed to earn their freedom by teaching ten Muslim children how to read and write. Those who were poor and illiterate were released on the promise that they will not fight the Muslims in the future.

The battle of Badr was the first armed confrontation between the Muslims and the Meccans. The Muslims not only came out victorious, but some of the worst enemies of Islam such as Abu Jahal, Shaiba, 'Utba and Walid bin 'Utba were also eliminated in the battle. This battle, therefore, marked a turning point in the history of Islam and considerably boosted the morale of the Muslims who, until then, had only known persecution and harassment.

The Muslims' victory at Badr was not tolerated by the vendetta seeking Quraish of Mecca. Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan and daughter of 'Utbah bin Rabi'a, who had lost her father, her uncle (Shaiba bin Rabi'a) and her brother (Walid bin 'Utba) in the battle, swore that she would not rest until another army was sent against Medina. The Jews of Medina were envious of the spreading influence of Islam and started openly opposing the Muslims and the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, although they had a treaty with them. Then there were the

¹¹ Ibn Hisham reports that the number included: 83 from *Muhajirin* and 231 from *Ansar* (61 from the tribe of Aus and 170 from the tribe of Khazraj).

hypocrites who had outwardly accepted Islam but in their hearts sought ways and means to hurt the Muslims and spread discontent and disunity among their ranks. The leader of the hypocrites was a man by the name of 'Abdullah bin Ubai bin Salul. He was the chief of the Khazraj tribe and, before the arrival of the Prophet in Medina, was generally accepted as the chief of the city. He, therefore, greatly resented the Prophet's authority and, as later developments will show, tried his best in turning the people against him.

Expulsion of Banu Qainuqa from Medina

After the Battle of Badr, the Jews started giving open expression to their feelings of hatred and jealousy against the Muslims and the relations between the Muslims and the three Jewish tribes began to deteriorate. In an isolated case, a Jewish person tried to disrobe a modestly clad Muslim lady shopping in the market place through mischief which provoked another Muslim man to kill the Jew. This led to some Jews in the street to kill the offending Muslim. The isolated street incident eventually led to an open confrontation between the Muslims and the members of the Banu Qainuqa tribe. The Muslims marched towards the strongholds of Banu Qainuqa in Medina and besieged them for a fortnight. After this period, the Banu Qainuqa surrendered on the condition that they, their families and their animals be spared. The Prophet accepted these terms and the Banu Qainuqa were expelled from Medina.

Battle of Uhud

The Quraish of Mecca were smarting under their crushing defeat at Badr and could not tolerate the spread of Islam in Medina. Moreover, the Meccans wanted to avenge the loss of some of their leaders, like Abu Jahal and 'Utbah, who were killed in the battle of Badr at the hands of the Muslims. The Quraish, therefore, started to make preparations for another attack on Medina. In the third year of the Hijra, exactly one year after the battle of Badr, the Meccan army proceeded towards Medina under the leadership of Abu Sufyan. The army consisted of some 3,000 soldiers and 200 horses.

In the month of March, year 625 CE, the Prophet left Medina with one thousand men and started marching towards Uhud to meet the enemy. Soon after leaving the city, 'Abdullah bin Ubai deserted the Muslim army, taking his three hundred men with him. There were now only seven hundred Muslims left to face an enemy of three thousand strong including two hundred on horseback.

Both armies camped near Mount Uhud, located a few miles north of Medina. Next morning, the Prophet arranged the Muslim army in such a way that Mount Uhud was at their back. To further safeguard against a surprise attack from a small opening in the mountain, the Prophet appointed a batch of fifty archers to take up positions on a hill guarding this passage. These archers were instructed not to leave their positions until further orders.

During the first phase of the battle, a part of the Meccan army under the command of Ikrima, son of Abu Jahal, advanced towards the Muslims from the front. The Muslims fought very bravely and overpowered the enemy which ran from the battle field. Thinking that the enemy was beaten, the Muslims started picking up the spoils of battle. The fifty archers, realizing that they may lose this opportunity, left their positions and joined their brethren to collect the booty.

The ready eye of Khalid bin Walid, who had not yet accepted Islam and was fighting from the Meccan side, saw the chance and attacked the Muslims from their rear. The

Muslims at that time were disorganized and panicked, falling easy target to the Meccans' swords. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} tried to call his people together but a stone hurled at him broke his two teeth and he fell to the ground momentarily stunned. At that instant a rumour spread among the Muslims that the Prophet was killed. This further heightened the disarray of the Muslims who then ran from the battle field and took to the protection of the mountain.

Seventy Muslims lost their lives in this battle compared with a loss of only twenty three by the enemy. The Prophet's uncle, Hamza, was also killed during this battle by a spear thrown by Wahshi, an Abyssinian slave owned by Jubair bin Mut'im, who had been persuaded to kill Hamza to gain his own freedom. Hind, the wife of Abu Sufyan, cut the belly of Hamza's corpse and chewed upon his liver to satisfy her revenge for her father and brother who were killed in the battle of Badr at the hands of Hamza.

Other notable Muslims who were martyred at Uhud included 'Abdullah bin Jahsh (a cousin of the Prophet through his aunt, Umama bint 'Abdul Muttalib) and Mus'ab bin 'Umair (who died while carrying the Muslim flag).

After a major victory at Badr, the Muslims now suffered a big setback at Uhud. The reasons for their defeat were the military tactics of Khalid bin Walid, the lack of discipline among the Muslim ranks, negligence of the Prophet's orders by the archers, eagerness on the part of the Muslim army to collect the booty and the reduction of the Muslim forces by the desertion of 'Abdullah bin Ubai.

Expulsion of Banu Nadir from Medina

Soon after the Battle of Uhud, two persons were killed from the tribe of Banu 'Amir for which the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} demanded blood money from the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir. Initially, the Banu Nadir agreed to pay the blood money but later on planned to kill the Prophet by dropping a heavy stone on his head as he sat adjacent to a wall of their quarters. The Prophet escaped from this attempt upon his life by immediately leaving the premises and ordered them to leave Medina. Banu Nadir initially defied this order but gave in after a fortnight of siege. They were allowed to take their goods and chattel and were expelled from Medina. Some of these people went to Syria while others settled in a place called Khaibar where they continued their anti Islamic activities.

The Murder of Muslim Missionaries

In 625 CE, the same year as the Battle of Uhud, seven men of the Banu Qara tribe came to Medina and asked the Prophet to send some missionaries to their area to teach them the Holy Qur'an and Islam. The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} had already started sending missionaries to the various tribes and this time sent six of his own Companions for this purpose. When these six missionaries reached the place called ar-Raji' belonging to the tribe of Banu Hudhail, they were set upon by two hundred men. Four of the missionaries were killed in the fight and two, Zaid bin Dathina and Khubaib, were taken prisoners and sold to the Meccans who intended to kill them to avenge the deaths of their own relatives in the Battle of Badr.

When Zaid was going to be beheaded, Abu Sufyan asked him: "Tell me truly, do you not wish that in your place Muhammad had been our prisoner and we should have executed him and you would thus have been saved to spend your days happily in the bosom of your family?" Zaid replied indignantly: "I call God to witness that I would not wish that I might be rescued in return for a thorn pricking the foot of the Messenger of Allah." Abu Sufyan

was amazed at this answer and this display of love and loyalty by the Companions of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} for him. Zaid was then beheaded.

When the other Muslim prisoner, Khubaib, was taken out to be executed in front of the people of Mecca, he asked for permission to say a Nafl Prayer, which he made very short. After completing his Prayer he told his executioners: “I wanted to prolong my Prayer but was afraid that you might think that I was not ready to die.”

Soon after the incident of ar-Raji‘, a man named Abu Bara came to Medina and asked for enlightenment in the religion of Islam. After being instructed in the new faith, Abu Bara requested the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} to send some *Huffaz*, the Memorizers of the Holy Qur’an, to the people of Najd to preach them Islam. The Prophet was afraid for the lives of his Companions and turned down the request. But when Abu Bara gave personal guarantee for their protection, the Prophet acceded to his request and sent with him seventy Muslim missionaries. When these seventy missionaries reached a place called Bir Ma‘una, the cousin of Abu Bara instigated the local tribesmen against the Muslims. These tribesmen surrounded the Muslim missionaries and after a fight killed all of them with the exception of one man who managed to return to Medina and reported the incident.

Battle of the Ditch (Battle of the Confederates)

Although the Muslims were defeated at Uhud, their efforts to spread Islam continued with intense zeal and their numbers kept on growing. With the growth of Islam the city of Medina started to enjoy a status which rivalled that of Mecca. In the growth of Islam, the Quraish saw a real threat to their own religious and social position among the Arabs. At the same time the Jews expelled from Medina began to instigate the Quraish against the Muslims.

Finally in the year 627 CE, some five years after the Hijra, the Quraish once again rounded up an army and marched upon Medina under the leadership of Abu Sufyan. This time, their forces numbered ten thousand men and six hundred horses. A number of Arab tribes joined league with the Meccans in this battle. For this reason this battle is also known as the Battle of the Confederates.

When the Prophet learned of this threat he gathered some three thousand men to face the enemy. On the advice of Salman al Farsi, the Prophet decided to remain in the city and dug a long trench around that part of Medina which gave an open access to the enemy. One side of Medina had a natural protection of hills and another side was protected by stone houses and groves of trees.

Later in his life, Salman al Farsi narrated that when the Muslims were digging the trench, they came across a hard piece of rock that they could not break. The Prophet, who was standing nearby, took the implement in his own hand and struck the rock. At this a spark flew out and the Prophet exclaimed, “*Allahu Akbar*”—meaning God is Great. According to Salman, this happened three times and the Prophet exclaimed “*Allahu Akbar*” each time. Salman then asked the Prophet as to why did he shout “*Allahu Akbar*” after striking the stone each time. The Prophet replied:

“The first time when I struck the stone, I was given the kingdom of Syria and I beheld the red-stone palaces. The second time when I struck the stone, I was bestowed the keys of Iran and I beheld the white palaces of Mada’in. The third time when I struck the stone, I was bestowed the keys of Yemen and I beheld the doors of Sana‘a.”

One by one, all these kingdoms fell to the Muslim armies after the death of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.

When the Quraish saw this defence, they were perplexed. They besieged the city and tried to storm it. But the Muslims easily repulsed the attack each time. Finally, the Quraish decided that the only way to enter the city was by making a secret alliance with the Jewish tribe of Banu Quraiza. Since Banu Quraiza already had a peace treaty with the Prophet, they initially refused this offer of the Meccans. On their persistence, however, they agreed to attack the Muslims from the rear while the Meccans engaged the Muslim army at the ditch. This secret plot of the Jews was discovered by the Muslims who then placed some five hundred soldiers on the Banu Quraiza side of Medina to guard against a surprise attack from that quarter.

Meantime, the Meccans started to run short of their food supplies, the weather became adverse and a strong, cold wind started to blow. Under the circumstances Abu Sufyan raised the siege and decided to return to Mecca. Although the Battle of the Ditch was a major confrontation between the Quraish and the Muslims, very little actual fighting took place. The Muslims lost five men while the enemy lost three.

Treachery of Banu Quraiza and their Punishment

After the departure of the Meccan army, the Muslims turned their attention to Banu Quraiza who had betrayed them during the battle of the Ditch. The Muslims laid siege to the Jews' fortress. When Banu Quraiza could not hold out any longer, they sent a message to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} that they would surrender but would like their fate to be decided by one of their own allies. Sa'd bin Mu'adh, the chief of the tribe of Aus, was appointed the arbiter. Sa'd passed the judgment on the Banu Quraiza according to the law of the Torah. According to the Jewish law the punishment for treason was death. In passing the death sentence on Banu Quraiza, Sa'd reminded the Jews of the fact that had the Jews succeeded in carrying out their plot, they would have put all the Muslims to death. As a result of Sa'd bin Mu'adh's judgment, all the male members of the Banu Quraiza tribe who were of fighting age were executed. Prior to their execution, they were offered the opportunity to accept Islam; only a very few accepted this offer. The women, children and elders of Banu Quraiza were expelled to Syria.

Many historians have commented that the Banu Quraiza made a tactical mistake in asking one of their own allies to decide their fate. The Mosaic Law was very strict in such matters and any person honestly passing a judgment under this law could not be too lenient. The historians believe that if the Banu Quraiza had entrusted their fate to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} himself, he might have forgiven their excesses and, at the most, expelled them from Medina as he had done earlier with the Banu Qainuqa and Banu Nadir.

***Bai'at-e Ridhwan* and the Treaty of Hudaibiya**

By the year 628 CE, some six long years had passed since the Muslims had migrated from Mecca. They were getting nostalgic and wanted to visit their homes. Also, many of the Muslims had not performed the pilgrimage since leaving Mecca. One night the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} dreamed that he was entering the Ka'ba and its key was in his hand. He told of this dream to his Companions and invited them to perform the *'Umrah* or the Informal

Pilgrimage. In February 628 CE, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} left for Mecca in the company of 1,400 Muslims. It was the month of Dhul Qadah, one of the four sacred months when war was unlawful throughout Arabia.

When the Quraish learned of the approach of the Muslims, they started making preparations for a confrontation and told the Muslims that they will not be allowed to enter Mecca and perform the pilgrimage. The Muslims camped outside Mecca, in a place called Hudaibiya. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} dispatched 'Uthman as messenger to the Quraish to inform them of the Muslims' intentions of only performing the pilgrimage. At that time a rumour spread out that 'Uthman had been murdered by the Quraish and caused a great deal of commotion among the Muslims. Realising the sensitivity of the occasion and the potential for an armed conflict with the Quraish, the Prophet sat down under a tree and asked his followers to offer an oath of allegiance to him. They all submitted to it one by one declaring their resolve to fight to the bitter end for the cause of Islam. This oath of the Muslims at the hands of the Prophet is known as *Bai'at-e Ridhwan*, or the Pledge of Acceptance.

The Quraish became alarmed at this display of solidarity by the Muslims and decided to come to terms with them. Suhail bin 'Amr and two other representatives of the Quraish came to confer with the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. When an agreement was finally reached, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} asked 'Ali to write down the terms as he began to dictate them.

The Prophet started his dictation with the invocation *Bismillah ar Rahman ar Rahim*—in the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. At this, Suhail bin 'Amr objected saying that they did not know what Rahman was and, instead, proposed to write *Bismika Allahumma*¹², In Thy Name, O Allah. Some of the Prophet's Companions objected to this but the Prophet said to let it be.

The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} then continued to dictate: "These are the terms of the truce between Muhammad, the Messenger of God and Suhail the son of 'Amr". Suhail protested again saying, "If we knew that you were the Messenger of God we would not be stopping you from performing the pilgrimage neither would we have fought with you; so write Muhammad the son of 'Abdullah." Ali by this time had already written the words 'Messenger of God'. The Prophet asked him to strike them out and write in their place "the son of 'Abdullah".

This treaty between the Muslims and the Meccans is known as the Treaty of Hudaibiya and according to its terms:

- There was to be no fighting for a period of ten years.
- Anyone who wished to join the Prophet's side was free to do so and anyone who wished to join the Meccans, was free to do so.
- If a young man from among the Quraish joined the Prophet, he would be returned to his parents or guardians. If a young man from among the Muslims joined the Quraish, he would not be returned.
- That year, the Muslims will go back without performing the pilgrimage.
- Next year, the Prophet and his followers could enter Mecca for a period of three days and perform the pilgrimage. During this period the Quraish would withdraw

¹² It was common practice in pre-Islamic Arabia to use this phrase for beginning something.

from the city.

- When the Muslims would come to Mecca the next year, they would be unarmed.

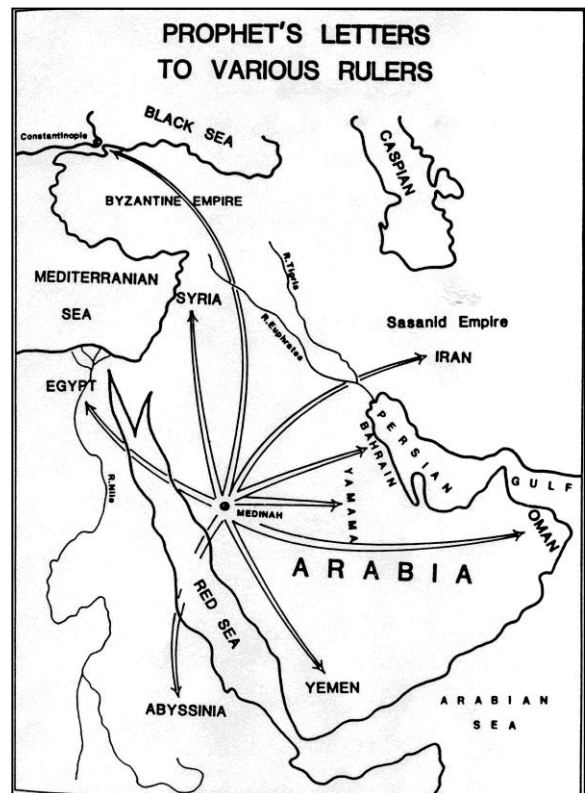
On the surface the Treaty of Hudaibiya appeared humiliating for the Muslims and ‘Umar bin Khattab could not contain his feelings. He went to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and Said: “Are you not God’s Prophet?” to which the Prophet replied, “Yes.” Then ‘Umar asked, “Are we not in the right and our enemies in the wrong?” To this the Prophet replied, “Yes.” ‘Umar then asked again, “Then why do we yield in such low fashion?” The Prophet replied, “I am God’s Messenger and I will not disobey Him. He will give me the victory.” However, ‘Umar persisted, “But didn't you tell us that we should go to the Ka’ba and perform the pilgrimage?” The Prophet replied, “Yes, but did I tell you it would have to be this year?”

The Treaty of Hudaibiya gave the Muslims much needed peace and calm in which to concentrate their efforts on the spreading of Islam. Great warriors like Khalid bin Walid and ‘Amr bin ‘As embraced Islam after the treaty of Hudaibiya. The success of Islam after the treaty can be recognized from the fact that at the time of the treaty there were only 1,500 men with the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, but two years later, at the time of the Conquest of Mecca, they numbered ten thousand.

The Prophet sends Letters to Kings and Rulers

On returning to Medina after the treaty of Hudaibiya, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} began to send envoys to various kings and rulers in and around Arabia. Each envoy carried a letter from the Prophet, inviting him to accept Islam. These envoys were sent to:

- **Heraclius**, the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire
- **Khusrow Perviz**, the Emperor of the Sassanid Empire of Iran
- **Najashi** (Negus), the King of Abyssinia
- **Muqauqis**, the Vicegerent of Egypt
- **Mundhir bin Sawa al Tamimi**, the chief of Bahrain
- **Al Harith bin Abi Shamir**, the Ghassanid Prince of Damascus
- **Haudha bin ‘Ali**, Governor of Yamama
- **Jaifer**, the King of ‘Oman
- **Chief of Banu Nahd**, a tribe of Yemen
- **Chief of Hamdan**, another tribe of Yemen
- **Chief of Banu ‘Alim**



Map showing the kings and rulers to whom the Holy Prophet sent letters inviting them to Islam.

- **Chief of Hadrami** tribe of Yemen

At the occasion of sending the letters, the Prophet had a seal made to affix his name. The seal read: Muhammad the Messenger of Allah. However, the Arabic words were written from the bottom to the top to keep the name of Muhammad below that of Allah.

The Letter to Heraclius—king of the Byzantine empire

The letter addressed to Heraclius was delivered to him while the Emperor was visiting Syria. The envoy carrying the letter was called to the King's court and the letter was read to the King by an interpreter. The King wanted to know if an Arab caravan was visiting Syria so that he could question an Arab about this Arabian Prophet. It so happened that Abu Sufyan, an enemy of the Prophet, was in town and was taken to the King's court. The conversation that took place between the King and Abu Sufyan has been recorded in the books of *Hadith*, as follows:

King: What sort of family does this Prophet come from?

A.S.: He comes of a noble family and is one of my relations.

King: Have any Arabs before him made similar claims?

A.S.: No.

King: Did your people ever find him telling a lie before this?

A.S.: No.

King: Has there been a king or ruler among his forefathers?

A.S.: No.

King: Who are his followers? Rich or the poor people?

A.S.: Mostly poor, humble and young people.

King: Are their numbers increasing or decreasing?

A.S.: Increasing.

King: Do his followers ever go back to their old beliefs?

A.S.: No.

King: Has he ever broken a pledge?

A.S.: No.

King: What does he teach?

A.S.: He teaches that we should worship One God and not set up equals to Him. He preaches against the worshipping of idols. He wants us to speak the truth and give up all evil and corrupt practices. He tells us to be good to one another, keep our promises and discharge our trusts.

King: It seems to me that his claim to prophethood is true. I was half expecting his appearance in our time but I did not know that he was going to be an Arab. If what you have told me is true, then I think his influence and his rule will definitely spread over these lands.



The seal affixed to the Prophet's letters.

The Letter to Khusrow Perviz—king of the Sassanid empire

The letter sent to Khusrow, the Emperor of Iran, got a different kind of reception. The Emperor ordered an interpreter to read the letter to him. On listening to the contents, the Emperor flew into a rage and tore the letter into pieces. When the Prophet's envoy reported this incident back to him, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} said: "What Khusrow has done to our letter, God will do to his Empire."

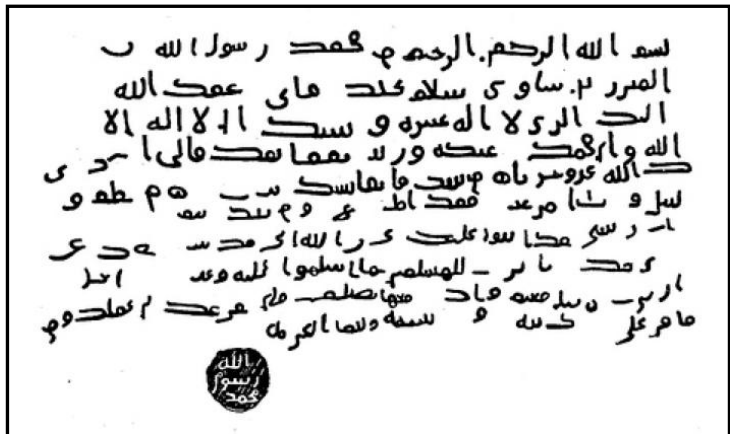
In his wrath, Khusrow also ordered Badhan, his Governor of Yemen, to dispatch some guards to capture this claimant of prophethood and to present him before the King. When the guards arrived in Medina with the directive of their Governor, the Prophet told them that he will respond to their request the next day. When they came the following day, the Prophet told them, “Convey to your Governor that my Master has slain his master last night.”

The guards returned to Yemen and advised the Governor accordingly. Not much later Badhan received a dispatch from Kavadh II (also known as Sherweh), the son of Khusrow Perviz, that he had slain his father in the public interest. At this Badhan exclaimed, “Muhammad’s words have been proved true. It seems that he is a true Prophet of God and I believe in him.”

In exactly fifteen years (643 CE), the Kingdom of Iran fell to the Muslim forces during the khilafat of ‘Umar bin Khattab and the then king of Iran ran for his life. In 651 CE—some twenty-three years after Khusrow Perviz had torn the Prophet’s letter—the last of the Sassanid Emperors, Yazdgerd III, was murdered and the mighty Sassanid Empire that had ruled a vast region for 327 years, totally disappeared from the face of the earth.

The Letter to Mundhir bin Sawa Al-Tamimi—chief of Bahrain

The envoy carrying the letter to Mundhir, Chief of Bahrain, was the most successful of all envoys sent out by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. When Mundhir bin Sawa received the Prophet's letter, he and many of his friends and followers accepted Islam. The Chief also wrote to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} for further instructions for his people.



Holy Prophet's letter to Mundhir bin Sawa al Tamimi (courtesy of: [wikimedia.com](https://www.wikimedia.com)).

The Letter to Najashi (Negus)—king of Abyssinia

The land of Abyssinia (Habsha to the Arabs) was ruled by the Aksumite kingdom from 100 to 940 CE. Their kings were called Najashi (Negus in English). The King who was a contemporary of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was named Ashama bin Abjar. The letter sent to Negus, King of Abyssinia, received an honourable reception. The King showed great respect for the letter and ordered an ivory box for it, saying: “While this letter is safe, my Kingdom is safe.”

It is reported that Negus accepted the truth of the Prophet Muhammad’s mission and joined the fold of Islam. Either because of this, or the fact that Negus had given refuge to the early Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} said his funeral prayer in absentia when the king passed away in 630 CE.

After the death of the Prophet, the Muslim armies marched into many countries. They conquered Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Cyprus, India, Trans-Oxiana, and the Anatolian plateau of Turkey. During all these conquests, they never touched the small kingdom of Abyssinia. This was for two reasons: Abyssinia had

given refuge to early Muslims on two occasions, and King Negus had treated the Prophet's letter with great respect.

The Letter to Muqauqis, Vicegerent of Egypt

When the Prophet's letter was received by Muqauqis, the Christian ruler of Alexandria (present day Egypt), he questioned the envoy regarding the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. Muqauqis did not accept Islam but, very diplomatically, wrote a letter to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} in reply sending with it presents of gold, two Coptic girls, garments of Egyptian linen and a mule.

The Conquest of Khaibar

Five months after returning from Hudaibiya, the Prophet learned of the rebellion of the Jews of Khaibar. Since the expulsion of the Jews from Medina, many had settled down in Khaibar and continued their nefarious activities against the Muslims. They instigated and aroused against Islam the Christian tribes settled on the southern frontier of the Roman Empire, the Arab tribes around Medina and even Khusrow of Iran.

In August 628 CE, the Prophet marched towards Khaibar with 1,600 of his followers. At Khaibar, a number of small forts fell one after the other and, after a heavy contest, their main fortress, al Qamus, was also captured. Being helpless, the Jews asked for the Prophet's pardon. He not only forgave them but also returned their land and properties with complete freedom to practice their faith. A fixed land tax, however, was imposed upon them.

Some 18 Muslims were killed in this Battle while the Jews lost 93 men.

The conquest of Khaibar coincided with the return of several Muslims from Abyssinia who had previously sought shelter there from the oppression of the Quraish of Mecca. These returning Muslims included Ja'far bin Abi Talib and Abu Musa al-Ash'ari.

After the conquest of Khaibar, a Jewish woman offered the Prophet a roasted sheep that she had poisoned. After taking only a bite, the Prophet spat it out and was thus saved. However, a Companion of his died of the poisoning. When asked as to why she had done it, the lady responded: "If the consumer were a king, she would rid herself of him, but should he be a prophet, he would be bound to learn about it."

The Three-Day Pilgrimage

Next year, in 629 CE, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} visited Mecca according to the terms of the treaty of Hudaibiya. Many Muslims accompanied him this time to perform the pilgrimage. When the Quraish learned of the Prophet's approach, they left the city according to the agreement. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and his followers numbering about two thousand performed the *'Umrah* or the Lesser Pilgrimage and after three days, returned to Medina.

The Battle of Mutah

On return from his three-day pilgrimage, the Prophet learned that the Christian tribes on the Syrian border were becoming hostile. The Prophet, therefore, sent a letter with an envoy to the Ghassanid Prince at Damascus, complaining about these hostilities. The Ghassanid Prince ruled that area in the name of the Eastern Roman Empire. While on his way, the envoy was intercepted and murdered at Mutah by a Christian chieftain named Shurahbil.

To put an end to these continuing hostilities, the Prophet raised a force of 3,000 men and dispatched it towards Syria under the command of Zaid bin Haritha, the freed slave and adopted son of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. In case Zaid was killed, the Prophet had established the chain of command to pass to Ja'far bin Abu Talib and then to 'Abdullah bin Rawah. The Byzantine army, it is estimated, was close to one hundred thousand strong.

The Muslim army marched away in September 629 CE and covered over six hundred miles to reach Mutah, a small village at the border of Syria. It was the largest and most arduous expedition ever undertaken by the Muslims and the first one against the Christians. When the Muslims saw the size of the Christian army, they wanted to send word back to Medina for reinforcements. However, the distance to Medina was too great and the Muslim leaders decided to fight with whatever soldiers they had.

As the battle started, Zaid, the commander of the Muslim forces, was killed and the flag and command passed on to Ja'far bin Abu Talib. Soon, Ja'far also fell and the command passed to 'Abdullah bin Rawah, as the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} had instructed. Soon, 'Abdullah bin Rawa also fell. At this point Khalid bin Walid picked up the flag of the Muslim army and continued fighting till evening came.

The following day, Khalid bin Walid took his exhausted army and the battle continued for a while. The Muslims, however, were grossly outnumbered and continuing the fighting any longer would have been suicidal. Khalid bin Walid, therefore, gathered the leftover of his army, executed a strategic retreat and returned to Medina. The Muslims at Medina chided the returning army and scolded them for not fighting till their death. The Prophet, however, defended the army's action and praised Khalid bin Walid for his bravery giving him the title of *Saif Allah* the sword of God. Because of the timely retreat of the Muslim army, not many people were killed in this battle.

The Conquest of Mecca

In the treaty of Hudaibiya it was agreed that any tribe wanting to join the Muslims or the Quraish was free to do so. As a result, the Khuza'a tribe joined the Muslims while the Banu Bakr entered into an alliance with the Meccans. Some two years after the treaty, the Banu Bakr tribe, with the help of the Quraish, raided the Khuza'a tribe by night and killed a number of their men in an attempt to settle some outstanding score. The Khuza'a tribe sent a deputation of about forty men to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, demanding help and justice. The Prophet sympathised with the Khuza'a tribe and sent word to the surrounding tribes to prepare for a march upon Mecca.

The Quraish neither wanted to pay compensation nor break away their relationship with the aggressor tribe of Banu Bakr. They, quickly dispatched Abu Sufyan to Medina to talk to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and calm things down. When Abu Sufyan arrived in Medina, the Prophet refused to speak to him. Abu Sufyan tried to seek intercession from Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Ali, but all to no avail. Disappointed, Abu Sufyan went to the Mosque in Medina and announced: "O Meccans, I renew, on behalf of the Meccans, our assurance of peace to you." The people of Medina, however, could not understand the significance of this speech. The Prophet said to Abu Sufyan, "Your statement is one-sided and we cannot agree to it." With the agreement now dissolved between the Muslims and the Meccans, the Prophet realised that there was no other way to render justice except by fighting the Quraish. In January 630 CE, the Prophet advanced towards Mecca with an army of ten thousand men.

This was the largest force Medina had ever seen. On reaching Mecca, the Muslim army camped outside the city.

Abu Sufyan, the leader of the Quraish, came out during the night with two companions to see the Muslim camp. He was astounded at the size of the Muslim army and could hardly contain his amazement. The Muslim ranks which numbered about three hundred at the battle of Badr a few years ago had now swollen to nearly ten thousand.

Meantime, 'Abbas bin 'Abdul Muttalib, the Prophet's uncle, saw Abu Sufyan and advised him to meet with the Prophet before it was too late. When Abu Sufyan agreed, 'Abbas asked him to mount his ride and took him to the tent of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. The Prophet not only pardoned his lifelong enemy but also allowed him to spend the night in the Muslim camp. Abu Sufyan was amazed at the discipline of the Muslims and their love for the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. Abu Sufyan made a remark at the time that: "I have seen great courts. I have seen the courts of Khusrow and that of Kaiser, but I have never seen any people so devoted to their leader as the Muslims are to their Prophet."

By sunrise, Abu Sufyan had accepted Islam. However, he was concerned about the fate of Mecca and asked the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} as to what the Muslims would do to the Meccans. The Prophet replied: "These people have been very cruel. They have gone back on the peace they signed at Hudaibiya and attacked the Khuza'a tribe. They have made war in a place which had been made sacred by God."

Abu Sufyan asked the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} for forgiveness and enquired if the Meccans could have peace if they did not draw their swords. The Prophet replied: "Everyone who stays indoors will have peace. Whoever takes shelter in the house of Abu Sufyan will have peace. Whoever enters the Sacred Mosque will have peace. Those who lay their arms will have peace."

In the morning, Abu Sufyan returned to Mecca with this message while the Muslim army started marching into the city from different gates. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} gave strict orders to his generals not to permit any fighting unless the enemy fought first.

The Prophet went straight to the Ka'ba and performed the circuits seven times. Then, with a wooden stick in his hand, he struck the idols, proclaiming: "The truth has come and the falsehood has vanished; indeed falsehood is meant to vanish." At his order, the Ka'ba was cleared of all idols and images. After this, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} went inside the Ka'ba and said his Prayer therein.

The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} then addressed the Meccans and told them that they will not be called to account. Ikrima, the son of Abu Jahal, was in the process of escaping to Abyssinia when he learned of this general amnesty. He could not believe his ears and had to ask the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} himself, who replied, "Yes, I have forgiven you." 'Utbah and Mu'attib, the two surviving sons of Abu Lahab, were afraid to appear before the Prophet. 'Utbah had divorced Ruqayya, the Prophet's daughter, under pressure from his father. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} took Abu Lahab's sons by their hands and walked to the wall of the Ka'ba where he prayed for a long time. On returning he said, "I had asked my Lord to give me these two sons of my uncle, and He has given them to me". Both these sons embraced Islam.

After the Conquest of Mecca, the Ansar suspected that the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} would decide to live in his home town now. At this, the Prophet exclaimed: "Allah be my refuge! My living is with your living and my dying is with your dying."

All historians agree that in the history of conquests there has never been a more triumphant entry than this one. Hardly any blood was shed and all the enemies were pardoned. The Muslims had been tortured in this city and were eventually driven out of it.

The residents of this city had not let the Muslims live in peace even in Medina and had waged many battles against them. But on this day, when the enemy lay helpless, defeated and at the mercy of the Muslims, a general forgiveness was declared and no revenge was sought. Such examples of greatness are truly rare in the history of conquests. The British Orientalist, Stanley Lane-Poole (1854-1931), writes about this incident in his book *The Speeches and the Table Talk of the Prophet Mohammad*:

“Through all the annals of conquests, there is no triumphant entry comparable to this one.”

Incident of Banu Jadhima

After the Conquest of Mecca, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} sent Khalid bin Walid to some districts around Mecca to take the message of Islam and not to fight with them. Khalid bin Walid went to the tribe of Banu Jadhima whose people had killed Khalid's uncle some time ago. These people accepted Islam immediately but took up arms to defend themselves against Khalid bin Walid. Khalid persuaded them to lay down their arms since they had accepted Islam. One of their tribesmen, however, advised them not to do so and warned them that if they laid down their arms, Khalid bin Walid would have them tied and executed. Believing in Khalid's promise, the tribesmen of Banu Jadhima laid down their arms upon which Khalid bin Walid ordered them to be tied and had some of them executed as revenge for the killing of his own uncle. This happened despite objections from Khalid's own companions including 'Abdullah bin 'Umar and 'Abdur Rahman bin 'Auf.

When the news of this tragic incident reached the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} in Mecca, he raised his two hands in prayer and pleaded: “O God! I am innocent before Thee of what Khalid has done.” After this, he sent 'Ali bin Abu Talib to Banu Jadhima to pay them the blood money on behalf of the Prophet for all those who had been killed.

Battle of Hunain

Immediately after the conquest of Mecca, the Muslims had to fight the Thaqif and Hawazin tribes which dwelt in and around Ta'if. These two tribes invited a number of other tribes in the area to join them in battle against the Muslims. This battle between the Muslims and the Thaqif and allied tribes was fought in the valley of Hunain. When the Muslim army entered the valley, the enemy archers rained arrows from the surrounding cliffs where they lay hidden. The beasts of the Muslim army took fright and ran in spite of the riders. There was a time when the Prophet was left with only a handful of Companions. When his Companions tried to stop him from going ahead, he scorned the proposal and said: “I am a Prophet, it is no lie; yet I am the son of 'Abdul Muttalib.”

At this moment the thunderous voice of 'Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, rang out in the valley telling the Muslims that their Prophet had stood his ground and was calling for help. The Muslims then gathered together and drove the enemy from the battle field.

Distribution of Booty and Ansar's Unhappiness

The victory at Hunain gave the Muslims their largest spoils of war ever. These spoils consisted of camels, goats and silver and were divided into five equal portions. Four of these

portions were distributed among the Muslim army and one portion was reserved for the Muslim Treasury to be used as the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} saw fit. From this fifth portion, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} gave generously to some of the newly converted leaders of the Quraish such as Abu Sufyan, Muawia, Harith bin Harith, Harith bin Hisham, Suhail bin 'Amr and some others, all of whom had been staunch opponents of Islam before the Conquest of Mecca.

The Ansar felt left out and grieved at this act of generosity towards the new converts and some of them gave voice to their feelings. When the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} learned of their resentment, he asked for them to be assembled. When they had all gathered in front of him, the Prophet addressed them:

“O Ansar! It has been reported to me that you do not approve of my distribution of the booty. Is it not true that when I came to you, you were languishing in misguidance and error, and God guided you to the truth through me? And is it not true that I found you in a state of poverty, and God made you affluent? And is it not true that I found you enemy one of another, and God reconciled your hearts?”

After listening to each sentence of the admonition, the Ansar would say, “Indeed! God and His Prophet have been very generous.” The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} then continued:

“Why don’t you say this O Ansar, ‘It was you, Muhammad, who were under our obligation. Did you not come to us vanquished and defeated, and we came to your rescue? Did you not come to us exiled and rejected, and we gave you shelter? Did you not come to us in want and need, and we came to your help?’

“Had you replied to me in these words, you would have said nothing but the truth and I would have agreed with you. O Ansar, are you angry because I gave away some goods to those whom I sought to win to Islam? Because I considered that their faith could be confirmed by material goods, whereas I considered yours to be based on solid conviction?”

“Does this not satisfy you, O Ansar, that when other people return home loaded with goods and camels, you will return home with the Prophet of God? By Him Who controls Muhammad’s soul, there are no people to whom I love to belong more than the Ansar.”

The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} said these words in great love, sincerity and affection for the men of Ansar who had pledged their unswerving loyalty and allegiance to him, and had helped him at the most critical stage in his mission. When the Ansar heard these words of great affection and sincerity from the Prophet’s mouth, they burst into tears and they all shouted with one voice, “We want only Muhammad, the Prophet of God.”

Campaign of Tabuk

In the summer of 630 CE, rumour spread out in Medina that the Byzantine army was gathering in the southern part of Syria, ready to attack Medina. Later events showed that these rumours were cleverly spread by the hypocrites in Medina who wanted to provoke the Muslims against the Roman Empire. The previous encounter with the Byzantine forces at Muthah was still fresh in the minds of the Muslims who showed some reluctance in joining this campaign. The Prophet finally prepared an army of thirty thousand men and marched towards Syria. After reaching Tabuk, the Prophet stayed there a few days and not finding any

signs of the enemy, returned to Medina. The journey took the Muslim army about two and a half months and was the last campaign undertaken by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}.

The Year of Deputations

By the end of 630 CE, the Muslims began to be perceived as the uncontested rulers of much of Arabia. Mecca had been conquered, Khaibar had been beaten and the several tribes of Ta'if that marched against the Muslims had been defeated. In conformity with the Arab custom, the remaining tribes offered their allegiance to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} through deputations sent to Medina. They came from Oman, Hadramaut, Harridan, Kinda, Bahrain, Himyar, Yamama, Hamdan, Najran, Azd, Jurash and many other provinces of Arabia. The tribes represented by these delegations included: Banu Tamim, Banu 'Amir, Banu Sa'd bin Bakr, Banu Hanifa, Banu Ta'iy, Banu Zubaid, Banu Harith bin Ka'b and many others. In fact so remarkable was the movement of these deputations towards Medina that the ninth year of the Hijra is known in Islamic history as *Sinat al Wafud* or the 'Year of the Deputations'.

Charter for the Christians of Najran

Najran, located north of Yemen and some 450 miles south of Medina, had been a stronghold of the Christians. When they saw the Muslims consolidate their power in Hejaz, they initially considered fighting against them. Later, however, they were persuaded by some elders to enter into a peace treaty with the Muslims. Thus, in 630 CE, the Year of Deputations, the Christians of Najran sent a delegation of sixty persons to Medina. The delegation was received in the Prophet's Mosque and the Prophet allowed them to pray there, which they did facing east. This group of Christians followed Byzantine rites.

The delegation discussed with the Prophet the points of doctrine including the nature of God, and he replied by reciting *Surah Ikhlas* of the Holy Qur'an:

“In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.
Say, ‘He is Allah, the One;
‘Allah, the Independent and Besought of all.
‘He begets not, nor is He begotten;
‘And there is none like unto Him’.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 112:1-5)

Further discussion on the nature of the Prophet Jesus led to some disagreements, on which he recited them the three verses of the Qur'an from *Surah Al-Imran*:

Surely, the case of Jesus with Allah is like the case of Adam. He created him out of dust, then He said to him, ‘Be!’, and he was.
This is the truth from thy Lord, so be thou not of those who doubt.
Now whoso disputes with thee concerning him, after what has come to thee of knowledge, say to him, ‘Come, let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and our people and your people; then let us pray fervently and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie’.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 3:60-62)

After three days, the Christian delegation decided to conclude its mission. In spite of doctrinal disagreements, the Prophet concluded a treaty with the people of Najran. The Prophet dictated the terms of the treaty to 'Abdullah b. Abu Bakr, who served as one of his

scribes. The treaty provided religious and administrative autonomy for non-Muslim citizens of the Islamic State. All sincere Muslim rulers have adhered to the founding principles of this treaty in managing the affairs of non-Muslim subjects throughout the centuries. According to terms of this charter:

- The Christians were not to be unfairly taxed
- No bishop was to be expelled from his monastery
- No pilgrim was to be detained from the performance of pilgrimage
- No Christian churches were to be pulled down for the building of mosques
- Christian women married to Muslims were free to enjoy their own religion
- In the case of repair of churches, the Muslims were to help the Christians

The Farewell Pilgrimage and Sermon on the Mount

In the year 632 CE, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} felt that his mission was approaching completion, and understanding that the end of his life was near, he decided to make a farewell pilgrimage to Mecca. After completing the various ceremonies of the Hajj, the Prophet addressed the people gathered there from the top of the Mount of Mercy, in the Plain of Arafat:

- “O people, listen to my words; for I do not know if I shall be among you after this year. Remember that you have to appear before your Lord Who will demand from you an account of all your actions.
- “O people, you have rights over your wives and your wives have rights over you. Remember, you must always treat your wives with kindness. Woman is weak and cannot protect her own rights. When you married, God appointed you the trustees of those rights. You brought your wives to your homes under the Law of God. You must not, therefore, insult the trust which God has placed in your hands.
- “O people, feed your slaves as you feed yourselves and clothe your slaves as you clothe yourselves. If they commit a fault which you are unable to forgive, then pass them on to someone else. They are part of God’s creation and are not to be harshly treated.
- “O people, listen to my words, and remember that all Muslims are brothers one of another. As you are one brotherhood, you will not take your brother’s belongings which he does not give to you of his own goodwill. And guard yourself against committing injustice.
- “O people, take note that I trample under foot all un-Islamic customs and traditions. All blood feuds are wiped out. As God has made you one brotherhood, so be not divided. An Arab has no superiority over a non Arab, nor a non Arab over an Arab; nor is a white one to be preferred to a dark one, nor a dark one to a white one. This day, retaliation for all murders committed in the days of ignorance is cancelled and all sums of interest are remitted.
- “O people, worship your Lord, observe Prayer, observe the Fast during Ramadhan, pay the Zakat cheerfully, perform the Pilgrimage, and obey those in authority among you; God will admit you to His paradise.”

And then he concluded:

“What I have said to you, you shall tell the others who are not present.”

In the history of Islam, this Sermon on the Mount is known as the Farewell Address of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. Anyone familiar with the faith of Christianity would find this address reminiscent of similar admonition delivered by Jesus Christ from the Mount of Olives, exactly six centuries earlier. In fact, anyone familiar with the history of the world's great religions would find a clear parallel in every word, every admonition, and every exhortation delivered on this day with the teachings of earlier Prophets and Messengers. Despite its extreme brevity, the address sums up the essence of the religion of Islam. At the conclusion of his Sermon on the Mount, the Prophet received the following revelation:

“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed my favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 5:4)

This is believed to be the last revelation received by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and with it the process of Qur'anic revelations, spanning a period of twenty two years, came to a close.

The Prophet's Illness and Demise

One night, two months after returning from the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} went to the Baqi' graveyard and prayed for the people buried there. On his return home, he fell ill with a headache and this illness eventually caused his demise. When his condition became worse, he happened to be in the house of his wife Maimuna. He called all his wives and asked their permission to spend his time in the house of 'A'isha, to which they all agreed. One day, feeling a little better, he addressed the people present in the mosque: “The curse of Allah falls upon the Jews and the Christians for they have made their Prophets' tombs places of worship. Do not make my tomb a worshipped idol.”

After this he offered himself for any injuries that he might have inflicted upon them, saying: “He whom I have ever lashed on the back, I offer him my back so that he may avenge himself on me. He whom I have ever blasphemed his honour, here I am offering my honour so that he may avenge himself.”

Then he led the Muslims in the noon Prayer after which he said to them: “I exhort you to be good to Ansar (the Helpers). They are my family and I found shelter with them. They have discharged the responsibility creditably that fell upon them... You should fully acknowledge and appreciate the favour that they have shown and should overlook their faults.”

After this, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} continued: “There is a slave among the slaves of God to whom God has offered the choice between this world and that which is with Him. And the slave has chosen that which is with God.”

When Abu Bakr heard these last words, he began to weep; for he understood that the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was speaking of himself and that the choice he referred to was his imminent death. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} continued, “O people, the most beneficent of men unto me in companionship and generosity has been Abu Bakr; and if I were to select from all mankind an inseparable friend, he would be Abu Bakr. But real companionship and brotherhood is ours when God unites us all in His presence.”

When the Prophet became so ill that he could not even come to the mosque, he asked that Abu Bakr lead the daily Prayers. 'A'isha knew that her father was very sensitive and prone to weeping and would be greatly distressed taking the Prophet's place. She, therefore, suggested 'Umar's name instead. But the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} insisted that it be Abu Bakr.

One day the Prophet was feeling a little better so he asked to be taken to the mosque. Ibn ‘Abbas and ‘Ali supported him from each side and, with his feet dragging on the ground, took him to the mosque. Abu Bakr had already started leading the Prayer. As Ibn ‘Abbas and ‘Ali took the Prophet to the front row, the people tried to give Abu Bakr a hint by clapping their hands. Abu Bakr, however, was too engrossed in the Prayer and did not take any notice. Finally he became aware of the Prophet’s presence behind him and wanted to move back. The Prophet, however, indicated to him to continue leading the Prayer and asked Ibn ‘Abbas and ‘Ali to put him down next to Abu Bakr. The Prayer then continued in such a manner that Abu Bakr was following the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} seated next to him while the people behind were following Abu Bakr. After the Prayer was over the Prophet asked Abu Bakr why he didn’t continue leading the Prayer after he was asked to do so. Abu Bakr replied with his customary modesty, “How dare the son of Abu Qahafa lead the Prayer in the presence of the Messenger of God!”

As the Prophet’s illness advanced, he requested his wives to allow him to spend his last days with ‘A’isha, to which they all agreed. One day Fatima, his daughter, came to see him. ‘A’isha saw the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} whisper something in Fatima’s ear, upon which Fatima began to cry. Then he whispered something else in her ear, which made her smile through her tears. When ‘A’isha queried Fatima on what the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was whispering to her, she answered that it was a secret not to be divulged. Much later, she told ‘A’isha that the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} had informed her that he was going to die in that illness and this had made her cry. Then the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} told her that she, Fatima, would be the first from the Prophet’s family to join him, and this had cheered her up.

The Prophet’s Mosque in Medina was adjacent to his residence. One day the Prophet stood by the window and looked outside at the Muslims getting ready to say their Fajr Prayer behind Abu Bakr. The people looked at the Holy Prophet’s face and waited for him to join them. He smiled at them and indicated with his hand for Abu Bakr to go ahead with the Prayer. That was the last time the Muslims saw their Prophet’s face; that day at noon, June 8, 632 CE, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} passed away. Nearing the actual moment of death, the very last words that repeatedly came to his lips were: “Unto the Friend the Most High ... Unto the Friend the Most High...”

When ‘Umar was told of the Prophet’s death, he did not believe it. He always thought that the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was going to outlive all of them. He, therefore, proceeded to the mosque and started telling the people that the Prophet was merely absent in spirit and will return soon.

When Abu Bakr heard the sad news, he went straight to his daughter ‘A’isha’s house and drew back the cloak which covered the Prophet’s face. He looked at the face of his departed friend and master and then bent down and kissed it. “Dearer than my father and mother,” he said, “thou hast tasted the death which God decreed for thee. Thou art too precious with the Lord for another death to befall thee.”

After this, Abu Bakr went out where ‘Umar was still addressing the people. He asked ‘Umar to be quiet but ‘Umar paid no attention. Finally Abu Bakr started to speak to the people himself: “O people, whosoever worships Muhammad, let him then know that Muhammad is dead. But whosoever worships God, let him know that the Lord is living and does not die.” Abu Bakr then recited the following Qur’anic verse which was revealed after the Battle of Uhud:

“And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Verily, *all* Messengers have passed away before him. If then he die or be slain, will you turn back on your heels?” (*Al-Qur’an*, 3:145)

Abu Bakr’s words put a hush on the crowd and ‘Umar was astounded. When he finally realised that the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was really dead, ‘Umar’s legs could not carry him and he fell to the ground.

The Holy Prophet’s body was bathed and laid out in the chamber of ‘A’isha where he had died. Next morning, the inhabitants of Medina came and visited it, praying over his remains. Abu Bakr and ‘Umar entered the chamber and prayed as follows:

“Peace be upon thee, O Prophet of God, and mercy from the Lord and His blessing. We bear witness that the Prophet of God has delivered the Message revealed to him; has fought in the way of God until God gave his religion victory; has fulfilled his words, has drawn us to himself, and been kind and tender hearted towards the believers; has sought no recompense for delivering the Faith to us, neither has he sold it for a price at any time.”

In the evening, the final rites were performed and the body was buried in a grave dug in ‘A’isha’s chamber, at the same place where the Prophet had breathed his last. Later on, when Abu Bakr died, he was buried in the same chamber and, in due time, ‘Umar as well. Thus was fulfilled a dream of ‘A’isha that three moons fell, one after another, into her chamber.

THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Some incidents are narrated below that show the noble character of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}:

- In Medina, there was a lady who routinely threw rubbish upon the Prophet as he passed by her house. When one day she failed to do it, the Prophet went to see her in case she had fallen ill.
- One day the Prophet observed an old lady who was trying to carry a rather heavy load. The Prophet offered to carry it for her. As they walked together towards the lady’s house, the lady constantly spoke ill of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, unaware of the fact that he was the one helping her. Upon reaching the house, she thanked him profusely and wanted to know his name.
- One day the Prophet was resting under the shade of a tree when a disbelieving Bedouin approached him and, holding a bare sword in his hand, asked the Prophet as to who could save him from harm. The Prophet calmly replied: “God”. The Bedouin was stunned at this strange answer and the sword fell from his hand. The Prophet picked up the sword and now asked the Bedouin the same question. The Bedouin answered: “No one.” The Prophet immediately corrected him by saying, “No. The same God that can save me can save you, too.”
- Once ‘Abdullah bin Salam, a leading Jewish rabbi, came to visit the Prophet with the intention of asking him three questions to ascertain his authentic status. But after simply looking at the Prophet, he accepted Islam. Someone asked him for the reason for this sudden change of heart. He pointed to the radiant face of the Prophet

Muhammad^{pbuh} and remarked, “By God, this face is not the face of a liar!”

- During the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet received several injuries including the loss of two teeth. After the battle, as the blood was being wiped off his face, he remarked: “How shall a people prosper that treat their Prophet in such manner who calls them unto the Lord?” Then he prayed: “O Allah, forgive my people, for they know not.”
- One day a Jew praised the Prophet Moses in such a way that it appeared to rank him higher than the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. At this, a Muslim was enraged and slapped the Jew. The latter came and complained to the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. When the Prophet heard of the incident, he remarked, “Do not accord me pre-eminence over other prophets....”
- The Prophet’s lifestyle went beyond austerity and actually bordered on poverty. Several days would go by before any fire would be lit in the hearth of his kitchen. Although given to excessive generosity, there were days when there was nothing in the house to be given away. Poverty in fact was so dear to the Prophet’s heart that he used to say, “Poverty is my pride.” He also used to pray: “O Lord! Keep me alive a poor man, and let me die poor; and raise me amongst the poor.”
- Sometime after signing the agreement with the Jews of Khaibar, they reportedly killed a Muslim by the name of ‘Abdullah bin Sahal who was visiting the place along with some companions. When the relatives of ‘Abdullah bin Sahal came to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} demanding compensation, he asked the people of Khaibar to pay the blood money or get ready for fighting. The Jews took an oath that they neither killed the person nor knew as to who had done it. At this the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} paid the blood money to ‘Abdullah bin Sahal’s relatives on his own.
- When entering the city of Mecca at the time of its conquest, the Prophet Muhammad’s head was bowed so low in humility and gratitude to God that his beard touched the camel that he was riding on. When the leaders of the Quraish appeared before the Prophet, he asked them: “What can you expect at my hands?” They replied, “Mercy, O generous brother.” The Prophet said, “I speak to you in the same words as Joseph spoke to his brothers. This day, there is no reproof against you. Go your way, for you are free.”
- Worship of God was the dearest thing to the Prophet’s heart. He routinely used to wake up in the middle of the night and spend hours in praying to his Lord. ‘A’isha, his wife, relates that one night they had both retired to their bed when the Prophet turned to her and asked, “‘A’isha, if you give permission, I would like to spend my time in Prayer.” ‘A’isha narrates that the Prophet then got up, performed his ablutions, and spent the entire night in tearful supplications.
- People often asked him as to why he spent so much time in prayers when God had already forgiven all his weaknesses and errors and promised him Heaven. His usual

reply was, “Shouldn’t I become the most grateful person then?”

- Emphasising the importance of God’s grace, the Prophet often used to say that no man will ever achieve salvation on the basis of his actions alone. When the people asked him if this applied to him as well, the Prophet answered, “Yes I, too, will not be able to achieve salvation except that God may envelope me with His mercy.”
- The Prophet was extremely generous and always exhorted the people to adopt this trait. He often used to say, “A generous person is close to Paradise and far from Hell, while a niggardly person is close to Hell and far from Paradise.” At other times he said, “A generous infidel is better in the eyes of God than a miserly believer.”
- Once someone asked the Prophet as to what is faith. He replied, “It is to love God and His Prophet more than wife, children and property.” The Prophet used to pray as follows: “O my God! I ask for Thy love; I ask that I may love whosoever loves Thee; and that I may perform whatsoever Thy love makes incumbent upon me.”
- The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was extremely gentle of heart and dealt with people with great kindness and compassion. When asked to curse someone, he replied: “I have not been sent to curse, but as mercy to mankind.”
- ‘Abdullah bin Ubai bin Salul, the leader of the Khazraj tribe in Medina, was a hypocrite who had accepted Islam outwardly but remained opposed to the cause in his heart. He never wasted any opportunity to render harm to Islam or berate the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. He was one of the foremost in accusing ‘A’isha, the wife of the Prophet, of unchaste behaviour when she was left behind by the caravan in the desert on one occasion. Yet, despite the persisting hypocritical behaviour of ‘Abdullah bin Ubai, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was always kind to him. Once when ‘Abdullah bin Ubai was taken ill, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} sat by his bedside and granted his wish to have one of his own shirts serve as the funeral shroud for ‘Abdullah bin Ubai. Upon the death of ‘Abdullah bin Ubai in 631 CE, the Prophet sent his shirt as promised and also led his funeral prayer. It is reported that ‘Umar bin Khattab protested vigorously saying that ‘Abdullah bin Ubai was an enemy of the Muslims and such honour should not have been accorded to him.
- Of all the human emotions, mercy was perhaps the closest to the Prophet’s own heart. He often used to say, “Verily, God is more full of compassion to his servants than the affectionate mother to her nursing child.”

Some twelve centuries after the demise of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, a French historian, Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869), paid the ultimate tribute to the genius of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} in his book, *Histoire de la Turquie*:

“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man of modern history with Muhammad? ... Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images, the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and

one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad. As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?"

The Scottish historian and Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Edinburgh, William Montgomery Watt (1909-2006) gives the following commendation in his book, *Muhammad at Medina*:

"The more one reflects on the history of Muhammad and of early Islam, the more one is amazed at the vastness of achievements... study of his life may contribute to a fresh appraisal and appreciation of one of the greatest of the sons of Adam."

While defending his position in selecting Muhammad as the 'most influential person' in his ranking of one hundred such persons, Michael H. Hart (b. 1932), the American astrophysicist and historian, writes in his book, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*:

"My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels."

More recently, Lesley Hazelton (b. 1945), an admitted agnostic of Jewish descent, writes in her book, *The First Muslim* (2013):

"Muhammad's is one of those rare lives that is more dramatic in reality than in legend."

WIVES OF THE HOLY PROPHET^{pbuh}

1. Khadija bint Khuwailid (555-620 CE)

A fairly well to do lady of Mecca, Khadija was twice widowed, and fifteen years his senior, when she married the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} in 595 CE. Her former husbands were Abu Hala and Atik. Her marriage with the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} lasted twenty five years: fifteen years before and ten years after the beginning of his prophetic mission. As long as the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was married to Khadija, he did not take any other wife.

Khadija died about two years before the Hijra when the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was nearly fifty years old. She was buried in Mecca. Khadija was the Prophet's only wife who bore him children that lived past infancy. The Prophet's love and regard for Khadija was so great that even after her death the manner in which he remembered her often made even the likes of 'A'isha very jealous.

On one occasion Khadija's younger sister, Hala came to visit the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. When he heard her voice he became startled and remarked: "It must be Hala; her voice is so much like Khadija's."

At this 'A'isha could no longer control herself and remarked: "How come, you always think of the old woman who is dead, while God has given you better wives?"

The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} replied: "It is not so. When people rejected me she stood by me; when people disbelieved, she believed and accepted Islam; when I had no support, she helped me."

2. Sauda bint Zam'a (d. 674 CE)

Sauda held the distinction of being the first lady the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} married after the death of Khadija. At the time of her marriage to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} in 620 CE, Sauda was a widow of nearly fifty years of age. The name of her former husband was Sakran who was an early convert to Islam. Both of them had migrated to Abyssinia but had returned to Mecca about the time Khadija died. Very soon afterwards Sakran died, leaving Sauda a widow.

At the time of Khadija's death, two younger daughters of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}—Umm Kulthum and Fatima—were still young and unmarried. At the suggestion of the wife of one of his Companions, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} married Sauda to be relieved of domestic worry. The marriage took place in Mecca, a few months after Khadija's death. When the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} migrated to Medina, Sauda also joined him there. She died in 54 AH, during the Khilafat of Mu'awia.

3. 'A'isha bint Abu Bakr (612-678 CE)

'A'isha was the daughter of Abu Bakr and his wife Zainab (Umm Ruman). At the time of the Prophet's marriage to Sauda, the name of 'A'isha was also brought to his attention. But 'A'isha was then engaged to Jubair bin Mut'im. Later on Jubair, who had not embraced Islam, broke the engagement due to Abu Bakr's close companionship with the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}.

After her engagement with Jubair was dissolved, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} married 'A'isha in 622 CE with Abu Bakr performing the *nikah* ceremony. The marriage, however, was not consummated till after the Prophet's migration to Medina. 'A'isha spent nine years with the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and died in 57 AH, at the age of sixty-six years. She was buried in the graveyard in Medina, known as Jannat ul Baqi'.

'A'isha was very dear to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} not only because of her youthfulness but also because of her intelligence, quick wittedness and piety. More than one quarter of all the *Ahadith* quoted by the great compilers of the Prophet's Tradition are narrated by 'A'isha.

4. Hafsa bint 'Umar bin Khattab (609-666 CE)

Hafsa, the daughter of 'Umar bin Khattab, was married to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} in the fourth year of the Hijra (624 CE), soon after her former husband, Khumais, died of wounds sustained in the Battle of Badr. Hafsa was a very learned lady, and the standard text of the Holy Qur'an, in the sequence laid down by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, was kept in her custody.

Hafsa died in 45 AH, at the age of fifty-seven and was buried in the Jannat ul Baqi' graveyard.

5. Zainab bint Khuzaima (595-625 CE)

Zainab was first married to Tufail bin Harith who divorced her. She then married 'Abdullah bin Hajash who became a martyr in the Battle of Uhud. In consideration of her bereavement, several Muslims offered to marry her but she declined them all. However, when the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} proposed to her she accepted the honour. The marriage took place soon after the Battle of Uhud, in 3 AH (625 CE). She was thirty years old at the time.

Zainab bint Khuzaima, however, did not live long and died within two or three months after her marriage. Besides Khadija, Zainab bint Khuzaima was the only other wife of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} who died within his lifetime. The funeral prayer was performed by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} himself, and Zainab was buried in the Jannat ul Baqi' graveyard in Medina.

5. Umm Salma (Hind bint Abi Umayya) (599-683 CE)

Her real name was Hind and she was the daughter of Suhail and Atika. She was first married to 'Abdullah bin 'Abdul Asad who had taken the *kuniya* of Abu Salma. Both Umm Salma and her husband Abu Salma had embraced Islam in the early years of the Prophet's mission and were also among the first emigrants to Abyssinia. Later on they returned to Mecca and after the Holy Prophet's migration to Medina, followed him there. Abu Salma suffered some bad wounds in the Battle of Uhud and eventually succumbed to blood infection some eight months later. Umm Salma was a mature lady with four children when she became a widow.

When the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} proposed to her, she initially made some excuses regarding her advanced age and having many children but later on accepted the honour. They were married around 4-5 AH (626 CE). Umm Salma died in 62 AH, at the age of eighty-four, and was the last of the Prophet's surviving wives. She was buried in the Jannat ul Baqi' cemetery in Medina.

7. Juwairiya bint Harith (608-671 CE)

Formerly known as Barraah, Juwairiya was the daughter of Harith, the Chief of the Banu Mustaliq tribe. She was married to Musafi who lost his life fighting against the Muslims in the Expedition of Banu Mustaliq, in the fifth year of the Hijra. With the defeat of the Banu Mustaliq, a large amount of booty and prisoners of war came into the hands of the Muslims. Juwairiya fell to the lot of a warrior who demanded as ransom quantity of gold beyond her means to pay. She then came to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} beseeching him for help. He offered to marry her to which she, as well as her master, agreed. At the time of her marriage in 627 CE, she was about twenty years old.

When the Muslim warriors learned of this marriage, they freed all captives of the Banu Mustaliq clan since they had all now become relatives of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} by virtue of his marriage to Juwairiya. Juwairiya died in 50 AH, at the age of sixty-three. She was also buried in the Jannat ul Baqi' in Medina.

8. Zainab bint Jahsh (590-641 CE)

Zainab was the daughter of Umayya, a sister of the Prophet's father 'Abdullah and thereby a cousin of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. She belonged to the noble clan of Hashim and was proud of this fact.

When the Prophet launched his drive for Islamic brotherhood and tried to remove all signs of racial and ethnic superiority, he arranged the marriage of his cousin Zainab to his freed slave, Zaid. However, she could never get adjusted to the idea of marrying a freed slave and her marriage with Zaid eventually led to a divorce due to mutual incompatibility. Since the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} had been responsible for arranging her marriage and had guaranteed her

upkeep, he decided to marry her himself. Zainab was about thirty-six years old at the time and the marriage took place in the fifth year of the Hijra (626 CE).

Zainab was the most generous of the Holy Prophet's wives and used to give away most of her annual stipend to the poor. Before his death the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} once remarked to his wives: "The first to join me among you is the one with the longest hand." The Prophet's wives took the hint literally and started comparing the lengths of their hands. It was after the death of Zainab that the other wives realized that the Holy Prophet's words actually alluded to the person's generosity. Zainab died in 20 AH, at the age of fifty-one.

9. Umm Habiba (Ramla bint Abu Sufyan) (594-666 CE)

She was the daughter of Abu Sufyan, a staunch enemy of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. She had married 'Ubaidullah bin Jahsh and both had embraced Islam in the early days of the Prophet's mission. To avoid the persecution of the Muslims in Mecca, both Umm Habiba and her husband went to Abyssinia with the Second Emigration of the Muslims to that country. On reaching Abyssinia, her husband converted to Christianity while Umm Habiba remained steadfast in her faith. After his conversion, 'Ubaidullah separated from his wife and later on died.

In the 7th year of the Hijra, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} sent his envoy from Medina to Negus, King of Abyssinia, asking for Umm Habiba's hand in marriage. Negus conveyed the Prophet's proposal to Umm Habiba to which she readily consented. Negus himself presided over the marriage ceremony that took place in 628 CE and afterwards sent Umm Habiba to Medina under proper escort. At the time of her marriage, Umm Habiba was about thirty-four years of age. Umm Habiba died in 44 AH at the age of seventy-two and was buried in the Jannat-ul-Baqi' graveyard in Medina.

10. Safiya bint Haiy bin Akhtab (610-672 CE)

Her real name was Zainab and she was the daughter of Haiy bin Akhtab, a chieftain of the Banu Nadir tribe of the Jews. The Banu Nadir had been expelled from Medina after the Battle of Uhud and had settled down at Khaibar.

Safiya's first marriage to Salam bin Mishkan ended in divorce. She then married Kinanah, a Jewish warrior at Khaibar. During the Battle of Khaibar in 628 CE, her husband and father were both killed and Safiya, along with other women, was captured. In deference to her status among her own people, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} released her and invited her to embrace Islam. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} then asked for her hand in marriage, to which she readily agreed. She was about eighteen years old at the time.

Safiya used to narrate how her father (Haiy bin Akhtab) and uncle (Abu Yasir bin Akhtab) became the enemies of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. In her own words:

"I was the favourite child of my father and my uncle... When the Messenger of God was staying at Quba, they went to see him before daybreak and did not return until sunset, being tired, weak and worn out. I went up to them with joy as usual but none of them paid any attention to me. They were taken with extreme dejection. I heard my uncle ask my father, 'Is he the one?' to which my father answered, 'By God, yes.' My uncle asked, 'Do you know it and have you done your investigation?' to which my father replied, 'Yes.' Then my uncle

asked as to what did my father feel in his heart to which my father responded, ‘By God, I shall be his enemy as long as I live.’”

Being of Jewish origin and an outsider, Safiya often received a discriminatory treatment from the Holy Prophet’s other wives. Once ‘A’isha called her a shrimp on account of her short stature. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} overheard the remark and said to ‘A’isha: “‘A’isha, you have said a word which, if dropped in the sea, would pollute the entire water.” This incident shows how the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} maintained justice among his wives and even reprimanded ‘A’isha for acting unsympathetically.

On another occasion ‘A’isha and Zainab teased Safiya regarding their ethnic superiority by saying that they were not only the Prophet’s wives but were also related to him. When Safiya complained about this to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, he said: “Safiya, why didn’t you reply by saying that your father was Aaron, your uncle Moses and your husband is Muhammad; so how can they be superior to you?”

Safiya died in 50 AH, at the age of sixty-two and was buried in the Jannat-ul-Baqi’ graveyard.

11. Maimuna bint Harith (600-681 CE)

Maimuna was the daughter of Harith of the Hawazin tribe and a sister-in-law of the Prophet’s uncle, ‘Abbas. She first married Mas‘ud bin ‘Amr who divorced her. She then married Abu Rahm who died soon after.

On the suggestion of ‘Abbas, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} married Maimuna, after the three day pilgrimage in the seventh year of the Hijra (629 CE). The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} wanted to have the marriage ceremony in Mecca and invite the Quraish, but the Meccans did not allow him to stay in the city more than the three days agreed upon in the Treaty of Hudaibiya. The marriage ceremony, therefore, took place at Sarif, north of Mecca, and was performed by ‘Abbas. Maimuna was about twenty-nine years old at the time.

Maimuna died in 61 AH, at the age of eighty-one and was buried at Sarif, according to her will. Besides Khadija, Maimuna is the only wife of the Prophet who was not buried in the Jannat ul Baqi’ graveyard in Medina.

12. Maria Qibtiya (Mary the Copt) (d. 637 CE)

After the Treaty of Hudaibiya, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} sent his envoys to various kings and rulers inviting them to embrace Islam. One of the recipients of these envoys was Muqauqis, the Ruler of Egypt. Muqauqis did not embrace Islam but, very diplomatically, sent some presents to the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} including two Coptic maidens named Maria and Sirin.

Both these girls embraced Islam. Maria was taken into marriage by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} (around 629 CE) while Sirin, her sister, was married to Hassan bin Thabit, a Companion of the Prophet. The marriage of Maria took place in the seventh or eighth year of the Hijra.

Maria held the distinction of being the only wife, other than Khadija, to bear the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} a child, a son by the name of Ibrahim. This son, however, died in the tenth year of the Hijra (January 27, 632 CE) when he was only eighteen months old. Maria herself did not live long and died five years later in 637 CE. She was buried in the Jannat ul Baqi’ graveyard.

A Note on the Prophet's marriages

The many marriages of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} were not the result of any lust that he carried in his heart. After marrying Khadija, who was nearly fifteen years his senior, the Prophet did not take on any other wife during her lifetime. Then only when he himself was fifty years old and needed someone to look after his daughters, did he undertake a second marriage to Sauda bint Zam'a, who was already a widow and also fifty years old.

Following a common cultural tradition of the Arabs, the Prophet Muhammad's many marriages were undertaken to cement ties with other tribes. Umm Salma (Hind bint Abi Umayya) was from Bani Makhzum, the clan of Abu Jahl and Khalid bin Walid. Umm Habiba was the daughter of Abu Sufyan, an enemy of the Prophet until the Conquest of Mecca. Juwairiya was from Banu Mustaliq with whom the Muslims had fought. Maimuna belonged to the Hawazin tribe that lived between Mecca and Ta'if and who had fought against the Muslims in the Battle of Hunain. Zainab bint Khuzaima was from the Banu Hilal which was a confederation of Arabian Bedouin tribes from Hejaz and Najd areas. Safiya bint Haiy was from the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadir who had settled down in Khaibar after having been expelled from Medina. After this marriage, the Jews of Khaibar refrained from inciting other tribes against the Muslims. Of the twelve wives of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, nine were widows.

Some of the Prophet's marriages were clearly consolatory and comforting in nature. This was the case with: Sauda bint Zam'a, who had participated in the First Migration to Abyssinia; Zainab bint Khuzaima and Hind bint Abi Umayya, both their husbands having been martyred in the Battle of Uhud; Zainab bint Jahsh, whose first marriage to Zaid bin Haritha was proposed by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} but had ended in divorce due to mutual incompatibility; Umm Habiba (daughter of Abu Sufyan), who had settled down in Abyssinia after the death of her husband there and whose marriage ceremony was performed by King Negus; and Maimuna bint Harith whose first two husbands had passed away and whose marriage was arranged by the Prophet's uncle, 'Abbas bin 'Abdul Muttalib.

MAJOR BATTLES AND EXPEDITIONS OF THE PROPHET

During the life of the Prophet, the Muslims undertook many armed expeditions and fought many battles, all of which were either defensive in nature or undertaken to establish peace. The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} himself participated in only a few of them. Much criticism is raised against Islam today, attributing its rapid spread to the use of sword and physical compulsion. This however, is not borne out by historical facts.

For the first fourteen years of his twenty two year prophetic career, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} passively bore all sorts of persecution and aggression afflicted upon him. And when finally the permission to fight was granted by God (22:39), the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} fought only in self defence or to check the enemy's war preparations or to establish peace in the area.

It should be noted that during the eight year period from the Battle of Badr to the Campaign of Tabuk, the total number of battle casualties in the whole of Arabia was less than 1,500. This is an extremely small number even by the standards of those days, and put the degree of warfare carried out by the Muslims in its proper perspective. Some of the notable battles and expeditions in which the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} participated are shown in the Table.

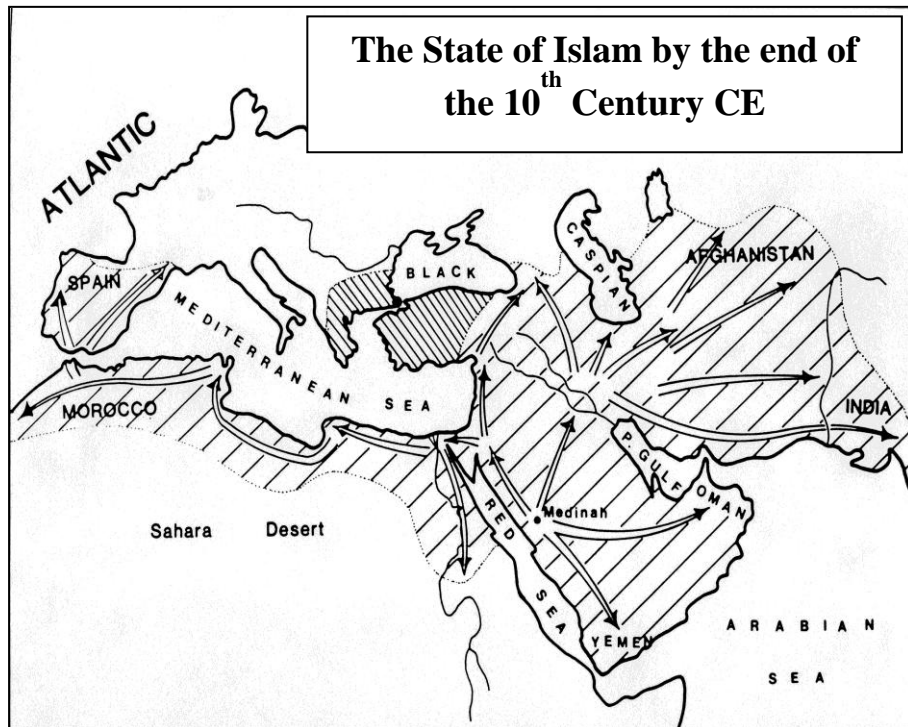
Table: List of the Major Battles and Expeditions undertaken by the Prophet

Battle / Expedition	Muslim Force	Date, CE	Muslims killed	Non-Muslims killed
Battle of Badr	313	Jan. 624	14	70
Battle of Uhud	700	Jan. 625	70	30
Campaign of Badr		Oct. 625	-	-
Campaign of Dhatal-Riqa	400	Apr. 625	-	-
Campaign of Dumatul Jandal	1,000	Jul. 626	-	-
Expedition of Banu Mustaliq		Dec. 626	1	10
Battle of the Ditch	3,000	Feb. 627	3	10
Campaign of Banu Lihyan		Aug. 627	-	-
Treaty of Hudaibiya	1,500	Mar. 628	-	-
Battle of Khaibar	1,600	Mar. 628	17	93
Battle of Mutah*	3,000	Sep. 629	12	?
Conquest of Mecca	10,000	Jan. 630	-	5
Battle of Hunain	12,000	Jan. 630	5	70
Siege of Ta'if		Jan. 630	12	?
Campaign of Tabuk	30,000	Oct. 630	-	-

* The Prophet did not participate in this Battle

THE SPREAD OF ISLAM

Of all the religions of the world, Islam has spread the fastest. At the time of the Prophet's demise, only the western part of the peninsula of Arabia had accepted Islam. In a north-south direction, the Islamic land stretched from the south of Jordan to Yemen; in an east-west direction, it stretched from the eastern coast of the Red Sea to the site of present day Riyadh. Thus, not even all of the present day country of Saudi Arabia had accepted Islam.



Much of the expansion of Islam took place during the period of the Successors, notably the Pious Caliphate of Medina and the Umayyad Caliphates of Damascus and Spain. Within a hundred years of its founding, Islam had spread from the Atlantic coast of North Africa in the west to the Indus River in the east. At the same time, it had penetrated beyond the Oxus River into Central Asia and was ready to make significant inroads into Spain and southern Europe.

The American historian and political theorist, Lothrop Stoddard (1883-1950), writes of this rapid spread in his book, *The New World of Islam*:

“The rise of Islam is perhaps the most amazing event in human history. Springing from a land and a people previously negligible, Islam spread within a century over half the earth, shattering great empires, overthrowing long established religions, remoulding the souls of races, and building up a whole new world, the world of Islam.”

Most European scholars have attributed this unusual spread of Islam to the political conquests made during the first century after its founding. However, some Orientalists disagree with this broad generalisation. The British Orientalist, Sir Thomas Arnold (1864-1930), observes that the actual conversions to this faith took place through the untiring efforts of the Muslim missionaries. According to this scholar, Muslim missionaries moulded their lives along the pattern of the Prophet’s life and preached the religion of Islam to the world just as the Prophet used to preach himself.

It cannot be denied that the political influence of Islamic governments in many countries afforded a highly conducive atmosphere in which to preach this faith. But this is true of all religions in history. In this respect, the patronage given to Islam by the early Caliphates is no different than the patronage given to Hinduism under the Guptas, or to Zoroastrianism under the Sassanids, or to Christianity under the Byzantine Empire and then later on under the colonising powers of Europe.

Thus, every religion of the world has taken advantage of its political influence and, in this respect, Islam was perhaps no different. But the image of the sword-waving Arabs converting their conquered nations at the threat of life is totally baseless and incorrect. Unfortunately, this is the image that is imprinted upon the minds of most people living in the West. The British Orientalist, De Lacy O’Leary (1872-1953), confirms this situation in his book, *Islam at the Crossroads*:

“History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.”

It is in fact a testament to the religious tolerance of Islam that many non-Muslim communities actually flourished during its rule. This is the case of Jews living in the Holy Land, the Hindus living in India, and the Coptic and other Eastern Orthodox Churches in the Middle East and the Mediterranean countries.

Again, there can be no denying that some Muslim rulers committed excesses during their reigns. However, such behaviour is a reflection of the personal character of these individuals and not of the philosophy and ideology of Islam. The religion of Islam explicitly forbids the use of force in the matter of religion and does not sanction any conversion under duress.

Preaching in Islam was never an after-thought but an integral part of the duties of a Muslim to convey the Word of God to the rest of the world. Therefore, right from its very inception, Islam was preached to everyone—to the Arabs and the non-Arabs; and to the followers of Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and the polytheists. At the conversion of Bilal and Suhaib Rumi, the Prophet called them the first fruits of Abyssinia and Greece—indicating a great foresight and vision.

Basically, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} did two things that established Islam as a missionary religion right from its beginning. First, he trained the Muslims as missionaries and sent them out to neighbouring tribes and territories. A number of Arabian tribes such as Banu Sa'd, Banu Juhaina and Banu Ru'as, converted to Islam through the efforts of a single member who came to Medina, accepted the new faith, and then preached it to his people on return. Many a missionary sent out from Medina were killed on the way by hostile tribes. Nevertheless, the tradition of missionary activity founded by the Prophet bore remarkable fruit over the coming generations.

The second important step taken by the Prophet was to send his envoys to kings, rulers and chiefs within Arabia and the surrounding kingdoms. Through the letters carried by these envoys, the Prophet invited the various rulers to accept Islam. The historians—both Muslim as well as European—have written a great deal about the wisdom and courage of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} in inviting heads of mighty empires towards God and Islam. Again, little came out of such preaching at the moment. However, this act of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} clearly established Islam as a universal religion.

Section 4

SUCCESSORS OF THE HOLY PROPHET

THE SYSTEM OF KHILAFAT IN ISLAM

At the death of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, the Muslims lost not only their prophet but also their spiritual, religious and political leader. The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} had not designated any successor during his own lifetime and the young Muslim community could not possibly survive without one. Someone had to lead the community and provide spiritual, social, legal and political direction. A leader, therefore, had to be selected who would not only be acceptable to the people but also worthy of the Prophet's ideals and objectives. The choice of the Muslims fell on Abu Bakr who was then elected as the first Khalifa or Successor of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. This election or nomination of leaders in the Muslim community grew into an institution called the *Khilafat* or Caliphate.

Like many other Islamic institutions, the system of Khilafat changed and evolved over a period of time. Not all Khalifas were elected in exactly the same manner, nor were the political conditions identical at the demise of each Khalifa that would merit the adoption of one fixed system of election. Similarly, not all Khalifas were alike in their piety, statesmanship, courage, foresight and charisma.

As long as the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} was alive, he kept in check the tribal rivalries that existed among the Arabs. After his death, these rivalries came out in the open and played a significant role in manipulating the power vested in the office of the Khilafat.

The system of Khilafat, in one form or another, lasted some 626 years after the death of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. During this period five distinct Caliphates existed among the Muslims, all belonging to the House of Quraish. These were:

Table: The various Caliphates in Islam

The Caliphate	Duration
1. The Pious Caliphate of Medina	632-661 CE
2. The Umayyad Caliphate of Damascus	661-750 CE
3. The 'Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad	750-1258 CE
4. The Umayyad Caliphate of Spain	929-1031 CE
5. The Fatimid Caliphate of Egypt	909-1171 CE
6. The Ottoman Caliphate of Turkey	1517-1924 CE

In the following pages we will briefly describe the salient features of the various Caliphates, their ascension to office and their ultimate decline.

THE PIOUS CALIPHATE OF MEDINA (632-661 CE)—29 Years

After the death of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, the period of the four successors, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman and 'Ali, is known as the Pious Caliphate. This was the most critical period for the State of Islam. The transition from the absolute authority of the Messenger of God to the authority of an elected successor was not easy for the Muslims. The Pious Caliphate, which lasted 29 years, was notable for the remarkable expansion of the Islamic State and the

democratic election of the Khalifas. However, this Caliphate was also challenged by several movements that caused dissension, apostasy and factional strife.

Khalifa	Period, CE	Years
1. Abu Bakr bin Abu Qahafa	632-634	2
2. 'Umar bin Khattab	634-644	10
3. 'Uthman bin 'Affan	644-656	12
4. 'Ali bin Abu Talib	656-661	5

The most significant feature of the Pious Caliphate was its system of election. All the four Khalifas were elected in one way or another. In the case of other dynastic Caliphates that followed, this system of election was replaced in favour of direct nomination of family members.

The Khalifas in the Pious Caliphate were the heads of State with no constitutional or political check on their authority. But this did not mean that they could do whatever they wanted. The Khalifas had to exercise their authority according to the commands and principles of the Qur'an and the Hadith. In the later Caliphates, as we will see, this restraint on the Khalifas was removed and they literally did whatever they pleased.

Another notable feature of the Pious Caliphate was the *Shura* or the Consultative Body which advised the Khalifa on all important matters. During the later Caliphates, this Shura was dissolved and the decision making rested solely with the Khalifa himself.

During the period of the Pious Caliphate, a Public Treasury was set up to receive Zakat and other taxes and to meet the expenditures of general administration, warfare and social programs. In the later Caliphates, this Public Treasury became the personal property of the Khalifas.

The other notable aspect of the Pious Caliphate was the extreme simplicity with which the Khalifas led their lives. They lived in ordinary homes, did their own household work, kept no bodyguards and their doors were always open to any complainant. On the other hand, the Khalifas in the later Caliphates lived like kings in their lofty castles, enjoying the worldly pleasures and were inaccessible to the common public.

It was indeed a great blessing for Islam that the immediate Successors of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} were men of great wisdom, courage and saintly character. Although they were heads of the Islamic State, supreme commanders of the Muslim armies and chief justices of the judicial system, yet they led a life completely free from any pomp and show. Many a time visitors from distant areas would come to the Khalifa's court and ask the question, "Where is the Khalifa?" while all the time the Khalifa sat in front of them dressed in ordinary clothes, indistinguishable from the common people.

To the Pious Khalifas their office was a sacred trust and a responsibility to be discharged with great honesty, diligence and conscientiousness. They paid no heed to the honour and prestige vested in their office and devoted their lives whole heartedly to the betterment of their subjects and to spreading the message of Islam.

Now we will read brief accounts of the first four Khalifas who succeeded the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and made up the Pious Caliphate.

1. **ABU BAKR BIN QAHAFA** (Khalifa: 632-634 CE)—2 years

Abu Bakr (573-634 CE) was nearly the same age as the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, being only two and a half years younger than him. His real name was ‘Abdullah but he was commonly known by his *kuniya*, Abu Bakr. He belonged to the tribe of Quraish and his genealogy unites his forefathers with that of the Prophet’s.

The sudden death of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} in 632 CE, threw the Muslim world in complete confusion. The Muslims in Medina became divided into two camps: the Ansar and the Muhajirin. Each group was trying to promote its own people for the position of the successor. Abu Bakr addressed the Ansar and told them that as far as service to Islam was concerned, no one could rival the Ansar. But the people of Arabia, he said, would not acknowledge a leader from other than the Quraish. At this the Ansar suggested that there be a chief from the Quraish and a chief from among themselves. ‘Umar, however, strongly disagreed with this proposal saying that two chiefs could not stand together. Abu Bakr suggested that the people select their leader from either ‘Umar bin Khattab or Abu ‘Ubaida, both of whom were present there. But both of them declined, saying that they could not possibly give preference to themselves over Abu Bakr.

When the situation started to get tense, ‘Umar took hold of Abu Bakr’s hand and swore allegiance to him. This seemed to settle the matter. After this, Abu ‘Ubaida and all others present, came forward and swore allegiance to Abu Bakr. Abu Bakr then rose and addressed the Muslims:

“By God, I have never wished for Khilafat, nor felt any greed for it, nor asked God for it, nor does it give me any pleasure... Brothers! Now I am elected your Amir, although I am no better than anyone among you. Help me if I am in the right and set me right if I am in the wrong... The weak among you will be strong with me till—God willing—his right has been vindicated. And the strong among you shall be weak with me till—if God will—I have taken what is due from him. Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Prophet. If I disobey Him and His Prophet, obey me not.”

The lifestyle of Abu Bakr was simple, frugal and austere. Before becoming the Khalifa, Abu Bakr used to milk the goats of his tribesmen. One day, soon after obtaining his new position, Abu Bakr overheard a girl saying: “Now that he has become the Khalifa, he will not milk our goats.” To this he replied immediately, “No, my daughter, I shall certainly milk the goats as usual. By the grace of God, my position will not change my routine.”

On becoming Khalifa, Abu Bakr faced a number of problems, three of which are noteworthy:

1. The appearance of false prophets
2. The apostasy movement among the various tribes
3. Refusal by many Muslims to pay the Zakat

The success of the Holy Prophet’s mission gave ideas to many ambitious persons in different parts of Arabia to lay similar claims to prophethood. Asad Ansi was the first to rise in Yemen. He was followed by Musailma in central Arabia and Tulaiha in northern Arabia. Even a woman, by the name of Sajah, claimed to be a prophetess. She married Musailma and joined forces with him. Abu Bakr dispatched forces to fight these pretenders and seekers of

political power. Of the four, Aswad Ansi and Musailma were defeated and killed while Tulaiha and Sajah ultimately embraced Islam.

Musailma, who was known among the Muslims as Musailma the Liar, died at the hands of Wahshi, the Abyssinian slave. Wahshi was also responsible for Hamza's death in the battle of Uhud but had embraced Islam since the Conquest of Mecca. In his later life Wahshi used to tell the people how he had killed both, the best of men (Hamza) and the worst of men (Musailma).

The apostasy movement, in which various Arab tribes began to renounce Islam, was very serious. The motives of this movement were purely political in which the tribal chiefs were in fact renouncing their allegiance to the Successor of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. Abu Bakr also sent troops to deal with the apostates and suppress this rebellion.

The third problem facing the new Khalifa was the refusal by many people to pay the Zakat or the obligatory alms. When the Zakat was first introduced during the life of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, many people paid it only in deference to the Prophet's wishes. Soon after he died, these people refused to pay it any more. Zakat had become an essential Islamic institution and fulfilled the needs of the State and the poor. Abu Bakr, therefore, came down hard on those who did not pay it. He vowed to collect Zakat from everyone who was paying it during the Holy Prophet's time.

After attending to the above three problems, Abu Bakr turned his attention to areas outside Arabia. Under the command of Khalid bin Walid, the Muslim army first quashed the rebellion in Bahrain which had started after the death of Mundhir bin Sawa al Tamimi, the ruler of that area. Then, the Muslim forces fought a battle against the Persians who had been helping the rebels of Bahrain. After this, Khalid bin Walid advanced to the Syrian frontier. There, after defeating the Roman armies in the battles of Ajnadan and Yarmuk, the Muslim forces took the whole of Syria under their control.

Little over two years after becoming the Khalifa, Abu Bakr fell ill and after a fortnight's illness, passed away on August 23, 634 CE. Abu Bakr took the office of Khilafat at the most crucial time in Islamic history when the rising of false prophets, rebellion, disunity among the Muslims, and political developments outside Arabia, all threatened the new born state of Islam. He crushed the influence of the false prophets, brought unity among the Muslims and put an end to rebellions at home and abroad.

Character of Abu Bakr

Abu Bakr was an extremely gentle and pious person. He was one of the first few people to embrace Islam and was a constant Companion of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. It was Abu Bakr who accompanied the Prophet during his escape from Mecca and gave his daughter, 'A'isha, in marriage to him after the death of his first wife, Khadija. Abu Bakr, therefore, was always held in high esteem by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} who appointed him to lead the Prayers during his last illness. Abu Bakr was a wealthy man and always gave generously in the cause of Islam.

Nearing his death, Abu Bakr enquired from the Public Treasury as to the money that he had withdrawn as his stipend. On learning the amount, he instructed that a plot of ground that he owned be sold immediately and that the entire sum of the stipend be paid back to the Public Treasury. Upon his death, Abu Bakr left behind just one camel and a piece of cloth which, according to his will, were handed over to his Successor for public use. When these items were presented to 'Umar after the death of Abu Bakr, he is reported to have burst into tears and remarked: "Abu Bakr! You have made the task of your successor very difficult!"

When he was on his deathbed, Abu Bakr advised his family that the two pieces of the cloth that he was wearing should be washed and used for his coffin. His daughter, ‘A’isha, remarked somewhat testily that they were not so poor as to ill afford the purchase of even the coffin cloth for their father. To this Abu Bakr replied, “The new pieces of cloth can be better utilised for the living than for the dead.”

2. ‘UMAR BIN KHATTAB (Khalifa: 634-644 CE)—10 years

Just before Abu Bakr passed away, he consulted some prominent Muslims regarding a suitable successor. Everyone suggested the name of ‘Umar bin Khattab (579-644 CE), who was then nominated to be the next Khalifa. After giving his inaugural address to the people, he concluded: “If I follow the right path, follow me. If I deviate from the right path, correct me so that we are not led astray.”

Tall, well-built, athletic, and a great orator, ‘Umar bin Khattab cut an impressive figure among the pre-Islamic polytheist tribesmen of Quraish. As soon as ‘Umar took the office of Khilafat, he continued with the expansion of the Islamic state initiated by his predecessor. During the period 633-642 CE, the Muslims fought a number of battles against the Persians. Some of these battles were:

- Battle of the Chains fought during Abu Bakr’s time
- Battle of Namaraq
- Battle of Jasr
- Battle of Buwaib fought during ‘Umar’s time
- Battle of Qadisiya
- Battle of Jalula
- Battle of Nihawand

In the last battle of Nihawand, the Persians were finally defeated and large parts of Iran came under the Muslim rule.

On the Syrian front, Muslims had already defeated the Romans in the battle of Yarmuk, fought during the time of Abu Bakr. After the fall of Yarmuk, the Muslims laid siege to the city of Jerusalem. After six months into the siege, the Christian Patriarch Sophonius agreed to a peace treaty according to which:

- The inhabitants’ life, property and churches were given protection
- Islam was not to be forced on them
- The inhabitants were to pay the *jizya* or poll tax
- The Greeks were to be turned out of the City

To sign the peace treaty, ‘Umar travelled from Medina to Jerusalem in 637 CE in the company of a slave. They took turns riding the single camel that they shared for this purpose. The Patriarch and the citizenry of Jerusalem were stunned to see the Caliph entering the city on foot holding the camel’s rein while the slave rode on top.

In the year 639 CE, ‘Amr bin ‘As was sent towards Egypt. After a siege of seven months of the fort of Fustat and a heavily fought battle at Alexandria, the whole of Egypt came under the Muslim rule.

‘Umar not only conquered a vast area during his ten year Khilafat, but also implemented a great system of administration. ‘Umar governed the state of Islam on the principle of democracy. Some of his administrative achievements are given below:

- He formed a Consultative Body of advisors called the *Shura*, and sought its advice and help in all important matters
- For the sake of convenience of administration, he divided the empire into provinces and appointed a governor for each province
- He strictly forbade the Arabs from holding or owning any land in the conquered territories
- He introduced a system of old age pension
- He introduced the Muslim era of Hijra
- He established a department of finance
- He founded schools and mosques in different parts of the Islamic state

In the year 644 CE, ‘Umar was fatally stabbed by a Persian slave while he was saying his Prayer in the mosque.

Character of ‘Umar bin Khattab

‘Umar bin Khattab was truly a great man. His, brilliant conquests, personal bravery and able administrative qualities, helped greatly in putting the young Islamic state on the right footings. He was very simple, honest, impartial, and endowed with great foresight. He was extremely strict in the following of Islamic principles, yet very kind and sympathetic at heart. He lived a very simple and unostentatious life.

‘Umar was always concerned about the proper discharging of his duties as the religious and political leader of the Muslims. He used to walk the streets of Medina at night to make sure that the people were sleeping well and not in need of anything.

At-Tabari, the great Muslim historian, narrates a conversation ‘Umar had with Salman Farsi which shows the genuine fear of God the great Khalifa had in his heart. ‘Umar once asked Salman: “Am I a King or a Khalifa?” To this Salman replied: “If you have collected a tax of even one dirham from the people and applied it unlawfully, you are a King, not a Khalifa.” On hearing this ‘Umar is reported to have wept.

‘Umar was so conscious of his duty to his people that he used to remark: “If a dog dies hungry on the banks of the River Euphrates, ‘Umar will be responsible for dereliction of duty.”

Once ‘Umar addressed a gathering of people and said: “Brothers! If I stray from the right path, what will you do?” A man stood up and said, “‘Umar, we will take off your head.” At this ‘Umar remarked, “Thank God, such bold persons are present in our community that if I go astray, they will set me right.”

During the Caliphate of ‘Umar, the two mighty empires of the Sassanids and the Byzantines were defeated and the Muslim rule was extended from Libya in the west to the Indus and Oxus Rivers in the east. Yet, ‘Umar himself led an extremely simple and

unpretentious life. Once a delegation from the Eastern Roman Empire came to visit the Caliph in Medina. On arrival, they asked a local person for the location of the Caliph's palace. Surprised at the question, the person promptly took the delegation to the local mosque where the Caliph was lying down on the bare floor.

When 'Umar lay on his deathbed, someone suggested that he nominate his own son, 'Abdullah, as the next Khalifa. 'Umar replied in anger: "May God curse you for tempting me to nepotism by nominating my own son, when I am about to meet my Creator. The Caliphate is an affair affecting the entire Muslim community and I would not like to make it a hereditary affair in my family..."

3. 'UTHMAN BIN 'AFFAN (Khalifa: 644-656 CE)—12 years

When 'Umar was on his death bed, he appointed a council to elect the next successor. The council consisted of:

'Abdur Rahman bin 'Auf
'Ali
Sa'd bin Abi Waqqas
Talha
'Uthman, and
Zubair bin 'Awwam

'Abdur Rahman was not willing to shoulder the great responsibility and opted out of the election in favour of the other five. He was, therefore, appointed to seek a common consensus for the next Khalifa. 'Abdur Rahman took the opinions of the council members and other prominent Muslims and the majority votes were in favour of 'Uthman bin 'Affan (577-656 CE). He was then declared as the next Khalifa and everyone took the oath of allegiance at his hand.

During the Khilafat of 'Uthman, the borders of the state of Islam were extended further to the east, north and west. In the east, the Persian King Yazdgerd, tried to instigate rebellion in the country against the authority of Islam. The rebellion was crushed and the whole of Iran came under Muslim rule.

In the north, the Muslim forces under Mu'awia fought against the Roman armies once again with the result that Asia Minor also came under Muslim control. In the west, the Muslims defeated the Roman forces sent to invade Egypt by sea and annexed this large territory to the Muslim state.

During the first half of his Khilafat, 'Uthman ruled the state with good reputation and was well liked by the people. Then, a number of charges began to be laid against the Khalifa by the same people who once spoke very highly of him. Some of these charges were:

- That 'Uthman had given important posts to his own relatives and kinsmen
- That 'Uthman was extravagant and gave away large sums of money to his relations
- That 'Uthman burned copies of the Holy Qur'an

It is true that ‘Uthman did appoint some relatives to high positions but, in each case, the person was deserving of the appointment. In some cases, he dismissed his appointed kinsmen when the public complained about it.

Similarly, ‘Uthman’s generosity towards his relatives was completely misunderstood by the public at large. Whatever ‘Uthman gave, he gave from his personal property and not from the State Treasury. Before becoming the Khalifa, ‘Uthman was one of the biggest owners of camels and goats and was known among his people as ‘Uthman Ghani, meaning ‘Uthman the Self Sufficient. But he gave away all these to his relatives, and towards the end of his Khilafat he had only two camels left and these, too, were meant for the pilgrimage.

The charge of burning the Holy Qur’an also was not founded on facts. When ‘Uthman standardized the Holy Qur’an, he had all the other incomplete versions collected and burned for the sake of preserving only the authentic copy. This action of his was misunderstood by the people, who raised a great commotion that the sacred Book was burnt.

Although ‘Uthman gave numerous explanations for his misunderstood conduct, the wave of dissent and revolt against him started to spread throughout the state. At the same time, the age old jealousy and rivalry between the Hashimite and the Umayyad started to resurface. An important reason for the rapidly deteriorating political situation was also the extreme simplicity and kindness of ‘Uthman’s character who dealt too kindly with the criminals and the rebels.

At last, the various parties who wanted to depose ‘Uthman, joined forces and entered Medina. ‘Uthman refused to fight and shed the blood of fellow Muslims. The rebels surrounded his house and while he was reading the Qur’an, assassinated him on June 17, 656 CE.

Character of ‘Uthman bin ‘Affan

‘Uthman was a very pious, kind, gentle, honest, and dutiful person. He was famous for his generosity and lived a very simple life. He was thought of very highly by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} who had given two of his daughters in marriage to him. He had great love for his fellow Muslims and eventually sacrificed his own life rather than shed their blood.

Once during his Caliphate there was a severe drought and people began selling their valuables and possessions cheaply to survive. ‘Uthman was told that a certain orchard was being sold very cheaply and that he should buy it. While on his way to purchase the orchard, ‘Uthman came across many who were poverty-stricken and starving. Seeing this, he was greatly distressed and distributed the entire sum among the people. On returning home, he was asked whether he had purchased the orchard. He replied, “Yes, in Paradise.”

During the days of rioting, ‘Uthman confided to ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar, a leading scholar of the time, “These people are demanding that I resign or they would kill me.” Ibn ‘Umar said, “Are you immortal? Can these people do anything more than killing you?” When ‘Uthman replied with a “No,” Ibn ‘Umar asked him, “Can they determine whether you go to heaven or hell?” Again, ‘Uthman replied in the negative. ‘Abdullah bin ‘Umar said, “Then do not take off a garment God has given you, so that you do not set a precedent allowing any group of people to remove their ruler or kill him whenever they disliked him.”

When the Prophet was still alive, he once said to ‘Uthman, “O ‘Uthman! It may be that Allah shall vest you with a garment to wear. If the hypocrites want you to shed it, do not remove it until you meet me.” ‘Uthman once narrated: “The Prophet took a covenant from me (not to fight at the time of my martyrdom) and I shall fulfil it.”

‘Uthman bin ‘Affan used to say: “If I were between Paradise and the Fire, not knowing where I will be sent, I would choose to be turned into ash before finding out where I was bound.”

4. ‘ALI BIN ABU TALIB (Khalifa: 656-661 AD)—5 years

With the death of ‘Uthman, a state of complete disorder and anarchy ruled in the city of Medina. After five days of political wrangling, Ibn Saba, leader of the Egyptian rebel group, supported the cause of ‘Ali on the grounds that he was the rightful Khalifa in whose favour the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} had made a will. On June 23, 656 CE, six days after the death of ‘Uthman, ‘Ali bin Abu Talib (600-661 CE) was chosen as the fourth successor of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and the public swore allegiance at his hand one by one.

Soon after his election, ‘Ali moved the capital of the Muslim State from Medina to Kufa in Iraq, which was a more central location within the Islamic State. After leaving Medina in 656 CE, ‘Ali never had the opportunity to visit that place again in his life.

Immediately after the election of ‘Ali, a cry of revenge arose throughout Arabia for the blood of the murdered third Khalifa, ‘Uthman. Talha and Zubair were among those who requested ‘Ali to punish the murderers of ‘Uthman. But the assassination of ‘Uthman was not the work of a few lonely individuals. A number of important tribal chiefs were involved in the conspiracy. Realizing the political sensitivity of the Islamic state, ‘Ali did not consider it proper to take any immediate action. He told the public that justice would be carried out in due course.

To further pacify the rebels, ‘Ali took steps to change all the provincial governors and asked them to step down. All except Mu‘awia complied. Mu‘awia, from the House of Umayya, had been appointed governor of Syria by ‘Umar himself. He was a very ambitious man and had accumulated great power in a short time. The refusal by Mu‘awia to obey the Khalifa’s orders set the stage for an eventual armed conflict between the two.

In the beginning, Talha and Zubair demanded from ‘Ali that assassins of ‘Uthman be brought to justice. But when ‘Ali did not comply with their demand, they advanced towards Basra to raise an army. On the way they met ‘A’isha, the wife of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, who was returning from the pilgrimage. She was shocked to learn of the murder of the pious Khalifa and decided to join Talha and Zubair in an effort to punish the assassins. The three marched towards Basra at the head of a small army. There, in December 656 CE, a battle was fought with the forces of ‘Ali which is known as the Battle of Jamal. In this battle, Talha and Zubair were both killed and the army, then under the command of ‘A’isha, was defeated. ‘Ali treated ‘A’isha with due honour and sent her back to Medina in the escort of her brother, Muhammad bin Abu Bakr.

Next year, in 657 CE, ‘Ali once again wrote to Mu‘awia to submit to him in the interest of Islam. Mu‘awia again refused to submit until the blood of ‘Uthman, who was also from the House of Umayya, was avenged. At this open disobedience, ‘Ali could find no other recourse but to declare war against Mu‘awia.

With an army of fifty thousand men, ‘Ali marched towards Syria. Mu‘awia also raised a large army in Syria and advanced to meet ‘Ali. In July 657 CE, the two armies met at a place called Siffin. The battle was fought only for a day or so but both sides suffered heavy casualties. Finally, it was decided that each side will appoint a representative and these two persons will be given full powers to make a judgment in the dispute.

The two persons thus selected for arbitration were Abu Musa Ash'ari representing 'Ali's group and 'Amr bin 'As, representing Mu'awia's party. These two persons met at a place called Dumatul Jandal, located between Tabuk and Kufa. Their decision was that both 'Ali and Mu'awia should give up their claims to Khilafat and that a third person should be elected as Khalifa.

There were people in 'Ali's group who were basically against arbitration and were not prepared to accept such a decision. Some 12,000 of these men separated from 'Ali's group and caused great disorder and havoc in the empire. They were known by the title of *Kharijites* meaning Outsiders. Their movement grew with time, causing great hardship to not only 'Ali but also to the later Khalifas of the House of Umayya.

After the fateful decision by Abu Musa Ash'ari and 'Amr bin 'As, rebellions broke out all over the land and the political stability of the Islamic state started to deteriorate very rapidly. Finding the situation very serious, 'Ali agreed to negotiate a treaty with Mu'awia in the interest of Islam. Under this agreement, Mu'awia retained control of Syria and Egypt while the rest of the empire remained under 'Ali's rule.

The Kharijites were not happy with this peaceful development and decided to kill 'Ali in Kufa, Mu'awia in Damascus and 'Amr bin 'As in Fustat (Egypt), all in the course of one night, the 27th of January 661 CE. In Fustat, 'Amr bin 'As escaped death and someone else who was leading the Prayer, fell victim to the assassin's sword. In Damascus, Mu'awia escaped with relatively minor injuries from which he soon recovered. In Kufa, 'Ali was attacked while he was going to the mosque to say his Morning Prayer, and was mortally wounded. Two days later, he passed away.

Character of 'Ali bin Abu Talib

'Ali was not only the Holy Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, but was also the second person to believe in him at the young age of eleven. 'Ali was brave, courageous and a model of simplicity. He never had any servant or maid in the house and he and his wife, Fatima, did all the house work themselves. He led a pure and unselfish life. When the responsibility of Khilafat fell on his shoulders, he fulfilled it in the best interest of Islam.

He is also universally regarded as the father of Islamic mysticism. His bravery is legendary and his counsel was sought after by all, including the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. 'Umar used to say this about him: "God forbid that we may be confronted with some controversial issue which 'Ali might not be able to solve."

It was 'Ali's habit to step into the battlefield riding a mule. Once people asked him as to why he didn't ride a horse which could run faster. 'Ali responded that it was so because he didn't wish to fly away from the battlefield. It was the same philosophy that prompted 'Ali to wear the armour only on his front side as he never intended to turn his back to the enemy.

Once, someone asked 'Ali if he had ever seen God. 'Ali replied that he never believed in something that he could not see! When prompted further as to how he saw God, 'Ali said, "With the inward eyes of the heart."

Once, someone praised a sermon of 'Ali that was very impressive and eloquent. 'Ali responded: "Do not praise me. That would mislead me and beguile me into vainglory. Remember that all praise belongs to God alone."

Both 'Ali and his wife Fatima were noted for leading extremely simple lives and carried out all household chores by themselves, without the help of any servant or slave. Their house was bereft of furniture and other possessions that many people considered to be necessary.

Upon asking for the reason, ‘Ali responded: “This worldly life is a journey and I like to travel light.”

One day during his Caliphate, ‘Ali was mending his old shoe when Ibn ‘Abbas came to visit him. ‘Ali asked him as to how much did he think the shoe was worth. To this Ibn ‘Abbas replied that in his estimation it was worth no more than a quarter of a dirham. At this ‘Ali exclaimed: “By God, the Caliphate is less valuable to me than this shoe. I have no ambition to rule.”

During the Battle of Siffin, the army of Mu‘awia controlled the source of water and denied access to the forces of ‘Ali. When, during the course of the battle, the tables turned and the source of water came under the control of ‘Ali’s forces, his people advised him to deny access to Mu‘awia’s army. He refused the advice, saying: “I would not pay the enemy in his own coin but in the coin of Islam.”

ACCESSION OF HASAN BIN ‘ALI (Khalifa: 661 CE)—six months

On the death of ‘Ali, people of Kufa elected his eldest son Hasan (625-670 CE) as the next Khalifa. As soon as Mu‘awia learned of this, he invaded Iraq and a battle ensued between Mu‘awia’s and Hasan’s armies. Hasan realized the seriousness of the situation and sent a letter of submission to Mu‘awia. Hasan agreed to abdicate his right to Khilafat in favour of Mu‘awia on the condition that after Mu‘awia’s death, Hasan’s younger brother Husain bin ‘Ali will be made the Khalifa. After this agreement, Hasan retired with his family to Medina where he was poisoned to death.

Most Muslim historians do not include Hasan bin ‘Ali in the group of Pious Caliphs, perhaps due to the fact that he had abdicated his Khilafat in favour of Mu‘awia. However, some scholars such as Imam Suyuti, Ibn al ‘Arabi and Ibn Kathir accept Hasan bin ‘Ali as one of the Pious Khalifas.

UMAYYAD CALIPHATE OF DAMASCUS (661-750 CE)—89 years

At the end of the Pious Caliphate and the abdication by Hasan, Mu‘awia proclaimed himself the new Khalifa and moved the capital from Kufa to Damascus. From that day on till the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate 89 years later, all Khalifas came from the House of Umayya. In each case the reigning Khalifa nominated his successor from his own family. Thus the system of Khilafat that started with Abu Bakr as a democratic institution became, under the Umayyads, a dynasty and a monarchy.

Table listing the Umayyad Khalifas of Damascus

Khalifa	Period, CE	Years	Khalifa	Period, CE	Years
1. Mu‘awia	661-680	19	8. ‘Umar II (bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz)	717-720	3
2. Yazid-I	680-683	3	9. Yazid II	720-774	4
3. Mu‘awia II	683-683	1	10. Hisham	724-743	19
4. Marwan	683-685	2	11. Walid II	743-744	1
5. ‘Abdul Malik	685-705	20	12. Yazid III	744-744	1
6. Walid I	705-715	10	13. Ibrahim	744-744	1
7. Sulaiman	715-717	2	14. Marwan II	744-750	6

The Umayyads also took over the Public Treasury and made it into a family possession. Similarly, the *Shura* or the Consultative Body set up under the Pious Caliphate disappeared and free criticism of the state policy was no longer tolerated. While the Pious Khalifas used to live a very simple life, the Umayyad Khalifas lived in castles and palaces. Drinking and gambling became more common in the society and the public became more accustomed to a life of ease and comfort.

During the reign of the Umayyad Caliphate, the borders of the Islamic State were further extended in all directions and the Muslim world produced some of its best generals during this period. ‘Uqba conquered North Africa and founded the famous city of Kairouan; Qutaibiya crossed the Oxus River and brought Trans-Oxiana under Muslim rule; Muhammad bin Qasim took the flag of Islam into Sindh, a province of India; while Tariq bin Ziad and Musa bin Nusair marched into Spain, annexing this area to the Islamic State.

With the enlargement of the empire, Umayyads introduced a number of reforms and made numerous innovations and improvements to the administrative system.

There were 14 Khalifas in all in the Umayyad dynasty. Some of these only reigned for a year or so. The notable Umayyad Khalifas include Muawia, ‘Abdul Malik, Walid I, ‘Umar bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz and Hisham. ‘Umar bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz was an extremely pious person and his short khilafat was in the style of the earlier Pious Caliphate. He is also considered by many Muslims to be the Mujaddid or Reformer of the first century of Islam.

With the rising power of the House of ‘Abbas, the Umayyad Caliphate came to a close in the year 750 CE. Some members of the House of Umayya went to Spain and there they founded first an Emirate and later the Caliphate. We will read more about this in the section on the Umayyad Caliphate of Spain and now we move on to the ‘Abbasid Caliphate.

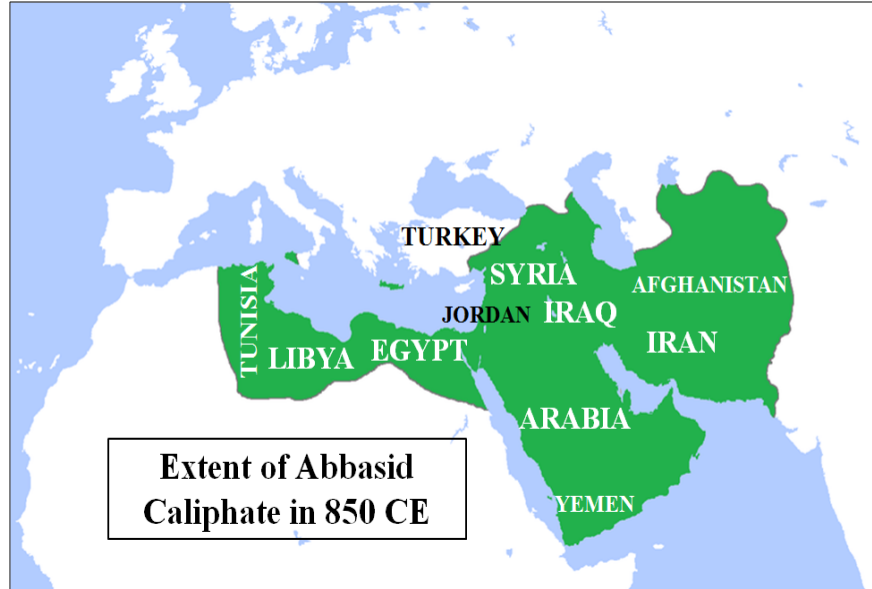
‘ABBASID CALIPHATE OF BAGHDAD (750-1258 AD)—508 years

Khalifa	Period, CE	Years	Khalifa	Period, CE	Years
1. Abul ‘Abbas as Safah	750-754	4	20. Al Razi	934-940	6
2. Abu Ja‘far al Mansur	754-775	21	21. Al Muttaqi	940-944	4
3. Al Mahdi	775-785	10	22. Al Mustakfi	944-946	2
4. Al Hadi	785-786	1	23. Al Muti	946-974	28
5. Harun al Rashid	786-809	23	24. Al Ta‘i	974-991	17
6. Al Amin	809-813	4	25. Al Qadir	991-1031	40
7. Al Mamun	813-833	20	26. Al Qa‘im	1031-1075	44
8. Al Mu‘tasim	833-842	9	27. Al Muqtadi	1075-1094	19
9. Wathiq	842-847	5	28. Al Mustazhir	1094-1118	24
10. Al Mutawakkil	847-861	14	29. Al Mustarshid	1118-1135	17
11. Muntasir	861-862	1	30. Al Rashid	1135-1136	1
12. Musta‘in	862-866	4	31. Al Muqtafi	1136-1160	24
13. Al Mu‘tazz	866-869	3	32. Al Mustanjid	1160-1170	10
14. Al Muhtadi	869-870	1	33. Al Mustadi	1170-1180	10
15. Mu‘tamid	870-892	22	34. Al Nasir	1180-1225	45
16. Mu‘tazid	892-902	10	35. Al Zahir	1225-1226	1
17. Al Muktati	902-908	6	36. Al Mustansir	1226-1242	16
18. Al Muqtadir	908-932	24	37. Al Musta‘sim	1242-1258	16
19. Al Qahir	932-934	2			

Towards the end of the Umayyad Caliphate, the people started raising charges of worldliness and neglect of Islamic principles against the Khalifas. Also, people started showing sympathy and devotion to the Hashimites, the clan of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}.

Meantime, the descendants of ‘Abbas, an uncle of the Prophet, started pressing claims to Khilafat. They united with the descendants of ‘Ali to emphasize the rights of the House of Hashim. Finally, a coalition was formed by the ‘Abbasids, the Shiites and the Khurasanians, which opposed the existing Khilafat of the Umayyads and promised a return to orthodox religion and the forming of a religious government.

With the murder of Marwan II, the last of the Umayyad Khalifas, ‘Abdul ‘Abbas was proclaimed the new Khalifa and the system of Caliphate passed from the House of Umayya to the House of ‘Abbas. The first act of the new ‘Abbasid Khalifa was to undertake wholesale killing of the members of the Umayyad clan. He also moved the capital of the empire from Damascus to Baghdad.



The authority of the new ‘Abbasid Khalifa, however, was not recognized throughout the Islamic empire. Spain and large parts of Africa remained outside the ‘Abbasid rule and in the eastern part of the empire, independent dynasties arose.

The ‘Abbasid Caliphate lasted over five hundred years. Some notable figures in this period were: Al Mansur, Harun al Rashid and al Mamun. Around the year 946 CE, the Buwaihids came to power and dominated the Khilafat for the next hundred years. From this time on, the ‘Abbasid Khalifas were only figureheads and the real power was wielded first by the Buwaihids (945-1055 CE) and later on by the Saljuqs (1037-1157 CE). It was during the period of the Saljuqs that the Crusades (1096-1244 CE) first started to be fought against the Christian empires of Europe.

Throughout the Crusades, the Khalifas of Baghdad remained engrossed in their internal struggles and passed their days idly and extravagantly. This mode of life continued till the capture of Baghdad by Hulagu Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan. Hulagu Khan devastated the city of Baghdad and killed al Musta‘sim, the last Khalifa of the ‘Abbasid Dynasty, in 1258 CE.

When the ‘Abbasid Caliphate replaced the Umayyad dynasty, the period of conquests came to a close and the empire of Islam entered a period of civilisation. Fields of education, music, agriculture, architecture, painting, calligraphy, science and literature were patronized by the ‘Abbasid Khalifas and received special attention. The ‘Abbasid reign produced some of the greatest Muslim scientists and philosophers, some of whom are mentioned below:

‘Ali al Tabari, physician	Al Asturlabi, astronomer and the inventor of astrolabe
Al Razi, physician	Al Beruni, scientist, philosopher, mathematician, historian
‘Ali ibn ‘Abbas, physician	‘Umar al Khayam, mathematician, astronomer, poet
Firdausi, writer and poet	Nasiruddin Tusi, astronomer, mathematician

Al Jahiz, zoologist	Al Farghani, astronomer
Al Damiri, zoologist	Ibn Hayyan (Geber), father of modern chemistry
Al Kindi, philosopher	Ibn Sina (Avicenna), physician, philosopher, astronomer
Ibn al Athir, historian	Al Ghazali, philosopher, mystic, jurist
Al Farabi (Alpharabius), philosopher	Al Khawarizmi, astronomer, mathematician, geographer, founder of Algebra, Arabic numerals and the negative sign
Al Battani; astronomer	Al Mahani, astronomer and a scholar of solid geometry and trigonometry

UMAYYAD CALIPHATE OF ANDALUS¹³ (929-1031 CE)—102 years

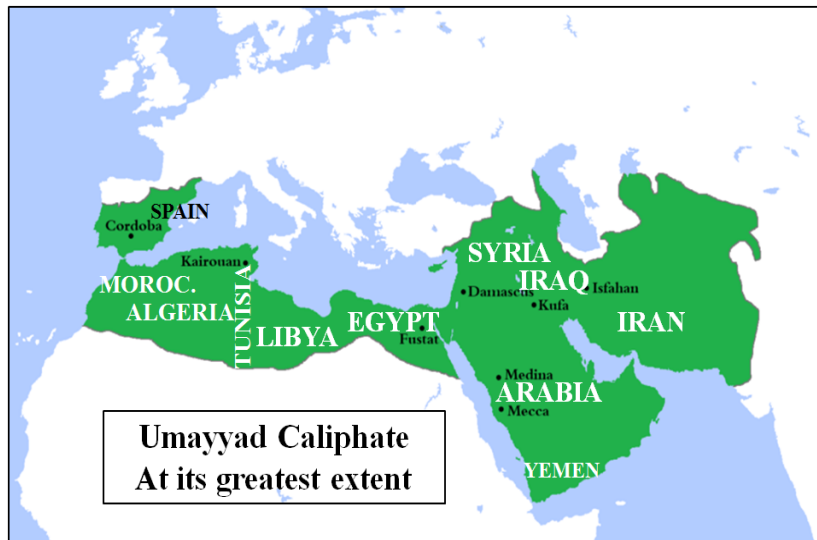
When the first ‘Abbasid Khalifa started the massacre of Umayyad dynasty in 750 CE, a member of the House of Umayya, ‘Abdur Rahman, escaped to Spain. There he established himself as a ruler and founded the Umayyad dynasty in Andalusia.

For 173 years (756-929 CE), the Umayyads ruled in Spain under the titles of Amirs and Sultans. Then, in the year 929 CE, ‘Abdur Rahman III assumed the titles of Khalifa and Amir al Mu‘minin, and thus laid the foundation of the Umayyad Caliphate in Spain. Over the next 102 years, there were nine Khalifas in this dynasty of which only the first three Khalifas had long reigns.

By the year 1031 CE, the Caliphate system ended in Spain and the country plunged into total anarchy. Out of this disorder emerged a number of small kingdoms. These petty kingdoms continued till Ferdinand conquered Cordova in 1236 CE and Seville in 1248 CE.

While the Umayyad rulers came from Damascus, most of the people who eventually inhabited Andalusia came from Morocco, Algeria, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Iberian Peninsula, Sicily and Malta. In history, these medieval Muslims are known as the Moors. The Europeans have also used this term mistakenly for all Muslims of Arab and African descent whether they lived in Andalusia or not. The word ‘Moor’ is derived from the Latin word ‘*Mauri*’ that designated the ancient Berber people of modern day Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania.

Khalifa	Period, CE	Years
1. ‘Abdur Rahman III	929-961	32
2. Hakam II	961-976	15
3. Hisham II	976-1009; 1010-1013	33
4. Muhammad II	1009-1010	1
5. Sulaiman	1009-1010; 1013-1016	4
6. ‘Abdur Rahman IV	1018	<1
7. ‘Abdur Rahman V	1023	<1
8. Muhammad III	1023-1025	2
9. Hisham III	1027-1031	4



¹³ The area called Andalus by the Arabs included present day Spain, Portugal, Andorra and part of southern France.

The period of Umayyad Caliphate in Spain, or Andalusia as the Arabs called it, was one of the most glorious in the history of Islam. Both, ‘Abdur Rahman III and his son Hakam II were great patrons of science and literature. Muslim Spain produced some great people in these fields:

Ibn Khaldun, historian	Ibn Rushd (Averroes), philosopher, astronomer
Ibn Zaidun, poet	Muhaiuddin ibn al ‘Arabi, a great Muslim mystic and scholar
Al Baqi, geographer	‘Ali ibn Hazn, scholar, thinker, writer
Al Idris, geographer	Ibn ‘Abdul Rabbi, distinguished author
Ibn Jubair, traveller	Al Baitar, botanist and pharmacist
Al Masuni, traveller	Ibn Zuhr, physician
Ibn Batuta, traveller	Al Zahrawi, physician
Ibn Bajja, philosopher	Solomon bin Gabirol, philosopher
Ibn Tufail, philosopher	Al Majirite, astronomer
Ibn Aflah, astronomer	Al Zarqali, astronomer

Spanish women were not confined to house work, either, and contributed much to the greatness of the Muslim civilisation in Spain. Some well known names of Muslim women in Spain include: Nazkun, Zainab, Hamda, Hafsa, al Kalziha, Safiya, Maria ‘A’isha, Hasana, Umm ul Ula, Al Walladha, Al Aruzia, Miriam, Asma, Umm ul Hina, Itimad, and Busina.

FATIMID CALIPHATE OF EGYPT (909-1171 CE)—262 years

The Fatimids claimed themselves to be the direct descendents of ‘Ali and his wife Fatima bint Muhammad. According to them, ‘Ubaidullah al Mahdi, the founder of the Fatimid Caliphate was the great grandson of Isma‘il, the son of the sixth Imam Ja‘far al Sadiq.

After the death of Imam Ja‘far al Sadiq, a schism appeared among the Shiites. A majority recognized Musa al Kazim as the 7th Imam and these Shi‘as are known as the Twelvers. The others recognized Muhammad al Mahdi, son of Isma‘il, as the 7th Imam and these people are known as the Isma‘ilis.

‘Ubaidullah used to be an Isma‘ilite Imam in Syria and was invited to head the North African Isma‘ilite movement. He accepted the invitation, declaring himself the great grandson of Isma‘il. In 909 CE, he reached Tunis, the capital of the Aghlabids and drove Ziadatullah, the last Aghlabid ruler, out of the country. After this he proclaimed himself Imam under the title of ‘Ubaidullah al Mahdi and thus established the Fatimid Caliphate in North Africa.

Table listing the Fatimid Khalifas of Egypt

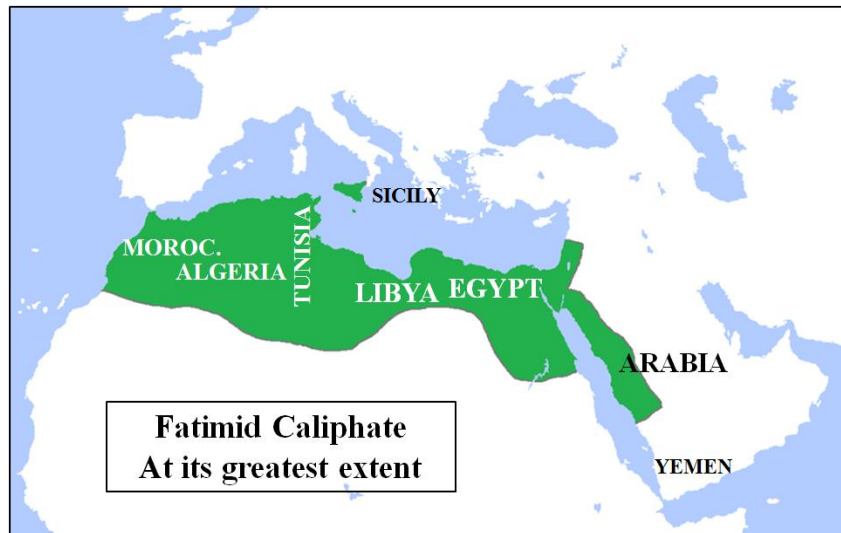
Khalifa	Period, CE	Years	Khalifa	Period, CE	Years
1. ‘Ubaidullah Al Mahdi	909-934	25	8. Al Mustansir	1036-1095	59
2. Al Qa‘im	934-946	12	9. Al Musta‘li	1095-1101	7
3. Al Mansur	946-962	16	10. Al Amir	1101-1130	29
4. Al Mu‘izz	962-975	13	11. Al Hafiz	1130-1149	19
5. Al ‘Aziz	975-996	21	12. Al Zafar	1149-1154	5
6. Al Hakim	996-1021	25	13. Al Faiz	1154-1160	6
7. Al Zahir	1021-1036	15	14. Al Azid	1160-1171	11

There were 14 Khalifas in the Fatimid dynasty who ruled North Africa for about 262 years. The last of the Fatimid Khalifas, al Azid, was dethroned by Salahuddin Ayyubi (1138-1193 CE) who is known in the West as Saladin and is famous for fighting against the Crusaders from Europe.

The contribution of the Fatimids to the progress of science and literature was not as great as under the

ʿAbbasids or the Umayyads of Spain. Nevertheless, a number of the Fatimid Khalifas patronized various fields of learning and the Khilafat produced its share of some well known Muslim scholars. Many schools and colleges were established by the Khalifas. The famous al Azhar academy was established by Khalifa al ʿAziz.

Generally speaking, the period of the Fatimid Caliphate was a period of prosperity for the country. Most of the Fatimid Khalifas were liberal, considerate to their subjects, great warriors and good administrators. Their administration was essentially patterned after the ʿAbbasids. The Khalifa was the spiritual as well as the temporal head of the State.



OTTOMAN CALIPHATE OF TURKEY (1517-1924 CE)

First the Seljuk and then the Ottomans created one of the largest empires in the world that was centred on Turkey. Together, they ruled Turkey and surrounding lands for a period of nearly 850 years.

Seljuk Sultanate of Rum (1077-1307 CE)—230 years

For a period of about 230 years, from 1077 to 1307 CE, the land of Turkey was ruled by the Seljuk Sultanate founded by Sulaiman ibn Qutulmish (d. 1086). During this period there were a total of 24 Sultans, all from the Seljuk dynasty. The Sultanate covered much of Turkey (except the western part on the Mediterranean Ocean) and also included northern Iran. In 1246, the Sultanate started to weaken and eventually split into small emirates that defied the rule by the centre. The Sultanate was named 'Sultanate of Rum' since much of the land was previously ruled by the Byzantine Empire or the Eastern Roman Empire.

Ottoman Empire (1299-1923 CE)—624 years

The Empire was founded in 1299 CE by Turkish tribes under the leadership of Osman Bey. It was one of the largest empires that the world had ever seen and at its peak covered: Turkey, western Asia, south-east Europe and North Africa.

Establishment 1299-1453 CE — 154 years

The Empire was established by Osman Bey (1258-1326), who extended the frontiers of the empire towards the edge of the Byzantine Empire. Over the next century, Ottoman rule extended over Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkan territories.



Growth & Expansion 1453-1683 CE — 230 years

During the two centuries following 1453, the borders of the Ottoman Empire were extended very significantly. Sultan Selim I (1512-1520) established the Empire's presence in Iran and Egypt; and Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) established Ottoman rule in Yugoslavia, Hungary, Transylvania, Wallachia, Moldavia, Baghdad and Mesopotamia.

Stagnation and Reform 1683-1827 CE — 144 years

The 44 year period following 1683, saw the Ottoman Empire simply stagnate. Several territories were lost in the several wars with Russia, including Banat, Little Walachia, Azov, Serbia, Moldavia and Montenegro. The Empire, however, gained in other ways by implementing several reforms in the areas of education, technology, and military modernisation.

Decline 1827-1908 CE — 81 years

Weak Sultans and mismanagement led to an eventual decline of the Ottoman Empire. The Crimean War (1853-1856) and the Russo-Turkish War (1877-1878) weakened the Ottoman Empire significantly and caused heavy financial losses. As a result, large parts of south-eastern Europe fell outside the Ottoman control.

Dissolution 1908-1923 CE — 15 years

The loss of territory continued because of the Italo-Turkish War (1911-1912) and Balkan Wars (1912-1913) in which the Ottoman Empire lost control over Bosnia, Herzegovina, Libya and Balkan territories. The Arab Revolt of 1916 eventually led to the loss of Middle East to the Ottoman Empire and its eventual partitioning. The Turkish War of Independence (1919-1922) led by Mustafa Kemal Pasha led to the final dissolution of the Ottoman Empire with Turkey becoming a Republic on October 29, 1923.

Ottoman Caliphate (1517-1924 CE) — 407 years

For a period of 400 years, the Ottoman Sultans claimed to be the Khalifa of the Empire and the Islamic lands. During its peak the Ottoman rule extended over Anatolian plateau of Turkey, most of the Middle East, North Africa, the Caucasus, and Eastern Europe. However, the Caliphate faced serious challenges by the late nineteenth century that included loss of

territories in the various wars and need for secularisation and adoption of European penal codes and lifestyle. The Khilafat Movement of India (1919-1924) tried desperately to influence the British to protect the Ottoman Caliphate from collapsing. However, faced with increasing secularism and nationalism within the country, Turkish National Assembly eventually abolished the Ottoman Caliphate on March 3, 1924.

MUSLIM CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

The periods of the various Caliphates—particularly the ‘Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad and the Umayyad Caliphate of Spain—ushered in the Islamic Civilisation that lasted well into the fourteenth century. During this period the Muslims made very significant contributions in the fields of science, philosophy, mathematics, medicine, architecture and the arts. The short summary that follows, addresses four important aspects of this subject:

1. Mechanism by which Muslims acquired a vast degree of existing knowledge,
2. Specific contributions that medieval Muslims made to the various fields of knowledge,
3. Reasons that led to the eventual decline of Muslim superiority in these fields, and
4. Passing of the torch to the West.

1. Acquisition of existing knowledge

Expansion of the Muslim Empire in the first century of Islam brought them in direct contact with the Zoroastrians, Christians, Jews and Hindus. Although the Muslims possessed an advanced theology, they lacked expertise in the natural sciences, mathematics, medicine and philosophy. Their poor understanding of the science of logic often put the Muslims at a disadvantage in debates with other scholars. The concepts of syllogism, fallacies, and inductive and deductive logic were still foreign to the majority of Muslims.

Motivated by the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} to seek knowledge, the Muslims turned to the existing fields of philosophy, logic and science of medicine with unprecedented thirst. Until the rise of Islamic civilisation, bulk of the contributions made in the field of knowledge had come from the efforts of the Greeks. Thales and Democritus were known for their cosmic and atomic theories; Galen and Hippocrates for their expertise in medicine; Pythagoras, Euclid and Archimedes for their contributions in mathematics; Ptolemy reigned as the great astronomer; and Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were truly the giants in the fields of philosophy, logic and social sciences.

With little pride and a great deal of genuine curiosity, the medieval Muslims devoured the thoughts and ideas of the early Greeks. In little over a century after the death of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, the Muslims had translated every important work of science and philosophy from the original Greek into their own Arabic language.

In the olden days, the sciences were not as compartmentalised as we find them today. It was in fact very common in the early days for a person to be a scholar of such varied disciplines as philosophy, mathematics, physics, astronomy, chemistry, medicine and even music. In time, however, the Muslim scholars attempted to classify the various sciences and fields of human knowledge. But, by and large, they remained multi-disciplined, with each person contributing to many fields.

2. Specific Contributions by Muslim Scientists and Philosophers

Since the list of Muslim scientists and philosophers runs into the hundreds, only a brief selection of their contributions is described here in a chronological order.

List of some important medieval Muslim philosophers and scientists

Name	Period	Main Contribution
Jabir ibn Hayyan (Geber)	721-815	Father of Muslim alchemy. First to produce sulphuric acid; colourisation technique for glass; laid emphasis on experimentation.
Al Khwarizmi (Algorism)	770-840	Mathematician. Developed Algebra. Introduced decimal system including the number zero. Mathematical process of algorithm is named after him.
Al Kindi	800-873	Polymath: philosopher-scientist. Founder of the Islamic peripatetic (Aristotelian) school of philosophy. Also contributed in physics, mathematics, music and medicine.
Hunain ibn Ishaq	809-873	Best known as a translator of Greek medical and scientific works into Arabic including <i>De Materia Medica</i> and <i>Art of Physic</i> . He possessed mastery in Arabic, Greek, Persian and Syriac languages. His original works cover the fields of: ophthalmology, medicine and philosophy.
Al Mahani	820-880	Mathematician; astronomer. Recorded timings of lunar and solar eclipses and planetary conjunctions. Wrote commentaries on Euclid and Archimedes.
Thabit ibn Qurra	826-901	Mathematician, physician, astronomer, translator. Important discoveries in algebra, geometry & astronomy. Reformed the Ptolemaic system; founded the science of statics in mechanics; theorem of amicable numbers; determined length of sidereal year. He translated works by Apollonius, Archimedes, Euclid and Ptolemy from Greek to Arabic.
Al Battani (Albatenius)	858-929	Astronomer; mathematician. His tables in <i>Kitab az-Zij</i> , were frequently quoted by medieval astronomers. Determined the exact length of the solar year; significant contributions in trigonometry.
Al Farghani (Alfraganus)	Ca. 860	Astronomer. Moon crater Alfraganus named after him. Determined the diameter of the earth. Wrote: <i>A Compendium of the Science of the Stars</i> .
Zakariya ar Razi (Rhazes)	865-925	Physician; chemist. Contributions: clinical care; difference between small pox and measles; discovered several chemical compounds; experimental medicine. Numerous writings on medicine and chemistry.
Abu Nasr al Farabi (Alpharabius)	872-950	Philosopher-scientist. Considered greatest commentator of Aristotelian philosophy. Known as the Second Master (First one being Aristotle himself). Classified different sciences. Contributions in the fields of music, psychology, physics, metaphysics and cosmology.
Abul Hasan al Mas'udi	896-956	Geographer; historian. Travelled extensively and described the people and history of: the Byzantine Empire, China, Russia, Bulgars, and Africa.
Ahmad ibn al Jazar (Algizar)	895-979	Physician. He is most famous for his writing of <i>Zad al Mussafir</i> (The Viaticum), which was extensively used in Europe for a classical education in medicine. His other writings on medicine cover the fields of geriatrics, paediatrics and therapeutics.
ʿAbdur-Rahman al Sufi (Azophi)	903-986)	Astronomer. Lunar crater Azophi and minor planet 12621 Alsufi named after him. Described Large Magellanic Cloud and Andromeda Galaxy. Observed the inclination of the ecliptic vis-a-vis the celestial equator.
Al Zahrawi (Albucasis)	936-1013	Surgery; medicine. Known as the father of modern surgery. Wrote <i>Kitab al-Tasrif</i> , a 30-volume encyclopaedia of medical practices. Pioneered the preparation of medicines.
Abul Wafa Buzjani	940-998	Mathematician; astronomer. Contributions in: spherical trigonometry, negative numbers, tables of sines and tangents, <i>Almagest</i> , time difference between two longitudes.

Maslama al Majriti	950-1008	Astronomer, chemist and mathematician. His main contributions include: translation of Ptolemy's <i>Planispermium</i> , improving upon the astronomical tables of al-Khwarizmi, introducing techniques of surveying and triangulation, and several treatise on chemistry. He is credited with noticing the "conservation of mass" in chemical reactions.
Ibn al Haitham (Alhazen)	965-1040	Physicist. Influenced the writings of Roger Bacon and John Keppler. Contributions in: optics (Book of Optics), catoptrics, theory of vision, description and analysis of camera obscura, celestial physics, theory of motion, perfect numbers, and exact determination of the meridian.
Abu Raihan al Beruni (Alberonius)	973-1048	Polymath: scientist philosopher. One of the greatest medieval scholars. Extensive contributions in: Indian astronomy, Sijzi's astrolabe, unified statics and dynamics into the science of mechanics, hydrodynamics, determining the radius of the earth, essays on political history, history of religions, and history of India.
Abu 'Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna)	980-1037	Polymath: greatest scientist-philosopher of Islam. Wrote extensively on: philosophy, astronomy, alchemy, geology, psychology, logic, physics, mathematics, poetry and theology. Main contributions: philosophical writings on logic, ethics and metaphysics; <i>Canon of Medicine</i> ; philosophy of science; writings on optics; theory of motion; equant problem in Ptolemaic model; and aromatherapy.
'Umar al Khayam	1048-1131	Mathematician, astronomer, philosopher, mystic and poet. Extensive writings on Algebra, geometry and philosophy. His calculation of an average solar day was more accurate than done five centuries later. He became famous in the West largely due to the English translation of his Quatrains by Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883).
Abu Hamid al Ghazali (Algazeli)	1058-1111	Theologian, jurist, philosopher, mystic. Extremely influential in curbing increasing acceptance of Hellenistic philosophy in Islam. His condemnation of philosophy and sciences deterred the progress of these fields in Islam. Tried to bring orthodox Islam and Sufism together through writings and speeches.
Abul Barakat al Baghdadi	1080-1164	Philosopher; physician. His contributions include: emphasis on experimentation in science, theory of motion, modification of the theory of projectile motion, distinction between space and time, theory of soul.
Abu Marwan Ibn Zuhr (Avenzoar)	1094-1162	Physician & surgeon. Emphasised empirical basis of medicine. Wrote extensively on several diseases and their cures. Described oesophageal and stomach cancers and other lesions.
Muhammad al Idrisi (Dreses)	1099-1166	Geographer, cartographer & traveller. Based on his own travels and information gained from merchants, compiled the most advanced map of the ancient world known as <i>Tabula Rogeriana</i> . Produced a compendium of geographical information in his book: <i>Kitab Nuzhat al Mushtaq ...</i>
Abu Bakr ibn Bajja (Avempace)	1085-1138	Polymath: astronomer, logician, musician, philosopher, physician, physicist, and botanist. His philosophical ideas affected Ibn Rushd and Albertus Magnus. He correctly explained the nature of the Milky Way as a collection of large number of stars that almost touch each other. Also wrote extensively on psychology. His collection of Arabic poems was rediscovered recently.
Abu Bakr ibn Tufail (Abubeker Ebn Tophail)	1105-1185	Polymath: writer, philosopher, theologian, and physician. He inspired Ibn Rushd to write his famous Aristotelian Commentaries.
Abu Walid ibn Rushd (Averroes)	1126-1198	Polymath: Aristotelian philosopher, theologian, logician, scientist. One of the truly greatest Muslim scholars of medieval times who had tremendous influence on European writers and philosophers and has been described by them as the "founding father of secular thought in Western Europe." His works cover twenty thousand pages and include every possible subject of human enquiry. He remains famous as the greatest commentator on Aristotelian philosophy.
Ibn al Baitar	1197-1248	Scientist, botanist, agriculturist, pharmacist & physician. He made a systematic compilation of the discoveries made by Muslim physicians in the Middle Ages. His pharmacopoeia and encyclopaedia of Islamic medicine listed 1,400 plants and drugs and the treatments of many illnesses.

Nasiruddin al Tusi	1201-1274	Polymath: astronomer, architect, biologist, chemist, mathematician, philosopher, scientist and writer. His most famous works are on the subjects of: trigonometry, astronomy, ethics, astrolabe, mysticism, biology, physics, logic and theology. He was successful in persuading Hulagu Khan not to destroy astronomical sites and libraries in Iran.
Al Dimashqi ibn al Nafis	1213-1288	Physician. Described pulmonary circulation of the blood. Writing of encyclopaedic book on medicine: <i>Al Shamil fi al Tibb</i> . He produced commentaries on the writings of Hippocrates and Avicenna.
Abu 'Abdullah ibn Battuta	1304-1369	Explorer & traveller. His journeys included trips to: North Africa, West Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia, South East Asia, and China. His travels covered a distance of nearly three times that of his contemporary, Marco Polo. In 1354, he compiled his famous book <i>Rihla</i> , the Journey, that includes the accounts of all his travels.
Ibn Khaldun	1332-1406	Historiographer & historian. His most famous work on history is of course <i>Muqaddimah</i> (Introduction) which has been described as philosophy of history. Other well known works include: <i>al Kitabal 'Ibar</i> (History of the World), <i>Lubabul Muhassal</i> (Commentary on Islamic Theology), <i>Sifa 'ul Sa'il</i> (a work on Sufism), and <i>'Aalaqa lil Sultan</i> (a work on logic).
Jamshid al Kashani (also known as al Kashi)	1380-1429	Astronomer & mathematician. Contributions include: distance and sizes of heavenly bodies; sine tables to eight decimals; transformation from ecliptic coordinates to equatorial coordinates; and determination of Pi to 16 decimal places.
Mirza Ulugh Beg	1394-1449	Mathematician & astronomer. Built the largest sextant to date to prepare <i>Zij-i-Sultani</i> (catalogue) of 994 stars, considered the most accurate until the time of Brahe. Determined the length of the sidereal year. Determined the earth's axial tilt as 23.52°. Extensive works in mathematics and trigonometry related to astronomical computations.
Abul Hasan al Qalasaki	1412-1486	Mathematician. Extensive writings on algebraic notations and Islamic inheritance jurisprudence. His well known writing is: Clarification of the Science of Arithmetic.

3. Reasons for the Decline of Muslim Sciences

By the second half of the thirteenth century, a decline had begun in the Muslim contributions to the fields of science and philosophy. There were two reasons for this decline.

In the first instance, the attacks of Mongols on Baghdad and the weakening of Muslim control in Spain started a decline of the political influence of the Muslims in the vast Empire. This political decline removed the state patronage that was so necessary for the development of knowledge.

The second fatal blow to the pursuit of science and philosophy came through the writings and pronouncements of Al-Ghazali (1058-1111 CE). Although a great scholar himself, his severe criticism of earlier philosophers and scientists made this field unattractive to future generations of Muslims.

Thus, the loss of patronage and the criticism of scientists and philosophers destroyed the spirit of independent enquiry among the Muslims. From the middle of the thirteenth century onward, Muslim science and philosophy went into a steady decline from which it never recovered.

4. Passing of the torch to the West

As the Muslim interest and superiority in the sciences and philosophy declined, the torch of secular knowledge was passed on to the Europeans. In this context, the Marquis of

Dufferin and Ava, Sir Henry Blackwood (1770-1832), states in his speeches delivered in India:

“It is to Muslim science, to Muslim art, and to Muslim literature that Europe has been in great measure indebted for its extrication from the darkness of the Middle Ages.”

The same idea is expressed by celebrated British philosopher, Bertrand Russell (1872-1970), in his *History of Western Philosophy*:

“Our use of the phrase ‘the Dark Ages’ to cover the period from 699 to 1000 marks our undue concentration on Western Europe. From India to Spain, the brilliant civilization of Islam flourished. What was lost to Christendom at this time was not lost to civilization, but quite the contrary. To us it seems that Western civilization is civilization; but this is a narrow view.”

The famous British novelist, H.G. Wells (1866-1946), writes about this transfer of knowledge in his book, *The Outline of History*, in the following words:

“From a new angle with a fresh vigour it (the Arab mind) took up that systematic development of positive knowledge which the Greeks had begun and relinquished ... Through the Arabs it was, and not by the Latin route, that the modern world received that gift of light and power.”

The French historian and anthropologist, Robert Briffault (1876-1948), acknowledges Muslim contributions in his *Making of Humanity*, in the following words:

“It was under the influence of Arabian and Moorish revival of culture, and not in the 15th century, that the real renaissance took place. Spain, and not Italy, was the cradle of the rebirth of Europe.”

The writer then goes on to add:

“It is highly probable that but for the Arabs, modern European civilization would never have arisen at all. It is absolutely certain that but for them it would never have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all previous phases of evolution.”

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECTS IN ISLAM

According to the English dictionary, the word ‘sect’ comes from the Latin *secta* that means: path, way, method, party, faction or doctrine. Thus, a sect is a religious body or denomination, especially a small group that has broken away from an established majority. The sect defines a group of people having a common leadership, set of opinions, philosophical doctrine, political principles, etc. Usually, it is applied to a faction of a larger group. In the Arabic language, the words that represent sect are: *Shi’a*, meaning sect, party or group; and *Firqa* (root: *frq*—to separate, divide), meaning group.

Like other religions, Islam has had its share of religious dissension and sectarian difference. At numerous times during the course of history, political motivations, issues of Imamatus (leadership), theological differences and philosophical leanings have divided the Muslim community into various groups that started to identify with specific causes.

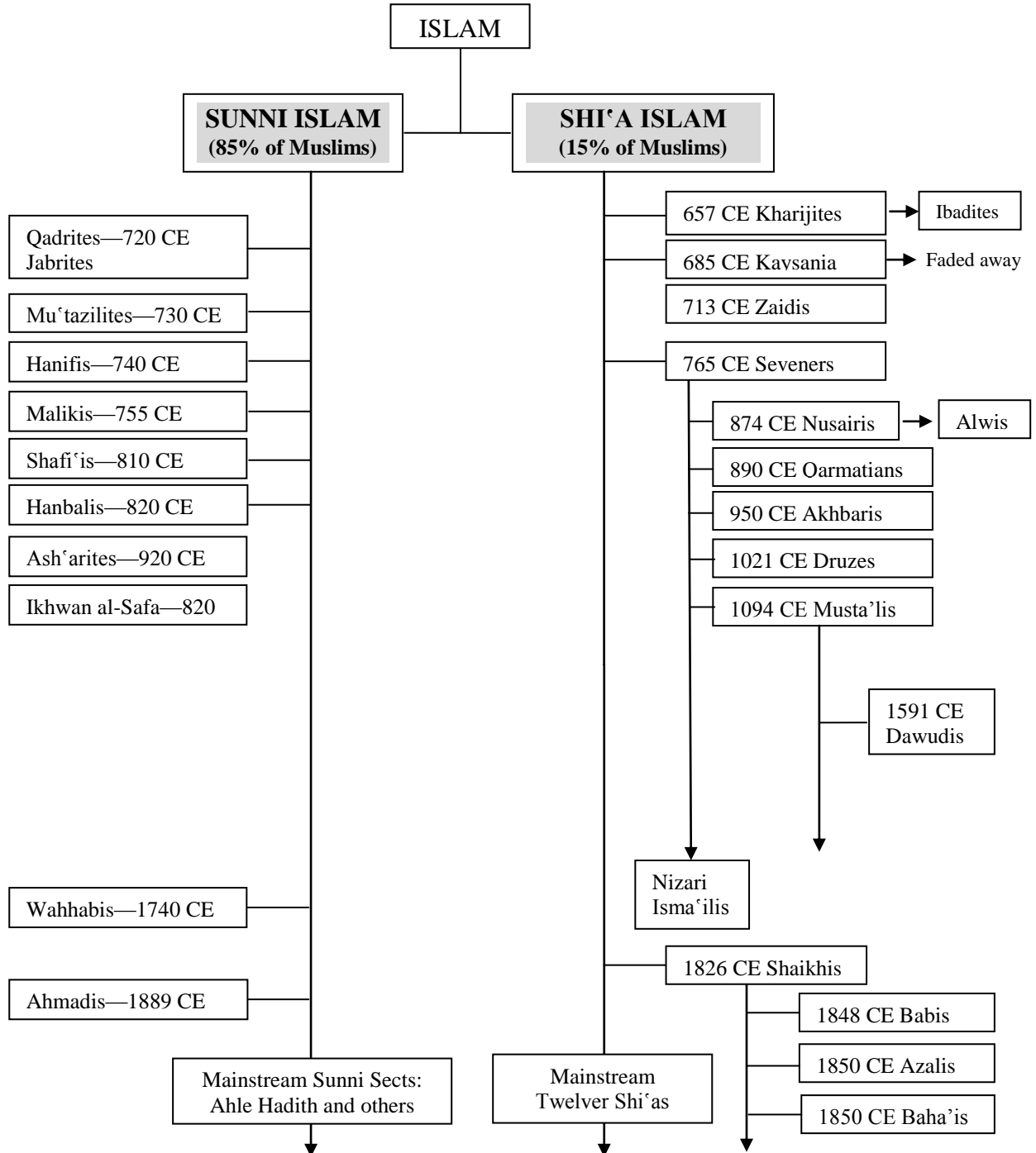
According to some scholars, there are as many as 150 different groups that can be identified over the fourteen centuries of Islamic history. However, not all these groups are

mutually exclusive. This is perhaps the most important aspect of sectarianism in Islam and needs to be understood properly.

Basically, there are two main divisions in Islam:

1. Sunni Islam, and
2. Shi'a Islam

All other sects and groups have evolved from these two main streams. To give an idea of their relative proportion, about 85% of the world's Muslims belong to the Sunni stream while a relatively small 15% belong to the Shi'a branch.



Issues that Split the Community

Over the course of time, five main reasons have been responsible for splitting the body of Islam into different groups. These are:

- Political
- Imamat (leadership) related
- Theological
- Juridical
- Philosophical

Table showing the major issues that have split the Muslim Community

Category	Issue	Resulting Sects
Political		Kharijites ; Qarmatians
Successorship & Imamat related	4 th Imam 5 th Imam 7 th Imam Mainstream	Kaisania Zaidis Seveners, Nizaris, Musta'lis Twelvers
Philosophical		Jabarites (Fatalists) Qadrites (Free-willists) Mu'tazilites (Rationalists) Ash'arites (followers of the middle way) <i>Ikhwan al-Safa</i> (Brethren of Purity) Mystics (Qadris, Chishtis, Idrisis, Suharwardis, Naqshbandis, etc.)
Theological		<u>Among Sunnis:</u> Wahhabis Ahmadis <u>Among Shi'as:</u> Akhbaris Shaikhis, Babis, Baha'is
Juridical		<u>Among Sunnis:</u> Hanafis, Malikis, Shafi'is, Hanbalis <u>Among Shi'as:</u> Ja'faris

Issues motivated by politics or related to issues of Imamat are irreconcilable and have generally caused permanent splits within the existing community. Examples include the separation of Kharijites and Qarmatians, and the branching off of Kaisania, Zaidis, the Seveners and the Twelvers. Political and Imamat related differences have been far more common among the Shi'as than the Sunnis.

Theological differences are very important and have caused the appearance of Akhbaris, Shaikhis, Babis and Baha'is among the Shi'as; and Wahhabis and Ahmadis among the Sunnis. Groupings based on theological differences are very divisive and mutually exclusive.

Differences related to juridical preference and philosophical view point are far less divisive than other causes. Being preferences and viewpoints, they can be maintained with other theological beliefs and sectarian ideologies. For example, one Sunni may subscribe to the Shafi'i school of law and Mu'tazilite philosophy while another may prefer the Maliki school of law and Ash'arite philosophy. Ahmadis that otherwise differ with the Sunnis on many theological points, follow the same Hanafi juridical system that is followed by tens of millions of other Sunnis in the world. A similar situation exists within the Shi'a branch of Islam where a common Ja'fariya school of law is followed by such diverse groups as Zaidis, the Seveners and the Twelvers.

1. The Sunni Branch of Islam

The Sunni stream of Islam is the largest body of Muslims who, over the period of time, have more or less faithfully followed the true tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and the Pious Khalifas. As well, it seldom faced division based on issues of Imamatus or leadership. By and large, the Sunnis do not subscribe to theological ideas that were not adhered to by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} himself. For this reason, the main body of the Sunnis is often called *Ahli Sunnah*, meaning Traditionists.

When differences did appear among the Traditionists, they either concerned juridical matters or philosophical preferences. As such, they were far less divisive than theological differences or issues of leadership faced by the Shi'as. Although great deal of tolerance exists today within the Sunni stream of Islam for various juridical schools and philosophies, such was not always the case. At various times in the history of Islam, even juridical difference and philosophical perspectives evoked the wrath and severe displeasure of the ruling authorities.

Like any other mainstream religious group in the world, the Sunnis have been inherently opposed to any change in belief or practice from the status quo. To them, any change was a novelty (*bidda'*) and thus distorted the traditional perspective of Islam. However, changes were indeed forced on the mainstream Sunnis from three areas:

1. Changing social behaviour and expansion of the Islamic State
2. Influence of Greek philosophy and the emergence of science among the Muslims
3. The appearance of the Promised Messiah^{as}

The above factors, together with the will to return to traditional orthodoxy, are largely responsible for the emergence of the various groups within the Sunni stream of Islam. Below, we shall deal with the impact of these influences and the manner in which accommodations were made.

- (1) The changing social behaviour and the conversion of large number of non-Arabs to Islam, created social and legal problems for which ready answers did not exist either in the Holy Qur'an or the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. Many jurists and religious scholars arose over time that made rulings upon the newly developing situations in somewhat different manners. Although a number of such jurist have appeared in history, the Sunni stream essentially recognises four of them: Imam Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i and Imam Hanbal. The right of independent opinion or *ijtihad* is granted to only these four ancient Imams for matters on which both the Holy Qur'an and the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} are either silent or not very explicit.
- (2) The second influence came from the spread among the Arabs of Greek philosophy and the consequent emergence of natural sciences. Within a hundred years of the Prophet's demise, Muslims' hunger for knowledge resulted in the translation of large volumes of Greek philosophies into the Arabic language. Trained in the use of logic and rational analysis, the Muslim scholars began to apply these principles to religious

and metaphysical matters in Islam. This resulted in the appearance of such philosophical groups as the Fatalists, the Free-willists, the Mu'tazilite rationalists, and the followers of the middle way—the Ash'arites.

- (3) The third and perhaps the most profound dilemma was forced upon the Sunni community by the claim of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be the Messiah and Mahdi promised in the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. Although the prophecies of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} on the coming of the Messiah are very clear, a certain perception had indeed developed in the minds of the Muslim scholars as to the manner in which he would appear. This happens practically with every prophecy. When the Muslim majority did not recognise the signs due to their own preconceived notions as to what they were supposed to be, they essentially rejected the claims by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. In the face of this large scale rejection, those who accepted the bona fide claims of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad were forced to identify themselves by the 'Ahmadiyya' title. For once, the large majority of the Muslims were indeed wrong and this, too, was prophesied in the Tradition.

Jabarites (Fatalists)

Some fatalists believed, on the basis of the Holy Qur'an, that whatever happened in the universe was predetermined and part of God's ultimate design. Although philosophically defensible, such a belief made accountability of our actions next to impossible. It also posed a problem for the ultimate reward of heaven and punishment of hell if the people were only doing what was already fated.

The Fatalist philosophy emerged during the Umayyads who wanted to absolve themselves of the killing of Husain, the Prophet's grandson, at Karbala in 680 CE. The most well known advocate of the Fatalist or Determinist school was Jahn ibn Safavin (d. 745 CE).

Qadrites (Free-willists)

The views of the Fatalists were strongly opposed by the Free-willists. They maintained that all people had free will and could, therefore, be held accountable for their actions. Mabad al-Juhani (d. 743 CE) was a strong advocate of human free will. Being the reign of the Umayyads, he was promptly sentenced to death. The advocacy of free will was taken over by Ghailan who, too, was sentenced to death under the next Umayyad Khalifa. Nevertheless, the influence of the Fatalists continued to decline and the influence of the Free-willists continued to increase steadily.

Interestingly, both the Fatalists and the Free-willists based their arguments on the same source, the Holy Qur'an. This strongly disturbed the ordinary, simple-minded people who were not capable of following the deep philosophical arguments of either side.

Mu'tazilites (Rationalists)

Under Wasil ibn Atta (699-748 CE), a school of philosophy developed that believed that God is subject to the law of justice. He must reward the righteous and must punish the wicked. They placed less emphasis on an act meeting with the approval or disapproval of God, and more on the intrinsic goodness or badness of the act.

The Mu'tazilites made reason the test of all beliefs. If a belief did not appear to be rational, it was either discarded or modified to fit the requirements of reason. They favoured the supremacy of reason over faith. They also favoured symbolic rather than literal interpretation of many Qur'anic verses. According to them, even the revealed truth must be tested by reason and then interpreted accordingly. Some common Mu'tazilite beliefs were:

- The Holy Qur'an is created and has not existed for ever
- God cannot be seen with human eyes
- God possesses neither anger nor pleasure
- There is no punishment or reward in the grave
- Miracles do not exist
- The Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} did not physically ascend unto heaven during *Mi'raj*
- There is no real bridge (*sirat*) in heaven
- There is no such thing as Recording Angels
- The good and the bad deeds will not be physically weighed in a balance
- Revelation can be accepted but needs reason to interpret it

The Mu'tazilite influence in Islam lasted for nearly two centuries when it faced the rising of Ash'arite philosophy.

Ash'arites (followers of the middle way)

The ultra rationalism of the Mu'tazilites and their persistence to check every Islamic element with the test of reasoning caused considerable problem in the Muslim world. The Mu'tazilites applied reasoning even to questions relating to God and His attributes. The strong domination of Mu'tazilite ideas for nearly two centuries (730-920 CE) was finally checked by a return to orthodoxy advocated by a number of scholars such as Al-Ash'ari of Iraq, Ibn Hazm of Spain, Al-Tahawi of Egypt, and Al-Maturidi of Samarkand. Together, the views of this opposition are known as Ash'arism. Ash'arites tried to demonstrate that not all religious questions lent themselves to simple rational analysis. To them, many things had to be believed in simply on the basis of faith.

Ash'arites treaded a middle course between the ultra rationalism of the Mu'tazilites and the ultra conservatism of the religious divines who took every word of the Qur'anic text literally. The inapplicability of simple reason in one particular case is demonstrated by a debate that was held between Al-Ash'ari and a famous Mu'tazilite of the time, Al-Jubbai:

- Al-Ash'ari: If a righteous person, a wicked person, and a baby died, how would God judge among them?
- Al-Jubbai: The righteous person shall go to heaven, the wicked person shall go to hell, and the baby somewhere in between.
- Al-Ash'ari: What if the baby claimed that had he lived longer and done good deeds, he would have been admitted to heaven?
- Al-Jubbai: To this God may reply that He knew that the baby would in fact grow up to be wicked and that He actually saved the baby from hell.
- Al-Ash'ari: Then the wicked person can claim that had God taken his life away while he was still a child, he too would have been saved from hell!
- Al-Jubbai: To this, I have no valid answer.

The story of the debate basically proves that all religious questions cannot be answered by simply reasoning about them.

Some two hundred years after the rise of Ash'arism in Islam, Imam Ghazali denounced the rationalism of the philosophers in his famous treatise *Tahafat al-Falasafa*. Although he did not claim to be an Ash'arite, his influence was such that philosophy, and by association sciences in general, became unattractive to the Muslims and eventually led to their decline over the coming centuries.

Ikhwan Al-Safa (Brethren of Purity)—950 CE

In the middle of the 10th century, there was a group of intellectuals and philosophers who used to meet in secret. They generally leaned towards Mu'tazilite doctrines and attempted to reconcile religion with science and philosophy. The *Ikhwan* were less of a sect in Islam and more of an elite group of intellectuals who held no prejudice or malice towards other sects and religions. The *Ikhwan* produced some fifty or so encyclopaedic treatise on their understanding of science, philosophy and religion. In contrast to the earlier Aristotelian understanding that the heart was the centre of Man's psyche, the *Ikhwan* considered the brain as the seat of all mental processes. The *Ikhwan* also believed in the system of evolution wherein advanced forms are derived from more primitive forms.

The Four Juridical Schools of the Sunnis

Over an eighty year period, from 740 to 820 CE, four ancient theological and juristic schools were founded in Islam. The influence of these schools is so immense that hardly any sect or group of people remained unaffected by the interpretations of these Schools. The vast majority of Sunni Muslims belong to one of these Schools. The Four Schools are:

- The Hanafiyya School Founded by Imam Abu Hanifa
- The Malikiyya School Founded by Imam Malik bin Anas
- The Shafi'iyya School Founded by Imam Shafi'i
- The Hanbaliyya School Founded by Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal

The Four Schools differ from each other on matters relating to Salat, fasting, marriage, divorce, inheritance, and administration of State. Although there are some differences that concern Islamic theology, by and large the Schools agree with each other on all important theological matters. For this reason, the various Schools are viewed by many Sunnis as equally valid interpretation of the religious law of Islam.

Although large populations of Muslims subscribe to only one of the Schools, the tolerance for other Schools is generally very high. The differences among the Schools are less divisive than those among other sects of Islam.

It should be noted that the Shi'as do not follow any of the above four Schools; they follow the juridical school founded by Ja'far al-Sadiq, their sixth Imam.

The Wahhabis

The Wahhabi sect rose in the middle of the eighteenth century within the Arabian Peninsula. The Wahhabi movement was started by Muhammad bin ‘Abdul Wahhab (1703-1793 CE) who was a native of Najd, a province in north central Arabia. He preached a strict puritanical Islam which forbade the veneration of holy places, religious relics and holy men. Amir Muhammad ibn Sa‘ud of Dar‘iyyah (1726-1765 CE) accepted Wahhabi beliefs and founded the Saudi State. His descendents, the House of Sa‘ud, did much to propagate and establish Wahhabi doctrines in Arabia and surrounding areas. During the spread of the political influence of the House of Sa‘ud, numerous armed conflicts occurred with the Ottoman Empire of Turkey.

The Wahhabis do not consider the opinions after the generation of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, his Companions, and the generation immediately following that. They follow a fundamentalist and puritanical form of Islam based on the ultra-conservatism and orthodoxy of Imam Hanbal and the theologian Ibn Taimiya. The Wahhabis denounce the calling upon earlier saints for aid and blessing or visiting of their tombs and shrines for this purpose. They reject the idea that things, places and people can be holy since it violates the holiness of God. They also denounce excessive veneration of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, saying of prayers for the dead, honours paid to departed saints, the use of rosary, and building of tombs, tombstones, grave markers and minarets. They do not object to the use of force to implement their beliefs and practices. Today, some of their earlier strict beliefs have mellowed considerably.

The Ahmadis

The Ahmadiyya movement was founded in 1889 as a sect of Islam by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} claimed to be the *Mujaddid* (Reformer) of the fourteenth century of Islam and the Promised Messiah and the Promised Mahdi whose advent had been foretold in the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. The Ahmadis generally follow the Hanafi School of law. We will read about the beliefs of Ahmadi Muslims and the history of this movement in some detail in Section 5.

2. The Shi‘a Branch of Islam

The Shi‘a stream of Islam traces its origin in political developments dating back to the beginning of succession after the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}.

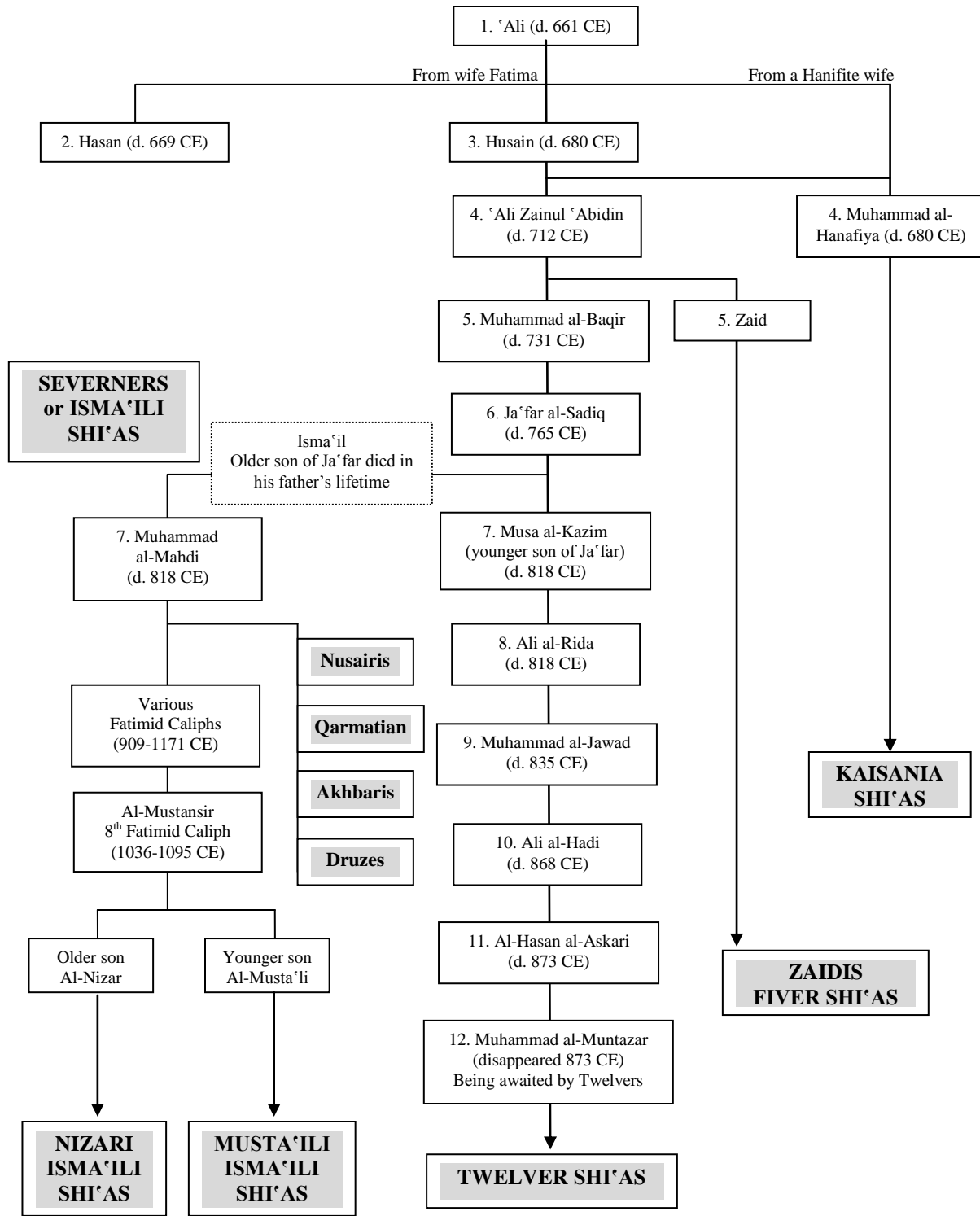
The backers and supporters of ‘Ali, commonly referred to as the partisans of ‘Ali, showed visible disappointment at the outcome of the various elections held to select the Khalifa of the Muslims. They called these elections conspiracies to withhold Khilafat from the Prophet’s own family. This was the first seed of dissension which appeared in Islam and eventually divided the otherwise united community.

Even when ‘Ali was finally elected as the Fourth Khalifa of Islam, opposition to his authority continued and this further consolidated the supporters of ‘Ali. However, the greatest rallying cry that united all Shi‘as came when the Prophet’s grandson, Husain, met with a tragic death at the hands of Yazid’s forces in the field of Karbala. This incident took on the same importance in the eyes of the Shi‘as as the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the eyes

of the Christians. Historically, the martyrdom of Husain has been more responsible in shaping the psyche, the attitudes and religious frame of mind of Shi'as than anything else.

The beliefs that are common to most Shi'a sects include:

Chart showing the House of 'Ali and the various Shi'a Sects



- The true right to successorship belonged only to ‘Ali (the first three Khalifas usurped the khilafat)
- There is need for an Imam to be present in the community at all times
- The Imam has to be a descendent of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and ‘Ali
- The Imam possesses divine and supernatural powers as a result of his direct descent from ‘Ali
- The Imam is infallible and cannot make a mistake
- The Imam is an intermediary between man and God. The Shi‘as’ love for their Imam is so great that Shi‘aism is often likened to Christianity and called the Christian form of Islam.
- All Shi‘as believe in the return of their Hidden Imam in the latter days

During the reign of the Umayyad Khalifas, the supporters of the House of ‘Ali led many unsuccessful religious revolts. They never recognized the authority of the Umayyad Khalifas and followed their own Imams who were the direct descendents of ‘Ali. The majority of the Shi‘as believe in twelve Imams and are hence called *Ithna-Ashariya* or Twelvers. They are the dominant religious group in Iran, a majority in Iraq, and significant minorities in Syria, Lebanon, Pakistan and the Persian Gulf states. The Shi‘as eventually split into many sects.

1. Kharijites

After the Battle of Siffin fought between Mu‘awia and ‘Ali in 657 CE, it was mutually agreed that arbitration will be held to decide on the rightful contender to the office of khilafat. A group among ‘Ali’s party rejected the entire philosophy of such arbitration maintaining that Khalifa is made by God and no human being has the right to decide about it. This group eventually seceded from ‘Ali’s supporters and came to be known as the Kharijites, or the Outsiders.

‘Ali eventually defeated the Kharijites in 658 CE in the Battle of Nahrawan. Because of their dissatisfaction with ‘Ali, Mu‘awia and ‘Amr bin ‘As, the Kharijites planned to assassinate them on the same day. ‘Ali was killed, Mu‘awia was wounded, and ‘Amr bin ‘As was unhurt.

The Kharijites were fundamentalists, outwardly pious and strongly rebelled against the liberalism they saw in the Umayyad Khalifas and fought against various Caliphates in Islam for hundreds of years. Today they survive in a more moderate form as Ibadites of Oman. The Kharijite beliefs included:

- The Imam does not have to be a descendent of ‘Ali or even a Quraish
- A Muslim who sins is no longer a Muslim and can be put to death

2. Murjites (Quietists)

As a reaction to the fundamentalist and confrontational attitudes of the Kharijites, the Murjites (Quietists) by contrast, disagreed with them on many points. They maintained that:

- Even serious sins are offset by faith. Muslims committing sins remain Muslims. Only God has the right to condemn anyone

- An Imam who leads the Prayer need not be perfect [this belief is widely held by the Sunnis but not the Shi'as].

3. The Twelver Shi'as or *Ithna Ashariya*

These comprise the largest group of the Shi'as today and exhibit most of the classical Shi'a doctrines. The Twelver Shi'as are known by this name because they follow the twelve Imams, all belonging to the House of 'Ali. Their twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, is believed by them to be still alive and in hiding. The Shi'as believe in the messianic return of this Imam in the latter days of Islam.

According to Shi'a belief, 'Ali inherited all the spiritual abilities of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and was thus the only rightful successor of his. The Shi'as, therefore, reject the Khilafats of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman and that of the Umayyad dynasty that followed.

The Shi'as do not accept many Ahadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} which were transmitted by 'A'isha, the wife of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, whom they consider an enemy of Islam. The Shi'a also differ from the Sunni Muslims in many other areas such as the regulations governing the ablutions, *Adhan*, Prayer, pilgrimage and the declaring of one's faith. The Shi'as also retain the pre-Islamic custom of legal temporary marriage for the sake of pleasure, called *Muta'*.

One important difference between the Sunnis and the Shi'as concerns the functions and status of the Khalifa. Shi'as believe that the physical descent of the Khalifa directly from the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} gave him divine endowment of wisdom, saintliness and grace. The Shi'as also consider the Khalifas infallible and impeccable and regard them with a deeper veneration than do the Sunnis. The Sunnis looked at the Khalifa as a popular choice of the believers and did not associate any supernatural powers with him. The Sunnis believed that the Khalifa must be from the Prophet's tribe, the Quraish. The Shi'as chose their Khalifas (or Imams) from a still narrower circle of the Prophet's immediate family. Today, the Twelver Shi'as are predominant in Iran, a majority in Iraq, and significant minorities in Pakistan, India and Lebanon.

4. Kaisania Shi'as (Four Imams)

At the death of Husain, the 3rd Imam of the Shi'as at the time, a group refused to accept his son Zainul 'Abidin as Imam. They maintained that the rightful Imam was Muhammad al-Hanafiyya, a half brother of Husain, by a wife of Hanafi tribe. The division was politically motivated and the actual leader in the background was a person by the name of Mukhtar who had revolted against the Umayyads. The Kaisania, therefore, is sometimes called Mukhtariya. Mukhtar was killed in 687 CE and the sect slowly faded away by 730 CE.

5. The Zaidis (Fiver Shi'as)

At the death of 'Ali Zainul 'Abidin, the majority followed the older son, Muhammad al-Baqir, as the fifth Imam. A minority of Shi'as, however, followed the younger brother, Zaid, as the fifth Imam. These Zaidi Shi'as are also referred to as Fivers since they have only five Imams. Zaid was eventually killed in an armed conflict against the Umayyad Khalifa, Hisham. Since his death, his supporters and followers broke away from the mainstream of

Shi'as and became a distinct sect by themselves. Of all the Shi'as, Zaidis are the closest to Sunnis in their beliefs. Today the Zaidi Shi'as are mostly found in Yemen.

6. The Sevens Shi'as

The division of the Shi'as into the Twelver and the Sevens sects occurred after their sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq. At the death of Ja'far al-Sadiq in 765 CE, the Twelvers made his younger son, Musa al-Kazim, their seventh Imam since the older son, Isma'il had already died in the lifetime of his father. A dissenting group, later called the Sevens, followed the direct line of Ja'far al-Sadiq through his deceased son, Isma'il. Since Ja'far al-Sadiq's elder son, Isma'il, was already dead, the Sevens recognized the new Imam in the son of Isma'il named Muhammad al Mahdi. For this reason the Sevens Shi'as are also referred to as the Isma'ilis.

The Isma'ilis developed highly esoteric doctrines around their Imam which could not be easily understood by the common man. The Isma'ilis continued to recognize their own Imams for the next 144 years, right through the period of the 'Abbasid Caliphate. Then in 909 CE, an Isma'ili Imam by the name of 'Ubaidullah overthrew the Aghlabid dynasty centred in Tunis, took on the name of 'Ubaidullah al-Mahdi and established himself as the first Khalifa of the Fatimid dynasty in North Africa. In this way the institution of Khilafat was also established among the Isma'ilis.

Then at the death of the Fatimid Khalifa al-Mustansir in 1095 CE, the Isma'ilis divided into two sects. The ones who followed the older son of al Mustansir by the name of al Nizar, came to be known as Nizari Isma'ilis; those who followed the younger son of al Mustansir by the name of al Musta'li who became the next Khalifa, are called Musta'li Isma'ilis. Following are the various sub-sects of the Sevens Shi'as:

(i) The Nizari Isma'ilis

The Nizaris took their leader al Nizar into a mountain fortress and for a number of years led a life of secrecy and terror. They were notorious for carrying out well planned assassinations of their enemies and opponents. In 1817 AD, one Nizari Isma'ili Imam was given the title of Agha Khan by Qajar Shah of Iran. This Imam later moved to India where his *dais* or missionaries had considerable success in converting the local Hindu population to their doctrines, particularly in the state of Gujarat. Since then the title of Agha Khan has been retained by the Nizari Isma'ilis for their Imams. The Nizari Isma'ilis are a closely bonded community that practically worships the Agha Khan. No outsiders are permitted during their worship out at the *Jama'at Khana*.

(ii) The Musta'li Isma'ilis

The Musta'lis continued to follow the direct line of al Musta'li. But the visible line of Musta'li Imams ended in 1130 CE when al Musta'li's son, al Amir, died leaving only an infant son by the name of al Tayyab. The Fatimid Caliphate continued through the new Khalifa al Hafiz who was the grandson of al Mustansir. But since Al Hafiz and the other Khalifas that followed him were not in direct line of descent from al Musta'li, the Musta'li Shi'as did not recognize them as their

Imams. According to the Musta'li belief, the infant son of al Amir is in hiding and is considered by them as the invisible Imam. The Musta'lis of Yemen managed to convert large numbers of Hindus in Gujarat, a state in western India. These converts are known in India and Pakistan as Bohras. Later, several divisions occurred among the Bohras leading to Alawi and Dawudi branches.

(iii) Nusairis (arose in 874 CE)

They are a branch of the Seveners. They arose in 874 CE and followed their leader Abu Shua'ib Muhammad ibn Nusair (d. 880 CE).

(iv) Qarmatians (arose in 890 CE)

An offshoot of the Seveners, the sect is named after their leader Hamdan Qarmat. It arose in 890 CE due to the rejection of the then Fatimid Imam. The religion of the Qarmatians was very esoteric, combining ideas borrowed from the Greek, Persian and Indian sources. Their social philosophy was a kind of communistic way of living. They strictly believed in social justice and redistribution of wealth. Their religious practices and worships were carried out in secrecy. Their social practices were carried out with great revolutionary zeal and often involved terrorism, conspiracy and rebellion. In 930 CE, the Qarmatians raided Mecca and took away the Black Stone. It was eventually returned to the Ka'ba in 951 CE, after having broken into a number of pieces. The raids and revolutionary activities of the Qarmatians caused considerable grief to the 'Abbasid Empire.

(v) Akhbaris (arose in 950 CE)

The Akhbaris arose among the Seveners around 950 CE, during the time of the Buwaihid control of the 'Abbasid Caliphate. Akhbaris abide by the authority of only the Qur'an and the Sunnah and reject the use of *ijtihad*, whether by consensus (*ijma'*) or through intellect (*'aql*). The non-Akhbaris are referred to as Usulis. In the 18th century, the Akhbaris were declared non-Muslims by the Usulis and were driven out of Najaf, Karbala, and much of Iran.

(vi) Druzes (arose in 1021 CE)

The sixth Fatimid Khalifa, Al Hakim, was promoted by some of his followers as being divine. Foremost among the propagandists was a Turk named Darazi (the cobbler). The followers of this Turk came to be known as the Druzes. According to the Druze belief, Al Hakim is still alive and will return as the Mahdi in the later days. The Druzes practise their religion secretly and are considerably removed from true Islamic doctrines. The 600,000 Druzes in the world are confined to Lebanon, Syria and Israel.

7. The Shaikhis

The Shaikhi sect of the Shi'as was founded by Shaikh Ahmad (1753-1826) in the early nineteenth century in Iran. It is an offshoot of the mainstream Twelver Shi'as. However, Shaikh Ahmad led the movement for only two years until his death in 1826 CE. Before dying, he had appointed Saiyad Kazim Rashti as his successor who led the community until his own death in 1843. He did not appoint his own successor as he believed that the appearance of the Mahdi was imminent and even told his followers to go out in the world and search for him. An important follower and disciple of Saiyad Kazim Rashti was Mulla Husain and many expected that he will take on the role of the leader for the community. However, he declined the honour and in fact began a search for the Mahdi.

8. The Babis

In 1844, Mulla Husain attended a meeting in which he met a young man by the name of 'Ali Muhammad (1819-1850) in Shiraz, Iran, who had been a disciple of Kazim Rashti as well. In that meeting, 'Ali Muhammad took on the title of *Bab* and claimed to be the 'gate' between the people and the hidden Twelfth Imam. Many a Shaikhis followed the Bab. As time went on, the Bab began to portray himself less of a gate to the Hidden Imam and more as the Hidden Imam himself. This caused considerable outcry in Iran. As well, in a conference held in Badasht in 1848, it was announced by the Babis that they are splitting from Islam and the Islamic law. Soon, the Bab claimed to be the Mahdi himself. However, the Ottoman Empire was fearful of such claimants and had Bab declared a heretic and threw him in prison. Finally, on July 9, 1850, Bab was executed by a firing squad.

In many of his writings, the Bab alluded to a Promised One and referred to him as 'He whom God shall make manifest'. The Bab said that he himself was but a ring upon the hand of him whom God shall make manifest.

9. Baha'ism

The Bab had prophesied the appearance of a Messianic figure referred to as 'he whom God shall make manifest'. In 1853, Mirza Husain 'Ali (1817-1892), a follower of the Bab, received his first intimation that he was the one anticipated by the Bab. He took on the title of Baha'ullah, meaning the Splendour of God. Because of his earlier involvement in the Babi movement, he had been imprisoned and spent much of his life in incarceration. In 1863, Baha'ullah declared his claim to a divine mission and in 1866 he began claiming himself to be a Messenger of God. He died in prison in 1892.

Before his death, Baha'ullah had appointed his son, 'Abbas Effendi (1844-1921), as his successor and the sole interpreter of his writings. 'Abbas Effendi had been exiled himself and was in the prison at the time. In 1908, he was released from prison and took on the title of 'Abdul Baha (meaning servant of Baha). 'Abdul Baha remained the head of the Baha'i community until his death in 1921.

The will of 'Abdul Baha appointed Shogi Effendi (1897-1957) as the successor. Shogi Effendi mounted a concerted plan to popularise the Baha'i faith in Europe and North America and initiated several movements in this context beginning in 1937.

At present the Baha'i creed claims to be a separate religion that has its own Scriptures and Law. The status of Baha'ullah in the faith is that of a 'Manifestation of God' that could

be understood as a Prophet or Messenger. There are three core beliefs in Baha'ism that include: unity of God, unity of religion, and the unity of mankind. Racism, caste system, social classes, nationalism, and gender-based inequality are viewed in Baha'ism as obstacles to the unity of humankind. Thus, the Baha'is emphasise the equality of man and woman and an international government in the world.

The Baha'is also believe that the Holy Qur'an is abrogated and that the age of Islam is completed.

The Qur'anic Injunctions on Sectarianism

Following are some verses of the Holy Qur'an in which the Muslims are commanded to safeguard themselves against division and splitting:

“And mankind was but one community. Then they differed... (10:20)

“Hold fast, all together, by the rope of Allah and be not divided; and remember the favour of Allah which He bestowed upon you when you were enemies and He united your hearts in love, so that by His grace you became brothers...” 3:104)

“And be not like those who became divided and who disagreed after clear proofs had come to them...” (3:106)

“Those who split up their religion and became sects, thou hast nothing to do with them. Their affair is up to God, then shall He inform as to what they did.” (6:160)

The Prophet's Hadith on Sectarianism

“There will soon arise differences of opinion and sects among my people.” (Mishkat, 1:72)

“Whoso departs from the united body even a hand's span, has indeed shaken off the rope of Islam from his neck.” (Mishkat, Ch. 3, No. 101; Also Abu Dawud)

“Avoid the branching paths and stick to the united body and the majority.” (Mishkat, Ch. 3, No. 101 (74w))

“Verily, it will happen to my people as it did to the Children of Israel. The Children of Israel were divided into seventy-two sects, and my people will be divided into seventy-three. Every one of these sects will go to Hell except one sect.”

When the Companions queried as to which sect it will be, the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} said:

“The religion which is professed by me and my Companions.” (Mishkat, Ch. 6, Pt. 2)

Section 5

AHMADIYYAT—the Renaissance of Islam

The momentum given to Islam by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} lasted several centuries. During this period, the Muslims expanded upon the philosophy of Islam, explored the deeper meanings of the Holy Qur'an, collected the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, and formulated Islamic jurisprudence. At the same time, they made notable contributions in the fields of science, mathematics, medicine and philosophy.

However, all religions weaken with time and Islam was no exception. Despite the appearance of numerous saints, reformers and mystics to renew the spirit of this faith, Islam went into a steady decline. Superstition and innovation crept into this religion and the light of spirituality was all but extinguished.

However, in the later part of the nineteenth century, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) of Qadian, India, initiated a systematic revival and renewal of the religion of Islam. He attempted to remove all encrustation and superstition that had gathered over the past twelve centuries and presented this faith to the world in its pristine beauty. He breathed a new life into this religion and established its excellence among other creeds in the world. The Ahmadiyya Movement that he founded initiated the renaissance of Islam.

Today, the Ahmadiyya perspective in Islam represents one of the most advanced and rational interpretations of the prophecies related to the Latter Days that are given in the Bible, the Qur'an, and the Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. It emphasises the development of a close relationship with God, and peaceful and harmonious living among the peoples. It redirects our attention to the great wisdom buried in the Holy Qur'an and advocates the continuing applicability of Islamic principles to the modern age. It forbids the use of violence and urges the use of written, spoken or other media to spread its message. In a sense, the Ahmadiyya perspective in Islam has ushered in a period of spring to this orchard after centuries of relative drought and autumnal weather. The Ahmadiyya community today is perhaps the best example of the true Islamic society that can be observed anywhere in the world. It lives peacefully and is dedicated to the spreading of Islamic values and norms.

THE LATTER DAYS OF ISLAM

Many religions of the world have prophecies regarding the Latter Days that are also referred to as the End of Time.

In the Zoroastrian religion, these prophecies speak of the darkening of the sun, the lengthening and shortening of the days, men becoming more vile, melting of the metal in the hills, the raging of a battle between the righteous and the wicked, and the arrival of a final reformer and renovator of the world who will save mankind.

In Hinduism, time is considered cyclic with the world presently going through the last phase (*Kali Yuga*) which is marked by: impiety, violence, decay, chaos, and waiting for the appearance of the final avatar, Kalki.

The concept of Kalki also exists in the Sikh faith and is described in the *Sri Dasam Granth* by Guru Gobind Singh. The coming of Kalki will take place when incest, adultery, atheism, and sin have spread everywhere.

In Judaism, the End Time is marked by a period when the Jews shall abandon the Laws of Moses, they will undertake another Exodus with the Jewish people returning to the land of Israel, the coming of the Messiah to lead the Jewish people and the world, and the ushering in of an age of justice and peace.

In the religion of Christianity, there are very extensive and vivid descriptions of the End of Time: a time of great trials and tribulations; when nations will rise against nations; when great earthquakes, famines and pestilences will take their toll; a time of terror and heavenly strikes; there will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars; the roaring of the sea and the waves; and the return of the Messiah himself.

In the religion of Islam, the prophecies of the Latter Days speak of the appearance of the Mahdi, the coming out of the *Dajjal* (the Antichrist)—who is described as a beast-like creature with one blind eye, letting loose of Ya'juj and Ma'juj (Gog and Magog) who will ravage the earth, the appearance of a peculiar insect, the rising of the sun from the west, and the return of Jesus son of Mary to establish peace on earth.

The Holy Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} make reference to the Latter Days of Islam. In verses 3-4 of *Surah al-Jumu'ah*, it states:

“He it is Who has raised among the unlettered *people* a Messenger from among themselves who recites unto them His Signs, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom, although they had been, before, in manifest misguidance;

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ
يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ
لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٤﴾

And *among* others from among them who have not yet joined them. He is the Mighty, the Wise.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 62:3-4)

وَأَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُمْ لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ وَهُوَ
الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤﴾

It is reported in the Hadith that Abu Huraira queried the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} as to who were these ‘others’ mentioned in the above verse. At this, it is reported in the Hadith that:

The Holy Prophet^{pbuh} put his hand on Salman al-Farsi and said,
“If faith were at Pleiades, even then some men or man from him would attain it.”
(*Sahih Bukhari*, Chapter 888, No. 2005)

While the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} condemn very strongly the splitting and division in the Muslim community through breaking away into sects, there is a Hadith and a prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} that such an act may be justified in the latter days of Islam. Huzaifa reports that he asked the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} about the latter days of turmoil and commotion:

I asked, ‘What do you enjoin me if I reach that?’

He (the Prophet) replied, ‘You should stick to the Jama'at (body) of the Muslims and their leader.’

I asked, ‘If they have no Jama'at and no leader?’

He said, ‘Then keep aloof entirely from those parties though you should have to cleave to the root of a tree till death overtakes you while you will remain upon that (condition).’

(*Mishkat*, vol. 4, Ch. 39, No. 4)

Thus, much as the separation from the main body of Muslims was frowned upon by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and admonished against by the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, it was bound to happen in the latter days of Islam and some indication of this situation was already intimated by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} himself to his Companions.

While a large majority of the Muslim community has been able to maintain the purity of the Islamic teachings over the past many centuries, the arrival of the Latter Days has ushered in a period of great tumult and disorder that is likened in the Holy Qur'an to *qiamat-e sughra*, or a lesser calamity. The picture painted by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} is of times of great turmoil, hardships, commotion, rebellion, mischief, war, and rioting. He mentions how *Ya'juj* and *Ma'juj* will become unrestrained and surge forth; and how *Dajjal*—the Antichrist—will appear who will be blind in his right eye and will try to lead people astray but will eventually be killed by the Messiah and the Mahdi. While some of these signs could be taken literally, much of the description is in metaphoric and allegoric language.

Some of the prophetic Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} regarding the Latter Days are given below that paint a very disturbing picture of these times:

“Prophethood shall last among you, as long as God wishes. Then He shall raise it up.
Then there will be khilafat along the lines of prophethood, as long as God wishes.
Then He shall raise it up.
Then there shall be oppressive kingdom, as long as God wishes. Then He shall raise it up.
Then there shall be imperialistic kingdom, as long as God wishes. Then He shall raise it up.
Then there will be khilafat along the lines of prophethood. Then he (the Prophet) remained silent.”

(*Sunan Ahmad / Mishkat* Ch.29, No.425w)

“The Last Hour shall not come to pass until ...
learning will become obsolete, and earthquakes will increase,
and time will become short, and trials will appear,
and ‘*harj*’ will increase—and it is slaughter—
and till wealth will increase among you and becomes enormous ...
till the people will outdo one another in lofty buildings ...
till the sun will rise from the west.”

(All Hadith books / *Mishkat*, Ch.39, No.32)

“... Surely, the son of Mary shall soon descend amongst you as a just ruler;
he will break the cross and kill the swine and there will be no *jizya* (poll tax on non-Muslims)
...”

(*Sahih Bukhari*, Bab 349, No.668)

“There is no Mahdi except Isa.”

(*Sunan ibn Maja*)

The Ahmadi Muslims believe that the Latter Days of Islam are upon us and the Messiah and the Mahdi promised by the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} has come. The condition of Islam in the world is in a dire state and there is no unified Jama'at and leader in the world for the Muslims. Nations are surging against nations and mischievous groups (*Dajjal*) are maligning and undermining Islam.

WHAT IS AHMADIYYAT?

Ahmadiyyat is a sect of Islam and not a new religion. Ahmadiyyat is a movement, entirely within the fold of Islam, meant to revive its true spirit and philosophy, to cleanse Islam of all superstitious and unnecessary beliefs and customs which had crept in over the past fourteen centuries and, finally, to preach the religion of Islam to non-Muslims with the enthusiasm and zeal of the early Muslims. In summary, Ahmadiyyat is the fulfilment of all the prophecies of the Bible, the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} concerning the Latter Days of Islam.

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam was founded by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, India, in 1889. The followers of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad believe that he is the Mujaddid (Renovator) of the fourteenth century of Islam and the same Messiah and Mahdi whose coming was foretold by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, and was eagerly awaited by all Muslims. His followers call themselves Ahmadi Muslims, only to differentiate themselves from members of other Islamic sects, and strictly follow the orthodox religion of Islam.

As far as the fundamental beliefs or acts of worship are concerned, the Ahmadi Muslims have neither taken anything out nor added anything new to the religion of Islam. The Ahmadi Muslims make their declaration of faith by reciting the same Kalima which was recited by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} himself; they say their Prayers and keep the fasts in the same manner as the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} of Islam did; and their Qibla, their Ka'ba, their Adhan, their *Hajj* and their Qur'an are all exactly the same as that of the other Muslims.

DIFFERENCES WITH SUNNI MUSLIMS

There are basically three theological beliefs held by Ahmadi Muslims which separate them from the mainstream of Sunni Islam. These three beliefs concern:

1. Jesus Christ's ascension to heaven,
2. The finality of the Prophet Muhammad's prophethood, and
3. The identity of the Promised Messiah.

1. Jesus Christ's Ascension to Heaven

The Sunni Muslims believe that Jesus was not put on the cross at all and that his place was taken by someone who resembled him. Jesus, according to them, was physically raised to heaven.

Ahmadis believe that Jesus was indeed put on the cross, but only for a few hours. They consider it highly unlikely that Jesus would have died in such a short time as the Romans meted out the punishment of crucifixion as a torture. They believe that Jesus, after recovering from his ordeal, travelled east to Kashmir where he died a natural death and remains buried in a tomb known locally as Rozabal in Mohalla Khanyar in Srinagar, India. The reason for Jesus' travel to Kashmir was the fact that many Israelites had settled down in Iraq, Afghanistan and northern India after their exile from Israel enforced by the conquering Babylonians in 586 BC. In Hebrew history, these wandering Israelites are known as the Lost Tribes. It was the mission of Jesus to preach to the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel. The Ahmadiyya viewpoint is well supported by the Holy Qur'an, the Tradition, the New

Testament accounts, and the writings of earlier scholars of Islam. After the publication of *Jesus in India* by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1908, a number of scholars, including several from Europe and the United States, have taken up their pen in support of this thesis.

2. The Finality of Muhammad’s Prophethood

In verse 41 of *Surah al Ahzab*, the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} has been given the title of *Khatam-an Nabiyyin*, the Seal of the Prophets. A majority of the Muslims interpret from this verse that the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was chronologically the last Prophet and that no new Prophets can come after him. They also believe the phenomenon of prophetic revelation to be closed for ever.

“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 has full knowledge of all things.”
(*Al-Qur’an*, 33:41)

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ
وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ
وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

According to the Ahmadi Muslims, the expression ‘Seal of the Prophets’ does not mean that the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} is chronologically the last Prophet. A seal is a mark of distinction and, in this case, implies great perfection of prophethood. Ahmadis believe that the door to prophethood is always open. However, a new prophet must be from within the fold of Islam. Ahmadi Muslims do believe that the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} was the last law-giving Prophet and that no new law-giving prophets can come after him.

There is ample evidence from the writings of the ancient and medieval scholars of Islam that the coming of a non Law-bearing prophet in the Muslim community does not interfere with the status of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} as *Khatam-an Nabiyyin*. In fact, it enhances his status as by truly following him, one can achieve such a station.

3. The Identity and Status of the Promised Messiah

Although most Sunni Muslims believe that the Messiah shall return according to the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, they identify him with the ancient Jesus Christ who lived in the first century of the Christian era.

Ahmadi Muslims believe that since Jesus Christ has already died, it can only be someone else who can appear as the Latter Day Messiah. Ahmadis believe that this Promised Messiah^{as} has already come in the person of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian.

In the following pages we shall read about the life of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and will see that he completely fits the typical role of prophets mentioned in the Bible and the Holy Qur’an. We shall see how God aided him at each critical juncture in his life and helped him prevail against his enemies and opponents. We will read about the love that he harboured for the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and the passion that he displayed for his God. We shall read about the contributions that he has made in the way of renovating and rejuvenating the faith of Islam through his writings, lectures and prayers, and the many *bid’at* (innovations) that he removed from the Muslims. We shall also read that being the Promised Messiah^{as}, his status was also that of a Dependent Prophet.

The above are the three important areas of contention between the Ahmadi and Sunni Muslims. In all other essential Islamic beliefs, the two groups hold more or less similar views.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TITLE ‘PROMISED MESSIAH’?

In the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, there are numerous references to the coming of a Latter Day Reformer who will cleanse the religion of Islam of all unnecessary customs and superstitions and restore to it the eminence and glory which it used to enjoy in the early days. He is also expected to unite not only all the Muslims but also all the religions in the world. This Reformer is referred to by various names and titles in the Hadith such as:

- Mahdi
- Messiah
- Jesus son of Mary

The advent of this Reformer is so vividly described in the Hadith literature that Muslims of all sects and generations had been eagerly waiting for his appearance.

Since one of the names used for this Reformer in the Hadith is ‘Jesus son of Mary’, many simple minded Muslims started believing that Jesus Christ himself will reappear in the Latter Days of Islam. When Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad proclaimed in 1890 that he was the Messiah whose advent was promised in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, a majority of the Muslims rejected his claim because they were looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ himself. In this respect these Muslims behaved like the Jews of two thousand years ago who had rejected Jesus’ claim to prophethood because they, too, were waiting for the second coming of the Prophet Elijah.

After receiving many revelations to this effect, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad declared in 1890 that he was the same Messiah and Mahdi whose advent had been foretold by the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} himself. He declared that he was in communion with God and constantly received His revelations and signs.

Similarities with Jesus Christ

A question arises as to why the Latter Day reformer has been referred to by the name of ‘Isa ibn Maryam’ (Jesus son of Mary) in the Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. The reason is the great resemblance this Latter Days reformer bears to Jesus Christ in a number of ways. If we look at their time settings, their teachings and their objectives, we find such a remarkable resemblance between the two as if the history is repeating itself. The similarities in fact begin between Moses and Muhammad and continue into Jesus and Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Some of the important areas in which the two resemble each other are discussed below:

- Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad holds the same relationship with the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} which Jesus Christ held *vis-a-vis* Moses.

- Jesus Christ was not a law giving prophet and came some thirteen to fifteen¹⁴ centuries after the Prophet Moses, the greatest law giving prophet of the Israelites. Similarly, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was not a law giving prophet and he, too, came some thirteen centuries after the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, the greatest law giving prophet of all times.
- Many prophets appeared between the time of Moses and Jesus. Similarly, many *ulema*, *auliya*, and *muhaddithin* appeared between the time of Muhammad and Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. According to a saying of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, the *ulema* of his community will be like the prophets of Bani Israel.
- Just as there were prophecies about the first coming of Jesus Christ in the Hebrew Bible, Talmud and Midrash, there were also prophecies about his second advent in the New Testament, the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith.
- Jews of the day rejected Jesus' claim to prophethood because they were mistakenly waiting for the second coming of the Prophet Elijah himself. Similarly, Muslims of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's time rejected his claim to Messiahship because they, too, were mistakenly waiting for the second coming of Jesus Christ himself.
- Just as the Jews, unto whom the Messiah was supposed to be sent, are still waiting for his arrival, the Muslims of today, unto whom the second coming of the Messiah was supposed to have occurred, are still waiting for his coming.
- Jesus was the first Israelite prophet in their history who was widely rejected by the Jews. Similarly, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is the first religious leader in the history of Islam who has been rejected by practically all sects and denominations.
- Despite the fact that the Jews imagined the coming of Messiah from heaven to be with great glory as their king, he in fact appeared as a rather weak and humble individual on the earth. Similarly, the Muslims expected that the returning Messiah will descend from heaven and will be accompanied by an army wielding swords. However, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born under very ordinary circumstance on earth and lived a life far removed from worldly ostentations and glory.
- The intention of Jesus Christ was to reform Judaism and not to found a new religion. It is not possible to found a new religion without giving the people a new Law. Jesus did not abrogate the Mosaic Law and, in fact, maintained its continued applicability to his own followers. Similarly, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad came to reform the Islam of his day and not to found any new religion.

¹⁴ The scholars differ as to the exact period of Moses, some putting Exodus around 1479 BC and some nearly two centuries later, in 1290 BC.

- Jesus’ teachings emphasized the gentler elements of the Jewish religion, such as kindness, meekness, humility, charity, forgiveness and repentance. Jesus de-emphasized the harsher elements of the Mosaic Law which, with its restrictions and punishments, had come to be regarded more as a curse than a blessing. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad’s teachings also emphasise the gentler elements of the religion of Islam such as patience, meekness, humility, forgiveness, charity and prayer. He, too, de-emphasized some of the harsher elements of Islamic history such as *jihad* with a sword.
- Just as the followers of Jesus Christ were persecuted because of his name (being Christians), the followers of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad are persecuted because of his name (being Ahmadis).

THE INSTITUTION OF *MUJADDIDIYYAT* IN ISLAM

A Mujaddid is a person who renews or renovates the religion. According to a Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, which has been recorded by Abu Dawud, *Mujaddids* (renovators) will appear during every century of Islam:

“Verily, God shall raise for this community, at the head of every century, one who will renew (renovate) for it its religion.” (Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 37, Hadith No. 4278)

The function of a Mujaddid is basically to renew and renovate the religion of Islam and re-infuse the spirit that is dying among the populace. He cleanses the faith of extraneous influences and *bidda’* (innovations), and restores its pristine condition and beauty. Thus, the function of a Mujaddid can be performed by a saint, scholar or khalifa of Islam who devotes his life to this particular function.

A list of various Renovators who have appeared during the past fourteen hundred years is given below. These *mujaddids* were the most outstanding saints and scholars of their time and did much to reform the religion of Islam of their day. Muslim scholars agree that it is not necessary for a Mujaddid to make a claim in his own lifetime. Thus, it is generally left to the historians to judge as to who is the mujaddid of any given century. According to the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, there will be at least one person who will be raised as Mujaddid. Sometimes, the Muslims have recognised more than one mujaddid for a given century.

List of *Mujaddids* of Islam commonly recognised by the Muslims

Islamic Century	Mujaddid	Hijra calendar	Christian calendar
1st	‘Umar bin ‘Abdul ‘Aziz	62-101	682-720
2nd	Imam Malik ibn Anas	96-180	715-796
	M. Ibn Idris ash-Shafi’i	150-205	767-820
3rd	Ahmad bin Hanbal	163-241	780-855
	Abu Ja’far ar-Razi	260-324	874-936
	Abul Hasan Ash’ari	259-323	873-935
4th	Hakim al-Nishaburi	321-402	933-1012
	Abu Bakr Baqlani	339-403	950-1013
5th	Imam al Ghazali	450-504	1058-1111

6th	ʿAbdul Qadir Jilani Fakhruddin ar-Razi	469-561 544-607	1077-1166 1149-1210
7th	Muinuddin Chishti Muhaiuddin ibn al ʿArabi Nizamuddin Auliya Ibn Taimiyya	535-633 560-637 635-725 661-728	1141-1236 1165-1240 1238-1325 1263-1328
8th	Ibn Hajar Asqalani	773-852	1372-1448
9th	Jalaluddin al Sayyuti	849-911	1445-1505
10th	Muhammad Tahir Gujrati Khairuddin al Ramli	???-976 993-1082	????-1568 1585-1671
11th	Ahmad Sirhindi	971-1034	1564-1624
12th	Shah Wali Ullah	1115-1176	1703-1762
13th	Ahmad Brelwi	1200-1247	1786-1831
14th	Mirza Ghulam Ahmad	1251-1326	1835-1908

It should be noted that the selection of a given person in history as a Mujaddid is a subjective matter and scholars frequently differ with each other. For some centuries, the candidates are uncontested. For example, every historian has picked ʿUmar bin ʿAbdul Aziz as the Mujaddid for the first century of Islam. Similarly, Al-Ghazali stands as the uncontested candidate for the fifth century Islam.

It is surprising to note that while more than hundred years are past the beginning of the fourteenth century of Islam, the Muslim community at large does not seem to find any appropriate candidate for the position of the Mujaddid other than Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the founder of the Ahmadiyya movement in Islam.

KINDS OF PROPHETHOOD

Although Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} is addressed by God as a prophet and a messenger even in his very early revelations that were published in the first four volumes of *Brahin-i Ahmadiyya* (1880-1884), he took these titles merely as signs of God’s extreme love for him and nothing more. Thus, until the year 1901, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} continued to consider himself only a *Muhaddath* (one who is involved in a discourse with God).

However, after the year 1901, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} considered his station to be somewhat higher than that of a conventional *Muhaddath* in Islam. The very first indication of this realisation appears in his book *Aik Ghalti ka Izala—A Misconception Removed* (November 1901, p.209-211). In this writing, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} argues that the word *Muhaddath* was not sufficient to explain the great frequency with which he was being given intimations of the Unseen by God. In the same writing, he also argued that only the word ‘prophethood’ correctly explained such intimation of the future.

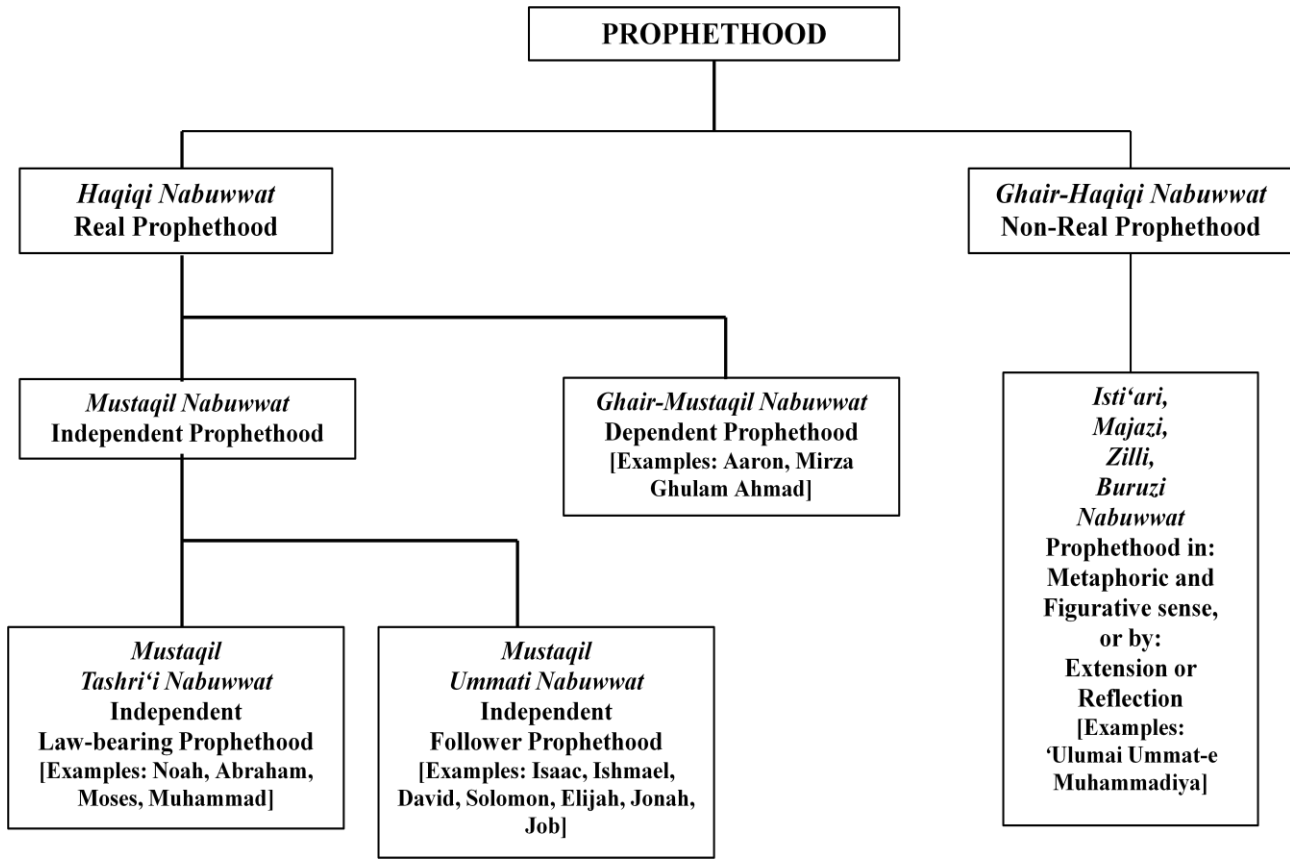
In his many writings, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad explains that there are in fact different types of prophethood. Some meanings of the word ‘prophet’ are general as defined by the Arabic dictionary and some meanings are more specific as used by the Muslim Community as theological terminology. And again, some applications of the word ‘prophet’ could be purely metaphorical and figurative.

The following chart and explanations are provided for the benefit of the reader and are based on the philosophy and themes expressed by the Promised Messiah^{as} on this subject in his writings:

Haqiqi or Real Prophethood covers all prophets that are so in the real sense of the word.

Ghair-Haqiqi or Non-Real prophethood includes such stations that are awarded purely in a metaphoric, allegoric, vicarious, reflective or some other sense of the word. Such titles of *Ghair Haqiqi* Nabuwwat have been used in Islamic history for saints and *Aulia-Allah* (Friends of Allah) as well. According to one Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}: “*Ulama-i ummati ka anbiya-i Bani Isra’il*”—the scholars of my community shall be like the prophets of the Children of Israel.

Chart showing various types of prophethood



Haqiqi Nabuwwat (Real Prophethood) can be further divided into: *Mustaqil* (Independent) and *Ghair Mustaqil* (Dependent) prophethood.

Mustaqil or Independent Prophethood does not owe its existence to any other prophet or individual. It is granted directly by God. This prophethood is further divided into: *Tashri'i* (Law-bearing) and *Ghair Tashri'i* (Non-Law-bearing) prophethood.

Tashri'i or Law-bearing Prophethood involves the coming of a new law for the community and abrogation of the previous one. Considering the very large number of prophets that have come in history, Law-bearing prophethood are relatively less common.

Examples of such prophets include: Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad. Outside of Palestine-Arabia region, Zoroaster was also a Law-bearing Prophet.

Ghair Tashri'i Prophethood is commonly referred to by Muslim scholars as ***Ummati Nabuwwat*** or 'Follower Prophethood'. Examples of Independently appointed Follower Prophets include majority of the prophets mentioned in the Bible and the Holy Qur'an, such as: Isaac, Ishmael, David, Solomon, Elijah, Job, Elisha, Zechariah, John and many others. These Prophets did not bring any new Law and *followed* the Law of pre-existing dispensations; however, their prophethood was independent and they did not owe their station to another individual.

Ghair Mustaqil or Dependent Prophethood appears to be rare in history, perhaps due to lack of appropriate historical evidence. In the Mosaic dispensation, the only clear example is that of the Prophet Aaron who seems to owe his prophethood to Moses who wanted God to appoint his brother to help him. Had Aaron not been related to Moses, he would likely not have received this station—not at least in the manner in which it was actually granted. In more recent times, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has categorised his own status as ***Ghair Mustaqil*** Nabi or Dependent Prophet. According to him, this is the only type of prophethood that is now open after the coming of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} as *Khatam-an-Nabiyyin* or Seal of the Prophets¹⁵.

Below are the types of prophethood that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has denied very strongly and vehemently for himself:

- **Law bearing prophethood** (*Tashri'i nabuwwat*), that would abrogate or conflict with the existing Law of Islam. Throughout his life and in all his writings he has emphasised the fact that no Law bearing prophet can come after the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.
- **Independent prophethood** (*Mustaqil nabuwwat*), that does not depend upon another person. An example of such prophets would be the likes of David, Solomon, Elijah, Job, Jonas, Daniel, Zechariah and John the Baptist. Although these prophets did not bring any new Law of their own and essentially followed the Mosaic Law, they did not owe their prophethood to the person of Moses.

According to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the above two types of prophethood are completely closed after the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} has been named the Seal of the Prophets. Now we shall look at the types of prophethood that, according to him, remain open even after the Holy Prophet's coming. These categories of prophethood do not conflict with the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} being the Seal of the Prophets. It is only these types of prophethood that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad has claimed for his own person.

¹⁵ The Promised Messiah says in his book *Haqiqatul Wahiy* (p-100): "...although a great many prophets came among the Children of Israel, but their prophethood was not the result of following Moses but these prophethood were a direct bounty of God and had nothing to do with the following of Moses. For this reason, unlike me, they were not prophet in one sense and follower in another but those prophets were called Independent Prophets and obtained their station directly."

- ***Ghair Mustaqil Nabuwwat*** (Dependent Prophethood)—this prophethood is not independent and depends upon the prophethood of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} and is obtained through his blessings and attachment to him. On one hand the incumbent is a prophet and on the other hand he is a follower of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}.
- ***Isti'ari Nabuwwat*** (Prophethood in metaphorical sense)—this prophethood is *Ghair Haqiqi* (non-real)
- **Prophethood in figurative sense** (*majazi nabuwwat*)—this prophethood is also *Ghair Haqiqi* (non-real)
- **Prophethood by extension** (*zilli nabuwwat*), where one basically represents the prophethood of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} himself.
- **Prophethood by reflection** (*buruzi nabuwwat*), in which one's prophethood is no more than a reflection of the Holy Prophet's own status.

According to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a prophet is one whose converse with God and his intimation of future events reaches an extreme level—a level generally beyond the scope and ability of a traditional saint, *qutb*, *abdal*, *wali-ullah* (friend of Allah) or *'alim* (scholar) in Islam. Likewise, his authority and his area of jurisdiction are also greater.

LIFE OF MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD BEFORE COMMISSIONING (1835-1882)

Preparation of the Land of India

A long time before the birth of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the land of India was being prepared for his advent. Islam was originally brought to India some thirteen centuries ago by people accompanying Muhammad bin Qasim in 711 CE. Since then, most of the great scholars and mystics of Islam were initially confined to the western part of the Muslim Empire, extending from Afghanistan to the Atlantic Ocean. It was only during the past millennium that many Muslim scholars and mystics either moved from the Middle East to India or were actually born there. The most well-known foreign arrivals in India include: **Abul Hasan al-Hujwari** (990-1077), popularly remembered in the subcontinent as *Data Ganj Bakhsh*; **Haji Huud** (1025-1141), who was born in Syria but eventually decided to come to India after being divinely inspired and became extremely active in preaching and converting a large number of persons to Islam; **Shah Yusuf Gardezi** (11th century) who came to India from Gardez, Afghanistan, and is buried in Multan where his tomb was visited by the famous historian, Arnold Joseph Toynbee; **Muinuddin Chishti** (1141-1230), who saw the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} in a dream and was asked to go to the land of India; **Baba Fakhruddin Suhrawardi** (1169-1295), who was a ruler of Sistan, Iran, but came to India at the advice of his shaikh; **Sayed Jalaluddin Bukhari 'Surkh-Posh'** (1199-1291) who came to India from Bukhara around 1238 CE; **Shah Jalaluddin** (1271-1347) who came to Bengal from Turkey and was responsible for the large-scale conversions to Islam in that land; and

Shahabuddin Hamdani (1314-1384), who was born in Iran but travelled extensively in Kashmir where he preached Islam to the local population.

Later scholars and mystics that graced the land of India included: **Baba Fakhruddin Suhrawardi** (12th century); **Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki** (d. 1236); **Fariduddin Ganj Shakar** (1173-1266); **Lal Shahbaz Qalandar** (1177-1274); **Fakhruddin Ibrahim Iraqi** (1213-1289), who spent a number of years in India before returning to the Middle East; **Nizamuddin Auliya** (1238-1325); **Amir Khusrow** (1253-1325); **Shah Rukne Alam of Multan** (1251-1335); **Nasiruddin Mahmud Chiragh Dehlvi** (1273-1356); **Akhi Siraj A'ina-i Hind** (1300-1357); **Ashraf Jahangir Semnani** (1287-1386); **Sayed Muhammad Husaini 'Banda Nawaz'** (1321-1422), who was responsible for spreading Islam in Baluchistan and Afghanistan; **Makhdum 'Ali Mahimi** (1372-1431), who is credited with writing the first exegesis of the Holy Qur'an in India; **Mian Mir** (1550-1635); **Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi** (1564-1624); **Shah Waliullah muhaddath Dehlvi** (1703-1762); **Khwaja Mir Dard** (1721-1785); **Shah 'Abdul Aziz** (1745-1823); **Shah Isma'il 'Shaheed'** (1779-1831); and **Sayed Ahmad Brelwi** (1786-1831).

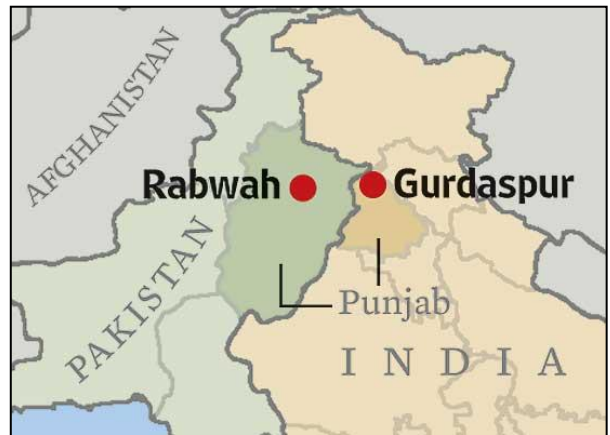
Many Sufi *Tariqas* (Orders) that were originally founded in the Middle East were eventually brought to India:

- The Shadhiliyya Order, founded by Abu Hasan Ash-Shadhili, was brought to India by **Shaikh Abu Bakr Miskin** and **Shaikh Mir Ahmad Ibrahim**
- The Chishtiyya Order of Central Asia took root in India under **Muinuddin Chishti**
- The Suhrawardiyya Order was brought to India by **Bahauddin Zakariya** (1170-1267)
- The Kubrawiyya Order was founded by **Najmuddin al Kubra** (d. 1221) in Tashkent and became important in Kashmir during the late fourteenth century
- The Naqshbandiyya Order, initially founded by Bahauddin Naqshband in Bukhara and Uzbekistan, was introduced to India by **Khwaja Muhammad al-Baqi Billah** (1564-1605)
- The Qadiriyya Order founded by 'Abdul Qadir Jilani was introduced to India by **'Abdul Karim Jili** (1366-1424)

Thus, the land of India was fully prepared and ready for the second advent of the Messiah.

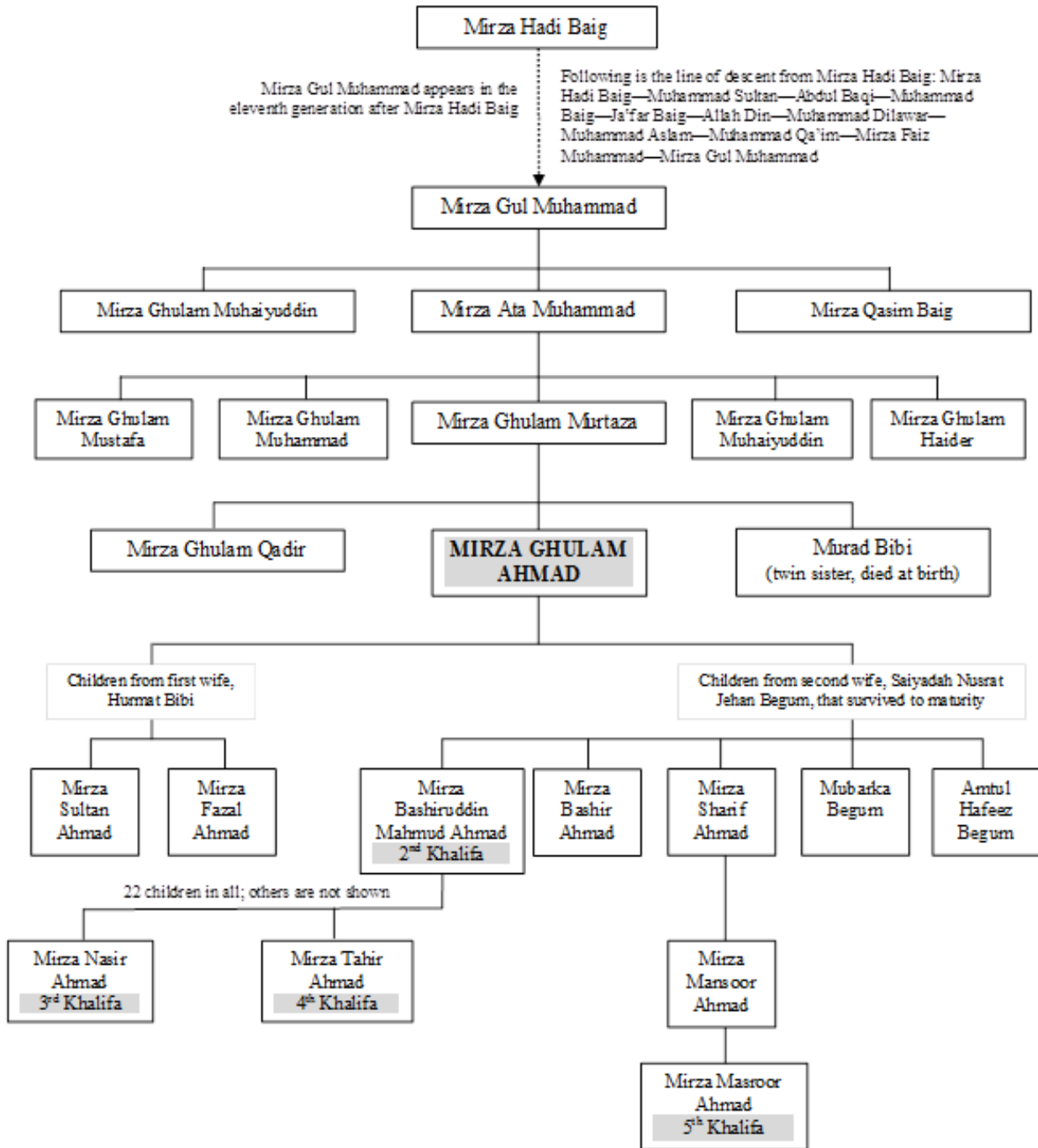
Ancestors of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad is descended from Mirza Hadi Baig who belonged to the Birlas branch of the Mughal family. Some thirteen generations separate Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad from Mirza Hadi Baig who migrated to India in 1530 CE from his hometown of Samarkand with two hundred others during the close of the reign of the Mughal King, Zahiruddin Baber (1483-1530 CE).



During the Mughal rule in India, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's ancestors held responsible posts at the royal court and had control over a large area around Qadian. At the rise of the Sikh rule in Punjab, his family started to lose control of this territory, which was eventually confiscated in the nineteenth century by the British Government in India. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's father spent his entire life in litigation trying to regain possession of his ancestral estate but did not gain anything.

Chart showing the Family Tree of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad



King Baber was a Turko-Mongol Muslim conqueror from Central Asia who finally succeeded in laying down the foundation of the Mughal Empire in South Asia. Mirza Hadi Baig and his party settled along the Beas River, 70 miles east of Lahore, in the Indian province of Punjab and called their settlement Islampur. After Mirza Hadi Baig was appointed *Qadhi* (judge) with jurisdiction over seventy villages around his settlement, Islampur came to be known as Islampur Qadhi Mahji. Over a period of time, the name was shortened to Qadhi Mahji and then to Qadian.

At the time of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's birth, India was ruled by the British. They had been in India since 1612, first under the charter of the East India Company and then, from 1858 onward, as part of the British Raj (reign) that lasted until 1947 when the subcontinent gained independence from Britain and divided into India and Pakistan. Of all the colonising powers of Europe, the British were perhaps the most considerate in the sense that they gave considerable autonomy to local chiefs and rajas, promoted education among the indigenous people, implemented justice without prejudice, and created an environment of peace and security.

The Birth of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835)

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was born at Qadian, in district Gurdaspur, India, on February 13, 1835. At the time of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's birth, Qadian was merely a small village without electricity, paved roads or railway line. The nearest connection with the outside world was through a place called Batala, eleven miles away.

He was born immediately after a twin sister named Jannat Bibi, who died a few days later. Muhaiuddin ibn al 'Arabi, a great Muslim mystic of Spain, had prophesied that the Promised Messiah would be born a twin. The name of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's father was Mirza Ghulam Murtaza and his mother's, Chiragh Bibi. He had an older brother by the name of Mirza Ghulam Qadir and a twin sister named Murad Bibi. The latter died soon after birth.

Early Life and Education

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad received all his education at home. His religious education started at an early age of six when a tutor, by the name of Fazal Ilahi, was retained to teach him the Holy Qur'an and the Persian language.

When he was ten years old, another teacher by the name of Fazal Ahmad taught him Arabic grammar. At age seventeen, he received instruction in more of Arabic grammar and something of logic, by another tutor named Gul 'Ali Shah. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's father, being an experienced physician, instructed him in the field of natural medicine.



Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah.

Although Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad could swim and ride, he was not really fond of games or sports. Right from very early age, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was given to studying the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, and other religious literature. Even at this young age his favourite pastime was praying and studying.

The First Marriage (1850)

According to the custom of the time, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was married at an early age of sixteen, to his cousin named Hurmat Bibi. From this first marriage, two sons were born: Mirza Sultan Ahmad (1853-1931) and Mirza Fazal Ahmad (1855-1904). Neither of these sons performed the *bai'at* (oath of allegiance) during the lifetime of the Promised Messiah^{as}. Mirza Fazal Ahmad passed away four years before his father's death while Mirza Sultan Ahmad eventually performed the *bai'at* at the hand of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, the Second Successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Even after the marriage, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad continued to spend most of his time in seclusion, prayer and meditation. The first marriage of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was not a happy one. His first wife not only refused to support his mission but in fact joined his foes in actively opposing him. The marriage, therefore, led to a permanent separation of the two although a divorce never took place.

Job in Sialkot (1864-1868)

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's father wanted him to learn some worldly knowledge and obtain some lucrative post in line with ancestral tradition, but he had no such desire. His father eventually secured him a government post as a Reader in a court in Sialkot. In deference to his father's wishes, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad took up this position in 1864, at the age of 29. He worked at Sialkot for about four years but his heart was never in his job. He spent all his spare time in worship, in the study of religious books and in carrying out discussions and debates with the Christian missionaries in the area.

In 1868 he learned of his mother's serious illness back in Qadian. He immediately resigned from his job and returned to Qadian. His mother, however, had passed away before his arrival.

Start of Revelations (1865)

The spiritual experiences of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad began in his early youth when he started having true dreams and visions. In these dreams he met various saints and prophets including the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. It was, however, in 1865 at the age of thirty, that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad received his first revelation in Arabic which concerned his age:

“Your age will be eighty years—a few years less or some years more; and you will live long enough to witness your distant progeny.”

The above revelation was in the Arabic language. A few years later, in 1868, he received another important revelation in Urdu:

“... He will bless you greatly, so much so that Kings will seek blessings from your garments.”

In 1872, he received the following revelation in Arabic in which God speaks about him in the following words:

“He is to Me like My Unity and My Uniqueness. Therefore, he will soon be made well-known among people.”

In the beginning, his revelations were short and infrequent, followed by long silent intervals. Gradually, the frequency as well as the length of his revelations increased. The written contents of some of his individual revelations run for many pages. In his lifetime, he received revelations mostly in Urdu and Arabic languages with some in Persian and a few even in English.

After the death of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, a collection of all his dreams, visions and revelations was compiled from various publications into one volume called *Tadhkirah*. Many of his revelations were repetition of the Qur’anic verses. The purpose was to emphasize certain meanings and implications of these verses which applied to a particular set of circumstances. A great number of his revelations and visions contain prophecies regarding future events. Many of these prophecies were fulfilled during the lifetime of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad or soon afterwards. But some of his prophecies concern the future and still await fulfilment. A great many of his revelations contain statements of extreme love and endearment which God displayed for Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.

Fasting and Devotion (1875)

In the year 1875, at the age of forty, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad kept fasts over a period of eight or nine months. He gradually reduced his daily intake of food to just half a piece of bread and intensified his prayers and devotions. As a result, God blessed him with great insight into the spiritual secrets and he met many prophets and saints in his dreams and visions.

Death of the Father (1876)

In the year 1876, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was in Lahore when he had a dream. From this dream he concluded that his father was about to pass away. He hastened back to Qadian and found that although his father was ill, it did not appear that his illness was very serious. The next day, at noon, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad received the following Qur’anic verse in a revelation:

“By the heaven and the Morning Star—” (*Al-Qur’an*, 86:2)

With this revelation he was also given the understanding that it referred to the death of his father which was to occur that day after sunset. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was greatly troubled by this revelation and naturally wondered about the cessation of certain sources of income which were available only during his father’s lifetime. Immediately, he received another revelation of the following Qur’anic verse:

“Is not God sufficient for His servant?” (*Al-Qur’an*, 39:37)

This revelation gave him great comfort and satisfaction. That day, after sunset, his father passed away in accordance with his revelation.

Adherence to Truth (1878)

An incident took place in 1878 which demonstrates how truthful and honest Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was in his everyday life. It so happened that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} once sent a manuscript to a printer by mail at the rate prescribed for parcels. In it he also enclosed a letter, addressed to the printer, giving certain instructions for the printing of the manuscript. He was not aware that postal regulations forbade the inclusion of letters in any material sent at the parcel rate. The owner of the printing press was an opponent of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and made a complaint against him to the postal authorities.

A case was filed against Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and he was summoned to the court to answer the charges. The lawyer who was representing his case, advised him to deny that he had placed any letter in the parcel. However, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad immediately rejected this advice telling his lawyer that he could not deviate from the truth and make a false statement for fear of punishment. His lawyer told him that in that case there would not be any hope for acquittal since he would be admitting to the breaking of the postal regulations.

Later, when he was questioned by the magistrate in the court, he admitted that he had indeed placed the letter in the parcel but explained that he did not know that he was breaking a postal regulation and had no intention of defrauding the Post Office. The court was so impressed by his forthrightness and honesty that the case against him was dropped and Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was acquitted.

Writing of *Brahin-e Ahmadiyya* (1880-1884)

Around the second half of the nineteenth century, Islam in India was being ruthlessly attacked by the Christians and the Arya Samaj, a militant sect of the Hindus. Under the favourable climate of the British rule, the Christian missionaries were also spreading their religion with great force and speed. The Muslims in India were completely heedless to this deteriorating situation and Islam in that country was indeed in a sorry state.

It was in such circumstances that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad took up his pen in defence of Islam and to prove its excellences. For this reason he started writing a great book called *Brahin-e Ahmadiyya*, meaning Proofs of Ahmadiyyat. The four volumes of this book were published between 1880 and 1884 while the fifth volume was published in 1905.

Aside from some articles he had been contributing to the local journals, *Brahin-e Ahmadiyya* was Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's first major writing. In this book he presented proofs of the truth of the Holy Qur'an and of the prophethood of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. He also threw a challenge, accompanied by a prize of 10,000 rupees, to any non Muslim who could refute these arguments and could produce even one fifth as many proofs in favour of his own religion.

Overnight, the publication of *Brahin-e Ahmadiyya* brought great fame and respect to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and people began to look at him as a great champion of Islam. He went on to write more than eighty books over the next 28 years. All this voluminous literature was intended for the revival of Islam and presenting its excellence and

superiority over all other religions. Most of his books were written in the Urdu language while some twenty books were written in Arabic.

LIFE OF MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD AFTER COMMISSIONING (1882-1908)

Appointed as a Reformer (1882)

Although Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had been seeing visions and receiving revelations for some time, his real mission and status had not yet been made apparent to him. It was in March 1882, when he was 37 years old, that his true station began to be revealed to him.

“God bless thee, O Ahmad... The Gracious God has taught thee the Qur’an so that you should warn the people whose ancestors have not been warned... Proclaim: I have been commissioned and I am the first of the believers...”

“He it is Who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the true faith so that He should make it prevail over all faiths... We shall suffice thee against those who mock at thee... This is a mercy from thy Lord. He will perfect His bounty upon thee so that it should be a sign for the believers. You have appeared with clear vision from your Lord so give glad tidings to people ... Tell them: ‘If you love God, then follow me, God will then love you...’

“God praises thee from His Throne. We praise thee and call down blessings on thee... I am with thee and be thou with Me wherever thou may be... God will exalt thy name and perfect His bounty upon thee in this world and the hereafter... Give glad tidings to those who have believed that they have the station of righteousness before thy Lord. Recite to them whatever has been revealed to thee from thy Lord.”

With this revelation of March 1882, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad realized that he was being appointed by God as the Mujaddid or Reformer of the fourteenth century of Islam. At this stage he did not make any specific public claim; his status as the Promised Messiah^{as} was yet to be revealed to him in another eight years. However, he intensified his prayers and worship and devoted all his time towards his writings and preaching the truth and the excellence of Islam.

The Second Marriage (1884)

The first marriage of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, which had taken place when he was sixteen years old, had ended in a permanent separation from his wife. Around the year 1881, when he was 46 years old, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad started to receive revelations regarding his second marriage:

“We give you good tidings that We will grant you a handsome son.”

“Be grateful to Me that you have found My Khadija.”

“I have determined to arrange another wedding for you. I shall make all the arrangements Myself and you will not be put to any trouble.”

Under the Divine Will, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad married a second time on November 17, 1884. He was 49 years old at the time. His second wife, Saiyadah Nusrat Jehan Begum, came from a noble Saiyad family of Delhi. From this second wife ten children were born whose names are given in the Table below.

Table showing the children of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad from the second wife

Name of child	Date of birth	Date of death	Life Span
1. Ismat Bibi *	Apr. 15, 1886	1891	± 5 years
2. Bashir Ahmad (Bashir the First) *	Aug. 7, 1887	Nov. 4, 1888	1 ¼ year
3. Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad	Jan. 12, 1889	Nov. 8, 1965	77 years
4. Shaukat Bibi *	1891	1892	±1 year
5. Mirza Bashir Ahmad	Apr. 20, 1893	Sept 2, 1963	70 ½ years
6. Mirza Sharif Ahmad	May 24, 1895	Dec. 26, 1961	66 ½ years
7. Mubaraka Begum	Mar 2, 1897	May 23, 1977	80 years
8. Mirza Mubarak Ahmad *	Jun 14, 1899	Sep 16, 1907	8 years
9. Amtul Naseer *	Jan 28, 1903	Dec 3, 1903	1 year
10. Amtul Hafeez Begum	Jun 25, 1904	May 6, 1987	83 years

* Died in infancy or early childhood

Five of the above ten children died in infancy or early childhood; the surviving five, three males and two females, lived to ripe old ages and had children of their own.

Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, the oldest of the five surviving children, became the Second Khalifa of the Promised Messiah^{as} and served in this capacity for over fifty years.

Nusrat Jehan Begum, the second wife of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, died on April 20, 1952, in Rabwah, Pakistan. She was 86 years old at the time.

The Sign of Red Ink Spots (1885)

One day in 1885, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was retiring on a cot while a devoted follower of his, ‘Abdullah Sannaury, was massaging and pressing his feet. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad saw in a vision that he had written certain divine decrees setting out events in the future and then presented the paper to God Almighty for His signature. God appeared to be in the form of a ruler. He dipped his pen in an ink-well holding red ink and first flicked it in his direction and with the rest of the ink, put down His signature. The vision ended. As he opened his eyes, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad saw several red drops that had fallen on his clothes and a few that fell on the cap of the attendant. The attendant, in his own statement recorded later, stated that while he was massaging his feet, he noticed a red drop on his ankle. When he touched it with his own finger, it spread out like liquid. Then he noticed some more wet stains on the shirt of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. At this, the attendant got up and carefully examined the entire chamber to determine the source of such droplets. He could find none. On his enquiry, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad narrated his vision. ‘Abdullah Sannaury beseeched him to give the shirt to him. Initially, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad hesitated for fear that it may become an object of undue reverence, but then relented when ‘Abdullah Sannaury promised that he will have the shirt interred with his coffin upon his own death.

A Prayer for a Difficult Hour (1885)

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad used to say the following prayer in Urdu very frequently. In a letter written to Hakim Nuruddin in 1885, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad drew his attention towards this prayer with great humility. It is a great prayer to be said at a difficult hour:

“O my Benefactor and O my God! I am an unworthy servant of Thine who is full of error and heedlessness. Thou hast seen transgression upon transgression from me and hast bestowed reward upon reward; Thou hast seen fault upon fault from me and granted favour upon favour. Thou hast always covered my blemishes and granted me innumerable blessings. So, even now, take mercy on this unworthy and sinful person, and forgive my audacity and ingratitude, and rid me of this sin, for there is none who can cure except Thee. Amin.”

Meteor Showers of 1833 and 1885

In the context of the return of the Messiah in the Latter Days, the New Testament book of Mark states:

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give light, and the stars of heaven shall fall....” (Mark 13:24-25)

While the Sign of the Eclipses is described in some detail in another section below, the present section is given to an explanation of the ‘falling of the stars’ as prophesied in the book of Mark.

The gravitational force of the earth continually pulls in part of the debris left behind in space after the formation of the solar system. When these bodies, which range from sand-size particles to fairly large chunks of rock, enter the earth’s atmosphere, they burn out due to the extreme resistance and glow like meteors or shooting stars. Sometimes these meteors appear singly and sometimes in the form of showers that appear to be originating from a certain part of the sky. Although the appearance of meteor showers is a routine astronomical phenomenon that dates back to as long as recorded history, there have been two occasions when it took on the aspect of a dramatic and unusual display.

The first incident took place in 1833, two years prior to the birth of the Promised Messiah^{as}. Known as the Leonids—since the meteors appear to be radiating from the Constellation Leo—the



A famous depiction of the 1833 meteor storm, produced in 1889, for the Seventh Day Adventist book *Bible Readings for the Home Circle*. Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and <http://star.arm.ac.uk/leonid>.

shower owes its existence to the break-up of the comet Temple-Tuttle whose debris gets pulled in by the gravitational force of the earth. The most magnificent occurrence of a meteor shower took place in 1833 when more than a hundred thousand meteors were seen per hour (some estimates put the frequency at nearly two hundred thousand meteors per hour or 55 per second). At this high rate, the display would have appeared nothing short of all the stars in the night sky falling down. In the United States of America, the meteor display was considered to be a literal fulfilment of the Biblical prophecy related to the return of Jesus Christ (as noted in the journal of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism).

The second magnificent display of a meteor shower took place on November 27, 1885. This shower is known as Andromedids since the meteors appear to radiate from the Constellation Andromeda. The debris comes from the comet 3D/Biela which broke up in 1846. The frequency of the meteors was estimated at several thousand per hour (by some as high as fifteen thousand per hour). In Burma, the meteor shower of 1885 was perceived as a fateful omen that led to the collapse of the Konbaung Dynasty that had created the second largest empire in the Burmese history. The meteor shower of November 1885 is also the first such display that was recorded on film. The Austro-Hungarian astronomer, Ladislaus Weinek, was the first to photograph the event by recording a short trail on a photographic plate at his Prague observatory.

While the falling of meteors and meteor showers is a normal astronomical phenomenon, its existence as a prophecy in the New Testament and the claim of the Promised Messiah^{as} as the only candidate who has ever applied this phenomenon for his own person, are very important and significant facts.

Solitary Retreat in Hoshiarpur (1886)

In January 1886, at the age of 51, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad travelled to Hoshiarpur with the intention of spending some time in a solitary retreat. In a house on the outskirts of Hoshiarpur, he isolated himself for a period of forty days. During this time his food was placed outside his door and he refrained from seeing any visitors. He spent all this time in intense meditation and worship and was in constant communion with God and received many revelations. He supplicated to his Lord to give him a Sign for the truth of Islam. It was during this solitary retreat that he was given the glad tidings of a great son to be born to him who is known, in the history of Ahmadiyyat, as the ‘Promised Son’ or the ‘Promised Reformer’. The text of the relevant revelation is given below:

“I confer upon you a Sign of My mercy according to thy supplications. I have heard thy entreaties and have accepted thy prayers with My mercy according to what you begged of Me...

“Therefore, a Sign of power, mercy, nearness is bestowed on you, a Sign of grace and beneficence is awarded to you and you are granted the key of success and victory...

“Rejoice, therefore, that a handsome and pure boy will be bestowed on you; you will receive an unblemished youth who will be of your seed and will be of your progeny.

“A handsome and pure boy is coming as your guest. His name is Emmanuel and also Bashir. He has been invested with a spirit of holiness, and he is free from all impurity. He is the light of Allah. Blessed is he who comes from heaven.

“He will be accompanied by grace which shall arrive with him. He will be characterized with grandeur, greatness and wealth. He will come into the world and will heal many of their disorders through his Messianic qualities and through the blessings of the spirit of

holiness. He is the Word of Allah for Allah’s mercy and honour have equipped him with the Word of Majesty. He will be extremely intelligent and perceptive and will be meek of heart and will be filled with secular and spiritual knowledge...

“Son, delight of the heart, high ranking, noble; a manifestation of the First and the Last, a manifestation of the True and the High; as if Allah has descended from heaven. His advent will be greatly blessed and will be a source of manifestation of Divine Majesty. Behold, a light comes, anointed by God with the perfume of His pleasure. We shall pour Our Spirit into him and he will be sheltered under the shadow of God. He will grow rapidly in stature and will be the means of procuring the release of those held in bondage. His fame will spread to the ends of the earth and peoples will be blessed through him. He will then be raised to his spiritual station in heaven. This is a matter decreed.”

The above revelation was made public in an *Ishtihar* (Announcement) dated March 22, 1886. In a second announcement, two days later, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad declared that this promised son will be born within a period of nine years.

In less than a month after the announcement regarding the birth of the promised son, a daughter named Ismat Bibi was born to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. His enemies rejoiced at her birth and took this opportunity to ridicule and defame him. Many of his opponents started saying that the prophecy was falsified by the birth of the daughter.

Then, one and a half year after the famous announcement, a son was born to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and was named Bashir Ahmad. This son, too, died little over a year later and the enemies of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad again raised a commotion in order to discredit him. They all started saying that the boy who had died was the one who should have lived to become the Promised Reformer. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad responded to these accusations by saying that he had never claimed that this Bashir Ahmad was indeed the Promised Son and that all he had prophesied was that such a son will be born within a period of nine years.

In due course of time, the Promised Son was born to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad on January 12, 1889, within the specified period of nine years and was named Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad. He eventually became the Second Successor of the Promised Messiah^{as} and served in this capacity for a period of over fifty years. On receiving a revelation in 1944, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad declared in a public address that he indeed was the Promised Son whose birth was prophesied by the Promised Messiah^{as} in 1886. We will read more about the Promised Son in the section on Promised Messiah’s Successors.

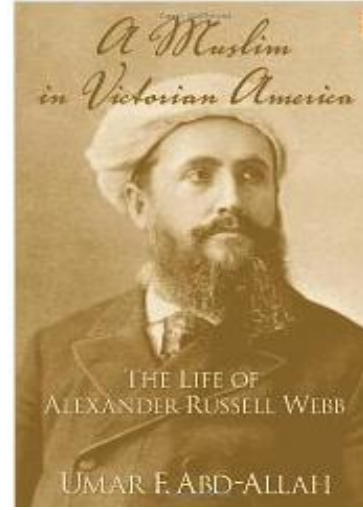
With hindsight, we can see that the prophecy of the Promised Son contains in it a small passage that does not apply to him but to another son preceding him who will not live long. The words related to this son are highlighted in the above prophecy text by shading. The words begin with: “A handsome and pure boy will come as your guest; and end with: “Blessed is he who comes from heaven.”

Conversion to Islam of Alexander Russell Webb (1887-1888)

Alexander Russell Webb (1846-1916) was an American writer, journalist and the United States Consul to the Philippines who converted to Islam in 1888 as a result of his correspondence with the Promised Messiah^{as}. He is considered to be the first Anglo-American convert to Islam in the country. He was the one in America who represented the

religion of Islam at the first Parliament for World Religions held in Chicago in September 1893.

Although a Presbyterian Christian by birth, Alexander Russell Webb began searching for religious truth in other faiths including Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Confucianism. His knowledge about Islam was only rudimentary. For this reason, he wrote a letter to the Promised Messiah^{as} from St. Louis, Missouri, on February 24, 1887 seeking his guidance to find salvation and nearness to God through Islam. This letter and its response by the Promised Messiah^{as} are published in his book *Shahna'i Haqq*.



Alexander Russel Webb

Commanded to Accept the *Bai'at* (1888)

In 1888, some six years after being appointed as a Reformer, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was commanded by God to start accepting the *bai'at* or the oath of allegiance of his followers. In an announcement printed on green paper and published on December 1, 1888, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad said:

“I have been commanded that the seekers after truth should enter into covenant of *bai'at* with me for the purpose of learning the way of true faith, true purity and the love of the Lord and of discarding an evil, slothful and disloyal life.

“Therefore, those who perceive such strength in themselves should come forward to me. I shall be the sharer of their sorrows and shall try to lighten their burdens. God will bless them through my prayers and my attention towards them provided they are wholeheartedly ready to comply with the conditions of the covenant which are divinely determined.”

By taking the *bai'at* or the oath of allegiance, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was laying the foundation of a movement which will be made up of people completely devoted to the cause of Islam in every respect. Before accepting any *bai'at*, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad announced, on January 12, 1889, the ten conditions of initiation into the Movement. These conditions were:

1. To abstain from shirk or setting up partners with God,
2. To keep away from falsehood, adultery, cruelty, dishonesty, riot, rebellion and every kind of evil,
3. To offer the five Daily Prayers and also the Tahajjud Prayer if able to do so,
4. Not to harm God's creatures in general and Muslims in particular, by one's actions or by words,
5. To stay faithful to God in sorrow or pleasure, prosperity or adversity, happiness or misfortune,
6. Not to follow vulgar customs, to abstain from evil inclinations, to submit to the authority of the Holy Qur'an and to make the sayings of God and His Messenger the guiding principles of one's life,

7. To completely discard pride and haughtiness and to pass one's days with humility, lowliness, courtesy and meekness,
8. To consider the religion, the honour of religion and the well-being of Islam dearer than one's life, wealth and children,
9. To show sympathy to God's creatures and to use one's natural talents for their welfare, and
10. To establish a brotherhood with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad on condition of obeying him in everything good, till the day of one's death.

These were the ten conditions of the *bai'at* which every one intending to enter the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam had to abide by.

The Founding of the Ahmadiyya Movement (1889)

After publishing the ten conditions of the *bai'at*, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad travelled to Ludhiana in March 1889 and issued another leaflet. In this leaflet he said that he would stay in the town at a house near that of Munshi Ahmad Jan's, a disciple of his. Those who wished to become his followers were asked to come to the house for an oath of allegiance. He explained the meaning, the necessity and the importance of the *bai'at*, in the following words:

“God wishes to found a community of the faithful to manifest His Glory and Power. He will make the community grow and prosper and will cause it to establish the love of God, righteousness, purity, peace and good will among men. This shall be a group of men devoted to God. He shall strengthen them with His own Spirit and bless them and purify them. He shall multiply them exceedingly ... He shall make the Community grow, so much so that its numbers and progress shall amaze the world. My true followers shall excel every other people. There shall always rise among them, till the Day of Judgment, persons who will be the chosen ones of God in every respect.”

The formal ceremony of the *bai'at* started on March 23, 1889. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad sat in one corner of the room while his disciples were called in, one by one. The ceremony was extremely simple. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad would stretch out his right hand which was then held by the disciple who would repeat the following words in Urdu after him:

“I repent today at the hand of Ahmad, of all the sins and bad habits to which I was addicted; and most truthfully and solemnly do I promise that, to the last day of my life, I shall avoid, to the best of my ability, all manner of sin. I will hold my faith above all worldly considerations. I shall try, as far as I can, to observe the ten conditions of *bai'at* laid down in the leaflet dated January 12, 1889. I seek forgiveness of God for my past sins.”

After this, the disciple would repeat the following words in Arabic:

“I ask forgiveness of God, my Lord,
“I ask forgiveness of God, my Lord,
“I ask forgiveness of God, my Lord, for all my sins and turn to Him. I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except God. He is One, without partners and I bear witness that

Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger. My Lord, I have wronged my soul and I confess all my sins. Do thou forgive me my sins as there is none other who can forgive.”

After taking this oath from the disciple, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad would lift up his hands in prayer and thus the ceremony of the *bai'at* would be completed for each individual. The very first person who took the *bai'at* at the hands of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was Maulwi Nuruddin who was his most devoted follower and eventually succeeded him as his First Successor. Ten other persons who followed him in doing the *bai'at* on the first day included: Mir Abbas Ali; Shaikh Muhammad Husain Muradabadi (scribe); Maulwi Abdullah Sanauri; Maulwi Abdullah of Tangi, Char Saddah, Sarhad; Munshi Allah Bakhsh of Ludhiana; Shaikh Hamid Ali; Qazi Khwaja Ali; Mir Inayat Ali; Chaudhry Rustam Ali; and Munshi Arora Khan. The total number of persons who carried out the *bai'at* on the very first day amounted to forty.

On March 23, 1889, some forty persons performed the *bai'at* and thus was laid the foundation of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam. This Movement, which started with a handful of devotees in the late 1800s, has today grown into millions of adherents spread all over the world. The Movement has established missions and mosques in numerous countries of the world, built schools and hospitals in many African nations, translated the Holy Qur'an in many languages, and is zealously preaching the religion of Islam in every corner of the world. The unusual success of the Movement is a living proof of God's support for this otherwise humble and resource-less community.

Claim to Messiahship (1890)

Early in 1890, God revealed to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad that Jesus Christ had died a natural death and that the belief that he was still alive in heaven was false. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad announced this fact openly to the world and declared that Jesus son of Mary could not possibly come back to life as the Latter Day Messiah. He told the world that the prophecy of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} regarding the coming of a Mahdi and a Messiah had been fulfilled in his own person. He further proclaimed that God had appointed him to bring about a reform in the world and to re-establish the supremacy and glory of the religion of Islam.

As proof for his claim, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad presented many arguments. He explained that just as the Prophet Elijah did not come back to life himself and his second coming was in fact realised in the appearance of John the Baptist, similarly Jesus Christ would not reappear himself and his second coming could only be realised in the appearance of someone else with the characteristics and qualities of Jesus. As further proof, he produced numerous references in the writings of early Muslim scholars and in the sacred books of other religions, all of which attested to the truthfulness of his claim.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim to Messiahship received a muted response from the public. Those who were honest and sincere could not find any fault with his claim and eventually entered his fold. But there were many other people who, for various reasons, did not accept his claim and denounced him as an unbeliever and a non Muslim. The Christian missionaries opposed him for he had proved that Jesus was a mortal being like the rest of us and could not possibly be the Son of God in the literal sense of the phrase. Muslim mullahs also opposed him since they saw in him a threat to their own dogmatic teachings and authority.

Challenge to the Scholars for written Debate (1891)

As the opposition to Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim mounted in India, he gave a challenge to all the scholars of the time for a written debate. This challenge was published as a poster from Ludhiana on March 26, 1891 and copies were sent to some well known scholars of the time that included: Maulwi Muhammad Husain Batalwi, Maulwi Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi (1828-1905), Maulwi Abdul Jabbar Ghaznawi (1852-1913), Maulwi Abdur Rahman of Lakhuka, Maulwi Shaikh Abdullah Tibbeti, Maulwi Abdul Aziz Ludhianiwi, and Maulwi Ghulam Dastgir Qasuri. The Promised Messiah^{as} invited all these learned scholars to a written debate to be held in public gatherings.

In addition to the above, invitations for debate were also forwarded to two caretakers of shrines (*sajjadah nashin*) that included: Mian Allah Bakhsh Taunswi Sanghri and Shah Nizamuddin Brelwi.

Needless to say that none of the above important scholars of the time accepted the challenge to the written debate.

Acceptance of Ahmadiyyat by Maulwi Ghulam Nabi of Khushab (1891)

Around the year 1891, Ludhiana had become the centre of opposition to the Promised Messiah^{as}. One such opponent by the name of Maulwi Ghulam Nabi came to Ludhiana from his hometown of Khushab and immediately started delivering speeches against the Promised Messiah^{as}. In no time at all he earned a reputation in the city as a venerable scholar and speaker. It so happened one day that he was giving his lecture in the same quarter in which the Promised Messiah^{as} was residing as a visitor. As Maulwi Ghulam Nabi came out of the lecture place accompanied by a throng of his well wishers and supporters, he happened to meet the Promised Messiah^{as} who was coming out of his place of residence. The Promised Messiah^{as} bade him the greeting of peace and extended his hand. Under some strange influence, Maulwi Ghulam Nabi kept holding the hand of the Promised Messiah^{as} and accompanied him to the men's section of his house where he sat down in front of the Promised Messiah^{as} with extreme humbleness and respect. All the companions of Maulwi Ghulam Nabi that had remained outside believed that he was just about to bring down the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Inside the room, Maulwi Ghulam Nabi enquired of the Promised Messiah^{as} as to where had he obtained the proof for the demise of Jesus Christ. To this the Promised Messiah^{as} replied that he had taken it from the Holy Qur'an, the Hadith and the sayings of the godly scholars. When Maulwi Ghulam Nabi asked for the Qur'anic reference, the Promised Messiah^{as} handed him a copy that was marked with pieces of paper at two locations indicating verse 56 of *Surah Al 'Imran* (3:56) and verse 118 of *Surah Al Ma'idah* (5:118). After asking for a little clarification, Maulwi Ghulam Nabi admitted his error and said that the Holy Qur'an was supporting the Promised Messiah^{as}. At this, the Promised Messiah^{as} asked that if the Holy Qur'an was supporting him, then which side was Maulwi Ghulam Nabi. Hearing this, Maulwi Ghulam Nabi started crying and said that he, too, was with him.

After the supporters outside demanded that Maulwi Ghulam Nabi come out, he sent a message to them that he had found the truth and had nothing to do with them anymore. If they wanted to preserve their faith, they too should accept the Promised Messiah^{as} as their Imam.

Then, quoting the relevant Hadith, Maulwi Ghulam Nabi said to the Promised Messiah^{as} that he wished to convey the *Salaam* of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} to which the Promised Messiah^{as} uttered the return greeting of *wa alaikumus salaam*.

Annual Gathering Instituted (1891)

On December 27, 1891, a gathering of the Ahmadiyya Movement was held in Qadian, India, in which 75 persons participated. The conference was a great success and the Promised Messiah^{as} announced that such a gathering of the community should be held every year for three days during the Christmas holidays. Since then, this annual gathering has been held more or less without any break and the number of participants has steadily grown. The last Annual Gathering held during the lifetime of the Promised Messiah^{as}, in 1907, was attended by some 2,000 followers. In the last Annual Gathering held in 1983 at Rabwah, Pakistan, the number of participants reached a quarter million. While no Annual Gatherings have been held in Pakistan since 1983 due to government sanctions, such gatherings are now held in every country of the world where the Ahmadis have their centres.

In these annual gatherings, the Ahmadiyya community reviews the work done in the previous year and listens to talks and speeches presented by the Khalifa and other learned scholars on topics covering Islam, Ahmadiyyat, comparative religions, and social, economic and political problems and their remedies. The Ahmadi Muslims participating in these gatherings come from all parts of the world. They take this opportunity not only to increase their religious knowledge and spiritual energy but also revive old friendships and establish new relations of love, affection and Islamic brotherhood.

Prophecy Regarding Pandit Lekh Ram (1893)

Pundit Lekh Ram (1858-1897) was a leader of Arya Samaj which was a highly militant and dogmatic sect of Hinduism founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in April 1875. It fiercely attacked both Islam and Christianity because they were attracting too many converts, especially from the lower castes. Pundit Lekh Ram was a persistent enemy of Islam and always used the foulest language in attacking the character of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. Many a times the Promised Messiah^{as} tried to correct him on this point but he would not listen. Finally, on February 20, 1893, the Promised Messiah^{as} made the following announcement concerning Pundit Lekh Ram:

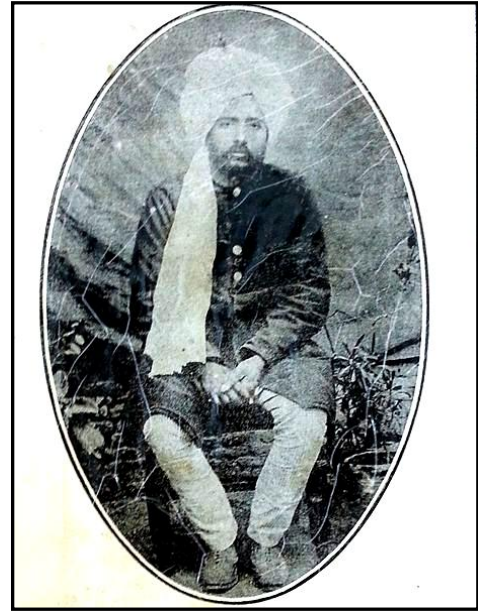
“Within six years from today, this man will be overtaken by severe torment as a punishment for the disrespect which he has shown towards the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}.”

“Now by announcing the prophecy I am seeking to inform all Muslims, Christians and followers of other religions that if this person is not overtaken within the period of six years from today by a torment that should be distinguishable from ordinary sufferings and should bear an extraordinary character and should be in the nature of Divine punishment, then it might be concluded that I have not been sent from God.”

In another revelation God informed the Promised Messiah^{as} that this reckoning will occur on the day next to the day of the 'Id Festival.

Even after the announcement of the prophecy in his regard, Pundit Lekh Ram did not mend his ways and continued to make vile remarks in his writings about the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, the Holy Quran and Islam. He even made a prophecy of his own that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad will die of cholera within three years and that his children will not survive.

Of course, what Pundit Lekh Ram had prophesied did not come to pass. The Promised Messiah^{as} did not die within the specified period and his children did indeed survive. The Promised Messiah's prophecy, however, was fulfilled word for word. Pundit Lekh Ram met his fateful end on March 6, 1897, on the day following the festive day of 'Id al Adha. He was fatally stabbed by an unknown person in his own house and the assailant could not be apprehended. The fulfilment of this prophecy was a great sign of the truth of the Promised Messiah^{as}.



Pandit Lekh Ram, a leader of Arya Samaj.

Sign of the Eclipses (1894)

In the context of the return of the Messiah, the New Testament book of Mark states with reference to the Latter Days:

“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give light, and the stars of heaven shall fall...” (Mark 13:24-25)

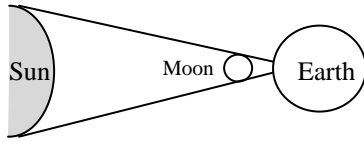
The darkening of the sun and moon, in the form of solar and lunar eclipses, is a fairly common astronomical phenomenon that takes place several times each year and, by itself, there is nothing special in it that will indicate the onset of the Latter Days when the return of the Messiah was expected. However, a Hadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} that is recorded by Dar Qutni, is more specific in the actual manner in which these eclipses will take place:

“For our Mahdi there are appointed two signs which have never been manifested for any other claimant since the creation of the heavens and the earth. One is the eclipse of the moon on the first of Ramadhan and the other is the eclipse of the sun in the middle of Ramadhan. These two signs have not appeared since the creation of the heavens and the earth.”

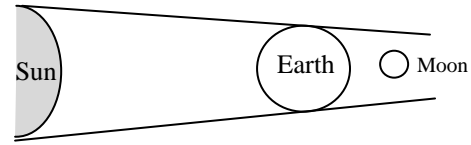
While all Muslim scholars were aware of this Hadith, they generally associated it with unusual circumstances and supernatural appearance of the Mahdi. It is a known fact that the moon can only be eclipsed when the earth positions itself in between the sun and the moon, blocking the former's light from falling on the latter. Thus, moon cannot be eclipsed on the first of any lunar month since it is already in the form of the New Moon and hardly visible. Similarly, the sun can only be eclipsed when an object such as the moon gets in between the sun and earth, blocking the former's light from reaching the latter. The sun cannot be eclipsed in the middle of any lunar month since the sun and the moon are on different sides of the earth and the moon is incapable of blocking the sun's light to cause a solar eclipse.

Thus, the fulfilment of the Hadith, according to its exact words, is a physical and mathematical impossibility and a logical contradiction in astronomy (see Figure).

Figure showing the geometrics during solar and lunar eclipses



Situation around the first of Ramadhan.
No lunar eclipse is possible since earth cannot throw its shadow on the moon which is in a New Moon phase. Only a solar eclipse is possible as actually happened.



Situation around the middle of Ramadhan.
No solar eclipse is possible since moon is not in a position to obstruct the sun. Only a lunar eclipse is possible as actually happened.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was the first person in history who interpreted the Hadith and the prophecy in such a way that it could at least comply with astronomical truth and requirement. Because of atmospheric conditions and different alignments of the sun-earth-moon system at different points on the earth, a lunar or solar eclipse manifests itself within three possible days. An eclipse of the moon can occur on the 13th, 14th or 15th night of a lunar month near the time of the Full Moon. An eclipse of the sun can take place on the 27th, 28th or 29th day of the lunar month, near the time of the new moon. The Promised Messiah^{as} asserted that the reference to the lunar eclipse on the first of Ramadhan actually means the first of the three possible dates of Ramadhan which is 13th. Similarly, the reference to the solar eclipse occurring in the middle of Ramadhan actually means the middle of the three possible dates which is 28th.

This heavenly sign was fulfilled during the time of the Promised Messiah^{as}, in exactly the way described in the Hadith. The moon was eclipsed on the first of the three possible dates, the 13th of Ramadhan, 1311 Hijra (corresponding to March 21, 1894), and the sun was eclipsed on the middle of the three possible dates, the 28th of Ramadhan (corresponding to April 6, 1894). These eclipses were visible over a large part of Asia including India. The sign of the eclipses was repeated in 1895, this time visible in America. It should be noted that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} is the only person in history who has claimed this heavenly sign in support of his claim.

Discoveries Regarding Baba Nanak (1895)

Baba Nanak, born in India in the fifteenth century, is considered by the Sikhs as the founder of their religion. The Promised Messiah's research and investigations regarding the Sikh religion demonstrated that Baba Nanak in fact was a Muslim saint who observed all the rituals and commandments of Islam. He showed the world that Baba Nanak, though born in a Hindu family, had accepted Islam. Baba Nanak believed in the Unity of God, offered the Daily Prayers and carried out all other duties of Islam including the pilgrimage to Mecca. Although Baba Nanak always preached the religion of Islam to his followers, they, however, deviated from his true teachings because of their political conflict with the Muslim Mughals of India.

Another piece of evidence which the Promised Messiah^{as} presented to the world concerns a cotton cloak of Baba Nanak considered a sacred relic by the Sikhs. In 1895, the Promised Messiah^{as} went to Dera Baba Nanak, a small village not too far from Qadian, where this cloak was kept. When the cloak was opened, it displayed the *Kalima* and other Qur’anic verses written on it. The Promised Messiah^{as} explained all these findings regarding Baba Nanak and the Sikh religion in his book *Sat Bachan*, meaning the True Word, in the language of the Sikhs. This book was published in November 1895.

Conference of World Religions (1896)

At the end of 1896, a three day Conference on religions took place in Lahore in which representatives of the various faiths were invited to present papers dealing with the following five basic themes:

1. The physical, moral and spiritual conditions of man.
2. The state of man after death.
3. The object of man’s life and the means of its attainment.
4. The effect of human actions in this life and in the hereafter.
5. The means of achieving spiritual knowledge.

The purpose of this Conference was to allow the public at large to see the relative merits of the various religions. The Promised Messiah^{as}, being one of the invitees, prepared an essay on Islam covering these basic themes. While he was still writing the essay, he received a revelation in Urdu:

“The essay has come out best.”

From this he concluded that his paper would excel all others at the Conference. Before the start of the Conference, the Promised Messiah^{as} fell ill and could not personally attend it. He, therefore, appointed one of his followers, Maulwi ‘Abdul Karim (see photo), to read the paper on his behalf.

Many well known religious scholars participated in this conference which took on the aspect of a tournament of religions. When the Promised Messiah’s essay was read on the second day of the conference, the audience applauded it warmly and the Indian press gave it



Chola (cloak) of Baba Guru Nanak.



Maulwi Abdul Karim Sialkoti.

an excellent review. Since the essay was more than 150 pages long, its reading could not be completed that day. At the request of the audience, the program of the conference was extended by one more day. During the two days, the reading of the Promised Messiah's essay took seven and a half hours.

This essay was later published under the title: *Islami Usul ki Philosophy*, meaning The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam.

Accusation of attempted Murder by Dr. Henry Martyn Clark (1897)



Dr. Henry Martyn Clark

Some Christian missionaries in India saw that the Promised Messiah^{as} was slowly gaining ground against them. When they felt that their efforts to refute his arguments were futile, they resorted to cheap tactics. In August 1897, Dr. Henry Martyn Clark¹⁶ (1859-1916), a medical doctor stationed at the Church Mission Society (CMS) in Amritsar, brought a charge against the Promised Messiah^{as} in the court of the District Magistrate. Dr. Clark accused Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of instigating a young man by the name of 'Abdul Hamid to murder him.

The case eventually came up before the court of Assistant District Commissioner, Captain Montagu William Douglas¹⁷ (1863-1957). 'Abdul



Captain Montagu William Douglas

Hamid was properly tutored by the opposition and told a pre-rehearsed story to the court. Captain Douglas, however, felt uneasy about the testimony of 'Abdul Hamid and asked the District Superintendent of Police to question him.

On interrogation, the youth burst into tears and admitted that he had been lying throughout the case. He then made a full statement saying that he was pressured by other people to lie against The Promised Messiah^{as}. After this, Captain Douglas acquitted the Promised Messiah^{as} with due honour and the case against him was discharged. Captain Douglas also advised the Promised Messiah^{as} of his right to bring a

¹⁶ Dr. Henry Martin Clark was also the chairperson of the debate that was held in 1882 between the Promised Messiah and a Christian named Abdullah Atham. Dr. Martyn Clark was born into an Afghan family but was adopted by the well known Christian priest, Robert Clark.

¹⁷ A British soldier and administrator, Montagu William Douglas was promoted to Deputy Commissioner in 1899 and became a Major in 1900. In 1903, he was on the executive committee for the Coronation Durbar in Delhi. From 1910-1913, he acted as Deputy Commissioner of Lylypur District (present day Faisalabad) and then from 1913-1920 served as Chief Commissioner of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. William Douglas was a proponent of the Oxfordian theory of Shakespeare's authorship holding that Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford wrote the plays and poems assisted by Francis Bacon, Christopher Marlowe, the Earl of Derby, John Lyly and Robert Greene.

charge against Dr. Henry Martyn Clark for accusing him falsely. At this, the Promised Messiah^{as} responded, “I do not want to bring a case against anyone; my case has been filed in the heavens.”

It is interesting to note that while the enemies were levelling charges of murder against the Promised Messiah^{as}, his own behaviour towards them was that of a gentleman. During the trial, Maulwi Muhammad Husain of Batala, an enemy of the Promised Messiah^{as}, appeared as a witness against him. While Maulwi Muhammad Husain was in the witness box, the defence counsel retained by the Promised Messiah^{as} started to cross examine him. The defence counsel wanted to show the court that Maulwi Muhammad Husain did not enjoy a good reputation in private life. For this purpose the defence counsel asked him a question which would have brought out a self humiliating answer. But, before the witness could answer, the Promised Messiah^{as} rose from his chair and at once stopped his own counsel from taking this liberty with the personal honour of the witness. Although the witness was one of his staunchest enemies, the Promised Messiah^{as} would not allow his weakness to be exposed in public. This is an excellent example of the true Islamic character of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Newspapers of the Ahmadiyya Movement (1897)

The very first newspaper of the Ahmadiyya Movement was called *Al Hakam* and was published for the first time on October 8, 1897. Shaikh Ya‘qub ‘Ali Irfani was its editor. The paper was initially published from Amritsar but later on was transferred to Qadian. The paper continued to be published until July 1943. Five years later, in 1902, another newspaper called *Al Badr* was started from Qadian. The first editor of *Al Badr* was Mufti Muhammad Sadiq and the paper continues to be published from Qadian to this very day. The publication of *Al Fazl* was started in 1913 by Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad who had not become the Khalifa yet.

All these newspapers played a historical role in recording the speeches, revelations, addresses and conversations of the Promised Messiah^{as} and in preserving the early history of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam.

Research on the life of Jesus and writing of *Jesus in India* (1895-1899)

The Promised Messiah^{as} undertook his research on the life and travels of Jesus Christ around 1895. It had already been revealed to him in 1890 that Jesus Christ had died a natural death. However, as to what happened to Jesus Christ after the event of the crucifixion, was not known to the world.

It appears that the Promised Messiah^{as} became interested in the subject of Jesus’ presence in India perhaps through the publication of a book by Nicolas Notovitch¹⁸ in the early 1890s

¹⁸ Born in Russia in 1858, Nikolaj Aleksandrovic Notovic was a journalist and historian of Jewish origin who had converted to Greek Orthodox Church. He travelled through Kashmir and Ladakh in 1887 and during his visit to the monastery of Hims located at 11,000 feet in the Tibetan Himalayas, he was informed by the lamas that, according to their books and records, Jesus had travelled to their land. Notovitch noted great similarities between the accounts of Saint Issa as recorded in the Buddhist Scriptures in the Pali language and the incidents that took place in the life of Jesus Christ. Notovich made extensive notes with the help of an interpreter and had them published in 1890 in New York under the title of *Life of Saint Issa*. In 1894, he expanded these notes into a formal book that was first published in French and then translated into English under the title of *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*. The book

that had attracted considerable attention by the church and the public at large. In his book *Kashfal Ghata'* (1898), the Promised Messiah^{as} actually refers to the discoveries of the Russian traveller and writes that he has seen his book and that he actually has a copy of it.

The Promised Messiah^{as} also knew of the investigations of the European traveller, Francois Bernier (1625-1688), the English translation of whose book; *Travels in the Mogul Empire* had been published in 1891. The Promised Messiah^{as} quotes several passages from his travelogue in his own books.

The earliest reference made by the Promised Messiah^{as} to the fact that Jesus travelled to Kashmir and Tibet and lies buried in Srinagar appears in his book *Sat Bachan* (November 30, 1895, p302-307 of *Roohani Khazain* volume 10). In this book that is otherwise devoted to the account of the Sikh faith and mentions several discoveries regarding its founder, Baba Guru Nanak, the Promised Messiah^{as}:



Nicolas Notovitch

- Refers to Francois Bernier's travels through the Mughal Empire in the late 1600s during which Bernier noticed remarkable resemblance between the Kashmiri and Israelite people
- Refers to the recent finding of some Gospel manuscripts in Tibet
- Believes that Jesus first came to Kashmir, then visited Tibet and eventually died in Kashmir.
- Mentions the grave of prophet Yuz Asaf in Srinagar and believes that it is the same person as Jesus

In January 1898, the Promised Messiah^{as} published his book *Kitab-ul-Barayya* in which he refers (on page 21 of *Roohani Khazain*, volume 13) to the research that indicates that Jesus was saved from crucifixion and died after coming to Kashmir and that his grave is present to this day in Kashmir where it is known as that of a prophet prince and whose name has changed from Jesus to Yuz Asaf.

was met by strong opposition by the Christian Church as well as many Christian scholars such as Max Muller. In his book, Notovitch makes the following assertions:

- Jesus' unknown years between the ages of 14 and 29 were spent in India,
- Issa (Jesus) is accepted as a great Prophet by the Tibetan Buddhists after the twenty-two Buddhas,
- The Buddhist accounts of Jesus' life have two noteworthy differences: (i) the Tibetan accounts seem to emphasise the unity of God much more than the Gospels do, and (ii) the Tibetan accounts place the blame of Jesus' crucifixion on Pontius Pilate and not the Jews.
- The Tibetan books also include the early history of the Israelites including the life of Moses,
- Jesus died on the cross and his ascension to heaven is a myth.

It should be noted that the account of Nicolas Notovitch about his findings in Tibet has been challenged by some scholars who consider his meeting with the lamas a hoax. Many other scholars, however, confirm that he did indeed meet with the lamas.

In his book *Raaz-e Haqeeqat* (November 30, 1898), the Promised Messiah^{as} makes several statements on pages 155 and 161-165 (*Roohani Khazain*, volume 14) regarding the latest discoveries in connection with Jesus Christ:

- Jesus migrated towards India
- Jesus took the message of God to the Israelite tribes that had settled in India, Kashmir and Tibet after their exile by the Babylonians
- Jesus died in Kashmir and was buried in Srinagar in the precinct of Khanyar
- The word *Messiah*, according to the philologists, is derived from ‘*msh*’ that means travelling
- Mentions that many discoveries have been made recently that indicate that Jesus travelled to Kashmir after the incident of the crucifixion; visited Nepal, Tibet and Kashmir; taught the Israelites in Kashmir; died at the age of 120 years; and is buried in the precinct of Khanyar
- Refers to a recently discovered Gospel in Tibet whose copy was obtained from London after great difficulty and through the hard work of his businessman friend, Sheikh Rahmatullah, who stayed in London for three months.

In his book *Kashfal Ghata’* (December 27, 1898), the Promised Messiah^{as} makes several more statements on the subject of Jesus’ presence in India:

- Jesus came towards India and visited Iran, Tibet and Kashmir. He spread the message of God and died in Srinagar. His grave is in the precinct of Khanyar and is known as that of prince prophet, Yuz Asaf
- Reference is made to the travelogue of Francois Bernier who gave strong proofs of the fact that the people of Kashmir are in fact the descendants of the Israelites
- Reference is made to the Russian traveller (Nicolas Notovitch) who has proved the coming of Jesus Christ to this land based on the books of Buddhism. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} writes that he has seen this book and actually has a copy.

In late 1898 or early 1899, the Promised Messiah^{as} undertook the writing of a book devoted entirely to the subject of Jesus’ travel to India. He intended to write ten chapters in this book and wanted to send delegations to Nisibain, Kabul and Koh Nu’man to obtain additional information on Jesus’ travels through these places. Unfortunately, these delegations could not be sent for certain reasons. For the investigations of the grave of Yuz Asaf in Srinagar, the Promised Messiah^{as} appointed Khalifa Nuruddin Jamuni who spent four months in Kashmir and completed his findings around September 1899, bringing back with him a large list of signatories to the fact that Yuz Asaf was none other than Jesus Christ.

whole and plausible theory. His most important contribution on the subject is the fact that Jesus travelled to India *after* and not before the incident of the crucifixion.

Designation of the Jama'at by the name of 'Ahmadiyya' (1900)

Until the year 1900, the public used designations such as *Mirzai* and *Qadiani* to distinguish the followers of the Promised Messiah^{as} from other Islamic sects in India. For the forthcoming official census of 1901, there was going to be a provision for people to associate themselves with any sect that they wished. For this reason, the Promised Messiah^{as} issued a poster announcement on November 4, 1900 in which he proposed:

“There were two names for our Prophet^{saw}: one was Muhammad and the second was Ahmad. The name ‘Muhammad’ was a *majestic* name and carried the prophecy that he would punish the enemies with sword who had attacked Islam and killed hundreds of Muslims with sword. But the name ‘Ahmad’ was an *elegant* name which meant that he would spread peace and reconciliation in the world. So, God allocated these names in such a way that during the Prophet’s early life in Mecca the name Ahmad was manifested with the teaching of patience and suffering. Then the name Muhammad was manifested during the life at Medina in which the opponents were punished under divine wisdom and expediency. However, it was prophesied that the name Ahmad will be manifested again in the latter days and such a person shall come through whom Ahmadi or elegant traits will be manifested and all fighting shall end. For this reason, it seems appropriate that this sect should be called the Ahmadiyya sect so that everyone may understand that this sect has come to spread peace and reconciliation and has nothing to do with war and fighting.”

Challenge to John Alexander Dowie of U.S.A. (1902)

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, John Alexander Dowie (1847-1907) had established himself in the United States of America as a healer, prophet, and the fore runner of Jesus Christ. In a place called Zion in the State of Illinois, he had founded his own Christian sect and had taken up the title of Elijah III.

Dowie was a bitter enemy of Islam and of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. He used to express his belief in this regard in the vilest possible language and used to advocate the total destruction of Muslims and the religion of Islam. When the Promised Messiah^{as} came to know of Dowie’s claims, he confronted him with the following challenge in September 1902:

“... There is no need for Mr. Dowie to subject the millions of Muslims to destruction. There is a very easy way to determine whether Dowie’s god is true or our God. That is that Mr. Dowie should pray that of the two of us, the one who is false may die before the other. Dowie believes in Jesus as God and I consider him a humble creature and a prophet. The matter in issue is, which one of us two is in the right?”

“The method I propose is that Mr. Dowie should come into the field against me with the permission of his false god ... If the false god of Mr. Dowie possesses any power he will certainly permit him to come forth against me.”

This challenge of the Promised Messiah^{as} was given great publicity in the American press. Dowie, however, gave no reply to the challenge. A year later, in August 1903, the Promised Messiah^{as} published another statement addressed to Mr. Dowie:

“I do not say merely out of my own mouth that I am the Promised Messiah. God, Who has created the heavens and the earth, bears witness for me... I have thousands of His testimonies in my support which I cannot number. One testimony is that if Mr. Dowie will accept my challenge and will put himself in opposition to me expressly or by implication, he will depart this life with great sorrow and torment during my lifetime.

“Dowie has not so far replied to my challenge nor has he referred to it in his paper. I, therefore, grant him time for seven months from today, the 23rd of August 1903. If during this period he comes forth in opposition to me and makes an announcement in his paper that he accepts fully the plan that I have put forward, the world shall soon see the end of this contest.

“If Mr. Dowie runs away from this contest, I would call upon the people of America and Europe as witness that this would also be considered his defeat, and in such case it should be concluded that his claim of being Elijah is a mere boast and deceit.

“I close these brief remarks with the following prayer: O Powerful and Perfect God, Who has ever been revealing and will ever continue to reveal Thyself to Thy prophets, do Thou give Thy judgment and show to Thy people the imposture and falsehood of Dowie.”

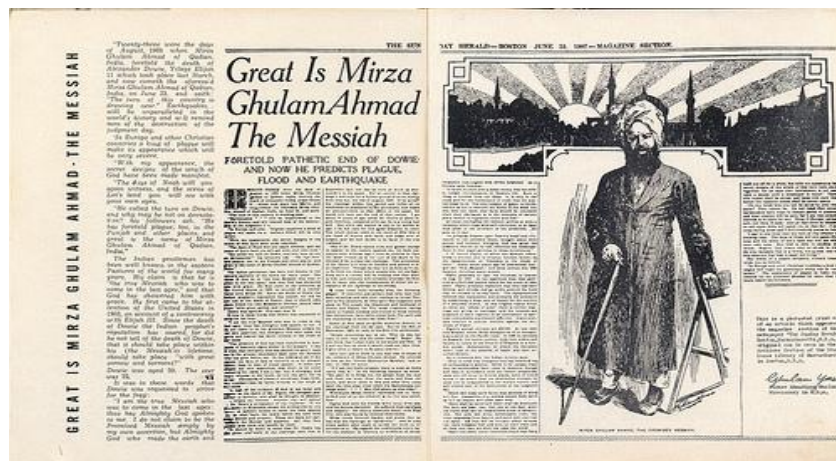


John Alexander Dowie in his robes as Elijah the Restorer courtesy: en.wikipedia.org.

At last, in December 1903, Mr. Dowie made the following announcement:

“In India there is a Muhammadan Messiah who keeps writing to me that Jesus Christ lies buried in Kashmir. People ask me why I don’t send him the necessary reply. Do you think that I should answer such gnats and flies? If I were to put my foot on them I would trample them to death. The fact is that I merely give them a chance to fly away and survive.”

The challenge was finally acknowledged by Dowie. From that day on, Dowie suffered a gradual decline of all his affairs. His health began to deteriorate, his followers began to have doubts and questioned his claims, and he began to experience financial difficulties. In 1905, he suffered a severe stroke and was paralysed, his wife and children deserted him and he



News report by the Sunday Herald, Boston, June 23, 1907

was charged with many immoral practices. Finally, on March 9, 1907, Dowie died a miserable death and another prophecy of the Promised Messiah^{as} was thus fulfilled. Several

newspapers in the United States, including the Sunday Herald in Boston (see photo), reported on the results of the prayer duel.

Two Martyrdoms in Afghanistan (1901 & 1903)

In 1901 and 1903, two notable personages of the Ahmadiyya Community were martyred in Afghanistan due to religious intolerance. These were the only two martyrdoms of Ahmadi Muslims that took place during the life of the Promised Messiah^{as} who memorialised them through his book, *Tazkiratush Shahadatain (A Narration of two Martyrdoms)*, written in 1903.

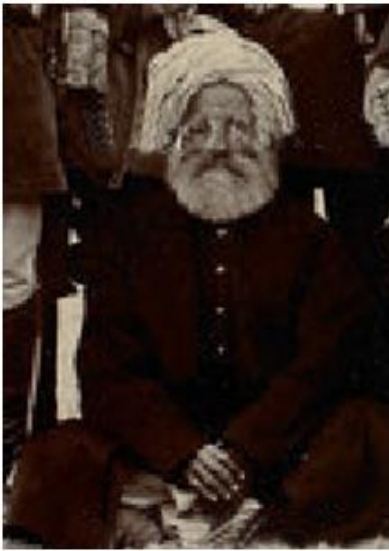
Around that time, Afghanistan was ruled by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (1840-1901) and later by his son, Amir Habibullah Khan (1872-1919). The British had negotiated an agreement with Amir Abdur Rahman Khan called the Durand Line Treaty under which the land between Afghanistan and British-ruled India including North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan was demarcated. When the time came to actually set the boundary on the ground, many persons from Afghanistan did not agree and instigated fighting against the British under the guise of *Jihad* or holy war.



Amir Abdur Rahman Khan
(en.wikipedia.org)

The first person to be martyred was Maulwi Abdur Rahman of Kabul, Afghanistan. He was a disciple of Sahibzadah Abdul Latif and had visited Qadian two or three times at the bidding of his master, staying in Qadian for several months each time. While in the company of the Promised Messiah^{as}, Maulwi Abdur Rahman strengthened his faith and familiarised himself with the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Community. One important aspect of the Ahmadiyya teachings was the condemnation of the so-called holy war. When Maulwi Abdur Rahman returned to Afghanistan, he openly preached the Ahmadiyya perspective of Islam, particularly condemning the use of force against the British government that had afforded peace and protection to millions of Muslims who lived in their territories. On learning that Maulwi Abdur Rahman has accepted Ahmadiyyat and was against the waging of holy war against the British, the ruler, Amir Abdur Rahman Khan, was infuriated and issued an order for his arrest and imprisonment. It was learned much later that on June 20, 1901, Maulwi Abdur Rahman was killed in the prison through strangulation. Less than two months later, the ruler Amir Abdur Rahman Khan was stricken by paralysis and passed away on October 1, 1901. Immediately after his death his son, Amir Habibullah Khan was made the ruler of Afghanistan and his crowning ceremony was performed by Sahibzadah Abdul Latif.

The second martyrdom, of Sahibzadah Abdul Latif, took place in Kabul two years later on July 14, 1903. Born around 1853, Sahibzadah Abdul Latif originated from the Afghanistan province of Khost and traced his ancestry from the well-known Afghan-Indian saint Seyed Ali Hujwari, known popularly as *Data Ganj Bakhsh*. He was a scholar of Islam and was quite experienced in spiritual matters such as true dreams, revelations and visions. For this, he was widely respected by the general public as well as the notable rulers of Afghanistan. He also helped the Amir of Afghanistan by quelling a rebellion against him in the south and by representing Afghanistan for the Durand Line Treaty.



Sahibzadah Abdul Latif

Having come across some books of the Promised Messiah^{as}, he decided to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca and also pass through India to pay a visit to Qadian. India at the time was suffering from the plague epidemic and the Ottoman Empire had restricted the movement of pilgrims to Mecca that year. Thus, not being able to proceed to Mecca as planned, Sahibzadah Abdul Latif decided to continue his journey to Qadian where he arrived in November 1902 and, soon after meeting the Promised Messiah^{as}, performed his *bai'at*. He stayed in Qadian for several months and spent all his time in the company of the Promised Messiah^{as} who was greatly impressed by his devotion and spirituality. One time during a trip to Jhelum in the company of the Promised Messiah^{as}, Sahibzadah Abdul Latif confided to him: “Hudhur,

I see my blood dripping that shall irrigate the land of Afghanistan.” At another time, he said while shedding tears from his eyes: “I see that the angels have killed a number of persons for my sake. What shall I do; I have not killed anyone.” Another time he received a divine revelation stating: “Sacrifice your head in the way of the Lord, and don’t hesitate, as God has willed it so, for the betterment of the land of Kabul.”

In March 1903, Sahibzadah Abdul Latif left Qadian and took to his return journey to Afghanistan. At the moment of parting from the Promised Messiah^{as}, he fell upon his feet as he was sure that he shall not see his master again. During his journey he mentioned several times to his companions that the land of Afghanistan was in want of his blood for its reformation. After arriving in Kabul, Sahibzadah Abdul Latif initiated extensive preaching and spreading the word about the advent of the Messiah and Mahdi. The ears of the Amir of Afghanistan had been poisoned by his courtiers and orthodox Muslim clergy with the result that Amir Habibullah Khan issued orders for the arrest of Sahibzadah Abdul Latif and ordered him to recant his acceptance of Ahmadiyyat or face the punishment of death.



Amir Habibullah Khan
(en.wikipedia.org)

On the day of execution, he was dragged by a rope tied to a ring pierced through his nose and was taken to a field where he was half buried into the ground and given the last chance to recant. After his continued refusal to do so, he was stoned to death. Forty days after the incident, a disciple of Sahibzadah Abdul Latif removed the body from under the stones, performed the funeral prayer and buried him in a proper graveyard. When Amir Habibullah Khan learned of this, he ordered his people to dig up the body and dispose it off to a yet unknown location. Amir Habibullah Khan was eventually shot and his dynasty was terminated by Bachha Saqqah, a bandit chieftain.

Charge of Defamation of Character (1903)

In 1903, Maulwi Karam Din—an opponent of the Promised Messiah^{as}—filed a libel case against him. When this case was dismissed by the judge, Maulwi Karam Din immediately

filed another case for defamation of character. This time the judge, Lala Chandoo Lal, who was appointed to hear the case, was openly prejudiced against the Promised Messiah^{as}. The judge was being pressured by his own community that now that the ‘prey’ was in his hands, he must give him a sentence of jailing. When the Promised Messiah^{as} was apprised of this plan of his opponents, he spontaneously exclaimed: “He considers me his prey—his prey—I am a lion of God. Can he put his hands on the lion of God?”

When efforts were made to have the case transferred to another Judge, Lala Chandoo Lal would not agree. One day, the judge held his court out in the open where a number of persons could attend the proceedings. During the interrogation, the judge asked the Promised Messiah^{as}, “Do you claim to be able to show Signs?” The latter replied, “Yes. Whatever Sign you ask for, I can show it at this time!”

But for some fear in the heart of the Judge, the world was deprived of witnessing a spontaneous Sign from God.

One day, Lala Chandoo Lal questioned the Promised Messiah^{as} regarding his well known revelation, “*I shall humiliate him who designs to humiliate thee.*” He asked if this was from God. The Promised Messiah^{as} replied in the affirmative, saying that it was a promise made by God to him that whoever intends to humiliate him, God shall humiliate him. At this the judge asked several times, “What if I intend to do it?” Each time, the Promised Messiah^{as} answered, “Whoever does it.”

One day the Promised Messiah^{as} was lying down on a carpet when some people advised him that Lala Chandoo Lal intended to incarcerate him. At this he sat up and said, “I don’t even see Lala Chandoo Lal presiding in the court.” As it so happened, the government demoted Lala Chandoo Lal and transferred him to another city from where he took retirement and later developed mental illness and passed away.

Writing of the Will (1905)

Towards the end of the year 1905, the Promised Messiah^{as} received repeated revelations intimating him of his own death:

“Only a little is left out of the term appointed by your Lord.” [in Arabic]

“Only a few days are left. All will be saddened on that day.” [in Urdu]

“The end of your appointed term is approaching and We shall not leave any cause of humiliation for you.” [in Arabic]

“Your time has come and We shall keep up for you bright Signs.” [in Arabic]

In December 1905, the Promised Messiah^{as} wrote a booklet called *Al-Wasiyyat* (The Will) in which he recorded his last testament to the Ahmadiyya Community. In it he urged the members of the Community to bring about a change for the better in their lives and to live up to the standard demanded by Islam. He also told them that on his departure from this world, God would send His Second Manifestation to the world. He instructed the Community to be sympathetic towards each other and to get rid of their low passions:

“Do not think that God will let you go waste. You are the seed that God has planted with his own hands. God says that this seed will grow and blossom and its branches will spread out to

all directions and it will become a big tree. Blessed are those who believe in what God says and do not fear the trials that come in between.”

In the Will, the Promised Messiah^{as} made a mention of a vision of his and said that he had been shown a site which was going to be his grave. In this vision he saw an angel who was measuring the land and after reaching a certain spot which was shining like silver, the angel said that this was his grave. He was also shown a piece of land which the angel said was the *Bahishti Maqbarah* or a Graveyard of the dwellers of paradise. He was told that his sincere followers will be buried in this graveyard.

In the Will, the Promised Messiah^{as} laid down the conditions for burial in that graveyard. In addition to being a good follower of Islamic principles, one who wished to be buried in the Paradise Graveyard was required to make a will leaving one tenth to one third of one's estate in the name of the Ahmadiyya Movement. If a person had no property or income but otherwise merited burial in the graveyard, he was to be permitted to be interred therein. In accordance with the wishes and instructions of the Promised Messiah^{as}, this special graveyard was established in Qadian.

Journey to Lahore and Demise (1908)

In April 1908, the Promised Messiah^{as} travelled to Lahore accompanied by his family. During his stay there he made numerous speeches, met with a succession of visitors and wrote his last book entitled *Paigham-i Sulh* or Message of Reconciliation. This book was addressed to Hindus and Muslims to patch up their quarrels and sign a formal pact to tolerate one another and enjoy the benefits of unity and peace. He told the two groups that unwarranted attacks on the Scriptures and prophets of other people cause only resentment and that understanding should be used in religious matters. Even in the presence of differing viewpoints, he said, mutual respect could bring the people closer.

On May 20, 1908, the Promised Messiah^{as} received his last revelation in Arabic:

“It is the time to march; again, it is time to march and death is near.” [in Arabic]

Six days later, on May 26, 1908, the Promised Messiah^{as} passed away. He was a little over 73 years old at the time (equivalent to little over 75 years by lunar reckoning). His coffin was brought from Lahore to Batala by train and from there his companions carried it on their shoulders to Qadian, a distance of eleven miles. Next day he was buried in the *Bahishti Maqbarah*.

Saiyadah Nawab Mubarka Begum, the daughter of the Promised Messiah^{as}, narrates that the evening before his death, her father was sitting in the courtyard of the house in Lahore and writing his last book (*Paigham-i Sulh*). His face mirrored a very special zest and a certain reddish shade and his pen was running faster than usual. She says that at that moment she remembered a dream of hers that caused her much apprehension and she tried hard to remove it from her mind. In her dream, he had appeared just like this, sitting on the bed and writing like this. She says that just before coming to Lahore, she had seen in the dream that:

“I am in the lower level in our courtyard (in Qadian) and go towards the circular room where a lot of people are present as if a special meeting is going on. Maulwi 'Abdul-Karim comes to the door and says to me, 'Bibi, go and tell your father that the Holy Prophet^{buh} and the Companions have come and they are calling for him.' I go upstairs and see that the

Promised Messiah^{as} is sitting on the bed and is writing with great speed and there is a special aspect to his countenance which is bright and full of zest. I say to him, 'Father, Maulwi 'Abdul-Karim says that the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} has come with his Companions and they are calling for you.' He lifts up his gaze while still writing and says, 'Go and tell them that I will be there as soon as this writing is finished.'"

She narrates that it was exactly the same scene that she saw in the courtyard of the house in Lahore the evening before he passed away.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF HADHRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD^{as}

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} made several claims in his life regarding his own person. These include being:

1. A Mujaddid
2. The Mahdi
3. The second coming of the Messiah, and
4. A Dependent Prophet

Below, we shall see as to what he has achieved in these three prophesied roles.

1. As a Mujaddid of Islam

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} devoted his entire life to the function of renovating and renewing the religion of Islam. He found the Islam of his time under severe attack by the followers of other faiths with little spirituality and moral excellence left among the Muslims themselves. Through his spoken words as well as through his extensive writings spanning nearly twenty-eight years, he came to the defence of Islam like no one else had done in the past fourteen centuries. Below, we summarise some of his contributions in this area:

- Proper ranking of the Qur'an and the Hadith
- Maintaining that no verse of the Holy Qur'an has been abrogated
- Maintaining that the Holy Prophet's *Mi'raj* was a spiritual experience
- Strove against *bidda's* in the Community: Qul ceremony; asking of help from dead saints; *Du'a* after the formal Prayers; unusual '*waza'if*'; the wearing of amulets; and other inappropriate and unusual practices that had crept into Islam during the past thirteen centuries.
- New interpretations of the Qur'anic verses concerning: Jesus' death; *Qiyamat-e sughra*—the Lesser Day of Judgment; the coming of the Messiah and Mahdi; the perpetuity of prophethood in the Muslim Community; Jihad by sword; and the signs of the Latter Days of Islam
- New and enlightening discourses on: the purpose of man's life; man's relationship with God; life after death; purpose of sending prophets; the power of prayer; the philosophy of Islam; and the nature of revelation
- Infused a new spirit in the pursuit of Islam and showed it as a living faith
- Wrote more than eighty books and numerous lectures, sermons and letters.

- Defended Islam from the attacks of other faiths and showed its beauty, excellence and superiority.

If we look at the total contribution of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} in the field of renewing and renovating the religion of Islam, we do not find its equal in the entire history of Islam—let alone the fourteenth century. No one has produced such voluminous literature—in three languages—as he has achieved over his lifetime. His works are laced with perfection of linguistic beauty, a constant current of spirituality, and mental flights into the realm of religious philosophy.

Thus, his efforts in reviving and renovating the religion of Islam are not only unparalleled but also clearly undeniable. In this respect, we must note, that Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's contributions as a Mujaddid of Islam have indeed been recognised by many eminent Sunni Muslims of his time who looked at his achievements without prejudice of mind.

2. As the Mahdi

Quoting the Hadith mentioned by Ibn Maja—*la Mahdi illa Isa* (there is no Mahdi except Isa)—Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} asserts that the two different names mentioned in the Hadith literature refer to the same person.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} presents a very interesting idea in his book *Izala Auham* (part 2, p-409, *Roohani Khazain*, volume 3) that just as the promised Messiah^{as} bears a certain resemblance with the original Jesus son of Mary, in like manner the prophesied Mahdi is expected to bear a certain resemblance with the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. Thus, just as the appearance of the Promised Messiah^{as} is the second manifestation of Jesus son of Mary, the appearance of Mahdi is the second manifestation of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} himself. Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} states in his book *Izala Auham* (p-175, *Roohani Khazain*, volume 3) that when the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} prophesied that the Mahdi would be named after him and his father's name would be after the Prophet's father, in fact what the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} meant was that the Mahdi would bear extreme resemblance with him in his character and traits.

The literal meaning of the word Mahdi simply means a person who has been guided by God. The entire life of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} shows that at each juncture of his life and in each endeavour that he undertook, he strictly relied on the Hand of God to guide him. It was under such guidance that he assumed the journey to Hoshiarpur for solitary meditation; it was under such guidance that he fasted for a period of nearly eight months; it was under such guidance that he married for the second time; it was under such guidance that he laid down the foundation of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at; it was under such guidance that he initiated the scheme of bequests in the name of the Movement; it was under such guidance that he wrote his speech, *The Philosophy of Islamic Teachings*, for the Conference on religions; and it was under such guidance that he sent a group of researchers to Srinagar to investigate the tomb of Yuz Asaf which eventually led to the publication of his now famous book, *Jesus in India*.

3. As the Promised Messiah

In the many Ahadith of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}, certain expectations exist as to the work of the latter day Messiah of Islam. Broadly speaking, these include the breaking of the cross, the killing of the swine, the fighting against and killing of the *Dajjal* (Antichrist), the uniting of mankind under one flag, and the re-establishment of peace, justice and equity in the world. In this context, we list the following achievements of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}:

- Proved weaknesses in the present-day Christianity (broke the cross):
 - Matter of Original Sin
 - Atonement from this Original Sin
 - Concept of Trinity
 - Divinity of Jesus
 - Jesus' ascension to Heaven
 - Jesus' natural death and burial in Srinagar, Kashmir
 - Contradictions in the Old and New Testaments
 - Incomplete and impractical teachings of the present-day Gospels
- Strove against wickedness and indecency (killed the swine), through numerous books, sermons and prayers.
- Broke the powers of Gog and Magog (fought against the *Dajjal*):
 - Reversed the process of Christianisation of Muslims in India
 - Strove against atheism, materialism and godlessness
 - Bared the schemes of the super powers against Islam (particularly through the works of the succeeding Caliphs of the Promised Messiah^{as}).
- Strove to unite mankind under one Faith:
 - Preached directly to Hindus, Sikhs, and Christians
 - Wrote letters to many reigning kings, queens and leaders
 - Promoted proper dialogue and peaceful inter-religious discussion
 - Compared the teachings of Islam to various other teachings
 - Proved the excellence of Islamic teachings
 - Proved the superiority of the prophet of Islam over all other prophets
 - Proved Islam as the universal religion of mankind and invited all people to embrace it
- Showed the Signs that were prophesied for the coming of the Messiah:
 - The eclipsing of the sun and the moon during the month of Ramadhan
 - Unusual and heavy meteor showers
 - Plague, earthquakes, and World Wars
 - The inventions of the Latter Days (railroad, publishing of books, scientific discoveries in astronomy, geology, etc.)
 - The gathering of pure and noble souls under his flag
 - His challenges to the wicked and the enemies of Islam
 - His final victory in all conflicts with other people

4. As a Dependent Prophet in Islam

The function of a person who bears the title of a ‘prophet’ in any sense of the word is to have frequent converse with God and receive frequent intimations of the unseen from Him. He also delivers warnings to the wicked and the enemies of the Faith, and conveys good news to the righteous and true followers of the teachings of Islam. He comes to establish the unqualified Unity of God and battles with God’s enemies with His support and blessing. He preaches righteousness and virtue and opposes wickedness and evil in every form. He opens up the gates of spiritual knowledge and blessings and brings mankind closer to God. Finally, he does all the above as a bona fide appointee of God. These are essentially the functions of a prophet according to Islamic theology. Below, we shall note some of the achievements of Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} in this context:

- He had frequent converse with God, many of which have been recorded in his numerous books and also published by the Ahmadiyya Community under the title of ‘*Tadhkira*’. He received most of his revelations in Urdu, but also in Arabic, Persian and some even in the English language.
- He received frequent intimation of the unseen from God in his dreams, revelations and visions, and announced them to the people (this is the root meaning of the Arabic word ‘*nabi*’). These intimations and resulting prophecies concerned earthquakes, plague, wars, adversities on people, births, deaths, behaviour of people, receiving of money, promotion and demotion of people, marriages, cures, and the spread of his own message in the world.
- In the tradition of earlier prophets, he showed miracles such as red ink spots on his robe, healing of many persons, sufficiency of food for many people, escape from a collapsing house roof, the Revealed Sermon, learning of thousands of Arabic language roots in one night, etc.
- He demonstrated the glory and majesty of God with manifest Signs received from Him.
- He received direct enlightenment from God on many subjects and issues, including the linguistic skill of the Arabic language.
- He gave good tidings to the righteous (*Bashir*): such as his revelation that “*Kings shall find blessings in thy garments*”, and gave due warnings to the wicked (*Nazir*): such as to persons like Lekh Ram, Alexander Dowie, ‘Abdullah Atham, and many others.
- He strove with pen and speech against the enemies of Islam and God. In this connection he penned more than eighty books in Urdu, Arabic and Persian languages; delivered many sermons, lectures and advice to his community; and gave death-challenges to the enemies of Islam.
- He preached the Unity of God and described in great detail His attributes and His Tradition.
- He opened the gates of spiritual knowledge for his followers and helped them reach spiritual heights as well.
- He showed God as a Living Supreme Being who still continues to converse with His people as he conversed in the past.

- He gave new insights into the verses of the Holy Qur'an by showing that new gems shall continue to be obtained from this Holy Scripture.
- He strove hard to establish the superiority of Islam among the faiths, prove its continuing applicability to modern times and cultures, and bring people closer to God.
- He acted like God's own successor on earth, dispensing justice, separating good from evil, and showing the right path to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.
- He founded a Community of righteous, pious and noble people and encouraged them to enter into service for the sake of Islam. This was one of the most important objectives of his coming. In the final analysis, a tree is judged by the fruit that it bears.

A LIST OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH'S BOOKS

The writings of the Promised Messiah^{as} fall into three categories:

1. Books, magazines, and posters which he wrote for the purpose of publication.
2. Letters which he wrote to his relatives, friends or other people.
3. Addresses and speeches which he made in formal or informal gatherings.

The authenticity of Promised Messiah's various 'writings' should be considered in the order given above. Below is given a list of the books of Promised Messiah^{as}, which belong to the first category. The books marked with an asterisk * are entirely or partly in Arabic.

Title	English translation	Published	Remarks
<i>Brahin-e Ahmadiyya, vol. 1&2</i>	Proofs of Ahmadiyya	1880	
		1882, vol. 3	
		1884, vol. 4	
<i>Purani Tahrirain</i>	Old Writings	1899	Written in 1879
<i>Surma Chashm Arya</i>	Collyrium for the Eyes of the Aryas	1886	
<i>Shahna-i Haq</i>	Battalion of Truth	1887	
<i>Sabz Ishtihar</i>	Green Poster	1888	
<i>Fath-i Islam</i>	Victory of Islam	1891	
<i>Tauzih-i Maram</i>	Explanation of Objectives	1891	
<i>Izala Auham</i>	Removal of Suspicions	1891	
<i>Ludhiana Debate</i>	Debate of Ludhiana	1891	
<i>Delhi Debate</i>	Debate of Delhi	1891	
<i>Asmani Faisla</i>	Divine Decision	1892	
<i>Nishan-i Asmani</i>	Heavenly Sign	1892	
<i>Aina-i Kamalat-i Islam*</i>	Mirror for the Excellence of Islam	1893	
<i>Barakatud Dua</i>	The Blessings of Prayer	1893	
<i>Hujjatul Islam</i>	Convincing Proof of Islam	1893	
<i>Sachcha-i ka Izhar</i>	The Expression of Truth	1893	
<i>Jang-i Muqaddas</i>	The Sacred Battle	1893	
<i>Shahadatul Qur'an</i>	Testimony of the Qur'an	1893	
<i>Tohfa-i Baghdad*</i>	A Present to Baghdad	1893	
<i>Karamatus Sadiqin*</i>	Miracles of the Truthful	1893	
<i>Hamamatul Bushra*</i>	Dove of Good News	1894	
<i>Nurul Haq*</i>	The Light of the Truth	1894	
<i>Itmamul Hujja*</i>	Completing the Convincing Proof	1894	

<i>Sirrul Khilafa*</i>	The Secret of Caliphate	1894	
<i>Anwarul Islam</i>	The Light of Islam	1894	
<i>Minanur Rahman*</i>	Bounties of the Gracious	1915	Written in 1895
<i>Ziaul Haq</i>	The Light of Truth	1895	
<i>Nurul Quran I & II</i>	The Light of the Qur'an	1895	
<i>Miyarul Mazahib</i>	The Standard of Religions	1895	
<i>Arya Dharm</i>	The Arya Religion	1895	
<i>Sat Bachan</i>	The True Word	1895	
<i>Islami Usul ki philosophy</i>	The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam	1897	
<i>Anjam-i Atham*</i>	The End of Atham	1896	
<i>Siraj-i Munir</i>	The Bright Lamp	1897	
<i>Istifta</i>	Asking for Religious Opinion	1897	
<i>Hujjatullah*</i>	The Convincing Proof from God	1897	
<i>Tohfa-i Qaisariyya</i>	A Present to the Queen	1897	
<i>Sirajuddin Isai ke Char Sawalo ka Jawab</i>	An Answer to Four Questions of Sirajuddin, a Christian	1897	
<i>Kitabul Bariyya</i>	The Book of Acquittal	1898	
<i>Al-Balagh*</i>	The Conveyance of the Message	1922	Written in 1897
<i>Zaruratul Imam</i>	The Need for the Imam	1897	
<i>Najmul Huda*</i>	The Star of Guidance	1898	
<i>Raz-i Haqiqat</i>	The Secret of the Truth	1898	
<i>Kashful Ghita</i>	The Removal of the Curtain	1898	
<i>Ayyamus Sulh</i>	The Days of Peace	1899	
<i>Haqiqatul Mahdi</i>	The Reality of the Mahdi	1899	
<i>Masih Hindustan Main</i>	Jesus in India	1908	Written in 1896
<i>Sitara-i Qaisariyya</i>	The Star of the Queen	1899	
<i>Tiryaqul Qulub</i>	Elixir for the Hearts	1899	
<i>Tohfa-i Ghaznawiyya</i>	A Present for the Ghaznavis	1902	Written in 1900
<i>Roidad-i Jalsa-i Dua</i>	Minutes of the Meeting for the Prayer		
<i>Khutba Ilhamiyya*</i>	The Revealed Sermon	1902	Delivered in 1900
<i>Lujjatun Nur*</i>	The Sea of Light	1910	Written in 1900
<i>Government Angrezi aur Jihad</i>	The British Government and Jihad	1900	
<i>Tohfa-i Golarhviyya</i>	A Present for the Golarhvi	1902	
<i>Arba'in 1, 2, 3, 4</i>	Forty (Brochures)	1900	
<i>I'jazul Masih*</i>	The Miracle of the Messiah	1901	
<i>Ek Ghalti ka Izala</i>	A Misunderstanding Removed	1901	
<i>Dafi-ul Bala wa Mi'yaro-Ahlil Istifta</i>	The Remover of the Calamity & the Criterion for the Chosen Ones	1902	
<i>Al Huda wat-Tabzirato Limanyara*</i>	The Guidance and Information for him who can Perceive		
<i>Nuzulul Masih</i>	The Advent of the Messiah	1909	Written in 1902
<i>Kasht-i Nuh</i>	The Ark of Noah	1902	
<i>Tohfatan Nadwa</i>	A Present to the Nadwa	1902	
<i>Ijaz-i Ahmadi</i>	The Miracle of Ahmad	1902	
<i>Review bar Mubahisa...</i>	Review of the Debate...		
<i>Mawahibur Rahman*</i>	Gifts of God	1903	
<i>Nasim-i Dawat</i>	The Breeze of Invitation		
<i>Sanatan Dharam</i>	Sanatan Dharm	1903	
<i>Tazkiratush Shahadatain</i>	A Narration of Two Martyrdoms	1903	
<i>Siratul Abdal*</i>	The Characteristics of godly People		
<i>Islam aur is Muluk ke Dusrai Mazahab</i>	Islam and Other Religions in the Country	1904	
<i>Lecture Lahore</i>	Lecture at Lahore	1904	
<i>Lecture Sialkot</i>	Lecture at Sialkot	1904	
<i>Lecture Ludhiana</i>	Lecture at Ludhiana	1905	
<i>Al Wasiiyat</i>	The Will	1905	

<i>Chashma-i Masihi</i>	The Christian Fountain	1906	
<i>Tajjaliyat-i Ilahiyya</i>	The Divine Manifestations	1922	Written in 1906
<i>Qadian ke Arya aur Hum</i>	The Aryas of Qadian and We	1907	
<i>Brahin-i Ahmadiyya, vol. 5</i>	Proofs of Ahmadiyya, vol. 5	1905	
<i>Haqiqatul Wahy*</i>	The Reality of Revelation	1907	Written in 1906
<i>Chashma Ma'arfat</i>	The Fountain of God Realisation	1908	
<i>Paigham-i Sulh</i>	The Message of Reconciliation	1908	

KHILAFAT AFTER THE PROMISED MESSIAH^{as}

As religious communities are naturally distressed and saddened at the death of their prophet, God gives them the good news of peace and security in the period that follows. This has been the tradition of God with all such communities and people in the past.

In the case of the Ahmadiyya community, the good news was reiterated by the Promised Messiah^{as} in his book, *The Will*, where he says that once he is gone, God shall send His second manifestation in the form of successors.

After prophethood, Khilafat is the most important institution in Islam. As it says in the Holy Qur'an in *Surah an-Nur*, verse 56:

“Allah has promised to those among you who believe and do good works that He will surely make them Successors in the earth, as He made Successors *from among* those who were before them; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them; and that He will surely give them in exchange security *and peace* after their fear. They will worship Me, and they will not associate anything with Me. Then whoso is ungrateful after that, they will be the rebellious.” (*Al-Qur'an*, 24:56)

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۗ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا ۗ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Thus, after the death of the Promised Messiah^{as}, a system of Khilafat was instituted in the Ahmadiyya Movement which is similar to the Pious Caliphate that followed the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}.

In this system of Khilafat, some select members of the community elect a Khalifa by majority vote. The Khalifa is the religious head of the community and directs all affairs of the community in complete accordance with Islamic principles. The Khalifa usually asks for a *bai'at*, or the oath of allegiance from the community members to re-affirm their loyalty and commitment to him and the cause of Islam. Although Khalifas succeed each other, they all act in the name of the Promised Messiah^{as}. For this reason they are referred to as Khalifa-tul Masih, meaning Successor of the Messiah.

To date, five Khalifas have led the Ahmadiyya community after the death of the Promised Messiah^{as}. The names of these Khalifas and the periods of their Khilafat are given below:

List of Khalifas after the Promised Messiah^{as}

No.	Name	Birth - Death	Khilafat
1 st	Maulwi Hakim Nuruddin	1841-1914	1908-1914
2 nd	Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad	1889-1965	1914-1965
3 rd	Mirza Nasir Ahmad	1909-1982	1965-1982
4 th	Mirza Tahir Ahmad	1928-2003	1982-2003
5 th	Mirza Masroor Ahmad	1950-	2003-Present

First Khalifa:

MAULWI HAKIM NURUDDIN (Khalifa: 1908-1914)

At the death of the Promised Messiah^{as}, a score of the leading members of the Community got together and decided that Maulwi Hakim Nuruddin (1841-1914) should be requested to undertake the responsibility of leading the Community. This request was conveyed to Maulwi Nuruddin in a written document signed by these people. After receiving the request, Maulwi Nuruddin thought for a while and then said that he will give his reply after prayer.

After performing his *Nafl* Prayer, he suggested that the members of the Community gather in the garden where he would address them. In his address he told the fellow Ahmadi Muslims that he had never desired to be their leader. He even mentioned the names of seven other persons who, he said, were more deserving of this honour. Then he told the gathering that if they really insisted, he would be willing to carry this burden. He reminded them, however, that a person who performed the *bai'at*, gave up all his freedom in the cause of Islam. Finally, he urged the fellow community members to remain united. His address was received with great acclamation and all those present performed the *bai'at* at the hand of Maulwi Nuruddin, who then became the First Successor to the Promised Messiah^{as}.



Maulwi Hakim Nuruddin, Khalifatul Masih I.

Maulwi Hakim Nuruddin was born in 1841 at Bhera, a small town in Sargodha District. He traced his ancestry to 'Umar bin Khattab, the second Caliph of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}. He was extremely learned in the Holy Qur'an and was well known for his knowledge of natural medicine.

In 1865-66, at the age of 25, he travelled to the cities of Mecca and Medina. He stayed there for nearly one and a half year to acquire religious knowledge. On his return to Bhera, his hometown, he started a religious school where he taught the Holy Qur'an and the Tradition of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. Besides, he started practice in the natural medicine. In a short time he became well known for his healing powers and people travelled great distances

to be treated at his clinic. His fame came to the notice of the Ruler of Kashmir, who appointed him as his court physician in 1867.

Around 1871, at the age of 30, he married Fatima Bibi. This marriage lasted until 1905, when Fatima Bibi passed away. After her death, and on the insistence of the Promised Messiah^{as}, he married Sughra Begum.

In 1885, Maulwi Nuruddin came across an announcement published by the Promised Messiah^{as}. He was so deeply impressed by it that he travelled to Qadian to meet the author. After meeting the Promised Messiah^{as}, Maulwi Nuruddin was convinced of his truth and became a devout follower of his. When in 1889 the Promised Messiah^{as} started accepting the *bai'at*, Maulwi Nuruddin was the first person to be invited to perform it.

In 1892, the old Ruler of Kashmir died and the new Maharajah terminated his services. Maulwi Nuruddin returned to Bhera and started the construction of a large clinic. In the following year he went to Qadian to visit the Promised Messiah^{as}. After staying there for a few days, he asked the Promised Messiah^{as} for permission to return to Bhera. The Promised Messiah^{as} asked him to stay a little longer. After a few days, the Promised Messiah^{as} asked him to have his wife come over and join him, to which Maulwi Nuruddin complied. Then a little later, the Promised Messiah^{as} asked him to have his books shifted to Qadian. After some time, when Maulwi Nuruddin again asked for permission to leave, the Promised Messiah^{as} replied: “Maulwi sahib, forget about your home town now.”

And this Maulwi Nuruddin did. From that moment on, even the thought of ever returning to his hometown never occurred to him again.

His life at Qadian was completely dedicated to the service of the Ahmadiyya Movement. He spent his time teaching, looking after the poor, treating the sick, proof-reading the Promised Messiah's manuscripts and in prayers and devotions.

Some of the important contributions made by Khalifa-tul Masih I towards the success of the Ahmadiyya Movement include the founding of Madrissah Ahmadiyya (The Ahmadiyya School), the entrusting of the English translation of the Holy Qur'an to Maulwi Muhammad 'Ali and establishment of the first foreign mission in England under the supervision of Chaudhry Fateh Muhammad Siyal. He also strengthened the institution of Khilafat and checked the efforts of a certain group within the Jama'at that was sowing seeds of dissension.

In January 1914, the health of Khalifa-tul Masih I started to decline and continued to do so for the next two months. In early March, he wrote out his will while he was confined to bed. At his instruction, his will was read out to those who were present. Nine days later, on March 13, 1914, Khalifa-tul Masih I passed away. At the time of his death he was 73 years old, the same age as the Promised Messiah^{as}. He was buried in the *Bahishti Maqbarah* in Qadian, by the side of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Maulwi Nuruddin was truly an unselfish, unassuming, godly person. His most important characteristic was his unshakeable faith and trust in God and his complete reliance on Him for all his worldly needs. He was extremely learned and was endowed with great knowledge of the Holy Qur'an. Consequently, the Promised Messiah^{as} had great love and regard for him and expressed it in one of his Persian poems:

“How good would it be if every one of the community would become Nuruddin.”

Second Khalifa:

MIRZA BASHIRUDDIN MAHMUD AHMAD (Khalifa: 1914-1965)

At the death of Khalifa-tul Masih I, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad (1889-1965) became the Second Successor of the Promised Messiah^{as} and continued to lead the Community for nearly 52 years.

Birth and Early Childhood

Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad was born in Qadian on January 12, 1889 and was the eldest of the five surviving children of the Promised Messiah^{as}. Throughout his childhood and early youth, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad suffered from chronic bad health and always fared poorly in his school exams. He could never concentrate on his studies and eventually failed his high school exam. But he took a deep interest in the study of the Holy Qur'an and learned it from Maulwi Nuruddin who was a great scholar in this field. Later in his life, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad not only studied the religious literature of Islam and other faiths, but also developed an unusual comprehension and mastery of many scientific, economic and political disciplines.

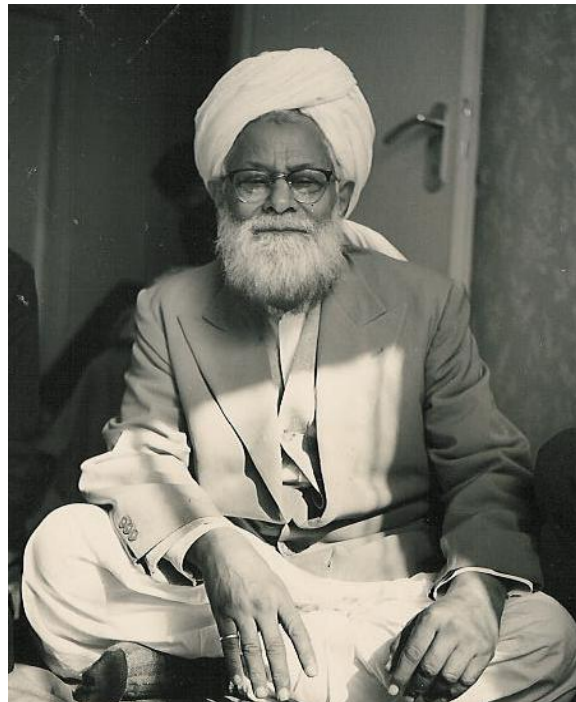
When the Promised Messiah^{as} died, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad was only 19 years old. He stood by the body of his holy father and made a pledge in these words:

“If all others should leave you and I should be left alone, yet I will stand against the whole world and shall not heed any opposition or hostility.”

Later events will show that both, his resolve in the face of difficulties and his commitment to the cause of Ahmadiyyat, were fulfilled in the most elegant manner.

In 1911, at the age of 22, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad set up an association with the name of Majlis Ansarullah, under the auspices of Khalifa-tul Masih I. This Association of the ‘Helpers of God’ carried out much useful work in the education of the Community and the upbringing of its youth.

In the year 1912, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad performed the pilgrimage to Mecca. In 1913, he started the publication of a weekly paper called *Al Fazl* which, in the course of time, became a daily newspaper of the Ahmadiyya community.



**Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih II.**

Election as Khalifa

On March 13, 1914, the First Successor of the Promised Messiah^{as}, Maulwi Nuruddin, passed away and the newly born Ahmadiyya Movement was faced with a serious crisis. There was a small faction in the Community, led by Maulwi Muhammad ‘Ali, who wanted to do away with the system of Khilafat entirely. During the Khilafat of Maulwi Nuruddin, these dissenters could not freely give voice to their feelings. At his death, however, they openly opposed this system and wanted to defer indefinitely the election of the next Khalifa.

The day after the death of Khalifa-tul Masih I, his will was read out to some 2,000 Ahmadi Muslims who had gathered in the mosque. In this will, Maulwi Nuruddin had suggested that the Community elect a new Successor. Maulwi Saiyad Muhammad Ahsan then stood up and formally proposed the name of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad. After this, the entire congregation shouted, “We second it”. Shortly afterwards, all present took the *bai‘at* or the oath of allegiance at the hand of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, now the Second Khalifa of the Promised Messiah^{as}.

Maulwi Muhammad ‘Ali and other dissenters left the congregation without performing the *bai‘at*. In a few days they even left Qadian and moved to Lahore where they founded their own organization under the name of *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam*. The followers of Maulwi Muhammad ‘Ali are commonly referred to as Lahori Ahmadi Muslims and differ with the Ahmadiyya Movement on two points:

1. The Lahori Ahmadi Muslims regard the Promised Messiah^{as} as only a Reformer and not a Prophet.
2. As a consequence of the above belief, they argue that the Successors of the Promised Messiah^{as} should not be called Khalifas.

Today, the members of the Anjuman at Lahore are only a very small fraction of the Ahmadi Muslims living all over the world.

Main Achievements of Khalifa-tul Masih II

The 52 year long period of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad’s Khilafat gave the Ahmadiyya Movement great stability and visionary direction. The Movement progressed in this period in leaps and bounds. Below, we will read about some of the achievements of the Second Khalifa.(i) Missionary Work

Immediately after taking over the office of Khilafat, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad intensified the missionary work of the Ahmadiyya Movement both inside India and abroad. As a result of this effort, a number of new missions were opened in foreign countries, some of which are listed below:

- In 1915, first missions were established in Ceylon and Mauritius.
- In 1920, the first mission was opened in the United States of America.
- In 1921, the first missionary was sent to the West African countries. Since then many missions, schools and hospitals have been established in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Ivory Coast, and Liberia.

- In 1924, the foundation of the Fazl Mosque in London was laid by Khalifa-tul Masih II himself.
- In 1925, the first mission was set up in Indonesia
- In 1928, a mission was established in Haifa, Palestine. This place is now in Israel.
- In 1934, the first mission in East Africa was opened.
- In 1935, a mission was also established in Japan. This mission had to be closed at the outbreak of the Second World War and was re-established in 1969, during the period of Khalifa-tul Masih III.
- In the period 1935-38, missions were opened in many East European countries such as Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Albania. At the outbreak of the Second World War these missions had to be closed. After the war, these countries came under Communist rule and the missions, therefore, could not be revived.
- In 1938, a mission was established in Burma.
- In 1945, a mission was opened in France but was closed down after a few years.
- In 1946, a mission was opened in Aden.
- In 1946, the first mission was opened in Spain.
- In 1947, a mission was established in Holland and the first mosque was built in The Hague in 1955.
- In 1948, the first mission in Switzerland was opened and the mosque at Zurich was built in 1963.
- In 1949, a mission was established in Hamburg, West Germany and a mosque was built there in 1957. A second mosque was built in Frankfurt in 1959.
- In 1956, the first mission was opened in Copenhagen, Denmark. Since then, missions have been opened in other Scandinavian countries namely, Sweden and Norway.
- In 1960, the first South American mission was opened in Guyana.
- In 1960, a mission was also established in the Fiji Islands.

(ii) Tahrik-e Jadid

In November 1935, Khalifa-tul Masih II initiated the scheme of Tahrik-e-Jadid. Under the nineteen demands of this scheme, the Ahmadiyya Community was urged to lead a simple life, to make sacrifices in the cause of Islam and to volunteer their lives for missionary work. The scheme was initially proposed for a period of three years but was made permanent very soon. Under this scheme of Tahrik-e Jadid today, missionary programmes are being carried out all over the world.

(iii) Waqf-e Jadid

In 1957, Khalifa-tul Masih II set up the organization of Waqf-e Jadid to carry out the missionary work inside Pakistan. Under this scheme, volunteers were asked to dedicate their lives to educate the rural population of the country and teach them the true religion of Islam.

(iv) Community Organised by Age Groups

For the better functioning of the members of the Community, Khalifa-tul Masih II established various organizations for the different age groups. The male members of the Community were divided into three age groups:

- Atfalul Ahmadiyya: for boys 7 to 15 years old
- Khuddamul Ahmadiyya: for youth 15 to 40 years old
- Ansarullah: for men above the age of 40

Similarly, the female members of the Community were organised into:

- Nasiratul Ahmadiyya: for girls 7 to 15 years of age
- Lajna Imaillah: for ladies above the age of 15

These various organizations are very active in Pakistan and abroad. They carry out programs not only relevant to their own class and age group, but also for the benefit of the community at large. This organisation of the Ahmadiyya Community into various classes and age groups greatly helped in promoting affectionate ties of mutual brotherhood and sisterhood.

(v) Majlis-e Mushawarat

In 1922, the Khalifa-tul Masih II set up a consultative body to advise the Khalifa on many important matters related to finance, budget, education, missionary projects and other affairs of the Community. This advisory body formally meets at least once every year. The number of the delegates to this Majlis keeps growing in response to the growth of the community. Currently, the delegates number more than 500.

(vi) Public Awareness of Islam

In the early twentieth century in India, Islam was a much maligned religion and slanderous remarks were frequently made against the character of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh} of Islam. To create public awareness of the true teachings of Islam and of the real character of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}, Khalifa-tul Masih II introduced public meetings in which representatives of other religions were invited to give speeches on the life and work of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}. These meetings were very successful in spreading the message of Islam and improving interfaith relations.

Claim to be the Promised Son

By 1939, the Ahmadiyya Movement had completed 50 years of its existence and Khalifa-tul Masih II had completed 25 years of his Khilafat. The Movement had made remarkable advances during the Khilafat of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad and the feeling was growing among the members of the Community that he, indeed, was the Promised Son

regarding whom the Promised Messiah^{as} had made the famous prophecy in 1886. However, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad had refrained from making any public claim so far.

Finally, on January 28, 1944, Khalifa-tul Masih II related a dream of his in the Friday Sermon. According to this dream it was made clear to him that he was indeed the Promised Son.

Later on, he called special meetings of the Community to re-affirm this fact. These meetings were held in the following places:

- Hoshiarpur: on February 20, 1944
- Lahore: on March 12, 1944
- Ludhiana: on March 23, 1944
- Delhi: on April 16, 1944

In all these meetings he told the public that through various dreams, visions and revelations, God had made it clear to him that the prophecy regarding the Promised Son was fulfilled in his person.

Migration To Pakistan

On the creation of Pakistan, in August 1947, many of the Muslims living in India moved to the new Muslim state. Khalifa-tul Masih II also decided to move the administrative centre of the Ahmadiyya Movement from Qadian to Pakistan. Some 313 Ahmadis stayed behind in Qadian to take care of the founding place of Ahmadiyyat, while the rest moved to the new country.

On September 20, 1948, about a year after moving from Qadian, Khalifa-tul Masih II laid the foundation of the new centre at Rabwah. At the time of its founding, Rabwah was a waste, desert land with no vegetation and frequent dust storms. Over the past sixty-five years, Rabwah has grown into an exemplary Muslim community complete with schools, colleges, hospital, institutions of religious learning and offices of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Rabwah also remained the official residence of the Khalifa until 1984 when the Fourth Khalifa, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, was forced to move to England due to extreme persecution and restrictions on his official duties.

Attempt on Life

In March 1954, an assassin attacked Khalifa-tul Masih II with a knife just after he had led the afternoon Prayer in the Mubarak Mosque in Rabwah. He received a deep wound in the neck, which could have been fatal had it gone a little deeper. Khalifa-tul Masih was 65 years old at the time.

Although the wound healed in due course, it shattered his nerves leading to a severe nervous fatigue a year later. After recovering somewhat, he travelled to Europe for medical treatment on the advice of his doctors. After staying there for about six months, he returned to Rabwah.

After his return from Europe, he undertook the writing of the Shorter Commentary of the Holy Quran in the Urdu language. The strain from this work plus other demands of his office, led to strong nervous fatigue in 1958. From then on, his condition gradually worsened

till, on November 8, 1965, Khalifa-tul Masih II passed away. He was 77 years old at the time of his death. Next day he was buried in the Bahishti Maqbarah at Rabwah.

The Writings Of Khalifa-tul Masih II

Some of the important writings of Khalifa-tul Masih II are listed below. An exhaustive collection of his various writings is included in the series *Anwarul 'Uloom*.

- *Tafsir e-Kabir*, The Larger Commentary of the Holy Qur'an
- *Tafsir e-Saghir*, The Shorter Commentary of the Holy Qur'an
- *Da'watul Amir*, Invitation to the Chief (published in English under the title of Invitation to Ahmadiyyat)
- *Tohfatul Maluk*, A Present for the Kings
- *Haqiqatul Nabuwwat*, The Truth of Prophethood
- *Saire Ruhani*, The Spiritual Stroll
- *Inqilabe Haqiqi*, The True Revolution
- *Hindustan ke Siyasi Mas'ala ka hal*, The Solution to the Political Problem of India
- *Paighame Ahmadiyyat*, The Message of Ahmadiyyat
- *Fazail al Quran*, The Excellences of the Holy Qur'an
- *Hasti Bari Ta'ala*, The Existence of God
- *Malaikat Allah*, The Angels of God
- *Islam ka Iqtisadi Nizam*, The Economic System of Islam
- Introduction to the Study of the Holy Quran

Third Khalifa:

MIRZA NASIR AHMAD (Khalifa: 1965-1982)

With the death of Khalifa-tul Masih II, the Ahmadiyya Community was once again faced with the task of electing the new Khalifa. The wounds of dissent, which the community had incurred after the death of the first Khalifa, had healed but their memory was still fresh. To safeguard against a similar dispute arising again, Khalifa-tul Masih II had established an Electoral College for the election of the Khalifa. The members of this college numbered about one hundred and fifty and included, among others, the *Amirs* of various circles in Pakistan, heads of the various central organizations and senior missionaries of the Movement.

At the death of Khalifa-tul Masih II, the Electoral College met in the Mubarak Mosque in Rabwah. When the votes were cast, Mirza Nasir Ahmad (1909-1982), the eldest son of the departed Khalifa, was elected by an overwhelming majority. Immediately, some five thousand Ahmadis, waiting outside the mosque for the results, performed the *bai'at* at the hand of Khalifa-tul Masih III. He was 56 years old at the time.

Birth And Early Life

Mirza Nasir Ahmad was born on November 16, 1909 and, by the young age of 13, had committed the entire Holy Qur'an to memory. In 1934, at the age of 25, he graduated from Government College, Lahore, with honours in Arabic. The same year he got married and soon afterwards proceeded to Oxford University for higher education. After obtaining his degree from Oxford, he returned to Qadian in 1938. From that day till he became the Khalifa in 1965, Mirza Nasir Ahmad held a number of important positions in the Ahmadiyya organisation:

- 1938-1939: Professor, Jami'a Ahmadiyya, Qadian
- 1939-1944: Principal, Jami'a Ahmadiyya, Qadian
- 1939-1949: Sadar, Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya
- 1949-1954: Na'ib Sadar, Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya
- 1944-1965: Principal, Talimul Islam College
- 1954-1965: Sadar, Majlis Ansarullah
- 1955-1965: President, Sadar Anjuman Ahmadiyya
- 1965-1982: Elected as Khalifa-tul Masih III



Mirza Nasir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih III.

Main Achievements of Khalifa-tul Masih III

As Khalifa-tul Masih III, Mirza Nasir Ahmad led the Community for nearly 17 years and contributed a great deal towards the progress of the Movement in the missionary work at home and abroad. Some of the noteworthy achievements of Khalifa-tul Masih III are mentioned below:

(i) Fazl-i 'Umar Foundation

In 1965, Khalifa-tul Masih III established the Fazl-i 'Umar Foundation in the memory of Khalifa-tul Masih II, who was named Fazl-i 'Umar in one of the revelations of the Promised Messiah^{as}. The purpose of this foundation was to carry on all the works in which the departed Khalifa had taken particular interest. An appeal was made to the Community to raise 2.5 million rupees as the capital of the foundation. The community participated in this venture overwhelmingly and the actual contributions far exceeded the initial target which was then raised to 5.2 million rupees. The main objectives of the foundation are:

- To assist in research work

- To assist in new missionary venture
- To assist in new educational effort
- To assist in economic welfare

(ii) Khilafat Library

On October 3, 1971, the Khalifa-tul Masih III inaugurated the Khilafat Library in Rabwah. This library can accommodate 50,000 books and has ample space for readers, research scholars and administrative workers.

(iii) Nusrat Jehan Scheme

After touring the West African countries in 1970, Khalifa-tul Masih III announced a scheme to expand the activities of the Movement in West Africa through the establishment of a number of schools and hospitals. The new scheme was named Nusrat Jehan Scheme and Khalifa-tul Masih III appealed to the Community to raise 100,000 pounds sterling over the next three years. Furthermore, he appealed to the Ahmadi teachers and doctors to volunteer themselves for service in these African countries.

The Community responded overwhelmingly with financial donations and volunteering its services. Very soon, schools and hospitals started to be established in Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Gambia and Sierra Leone. The results of this scheme have been most gratifying. The effort of the Movement has not only provided educational and medical services in remote regions which were completely devoid of any such facility, but, more importantly, the close contact of Ahmadi doctors and other workers with the local population has forged strong bonds of international brotherhood.

(iv) Waqf-e 'Arzi

Waqf 'Arzi means the temporary donation of one's time. Khalifa-tul Masih III instituted this scheme early in his Khilafat, under which Ahmadi Muslims would spend at least two weeks of their time at a designated place in the country and teach the local community the Holy Qur'an and explain to them the true religion of Islam.

(v) Centenary Jubilee

At the Annual Gathering held in Rabwah in December 1973, Khalifa-tul Masih III announced that the Ahmadiyya Movement will celebrate its 100th anniversary on March 23, 1989. The celebrations were to start on March 23 and were to continue throughout the year, finishing at the Annual Gathering of the same year. The Centenary Jubilee was not only meant to mark the 100-year existence of the Ahmadiyya Movement, but also the culmination of an intensive programme undertaken in the intervening years which would involve:

- The establishment of additional missions abroad
- The translation of the Holy Qur'an in French, Russian, Italian, Spanish, Chinese and Yugoslavian languages
- The publication of Islamic literature in at least 100 languages of the world

- The installation of printing presses in Pakistan and abroad
- The establishment of a broadcasting system in a foreign country.

Khalifa-tul Masih III appealed to the Community to pledge 25 million rupees to finance the various projects envisaged under this centenary celebration scheme.

(vi) Other contributions

On October 9, 1980, Khalifatul Masih III laid the foundation of Basharat Mosque in Spain after a lapse of five centuries of Muslim rule in that country that had ended with the Spanish Inquisition.

Khalifatul Masih III also gave the Jama'at the now famous and widely recognised slogan of: *Love for all, hatred for none.*

Persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan

Like the Muslims of the early days of Islam, Ahmadis have had their share of discrimination and persecution. Although the opposition of the Ahmadiyya Movement by the mullahs and orthodox Islamic clergy dates back to the days of the Promised Messiah^{as}, organised discrimination and persecution has greatly intensified since the creation of Pakistan.

The first major outbreak of severe violence against the Ahmadis occurred in 1953, during the Khilafat of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifa-tul Masih II. At that time, the government of Pakistan had to impose Martial Law within the country to curb the rioting and looting against the Ahmadis.

The second wave of such anti Ahmadiyya activities started in 1974 and was backed by the government of Prime Minister Zulfiqar 'Ali Bhutto. During this period, many Ahmadi homes were looted and burned, the community was boycotted, many Ahmadis in the higher echelons of the government and the armed forces were retired, and a number of the community members were put to death.

These outrages against the Ahmadiyya Movement culminated in a resolution of the National Assembly of Pakistan, on September 7, 1974, which declared the Ahmadis as non-Muslims under the law and constitution of the country.

Throughout these extremely trying circumstances, the Ahmadiyya Community displayed a remarkable sense of restraint and self control and bore these outrages with great patience and forbearance.

Prime Minister Zulfiqar 'Ali Bhutto, who used to take great pride and credit for declaring the Ahmadis non Muslims, came to a sorry end. On July 5, 1977, less than three years after the resolution of the National Assembly, he was removed from office by the Martial Law regime of General Ziaul Haq. Bhutto was then imprisoned and charged for the abetment of the murder of a political opponent in 1974. He was convicted on March 18, 1978 and hanged on April 4, 1979, despite many pleas for clemency



Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Prime Minister of Pakistan (courtesy: en.wikipedia.org).

by many countries. Bhutto's age at the time was 51 years and 3 months. This incident marked the fulfilment of the Promised Messiah's revelation and prophecy of 1891:

“He is a dog and he will die according to the value of the letters in the word ‘*klb*’.”

In this revelation the Promised Messiah^{as} was given the intimation that the value of the letters in the word ‘dog’ points to the age of the person. The Arabic word used for dog in his revelation was “*klb*” which, under the letter valuing system, amounts to the number 52 (K=20; L=30; B=2). In explanation of this revelation the Promised Messiah^{as} wrote in his book, *Izala Auham* (published in 1891):

“He is a dog and he will die on the numeric value of the letters in dog; which amount to fifty two. This means that his age will not exceed fifty two years and that he will die within the course of his fifty second year.”

This prophecy of the Promised Messiah^{as} made in 1891, was fulfilled word for word, eighty eight years later in 1979.

Illness and Death

In June 1982, Khalifa-tul Masih III was taken ill while visiting Islamabad. The illness proved fatal and on June 9, 1982, Khalifa-tul Masih III passed away. His body was taken to Rabwah where, on the following day, he was buried in the Bahishti Maqbarah.

Books of Khalifa-tul Masih III

- Message of Love and Brotherhood to Africa
- A Message of Peace—A Word of Warning
- Khilafat and Mujaddidiyyat
- Twenty-three Great Objectives of Building the House of Allah (Urdu)
- Collection of the Friday Sermons (Urdu)

Fourth Khalifa:

MIRZA TAHIR AHMAD (Khalifa: 1982-2003)

After the death of the Khalifa-tul Masih III, the Electoral College convened in the Mubarak Mosque in Rabwah to elect the new Khalifa. After the votes were cast, Mirza Tahir Ahmad (1928-2003), the son of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad and the grandson of the Promised Messiah^{as}, was elected by an overwhelming majority as the Fourth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam on June 10, 1982.

Mirza Tahir Ahmad was born in Qadian on December 18, 1928. He obtained his high school education at Talimul Islam High School, Qadian, and his early college education at Government College, Lahore. In 1949, he enrolled in the Jami'a Ahmadiyya (Theological Academy) at Rabwah and successfully completed his *Shahid* examination in 1953.

In 1955, he went to England where he undertook higher studies, performed missionary services and became familiarised with the European culture and social habits. He studied for

two and a half years at the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University but returned to Pakistan without graduation.

Since 1958, Mirza Tahir Ahmad held a number of important positions in the organisation of the Movement, some of which are listed below:

- 1958: Nazim Irshad, Waqf-e Jadid
- 1960-1966: Na'ib Sadar, Khuddamul Ahmadiyya
- 1961: Member, Ifta' Committee
- 1966-1969: Sadar, Majlis Khuddamul Ahmadiyya
- 1976: Director, Fazli 'Umar Foundation
- 1974: Member of the representative delegation to the Pakistan National Assembly
- 1979-1982: Sadar, Majlis Ansarullah
- 1982: Elected Khalifa-tul Masih IV

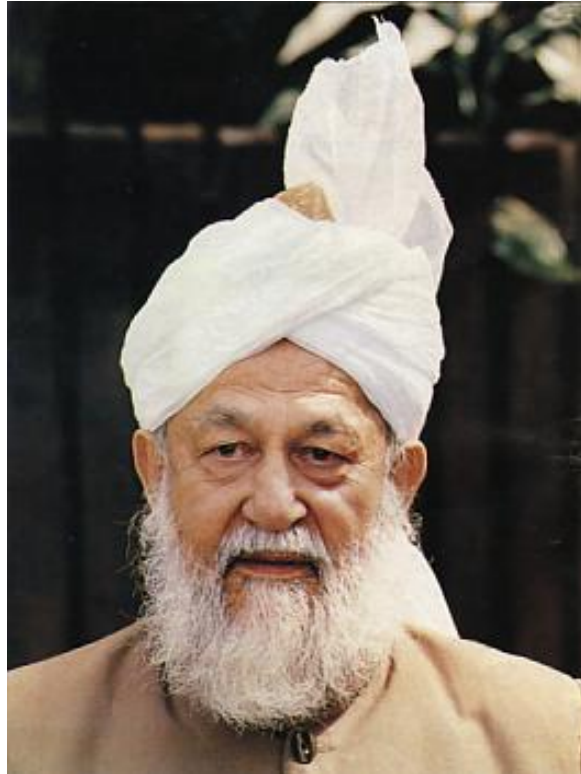
The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam continued its rapid progress under the

leadership and guidance of its fourth Khalifa.

New missions and mosques were opened; members of the Community were urged to call people unto God and to make additional sacrifices of their time and their wealth. In the face of this new zeal that started to pervade the Community, the government and the Muslim clergy in Pakistan mounted another wave of opposition, restrictions and persecutions. This culminated in the formation of a Government ordinance which severely restricted the freedom of religious expression on the part of the Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan.

In view of the nature of these restrictions, Mirza Tahir Ahmad, the Fourth Khalifa of the Promised Messiah^{as}, decided to leave Pakistan and came to London, England, in April 1984. He undertook this migration to safeguard the institution of Khilafat, which was increasingly coming under great danger in Pakistan, and to continue to lead the Community, an act which was being denied in the home country.

In the face of continuing persecution and hostilities against the Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan, Mirza Tahir Ahmad issued a challenge to a *Mubahala* (Prayer Duel) on June 10, 1988 to General Zia-ul Haq, President of Pakistan, and several other notables who were guilty of spreading falsehood against the Ahmadiyya Jama'at. The *Mubahala* challenge was issued in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. Two months later, in his Friday sermon of August 12, 1988, Mirza Tahir Ahmad stated that the ill fate of General Zia-ul Haq was now



Mirza Tahir Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih IV.



General Zia-ul Haq, President of Pakistan (courtesy: izquotes.com).

sealed because of his continuing wave of persecution and transgression against the Jama'at Ahmadiyya. Just five days later, Zia-ul Haq's military plane blew up in the sky killing him and all others on board. This prompted one newspaper to report the incident with the headline: ZIA BLOWN OUT OF SKY.

In 1987, Khalifa-tul Masih IV launched the scheme of Tehrik-e Waqfe Nau under which Ahmadi parents were encouraged to devote the lives of their children for the cause of Ahmadiyyat.

In 1991, Khalifa-tul Masih IV returned to India to attend the 100th Jalsa Salana of the country held in Qadian. It was the first time a Khalifa of the Community had returned to Qadian after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947.

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Khalifa-tul Masih IV was to establish Muslim Television Ahmadiyya International (MTA). The satellite-based channel broadcast its first program on August 21, 1992 from London, England. Initially, it started as a weekly program transmitting his Friday Sermon. Today, MTA broadcasts 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is watched by millions of people on five continents and consists of three channels. The Friday Sermon of the Khalifa is still broadcast live every week, now in six languages. Also transmitted are important events of the Community in most major languages.

In 1993, Khalifa-tul Masih IV initiated an international *bai'at* ceremony, held at the occasion of the Annual Convention in London, in which people from all over the world pledged their allegiance to the Khalifa. Since then, it has become an annual event at the UK Annual Convention.

In 1994, Khalifatul Masih IV founded Humanity First, a charitable organisation dedicated to serve socially disadvantaged individuals and families struck by disasters in the poorer communities of the world. Presently registered in some 33 countries, the organisation is run by volunteers allowing over 93% of the donations to go directly to the projects. Since its inception, Humanity First has provided aid and relief to those affected by earthquakes in: Kobe, Japan (1995); Izmit, Turkey (1999); Gujarat, India (2001); the Indian Ocean Tsunami (2004); Kashmir, Pakistan (2005); Peru (2007); Sumatra, Indonesia (2009); Haiti (2010); and Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, Japan (2011). Other disasters in which Humanity First provided aid have included: human violence in Kosovo (1997), Kenya (2008), and Gaza (2009); and hurricanes and flooding related to: Katrina in the USA (2005), Surinam & Guyana, Burma (2008), and Bangladesh (2009). Besides providing relief during disasters, Humanity First carries out long-term projects in Africa and Asia under the titles of: Feed a Family, Water for Life, Learn a Skill, Orphan Care, and Gift of Sight.

Khalifa-tul Masih IV was a great advocate of homeopathic medicine. After witnessing its effectiveness on himself and his wife, he embarked upon a program of homeopathy training on the MTA. His lectures were later published in a book form.

The Khilafat of Mirza Tahir Ahmad faced new level of national and international opposition and persecution. But, despite all these setbacks, the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam continued to make significant progress in the areas of missionary work, translations of the Holy Qur'an, publishing of Islamic literature and increasing spiritual fervour among its members.

Mirza Tahir Ahmad passed away in London, England on April 19, 2003. He is buried in the Community's cemetery in Islamabad, Tilford.

Books of Khalifa-tul Masih IV

Mirza Tahir Ahmad was well-versed not only in the religious field but also in the latest scientific discoveries of the present age and was quite familiar with the social and moral challenges that the modern discoveries were creating for the public. As well, he was an outstanding poet in the Urdu language. Some of his books include:

- Revelation, Rationality, Knowledge and Truth
- *Sawanai Fazl-i 'Umar, volumes 1&2*—Biography of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad (Urdu)
- An Elementary Study of Islam
- Universal and Moral Values, Politics and World Peace
- Gulf Crisis and the New World Order
- Christianity—A Journey from Facts to Fiction
- Murder in the name of Religion (Urdu)
- The Seal of Prophets—His Personality and Character
- *Zahaq al Batil*
- Reality of Punishment of Apostasy in Islam (Urdu)
- *Khatam-e Nabuwwat* (Urdu)
- Homeopathy
- Some Distinctive Features of Islam
- Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues
- Shari'a Relationship Between Religion and Politics in Islam
- The Philosophy of Revival of Religion
- Absolute Justice, Kindness and Kinship
- *Kalam-i Tahir* (Urdu Poetry)

Fifth Khalifa:

MIRZA MASROOR AHMAD (Khalifa: 2003-Present)

At the demise of the Fourth Khalifa, Mirza Masroor Ahmad (b. 1950) was elected as the fifth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Community on April 22, 2003. He was born on September 15, 1950 in Rabwah, Pakistan, and is the great-grandson of the Promised Messiah^{as}. He attended Talim-ul Islam High School and Talim-ul Islam College, both located at Rabwah, obtaining his Bachelor's degree from the latter. For his post-graduate studies, he enrolled in the University of Agriculture at Faisalabad, Pakistan, earning his Master's degree in 1976.

After serving the Ahmadiyya Community in several positions, he proceeded to Ghana in 1977 where he stayed for eight years during which time he established the Ahmadiyya Secondary School in Salaga, acted as Principal at the Ahmadiyya Secondary School at Essarkyir, and managed the Ahmadiyya Farm in Depali. He was responsible for successfully planting and harvesting wheat for the first time in Ghana.

After returning from Ghana, he served in the departments of Finance and Education at the Ahmadiyya offices in Rabwah and was finally appointed as *Nazir A'la* (Principal Director) and local president until his election as Khalifa-tul Masih V.

In 1999, the Provincial Assembly of Pakistan passed a resolution changing the name of Rabwah to Chenab Nagar, simply because the word Rabwah appears in the Holy Qur'an. After several signs had been placed in various places in Rabwah to this effect, an FIR (First Information Report) was filed as a criminal complaint against several prominent officials of the Ahmadiyya Community for erasing a sign which bore the new name. As a result, Mirza Masroor Ahmad was arrested, along with some others, and was imprisoned for eleven days without bail. He was finally released on May 10, 1999.

His election to Khilafat was carried out at the Fazl Mosque in London a few days after the demise of his predecessor under the chairmanship of Chaudhry Hameedullah. Immediately afterwards, all present at the election undertook the oath of allegiance at his hand. Presently, Mirza Masroor Ahmad resides in London, England.



Mirza Masroor Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih V.

Achievements

After being elected Khalifa-tul Masih V, Mirza Masroor Ahmad has been extremely active in carrying out proper upbringing of the Community, instilling in the members the importance of Prayer and encouraging them to become model citizens and Muslims. His notable achievements to date include:

- An address at the House of Commons of the United Kingdom on October 22, 2008 on the subject of Islamic Perspective on Global Crises
- A keynote speech to the European Parliament in Brussels on December 4, 2012 on the subject of How to Combat Religious Extremism
- An address at the German Military Headquarters at Koblenz on the subject of Islam's Teaching of Loyalty and Love for One's Nation
- A keynote speech at the Rayburn House Office Building in Capitol Hill, D.C., on June 27, 2012 on the subject of The Path to Peace: Just Relation Between Nations. Remarks were also made at this occasion by such notables as: House Democratic Leader, U.S. Senator, and U.S. Representatives. At this occasion, he was also presented with a copy of a bipartisan U.S. House of Representatives Resolution (H. Res. 709) welcoming him to Washington D.C. and honouring his contributions to peace.

- An address to more than 300 U.S. politicians, academics and community leaders in Beverley Hills, California, on May 2013 on the subject of Islamic Solutions for World Peace.
- Khalifa-tul Masih V has written several letters to many heads of states and chiefs of religious organisations on the subject of peace and avoiding a World War. The recipients of these letters include: Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu; President of Iran, Mahmood Ahmadinejad; Grand Ayatollah of Iran, Sayyed ‘Ali Hosseini Khamenei; Pope Benedict XVI; President of the United States of America, Barack Obama; Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper; Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron; the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel; President of France, Francois Hollande; Premier of China, Wen Jiabao; and the King of Saudi Arabia, ‘Abdullah bin ‘Abdulaziz al-Sa‘ud.
- Khalifa-tul Masih V has raised a tempered and intelligent response to several incidents and issues that had angered Muslim communities in the world at the occasions of: Pope Benedict XVI’s remarks about Islam, burning of the Qur’an by the Dove World Outreach Center, controversy surrounding the building of a mosque at ‘ground zero’ in New York, the Geert Wilders controversy in the Netherlands, the Fatwa by the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia demanding the destruction of all churches in that country, and the showing of the anti Islamic film, *Innocence of Muslims*.
- Addition of two more channels to MTA (Muslim Television Ahmadiyya). One carries out special programming in European languages such as English and German while the second, MTA Al-Arabiya, broadcasts to the Arabic speaking people in the Middle East, North Africa and North America.

The writings of Khalifa-tul Masih V

- Conditions of Bai‘at and Responsibilities of an Ahmadi
- The Blessed Model of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh} and the Caricatures
- A Response to the Pope’s Remarks about Islam
- The Guiding Light
- Islam—Peaceful Religion
- True Love for the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}
- Exemplary Compassion of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}
- World Crisis and the Pathway to Peace

Section 6

COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS

INTRODUCTION

To fully appreciate the religion of Islam and to be able to explain its excellences to other people, Muslims must learn something about the beliefs, traditions and history of the world's other major faiths.

An important aspect of modern research in the area of religion has been the application of comparative methods of inquiry. Under this system of investigation, one compares the beliefs, modes of worship, ethical and moral codes, social directives, and philosophies of two different religions. Since most of us are quite familiar with at least one religion, we can appreciate the concepts and tenets of another religion when compared with our own.

But, unfortunately, a study of comparative religions frequently deteriorates into a study of competitive religions. In most such studies the student learns little about the other faith except how ridiculous it is. And this is not the purpose of true learning.

Muslims believe that at the root of all major religions is the process of revelation. It is through this process that spiritual knowledge and wisdom is given to man by God. The knowledge thus received is considered to be the most authentic and truest form of learning. The founders of all major religions have either explicitly claimed to have received revelation, or their lives clearly demonstrate this fact.

While there are many aspects of earlier religions which became outdated with time due to man's continuing progress in the fields of social behaviour, technological achievements and religious philosophy, there are certain wisdoms expressed in all religions which are 'everlasting' and of universal appeal. These gems of wisdom have an uncanny ability to survive the vagaries of time and could be unearthed even in the ruins of some of the oldest faiths on earth. For that reason, selected words of wisdom taken from their sacred books have been included under each religion.

Muslims believe that God sent His messengers to all the nations in the world. For this reason, Muslims should carry out any comparative religious study with due objectivity and proper consideration for the convictions of others. Muslims should realize that for many people a religion is not simply a rational set of beliefs and worships but also a way of life in which loyalty to one's country, ancestors, traditions and culture, all play an important role. Muslims, therefore, should treat the religions of other people with great respect and strongly refrain from ridiculing them in any way.

Now, one by one, we will study the major religions of the world. We will study their essential beliefs, modes of worship and philosophy of life, and will frequently quote words of wisdom from their sacred Scriptures. In each case, brief comparisons will be made with the religion of Islam. The treatment of the world's major religions in this section is intended to be informative and educational rather than competitive and contentious. It is hoped that the student will benefit from this approach.

TIMELINE OF THE ORIGIN OF MAJOR RELIGIONS

Chart showing the timeline of the major religions of the world

Period	HINDUISM	BUDDHISM	JAINISM	SIKHISM	SHINTO	CONFUCIANISM	TAOSIM	ZOROASTRIANISM	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
1400-1500 BC	█										
1300-1400 BC			Very approximate date						█		
1200-1300 BC											
1100-1200 BC											Moses 1391-1271 BC
1000-1100 BC								█			Very approximate date
900-1000 BC											
800-900 BC											
700-800 BC											
600-700 BC											
500-600 BC		█									
400-500 BC											
300-400 BC											
200-300 BC											
100-200 BC											
1-100 BC											
1-100 CE											
100-200 CE											
200-300 CE											
300-400 CE											
400-500 CE											
500-600 CE											
600-700 CE											
700-800 CE											
800-900 CE											
900-1000 CE											
1000-1100 CE											
1100-1200 CE											
1200-1300 CE											
1300-1400 CE											
1400-1500 CE											

The Table above shows a timeline of the origin of the major religions of the world. In the case of Hinduism, the date of origin is only approximate since the actual origin of this faith is shrouded in antiquity. The origins of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are well established due to a reasonably good understanding of the time periods of their respective founders. The origin of the Shinto faith is surrounded in antiquity as well and no precise date can be fixed. Origins of Confucianism and Taoism are well established due to known periods of their

respective founders. Zoroastrianism was initially believed to be quite ancient but modern research places its origin between the tenth and eleventh centuries BC. Judaism is a problematic faith since most of its teachings go back to the time of Abraham. However, the religion—as it exists today—was formalised by Moses and the post-Mosaic prophets. Thus, it is assigned a date of origin coinciding with the period of Moses. Date for Christianity is well established at around 27-30 CE. The origin of Islam is linked to the beginning of the Qur’anic revelations that commenced in 610 CE.

CLASSIFICATION OF RELIGIONS

As we mentioned at the beginning of this book, there are about ten major religions in the world. In alphabetical order, these are: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Taoism and Zoroastrianism. Although Sikhism is not considered a major religion or a revealed faith, it is included in this section for the benefit of the reader. Baha’ism is not included in this book as it started off as a sect of Shi’a Islam and then claimed to be an independent religion.

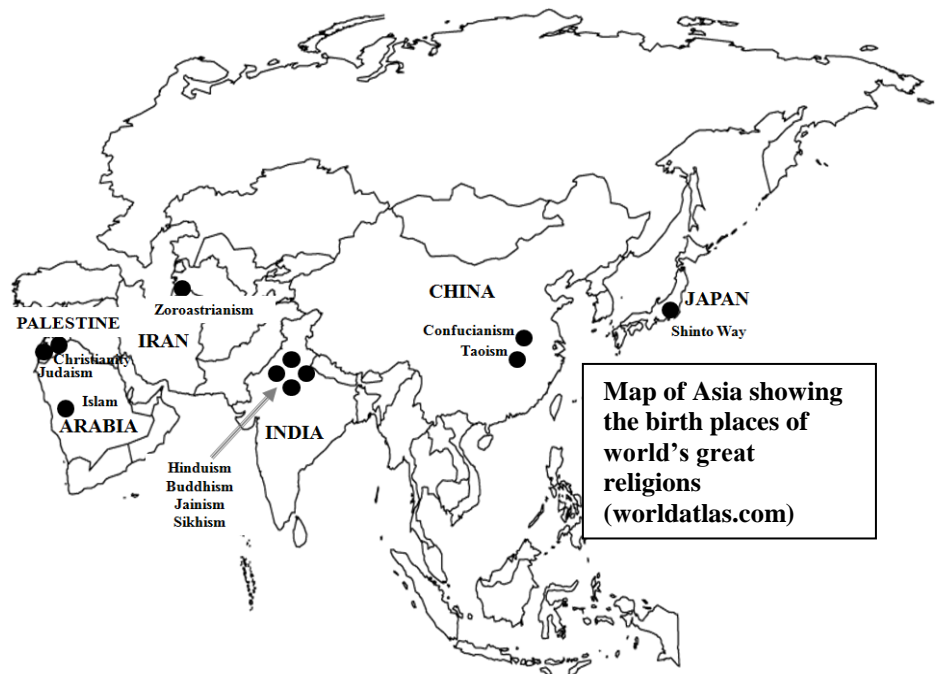
Classification based on place of origin

To simplify the study of comparative religions, the scholars classify these faiths into various categories based on certain criteria. For example, on the basis of geographic origin, the world’s major religions may be classified as follows:

	Religion
Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism	India
Confucianism, Taoism	China
Shinto	Japan
Zoroastrianism	Iran
Judaism, Christianity, Islam	Near East

Classification based on Ethnic and Missionary appeal

Another criterion that can be used in classifying these religions is their ethnic aspect. Some religions have appeal to their own people and are, therefore, called ethnic. Preaching to outsiders and conversions in these ethnic faiths have been uncommon. Other faiths claim to be of more



universal appeal, have been vigorous in missionary work and have actively sought conversions. Following is the division of the world's major religions into these two classes:

Ethnic Religions	Missionary Religions
Hinduism, Jainism & Sikhism (Strictly Indian) Confucianism & Taoism (strictly Chinese) Shinto (strictly Japanese) Judaism (strictly observed by the Israelites) Zoroastrianism (strictly observed by the Iranians & Parsis)	Buddhism Christianity Islam

Classification based on the importance of Prophecy and Wisdom

Another classification of these religions is based on the relative importance of 'prophecy' in these faiths. Religions in which prophecy has been demonstrated to have played an important role are called 'Religions of Prophecy' while all other faiths are called 'Religions of Wisdom'. On this basis, the major religions could be divided into:

Religions of Prophecy	Religions of Wisdom
Hinduism Zoroastrianism Judaism Christianity Islam	Buddhism Jainism Confucianism Taoism

HINDUISM

Basic Facts

Name:	The word <i>Hindu</i> is the Persian word for Indus, the river along which the ancient Indus Valley civilisation flourished. Hindus themselves prefer to speak of their religion as <i>Sanatan Dharm</i> or the True Teachings.
Founder:	Hinduism has no known founder. Non Hindu scholars believe that personages such as Krishna and Ram Chandar were Hindu prophets.
Place of Origin:	Generally believed to be India. However, many of the Hindu traditions were likely acquired in Asia Minor from where early followers migrated to India.
Sacred Books:	<p><u>Sruti or revealed literature:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rig Veda: lyric hymns to various deities • Santa Veda: hymns in reference to the Soma sacrifice • Yajur Veda: sacrificial prayers • Atharva Veda: incantations • Brahmanas: Commentaries of the Vedas; concerned with ritual and prayer • Upanishads: philosophical and speculative texts dealing with Brahman and Aatman <p><u>Smrti or remembered literature:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mahabharata: epic literature of the 3rd century BC, ascribed to the sage Vyasa. The epic contains the famous Bhagvad-Gita, or the Song of the Lord. • Ramayana: epic literature of the 2nd century BC, ascribed to the saint Valmiki. It narrates the life of the avatar Rama. • Puranas: devotional texts dealing with religious practices, mythology & cosmogony

Sacred Place:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Varanasi (Banaras), on the Ganges • Allahbad, where Ganges and Jamna Rivers meet • Vrindaban, the site of a forest where Krishna spent his childhood days
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holi, a spring festival associated with Krishna • Divali, the Feast of Lights, an autumn festival • Dasehra, a ten-day festival celebrating Rama's battle against Ravana

Introduction

The word Hinduism covers a large number of indigenous faiths that developed and flourished in the Indian subcontinent, over the past four thousand years. On the lowest level, these faiths include the most primitive type of animism and, on the highest level, a rarefied monism.

The Hindu religion is very old, diverse, and evolved considerably over the first 1,000 to 1,500 years of its existence. Due to its great antiquity, a great deal of mythology got incorporated with the wisdom and philosophical speculation.

The history of the Hindu religion dates back to the arrival of the Indo Aryans in India around 1500 BC. The word 'Aryan' is a linguistic term indicating a speech group of Indo European origin and is not an ethnic term. The arrival of the Indo Aryans coincided with the decline of the Indus Valley civilization which had existed in India since 3000 BC. The Indo Aryans came from the region of the Caspian Sea and the southern Russian steppes. They entered north India through the passes in the Hindu Kush Mountains.

The Indo Aryans brought many beliefs with them. Over the centuries the beliefs of the Aryans mixed with those of the local Dravidian people giving rise to what is known today as Hinduism.

Although Hinduism is not a truly missionary religion, it did spread to the Indonesian archipelago and is still practised on the Island of Bali.

Table showing Timeline of development and patronage of Hinduism in India

Period	Development and Patronage
2800-2000 BC	Indus Valley civilisation
1200-900 BC	Early Vedic Period—earliest Vedas are completed
900-600 BC	Late Vedic Period—Brahmanical religion develops, emphasising rituals and social obligations
800-300 BC	The 11 major Upanishads are written including the ideas of reincarnation and <i>karma</i>
500 BC-1000 CE	Epic poems and Puranas are written
320-185 BC	Mauryan Dynasty founded by Chandragupta
320-500 CE	Gupta Empire; the Golden Age of Hinduism in India

Essential Beliefs of Hinduism

Without any attempt to rank them in their order of importance, following are the essential Hindu beliefs:

1. The Hindu Triad: The central belief of Hinduism is that there is One Universal Spirit called Brahman which has no beginning or end. In Bhagavad-Gita, the Song of the Lord, we find the following description of the Supreme Spirit:

“I am He by Whom the worlds were created and shall be dissolved ... There is nothing higher than Me... The whole world is pervaded by Me, yet My form is not seen. All living things have their being in Me, yet I am not limited by them... I, the Supreme Self, am the cause and upholder of all. Under My guidance, Nature produces all things movable and immovable ... I am the Father of the universe and its Mother. I am its Nourisher. I am the Knowable and the Pure I am the Goal, the Sustainer, the Lord, the Witness, the Home, the Shelter, the Lover and the Origin. I am Life and Death; I am the Fountain and the Seed Imperishable.

“I am the Source of all; from Me everything flows. The Supreme Spirit, the Eternal Home, the Holiest of the Holy, the Eternal Divine Self, the Primal God, the Unborn and the Omnipresent. The Source and Master of all beings, the Lord of Lords, the Ruler of the universe.

“Could a thousand suns blaze forth together it would be but a faint reflection of the radiance of the Lord God. He is the Light of lights, beyond the reach of darkness; the Wisdom, the only thing that is worth knowing.

“The aspects of My divine life are endless. Whatever is glorious, excellent, beautiful and mighty, be assured that it comes from a fragment of My splendour.”

In the Hindu religious philosophy, Brahman, the Supreme Spirit, has three main attributes or manifestations which are identified as:

- Brahma, the Creator
- Vishnu, the Preserver
- Shiva, the Destroyer

Because of these three main attributes or forms of Brahman, He is also called Trimurti or the Three in One God. Besides Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, there are many other attributes of Brahman which are all symbolized in the Hindu religion as ‘gods’.

Brahman is the Absolute, impersonal World Soul Who cannot be known without its various manifestations which then become the personal deities. Different groups of Hindus worship Brahma or Vishnu or Shiva as their personal god.

Hindus believe that at the end of each cycle of creation, called a ‘Day of Brahma’, Shiva destroys the old world, Brahma creates a new one and Vishnu appears on earth in various forms or incarnations called avatars.

With this usual belief in the Brahman on one hand and in its various manifestations on the other, Hinduism is at once a monotheism and a polytheism.

2. Avatars: According to Hindu belief there are ten avatars or incarnations of Vishnu:

1. Matsya, the fish
2. Kurma, the tortoise
3. Varaha, the boar
4. Nara Simha, the man lion
5. Vamana, the dwarf
6. Parusha Rama, Rama with an axe
7. Rama Chandra, the hero of the Ramayana epic
8. Krishna, the main character in the Bhagavad-Gita

9. Buddha, the founder of Buddhism

10. Kalki, the tenth avatar who is yet to come

3. World is Eternal: Hindus believe that the world is part of a beginning-less and endless process which follows fixed cycles known as the Days of Brahma. Each day of the Brahma lasts for four and a half billion years.

4. The Soul is Eternal: Hindus believe that the souls have existed from time immemorial and are not necessarily created by Brahma.

5. The Law of Dharma: Very simply, this is the Law of Moral Order or right conduct. According to this law each person has his own dharma which depends upon his own race, caste or family. Although dharmas of various people may be different according to their station in society, they all lead to the same objective: reunion with Brahman, the World Soul.

6. The Caste System: Hinduism is the only religion in the world that believes in a caste system. Under this system people are assigned certain specific functions and duties in the society. The four castes recognized under this system are: Brahmins the priests, philosophers and holy people dedicated to the study of the sacred books and belong to the highest caste; Kshatriyas engage in military and governmental activities and represent the upper middle class; Vaisyas the tradesmen, merchants, farmers and Industrialists; and Shudras who carry out menial jobs in the society and their essential purpose is to serve the other three castes.

7. Samsara: Samsara is the endless cycle of birth and rebirth through which each soul goes until it attains liberation. This concept of reincarnation applies to the individual as well as the universe.

8. The Law of Karma: According to this law every action produces its inevitable result so that the conditions of each rebirth are determined by the acts performed during the previous life. Under this law, 'From good must come good; and from evil, evil'.

9. Moksha or Salvation: Salvation is achieved in Hinduism when the soul is finally released from its continuous process of birth and rebirth and becomes one with Brahman, the World Soul.

Hindu Acts of Worship

In Hinduism, there are many ways and methods to achieve religious objectives. There is the way of penance and the way of sacrifice. There are the ways of meditation, of devotion, of renunciation and of religious acts. There are no specific practices or creeds that are held essential in Hinduism and there are many forms of religious worship in this faith:

1. Sandhya: These are devotional rituals that are performed three times a day: at dawn, at midday and in the evening. These rituals begin by bathing oneself in the morning and include meditation, making of offerings and uttering of prayers.

2. Puja: Puja, which literally means worship, involves the paying of respect to the god. The Hindu gods are invariably in the form of idols. These idols are usually kept in the temple but may also be kept at home. The idol or statue of the god is the symbol of divine presence to the Hindus. The Hindu worship is seldom congregational and is largely individual. Certain rituals are followed during the puja both at home and in the temple.

3. Katha: Katha is the communal worship and involves recitations from the Scriptures.

4. Yogas: Yoga is the general name for certain disciplines which, the Hindus believe, should be followed to achieve the state of 'nirvana' or enlightenment. These disciplines are extremely ancient and are considered necessary to gain complete control of one's emotions and morals. It is through the yogas that the Hindus try to identify with the Brahman.

5. Samakaras: In the Hindu religion certain rituals are performed which relate to the various stages of one's life. These rituals include: name giving ceremony, shaving of the child's head, initiation into the caste, marriage ceremony, funeral sacrament, and post cremation ceremonies.

6. Pilgrimage: The pilgrimages are a very important aspect of Hindu religion. There are local, regional and national pilgrimage sites across India. The objectives of performing these pilgrimages are manifold: for salvation, for absolution of sins, for worship, for experiencing the divine, for obtaining relief from illness or for receiving some other specific blessings.

The Philosophy of Life in Hinduism

At the risk of over simplification, we could reduce the Hindu philosophy of life to four basic objectives:

- Dharma: The acquisition of religious knowledge through right conduct and right living
- Artha: The lawful making of wealth
- Karma: The satisfaction of human needs and desires covering the entire lifetime
- Moksha: The quest for liberation and salvation.

The Wisdom of Hinduism

Below is a sampling of some of the wisdom of Hinduism taken from its sacred books:

- The end and beginnings of beings are unknown. We see only the intervening forms. Then what cause is there for grief?
- Sacrifice is the noblest form of action
- All action originates in the Supreme Being
- Neither in this world, nor elsewhere, is there any happiness in store for the one who always doubts
- In sorrows not dejected, in joys not overjoyed; outside the stress of passion, fear and anger, steadfastly calm in lofty contemplation; such a one is the wise man

- Be not over-glad attaining joy, and be not over-sad encountering grief
- That man alone is wise who remains master of himself
- Do your earthly duty free from desire, and you shall well perform your heavenly purpose
- If you were the worst of all wrong doers, the ship of truth would bear you safe across the sea of your transgression
- Four sorts of mortals know Me; he who weeps, the man who desires to know, he who toils to help, and he who is sure about Me
- Whoever offers Me in faith and love a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water poured forth, that offering made lovingly with pious will, I accept
- Those who worship Me with love, I love; they are in Me and I in them
- Be certain that none can perish, trusting Me
- Passion binds by toilsome strain; but ignorance, which shuts the beams of wisdom, binds the soul to sloth
- The doors of hell are threefold, through which men to ruin pass: the door of lust, the door of wrath, and the door of avarice
- The faith of each believer conforms itself to what he truly is
- Religion shown in acts of proud display is rash and vain

Comparative Study

Below, we will try to compare the various beliefs and acts of worship of Hinduism with their counterparts in Islam.

(1) Concept of God: Hinduism, with its belief in One Supreme God called Brahman, is basically a monotheistic religion. But the symbolisation of the various attributes of Brahman into different deities turns this fundamental monotheism into a kind of polytheism. Furthermore, the concept of One God is not central to Hinduism as it is with the religion of Islam. In Islam, God is One and no manifestations of God exist in any form.

(2) Inequality of people: With its institutionalised caste system, Hinduism advocates a strong inequality among people. This caste system is unique to this religion and nothing similar to it can be found in the other major religions of the world. It is conceivable that the caste system originated in ancient India essentially to bring certain order to the society and to allocate different duties to the people. With time, this social order could have become ingrained in the Hindu society and eventually became a source of considerable sorrow to the people in the lower castes.

(3) Reincarnation: The Hindu philosophy of reincarnation is obviously based on intellectual speculation regarding the nature of death and what happens to the soul afterwards. Belief in reincarnation also exists in three other faiths of Indian origin: Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. In Islam, the death in this life leads to resurrection on the Day of Judgment and then an everlasting life afterwards in a spiritual state.

(4) Salvation: Because of its belief in reincarnation, Hindu concept of salvation is concerned with release from this endless cycle of births and rebirths. In Islam the concept of salvation relates to the receiving of God's pleasure and nearness on the Day of Judgment.

(5) The Worshipping of Idols: Although the Hindus worship idols, they do not believe that the statues themselves have any powers. To them the idols are mere representations of gods and help to create the proper mood for prayer. Other religions, such as Judaism, Zoroastrianism and Islam, consider this representation of divine existence into various statues, a rather primitive action and attribute it to the great antiquity of this religion. In Islam, all worship is performed to the One Invisible God and no representations of any kind are permitted.

(6) The Hindu Sacred Books: The Hindus perhaps have the most extensive sacred literature of any religion in the world. But, because of their great antiquity, it is difficult to assign the various books to their original authors. Also, much of the sacred texts relate to intellectual speculation, a field that is continually challenged by man's increasing knowledge. How much of this sacred literature is the product of revelation and how much owes to human interpolation, is a question difficult to answer with any certainty. There is great wisdom in the Vedas to elicit the view that they were originally revealed. With the passage of time they could have easily suffered at the human hand, much like the sacred texts of many other religions. As regards authenticity, the Holy Qur'an is the only sacred book in the world today which has remained unchanged since it was first compiled during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet^{pbuh}.

(7) The Hindu Avatars: The avatar in Hinduism is perhaps the closest thing to the prophet in the Near Eastern faiths. Although the Hindus believe that the various avatars such as Rama Chandra and Krishna were manifestations of the god Vishnu, to the outsiders these avatars appear to be sages, saints or prophets who, because of the great reverence by the followers, were elevated to their divine status. Muslims believe that Rama Chandra and Krishna were indeed prophets of God, much like Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.

(8) Relationship between Hindu & Biblical traditions: Contemporary scholars are finding a great deal of evidence that shows great similarity between Hindu and Biblical traditions. Some scholars believe that Hindus follow the *Shari'a* given to the Prophet Noah. Some of the elements common to these two traditions are as follows:

- There is a tradition of a great flood in Hinduism that is extremely similar to the Biblical Great Flood
- The Hindu sage Svayambhuva Manu (meaning: came into existence) is the Biblical Adam
- The wife of Svayambhuva Manu is known in Hinduism as Hawyawati which is the same as Hawwa (Eve)
- Jal-Plavan Manu (Manu of the Great Flood) is also known in Hindu tradition as Niyuh, which is the same as Nuh (Noah) associated with the Great Flood in Biblical tradition

- The Hindu god Brahma and his consort Sraivati appear to be equivalent to the Biblical Abraham and his wife Sarai

BUDDHISM

Some Basic Facts

Name:	Buddhism
Founder:	Siddharta Gautama Buddha (560-480 BC)
Place of Origin:	India
Sacred Books:	Tripitaka—the Three Baskets of Wisdom (Mahayana branch) Pali Canon (Hinayana or Theravada branch)
Sacred Place:	No universal sacred place for all Buddhists. Pilgrimages are usually made in individual countries to local shrines and historic places.
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vassa, observed by Theravadans, is three months of intense meditation • Wesak (Kason), a festival held in May celebrating Buddha's birth • Asalha Puja, celebrated by Theravadans, as marking the first sermon by Buddha • Magha Puja, celebrated on the full moon day of Magha • Pavarana, celebrated on the full moon day of the 11th lunar month (end of Vassa) • Upavasatha, celebrated to 'cleanse the defiled mind'

Introduction

Buddhism was founded in India in the sixth century BC, at a time when the people of India had become disillusioned with the Hindu caste system and certain Vedic teachings.

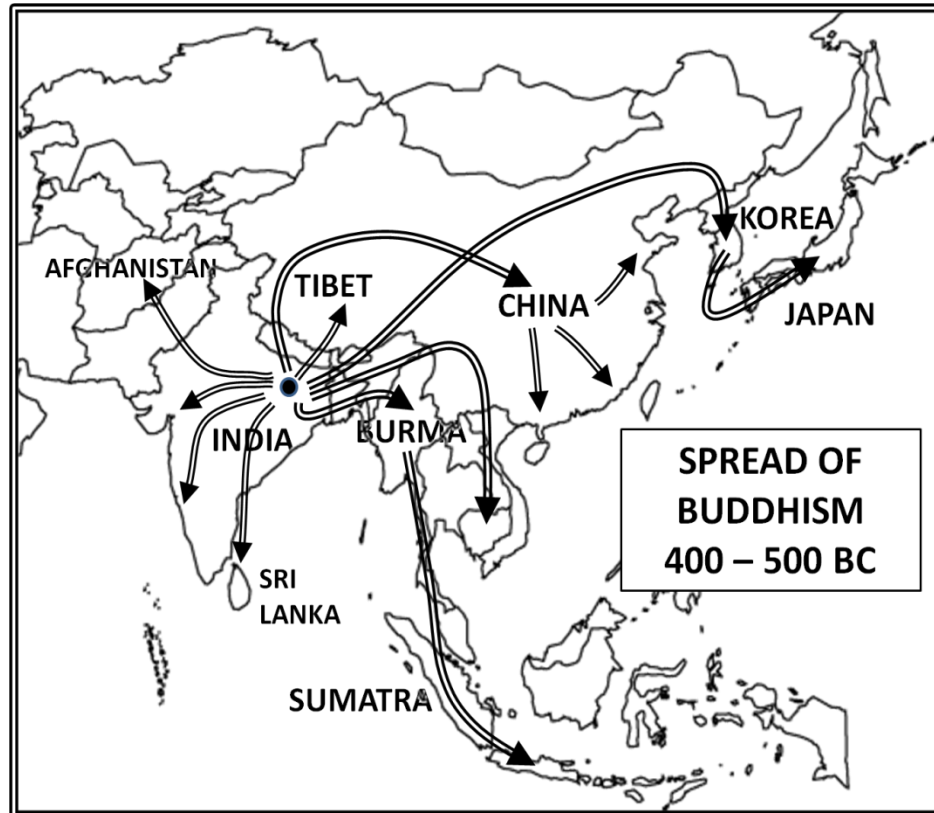
The founder of this new faith was Siddharta Gautama who was a Hindu prince living in northern India. At a very young age, he became deeply affected by the great suffering and pain that existed in the world. He left his family, renounced his princely status and went out searching for the answers to these problems. He wandered from place to place in search of wisdom when, suddenly, he received enlightenment. Since that day he has been known as the Buddha or the Enlightened One.

Buddha lived for about eighty years and taught his new-found wisdom all over India. For the next thousand years or so, Buddhism spread very rapidly in India and South-east Asia. In every country, Buddhism adapted itself to the local conditions and absorbed many of the local beliefs and rituals. Over the years, many sects developed in Buddhism, two of which are very important:

- Mahayana, or Greater Vehicle of Salvation, and
- Hinayana (also called Theravada), or Lesser Vehicle of salvation

The Mahayana Buddhism is currently practiced in eastern Asia including China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Hinayana Buddhism is dominant in southern Asia including Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand. A relatively minor sect, known as Northern Buddhism, flourishes in Tibet, Mongolia and the Himalayas.

Initially, Buddhism started as a reform movement within Hinduism but eventually became an independent religion. Buddhism was the first missionary religion of the world where the followers of Buddha carried this faith to other countries and peoples with a strong sense of universal mission. Buddhism shares a number of beliefs with the traditional Hinduism such as the doctrine of reincarnation and the Law of Karma. The main differences between the two faiths originate from the rejection by Buddhism of the Hindu caste system, of the authenticity of all the Vedas, and of the belief that an individual soul must be united with the World Soul or Brahman. To many Hindus, Buddha still remains the ninth avatar or incarnation of their god Vishnu.



Map showing the spread of Buddhism during 400-500 BC.

Essential Beliefs of Buddhism

Following are the essential beliefs of Buddhism as the religion exists today:

1. From good comes good, and from evil, evil (this is the Hindu Law of Karma).
2. Prayers and sacrifices to the gods are useless.
3. The Vedas are not sacred books.
4. The world always was and always will be.
5. Brahma did not create the caste system.
6. The aim of life is not pleasure or happiness but the end of individual existence through the practice of the Ten Perfections.
7. He who attains perfect wisdom enters nirvana, and is freed from the endless chain of births and rebirths.

In addition to the above, the Buddhists believe in the Four Noble Truths:

1. There are many kinds of sufferings in this world including old age, illness, death, failure, separation, etc.

2. The cause of all these sufferings is the human desire which grasps for the wrong things.
3. All human suffering can be dissolved by getting rid of the human desire.
4. The desire can be rid of by following the Eightfold Path.

The Buddhists follow an Eightfold Path in their religion:

1. Right Belief
2. Right Resolve
3. Right Speech
4. Right Behaviour
5. Right Occupation
6. Right Effort
7. Right Contemplation
8. Right Concentration

The Buddhist DOs and DON'Ts:

Among the extensive codes of Buddhism are the 'Ten Commandments' and the Ten Perfections.

The Buddhist Ten Commandments are as follows:

1. Do not destroy life
2. Do not take what is not given to you
3. Do not commit adultery
4. Tell no lies and do not deceive anyone
5. Do not become intoxicated
6. Eat moderately
7. Do not watch dancing or plays nor listen to singing
8. Wear no garlands, perfumes or ornaments
9. Do not sleep in luxurious beds
10. Do not accept any gold or silver.

The Buddhist Ten Perfections are as follows:

1. Giving (in charity)
2. Duty (religious and worldly)
3. Renunciation (from worldly pleasure)
4. Insight (and wisdom)
5. Courage
6. Patience
7. Truth
8. Resolution (in all undertakings)
9. Loving kindness (towards friends and enemies alike)
10. Serenity (towards joy and sorrow).

The Worship in Buddhism

Worship is not considered extremely important in Buddhism and varies a great deal between Mahayana and Hinayana branches. Some forms of Buddhist worship are noted below:

(1) Relic Worship: Actual and symbolic relics of Buddha are worshiped by the followers by prostration, chanting and making offerings.

(2) Meditation: Meditation is the main religious activity in which the individual attempts to control his self and tries to achieve nirvana.

(3) Paritta: This involves chanting of discourses from the sacred Pali books. This chanting may be done at special events such as death, illness, danger or when embarking upon a new activity.

Buddhist Philosophy of Life

Buddha strongly preached his followers to follow what he called the ‘Middle Way’. He told them to avoid both extremes. One extreme is to indulge in the pleasures and comforts of this material world and the other extreme is to starve oneself, go without sleep or inflict self punishment.

In the Buddhist philosophy of life, man can overcome the suffering in this world by controlling his desires and following the Eightfold Path. When man obtains perfect wisdom and masters his emotions and his self, he gains salvation and is ready for the final reward that is nirvana.

Nirvana, in the Buddhist religion, is not only the blissful state in which all suffering ceases, but it also marks the release of the soul from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth.

The Wisdom of Buddhism

Following are some of the sayings taken from the Buddhist sacred book, Tripitaka:

- A man who conquers himself is the greater conqueror than the one who battles against a million men
- Hatred is not diminished by hatred, but by love
- The evildoer mourns in this world, and he mourns in the next
- Few there are among men who arrive at the other shore; most of them run up and down this shore
- An evil deed, like freshly drawn milk, does not turn sour at once
- The scent of flowers does not travel against the wind; but the fragrance of good people travels even against the wind
- Not in the sky, nor in the midst of the sea, nor in the clefts of the mountains, nor in the whole world is there a spot where a man could avoid death
- The fool wishes for precedence among the monks, for lordship in the monasteries, for honour among other people
- Without knowledge there is no meditation, without meditation there is no knowledge
- All created things perish
- No suffering befalls the man who calls nothing his own
- He whose evil deeds are covered by good deeds brightens up the world, like the moon freed from clouds

- No amount of effort can purify a man who has not overcome his doubts
- There is no fire like passion; there is no evil like hatred; there is no pain like this body; there is no happiness greater than peace
- You yourself must make the effort; the Buddhas are only teachers

Comparative Study

As we mentioned earlier, Buddhism started essentially as a reform movement within Hinduism. Gradually, however, Buddhism started to diverge away from Hinduism and reverence for Buddha increased so much that he began to be portrayed by his followers as a semi divine and, ultimately, as a celestial being.

Buddhism maintains belief in the process of reincarnation and the Law of Karma, as understood by the Hindus. Buddhism, however, rejects the Hindu caste system and the authenticity of the Vedas.

Buddhism of today places little emphasis on the concept of God. But then Buddhism has changed so much to adapt itself to the local conditions in the various countries that it is almost impossible to ascertain with any great deal of accuracy what its original teachings used to be in this respect.

Buddhism is at once a philosophy of life and a practical discipline. Although Buddhism lacks a well developed spiritual philosophy, it is an extremely humanistic religion and has found great popularity among the people in the Western countries. What people find attractive in this religion is its great tolerance, its high moral and ethical standards, its relatively bloodless history and its concept of nirvana.

JAINISM

Some Basic Facts

Name:	Jainism, meaning religion of the Conquerors
Founder:	Prince Vardhamana, known to his followers as Mahavira, the Great Hero (540-468 BC)
Place of Origin:	India
Sacred Books:	Siddhanta (of the Sky-clad Jains) Angas (of the white-clad Jains)
Sacred Place:	Mount Parscanatha (Bihar), the site of Jain pilgrimage. Pawapuri, where the twenty fourth Tirthankar (saint) Mahavira passed away
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paryushana, a festival held for eight days at the close of the Jain year • Mahavir Jayanti, celebrates the birth of Mahavira • Diwali, originally a Hindu festival

Introduction

The Jain religion was founded by Prince Vardhamana who lived in northern India from 540 to 468 BC. He was a contemporary of Buddha and, like him, was born into a Hindu family and studied Hindu religion in his early years. Prince Vardhamana was given the title of Mahavira by his followers, which means the Great Hero. The followers of this religion are called Jains, meaning Conquerors who had conquered their own selves.

While both Buddhism and Jainism rebelled against the Hindu caste system and the authority of the Vedas, they both accepted Hinduism's Law of Karma and the belief in Reincarnation and Nirvana. But at this point the two new faiths parted company. Buddhism followed the 'Middle Way' of moderation while Jainism followed the way of self denial and asceticism.

There are only about three million Jains living today, almost all in India. But these followers have retained a degree of influence out of proportion to their numbers and the Jain philosophy has played an important role in the history of Indian religions.

Essential Beliefs of Jainism

The two essential beliefs in Jainism which set this religion apart from traditional Hinduism or contemporary Buddhism, relate to the conquering of one's self and the sanctity of all living things.

1. Conquest of Self: In Jainism, the self can only be conquered by self denial, renunciation of worldly pleasures, asceticism and giving up of all desires and ambitions.

2. Principle of Ahimsa: By far the most important tenet of Jainism is the principle of Ahimsa or 'non injury'. The Jains accord great reverence to all living things and killing of any form of life is strictly forbidden.

3. The Law of Karma: Jainism believes in the Hindu Law of Karma that from good must come good and from evil, evil. The Law also determines the conditions of each rebirth according to the acts performed in the previous life.

4. Samsara: Jainism also believes in the Hindu principle of Samsara or the endless cycle of births and rebirths. This process of reincarnation continues till the soul finally attains liberation.

5. Moksha: Moksha or salvation in Jainism can only be achieved by the conquest of one's own self and by practicing the principle of Ahimsa.

The DOs and DON'Ts in Jainism

There are six important commandments in Jainism:

- Do not kill or hurt any living thing
- Do not steal
- Do not lie
- Do not covet or desire anything
- Do not live an unchaste life.
- Do not become intoxicated

The Worship in Jain Religion

The Jains worship many Hindu gods and also their own saints. Jains believe that Mahavira was the 24th saint and that twenty three saints had passed away before him. Jain temples are filled with images of these twenty four saints called Tirthankaras, who are the object of worship by the followers.

Aside from the temple worship, Jains spend about an hour every day in unbroken meditation in which they try to be at peace with the world and contemplate on spiritual heights. If possible, this meditation is carried out three times a day, in the morning, afternoon and the evening.

The Jains also devote their time to temporary monkish living at least six times a month. The Jains have a well developed ethical system in which gambling, eating of meat, drinking, adultery, hunting, stealing and speaking ill of others, are strongly forbidden.

Similarly the concept of charity is a very important part of the Jain religion and is widely practiced. In fact the religion demands that at least one act of charity be carried out each day. Jains today are very active in promoting public welfare and building schools and hospitals.

Jain Philosophy of Life

The Jains believe in the principle of Samsara, the endless cycle of births and rebirths. According to Jains, it happens only rarely that a soul is born in the human body. Man, therefore, should use every opportunity to obtain moksha or salvation. The path to achieving salvation lies in acquiring the Three Jewels:

- Right Knowledge
- Right Faith
- Right Conduct

Right knowledge comes through knowing the Jain principles, right faith through believing in them and the right conduct through following them.

The Wisdom of Jainism

- All living things hate pain; therefore do not hurt them
- No man should seek fame and respect by his austerities
- There are three ways of committing sin: by our actions, by authorizing others, and by approval
- Knowing the truth one should live up to it
- A blind man, though he may carry a light, still does not see
- A man should treat all creatures in the world as he himself would like to be treated
- He who is carried away by passion will not get very far

Comparative Study

Jainism, very much like Buddhism, developed as an offshoot of the Hindu religion. It maintained many of the Hindu beliefs such as Samsara, Karma and Nirvana. The only two

beliefs that are new to Jainism relate to extreme self denial and the sanctity of life. Basically, both these concepts exist in the other major religions of the world but are not taken to the degree practiced in Jainism. Islam and the other religions also de-emphasise worldly pleasures and comforts but do not go to the extreme of giving them up completely. Similarly, all religions teach sanctity of human life and kindness to animals but do not carry this teaching to such extremes that one is forced to give up ploughing the land for fear of killing the rodents or insects. Although the principle of Ahimsa, as taught by Jainism, is not really practicable, it has highlighted the fact that all living things suffer pain and should not be needlessly hurt.

THE SIKH RELIGION

Some Basic Facts

Name:	Sikhism. The word Sikh means a disciple.
Founder:	Baba Guru Nanak (1469-1539 CE), with considerable influence from later Gurus
Place of Origin:	Province of Punjab, India
Sacred Books:	Guru Granth
Sacred Place:	Amritsar, India
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vaisakhi, celebrates the birth of the Khalsa brotherhood • Diwali; Birth of Guru Nanak; Birth of Guru Gobind Singh • Martyrdom of Guru Arjan; Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Introduction

The Sikh movement started in India as a small group of devoted disciples who gathered around the saintly person of Baba Nanak. Baba Nanak was a contemporary of Babar, the first Mughal Emperor of India, and was born in April 1469 CE, in a village called Nankana Sahib, not far from Lahore. Although born in a Hindu family, he was disillusioned by the Hindu caste system, the power of the Brahmin priests, and the custom of ‘sati’ in which the widows were burned on the funeral pyre of their husbands.

There is considerable evidence in historical records that Baba Nanak embraced Islam, used to perform the Islamic rituals and undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca. These records also point to the fact that Baba Nanak did not found any new religion. Over the years his disciples and successors, however, did form a new identity and a religion for themselves.

After the death of Baba Nanak, there came a succession of nine Gurus (teachers) who formalised the teachings of the various Gurus, organised the Sikhs into a proper community and implemented the various social institutions found among the Sikhs today. Below are given the names of the various Sikh Gurus, their periods and the periods of their guruship:

List of the Ten Gurus of the Sikhs

Name of Guru	Birth-Death	Period of Guruship
1. Guru Nanak	1469-1539	
2. Guru Angad	1504-1552	(Guru: 1539-1552)
3. Guru Amar Das	1479-1574	(Guru: 1552-1574)
4. Guru Ram Das	1534-1581	(Guru: 1574-1581)
5. Guru Arjan	1563-1606	(Guru: 1581-1606)

6. Guru Har Gobind	1595-1644	(Guru: 1606-1644)
7. Guru Har Rai	1630-1661	(Guru: 1644-1661)
8. Guru Har Krishna	1656-1664	(Guru: 1661-1664)
9. Guru Tegh Bahadur	1621-1675	(Guru: 1664-1675)
10. Guru Gobind Singh	1666-1708	(Guru: 1675-1708)

The Gurus and their teachings

Excluding the period of Baba Nanak, the period of the nine successors lasted 169 years. These Gurus served as the spiritual and temporal heads of the Sikh community. Each Guru was nominated by his predecessor on the basis of his spiritual ability and worthiness. But, starting with the Fourth Guru, the office became hereditary in the line of his male descendants. Each of the Gurus contributed something which helped the community:

- Guru Nanak taught the Unity and love of God
- Guru Amar Des established the *langar* or communal eating facility which helped significantly in fostering the bonds of mutual brotherhood
- Guru Ram Das initiated the building of the city of Amritsar
- Guru Arjan established a number of other Sikh towns in Punjab and built the now famous Hari Mandir, or the Golden Temple, at Amritsar. It was during the time of this Fifth Guru that confrontations with the Muslims started. Guru Arjan died while in Muslim custody and gave the Sikhs their first martyr.
- Guru Har Gobind, Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishna the sixth, seventh and eighth Gurus did not make any significant contribution to the Sikh religion and spent most of their efforts in militarily organising the Sikh community.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur was the surviving son of Guru Har Gobind. During his period, Mughal King Aurangzeb was actively pursuing the policy of Islamisation in India. Guru Tegh Bahadur opposed many of the Emperor's policies. The Guru was imprisoned and later executed and is revered by the Sikhs as a great martyr.
- Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs. He took up the office at the age of nine and for the next 33 years consolidated the military power of the Sikhs, leading them against the Islamic powers with considerable success. In fact most of the visible aspects of the Sikh community today owe their origin to Guru Gobind Singh. He gave them the name of 'Khalsa' meaning the Pure. The male members of the community were given the title of Singh (lion), and the females that of Kaur (princess). He also introduced the five symbols for the Sikhs known commonly as the five Ks. These are:
 - Kesh (uncut hair)
 - Kangha (comb)
 - Kirpan (sword)
 - Kara (steel bangle)
 - Kach (shorts)
- Guru Gobind Singh's four sons were all killed during his lifetime. When the Tenth Guru himself was lying on his deathbed, he told the Sikh community that from then on no more human Gurus will appear and that their sacred Scriptures, the

Granth, would be their Guru. That is why the Sikhs call their sacred book Guru Granth.

Essential Beliefs of the Sikh Faith

1. Unity of God: The most important belief of the Sikh religion concerns the Unity of God. God is One, the Creator of all things, existing from beginning and the source of all man's happiness.
2. Walking the path of the Gurus: Man can become one with God only by walking on the path of the Gurus. By sincere worship and meditation, the Sikhs believe, one can experience God.
3. The Holy Book is the Guru forever: The sacred book, Guru Granth, can lead the followers to find God and salvation. No more religious leaders are necessary after the Granth was declared the Guru of the Sikhs.
4. Salvation: Salvation results with a love union with God. Until this union takes place, individuals may go through many reincarnations. This principle of reincarnation is taken from Hinduism.

The Sikhs do not believe in the angels or other supernatural beings or in Heaven or Hell. It should be noted that Guru Granth does not present the Sikh beliefs in any systematic manner. The Granth emphasizes the stimulating aspects of its teachings on the human heart, to love God.

Worship in the Sikh Religion

The focal point of all Sikh worship is the Guru Granth. In the gurdwara, the Sikh place of worship, the Sikhs sing hymns from the Scriptures and members of the congregation give readings and expositions from the Granth. No weekly holy day is observed by the Sikhs.

Although the Sikhs reject the symbolisation of God by idols, the paintings of Baba Nanak are highly revered and displayed prominently in the Gurdwara.

In their homes, the Sikhs recite various *shabads* or verses from the Granth. The most important of these is Guru Nanak's Japji which is recited silently by the Sikhs every morning. Below are given some selected verses from this Japji to give the reader some idea of the fundamental beliefs of this religion:

“There is One God whose name is true, the Creator. Devoid of fear and enmity, Immortal,
Unborn, Self Existent
The True One was in the beginning; the True One was in the primal age
The True One is now also, O Nanak; the True One also will be
The hunger of the hungry for God diminishes not though they obtain the load of the worlds
If man should have hundred thousand devices, even one would not assist him in finding God
How shall man become true before God? How shall the veil of falsehood be rent?
By walking, O Nanak, according to the Will of the Commander as ordained
Bodies are produced by His order; His order cannot be described
By His order souls are infused into bodies; by His order greatness is obtained

By His order men are high or low; by His order they obtain predestined pain or pleasure
 By His order some obtain their reward; by His order others wander in transmigration
 All are subject to His order; none escapes from it. He who understands God's order, O
 Nanak, is never guilty of egoism
 Who can sing His power? Who has power to sing it? Who can sing His gifts or know His
 signs?
 Who can sing His attributes, His greatness, His deeds?
 Who can sing His knowledge whose study is laborious?
 Who can sing Him, Who fashions the body and then destroys it?
 Who can sing Him, Who takes away life and then restores it?
 Who can sing Him, Who appears to be far, but is actually so near?
 Who can sing Him, Who is All Seeing and Omnipresent?
 In describing Him there would be no end.”

Comparative Study

The Sikhs claim that Baba Nanak founded their faith which, they profess, is distinct from either Hinduism or Islam. Historical records, however, prove that Baba Nanak, who was born and raised in a Hindu family, later accepted Islam. Also, many of the *shabads* of the Granth are simply Gurmukhi renderings of the Qur'anic verses. Similarly, the concept of God presented in the Granth is exactly the same as given in the Holy Qur'an. Many of God's attributes mentioned in the Granth are again translations of the Qur'anic attributes of God.

It is for this reason that many Western scholars of religion do not regard Sikhism as an independent religion but an offshoot of Islam.

The Ahmadis believe, and this belief is borne out by ample historical evidence, that Baba Nanak was a Muslim saint and a mystic who was greatly affected by the general lack of education and awakening in his agrarian community in the Punjab. His teachings were directed essentially at his own people and that is the reason why Sikhism later developed as a strongly ethnic religion.

The beliefs and modes of worship of Sikh religion were greatly influenced by the surrounding Hindu tradition and environment. The principle of reincarnation, prostrating in front of the Granth, and the use of Baba Nanak's portraits in the gurdwara, are a few examples.

CONFUCIANISM

Some Basic Facts

Name:	Confucianism
Founder:	Ch'iu K'ung, known to his followers as K'ung-fu-tse (K'ung the philosopher). This name became Anglicised to Confucius. 551-479 BC
Place of Origin:	China
Sacred Books:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Five Classics [I Ching, Classic of Poetry, Book of Documents, Book of Rites, Spring and Autumn Annals] • Analects of Confucius, consisting of the sayings of Confucius and his contemporaries
Sacred Place:	Temple at Qufu, Shandong, which is the birth place of Confucius
Festivals:	The Qufu Festival, held at the birth place of Confucius in Qufu City, in the fall

Introduction

Confucianism is a Chinese religion founded by Confucius who lived from 551 to 479 BC, around the same time that Mahavira and Buddha were founding two new faiths in India. The real name of Confucius was Ch'iu K'ung but his followers used to call him K'ung-fu-tse meaning K'ung the Philosopher. This, over the years, got simplified to Confucius in the Western countries.

Although Confucius accepted the traditional concept of God and the Divine Law, his teachings mostly emphasised ethics, wisdom, governmental system, regard for justice and the value of tradition. Confucius was a great teacher and he travelled throughout China, teaching and preaching his philosophy and his system of ethics. He laid great emphasis on the seeking of knowledge and the need to question anything that was ambiguous, until the ambiguity was removed.

With the rise of Communism in China, all earlier philosophies—particularly of religious nature—were suppressed and went underground. At present, China does not have religious and sacred places but only historical sites.

The Teachings of Confucius

The teachings of Confucius can be condensed into six principles and five virtues. These are given below:

The Six Principles of Confucius:

1. Human nature is good and evil is unnatural.
2. Man is free to choose his conduct as he wills.
3. Virtue is its own reward. Doing good for a reward or avoiding evil for fear of punishments, is not virtue.
4. The rule for behaviour is: what you do not want others to do to you, do not do to them.
5. A man has five duties: to his ruler, to his father, to his wife (and she to him), to his elder brother, and to his friend.
6. Man should strive to become a superior man.

Five Constant Virtues taught by Confucius:

1. Benevolence, which is to think of other people first
2. Righteousness, which is not to do to others which you would not want them to do to you
3. Propriety, which is to behave with respect and courtesy towards others
4. Wisdom, which is to be guided by knowledge and understanding
5. Sincerity, which is to be sincere, truthful and honest in all your actions

The Wisdom of Confucius

Following are some of the sayings of Confucius which have been selected from the Book of Analects:

- He who does not recognise the existence of a Divine Law cannot be a superior man
- Repay kindness with kindness, and enmity with justice
- Men of superior mind first get down to the root of things; then the right course is open to them
- To prize the efforts above the prize, that is virtue
- Do not wish for speedy results nor trivial advantages
- The superior man will be agreeable even when he disagrees; the inferior man will be disagreeable even when he agrees
- The superior man seeks what is right, the inferior one what is profitable
- A good man is neither liked by everybody nor disliked by everybody. He is liked by all the good people and disliked by the bad
- Do not set before others what you yourself do not like
- In a good country, people speak out boldly and act boldly
- When you have erred, be not afraid to correct yourself
- We know so little about life, how can we then know about death
- To see what is right and not do it, that is cowardice
- Only the supremely wise and the abysmally ignorant do not change
- When you know a thing, maintain you know it; when you do not, acknowledge it. This is the characteristic of knowledge
- Let there be three men walking together, and in them I will be sure to find my instructors
- One should not be greatly concerned at not being in office, but rather about the requirements in one's self for that office
- The superior man is slow to promise, but prompt to fulfil

Comparative Study

The Chinese religions have developed so differently from the Near Eastern or Indian religions that a proper or valid comparison is difficult to make. While most major religions emphasize the spiritual aspects of man's life, Chinese religions emphasize only the moral and ethical aspects.

The moral and ethical teachings of the Chinese religions are quite comprehensive. It is in the area of spiritual philosophy and man's relationship with God that these faiths fall short. The Chinese religions lack the intellectual speculation of the Indian faiths and the spirituality of the Near Eastern religions. For this reason many Chinese people practice the teachings of Confucianism but try to seek salvation in Buddhism.

TAOISM

Some Basic Facts

Name:	Taoism (pronounced Dowism). Derived from the Chinese word Tao, meaning The Way
Founder:	Lao Tze (or Lao Tzu), 604-524 BC
Place of Origin:	China
Sacred Books:	Tao Te Ching Zhuangzi Daozang
Sacred Place:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baxian Gong (Eight Immortals Palace), in Xi'an, Shaanxi, • Baiyun Guan (White Cloud Monastery), in Beijing, • Chongyang Gong (Palace of Chongyang), in Huxian, Shaanxi, • Huashan (Mount Hua), in Huayin, Shaanxi.
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese New Year • Chio, the festival of cosmic renewal

Introduction

Very little is known about the life of the founder of Taoism except that he was known to his followers as Lao Tze, meaning the Old Philosopher. Lao Tze was a contemporary of Confucius and about fifty years his senior. There are historical records indicating that the two had met more than once. Lao Tze lived in that golden century of religious awakening when four new religions were being founded in the world: two in India and two in China.

The teachings of Taoism are completely different from Confucianism or from any other major religion. Tao teachings are highly metaphysical and lend themselves to such a variety of interpretation that one doesn't really know for sure what Lao Tze intended them to mean. The teachings of Lao Tze, as they are available today, lack in theology, social laws and institutions. The religion emphasizes living naturally and ethically but not necessarily spiritually.

Very early in its life, this religion branched into two movements: one purely philosophical and the other, religious. As a philosophy Taoism moved towards naturalism while as a religion it deteriorated into superstitious beliefs and occult practices. The followers of Taoism started worshipping nature gods along with Lao Tze and many other gods borrowed from Buddhism. Over the years, Buddhism exerted great influence on the development of Taoist beliefs and acts of worship. Since Taoism lacked a formalised or systematic mode of worship, Buddhism promptly filled this vacuum.

Although Taoism is not a major religious order in China today, it has continued to influence the thinking and ethical standards of the Chinese people who still try to seek mystic and philosophical wonders in the teachings of the Tao sacred book, Tao Teh King.

Most Taoists today worship Buddhist gods, make offerings to their ancestors, and follow many other Buddhist rites and ceremonies. They also believe in spirits both good and bad.

The Wisdom of Taoism

Following are some of the selected sayings from Tao Te Ching, the sacred book of Taoism:

- Nameless are the origins of all creation
- The wise man wears a coarse garment, but carries a jewel in his heart
- The way of heaven is impartial; but it favours good men
- Absence of desires brings tranquillity
- A thousand mile journey can be made one step at a time
- He who conquers others is strong, he who conquers his own will is mighty
- The world is lost to those who try to win it
- Everything difficult can be dealt with while it is still easy
- In serving Heaven and in ruling men, use moderation
- To the good I would be good, and to the bad I would be good
- The more prohibitions, the more poverty; the more laws, the more crimes; the more weapons, the more chaos
- Sincere words are not fine, fine words are not sincere
- The wise reject all extremes
- The way of Tao is to recompense injury with kindness
- Little faith is put in those who have little faith
- The value of an act is judged by its timing
- Get rid of your preachers and discard your teachers and the people will benefit a hundred times
- If you trust people not enough, they may trust you not at all

SHINTO FAITH

Some Basic Facts

Name:	Shinto. It is the Chinese rendering of the Japanese word Kami no Michi which means the Way of the gods
Founder:	No known founder; largely based on Japanese traditions and mythology
Place of Origin:	Japan
Sacred Books:	Kojiki (Records of Ancient Writings), assembled around 712 CE Nihongi (Nihon Shoki), assembled around 720 CE
Sacred Place:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ise, east of Osaka, main island of Honshu • Izumo, north of Hiroshima, Island of Honshu
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gion festival in Kyoto • Takayama festival in the Hida region • Chichibu festival in the mountains northwest of Tokyo

Introduction

The Japanese religion Shinto is not considered to be a revealed religion by the scholars and historians. Although some fundamental ideas of this religion date as far back as 600 BC, the religion was organised into a systematic set of beliefs and worships around 350 to 550 AD.

One important reason for the organisation of this national religion was to meet the challenge of the two imported religions: Buddhism from Korea and Confucianism from

China. Over the years, Shinto and Buddhism intermingled so much in the Japanese society that today many Japanese would declare themselves to be both, Shintoist and Buddhist. It is very common for a Japanese to have a Shinto wedding and a Buddhist funeral.

In the Japanese mythology, the islands of Japan were created by two gods, Izangi and Izanami, who then descended from heaven to populate them. The first emperor of Japan is said to have descended from these two gods. The roots of the Japanese religion, therefore, lie in animism—a belief that supernatural forces reside in natural objects such as animals, trees and mountains.

The central concept in the Shinto religion is that of Kami. Kami is a general term of respect for something holy and awesome. According to the Japanese, spiritual forces may reside in people, animals, trees, mountains or other objects. The Japanese appease to these forces by revering or worshipping these objects and respectfully call them Kami.

In rare cases, a living person may be regarded as a Kami. The Japanese believe that a god may take possession of a person's soul and use him as a medium to speak the words of the god. This is the closest thing to the Shinto concept of a prophet.

The Beliefs of Shinto

Although the Shinto religion has no revealed commandments, it has a fairly well developed code of ethics and social behaviour. The basic beliefs of the Shinto faith could be summarized in the five tenets given below:

1. To be courageous, loyal and to observe cleanliness
2. That the Japanese race originated from two gods named Izangi and Izanami
3. That life is good
4. That the world reveals itself in beauty
5. That the deeds are more important than arguments

The Shinto DOs and DON'Ts

There are two sects of Shinto which have developed formal decalogues or Ten Commandments.

The ten DOs of the Shinshu Kyo sect are:

1. Worship the great deities of Shinto
2. Pacify your spirit
3. Practise the Way of the gods
4. Revere the divine origin of the state
5. Be loyal to the ruler
6. Be zealous in your duty towards your parents
7. Be kind to others
8. Be diligent in business
9. Be steadfast
10. Cleanse away the rust of your body

The ten DONTs of the Shinri Kyo sect are:

1. Do not transgress the will of the gods
2. Do not forget your obligations to the ancestors
3. Do not transgress the decrees of the state
4. Do not forget the great goodness of the gods which removes misfortune and sickness
5. Do not forget that the world is one great family
6. Do not forget the limitations of your own person
7. Do not become angry
8. Do not be lazy in your business
9. Do not cause dishonour to the teachings
10. Do not be carried away by foreign teaching

Worship in the Shinto Religion

Much of Shinto worship is an individual matter. Usually, before undertaking a journey, or an examination, or a new venture, a Shintoist will visit the shrine to appease the gods.

The concept of the shrine is very important in the Shinto religion. In the Japanese language the word for shrine means spiritual dwelling place of a god. It is very common for a shrine to enshrine a different deity. The deities of Shinto are not supernatural beings or gods, but rather the spiritualisation of ordinary natural objects.

The shrines are generally located at places of natural beauty such as mountain tops. Inside the shrine is a large trough of clean water for the worshiper to perform ablution. The worshiper then performs a short prayer in the worship hall of the shrine.

In the Shinto religion, ancestor worship has an important place. In Shinto philosophy, man can only exist in this world by receiving the blood of countless ages of ancestors. These ancestors, therefore, must not be forgotten. Reverence and worship of ancestors is one of the fundamental principles of the Shinto faith.

Wisdom of the Shinto Way

- All men are brothers
- When prayer fails to help you accomplish your purpose, know that something is lacking in your sincerity
- Do not profess love with your lips while you harbour hatred in your heart
- One should not be mindful of suffering in his own life and unmindful of suffering in the lives of others
- In all the world there is no such thing as a stranger

Comparative Study

The Shinto religion is an 'unfounded' religion in the sense that it cannot be traced to any known founder and appears to have evolved from ancient Japanese folk beliefs.

While the ethical system of the Shinto faith is reasonably well developed, its spiritual philosophy is very primitive. The religion revolves around nature worship and is highly disinterested in intellectual and philosophical speculation.

Among the major religions of the world, the Shinto religion comes closest to Hinduism. Both have a rich blend of tradition and mythology and both lack a known founder. But while most Hindu beliefs are a result of intellectual curiosity and philosophical speculation, Shinto beliefs appear primitive and superstitious by comparison. While Hindu triad has its basis in Brahman, the One God, there is no such concept of One Supreme Being in the Shinto religion, not at least in the way the faith exists today.

The Shinto religion is an ethnic faith; it is meant for the people of Japan only. Until very recently, the Shinto religion demanded complete loyalty to the King of Japan. The Japanese monarchy is a hereditary institution, existing in the same family for 124 generations since Emperor Jimmu, the first Emperor of Japan. The Japanese Emperor is also the high priest of the Shinto religion. Today, Shinto is more of a Japanese culture or a way of life than a true religion.

ZOROASTRIANISM

Some Basic Facts

Name:	Zoroastrianism
Founder:	Zoroaster (called Zarathustra by the Greeks), 1500 BC (or between 1000 and 1100 BC)
Place of Origin:	Steppe lands to the east of the Caspian Sea, in Iran
Sacred Books:	Zend Avesta (The Law and Commentaries)
Sacred Place:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various shrines in the Yazd area of Iran including Pir-e Sabz Shrine • Udvada Atash Behram in Gujarat, India
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gahambars • Muktdad, the festival of all souls • Khordad Sal celebration marking the birth of Zoroaster • Zarthosht no diso celebration marking the death of Zoroaster

Introduction

Zoroaster was born in the area east of the Caspian Sea. At the time of his birth this area was in north-east Persia, but now it lies in southern USSR. The Indo Iranian race living in that part of the world used to worship many nature gods such as the Rain god, the Sun god, the Fertility god, and so on. According to legend, Zoroaster used to meditate a great deal. One time he went up to the top of Mount Sabalan to live in isolation. There, in a flash of enlightenment, he found what he was seeking:

“From good must come good; and from evil, evil.”

The good cannot create evil, and the evil cannot create good. According to Zoroastrianism, there are two forces in the world: one is the Wise Lord (Ahura Mazda), and the other is the Destructive Spirit (Angra Mainyu). The two great forces or beings have no contact with each other. Men must choose between the two spirits because there can't be any compromise. Ahura Mazda is the Supreme God in the Zoroastrian religion and, therefore, worthy of absolute worship.

The Zoroastrians believe that Zoroaster was a prophet through whom the Divine revelation was given to mankind. Zoroaster forbade the worship of idols and instead

instituted the worship of Ahura Mazda, the Wise Lord. He also told the people that on a Day of Judgment, good will overcome evil.

History of Zoroastrianism

It is now believed that Zoroastrianism began around 1000-1100 BC. Persia at the time was just emerging out of the Stone Age and writing was not known to the people. No records, therefore, exist of this early period.

Then in 599 BC, Cyrus came to power in a small Persian kingdom and, in a matter of twenty years, conquered all of Persia and the mighty Babylonian Empire. After the fall of Babylon, Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to their homeland. These Jews had been exiled since Babylon conquered the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 BC, during the time of Prophet Jeremiah.

Cyrus founded the Achaemenid dynasty which ruled the greatest empire the world had then known. He adopted Zoroastrianism as the state religion, spreading it in the entire kingdom. Some of the great kings of this dynasty include Darius (522-486 BC), Xerxes (486-465 BC), and Artaxerxes (465-424 BC). The Achaemenid Empire was eventually brought to an end in 331 BC by Alexander the Great or, as he is known in the Persian history, Alexander the Vandal.

After the death of Alexander, the descendants of one of his generals, the Seleucids, ruled Persia for many years until a new Persian dynasty by the name of Parthians grew powerful enough to expel them. The Parthians ruled Iran for nearly 500 years and continuously fought with the Roman Empire in the west. It was during the Parthian rule that the teachings of Zoroaster began to be compiled in the form of a holy book, the Zend-Avesta.

Around 224 CE, a ruler of a south-western province in Persia rebelled against the Parthians and established the Sassanid Empire, named after a legendary ancestor, Sassan. The Sassanids ruled Persia for over four centuries till the Muslim armies defeated their kingdom in 642 CE, in the battle of Nihawand. In 652 CE, the last Zoroastrian king of the Sassanid Empire, Yazdgerd III, died. It is from his coronation, held in 632 CE, that the Zoroastrians date their calendar using the convention AY, for After Yazdgerd.

After the fall of the Sassanid Empire, a majority of the population of Iran accepted Islam and the number of Zoroastrians started to decline rapidly. In the tenth century CE, a small group of Zoroastrians left their Persian homeland and migrated to India where they began to be called Parsis meaning Persians. Although the religion of Zoroastrianism originated and flourished in Persia, today there are more followers of this ancient faith living in India than in their original homeland.

Essential Beliefs of Zoroastrianism

1. Duality of powers: Zoroastrians believe that there are two independent and rival forces in nature: the good force in the form of Ahura Mazda (the Wise Lord) and the evil force in the form of Angra Mainyu.
2. Free Will: Man has the free will to choose either good or evil.

3. Day of Judgment: Man must stay on the side of Ahura Mazda so that on the Day of Judgment the good may overcome evil.
4. Acquisition of virtues: To properly ally himself with Ahura Mazda, man must acquire the following virtues:
 - Truth
 - Charity
 - Good thoughts, good words, good deeds.
5. Prayer: A man should pray to Ahura Mazda for all his needs.
6. The Straight Path is narrow: When a man dies, his soul crosses a narrow bridge over hell. The good man crosses over safely and is welcomed by a beautiful maiden. But for the evil man, the bridge becomes narrow until he falls down in hell.
7. Hell and Heaven: Hell and heaven are not eternal in Zoroastrian belief. The purpose of all punishment is to reform.
8. End of Time Saviour: At the end of time there will appear a saviour who will revive the dead, reward the good and punish the bad.

Worship in Zoroastrianism

1. Prayer: Zoroastrians say their daily prayers five times each day. Before saying their prayer, they perform ablution. The prayers are always said facing a light (sun, fire or lamp). All prayers are said while standing and in the sacred language of the Avesta.

2. Ceremonies: Many stages in the life of a person are marked by religious ceremonies. These include:

- Birth rites
- Initiation, around the age of ten
- Marriage
- Death

The Zoroastrians neither bury their dead nor cremate them. The dead body is first washed, then wrapped in clean clothes, and finally placed in the Towers of Silence to decompose naturally and to be consumed by birds.

The fire is considered sacred in this religion and plays an important role in all their worships and ceremonies.

Comparative Study

Zoroastrianism is a very ancient religion going back to about the time of Moses. But while Judaism was blessed by a series of Israelite prophets who came after Moses, no such successors seem to have come in Persia after Zoroaster. Zoroastrianism, therefore, maintained much of its early primitive features and teachings and its religious philosophy did not keep pace with the times.

Both Judaism and Zoroastrianism appeared in the world around the same time and in areas not too distant from each other. Over the years, the two faiths influenced not only each other but also the religions of India and China. Some of the religious concepts that are common to both Judaism and Zoroastrianism are:

- Concept of One God
- Concept of Angels
- Concept of devil or satan
- Concept of hell and heaven
- Concept of a day of judgment
- Concept of a Latter Day Messiah

Because of the discontinuation of revelation in the Zoroastrian religion, this faith started to become outdated and by the time Islam came, a majority of the Zoroastrians adopted the new religion. It is interesting to note that of the three pre-Islamic religions of the Near East: Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism, only the followers of Zoroaster embraced Islam in large numbers.

Today, Zoroastrianism is gradually becoming extinct from the world; less than 200,000 followers remain, mostly in India. One reason for this gradual decline is the fact that Zoroastrianism is a strongly ethnic religion and conversions are not possible. A faith meant for a people, therefore, dies with the people!

JUDAISM

Some Basic Facts

Name:	Judaism. The names Judaism, Judea and Jew are all derived from Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and the brother of Joseph
Founder:	The present form was founded by Moses (1391-1271 BC)
Place of Origin:	Babylon, Canaan, Egypt area
Sacred Books:	The Hebrew Bible (Old Testament), consists of 39 books including the five books of the Torah
Sacred Place:	Jerusalem
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosh Hashanah the Jewish New Year • Yom Kippur the Day of Atonement • Sukkot the feast of Tabernacles • Simchat Torah rejoicing of the Law

Introduction

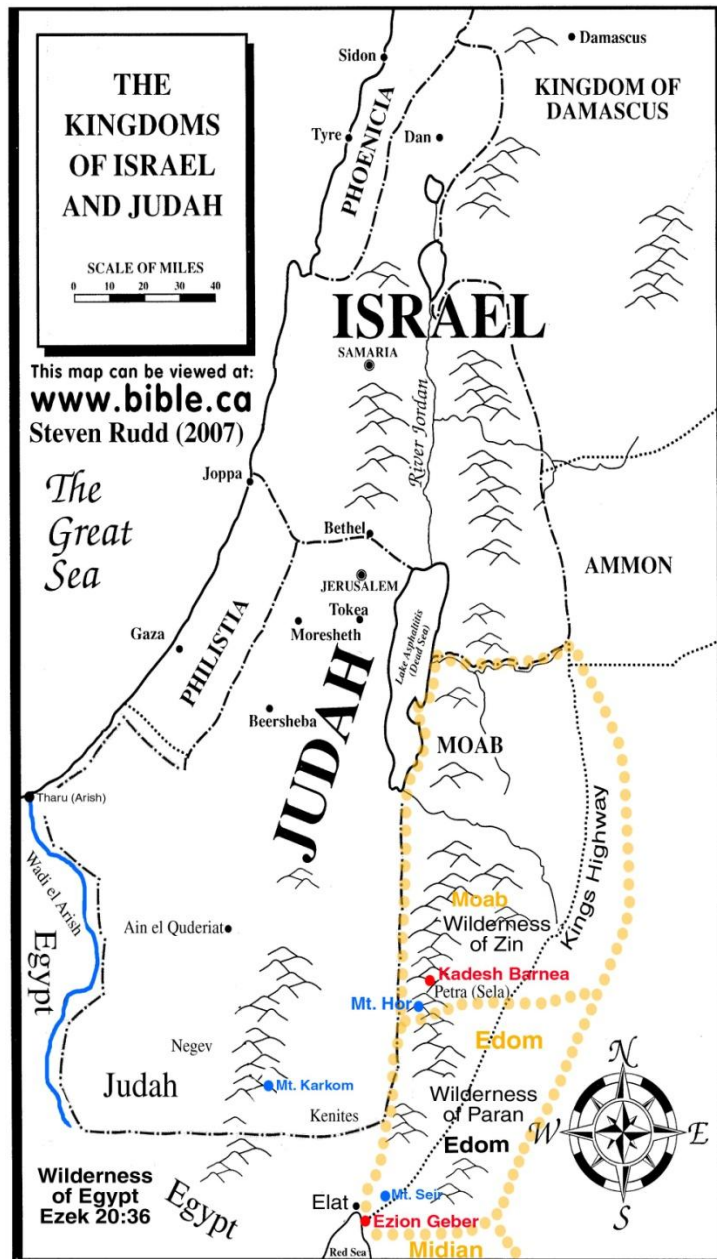
Judaism is one of the oldest religions in the world and had significant influence on the development of two other monotheisms: Christianity and Islam. The central doctrine of Judaism is the Unity of God. But along with this doctrine goes the belief that the Jewish people are God's chosen people, and that God wants them to be an example to all mankind.

Judaism, therefore, is an ethnic religion and its history is the history of the Hebrew people. These people trace their ancestry to the great patriarch, Abraham, who lived in Chaldaea around 2,000 BC. Chaldaea is in the eastern part of the Fertile Crescent which extends from the areas of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to the eastern coast of the Mediterranean.

The Chaldeans used to worship idols and images, and Abraham revolted against this practice. Abraham used to receive revelations from God and during one of these revelations God made a Covenant with his people. In this Covenant, God promised Abraham's descendents all the land of Canaan and God's protection in exchange for their homage and allegiance. The followers of Judaism still call themselves the Sons of the Covenant or B'nai B'rith in Hebrew.

Abraham spoke the Hebrew language and his descendents, therefore, are called Hebrew people. But a grandson of Abraham, by the name of Jacob, was given the title of Israel by God in one of his revelations, and the descendents of Jacob begun to be called Israelites. Jacob had twelve sons from whom descended the Biblical Twelve Tribes.

A son of Jacob, by the name of Joseph, was appointed a governor of a province of Egypt by a benevolent king. During his time, many Israelites migrated to Egypt from their homeland in the Canaan Babylonia area. The later kings of Egypt, however, treated the



Map showing the Northern and Southern Kingdoms after the United Monarchy in Israel (courtesy of: bible.ca)

Israelites badly who spent the next three hundred years in bondage and servitude under their Egyptian masters.

Some five hundred years after Abraham, one of his descendents by the name of Moses arose and unified the Israelites living in Egypt. Moses eventually led the Israelites out of Egypt towards the land of Canaan.

On the way to Canaan, Moses experienced a vision on Mount Sinai and received the famous Ten Commandments from God. These Ten Commandments became the foundation on which the teachings of the Torah were later amplified. Although Judaism contains teachings going as far back as Noah and Abraham, its present form and structure was established essentially by Moses.

After the death of Moses and after their wanderings in the desert for nearly forty years, the Israelites finally settled down in the Canaan area. Here, in the year 1043 BC, the first Israelite kingdom was established by King Saul. Saul was followed by the two great prophet kings of the Israelites, David and his son Solomon. After the death of Solomon, the United Kingdom of Israel broke up into two separate kingdoms: the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel lasted until 722 BC when its capital, Samaria, fell to the conquering Assyrians. The Southern Kingdom of Judah lasted till 586 BC when its capital, Jerusalem, fell to the conquering Babylonians. The Babylonians exiled the Jews from Jerusalem and destroyed their holy city. It was only when Cyrus of Persia defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC that the exiled Israelites were allowed to return to their homeland and rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

The six hundred year period, from the start of the United Kingdom to year 400 BC, is one of the most glorious periods in the Israelite history or, for that matter, the history of the world. It was during this period that most of the known prophets of the world appeared. One could even call this period the Age of the Prophets.

Some of the great prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, Ezekiel, Job, Ezra and Malachi appeared in this period. It was also during this period that the founders of four other great religions, Mahavira, Buddha, Confucius and Lao Tze, appeared in India and China. With the death of Malachi, the last of the Israelite prophets, the Old Testament comes to a close around 400 BC.

The Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible as the Jews prefer to call it, is the sacred book of Judaism. It contains not only the five books of Torah revealed to Moses, but many other books attributed to later prophets such as Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Job, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Zechariah and Malachi.

Besides the Hebrew Bible, there are two other texts considered sacred by the Jews: the Mishnah and the Talmud. The Mishnah is a collection of religious laws arranged in six orders which cover agricultural tithes, festivals, marriage, civil laws, sacrifices and ritual purity. The Mishnah was codified around 200 CE under Rabbi Judah the Prince. The Talmuds are commentaries on the Mishnah and were written by the middle of the sixth century CE in Aramaic, the everyday language of the Jewish people of the time.

The Essential Beliefs of Judaism

Although there are many beliefs in Judaism, there are 13 articles of faith considered essential. These are:

1. The belief in God
2. The belief that there is only one God
3. The belief in the non corporeal nature of God
4. The belief that God is the First and the Last
5. The belief that God is All knowing, All Seeing and the Lord
6. The belief that prayers should only be directed to God
7. The belief that God rewards the good and punishes the bad
8. The belief that all the words of the prophets are true
9. The belief that Moses is the chief of all prophets
10. The belief that the present Torah is the same as revealed to Moses
11. The belief that the Law of Torah is the last law from God
12. The belief in the coming of the Messiah
13. The belief in the Resurrection

The central belief expressed in the Hebrew Bible concerns the Unity and love of God. This is evident from the Hebrew declaration of faith, the *Shema Yisrael*, which is equivalent to the Islamic *Kalima*:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is One.
And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your might
And these words which I command you shall be upon your heart.” (Deuteronomy 6:4-6)

The Codes for Social and Moral Conduct

The Hebrew Bible contains hundreds of codes and directives for the Israelites by which to conduct their spiritual and worldly affairs. Of these, the Ten Commandments are the most famous:

1. You shall have no other gods besides Me
2. You shall not make any image or likeness of anything in heaven above
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord in vain
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy
5. Honour your father and your mother
6. You shall not commit murder
7. You shall not commit adultery
8. You shall not steal
9. You shall not bear false witness
10. You shall not covet anything that is your neighbour's

Some additional directives besides the Ten Commandments are given below:

1. You shall not oppress your neighbour
2. You shall do no injustice in weight or in measure
3. You shall seek no vengeance
4. Open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor
5. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind

6. You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial toward the poor, nor favour the mighty
7. You shall not wrong the stranger. The stranger among you shall be as the home born among you, and you shall love him as yourself

Modes of Worship in Judaism

All acts of worship in Judaism are based on three principles which are:

- (i) That God should be praised and worshipped
- (ii) That man should ask his Lord for all his needs
- (iii) That man can commune with God through prayer

The various acts of worship in Judaism including prayer, singing of God's praise, fasting, observing the day of Sabbath, giving of sacrifices, are all based on the three fundamental principles given above. The various rituals followed in Jewish worship are:

1. The Prayer: There are three daily prayers which include the Shemah and other passages from the Hebrew Bible and the post Biblical works. The prayer also includes meditation and asking of individual favours and blessings. The prayers are said in the morning, afternoon and evening, either at home or in the synagogue.

2. Mezuzah: This is a small wooden case inscribed with the Shemah and another discourse from Deuteronomy. This case is fastened to the doorpost of one's home and each time, upon going out or coming in, the Mezuzah is touched with the tips of two fingers, which are then kissed. The entire ritual is symbolic of remembering God in all goings in and goings out.

3. Feast of Passover: In this ritual, which takes place during the annual Feast of Passover, the entire family participates. The occasion marks the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. The ritual celebrations include the invoking of blessings, singing of the first chapter of Genesis and saying of prayers.

4. Observing the Sabbath: This is the Jewish weekly holy day and begins on Friday after sunset and ends with the sunset on Saturday. The day is essentially devoted to services in the synagogue and prayers. No work of any kind is permitted on this day. The orthodox Jews neither drive nor undertake any journey on this day.

5. Kosher Foods: It is a duty of the Jews to eat kosher food fit according to Jewish dietary laws. According to these laws, meat and dairy products must not be served in the same meal. Only meat of certain animals is permitted; pork and shellfish are forbidden. Furthermore, the animals must be slaughtered in the proper Jewish way.

The Wisdom of Judaism

The following sayings are taken from the Hebrew Bible to give the reader some idea of the wisdom contained in this religion:

- What does the Lord require of you? Only to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God
- What is hateful to thee, do not to thy fellow man do
- He who oppresses the poor blasphemes his Maker, but he who has mercy on the needy, honours Him
- One can enter the heavenly kingdom without diamonds, but not without honesty
- The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away
- Better a dinner of herbs where love is, than a roasted ox with hatred
- Say not anything which cannot be understood at once
- Separate not yourself from the community
- The price of wisdom is above pearls
- Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins
- Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us?
- To the wise the path of life goes upward
- Where there is no vision, the people perish
- As he thinks in his heart, so is he
- Let justice flow like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream
- Rejoice not when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles
- If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink
- For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born and a time to die: a time to plant and a time to harvest

Comparative Study

While the beliefs and principles of Judaism are of universal appeal, its history has associated them with a national group, speaking a national language and living in their native land. Judaism, therefore, developed strictly as an ethnic religion for the descendents of Abraham and Jacob.

Despite being fairly ancient and ethnic, Judaism formalised some of the most basic principles of man's religion, in a form not accomplished before. Two other faiths that are as old as Judaism Hinduism and Zoroastrianism both lack the sophistication in spiritual philosophy and in the social and moral codes, which we find in Judaism.

Of all the religions of the world, Islam is closest to Judaism. Both are strongly monotheistic, far more than Christianity. Both have a well developed law and social and moral codes. Both have more or less similar religious philosophies: beliefs in One God, the angels, the prophets, the Day of Judgment, and the carrying out of service to humanity. In fact, both religions trace their ancestries to Prophet Abraham; the Jews through Abraham's son Isaac, and the Quraish of Mecca through Abraham's son Ishmael.

Basically, there are two differences that set these religions apart:

- (1) The Jews believe in the finality of the Mosaic Law while the Muslims believe in the finality of the Qur'anic Law.

- (2) The Jews do not believe in the prophethood of any one after the Prophet Malachi. The Muslims believe in the continuity of prophethood after Malachi in the persons of Zechariah, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad.

All other differences are either as a consequence of the above, or interpretational, and fundamentally not essential.

Although the Jews believe in the coming of the Messiah, they do not recognize him in the person of Jesus Christ. The reason for this is the statement in the Book of Malachi which prophesied the return of the Prophet Elijah before the coming of Messiah. The Jews take the returning of Elijah literally, and do not agree with the Christian or Muslim belief that Elijah has returned in the form of John the Baptist.

CHRISTIANITY

Some Basic Facts

Name:	The word Christian was first used by the Greeks for the followers of Christos, as the Greeks used to call the Messiah.
Founder:	Jesus Christ, which is the Greek rendering of the original Hebrew name Isa al Masih, meaning Isa the Anointed. (Born: 4-7 BC)
Place of Origin:	Palestine area
Sacred Books:	The New Testaments [includes the four Gospels and 23 other books]
Sacred Place:	Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem
Festivals:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas, which celebrates Jesus' birth • Easter, which celebrates the resurrection of Jesus • Ascension which celebrates the ascension of Jesus to heaven, forty days after the Easter • Pentecost, which celebrates the coming of the Holy Spirit to the apostles, ten days after the Ascension.

Introduction

Christianity is the faith with the largest following in the world. The term Christian was used for the first time after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, for people who associated themselves with the teachings of Christos—the Messiah. Although other religions like Zoroastrianism, Buddhism and Confucianism are also named after their respective founders, the attachment and the reverence which the Christians display for Jesus Christ is quite different. The person of Jesus Christ is worshiped by his followers and is central to the teachings and philosophy of Christianity.

Strangely, no other prophet has appeared in history whose birth, life, death, and teachings have been the subject of greater controversy than Jesus Christ's. Likewise, very few other religions have been so drastically misinterpreted by their own followers as the religion of Christianity. In what follows, we will try to explain the reasons for this rather unique development of this religion.

Table showing the Timeline of Christianity

Period	Developments
4 BC	Birth of Jesus
26 CE	John the Baptist (Yahya) begins his ministry
27 CE	Jesus Christ begins his ministry
30 CE	Crucifixion of Jesus Christ
35 CE	Saul converts to Christianity from Judaism and takes on the name of Paul
312 CE	Emperor Constantine's conversion to Christianity
325 CE	Council of Nicaea
380 CE	Christianity made official religion of Roman Empire
381 CE	Council of Constantinople
451 CE	Council of Chalcedon
1054 CE	Great Schism between East and West
1517 CE	Beginning of Protestantism (Luther posts his criticism on the church wall)

Jesus Christ

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, in the province of Judea, anytime between 4 and 7 BC. The Christians believe, and majority of the Muslims concur with this belief, that Jesus was born to Mary, his mother, without the agency of a human father. Joseph, the husband of Mary, is supposed to have married her after the conception of Jesus.

Jesus was born among the Israelites and the Gospels trace his ancestry to Prophet David, through his 'father' Joseph. Jesus, therefore, was not only born a Jew but was also raised and educated according to the Judaic tradition.

Early in his life he became a Jewish rabbi, but was opposed by the orthodox Jewish priests for preaching his radical teachings. At the age of thirty, Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, who was then heralding the coming of the Messiah. Jesus' ministry is believed to have started after his baptism. When the Jews raised the objection that how the Messiah can come before the reappearance of Prophet Elijah, Jesus is said to have responded by pointing out that John the Baptist was in fact Elijah.

Jesus' ministry in the Palestine area lasted about three years. During this short period he is said to have performed a number of miracles and healed many a people of their illnesses. Jesus' teachings emphasized the gentler elements of the Mosaic teachings and condemned the rigid, often cruel, application of the Law. His open criticism of the Jewish priests and his rapidly increasing popularity among the masses made him an enemy of both the Jews and the Romans.

As a result, Jesus was first made to appear in front of the Jewish religious authorities who, after questioning him at great length, passed him on to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate. Pilate believed in the innocence of Jesus Christ but, at the demand of the people and the priests, condemned him to crucifixion.

Jesus was put on the cross on Friday. With the start of the Jewish Sabbath at sunset, Jesus' body was released to his followers, after the Roman soldiers had assumed that he had died. For the next two days, Jesus' body was placed in a cave. After this period Jesus was seen alive by a number of his disciples and ate with them. Later on, according to the Christian belief, Jesus was taken up to heaven.

The Ahmadi belief in this regard is that Jesus recovered from his wounds, met and ate with his disciples and left the Palestine area, travelling eastward to Afghanistan and Kashmir.

The Ahmadis believe that Jesus lived to a ripe old age, died in Kashmir and is buried in Sri Nagar.

Development of Christianity after the Crucifixion of Jesus

Although all religions change with time, the changes which occurred in Christianity after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, affected the fundamental beliefs and principles of this religion. The developments in Christianity, from the moment of crucifixion when there were only a handful of devoted followers, to the time when it became a dominant force in much of Middle East and Europe, can be divided into two phases: the Jewish Phase and the Greek Roman Phase.

The Jewish Phase (30-70 CE)

In the beginning, Christianity was totally limited to the Jewish people. The God of Christians had the same attributes as the God of the Israelite people. The early Christians also followed the Jewish traditions of circumcision, offering animal sacrifices and observing the Sabbath. They did not believe that Jesus was the son of God, not at least in the literal sense.

The early Christians also knew that Jesus had survived the ordeal of the crucifixion and, therefore, did not subscribe to the idea of his resurrection. The only difference between these early Christians and the Jews was that the former believed in Jesus as the Messiah and considered faith in God more important than the following of the rigid Mosaic Law or the rituals of the rabbis.

The Greek Roman Phase (70-500 CE)

Initially, the disciples of Jesus Christ preached the new faith only to the Hebrew people. But with the conversion of Saul, a Jewish rabbi, to Christianity, all this changed. He took on the name of Paul and travelled extensively throughout Asia Minor and Eastern Europe, preaching the new religion to the gentiles or non Israelites.

The Greek civilisation was the most advanced at the time and very receptive to the teachings of the new faith. Having no emotional or traditional attachment with the Judaic tenets, the Greek converts quickly gave up many Jewish customs such as animal sacrifice, circumcision and the observing of the Sabbath and the Law.

Then, with accession of Constantine the Great to power in 313 CE, Christianity became the official religion of the Eastern Roman Empire. The establishment of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire brought it great respect and prestige. Armed with this powerful political backing and supported by Greek intellectualism, Christianity started spreading rapidly among the 'barbarian' tribes of northern and western Europe.

As the number of Hebrew-Christians declined and the number and influence of the Greek-Christians increased, many of the fundamental beliefs and practices of this new faith started to undergo significant changes. The concept of God changed from the personal, loving God of the Israelites to an impersonal, supreme deity, palatable to the Greek philosophical rationalism.

Similarly, while the Hebrew-Christians were ingrained in the strong monotheism of the Old Testament and could accept Jesus as the son of God only in a metaphorical sense, the

Greeks, having no such reservations, took the words literally. The Greeks used to believe in many gods and deities and had no intellectual hurdle in transforming a prophet into a god.

It was during this Hellenistic period, therefore, that the divinity of Jesus Christ and his resurrection after crucifixion became popular Christian beliefs. It was also in the same period that the terminology of Trinity came into existence to explain the combination of God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The Essential Beliefs of Christianity

Although there are over 250 sects of the Christians today, some essential beliefs are shared by all of them. These basic beliefs are:

1. Belief in God, Almighty, Creator of all things
2. Belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and the Son of God (whether metaphorically or literally)
3. Belief in Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost
4. Belief in eternal sin (that man is born a sinner)
5. Belief that Jesus Christ came down to earth from heaven for the salvation of mankind
6. Belief that the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) is the only proper guidance for mankind
7. Belief in baptism as a remission of sin
8. Belief that sins can be forgiven through repentance
9. Belief in life after death
10. Belief that those who repent and follow Jesus Christ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven

The Christians not only believe that Jesus Christ is alive and accessible, but also that he is directing the affairs of the Church from his seat in heaven and that one day he will return to this world to establish the Kingdom of God. Except for a small minority of Unitarians and Universalists, all Christians today worship Jesus Christ in one form or another.

Worship in Christianity

Worship in Christianity varies considerably with the sect and the geographic location in the world. Worship may be private and individual or congregational. Private worship generally takes the form of 'silent prayer' invoking God's mercy and help usually through the person of Jesus Christ.

Congregational worship in the churches takes on the form of an elaborate pageant involving priests in their ornate robes and music sung by the choir. The congregation usually joins in the singing of hymns and psalms while the priest may deliver a sermon.

Many Christians keep the fasts of lent, a forty day period before Easter. These fasts are kept in memory of the forty days Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry.

An important Christian rite involves baptism. In the early days of Christianity, baptism marked the initiation into the new faith. The new convert was given a public 'washing' symbolising the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today, some churches still carry out

this rite on the confession of personal faith by believers. Other churches perform baptism on new born children on the promise that they be 'confirmed' in their faith later.

The Teachings of Jesus Christ

To properly understand the teachings of Jesus Christ one has to turn to the Gospels. The only place in the Gospels where an attempt has been made by the narrators to quote Jesus Christ word for word is the account of the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon illustrates the emphasis of Jesus' teachings which was directed towards an unpretentious, honest and altruistic life. Below are quoted some selected verses from this sermon:

- "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness: for their's is the kingdom of heaven...
- "Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you...
- "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven...
- "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.
- "You have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart...
- "You have heard that it has been said: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that you resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also...
- "Give to him that asks of thee, and from him that would borrow, turn not thou away.
- "You have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you...
- "Take heed that you not give your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise you have no reward... Therefore when you do give alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets... But when you do give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does...
- "And when you pray, you shall not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men...
- "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you...
- "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust does corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal...
- "For with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged. And with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

“And why do you notice the speck in your brother’s eye, but consider not the beam in your own eye? First cast out the beam out of your own eye, and then you shall see clearly to cast out the speck out of your brother’s eye...”

“All things you would like others do to you, you do to them...”

“Enter you at the straight gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction. Because straight is the gate and narrow is the way, which leads unto life...”

Comparative Study

Basically, there is little difference between the teachings of Judaism and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Christianity, shorn of its later encrustations, is simply a sect of Judaism a sect which had recognized the Messiah in the person of Jesus Christ.

The teachings of Jesus Christ are clearly of a reformatory nature. He saw many wrongs in the way the Mosaic Law was being interpreted and applied by the people, and tried to correct them.

There is no doubt that some of Jesus’ teachings about love, forgiveness and charity were indeed revolutionary. And it was this aspect of extreme humility that attracted a number of his followers among the Hebrews and, later on, among the Greeks and the Romans. But having a few revolutionary ideas does not make a new religion.

The early Christians retained their Judaic traditions and practices. It was only when the Greeks adopted the teachings of Jesus Christ that they started formalising them within the framework of a new theology... a theology now centred around the person of Jesus Christ himself. History shows very clearly this gradual process of Jesus’ deification from an Israelite prophet to the Son of God.

From the point of view of a Muslim, the present day Christians have grossly misunderstood some basic historic facts. The misunderstandings are caused by:

- (1) Taking literal meaning of the Hebrew phrase, Son of God
- (2) Shrouding the events of crucifixion in great mystery and superstition
- (3) Not understanding the true purpose of prophets
- (4) Considering the New Testament as the authentic and final word of God.

Once all these misunderstandings are removed, the life of Jesus Christ clearly shows that:

- He was an Israelite prophet, in the tradition of many earlier prophets
- His main objective was to reform Judaism; he was sent mainly to the lost people of the House of Israel
- He was put on the cross for a short time but did not die on it
- He was taken down alive from the cross, and recovered from his ordeal
- He ate food with his disciples like mortal beings
- He travelled to the east in search of the Lost Tribes of the Israelites
- He lived in India and Kashmir and eventually died there

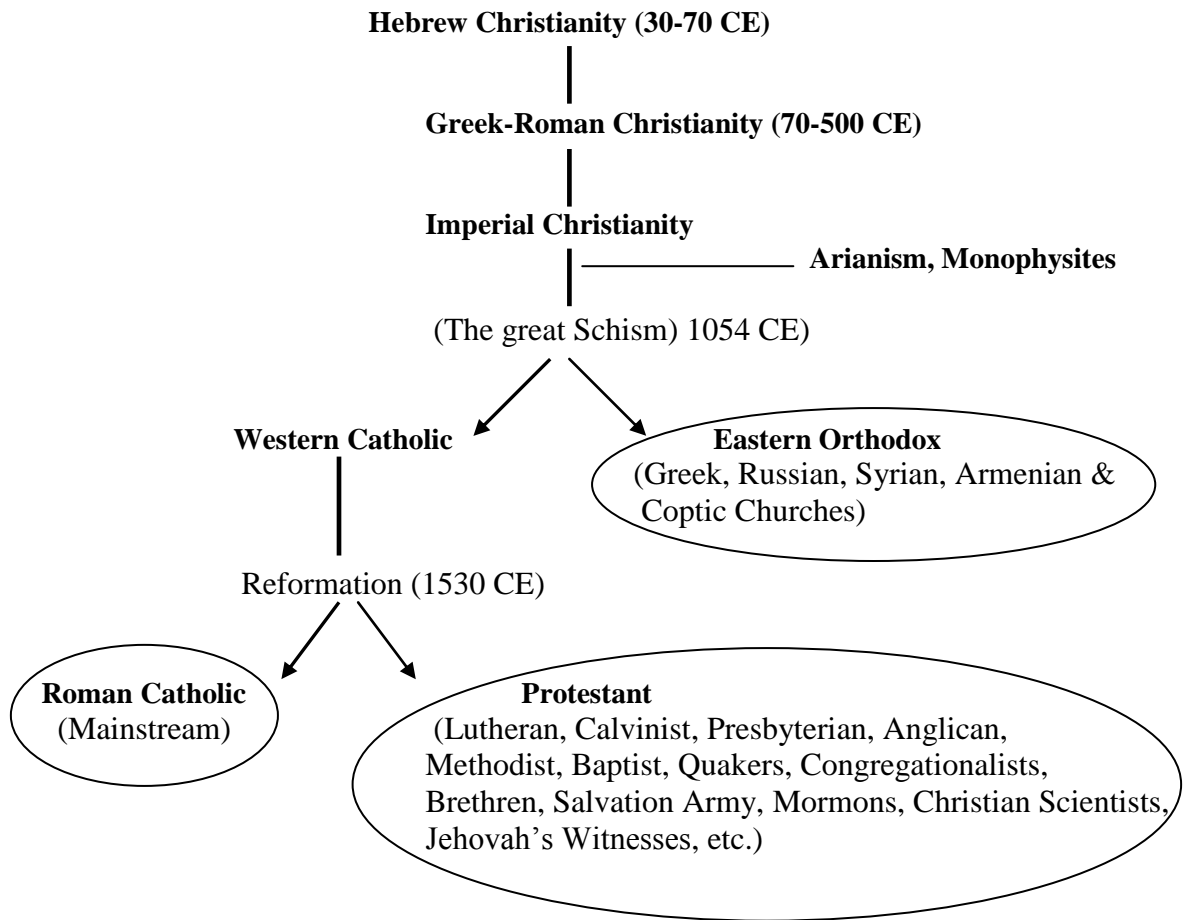
Development of Differences and Sects in Christianity

Like other major religions in the world, Christianity has had its share of sectarian differences and splits over time. Although the scholars have recognised more than three

hundred distinct denominations in Christianity, most of them fall into three broad divisions that came about as a result of two major splits in the Christian Church. The first major split occurred in the eleventh century that resulted in the separation of Eastern Orthodox Church. The second split occurred in the sixteenth century as a result of the great reformation movement in Europe that gave rise to various Protestant denominations. The mainstream of Christianity is known today as the Roman Catholics.

Together, these three broad divisions in Christianity consisting of the Eastern Orthodox, the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Churches make up more than 95 percent of all Christians. To give you an idea of their relative abundance in the world, the Roman Catholics form a clear majority, followed by the Protestants and then the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Chart showing the development of major sects in Christianity



Early Hebrew Christianity (30 – 70 CE)

For approximately forty years after the event of the crucifixion and the departure of Jesus Christ from Palestine, Christianity remained primarily a sect of Judaism. Practically all followers of this movement were the existing Jews who had accepted the person of Jesus son of Mary as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament.

Very gradually, as the new faith spread among the gentiles in Syria, Turkey, and across the Mediterranean Sea, emphasis on traditional Jewish aspects began to be dropped among

the new converts. Thus the first theological differences that arose in Christianity were inadvertently caused by its own rapid growth.

Hellenist-Roman Phase of Christianity (70 – 500 CE)

The Greek-Roman phase of Christianity began when Jewish Christians began to preach the message of Jesus Christ in Antioch which was located in Syria (modern day Turkey). These rapid conversions among the gentiles also took a heavy toll on the theological framework of early Christianity. The Greeks and Romans used to believe in their pantheons of gods and found little psychological difficulty in accepting Jesus Christ as another deity. Thus all references to his son-ship of God began to be taken literally. A similar treatment was accorded to the miracles of Jesus wherein all references to the spiritual awakening and healing of people ended up being taken literally as physical revival of the dead and the physical healing of the sick.

Conflict between Jewish and Hellenistic Phases

For some length of time, Jewish and Greek versions of Christianity dwelt side by side. The Jewish followers of Christianity continued to adhere to their rigid monotheism while the Greek followers of Christianity began to weave Christian elements of history into their own mythology. Since the two interpretations within Christianity were so different, they ultimately began to create a visible dichotomy in theological belief.

It was this persistent battle between the Hebrew Christianity and the Greek version of Christianity that eventually led to the Creed of Nicaea (325 CE) and the Councils of Constantinople (381 CE) and Chalcedon (451 CE). In these Councils, an official version of Christianity had to be put to vote and adopted simply by majority consensus.

The fundamental monotheism of Old Testament teachings could not be easily reconciled with the view that Jesus was the true Son of God. These contradictory principles caused a constant debate within early Christianity and eventually led to its first significant split in the appearance of Arianism.

Arianism

The split took its name after Arius (265-356 CE) who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. This philosophy developed in Alexandria and Antioch in the early part of the 4th century. Having its roots in Gnosticism, the Arianistic philosophy posed the first major challenge to traditional 'Catholic' viewpoints. The Arianists believed that:

- God is Unique and uncreated
- Everything else is created by God
- Christ was an intermediary between God and man but was not eternal
- Although inferior to God, Christ should still be worshipped

The open conflict between Arianism and Catholic views led to the Council of Nicaea where an official Creed was proposed for the first time.

Council of Nicaea (325 CE)

The first Council of Nicaea that was held in 325 CE, proposed the following official creed for Christian beliefs:

- Belief in One Almighty Creator God
- Belief in Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God as being of the same substance
- Belief in the Holy Spirit
- Jesus suffered for the sake of mankind, died and rose again on the third day and then later ascended to Heaven
- Jesus shall return to judge the living and the dead

The Council of Nicaea condemned the teachings of Arianism and upheld that the Son of God was of exactly the same substance as God Himself. The creed of the Council of Nicaea was finally adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE.

Imperial Christianity (Church of the Empire)

For the first three centuries after its origin, Christianity suffered as a religion at the hands of Roman kings. It was finally in 313 CE that Constantine became king and allowed the Christian Church to flourish. Constantine converted to Christianity and from this moment on the affairs of the state and the affairs of the Church continually intertwined.

Christianity continued to spread in the region and a guiding principle of its universality or Catholicity was recognised on the basis that the same faith was taught everywhere. In the later part of the fourth century, paganism was officially outlawed in the Christian lands and Christianity became the state religion.

In the Eastern Roman Empire with its capital in Constantinople, the emperors frequently interfered with the organisation of the Church with the consequence that the Church came increasingly under imperial control. In the west, the imperial authority was broken down and allowed Rome to exercise increasingly greater autonomy and authority. Thus beginning with the fourth century, the Church in the East and the Church in the West took increasingly different directions.

After Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Christian Church was organised around five geographic centres:

- Ancient Rome, as the presiding church
- Constantinople (built by Constantine the great), as the new Rome
- Alexandria, in North Africa
- Antioch in Syria (present day Turkey), and
- Jerusalem

Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)

The Fourth Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church was held at Chalcedon, near Constantinople, in 451 CE. The purpose of the Council was to end all disputes that

concerned the two natures of Jesus Christ. The Council finally decided that Jesus Christ was at once man as well as God. He was co-substantial with God and of one substance with man. Thus he was one being with two natures.

Division in the Imperial Church (soon after 451 CE)

The united churches of the Empire suffered their first division in the fifth century when the Egyptian Coptic Church, the Syrian Church and the Armenian Church rejected the definition of Jesus Christ as formulated in the Council of Chalcedon. The Christians who rejected the Chalcedonian Creed became known as Monophysites since they believed in 'one nature' of Jesus Christ.

The veneration of sacred images caused another debate within the Imperial Church during the hundred-year period from 726 to 843 CE. During this period, a number of Christian kings and bishops advocated very strongly against the increasing use of icons of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and the Saints and called such practice idolatry.

Several Councils were held to decide on the issue of veneration of sacred images. Finally in 787 CE, the Seventh Ecumenical Council in Nicaea decided that it was permissible to use and venerate such images since the veneration was ultimately directed towards God Himself.

The great split of 1054 CE

Beginning with the 9th century, theological as well as political tensions began to develop within the Imperial Church. By this time the Holy Roman Empire had been established in the west and relations between Rome and Constantinople became strained. At the same time the Pope in Rome began to consolidate his authority.

The Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon had formulated that the Holy Spirit, the third element of the Trinity, proceeded from God the Father. The western Roman churches made an important change to this formulation and adopted the belief that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son. This was completely rejected by Constantinople. Many attempts were made to reconcile the two groups but made matters worse when people on both sides were insulted through various deliberate actions.

The schism of 1054 CE led to the formation of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western Catholic Church.

Eastern Orthodox Churches

After the split of 1054 CE, the Eastern Orthodox Churches included the Greek, Russian, Syrian, Armenian and Coptic churches. The Eastern Orthodox Church is also referred to as the Greek Orthodox Church or the Orthodox Catholic Church.

The authority in the Eastern Orthodox Church does not belong to a single individual (such as the Pope in the Western Catholic Church) but to an Ecumenical Council. It is the responsibility of this Ecumenical Council to interpret the Biblical teachings and to administer discipline within the church. Each national church has its own patriarch while the patriarch from Constantinople is 'first among equals'.

With the rise of first Islam in the Middle East and then the domination of Turks during the past five centuries, the patriarchate of Constantinople has gone into decline, thus strengthening the base of the Western Catholic Church. The patriarchate in Constantinople

continues to support the few Greeks who live in Turkey and the millions of Orthodox Christians who live in Western Europe, the Americas and Australia.

An attempt was made in 1960 to unite the Eastern Orthodox and the Western Catholic churches during a meeting of the Pope and the Patriarch of Constantinople. However, too many differences had arisen over the centuries to affect easy reconciliation and union.

Catholicism

Catholicism forms the mainstream of Christianity and is the most abundant group in the world. It is noted for its very hierarchical and rigid structure of the Church and has traditionally maintained beliefs that tend to give the highest possible rank to Jesus Christ.

Some fundamental doctrines of the Catholics are listed below:

- Belief in God, as Creator, Preserver, Nourisher and Planner
- There are three aspects of the One God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. There is always one God with three different ways of action.
- God was incarnated into man when he begat His son, Jesus Christ. Thus Jesus was both God and man at the same time.
- The purpose of sending Jesus to the world was to redeem mankind of Eternal Sin. This was achieved when Jesus gave up his life for the sins of mankind.
- Church is the visible body of Jesus Christ that is upheld by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Catholic Church is the best interpreter of the word of God.
- The Catholic Church must be hierarchically structured with the college of bishops as its ruling group. The Pope, who is called the Bishop of Rome, acts as the prime bishop (this is called papal primacy).
- The Catholics pray to the dead saints (who are considered alive) to intercede for them and pray to God for them.
- Mary is considered as the mother of God rather than simply as the mother of Jesus, and is worshipped. Her own conception is considered 'Immaculate'—meaning that it was free of original sin. It is also believed that Mary, too, was taken up into Heaven with her body and soul (doctrine of Assumption).
- The purgatory to the Catholics is not quite the Hell of Islam. It is in fact regarded as a vestibule of Heaven. The Catholics pray to God that people in purgatory be forgiven and taken into Heaven.
- Catholic morality—like morality in other Christian sects—is largely based on the teachings of the Old Testament.
- Faith in Jesus Christ is one of the fundamental principles of Catholicism. This is expressed by the slogan, "Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life".

The important sacraments or modes of worship of the Catholics include:

- The Sacrament of the Eucharist or the Mass which is intended to re-enact the Last Supper of Jesus Christ
- The daily prayers of the Church
- Baptism is normally performed within a few months of the child's birth

- Confirmation occurs at an older age when the believer declares his faith and becomes a member of the Church
- Penance that is meant to reconcile the Catholic after he has sinned
- Holy Orders allows a man to perform the Mass for the believing Catholics

The one most important difference between the Catholics and the Protestants is the fact that the Catholics hold the Church—with all its hierarchy and authority—as the supreme authority on earth. In contrast, the Protestants believe that the Bible is the ultimate authority and that one does not really need a central body such as a church to interpret it.

Protestantism

Protestantism is the youngest of the Christian divisions, being only 400 years old. It began in the 16th century as a reform movement within Catholicism. The broad reformation of the 16th century was itself based on many individual movements, four of which played a key role in the origin of Protestantism. These four individual movements are referred to as:

- Lutheran
- Calvinist (Presbyterian)
- Anglican (Church of England, Methodism, Salvation Army)
- Radicals (Baptist, Quakers, Brethren, Congregational, Mormons, Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witness, etc.)

Role of Martin Luther

The reform movement was initiated by Martin Luther (1483-1546) who was a professor in the German town of Wittenberg. He revolted against the sale of indulgences whereby people could purchase certificates that would release them or their loved ones from purgatory. In 1517, Martin Luther nailed to the door of the church ninety-five objections against indulgences, to be used for scholarly discussions. When the Catholic Church refused to change its practice and forced Martin Luther to take down his objections, he finally denied the ultimate authority of Rome in favour of that of the Scriptures. Over the next several years, he was ex-communicated by the Catholic Church and had to hide for his own safety.

Role of Ulrich Zwingli

In the meantime, Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) was independently arriving at similar conclusions in Switzerland that convinced him that Bible alone was the authority for the Christians. Since Switzerland was relatively free of the influence of Rome, Zwingli's ideas spread with greater freedom.

Role of John Calvin

John Calvin (1509-1564) was born among the second generation of Protestants. He produced the first systematic account of Protestant theology under the title of Institutes of the Christian Religion (1536 CE). John Calvin settled down in Geneva and made this place into

an important centre for the spread of his teachings. In English speaking countries, Calvinism is called Presbyterianism and in England its followers were known as Puritans because they abstained from such pleasures as dancing, music, drama, fancy clothing, etc. When England and Scotland united in 1707, one condition of this union was that the Church of Scotland would be Presbyterian and that the king of England and Scotland becomes a Presbyterian on crossing the border.

General Protestant Beliefs

The central belief of Protestantism is based on the acceptance that salvation is achieved through the Grace of God rather than earned through one's own efforts—as believed by the Catholics. According to Martin Luther, good works that are done either to obtain reward or out of fear of punishment, cannot earn salvation. Good works must flow simply out of the goodness of the person and not be driven through some ulterior motive. Furthermore, good works did not simply constitute religious worship but included acts of love towards other people. To the Protestants, faith is not simply the act of believing something but an act of loving and placing of trust in God for His eventual forgiveness.

The second most important belief of the Protestants is related to the ultimate authority of the Bible as opposed to that of the Church or the Pope as practised by the Catholics. It was for the sake of making Bible knowledge available to all people in the society that a mass effort was made to translate it from Latin into the local European languages. To give ultimate authority to the Bible, the Protestants maintained that it was completely free of any error and was the inspired word of God.

As a further step to make Bible understandable by the common people, Protestants developed interpretations and commentaries of the Scriptures to clarify many doctrinal issues. Thus the Lutherans produced the Book of Concord (1580), Anglicans produced the Thirty-nine Articles (1571), and Calvinists produced the Westminster Catechism (1648). Since the original purpose of Protestantism was to move away from the influence of a single authority, many radical groups were weary of these centralised interpretations and continued to favour individual interpretations of the Bible.

Another belief of the reform movement was the priesthood of all believers as opposed to the recognition of designated clergy. Thus, no professional clergy is required in Protestantism to administer various religious rites and sacraments and to mediate salvation. In practice, however, most Protestant churches would have some professional clergy but this is more for the sake of convenience rather than a necessity. Since all ordinary persons could act as the clergy in any situation, no special standards were required of the professional clergy who were clearly permitted to marry.

Other points on which the Protestants objected included the worshipping of the saints, worshipping of Virgin Mary, saying prayers for the dead, and the general powers of the priests in the Catholic Church.

The Protestants have reduced the seven sacraments of the Catholics and the Eastern Orthodox Church to only two. These include baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Protestant services and worship are carried out in the local language of the people. The sermon is considered very important in most Protestant services and takes up most of the time in the more radical churches.

Mainstream Protestantism—consisting of Lutheran, Calvinist and Anglican churches—practises infant baptism that symbolises the intention to have everyone in the society join the church.

Radical Protestant denominations—such as Baptists, Quakers, Moravians, Mennonite, Holiness, and Pentecostals—practise adult baptism that symbolises the joining of redeemed and practising Christians.

ARABIC and URDU TERMS

Terms	Meaning
<i>Abu</i>	Father of
<i>Adhan</i>	Call to formal Prayer
<i>'Amal</i>	Action, deed
<i>Ansar</i>	Helpers
<i>Arzi</i>	Temporary
<i>Ayat</i>	Verse of the Holy Qur'an (literally means: sign)
<i>Bahishti Maqbarah</i>	Graveyard for the inmates of Paradise
<i>Bai'at</i>	Oath of allegiance
<i>Bani, Banu</i>	Children [Bani Isra'il: Children of Israel or Israelites]
<i>BC</i>	Before Christ
<i>Bin</i>	Son of
<i>Bint</i>	Daughter of
<i>CE</i>	Christian Era
<i>Dhul</i>	Owner of
<i>Du'a</i>	Informal (silent) prayer
<i>Fiqh</i>	Religious law; jurisprudence
<i>Firqa</i>	Sect
<i>Hadhrat</i>	Presence, dignity, majesty, highness; Title of respect used for address great ones
<i>Hadith</i>	Saying, usually that of the Prophet Muhammad ^{pbuh}
<i>Hajj</i>	Pilgrimage
<i>Hijab</i>	Veil, cover, curtain. A piece of cloth worn by Muslim ladies to cover their face or head.
<i>Hijra</i>	Migration; referred to Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE.
<i>Ibn</i>	Son of
<i>Ijtihad</i>	Exercise of judgment
<i>Imam</i>	Leader
<i>Iman</i>	Faith, belief
<i>Injil</i>	Gospels of Jesus Christ
<i>Ishtihar</i>	Announcement
<i>Isra'</i>	Night Journey, usually referred to the Prophet's spiritual journey to Jerusalem
<i>Jadid</i>	New
<i>Jalsa</i>	Gathering, Convention, Conference
<i>Jalsa Salana</i>	Annual Gathering, Annual Convention
<i>Jama'at</i>	Group, party
<i>Jannat-ul Baqi'</i>	A graveyard in Medina
<i>Jihad</i>	Striving
<i>Jizya</i>	Poll tax, usually levied on the non-Muslims to give them protection
<i>Ka'ba</i>	The cube-shaped building in the centre of the Sacred Mosque towards which the Muslims face during their formal Prayers
<i>Kaiser</i>	The King of the Byzantine Empire Eastern Roman Empire); Heraclius
<i>Kalima</i>	Declaration of Faith
<i>Khalifa</i>	Caliph, successor, vicegerent
<i>Khalifa-tul Masih</i>	Successor of the Messiah
<i>Khatam-an Nibiyyin</i>	Seal of the Prophets
<i>Khilafat</i>	Caliphate, successorship
<i>Khutba</i>	Sermon
<i>Kisra</i>	The King of the Sassanid Empire of Iran; Khusrow
<i>Kufr</i>	Disbelief, denying
<i>Kuniya</i>	A teknonym for Arabic names where the name of the adult is derived from his or her eldest child. An additional word <i>abu</i> or <i>umm</i> is used such as: Abu Bakr (the father of

	Bakr) or Umm Salma (the mother of Salma)
<i>Mahalla</i>	Quarter, street, lane
<i>Mahdi</i>	Guided one
<i>Majlis</i>	Assembly, congregation, council
<i>Majlis Shura</i>	Consultative or advisory committee
<i>Malak</i>	Angel
<i>Mala'ika (pl.)</i>	Angels
<i>Masih</i>	Messiah
<i>Masjid al Aqsa</i>	The Distant Mosque (The Temple of Solomon)
<i>Masjid al Haram</i>	The Sacred Mosque
<i>Maulwi</i>	A learned man, a Muslim priest
<i>Messiah</i>	Christ
<i>Mi'raj</i>	Ascent; referred to the Prophet's spiritual ascent to Heaven
<i>Muezzin</i>	One who calls people to Prayer; one who gives the <i>adhan</i>
<i>Muhajirin</i>	Emigrants; usually used for Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina
<i>Mujaddid</i>	One who renews or renovates
<i>Mullah</i>	A Muslim teacher or interpreter of the religious law; title of respect for a learned man
<i>Muqatta'at</i>	Abbreviations; Cryptic letters at the head of some Surahs
<i>Mushawarat</i>	Consultation
<i>Mushrikin</i>	People who ascribe partners with God; pagans
<i>Nabi</i>	Prophet
<i>Nabuwwat</i>	Prophethood
<i>Nafl</i>	Non-obligatory Prayer
<i>Najashi</i>	Negus; title of the monarchs of ancient Abyssinia
<i>Qibla</i>	Literally means direction; the direction to which Muslims turn for formal Prayers
<i>Qur'an</i>	That which is read or recited. The Muslim Holy Book.
<i>Rak'at</i>	A set of postures during formal Prayer that include: standing, genuflection, sitting & prostration
<i>Rasul</i>	Messenger
<i>Sadaqa</i>	Informally given charity
<i>Sahih</i>	Authentic
<i>Sajdah</i>	Prostration
<i>Salat</i>	Ritual Prayer
<i>Saum</i>	Fast
<i>Shaheed</i>	Martyr
<i>Shari'a</i>	Religious or divine law; Islamic jurisprudence
<i>Shi'a</i>	Party, group; used commonly for the Party of 'Ali
<i>Shirk</i>	The act of ascribing partners with God
<i>Suhuf</i>	Scriptures
<i>Sunnah</i>	Tradition of the Prophet Muhammad ^{pbuh}
<i>Surah</i>	Chapter of the Holy Qur'an
<i>Tafsir</i>	Commentary, usually of the Holy Qur'an
<i>Tahajjud</i>	Non-obligatory night Prayer
<i>Tahrik</i>	Movement, encouragement
<i>Taqdir</i>	The Decree of God
<i>Tasmia</i>	Invocation, at the beginning of each Surah
<i>Taurat</i>	Torah of Moses
<i>Umm</i>	Mother of
<i>'Umrah</i>	Lesser or Informal Pilgrimage in which some rites of Pilgrimage are left out
<i>Wahiy</i>	Revelation
<i>Waqf</i>	Trust, endowment
<i>Wasiyyat</i>	Will, bequest
<i>Wudhu</i>	Ritual ablution
<i>Zabur</i>	Psalms of David
<i>Zakat</i>	Prescribed Alms

Suggestions for Further Reading

Religion of Islam

Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam: *Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*
Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam: *The Essence of Islam* (Extracts from his writings)
Ahmad, Waheed: *Invitation to Islam*
Ali, Ameer: *The Spirit of Islam*
Ali, Muhammad: *The Religion of Islam*
Hammudah Abdalatai: *Islam in Focus*
Hitti, P. K.: *Islam, A Way of Life*
Hodgson, M.: *The Venture of Islam*
Khan, Muhammad Zafrulla: *Islam, Its Meaning For Modern Man*
Khan, Muhammad Zafrulla: *Islamic Worship*
Nasr, S.H.: *Ideals and Realities of Islam*
Williams, J.A.: *Themes of Islamic Civilization*

Islam and Related Subjects

Al-Hujweri, 'Ali: *Kashfal Mahjub* (English translation by R.A. Nicholson)
Arnold, T.W.: *The Preaching of Islam*
Attar, Fariduddin: *Tadhkirat al-Auliya* (English translation by A.J. Arberry)
Boisard, Marcel A.: *Humanism in Islam*
Danner, Abdal Jabbar: *The Islamic Tradition—An Introduction*
Fadiman, J. & Frager, Robert: *Essential Sufism*
Khan, M. Zafrulla: *Islam and Human Rights*
Nasr, Seyyed Hossein: *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*
Nicholson, R.A.: *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*
Shah, Idries: *The Sufis*
Sharif, M.M.: *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, volumes 1&2

The Holy Quran

Ahmad, M. Bashiruddin Mahmud: *Introduction to the Study of the Holy Qur'an*
Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam: *Commentary on Surah Fatihah*
Ahmad, Waheed: *Teachings of the Holy Qur'an—Selected Subjects and Themes*
Watt, W. Montgomery: *Bell's introduction to the Quran*
Katircioglu, M.M.: *The Wisdom of the Quran*
Al-Ghazali: *The Jewels of the Quran*
Irving, T.B.: *The Quran, Basic Teachings*

Hadith Literature

Sahih Bukhari
Sahih Muslim
Jami' Tirmidhi
Sunan Abu Dawud
Sunan ibn Maja
Sunan Nasa'i
Al Muwatta by Imam Malik
Mishkat ul Masabih

Biographies of the Prophet Muhammad^{pbuh}

- Ahmad, M. Bashiruddin Mahmud: *Muhammad the Liberator of Women*
Ahmad, M. Bashiruddin Mahmud: *The Life Muhammad*
Ali, Muhammad: *Muhammad the Prophet*
Azzam, A.R.: *The Eternal Message of Muhammad*
Balyuzi, H.M.: *Muhammad and the Course of Islam*
Bauben, Jabal Muhammad: *Image of the Prophet Muhammad in the West*
Fida Husain: *Wives of the Prophet*
Guillaume, A.: *The Life of Muhammad* (a translation of Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*)
Hakim, Khalifa Abdul: *The Prophet and his Message*
Haykal, M. Husayn: *The Life of Muhammad*
Khan, M. Zafrulla: *Muhammad, Seal of the Prophets*
Lings, Martin: *Muhammad, His life Based on the Earliest Sources*
Nu'mani, Shibli: *Seerat un Nabi*
Watt, W.M.: *Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman*

Islamic History

- Ahmad, Jamil: *Hundred Great Muslims*
Ahmed, Gulzar: *The Battles of the Prophet of Allah*
Ali, Amir: *A Short History of the Saracens*
Ali, K.: *A Study of Islamic History*
Donner, F.M.: *The Early Islamic Conquests*
Faqih, Irfan: *Glimpses of Islamic History*
Gibb, H.A.R.: *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*
Hitti, P.K.: *History of the Arabs*
Husain, Athar: *The Glorious Caliphate*
Hussain, Iqbal S.: *Islam and Western Civilization*
Imamuddin, S.M.: *A Political History of Muslim Spain*
Lewis, B.: *The Arabs in History*
Murata, S. & Chittick, W.C.: *The Vision of Islam*
Najib-Abadi, Akber Shah: *History of Islam (Tarikh Islam—in Urdu)*
Nasr, Seyyed Hossein: *Science and Civilization in Islam*
Savory, R.M. (Edit.): *Islamic Civilisation*

Ahmadiyyat

- Ahmad, M. Bashiruddin Mahmud: *Ahmadiyyat, or the True Islam*
Ahmad, M. Bashiruddin Mahmud: *Invitation to Ahmadiyyat*
Ahmad, M. Bashiruddin Mahmud: *Truth About the Split*
Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam: *Tadhkira*
Dard, A.R.: *Life of Ahmad* (Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement) Part 1
Gualtieri, Antonio R.: *Conscience and Coercion*
Gualtieri, Antonio R.: *The Ahmadis—Community, Gender, and Politics in a Muslim Society*
Khan, M. Zafrulla: *Ahmadiyyat, The Renaissance of Islam*
Khan, M. Zafrulla: *Hazrat Maulvi Nuruddin*
Lawan, Spencer: *Ahmadiyyat*

Comparative Religions

- General: Gaer, Joseph: *What the Great Religions Believe*
Hinnels, J.R. (Edit.): *A Handbook of Living Religions*
Smart, N. & Hecht, R.D. (Edit.): *Sacred texts of the World*

Wolcott, L.: *Religions Around the World*
Heydt, H.J.: *A Comparison of World Religions*
Hall, T.W.: *Introduction to the Study of Religion*
Bouquet, A.C.: *Comparative Religion*
Oxtoby, William G.: *World Religions*, volumes 1 & 2
Parrinder, G.: *World Religions*

- Buddhism: Gard, R.A.: *Buddhism*
Carrithers, M.: *The Buddha*
- Christianity: Ahmad, Mirza Tahir: *Christianity—A Journey from Facts to Fiction*
Barrett, Charles D.: *Understanding the Christian Faith*
Berna, Kurt: *Christ did not Perish on the Cross*
Bernier, Francois: *Travels in the Mogul Empire*
Deardorff, James W.: *Jesus in India—A re-examination of Jesus' Asian Traditions*
Edmunds, A.J.: *Buddhist and Christian Gospels*
Faber-Kaiser, A.: *Jesus Died in Kashmir*
Ahmad, Mirza Ghulam: *Jesus In India*
Shams, J.D.: *Where did Jesus Die*
Ahmad, Khawja Nazir: *Jesus in Heaven on Earth*
Kersten, Holger: *Jesus Lived in India*
Hassnain, Fida: *A Search for the Historical Jesus*
Kashmiri, Aziz: *Christ in Kashmir*
Kehimkar, Haeem Samuel: *The History of the Bene Israel of India*
Notovitch, Nicolas: *The Unknown Life of Christ*
Pappas, Paul C.: *Jesus' Tomb in India—The Debate on his Death and Resurrection*
Potter, Rev. Charles Francis: *The Lost Years of Jesus Revealed*
Prophet, Elizabeth Claire: *The Lost Years of Jesus*
Streeter, B.H.: *The Buddha and the Christ*
Thiering, Barbara: *Jesus the Man*
Thundy, Zacharias P.: *Buddha and Christ—Nativity Stories and Indian Traditions*
- Judaism: Hertzberg, A.: *Judaism*
Donnitz, M.: *Judaism*
Epstein, I.: *Judaism*
Wood, L.J.: *The Prophets of Israel*
Shulvass, M.A.: *The History of the Jewish people*
Zubeiri, M.H.: *Abraham, His Life and Times*
- Hinduism: Renou, L.: *Hinduism*
Crompton, Y.: *Hinduism*
Sen, K.M.: *Hinduism*
The Bhagavad Geeta (various English translations)
- Sikhism: Mansukhani, G.S.: *Introduction to Sikhism*
- Zoroastrianism: Hinnells, J.H.: *Zoroastrianism and the Parsis*
Mehta, P.D.: *Zarathustra*