

No Islam but Islam

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By

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For my kindred spirit
Damanjit Yakhmi,
dearest of friends

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FOREWORD

This book is about what Islam is, not about what Islam is *not*, as is proclaimed by mullahs when violence against Islam threatens their self-styled religion, endangering their lifestyle of zeal, orthodoxy and intolerance. Conceived as an antidote against those fundamentalists who do not denounce the evils of terror, murder and suicide bombing, this book strives toward delineating the compassionate side of Islam based on the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Paradoxically, Islam as a religion of peace and reconciliation was hijacked immediately after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. At the very inception of its rise to glory, it fell from the grace of purity in love, harmony and compassion. The message of Islam was sidelined if not forgotten, and Islam did rise—it rose to the pinnacle of expansion by the sword, under the weight of an astonishing mixture of dualities, in cruelty and compassion, in tolerance and intolerance, in killing and forgiving. Historically, Islam emerged as a power struggle between several factions, and even its great split into the major sects of Shia and Sunni, and further fragmentation into multiple sects, did not affect the dizzying speed of its conquests, along with the flourishing of the arts and sciences. Sadly, the arts of poetry, literature and architecture which allowed Islam to reach the zenith of its expression declined with the gradual onslaught of man-made laws and edicts in stark contrast to the precepts of Islam. Prophet Muhammad's last sermon on the last holy pilgrimage to Mecca, as detailed at the beginning of the first chapter, is the epitome of Islam as a universal message of love, equality and compassion for all God's creatures.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MOUNT OF MERCY

Pass through this moment of time in harmony with nature, and end your journey in content, as an olive falls when it is ripe, blessing nature who produced it, and thanking the tree on which it grew.

—Marcus Aurelius

Prophet Muhammad's Last Sermon on the Mount of Mercy

From the Prophet's sermon on Mount Arafat after *haji*: "My beloved friends, listen to my words, because I don't know if I will ever be with you here again after this year. Therefore listen to what I am saying, carefully, and take these words to those who could not be here today. My friends and family, your lives, property and honor are sacred for you until you appear before your Lord, just as you consider this month, this day and this city sacred. Return the things that are entrusted to you to their rightful owners. You will meet your Lord, and He will hold you answerable for your actions. You have rights over your wives, and your wives have rights over you. Treat your wives with love and kindness. Verily, you have taken them on the security of God, and their persons are made lawful unto you by the words of God. Free your slaves, following my example, and tell others to do the same. But if they wish to stay with you, see that you feed them with such food as you eat yourselves, and clothe them with the stuff you wear. And if they commit a fault which you are not inclined to forgive, then part from them, for they are the servants of God as you and me, and are not to be treated harshly. Know that we are all equal in the sight of Allah, and journey together in this world as a family of brotherhood and sisterhood. All of us belong to the line of Adam, and Adam was created from dust. This is a gift of knowledge for all who cultivate wisdom and humility. An Arab is no better than a non-Arab, nor is a white better than a black, or a black better than a white, except in piety. Nothing is allowed to a Muslim if it belongs to another, unless it is given freely and willingly, so do not oppress each other. I am leaving

behind me two things, the Book of God and my example, if you follow these two, you will never go astray. Spend freely of what is given to you, whether in prosperity or in adversity. Restrain your anger and pardon all, for Allah loves those who do good, as it has been revealed. This hajj is acceptable to Allah, only if we have love in our hearts for each and every one of God's creatures."

Kill not your children for fear of want. We shall provide sustenance for them. As well as for you. Verily, the killing of them is a great sin. (17:31 Quran)

This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you, and have chosen for you as religion Al-Islam. Whoso is forced by hunger, not by will, to sin; for him, lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful," Prophet Muhammad recited, his eyes shining with mirth. (5:3 Quran)

"Know you that what month is this? What territory this is? What day?"

"The sacred month! The sacred territory! The great day of pilgrimage—" several voices spluttered forth, filling the Mount of Mercy with the music of joy.

"Even thus sacred and inviolable God made His life and the property of each of you unto the other, until you meet your Lord." Prophet Muhammad's voice rippled above all, his arms held out. "O Lord! I have delivered my message and accomplished my work!"

"Yes, you have, Prophet. Yes, you have—" the pilgrims cheered.

"O God, I beseech Thee, bear Thou witness unto it," Prophet Muhammad prayed. "This is the day of true brotherhood and sisterhood, of devotion and repentance. This is the day when Allah is revealed to His servants, extending His Hands with generosity and immense blessing! We are promised that during these hours by Arafat, Allah will send down His mercy and forgiveness to those who are deserving and they will feel His presence!"

"The heart of the believer is between two fingers of the Infinitely Merciful" – the Prophet Muhammad

The Prophet's Night Journey to the Throne of the Beloved

The Prophet's cousin Ali had long since retired upstairs, and Ali's sister Umm Hani had dozed off in a corner by the window, while Muhammad slept soundly. The house itself was quiet when Muhammad's eyes were shot open by a sudden flood of light. Veils upon veils of shimmering light were dancing before his sight, revealing vistas infinite and boundless. All were expanding into One Circle of Unity, its shining globe a mirror bright. Gabriel was floating out of this mirror, appareled in the purity of light so dazzling that it appeared to cut through the very heart of the night, effacing all darkness. The silvery thatch of hair over his head was crowned by stars, and his wings were sprinkled with the colors of the rainbows. Muhammad could not tear his gaze away, the fires of joy and bliss leaping through his very soul into his shining eyes. Gabriel was commanding him to rise, and he was obeying much like the Pilgrim of Love, listening to the music of the night, which was bidding him to journey to the Throne of the Beloved.

The night itself, decked with brilliant stars was beckoning Muhammad to obey each and every command of Gabriel. In absolute surrender to his sight and senses, Muhammad had already followed Gabriel out on the road. Gabriel was drawing his attention toward a beautiful mare, its glittering wings spread out like a giant eagle in flight. The fire and brilliance of jacinth was contained in the eyes of this mare, her golden hair braided with moonbeams.

Her name is Buraq, Muhammad. Our heavenly mount to carry us on our Night Journey to the Lord of Power! Gabriel smiled, hoisting Muhammad up, and easing himself on its back with the swiftness of lightning.

Buraq whinnied with great delight, sucking in a cool draught of night air, and galloping over the wind toward the celestial skies. Muhammad was feeling light-headed, his eyes searching the expanse of the mountain upon which Buraq had planted her feet. Gabriel was commanding him to dismount and offer his prayers, expounding that the ground under their feet was the summit of Mount Sinai where Jehovah had given the tablets of stone to Moses. Muhammad was spellbound by this Journey awesome and ineffable. Astride Buraq with Gabriel behind him, Muhammad could feel the silken sails of the wind caressing his face. Their next halt was at Bethlehem, where Muhammad prayed at the very spot where Jesus was

born. Buraq was their holy guide, sailing up once again, and then swooping down in front of the temple in Jerusalem.

Muhammad was commanded to enter this Holy Temple, Gabriel beside him introducing him to Jesus and Moses. All three were kneeling in unison, offering prayers. Muhammad had barely finished his prayers, when he found himself outside the Temple. Gabriel was leading Muhammad toward a ladder balanced on Jacob's stone, planting his feet on the first rung, and bidding him to follow in the footsteps of Light and Trust. They were climbing the very rungs of the voids, each step light as a feather. In a flash, Muhammad was whisked into the mists of ether, standing face-to-face with Gabriel at the very gates of Paradise.

The portals of the heavens were flung open by Gabriel's command, and Muhammad was entering the First Heaven, made of pure silver, suspended low under the canopy of stars, and balanced by golden chains. Adam was the first one to greet Muhammad in this First Heaven, embracing him, and hailing him as the noblest of his children. Adam was leading him toward the Second Heaven where Noah stood welcoming. Muhammad was embraced by Noah, Jesus and John the Baptist, before being whisked away by Gabriel into the Third Heaven. The Third Heaven was the abode of the David and Joseph, Gabriel was expounding. In the Fourth Heaven, Enoch offered them warm welcome before they were flown to the Next. Muhammad had barely exchanged greetings with Aaron in the Fifth Heaven, when the Sixth Heaven with its entire splendor was calling him and he yielded to its glory where angels stood singing.

O Allah, Who has united snow and fire, unite all Thy faithful servants in obedience to Thy Law.

Muhammad's senses were intoxicated by the sweetness of music from the lips of the angels. His soul was a shuddering mirror of bliss and rapture so supreme that he did not even know that he was transported inside the shining vaults of the Seventh Heaven.

Prophet Muhammad was absorbed into a flood of divine Light, standing under the shade of a lote tree, beyond which in rippling waves upon waves of light were concealed many thrones of Allah. Muhammad was invited into the House of Adoration, embellished with rubies and jacinth, his gaze searching the Face of the Beloved. The scent of Paradise was in his breath, the perfume of nearness only two bow shots away from

the Throne of Allah. The Face of God was veiled in twenty thousand veils, and the glory which radiated from behind the veils was greater than fifty thousand suns caught inside the heart of one day. To the right of God's Throne was an inscription bright and dazzling.

There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Messenger.

The golden tongue of this inscription itself was pouring the music of ecstasy and exaltation into Muhammad's soul as he stood gazing, rapt and dazzled.

O Muhammad, salute Thy Creator. One Voice imbued with love encompassing was the pulse of a caress and a command.

The shafts of pain and bliss were leaping from within Muhammad's heart, his own Fire of Love one embrace, ineffable. Sweetness upon sweetness from the very face of his Beloved were infused into each pore of his self-surrender, as he stood there annihilated, dazzled. His very soul was singing in ecstatic exaltation.

Glory be to Him Who carried His servant by night from the sacred temple of Mecca to the Temple that is remote, whose precinct We have blessed, that We might show him of Our signs. For He is the Hearer and the Seer. (17: 1 Quran)

The Zen of Islam

I cast the garment of love over thee from Me. And this in order that thou mayest be reared under Mine Eye. (20:39 Quran)

Work not confusion in earth after the fair ordering thereof, and call on Him in fear and hope. Lo, the mercy of Allah is nigh unto good. (7:56 Quran)

Sanction is given to those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo, Allah loveth not aggressors. (2:190 Quran)

Women shall have the same rights over men as men have over them. (2:228 Quran)

And the women have rights similar to those of men in equity. I God will allow not the work of any worker from among you, male or female, to be lost. (3:196 Quran)

And whoso doeth good works, whether male or female, and he or she is a believer, such will enter Paradise and they will not be wronged the dint in a date-stone. (40:40 Quran)

He hath revealed unto thee, Muhammad, the Scripture with the truth, confirming that which was revealed before it, even as He revealed the Torah and the Gospel. (3:3 Quran)

And O Muhammad say: my Lord, forgive and have mercy, for Thou art best of all who show mercy. (23:118 Quran)

The faithful slaves of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly, and when the foolish ones address them, answer: Peace. (25:63 Quran)

O mankind, lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Lo, the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct. Lo, Allah is Knower, Aware. (49:13 Quran)

This it is which Allah announceth unto his bondsmen who believe and do good works. Say O Muhammad unto mankind: I ask of you no fee thereof, save loving-kindness among kinsfolk. And whoso scoreth a good deed, We add unto its good for him. Lo, Allah is Forgiving, Responsive. (42:23 Quran)

Enjoy ye righteousness upon mankind, while ye yourself forget to practice? And ye are the readers of Scripture. Have you then no sense? (2:44 Quran)

Woe unto each sinful liar. (45:7 Quran)

The way of blame is only against those who oppress mankind, and wrongfully rebel in the earth. For such there is a painful doom. (42:42 Quran)

Yet ye it is who slay each other and drive out a part of your people from their homes, supporting against them by sin and transgression. And if they came to you as captives ye would ransom them, whereas their expulsion itself was unlawful for you. Believe ye in part of the Scripture and disbelieve ye in part thereof? And what is the reward of those who do so save ignominy in the life of the world, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be consigned to the most grievous doom. For Allah is not unaware of what ye do. (2:85 Quran)

A gift of welcome from the Forgiving, the Merciful. (41:32 Quran)

*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful
Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds
The Beneficent, the Merciful
Owner of the Day of Judgment
Thee alone we worship, Thee alone we ask for help
Show us the straight path
The path of those whom Thou hast favored
Not the path of those who earn Thine anger
Nor of those who go astray (1:1 Quran)*

Ye who believe! Be steadfast witness for Allah in equity, and let not hatred of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly, that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to Allah. Lo, Allah is informed of what ye do. (5:8 Quran)

Teach Islam

Islam is the alphabet of love, with the Quran as its dictionary, seeking dialogue or conversation with the People of the Book and with people of all faiths who wish to study its message in the light of wisdom and understanding. Its 114 verses, beginning with *The Most Merciful, The Most Gracious, The Most Compassionate God*, and with the exception of only one *surah*, IX Al Bara, testify to a universal love for mankind. Though its verses appear harsh at first, poetic when one gets into the rhythm of reading, enveloping and enlightening at the same time, they are to be understood in the context of times when Arabia was caught up in the fever of greed, cruelty, debauchery, and drunkenness, not to mention violent conflicts between and within tribes. Blood feuds were common, slavery was rampant, women were oppressed, infant girls were buried

alive, and gods were revered and mocked with the same passion as the passionate needs and greed of men, striving toward riches and power.

Now to the power of understanding, or lack of it.

As one reads the Divine Word of God, as one believes the Quran to be, with only one's limited intelligence, one tends to squeeze a handful of interpretations out of it, most of which become gilded with distortions, if not the victims of lies, depending upon the intent or the inclination of the author or scholar. If moved by zeal, such persons mold each interpretation into fire-brands, while to others who are guided by the purity of their own minds and hearts, the same verses lend the glow of well-preserved pearls. And yet, they melt against the hurricanes of lies and distortions. If one were to riffle through the pages of history, one would not fail to discover that many truths lie buried under mounds of lies, and that many lies have been repeated so often, by so many, and with such pious conviction, that if someone, even in this age and time, dared speak the truth, it would sound like a lie.

And yet, it is a difficult task, to know truth, since truth is a relative term. However, we do walk in its shadows of love and light, our hearts tortured with the longing to be good and to do good. It is even more difficult since the Scriptures speak to us in parables while we wade through the waters of doubt and conflict. The Quranic verse which cautions us not to fall into error, or to dispute with others in regard to different interpretations, becomes our guide, reminding us that we know not what we claim to know.

He it is who hath revealed unto thee Muhammad the Scripture wherein are clear revelations—they are the substance of the Book—and others which are allegorical. But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, forsooth, that which is allegorical, seeking to cause dissention by seeking to explain it. None knoweth its explanation save Allah. And those who are sound of instruction say: we believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only men of understanding really heed. (3:7 Quran)

But before delving deep into more quotations from the Quran or Hadith, I am taking the liberty of sharing the loving life of the Prophet as a man, as a husband, as a father, and as a friend to all who sought his advice or friendship. History knows everything about him, no doubt, exploring all facets of his life, passion and ambition. Many faces and countless facets!

Harsh, stern, rebuking, commanding, and then kind, loving, forgiving. Yet, reading in between the lines, and gleaning facts with as much precision as my own limited intellect permits, I have attempted to portray the Prophet as I see him through the veils of the Hadith, the Quran, and history. Skipping quickly beyond his childhood, he emerges as a young man, endowed with wisdom and compassion. His friends call him *Al Amin*, meaning truthful. He has earned the respect of the young and old by the sheer virtue of his good manners. At the age of 25, when he marries a widow of 40 by the name of Khadija, twice married before and the mother of one son and two daughters, he loves and respects her with something verging on reverence, remaining faithful to her till her death. His character stands out in this happy marriage of 24 years, especially when polygamy was the norm, and men treated women as their property, marrying, divorcing or simply abandoning them as their whim or caprice dictated. Another outstanding characteristic which distinguished him from others was the shimmering ocean of love in his eyes which could never be dimmed, even by the fires of grief and adversity. When he was chosen as the Messenger of God, the light in his own eyes appeared to be his guide, wavering at times, but never dying under the assaults of insult, violence or persecution.

Peaceful by nature and averse to violence, he abstained from striking back, even in self-defense. Once, when pelted with stones and hounded by a mob, his shoes filled with blood, he almost collapsed with sheer pain and exhaustion, his followers asked him to curse his tormentors, but he prayed for their forgiveness instead, much in the manner of Jesus, when he said: *forgive them, O Lord, for they know not what they do*. Revelation upon revelation came to him to guide him toward patience, forgiveness, and compassion. And one night, as detailed above, he was taken to the Throne of God, on what came to be called his Night Journey. He shared the experience of this journey, in which he was taken to Jerusalem, then to the heavens, meeting all the previous Prophets, including Jesus, and finally before the Throne of God, meeting Allah, his Beloved, with his cousin. When this story was circulated amongst the Meccans, one of the Prophet's bitterest of opponents, Abu Jahl, accused him of making the story up. Abu Jahl told the Prophet to lift one foot up, then the other, with which he complied, and then he asked him to lift both his feet up, to which the Prophet replied that of course he could not. Abu Jahl mocked,

You can't even lift your two feet up in the air and you profess that you went to the highest of heavens.

To which the Prophet replied: *I didn't say I went, I said I was taken.*

Glorified be He Who carried His servant from the Inviolable Place of Worship Mecca to the Far Distant Place of Worship Jerusalem the neighborhood thereof. We have blessed that We might show him of Our tokens! Lo! He only He, is the Hearer, the Seer. (17:1 Quran)

In short, his Prophethood, his later marriages, and his boundless love for all became the gateway to his divine message, which he delivered by living it, as a loving, caring, forgiving man. His followers were prone to zeal even while he lived, and he rebuked and checked them, exclaiming at times: *by these pious fools, my back hath been broken.* His love did not extend only to human beings, but to all God's creatures. Once, during a sermon, a cat came to sit on the edge of his robe, and he would not get up lest he disturb the cat. At the time of his final pilgrimage to Mecca, he noticed a bitch on the road with a litter of pups, and commanded his men to change their route so as not to frighten the young pups. As a conqueror, his forgiveness was wholesale and unconditional. No vengeance was wreaked even upon the woman who tore open the breast of his slain uncle, chewed on his liver and made garlands of his intestines. He had come not to avenge, but to reconcile, to stress his message of unity, to abolish slavery, to grant equality to women, and to tell all in the sight of God that he was not the messenger of a new religion, but confirming the religion of the old prophets. After his death, when his youngest wife, Aisha, was asked to describe the character of the Prophet, she said: *he smiled often and laughed much.*

Announce O Muhammad, unto My slaves that verily I am Forgiving, the Merciful. (15:49 Quran)

And lo, there is a party of them who distort the Scripture with their tongues that ye may think that what they say is from the Scripture, when it is not from the Scripture. And they say: it is from Allah, when it is not from Allah, and they speak a lie concerning Allah knowingly. (3:78 Quran)

Confound not truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth. (2:42 Quran)

Beautiful for mankind is love of the joys that come from women and offspring, and stored-up heaps of gold and silver, and horses and cattle

and land. That is comfort of the life of the world. Allah, with Him is a more excellent abode. (3:14 Quran)

It is not for believer to kill a believer unless it be by mistake. (4:92 Quran)

Whoso slayeth a believer of set purpose, his reward is hell forever. Allah is wrath against him and He hath cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom. (4:93 Quran)

O ye who believe, squander not your wealth among yourselves in vanity, except it be a trade by mutual consent, and Kill Not one Another. Lo, Allah is ever merciful unto you. (4:29 Quran)

Whoso doeth that through aggression and injustice, We shall cast him into Fire, and that is very easy for Allah. (4:30 Quran)

Say: O My slaves who have been prodigal to their own hurt! Despair not of the mercy of Allah, Who forgiveth all sins. Lo, He is the forgiving, the merciful. (39:53 Quran)

The good deed and the evil deed are not alike. Repel the evil deed with one which is better, then lo, he, between whom and thee there was enmity will become as though he was a bosom friend. (41:34 Quran)

And when we made with you a covenant saying: shed not the blood of your people nor turn a party of your people out of your dwellings. Then you ratified our covenant and you were witnesses thereto. (2:84 Quran)

Wrong not mankind in their goods, and do not evil, making mischief in the earth. (26:183 Quran)

And each one hath a goal toward which he turneth; so vie with one another in good works. Wheresoever you may be, Allah will bring you all together. Lo, Allah is able to do all things. (2:148 Quran)

Keep to forgiveness, O Muhammad, and enjoin kindness, and turn away from the ignorant. (7:199 Quran)

And for such it may be that Allah will pardon them. Allah is ever Clement, Forgiving. (4:99 Quran)

Whereby Allah guideth him who seeketh His good pleasure unto paths of peace. He bringeth them out of darkness unto light by His decree, and guideth them unto a straight path. (5:16 Quran)

And when it is said unto them: make not mischief in the earth, they say: We are peacemakers only. (2:11 Quran)

Those who spend of which Allah hath given them in ease and in adversity, those who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind. Allah loveth the good. (3:134 Quran)

O mankind, call upon your Lord humbly and in secret. Lo, he loveth not aggressors. (7:55 Quran)

Yet whoso doeth evil or wrongeth his own soul, then seeketh pardon of Allah, will find Allah Forgiving, Merciful. (4:110 Quran)

And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in Allah. Lo, He is the Hearer, the Knower. (8:61 Quran)

It may be that Allah will ordain love between you and those of them with whom you are at enmity. Allah is mighty, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (60:7 Quran)

Ask pardon of your Lord and then turn unto Him repentant. Lo, my Lord is Loving, Merciful. (11:90 Quran)

There is no compulsion in religion. (2:257 Quran)

Say: Each one doth according to his rule of conduct, and thy Lord is best aware of him whose way is right. (17:84 Quran)

My lord! Lo! They have led many of mankind astray. But whoso followeth me, he verily is of me. And whoso disobeyeth me—still Thou art Forgiving, Merciful. (14:36 Quran)

And for every nation there is a messenger. And when their messenger cometh (on the Day of Judgment) it will be judged between them fairly, and they will not be wronged. (Quran 10:48)

And this Quran is not such as could be intended in despite of Allah; but it is a confirmation of that which was before it and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind—Therein is no doubt—from the Lord of the Worlds. (10:38 Quran)

Say (unto mankind): cry unto Allah, or cry unto Beneficent, unto Whomsoever you cry (it is the same). His are the most beautiful names. And thou (Muhammad), be not loud voiced in thy worship, not yet silent therein, but follow a way between. (17:110 Quran)

If you do good, you do good for your own souls. And if you do evil, it is for them (your own souls). (17:7 Quran)

Indeed there have come to you clear proofs from your Lord: so whoever sees, it is for his own good, and whoever is blind, it is to his own harm. (6:104 Quran)

Permission to fight is given to those who fight against you, but be not aggressive. (22:39 Quran)

Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: our Lord is Allah. For had it not been for Allah's repelling some men by means of others, cloisters and churches and oratories and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft mentioned, would assuredly have been pulled down. Verily Allah helpeth one who helpeth Him. Lo! Allah is Strong, Almighty. (22:40 Quran)

And they have broken their religion (into fragments) among them, (yet) all are returning to Us. (21:93 Quran)

Lo! This, your religion, is One religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me. (21:92 Quran)

Lo! Allah defendeth those who are true. Lo! Allah loveth not any treacherous ingrate. (22:38 Quran)

The truth is from thy Lord, so let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve. (18:29 Quran)

Then whoso doeth good works and is a believer, there will be no rejection of his effort. Lo! We record (it) for him. (21:94 Quran)

Unto Allah belong the East and the West, and whithersoever you turn, there is Allah's countenance. Lo! Allah is All-Embracing. All-Knowing. (2:115 Quran)

Say (unto the People of the Scripture): Dispute ye with us concerning Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? Ours are our works and yours your works. We look to Him alone. (2:139 Quran)

Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered. (2:136 Quran)

Lo, those who believe (in that which is revealed unto thee Muhammad) and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabaeans—whoever believeth in Allah and the Last Day and doth right—surely their reward is with their Lord, and there shall no fear come upon them, neither shall they grieve. (2:62 Quran)

And for every nation have We appointed a ritual, that they may mention the name of Allah on the beast of cattle; and your God is one God, therefore surrender unto Him. And give good tidings (O Muhammad) to the humble. (22:34 Quran)

Lo! We have sent thee with the truth, a bearer of glad tidings and a warner; and there is not a nation but a warner hath passed among them. (35:24 Quran)

And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them who do wrong; and say: We believe in that which hath been revealed unto you. Our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender. (29:46 Quran)

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East and West: but righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and prophets; and giveth his wealth, for the love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free, and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and

the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God-fearing. (2:177 Quran)

The Messenger believeth in that which has been revealed unto him from his Lord and (so do) the believers. Each one believeth in Allah and His angels and His Scriptures and His messengers. We make no distinction between any of His messengers—and they say: we hear and we obey. (Grant us Thy forgiveness, our Lord). Unto Thee is the journeying. (2:285 Quran)

And covet not the thing in which Allah hath made some of you excel others. Unto men a fortune from that which they have earned, and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned. (Envy not one another), but ask Allah of His bounty. Lo! Allah is ever Knower of all things. (4:32 Quran)

Repel not those who call upon their Lord at morn and evening, seeking His countenance. Thou art not accountable for them in aught, nor are they accountable for thee in aught, that thou shouldst repel them and be of wrong-doers. (6:52 Quran)

Revile not those unto whom they pray beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance. Thus unto every nation have We made their deed seem fair. Then unto their Lord is their return, and He will tell them what they used to do! (6:109 Quran)

Unto each nation have We given sacred rites which they are to perform, so let them not dispute with thee of the matter, but summon thou unto thy Lord. Lo! thou indeed followest the right guidance. (22:67 Quran)

And strive for Allah with the endeavor which is His right. He hath chosen you and hath not laid upon you in religion any hardship; the faith of your father Abraham (is yours). He hath named you Muslims of old times and in this (Scripture), that the messenger may be a witness against you, and that you may be witness against mankind, so establish worship, pay the poor-due, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protecting Friend. A blessed Patron and a blessed Helper. (22:78 Quran)

Say: o mankind! I am only a plain warner unto you. (22:49 Quran)

Those who believe and do good works, for them is pardon and rich provision. (22:50 Quran)

Create not disorder on earth. (1:12 Quran)

O thou soul, in complete rest and satisfaction, come back thou to thy Lord. Well pleased and well-pleasing unto Him. Enter thou then among My devotees, enter thou My Paradise. (89:27-30 Quran)

They ask thee concerning wine and the game of hazard. Say: In both there is great sin and also some advantages for men, but their sin is greater than their advantage. And they ask thee what they should spend. Say: What you can spare. Thus does Allah make His commandments clear to you that you may reflect. (2:220 Quran)

Lo, the mountains As-Safa and Al-Marwah are among the indication of Allah. It is therefore no sin for him who is on pilgrimage to the House of God, or visiteth it, to go around them, as the pagan custom is. And he who doeth good of his own accord, for him, lo, Allah is Responsive, Aware. (2:158 Quran)

And we prescribed for them therein: The life for the life, and the eye for the eye, and the nose for the nose, and the ear for the ear, and the tooth for the tooth, and for wounds retaliation. But whoso forgoeth it in the way of charity, it shall be expiation for him. Whoso judgeth not by that which Allah hath revealed: such are wrong-doers. (5:45 Quran)

And do thou O Muhammad remember thy Lord within thyself humbly and with awe, below thy breath, at morn and evening. And be not thou of neglectful. (7:205 Quran)

And if anyone of the idolaters seeketh thy protection O Muhammad, then protect him so that he may hear the word of Allah, and afterward convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not. (9:6 Quran)

And if they deny thee, say: unto me my work, and unto you your work. Ye are innocent of what I do, and I am innocent of what ye do. (10:42 Quran)

As for every nation there is a messenger. And when their messenger cometh on the Day of Judgment it will be judged between them fairly, and they will not be wronged. (10:48 Quran)

Establish worship at the two ends of the day and in some watches of the night. Lo, good deeds annul ill deeds. This is a reminder for the mindful. (11:114 Quran)

And speak not, concerning that which your own tongues qualify as clean or unclean, the falsehood: ‘This is lawful and this is forbidden.’ So that ye invent a lie against Allah. Lo, those who invent a lie against Allah will not succeed. (16:116 Quran)

Lo, those who believe this Revelation and those who are Jews, and the Sabaeans and the Christians and the Magians and the idolaters—lo, Allah will decide between them on the Day of Resurrection. Lo, Allah is witness over all things. (22:17 Quran)

Lo, We have sent thee with the Truth, a bearer of glad tidings and a warner; and there is not a nation but a warner hath passed among them. (35:24 Quran)

O ye who believe! Let not a folk deride a folk who may be better than they are, nor let women deride who may be better than they are; neither defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. Bad is the name of lewdness after faith. And whoso turneth not in repentance, such are evil-doers. (49:9 Quran)

And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel. Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was revealed before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised One. Yet when he hath come unto them with clear proofs, they say: This is mere magic. (61:6 Quran)

Wherever you turn is the face of God. (2:115 Quran)

He revealed to His servant what He revealed. (55:10 Quran)

There is no thing whose treasures are not with us. (15:21 Quran)

The Prophet said that on the day of resurrection, God will manifest Himself to all creatures in the forms that they themselves have refuted, announcing “I am your Lord”. In the face of this unfamiliar apparition, they will seek refuge in their own representations of God. Then He will appear in those representations, and they will believe that it is indeed Him.

Bilal, the first *muezzin* in Islam, quoted Prophet Muhammad: “If a Muslim forces a conversion, he does not risk hell, he is certain of hell.”

God has sent to the world since its creation two hundred thousand prophets; 25 of them are referred to in the Quran. The greatest of these are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Prophets are to be regarded as free from sin, the most sinless of all being Jesus. Prophet Muhammad speaks of him as the Word of God, the Spirit of God, born of the Virgin Mary, and a Worker of Miracles.

Announce, O Muhammad, unto my slaves that verily I am forgiving, the Merciful. (15:49 Quran)

CHAPTER TWO

ISLAMIC FESTIVALS

The best way of avenging yourself is not to become like the wrongdoer.
—Marcus Aurelius

Eid-ul-Fitr

A day which occurs often, this is a festive and joyous occasion after a whole month of fasting (known as Ramadan). Sumptuous feasts and sweets - especially vermicelli cooked in sweetened milk - are prepared to be shared with friends and neighbors. It is a three day festival when Muslims visit friends, relatives and neighbors in the spirit of love, enjoying feasts and friendships, and forgiving all past rifts and grievances. Everyone wears new and colorful clothes, especially children, who are presented with gifts of cash or sweets. Other celebrations include fairs and entertainment, accompanied by song, music and dancing. This is much like the time when the Prophet Muhammad would sit with his family, watching the performance of dancing with spears, and enjoying songs and music. This joyful festival after the conclusion of Ramadan marks the birth of Islam, as Prophet Muhammad received his first revelation during this holy month. The festival also serves as a reminder to Muslims that they have an obligation toward the poor of the community. A special contribution called *sidaqat-ul-fitr* is made for this purpose. It is recommended that this contribution be given to the poor before Eid so that they too can enjoy the Eid celebrations. Fasting is a form of worship which has been prescribed and practiced for many ages by different peoples and religions. The essence of this worship may best be presented through this revelation from the Quran:

O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed upon you as it was prescribed upon those before you, that you may learn self-restraint and God-consciousness. (2:184 Quran)

Ramadan

In pre-Islamic times, the tribe of Quraysh observed Ramadan and Jews would fast on the day of Ashura, marking two historical events: the day when Noah left the Ark and the day when Moses was saved from the Egyptians by God. During the downpour of his revelations, God proclaimed to Prophet Muhammad that fasting for His sake was not a new innovation, but rather an obligation practiced by those truly devoted to the oneness of God.

During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims are called upon to re-evaluate their lives in conformity with Islamic traditions, making peace with those who have wronged them, strengthening ties with their family and friends, avoiding harmful thoughts and acting nobly and courteously toward mankind. During this month every part of the body must be purged of every evil impulse or inclination. The tongue must be restrained from gossip and backbiting. The eyes must not covet that which is unlawful. The ears must refrain from listening to idle talk or angry expressions. The feet must refrain from approaching dens of vice and violence. That way, every part of the body can participate in fasting, rejecting the corruption of sin, hatred and malice, and purifying one's body and soul to seek God's grace and guidance.

War is not permitted during the month of Ramadan.

War is a great transgression in the sacred month of Ramadan. (2:217 Quran)

Fasting is not only abstaining from food, but purging oneself by shunning the forces of evil, draining out hatred, malice, enmity and the lust to kill and abstaining from defiling the sanctity of any woman's body or soul.

Allah is not in need of leaving his food and drink, and He will not accept the fast of the one who tells lies, acts on lies and refrains not from evil actions. - Prophet Muhammad/Al Bukhari [3:127-O.B]

Shall I inform you of a better act than alms, prayer and fasting? Making peace between one another. Enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by the roots. - Prophet Muhammad