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**ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY (5)**

**Prophethood II**

**Prophet of Islam**

**(saww)**

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**Chapter 1 of the book “Islamic beliefs”**

**Compiled by “International Institute for Islamic Studies (IIIS)**

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

Objectives:

• To know the characteristics of the holy Prophet of Islam (s)

• To get familiar with his way of life

• To know how he succeeded in his mission

• To understand why Muslims consider him as the paragon of virtue

# The bright night

It was a strange night. Iwan Kisra cracked; The fire in the Azargashsb fire temple, which had been burning for a thousand years, all of a sudden stopped. All the idols of the Ka‘ba collapsed and a great flash of light went up to the sky. The Prophet of kindness was born to quench, with his perfect conduct, the thirst of the world for knowledge and love. The character of the holy Prophet (s) captivated many hearts and his perfect conduct, like a magnet, attracted the masses. Many books have been written on his conduct and lifestyle. Many historians and orientalists believe that the biggest factor for his success and popularity was his perfect conduct. In many places in the glorious Qur’an, Allah (swt) talks about the Prophet’s (s) perfect conduct and states that the cause of his popularity was his good manners and kindness. Therefore, in this chapter, we will briefly study the factor for his success i.e. the character and conduct of the holy Prophet (s).

Iwān Kisrā: is a Sassanid-era Persian monument in Al-Mada'in which is the only visible remaining structure of the ancient city of Ctesiphon. It is near the modern town of Salman Pak, Iraq.

Azargoshasb fire temple: this temple existed in ancient Iran and was the place of worship for fire-worshippers for almost a thousand years.

Think about

When we hear about a successful leader, usually his intelligence and great management skills are considered among the secrets of his success. In your opinion, why have orientalists and historians considered his perfect conduct as the secret of his success amongst all the activities and works of the holy Prophet (s)? In your opinion, how important can conduct be in the prosperity of a leader?

Reference

What is the reason behind the events which occurred during the birth of the holy Prophet? Find the answer in the book of “The Message”/ p119, by Āyatullah Ja‘far Subhānī. The book is available at this link:

http://www.al-islam.org/message/

 Allah (swt) describes His Prophet (s)

In (9: 128), Allah (swt) introduces His Prophet (s) to people with four important attributes:

" لقدجائَكم رَسولٌ مِن انفسِكم عَزیزٌ عَلیهِ مَا عَنِتمْ حَرِیصٌ عَلیكم بالمُؤمِنِین رَوُفٌ رَحیم"

“There has certainly come to you an apostle from among yourselves. Grievous to him is your distress; he has deep concern for you, and is most kind and merciful to the faithful.”

In the surah of Qalam in the glorious Qur’an, Allah (swt) describes His Prophet (s) and in the 4th ayah states:

" و انک علی خلق عظیم"

“and indeed you possess a great character.”

The glorious Qur’an regards the holy Prophet’s (s) soft-nature and kindness as the secret of his popularity and in (3: 159) states:

فَبِما رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَ لَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَليظَ الْقَلْبِ لاَنْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَ اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَ شاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلين"

“It is by Allah’s mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hard-hearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah. Indeed Allah loves those who trust in Him.”

Case Study

Sir William Muir who was a well-known orientalist describes the holy Prophet(s):

A remarkable feature was the urbanity and consideration with which Muhammad treated even the most insignificant of his followers. Modesty and kindliness, patience, self-denial, and generosity, pervaded his conduct, and riveted the affections of all around him. He disliked to say No. If unable to answer a petitioner in the affirmative, he preferred silence. He was not known ever to refuse an invitation to the house even of the meanest, nor to decline a proffered present however small. He possessed the rare faculty of making each individual in a company think that he was the favoured guest. If he met anyone rejoicing at success he would seize him eagerly and cordially by the hand. With the bereaved and afflicted he sympathised tenderly. Gentle and unbending towards little children, he would not disdain to accost a group of them at play with the salutation of peace. He shared his food, even in times of scarcity, with others, and was sedulously solicitous for the personal comfort of everyone about him. A kindly and benevolent disposition pervaded all those illustrations of his character.

 Sir William Muir (Life of Muhammad, pp. 510-13)

Web Link:

To know more about the quotations from scholars from other faiths regarding the holy Prophet(s) of Islam see:

http://www.alislam.org

/library/links/eyes.html

The holy Prophet (s) withstood all spiritual and material pressures exerted by the disbelievers and did not give up his mission. After migrating to Medina, he established an Islamic government and gradually introduced divine laws and Islamic culture to Muslims. Āyatullah Mutahharī said: “What gave spirit, freshness and unity to this newly-founded society were two things: [one was] the glorious Qur’an which was read constantly and inspired people, and the other was the great character of the holy Prophet (s) which captured hearts.” Mentioning some key attributes of this excellent character, who appeared at the Age of Ignorance and, in a short while, formed a new age at the heart of history, may be useful for us to know more about his personality and understand his greatness and also know various aspects of his godly life. Trustworthiness, kindness, softness along with firmness, geniality in the family, benignity, self-discipline and simplicity, altruism, bravery and courage, resolution and resistance, leadership and management, being supportive of knowledge, devotion, hygiene and cleanliness, order and discipline are among the Prophet’s (s) significant attributes in his individual and social life some of which will be explained in brief from Āyatullah Mutahharī’s viewpoint.

Biography

Āyatullah Murtaḍā Mutahharī (1920 –1979) was an Iranian Muslim scholar, theorist, philosopher, and lecturer. He was an eminent and well- known theologian who dedicated his life to defend religion in the light of reason and intellect. He wrote more than 50 books. Some of his major books are: Tawhīd (Monotheism), Divine Justice, Prophethood and Principles of Philosophy and the approach of Realism. Included among the features of the fine works of this great thinker, the following can be mentioned:

One of features of the academic personality of Ayatullah Mutahhari, is his method of comparative discussion. His method in examining intellectual matters was that, after clarifying the subject and examining it from the perspective of Islamic philosophy and teachings, he would review and criticise the perspective of other schools of thought, religions, and philosophies, expressing their strong and weak points, and then finally, he would prove the superiority of Islamic philosophy and teachings. This method – especially in his philosophical and theological discussions, was particularly outstanding. The second feature of his works was his historical studies in various academic fields. Familiarity with history and the root causes of an issue, and the evolutionary developments it has passed through, has an important contribution to the correct understanding of scholarly discussions. This method, particularly in his philosophical discussions, has been followed well. The third feature is the exceptional comprehensiveness within his works. Many of the important and core topics of Islam and Muslims have been explained and interpreted within them, resulting in him being given the titles “Islamic scholar” and “martyr teacher” and since he had expertise in most Islamic topics and passed on his wide-ranging scholarly findings to others. Another feature present within his works is simplicity and eloquence in writing and speech such that many people have been attracted to read his books.

Ayatullah Mutahhari had been a student of the outstanding mystic, philosopher and exegetist of the Islamic world Allamah Tabatabai and, in the realm of mysticism, had been one of the special students of that great personality. He was assassinated in 1979. The Miracle of Morality

Discussion activity

Before reading the next part, read the attributes of the holy Prophet (s) once more. Discuss what you know about these attributes with your friends. In your opinion, which one is more useful for leading a society?

# Perseverance and Tirelessness

One of the most distinguishing characteristics required within missionary activity is patience and perseverance. In this regard, God says to the Prophet (s) within the Holy Quran “So be steadfast, just as you have been commanded…” (11:112). We tend to look past the bright spot in the history of Islam and towards the dark days and this view, which is from “the future towards the past” portrays realities in a different way. We need to imagine ourselves in that time that the Prophet (s) was alone; there was no sign of victory ahead of him to be seen. Obstinate enemies were out to eliminate him and even some of his relatives were on the front line of this battle! He continuously went among the Arab tribes and invited them to Islam, but no one responded to his invitation. Stones were thrown at him, such that blood came from his blessed body, but he did not waver in his mission. He was within such social, economic and political surroundings that all ways for him and his few followers were blocked. Some died of starvation and some from illness. His few followers were tortured, tortures that affected his heart and soul.

Days passed for the Prophet (s) that are difficult to be described in speech and writing. When, for the purpose of inviting to Islam, he went to Taif, not only did the people not accept his invitation but they even threw so many stones at him that blood flowed from his feet. They got ignorant people to shout at him and curse him. He was forced to take refuge in a garden and sat under the shade of a tree and spoke to God: “O Allah, to You alone do I complain of the debilitation of my strength, the deficiency of my means, and the contempt with which people treat me. O Allah, the Most Merciful of those who have mercy, You are the Lord of those who are oppressed, helpless and weak. And You are my Lord. To whom would You render me? To someone far-off who would sullenly frown at me? Or to an enemy whom You have given control over my affairs? If You are not angry with me, then I should not worry.” Sometimes they called him a sorcerer and other times they called him crazy and at times they poured ashes on his head. They even plotted to kill him and encircled his house with swords. The difficulties that the Prophet was subjected to were such that he stated: No prophet was made to suffer torment as I did. In the Battle of Uhud, they broke his teeth and struck his forehead with stones. However, he supplicated to God: “Oh God, guide my people for they are ignorant.” Amidst these conditions, he continued with patience and perseverance. Finally, the sweet fruit of this tree was tasted and his religion not only fills the Arabian Peninsula, but exists throughout the whole world. Today, the call to prayer, which is his victory cry, is heard in all four corners of the world and in all of the five continents of the planet.

Progress Tracking

A part of the acts of worship of the Prophet (s) that have been mentioned, have been those such as remaining awake for the major part of the night and devoting it to saying the special prayers of the Prophet (s) and his household. The Holy Quran, in verse 41 of chapter 73, where it commands the Prophet (s) and his household to spend half or a major part of the night in worship, is only addressing the Prophet (s) and his household, as opposed to the other Islamic commandments whose addressee is the general public. What is asked of us it that, first of all, we act upon that which Islam has informed us is obligatory on us, such as the daily prayers and the fast of the holy months of Ramadan, and, alongside work and acquiring knowledge, to the extent possible, to spend our time in worshiping our lord and in his remembrance. In fact, in studying the characters of the Prophet (s) and his household, we should look at all dimensions of their lives so that at no time we stray away from the path of moderation. For example, it was this same Prophet who spent his nights in worship in this way, but who also was busier than anyone else with work and activities in the daytime. He regarded work and effort for obtaining the means for the living and welfare of the family as worship of God and ordered and encouraged others to engage in this worship.

# Worship

The Prophet (s) stated that: “The best of people are those who love to perform worship and prayer.”

Spirituality and worship are among the most important points of discussion in regards to the behaviour of the Prophet (s). There are various manifestations of worship of the Prophet (s), such as prayer and remembrance, nightly devotion and supererogatory prayers, fasting and hajj. His prayer, which he called the light of his eyes, was accompanied with the utmost attention and presence of the heart. The Messenger of Islam (s) also placed special emphasis on supererogatory prayers. Also, intense and prolonged worship along with their preparations and introductions, specific practices such as dividing prayers according to the hours of the night, remaining awake for a part of the night, recitation of the Quran and conversing with his lord were among the devotional activities reported from the Prophet’s life.

During the night, the Messenger of God (s) arose from his bed and, after making ablution and brushing his teeth and then reciting some verses of the Holy Quran, went into a corner and engaged in worship and crying. Some, who saw him in this condition, asked the Prophet (s): “You, who does not have any sins, why do you cry so much?” He answered: “Should I not be thankful to God?”

Umm Salamah reported: One night the Prophet (s) was in my home. I saw him standing in the darkness, his hands were raised up and he was shedding tears and was saying: Oh God! Do not take from me whatever blessing You have given to me, do not please my enemy, do not entrap me in adversities which you have saved me from, do not leave me on my own - even for the twinkling of an eye. I said to him: You have been exempted! He replied: No person is without need of God. Prophet Jonah (as), the moment he was left to himself, he became imprisoned in the belly of a fish.

When the month of Ramadan arrived, the Prophet (s) freed all his slaves. At the time of prayer he would tremble and whenever he prayed by himself, he would prolong his prostrations. However, whenever he led the congregational prayers of others he read them in a very normal and simple way. The Prophet (s) recommended to one of his companions, who became a leader of prayers for other Muslims: Whenever you are standing with others in prayer, after reciting the chapter al-Hamd, try to choose a short chapter to recite and do not prolong the prayer.

Imam Ali (as) in regard to the worship of the Prophet of Islam (s) said: “When he stood in prayer, due to the intensity of fear and grief and much crying, a sound came from inside him that sounded like the boiling of a pot set on fire; and this was while he was safe from the punishment of God. By these acts he wanted to increase his reverence for, and humility before, God and to be a leader and guide for others.”

# Trustworthiness

Before being chosen as the Prophet (s), Muhammad (s) went on a business trip to Shām(Greater Syria) for Khadījah, whom he later married. During that trip, his ability, trustworthiness, reliability and uprightness became manifest more than before. He was so well-known as being upright that people called him “Muhammad al-Amīn” [meaning “the trustworthy Muhammad”]. People used to trust him with their property. After being chosen as the Prophet, although the tribe Quraysh had become his enemies, still they used to trust him with their property. Also, after migrating to Medina, he requested Ali (a) to stay some more days in Mecca to return the trusted property to their owners.

# Simplistic Lifestyle

Despite his high position and status, the Prophet (s) did not lead a life like that of rulers; he lived a very simplistic life. Once, a person came to see the Prophet while he was sitting in a circle of his companions. He looked at those present and could not identify the Prophet from among them, thus he asked, “Which of you is the messenger of God?” The Prophet replied, “I am.” This person describes the Prophet (s) like so: “I saw him wearing simple clothing like the rest.” (Kanz al-Fawā’id, vol. 1, p. 212)

# Cleanliness and Tidiness

The Prophet of Islam (s) not only gave importance to the cleanliness of his soul, but also gave a great deal of attention to the cleanliness and tidiness of his appearance. He also, by his behaviour and speech, commended cleanliness and hygiene to others. The Messenger (s) valued cleanliness much and in cleanliness of body and clothes, he was unique.

In addition to the regular ablutions, he washed himself most days and considered both to be acts of worship. He washed his hair with cedar leaf and combed it, and scented himself with musk and amber. Several times daily, especially at nights before sleeping and after awakening, he would brush his teeth with care. He also told his companions: “Never sit with yellow and unclean teeth in a gathering. Do not neglect brushing your teeth and keeping them clean.”

The Prophet’s (s) clothes were always clean.

Before and after eating, he would wash his hands and mouth and he would abstain from eating bad-smelling herbs.

A comb, scissors, mirror and toothbrush were items he would take on journeys with him.

His home was very simple and always clean.

He emphasised that rubbish should be taken out in the daytime and not remain in its place until night.

Cleanliness of his body and limbs was in harmony with cleanliness of his soul. He emphasised to his companions and followers that they keep their head, face, clothes and home clean and requested that they wash themselves, especially on Fridays, and that they use fragrance in order that they would not give off a bad odour while attending the Friday prayers.

He did not like unwashed dishes to be left and said: before sleeping at night, wash the dishes.

These points are only a small reflection of the importance this great personality gave to the issue of cleanliness and hygiene. Prophet Muhammad (s) lived a very simple life but he cared deeply about cleanliness and tidiness and recommended to others that they be clean and tidy.

# Soft, Yet Firm

One of the characteristics of God’s chosen ones is that their personalities possess opposite characteristics. In other words, when God’s satisfaction lies in mercy, their encounter will be full of mercy and kindness, and when it lies in seriousness and firmness, they deal with firmness and boldness.

The holy Prophet (s) was soft, moderate and forgiving in his personal issues and whatever was related to himself; cases of his great and historical forgiveness were keys of his great achievements; but in fundamental and general issues where it was the realm of law, he would show resolution and firmness and he would not overlook the situation. After conquering Mecca and the Quraysh, he overlooked all the harms that the Quraysh had inflicted on him during the past twenty years and forgave it all immediately. He also accepted the repentance of the assassin of Hamzah, his uncle.

Yet, during that same conquest of Mecca, when one of the noblewomen had committed usurpation and such was established, he carried out the law regarding her.

# His conduct towards his family

He was very cordial in his family. He would not treat his family harshly and that was in contrary to the social norm of his time. He strongly advised men to treat their wives kindly and stated: “All people have positive and negative qualities. Men should not consider only negative qualities of their wives and leave them; because whenever a negative quality of hers bothers him another quality of hers would please him. He was extremely kind to his children and grandchildren. He used to sit them on his lap or his shoulders and kiss them. One day, he kissed one of his grandchildren (Imam Hassan ibn Ali al-Mujtabā (a)) in the presence of a nobleman. That man said: “I have two sons and I have never kissed them.” The holy Prophet (s) stated: “Whoever does not show mercy [on others] would not deserve [Allah’s] mercy.”

Pillars of Wisdom

The Prophet (s) stated:

 ’The most faithful people are those who have better manners within their families and express more love to them; and I express love to my family more than you do!’

’Respect your children and treat and interact with them in a good manner.’

# With Slaves

During the Age of Ignorance, slavery was very common and slaves didn not have any individual or social rights. The religion of Islam set numerous laws in an effort to revive the rights of slaves, doing everything possible to set the stage for their ultimate freedom. The Prophet (s) was extremely kind to slaves. During his lifetime, he would buy and set free slaves in the way of Allah under various pretexts and would encourage others to do so as well. He would tell the people, “These are your brothers, feed them the same food you yourselves consume, and cover them with the same clothing you use to cover yourselves.” He considered the slave trade as the worst occupation and would say, “The worst of people in Allah’s eyes are those who sell people.”

Reference

To know more about the League of the Virtuous (Hilf al-Fuḍūl) see the book of The Life of Muhammad - the Prophet(s)/ chapter 4 by Akhtar Rizvi. You can find the book at

http://www.al-islam.org/lifeprophet/

# Fighting against oppression

He always supported the oppressed and struggled against oppressors. There are many examples in history that he made efforts to administer justice. In the [pre-Islamic] Age of Ignorance, he made a covenant with a group who suffered from oppression to protect the oppressed and fight against oppressors. This covenant was called “Hilf al-Fuḍūl”. Later, he sometimes remembered that covenant and said: “I would not agree for that covenant to be broken and even now I am ready to participate in such a covenant again.”

# His Hate for Idleness and Wasting Time

He would say:

“O Allah! I seek refuge in you from indisposition and not being lively, from feebleness and laziness, and disability and abjection.” (Al-Jāmi‘ al-Saghīr, vol. 1, p. 58)

He would encourage the Muslims to work and would say:

“Worship is seventy parts and the best of those is earning a halal living.” (al-Kāfī, vol. 5, p. 78)

# Organization and Doing Things in a Proper Manner

When he did something, he liked to do it impeccably and appropriately, to the extent that when his loyal companion, Sa‘d ibn Ma‘ādh, passed away and was placed in the grave, and he saw that they had not properly constructed it, he personally moved its stones and bricks around and solidified it and went on to say:

“I know it will not be long before all of this is ruined, but whenever a believer does something, Allah likes it that he does it in a proper and appropriate form.”

# His Mission

His mission was the perfection of man. He describes the goal of his mission as: “I was chosen to complete moral virtues.” The religion which Muhammad (s) introduced to people is a comprehensive program for living which includes both aspects of human’s life, i.e. his material and spiritual aspects. In other words, a Muslim is the one who is prosperous both in this world and the Hereafter. Therefore, a collection of individual and social guidelines can be found in the Qur’an, teaching human beings the true way of life and ultimately achieving prosperity. He spent his lifetime on teaching humanity and prepared the grounds for the development and perfection of human beings and ethics by establishing Islamic government. Imam Ali (a) introduced his cousin (the holy Prophet (s)) to people with very beautiful attributes:

“[He is] an itinerant healing doctor.

Summary

The Prophetic mission of the holy Prophet (s) was to bring all aspects of human life to perfection and his activities were too comprehensive to be mentioned here. However, some of his most important measures which were recorded by historians during 23 years of his Prophetic mission are as follows:

• Reviving monotheism and fighting idol-worshipping

• Establishing an Islamic government based on monotheism

• Accomplishment of the divine mission and delivering the word of God (the Qur’an) to people and striving for upholding its laws

• Promoting the value of reason and knowledge and fighting with ignorance and superstitions

• Creating Islamic culture and civilization

• Explaining and disseminating Divine teachings and training faithful and virtuous people

• Spreading and establishing moral virtues

• Promoting the position and status of women and strengthening the family foundation

• Establishing equity and brotherhood and introducing faith and piety as the only factors of superiority among human beings

• Fighting against racial and ethnic discrimination

We will discuss more about the mission of the holy Prophet (s) in future units.

# The Holy Qur’an

 The holy Qur'an is the most important source for all Muslims and acts as an instrument of unity. Regardless of their sectarian and cultural backgrounds, all Muslims refer to the same book as the divine guide to govern their lives.

Muslims deny any alteration in the Qur'an and believe that the Qur'an available today is the same that was revealed to the prophet Muhammad.

The Qur'an is a living and eternal reminder (dhikr) which will never die and fall into oblivion. It is immune from any addition and loss and secure against any alterations in form and style, which could affect its character and role as "the Reminder of Allah which expresses divine truth and knowledge."

# It is a miracle

It was demanded of the Prophet (s), as it had been of other prophets, that he produce a miracle. The Prophet himself also confirmed the power of prophets to produce miracles as has been asserted clearly by the Qur’an. Many miracles by the Prophet have been recounted, the performance of some of which is certain and can be accepted with confidence. But the enduring miracle of the Prophet, which is still alive, is the sacred book of Islam, the Holy Qur’an. The Holy Qur’an is a sacred text consisting of 6236 verses (āyah) divided into one hundred and fourteen large and small chapters (sūrah). The verses of the Holy Qur’an were revealed gradually during the twenty-three year period of prophecy and mission of the Prophet. From less than one verse to a whole chapter were revealed under different circumstances, during the day and night, on journeys or at home, in war or peace, during days of hardship or moments of rest.

The Holy Qur’an in many of its verses introduces itself in an unambiguous language as a miracle. It invited the Arabs of that day to rivalry and competition in composing writings of comparable truth and beauty. The Arabs, according to the testimony of history, had reached the highest stages of eloquence and elegance in verbal expression, and in the sweetness of language and flow of speech they ranked among the foremost. The Holy Qur’an claims that if it be thought of as human speech, created by the Prophet himself or learned through instruction from someone else, then the Arabs should be able to produce its like or ten chapters like it, or a single one of its chapters, making use of whatever means were at their disposal to achieve this end. The Qur’an introduces itself as the Prophet’s (s) eternal miracle and challenges all of mankind to bring a book like it, if they have any doubt in it being a miracle. Here, we look to briefly analyze the different dimensions to its inimitability.

Key Terms:

Tahaddī: Denotes when one challenges others to match him/her in an act, writing or speech. One of the dimensions of the inimitability of the Qur’an is tahaddī.

# The Qur’an’s Challenge

The Qur’an shows that from the beginning of its revelation, namely the period in Mecca, it was, as Islamic theologians put it, mutahaddī, that is, from when it was revealed, it challenged the people, not only of that day and age and place, but throughout history and everywhere. The Qur’an says:

قُل لَّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى أَن يَأْتُواْ بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لاَ يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا (17:88)

“Say, “Should all humans and jinn rally to bring the like of this Qur’an, they will not bring the like of it, even if they assisted one another.” (17:88)

Think about:

In your opinion:

- If the enemies of Islam could write a book like the Qur’an, don’t you think they would use it against Islam? So why is it that till this day, there hasn’t been any significant claim about someone matching the Qur’an? Can this not be a sign that indeed man is incapable of matching it?

- How is it that till this day, no one has been able to bring a book like the Qur’an?

# The Essence of the Claim of the Qur’an

In some places, the Qur’an tells the deniers of its inimitability to bring ten chapters like those of the Qur’an,

قل فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِسُوَرٍمِثْلِهِ

Bring ten chapters like it. (11:13)

وَادْعُوامَن اسْتَطَعْتُم مِن دُون اللَّهِ

And call upon anyone you want [for aid] other than Allah

 In other places, it steps even further and says,

“قُل فَأْتُوابِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ”

Oh Prophet, tell these deniers to bring one chapter like it.

وَادْعُوامَن اسْتَطَعْتُم مِن دُون اللَّهِ

Call upon anyone you can other than Allah! (10:38)

What can be concluded by these words of the Qur’an is that the Qur’an has claimed to be a miracle and that does not necessarily mean that it is a miracle in its entirety, its chapters in their individuality are also miracles.

# The Advantage of the Qur’an over Other Miracles

## 1. Being Speech

Every endeavor and action represents its doer. For example, a building represents its architect and a rug represents its weaver. Nonetheless, all of these fall short of how speech represents who it belongs to. There is a chance that a person sees someone’s painting and gets an impression of its painter, but upon actually encountering the painter and listening to him speak, he learns more of the painter and the impression changes. Thus, nothing can unveil one’s personality more accurately than his speech. From this perspective, since it is also speech, the Qur’an is a good introducer of the one dictating it, which is God Almighty.

Discussion Activity

Which characteristics of the Qur'an make it an everlasting miracle for all generations and in all places?

Share your ideas with your fellow classmates in this regard.

## 2. Everlastingness

Another advantage of the Qur’an in this sense is its everlastingness. Nothing is as everlasting as speech and the secret behind why speech was chosen as the Prophet’s main miracle is the fact that since his religion is the seal of religions, and is a religion to remain forever, the only thing that has the capability of remaining unchanged is speech. This is while other prophet’s miracles, such as reviving the dead, were all incidents that happened only in the sight of a few, and were merely recounted afterwards.

The Different Dimensions of the Qur’an’s Inimitability

The Qur’an is a miracle in different ways, meaning that it is beyond the ability of man.

First: Literary Inimitability:

The literary inimitability of the Qur’an has to do with art and beauty. What is interesting is that the beauty of the Qur’an knows no limits in time and space. Many of the nice and beautiful words that exist are specific to a particular period and do not match with other epochs, or at least, are in harmony with a nation’s cultural background; the Qur’an on the other hand, does not belong to a specific time, ethnicity or culture.

All of those who became acquainted with the language of the Qur’an found it to be in harmony with their taste. No matter how much time elapses and how many new nations become familiar with it, people are still drawn towards the beauty of the Qur’an.

Throughout the fourteen centuries since its advent, Islam’s enemies have made painstaking efforts to undermine its status, such as ascribing alteration to it, or formulating chapters that match its chapters, but have failed to answer the challenge of the Qur’an.

The following are two examples of orientalists’ observations in this regard:

For instance E. H. Palmer says "the best of Arab writers have never succeeded in producing anything equal in merit to the Qur'an" (Palmer, 1900, p. IV) and the famous Arabist H. Gibb asserts that:

"...the Meccans still demanded of him a miracle, and with remarkable boldness and self-confidence Mohammad appealed as a supreme confirmation of his mission to the Koran itself. Like all Arabs they were the connoisseurs of language and rhetoric. Well, then if the Koran were his own composition other men could rival it. Let them produce ten verses like it. If they could not (and it is obvious that they could not), then let them accept the Koran as an outstanding evident miracle." (Gibb, 1980, p. 28)

Elsewhere he asserts:

"As a literary monument the Koran thus stands by itself, a production unique to Arabic literature, having neither forerunners nor successors in its own idiom. Muslims of all ages are united in proclaiming the inimitability not only of its contents but also of its style...and in forcing the high Arabic idiom into the expression of new ranges of thought the Koran develops a bold and strikingly effective rhetorical prose in which all the resources of syntactical modulation are exploited with great freedom and originality." (Gibb, 1963, p.36)”

Interestingly, even the Prophet’s own words – through whom the Qur’an was revealed – differ from those of the Qur’an. Many words have been narrated by the Prophet in the form of sermons, supplications, sayings and traditions and are at the peak of eloquence, yet none have the style of the Qur’an. This by itself shows that the Qur’an and the personal words of the Prophet come from two different sources.

The word structure in the Qur’an is unmatched; no one has ever been able to alternate its words without damaging its beauty or to pen something like it.

Progress Tracking

Note that, in the Holy Quran, there are in general three types of challenge which God has posed to humans and which expose the inability of man to produce something like the Quran and thus prove the miraculous nature of the Quran. The types of challenges in the Quran are in these three forms, that all the humans and jinn, if they come together, they could not bring the like of 1) the Quran, 2) 10 chapters of the Quran, and 3) one chapter of the Quran.

Web Link:

To learn of non-Muslim scholars’ words on the Qur’an, you can refer to the following link:

http://www.tebyan.net/

newindex.aspx?pid=65736

Some aspects of the literary beauty of the Qur’an:

1. Eloquent, but not Poetry

One of the facets of the inimitability of the Qur’an is its eloquence. Its eloquence is of beauty, and beauty is something to be sensed, not described. For example, no one has been able to come up with a formula for visual beauty; rather, it is a sense in each and every person that has to do with the heart and one’s feelings, not knowledge and intellect. It is due to this fact that the content of poetry does not necessarily have to be accurate; all that matters when it comes to the beauty of poetry is its outer literary form, to the extent that they say that “the best of poetry is the most false of it”; poetry containing the most false exaggeration is the most beautiful. These are all factors in the inimitability of the Qur’an, in the sense that while it bears the utmost beauty, its style has nothing to do with the style of poetry, exaggeration and falsehood. The Qur’an is neither poetry nor prose. It is not poetry because it does not rhyme the way poetry does, and also does not have the imaginary side to it that poetry usually carries. Poetry revolves around exaggeration which is a type of falsehood, but in the Qur’an, there are no imaginary analogies and metaphors. At the same time, it is not prose either, due to its harmony and rhythm; a rhythm unprecedented in all other prose till this day and Muslims continuously recite it with this special rhythm.

2. The Qur’an’s Approach to analogy

What lends to the beauty of speech is the use of analogies therein; the reason being that when one thing is likened to another, the two are made ‘partners’ and this is what arouses awe. Interestingly, the Qur’an does not utilize this technique much and yet it remains very intriguing. Therefore, another dimension of the Qur’an’s inimitability is that it does not make much use of this important tool that man uses to embellish his speech, and yet, it remains captivating.

Reference:

If you wish to know more about the different aspects of the literary inimitability of the Qur’an, please refer to page 49 of the book Word of God, by Dr. Shomali.

3. Its Ability to take on Rhythm

As far as different languages are concerned, it is only poetry that can be rhythmic. Of course, any prose can be sung out loud, but even those who have no background in music can tell that prose is to be read rather than recited with rhythm. Yet, there are some proses that can take on rhythm. What is meant by them being capable of taking on rhythm is that their message is better conveyed when recited with rhythm rather than without. The Qur’an’s structure isn’t that of poetry, because it does not rhyme nor are all its syllables in harmony. Its content does not resemble that of poetry either, because poetry is dependent upon the imagination, while the Qur’an is devoid of all poetic imagination. The Qur’an is the only rhythmic prose that exists. Religious teachings teach us to recite the Qur’an with a pleasant rhythm; a rhythm inspiring spirituality, not one of gatherings of amusement.

The other sayings of the Prophet cannot be recited in such a manner and cannot take on any rhythm.

The reason why Islam encourages reciting the Qur’an with a rhythm is because it bears this capability and is receptive to it and can manifest better through it.

4. The Sweetness of the Qur’an

Another matter is the sweetness of the Qur’an. Meaning the sweetness it has for the person reading it and how it is in harmony with his nature, such that one’s thirst for it is never quenched. In Islam, due to the impact it has, recitation of the Qur’an is, in and of itself, of high importance; this impact owes to the structure and beauty of the Qur’an, because these words differ from other words. If you hear the same message through another means and structure, it will not have the same sway and influence as when you hear it through the Qur’an’s words.

No matter how much this sweetness is repeated, it does not decrease, and this is also one of the miraculous aspects of the Qur’an.

Web Link

To know more about the attraction of the Qur’an see the following web site:

http://www.tebyan.net/newindex

.aspx?pid=193170&KEYWORD=quran

## Second: Harmony and Proportionality of the Qur'an

The harmony and proportionality of the Qur'an from the point of view of its form and meaning is also another aspect of its inimitable nature. The Qur'an itself says: 'Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.' (4: 82)

In explanation of this aspect of the inimitability of the Qur'an it should be taken into account that every human being goes through two different types of transformations in life. One is his personal development, where his knowledge increases through age. The reflection of this can be seen in the contradictions of his thought and understanding which are eventually reflected in his speech. The second is a transformation due to the different incidents that take place in a person's life, which initiate emotional, sentimental, and psychological states that, in turn, lead to hope, sadness, happiness, peacefulness, and absurdity. These are the factors that bring about change in man's speech. If it were to be assumed that the Qur'an is the work of the holy Prophet of Islam (s), who went through so many traumas in his life, then the effects of these would certainly have been reflected in what he brought. However, no such evidence can be found in the Qur'an and this becomes another proof for the inimitability of the Qur'an.

In relation to matters relating to the empirical sciences, one must keep in mind that the Qur'an is not a scientific book providing empirical knowledge, and also the empirical sciences are always changing on the basis of new research.

In addition to this, the Qur'an also tells of the unseen (ghayb) and of future events. This does not include just the precise information given about the history of Moses, Jesus, the People of cave (Seven Sleepers), etc. A significant proportion of the Qur'an focuses on the history, on its contemporary time and also on the future. These events have occurred precisely as explained by the Qur'an. Moreover, they were not mentioned in an ambiguous fashion or just in a symbolic way.

The Qur'an is consistent and at the same time is composed of different types of knowledge. For example, it is not just a history book but comprises a vast range of subject matters. Furthermore, the Qur'an is a divine Book; its meanings and words are both revealed by God and protected by God Himself, as He says in the Qur'an: 'Certainly, We sent the Reminder and We will protect it'. (9:15). Professor Neuwirth, a contemporary Islamist, basis his argument on similar grounds and asserts in his essay in The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an:

"The Qur'anic text transmitted to us betrays a peculiar composition, essentially different from that of the Hebrew Bible, which pursues salvation history through a roughly chronological sequence of events, and equally different from the Gospels that narrate essential stages of the founding history of Christian faith. The Qur'an does not present a continuous narrative of the past, but in its early text conjures the future, the imminent day of judgment, and later on enters into debate with various interlocutors about the implementation of monotheist scripture in the present." (Neuwirth, 2006, p. 97)

The Scholars in the past and present have recognized the substantial amount discussed in a proportional and harmonious manner. This proportionality and harmoniousness is not only related to past and future events, but also contains what is required by every human being to be guided and live a prosperous life.

Reference

You can refer to the research of Dr. Bucaille, The Bible, the Qur 'an and Science to know more about the empirical scientific aspect of Qur’anic Knowledge. Note that based on what is said in this chapter, although, the research of Dr Bucaille is a good piece of work but it cannot be considered as absolute.

## Third: Intellectual and Scientific Inimitability:

The Qur’an’s inimitability from this point of view calls for a broad discussion, but it can also be concisely analyzed. It must be noted that the noble Prophet of Islam (s), and all the other prophets in general, are different personalities; they are neither philosophers, nor scholars, nor poets, nor historians, nor industrialists, nor artists. But at the same time, they possess all their merits plus more. The Qur’an also, being a divine book, is neither philosophy, nor science, nor history, nor literature, nor artwork; yet it possesses the characteristics of all the above and more.

The Qur’an is a book of guidance to mankind and in reality, is the book of ‘man’; man here being the one God has created and the prophets have come to introduce to Him, and to teach him the path unto their salvation. The human that man knows through sciences is the man located between birth and death, while what happens before birth and after death is dark territory unknown to material sciences. The man of the Qur’an on the other hand, has no unknown territory; he comes from another world and must complete himself in this world, and his hereafter depends on how much effort or laziness he exhibits in this world. The man of the Qur’an needs to know:

where he has come from, where he is headed, where he is now and what he must accomplish.

It is only when he can correctly answer these four questions that he can secure his true salvation in this and the next world.

In addition to all of the above, the man of the Qur’an must believe in a series of unseen and non-tangible creatures (which the Qur’an collectively refers to as al-ghayb) as the manifestations and channels of divine will in this world of existence, and must know that God Almighty has never left man, who is need of divine guidance, to himself, rather, He has sent elite individuals to convey God’s message to mankind.

In addition to this, the Qur’an also has things to say regarding the natural sciences. For example, it has spoken about wind, rain, earth, the sky and animals. Later scientists have concentrated more on these issues the Qur’an speaks about and have tried to prove what the Qur’an says complies with what science has gradually discovered. Of course, we should not rush when it comes to applying scientific theories to Qur’anic verses, because later on, a theory’s inaccuracy may be proven. Nonetheless, there are many examples of these scientific miracles in the Qur’an. As a matter of fact, the scientific content of the Qur’an comprises those things that are gradually discovered and comprehended in the future. What man discovers regarding the miracles of the Qur’an, especially in its content, are vastly more than what he knew ten centuries ago, whether it has to do with beauty, science or intelligence.

Reference

If you wish to know more about the unschooled Prophet (s) and historical evidence for him being so, please refer to the book The Unschooled Prophet by Āyatullah Murtada Mutahhari. You can find this book here:

http://www.al-islam.org/unschooled/

## Delivered by the Unschooled Prophet

One of the definite characteristics of the holy Prophet of Islam (s) which no one can deny is that the Prophet was “ummī” i.e. he had not written, he had not studied nor had he been taught by any teacher. This fact is so definite and clear that famous western orientalists have mentioned it in their books. Stating that such words which are in the extreme eloquence and fluency and contain the secrets of the universe, shows that it is a divine work and this knowledge is gained through revelation. In this regard the holy Qur’an says:

“You were not able to read or write before the Qur’an was revealed to you; however, the followers of falsehood would have tried to confuse the matter” (29:48(

Key Terms:

Wudhu: is the Islamic procedure for washing parts of the body using water, typically in preparation for prayers and reciting Qur’an.

Qiblah : is the direction that should be faced when a Muslim prays during salah. It is fixed towards the direction of the k'aba in Mecca.

# The Etiquettes of Recitation:

The Holy Quran is the best and most important blessing that God has bestowed upon man. So that in the first verses of the chapter Al-Rahman it says: “The All-Beneficent has taught the Quran. He created man, [and] taught him articulate speech.”

The human only reaches to his ultimate perfection in the light of the teachings of God and through the receiving and consideration of the Quran. Because the Quran is the source of all riches and the means to receive all blessings, both material and spiritual, even though the creation of man was prior to the revelation of the Quran, God, however, due to the importance of the Quran, has given it precedence in these verses.

One of the most fundamental missions of the Prophet (s) was the recitation of the Quran to the people. Therefore, the first step to benefit from the Quran is the recitation of its verses. We will briefly describe some of the properties of the recitation of the Holy Quran:

## Speaking with the Lord

The Quran is God’s letter and the way to gain familiarity with Him is to read His letter. In the words of Imam Sadiq (as): God has revealed Himself through his speech to humanity.

## Utilising the guidance of the Quran

Recitation of the Quran paves the way for guidance and spiritual evolution; this is because we become familiar with the commands, prohibitions and instructions of God and try to act according to that which has been commanded and abstain from that which has been prohibited. Pious Muslims regard the recitation of the Quran to be the introduction to action and Imam Sadiq (as) regarded the true recitation to be taking lessons from the Quran and submitting to and complying with its commandments.

## Encouragement to develop characteristics necessary for the utilisation of the Quran

The Quran considers its specific guidance to be especially for the pious. These virtuous individuals are adorned with traits such as staying awake at nights, humility in worship, patience in difficulty, forgiveness, integrity and being thankful for divine blessings. The reciter of the Quran, when reading of these required traits, will desire to acquire them.

## Making the decision to refrain from committing sin

A person, through recitation of the Quran, will taste the joy of understanding its verses and when faced with obstacles to understanding the Quran he will be determined to overcome them. One of the most fundamental obstacles to understanding the Quran is due to the heart of a person being contaminated with sin. Therefore, by reciting the Quran, a person will stay away from sin.

## Response to supplication

Permanent familiarity with the Quran provides honour to the reciter and, in respect to this companionship and friendship of God, he will blessed with much good in this world and the next world. In a hadith of Imam Sadiq (as), he relates that God says: “Whoever, instead of requesting from me, spends his time in My remembrance, I will give him the highest amount.”

## Cause of Enlightenment

Recitation of the Quran causes a person to become enlightened and heavenly. The holy Prophet (s), in advising Abu Dhar, said: “Recite the Quran and remember God much, because recitation of the Quran causes you to be remembered in the heavens and is the source for your enlightenment in this world.”

These are only some of the benefits to becoming acquainted with the Word of God and which cause us to become ever more attracted to its text. This is besides the essential sweetness and beauty of the Quran which is known to those most acquainted with it. Ayatullah Mutahhari, regarding the need for familiarity and understanding of the Quran, says:

The study and knowledge of the Quran is essential for every learned person as well as for all faithful believers. It is especially essential for those scholars who are interested in the study of man and society, since this book has been effectively instrumental not only in moulding the destinies of Islamic societies, but also in shaping the destiny of the human race as a whole. A brief glance over history would be enough to provide sufficient proof of the claim that there has been no such book that has ever influenced human societies to the magnitude of the Quran. It is for the same reason that the Quran automatically steps into the precincts of sociological discussions, and becomes the elemental constituent of the subjects of research in this discipline. This means that any deep study and research in the field of world history generally, and of Islamic societies in particular, during the last fourteen hundred years, is impossible without the knowledge of the Quran.

The study of the Quran is essential for every committed Muslim, since it is the main source and foundation of the religious thought and faith. Whatsoever gives meaning, essence and sanctity to his existence lies in the Holy Quran.

The Qur'an formulates the tenets of faith besides communicating the ideas and views that are essential for a man of faith and belief. Similarly, it also lays down the principles of moral and ethical values for the purpose of social and familial existence. It leaves the job of explanation, interpretation, and occasionally that of ijtihad and application of principles (usul) to secondary matters (furu') to be dealt with through ijtihad and sunnah. Accordingly, utilization of any other source depends on the prior knowledge of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the criterion and standard for judging all other sources. We should judge hadith and sunnah in the light of the Qur'an. We can accept it only when it is in accordance with the Qur'an, otherwise we do not accept it.

This all bears witness to the fact that man must place the Quran and its deep teachings as the cornerstone of all activities in his life and with continuous recitation and reflection and contemplation on its verses he opens the way for individual and social well-being. Unfortunately, occasionally it is seen in some families that they use the Quran only for recitation in some special ceremonies, whereas the Quran has been, is, and will be, the perfect program for life and the means of salvation and solving the problems of humanity. It is also occasionally seen that some persons only recite the Quran and do not pay attention to its sublime meanings and teachings. Of course recitation in itself is good; however the mentioned benefits of recitation of the Quran are mainly for those who combine their recitation with thinking about its teachings and are able to find its key truths.

Recitation of the Qur’an has some outward etiquettes, such as being with wudhu, facing the qiblah, brushing the teeth before, etc. Although these etiquettes are important and are encouraged to be observed, but more important than these are the etiquettes of a true recitation:

الَّذينَ آتَيْناهُمُ الْكِتابَ يَتْلُونَهُ حَقَّ تِلاوَتِهِ أُولئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَ مَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ فَأُولئِكَ هُمُ الْخاسِرُونَ

Those to whom We have given the Book read it as it ought to be read. These believe in it; and whoever disbelieves in it, these it is that are the losers. (2:121)

## A proper recitation of the Qur’an bears the following:

1. Recitation at a steady pace and in the form of tartīl.

وَ رَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتيلا

And recite the Qur’an in a measured tone. (73:4)

Tartīl in origin means to organize and put in a coherent order, and in this context means to recite the verses at a steady pace and with necessary order, and correct pronunciation of its letters, and clear enunciation of its words, and concentration on the concepts and messages of the verses, and reflection on their lessons.

1. Recitation in the heart of the night has more of an impact. When describing the pious, Imam ‘Alī (a) says:

أَمَّا اللَّيلُ فَصافُّونَ أَقدامَهُم تالِينَ لِأَجزآءِ القُرآنِ يُرَتَّلُونَهُ تَرتِيلاً

During the night they are upstanding on their feet reading portions of the Qur'an and reciting it in a well-measured manner. (Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon of Muttaqīn [191])

1. Reflection and understanding its complexities and profundities

كِتابٌ أَنزَلناهُ إِلَيكَ مُبارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آياتَهُ

)It is) a book that we have sent down to you, so that they may contemplate its signs, and those who possess intellect may take admonition. (38:17)

1. إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَ إِذا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آياتُهُ زادَتْهُمْ إِيماناً وَ عَلى‏ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ

Indeed the faithful are only those whose hearts tremble when Allah is mentioned. And when His signs are recited to them, their faith increases, and who put their trust in their Lord.(8:2)

When describing the pious, Imam ‘Alī (a) says:

يُحَزِّنُونَ بِهِ أَنفُسَهُم وَ يَستَثِيرُونَ بِهِ دَوآءَ دآئِهِم

Creating through it [the Qur’an] grief for themselves and seeking by it the cure for their ailments. (Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon of Muttaqīn [191])

They turn to the Qur’an the same way an ailing person seeks a cure, and that is why their recitation is with grief and with worry over whether or not they will be cured or not. This state raises one’s reflection and contemplation, and prepares them like a thirsty person about to be quenched.

وَ استَشفَوا بِنُورِهِ فَإِنَّهُ شِفآءُ الصُّدُورِ

And seek your cure through its light for it is indeed the cure of the hearts. (Nahj al-Balāghah, sermon 108)

1. Having hope in its glad tidings and fear of its warnings.
2. Learning and taking lessons from the stories of the Qur’an.
3. Acting upon all of its guidelines and laws.

Discussion Activity

Why do you think the cognitive and spiritual etiquettes of the Qur’an are more important than its external ones? Share your ideas with fellow classmates in this regard.

Web Link

See the following link to know about seven tips for improving your relationship with the holy Qur’an.

http://www.tebyan.net/

newindex.aspx?pid=

92195&KEYWORD

=quran

Summary

The Holy Qur’an is the final divine book and the enduring miracle of the Prophet of Islam (s).

In order to prove its truth, Allah Almighty has invited others to match it.

The Qur’an is inimitable from different perspectives; literary and scientific inimitability being two of the most important ones.

The Qur’an has special characteristics setting it apart from other divine miracles. Being speech, eternal, sweet and beautiful and taking on rhythm, not like that of poetry.

Reciting the Qur’an befittingly has its own etiquettes to which the Qur’an has pointed to. Reciting with tartīl and a good voice are some of the etiquettes.

Making the most of its recitation depends on thought and reflection on its verses, something that different verses and traditions have pointed out.

# Seal of Prophethood

ما كانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبا أَحَدٍ مِنْ رِجالِكُمْ وَ لكِنْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَ خاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَ كانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْ‏ءٍ عَليماً (33:40)

“Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets and Allah has knowledge of all things.”(33:40)

The term khātam derives from the root KH T M, meaning ‘to end’. An analysis of its definition in dictionaries and different usages in the Qur’an shows that the term denotes what is used to end a matter or activity, and also what is used to seal letters and the like. It is for this same reason that the same term is also used for ‘ring’, because in the past, rings with impressions engraved on them were used as signets to seal letters and important documents.

According to this noble verse, the Prophet of Islam (s) is the final link of the chain of divine prophets after whom no other prophet will be sent.

Although the aforementioned verse is sufficient for proving this point, the proof for the Prophet of Islam (s) being the seal of prophethood is not limited to it and there are other Qur’anic verses and numerous traditions to support this.

In addition to what was said above, there are many traditions that convey the sealing of prophethood:

The Prophet (s) has said:

What I have declared as permissible, will be permissible until the Day of Resurrection, and what I have declared as forbidden, will be forbidden until the Day of Resurrection. (Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 2, hadith 17.)

ProphetProphetProphetProphetThe famous tradition of al-Manzilah regarding the story of the Prophet mobilizing toward the battle of Tabūk and what he told Ali ibn Abī Tālib (as) in explanation of the reason for leaving him behind, clearly highlights the finality of his prophethood:

 “Your position (al-manzilah) in relation to me is like that of Aaron in relation to Moses, except that after me there will be no other prophet.”

Web Link

Please refer to the commentary of verse 40 of chapter 33 to learn more about the reason for the revelation of this verse.

http://shiastudies.net

/article/english/

Article.php?id=2747

 Activity

Can you find the difference between a nabi (Prophet) and a rasūl (messenger) using Qur’anic verses? To find the answer, you can refer to the following: (2:213), (3:81), (4:165). Write down your findings in 300-400 words.

###  Discussion Activity

Discuss with your friends what eternal haram or halal means. Does this mean that no Islamic laws are changeable?

# A Question

Belief in the Prophet (s) being the seal of prophethood may give rise to the question, “If there is no limit and boundary to the perfection of man and all people in every era are in need of a guide, then how can prophethood be sealed and the masses deprived of the leadership of new prophets?”

The answer to this question lies in the fact that it is possible for humanity to reach a level of cultural and intellectual maturity, enabling it to continue its path of perfection through continuous implementation of the comprehensive principles and teachings left to its disposal by the final prophet, without any need for a new religion. As a matter of fact, in order that man be able to traverse this path full of ups and downs towards proximity of God, what previous prophets did was that each of them presented a part of this path’s map to him, until he reached a level to deserve the whole and comprehensive map through the final prophet on behalf of God Almighty. Clearly, with access to the whole map, there is no longer a need for another.

Of course, one might think that as time goes on, there are new needs, and in other words, the needs of man are constantly changing, while the final religion only comprises of stable and unchanging precepts, and as a result, since these new needs have not been addressed in the Qur’an and traditions, such a religion is inefficient and useless. But if one pays closer attention, he will find that the mere fact that there is change in man’s needs does not result in this religion’s deficiency. If Islamic laws were all specific in the sense that it had counted every single issue in its particularity and assigned a ruling to it, then such a problem would hold, but that is not the case, rather, in Islamic thought, there is a set of general and very broad principles applicable to variable needs, and this leaves no room for the aforementioned problem.

For example, as time passes, new forms of legal relations and contracts develop between people that never existed during the time the Qur’an was revealed. During the Prophet’s time there was no such thing as insurance and all its different branches; the only thing was the general principle of ‘the obligation to fulfill one’s vow and contract’, which is a Qur’anic principle which covers cases like insurance. Of course there are other conditions and criteria for this principle that must be met as well. Therefore, there is a general rule in this regard, although its instances may vary by the day.

Activity

Can you give a few examples of Islamic laws that have changed over time? What is meant by ‘secondary laws’?

# Succession of the Prophet (saww)

 After the passing away of the Prophet (s), the Muslims were divided into two groups over the succession of the Prophet (s): one group believed that Ali ibn Abī Tālib had been directly appointed by the Prophet as successor, and the other in the succession of the Abū Bakr ibn Abī Quhāfah as per his election at the council held in Saqīfah.

Progress Tracking

In the Sunni school, there are books in which the most authentic traditions of the Prophet (s) can be found. The Sunni school consider Saḥīḥ Bukhārī, Saḥīḥ Muslīm, Sunan Abī Dāwūd, Sunan Tirmidhī, Sunan Nisā’ī, and Sunan Ibn Mājah as the most important sources of tradition.

In the Shia school, Uṣūl al-Kāfī, Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhū al-Faqīh, al-Tahdhīb and al-Iṣtibṣār are the most important sources of tradition.

# The Sunni School of Thought:

According to the Sunni school of thought, after the Prophet of Islam (s), the true imam was Abu Bakr. They believe that there are two ways for appointing the successor of the Prophet (s):

The first is for the Prophet to appoint the imam explicitly and directly, but according to them there is no such direct appointment in this regard and the Prophet did not appoint a successor and delegated this matter to the Muslims themselves.

The second is for there to be a consensus (ijmā‘). After the passing of the Prophet (s), since he had not appointed anyone as his successor, it was the consensus of the Muslim nation that Abu Bakr be successor. Actually, in the beginning, there was a consensus regarding three individuals, meaning that there was a consensus that the succession of one of three individuals was legitimate: Abu Bakr, Ali and Abbas. Since Ali and Abbas did not object to the caliphate of Abu Bakr, consensus was with Abu Bakr, because if this was not the case, Ali and Abbas would have objected. According to this account, there is no text and tradition on the legitimacy of the caliphate of Abu Bakr and the only reason for his caliphate is consensus. Of course, there are different opinions regarding whether such a consensus was among all the Muslims or only a certain group. Some believe that the consensus of the experts on the caliphate of Abu Bakr suffices.

Some Sunni scholars, such as Faḍl ibn Rūzbahān, do not consider being the most virtuous to be one of the conditions of caliphate. This group is in no need of proving his virtue over the rest, but at the same time, there are some Sunni scholars who believe that one must be higher than the rest to be imam, and that is why they engage in proving his virtue over the rest of companions.

In any event, after Abu Bakr, ‘Umar ibn Khattāb assumed the caliphate through Abu Bakr’s appointment. After this, in his last days, the second caliph put together a six person council governed by specific protocols determined by the caliph himself; the outcome of this council was the caliphate of ’Uthmān. After the assassination of ’Uthmān, the masses went to ‘Alī ibn Abītalib and pledged their allegiance to him as caliph. After the assassination of the fourth caliph, his son, Hasan ibn ‘Alī took on the caliphate, with Mu‘āwiyat ibn Abī Sufyān claiming the same position simultaneously; he had even gone to battle with the fourth caliph for this position but had failed. This time though, he succeeded in defeating the army of Hasan ibn ‘Alī and signed a peace treaty with Hasan ibn ‘Alī, and assumed the caliphate. From then on, for several generations, the Umayyids held on to power until they were overthrown by the ‘Abbāsids who stayed in power for a long time.

Key Terms

What is meant by imamate here is confined to political succession and not imamate in its specific sense, which denotes leadership of the people in all their affairs, or divine vicegerency.

# The Succession of the Prophet from the Shia School’s Perspective:

The Shia school holds that the Prophet (s) explicitly made mention of his successor and it is not acceptable to say that a prophet who would appoint someone to take his place when he would leave the city for a short period, would neglect the future of his people and not appoint a successor, as the second caliph did and appointed a successor after himself. For example, according to the Qur’an, in the first days of his prophethood, the Prophet (s) was ordered to call his close relatives to Islam; he told them, “Whosoever answers my call first, will be my vizier, successor and heir.” ‘Alī (a) was the first to answer this call and the Prophet (s) accepted his faith and vowed to fulfill his promise; usually it is impossible for the leader of a movement to introduce one of his followers as his successor to outsiders, but not to his closest and most loyal companions, or for him to consider and introduce him as his vizier, but throughout his lifetime and mission, to isolate him from responsibilities of a vizier and neglect his position and respect as a successor and place no difference between him and the rest.

Also, another example would be the event of Ghadīr Khum, in which the noble Prophet (s) declared the general authority of ‘Alī over the people and made ‘Alī the guardian of the people, those for whom he himself (the Prophet) was guardian. These are a few of the many traditions on the outstanding merits and virtues of ‘Alī ibn Abī tālib and it is due to his position and status in the eyes of the Prophet (s), his companions and the Muslims, that his followers deemed it clear that caliphate and authority belong to ‘Alī after the Prophet’s (s) passing, but contrary to their expectations, such a thing did not take place.

The Shia believe that firstly, with the Prophet’s explicit appointment of his successor, there was no room for any consultation and consensus, and secondly, that there was no consensus on the caliphate of Abu Bakr to begin with and that there was objection to this matter by some of the great companions namely Ali and his supporters; ‘Abbās, Zubayr, Salmān, Abūdhar, Miqdād and ‘Ammār.

The Shia believe that after ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib, his son, Hasan ibn ‘Alī and after him, his second son, Husayn ibn ‘Alī, and after him, nine individuals from the progeny of Husayn were imams one after another, the last of them being the Mahdī; one whom the Prophet (s) has referred to as the ‘promised one’ who will fill the world with justice. He is alive at the moment and is in occultation. Of course, it is noteworthy that in Shia thought, imamate is not hereditary; on the contrary, the purest individual in every era assumes imamate; every one of these imams who reached the status of imamate had been raised under the care of the previous imam and reached that necessary level of perfection. Therefore, they reached this position due to their merits and existential conditions and qualifications, although it is also for sure that other hereditary matters did indeed contribute to their perfection, such as the purity and chastity of their fathers and mothers.

Think About

Please pay attention that the enemies of Islam have always capitalized on this historical difference between the Sunni and Shia schools to their own sinister interests. Thus, it should be kept in mind that these discussions should only be presented in order to become more familiar with the beliefs of these two schools and not spark yet another quarrel. In your opinion, what are some ways these two schools can get closer?

Reading Comprehension

1. How does Allah describe the Prophet (s) in the Holy Qur’an and what attributes does He ascribe to him?
2. Explain how the Prophet of Islam (s), whilst being soft also possessed firmness.
3. How did the Prophet (s) deal with the issue of slavery during his time?
4. What were some of the most significant accomplishments made during the Prophet’s (s) 23 year mission?
5. What are some advantages that the Holy Qur’an holds compared to other miracles?
6. In the Holy Quran, how many types of challenge are there?
7. Explain the harmony and proportionality of the Qur'an.
8. What does the word ‘khÁtam’ literally mean and how is it associated with the Holy Prophet?
9. If there is no limit to the perfection of man and all people in every era are in need of a guide, then how can prophethood be sealed and the masses deprived of the leadership of new prophets?