

Are All Religions Alike?

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P A K I S T A N**

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IMPORTANT NOTES

English-speaking readers may find the following explanations of terms used in this pamphlet useful:

Ahl-e-Kitab: These are the people of the Book i.e., Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans). These are the people, who along with their conviction (Īmān) in *Allah*, have faith in all the Messengers coming before Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and in some of the Books before the Qur'ān was revealed.

Ahimsa: It is an Indian doctrine of nonviolence, expressing belief in the sacredness of all living creatures and the possibility of reincarnation, strictly practiced by the Jains and subscribed to by Buddhists and Hindus.

Allah: It is the Arabic word for The One God. It is a misnomer to consider a name for God, as God has no names, only attributes.

Brahma-Samāj: It is a Hindus' School of Thought, founded in 1830 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal and flourished as a Movement in India.

Deity: A god/God or goddess, Divinity. From Middle English *deite*, from Old French, from Late Latin *deitas* (stem *deitat-*), from Latin *deus*, god.

Deen: It is a term with no exact English equivalent. It is a "Way of Life", and in the Islamic context, is a social system based on Qur'ānic values.

Īmān: Literally it is 'to be convinced, to accept, to verify something, to rely upon, or have confidence in.' It is synonymous with conviction and is based upon reason and

knowledge. The Qur'ān does not recognize as *Imān* any belief that is divorced from reason and involves the blind acceptance of any postulate. It signifies the conviction that results from full mental acceptance and intellectual satisfaction, inner contentment and peace.

Kāfir: Literally "unbeliever". According to Sura 5, Verse 44, those who do not live by the Laws as revealed in the Qur'an are Kāfirs, the infidels.

Mu'min: It is the one who accepts the truth in such a way that it ensures his own peace and helps him to safeguard the peace and security of the rest of mankind. *Al-Mu'min* is one of the attributes of God Himself.

Muhammad: The name Muhammad, the Messenger of *Allah*, -the last of the series of *Rusul* -is generally followed by the salutation "Peace Be Upon Him". As this ("Peace Be Upon Him") is not used in the Qur'ān, and for the sake of brevity, it is not used as such in this pamphlet; it has been indicated as PBUH or pbuh. However, it should be implicitly understood that, as mentioned in Sura Al-Saaffaat 37, Verse 181, we do convey Peace Upon all the Messengers of *Allah*, and Praise be to *Allah*, the Originator and the Creator of the Universe.

Muttaqi: It is a derivative of the Arabic word *Taqwa*. Deviation from the path of right conduct leads man to ruin; *Taqwa* helps to keep him on the right path and thus save him from ruin. In the context of the Qur'ān, *Taqwa* involves not only saving oneself from the forces of destruction but also stabilizing one's personality through the preservation and enforcement of the Laws of *Allah*. To be more concrete, it means the faithful and efficient performance of all the duties that *Allah* has enjoined upon man through Revealed Guidance. This meaning is wide enough to include loftiness of character and purity of

conduct. One who leads a life of *Taqwa* is called *Muttaqi*. Its plural is *Muttaqeen*.

Nubuwwah: It is the reception of the revelation of Divine Guidance by *anbiya* or *rusul*. It ended with Muhammad (PBUH). The Guidance revealed to him is preserved and enshrined fully and exactly in the Qur'ān. The function of *risalah*, or the delivery of the Divine Message to all mankind and the establishment of a social order in accordance with its principles, has devolved upon the nation or *Ummah* that believes in that Book, that is, the Qur'ān.

Pundit: It is the one who is well-versed in Hindu religious lore.

Rusul: It is the long succession of Divine Messengers of God. And **Rasul** is the each one of this long succession of Divine Messengers of God, who came from time to time to mankind with a Code of Divine Guidance, and established a socio-economic order based on the permanent values embodied in that Code.

Shar'a and Minhaj: It is the outward form of observance idealized.

Shirk: It is the only unforgivable sin in the Qur'ān. It is the 'association of partners with *Allah*, whether it is the human world or the physical world or the obedience to laws in contradiction to those revealed in the Qur'ān. Those who do so are called *mushrikeen*. This includes creating divisions within the Muslim community through sectarianism.

Are All Religions Alike?

Background of This Discourse

Movements such as "Are all religions one and the same?" have, off and on, been rising on the soil of undivided India. The sole aim of these movements had been to popularize the thoughts that "Universal values are equally found in all religions; so Islam, as religion, merits no credence, no supremacy, no hegemony, and no pre-eminence over and above any of the other religions of the world."

Among the leaders of "United India", (Maulana) Abul Kalam Azad (deceased), with Congress at his back, was such a leader who initiated this Movement in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent. Its ultimate aim was to prove that:

- ❖ Islam, as a religion, does not merit any peculiar characteristic of its own
- ❖ Universal values are one and the same in all religions of the world
- ❖ If the followers of all these religions act upon the teachings of the founders of these religions, Islam says: 'My purpose is achieved.'

Contrary to this concept, the Pakistan Movement was launched on the premise that the entire Muslim population of India is a separate nation and enjoys a distinct system of life. They need a separate homeland, where they could run this System as a free independent state.

On the basis of the arguments drawn from the teachings of the Qur'an and the vigour of conviction (Iman), his Movement was countered then and there. He was rebutted with a crushing reply and was proved to be wrong in his

mode of argumentation and way of expression. The Pakistan Movement succeeded and Pakistan, on the fine morning of 14th of August 1947, emerged as a new independent state on the map of the world. Its specific purpose was to establish God-given System of life (demarcated in the Qur'ān) as a Law. Consequently, excepting the circle of the leaders of Congress, (Maulana) Azad turned out to be no more an influential figure in the Indo-Pak Subcontinent.

Since some time, it has been observed that the followers of (Maulana) Abul Kalam Azad are projecting, in a queer manner, the various aspects of his writings, particularly his teachings, beliefs, and his ideas of the two-nation theory. The purpose of their writing is to prove that the so-called wrong ideas he propagated, on being a disciple of Gandhi, in the last days of his life, were not wrong in the real sense. According to them these ideas looked to be wrong because these were presented in a wrong way.

We thought it necessary that "these diabolical efforts of theirs be remedied". And "this stark fact be firmly built in the minds of our young rising generation that there were persons, who had recently written the exegesis of the Qur'ān and the people were still reminiscent of their writings. The Hindu, in the words of Naseem Hijazi, (a renowned Pakistani Novelist), selected those persons to implement their schemes." And hence they included (Maulana) Abul Kalam Azad in this list.

In this connection, we are reproducing a paper of G. A. Parwez (R. A.) that was written in August 1941. Its title is "Are All Religions Alike?"

(Tolu-e-Islam Magazine, Lahore, December, 1987)

Prolegomena

Since some time, a kind of tradition has popped up to hold Inter Religions Conferences from time to time. The representatives of various religions narrate the merits of their religion in these conferences. The general aim of these gatherings is to impart a body of knowledge of the various religions amongst one another. And thereby remove the misunderstandings that have found way for lack of religions knowledge. The excellence of this aim and the utility of these ceremonies can not be refuted. But whenever I studied the proceedings of these ceremonies, I felt that (at least) Islam, in the real sense, is little presented properly in its true tone and tenor. It is an undeniable fact that Islam is a harbinger of peace and a source of nourishment for mankind. That is why it contains the teachings of tolerance, virtuous dealings, and broadness of visions for both the irreligious and the religious followers. But this is also a stark fact that Islam is a strong supporter of a peculiar excellence over the edge of other religions. It proclaims that God's message, in its pristine purity, is present in the Qur'ân alone; it's the last message of God and is a complete and perfect code of life. It contains all the means of guidance for every branch of human life and perpetuates to the last syllable of the recorded time on this earth. Its broadness of vision, its openness, its tolerance, and its virtuous dealings are publicly trumpeted. But its excellence, completeness, supremacy, and exaltation over and above the other religions are never talked of. It is because it is usually understood that doing so would tantamount to generate heart-breaking of the other religionists; thus they would term the representative of Islam as "prejudice and narrow-minded." Influenced with this misconception of tolerance and broad-mindedness, Islam's representatives find no courage to interpret Islam in its true and pristine perspective. Thus, they attend these

ceremonies with the sense of getting finished, boggled, demurred, and bashed.

With this concept in mind, such conferences, at least for Islam, never bring any better results. On the contrary, I am feeling since long that this is causing more harm than good in its true perspective. Whether or not this is the purpose of conducting these gatherings, but their results are definitely producing the impact that -with the neglect of its distinctive characteristic -Islam is slowly being brought at the level of other religions. Consequently the events are gradually casting the shadow that this is not a fancied fear. Nor is it an apprehension of any speculative imagination.

In the beginning of June 1941, such a type of "Conference on All Religions" was held at Shoolapur (in undivided India). Pundit Sunderlalji, a famous Hindu activist, was the president of this Conference. The detail of whatever-the-representative-of-Islam delivered in this Conference could not be known. But in his presidential address, the president focused his deliberations on the point that Islam accepts itself that the mores and cores of salvation and progress are one and the same in every religion. No religion enjoys superiority to any other religion. The spirit of religion is God- worshipping and righteous living. And that this is the same in every religion. The difference is only in *Shar'a* and *Minhaj* (in bylaws). And that this difference carries no significance at all.

The Exegesis of Azad

To prove his assertion, Pundit Sunderlalji said nothing of his own. From the beginning of his address to the end, he referred detailed quotations -supporting his assertions word by word -from Abul Kalam Azad's exegesis of Surah-Al-Fatiha (Tarjuman-Al-Qur'an, Vol.1). Probably you would know that the Hindus published the Hindi

rendering of this exegesis and Pundit Sunderlalji made frequent references from it in his presidential address. I have nothing to do with the prose and cons of the factors that provided impetus to the writing of this exegesis, nor to the objectives that led to its Hindi rendering and general publicity. As a student of the Qur'ān, I have to see the feasibility of these ideas from the Qur'ān's point of view. Prior to it, I have exhaustively written on this topic. But the need of the day is that it be described in detail so that those propagating these ideas should remain no more duped, defrauded, and swindled in the perception that Islam itself is a supporter of this type of teaching. The need of this detailed elaboration becomes more intense, all the more, when it is felt: what impact does this teaching imbibe in the personality fiber of our young generation?

This teaching brings out the following concepts:

- ❖ All religions are one and the same
- ❖ All religions have the same universal truth in them
- ❖ God-worshipping and righteous living are the sure test of salvation and good fortune
- ❖ Divine guidance is the blessing of God; it can not be the monopoly of any one-group etc.

These ideas are so fantastic, so elusive, and so alluring that the superfluous minds and brains are easily and briskly trapped in the orgasm of the charm. And when the support of the Qur'ān's exegete like Azad is blended with this trivial charming attraction, then nothing could dispense with the charm of this spell.

Akbar's Deen-e-Ilāh

The first glimpse of this deceptive concept of the exposition of tolerance and the broadened view of this

mirage-oriented exegesis is found in the Deen-e-Illāhi of Akbar, the great. As the passions and the objectives operating behind the motives of this movement are not hidden from the eyes of the historians, so are the noble efforts in their eyes that were showered to falsify and uproot this Islam-rending theory.

The movement of Brahma-Samaj faction has also been founded on the same lines. Since this movement did not come from the Muslims, so it is beyond the scope of our criticism in this discourse.

After this movement, it was this very theory that was projected against the Muslims during the running surge of the political morass, conflict, and upheaval. The exegesis of Azad became the root cause for the propagation of this theory and hence spread as Deen among the Muslims. Azad, as a scholar of Deen and exegete of the Qur'ān, had a distinct position among the Muslims. He had a deep impact of his speech and writing on the heart and mind of the Muslims. His exegesis of the Qur'ān was awaited since the past many years. When it was published, it was welcomed and was sold like hot cakes. The people treated it with great reverence and respect. And raised slogans of its appreciation and felicitation from every walk of life.

There is no doubt that Azad's translation has a specific characteristic; not to appreciate this aspect would be miserliness and stinginess. But the discussion is about the very idea that has been mentioned above. Amid the crowd of exceeding excitement, fondness, and fervid devotion, no body thought of it during the time of its circulation. Not as a self-praise, but as the expression of the factual position, during this multitude of appreciation and eulogy, God blessed the writer with divine help to pinpoint to the discerning and the sagacious persons his basic mistake that was to be disseminated with his exegesis. Hence my article

criticizing this part of his exegesis was published in the Mu'arif periodical publication of January 1933. This article was much appreciated among the erudite. Some where from the circle, the voices were raised against this idea of Azad. Eight or nine years have passed since the publication of this paper. Since those critical papers published against this theory passed temporarily through the eyes of the people, so they were lost in the memory of the people.

The miscellaneous papers have only temporary effect. And since this exegesis is in the form of a permanent book, so it remained fresh every time. Whenever this theory got a lot of general publicity, I had, however, been writing some thing against it. Since the last three years, this issue was talked of in Tolu-e-Islam magazine now and then. But despite all that, the temporary efforts -till carried on in a sequence of some continuity -cannot prove effective as compared to the status of a permanent book. Especially it becomes even more difficult when the people of the other religions struggle hard for making this idea popular and wide-spread among the masses. To me this very idea is the biggest danger to Islam. It is because when you once accept that Islam has no distinct feature over the other religions, it loses all the efforts carried out for fondness, prestige, and honour of Islamic system of life. And even the political efforts held so high in its importance become meaningless.

(The Pakistan Movement was founded on the assertion that a separate free State is needed if the Muslims desire to lead life according to Islam.) The secret of nations' life is conditioned with their belief (the aim of life). The higher is the goal of life (belief) of a nation and the more love its individuals shower on it, the more prosperous of the wealth of life that nation will be. Even a slight mistake in theory of life (belief) makes a nation worthless. When the railway train changes its track, there is an imperceptible distance, hardly of an inch, between the two line-points. If there is a

slight mistake in getting the railway track changed, the railway train not only will go many miles away from its destination within no time, but will also be liable to destruction and ruination at every step. To me, Azad's theory is such a devastating mistake, which, if allowed to pervade, God knows, what havoc would it wreak. This is the very feeling that prevails upon me of and on and becomes the root cause to write on it.

It is said that the followers of other religions are accepting that their own religion is not the only one that is the most dignified and elevated. They admit that the status of their own religion is like that of the others'. It has automatically brought a change in the unnecessary discussions and dialogues used to be launched against other religions for establishing superiority of their own religion. This is the conduct of the other religionists. And what is the state of affairs among the Muslims?

Taunting of Narrow-mindedness

The Muslims are again being persuaded to accept that all religions are one and the same; Islam enjoys no superiority over other religions. There is no denying the fact that unjustified discussion, bickering and wrangling do never bring any conducive results. And I always avoid it. But let the fault-finders just think over what they say. And let them ponder over the nature and scope of other religionists' broad-mindedness and narrow-mindedness in this regard? For understanding the phenomenon take the example of Zaid. He has a child, most stupid and ignorant. In contrast to him, Omer's child is sharp and acute. Zaid says everywhere: "I do never say that my child enjoys any specific superiority. To me, Omer's child and mine are absolutely the one and the same; there is no difference among the two; it is nothing but the self-praise of Omer

that he does not consider any one else's child at par with his own chap. ”

Pause and reflect! Does this principle reflect Zaid's broad vision and Omer's narrow-mindedness? Or does it show of any reality in the real sense? The present day necessities of life have brought this to bear upon the fact that all religions (except Islam as a system) are facing difficulty to harbour their beliefs on the anvil of knowledge and reason. Nor are their conduct and code coincide with man's growing urges and varying climes of the day. They have thus to borrow principles and laws from here and there for satisfying their day to day practical needs. Hence these religions are totally incompetent to keep pace with the day's accelerating developments of the man. Slowly and gradually, the followers of these religions are becoming incapacitated to rest with their beliefs. Nor are they adherent to their religion. They are disgusted with their religion. In some cases, their disgust is transforming into revolt and insurgency.

The secret of the life of a nation depends upon its adherence to the belief system; so the followers of these religions face a danger of gradually disintegrating the very fabric of their religion. On the contrary, they are seeing how the Qur'ān is meeting the growing needs of the man. In view of these circumstances, they fear lest the wise class of the followers of their religion should divert to the teachings of Islam. Under these paradigms, they understand it well how fruitless and meaningless is their saying to their religious-bitten youth that their religion enjoys superiority over and above all the religions of the world. In order to avoid this danger, they have devised the same technique, which Zaid had invented for his child. They have started to bring down Islam to the level of their own religion if their religion can not be at par with Islam. And likewise this idea is made mature in the minds of their religious-bitten youth

that all religions are uniformly one and the same; so they should not be fed up with their own religion. And this idea is embedded in their mind that there does not exist in the world a religion that is better than their own. They say that the religion is confined to worship and prayer alone. From this point of view all religions are one and the same.

So far the system of life, they say that it is a separate entity and has nothing to do with the religion. It is the collectivity of the nation that gives shape to it. In this way, it is the nationality that is the very focal point to which the secret of life is tied up tightly. This shrewd class of the people has thus saved their nation from the coming danger. In other words, they concealed the weakness of their religion in the veil of "oneness of religiousness" and found another front (*i.e.*, nationality) for the collectivity of the nation.

These are the hard cores and mores under which this movement of "uniformity of religions" emerged on the surface of the religions of the world. You are at liberty to give it any name you like. But just think of the conditions of the heart of a person who accepts that the time had to come when the followers of all the religions would be bound to confess the inherent defects in their religions. In other words it can be said that the advancing needs and urges of the time would compel them to confess the fact that their religions could not be compatible to the growing needs of the day. It is the right time when the assertion of Islam as the real system of life could be presented on reason and vision to the world forum and thus its superiority and comprehensiveness could be got established. These were the circumstances when this assertion of the Qur'ān had to emerge as a living reality:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ
عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ

Allah has sent His Rasūl with Code of Life and Divine Order so that it prevails over all human orders, how much it is to the dislike of the *Mushrikeen*, the *Polytheists* (9:33).

Whoever believes in this grand reality of the Qur'an -say the truth -when he sees that the followers of Islam are themselves projecting the idea that "All religions are one and the same", how can he accept and disseminate this notion as true service to the cause of Islam?

It is said: if you will make this assertion that our religion is the best and the most superior of all the religions -and salvation and good fortune do not exist anywhere beyond it -the others will also start making the same assertion for their own religions. And then the same question of 'comparing and contrasting' the religions will be created; it will generate hullabaloo. First of all, the question of this comparison does not arise; now gone are the days when such discussions on sheer theoretical issues used to be conducted. Now the situation is that the entire world is fed up with its own theories of life and is searching for an ideology under which the man is able to live a safe and secure life. The nations that propounded nationalism as the sole guarantee of peace and satisfaction are willingly or unwillingly accommodating with it. Under these circumstances the question of any type of competition does not arise.

Now the need of the day is to show up the true concept of Islam; the thirsty world searching for this concept will automatically gather round this fountain of life. But even if the question of competition is accepted, no one is afraid of this comparison. For Omer, this challenge is a happy augury: that his and Zaid's son be made to appear in the competitive examination. If the world wants to ask for it, it

may ask with pleasure. We would tell it: where and why its theories failed and which Code of life - pristine clear of its multitude of weaknesses, infirmities, and defects - Islam brings forth against it. But at present my address is not to the followers of the other religions. I now want to address those who call themselves Muslims and have conviction that all religions are one and the same.

The sole purpose of this conspicuity of my address is to evaluate this ideology against the set criterion of the teachings of the Qur'ān. The mode of addressing the followers of the other religions is different. To them the Qur'ān is no authority. Hence my address is confined to those who accept the Qur'ān as the sole authority. The perfection of the human prestige, the achievement of exaltation and elevation - in the present and the future - and every kind of well being, welfare, salvation, and progress can be clinched with this system of life. The Qur'ān is the true exponent of this system and Muhammad (PBUH), the Messenger of *Allah* is the living model of pragmatism. If this all is proved from the Qur'ān, then how much the world may link these qualities to the narrow-mindedness, you should sacrifice (according to the value judgement of others) the numerous forms of broadness of mind and openness of heart to "this sort of narrow-mindedness". If you are ready for it, you have room in the bounteous showers of *Allah*. If you (God forbid) term it narrow-mindedness and short-sightedness, then search for the broadness and vastness of vision:

- ✧ Where calling liars as brázenfaced is thought to be narrow-mindedness
- ✧ Where terming defective as deficient is thought to be against tolerance
- ✧ Where the righteous is avoided because he makes the liar broken-hearted

- ✧ Where the realities are concealed because their unveiling over-shadows the brightness of the artificiality.

In Islam, truth has to be called truth and the untruth to be the untruth: how much it is to the dislike of the *Mushrikeen*, the *Polytheists* (9: 33). This is the established truth that there does not exist God-sent -pristine, original, and complete -message except the one enshrined in the Qur'an under the canopy of this firmament. Then hesitation to declare this truth -only because the others would taunt you that you are narrow-minded -is nothing but a pragmatic *shirk* i.e., polytheism. It is nothing but a practical tactic of appeasing others by leaving God. Says the Qur'an:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا أَنزَلْنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا
بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّاعِنُونَ

Those who conceal the matters, which We have revealed with Truth and Divine Guidance -In spite of the fact that We explained them exclusively and unambiguously in the Book i.e., the Qur'an for the people -are the people whom *Allah* curses and all the cursers curse them (2: 159).

The Beliefs of Maulana Azad

The above mentioned Qur'anic exegesis of Azad is spread over nearly 175 pages and contains a summary of the lengthy discussions in a few pages at the end. This is the very gist of discussion that Sunderlalji has quoted in

support of his assertion. For the convenience of the readers, these quotations are reproduced below. Maulana Azad writes:

"But the Qur'ān came forward to re-present to the world at large the universal truth sponsored by every religion.

a. "It (The Qur'ān) not only stated that there is truth in every religion but it also made it clear that all religions are true. He said Deen is God's beneficence, so it is not possible that it might be bestowed upon any one nation or group and the others may have no share in it.

d. "The Qur'ān came to distinguish religion from its outward observance. The former is called *Deen* and the latter *Shar'a* and *Minhaj*. *Deen* was but one and the same everywhere and at all times and was vouchsafed to one and all without discrimination. In respect of the outward observance of *Deen*, there was variation and this was inevitable. It varied from time to time and from people to people, as seemed pertinent to every situation. Variations of this nature could not alter the character of *Deen* of the basis of religion. That was the truth, which the Qur'ān aimed to emphasize. Its complaint was that *Deen* had been neglected and the variation in *Shar'a* and *Minhaj* or the outward form of observance idealized and made the basis of mutual differences among mankind.

e. "It stated that groupism would not lead to progress or bring salvation to man. These group formations were all man-made. The *Deen* prescribed by God was but one. And what was this *Deen* but the way of devotion to one common God and of righteous living -the law of life, which one was not to stray.

f. "It announced in very clear terms that its call was but to proclaim that all religions were true and that their followers had disregarded the truth, which they embodied. Should they return to this forgotten truth, the task of the Qur'ān was fulfilled. The act will be regarded as indeed the acceptance of the Qur'ān. The truth common to all of them was but what it calls *Al-Deen* and *Al-Islam*."

{Tarjuman al-Qur'ān Vol. 1, pp. 162-163; (1947 Edition, pp. 213-214)}

{This translation is taken from: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Tarjuman al-Qur'an. Dr. Syed Abdul Latif (edited and rendered into English), Vol. 1, Surah-Al-Fatiha, Kazi Publications, Lahore, pp. 181-182}

At another place, Maulana Azad writes on the differences of *Shar'a* and *Minhaj* as:

"The Qur'ān points out that neither are the conduct, ceremonials and rituals the pristine reality, nor are

their differences, the difference of right and wrong. These are but the outward manifestations of religion. The spirit and reality are above these manifestations. This is the real *Deen*. And what is the real *Deen*? It is but worship of one God and righteous living. It does not solely belong to any one group, which had not been bestowed to any one other than it. It is one and the same in all religions."

{Tarjuman al-Qur'ān, 1947 Edition,
p. 189}

{This translation is taken from:
Maulana Abul Kalam Azad:
Tarjuman al-Qur'an. Dr. Syed Abdul
Latif (edited and rendered into
English), Vol. 1, Surah-Al-Fatiha,
Kazi Publications, Lahore, P. 158}

He has repeated the same thoughts in so many other places. (It would be better if you study this exegesis and, combining the reference and context together, examine closely the nature and scope of Azad's thoughts on this count.) Then judge:

- ❖ Whether, according to the teachings of the Qur'ān alone, (a) only God-worshipping (i.e., accepting God) and leading righteous living is needed for salvation and progress
- ❖ Or, along with (a), having conviction (Imān) in the Messengerhood of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) is also needed (which makes conviction (Imān) in the Qur'ān imperative. The meaning of having conviction (Imān) in the Messengerhood of Muhammad (PBUH) and the Qur'ān both is to lead life in harmony with the

Qur'ānic Jurisprudence. It is nothing but the other name of "righteous living").

In other words, it means, the focal point of this entire discussion is whether or not the conviction (Imān) in the Messengerhood of Muhammad (PBUH) and the Qur'ānic Jurisprudence is also essential for salvation and progress. With the mention of infidels and the polytheists, the Qur'ān has also talked of Ahl-e-Kitab (people of the book i.e., Jews, Christians, and Sabians). These were the people who, in addition to their conviction (Imān) in *Allah*, had faith in some of the Messengers that came before Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and also in some of the books before the Qur'ān was revealed. If the discussion is made a bit briefer, it will concentrate on:

- ❖ Whether -according to the Qur'ān -it is essential for people of the book to believe in the Messengerhood of Muhammad (PBUH) as well as to follow the Qur'ān.
- ❖ Or it is enough for them to act perfectly upon the teachings of their own religions.

If the Qur'ān demands from people of the book to also have conviction (Imān) in the Messengerhood of Muhammad (PBUH) and obeisance to the Qur'ān. And tells them that there is no other alternative for any salvation and progress, it will make this matter crystal clear. It is because if people of the book were demanded to have such a conviction (Imān), then the same demand would also become terse and intensified for the people of the non-book.

What is the Meaning of Deen?

First of all, consult the meaning of Deen or Islam, the Qur'ān represents through its teaching. The exposition of the Qur'ānic education is that Divine messages

continued showering from God through the agency of numerous Messengers of God. These messages were for the guidance of the humans of the various tribes, clans, and nations at different intervals of time. The fountain spring of these messages remained constantly the same in nature. It was solely the obedience to the one unique *Allah* –not any other deity worthy to be obeyed. But to act upon this fountain spring for transforming it onto a practical system, there were variations to suit the urges, demands, and paradigms of the time, place, and circumstances. These messages were continuously revealed and remained intact in their pristine form for some time. In the course of successive editions many passages were excised and many were interpolated. In other words, they were either wasted with storms, thunderbolt, earthquakes, and other cataclysms of nature, or were abrogated, abandoned, or adulterated by the men themselves. Sometimes these were totally forgotten; so after some time, these were renewed; similar to these, messages (*i.e.*, Verses of *Allah*) were revealed again.

Simultaneously the humanity was also passing through the various stages of its evolution, so its urges, exigencies, needs, mores and cores, were also in flux. To suit the growing needs at every age, the factors for structuring the Divine System were also passing through the corresponding evolutionary stages. At the time of every Messenger (PBUH), some renewal of the previous Messengers' (PBUH) forgotten or wasted messages was made, some value added messages were given and also annulment and/or modification of the previous injunctions was incorporated. But this modification and/or annulment always used to lead towards higher stages of evolution –not towards decline and downfall of man. The following sacred verse of the Qur'ān has pointed towards this reality:

﴿ مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا ۗ ﴾

(Our Law is that) (a) Injunctions given in earlier revelations, which were meant only for a particular time, are replaced by other injunctions, and (b) Injunctions, which were to remain in force permanently but were abandoned, forgotten or adulterated by the followers of the previous *Anbiya*, are given again in their original form (2: 106).

In other words, it means that a better injunction (*i.e.*, verse of *Allah*) was given in lieu of the repealed injunction and similar to the forgotten messages (*i.e.*, Verses of *Allah*) were revealed. That is why the Qur'an has mentioned explanations of the abrogation, adulteration, and modification of the previous Divine Books at various places. At one place, the Qur'an says:

وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ فَاخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ

And We gave Moses the Book, so differences were created in it (11: 110)

At another place says the Qur'an:

يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَوَاضِعِهِۦ وَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِۦ

They tampered with the phraseology of Divine revelation and even set aside a portion of their commandments (5: 13).

And still at another place says the Qur'an:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ
عِنْدِ اللَّهِ

Woe be to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say: "This is from Allah." (2: 79)

At numerous places in the Qur'an, there are explanations of replacement, abandonment, forgetfulness, abrogation, interpolation, adulteration, and willful modification made in the Divine Books revealed to the previous *Anbiya*. The entire world stands witness to this evident reality. There is no religion in the world today that could prove with reasoned arguments that the book they claim to be Divine is word by word the same that was revealed to their Messenger (PBUH). On the contrary, there are many historical evidences to establish the stark fact that there is no trace of the original documents of these Books anywhere in the world. (For detailed description of these matters, please refer the first chapter of my book: *Me'rāj-e-Insāniyyat* -Ascension of Humanity.) Anyhow, this successive long series of Divine Guidance continued till the (human) world, on the scale of evolution, passing through its childhood reached its adulthood period. Now, according to the Divine Plan, the time had come to give all the truth in its complete original form in a comprehensive way, in lieu of the Divine Books given through the agency of the previous *Anbiya* (Peace Be Upon Them). These were either destroyed completely, or there had been abrogation, abandonment, adulteration, and/or modification in them. Then -in place of all these injunctions, which were given for the time being -the Commandments were to be given

that could remain sufficient to meet the human needs till the Day of Resurrection. Thus, the collections of all these Truths, Injunctions, Principles, and Commandments suited to the genesis of the genius were given to the world in a safe and secure way. And God Himself took the responsibility of its security and preservation till the Day of Judgment. The name of this latest collection and final edition of Realities and Divine Code is the Qur'an.

It was, then, announced to the entire world: "All Our Bounties have been perfected and completed". The human code of life was given the final touches. It encompassed the entire previous body of Truth. Now this code of life (i.e., the Qur'an) is the only pragmatic criterion for salvation, achievement and progress. Other than that, whatsoever is there -anywhere in the world -stands abrogated. Today this is the only Deen, the only Islam in the entire world. And conviction (Iman) *per se* is only in this Islam. Other than that, there is nothing like this sort of Deen, Islam, *Shar'a*, or *Minhaj* under the firmament of this world. It is the proclamation of God, Who sent these messages that remained in practice previously. He sent the one Himself instead of the other. He Himself concentrated all these into One Collection and hence adjudicated this one as His Code of Laws in lieu of all the previous Scriptures. He ordained to have conviction (Iman) that *Allah* had commissioned all the *Anbiya*, who came previously. All the messages they delivered were God-revealed. As their status of being *Anbiya*, there is absolutely no difference among them. Nor was there any difference in these messages from the vantage ground of Divine Messages. Concurring with it, the same God had said: "Now obeisance and obedience is only to this Collection of Laws, the Qur'an." This is the *Al-Deen* and this is the *Al-Islam*. Every one is required to follow it. The salvation and progress is attributed to it. It is right to say that the entire body of Truth "was" equally "present" in all the religions on their own time. But to say that

'originality-of-*Deen*-is-one-and-the-same-in-all-the-religions' is absolutely against the reality and the teachings of the Qur'ān.

There is much difference between "was present" and "is present". And this is the very difference on which depends the modern theory of right and wrong. Understanding of this reality makes the entire matter crystal clear.

Exposition of Conviction (Īmān)

Now study a detailed account of this point. The Qur'ān's basic demand is of conviction (Īmān). But the question is: "Does conviction (Īmān) mean faith in *Allah* or any thing else -anything more than that?" The Qur'ān has given five elements of conviction (Īmān):

وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ
وَالنَّبِيِّينَ

But the good belongs to him who has conviction in *Allah*, in the life hereafter, in *Malā'ikah*, in the Books, and *Anbiya* (2:177).

And the refusal of these very elements of conviction (Īmān) is out and out infidelity and absolutely "going astray". In this regard says the Qur'ān:

وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا

He who denies *Allah*, His *Malā'ikah*, His *Books*, His *Rusul* (Messengers), and the *Life Hereafter* has surely gone far astray (4: 136).

But the style of the *Qur'ān* is that somewhere it explains these elements in detail and at some other places it epitomizes these elements in stead of giving the illustrative elaboration. With reference to the context and the subject matter area, it merely describes that element, which needs to be emphasized. For example, at one place it mentions conviction (*Īmān*) in *Allah* alone:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ
عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ

Surely those who accepted that our *Rabb* is *Allah* and then remain steadfast to it, the angels will descend upon them (41:30).

At many other places it mentions the conviction (*Īmān*) in *Allah* and the *life hereafter* alone:

مَنْ غَامِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ

Whoever has conviction in *Allah* and the last day (*the life hereafter*) and does right, will be duly compensated (2: 62).

And still at other places, it mentions of conviction (*Īmān*) in *Allah* and His *Rusul* (Messengers):

فَقَامُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ

**Have conviction in *Allah* and His *Rusul*
(3: 179).**

Yet at other place it, along with other elements of conviction (*Īmān*), talks of the conviction in the Book:

فَتَامِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَالنُّورِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلْنَا

**So have conviction in *Allah*, His *Rusul*,
and in His light (*the Book*, the *Qur'an*)
that We have revealed (64: 8).**

In short, it describes different elements of conviction (*Īmān*) at different places but it does not mean that these elements can be segregated and having conviction (*Īmān*) in one or two such elements alone is enough for becoming a Momin. The demand for all the elements of conviction (*Īmān*) is a common denominator. Refusal even to any one of them is infidelity; it is the first article.

The Meaning of Conviction (*Īmān*) in *Allah*

Now, come to the second article. The question is: "What is the meaning of having conviction (*Īmān*) in *Allah*, *Rusul*, and *Books*?" The study of the *Qur'an* makes this reality clear that the purpose of conviction (*Īmān*) is to obey, to follow, to submit from the core of ones heart. The meaning of having conviction (*Īmān*) in *Allah* is to obey His orders from within. (*Atee Ullah*). Simply accepting the existence of *Allah* cannot be termed conviction (*Īmān*) in Him. Barring a few atheists in the world, there is no body who does not admit the existence of *Allah*. There will be difference in the name, difference in determining His attributes, but the admittance of His Self will be found everywhere. If conviction (*Īmān*) meant simply the

admittance of the Self of *Allah*, then why had the Qur'ān termed those people infidel (*Kāfir*) who acknowledge the existence of *Allah*? At numerous places; the Qur'ān has clarified it: if you ask these people "Who is the creator of the earth and the sky? Who does shower the rain? Who does make the air blow?" they will answer, "It is *Allah*." But thereafter the Qur'ān says, 'amazed it is then, in spite of their admittance, these people do not have conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah* (29: 61-63).' It makes the Qur'ān's meaning of conviction (*Imān*) clear. It is the acknowledgement of the Self of *Allah* along with all the descriptions revealed in the Qur'ān (23: 84-90). And simultaneously, it is the obedience to all His injunctions. This is the Qur'ānic meaning of the conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah*. Since *Allah's* injunctions are revealed through the agency of the *Anbiya*, and are preserved in the revelation of *Allah*, so it has been said: "Have conviction (*Imān*) in *Anbiya*, and His Books along with the conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah*." It has the same meaning -that the Divine Injunctions be obeyed. Even about the Qur'ān, it has been said:

اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ

(O Jama'at-ul-Momineen) follow only that which has been revealed to you by your Rabb and do not follow any other ally (7:3).

Deen depends upon sheer obeisance: pristine and free from even the least tinge of any ulterior motive. There was obeisance to the teachings of the Books on their own time (when these were not distorted) before the Qur'ān was revealed. Those Books were destroyed, abrogated, interpolated or were adjudicated to be kept in abeyance, so

their obedience was also suspended. And when the Book itself did not remain operational in its original form, the time of the Messenger of that Book ended too. After the long succession of Divine Messengers, the last of the series of *Rusul* came. His revealed Book (the Qur'ān), present in its original form, is enforceable up to the Day of Judgement, the last syllable of the time on this earth. Thus, conviction (Imān) in *Allah* and His Messenger (PBUH) implies acting upon the teachings of the Qur'ān.

Now the conviction (Imān) in the Messengers prior to the last Messenger, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), and in the Divine Books before the Qur'ān was revealed, means that they were the true Messengers of *Allah* on their own time and their messages were the true Orders of *Allah*. Now all these Orders have been included in the shrines of the Qur'ān.

In this regard, the Qur'ān is explicit. It says:

وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّئًا عَلَيْهِ

**We have sent you a Book based on truth.
It validates and subsumes the true
teachings of the earlier Books (5: 48).**

Hence after this new Book, the obedience to the old Books carries no weight. Every new edition of the code of law contains new additions in addition to all the matters of the previous editions that are essential to keep enforced. Therefore, the enforceable law is understood to be the one that is given in the latest edition. More over, after the Qur'ān was revealed, leading life of the various religionists (Ahl-e-Kitab) according to the dictates of their religions (given in their religious Scriptures) is wrong in principle. Now the "Truths" (of their religions, and of those, which

the humans need) are enshrined in the Qur'ān. Since, as has been described above, after the coming of every new Messenger (PBUH) and his new Book, obeisance to his Divine teachings, and his Divine Book was necessary. Hence every Messenger (PBUH) was told to inform his Ummah when the last of this series of Divine Guidance reaches - after whom no other Messenger or any other Divine Book will come - you will all have to obey this last of the Messengers. In Sura Ae'rāf of the Qur'ān, Hazrat Moses (AS) lifts up his hands in prayer:

"O my Nourisher, since You have bestowed Your blessings on this nation, the *Banī Isrā'īl*, keep them showering continuously." He was told: "Surely Our blessings are boundless, and encompass each and every thing, but according to Our System of Guidance only those will share them who have conviction (Imān) in Our Last Nabi and the Last Book." In other words, it means only those, who follow the last of this series of the Messengerhood of the Divine Guidance, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and the last Book, the Qur'ān, will get these blessings.

فَسَاكُنْهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِنَا

يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي
التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ يَأْمُرُهُمْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاهُمْ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُحِلُّ لَهُمُ
الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبَائِثَ وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَالَ الَّتِي
كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِهِ وَعَزَّرُوهُ وَنَصَرُوهُ وَاتَّبَعُوا النُّورَ الَّذِي

أَنْزَلَ مَعَهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

My Rehmat embraces all things but it is bestowed upon those who adhere to My Laws, provide *zak'at*, and, in short, have conviction (*Īmān*) in the truth of My revelation. This was said to *Moses*, but now *Allah's Rehmat* will be bestowed upon those who follow the "*Ummi Nabi*" (29: 48) whom they find mentioned in the *Torah* and the *Injeel* that is with them; who will enjoin what is wrong according to the *Qur'ān* and declare *halāl* (lawful) all good things and *harām* (unlawful) all other things (6: 146; 5: 3-4); who will lift the burdens under which the humanity groans and free them from the shackles, which bind them. Those who will have conviction in this *Rasūl* (Messenger), support him against his opponents, help him in his mission and follow the light of the *Qur'ān*, which has been revealed to him -these are the ones who will be successful and prosperous (7:156-157).

Pause and reflect: what are the condition that the *Qur'ān* has made compulsory for betterment and auspiciousness? These are: have conviction in the Last Messenger (PBUH) and follow the *Qur'ān*. The very name of carrying out this process is Islam. Here, in the above-mentioned verse, the same has been said to *Moses* (AS). At another place the same has been said to all the other *Anbiya*:

The guidance, which is being given to you, now, is nothing new. It has been given to earlier *Anbiya*, with whom *Allah* has made a covenant. This covenant was that when the last *Nabi* who will validate the

claims and promises made in their scriptures, comes, they would accept him and also aid him.

Allah has asked them: "Are you aware that you are accepting the covenant on these terms?" They had answered: "We are", thereupon *Allah* said: "Be witness to this and I will also be a witness along with you." *Allah* had made it clear that those who would backslide would be those who had abandoned the right path.

This is that Deen, which is ordained by *Allah*. Do they desire to follow a Deen other than this, when they can see that every thing in the universe submits to *Allah's* Laws by choice or by constraint and follows the way, which leads to the goal set for them by *Allah*.

Therefore, *O Jama'at-ul-Momibeen*, say: "We have conviction (*Īmān*) in *Allah* and in that, which He has revealed to us; and in that, which was revealed to *Abraham*, *Ishma'el*, *Isa'ac*, and *Jacob* and their descendants; and that, which was given to *Moses*, *Jesus*, and the other *Anbiya*" by their *Rabb*. No distinction do we make amongst them and we surrender to the Laws of *Allah*.

This is Islam: any one who adopts a way other than this will not be accepted and at the end he would be the loser (3: 81-85).

Taking covenant from *Anbiya* means taking covenant from their Ummah through their agency. It is due to this fact that

the scattered parts of the Divine Books found today indicate that the earlier *Anbiya* used to persuade the people to have conviction (Imān) in the last of the longest series of the Divine Guidance (i.e., the last *Nabi*, Hazrat Muhammad PBUH). It was because this was the demand of the Divine System. Therefore, after the coming over of the Last Messenger (PBUH), there is no way for any salvation and progress except having conviction (Imān) in him. That is why the Qur'an asserts that making any distinction amongst the *Anbiya* is definitely confirmed infidelity (4: 150).

Therefore, the second article makes it clear that:

1. Having conviction (Imān) in *Rusul* and the Divine Books do not mean to accept them only; it is to follow them in letter and spirit
2. Making any distinction amongst *Rusul* is infidelity. It means all the *Rusul* on their time had been bringing Divine Guidance from Allah, their obedience at their time was compulsory
3. Having conviction (Imān) in the last Messenger, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) has the same meaning -that the Qur'an be followed. Since no Messenger will come after Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), obeisance to the Qur'an is to the Day of Judgement and is for the entire humanity
4. Now whoever has conviction (Imān) in Allah, His *Rusul*, and *Divine Books* in the manner the Qur'an has prescribed, will be understood to be on the Divine Guidance.

In this regard the Qur'an says:

If these people have conviction (Imān) in it like the manner you have, then they will also be following the right path. If they

repudiate it, this will be tantamount to an abandonment of the path followed by the *Anbiya* (2: 137).

Exposition of Conviction (Imān) in Messengerhood

It is said those who (a) consider all the religions one and the same, and (b) also profess the truthfulness of Muhammad (PBUH), the Messenger of *Allah*, so it is no more making any distinction amongst the *Rasul*. In other words, it means they accept Muhammad (PBUH) as the true Messenger of *Allah*. Even Maulana Azad has written in his exegesis that accepting the Messengerhood-honour and obedience of Muhammad (PBUH), along with the Oneness of *Allah* is essential for embracing Islam (P. 119). In other words, the pivotal point according to Maulana Azad is that:

1. Like other *Anbiya*, having conviction (Imān) in Muhammad (PBUH) is a must.
2. BUT for salvation, auspiciousness, and progress, acting upon the teachings of one's own religion is enough alone.

In other words, it means that the Muslims believe in *Moses*, *Jesus*, and the other *Anbiya* as the messengers of *Allah* - but they obey only the Book, which was revealed to Muhammad (PBUH), the *Rasul* of *Allah*. If the Christians and the Jews, exactly like the Muslims, profess that Muhammad (PBUH) is the *Rasul* of *Allah* but continue following their own religion, then according to Maulana Azad, the purpose of Islam is fulfilled.

This misunderstanding is based on the premise that the meanings of the conviction (Imān) in Muhammad (PBUH), to these fellows, is simply to accept that he (PBUH) was a Messenger from *Allah* and nothing else. It does not accomplish the condition mentioned in article two above.

With categorical Qur'ānic injunctions this condition has clarified that, when the word conviction (Imān) is used about the earlier *Anbiya* and the last Messenger (PBUH) - (or the previous Divine Books or the Qur'ān) - there would be a basic difference in its Qur'ānic meanings. In other words it means that after coming over of a new Messenger (PBUH), or a new Divine Book, the meaning of having conviction (Imān) in the previous *Anbiya* and the previous Divine Books would simply be that the previous *Nabi* or the previous Divine Book was from *Allah*. And having conviction (Imān) in the new *Nabi* and the new Divine Book would be to accept that this new *Nabi* and the new Divine Book are from *Allah* and be followed in letter and spirit. It is just like the coming of a new Vice Roy that his predecessor was simply accepted as a king, his successor at his own time, but obeisance would definitely be of the orders given through this new Vice Roy. Therefore, when the Muslims say they have conviction (Imān) in all the previous *Anbiya*, it means that they accept this reality that they (Peace be upon them) were the torch-bearers of the Divine message on their own time and were hence worthy of being followed potentially. But after the coming over of the last Messenger (PBUH), obeisance remained simply to the Qur'ān alone. That is why all the Truths of the previous Divine Books were included in it and some new injunctions commensurate with the needs of the time have also been added to it. Therefore, the meanings of making distinction amongst the various *Rusul* does not connote to acknowledge verbally that the previous *Anbiya* inclusive of the last Messenger (PBUH) were the Messengers of *Allah*. On the contrary, its meanings are that the obeisance is only and only to the Last Divine Book along with the admittance of the Messengerhood of all the previous *Anbiya*. If the acknowledgement of the Messengerhood of the last *Nabi* is verbal and obeisance is to one's own religions individually, then it is not the Qur'ānic conviction (Imān) in the real sense. It is infidelity. On this count the Qur'ān says:

O mankind! Now that a *Rusul* (Messenger) has come to you bearing truth from your *Rabb*, have conviction (*Īmān*) in him; it will be good for you. But if you do not have conviction (*Īmān*), mark that no harm will be done to *Allah*. The entire universe is busy in carrying out *Allah's* plan, which is based on knowledge and wisdom (4: 170).

Just pause and reflect over this reality that a person accepts that Muhammad (PBUH), the last Messenger, was a righteous and truth-speaking man. He (PBUH) was the true Messenger from *Allah*. But he acts according to the matters that are being inherited from his forefathers and are attributed to some previous *Rusul*, then stand for a while and just think: what is the meaning of his verbal acknowledgement and conviction (*Īmān*)? In other words he accepts that the Qur'ān was revealed to Muhammad (PBUH), the last Messenger, and that this is written in the Qur'ān that Divine Guidance and Direction can be obtained by following the Qur'ān but he seeks other ways and means for obeisance and obedience. Its logical conclusion is that he does not accept Muhammad (PBUH) as the last Messenger and the Qur'ān as the Divine Book of *Allah*. Had he accepted it as such, why had he not followed it?

Brahma-social (Brahma-Samāji) Conduct

Those who talk of such type of "tolerance" and "broad-mindedness" are either soaked with self-deception or deceive others. And those Muslims who assure them that, from the Qur'ānic point of view, there is possibility that Muhammad (PBUH) be accepted as the true Messenger of *Allah*, but obeisance be made to some other religion. This confirms their deception. A Brahma-social sect is extant in India. Its beliefs are:

1. Only one and one God be worshipped; no incarnate of God be accepted; idol-worshipping be opposed
2. Nature be accepted as the basic principle of the religious beliefs
3. **Ones religious beliefs be not based on any conspicuous book, but the veracity and truthfulness of every Divine Book be accepted**
4. The true principles of every religion be accepted as the belief-principles
5. Belief be not based on rituals, traditions, and conventions; the true purpose be for the cleanliness of the heart

(Consult Encyclopedia of Britannica and
Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics)

These beliefs make it clear that all the aspects of "tolerance" and "broad-mindedness" have been included in this teaching. But who can deny this truth that in spite of it, all the followers of this Brahma-social sect are nothing but Hindu and Hindu alone. We need not to have doubt on their intention. All that is to be said is that **to these believers, the meaning of accepting "the truthfulness and veracity" of any Divine Book is only to acknowledge it verbally that "it is a true Book"; obeisance is not included in their conviction (Īmān). From the Qur'ānic point of view, they are committing an open mistake.** Since they have no teaching of the Qur'ān before them, therefore, this belief of theirs is not much worthy of any attention. But what would be said of him, who claims to have the teachings of the Qur'ān before him, yet corroborates this belief? The Qur'ān openly says that:

(O Muhammad) Say: O mankind, I, am Allah's Rasūl sent to all of you – the Rasūl of that Allah whose dominion encompasses the entire universe, which is under His sole authority. Allah gives life

and causes death according to His Law of *Muk'afāt* (i.e., the Law of Requital). Therefore, have conviction (*Imān*) in Him and in His *Rasūl* – the *Ummi Nabi*, who also has conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah* and His revelation. Follow him so that you may be guided aright (7: 156).

Hence no one can be true of one's claim that one accepts Muhammad (PBUH) as the true Messenger of *Allah* and the Qur'ān as the true Divine Book unless and until one follows the Qur'ān. And this address is to the entire humanity –not to any specific sect or group of people.

Now come to the article three i.e., is the following of the injunctions of the Divine Book necessary? Or is simply "God-worshipping and righteous living" on ones own whims and wishes necessary for salvation and progress? To answer these questions, just recast your view on the theory of Maulana Azad. He writes:

"d. The Qur'ān came to distinguish religion from its outward observance. The former is called *Deen* and the latter *Shar'a* and *Minhaj*. *Deen* was but one and the same everywhere and at all times and was vouchsafed to one and all without discrimination. In respect of the outward observance of *Deen*, there was variation and this was inevitable. It varied from time to time and from people to people, as seemed pertinent to every situation. Variations of this nature could not alter the character of *Deen* of the basis of religion. That was the truth, which the Qur'ān aimed to emphasize. Its complaint was that *Deen* had been

neglected and the variation in *Shar'a* and *Minhaj* or the outward form of observance idealized and made the basis of mutual differences among mankind.

"e. It stated that groupism would not lead to progress or bring salvation to man . . ."

{Tarjuman al-Qur'an Vol. 1, pp. 162-163

(1947 Edition, pp. 213-214)}

{This translation is taken from: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad: Tarjuman al-Qur'an. Dr. Syed Abdul Latif (edited and rendered into English), Vol. 1, Surah-Al-Fatiha, Kazi Publications, Lahore, P. 52}

Along with these excerpts, consult his following explanatory note of Sura Baqara's verse 172 given in his exegesis:

5. This proclamation of the grand fountain spring of the true Deen -that the salvation and progress does not lie in any characteristic form of pray or any particular restriction in any of the edible things or any other such form -is achievable through true God-worship and righteous living.

(Page 229: for detail, please, consult the original exegesis)

These were the very quotations, which Pundit Sunderlalji had given in his presidential address. And had proved that a Hindu, who is punctual in the Sharia of his own religion, on his own ways and methods, is entitled to salvation as is a Muslim on the basis of following the Qur'anic jurisprudence. It is because the emphasis on God-worship and righteous living is equally extant in all the religions and that is the real Deen.

Before looking to the importance the Qur'ān attaches to *Shar'a* and *Minhaj* or the outward form of observance idealized, it is necessary to evaluate the theory of Maulana Azad with which he has inflicted a fatal blow to the very roots of Islam. Acceptance to his theory uproots the very essence of the tree of Islam. According to the teachings of the Qur'ān, before the coming over of the last Messenger, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), all the earlier *Anbiya* were sent to some one or the other particular nation, and their message remained enforced for a particular interval of time. In other words, the circle of their Messengerhood remained limited to a particular span of time and space, so the injunctions enforced through them were given to a particular nation they were sent to for a particular time. The coming over of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) changed the entire system.

The Qur'ān is Universal

The annunciation of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) was not confined to any specific nation, country, tribe, clan, or time. His message was universal in nature and was addressed to the entire humanity. The entire teachings of the Qur'ān stand witness to this stark fact. The circle of influence of his Messengerhood was not restricted to any specified area of space or interval of time. It was for all the times to come, for all the countries of the world, for all the people to the last syllable of the recorded time, the Day of Judgment. His Messengerhood was equally for all the people of the entire world. That is why all the jurisprudential injunctions enshrined in the Qur'ān have not been devised for any particular nation under particular conditions; these are universal in nature and scope. If it is accepted that all these Jurisprudential Injunctions of the Qur'ān were enforceable in the particular conditions and circumstances of the people of Arabia, Islam's claim of universality automatically drops to falsehood. In this state of affairs the Injunctions of Islam

can neither remain enforced on all times, nor can any nation be compelled to act upon them. Therefore to lay emphasis on these Qur'anic Jurisprudential Injunctions, simply because it was necessary to prescribe the Injunctions and functions that suit the genesis of the changing conditions of every nation on every time, is an open rebuttal to the Islam's assertion of its universality. Islam is the Deen of the entire humanity and its Laws and Principles have not been devised to suit any particular nation for any specific time.

We accept that mechanical performance of the religious outward forms idealized is not the following of the injunctions from within. These outward forms of observance are just like the body that compulsorily requires the presence of soul in it. But it does not mean that the Qur'anic Injunctions were executed only to suit the circumstances of life, during the period of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), and these injunctions merit no significance today, have no role to play for the salvation and progress of any nation. Had there been some ignorant, we would have made him understand the factual position. We are wonder struck how a prudent like Maulana Azad be prevailed upon to understand that Islam is a system and a part of it influences the entire system! The Qur'anic Injunctions are the integral part of this Islamic system. No man of the world has any right to make any kind of change in it. Or along with the claim of Islam, no man is able to declare it lawful that "salvation and progress" can also be achieved with other means and way than those actions and injunctions enshrined in the Qur'an. "Salvation and progress" is the natural consequence of Islamic system. Bring changes, even in minor details of this system, this result would automatically run a change. When the Qur'an says that no Deen other than Islam is acceptable to Allah, it means Islamic system and not the ambiguous and undefined words of "God-worship and righteous living".

Consult the Qur'an and find how much importance has been assigned to "the boundaries" of these injunctions.

Obelance of the Revelation

As has been written in the previous paragraphs that the Ahl-e-Kitab used to accept God and perform good deeds. Even then, the Muslims (under special circumstances) were ordered to wage war against infidels and polytheists (*mushrikeen*). At the time of this order a charge sheet was levied against the Ahl-e-Kitab. Examine closely and critically the way this order was given to the Muslims in the Qur'an:

In addition to polytheists (*mushrikeen*), there are Ahl-e-Kitab, who oppose the Divine Order in like manner. They do not truly have conviction (*Imān*) in Allah and the life hereafter. Nor do they consider *Harām* (unlawful) the things that Allah and the Messenger (PBUH) term *Harām* (unlawful). They live within the boundaries of the Islamic system as non-Muslims and enjoy full human rights but do not adhere to the laws, which apply to them. There is, therefore, no alternative but to fight with them until they surrender and agree to pay "a compensation for the protection afforded" (*Jizya*) with a willing hand after having been subdued in the war (9: 29).

This grand verse of the Qur'an makes the following matters clear:

1. Whereas the *Ahl-e-Kitab* claimed (and are still claiming) to believe in God and the life

hereafter, but the Qur'an does not term this belief as having the conviction (Imān), so -as has been written in Article one above -
 "according to the Qur'an the true belief is the one that corroborates the way the Qur'an has given";

2. The result of having conviction (Imān) of the Ahl-e-Kitāb, in such a way, is that they do not take into consideration the limits the Qur'an has imposed on *Halāl* (lawful) and *Harām* (unlawful). This makes it clear that Islam (by self-conjecturing) is not merely the name of "God-worshipping and righteous living"; on the contrary, acting upon the Qur'ānic Jurisprudential Injunctions is also compulsory;
3. In the third part of the verse mentioned above (i.e., they do not adhere to the laws of the true Deen, the Divine Order), this matter has been described clearly that their "God-worshipping" on their own ways and means carries no meaning at all. Accepting Deen, the Divine Order, is absolutely compulsory for them. The Deen-ul-Haqq, the Divine Order, is the name of the System, which was sent to the world through the agency of the last Messenger, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). Wherever these words (i.e., Deen-ul-Haqq) have been used in the Qur'an, have been used for this Deen alone. (For this purpose, please consult these verses of the Qur'an -9: 29; 48: 28; 61: 9).

The meaning of the aforementioned verse is quite clear. Since this reality was against his concept, Maulana Azad inserted an addition (within brackets) in his translation of the same verse and thus changed its sense all together. His translation of this verse is:

Amongst the Ahl-e-Kitab are the people whose condition is that neither do they have (true) belief in God, nor in the life hereafter. Nor do they consider the things *Harām* (unlawful), which *Allah* and His Rasūl *-(in their book)* - has called *Harām* (unlawful), and nor do they act upon the true Deen...

(Tarjman-ul- Qur'ān, P.82)

Just think: by the addition of a few words (within brackets) in his translation, what a twist had been given to the matter. This is 'what the Qur'ān says: "These people do not consider the things *Harām* (unlawful), which *Allah* and His *Rasūl* has termed *Harām* (unlawful)." In other words, the things, which are termed *Harām* (unlawful) in the Qur'ān, these people do not consider them *Harām* (unlawful). But Maulana Azad has said: "The things, which *Allah* and His *Rasūl* *-(in their book)* -has called *Harām* (unlawful)." In this way he has tried to prove that the Qur'ān wants to make the people understand that the people may consider the things *Harām* (unlawful), which have been termed *Harām* (unlawful) in *their books*. Just imagine what a great addition has been made in the teachings of the Qur'ān! And what a dauntless daring is it in this addition? This is the technique of the exegesis through which these fellows make an unsuccessful trial to prove their ideas as the ideas of the Qur'ān. And are never afraid how bold is their daring!

The gist of whatever has been written in the aforementioned pages is that:

1. According to the Qur'ān, there are five elements of having conviction (Imān). There is either a mention of any one element or more than one in some place or places in the Qur'ān. But the Qur'ān means all these five elements. Refusal of

- even any one of these elements is infidelity (Kufr).
2. Out of these five elements of conviction (Imān), the conviction (Imān) in the Messengerhood of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and also in the Qur'ān revealed from *Allah* is an integral part.
 3. *Having conviction (Imān) does not mean simply accepting; but along with it, it is also the following of these elements.*
 4. The obeisance to every *Rasūl* and every Divine Book was compulsory at their own time but after the annunciation of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), the obeisance would be to the last Book of *Allah*, the Qur'ān, and not of the previous Books.
 5. The Jurisprudential Injunctions of the Qur'ān are the compulsory parts of Islamic system and the following of these Injunctions is a must.

Now, keeping these illustrations in view, understand the meaning of this verse, which is the strong hold of the supporters of this new idea (that 'All religions are one and the same'). The Qur'ān says:

Those from amongst the Jews, Christians, Sabaeans, and those who have conviction (Imān) in *Allah* without formally adopting any particular religion; and those who are Muslims only by virtue of being born in a Muslim family: who have conviction in *Allah's* law of *Mukafāt* (Requital), as revealed to you O *Rasūl* and leads his life accordingly, will be duly compensated. Such a person will lead a life of heavenly bliss, free of fear, grief, and anxiety (2: 62).

A Significant Verse

The conclusion drawn from this verse is that the Jews, Christians and Sabaeans are claimed to have conviction (Imān) in *Allah* and the life hereafter only. There is no claim of having conviction (Imān) in the Qur'ān.

Whatever we have written up till now, will create no difficulty in understanding this verse. The first thing is that "to have conviction (Imān) in *Allah* and the life hereafter" is not the end in itself. It includes all the five elements of conviction (Imān). Wherever having conviction (Imān) is reiterated in the Qur'ān, it is for the complete conviction (Imān) -not for a part or parts. The Qur'ān is very much explicit for this complete conviction (Imān) and says:

**If these people have conviction (Imān) in
it like the manner you have, then they will
also be following the right path (2: 137).**

The second thing is that, if the claim is merely of the conviction (Imān) in *Allah* and the life hereafter, this verse also mentions of Jews and Christians in addition to the mention of the Muslims themselves. The question is: "Have the Muslims been given the same claim that they too have to have conviction (Imān) in *Allah* and the life hereafter?" If they have to have this same claim, then it is not understandable as to whom the claim is for having conviction in the Qur'ān.

The meaning of this verse is self-explanatory. Before the advent of Islam, the people had confined religion within the folds of (races and nations). For example, Torah is for the nation of *Banī Isrā'īl* (for Jews) and Christianity too. It was because, in *Injīl* (New Testament), this saying is attributed to Jesus (AS) that "I have come to the lost sheep of *Banī Isrā'īl*; the bread of the sons can not be thrown to the

dogs." The division of men in Hinduism is based on "races by birth". And the condition of "races by birth" is that neither the Hindu of a lower race can move up to be the Hindu of a higher race, nor is there any way open to reach the proximity (nearness) of God. This was also included in the religious beliefs that a person born in the clan of Jews deserves for salvation, being one of the sons of *Allah*. Hazrat Jesus (AS) becomes responsible for the salvation of the child born in the family of a Christian. In other words, there was a belief in the religions of the world that:

1. One gets salvation on the basis of one's birth, within the fold of a sect of a specific family, and
2. All the doors of salvation are closed to the men born in other sects, because one can not join that sect (The entry into the sects is by birth, not by choice). (Be it known that there is no concept of any preaching in Hindus and Jews; even the concept of preaching came late in Christians.)

When the Qur'an came, it boldly refuted these concepts. It openly declared that salvation and progress has nothing to do with birth. Wherever one is born (whether in Jews, Christians, or Sabaeans etc.) can openly join the fold of Islam by having conviction (*Īmān*) and can deserve to have paradisaal life with good deeds. The Qur'an says that:

Whosoever have conviction (*Īmān*) in *Allah* and His *Rasūl* {i.e., *Allah's* law of *Mukafāt* (Requital), as revealed to you O *Rasūl*} and lead their life accordingly, will be duly compensated. Such persons will lead a life of heavenly bliss, free of fear, grief, and anxiety (2: 62).

So far are the Muslims, they should, too, not remain brewed in the false conceit that they will have their

entitlement for salvation only because they are born in the Muslim family. Proving their conviction (Īmān) through their good deeds, they will have to be eligible for a life of heavenly bliss. This claim of having conviction (Īmān) from the Muslims is not specifically at this place, there are other verses where this claim has also been reiterated. For example, in Sura An-Nisa, the Qur'ān says that:

O you who profess to have conviction (Īmān) hold fast unto your conviction (Īmān) in Allah, His Rasūl, the Book, which He sent to this Rasūl and those, which He had sent earlier. (4: 136)

In Sura At-Tauba, this reality of having conviction (Īmān) has also been made explicitly clear. There were people amongst the Muslims whose conviction (Īmān) was merely verbal in nature and scope; its fountain spring never sprang from the core of their hearts. And nor were their good deeds worthy to prove it. (They have been called hypocrites i.e., *munafiqeen*). In the other spheres of life, this veiled attitude and conduct of life could be lived by one way or the other. The field of fighting in the way of Allah (*Jihad*) was the greatest pragmatic test of their conviction (Īmān). These people used to try to escape from such occasions with their hither-and-thither type of lame excuses. It is evident that these people were Muslims, just in the terminological jargon. In comparison to those who used to prove their conviction (Īmān) in the most difficult vicissitudes of life, their professing of the conviction (Īmān) was just verbal in nature and scope. For each of these two groups of the people, the Qur'ān has said:

The truth is that those who truly have conviction (Īmān) in Allah and in the life hereafter will never ask to be exempted from fighting with their possessions and

live in the cause of *Allah*. *Allah* knows well about the *munafiqeen*. Exemption is sought only by those who do not truly have conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah* and the life hereafter, whose hearts are filled with doubt, which makes them hesitant to act (9: 44-45).

This verse of the Qur'ān has made the following matters clear to the mind:

1. It is evident that those-holding-fast-the conviction (i.e., the true Muslims), who used to participate in fighting with their possessions, had conviction (*Imān*) in *Malā'ikah* (the forces of nature), the Divine Books, and the *Rusul* in addition to their conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah* and the life hereafter. But here, in this verse of the Qur'ān, the mention of their conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah* and the life hereafter has only been thought to be enough.
2. The hypocrites (i.e., *munafiqeen*) were those people who verbally professed all the elements of conviction (*Imān*), were called Muslims, and lived their social life with them. The Qur'ān does not accept their conviction (*Imān*) and makes proclamation in unambiguous terms that these are the people who had no conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah* and the life hereafter.
3. Therefore, when the Muslims will be told to have conviction (*Imān*) in *Allah* and the life hereafter, and do the good deeds, it would mean that their being a Muslim by birth or merely professing the conviction (*Imān*) verbally is not enough. Conviction (*Imān*) ought to be from the core of one's heart and the actions of life should

authenticate it. According to the Qur'ān, the true *mu'mineen* are:

The *mu'mineen* are those who have conviction (Imān) in Allah and His Rasūl, then they have no speck of any doubt (in this conviction (Imān)); in the cause of Allah, they fight with their possessions: the goods and the breath of life. These are the people who are the true (Muslims) (49: 15).

These illustrations make it clear that there are trying conditions for a Muslim to clinch "salvation and progress". He should have conviction (Imān) of the measure, the Qur'ān has prescribed. He should seek decision from the same measure "enshrine in the Qur'ān" in every walk of life and then continue accepting these decisions from the core of his heart. He should impose restrictions of *Halāl* (lawful) and *Harām* (unlawful) on himself, and then should keep his utmost dear possessions, like his goods and breath of life, ready to lay down in the cause of Allah. In other words he should, at every time, imagine himself in the field of martyrdom. It is then that he should expect "salvation and progress".

Contrary to it, the only compulsory thing for a non-Muslim (such as a Hindu) is to get up in the morning, do "service to God" according to the conventional methods in vogue, and give charity at times. The examples of such "services to God" are to feed grain to the sparrows, to buy fodder for the bull, to pour flour on the abode of the insects. Just-an-advance-ahead-to-it, are the examples of 'getting the free wayside stall or tub for drinking water built some where, if capable, got the well dug, inn or hospital constructed'. Such-and-the-like are the forms of charity. Other than these forms, there was no need of imposing any conspicuous

restrictions on oneself. Neither were the difficult stages of Islamic Injunctions necessary to be traversed, or the troubles of migration to be imperatively overcome, nor the head to be sacrificed in the cause of *Allah*.

(On the contrary, the concept of fighting in the cause of *Allah* -*Jihad* - is a sin in Hinduism, it is against *ahimsa* i.e., non-violence movement.) On the other hand, it is necessary for a Muslim to lead life according to the dictates of System that *Allah* has prescribed in the Qur'ān, whereas a non-Muslim is completely free to devise a system he likes for him and lead the life in the system he desires. There is no binding of any Divine System and man-made system for him. All he has to do is what has been mentioned above. He will be entitled for salvation.

Now just pause and think! When the end of all the struggles and strides of human life is nothing but the achievement of salvation, then who will be the "normal" person that will accept this utmost tremendous way of living, where he has to pass through trying circumstance at every breath? Why should he not go for adopting such an easy mode of living in stead of running for surmounting the baneful and trying stages of life to clamp the achievement of salvation? Had the achievement of salvation been clamped as such, what was the need of providing detailed guidance and injunctions in the Qur'ān? All that was necessary for this purpose was: "O people, accept the existence of God, and continuously go on doing righteous deeds on the pattern of your own ways and means; salvation for you is definite." Had such a mode of "total reconciliation" of "tolerance and broad-mindedness" been practiced, there would have been no confrontation from anywhere, nor had there been any hue and cry against it. Nor had the last Messenger, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and his followers been tramped in such trouble and trepidation, nor had they to migrate to Madina from Mecca for living the life of such a series of

wars against infidels (*Kāfirs*). The entire world would have mired in happiness and the men had the easiest way of achieving salvation and progress. And then the continuous confrontation between the truth and the falsehood had ended forever. The total world (except some atheists, who refuse the existence of God) would have been *mu'min*. There would have been no bickering, wrangling, and fighting between Islam and infidelity, and truth and falsehood.

God-worshipping and Righteous Living

Hearts, pay attention to the use of ambiguous words of "God-worshipping and Righteous Living" once again. The salient questions are:

What is called this 'God-worshipping'?

What is 'Righteous Living'?

Is the answer to these two questions this that it is the way of worshipping God in the manner one likes? And Right Living adopting a way one desires good and abstaining from the mode one considers bad on one's own?

It is a fact that some words (or religious terms) are in use among the Muslims. These words and terms do not depict the Islamic meanings for which they were opted in the beginning. Not only this that these words do not reflect the true teachings of Islam, but some time they project such meanings that are, in real sense, diametrically opposite to the true spirit of Islam. "Worship" is one of the categories of such a band of words. In other religions, the relation of man and God is represented with "adoration and worship", but in Islam, the word used for it is "*abqodiyat*" (obeisance), which is different from worship in meanings. Ignoring this very difference generates the entire body of

misunderstandings that leads to the concept of "uniformity of religions".

The concept of supreme body has incessantly been coming down since the beginning of man on this earth. When the humanity was at its infantile period, the man had individual pattern of living. He was weak and defenseless against the powerful beasts that roamed about him. He used to live in jungles, ravines and caves. Fruit and prey were the main sources of his living. No man had any individual relation with any other man. In this mode of living, the relation of "God" with man was no more than the man's prostrating before Him at the eve of any affliction, calamity, disaster, misfortune, or trouble and of dancing at the moments of mirth and happiness as if it is festivity rejoicing. "God" was either in the garb of deity, gods, goddesses, or in the form of idols. The utmost endeavour of man was to keep these deities happy. The name of the outward manifestation of this struggle was "worship". During this period, whenever the light of the Divine Revelation came, it shredded away the wrong veils of the man-made concepts, and gave the true concept of God. When this light was lost, the same darkness of ignorance prevailed upon the human universe.

Slowly but gradually the humanity passed through some higher evolutionary stages of life. He could survive only through some form of group life. A band of men could survive under conditions in which a single individual had no chance, so early men naturally lived in groups. Some form of social organization is necessary for group life. Thus he laid the foundation of gregarious life. The first social ties came from blood relationship. Now the tendency diverted from individual mode of living to tribal form of life. The men started establishing succour and co-operation among one another. The various forms of participatory actions started burgeoning. This stemmed the issues of mutual rights and their preservation. For prescribing correct

dimensions to the issues of mutual rights and their preservation, Divine Injunctions also started coming through the agency of Messengerhood. It is evident that whatever were the mores and cores of human life, injunctions of the like manner were ordained. The time marched ahead. The urges of life passed through the process of progress and change. The Divine series of the injunctions also continued a forward march to commensurate the process of permanence and change in life. According to these Divine orders, the relation of the head and the subordinate and of the ruler and the ruled surfaced between God and man. Since the Divine Guidance did not remain preserved with the man for a longer period, the essence of the Divine Injunctions was mutilated. The concept of the ruler and the ruled about God was also lost and then the same old concept of worship used to prevail. This state of affairs continued as such till the men started collective life in stead of living individually and, thereafter, the end of their total efforts transformed into the formulation of collectivity in life.

Now was the time that they could be given a perfect Code of life, comprising constitutional paradigms and laws for the most complete form of the collective system of life. This Code was finally given to the humanity. This Code made it clear that all the man-made constitutional rules and regulations for this collective system of life will hamper the process of development of the humanity. It also made it crystal clear that the human development can only take place with this Code of life that God has showered for this purpose. This Code of life is called the Qur'an.

This Code of life told clearly that the duty of every one having conviction (Imān) in *Allah* is to try to implement God-gifted System instead of executing man-made systems of life, whether this man-made system is made of a single individual or of a group of people. In other words it means

that the rule is of God instead of men. And thus the man is not a servant of any one else except that of *Allah*. This is the right relation between man and God. In other words this is the relation of subordinate with the head, and of the ruled with the ruler. This is covered with the concept of "*Aboodiyat*" (obeisance), which means "to put forth one's all-efforts in accord with the needs of the Divine Order."

By now you would have seen that the word "worship" does not absolutely convey the Qur'anic meanings of the relation between God and man. Not only this that it does not communicate these meanings, it generates all together those different meanings, which were the product of the infantile period of the humanity and depict a memorable period of his individual mode of living. Within the umbrella of these meanings, the concept of "God-worship" is uniformly similar in every religion. But God's "*aboodiyat*" (obeisance) can only be accomplished when one lives within the parameters of Islam. Therefore, the Divine Code under which God's rule can be established is never found anywhere else than the shrines of the Qur'an. The demand of Islam is to establish Divine System -and not the worship of God.

The Right Meanings of Conviction (Īman)

Hence, the meanings of having conviction (Īman) in *Allah* are: "I solemnly declare that I do not follow the Sovereignty of any one else except that of *Allah's*." The remaining four integral parts of conviction (Īman) are the branches of this fountain spring. In other words it means that:

1. Solemn declaration of following the Sovereignty of God:
Conviction in *Allah*

2. This Sovereignty can be exercised through the Code that is God-revealed and is enshrined in the Qur'ān in its last and final form:

Conviction in Books

3, 4. These Codes were revealed to *Anbiya* through *Malā'ikah*, and the last and final of this continuity is Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH):

Conviction in *Malā'ikah* and *Rusul*

5. The natural consequence of this mode of life is exaltation in this world and eminence in the life hereafter:

Conviction in the Life Hereafter

This is what the Qur'ānic meanings are. Whether mention is made of all of these integral parts of conviction (Īman) or of any one, the purpose encompasses the entire System.

Now is the concept of "righteous living". After understanding the essence of Islam, its definition is no more difficult. Every step that is taken for establishing Divine Order in the world is a good step and the one taken against it is bad. To the man in his initial stages of life, the meaning of conviction (Īmān) in *Allah* was simply the worship of God; similarly his concept of 'good' was also at the low ebb of its initial stage. The mode of living was individual at that time, so 'good' and 'bad' was the name of individual actions. For example, if he saw a man showing sympathy with the men running fever, helping the old, loving the animal etc. he thought him a pious man. And it is a fact that such can be 'the good actions' in individual life. But in the collective life, the standard of the concept of good and bad becomes higher than that. At this point what is to be seen is:

- What are the basics of the culture and civilization of a nation?

- What type of system of life does the nation suggest for its men?
- What are the effects of that culture and civilization on the world?

If its implications are humanity bruising, the personal 'good' of the individuals of that nation (such as charity etc.) weigh nothing in the scale of humanity. So far as the people of that system remain supporting, helping, favouring, and co-operating with it, no action of theirs will be a virtuous action. Applying leeches to some one's jugular vein for sucking even the last drop of blood in him and then finding that he has fits of weakness, supply syrup to his throat for cure, can only be a virtuous action to the superfluous mind alone. The Qur'ān imparts education for the establishment of the system of justice, which means the preservation of the benefit of the entire humanity. The name of this system is the Rule of God.

A person is a philanthropist; he participates in virtuous works, helps the poor and has very fine conduct and disposition but does not accept the government of his time, or remains busy to establish some other government in its stead. This is such a severe crime in the eyes of the government that his "personal virtues" carry no weight for the government. And if this crime is proved against him, he will be given the most rigorous punishment.

The name of leading life under the rule of God is conviction (Iman) and the life opposed to it is infidelity (Kufr). Please judge yourself "What weight can the personal virtues have in the Divine Scale?" These are the people for whom the Qur'ān has explicitly clear verdict:

These are the people whose actions are rendered waste (2:217).

In other words it means that the action they think virtuous on their own whims, are not virtuous in the real sense; hence have no result. Go on taking pieces of chalk with the understanding that it is quinine, malaria will never be cured. In this regard, the Qur'an says:

The deeds of those who reject the guidance of this Divine Light, are like a mirage in a desert; whereby a man parched with thirst mistakes it for water and on reaching there finds that it was nothing but a visual delusion. At that point one does find one thing at least: that *Allah's Law of Mukafāt* is (always) present with him and that it settles all scores forthwith; for *Allah* is swift in reckoning.

(In contrast to the Divine Light) The similitude of their deeds is the depth of darkness in a vast and deep ocean that is further darkened by waves billowing over waves and the dark clouds above. These will be such depths of darkness, layer upon layer, that one can even hardly see his outstretched hand; for how can he get any light from anywhere else when *Allah's Light* (of Revelation) is not available? (24: 39-40)

Therefore, these people consider system of life quite different from the actions of life and forget that only those actions bear fruit that are carried out within the boundary walls of a right system. Extra systematic individual actions carry no weight. Please study third *Rūkoo* of Sura At-Tauba of the Qur'an. In what a fascinating way this reality has been made clear! Making this idea clear, it was said:

It is true that the *mushrikeen* (hypocrite) used to provide drink to the pilgrims and maintain the sacred Mosque (*Ka'ba*) but can they be placed equal to those who have conviction (*Iman*) in *Allah* and the life hereafter (Divine Order)? They can not be regarded as equal in the estimation of *Allah*. The *z'alimeen* can in no way be considered as following the right path (9:19).

At various places, the illustrations of these matters are extant in the Qur'ān. This would have made it clear to you as to what the righteous living is in the scale of the Qur'ān.

Keep these illustrations in view. And then pause and reflect that this theory -that there is no need of any conspicuous system of life for salvation and progress, and that "God-worshipping and righteous living" are equally in extant in every religion in principle -is enough for salvation." How much against the teaching of the Qur'ān this theory is! Be it known that this assertion -that Islam enjoys superiority and preference over the religions of the world -can not become the root cause for creating enmity against any religion. Islam does not teach enmity just over the difference in religions. It is the messenger of peace and solidarity. The proclamation of this assertion and its preaching is the well being and the sympathy of the humans. It is as if you say to a patient: "My brother, your disease will not be cured with irregular treatments; consult so and so a doctor for it; he is the only expert of these diseases and he is the only one to give you the right prescription." This suggestion is no enmity to the patient. On the contrary, it is based on love. The enmity will be from the side who says: "No, brother, it is not. All the medical clinics are one and the same. Get the prescription for treatment from anywhere you like and buy the medicine." Though the proprietor of the medical clinics had announced: "Now the right prescriptions will be available

from such and such medical clinics. (The other clinics cheat on our name.)" Now telling that every medical clinic is one and the same is falsification of this announcement and an open enmity to the patient. That is why it has been said in the Qur'an:

In these also there are signs for those who use their reason (16: 12).

Islam Is a Deen

In this discourse, the word religion has been used for Islam. As has been written earlier, Islam in real sense is not religion; it is Deen. Therefore, comparing and contrasting of Islam with religions of the world is wrong. When it is not a religion, how valid is the comparison with the religions? It is Deen and the meaning of Deen is the system of life; so if Islam is to be compared, it should be with the other life systems of the world.

The basic mistake of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others following him is that they also understand Islam to be a religion. When it is understood to be a religion, then definitely there remains no difference between Islam and other religions. In this case, the effort of proving Islam's superiority over other religions is useless. When the end is worshipping alone, then it be in the temple or the mosque, it makes no difference. When the purpose is pilgrimage to Hindu shrine, then it be to Hindu god or to Mecca is of the same caliber. When the end product is charity, then giving alms to some one is no different to giving *zakat*. With this concept, "God-worshipping and righteous living" remains almost the same everywhere.

On the contrary, the-condition-of-"God-worshipping"-for-it is also meaningless. The code of ethics (for example speak the truth; do not tell a lie; do no steal; do not eat unlawful; do not rape) is one and the same everywhere; even the atheists understand that these ethical rules are

good in nature. In this regard, even the "God-worshipping" does remain no more necessary. The name of these ethical regulations is adjudicated to be "true Deen". Since this belief is running long among the Muslims that Islam is also a true religion, they also hold the relation of worship with God. And the righteous living is the name of the few ethical regulations: some beliefs, some fundamental forms of pray and the ethical mores and cores that are equally found everywhere. Only this collection is termed as Islam and nothing else.

There is no difference between this form of Islam and the other religions. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad held the same concept of Islam, so his deduction per se -that there is no difference between Islam and other religions - is also right. The only difference between him and the other *Maulvis* is that he announced it openly whereas the others had no such daring; otherwise every *Maulvi* holds the same belief, whether he is vocal or not. Or you may say that this is the necessary result of the belief, which Maulana Abul Kalam Azad has announced.

But when it is understood that Islam is not a religion, it is a system of life, then the edifice raised on this foundation is different from the one that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad represents. It is evident that every system of life has its own specific exigencies. Till the minds are prepared for it, such a system can not be established. Conviction (*Īman*) is that conspicuous mentality on the basis of which the edifice of that system is raised. According to the Qur'ān: "Only one and the one alone is the system of life for all the human beings." Hence one and the one alone is the mode of conviction (*Īman*). According to this Qur'ānic concept of Islam there is no such question that this system is one and the same for every nation and every religion. This system is no where except in the Qur'ān, so the question of its comparison does never arise.

This is the very basic mistake, which raised the entire edifice of Brahma-social exegesis of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.
