

Vitals of Faith

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The Judgement of Reason

We see that hundreds of factories in big cities are operating with the power of electricity. Railways and trams are running. At dash thousands of bulbs light up instantly. Fans revolve in every borne during the hot weather. These happenings of daily life do not excite feelings of wonder or amazement in us nor do we argue among ourselves as to why those things operate or light up. Why is it so ? It is because we can readily see the wires which transmit power to these bulbs. We know too something about the Power Station which supplies electricity through these wires. We are aware that this Power Station is operated by people. The engineer who supervises the working of dais staff is also familiar to us. The engineer, we know, is trained in the science of producing electricity. He has several types of machines at his disposal. He operates these machines and produces that power whose, splendor is displayed in the effulgence of the electric light, the revolving of fans, in the movement of railways and trams and in the running of mills and factories.

Hence the reason why we do not dispute the existence of electricity when we see it displayed before us is that the entire chain from the production to the use of electricity is part of our awareness and observation. Suppose these electric lights were on, the fans revolved as usual, the railways and trams were running, the cables which transmit the power of electricity to them were hidden from our view. Suppose the Power Station was also beyond the orbit of our comprehension. Suppose we were completely unaware of those who work in the Power House, nor did we know that there was an engineer who operated this Power House by means of his skill and specialized knowledge. Would then we take the splendors of electricity for granted? Would we not argue among ourselves about the sources and nature of these splendors? There is no doubt that your answer to these questions will be 'no'. Why? It is because when the causes of manifest things are hidden, when the sources of apparent phenomenon are mysterious, it is quite natural that the hearts should be filled with wonder and curiosity, minds should turn to the exploration of this hidden mystery and that people should enter into speculation and offer various explanations about the unknown phenomenon.

The First Group-The Speculators and the Skeptics

Let us proceed with the discussion on the premises of the same supposition. Let us agree that our supposition is a fact and that the state of the world is as we have supposed. Millions of electric lights are on. Millions of electric fans are revolving. The trains are running The factories are operating; and we have no means of knowing as to what power is working behind them and what is the source of this power? People are aghast with wonder at such splendors. Every man is exercising his wit to discover the causes of these wondrous displays. Some one says these things are luminous or are moving by themselves. There is no extraneous power which is supplying light or dynamic force to them from outside. Some one says that the mass with which these things are made produces light and the moving force in them. Some one avers that there are some gods appointed to rule over the affairs of this material world. One of these gods gives light to the bulbs ; another moves the trains and trains; yet another god revolves the fans and it is a god, too, who operates the factories and mills. There is a group of people who have exhausted their faculty of thinking and are at wits' end. In a hopeless state of mind they say that their minds cannot comprehend the secret of this magic. They know only that which they see or perceive with their senses. More than this, they are unable to comprehend. And they can neither affirm nor refute what is beyond the orbit of their comprehension. All these, groups are locked in disputation, but none of them commands knowledge other than their own suppositions, calculations or personal impressions to support their respective viewpoints or to refute the outlook of their adversaries.

The Second Group-Bearers of Knowledge

At the time when confusion rages; in the world, a man appears and say, "Brothers, I possess the avenues of real knowledge which are not familiar to you. Through these means it has been intimated to me that these electric bulbs, fans, trains, factories and mills have secret transmission lines which you cannot perceive. A big Power House supplies force which moves these machines and produces light. This Power House is equipped with gigantic machines which are operated by numberless personnel. These personnel work in subordination to a chief engineer. It is the same engineer whose knowledge and skill has created this entire system. The whole process is being carried out under the direction and supervision of this engineer.

This person proclaims his knowledge with full vigor. People say that his claims are unfounded. All groups join forces to oppose him. They pronounce him as a mad man. They beat him, persecute him, expel him from his home. Yet the man remains true to his aims in spite of all spiritual and physical tortures. He does not amend or alter his word to the slightest degree in the face of any threat or temptation. No hardship can weaken his resolve. Every word spoken by him reveals his firm conviction in the truth of his claims. A second man follows him and he, too, proclaims the same word in the same manner. A third, fourth and fifth man succeeds and repeats the claims of his forerunners. A series of knowledge-bearers follows by rapid succession. The number of these men swells to hundreds and thousands and even more and all proclaim the same word in the same manner. Differences in time and place or circumstances effect no variation in their claim. All of them aver, "We possess means of knowledge with which common people are not familiar". The people declare that every one of them is mad. They are subjected to torture and violent persecution. They are oppressed in every way and forced to recant from their claim. But all of them remain true to their words and no worldly power can force them to relent. Besides this tenacity of purpose and steadfastness the main virtues of these persons are that none of them is a liar or a thief, or a perfidious, wicked, tyrannical or a corrupt person. Even their enemies and adversaries acknowledge their virtues. All of them bear pure morals; they are extremely pious in character and they excel in good manners among other members of their species. There is no trait of insanity in their personalities. On the contrary, they present such teachings and frame such edicts for the refinement of morals, purification of the soul and for the reformation of worldly matters that it is impossible to produce the like of them and what's more, eminent scholars and sages spend whole life spans in trying to comprehend the subtle points of their teachings.

In Time Court of Reason

On one side are the refuters, divided among themselves ; on the other are the plaintiffs who are unanimous in their claim. Their cause is brought before the court of reason. Reason, as judge, is duty-bound to understand its position clearly. Next it should grasp the viewpoints of the two parties in the case. Finally, it should compare the two positions and adjudicate in favor of one or the other party. The position of the judge himself is such that he has no means of ascertaining the fact of the matter.. He possesses no knowledge of the reality. He has before him only the statements of the

contending parties,, their arguments, their personal circumstances and the external evidence and observations. He has to subject this material to a careful scrutiny and then judge as to which side is probably right. The judge's ruling cannot decide beyond what is probable, because the mass of evidence contained in the docket makes it difficult for him to be absolutely certain about the fact of the matter. The Judge can do no more than prefer the cause of one party to the cause of another, but he cannot affirm or refute the cause of any party with absolute certainty and exactitude.

The Refuters hold the following Position

They hold divergent views about reality and lack unanimity on almost every point. Members of the same group are often at variance with each other.

They confess that they possess no means of knowledge other than that which the other people possess. Each group among them claims no more than that its suppositions are weightier than the conjectures of other groups. All, however, admit that their claims are based on mere conjectures.

Their conviction, faith and belief in their suppositions is not inflexible, Instances of their shifting beliefs can be cited out of number.

It has been noticed several times that only yesterday a person from among these people held forth a theory with full conviction but denounced this same theory the next day and propounded an entirely new idea. Their views are often liable to change with advancement in age, wisdom, knowledge and experience.

They rebut the claim of the plaintiffs on the sole plea that the latter have advanced no certain .proof of the genuineness of their case. They argue that they have not shown to us those mysterious cables which supply power to the electric bulbs and fans. They have yet to prove the existence of the Power Station through the test of experience and observation. They have not taken us around the Power Station, nor have they shown us its machines and implements. They have never provided us with an occasion to meet the personnel of the Power Station, nor indeed have they introduced us face to face with the engineer who runs this station. How then can we believe that their assertions are facts?

The Position of the Plaintiffs is as follows

They are unanimous in their assertion. They are in perfect agreement in regard to the fundamentals of their claims.

There is not a single instance of any one of them having altered his statement even to the slightest degree. From the time of laying forth his claim till the end of his life, every one of them has held fast to one and the same truth.

Their characters are pure and beyond reproach. There is no trait of falsehood,

deception, artifice or treachery in their personalities. There is absolutely no reason why these people who are otherwise so truthful and fair-minded in life should unanimously speak falsehood in this particular case.

There is no evidence that self-interest is their motive in putting forth this claim. On the contrary, there is no denying the fact that several of them have endured severe hardship for the sake of this cause. They suffered physical torture, were incarcerated, beaten up, exiled and some of them were even assassinated. Some were, even cut up with the blade of the saw-mill. Earning few exceptions, none of them lead a prosperous or an easy life. Hence they cannot be accused of having any personal axe to grind. The fact that they remained true to their cause furnishes positive proof that they had an unflinching faith in the truth of their case. So unshakeable was their belief that threat to life or limb could not deter them from holding fast to their convictions.

There is no evidence that any of them was insane or feeble in intellect. They were all exceptionally wise and sensible in dealing with the problems of life. Their adversaries often vouched for their wisdom. How can then we conclude that in this particular case, they all were afflicted with insanity? And what sort of case was it? It was a case which had become a matter of life and death for them. It was a cause which pitted them against the whole world. They had struggled for years against the combined forces of the world for this cause. It was a cause which was the essence of their whole rational teaching (and even their detractors admitted the rationality of their case).

They never pronounced, "we can introduce you to the Engineer or His functionaries face to face or that we can show you around the hidden factory or otherwise we can prove our claim through experience or observation". They themselves attribute their knowledge to some 'Invisible Power' and invite the people to rely upon their word and admit their evidence.

The Verdict of the Court of Reason

Having considered the respective positions of the two parties, the Court of Reason delivers its verdict. The Court observes that both parties have beheld the same suns and phenomenon and have endeavored to explore their internal causes and reasons. Prima facie the viewpoints of both parties are of a like nature inasmuch as none of them is completely devoid of reason; in other words, according to reason, it cannot be said that the truth of any of these viewpoints is questionable or improbable. Secondly, experience or observation cannot determine the validity of any one of these claims. No group from among the first party can furnish scientific evidence of its theories which may convince every one of the veracity of its claims; nor can the second party furnish any such proof; it does not even claim to do that. On further study and consideration some points emerge on the basis of which the Court has determined that the claim of the second party is to be preferred vis-a-vis the representation of the first group.

These points are:

First : No other claim has been pressed unanimously, vigorously and with such deep conviction by so large a number of wise, pious and truthful men.

Secondly, the fact that so large a body of men bearing good character and belonging to different periods and places unanimously declared that they had an uncommon means of receiving true knowledge through which they ascertained the internal causes of the outer phenomenon forces on the conclusion that their claim is justified-significantly, there is no variation in their statements about their knowledge. The knowledge which they have propounded is not devoid of reason, nor is it contrary to the principles of reason that some persons should be endowed with certain extraordinary powers which are denied to ordinary men.

Thirdly, upon considerations of the external phenomenon it seems probable that the case of the second party is genuine. The electric bulbs, fans, trains and factories are not luminous or moving by themselves, for if it were so, their illumination or locomotion would have been automatic, which, we know, is not the case. Their light or movement is not due to the natural property of the material they are made of, because when they are not luminous or operating their physical material remains the same. It would be incorrect to say that they operate under the control of different forces, because often times when the light goes out the fans also stop revolving, the tram cars come to a stand-still and the factories grind to a halt. Hence all theories interpreting the external phenomenon propounded by the first group are irrational and far-fetched. The truth of the matter is that there is one Power behind all these phenomena and this Power is being wielded by an Omnipotent and Omniscient Being who displays this Power through various phenomena under an organized and well-laid system. As regards the assertion of the doubters that, 'we do not understand this and we can neither affirm nor refute what is beyond our comprehension', the Juror (reason) rules that this argument is fallacious. The existence of a phenomenon does not depend on whether the listeners are able to understand it or not. Authentic and permanent evidence is enough to admit the validity of a case. If some reliable men came to us and report that they have observed some men in the land of the West flying in the air on vehicles made of steel and that they, while sitting in London, have listened to songs broadcast from America, we shall have to consider the following questions before we credit their statements:

Are these men liars or jesters? Do they have any personal motive in making such statements? Are they sane? If it is proved that they are not liars, nor jesters, nor mad, neither have they any selfish motive in making these statements, and if we observe further if that the same statements are being made in right earnest, without the slightest variation, by a large body of truthful and wise men, we shall surely give these statements full credit, irrespective of our inability to comprehend the phenomenon of men flying in the air in vehicles of steel or listening to songs broadcast from a distance of thousands of miles without any which has been revealed by truthful men not on the

basis of conjecture but through knowledge and intuition".

The Prophet of Islam

If one were to close one's eyes and imagine one-self in the world of 1400 years ago, one would find that it was a world completely different from ours, having not even the least semblance with the rough and tumble that we find around ourselves. How few and far between were the opportunities for the exchange of ideas ! How limited and undeveloped were the means of communications! How little and meager was man's knowledge! How narrow was his outlook ! How engrossed he was in superstition and wild ideas.

Darkness held the sway. There was only a faint glimmer of learning which could hardly illumine the horizon of human knowledge. Neither was there wireless nor telephone, neither television nor cinematograph. Railways and motor-cars and airplanes were unknown. I-land written books or copyists alone supplied whatever scanty literary material was there to be transmitted from generation to generation. Education was a luxury, meant only for the most fortunate ; and educational institutions there hardly existed.

The store of human knowledge was scanty, man's outlook was narrow, and his ideas of men and things were confined to his limited surroundings. Even a scholar of that age lacked in certain respects the knowledge possessed by a lay-man of today, and the most cultured person was less refined than a man in the street of the present time.

Indeed, humanity was steeped in ignorance and superstition. Whatever light of learning there was, seemed to be fighting a losing battle against the darkness prevailing all around. What are considered to be matters of common knowledge today could hardly be acquired in those days even after years of calculated thought and patient research. People used to, undertake hazardous journeys and spend a whole lifetime struggling to acquire that modest information which is everybody's heritage in the present age of learning. Things which are classed as `myth' and `superstition' today were the unquestionable truths of truths of that age. Acts which we now regard as heinous and barbarous were then the order of the day. Methods which appear obnoxious to our moral sense today constituted the very sense of morality, and one could hardly even imagine in those days that there could be. a different way of life. Incredulity has assumed such mighty proportions and had become so wide-spread that people refused to consider anything as lofty and sublime unless it appeared in the garb of the supernatural, the extraordinary, the uncanny. They had developed such complex that they could never imagine a human being to possess a pure and uncorrupted soul or a true saint to be a human being.

Arabia-Tide Abyss of Darkness

In that benighted era, there was a territory -- Arabia--where darkness lay heaviest and thickest. 'The neighboring countries of Persia, Byzantine and Egypt possessed a glimmer of civilization a faint-light of learning. Put Arabia had received no share from their cultural heritage. It stood isolated, cut off by vast oceans of sand. Arab traders, plodding at distances which took them months, carried their wares to and from these countries but they could hardly acquire, any grain of knowledge on their journey. In their own country, they did not have a single educational institution or library. None seemed to be interested in the cultivation and advancement of knowledge. The few who were literate were not educated enough to have anything to do with the existing arts and sciences. They did possess -a highly-developed language capable of expressing the finest shades of human thought in a remarkable manner. They also possessed a literary taste of a high order. But the study of the remnants of their literature reveals how limited was their knowledge, how low was their level of culture and civilization, how saturated were their minds with superstitions, how barbarous and ferocious thoughts and customs, and how uncouth and degraded were their moral standards and conceptions.

It was a country without a government. Every tribe claimed sovereignty and considered itself to be an independent unit. There was no law except the law of the jungle. Loot, arson and murder of innocent and weak people had become the order of the day. Life, property and honor were constantly at stake. Different tribes were always at daggers drawn with one another. Any trivial incident was enough to cause a war to blaze out in ferocious fury, which sometimes even developed into a country-wide conflagration ceaselessly continuing for several decades. Indeed, a Bedouin could not understand why he should let off a person of another tribe, whom, he thought, he had every right to kill and plunder.

Whatever notions they had of morals, culture and civilization, were primitive and uncouth. They could hardly discriminate between pure and impure, lawful and unlawful, civil and uncivil. Their life was wild. Their methods were barbaric. They reveled in adultery, gambling and drinking. Loot and plunder were their motto, murder and rapine their very habits. They would stand stark naked before each other without any qualms of conscience. Even their women-folk would become nude at the ceremony of circumambulation of the Ka'ba. Out of sheer foolish notions of honor, they would bury their- daughters alive lest anyone should become their son-in-law. They would marry their step-mothers after the death of their fathers. They were ignorant of even the rudiments of everyday routine of eating, dressing and washing.

As regards their religious beliefs, they suffered from the same evils which were playing havoc with religion the world over.

They worshipped stones, trees, idols, stars and spirits : in short everything conceivable except God, They did not know anything about the teachings of the prophets of God. They had an idea that Abraham and Ishmael were their fore-fathers, but they knew next to nothing about their religious preachings and about the God whom they

worshipped. The stories of Ad and Thamud were to be found in their folklore, but they contained no traces of the teachings of prophets such as Hud and Salih. The Jews and the Christians had transmitted to them certain legendary folk-tales relating to the Israelite prophets. They presented a harrowing picture of those noble souls. Their teachings were adulterated with the figments of their own imagination and their lives were tarred black. Even today, an idea can be had of the religious conceptions of those people by casting a cursory glance at those Israelite traditions which Muslim commentators of the Qur'an had conveyed to us. Indeed, the picture which had been presented of the institution of the prophethood and of the character of the Israelite prophets is the very anti-thesis of all that those noble followers of truth had stood for.

The Savior is Born

In such a dark age and in such a benighted country a man is born. In his very childhood his parents die and, a few years later, the sad demise of his grandfather also occurs. Consequently, he is deprived even of that scant training and upbringing which an Arab child of his time could get. In his boyhood he tends the flocks of sheep and goats in the company of Bedouin boys. When of age, he takes to commerce. All his associations and all his dealings were with the Arabs alone, whose condition had been just described. Education has not even touched him; he is completely unlettered and unschooled. He never gets a chance to sit in the company of learned men, for such men were totally non-existent in Arabia. He did have a few opportunities to go out of his country, but those journeys were confined to Syria and were nothing more than the usual business-trips undertaken by Arab trade-caravans. If he met any learned man there or had the occasion to observe any aspect of culture and civilization, those random meetings and stray observations cannot be given any place in the making of his personality. For, such things can never have that profound influence on anyone which might lift him totally out of his environment, transform him completely and raise him to such heights of originality and glory that there remains no affinity between him and the society in which he is born. Nor can they be the means of the acquisition of that profoundly refined aesthetic outlook and moral sensitivity. Surrounded on all sides by stone-hearted people, he himself has a heart overflowing with the mills of human kindness. He helps the orphans and the widows. He is hospitable to travelers. He harms none; rather, he goes all out to suffer hardships for the sake of others. Living among those for whom war is bread and butter, he is such a lover of peace that his heart melts for them when, they take up arms and cut each other's throats. He keeps aloof from the feuds of his tribe, and is foremost in bringing about reconciliation. Bred up in an idolatrous race, he is so clear-minded and possesses such a pure soul that he regards nothing in the heavens and the earth worth worshipping except the One True God. He does not bow before any created thing and does not partake of the offerings made to idols, even in his childhood. Instinctively he hates all kinds of worship of the creatures and objects besides God. In brief, the towering and radiant personality of this man; in the midst of such a benighted and dark environment, may be likened to a beacon-light illumining a pitch-dark night or to a diamond shining in a heap of dead stones.

A Revolutionary Comes

After spending a great part of his life in such a chaste, pure and civilized manner there comes a revolution in his being. He feels up with the darkness and ignorance massed around him. He wants to swim clear of the horrible sea of ignorance, corruption, immorality, idolatry and disorder which surrounds him on all sides. He finds everything around him out of harmony with his soul. He retires to the hills, away from the hum and drum of habitation. He spends days and nights in perfect seclusion and meditation: He fasts so that his soul and his heart may become still purer and nobler. He muses and ponders deep. He is in search of such a light which might melt away the encompassing darkness. He wants to get hold of that power with which he might bring about the downfall of the corrupt and disorderly world of his day and lay the foundations of a new and better world.

Lo ! a remarkable revolution comes over his person, All of a sudden his heart is illuminated with the Divine Light, giving to him the power he had yearned for. He comes out of the confinements of his cave, goes to the people and addresses them in the following strain:

The idols which you worship are a mere sham. Cease to worship them from now on. No mortal being, no star, no tree, no stony, no spirit is worthy of human worship. Therefore, bow not your heads in worship before them. The entire universe with everything that it contains belongs to God Almighty alone. He alone is the Creator, the Nourisher, the Sustainer and consequently, the real Sovereign before Whom all should bow down and to Whom all should pray and render obedience. Thus worship Him alone and obey His commands only. Loot and plunder, murder and rapine, injustice and cruelty-all the vices in which you indulge are crimes in -the sight of God: Give up your evil ways ; He hates them all. ,Speak the truth. Be just. Do not kill anyone. Do not rob anyone. Take your lawful share and no more. Give what is due to others in a just manner. You are human beings and all human being are equal in the sight of God. None is born with the slur of shame on his face, nor anyone has come into the world with the mantle. of honor hung around his neck. He alone is high and honored who is God-fearing and pious, true in words and deeds. Distinctions of birth and glory of race are no criteria of greatness and honor. The one who fears God and does good deeds is the noblest of all. One who is shorn of love of God and is steeped in bad manners is doomed. There is an appointed day after, your death when you shall have to appear before your Lord. You shall be called to account for all your deeds-good or bad, and you shall not be able then to hide anything. The whole record of your life shall be an open book to Him. Your fate shall be determined by your good or bad actions. In the court of the True Judge-the Omniscient God-the question of unfair recommendation and favoritism does not arise. You shall not be able to bribe Him. No consideration will be given to your pedigree or parentage. True faith and good deeds alone will stand you in good stead at that time. He who will be fully equipped with them shall take his abode in the Paradise of eternal happiness, while the one who is devoid of them shall be cast

in the fire of Hell.

This is the message with which he comes. The ignorant nation turns against him. Abuses and stones are showered at his august person. Every conceivable torture and cruelty was perpetrated on him. And this continues not for a day or two but uninterruptedly for thirteen long agonizing years. At last he was exiled. But he is not given respite even there. He is tormented in various ways in his abode of refuge. The whole of Arabia is incited against him. He is persecuted and hounded down continuously for full eight years. He suffers it all, but does not budge an inch from the stand he has taken. He is resolute, firm and inflexible in his purpose and stand.

Why all that Enmity?

One might inquire; how is it that his nation became his worst enemy? Was there any dispute about gold and silver or other worldly possessions? Was it due to any blood feud? Did he ask for anything from them? No! The whole enmity was based on the fact that he had asked them to worship the One True God and to lead a life of righteousness, piety and goodness. He had preached against idolatry and the worship of other beings besides God and had denounced their wrong way of life. He had stricken out at the roots of priest-craft. He had inveighed against all distinctions of high and low between human beings, and had condemned the prejudices of clan and race as sheer ignorance. And he wanted to change the whole structure of society which had been handed down to them from time immemorial. In their turn, his countrymen told him that the principles of his mission were hostile to their ancestral traditions and asked him either to give them up or to bear the worst consequences.

One might ask, what for did he suffer all those hardships? His nation offered to accept him as its king and lay all the riches of the land at his feet if only he would leave preaching his religion and spreading his message. [1. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had to face tempests of adversity for the sake of truth. He braced all the opposition and oppression with a smile on his lips. He stood firm, undeterred by criticism and coercion. When the natives felt that the threats failed to frighten him and the severest tribulations to which he and his followers were subjected could not move them even an inch, they played another trick – but that too was destined to doom! A deputation of the leading Quraish called upon the Holy Prophet and tried to bribe him by offering him all the worldly glory and riches that they could imagine. They said: "If you want to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much as you wish: if you aspire to win honor and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you have a fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the most beautiful maiden of your own choice." But the reply of the Prophet was: "O Uncle! Should they place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left, in order to make me renounce this mission. IT SHALL NOT BE, I will never give it up till it should please God to make it a triumph or I perish in the attempt." This was the character of the Prophet of Islam!] But he chose to refuse tempting offers and to suffer for his cause, instead. Why? Was he to gain in any way if those people became godly, pious and righteous?

Why was it that he cared not a jot for riches and luxury, for kingship and glory, for ease and plenty? Was he playing for some higher material gains so that these blessings sank into insignificance in comparison with them? Were those gains so tempting that he could choose to go through fire and sword and bear tortures of the soul and torments of the body with equanimity for years? One has to ponder over it deeply to find an answer.

Can anyone ever imagine a higher example of self-sacrifice, fellow-beings benevolence and charity towards his fellow beings than that a man would ruin his own happiness for the good of others while those very people for whose betterment he was striving to his utmost would stone him, abuse him, banish him and give him no quarter even in his exile, and that, in spite of it all, he would persist striving for their well-being?

Can any insincere person undergo so much suffering for a false cause? Can any dishonest speculator and visionary exhibit such firmness and determination for his ideal so as to stick his guns to the very last and remain unruffled and unperturbed in the face of dangers and tortures of every conceivable description when a whole country rises up in arm against him?

This faith, this perseverance and this resolution with which he led his movement to its ultimate success is, therefore, an eloquent proof of the supreme truth of his cause. Had there been the slightest element of doubt and uncertainty in his heart, he could never have been able to brave the storms which continued in all their fury for twenty-one long years.

This is one aspect of the revolution wrought in his being. The other is even more wonderful and remarkable.

A Changed Man

the bygone nations, the day of judgment, the life after death, the hell and the heaven. No doubt he possessed an excellent character and charming manners, and was highly cultured, yet there was nothing so deeply striking and so radically extraordinary in him which could make man expect something great and revolutionary from him in future. Of course he was known among his acquaintances as a sober, calm, gentle, law-abiding and good-natured citizen. But when he came out of the cave with a new message he was imbued with qualities that were unique and hitherto unsuspected: indeed he was completely transformed. Here is a glimpse of his personality:

When he began preaching his message the whole of Arabia stood in awe and wonder and was bewitched by his wonderful eloquence and oratory. It was so impressive and captivating that his worst enemies were afraid of hearing it, lest it should penetrate

deep into the recesses of their hearts or the very marrows of their beings and carry them off their feet and make them bid good-bye to their old religion and culture. It was so matchless that the whole Arab legions of poets, preachers and orators of the highest caliber failed to bring forth its equivalents in beauty of language and splendor of diction when he threw the challenge to his opponents to put their heads together and produce even a single verse like the one he had recited.

His all-Embracing Message

Along with this, he now appeared before his people as a unique philosopher, a wonderful reformer, a revolutionary, molder of culture and civilization, an illustrious politician, a great leader, a judge of the highest eminence and an incomparable general. This unlettered Bedouin, this dweller of the desert, spoke with such learning and wisdom the like of which none had said before and none could say after him. He expounded the intricate problems of metaphysics and theology: He delivered speeches on the principles of the decline and fall of nations and empires, supporting his thesis by the historical data of the past. He reviewed the achievements of the old reformers, passed judgments on the various religions of the world, and gave verdicts on the differences and the disputes between nations. He taught ethical canons' and principles of culture. He formulated such lays of social and economic organization, group conduct and international relations that even eminent thinkers and scholars can grasp their true wisdom only after life-long research and vast experience of men and things. Indeed, as man advances in theoretical knowledge and practical experience, so would their beauties progressively unfold themselves.

This silent and peace-loving businessman who had never handled a sword before; who had no military training, who had but once witnessed a battle and that also just as a spectator, turned suddenly into such a great warrior that he did not even once retreat in the fiercest of battles. He proved to be such a great military general that he conquered the whole of Arabia in nine years, in the days when the weapons of war were primitive and means of communication, poorest. His military acumen and efficiency developed to such a high pitch and the military spirit which he infused and the military training which he imparted to motley crowd of Arabs (who had no equipment worth the name.) wrought such a miracle that within a few years they overthrew the two most formidable military powers of the day and ultimately became the masters of the greater part of the then known world.

This reserve and quiet man who, for full forty years, had never given proof of any political interest or activity, appeared suddenly on the stage of the world as such a great political reformer and statesman that without the aid of radio and wireless and press he brought together the scattered inhabitants of a desert of twelve hundred thousand square miles, a people who were warlike, ignorant, unruly, uncultured and plunged in internecine tribal warfare-under one banner, one law, one religion, one culture, one civilization and one form of government. [Sir William Muir, an adverse critic of Islam, admits in his book, Life of Muhammad: "The first peculiarity, then,

which attracts our attention is the subdivision of the Arabs into innumerable bodies,.. each independent of the others ; restless and often at war amongst themselves,; .and even when united by blood or by interest, ever ready on some insignificant -,cause to separate and give way to an implacable. hostility. Thus at the era of Islam the retrospect of Arabian history exhibits, as in the Kaleidoscope. an ever-varying state of combination and repulsion, such as had hitherto rendered abortive any attempt at a general union ...The problem had yet to be solved, by what force these tribes could be subdued or drawn to one common centre; AND IT WAS SOLVED BY MUHAMMAD."]

He changed their modes of thought, their very habits and their morals. He turned the uncouth into the cultured, the barbarous into the civilized, the evildoers and bad characters into pious, God-fearing. and righteous persons. Their unruly, and stiff-necked, natures were. transformed into models of obedience and submission to law and order. A nation which had not produced a single great man worth the name for centuries, under his influence and guidance gave birth to thousands of noble souls who went forth to far-off corners of the world to preach and teach the principles of religion, morals and civilization. [3. It would be instructive to refer here to an important speech of Jafar Ibn Abi Talib. When the oppression upon the Muslims of Mecca reached its limits, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked some of them to migrate to the adjoining state of Abyssinia. A group of Muslims migrated to that country. But the Quraish who were perpetrating every conceivable oppression upon the Muslims did not sit idle. They pursued the emigrants, asked King Negus of Abyssinia to forcefully return his. immigrants. In the court of King Negus Jafar made a speech and threw light on the revolution that the Holy Prophet 'had brought about. An extract from his speech is given below: "O King! We were ignorant people, given to idolatry. We were used to cut corpses even of dead animals, and to do all kinds of disgraceful things. We did not make good our obligations to our relations, and ill-treated our neighbors. The strong among us would thrive at the expense of the weak, till, at last, God raised a prophet for our reformation. His descent, his righteousness, his integrity and his piety are well-known to us all. He called us to the worship of God, and exhorted us to give up idolatry and stone-worship. He enjoined us to speak truth, to make good our trusts, to respect ties of kinship, and to do good to our neighbors. He taught us to shun everything foul and to avoid bloodshed. He forbade all manner of indecent things: telling lies, accusations against the chastity of women. So we believed in him, followed him, and acted upon his teaching,, "]

He accomplished this feat not through any worldly lure, or by means of oppression and cruelty, but by his captivating manners, his endearing character and his convincing teaching. With his noble and gentle behavior he befriended even his enemies. He captured the hearts of the people with his unbounded sympathy and the milk of human kindness. He ruled justly. He did not oppress even his deadly enemies who were after his life, who had pelted him with stones, who had turned him out of his native place, who had pitched the whole of Arabia against him -- nay, not even one who had chewed raw the liver of his dead uncle in frenzy of vengeance. [4. On the occasion of the Battle of Uhud, Hinda, the wife of Chief of the Pagan Arabs, actually chewed the raw liver of the Prophet's uncle, Hamza.] He forgave them all when he triumphed over them. He

never tools , revenge from anyone for his personal grievances for the wrongs perpetrated on his person.

In spite of the fact that he became the ruler of his country, he was so selfless and modest that he remained simple and sparing in his habits. He lived poorly, as before, wore coarse clothes, ate the simplest food of the poor, and sometimes went without any food at all. He used to spend whole nights standing in prayer before his Lord. He came to the rescue of the destitutes and penniless. [6. The Prophet said: "Anyone who dies in debt or leaves behind dependants who are in danger of becoming destitutes, they should come to me because I am their guardian." His whole life bears ample testimony to this.] He felt not the least insult in working like a laborer. Till his last moments there was not the slightest tinge of royal pomp and show or hauteur of the high and the rich in him. Like a common man he would sit and walls with people and share their joys and sorrows. He would. so mix up and mingle with the crowd that a stronger would find it difficult to single out the leader of the people and the ruler of the nation from the rest of the company.

In spite of his greatness his behavior with the humblest person was that of an ordinary human being. In the struggles and endeavors of his whole life he did not seek any reward or profit for his own person, nor left any property for his heirs. Even his personal legacy was for his family, it was left for the Uzyaynah.

He did not ask his adherents to earmark anything for him or his descendants, so much so that he forbade his progeny from receiving the benefit of zakat, lest his followers at any future time may dole out the whole share of zakat to them.

His Contribution to Human Thought

The achievements of this great man do not end here. In order to arrive at a correct appraisal of his true stature one has to view it in the background of the history of the world as a whole. That would reveal that this unlettered dweller of the desert of Arabia, who was born in the dart: ages some 1400 years ago, was the real pioneer of the Modern Age and the true leader of humanity. He is not only the Leader of those who accept his leadership but of those who also do not acclaim him as such ; even of those who denounce him ! The only difference is that the latter are unaware of the fact that his guidance is still imperceptibly influencing their thoughts and their actions and is the governing principle of their lives and the very spirit of the modern times. [6. Arthur Leonard says: "Islam, in fact, has done a work. She has left a mark on the pages of human history, which is so indelible that it can never be effaced ...that only when the world brows will he acknowledged in full. John Devenport, a leading scientist, observed: "It must be owned that all the knowledge whether of physics, astronomy, philosophy or mathematics which flourished in Europe from the 10th century, was originally derived from the Arabian schools, and the Spanish Saracen may be looked upon as the father of European philosophy, "quoted by A. Karim in Islam's Contribution to Science and Civilization. Bertrand Russell, the famous British philosopher writes: "The supremacy of the East was not only military, Science, philosophy, poetry and the

arts, all flourished...in the Muhammadan world at a time when Europe was sunk in barbarism. Europeans, with unpardonable insularity, call this period "The Dark Ages" but it was only in Europe that it was dark-indeed only in Christian Europe, for Spain, which was Muhammadan, had a brilliant culture." (Pakistan Quarterly, Vol. IV. No. 3, Emphasis ours) Robert Briffault, the renowned historian, acknowledges in his book *The Making of Humanity* : "It is highly probable that but for the Arabs, modern European Civilization would never have assumed that character which has enabled it to transcend all the previous phases of evolution. For although there is not a single aspect of human growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic culture is not traceable nowhere it is so clear and momentous as in the genesis of that Power which constitutes the paramount distinctive force of the modern world and the supreme source of its victory-natural science and the scientific spirit What we call science arose in Europe as a result of a new spirit of inquiry; of new methods of investigation, of the method of experiment, observation ; measurement, of the development of mathematics in a form unknown to the Greeks. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European world by the Arabs". Stanwood Cobb, founder of the Progressive Education Association, says: "Islam ..was the virtual creator of the Renaissance in Europe."-quoted by Robert L. Gullick Jr. in *Muhammad the Educator*.]

It was he who turned the course of human thought from superstition-mongering, love for the unnatural and the inexplicable and monasticism towards rational approach, love for reality and a pious, balanced worldly life. It was he who, in a world which regarded only supernatural happenings as miracles and demanded them for the verification of the truth of a religious mission, inspired the urge for rational proof and the faith in them as the criterion of truth. It was he who opened the eyes of those who had been accustomed till then to look for the signs of God in the unusual, the extraordinary, the super-natural and, instead made them seek the signs of the Creator to the natural phenomenon spread all around the man. It was he who, in place of idle speculation led human beings to the path of rational understanding and sound reasoning on the basis of observation, experiment and research. It was he who clearly defined the limits and functions of sense-perception, reason and intuition. It was he who brought about a rapprochement between the spiritual and the material values. It was he who harmonized Faith with Knowledge and Action. It was he who integrated the scientific spirit with the power of religion and who evolved true religiosity on the basis of the scientific spirit.

It was he who eradicated idolatry, man-worship and polytheism in all forms so thoroughly and inspired such a firm faith in the Unity of God that even those religions which were based entirely on superstitions and polytheism were compelled to adopt a monotheistic theme. It was he who changed the basic concepts of ethics and spirituality. To those who believed that asceticism and self-annihilation alone formed the standard of moral and spiritual purity that purity could not be achieved except by running away from worldly life, disregarding all the urges of the flesh and subjecting the body to all types of tortures, it was he who showed the path of spiritual evolution, moral emancipation and attainment of salvation through active participation in the practical affairs of the world around them.

It was he who brought home to man his true worth and dignity. Those who believed that none but a God-in-carnate or a son of God could be their guide and leader were told that just a human being like them, without any claims or pretensions to Godhead, could represent the heavenly kingdom and serve as vicegerent of God on earth. Similarly, those who used to worship and pay homage to persons who happened to yield some power or authority were told not to degrade themselves since no man was superior to any other man. It was he who stressed the point that no person could claim holiness, authority and overlordship as his birth-right and that none was born with the stigma of untouchability, slavery or serfdom on his person. It was he and his teaching which stimulated the ideas of the unity of mankind, equality of human beings, true democracy and real freedom in the world.

Leaving aside this realm of thought and moving a bit further one will find countless practical results of the leadership of this unlettered person firmly impressed on the laws and ways of the world. So many principles of good behavior, culture and civilization, purity of thought and deed which are prevalent in the world today, owe their origin to him. The social laws which he enunciated have infiltrated deep into the structure of man's social life and this process continues up to this day. The basic principles of economics which he taught have inspired many a movement for social reform in human history and hold out fresh promise for the future. The laws of government which he formulated brought about many an upheaval in the political nations and theories of the world and continue to assert their influence even today. The fundamental principles of law and justice which bear the stamp of his genius have influenced, to a remarkable degree, the administration of justice in the courts of nations, and form a perpetual source of guidance even for the jurists of the future. The unlettered Arab was the first person who set on foot for the first time practically the whole framework of international relations, and regulated the laws of war and peace. For no one had previously even the remotest idea that there could also be an ethical code of war and that relations between different nations could be regulated on the ground of common humanity. [7. For a detailed discussion see Abul A'la Maududi's *At-Jihad fil-Islam* and Dr. Hamidullah's *The Muslim Conduct of State*.]

The Greatest Revolutionary

In the cavalcade of world history the sublime figure of this wonderful person towers so high above all the great men of all times who are famous as heroes of nations that they appear as dwarfs in his company. None of them possessed a genius capable of making any deep impression on more than one or two aspects of human life. Some are the exponents of theories and ideas but are deficient in practical action. Others are men of action but suffer from paucity of knowledge. Some are renowned as statesmen only, others are masters of strategy and maneuvering. Some have concentrated on one aspect of social life in a manner that other aspects have been overlooked. Others have developed their energies to ethical and spiritual verities but have ignored economics and politics. Some others have taken to economics and politics, but neglected the

moral and the spiritual aspects of life. In short, one comes across heroes who are adepts and experts in one walk of life only. His is the only example where all excellence have been blended into one personality. He is a philosopher and a seer and also a practical embodiment of his own teachings. He is a great statesman as well as military genius. He is a legislator and also a teacher of morals. He is a spiritual luminary as well as a religious guide. His vision penetrates every aspect of life and there is nothing which he touches and does not adorn. His orders and commandments cover a vast field from the regulation of international relations down to the habits of everyday life like eating, drinking and cleanliness of the body. On the foundations of his theories, he established civilization and a culture and produced such a fine equilibrium in the conflicting aspects of life that there is to be found not even the slightest trace of any flaw, deficiency, or incompleteness. Can anyone point out any other example of such a perfect and all-round personality?

Most of the famous personalities of the world are said to be the products of their environment. But his case is unique. His environment seems to have no part in the making of his personality. It also cannot be proved that historically his birth synchronized with the older of things in Arabia at that time. What one can say at the most is that the circumstances in Arabia cried aloud for the appearance of such a person who could weld together the warring tribes into one nation and could lay the foundation of their economic solidarity and well-being by bringing other countries under their sway-in short, a national leader who would have had all the traits of an Arab of those days and through cruelty, oppression, bloodshed, deceit and hypocrisy, or by any other fair, or foul means, could have enriched his own people, and left a kingdom as a heritage for his successors. One cannot prove any other crying need of the history of Arabia of that time.

What one can say at the most in the light of the modern idealistic as well as materialistic interpretations of history is that the time and the environment demanded the emergence of a leader who could create a nation and build up an empire. But these philosophies cannot explain how such an environment could produce a man whose mission was to teach the best morals, to purify humanity of all dross and to wipe out the prejudices and superstitions of the days of ignorance and darkness, who looked beyond the watertight compartments of race, nation and country, who laid the foundations of a moral, spiritual, cultural and political super-structure for the good of the world and not for his country alone, who practically and not theoretically placed business transactions, civics, politics and international relations on moral bases and produced such a balanced and temperate synthesis between the worldly life and spiritual advancement that even to this day it is considered a masterpiece of wisdom and foresight exactly in the same way as it was considered in his own lifetime. Can anyone honestly call such a person as the product of the all-pervading darkness of Arabia ?

He does not only appear to be independent of his environment. Rather, when we look at his achievements we are irresistibly drawn to the conclusion that he actually transcends all limitations of time and space. His vision breaks through all temporal and

physical barriers, passes beyond centuries and millenniums and comprehends within itself entire human activity and the whole of human history.

He is not one of those whom history has cast into its dustbin, nor is he praised only because he was just a good leader in his own time. He is that unique and incomparable leader of humanity who marches with, the time, who is as modern in every age and in every era as he was in his own period of time: Truly, his teachings are as modern, as tomorrow morn.

Those whom people style as "makers of history" are only "creatures of history". In fact, in the whole history of mankind, he is the unique example of a "maker of history". One may scan the lives and circumstances of the great leaders of the world who brought about revolutions and one will find that on each such occasion the forces of revolution were gathering momentum for the destined upheaval, were, taking their course in certain directions and were only waiting for a propitious moment to burst out. In harnessing these forces in time for action the revolutionary leader played the part of an actor for whom the stage and the role are set beforehand. On the other hand, amidst all "makers of history" and revolutionary figures of all times, he is the only person who had to find ways and means to bring together the wherewithal of revolution, who had to mould and produce the kind of men he wanted for his purpose, because the very spirit of revolution and its requisite paraphernalia were non-existent in those people among whom his lot was cast.

He made an indelible impression on the hearts of thousands of his disciples by his forceful personality and molded them according to his liking. By his iron-will he prepared, the ground for revolution, molded its shape and features, and directed the currents of events into channel as he wished and desired. Can anyone- cite another example of a maker of history of such distinction, another revolutionary of such brilliance and splendor?

The Final Testimony

One may ponder over this matter and wonder how in the dark ages 1400 years back, in a benighted region of. the earth like' Arabia, an unlettered Arab trader and herdsman came to possess such light, such knowledge, such power, such capabilities and such finely-developed moral. virtues?

One may say that there is nothing peculiar about his message. It is the product of his own mind. If it is so, then he should have proclaimed himself to be God. And . if he had made such a claim at that time, the people of earth who did not hesitate in calling Krishna and Buddha as gods and Jesus as the Son of God, just out of their own fancy, and who could, without compunction, worship even the forces of nature like fire, water and air-would have readily acknowledge such a wonderful person as the Lord God Himself.

But lo! his assertion is just to the contrary. For he proclaimed that he was merely a human being like others. He said that he had not brought anything to them of his own accord: all had been revealed to him by God. He virtually proclaimed before his people: Whatever I possess belongs to Him. This message, the like of which the whole humanity is not able to produce, is the message of God. It is not the product of my own mind. Every word of it has been sent down by Him, and all glory to Him Whose Message-it is. All the wonderful achievements which stand to my credit in your eyes, all the law which I have given, all the principles which I have enunciated and taught-none of them is from me. I find myself thoroughly incompetent in producing such things out of my sheer personal ability and capability. I took to Divine Guidance in all matters. Whatever He wills I do, what He directs I proclaim.

What a wonderful and inspiring example of honesty, integrity, truth and honor it is! A liar and a hypocrite generally tries to ascribe to himself all the credit for the deeds of others also even when the falsehood of his statement can be easily proved. But this great man does not -appropriate the credit of any of those achievements to his own person even when none could contradict him, as there was no method of finding out the source of his inspiration.

What more proof of perfect honesty of purpose, uprightness of character and sublimity of soul can there be? Who also can be a more truthful person than he who received such unique gifts and embellishments through a secret channel and still he out-rightly pointed out the source of all enlightenment and inspiration? All these factors lead to the irresistible conclusion that such a man was the true Messenger of God.

Such was .the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He was a man of extraordinary merits, a paragon of virtue and goodness, a symbol of truth and veracity, a great apostle of God, His Messenger to the entire world. His life and thought, his truth and straightforwardness, his piety and goodness, his character and morals, his ideology and achievements all stand as unimpeachable proofs of his prophethood. Any human being who studies his life and teachings without bias will testify that verily he was the true Prophet of God and the Qur'an-the Book he gave to mankind is the true Book of God. No unbiased and serious seeker after truth can escape this conclusion.

Furthermore, this must also be clearly understood that, now, through Muhammad (peace be upon him) alone can we know the straight path of Islam. The Qur'an and the life-example of Muhammad (peace be upon him) are the only reliable sources that are available to mankind to learn God's Will in its totality. Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of God for the whole of mankind and the long chain of prophets has come to an end with him. He was the last of the prophets and all the instructions which it was God's Will to impart to mankind through direct revelation were sent by Him through Muhammad (peace be upon him) and are enshrined in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Now, whoever is a seeker of truth and anxious to become an honest Muslim, a sincere follower of the way of God, it is incumbent upon him to have faith in God's last Prophet, accept his teachings and follow the way that he has charted for man. This is

the road to success and salvation.

Life after Death

Is there any life after death ; if so, what kind of life is it ? This question lies far beyond the ken of our perception. We do not have the eyes with which we could see beyond the frontiers of worldly life and find out what lies on beyond it. We do not have the ears with which we could hear anything from beyond these frontiers. Nor do we have any instrument by which we could determine with certainty whether there is any, life beyond death. Therefore, the question whether there is any life after death lies completely outside the province of scientific knowledge which is concerned with the classification and interpretation of sense data. Anyone who asserts in the name of science that there is no life after death, therefore, makes a very unscientific statement. Merely on the basis of scientific knowledge, we can neither affirm that there is a life after death nor deny it. Until we discover a dependable means of acquiring knowledge about this matter, the correct scientific attitude would be neither to affirm nor to deny the possibility of life after death. The question is beyond its jurisdiction.

But can we possibly maintain this attitude in life ? Can we afford to adhere to this neutrality ? Theoretically speaking, this may hold good, but looking to the hard realities of life which we have to face on every turn and pass, our answer would be : *certainly not*. If we do not have the means to know a thing directly, it is of course possible for us, from a purely rational point of view, to refrain from either affirming or denying it. But if the thing is directly concerned with our everyday life, we cannot maintain that attitude and must either affirm or deny its existence. In order to live a full life on the earth we must have a definite attitude towards such problems. These questions simply cannot be avoided. For instance, if you do not know a person with whom you do not have any dealings, you may refrain from forming an opinion about his integrity and trustworthiness ; but if you have to deal with him, you must do so either on the assumption that he is an honest man or on the supposition that he is not. You may also proceed with the idea that, until his honesty is either proved or disproved in practice, you will deal with him on the assumption that his integrity is doubtful. But this manner of dealing with him would, in effect, be no different from the way you would deal with him if you were convinced of 'his dishonesty. Therefore, a state of doubt between affirmation and denial is possible only as an abstract idea; it cannot form the basis of practical dealings, which require a positive attitude of either affirmation or denial.

The Significance of Life and Death

A little reflection should help us to see that the question of life after death is not merely a philosophical question ; it is deeply and intimately related to our everyday life. In fact our moral attitude depends entirely upon this question. If a person is of the view that the life of this world is the only life and that there is no life of any kind after that, he must develop a particular type of moral attitude. A radically different kind of attitude and approach is bound to result if he believes that this life is to be followed by another life where one will have to render account of all one's acts in this world and that one's

ultimate fate in the Hereafter will depend upon one's conduct in worldly life. Let us try to understand this through a simple example. A person undertakes journey from Lahore to Karachi [8. **Two cities of Pakistan,-Editor.**] on the assumption that he is traveling to his final destination where he will be beyond the reach of the police that could haul him up for an offence, and the Jurisdiction of the courts of justice that could bring him to book. Another person undertakes the same journey knowing that it is only the first stage of a longer journey which will carry him, beyond Karachi, to a land overseas which is ruled by the same sovereign as that of Pakistan. He also knows that the court of that sovereign has complete secret dossiers of his activities in Pakistan and that this record will be fully examined there in order to decide what position and treatment he deserves by virtue of his past performance. Now, it should be easy to realize how different the conduct of these two travelers of the same train will be. The former will prepare himself only for the journey up to Karachi, whereas the latter will keep in view also the requirements of the further stages of the long journey. The former will assume that all the gains that he can possibly make, or all the losses or harms that he might suffer, will be confined to the journey up to Karachi, and that will be the end of it. The latter, on the other hand, will know that the real gains or losses of the journey will be realized in its last stages and not in the first. The former will keep in view only those results of his actions as are likely to manifest themselves up to the time that he reaches Karachi; the latter's view will extend to the long-term results likely to unfold themselves in the distant overseas lands where his journey will eventually take him.

Now it is obvious that this difference between the approaches and attitudes of the two travelers results directly from their view of the nature of their journey and its end. Similarly, a person's views in regard to life after death have a decisive influence upon his moral conduct in this world. The direction of every step that he takes in his practical life will depend upon whether he treats this worldly life as the first and last stage of life, or whether he also has in view the Hereafter and the consequences of his conduct in this world or the next one. He will move in one direction in the first instance, and in exactly the opposite direction in the other instance.

From this it should be clear that the question of life after death is not merely a fruitless intellectual or philosophical exercise but a question that intimately concerns and vitally affects our everyday life. There is, therefore, no justification for any skepticism in this matter. Any attitude that is determined by skepticism in regard to the Hereafter could not in effect be any different from the one based on a definite rejection of the idea of a life after death. We are, therefore, obliged to make up our minds whether there is a life after death or not. If science cannot help us here, we must seek the aid of rational thinking and logical reasoning.

Where Reason Leads to?

But what is the material upon which we could base this logical reasoning?

There is, first, man himself, and then the system of the universe. We shall, therefore,

try to study man against the background of the Universe and see whether all his requirements are fulfilled within this system or whether some of them remain unsatisfied and need some other kind of system for their satisfaction.

Now man has various aspects. First of all, he has a body which is composed of various minerals, salts, gases and water. The Universe is a vast system containing, from tiny specks of dust to the large planets moving in their orbits. We find. Ourselves dazzled with the spectacle of a plethora of things: the earth, stones, metals, salts, gases, rivers, oceans, and an unending array of things need a set of laws to govern their existence and operation, and all these laws are at work within the Universe. They provide a free opportunity for the various elements and forces of nature to play their part in the Universe; similarly, the human body has a full and free opportunity to live and work under these laws. Secondly, man is a being who has grown through nourishment derived from the things around himself. Similarly, there are various kinds of trees, plants and herbs in the Universe which are governed by the laws that are essential for growing bodies.

Moreover, man is a living being who moves and acts of his own free will ; he procures food for himself, protects himself and ensures the preservation of the species. Again, there are various other beings of this kind in the Universe: on land, in water and in the air, there are myriads of animals whose lives and functions are governed completely by the laws which are sufficient to cover the whole gamut of their activities.

Above all, there is the moral aspect of man's being, which is endowed with the consciousness of good and evil, the faculty to discriminate between the two, and the power to do good as well as evil. Man's nature demands that good deeds should have good results and evil deeds should lead to evil consequences. He can discriminate justice from tyranny, truth from falsehood, right from wrong, mercy from cruelty, kindness from arrogance, generosity from meanness, trustworthiness from breach of trust and so on and so forth. These qualities are not abstract ideas but are actually experienced in human life and have a deep and far-reaching effect on human culture. Therefore, the nature with which man is endowed strongly demands that his acts should lead inexorably to their moral consequences, in the same way as they lead to their physical effects.

But let us look around and reflect a little deeply upon the system of the Universe. Can the moral consequences of human actions fully unfold themselves in this system? On the basis of the body of knowledge that we possess we can confidently assert that this is not possible, because, for all that we know, there is no other creature in the Universe which is endowed with moral consciousness. The whole system is governed by the physical laws of the Universe, and the moral laws of the human realm are not at work anywhere in their full measure. For instance, money carries both value and weight in human affairs but truth often lacks both. The mango seed always ultimately yields mangoes, the devotee of truth, on the other hand, sometimes receives bouquets but sometimes, rather often, brickbats. The material objects in the world are governed by law which always leads to certain pre-determined results, but within the dynamics of the

working of these laws the operation of the moral forces in the human world is not so manifest. The laws of nature often fail to ensure the logical moral consequences of human actions; and even where we find such consequences they occur only to the extent the laws of nature permit. It is a physical world that we live in. And it often happens that the actual consequences of an act under the laws of nature are simply contrary to what the law of ethics demands. Through cultured and civilized life and political organization, man has no doubt striven to some extent to ensure that the acts of man lead to set and pre-ordained moral consequences according to a code of ethics. But these efforts have been on a very limited scale and extremely deficient. They have been vitiated, on the one hand, by the operation of natural laws, and on the other by man's own weaknesses and shortcomings.

Let us try to understand this with the help of a few examples. If a person sets fire to the house of an enemy, the house will be gutted ; this will be the natural result of the act. The moral consequence of the act should be the punishment of the criminal commensurate with the damage that he has caused to the family whose home he has burnt. But this consequence can come about only if the culprit can be traced and apprehended by the police, the charge against him is proved, the court can estimate fully the loss that his offence has caused to the affected family and its future generations, and then awards to the offender a punishment commensurate with his crime. If any of these conditions is not duly fulfilled, the moral consequence will either not manifest itself at all or will unfold itself only partially ; nay, it is quite possible that the culprit may go scotfree and even remain happy and become prosperous after having ruined his enemy.

Let us take another example.. ' We often find that a few people manage, by hook or by crook, to acquire a strong hold over a whole community, which begins to follow them. Taking advantage of this position these leaders bamboozle their people into following their -jingoism and militant imperialism. They lead their people into war with their neighbors. Several countries are ruined in these wars, millions of men are killed, and many more are forced to live in misery and degradation. Their misdeeds have far-reaching effect on human history for countless generations, even many-long centuries. Now, is it possible for such criminal maniacs to be punished sufficiently for their crimes and follies in this life ? Indexed, they would not be adequately punished even if they were all literally thrown to the wolves, or burnt ., alive, or subjected to any other torture of which man is capable. No conceivable punishment could possibly be measured against the grave harm caused by them to millions of men for countless generations. Under the natural laws that govern the system of the Universe they could not possibly be awarded punishment commensurate with their crimes and follies. Even if a Chinghiz or a Hitler is torn to pieces, this punishment stands with no comparison to the wrongs they perpetrated on humanity.

Or, on the other hand, take the example of the great prophets, the sages and the pious and virtuous men who called mankind to the truth and the right path and guided them out of darkness into light, and whose ideas and teachings and practical examples have benefited millions of men for centuries. And they did all this good to mankind, bracing

all the tempests of adversity that came in their way and suffering miserably at the hands of the vested interests. It is possible to reward such men adequately in this short span of life within the limits of the physical laws that govern the world ?

As we have argued above, *the laws that govern the present system of the Universe do not allow an opportunity for the full unfolding of the moral consequences of human actions.* Secondly, the actions of men during their short span of life on earth often have reactions and effect so widespread and lasting that their full consequences must take thousands of years to unfold and manifest themselves fully; and it is obviously impossible for any person, under the present laws of nature, to attain such a long career on earth. From this it logically follows that while the present physical world and its natural laws are enough for the material and animal constituents of man, they are utterly inadequate for the moral element of his being. This component calls for another world where the law of ethics of the governing law and the laws of nature are subservient to it ; where life is unlimited ; where all the moral consequences of human actions in the material world that could not manifest themselves there, should manifest themselves fully and in the proper form. It demands a world where truth and righteousness, and not gold and silver, carry weight ; where fire burns only such things as deserve to be burned according to the moral law ; where happiness and comfort are the lot of the virtuous and pain and misery the plight of, the wicked. Both nature and reason demand such an order.

The Light of the Qur'an

So far as logical reasoning is concerned, it only indicates that such a world 'ought to be'. But as to the question whether such a world does in fact exist, neither reason nor knowledge can give us a categorical answer. And it is here that the Qur'an helps us. It assures us that the world that our nature as well as our reason demand shall be a reality one day. The present system of the Universe, which was created in accordance with physical laws, will be demolished at one stroke; and it will be replaced by another world where the earth, the heavens and all other things will be essentially different from what they are here. God, Almighty will then resurrect all the men who were born from the beginning of creation down to its end, and will make all of them appear before Himself at one time. The records of all the deeds of individuals, communities, and mankind at large, will be there without the slightest error or omission. Also there will be complete reports of the effects and consequence of all human actions in the material world ; and all the generations of men affected by them will be present in the witness box. Every particle affected in any way by the deeds or words of men will tell its own story. And the limbs, the ears, the eyes and all other parts of the human body will stand witness how they were used or abused in life. On the basis of this unimpeachable evidence and those complete records; Allah, the Supreme Sovereign of the Universe, will decide each case with perfect justice and pronounce the reward or penalty as the case may be. The reward as well as the punishment will be of a magnitude that cannot even be estimated by the limited standards of the material world. The standards of time and space, and weights and measurements, and the natural laws, will be essentially different from those prevailing in the present world.

The virtues whose beneficent effects extend over several centuries in this world will be fully rewarded there, and neither death nor illness nor old age will be able to cut short the enjoyments of the reward. On the other hand, the evil deeds whose effects and consequences blight the lives of millions in this world for hundreds of years will be punished fully, and neither death nor coma will be able to relieve the pain and distress of the sufferer.

If the existing system of the Universe with its present natural laws is a possibility and a reality, why should another world with a different set of natural laws be regarded as an impossibility?