

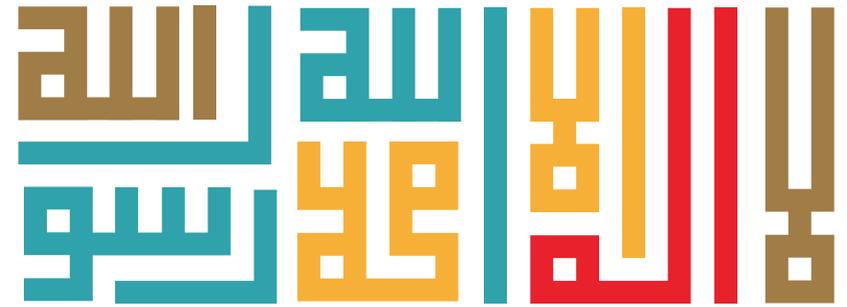
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لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله
la ilaha illallahu muhammadur rasulullah

The Message to Mankind

The Message to Mankind

Dr Irfan Jehangir



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P R O J E C T

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The Message to Mankind

Human beings have always been searching for some meaning to their existence and want to look out for answers to the very fundamental questions like:

What am I doing on this planet earth? What is the aim and purpose of human life? Why are the claims of different religions, individuals and interests of different nations often mutually contradictory, and how can they be reconciled? What things are conducive and which harmful to the interests of mankind? What are the common values of humanity and Why is it necessary to protect and preserve these values and how? What are the fundamental rights of man and how can they be safeguarded?

It is clear that human reason and the sciences do not and cannot possibly help us to solve these questions. Let us refer to Einstein:

“For science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be, and outside of its domain value judgments of all kinds remain necessary ...”

Humans have made spectacular progress in relation to material development and especially our current obsessions with ever increasing material gadgets are never ending. Throughout history we however see people incessantly striving towards the creation of a great civilisation, which became the focus of their desires and ambitions, hopes and aspirations. They looked upon their success as the sole purpose of human endeavour. This civilisation, they hoped, would finally liberate mankind from the clutches of tyranny and suppression, and usher in an era of eternal peace, security and contentment. Unfortunately, they remained lost in the illusion of having built up an unparalleled civilisation whose growth was always a source of pride and happiness for them. Every step they took for its progress kindled a new ray of hope in their hearts for ultimately

attaining human welfare and advancement. But the process never reached the desired culmination, and the main objective ever remained a mirage. Long before the goal was reached, invariably an anti-climax set in and man himself became instrumental in pulling down the imposing edifice that he had once raised through the ages; shattering his hopes, ideals and aspiration.

History bears witness that the human reason could subdue the forces of nature but could not find by itself a satisfactory solution to the problems of mankind. In fact, these cannot be solved unless and until we first find satisfactory answers to certain basic and fundamental questions asked above.

An Alternate Source

Humans therefore, must turn to an alternate source of knowledge for guidance and solution to its problems. Human intellect is helpless in this sphere as the only knowledge it has is the one that comes from its own endeavours and that has not been able to help as borne out by the historic facts.

The Quran points us towards the solution to this puzzle by guiding us to the Divine guidance in order to find out our answers and solutions it says:

(20:50) He(Moses) said: "Our Lord is He Who gave everything its form and then guided it."

That is, we acknowledge and believe in Him alone to be our Lord in every sense. He is our Sustainer, our Maker, our Master, our Sovereign and is Supreme in everything. There is no other lord in any sense but Him. This concise sentence needs serious attention. It

means that it is God alone who has created everything and given it its distinctive structure, form, capabilities, characteristics, etc. For instance, man has been given the hands and feet which are given the most appropriate structure that was needed for their right functioning.

A human being, an animal, a plant, minerals and the like, air, water and light, everything has been given that particular form which was needed for its precise and right functioning in the universe.

Then He has guided everything to function properly. It is He Who has taught everything the way to fulfil the specific objective for which it has been created. He has taught the ear to hear and the eye to see, the fish to swim and the bird to fly; the earth to grow vegetation and the tree to blossom and bear fruit. In short, He is not only the Creator of everything but also its Guide and Teacher. This verse also makes clear the need of Prophethood which is the communication method used by our creator to pass His message on to us. When God guides everything in the universe, He has also to fulfil the need of the guidance of mankind. Whereas the guidance of the animals and birds has been provided by instinct, the guidance of rational human beings has been provided by sending Messengers who appealed to them by rational arguments and brought with them books that would remain a source of guidance even after the messengers passed away.

This Guidance which comes direct from God is known as revelation. It has been revealed all along to mankind through the agency of various Messengers. But unfortunately, due to the ravages of time and human tampering with the texts of the Scriptures, the messages delivered by the pre-Islamic Messengers- Noah, Abraham, Moses & Jesus- could not be preserved long in their original form. Eventually, about fifteen centuries ago, the complete and final version of that Guidance was revealed to mankind through Muhummed (PBUH), the last of the series of the Messengers. This version of the Divine

Guidance or the last testament from God is embodied, exactly in its original form, in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an was revealed over a period of about twenty-three years. Muhammed pbuh had made fool-proof arrangements for its transcription and preservation, and before he passed away it had been fully compiled in the form of a book, apart from being memorised by heart by hundreds of men. The Book has thus been inherited in its original form and it is a historically established fact that not a single letter of the Book has been altered in the course of the fifteen centuries of its existence. This great and incomparable book is a unique testament of the eternal truths and ever-abiding universal values, and offers enlightenment and perfect guidance in regard to all aspects of human life. Writings of men are the products of their environment and are designed to convey some idea and serve one or another limited purpose. The life of such writings is, therefore, transitory, and their interest and utility limited. On the other hand, a book that carries revealed guidance forever is independent of time and space.

The Quranic teachings are never out of date, and there is no limit beyond which it could fail to enlighten the development and the realisation of individual potentialities. The Quran is unique in the fact that it explains the laws that govern the rise, decline and fall of nations. The Qur'an thus is a Divine Book embodying all these attributes, and being the final code of life forever prescribed by God for mankind. The teachings of the Quran are fully comprehensive and complete in every respect.

The Qur'an declares that man is not merely a physical being but is composed of something else besides his physical body which is called human personality. This personality, however, is not inherited by man in a fully developed state; it exists in a latent form and its development is the ultimate object of human life. The growth of an individual's physical existence is governed by certain natural laws;

but the development of his personality is subject to a different set of laws which have been given to mankind from time to time through Divine Revelation, and are now fully embodied in the Qur'an.

As a direct consequence of a ruthlessly materialistic view of life, mankind today faces a crisis which is pervading all spheres of human life and has taken the form of a universal revolt against religion.

As William Ernest Hocking puts it, *"All living religions are wretched vessels. They are all wrapped in sanctimony, dusty-eyed with self-satisfaction, stiff-jointed with the rheum-rust of their creedal conceits, so timorous under the whips of conformity that only a few dare the perilous task of thinking"*.

Russell goes even further:

"Religion prevents our children from having a rational education; religion prevents us from removing the fundamental causes of war; religion prevents us from teaching the ethic of scientific co-operation in place of the old fierce doctrines of sin and punishment. It is possible that mankind is on the threshold of a golden age; but, if so, it will be necessary first to slay the dragon that guards the door, and this dragon is religion".

Our age thus poses an open challenge to religion as a whole. Islam is a way of life and Quran presents its teachings as an open challenge to the restricted and restrictive nature of "religion". Religion as a specific set of rituals and rites performed in a specific manner and in complete disregard of what human concerns and social issues are is challenged by the Quran when it says:

"Do you consider the giving of drink to pilgrims, or the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque, equal to (the pious service of) those who believe in God and the Last Day, and strive with might (for justice and truth) in the Cause of God. They are not equal in the sight of God.(At-Tauba verse 19)

This question has been posed to bring home the fact that the guardianship of a shrine or attendance at it or other religious acts that are done for show off, and are exploited by worldly people to establish and maintain the show of their piety, have no value whatsoever in the sight of God. The real worth of a person with God is that he should be sincere in his beliefs and make sacrifices in the causes that are for truth and justice, no matter whether he enjoys or does not enjoy such distinctions or happens to descend or not from a family of saints. On the contrary, those people who lack these excellent qualities have no value with God, no matter whether they are the descendants of saints or inherit the guardianship of shrines from a long line of saints, or perform some religious acts for show on special occasions. And it is not lawful in any way that the guardianship, etc. of sacred places or political power and institutions should be left in the hands of these worthless people just because they happen to inherit such rights from their forefathers.

Qur'an openly challenged the religions of the day at the time of its revelation: Judaism, Christianity, Manichaeism, idol-worship, star-worship, nature-worship and superstition. What is more, it not merely challenged the truth and validity of the elements of a particular form of religion, but also emphasised that "religion" itself was based on false foundations.

Islam too is generally regarded as a religion whereas in fact it is not a religion but a Deen (a complete way of life). Religion and Deen, which are generally treated as synonymous, are not only essentially different concepts but are mutually contradictory. So, the fundamental difference between the two must be clearly understood before the assertion made above can be properly appreciated. A proper understanding of this difference is also essential for solving the problems of mankind and removing the crises in which it finds itself today.

Quran teaches that since the dawn of mankind on this planet God sent His messengers to guide humanity. Thus from time to time each of this long succession of Divine Messengers came to mankind with a Code of Divine Guidance, and established a socio-economic order based on the fundamental and everlasting values embodied in the divine Code. The sources of conflicts and strife in that society were thus brought to an end. The pursuit of material greed and loathsome self-interests was replaced by the ideal of working for the greater good of the society and humanity. Oppression and exploitation were abolished and justice and equity prevailed. Every individual was, therefore, satisfied and did not owe obedience to any person or power except to Divine Laws sent down by the Creator for the benefit of humanity.

All the members of society thus enjoyed true freedom and security and freedom not confined to man's physical existence on this earth alone but also ensured for his everlasting life in the life hereafter. This way of life, this code of law and this social order was known as Deen. However, this social order prevailed during the lifetime of the respective Messenger who founded it and for some time thereafter. But sooner or later, the forces of greed would again raise their ugly heads and begin to undermine it, reviving the evils of injustice, exploitation and tyranny. In their attempt to re-establish the old order, forces generally availed themselves of the services of men who appeared in the robes of piety and spoke in the name of God. They posed as the interpreters of God's Will and thus distorted the principles and tenets of the Deen, which no longer remained a living force in society and was reduced to a set of soulless beliefs and lifeless dogmas and formal rituals divorced from reason and knowledge and the realities of life in this world.

They sought to keep the common people entangled in the labyrinth of dogma and ritual, and the exploiters, religious as well as temporal, were thus left free to maintain their stranglehold upon the defrauded

masses and to fatten themselves on the labour of others. This was the metamorphosis of Deen into religion, as in the old.

The True Message

The aim of Islam is to indicate to man the better and higher horizons of life, and to save man from the loathsome greed of his material self and his lusts. By accepting the message of Islam he/she is setting itself on a beautiful journey from ignorance towards knowledge and from want to a state of complete contentment. The Quran declares:

“O ye who believe! Respond to God and His messenger when He calls you unto that which will give you life” (8: 24)

By accepting the message of Islam, the dead soul and dormant faculties of man come alive and rise up and grow to new heights of material and spiritual success, without any conflict or contradiction between the two aspects. The Quran further dispels any doubt about any form of superiority of one man over the other, which may lead to oppression by declaring:

(49:13) “Human beings, We created you all from a single male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes (just to give) you identity. Verily the noblest of you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you. Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Aware”.

In this verse the whole of mankind has been addressed to reform it of the great evil that has always been causing universal disruption in the world, that is, the prejudices due to race, colour, language, country, and nationality. On account of these prejudices man in every age has generally been discarding humanity and drawing around himself some small circles and regarding those born within those circles as his own people and those outside them as others. These circles have been drawn on the basis of accidental birth and not on rational and

moral grounds. In some cases their basis is the accident of being born in a particular family, tribe, or race, and in some particular geographical region, or in a nation having a particular colour or speaking a particular language. Then the discrimination between one's own people and others is not only confined to this that those who are looked upon as one's own people are shown greater love and cooperation than others, but this discrimination has assumed the worst forms of hatred, enmity, contempt and tyranny. New philosophies have been propounded for it, new religions invented, new codes of law made and new moral principles framed; so much so that nations and empires have made this distinction a permanent way of life with them and practiced it for centuries.

In this brief verse, God has drawn the attention of all mankind to three cardinal truths:

(1) The origin of all of you is one and the same. Your whole species has sprung up from one man and one woman. All your races that are found in the world today are, in fact, the branches of one initial race that started with one mother and one father. In this process of creation there is no basis whatsoever for the divisions and distinctions in which you have involved yourselves because of your false notions. One God alone is your Creator. Different men have not been created by different gods. You have been made from one and the same substance. It is not so that some men have been made from some pure and superior substance and some other men from some impure and inferior substance.

(2) In spite of being one in origin, it was natural that you should be divided into nations and tribes. Obviously, all the men on the earth could not belong to one and the same family. With the spread of the race it was inevitable that countless families should arise, and then tribes and nations should emerge from the families. Similarly, it was inevitable that after settling in different regions of the earth, there should be differences of colours, features, languages and ways of

living among the people, and it was also natural that those living in the same region should be closer in affinity and those living in remote regions not so close. But this natural difference never demanded that distinctions of inequality, of high and low, of noble and mean, should be established on its basis, that one race should claim superiority over the other, the people of one colour should look down upon the people of other colours, and that one nation should take preference over the other without any reason. The Creator had divided the human communities into nations and tribes for that was a natural way of cooperation and distinction between them. In this way alone could a fraternity, a brotherhood, a tribe and a nation combine to give birth to a common way of life and to cooperate with each other in the affairs of the world. But it was only to be used for your identity not superiority or inferiority. Nor for any kind of mutual boasting and hatred, which led mankind to every kind of injustice and tyranny.

(3) The only basis of superiority and excellence that there is, or can be, between man and man is that of moral excellence. As regards birth, all men are equal, for their Creator is One, their substance of creation is one, and their way of creation is one, and they are descended from the same parents. Moreover, a person being born in a particular country, nation, or clan is just accidental. Therefore, there is no rational ground on account of which one person may be regarded as superior to the other. The only trait that makes one person superior to others is that one should be more God-conscious, a greater avoider of evils, and a follower of the way of piety and righteousness. Such a man, whether he belongs to any race, any nation and any country, is valuable and worthy on account of his personal merit. And the one who is reverse of him in character is in any case an inferior person whether he is black or white, born in the east or the west.

These same truths that have been stated in this brief verse of the Quran have been explained in greater detail by the Prophet (peace be

upon him) in his addresses and traditions. In the speech that he made on the conquest of Makkah, after going round the Kabah, he said:

“Thank God Who has removed from you the blemish of ignorance and its arrogance. O people, men are divided into classes: the pious and righteous, who are honourable in the sight of Allah, and the sinful and vicious, who are contemptible in the sight of Allah, whereas all men are the children of Adam and Adam had been created by Allah from clay. (Baihaqi, Tirmidhi).

On the occasion of the last or Farewell Pilgrimage, he addressed the people, and said:

“O people, be aware: your God is One. No Arab has any superiority over a non-Arab, and no non-Arab any superiority over an Arab, and no white one has any superiority over a black one, and no black one any superiority over a white one, except on the basis of taqwa (piety). The most honourable among you in the sight of God is he who is the most pious and righteous of you. Say if I have conveyed the Message to you? And the great congregation of the people responded, saying: Yes, you have, O Messenger of Allah. Thereupon the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: Then let the one who is present convey it to those who are absent”. (Baihaqi).

Prophet pbuh also said:

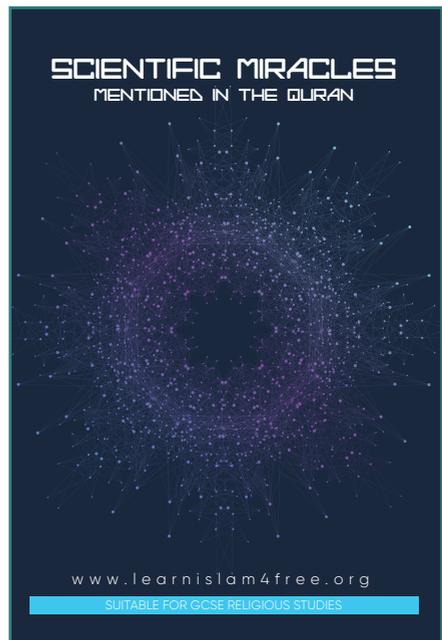
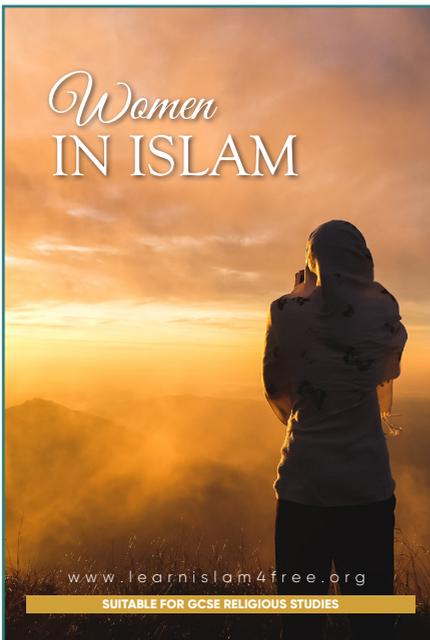
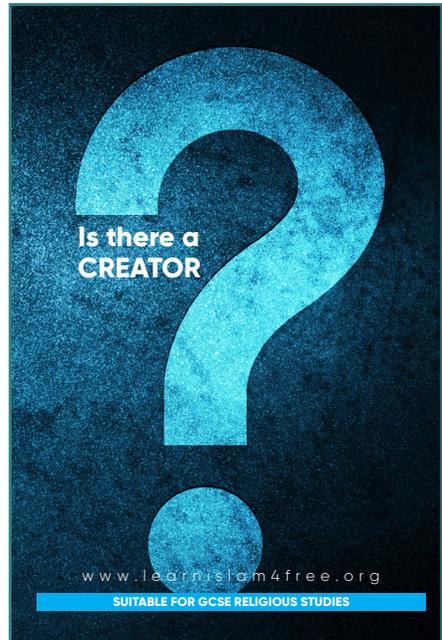
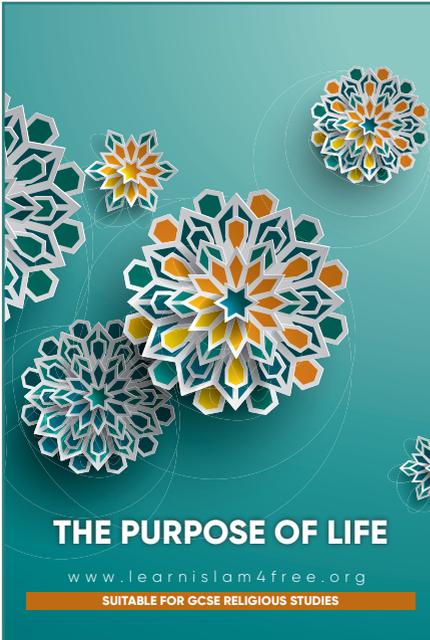
“You are all the children of Adam, and Adam was created from the dust. Let the people give up boasting of their ancestors, otherwise they will stand more degraded than a mean insect in the sight of Allah”. (Bazzar).

These teachings have not remained confined to words only but Islam has practically established a universal brotherhood of the believers on this basis, which does not allow any distinction on account of colour, race, language, country and nationality. It is free from any concept of high and low, clean and unclean, mean and respectable

and which admits all human beings with equal rights; whether they belong to any race and nation, any land or region! Even the opponents of Islam have to admit that no precedent is found in any religion and any system of the success with which the principle of human equality and unity has been given practical shape in the Muslim society, nor has it ever been found anywhere else. Islam is the only way of life which has welded and combined innumerable races and communities scattered in all corners of the earth into one universal community which it calls Ummah.

The Message of Islam therefore is for all of mankind to join in and help build a universal community living in peace, harmony and in complete sync with their true nature by understanding our relationship with our Creator, His Creation and our environment. This can be achieved by basing our understanding on truth, rationality, balanced views and justice for all.

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