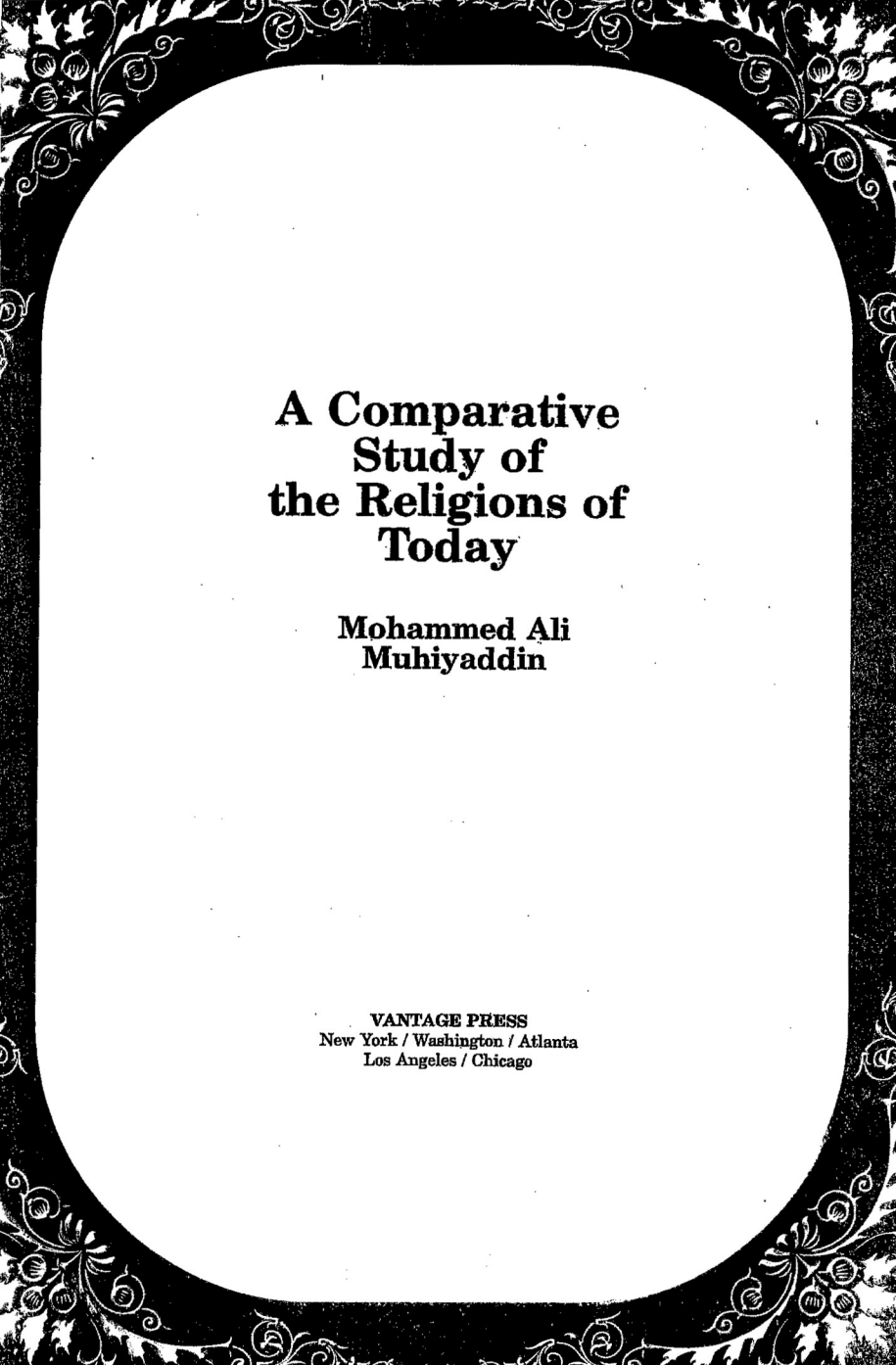


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A Comparative Study of the Religions of Today

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Today the human race is confronted with two main contesting ideologies, the THEISTIC and the ATHEISTIC. The theistic society consisting of monotheists and polytheists centers around godhood with the grassroot belief in One Supreme Power, the Only One God, who is the sole planner, designer, creator and sustainer of the entire universal order. Fundamentally, God is believed to be far above any creation, par excellence, omnipotent and omniscient, continually existing in the present which, to any creation, is the period from the long infinite past down to the farthest infinite future, to which when the very short life of the human being on earth is compared, the latter would look like an infinitely small and negligible interval in the vast eternity of the universe. In these contexts, the theists not only worship God in gratitude for His creative functions and love, but also adore Him for His extreme kindness and consideration, in due measure, to all creatures. Further, the theists pray to God for granting favours, spiritual guidance in all walks of life in this world, for protection against evil forces, dangers, committing sins and for the attainment of perpetual bliss during the life after death. They consider the few years of the life of the human being on earth as a very short span in his infinitely long total existence in the universe. On the other hand, the atheistic society has no concern with what the theists call spiritual values and, thus, has a purely materialistic appreciation of life. It believes that along with the spontaneous evolution of the universe, natural laws too were instituted, with the result that in accordance with these laws, and without the need for God, the universe as well as everything in it, including the human race on earth, continues to function and exist as entities with no objective or motive behind the creative, living and destructive processes. The atheist society, thus, has no belief at all in any life after death.

The atheistic society does not also find the need for any religion as it believes that the society, which is formed by the masses in order to exist as an organized group, can frame its own norms and codes of law to suit any social order, determined as best, by the majority of

people in accordance with the social needs of any epoch. Clear enough, the social laws, codes and norms may also change like a weathercock in relation to the will of the masses in any society, with the result that theoretically it may be expected that adjacent societies may also have some entirely contradicting laws, codes and norms according to the will of each majority. As compared to this, the theistic society generally believes that the universal order in general, and the human race in particular, having been created by God with specific purpose known to Him alone, He alone is responsible to direct everything in the universe in courses set according to the destiny of each through just operation of His own natural laws and forces. In the same overall plan comes the divine guidance sent by God to the human race from time to time through selected model leaders with standard divine norms, codes and laws revealed to them for guiding the human society along just and even courses, befitting the degree of mental growth of the human being during the various epochs of its existence in the world.

The theistic society is composed today of adherents and followers of a number of historic religions or ways of life of which, in alphabetical order, are the following: Buddhism, Christianity, Communism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Taoism and Zoroastrianism.

Notwithstanding the basic unitary concept of the omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God and His absolute, uncompromising, superauthority in the philosophy of all religions (for no reason other than perhaps of having got mixed up for ages due to association with pagan or animist environments and concepts or worship, and seeking of spiritual assistance from awe-inspiring creatures and forces of nature), not only the adherents of some religions but also their scriptures appear to have included in their basic beliefs and rituals themes concerning worship of and devotion to several images and idols of deities and demigods, with some of the specific attributes of the Only One God attached to them. It was, as it seems, because of this grave schism that some later religions like Buddhism and Jainism were initiated without any specific concept of God altogether, but with the emphasis on doing good, abstaining from sins and undergoing a state of deep meditation in pursuit of knowledge, enlightenment and redemption of the soul for good from the active worldly existence. The trinity concept of Christianity, which attributes some powers of the One God to Jesus Christ, who is considered as the son of God, also looks like a schism of the Absolute One God concept. There are, however, some religions like Islam and Judaism that do not reconcile with any concept that may even slightly undermine the "above the human" aspects of the One God. Under the

influence of such opposing beliefs and convictions it is therefore not infrequently that the human race was and is being subjected to stresses and strains of frequent oppressions, injustices and even destructive feuds and wars at the hands of the contestants of the different religions in the name of varying types of faith in the Absolute One God. Such a background might have prompted emergence of Marxism, which outlaws grouping behind religion altogether.

Against the erstwhile, formidable strength of the theistic society as a whole composed of the adherents and followers of the various religions detailed above, a contestant emerged in the early twentieth century to strengthen the ranks of the atheistic society. Marxism, whose chief architect was Karl Marx, was given practical shape as a distinct way of life in the U.S.S.R. by Lenin and his associates in the years following the First World War. Marxist theory, highlighted by the Bolshevik-Communist method of achieving a classless welfare state and society for the evolution of a socialistic world order, first implemented in the U.S.S.R. on the basis of a tight party dictatorship, has since engulfed in its fold almost all of Eastern Europe, China, Burma, North Korea, Vietnam, as well as some other countries in Asia and Africa. Subscribers to the Socialistic left and Communist ideologies constitute very strong minority party groupings influencing the economic, social and political conduct of many other countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. The present ruling government of France is socialist with the support of communists and Italy is too on the threshold of being absorbed into a similar grouping. Socialist ideology punctuated by communist and Marxist principles has started gaining momentum in countries like the United Kingdom, West Germany, most of the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and even the U.S.A. The Marxist way of life identified as Communism is a materialistic one with no place for religion, spiritual values and God. Like any atheist, the Communist society, too, believes that the universe was created through evolutionary process over ages according to the laws and forces of nature with no cause, reason, objective or purpose and that, as such, it also can function without there being the need of God. Therefore, this way of life has no belief in a cause, or objective for creation, life or death and, as such, does not also believe that there is any life after death.

Nevertheless, the prying mind of the human being does not seem to be satisfied even after taming the genie atom to perform command jobs after splitting it; paying frequent unwelcome visits to planets and space by himself and through artificial probes and satellites; probing and bugging the territories several million light years away of galaxies,

quasars and black holes through radio telescopes; viewing the minute atomic structure through electron microscopes; creating the chlorophyll and many other natural bioprocesses, and even development of test tube babies; penetration into some of the hitherto unknown secrets of life itself such as DNA and chromosome activity and so on; until and unless he is able to understand the very secrets of creation, if he can! How can, therefore, the intelligent and querying human mind of the scientist and philosopher come to a dead end of reasoning that all these intricate complications he finds around and even in himself, all arranged in systematic and complementary manner with specific duties allocated to each whole and even to each component, have all come into being without any planning, designing and purpose at all? When the enlightened human being after all knows that, being an integral part of the universe, he cannot be forced into action without a purpose and that every action needs a subject and also an objective, how can one even think that such a fantastically harmonious universe with millions of different animates and inanimates, one complementary to the other, should come into being and exist without a reason or objective and a planner, designer and sustainer? Because life itself is action and no action may take place without a cause, reason or motive, the natural corollary of mature and intelligent thought, the human being cannot but come to the logical conclusion and belief that, after all, there must be an author, controller and sustainer also for the entire universal order as well as a specific purpose behind each and every creation. Just to deny this glaring fact supported by logical and scientific reasoning is to run away, like a coward, from the realities of life itself. Even acceptance by the atheist of the existence of natural laws and forces which are responsible for creation, life and death is itself an indirect admission of the existence of Mighty One God, par excellence!

Really then, this Mighty God must be a magnanimously fantastic entity reigning eternally over the activities of the universe from its beginning to end, Himself being far above time, matter, energy, space and any other limited aspects that are built into any component or constituent constituting the universe itself in limited space, time, matter and energy segments of the infinitely infinite space and time. It is not, thus, surprising that in spite of the emphatic superficial negation of God by the atheistic society, it too is indirectly obliged to recognise the existence of the Supreme Power, God, by conceding the fact that creation, existence and destruction of everything in the universe take place in accordance with the "law of nature," although it is able to define neither "nature" nor explain to the satisfaction of conscience

and science who the author of this "nature" is, how it came into being and for what purpose!

Nevertheless, it is agreed by all that the materialistic purpose of religions and even the Marxist, communist and socialistic ways of life, is to evolve a peaceful, content and progressive multiracial world society in which each individual is capable of fulfilling the needs of his own short life on earth without obstructing similarly diverse but orderly lives of his fellow beings and, as a social creature, to be complementary to each other. Naturally, essential laws of conduct of such a way of life must be internationally applicable to all societies of the world at any time, if international brotherhood is to be the aim. Therefore, if we may find a religion with a way of enabling the fully developed human beings of today, tomorrow and future to set up a world order from which enmity, greed, poverty, hunger, hatred, jealousy, rivalry, oppression, exploitation and so on are outlawed and, instead, human equality and justice irrespective of considerations of race, prejudice or color, prosperity and contentment for each individual, feeling of brotherhood among each other and so on are the established order of the day based on the lofty ideal of "one for all and all for one," then, cannot such a way of life, adopted on a world basis, be responsible for landing the human race into the civilization of the proverbial millennium enabling not only the East to meet the West but also to make every one of the human race see eye to eye in order to forge ahead as one nation for preserving the human civilization of today and to march forward to a more progressive future?

Of course so, if there is one, but who knows really? The search is worthwhile because, unless we are soon able to identify one, no one is sure of even preservation of the present great human civilization of science and technology, for which, to reach the state of art found today, how much hard and dedicated work of how many thousands of persons for how many thousands of years has been responsible, no one really knows! But one thing is quite clear: the only way of life satisfying the need of today, tomorrow and future must be motivated by incentives and rewards materially, morally and spiritually because motivation for work is produced by incentives and rewards only, an aspect built into the fundamental specification of human nature itself. Any prescription not recognising this important aspect of life is bound to fail in the life-styles of human beings. This is what is exactly happening to the latest of the ways of life, Communism, in a life span of six and a half decades in the U.S.S.R. under rigid, totalitarian party control of social, economic and political life. Complete equality in every respect is something against very nature itself. Mountains, valleys, rivers, seas,

oceans, forests, plains, deserts, which being all different are but complementary to one another to provide a balanced, contrasting, harmonious whole. As food is not enjoyable without hunger, it is but natural that in practice for those who do not get hungry, starvation is introduced artificially in order to produce hunger. Unless there is heat, the beauty of a cool breeze cannot be enjoyed. Thus, in variety there is enjoyment. Materialistic, moral and spiritual values, all resonate with this important aspect of life and the universe itself. Therefore, in actual human life too complete equality in every aspect seems to be unreal. Rich and poor must exist together but complementary to each other. While the poor expects brotherly consideration of the rich, the former must be thankful to the latter. Such a practical and real philosophy in phase with the great harmony of nature alone can survive the test of all times and people. In it there is motivation and hope materially, morally and spiritually. Anything against this must fail in practice.

Further, the philosophy and way of life that we are looking for must have taken into consideration one of the important characteristics of human beings: mankind is prone to commission of mistakes and omissions in their lives both knowingly and unknowingly. Therefore, the said philosophy and way of life must be able to hold out to them hope of a clean future even in the event of committing mistakes knowingly or unknowingly. To err is human and to forgive divine. Although the responsibility for all actions of man, no doubt, is vested in man himself because of the discriminative and decisive powers vested in him, all opportunity should also be extended to him for genuine repentance to God after making amends for any injustices committed by him to another. Even in scientific terms, quality and purity of abstract things like minerals, gold and water are relative with reference to the environments and the degree of attainability. Therefore it is not just that the human being is provided the hope of complete redemption from sins only when he becomes one hundred percent pure, not that he is led to believe that such a state is unobtainable until he suffers all the consequences of his sins and mistakes during his unlimited period of life cycles on earth itself without the hope of any pardon. Similarly, the hope extended to any one that all his mistakes and sins shall be condoned or forgiven the moment he only believes in a certain philosophy is also not a reasonable formula either, because then again lawful laxities causing confusion in the organised society may result. What should then satisfy the intelligent human being is a philosophy and way of life where the spiritual relationship between man and God is like the one between a loving child and his parents, wherein the all knowing and all powerful God is not only compassionate, understanding

and loving, but also ready to excuse as well as to punish on the merits of each case. Thereby is projected the qualities of an ideal God who is ever ready to appreciate good work and extend pardon whenever a genuine supplicant tenders sincere apology with proper amends, so that each human being is adjudged on merits of a final weighted balance sheet of good and bad. As this philosophy and way of life should then look like a standard, it may be adopted by all people of the world at all times, and each individual may fulfill his responsibility to self, fellow beings, society and to God, one not interfering with another.

Unfortunately, what has been found so far is that each religion, ideology and way of life was being propagated by its respective adherents and followers as the best one for attaining the golden age of universal prosperity and peace in this world as well as the immortal life after union with the Godly environment in the hereafter. This was done without carefully analysing the philosophies and ways of life of all existing religions including their own to be quite sure that theirs is the best of all for the evolution of a balanced material, moral and spiritual world society which may provide opportunity to attain the two goals. During the process, jealousy, hatred, perpetual enmity and rivalry are all let loose to become the winner. Finally, in order to appease the human ego, many a time the use of force and even total war had been resorted to at great cost and destruction as is testified by history. Even today, when the human race has attained scientific and technological progress more than ever before as the result of enviable mental development, the two contesting ideologies of the world, the so-called capitalistic nations on the one hand and the totalitarian communist nations on the other, are vying with each other in rivalry to prove to each other and to the rest of the world, through even the show of might and destruction, that the economic, social and political methods of their respective blocs is the better for the creation of a just world order. In this process, in order to excel one another, they are both busy stockpiling destructive weapons, including the nuclear arms of all sorts, with the objective being none other than a confrontation leading to nothing but obliteration of the human race itself. Elsewhere we find segregated groups called the rich nations, the poor nations, the developed nations, the developing nations and even the nations under the poverty line, all consisting of people of the same human race living in this very world and in this highly developed century. It is also a continuous cry of the special agencies of the United Nations Organisation and the rich as well as the poor nations that not only hunger and poverty of the people of all nations must be eradicated but also that the glaring economic disparity between the rich and the

poor nations must be reduced by providing more economic aid and assistance, better distribution of wealth and transfer of technology. Still, instances are not few where people die in millions in abject poverty due to shortages of food, drinking water and disease in many parts of the world. On the other side of the living picture of the world we find that poverty exists even amidst the rich nations and that shortages of food as well as many other consumer goods are a usual feature in the vast lands of the propagators of the newest way of life, Communism, which itself promised more than six decades ago attainment of the millenium through their fascist ways. At the same time what is shocking, indeed, is that the armament race on which both the blocs are engaged at fantastic costs is carried on at the expense of the economic uplift of their own poor people. It is not rare that even poor countries that are about or under the so-called poverty line also indulge in the same satanic luxury of amassing destructive weapons and arms on the false pretext of security and self defense when their own peoples are starving and the governments of the concerned countries are engaged in the exercise of passing around the miserable hat, seeking charity, aid and loans every year for national development and even to finance payment of interests and instalments of existing huge loans. Is it not horrible to think that we are living in a world where beggary is resorted to as well as encouraged or even condoned in order to live in luxury and to cause destruction an affront to human dignity! Elsewhere, we also find that the rich and developing nations often indulge in the sale of arms to such poor nations, extending huge aids and credits in preference to assistance in nation-building projects dedicated to their economic uplift. If only a part of the total annual expenditure incurred on amassing and the sale of arms and weapons were utilised for the economic uplift of the poor peoples in the world, it could emphatically be stated that the economic level of each of the more than five billion human beings existing today could have risen a few thousands of dollars, which may be much much above the poverty line in any country indeed. On the other hand, the human race has become so cruel today that while millions die of hunger and malnutrition in many parts of the world, valuable food grains are wantonly destroyed by dumping them in the sea in the name of stabilization of home markets. All these have been happening when every one claims to possess and profess codes of religious and other ways of life that are loudly claimed to have been geared towards establishment of a true welfare state! Can deceit have no end in sight?

Why all this confusion? Has there been so far no single religion or way of life that could radically transform the conduct of the indi-

vidual, the community, the nation and the world? May there be one, which has not yet been brought to the notice of the critical man of today, probably? That is why, perhaps, Karl Marx and Lenin were prompted to evolve the entirely new Marxism independently. But, as is clear from history, many a reformer and prophet having come and gone and vast areas of the world having today come under the influence of one or more religions, could it not be probably that at least one among them could be capable of assisting us to evolve the era of peace and plenty? But then, during these days of acute materialism, while most of the followers of any particular religion themselves do not care to know why they continue to follow the religions of their forefathers, yet there are many others who follow the religion of their forefathers blindly, without knowing much of the basic philosophy of their own religion. Adherence to religions has today, thus, become for most people a life-style of rituals and unquestionable beliefs, some of which appear to be so unreasonable that no reconciliation is possible with them for an enlightened person of this century. Nothing other than custom, personal ego and fear of estrangement from existing society force such people to stick to the religion of the parents and grandparents. It is also a pity that except from hearsay most of the missionaries of some religions not having firsthand and in-depth knowledge of other important living religions that bind the life-styles of hundreds of million human beings to their folds, still claim theirs to be the best, although reason and logic require that nothing may be designated as the best until it is so proven as a result of comparing all similar ones. There are also many who take the easy course in agreeing that all religions lead to the same ultimate end without caring to study them all in any depth, for the simple reason that while wanting to remain in the traditional society, neither do they want to contradict their own or other religions nor, for fear of expulsion and further trouble, do they want to say anything in praise of other religions. There is yet another class that, having found that their own religion not only prevents free thinking but that some of its philosophies are also against some basic social, economic and scientific concepts of life as required by the progressive society, comes to the illogical conclusion that all religions similarly thwart the growth of progressive societies and therefore come to the wrong decision that religion is not a necessary requirement of the progressive society. Such people fall easy prey to materialism and denounce all religions without having no definite idea of any religion at all. With no iota of spiritual values, thus they fall into the euphoria of permissiveness, laxity and contempt for any organized society founded on the basis of traditions of any religion. Marxism, with its

temporary halo being the only course open to them, they soon substitute Marxist principles for religion as a means to attaining the millennium during the lifetime. At the same time, rivalry continues between the exponents of each way of life, mostly without knowing the basic principles and philosophies of each other. Thus, in fact, it is not religions that are the causes for enmity in societies but it is the lack of detailed knowledge about their own religion and other religions. Most of the religious controversies are thus the creation of either hearsay, lack of information or ignorance.

What is then the solution? The only one is to critically study one's own religion along with other important existing religions in order to enable the prying and hopeful human mind to be satisfied whether one or other of the existing religions fulfills the requirements and aspirations of the individual as well as the society in any time and place. But, to study the different religions one must have all the scriptures, treatises and literatures on each of them. These are, however, so many in number that a full lifetime may be insufficient to go through them properly. Moreover, there are so many books written by different authors on every religion on earth, each with his own different egoistic explanations and interpretations; that unless one engages in the pursuit of going through most of them, leaving aside his day to day work of eking out a bare living for him and his family, there can be no way of knowing what basic philosophy and way of life has been, in fact, advocated by each. Unfortunately, as it appears, no one has so far ventured to produce one single treatise on the comparative study of existing religions which could readily be referred to for this purpose, enabling a busy person to lay his hands on any desired religious scripture that interested him and guiding him to know more about it through further detailed study. Therefore, having had the advantage of studying the various existing religions in-depth as well as having had the opportunity of associating with their adherents in many parts of the world and understanding their philosophies, scriptures, ways of life and rituals, through this treatise I have ventured to fill this important gap in the cultural evolution of the human race which, unfortunately, in this century of unprecedented advancement in the fields of science and technology due to its having attained mental maturity a long time ago, has already started its course toward moral and spiritual bankruptcy caused by intense materialism and neglect of spiritual values altogether.

The world today has come almost to the brink of a terrible catastrophe. Nations, countries and even individuals have begun doubting the sincerity of each other and, for the absolute control of only

materialistic values, the standard moral values based on spiritual aspect are being discarded ruthlessly. The feared total holocaust could be a reality any moment if, unfortunately, the finger of one of the controlling human beings goes to the red button that can order the third world war by the unleashing of the formidable conventional and nuclear warheads kept ready everywhere on and over the globe. In these days of indecision and confusion only a one world order, based on internationally applicable ways of life derived from just moral values built on spiritual foundation, giving both the human being and the rest of the universe their due respective positions, as well as meaning, and fully dedicated to none other than the Supreme Almighty One God of the universe, can be of any help to the human race wandering about and drifting in search of the right spiritual values. Such a life of course will be able to hold ground only if it is governed by a complete code of life which is applicable to all times and generations so as to enable the human being to live in the materialistic temporary home of earth as a fit creature in any era while trying to consolidate his ultimate position in the life after death somewhere in the universe in some other unknown form after attaining immortality and union with the Godly environment to live for ever. Without hope of such a final goal, the human being cannot remain mentally at ease. Such an ideal worldly life certainly can be enjoyable only if self as well as environments near and far on earth all enjoy the bounties of God in reasonable measure and sing God's praises in gratitude and for guidance together, each individual having gotten adjusted mutually in honorable places of duty in the community of contemporary human society, supplementing each other's efforts. Does not each one of us long eagerly for the arrival of that day? Let me therefore try to assist my contemporaries to know whether there is any such super philosophy and way of life available today to save the human race. This is the motive that has prompted me to write this unique treatise.

Under the circumstances, I request the reader to cast off his erstwhile ego which has so far been compelling him to believe that his own way of life, though full of pitfalls and insufficiencies, has been the best unless he is too sure of it as the result of having learned about the philosophies and ways of life advocated by other religions. I am sure that no one can afford to come to that conclusion until he has the full grasp of the philosophies of all other existing religions. What I have therefore tried to do is to assist the reader to understand and compare each of the following religions existing today from the outline of their respective philosophies, beliefs, codes, rituals and other aspects, allocating a chapter to each: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism,

Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shintoism, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism.

For the reason that the Communist Party dictatorship based on the Marxist ideology has already come to stay in many areas of the world with a more rigid social, economic and political control on the masses than any religion, and as the way of life and driving force for over a third of the world population today with the likelihood of its taking over more and more areas, particularly in the poor and developing parts of the world, a separate chapter has been allocated to discuss this new ideology and way of life that has become a world movement. Because most of the vast peoples now under the active influence of Communism had earlier been the adherents and followers of one of the existing prime religions which all promise to offer almost everything in this world and the hereafter to their respective followers, one has to admit the fact that this new way of life may have some strong points in it that must have attracted such vast peoples into its fold, especially when this new way of life ignores God's existence altogether. The reasons for this important shift of the present generation towards Communism is a vital phenomenon of this twentieth century which, having posed a problem so vast that on its success and failure depends the sustenance or destruction of the human race itself, needs good investigation: Was it the temporary glamour and halo offered by the Communist ideology projected through a vast publicity campaign, or was it the failure of the existing religions to equally fulfill the aspirations of the developed human being? Or was it the failure to project sufficient information on the ideologies of the existing religions to the progressive new generation that was responsible for attracting such a large multitude of people to rally behind Communism? This can be found out only by comparing the ideology of this new movement with those of the various living religions.

For the purpose of this treatise I have used only such material as is stated in the basic scriptures of each religion which their followers consider as divine in nature. However, though I have made some remarks and explanations or outlooks on religions as seen from the points of view of any reformist or political movements within, introducing changes in the age-old accepted philosophies, rituals and codes of any religion, I have not considered them as canonical. This is so because, for some time, efforts have been made by some reformists who, with no divine authority, having either found that certain basic concepts, practices and codes of conduct of some religions could neither stand to the provings of modern scientific truths and commonsense nor come to equal the international considerations of human equality and justice

acceptable socially, economically and politically to every individual irrespective of birth, race, colour, wealth or profession, or even for their other personal considerations have tried to formulate their own views by interpreting scriptural laws, codes and practices of their own religions, whereby drastic changes in age-old and accepted practices have been introduced in order to make them either acceptable to the questioning and inquiring human being of later ages or to create confusion through doubts and rifts. Such basic changes constitute acute schism having no divine authority permitting them to alter the very structure of the concerned parent religion which then in fitness of things should have been discarded being unfit for modern times rather than sticking to it egoistically by making radical but unauthorised changes on the plea of acute patriotism and love of traditions.

On the other hand, it is high time that the developed human mind of this unique century must ask the pointed questions to himself:

- Are there inconsistencies, contradictions, confused thinking and enunciations in the scriptures which constitute the philosophy, laws, codes and practices of the religion that I follow?
- Is the religion that I profess today really conducive to the evolution of a model society by the cultured people of the masses of the twentieth century and beyond an indiscriminative classless society on a national as well as international basis reconciled to scientific truths and technological progress?
- Can the philosophy and the way of life of my religion permit me to fulfill my day to day duties to my contemporaries, neighbors, organisation, and country, as well as to God without any hindrance?
- Does the philosophy of my religion give a meaning to my life and to the universe as well as a hope for my soul during my short life in this world and the unknown life of immortality after death?

If the answer to each is a sincere and honest YES, then of course stick to it; if not, it is high time that one begins to search for a more hopeful, meaningful and rewarding philosophy as well as way of life with the assistance of this treatise. I am sure that one should be able to find a model from the range of important living religions which are discussed in the following pages fully satisfying the modern human being of today as well as the future.

I have tried to outline each religion dispassionately without any distorted version and strictly according to what is found in the scriptures of each. *However, in order to guide the inquisitive reader, I have*

given a few warranted comments here and there whenever any constructive criticism is called for judiciously. Without this, such a unique treatise comparing the various prime religions under the roof of one book may not be able to do full justice to the subject. In some chapters, I have recapitulated or even repeated some facts, sometimes a few times, because without them the right theme could not have been highlighted otherwise in such manner that the crux of the argument may be understood clearly. Most of the scriptures also repeat one and the same idea or directive many times for this same reason. Therefore, being an exposition of what is stated in the various scriptures, full justice to the comparative study of the subject is not possible without such repetitions of essential themes at appropriate places. This is particularly true when discussing the two sister religions Judaism and Christianity, especially because the Old Testament, which is the first part of the Christian Bible is more or less the Pentateuch of the Jews. Of necessity I have had to apologise for this action. No doubt the readers are quite intelligent enough to draw their own conclusions as well as to understand the sincerity of the author's purpose. On the basis of such criticisms it may be easier for the reader to study the relevant scriptures in the original for drawing his own independent and wise conclusions. However, at the end of the treatise, is allocated one chapter for summarising and comparing all the religions and ways of life discussed in the earlier chapters against such universal standards of belief, behaviour and action as are in accordance with the expectations of the developed human being of this century as well as the future for the evolution of a classless society based on one world order for the entire human race in order that it may live such a meaningful life in this material world as may enable it to enjoy also just rewards during its immortal life after death as promised by most of the religions. Although the modern human being has become more materialistic than, perhaps, ever before in his long history, he has also become more conscious of the dire necessity of strengthening his spiritual aspect in such manner that not only may it be in harmony with nature as well as proven scientific facts from time to time but may also provide the required motivation for him to work hand in hand with fellow beings discarding prejudices based on race, caste, color, class, profession and wealth for the attainment of universal happiness through love and contentment. This certainly demands a practical and dynamic universal philosophy and way of life that integrates materialism with moral values derived from spiritual consciousness. It must not be lost sight of that a philosophy and way of life that is intended for the guidance of the human race must be in tune with all aspects of just human behaviour

arising out of the specification of human creation and, of course, in harmony with the natural laws governing the universe in general and the earth in particular. God, the Only One, alone being the sole author of these laws, only such a philosophy and way of life that has been proven to have been given by Him through an enlightened leader may alone satisfy the requirement. It is also not difficult to realize that this model leader must essentially be none other than a human being, for the simple reason that if he were, instead, an angel, or a supposed incarnation or son of God, obviously it could not be possible for the ordinary human beings to follow such a superhuman being. Such a divine philosophy and way of life given by God to the human race at a time when it had attained mental maturity, then, may alone claim universalism, applicable to us today as well as to the human beings of tomorrow.

One cannot fail to notice that it is a modern necessity that even moral standards to be applied to any society where materialistic outlook on life prevails must receive the approval of the majority of its masses of people; even in countries that claim to be the defenders of certain faiths it is so. However, that the will of the majority may not necessarily be the right one for all persons morally, socially and spiritually, is demonstrated by national consensus on, say, pornography, homosexuality, premarital sex between consenting adults and so on which, while in some countries are quite legal, are illegal in other countries according to the will of the majority, although according to the religions of the very same people they are highly objectionable. Not only that: How can the same aspect in the life of a sane and healthy human being be legal as well as illegal at the same time in two different countries? Similarly, the will of the majority of the people in the same country can make something legal today and illegal tomorrow, even though this may affect the existing social structure and balance. However, the standard universal morality for the developed human being, as dictated by God's law based on spiritual values, being fit for application at any time can never change like a weathercock. Therefore, such divine laws alone can serve the humanity of today and the future on an international basis. This is so because God's law, intended for the human being in his mature state of evolution, must have been framed by Him with due consideration of what is ultimately good or bad for him after having taken into account the full specification of his creation and life in all aspects of time, matter and space which God, his creator, alone is aware of.

Further, today when the human being has achieved mental maturity, why should not the laws concerning basic social and moral values

be also standardised for all time for the entire human race, thereby leaving no necessity to change them to suit local requirements as considered necessary by the fancies of individuals? Such standardisation can be achieved only if the conduct of human beings is based on spiritual values and all the needed codes and laws are derived from a divine scripture revealed at a period when man had attained mental maturity. Such laws and codes as can stand the test of all time can be easily identified as God's final laws.

The opinions and conclusions drawn in the final chapter of this book are, however, my own, based on national and international thought of the modern age after studying what are contained in the scriptures of the various religions. No doubt others may agree to differ with my thoughts, points of view, and conclusions, but none, perhaps, can be so unfair as to contradict them for the reason that the findings are based on truth, logical and scientific. For one, the author cannot even think of a situation in which only part of the moral and social codes and injunctions of a so-called divine scripture are acceptable because they suit him while the rest are rejected on the ground that they cannot be either considered logical or applied with reason in modern times. If it is so, then it cannot any longer claim to be a final and complete divine scripture. Either the whole must be accepted or rejected, as far as the fundamentals at least are concerned, not partly either, the criterion being that if the scripture is absolutely divine in nature and intended for the all time guidance of the human being, all of it must be applicable for any time and place today as well as in the future. Thus, if any way of life does not appeal to any international model it is not to be accepted as a standard.

In the past history of mankind, particularly after the eighth century C.E., instances were many when reformers, brought up under strict influences of their own religions, have had the opportunity to compare other more dynamic religions with their own. Having found that some of the basic philosophies and ways of life of their own religions, as accepted for centuries under scriptural authority, had grave shortcomings which made them untenable for the age, they launched reformist movements to make them more scientific in approach, dynamic and appealing to the questioning contemporary generations by adapting some few good aspects of other religions into their own. At the same time, under the influence of personal ego and mainly to prevent erosion of their own religion by others, they went on advocating all their life that all religions led man to the same goal, as found by them from supposed enlightenments from none other than God, during tranced meditations, not realising the basic fact that all means may not neces-

sarily lead to the same end. The civilization of the only one man and one woman having developed from primitiveness over thousands of years to what it is today, with perhaps five billion souls, naturally, the divine guidance too must have kept pace with the development of the human intellect from time to time in a step by step process indeed. It is only a logical approach to the problem that what laws and codes of behaviour had been applicable to the early generations did need modifications for application to the civilized man of later times. The concept of incarnations in Hindu philosophy as well as the concept of divine revelations sent through various prophets in Jewish, Christian and Muslim philosophies point to this essential feature in the spiritual relationship between God and the human being. It is also not a secret that the learned people of some of the ancient religions did hold the belief that according to their scriptures and sacred documents "the *Kalki*," "the *Comforter*" and "the promised *Messiah*" are yet to arrive with divine revelations to finally guide the human race. However, when it will be is not known to them. There are ample proofs to show that the old philosophies and ways of human life, having gotten either polluted over the ages or been proven insufficient to the successive generations, did need radical changes in them for application to the developed race of the later times. It is therefore just another logical conclusion that every time new laws are brought, the old ones become obsolete and that such a step by step process must have been taking place from time to time also in the field of divine guidance to man since his arrival on earth. Naturally, it is to be expected that the complete guidance must also have thus come to the human race in the shape of a final revelation applicable for all time to guide its social, moral and spiritual growth, because the human intellect attained full growth a long time ago. If we can identify such a final revelation, why not accept it, better late than never, rather than carrying out fruitless piecemeal, incomplete repairs to any existing ones? However, without making genuine efforts to know if such a new universal philosophy, law and way of life that may be suitable to the developed human beings of the modern age has already been brought by the expected *Kalki*, *Comforter* or the promised *Messiah* and so on, as the case may be, as found in the scriptures and ways of life of one of the existing modern prime religions, these reformers, instead, tried without divine sanction in vain to modify some of their outdated life-styles and philosophy by adopting bits and pieces from other more modern religions. Having spent a whole lifetime dedicated to bringing about a renaissance among co-religionists through incongruent adaptations from other religions, such unauthorised reformers had, however, ultimately to leave this world without achieving

anything more than getting themselves enshrined as another diety for worship by followers, and dividing the society further, rather than unifying even followers of one and the same religion.

Let us not therefore repeat the same mistake. Truth is one and the royal road to it should also be only one. Anyone neglecting the royal road and trying to approach the truth from other routes, in all probability, may be left with the possibility of undergoing much sufferings before rejoining the royal road later, or even unattainability of the objective. Any attempt to modify an existing way of life by the removal of some of the major inconsistencies, contradictions or untenable concepts in order to make it more palatable in preference to acceptance of the ideal one straightaway with courage is a limited way of approach leading to failure again later because history may repeat itself. Tolerance, however, is something entirely different from a state of acceptance of another untenable view. Excessive tolerance too may lead to catastrophe because was it not in the same way that the superpowers started stockpiling and deploying even nuclear weapons in the name of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, in spite of the fact that the two opposing types of philosophy and different ways of life have so much against one another that the pressure must ultimately make the shells explode, both being all the time fully aware of the ghastly consequences about which there are not two opinions. So, the search to spot the ideal philosophy and way of life must be on relentlessly.

This treatise is the product of a further amplification and rearrangement of the material contained in the very many notes that were made by the author during his intense research and study of the various religions of this century for more than three decades and purely for his own satisfaction. Prior to that, as the result of having been brought up in Orthodox religious society of the then British Malabar of South India during the third and fourth decades of this century when that area was noted for its religious tolerance, and having had the opportunity to receive an excellent early education up to the university level along with multireligious students as well as a teaching population, it had been his rare privilege to acquire basic knowledge of the philosophies of various religions in general and of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Islam in particular through their respective holy books, scriptures and writing of very many authors and theologians as well as the gathering of firsthand knowledge of the ways of life as preached by their clergies and followed by their adherents. In later years, he observed at close quarters how the growth of acute liberalism, communism, permissiveness, secularism and "hippism" had made deep inroads into the life-styles of even immature youngsters

and teenagers all over the world due to the neglect of spiritual values. As a result of acute materialistic thinking, family cohesion, respect for elders and older concepts of moral values had almost broken down causing social problems of great magnitude everywhere. With the deteriorating world condition, the ideas and thoughts found in these pages arose in the alarmed mind of the author.

Further, the manner in which the Anglican Church of England had commenced to succumb to the effects of this acute materialism, as shown by the auctioning or selling of the churches for raising money to spend on other purposes for the reason that they continued to remain infrequented by religious devotees, kept him more and more concerned at the extent of spiritual deprivation that had set in there and of its ill effects if the same started to spread as a contagion to the rest of the world also. This prompted the author to put together all his previous notes and knowledge on the subject to form this treatise with the hope that his ideas and thoughts may provide food for thought for his twentieth century contemporaries, many of whom have been drifting in search of a philosophy and way of life sufficient to rescue them from their present predicament of having been engulfed by acute materialism devoid of any spiritual values altogether. As Bishop Butler wondered if an entire nation could go mad, is it also possible to visualise that the bulk of the civilized human race of this unique century can go acutely materialistic, ignoring its All Powerful Creator and Sustainer, God? For, if it so happened, what could then be the exemplary divine punishment for such a lot of ungrateful human beings of this age of unprecedented progress?

As seen from the bibliography at the end, the author has taken great pains to refer to very many books and literatures over decades for gathering the variety of information contained in this book. Some of the references were in his possession, others loaned to him by friends and quite a lot read during his frequent visits to the United Kingdom from the vast treasure houses of rare books which exist in British libraries in England and libraries of the British Council and United States Information Centers in many countries, some of these rare books not being obtainable elsewhere because they were either extinct or out of print for a long time.

Certainly, some views and extracts from the publications of the many authors as shown in the long list of bibliography at the end of the book have found places of honor in this study as excerpts. The author is grateful for having gotten the opportunity to enrich his knowledge quite appreciably on account of the valuable information contained in them. It is a statement of fact that without them it should not have

been possible for him to write a book of this kind.

The author takes the privilege of assuring the reader that he has great respect for all prime religions of today because, after all, they all tend to announce severally in their own ways the existence of only ONE GOD and universalism at the root despite varying tints of polytheism in almost all of them but few. The motive of the author in writing this comparative study has been quite selfless—to put their philosophies and ways of life in one book in order to enable all to critically study them—and therefore he has taken utmost care to base his exposition of the various religions strictly on the basis of the accepted and available scriptures of the different religions or the ways of life, and standard works of famous authors on these scriptures. In spite of this honest effort, as human he is, it may be likely that some minor inaccuracies and/or criticisms, not always quite wholesome to all when such a disputable topic is analysed, may have crept in inadvertently. On pointing out any such inaccuracies supported by acceptable evidences, the author shall be only too happy to remedy them in the next edition.

Chapter 2

Buddhism

Hindus and their scriptures consider Buddha as the ninth incarnation of one of their trinity gods, Vishnu. Like Jainism and Sikhism, Buddhism may also be considered an adaptation of Hinduism because some of the basic concepts of Hindu philosophy such as Samsara, Karma, Yoga, Nirvana and so on exist in Buddhism as well. No doubt, many a Hindu philosopher, therefore, considers Buddha as yet another reformer of Hinduism who came as the Buddha incarnation of Vishnu, was born as a Hindu, died as a Hindu, and lived the life of a Hindu. However, Buddhism has also some important aspects radically different from the Vedic and Epic Hindu philosophy in the form of almost a negation of gods, deities, caste system, sacrifice and so on, and in fraternization with other regional philosophies or ways of life it has evolved a distinct culture separate from the ways of Hindu for a large cross-section of people in Sri Lanka, Burma, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Korea, Japan and even India.

As will be seen from the life history of Buddha, a major part of his life had been a struggle, first to find the 'Noble Truths' of causation and cessation of pain on the one hand and to find a way to get rid of the endless and horrible Samsara (rebirth) cycle, which was the only Hindu way of purifying the soul of the sins committed through Karma which, as per the *Bhagavat Geetha*, "Even God is incapable of changing because this is the law ordained by Him dependant on the duties (Dharmas) of four castes, born of nature." After a struggle of seven years, during which period Gautama Buddha subjected himself to the renunciation advocated by Geetha and even the torture of the Vedas, he had to return disappointed, having fallen acutely ill. However, on regaining his health, as the result of further renunciation and yoga meditation under a bodhi tree, he was able to find out not only the "Noble Truths," but also the way for complete redemption called Nirvana (union of the soul with the Supreme Essence) through the process of Samadhi (blowing out). Nevertheless, in the end he still had no way out other than resigning himself to the old philosophy of rebirth (Samsara) in cases where the Nirvana was not attained due to sins committed during any

particular life term. In other words, in effect, it was acceptance of the two contradictory philosophies, one being that God redeems one of sins as the result of renunciation, penance and good work, and the other being that redemption is not possible except through suffering in time, space and effect the result of Karma, final redemption being only possible through a spotless life cycle, during which the full effects of past sins have to be born out, which is the same as the Hindu Samsara philosophy itself. Perhaps, it was due to this very confusion that Buddha could not specifically either affirm or deny the existence of God or even a life after death, as will be seen later in these pages.

The Life of Buddha

The traditions say that Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was born and brought up in a luxurious and affluent royal family as the heir apparent, carefully segregated from the miseries of life as well as the lower Hindu castes and duly indoctrinated as a Kshatriya (warrior) which is the higher caste of Hindu society, below only the sacred Brahmanas. He seems to have become obsessed by the sight of a sick man, an old man and a dead body, each for the first time in his life making him realise the fact of life that everyone is liable to become sick and all will grow old and die, after all. The sixth century B.C.E. was remarkable for the spiritual unrest and intellectual ferment in many countries of the world. Confucius and Lao Tzu had been preaching their own philosophies in China, Mahavir and Buddha theirs in India, Zarathustra his in Iran and Parmenides as well as Empedocles theirs in Greece, all trying to work out their own philosophical systems to evolve a harmonious equation among man, the universe and the Supreme Entity, that is God, Nature or Supreme Essence as each called it. From this it appears that the preachings of the chain of prophets from Moses to Ezekiel of the Old Testament, had all been localised in the area of Palestine and its vicinity, directed towards the children of Israel and had not penetrated farther than the area of the Aramites or Hebrews. Thus, the young Gautama Buddha was trying to reform the Hindu society in his own way by getting rid of the age-old idol worship, caste oriented Dharma and Karma Philosophy governing redemption from sins, offering of sacrifices to various gods and, perhaps, the very incarnation philosophy. Naturally, having been born as a high caste Hindu and confronted by much of the illogical and contradictory scriptural doctrines of Hinduism, the young Gautama must have taken refuge in the forests to practice the Vanaprastham (forest life) and Sanyasam (penance with renunciation) stages (Ashramam) prescribed

by the Vedas particularly to the two higher castes. Having received enlightenment and wisdom, Buddha became actively involved in devising a strict program of monastic life for his disciples to obtain supervised training in the act of leading a life of renunciation. The disciples were to practice yoga to obtain wisdom and knowledge in order to enable them to lead a faultless life aimed at the attainment of Nirvana or redemption by cutting off the rebirth cycle altogether through a "union with the Supreme Essence" or "blowing out." Having led a large following, Buddha died at the age of eighty, exhorting his disciples "to strive after salvation energetically because all that is composed is liable to decay." According to the traditions as well as *The Dīpavamsa*, a Pali chronicle of the fourth century C.E. containing accounts of the Magadha kings of India from Buddha to Ashoka, the death of Buddha is assessed between 544 and 483 B.C.E. His departure for the forest life is said to have been at the age of twenty-nine and he is supposed to have received the enlightenment at the age of thirty-five. For forty-five years he is said to have wandered from place to place preaching his doctrine of Dharma (duty) to monks, nuns and people at large and is said to have permitted women to join the order of nuns, on equal status with men, for the first time in the social and religious life of India.

Teachings of Buddha

The teachings of Buddha appear to have been, in the beginning, preserved in the memory of Buddhist monks over the ages. These had been put into the present form of scripture after the split of the Buddhists into two sects, Mahayana (The Great Vehicle) and Hinayana (The Little Vehicle). One of these collections, known as *The Canon of the Theravādins* (The School of the Elders) appears to exist now in Pali, a living language of Sri Lanka (Old Ceylon) introduced first into that country by Buddhist missionaries of the third century B.C.E. and during the spread of Buddhism to Burma and Siam; it is said to have been reduced to writing in Ceylon during the first century C.E. In all old schools of Buddhism, the Canon exists in the form of "Tripitaka" (The Three-fold Basket), consisting of:

- The Vinaya Pithaka, containing 227 rules of discipline known as Vinaya. The most important of these rules of discipline, contravention of which may lead to expulsion of the adherent from the Buddhist order, are committing unchastity, theft or murder, inciting one to commit suicide, and making false claims for supernatural powers.

—The Sutta Pitaka on Dharma (duty), arranged in five collections of discourses called Nikayas or Agamas of which the first is common to all schools. These are discourses attributed to Buddha himself and include poems, legends, dialogues and commentaries some of which being ascribed to the disciples of Buddha in a convenient way to be memorised. These are: Digha Nikaya, Majjima Nikaya, Samyutta Nikaya, Angutara Nikaya, and Khuddaka Nikaya. The fifth, however, is not recognised by all the schools. In Pali Canon, it consists of fifteen works, the most important of them being “Dhammapada” (Works of the Doctrine), which is a collection of 423 verses; “The Sutta Nipada,” consisting of five books of suttas (verses); “Jataka” (story of Buddha in previous births; and two collections of verses attributed to his disciples), “The Theragatha” (verses of the elders), an “The Therigitta” (verses of the women elders.)

—Abhidhamma (Higher Doctrine), relating to psychological ethics and consisting of seven works in Pali Canon.

Other Canons that existed in Buddhist schools of northern India are known in Chinese and Tibetan translations of the Sanskrit text which is now lost. There are some dissimilarities between the Canons of the northern Indian schools and the southern Pali schools, the latter being current in Siam, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand and Sri Lanka. This could have been the result of the spread of the teachings orally in widely separated communities on the one hand and due to the cultural differences between the different races on the other, resulting in the differences showing up when they were finally written down by scholars with characteristic differences in interpretations.

The Doctrine of Buddha

“Dhamma Kakka-Pavathna-Sutta” (the verses of turning of the wheel of doctrine), addressed “to him who has gone forth from the world,” contains the doctrine preached by Gautama Buddha. It is the conviction that the worldly life cannot give the ultimate happiness and that one has to take a middle course between the profitless life of indulgence in sensual pleasures and the equally profitless way of self torture, both the extremes having been practiced by the contemporary Hindu society in which he was born and brought up. Buddha taught that right thinking, right living and self denial should enable the soul of man to attain Nirvana, which was the ultimate release from earthly existence as well as from pain, desire and sorrow. The strict monastic life prescribed by him for his disciples was aimed at obtaining the neces-

sary and essential training and control over the mind with the ultimate object of this doctrine in view. He had realized that the human mind and actions can get channelled away from the lures of the worldly life only under the influence of a tightly disciplined training, and therefore the effort towards finding the truth of redemption and final Nirvana may best be possible only through the disciplined life of a recluse. Although it appeared to Buddha that he had found a way for the redemption of the human soul that was much better than what the caste-ridden contemporary Hindu philosophy advocated, nevertheless, as he was not a prophet of God who alone could know through God's revelation what the purpose and destiny of man were and how best the desired redemption could be obtained, there was no wonder that in the end he also got confused on the issue. He had neither claimed to be an incarnation nor a prophet. That living the life of a recluse and denying the world altogether cannot be the right course for the human being should be clear from the fact that if everyone in the world opted for this course as prescribed by Buddha for seeking redemption, the entire world must have come to a dead stop, as far as human activity is concerned a long time ago! Instead, it may be conceded readily that the right philosophy for mankind should be the one that can extend the hope of redemption of the soul through a middle-course life in the world because, after all, everyone has to dwell on the earth for a specified time doing his bit of duty and turning the wheel of time for the benefit of society. Nevertheless, Buddha's search for truth convinced him of the practical philosophy of life that the Middle Course was the only way to attain Nirvana by the Thathagata—the Buddha—and that the way to receive the enlightenment consisted, according to him, in the knowledge of the following four Truths:

- The first truth is the noble truth of pain: birth is pain, old age is pain, sickness is pain, death is pain, the five aggregates of grasping being pain.
- The second truth is the noble truth of the cause of the pain and this is the craving *Tanha* (thirst) that leads to rebirth: the craving of the passions, the craving for existence, the craving for nonexistence.
- The third truth is the noble truth of the cessation of pain, consisting in the remainderless cessation of craving, its abandonment and rejection, emancipation and freedom from support.

The three noble truths mentioned above are the noble truths of knowledge that constitute the state of the Arhat (the perfected disciple), who has reached the goal of Cessation of pain.

—The fourth truth consists in the actual means of arriving at these truths, which is the "Noble eightfold Path": Right views; Right intention; Right effort; Right speech; Right action; Right livelihood; Right mindfulness; and Right concentration.

The description of the Noble Path covers the whole training of the disciple as developed in the Suttas, with great significance attached to a theoretical part consisting of right views, a system of ethical practice and a method of mental training demonstrated in the right effort, mindfulness and concentration.

As per the sermon, the individual has been analysed into five groups of elements or five aggregates of grasping, namely, the body, the feeling, the perception, the mental element, and the consciousness. As opposed to Hinduism and Jainism, Buddhism denies a permanent self (Atman) while also denying that there is anything beyond the five elements constituting the conception of the individual. However, Buddha could not reconcile with the reality of life which has both mind and body as conceived physically by all other religions, including his own parent Hinduism. Hinduism, in particular, defends the "Atman-Rupa" (the soul-body) theory of the definite existence of the soul and body as separate entities, as otherwise the existence of the body cannot be explained. Further, it went against the very Hindu doctrine of karma and transmigration of soul "to which even gods were held liable," according to Bhagavat Geetha. Nevertheless, the Buddhist philosophy accepts the theory of transmigration of souls from one body to another, until the elements cease to exist altogether, by the process of disintegration with cessation of craving and the goal of attaining Nirvana. This, to some extent, compares with the Hindu philosophy of transmigration from one to another until the soul is completely freed by Nirvana through karma and yoga.

Four questions Buddha refused to answer, for the reason that these were unproductive and these were:

- Is the universe eternal or not?
- Whether the universe is finite or not?
- Whether the life is the same as the body?
- Whether one who is emancipated (Thathagata) exists after death?

The fourth of these questions, in particular, is vital indeed to any religion or philosophy, particularly to Buddhism, which defines the goal of the individual as Nirvana (final redemption or blow out) which, in its final act, is total extinction of craving or passion which should

be possible at least to a few in one lifetime, as is believed by the followers of Buddha.

The doctrine of the origin of pain, as formulated in the well-known Chain of Causation (Paticca-Samuppada), consists of twelve causal states of the individual, each of which is supposed to determine the next: ignorance; mental elements; consciousness; mind and body; the six senses; contact; feeling; craving; becoming; birth; old age and death. The entire philosophy and each one of the twelve states of the individual as stated in the doctrine of the origin of pain are so vague and confusing that no one can be sure of anything. However, some of the teachings covering the life of the disciples and monks such as noninjury to anyone, forgiveness even to enemies and friendliness to all have much ethical value.

In Buddhism, moral values are separated from the prescriptions of mere ritual significance and motive is made the criterion of moral action instead of judging goodness by the sum total of all good or bad actions performed by an individual. Buddha, however, retained the doctrines of Karma, Rebirth and Nirvana as existing in Hinduism. The prime concern of the Buddhist disciple is the seeking of knowledge and the meditation known as "Samadhi," almost similar to Hindu "Yoga." For those who are acquainted with the Hindu ways and cults it will appear that Buddhism was an adaptation or even a transformation of Hinduism with Samadhi as the end of the individual, probably for the reason that attainment of Nirvana (ultimate salvation) through the process of Karma and repeated rebirths by transmigration of soul, in almost all cases ad infinitum, could not be the best way for redemption from sin in the life cycle of man in the difficult world. Therefore, rather than getting involved in the worldly affairs and becoming a prey to bad thoughts, bad speech and bad actions, Buddha discovered that meditation on knowledge and nature through Samadhi away from the mundane affairs altogether was a better way to achieve the Nirvana so that the transmigration cycle could be terminated. But, as stated earlier, if the large majority of the people of even one age had followed this method, doomsday would have arrived a long time ago indeed!

Yoga and Samadhi have much in common with hypnotism (trance), both being self-hypnotism and consisting of fixing all attention on one particular object or point (between the two eyes and the eyebrows, as per the Geetha) so that the mind is subjected to different stages of absorptive postures contemplating either nothing or only one specific object. While four stages of trances (Dhyanas) have been described in the older Suttas, five stages called attainments, method and subjects of meditation have been elaborated in post-canonical works, especially

in "The Way of Purity" of Budhaghosa literature. Although in Modern Pali Buddhism these have fallen into disuse, the developments which took place in Sanskrit Buddhism have been almost entirely preserved in China and Japan. On the whole, in spite of the efforts of Buddha to keep away from the conventional Vedic Hindu cult of deity worship, archeological finds (in Lopburi, Cheing, Mai, Taila and other places that have been exhibited in Japanese, Chinese, Siamese, Indian and Pakistani museums) and particularly the Buddha themes depicted in Oriental paintings (of Ashikaga, Ming, Kamakura and Tang [China] period, as well as Japanese and Siamese samples dating from the seventh to the fourteenth centuries C.E.) lead to the conclusion that although the worship of a deified Buddha does not appear to have been resorted to by the Buddhists, due to the Hindu Sanskrit influence considering Buddha as the ninth incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu, supernatural powers had been attributed to Buddha even by his own followers in spite of the fact that according to the "Vinaya Pittaka" (The Threefold Basket), claiming supernatural powers is a major contravention of one of the four fundamentals of Buddhist philosophy and may lead to the expulsion of a disciple from the folds of the Buddhist order itself.

For attainment of Nirvana through Samadhi (tense meditation), the eightfold path is a course of training. In order to extinguish craving fully through training, however, one has to abandon household life altogether and join the Sangha Order of the monks. There are two essential ceremonies of the Sangha Order of which the first is the assembly of the Uposalha, at which "Pathimokha," or the list of offences given in "Vinaya" is recited every fortnight, and confession of any infringement is made. The second is the practice of retreat (Vassa) during the three months of the rainy season when travelling is forbidden. The second part of the "Vinaya" contains the detailed rules of admission of members, internal regulation of the monasteries and discipline of the order of monks.

Buddhism was born in an age of great spiritual commotion and questioning in many parts of the world. In India, the Hinduism of the scriptures brought by the Aryan invaders, consisting of the Vedas and Brahmanas, had developed at the hands of the Brahmana priests into a code to support, mainly, a system of sacrifices and rituals with an integrally associated and acute caste distinction among fellow citizens. This was not done on the basis of distinct professions alone, but was based mainly on the birth into a particular caste as well as allocation of abject jobs hereditarily to one particular class labelled for ever as untouchables, and the worship of innumerable gods, goddesses and

their so-called manifestations as deities in place of the Supreme Creator. The inevitable reaction to this illogical system had first appeared in the development of the Upanishads during 600–500 B.C.E., advocating a pantheistic philosophy, seeking the Reality behind the concept of various gods and a workable philosophy aimed at redemption of the soul through union with this Reality. Although Buddhism was the result of revolt against the orthodox Vedic Hinduism, some of the doctrines of Buddhism are certainly derived from the very Hindu concepts. The lifelong search of Gautama Buddha to obtain knowledge about the Supreme Essence and, through its mercy, a release of the soul from the Karma-oriented rebirth cycle and the associated sufferings through repentance, good work and penance, ultimately landed him back deeper into the slush of acceptance of the yoga and rebirth cycle themselves as the only panacea for the redemption of the soul. This was essentially because he performed his meditation and searched just as any other intelligent philosopher would have done—concentrated thoughts and logic on specific problems—and obtained a solution which appeared to him as the best. He never claimed to be blessed by God with a mission in the capacity of a prophet with divine inspirations. That he did not claim any such prophethood and that he was not one either are amply proven from the facts of the history of his life. He did not even mention the philosophy of the Only One God, who in His own authority plans, creates, maintains, destroys as well as reproduces in due times and at His own pleasure everything in the universe, in contrast to the contemporary confusing and illogical philosophy of the innumerable gods of the Vedas and the pantheistic, supporting Upanishads. No wonder, therefore, that Buddha could not answer regarding life after death or even the fate of the universe.

Buddhism after Buddha

As reported in the Pali Chronicles, immediately after Buddha's death about 483 B.C.E., the first council was held at which the scriptures Dhamma and Vinaya were recited. The second council was held about a century later when factions due to schism had occurred. The third was held in 247 B.C.E. during the reign of Ashoka, the Indian Hindu king who took Buddhism as his cult. In the Sanskrit works, Asoka is mentioned several times; however, in the Pali Canons there is no mention of him at all. Probably, the Arya-Dravidia rivalry highlighted in Ramayana with the Kshatriya king Rama representing the high caste Aryan Hindus and Ravana, representing the low caste native Indians,

mainly of the Dravidian race, driven off to the south first and then to Lanka (Sri Lanka) by the former, could be one of the reasons behind this omission. Nevertheless, the Chronicles mention that it was Mahinda, the son of Asoka, who spread the Buddha doctrine to Ceylon during the third century B.C.E.

Subsequent history of the Theravidins (or Dravidians?) is confined to Ceylon. Accounts of the Chinese pilgrim travellers Fa Hien (fourth century C.E.) and Hiun Tsiang (seventh century C.E.) show that they saw Buddhism extended even to Central Asia and that eighteen different schools of the cult then existed in India of which the Great Vehicle and the Little Vehicle were the two great divisions; the Great Vehicle (Mahayana), begun during the first century C.E. had branded the older school as the Little Vehicle (Hinayana). The Indian Buddhist king Kanishka (first century C.E.) unhappy with so many divisions among the Buddhists, called a general Buddhist council and arranged the three Pithakas and a commentary to be issued as a standard. It was the Theravada school that spread Buddhism to the south and to Ceylon under king Ashoka (274-232 B.C.E.). Another school, the Sarvastivada, translated the Buddhist scripture into Sanskrit language and spread the movement to northwest India, Tibet and China. The fact that Pali Canon is taken as authoritative in Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia shows that Buddhism spread to those countries of south-east Asia from Ceylon. In the eastern areas of the Indian subcontinent the Pali Theravadian school is the religion of the minority community even today.

The Decline of Buddhism

The decline of Buddhism in India was probably caused by the deification of Buddha, worship of the Bodhi Sattvas as the givers of merit and the attribution of consorts to them. Gradually, the attribution of superhuman powers to Buddha and Bodhi Sattvas led to deity worship, an act prohibited under the strict rule of the Vinaya Pithaka, with the penalty of expulsion from the Buddhist order prescribed for its contravention. The new movement had to get gradually assimilated into the larger Indian cult of Hinduism, which also considered Buddha as the ninth incarnation of the Vishnu god. In the Far Eastern countries too, Buddhism became modulated with the local deity cults of the respective country or region, the crossbreed becoming the national identity of each in due course.

Cracks had appeared in the Sangha (society) of the Buddhists in India as early as the first century after the death of Buddha when at least three distinct schools had emerged among them. While the conservatives called themselves the School of Elders, or Theravidins in Pali language (Did the term come from the Dravidians, the original inhabitants of India, who were mostly considered as the Hindu low castes and who were chased down by the invading Aryans to the south?), the liberals, known as the Great Assembly (Mahasanghika) interpreted the doctrines more freely. Yet another movement, called Mahayana (The Great Vehicle), termed the older school, Hinayana (The Little Vehicle), inferior and elementary. It was, however, the old school of elders, or the Pali Theravidia school of Hinayana, and the liberal Sanskrit school of Mahayana that survived. These, again, look as if they were based on a racial rivalry between the north Indian Sanskrit-speaking Aryan invaders and the Pali-speaking Dravidians who were considered the lower Hindu classes and driven southwards during the Aryan conquest of the Indo-Gangetic plains. The difference between the Old School and the Liberal School may be found from the Pali literature of the Theravidins and the Sanskrit literature of the Mahayanas. While the Theravidins have great reverence for the person of the historical Gautama Buddha, his teachings and the Buddhist Order which he founded, the Mahayanas remember him as one of the many Buddha manifestations of the primordial Buddha nature who are supposed to have taught differently according to the needs of the various ages, they appeared, meaning that there were many Buddhas before. This is certainly a doctrine, adopted after Buddha, to accept him as one of the Avatars (incarnations) of the Hindu god Vishnu, in reciprocity to the Hindu doctrine developed later that Buddha was the ninth Avatar of Vishnu, like Krishna. Again, while the Theravidins hold the view that an ideal Buddhist is a true follower of the eightfold path enunciated by Buddha, the Mahayanas believe that the ideal Buddhist is one who has vowed to become Buddha-inspired to work for the good of others through the six virtues of generosity, morality, patience, vigor, concentration and wisdom. The Mahayan movement has incorporated in its literature many tendencies that grew out of the traditions of North India during the first century B.C.E. and fifth century C.E. as is evidenced from the Sanskrit, Chinese and Tibetan literature. Although these remain classified under Vinaya (monastic rules), Sutras (discourses) and Shastras (philosophical treatises), the subject matter often differs from what is found in Pali works. The discourses project Buddha as a great teacher and in typical Mahayan Sutras, he is depicted as a transcendent, eternal being preaching to innumerable Buddhas,

Bodhisattvas, gods and demigods, along with human disciples. In Shastras, the arguments revolve around concepts of ultimate reality such as, inexpressible voidness, metaphysically idealistic consciousness and truly-so quality. The Mahayan narratives also develop many miracles, legends and other elements in the personal life of Buddha.

From the seventh century C.E. onwards the assimilation of a secret doctrine called Tantrism became associated with Buddha's following. Tantrism appeared first among the Hindus of India as a marginal ritual using Matras (spells), Dhavanis (mystic syllables), Mandalas (occult diagrams) and Mudras (symbolic gestures) for reinforcing the devotion of the Hindu devotee through a state of a symbolic mystical union with the deity of any specific god, with emphasis on his consort as part of the Shakti cult. In the place of Hindu gods and their consorts, the Buddhists substituted Buddha and Bodhisattvas with their mythical feminine partners. Meditation on the symbol was intended to lead to an inner unification with the deity which was considered the supreme spiritual bliss. The symbolism of sexual union was used to indicate the ultimate mystical realization. This brought not only condemnation from religious groups upon Buddhism, but also the ultimate downfall of the Buddhist cult into the parent Hinduism itself through the mutual acceptance of the concept of Buddha as the ninth incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. Elsewhere it mostly became assimilated with other regional cults to evolve common national cultures and ways of life.

Chapter 3

Christianity

One of the prime religions of today with followers exceeding a billion and a quarter living in almost all countries of the world, Christianity came into being as a distinct religion long after the departure of Jesus Christ (peace be on him), a prophet of God, from this world. The Christians believe that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) was the eternal son of God by reason of his miraculous birth to the Virgin Mary; that he was equal with God, who was his father; that God, while being one in Essence is three in the personal concept of the Trinity, in the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and that Jesus (peace be on him) was sent to the earth as His representative son to live, suffer as a human, and die on the Cross at the hands of his opponents for the redemption of his followers. According to the existing records, Jesus (peace be on him) was born in Bethlehem of Palestine during the reign of Herod the Roman, and preached his Gospels among Jews more than 2,000 years ago. "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them," he said emphasising that with him the chain of prophets and the law were not abolished, but only became fulfilled. Jesus Christ (peace be on him) preached his Gospels for about three years only before he was recalled by the Creator at the early age of thirty-three.

The Life of Jesus (Peace Be on Him)

The main information on the life of Jesus (peace be on him) is contained in the records of the four early evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, known and accepted by the Christian church as the Gospels, found in the early part of the New Testament of the Christian Bible. Some short glimpses into the early life of Jesus (peace be on him) are found in only two of them, namely the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke. There is, however, a fifth version of the Gospel by Barnabas, according to which he himself was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus (peace be on him) during his lifetime. But this is not accepted as canonical by the Christian Churches. This version contains more information on the early days of Jesus (peace be on him) than the rest.

There is, however, one contradiction of no small importance between the reportings of Matthew and Barnabas on the one hand and that of Luke on the other. The former two mention a flight of Joseph, the husband of Mary, with her and the sacred baby Jesus (peace be on him) to Egypt soon after the birth of the child, although Luke does not mention this incident at all. According to Matthew and Barnabas, on the basis of a divine revelation after the birth of Jesus (peace be on him) that the baby may be killed by Herod, Joseph took her and the baby from Bethlehem to Egypt for a temporary sojourn and that they returned to Nazareth in Galilee only after the death of Herod. On the other hand, Luke has reported that after the birth of Jesus (peace be on him) in Bethlehem, the family returned to Nazareth to live there.

While the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke describe very briefly the circumstances that led to the miraculous conception of Jesus (peace be on him) to the Virgin Mary as well as a small account of his early life, they deal in greater detail with the events and miracles that accompanied his life during his prophetic ministry of about three years, including his (supposed) crucifixion, resurrection and ascension; however, the Gospels according to Mark and John only deal with events of his prophetic period. The Gospel according to Barnabas on the other hand, while giving a brief account of the miraculous conception, birth and the early life of Christ (peace be on him), also concentrates in great detail on the events that occurred during his prophetic mission as well as on his message. There is a big difference, however, between the "Canonical Gospels" and the Gospel of Barnabas in that while the former four not only attribute to Jesus (peace be on him) divinity and oneness with God but are also emphatic on the events of the crucifixion, the latter, denying them all, confirms that someone else was crucified instead of Jesus (peace be on him) and that the prophet even rebuked and reprimanded those who even tried to attribute any divinity to him.

It is generally accepted that the circumstances of the birth of Jesus (peace be on him) to his mother, the Virgin Mary, and his life before as well as during his prophetic mission were full of miracles. The Gospels say that Jesus (peace be on him) was conceived by his mother miraculously before her marriage and that her husband, Joseph the carpenter, having come to know of it only after the marriage, decided to accept the *fait accompli* without causing discredit and embarrassment to himself, to her and their families, as the result of a divine revelation that the conception of the baby had taken place prior to the marriage through divine will and without any normal process of contact with man. No doubt such a sound belief among thousands of human beings in those difficult days as well as among millions ever after is ample

testimony to the greatness of Jesus (peace be on him) as a prophet of God and the will of God. It is also accepted that even after the birth of Jesus (peace be on him) miracles were associated with him throughout his short lifespan of about thirty-three years, of which only a tenth had been spent in the ministry. The miracles, however, kept pace with his teaching and preaching mission as a means of convincing the Jews of his superordinary powers as a prophet of God. These were the miracles of talking while being still a babe in the cradle; healing; raising the dead to life; providing food at short notice to large numbers of people; and so on, all with divine help, of course.

Teachings of Jesus (Peace Be on Him)

That Jesus Christ (peace be on him) did not bring a new religion, but only came to collect the lost sheep among the followers of Moses (peace be on him) who had gone away from the law and the covenant, not abolishing but only amplifying some of the God's laws established by Moses, and other prophets before him (peace be on them) is borne out by the main preaching of the prophet himself: "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them." Further, the very fact that the Old Testament, which is the first part of the Christian Bible, is adopted from the Jewish Pentateuch, supposed to be the collection of Mosaic Law and Covenant known as Torah, shows that basically no new laws radically different from the spiritual, moral and social laws which had been given to the Jewish nation called the children of Israel were prescribed by Jesus (peace be on him). From the Gospels it is also seen that apart from suggesting ways of avoidance of the very causes prompting the commission of forbidden crimes and sins for which punishments were prescribed in the Torah, Jesus Christ (peace be on him) did not introduce any changes in the already existing Mosaic Law governing the social life and spiritual concept of his followers. Essentially, therefore, Jesus Christ (peace be on him) remained a final prophet or the promised Messiah of the Jewish people in the chain of prophets from Moses (peace be on him) downwards. Nowhere in the Gospels does Jesus Christ (peace be on him) claim that he was a prophet for the whole world. Instead, as found in John 15:25-26; 15:26-27 and 16:7-11, and more specifically in the Gospel of Barnabas, Jesus (peace be on him) had prophesied the arrival of a "Counsellor who will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgement When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his authority but whatever he hears he will speak and he

will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. . . ." This clearly shows that Jesus (peace be on him) did mean that another prophet to convince the world would follow him and that "if he (Jesus) (peace be on him) did not go away, the Counsellor will not come and that therefore it was advantageous to them that he himself went away." Neither do the Gospels accepted by the churches nor the Gospel of Barnabas specify any religious code on social life, worship and so on along the lines of the Jewish code. The Gospels also do not state that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) ever ordained any kind of religious prayers other than the way to pray as stated in Matt. 7:6-13. Further, Matt. 19:16-20 states that Jesus (peace be on him) is reported to have not only said, "if you would enter life, keep the commandments," but also that he clarified "the commandments" to be: "You shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness, honor your father and mother, and, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." As every student of the Old Testament knows, these commandments are the essentials of social conduct in the Law of Moses (peace be on him). Again, Matt. 22:37-40 says the Jesus (peace be on him) is reported to have said, "On these two Commandments depend all the law and the prophets," These, as well as the report of Matt. 5:17-18, where Jesus (peace be on him) is stated to have said during the famous Sermon on the Mount, "Think not that I have come to abolish them but to fulfil them," as well as what is designated as "The New Law" in Matt. 5:21-48, all show without any doubt that rather than bringing any "New Law" after abolishing the laws of the Torah given by God to the children of Israel through Moses, Jesus (peace be on them) only amplified and explained some of the earlier laws to make them unambiguously clear. Further, the admonition reported to have been given by Jesus (peace be on him) to the pharisees and scribes in Matt. 23:1-36 shows that the intelligentsia of the Jews had deviated from the letter and spirit of the teachings of Moses and the prophets (peace be on them). Thus it is clear from the New Testament itself that the main mission of Jesus (peace be on him) as an apostle of God was to guide the children of Israel back into the right path socially, morally and spiritually, and that this mission was confined to the Jewish people only and not to the whole world as it was projected subsequently after the conversion of Saul (Paul) sometime around 33 C.E.

It is seen in Acts 11:21-26 that the first time the followers of Christ (peace be on him) were called "Christians" was in Antioch. Similarly, the ranks of the followers of Jesus (peace be on him) were thrown open to gentiles (non-Israelites) and heathens, even exempting them from the circumcision on the basis of a declaration made by evangelist and

apostle Peter, based on conclusions drawn by him consequent on seeing a vision in a trance, the Holy Spirit having fallen on him during his Sermon (Acts 10:44-48). Again, the so-called sanction claimed by Christians to eat even food forbidden to Jews is attributed to another vision of a hungry Peter in a trance, wherein he saw "something descending like a great sheet upon the earth in which were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air," and a voice was supposed to have ordered him thrice "to kill and eat animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds in the air . . . as God had made them clean" (Acts 10:10-16). The above report and the conclusion drawn in Mark 7:19 appear to have been made the basis by the church to prove that the followers of Jesus (peace be on him) had the sanction to eat all foods that had been forbidden under the Mosaic law and that his teachings were intended for the gentiles and heathens as well. However, it is also seen that what is stated in Mark 7:19 and Acts 10:10-16 regarding forbidden foods is contradicted by Acts 15:28-29 where it is stated that the Council of Jerusalem had permitted the gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilisia to refrain from eating what has been sacrificed to idols, blood and what has been strangled. Thus it is clear that even the Jerusalem Council had not made all foods clean to the followers of Jesus (peace be on him). The act of exempting the gentiles from circumcision and permission granted by the Council to eat forbidden foods detailed in Deut. 14:3-21 of the Old Testament were their own and not of Jesus Christ (peace be on him). Further, a careful reading of Mark 7:14-18 will show that they do not refer to foods as alleged parenthetically in Mark 7:19, but to the "evil thoughts of the heart and their consequences," as ably proven by the explanation of Jesus himself (peace be on him), as found in Mark 7:20-23. It is, however, a pity that the dream of hungry Peter was interpreted as a sanction to eat forbidden animals, birds and reptiles rather than a suggestion to kill and eat such of the birds, animals and reptiles as had not been forbidden under Mosaic Law.

As seen in the Gospels, many of the teachings of Jesus (peace be on him) are in the form of parables, all of which are not entirely clear. Apart from the parables, the Gospels contain precepts of admonition and instructions as well as discourses, as in the Sermon on the Mount. Some of the teachings are wonderful clarifications of the existing Old Laws of Moses (peace be on him) found in the Old Testament regarding adultery (Matt. 5:27-30), swearing (Matt. 5:33-35) love and hate (Matt. 5:43-48), piety and giving alms (Matt. 6:1-4), praying, forgiving and fasting (Matt. 6:7,14-18), and so on. Nevertheless, the main framework of the Mosaic law as given in the Old Testament still remained applied to the limited followers of Jesus (peace be on him) not only during his

ministry but also a few decades after his ascension. This was, probably, the reason why Christ (peace be on him) did not ordain even a separate prayer on his disciples other than the general "Lord's prayer," as found in Matt. 6:9-13.

The Status of the Gospels

Although the four versions of the Gospels in the New Testament of the Bible are considered by the Church as the Canon, they do not enable one to deal with the problems in the life of Jesus (peace be on him) in any chronological order, nor do they give any specific idea as to what pertinent way of life, spiritual as well as temporal and radically different from the Mosaic laws that governed the Jewish way of life, was specified by Jesus Christ (peace be on him). During the lifetime of Jesus (peace be on him) no separate church or even place of worship was ever established or ordered by him to be established for the exclusive use of his disciples and followers. Jesus (peace be on him) himself worshipped in secret away from the disciples and preached in Jerusalem and elsewhere, mostly within the precincts of the Jewish synagogues. Even about faith in Jesus (peace be on him) as well as in God, the reports of the four evangelists in their versions of the Gospel often give ambiguity. For instance, while in Mark 14:62, John 10:37 and Matt. 16:13-17, Jesus (peace be on him) is reported to have called himself "the son of God," in Luke 22:70-71, the retort of Jesus (peace be on him) to the judge "You say that I am (the son of God)," shows that he himself did not claim so. Elsewhere, the testimony of Jesus (peace be on him) that God in heaven is "your Father" (Matt. 5:16, 6:6, 7:11); "my Father" (Matt. 7:21); and "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9); all go to show conclusively that even according to the Gospels, Jesus, the prophet of God, (peace be on him) had only stated the universal concept of Deut. 14:1: "You are the sons of the Lord, your God," and as in old Greek philosophical teachings that God being the creator of everything, is the father of Jesus (peace be on him) as He is the father of anyone and everything else too in the universe, in a broad philosophical sense which points to the fact that God's care and love for the human being in particular is on the footing of the father to his children—nay, even much more indeed as he is the sole creator and sustainer of the universe as a whole. It is also to be noted that, in more occasions than one, the Gospels claim that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) had referred to himself as the "son of Man."

Thus, what is shown by the Gospels is that they convey two contradictory messages simultaneously: that Jesus Christ the prophet

(peace be on him) was the "son of God" on the one hand and that he was the "son of Man" on the other. Is there any doubt that what has been attributed to Jesus Christ (peace be on him) by the Gospels—"I am the Son of God" (John 10:37); "I and Father are One" (John 10:30); "Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you kill and crucify" (Matt. 23:34); "The Father is in me and I in Father" (John 10:38); the unprotested agreement of Jesus (peace be on him) with Thomas when the latter addressed him, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:29); the approving reply of Jesus, (peace be on him) "Blessed are you, Barjona," when the latter, Simon Peter, replied to the former, "You are Christ, the Son of the living God," (Matt. 16:16-17); and so on—all purport to show that Jesus Christ, the prophet of God (peace be on him) had claimed for himself oneness with the Almighty One God, quite contrary to the uncompromising concept of the "Only One Jealous God," contravention of which, as per the Covenant and often repeated in the Torah, the children of Israel have been warned to guard against always, as contained in Deut. 5:9 of the Old Testament, which is part of the Christian Bible too. Thus, what in fact was Jesus (peace be on him)—whether a man, or the son of God, a prophet of God, or even God himself—cannot be inferred conclusively from the four Gospels, causing utter confusion in the mind of readers.

Further, study in Mark 10:11-12; "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery," and Mark 7:18-19; "Thus he declared all foods clean" (including dead meat, blood, pork, et cetera, forbidden by Mosaic law as being unclean). This is certainly not in conformity with what Jesus himself (peace be on him) preached: "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them" (Matt. 5:31-32). Even on the subject of divorce, there is difference in reporting between Matthew and Mark, while in Matt. 6:31-32, Jesus (peace be on him) is reported to have said, "But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress, whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery," the exception "except on the ground of unchastity" is missing from Mark 10:11-12. Thus, with so much contradictions, it becomes difficult to agree to the claim that the four versions of the Gospel found in the Bible are the true revelations of God as preached by Jesus (peace be on him), who was a prophet of God indeed.

From the style of reporting of the four Gospels in general as well as from the opening verses of the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles of the New Testament it seems that at least these

two and possibly the whole of the Gospels were written by one and the same author who was with Paul and his followers, perhaps one Theophilus. This must have happened not earlier than 62 C.E. and possibly much later, because Paul's sailing to Rome along with the author to appeal to Caesar directly regarding Paul's conviction to Jerusalem, as reported in it, was about that year and the various letters which Paul, Peter, Jude and James had written to Jews and gentiles as found in the last part of the New Testament could not have been written until years after the event. Thus a conservative estimate of the time of writing of the New Testament could be after 70 C.E. or even much later. From the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans it is also found that it was written by one Tertius, who with Paul and the whole church had been then the guests of one Gaius. There is no clue in the New Testament to estimate when these were written, except that the so-called Muratorian fragment, published by Ludovico Muratori in Latin, shows the names of the books that were read in the Church of Rome of about 200 C.E.. It is said that Mark, who compiled the Gospel, was a disciple of Saint Peter, and Luke a disciple of Saint Paul. There is a misunderstanding that the other compilers, Matthew and John, were of the twelve disciples of Jesus (peace be on him). It carries no authenticity because Matthew's version of Gospel has referred to the real disciple Matthew of Jesus (peace be on him) and the version of John refers only to a disciples Simon, son of John. Separately, Mark is reported to have written his version of the Gospels in Latin about 65-70 C.E., Luke, his version in about 80-90 C.E., Matthew about 80-100 C.E., and John, his version about 100-140 C.E..

It is known that many more versions of the Gospels did exist earlier, especially from what is said in the opening paragraph of the Gospel according to Luke addressed to Theophilus by the writer. That there was more than one version of the Gospel and other philosophies on faith, contradictory to each other and existing even during the early days of the evangelists, is proven by Paul's own letters to the Corinthians (Cor. I 1:10-17; 4:15-17; and 7:17-18) as well as his letter to the Galatians (1:6-13), in which are found strong and emphatic phrases such as, "Be imitators of me," "To remind you of my ways in Christ," "This is my rule in all the churches," "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel . . . the gospel which was preached by me," and so on. This is quite expected from the fact that Paul's elevation to the rank of a follower and then to that of an apostle was on the basis of a trance vision of Christ (peace be on him), after which he announced Christ in Damascus, as "He is the son of God." However, among his colleagues there were others who had not only moved with Jesus (peace

be on him) as one of his twelve disciples but were also made apostles by him personally for spreading his gospels which must have been different from the one received by Paul through the trance vision, which could not always be quite correct in relation to real happenings. In 200 C.E. thirty-four Bibles and one hundred thirteen epistles, all in Greek, were known to have been included in religious books of the time. However, as stated further on in this chapter, in the year 325 C.E., the Nicaean Council declared that all but the four versions of the gospels and those epistles now found in the New Testament were forgeries; the rest were ordered to be destroyed, including the Gospel of Barnabas.

No one may be at all sure whether the version of Gospel attributed to Barnabas is the true Gospel of Jesus (peace be on him) for the same reason as detailed above. However, to a person of unbiased mind, there are some salient points in it which may give it a higher status. It is a more logical and a continuous document touching on the circumstances that led to the conception of Jesus by the Virgin Mary, the birth of Jesus (peace be on him), his early days, his prophetic ministry, and his elevation in person to God. In unequivocal terms, while this document, which according to its author was the result of having been instructed by Jesus (peace be on him) in his capacity as one of the master's own twelve disciples, denies the divinity of Jesus (peace be on him) as well as his crucifixion, and also confirms that he was a miracle child conceived and born under the will of God (as in the case of Adam (peace be on him) who, of course, had no father or mother) that he was a prophet who was charged with guiding the erring children of Israel into the arena of Mosaic Law, modified in "fulfillment" in accordance with time but within the jurisdiction of the Law and prophets. In fact, when one reads this version of the Gospel, it gives the impression that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) is there preaching to the Jews that he had arrived to rekindle the faith in One God and adherence to the Commandments of God in letter and spirit which they had ignored many a time in their past long history, and therefore that they should become true believers through repentance because the Kingdom of God was at hand. But, unfortunate as it is, this version of Gospel is rejected by the churches.

Notwithstanding, it is quite strange that nowhere in the Gospels recognised by the Church is there any mention that the information contained therein is based on the consensus of the ten or eleven good disciples of Jesus (peace be on him) and certainly not the two earliest of them, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew. It is particularly so because the prophetic ministry of Jesus (peace be on him) was confined to a very short period of three years only. Again, considering that at least

ten out of his twelve disciples were true and, as reported in Matt. 6:20, Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:21 of the Gospels, when Jesus (peace be on him) himself had commanded his disciples "to tell no one about him (being the Christ)," it appears quite mysterious how any of his true disciples ever dared to disclose this secret information to anyone else against the firm directive of the master not to do so. It is also not understood how so many contradictory reports even on matters of faith and belief in God and Christ (peace be on him) could have crept into the four or five available accounts on Jesus (peace be on him) and his teachings within such a short period. It is also quite mysterious how the Gospel of Jesus, the prophet of God (peace be on him), which was the revelation from none other than God, did not get preserved at least in the memories of quite a few of his disciples who had been around him when the Gospel must have been revealed during his short prophetic period of three years, to be transcribed at least soon after his ascension verbatim in the first person. Instead the scribes among his followers prepared them nearly a century later as stories differing in accounts from person to person even on matters of faith. Thus, the authenticity of the Gospel reports available today appear to be logically and critically doubtful indeed.

Comparison Between the Old Laws of the Torah and the New Laws of the Gospels

The belief that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) had brought "New Laws" in place of the Old Laws of the Torah, as interpreted in the Gospels (Matt. 5:21-48; Mark 7:19-23; 10:11-12; and so on), appears to have been based on a serious misunderstanding. At best, the teachings of Jesus (peace be on him) may be considered as amplifications of some of the Old Laws but certainly not as any amendments. The Gospels go far deeper into the removal of the causes of committing sins for which the Torah had laid down punishments. They are finer amplifications of the Ten Commandments, relating how to avoid committing sins in thought, words, action or allowing even a cause to remain. The Gospels impress the need to love God and neighbor; to respect the parents; to do good deeds not for showing up to the world, but for God's sake; not to worship, fast and perform charities so that others should see them; not only to abstain from adultery, but not even to see or think of such an action and if necessary to remove the part of the body that may tempt one to commit such a sin; not to hoard wealth when one's brethren need it; to refrain from hypocrisy and finding fault with others rather than trying oneself to be faultless and so on. In fact, these are some of the Mosaic Laws concerning the shaping of moral

and spiritual values. Thus, the correct view is that the Gospels of Christ (peace be on him) have clarified the *modus operandus* of the common laws of the Old Testament. Instead, it was unfortunate that soon after the departure of Christ (peace be on him), his followers including the children of Israel as well as the gentiles, fell into deeper blasphemy, having gotten mixed up with the heathen, Roman, Greek and other faiths as well as philosophies. Leaving the strict montheism—the “Only One God” enjoined on the Children of Israel—they opted for the cult of the Trinity, whereby Jesus (peace be on him) is not only called the son of God but is treated as one with God, thus abolishing the Law and defying his most important Gospels: “Think not that I have come to abolish the law and prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them” (Matt. 5:17); “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one little of the law to fail” (Luke 16:17); “For it is written that thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shall you serve” (Matt. 4:10); and “Why callest thou me good? there is no good, save one, that is God” (Luke 18:19).

It is thus seen that the real mission of Christ (peace be on him) was to rekindle in the children of Israel the love of God as well as neighbors and strict adherence to the real commandments given by God to them through Moses (peace be on him) in letter and spirit, or in short, “to collect the lost sheep back into the herd as a shepherd,” in the capacity of yet another prophet and Messiah of Israelites in the chain of many earlier ones.

History of the Present Gospels

That the existing four Gospels of the New Testament were not the only ones existing even during the time of Luke is proven from the introduction of his Gospel (1:1–4) and that all that happened even during the short three-year period of the prophetic mission of Jesus (peace be on him) has not been recorded in the Gospel is seen from John 20:30. When one looks into this question deeper, it is found from Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* that 2048 bishops had assembled under the chairmanship of Emperor Constantine in the year 325 C.E. to decide theological matters and also to select those books from a vast collection of manuscripts which in their judgment constituted the authorized word of God. Every one of the bishops tried to see that his own predetermined concept prevailed. But Constantine used his imperial authority and disqualified 1730 bishops from having any voice in deciding the question. This step dampened the spirit of the remaining bishops whom the emperor chose not to disqualify, in consideration of their being in agreement with the preconceived ideas of the

sovereign, who was not then a Christian, however. This was called the Council of Nicaea. Again, in his book *Age of Reason*, Thomas Fain says on page 92 that the Councils of Nicaea and Laodicea were held about 350 C.E. and that the books that compose the New Testament were then voted for with "Yeas" and "Nays," and a great many books which were offered were rejected on the basis of a majority of "Nays." It is said that out of some fifty Gospels only those of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were selected and the rest were burned. The Emperor Constantine then decreed that the above decision be considered as sanctioned by the Divine Will, that the four Gospels should be believed implicitly as the words of God and that anyone found either possessing or concealing what was contained in any copy of the Gospels other than the authorised four versions shall be punished by death for preaching something other than the words of God. Thus, bowing down to the imperial authority, the bishops vowed to produce the first copy of the New Testament. Further, all Hebrew copies of the Gospels were also ordered to be destroyed. H. G. Wood says, "The material in the synoptic Gospels is not affected, for the most part, by the events of 79 C.E. It has taken shape in the experience of the first generation of Christians, before the fall of Jerusalem. The order in which the stories about Jesus are narrated in the Gospels is obviously, in large measure artificial and it varies from one Gospel to another" (H. G. Wood, 147, *Did Christ Really Live*). However, there is no doubt that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) was a fact and not a fiction.

It is probable that because the early Christians believed and expected the end of the world very soon, as seen from I Cor. 7:26-31, the Gospels appear as unmethodical, casual literature to serve for a very short stopgap period only and particularly so because of the prophecy, "For the time is at hand." It is pertinent to point out here that Clement of Rome (97 C.E.) and Polycarp (112 C.E.) quote sayings of Jesus (peace be on him) in a form different from those found in the existing Canonical Gospels. In his seventh epistle, Polycarp inveighs much against "men who pervert the saying of the Lord to their own lusts," which looks to be referring to tradition earlier than the Gospels.

Gospel of Barnabas

Reference has already been made earlier to the Gospel of Barnabas. It is of interest to know what it is and where it is. It is said that this version of Gospel was in acceptance as canonical in the churches of Alexandria prior to the decision of the Nicæan Council of 325 C.E. It

is also stated that Iranaeus (130–200 C.E.) was a supporter of pure monotheism and opposed to Paul for injecting documents of pagan Roman religion as well as Platonic philosophy and had quoted extensively from the Gospel of Barnabas in support of his views. This shows that the Gospel of Barnabas was in circulation during the first and second centuries C.E. However, as was said earlier, the Nicaean Council having decided to destroy all Gospels and original Hebrew scripts other than the four authorised ones, an edict was issued that anyone in possession of any other version of the Gospels should be put to death. Notwithstanding, a copy of the Gospel of Barnabas was secured in 383 C.E. by the Pope who preserved it in his private library. During the year 478 C.E., during the reign of Emperor Zeno, the remains of Saint Barnabas were discovered and a copy of the Gospel in own hand was found on his breast, as recorded in *Acta Sanctorum Boland Junii Tom II* (Antwerp, 1698). The famous Vulgate Bible appeared to have been based on this Gospel. Subsequently, Fra Marino, a friend of Pope Sixtus (1585–1590) found the copy of the Gospel of Barnabas in the private library of the pope. Marino naturally got interested in it as he had read the writings of Iranaeus in which Barnabas had been profusely quoted. This Italian manuscript passed through different hands until it reached “a person of great name and authority” in Amsterdam who, in his lifetime, had been often heard putting a high price to this piece of historical importance. After the death of this “person of great name and authority,” who wanted to remain anonymous for obvious reasons as far as this Gospel was concerned, it came into the possession of J. E. Cramer, a councillor of the King of Prussia, in the year 1713. Cramer presented this manuscript to the famous connoisseur of books, Prince Eugene of Savoy. In 1738, along with the library of the prince it found its way into the Hofbibliothek in Vienna, where it now rests. This Latin text was translated into English by Mr. and Mrs. Rogg, printed at the Clarendon Press in Oxford and published by the Oxford University Press in the year 1907. However, this English translation mysteriously disappeared from the market. Two solitary copies of this translation, however, are known to exist, one in the British Museum and the other in the Library of Congress, Washington.

In his *Miscellaneous Works* (published posthumously in 1747) Toland mentions that the Gospel of Barnabas was still extant, (pp. 380, Vol. D). In chapter fifteen he refers to the Glasian Decree of 496 C.E. where “Evangelium, Barnabe” is included in the list of forbidden books. Prior to that it had been also forbidden in 465 C.E. by Pope Innocent as well as by the Decree of Western Churches issued in 382 C.E. Barnabas is also mentioned in the stichomythia of Nicephorus, serial no.

long after his ascension. Further, the upbringing of the baby Jesus, his circumcision and baptism were all in accordance with the Hebrew laws and tradition. If, on the other hand, circumcision was not considered as a cardinal act of faith for his followers, then God would surely have revealed this fact to his mother, the Virgin Mary, not to circumcise him, for many revelations of importance are reported to have been made by God to her and Joseph prior to and after the birth of Jesus. The Gospels also proclaim Jesus (peace be on him) to have impressed on all his listeners (who were mainly Jews) the need for repenting, obviously because they had lived in sin against the laws of the Torah and the Covenant with God. Further, the four versions of the Gospel as well as the Gospel of Barnabas bear out the facts that the followers of Christ strictly followed the old Jewish laws and that they even followed the Sabbath on Saturdays as the Jews did (Matt. 28:1, Mark 16:1-2, Luke 23:56, 24:1) and not on Sundays as it became the practice later on. Again, another convincing proof demonstrating the fact that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) was yet another prophet of God to the children of Israel is the testimony found in the Acts 1:6-7 of the New Testament. At the time of the resurrection of Christ (peace be on him), when the disciples asked him, "Will you at this time restore the KINGDOM OF ISRAEL," his reply was, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has by His own authority," after which he is reported to have been lifted forever. What other concrete evidence is needed to establish the fact that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) was the last prophet of God sent to the children of Israel to reestablish the real laws of the Torah through the Gospels because the former had been polluted beyond recognition as the words of God?

For a number of years after the ascension of Jesus Christ, (peace be on him) the Jews, in collaboration with the heathens and particularly the Romans, continued to persecute his followers. His teachings focusing on the worship of the Only One God and following the laws of the Torah in letter and spirit were contrary to their own then existing practices of faith and action, the Jews having acquired many abominations of heathen sects due to fraternization and abetment as well as the laxities of a priestly order that sold the law for petty gains, preached what they did not practice and remained hypocrites as denounced by Jesus himself (peace be on him) in Matt. 23:1-39. Christ (peace be on him) was sent by God to clean up this mess with the Gospels. Between the first and fifth centuries C.E., Christianity became the state religion of Rome and thereafter it spread to the Mediterranean areas, North Africa, the Middle East and the West Coast of India through early evangelists. About three decades after Christ (peace be on him), one

of his staunch opponents in the person of Saul, an inhabitant of Tarsus and a Roman citizen, joined the ranks of the disciples of Jesus (peace be on him). To recapitulate, as stated earlier on the authority of the Acts of the New Testament, Saul's conversion was the result of a trance, during which he was supposed to have been instructed near Damascus by Jesus himself (peace be on him) to join the ranks of his apostles and spread his message. Since this incident, Saul became Paul and later Saint Paul, and started his evangelical mission, deifying Jesus (peace be on him) and calling him "Son of God." Until then, the teachings of Jesus (peace be on him) and his disciples were centered on the Ten Commandments of the Mosaic Law, enjoining the Jews to repent and go back to the practice of the law in letter and spirit.

It is also clear from Acts 4:20, that after the ascension of Jesus, (peace be on him), his early disciples like Peter, Stephen and John used to project him as the "holy servant of God," through whom the Kingdom of God could be attained by means of repentance, love and prayer. However, after the conversion of Saul the concept started changing from the "holy servant of God" to "Son of God" and even "God himself," and the message of Jesus (peace be on him) was extended to apply to believing gentiles too. As a result, the believers and gentiles who were listening to the preachings were "filled with the Holy Spirit," which, due to their over-enthusiasm was interpreted to mean that Jesus (peace be on him) their master wanted them to preach among gentiles and heathens too (Acts chapters 10 and 11). Subsequently, it is seen that the institution of The Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit with Jesus Christ (peace be on him), acting as and on behalf of God himself and directing all Godly acts, also developed as the guiding doctrine of Christianity. Sooner or later, it is seen also that there appeared to have developed a split between the group headed by Paul and Silas on the one hand and the group lead by Barnabas and Mark on the other and they parted their ways, probably on account of the dispute over circumcision, deification of Christ and throwing open the ranks to gentiles (Acts 15:2, 28, 29, and 36-40).

That Paul was not happy with other disciples and followers following Gospels different from his own version is clear from his letter to the Galatians (1:6-17; 2:1,14; 5:1,2,10,11,12; and 6:12-15). However, with the advent of Paul in the arena, the message was extended to gentiles including the heathens and eating all food including what was forbidden by the Law. The theology of Paul was based on his personal experience through "a vision" as with others also and he appears to have interpreted it in the light of contemporary Roman and Greek thought. Perhaps he felt that the masses, on whom the Roman, Greek

and pagan ways of life had a great hold, and the intelligentsia, under the influence of Plato and Aristotle, could not be attracted to his theology without making mutual adjustments. The theories of Redemption and the Trinity, whereby Jesus (peace be on him) is deified as the son of God in the equation of God, Son and the Holy Spirit, were the children of Paul's brain, and were philosophies foreign to the real message of Jesus (peace be on him) and unknown to his personal disciples. Dynamic and extremist as he was, Paul, who had not known Jesus (peace be on him), appeared on the scene in preference to Jesus' (peace be on him) own disciples, who had been all along with the master during the short period of his ministry. Rome became the center of Christian activity instead of Jerusalem, where the main Jewish synagogue existed. Rather than being a renaissance movement within Judaism, from then onwards Christianity became a distinctly separate religion, with the followers of Christ (peace be on him) being called "Christians," a term never used by Jesus (peace be on him). Paul became, thereafter, more known to the Christians than even Christ himself (peace be on him). As said earlier, being an aggressive Roman citizen and a Jew from Tarsus, as well as an earlier persecutor and killer of the followers of Christ (peace be on him), on conversion Paul's extremism was channelled into a vigorous spreading of Christianity with the Roman empire as the center. Perhaps opportunism forced him to make adjustments with the polytheism of gentiles, Romans, Greeks, heathens in general and the corrupt Jews, so that deification of Jesus (peace be on him) on the concept of the Trinity became the canon of the Christian Church, founded for the first time under the aegis of Paul.

It has already been said that the conviction of Paul that Jesus (peace be on him) was the son of God was based upon his trance vision of Jesus (peace be on him), which he interpreted to be a message conveyed to him by the Holy Spirit. His deification of Jesus (peace be on him) gave an essential bridge for reconciliation between his own thoughts and the Hellenic as well as heathen customs of worship of demigods, which had been prevailing during the time in the Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Indian religious practices. Further, the universal brotherhood adopted as a cornerstone of Christianity by Paul and his followers when they opened the Christian ranks to Hebrews and gentiles alike in contrast to the law being confined to the rank and file of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel alone gave the Christian movement a good edge over Judaism and other religions then existing. So also, the social discrimination based on birth into a particular clan or caste as existed then in heathen and pagan societies of Africa and Asia made the new movement a welcome guest among many a downtrodden people in the communities where evangelists preached the Christian

message. To them the worship of the Trinity only, highlighted by Jesus (peace be on him), the son, was a lesser evil than the worship as well as the sacrificial offerings to several gods and goddesses for different purposes. Thus, the spread of the Christian faith caught great momentum in subsequent years.

The Crucifixion

The Christian faith is to a very large extent, based on the event of crucifixion. The New Testament is conclusive on the events of the crucifixion of Jesus (peace be on him) as well as his resurrection before his final disappearance. The Christian believes that it was by way of the fulfilment of the Scriptures and for the redemption of all who believe in Christ (peace be on him) that he was crucified. The atonement function which is administered by the priest at the time of death of a Christian is considered as an initiation into the sharing of the death of Jesus (peace be on him) by the devotee. In fact, the Christian belief is that Jesus (peace be on him) died on the cross to save his devotees and to blot out the "original sin" committed by Adam (peace be on him) and that sheer faith in Jesus as the son of God (peace be on him) acting as and on behalf of God through the holy bond of the Trinity alone would free them from all sins. However, on a close scrutiny of the New Testament it is found that it relates the reappearance of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) in flesh and blood in front of his disciples and followers soon after his supposed death by crucifixion. He himself asked them to feel by touch to be sure that he was really alive, proving conclusively that he was not crucified. It is reported in The Acts of the Apostles that not only did Jesus (peace be on him) appear alive to the disciples, but also appeared to teach them for a full forty days, speaking of the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3,4) and that they even conversed with him. Peter as well as Paul have also testified of this fact in Acts 2:32 and 23, 24, respectively, although Paul had not seen Jesus (peace be on him) in person either before or after the incident on the cross.

The questions of crucifixion and the subsequent resurrection of Christ (peace be on him) are the cornerstones of Christian faith and belief. Nevertheless, logic and history have much more to reveal than this blind faith. Firstly, to witness the alleged crucifixion of Christ (peace be on him), none of his disciples is reported to have been present. While Judas Iscariot turned a traitor, Peter denied even knowing Christ (peace be on him), thrice "invoking curse on himself and swearing" (Mark 14:66-71), and the rest all disappeared from the vicinity to save

themselves. As stated in Mark 15:40,41 and Matt. 28:55,56, only some women including his mother, Mary, were, perhaps, witnessing the act and that too from a far distant spot from where it would have been difficult to recognise without any doubt who in fact was the person that was being crucified on the pole. In contrast to the reportings in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark on the incident, Luke's Gospel states (Luke 23:49) that "all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him (Jesus) from Galilee stood at a distance" and saw him dying. John's Gospel (John 19:25,27) states that "Mary his mother, his mother's sister, two other Marys and a disciple whom he loved saw Jesus dying by their side," on the cross. It is also stated that no male ever approached the spot, lacking courage even to collect the dead body until the evening, except one Joseph, a respected member of the council (Mark 15:43), who arranged for the burial of Jesus (peace be on him) in secret in a tomb in the rock, the spot being known only to him, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus (Mark 15:46,47).

On the theme of the so-called resurrection of Jesus (peace be on him) from the grave, two contradictory reports are found in the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, Mark and John. While Matthew's report states that on the Sunday morning when Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Jesus, went to the tomb where Jesus (peace be on him) was supposed to have been buried a couple of days earlier, they found it empty and that an angel in glory told them that Jesus (peace be on him) had resurrected from the grave to reappear in Galilee; Jesus (peace be on him) reappeared to them on their way back and as instructed by him, they reported this matter to the disciples of Jesus (peace be on him) (Matt. 28:1-10). Luke reports that two men (and not one angel in glory) found at the grave told a number of women who had gone to anoint the body on the first day of the week, that Jesus (peace be on him) had risen from the grave and that it was they who in turn told the eleven apostles and the rest who did not believe them (Luke 24:4-11). Mark's version says that the day after the Sabbath, when the women and the Marys went to the tomb to anoint Jesus (peace be on him), they saw a "young man" sitting by the grave who told them of the resurrection of Jesus (peace be on him) to appear in Galilee and that although he had instructed them to inform Peter and the other disciples, they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid (Mark 16:5-8). However, John's version of the incident is entirely different. He says that when Mary Magdalene had first gone to the tomb on the still dark morning of the day after the Sabbath, she saw the stone had been taken away from the tomb and then she informed Peter and "the other disciple whom Jesus loved," who ran out to the tomb. They saw that the shroud had been rolled up and Jesus (peace be on him) was not in it and they went

back to their homes as they did not know the scripture that "Jesus must rise from the dead." However, Mary, the mother, while standing weeping outside the tomb, saw two angels in white sitting where the body of Jesus (peace be on him) was lain, one at the head and one at the feet. Saying that "she was weeping because they had taken away her Lord . . . on turning round she saw Jesus (peace be on him) standing but did not know that it was Jesus." Jesus (peace be on him) said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him and I will take him away." Jesus (peace be on him) said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabboni" (Teacher), and as directed by him, she went and said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord." (John 20:1-18).

Further, what is reported in Matt. 27:46 and Mark 15:34,35, that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) died on the cross under pathetic and miserable circumstances, shouting in Hebrew, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is so touching that it is beyond the comprehension of man to believe: a chosen prophet of God, whom Christians believe was not only "His only son, but was acting as and on behalf of his Father, God," died on the cross miserably neglected by God at the hands of his enemies, some of whom spat at him. It's even harder to believe that a chosen prophet of God behaved in such an abject manner, remonstrating against an act and losing all hopes in the mercy of God rather than accepting the situation with reliance and utmost patience as the will of the Almighty and All-knowing God. However, it is interesting to note that while Luke reported it in his Gospel differently, that Jesus (peace be on him) died on the cross crying in a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:45), a plea that may be acceptable from a prophet of God—it is rather strange that John has not made any mention of this important incident at all in his version of the Gospel.

Thus it is a complex riddle that cannot be solved even by a computer. One angel found sitting at the tomb of Jesus (peace be on him) as per one report and two angels according to another; son and angels not recognizing and respecting his dear mother (from the strange expression, "woman," in John 20:15); the ardent mother not recognizing her son, Jesus, (peace be on him) and vice versa, only a couple of days after she had seen him last; Mary and the other women "not telling" of the incidents to others according to one version and "telling" of the incident to others according to other versions; the two contradictory versions of the same incident—a hopeless and dejected cry of Jesus (peace be on him) on the cross on the one hand and a hopeful and contented cry on the other—are all so unconvincing on two of the most

important aspects of Christian faith itself that while on the one hand they make doubtful the very authenticity of the four versions of the Gospel accepted by the Church as Scriptures and on the other they pose a number of questions on the very faith developed on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, (peace be on him) hitherto believed to be canonical.

Was the incident of the denial of Jesus (peace be on him) thrice under oath, by his trusted early disciple Peter because of the probability that the person caught for prosecution and crucifixion was not in fact Jesus Christ, the prophet of God, (peace be on him) but an imposter, who, because of his hypocrisy and wickedness was transformed by God to look almost like Jesus (peace be on him)? Did Judas have to identify Jesus (peace be on him) to the Jews by kissing his hands because the imposter, who perhaps having claimed the sonship of God and oneness with God to himself was to be put to death according to the Jewish laws was not known to them (while Jesus should have been well-known to them because of his frequent preachings in the synagogues for over three years)? Were the "resurrection" of Jesus (peace be on him) a few days after his supposed crucifixion and his subsequent ascension really acts of God to convince the disciples and followers that he was not crucified but recalled to heaven as yet another miracle like his birth itself? These and many other similar questions (such as why the disciples or even Jesus Christ (peace be on him) did not touch on these important matters concerning faith during his reappearance among his disciples a couple of days after the crucifixion, when he is supposed to have preached, eaten among them and even invited them to feel for themselves by touching him to ensure that he was still living in flesh and blood during the forty days he had been with them before his final ascension) remain real mysteries to any man. Especially so because a prophet of God whose birth and whole life had been full of miracles (and Christians also believe that he was the only beloved son of God) is found to have been forsaken by God to die on the cross at the hands of his enemies, the blasphemous Jews, when he had been on God's mission and it is believed that he was raised up to heaven later. His ascension straight from the cross could have become yet another miracle to convince without any doubt to the Jews that he was the true prophet of God sent to them. Thus, the last days of Jesus Christ (peace be on him)—whether he was crucified by the Jews or was lifted up to heaven by God, or a traitor and imposter was crucified instead—as well as the questions whether he attributed sonship and oneness with God to himself and whether he preached a new law at all or only came as yet another prophet to the children of Israel, all remain conjectures accord-

ing to the four Gospels accepted by the Church. No doubt, according to the Gospel of Barnabas, all these questions are answered crystal clear: that Jesus (peace be on him) was another prophet to the children of Israel to revive God's laws as given to them through the Torah, imploring them "to repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand"; he was born under God's miraculous will; he grew up as well as preached his Gospels accompanied by God's miracles, never claiming either sonship or oneness with God; and most of all, he was not crucified but lifted up to heaven by God. However, as stated earlier in this chapter, this version of Gospel is not recognized by the Christian church. If it had been, the entire course of history of mankind after Jesus Christ (peace be on him) would have been quite different from what it is today!

The Christian Faith and Worship

As discussed in the earlier pages, the Gospels do not prove conclusively that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) ever preached any new religion. In fact, his mission during his three year prophetic period was aimed at convincing the Jews that they had gone astray much from the true path of God due to the hypocrisy of the pharisees and scribes among them and that therefore they should go back to the folds of the true laws through repentance, mutual love, justice and most of all by following the law in letter and spirit as preached by his Gospels revealed by God, which among others are highlighted in the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7. No one can have any doubt that these had been the essence of the Law in the Commandments of the Old Testament records considered as the Five Books of Moses (peace be on him) and that those were amplified by the Gospel highlighting how committing of sins may be totally avoided by restraining ones thoughts, senses and actions in advance. Further, the New Testament records say that he used to pray in private and instruct his disciples "to pray by going into thine own room, shutting the doors and praying the father who is in secret" (Matt. 6:6-13), and that whenever he used to preach before the Jews and his disciples, he always used to worship secretly, and alone. Is it appealing to sense and reason therefore to even imagine that this prophet of the One God could have ever committed the major sin of attribution of sonship of God to himself or oneness with God to himself or could have given himself any share in the exercise of the absolute power of God, which are acts punishable by death according to the Torah?

That until a few decades after the ascension of Christ (peace be

on him), his followers had no separate place of worship and any separate identity of their own is proven from the fact that it was after the fellowship was thrown open to gentiles, mainly Greeks and heathens in Antioch, and after Barnabas had brought Paul also to Antioch that the followers of Christ (peace be on him) had been called as "Christians" for the first time (Acts 11:26). However, even after this epoch-making event about the fifth decade C.E., as well as during their earlier first missionary journey, Paul, John and Barnabas "proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews in Cyprus" (Acts 13:5). In Antioch of Pisidia too the same was the case (Acts 13:16-44). However, it was because the Jews reviled and contradicted Paul that they had to turn to the gentiles as the last resort under great opposition (Acts 13:45-50) from evangelists who had come from Judea to Antioch and therefore Paul and Barnabas had to go to seek the decision of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem on the matter (Acts 15:1-5). It is seen that the dissension that developed was on the questions of throwing the movement open to the gentiles who were not circumcised, whereas the Jews were, and the eating of foods that were forbidden in the Mosaic law as being unclean. Then it was the Council of Jerusalem under the advice of James that decided to exempt the gentiles from the act of circumcision and to permit them to eat anything except what was sacrificed to idols, blood and what was strangled, and to refrain from unchastity (Acts 15:6-29). It seems that on these very issues, and possibly more too, Barnabas and Mark had to part their ways with Paul and Silas after "there arose a sharp contention" (Acts 15:36-40). After this incident, strange enough, the New Testament does not state any reconciliation between the two groups and Barnabas and Mark also do not get even mentioned thereafter. In any case, it is clear from the above that at the beginning of the sixth decade C.E., the Christian Church, which was formed only during the last few years, had already started dividing up doctrinally into groups as the result of deviation from the path shown by Jesus Christ (peace be on him) as to how and among whom the spread of the word of God was to be directed. In conclusion therefore, it is clear that Jesus (peace be on him) and his early apostles and disciples had neither shown nor directed any way of life, devotion and worship different from the ways of the real Torah nor a separate place of preaching other than synagogues of Jews. Thus, even as per the New Testament, essentially it was only the question of repentance and mending the wrong ways in accordance with the Mosaic law in letter and spirit that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) preached during his short prophetic period aimed at the children of Israel, alone.

As seen from the foregoing paragraphs, it was because of the fact

that the fellowship of the disciples of Christ (peace be on him), which originally was confined to Jews only, was thrown open to gentiles after exempting them from circumcision that a separate church including place of worship exclusive for the Christians had to be established, first in Antioch. Since then, on the basis of the Pauline deification of Christ (peace be on him) in the holy alliance of the Trinity, whereby Jesus Christ (peace be on him) acts as and on behalf of God though the concept of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in granting unconditional pardon of sins to his disciples, took firm ground as the linchpin of the Christian faith and worship through an initiation ceremony called Baptism.

It may be important in this connection to mention that during the fourth century C.E., a dispute also existed between the Antioch and Alexandrian schools of churches on the questions of "inspiration" and "incarnation" in respect of the "divine presence through the Holy Spirit" in churches. Earlier, during the latter part of the first century itself, the followers of Christ (peace be on him) had split into two main camps, one believing in him as "the son of man with no divinity attached to him other than a miraculous prophet of God" and the other believing him to be "the Son of God," the last spearheaded by Paul. It is a matter of critical history how this split aggravated subsequently into a confrontation between them leading to the success of the propagators of the schism whose faith and belief—"God is one in essence but three in the person of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit" and the "uniqueness of God in Jesus Christ"—had come to stay ever since for tens of centuries as the indisputable doctrine of the Church as contained in the "Declaration of Creed" to be confirmed by all devotees at the time of the baptismal initiation into the Christian church in total deviation from the acute monotheism of the covenant and laws of the Torah preached by many a prophet of the children of Israel from Moses down to Jesus Christ (peace be on them).

Notwithstanding the above, no one may ignore another fact of history that a group among the Christians called the Hypsistarians, who considered Jesus (peace be on him) as a prophet of God alone and refused to believe in the Trinity or the assignment of sonship of God and divinity to Jesus (peace be on him) also did exist up to about the fourth century C.E. They considered God not as "The Father," but as a mighty ruler of the world, being the highest with no one equal to Him. Prior to that, as the Gospel of Barnabas proves, he and Mark along with their followers also did not believe either in the divinity of Christ or that he was the son of God. In his Gospel, Barnabas even reports that Jesus (peace be on him) admonished anyone who attributed

divinity to him and that he used to impress on all that he was nothing but a messenger of God like his predecessors Moses, Abraham and others (peace be on them).

It is also found that in later years Paul of Samosata who was the bishop of Antioch, was of the view that Christ (peace be on him) was not God, but only a holy man and prophet and that God could not have become a man. Again, Lucian, the bishop of Antioch, well known for his sanctity as well as a reputed scholar who was martyred in 312 C.E., was strongly against the belief in the Trinity. He is said to have deleted all mention of the Trinity from the Church canons because this, according to him, was a later interpolation not found in the earlier Gospels. Further on, Arius, a disciple of Lucian (250–336 C.E.) and a Libyan by birth who had a large following, also believed that “howsoever much Christ may surpass other created beings, he himself was not of the same substance as God, but was a human being as any other.” In fact, he shook the very foundations of the Pauline Church. However, in 325 C.E., Emperor Constantine, being a supporter of Christianity without himself being actually a Christian, in the interest of carrying on with his own administration, having desired to unite the different factions and particularly the two contending strong factions of Christians, one under Arius and the other under bishop Alexander, called a conference of Christians of all opinions at Nicea. Confused, but wanting to have the cooperation of Christians, Constantine backed the larger section of them under Athanasius, who had succeeded Bishop Alexander as the head of the Pauline Church, and banished Arius from the realm. Thereafter the belief in the Trinity became the official Christian faith of the Roman Empire and was followed by the horrible massacre of Christians who did not believe in the concept. Also, the possession of any version of Bible not authorized by the Church became a penal offense in the Roman Empire. It is said that over 270 different versions of the Bible including the Hebrew versions were then burned. The Nicaean Council had decreed that the New Testament as it is found today was the only authorized version of the Christian Church. Nevertheless, the course of events changed when in 336 C.E., consequent on the emperor accepting the faith of his sister Constantina and Arius. Arius too was recalled but soon he was murdered. The emperor having known of the plot, banished Athanasius and his two other bishops from the empire and himself accepted Christianity of the Arius faith, whereby monotheism became the official Christian religion of the Roman Empire. On the death of Constantine in 337 C.E., the new emperor, Constantius, who had also accepted the faith of Arius, called a Christian conference at Antioch in 341 C.E. in which again monotheism was accepted as the correct Christian faith. This decision

was reconfirmed by another council held in 351 C.E. at Sermium. St. Jerome, however, wrote of this in 359 C.E. that "the whole world groaned and marvelled to find itself Arian."

The mutual killings of Christians still fresh in his memory, Pope Honorius wanted in the early seventh century to find a solution to the cause of dissension and he tried to support the doctrine of "one mind" because he believed that if God had three independent minds the result would be chaos. Although this concept of one God was not challenged by any for a considerable time, in 680 C.E., in another Council of Churches held in Constantinople, Honorius was anathematized, a unique act in the history of the Papacy when a pope was denounced by a succeeding pope. Nevertheless, long after this incident, in 1547 C.E., L. F. M. Sozzini, a native of Siena (1525-1565 C.E.) who having come under the influence of Camillo, a Sicilian mystic, challenged Calvin on the doctrine of the Trinity, amplifying the doctrine of Arius and denying the divinity of Christ as well as repudiating the doctrine of original sin and atonement. According to him, the only object of adoration could be the one and only One God. He was followed by his nephew F. P. Sozzini (1539-1604), who published a book on the gospel of St. John denying the divinity of Jesus. With the assistance and collaboration of others like him, such as John Sigismund, the ruler of Transylvania, who was an antagonist of the Trinity doctrine, and Bishop Francis David (1510-1579 C.E.), also an anti-Trinitarian, Sozzini formed in 1578 C.E. a sect known as "Rocovian Catechism" after the city of Racow in Poland, which was a stronghold of the faith of Arius.

Today, there are a large number of men and women among Christians who believe in only One God, denying the divinity of Christ (peace be on him) as well as the doctrine of the Trinity. However, they are voiceless and helpless under the strong power of the Church. Even Athenasius, the champion of the trinity doctrine, is reported to have said that in spite of all his efforts to mediate in the divinity of Jesus (peace be on him), his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves, making him incapable of expressing his thoughts, which made him to pronounce, "There are not three, but One God." From his close association with many followers of Christianity, the author of this book has found that due to similar contradictions between the faith propagated by the Church and the inherent reasoning present in the individual, particularly in the educated generation of today, many an enlightened modern man does not bother much about what the ecclesiastics of the church pressure him to believe, although he himself was born, named, baptized, brought up and would even call himself a Christian.

By the fifth century C.E., Christianity had finally surfaced as the state religion of the Roman Empire, from where it spread to the Mediterranean areas of North Africa, the Middle East and the West Coast of India through evangelists. Only Catholicism was existent then. Monotheists among the followers of Christ had to conceal their faith due to the fear of possible persecution after the Nicaean Council and the decree of Constantine. The Pauline philosophy of deification of Christ (peace be on him) through the cult of the Trinity made Christianity acceptable to heathen, Hellenic, Roman, pagan and Hindu polytheistic cults because the Christian faith in the Trinity was a lesser evil than adoration and prayers to multifarious gods, goddesses and deities. Further, the universal brotherhood that was not only advocated but also practiced among Christians irrespective of the social standing of an individual gave a big edge to the new movement over the cults then prevalent among the people in the Middle East, Africa, India, and the Far East. During the next ten centuries it spread to Europe in general. Notwithstanding, since the seventh century C.E. when Islam appeared in Arabia and it started appealing more to the people of North Africa and Asia in general and particularly to those in the Indian subcontinent, Christianity was obliged to give way by and large to the newer way of life. Nevertheless, consequent on the European conquests of Africa and Asia and subjugation of their peoples by the conquering Christian powers, notably the Dutch, the Portuguese, the French, the Germans and the British, Christianity spread farther, not only to the pagan areas of Africa but also to the eastern colonies of the conquerors under the royal patronage.

Prior to the second century C.E., the early Christian evangelical activity was confined to and aimed at the spreading of the message and teachings of Jesus Christ, (peace be on him) as he did during his short three years or so of his prophethood, without any specific dogmas other than those of repenting and going back to the Mosaic law in letter and spirit. Even after the movement was thrown open to the uncircumcised gentiles and the heathens as the result of "the Holy Spirit" getting filled into everyone present, including the gentiles, in the preaching gatherings of apostles John, Peter, Stephen and others as a major deviation from the ways of Jesus Christ, (peace be on him) the evangelical mission of the apostles was continued, even during the time of Paul, maintaining "Unity of Spirit" only without any dogmas, forms of worship and so on any different from the ways of the Mosaic law as is evident from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians; "The bond of peace. . . just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your

call, One Lord, One faith, One baptism, One God and father of all, and through all and in all." It is crystal clear from The Acts of Apostles of the New Testament that during their early days all the apostles and even Paul had to fight the allegation of Jews that it was for abolishing the law and the prophets that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) had come. Instead they had time and again to restate to the Jews that the mission of Jesus (peace be on him) and themselves was to reestablish the true law of the Jews in letter and spirit through repentance and joining the real Kingdom of God at hand, although during Paul's time the schism of "Deification of Christ through the doctrine of Trinity" had in fact started. However, "The Essence of Christianity," which developed in later years, does not appear in the New Testament, which was addressed to "the lost sheep" among the pharisees and scribes of the Jews; to collect whom back to the fold of the herd had the Shepherd Jesus (peace be on him) come with the clarion call, "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand," and "Think not I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them." It was in the first century C.E., during the time of Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, that the Christian ways, quite distinct from the ways of Jews, was evolved, although neither Christ (peace be on him) nor his disciples and apostles are known to have adopted this form. The dying man is baptized into the death of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) and is set free by the clergy from operation of the laws of sin and death, as a matter of ardent faith. The Christian faith was soon evolved into "the faith in God getting absorbed into a peculiar monotheism whereby the figure of the son, Jesus Christ, (peace be on him) overshadowed the figure of God, the father, and thus caused the latter to disappear, the Creator and Sustainer God receding behind the glorier figure of the redeemer Christ, who, for all purposes, is believed to act on and behalf of the father God, at all times." Thus today, for a Christian, it is the cult dimensioned by the belief and faith in Jesus Christ (peace be on him) as the full representative of the living God in purpose and intent through the cult of the Trinity, which is the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit equation, radically opposite to the Mosaic law, and some glimpses into the very teachings of Jesus himself (peace be on him) on faith in the Only One God, as found in the New Testament itself.

The clergy denomination of almost all sects of Christians attributes not only the only fatherhood of Jesus (peace be on him) to God, but even goes to the extent of calling Jesus (peace be on him) an object of divine consideration and worship through the Trinity cult, which some Christian clergy and modern Hindu philosophers easily compare to the concept of the Hindu trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—a concept

that even the Pauline philosophy did not know. On a close study of even the canonical Gospels, one is convinced that Jesus (peace be on him) only clarified certain of the Mosaic laws by making his followers understand how in fact the letter and spirit of the law could be followed, as in the case of adultery, sin, divorce, real prayer, good works, meekness, mercy, purity of heart, anger, killing, pardon, piety, fasting, love and so on as found in the Gospel of Matthew under the "Sermon on the Mount." In the Gospels, one can find no new law at all other than a few clarifications of the Ten Commandments, basically, as taught by Jesus (peace be on him). The main emphasis made by Jesus (peace be on him) was, however, on faith in One God, the Kingdom of God, repentance, love of God, the love of neighbor and respect of parents.

Subsequently, however, propagators of the idea of "Public and Private Religion," which developed in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries C.E. following the Lutheran revolution, were responsible for giving new dimension to Christian values by defining "Essence of Christianity" and emphasising the importance of spiritual, religious and moral life before God in contrast to the earlier dogmatic definition of the theologians belonging to the legally valid churches until then. Nevertheless, the twentieth century dogma evolved on the basis of "the absoluteness of Christianity" of Earnest Belstch (1902) that the Conception of Salvation through "the uniqueness of God in Jesus Christ," in order to compete with some other old religions, was, in fact, responsible for considering Jesus Christ (peace be on him) an object of not only reverence but also of worship as a deity of God much in the same way as, say, in Hinduism. In recent years, some of the Christian exponents of the coexistence group, who are theologians in India, did even go as far as to compare Jesus Christ (peace be on him) to "the Vishnu incarnation Krishna" of Hindu mythology, to derive inference that they were both one and the same person, although such a contention appears historically ridiculous because Krishna was a historic figure who existed about 3000 years ago, which is a thousand years before Christ (peace be on him) lived. Nevertheless, the fact cannot be disguised that this attempt was to give credence to the view that like Krishna and other Avathars of Hindu scriptures, whom Hindus consider as incarnations of Vishnu of the Hindu Trinity, Jesus Christ (peace be on him) was the son of God of the Christian Trinity, a blasphemous belief which, according to the Mosaic law and Covenant, should be punished by death!

"Jesus Christ was the only son of the living God; he was crucified by the Romans on the insistence of Jews for the charge of claiming sonship of and Oneness with the Only One God, which was punishable,

according to the Covenant between the children of Israel and God, by death. Jesus died on the cross to save his followers from the original sin and pangs of death, and therefore, the belief and faith in that the Lord, the Creator and Judge who revealed Himself in Old Testament and lived among men as Jesus, the son and resurrected one, with the Holy Spirit relationship between the father and the son will relieve the believer in Christ from all sins and death pangs." It is with this faith that at the time of death the Christian priest administers the "Extreme Unction" (Sacramental healing) to all Christians with the utmost faith that "as one is baptised into the death of Jesus" (participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus), he is also "set free from the law of sin and death." What a faith radically different from what Jesus (peace be on him) revealed while alive!

Nevertheless, next to Communism, Christianity commands the largest following of people today, consisting of over 800 million belonging to the (Catholic) Church of Rome, 133 million to the Eastern Orthodox (Catholic) Church, 50 million to the Anglican Church, 42 million to the Lutheran Church, and over 250 million to other churches and sects such as Baptists, Coptics, Congregationalists, Evangelists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Presbyterians, other Protestants, Quakers and so on, irrespective of the fact whether all of them sincerely believe in the cult, and without many, in fact, really knowing what was the mission of Jesus Christ (peace be on him), what is the status of the Holy Bible, what difference is there really between absolute monotheism of the Law of the covenant and the concept of the Trinity and so on, except through what is interpreted and taught to them by the undisputed spokesmen of the Christian churches. No wonder, therefore, that a large number of the erstwhile adherents of the Christian faith have fallen prey to the Communist doctrine, really believing that Christianity is deficient as a complete code for the attainment of a welfare state and pragmatic in explaining the supremacy of God over all the creations.

Chapter 4

Communism

Introduction

A welfare state of plenty wherein peace, tranquility, freedom of thought and expression as well as universal brotherhood prevail and one that provides equal opportunity to all its citizens to earn as much income either in cash or in kind as to obtain all necessities and reasonable comforts of life such as food, shelter, dress, education, health care, recreation and, above all, old age care for self and family has remained the materialistic ideal of people of all ages. However, for the simple reason that, having been endowed with the inherent instincts common to the world of animals as a basic function of behavior in the specification of creation, the human being too becomes inclined towards the exercise of acute selfishness, which in extreme cases prompts him to be not only unjust but also to have recourse to exploitation or even murder to deprive his fellow beings of their due shares. Such an ideal welfare state therefore, has mostly remained above the reach of a significantly large cross section of the human population so far. That oppression and exploitation cannot be curbed through sheer force alone has been a fact known to all ages. Cultivation of love on the basis of universal brotherhood and the inculcation of spiritual consciousness in the mind of the human being alone can tone down his animal instincts. The history of mankind has shown that the Creator of the universe, in fitness of things and in His extreme love to the "finest of all His creations," the human being, has never failed in His duty of guiding the human beings at any age. This service was bestowed on the human beings by God in the form of divine guidance through reformers and prophets who, through God's inspiration, have provided guidelines of human conduct from God himself. The various reformers and prophets sent from the time of the first man to a time when man had evolved into his final complete self can thus be taken as a step by step guidance system based on the divine Will. Such a service cannot be ideally performed by none other than the planner, designer, and sustainer of everything in the universe.

Unless one thinks deeply to find out what is the purpose of the life of man in this world by looking around him, shedding off his own ego and purely material approach to life, this secret cannot be discovered. When one concentrates on a thought-provoking study of how many billions of different creations, tiny as well as huge, work in unison within and without in perfect harmony complementing each other to make the glorious universe a whole cannot but convince man of the greatness of the Creator and puniness of himself. Even if they had come as random events, there must be a cause, how, purpose and, most of all, a super architect responsible for them, to have them created and to keep them in harmony and order. This fact would be evident to those who ponder with their unbiased consciences logically and systematically and then glorious fresh new vistas of spiritual awakening should also dawn on them. For a balanced growth of the human being his physical as well as spiritual faculties must work together. Any system that ignores one or the other may only be incomplete. It does not really matter if the God of the believers is renamed as "the nature" of the unbelievers because the essence is the same. Everything in this universe is subject to the full administrative control of the only One Creator and the Laws of this creator are God's laws or the "natural" laws. But even the natural laws need to be controlled and put to proper use by man for deriving benefits as well as for destruction, as in the case of the use of a knife, which can cut a vegetable, meat or fruit as well as harm a person. It is the cultivation of safe use and prevention of the unsafe or destructive use that are essentially contained in the guidance provided by God through divine revelation to the prophets in an evolutionary process. Thus, the divine laws tend to regulate the animal instinct in man within certain approved norms so that the human society as a whole flourishes during the earthly life to continue its course on to the future life after death.

At the time when the Marxist and Communist ideas of society and state were manufactured during the nineteenth century and put into operation by the Russian Soviets in 1917, there were more than one prime religion of national as well as international acceptance flourishing in the world, the followers of each declaring unequivocally that theirs was the best panacea for attaining not only the ultimate welfare state of peace, prosperity, plenty and contentment, but also the ultimate spiritual salvation. Further, at least one of these religions, Christianity, was then the guiding religion for a vast population of the world and almost the only religion, either through birth or bringing up or both, of the architects as well as the bulk of the leadership of the Marxist and Bolshevik Communist state of Soviet Russia. It is worth-

while to recapitulate that Christianity is the religion identified by the followers of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) the great prophet of God, whose mission was "not to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them," by showing the way to the children of Israel how to eliminate even the causes leading to commission of various crimes for which punishments had been provided in the original law of the Torah. St. Paul had extended these teachings after Christ (peace be on him) to the non-Israelite too on the same basis by propagating "the Christian spirit and Christian values," in the world and, particularly, in Europe. Not this alone: during this time, although not known to the large majority of the masses of the people of Europe and, as it appears, even to the leadership of Marxism, socialism and Communism, elsewhere there was also the religion of Islam (the religion of peace). A sister religion 700 years younger than Christianity, with a wide following second only to Christianity, Islam contained internationally adoptable complete codes aimed not only at the emancipation of the human being singly, collectively, regionally and internationally on the basis of a materialistically, spiritually and logically balanced dissertation, but also the actual realisation of the ideal of the one-world welfare state on earth on the basis of an already tried formula that otherwise had been only a purely theoretical utopia of the architects of socialism; Marxism and Communism. Not knowing in depth and having kept away from the influence of any religion altogether, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels evolved their own Marxist theory of the Communist Welfare State and a socialism based on class hatred, revolution and class confrontation. Lenin used all his powers to bring into operation his brand of Bolshevik Communism in Soviet Russia. On a close study of the life history of the architects of the Communist ideology and the living conditions of European people of the age, no one can dispute that due to the inability of most of the leaders of Marxism and Communism, particularly Karl Marx, to escape poverty despite high education on the one hand and their utter ignorance of their own religious values (Karl Marx himself had the heritage of two of them) and those of other contemporary religions they had to manufacture an entirely new idea of their own. As shown later, the new ideology was concocted not for the emancipation of the workers and the peasants (proletariats), but to satisfy the egoistic desire of the first leadership to exploit and to derive benefit from presiding over a machine which could perpetually create hatred between the proletariats and the bourgeois—the employers, capitalists, and their henchmen—by creation of discontent between the two. It is evident to the student of the history of Communist ideology that in fact, the group led by the Menshevik leader L. Martov, which opposed Lenin, feared as early as 1903 that the "Bolshevik party dic-

tatorship proposed by Lenin may transform the party of workers into a party over them." This became one hundred percent true within hardly six years after the Bolshevik Communist Soviets were established in Russia because as even Lenin realized close to his death, Stalin had accumulated so much personal power over the party that it had become well-nigh impossible to curb the tendency. Today the myth has in fact exploded, as seen in Poland, where the workers of that independent Communist bloc country are being ruthlessly suppressed from voicing their grievances against the totalitarian Communist military regime that has been installed there by the force of arms of the Russian Presidium of the Soviets! It was shortsightedness, ignorance and a disregard of spiritual consciousness and a refusal to learn from other current religious philosophies that made Lenin bulldoze his utopian theory of Bolshevik Communism into operation in Russia in 1917, hoping to transform that country into a welfare state. What in fact has since been achieved over a period of more than six decades after that epoch-making event is evident to all. The field trial of Bolshevik Communism in Russia followed by its extension to Eastern Europe under a strict totalitarian dictatorship and the strict guidance of dedicated specialist teams of ideologists, planners, militarists, scientists, economists, administrators and secret service men all working under regimented unison for sixty-five years with the full support of the armed forces but without any regard to the spiritual values has today brought Russia under a spell of continuing food grain shortage, which for the current year may be of the order of many million tons, not to speak of other sectors of production. The only remarkable thing that it has so far been able to achieve is in the field of stockpiling destructive weapons aimed at total destruction of civilizations, the welfare state idea of Marxism, Communism and Socialism still being beyond a distant horizon.

Nevertheless, today seeing the failure of the sixty-five-year-old colossal Russian and East European effort by 400 million for creation of the people's confrontation-free welfare state and society visualized by the euphoric Marxist-Communist doctrine, one cannot but declare that prior to the evolution of the doctrine 150 years ago by Karl Marx and Fredrich Engles by "misreading the human history" and at least prior to the implementation of the Bolshevik Communism in the U.S.S.R. by Lenin and his associates sixty-five years ago, bulldozing the traces of any capitalism and religion altogether, had they cared to study in depth the philosophies of the various religions that existed during their times in general, and Islam in particular, to examine if there existed really any philosophy and way of life that while gratefully acknowledging the existence of the kind and magnanimous God Al-

mighty, the Planner, Creator and maintainer of the universe and man and containing the dissertation for evolution of a classless confrontation-free welfare state not only in a country or region but for humanity as a whole for all time, and much superior to the Marxist-Communist concept, they must have surely succeeded in establishing a truly prosperous and model one, based not on confrontation, but on love and peace, within a decade or so. Instead, they opted to evolve their own euphoric concepts; under the influence of human history they claimed that past history has been a continuous confrontation between men of different classes of society for existence and that religion was a handicap for emancipation of a model welfare society!

Marxism, Communism and Socialism

The Communist society is supposed to become established in the later stages of the socialist community when goods become so abundant that they are distributed on the basis of need rather than endeavor. The French writers Francois Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837), Comte Henri de Saint-Simon (1760-1825), the English writer Robert Owen and the others were in fact the originators of the Western socialist thoughts that were modified by the nineteenth century socialist utopians to propagate the philosophy of socialism as a practical possibility. Simon thought that by eradication of the sources of public disorder the corrosive element in the institution of state may be gotten rid of and that, with this end in view, the contemporary dawn of industrialization should inaugurate the rule of experts. He argued that although all men were not born with the same endowments of instinct, nevertheless, by providing equal opportunity to all to rise to high positions by the dint of their merits, the best could be achieved commensurate with individual talents and thus the best advantage of the industrial revolution could be derived by the participation of scientific and technological know-how in the industries.

The synthesis of Fourier was that the rule over the people should be replaced by the "administration of things." His followers stretched this idea to state that private ownership of property was incompatible with the new industrial system and that hereditary ownership is not conducive to national ordering of the society. They even started a Saint-Simonian Church to strengthen and conceal their claim that bourgeois or capitalist property was not sacrosanct. Fourier himself, having been a failure as a salesman confronted with acute competition, was an

intelligent but dejected person. Naturally, he had developed an anti-capitalist vision and was a person of wide-ranging imagination. He even contemplated that in the near future social as well as sociological transformation could take place whereby "the ocean may become lemonade and wild animals may become anti-lions and anti-tigers to serve the human beings!" On this curious basic assumption he started planning his utopia of socialistic society. Communes, to serve as the "germ cells" of the future model societies, would be formed in which, rather than being forced to perform unsuitable jobs, people would work in rhythm with their inclinations and temperaments to do any job they liked for days and months, even changing the jobs frequently during the course of the same day, a novel concept in which man's self was not controlled by external forces of direction and regulation but action was dictated by love and passion, binding the society harmoniously without coercion.

Robert Owen (1771-1858), a textile factory owner in Scotland known for his goodness to his workers, was an educational and factory reformer who had turned to trade unionism after having developed a dislike for his other fellow capitalists due to their harshness to their workers. He thought that the benefits of industrialization could be better achieved by augmenting industry and agriculture through cooperative movements to better living standards as well as to improve health of mind and physique through the setting up of collective recreational facilities in each settlement. Although a few community settlements set up in America as field trials of his theory all failed, his philosophy still remains the most important contribution to the socialist ideology of the west.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the socialist doctrine was enriched by the theory of voluntarism and the virtues of revolutionary actions and proposals of Louis Blanc for the establishment of national workshops with government capital managed by the workers and devoid of government control, the concurrence of Etienne Cabet with Fourier's views and the anarchist vision of Pierre Joseph Proudhon attacking private property. This was followed by the *Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx (1848) which contained his philosophy which he called "scientific socialism," a blending of German idealistic philosophy, British political economy and French socialism, thereby evolving a "practical socialism" as against the utopia of his predecessors, although every one of these socialistic ideals still remained purely theoretical in approach. Marx did not find history as a perpetually continuing struggle between the rich and the poor, but a confrontation for existence between different classes of men who shared a common position in the

productive process for realization of common interests. Thus he pictured history as a struggle between classes of society and envisaged a final equilibrium getting established between capitalist employers and workers to develop a society based on cooperative production without economic and social restrictions, ending the class war. The *Communist Manifesto* of Marx, however, did not leave any deep impressions on the nineteenth century European revolutions and, as with every socialist of the days of socialism, was a creed mostly of isolated exiles only. It is worth noting that Marx too lived as an exile along with his associate Friedrich Engel, cut off from the European labor movements.

The Marxist theory was the invention of Karl Marx and his associate Friedrich Engels. Influenced by the Marxist theory, the Communist theory was evolved in 1883 by G. V. Plekhanov and P. B. Axelrod, who founded the group for the emancipation of labor. Breaking away with the older Norodiniki, who had relied on a peasant revolution as the source of Russian emancipation, the group preached the doctrine that the main pivot of revolutionary success must be an organised working class and its later emphasis upon the class structure of society could make it regarded as the first Marxist organization of Russia. The theory was put into practice as a field trial with full force in Russia by Lenin.

It is of interest to get at the chronicles of the main personalities and events involved in the Marxist—Communist enterprise, having known what are Communism and Marxism.

Karl Marx

Karl Heinrich Marx, one of the seven children of Jewish parents, the father being a lawyer, was born in 1818 in Prussia, a part of Germany. Heinrich, the father, having converted to Christianity in 1817; the son Karl too was baptized as a Christian eight years later. During the high school period, the writings of Karl showed a sense of Christian devotion and his desire for self-sacrifice for humanity. At the Bonn university he matriculated; in 1835, in humanities, particularly Greek and Roman mythology and the history of art. At school he participated in student activities and was jailed for a day for being drunk and a ruffian. In 1836 he joined the University of Berlin to study law and philosophy. While in Berlin he got exposed to the idealist doctrines of Hegel and he later joined the Doctors Club of Bruno Bauer, a lecturer in theology who was evolving the idea that the Christian Gospels were human fantasies developed for the emotional needs of man rather than the chronicles of a historic Jesus (peace be on him).

The younger generation, influenced by Hegelian doctrines and the ideas of Bauer soon became inclined towards atheism and a sense of revolution through political action to change the existing corrupt society. Marx, however, succeeded in receiving his degree in 1841. In his thesis, Karl said that he considered Prometheus who had said, "In sooth all gods I hate," as the noblest of saints and martyrs known to philosophy.

From 1842, for a year, he edited a newspaper but, on its being suspended by the government, he went to Paris to study French Communism. In Paris, having associated with the Communistic societies of French and German workingmen, Marx became more involved in raising the call for an "uprising of the proletariat," with his assertion that "religion is the opium of the people." After being expelled from France under pressure from the Prussian government, Marx left for Brussels, renouncing his Prussian nationality. There he associated with Friedrich Engels, who had been initiated into the Communist ideology by the Jew Moses Hess, known as the "Communist Rabbi." In Brussels, the common materialistic views of Marx and Engels, fortified by those of Robert Owen from England, became crystallised. They insisted that the stage of bourgeois society could not be skipped over, that the proletariat could not just leap into Communism and that the worker's movement required a scientific basis and not moralistic phrases. The main books and treatises of this period are *The Holy Family*, published originally in 1845, and *The German Ideology*, written in 1845-1846. Marx even attacked the views of Pierre Joseph Proudhon, who desired to combine the best of competition and monopoly by accepting what is good in each of them while eschewing their bad aspects.

The *Communist Manifesto* (1848) was next. In 1847, Marx and Engels joined The League of the Just, a secret society composed of emigrant German workers and craftsmen established in London; its name was changed to The Communist League. The program of the League evolved by Marx and Engels enunciated that the past history of man had been a history of class struggles and that the victory of the proletariat must be the final struggle ending the class society for ever. It criticized all forms of socialism founded on cobwebs as alienation and rejected all kinds of "social utopias" based on small community experiments as "reactionary sects" nullifying the class struggle.

In 1848, on revolution breaking out in France, Italy and Austria, Marx crossed over to Paris, where he even opposed a project aimed at the invading of Germany in order to liberate it. When the revolution reached Austria and Germany, he returned to the Rhineland, where

he favored a coalition of the proletariat and democratic bourgeois and, concurring with Engels, shelved the Communist Manifesto, disbanding even the Communist League. However, following his confrontation with the government, he was banished in 1849 from Germany as an alien and subsequently, on being expelled also from Paris, he went to London, the same year joining the Communist League once again. It was in London, as the result of their continuous failure in the past to achieve cooperation and accommodation with the socialists and bourgeois, that Marx and Engels finally decided to evolve their own independent policy of not getting subjugated to others, to make the revolution permanent by avoiding subservience to the bourgeois parties, and to set up their own revolutionary worker governments side by side with any new bourgeois ones. They contended that the proletariats may have to undergo even fifty years of civil wars and national wars not only to change conditions but even to change themselves and become qualified for political power, rather than hoping to achieve power immediately.

From 1850 to 1864, practically having no employment, Marx had to undergo acute misery and poverty living barely on bread and potatoes only six years, and seeing not only the death of several of his children but even his eviction from his rented home. However, Engels remained a true friend to him for financial assistance. In his *Critique of Political Economy* of 1859 is found how Marx came to his materialistic conception of history. "The mode of production in material life determines the general character of social, political and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary their social existence is what determines their consciousness." This theory is 180 degrees out of phase with the concept of religion, Marx having equated the human being squarely with the animal world, giving no credit to his superiority because of his control of moral consciousness, which in turn is controlled by spiritual guidance.

Until 1864 Marx lived in London in political isolation but with the founding of the International Working Men's Association he joined the organisation. When the Franco-Prussian war broke out in 1870, Marx and Engels supported the war effort of Prussia, declaring that it was a war of German defense. On the defeat of the French, when the Paris insurrection broke out protesting the peace terms, both of them joined the side of the insurgents, stating that the German terms amounted to "aggrandizement" at the expense of the French people. Although the insurrection was crushed, Marx extolled the cause, saying, "History has no comparable example of such greatness. . . . Its

martyrs are enshrined for ever in the great heart of the working class." He and Engels considered it as the first example of the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

His *Das Kapital* (1867), which is the main publication always referred to by the working class (proletariat), details, among other things, the misery of the English working class, which he believed would increase to a point where the monopoly of the capital would almost choke production until "the knell of the capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."

He claimed that each phase of the development of production was associated with a corresponding class struggle, leading necessarily to the dictatorship of the proletariat and at last a classless society is evolved. This appears as nothing but an endless rope with no hope of attaining the ideal. With no specific concrete program synthesis (except for taking advantage of any situation becoming favorable to the proletariat) for establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat, Marx's ideology did not emphasize any useful idea for the systematic solution of even the problems of the working class. In this process he entirely forgot the basic natural theory of evolution that in spite of and along with the mountains, plains, the deep sea and the cosmos constituted by innumerable creations, animate and inanimate, the fittest will survive in accordance with the natural plan and through a will to exist, despite other creatures and natural forces being not in most occasions favorable. Further, no two things in nature appear equal in every respect and even if the entire wealth of the world is bestowed on a person, unless his consciousness develops a blissful outlook of contentment, he cannot really be happy or satisfied. It is not the question of the class that in fact matters, but the adjustment that may be brought about between the classes to mold a uniform brotherly society. Class by profession will always exist in a society but mental adjustment alone can get rid of social distinction between the high and low. Even according to the doctrine of Marx and Engels, the classless society can only emerge when the proletariat assumes the dictatorship on the conclusion of a perpetual struggle or even war against the bourgeois. But the "the taste of the pudding is in the eating of it," and we have now seen the actual field trial operation of the Communist theory in the Russian soviets, where for the last sixty-five years it is not the proletariat who is the dictator but someone else who has nothing to do with the working class.

Again, the so-called benefits of the dictatorship of the working class is evident in the English scene where even the government is powerless against the unilateral decisions to strike, which are made

according to the whims of the trade union leaders, who go about in Rolls-Royces instigating the working class, asking for more wages not for essential needs but for drinking and gambling, thus making anything manufactured in that country much more expensive than anywhere else in the world and forcing factories like steel, autos and the like even in state-owned corporations—which once were noted for cost effectiveness, discipline and efficient work—to close down due to losses, making millions of workers jobless and leaving their families hard pressed and poor.

It was a pity indeed that while formulating the so-called potion of theoretical Marxist Communism, Marx and Engels could not comprehend any better solutions for attainment of the ideal welfare state than the only one involving the entire humanity in a perpetual confrontation and class war with the objective of a party caucus, not necessarily from the real peasants and working class but a coterie of intellectuals from outside the proletariat, sitting in judgment as directing dictators with the calculated intention of keeping one class of the society under perpetual subjugation and suppression of the other. Educated and intelligent as they no doubt were, they could also have certainly formulated the better alternative leading to the attainment of the same welfare state on the basis of providing equal opportunity to all classes of the society to progress together, solidly resting on the foundations of human love, justice and universal brotherhood, each class contributing and supplementing the best to the overall prosperity devoid of any oppression at all and cutting out altogether any possibility of setting one class against another. Alas, the Marxist theory having been worked out under limited comprehension and background of its authors, naturally it could not visualize the real implications of what L. Martov of the later, Menshevik group that opposed Lenin feared in 1903. It is human nature that even after the victory of the so-called proletariat, many a contender will come up with the hope of rising to the prime seats of power and the dictator may thus “transform the party of the workers into a party over them,” as was demonstrated even during the last days of Lenin, when Stalin had accumulated so much power for himself that Lenin himself found it impossible to reverse. Thus, the never ending chain of oppression as has been happening under the communist regimes, the latest being in Poland, must continue forever.

Friedrich Engels

With Karl Marx, this socialist was the co-founder of theoretical Marxist Communism. He had been working behind Marx, evolving theories of Marxist socialism and Communism as his close associate

with the objective of promoting the socialist movement in Europe. In Bremen, he wrote the treatise *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, based on his experience earlier, and *The German Ideology*. Later he lived between Brussels, Paris and London. It was Engels that, in 1847, helped in London to transform the secret socialist society of the League of the Just into the Communist League. The Second Communist Congress, held in London, which authorized Marx and Engels to draft a statement of Communist Principles and policies led to the writing of *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, jointly by Marx and Engels. After the failure of the German Revolution of 1848, Marx and Engels went back to London to reorganize the Communist League, where they drafted, in vain, the technical directives for the Communists in the hope of another revolution taking place in Germany.

For economic reasons, Engels soon rejoined his father's firm in Manchester as an employee, eventually becoming a partner. While working for the promotion of the Communist ideology along with Marx on the one hand, it is irony and a demonstration of the hypocritical double life, that Engels continued to live as a capitalist, operating his firm profitably. He continued to assist Marx financially and, finally selling his interest in the cotton firm in Manchester, he obtained enough money not only to live well for the rest of his life but also to provide reasonable annuity and expenses to his friend and associate. In fact, Engels had been the adviser to Marx on questions of economics, business practices, industrial operations, nationality, military matters, international affairs and sciences. While Marx remained a theoretician, Engels had been the salesman of their ideas through his writings. Engels was responsible for implanting the idea among the Communists that *Das Kapital* of Marx was the "Bible" of Marxism. After the death of Marx in 1883, Engels remained the foremost authority on Marx and Marxism and naturally, too. He also completed the unfinished notes of Marx and added further volumes to *Das Kapital* and other works. He died of cancer in London in 1895.

Lenin

Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov was born at Simbirsk in 1870, was renamed "Ulyanovask," and adopted the pseudonym "Lenin" in 1901 after his exile in Siberia for clandestine party work. He had leanings toward atheism as early as the age of sixteen. One of the five sons of a liberal-minded school inspector, he as well as his brothers, who were all well-educated, joined the revolutionary movement of the time because even the highly educated and cultured intelligentsia were usually denied

the elementary civil and political rights in the Tsarist Russia of the time and even Lenin's father was threatened with premature retirement shortly before his untimely death, as the civil administration of the Tsars feared the consequences of the spread of education among the masses. His eldest brother, a university student, was hanged for conspiracy in a terrorist group that plotted to assassinate Emperor Alexander III of Russia. Lenin, naturally, had begun to react to the political setup of his time, even at the early age of seventeen. He studied in St. Petersburg and the Imperial Kazan universities. However, during his forced idleness (due to denial of readmission in the latter university for the reason of having been expelled earlier from the universities for participating in illegal student assembly) he associated with exiled revolutionaries and the similar minded older generation in Kazan and elsewhere. Having read *Das Kapital* of Karl Marx, he became a Marxist in the year 1889. On being permitted to take the university examination in 1891, he passed the law examination, taking first in all subjects. In 1892, having been admitted to the bar, he practiced law for a year or two on behalf of the poor peasants and artisans. On shifting to Lenin-grad in 1893, he practiced law as a public defender and there he made contacts with revolutionary Marxists who delegated him in 1895 to make contacts with Russian exiles in Western Europe in general and with the leading Marxist thinker, Gregory Plekhanov, in particular. On his return the same year, L. Martov (who later became the leader of the Mensheviks who opposed the Bolsheviks led by Lenin) and other Marxists succeeded in unifying the Marxist ranks to form The Union for the Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class, which issued pamphlets and proclamations on behalf of the workers and supported workers' strikes after infiltrating into the working classes in order to educate them on Marxism. In 1895 Lenin was imprisoned and exiled to Siberia. On his return in 1900, he went to Munich where, with comrades Plekhanov and Martov, he edited a newspaper, *Iskara* (The Spark), in the hope of unifying all the socialist and Marxist groups in Europe under one cohesive Social Democratic Party with a common revolutionary objective.

Earlier, Lenin had produced some literature encouraging the workers to strike and to shake their traditional veneration to the ruling Tsars because the imperial power had been assisting the capitalists to make the life of the workers more difficult. At the same time, he had also been attacking the Social Democrats and others who concentrated their efforts only in obtaining better wages and lesser hours of work for the workers, leaving the political struggle to the bourgeois. He also had his thoughts directed towards the problems of the peasants. Until

1890, Lenin had held the view of Plekhanov that the peasants and workers should first bring about a bourgeois revolution in Russia, establishing a democratic republic and a strong capitalism of the proletariat ushering in the full socialism only on attainment of a high degree of political organization, socialist consciousness and culture among the proletariat. However, from 1894 onwards, he differed from his earlier view because he felt that even after all the farms in Russia were divided among the communes, socialism could not be established because of the fact that the produce and sales markets would yet be in the hands of the capitalists in a free market. For the purpose of self-interest, some of the communes, he feared, would favor the growth of minicapitalists and therefore even the communists would become "petty bourgeois democrats." Thus, he believed that unless the entire private ownership, means of production and market system were all abolished and run on the basis of a collective state ownership, real socialism could not be attained. Lenin's ideas did not, however, find favor with the majority of the Marxist leaders at their first congress, held at Minsk in 1898. In the second congress, held in 1903 at Brussels, which due to police interference was shifted to London, Lenin's idea as contained in his 1902 pamphlet on party organisation, that "because the workers while unifying as the proletariat against the capitalist may compromise on wages and duty hours, only a party formed without by dedicated, conscious, honest and disciplined believers in Marxism should direct the proletariat on how to bring about the revolution of workers against the capitalists and continue to discharge the duty for a long time even after attainment of the power by the proletariat so that any tendency either on the part of the capitalists or the minicapitalists again to raise their heads may be ruthlessly destroyed until the real socialism becomes a password with the entire society, first at home and later in the world", was also defeated by the group under the Plekhanov-Martov-Leon Trotsky leadership for the reason that "this would convert the party of the proletariat to a dictatorship over the proletariat." However, as an initial conciliatory first step, under the cloak of need, "a party of a new type," which while guided by a "democratic centralism" or absolute party discipline on the basis of a highly centralized body organized around a small, ideologically homogenous hardened core of experienced and professional revolutionaries elected to the central committee was led by a grass roots hierarchy of lower party organizations that enjoyed the support and sympathy of the proletariat and all groups opposed to Tsarism was evolved. Nevertheless, subsequently Lenin saw that the rival group under Plekhanov, Martov and Trotsky charged that this proposal was

also conducive to a dictatorship over the proletariat and indicted that rather than this being a party of the proletariat, this system too may lead to the ultimate establishment of a one-man dictatorship later on. Although defeated, the "Bund" group dominated by Jewish Social Democrats having walked out of the second congress, Lenin was left with a slight working majority for his group in the party and thus he started work henceforth with the new Russian Social Democratic Worker's Party. The two groups went on fighting within the party until 1912, when Lenin made the epoch-making final split at the Prague conference, separating his Bolshevik Party (Majoritarians) from the Mensheviks (Minoritarians).

After the abortive revolution of 1905, Lenin was forced into exile up to the year 1917, one of the main reasons for the defeat of the revolution being the split between Lenin and Plekhanov. The defeat of the revolution, however, also saw a combination of repression and a little reform introduced by the Tsarist administration, which appeared to seal the fate of any future revolution, as a result of controversies having developed within both groups over tactics and philosophy. In the year 1914, consequent to the outbreak of the First World War, everywhere in Europe the socialists had begun to help the war efforts of the imperialists on either side, ignoring their pledge made at the second congress to fight the capitalists. Lenin therefore denounced his fellow socialists who were helping the war efforts as "social chauvinists" who had betrayed the Second Communist International. With very little backing however, he managed to cross into neutral Switzerland, where in 1914 he met with some like-minded Bolshevik and Menshevik emigrant workers. In the conferences of the antiwar socialists held in Switzerland in 1915 and 1916, Lenin did not succeed in his appeal "to transform the imperialists' war into a civil war." The conference instead adopted the slogan, "An immediate peace without annexation or indemnities and the right of the peoples for self determination." However, with the undwindling hopes and vigor, Lenin continued to work for educating the public opinion through pamphlets such as *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917), where he emphasized and proved that the war was a result of the "Insatiable expansionist character of imperialism which was a product of monopoly finance corporation." The Capitalist banks, having brought the world economy under their direct or indirect control with the help of the respective imperialists, had amassed fabulous wealth from the colonies, creating rivalry between the colonial imperialist powers for possession of the colonies, which was certainly a correct inference of what had been happening in the world of conquests.

In 1917 luck at last dawned on the fate of Lenin. Early that year, the starving, freezing and disgruntled soldiers of the Petrograd garrison having succeeded in deposing the Tsar with the help of the Germans, Lenin and his comrades managed to cross into Russia via Sweden. A month later, the Tsar was forced to abdicate. A provisional government had been formed in Petrograd by a group of leaders of the bourgeois liberal parties with the assent of the Petrograd Soviet, a council of the deputies of workers elected in the factories of the capital, and similar soviets of worker's deputies as well as soviets of deputies of soldiers and peasants had sprung up in other cities and towns in the country. The soviet of the capital having turned over its power to the provisional government of the capital composed of Menshevik and socialist revolutionary leaders of peasant parties who regarded the revolution as bourgeois, they believed that the new regime should be headed by the leaders of the bourgeois parties. Lenin put new life into his Bolshevik comrades who accepted the authority of the new provisional government, although he considered it as also imperialist and nonsocialist according to his Bolshevik philosophy because it could not satisfy the immediate desires of the workers, soldiers and peasants to divide and place the land and the factories among them. As a real Soviet government alone could do this great job, Lenin cried, "All power to the Soviets." Until 1917, the Bolsheviks of Lenin remained a minority in the soviets; however, due to war weariness and a breakdown of the economy, the overtaxed peasants, workers and soldiers demanded a change and the moderate socialist leader Aleksander Kerensky had been losing his popular support. But as Lenin suggested that Kerensky still had the ability to complete the revolution, the latter contended that only a free constituent assembly elected after the return of order alone would have the power to decide Russia's political future. However, the demand of the Lenin group for immediate peace, land and bread without delay had been receiving increased support among the workers, peasants and soldiers. Lenin himself remained underground since mid-1917, having been accused by the Kerensky government as being a German agent, until the Bolshevik majority was voted into the Petrograd soviet in late 1917. Lenin believed that a "dictatorship of the proletariat," or the direct rule of the armed peasants, workers and soldiers, alone could rid the Soviet society of capitalism and imperialism and that in due time this armed rule would eventually build into a "non-coercive, classless, stateless communist society" in the whole world, as expounded in his pamphlet *State and Revolution*, which was written during his time of hiding, a philosophy that history has proven during an expensive sixty-five year period to be merely "Utopian." In the

meantime, Lenin had also been preparing the Bolsheviks to start the revolution in due time with a full armed takeover of power in the whole country by enlisting soldiers, peasants, sailors and Bolshevik workers into a "workers' militia," training them under the guise of "Red guards" for the self defence of the Petrograd Soviet, with the collaboration of Trotsky, who was the new Bolshevik chairman of the soviet. On November 7 and 8 of 1917, the Red Guards, Bolshevik soldiers and sailors deposed without major resistance the provisional government, proclaiming that the power had passed into the hands of the Soviets. By now the Bolsheviks had obtained a majority in the All-Russian Congress of the Soviets and the delegates therefore had no difficulty in electing the forty-seven-year-old Lenin as the first chairman of the "People's Commissars," the new Soviet government that approved his decrees on peace and land. Lenin steered the government towards consolidation of its power and negotiations for peace.

In 1918, the freely elected constituent assembly of Soviets met and when the Mensheviks and socialist revolutionaries who constituted the majority rejected Lenin's Sovietism, he dismissed the assembly and negotiated peace, a humiliating one indeed, whereby a large part of the Western Russian empire was to be dismembered. Although his opponents and communists refused to agree, after all, Lenin was able to win the support of the central committee to accept the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, guaranteeing peace, as Russia was no longer able to fight a war.

Soon after, when Lenin's government decided to repudiate foreign loans taken by the Tsarists and the provisional governments as well as to nationalize foreign properties in Russia without compensation, civil war erupted, the rivals being determined to bring down the government. The civil war of 1918-1920, during which the Bolshevik authority was reestablished by Lenin, was fought ruthlessly at the cost of millions of lives, untold destruction and human sufferings. Attempts were made on the life of Lenin, from which he escaped death. In spite of active assistance in money, support troops and material from the capitalist allies of the opponents (the Whites), consisting of former Tsarist generals, admirals and their supporters, Lenin was able to suppress the uprisings ruthlessly with the help of the Red Army under the command of Bolshevik Leon Trotsky. The next step for Stalin was to provide food for the workers; due to a lack of money he started forced requisitioning of surplus food grains from the peasants without payment. After the final defeat of the Whites, due to resistance from the peasants themselves who threatened mass rebellion, Lenin was forced to retrace his steps for a time towards capitalism, announcing the new

economic policy not only stopping the forced requisition of grains but also permitting the sale of surplus food grains by the peasants on the open market. Another success of Lenin came on the international political front, when in 1921 he won recognition of his new Soviet government by all major imperialist and capitalist powers except the United States of America. Lenin, however, failed in hopes of forging ahead united proletarian revolutions abroad on the pattern of a world socialist movement as originally envisaged by him when he had such an Utopian idea in his view. This was mainly because, with a dangerous precedent of totally repudiating international economic agreements and unilateral nationalization of foreign properties in Russia, even at the embryo stage of the first model communist pattern of politico-economics, the capitalist world had already encircled the U.S.S.R., isolating it to such an extent that it became almost impossible for the Bolsheviks to attempt any immediate export of the proletarian revolution to other countries for creating similar chaos as existed in Russia. However, the fear of the capitalist world of importing active communism if they interfered actively in Bolshevik politics of the U.S.S.R., forced the former also to keep their hands off from meddling in the internal affairs of the government of Lenin. While this kept the U.S.S.R. isolated from the capitalist world, it gave a breathing space for Lenin to consolidate the Bolshevik power in Russia. Notwithstanding the above, in order to break his isolation, Lenin exhorted all the revolutionaries of the world to form parties all over the world that could emulate the only proletarian revolution in the world—the Bolshevik revolution of the Soviets. Earlier, to mark and highlight his break with the Second International of 1903, Lenin had also formed the third Communist International of 1919, which accepted affiliation only of parties that had accepted the decisions of his party as binding, imposed strict discipline in the party and broke clearly from the viewpoints of the second International. Prior to this, in 1918, he had also renamed his party as the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks). The program of the Third International had some creditable effects on the colonial world in Asia and Africa and particularly in the Indian subcontinent, which, taking the clue from the Russian revolution and its own local ideas, started its own national movement soon after the end of the First World War demanding independence from British Colonial rule, gaining ground slowly and steadily until the country became independent in 1947, creating two sovereign states of India and Pakistan. After the Second World War, which ended with the defeat of Germany, Italy and Japan by the Allies, which included the Communist Russia under Stalin and the capitalist powers, mainly England (and its empire), France and

the United States of America, the Russian Bolshevik Communism had been emulated by all countries of Eastern Europe, namely Albania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany, Poland, Yugoslavia and Romania. This was followed in Mainland China, known as the "Peoples China," North Korea, Manchuria and Vietnam in the east and Cuba in the Americas, which put together have today a total population of over a third of the world.

Towards the last days of Lenin, when he was still the party chairman, he himself had come to realize that his utopia of a one world socialist (Communist) society was never to be realized. By about the year 1922, within only five years of the installation of a Bolshevik dictatorship in the name of the proletarian revolution presided over by himself, inefficiency and corruption had already set in to the Soviet government. And soon after the appointment of Stalin as the general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, Lenin himself had to see helplessly that Stalin had started accumulating and concentrating too much power into his own hands. No doubt, Lenin must have become totally disillusioned and even must have had his deathbed nightmares over what his old opponents, the Mensheviks, under the Plekanov-Martov leadership, had forewarned and feared as early as 1903 at the Second London congress: that the party dictatorship that Lenin had been preaching with dedication would ultimately make the "party of the proletariat a party of a dictator over them." Although Lenin even desired to replace Stalin, time had already run out, leaving the paralyzed Lenin to see the sounding of the death knell of his lifelong utopian hope of a world socialist community ever springing up at the hands of the dictator Stalin, who had gained all the power necessary to steer clear of any conspiracy to replace him. Thus, much against his own will to continue in power in this world, in 1924 he had ultimately to bow down to the final decree of the ever watchful and Supreme God whose very existence had been denied by Lenin and his comrades and take his exit to face the consequences of his apostasy and rebellion with his Creator, whether he liked it or not, not as a healthy person but an unfit paralytic!

His successor, Stalin, as stated earlier, accumulated too much dictatorial power for himself and in fact ruled as a dictator over the party and the proletariat in accordance with the doctrine of Lenin, ruthlessly suppressing and purging any opposition. He even nursed what was known as "Stalinism," which in turn saw its enemies during the rule of his successor, Nikita Khrushchev. How the East European countries were brought under the heels of the Moscow leadership is well known to history and today how in Poland the fearful prophecy of Plekhanov

and Martov of the Mensheviks opposed to Lenin, that party dictatorship by the professionals may ultimately convert it from a "party of the proletariat to one over them," has in fact been fulfilled through repression of the free workers trade unions by the Communist dictatorship at home under active support from Moscow with the help of the army.

With a shortage of almost everything including food grains, fifty tons of which need to be imported every year, the model utopian communist state of plenty of the socialist thinkers, given shape as a pilot project at the cost of hundreds of thousands of human lives, time and money in Russia over a span of sixty-five years, has remained a field trial and nothing but a failure today. The Communist bloc has been able to develop satisfactorily to an extent of self-sufficiency nothing other than formidable military power to suppress freedom of nationals as well as to wage a destructive war over all these six and a half decades. A trial of a theory might have been good but once the theory has been proven as impracticable in spite of dedicated direction by a dictatorship of professionals, militarists, politicians, economists, philosophers, scientists and what not for over sixty-five years, is it not a pity and disgrace that the totalitarian Communist leadership is still bent upon wasting the valuable life of the human race of this scientific and technological age to further whip the dead horse that had been kept alive as the result of a mythical hope of attainment of a welfare state, rather than bowing their heads to natural foundations and accepting defeat honorably at last? But who will bell the cat? Has man yet learned from the past history?

As Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev and Brezhnev have all treaded on the dictatorial footsteps of Lenin as totalitarian rulers, without much doctrinal contributions to the utopian Communist and socialist theories from themselves, we leave them to history as political dictators not much different from Kaisers or Tsars.

Mao Tse-Tung

Mao Tse-Tung, or Mao Ze-dong, the Chinese revolutionary thinker and undisputed leader of nearly a billion Chinese people prior to his death, was the prime architect of the New China. Mao was born in 1893 in Hunan province of China in a poor family. His father had become rich as a grain dealer. Attending a village school at the age of eight Mao studied the Confucian classics. At thirteen he had to leave school to work in his family farm at the insistence of his father. As he disliked the traditional work of the family, as a rebel against his parents, he

left to study in a neighboring higher primary school, later joining the high school in Changsha, the provincial capital. It was here that Mao got himself exposed to Western ideas of revolutionary reformers such as Sun Yat-sen and Liang Ch'i-chao. Soon, the revolution of October 1911 that had broken out against the Manchu rulers spread to Changsha too. Leaving studies, Mao, who admired the warrior emperors, Napoleon and George Washington, enrolled in the Hunan revolutionary army. Six months later, the new Chinese Republic was born and this ended Mao's military service. For a year, he went drifting from a police school, a law school, a soap-making institute, a business school and a high school. Due to a sudden changeover from eastern to western methods in the schools, the young generation had difficulty in deciding the best line for preparing them for a good career and the young Mao had also the same problem. In 1918, however, he graduated at a level higher than secondary from the Changsha normal school in Chinese history, literature, western ideas and philosophy. At school Mao had taken part in the activities of student organizations and, among others, he had formed in 1917-1918 the "New Peoples' Study Society" with some friends who followed his leadership through to the Communist victory of 1919. Thereafter, Mao continued his studies at the university of Peking where he was influenced by Li Ta-chao and Chen Tu-hsiu, who were the two main figures in the Chinese Communist movement. His joining the university coincided with the start of the May Fourth Movement of 1919, a vigorous student movement protesting against the decisions of the Paris Peace Conference to hand over the former German possessions in Shantung to Japan rather than return them to their natural owners, the Chinese. Chinese radicals had therefore no support for the western liberalism, favoring Marxism and Leninism as a solution for the problems of China. This led to the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in the year 1921. Nevertheless, the May Fourth Movement, which was initiated by Chen Tu-hsiu, soon became one in which the Chinese students actively participated. While at the university, Mao was responsible for bringing together students, workers and merchants through various organizations aimed at forcing the government to oppose Japan. Fleeing from Hunan to Peking after leading a campaign against its military ruler, Mao, who had been an admirer of the Russian Revolution became a full-fledged Communist in 1919/20, having become convinced of "the Marxist interpretation of history." In 1920 he became the principal of the primary school of his native province in Changsha, where he organized a Communist group. In 1921 he attended a meeting of representatives from the other Communist groups in China, which was also attended by two

representatives of the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern) and assisted in the founding of the Chinese Communist Party mentioned earlier. This was followed by the formation of an alliance between the Young Communist Party and the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) of Sun Yat-sen to fight the corrupt, oppressive and inefficient government of Peking. As a consequence of this, Mao left his teaching job to become a professional revolutionary and politician. In 1924-1925, while resting in his native village of Shaoshan, having seen the great tempest of the peasant demonstration that protested the 1925 shooting of several persons by foreign police in Shanghai, Mao started organizing a network of peasant associations by channeling their spontaneous protest movements. Mao was soon forced to flee from Hunan, pursued by the military governor, and thereafter he lived in Canton, which was the base of the Kuomintang of Sun Yat-sen. On the death of Sun, the Kuomintang leadership passed on to Chiang Kai-shek. After becoming the editor of the Kuomintang publication the *Political Weekly*, and attending the second Kuomintang congress in 1926, Mao also served as the principal of the sixth Kuomintang Peasants Training Course at Canton. Although Chiang Kai-shek remained committed to the "Communist World Revolution" and desired Russian economic and other aids, in order to be his own master he cleansed the Kuomintang of the Communists, particularly those who looked towards the Russian leadership of the Communist world. Nevertheless, Mao, who too was a Communist, continued to enjoy the confidence of Chiang and the Kuomintang with the result that a number of peasants who had been trained by Mao at Canton became handy for him to strengthen Communism within the Kuomintang against the policy of Chiang Kai-shek, its leader.

In 1927, although Mao expected a spontaneous Communist revolution with millions of peasants partaking, as the result of the keenness of Chiang for alliance with the property owners in the cities (he himself having been responsible for the massacre of the very workers of Shanghai who had made the city over to him during his expedition aimed at unifying China under his leadership after overthrowing the corrupt, oppressive and inefficient Peking government) the Communist movement suffered a great setback through the annihilation of Communists in the cities and fragmentation of those in the countryside. Moreover, the strategy of Stalin for carrying out the Chinese revolution in alliance with Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang also collapsed. Undeterred by this major reverse, Mao collected a few hundred peasants and embarked on a new type of revolutionary warfare in the countryside from a base in the Ching-Kang mountains, hoping that the Red Army would play

the central role. In fact, when the revolutionary civil war did actually erupt, with the help of millions of Chinese peasants in the countryside who sympathised with the Mao movement, he was able to encircle the cities, defeating Chiang Kai-shek and winning the civil war.

It took twenty-two years for Mao Tse-tung and Chu Teh, the army commander in chief, to gain control of the government of China. Begun in 1927, as a guerilla war from the countryside, when the central Kuomintang committee in Shanghai ordered the Red Army to occupy several major cities in south and central China in the hope of starting a major workers' revolution, Mao disobeyed the orders and withdrew in 1930 to his base in southern Kiangsi, abandoning the battle as he feared costly loss of lives. This was followed by formation in 1931 of a Chinese Soviet Republic in part of Kiangsi province with himself as the chairman. His Red Army with a strength of 200,000 men had then been controlling an area of several million people. However, although Mao was able to defeat Chiang's forces in four of the major battles, he could not stand the assault of another battle in which Chiang's special militia was to be pitched against the Red Army. Therefore in 1934, Mao decided to withdraw along with his pregnant wife and the Red Army to northwest China, abandoning his Kiangsi base, the operation being known as the "Long March." The few thousand troops who survived the rigors of this fatal march arrived in northwest China in the autumn of 1935. In August 1935 the Comintern, at its seventh Moscow congress, and the Chinese Communists, on one of their "Long March" halts, agreed on the formation of a united front against the fascists. The following year saw the Chinese Communists agreeing to accept the Nationalist Party under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek as a constituent of the "United Front." In December 1936 the kidnapping of Chiang himself by the military leadership of northeastern China, which wanted to fight Japan for the recovery of that part of China under their occupation rather than the Chinese Communists, hastened the unity between the Kuomintang and the Communists. When in 1937 Japan had started her attempt to annex the whole of China, the Kuomintang-Communist reconciliation pact to oppose Japan had already been concluded in September of 1936. The Chinese army had been mobilised to reach between half and one million men by the time the Japanese surrender was brought about with the active cooperation of the Chinese army and the Chinese peasants, working hand in hand. By then the communist ideology had penetrated among the vast population of rural workers and peasants.

Between 1936 and 1940 Mao produced a number of books and pamphlets, such as *On Practice*, *On Contradiction*, *Strategy Problems*

of China's Revolutionary War, On Protracted War, On the New Stage, The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party, and On New Democracy. The Socialist High Tide, in three volumes edited by Mao himself, came out in 1955-1956.

While Mao Tse-Tung also believed that the emergence of Chinese revolution was a part of the international proletarian revolution against imperialism and capitalism, he differed from the Moscow attitude in that every country had the right to be ruled on the basis of a system best suited to the local conditions rather than being only along the lines dictated by a Moscow-based and centralized, Comintern, Marxist pattern. As far as China was concerned, he felt that internally the country should be ruled by a "joint dictatorship of several parties" belonging to the anti-Japanese front. He believed also that his cooperation with the Kuomintang in the joint "United Front" was only a temporary phase and that as long as the aims of the Communist party coincided with those of the Kuomintang, the communists should not try to rush through to socialism and disrupt the Front. However, he also had no doubt in his mind of the necessity to assume full power by the Communists ultimately, but in due time, in order to progress to full socialism. Mao had to struggle within the United Front against the Kuomintang as well as within the Communist party itself against his rivals, the Moscow-trained Wang Ming and Chang Kuo-Tao who, at first, did not reconcile to the political and military leadership of Mao. Nevertheless, after the 1938 "Signification" campaign, whereby Mao advocated adoption of Marxism not only to the Chinese conditions but also to the Chinese mentality as well as to the cultural tradition of the Chinese people, he ultimately emerged as the acknowledged leader of the Chinese Communist Party.

Mao did not have a firsthand knowledge of the working of Russian Soviet Communism, nor the ability to read the works of Marx and Lenin, which advantage his colleagues possessed. Nevertheless, he claimed to know and understand well China and her people. In 1942, therefore, during the "Ratification Campaign," while the writings of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and other European Marxist Communist leaders were being studied, Mao insisted the party workers eliminate all "foreign dogmatism," which he termed the blind imitation of the experience of Soviet Russia and Russian directives on Communism. While the Russian leadership denounced this as an attempt to purge the Chinese Communist Party of what the former called "Proletarian internationalism," or in other words, "devotion to the directives from Moscow," the rift between Moscow and Peking widened, culminating in the lack of enthusiasm on the part of Stalin when Maoists emerged

victorious in the civil war against the Kuomintang, which at the climax of the Sino-Russian rift in 1962, Mao condemned as an "attempt on the part of Stalin in 1945 to block the Chinese Revolution." Notwithstanding the rift, soon after the Communist victory, when Mao became the chairman of the Chinese Peoples Republic in December 1949, he visited Moscow where he and Stalin concluded the treaty of mutual assistance and limited economic aid after a deliberation of two months. Shortly after this, with Russian assistance and centralized planning despite a lack of expertise in large economic development for themselves, the Chinese embarked on installing heavy industries, forging ahead with land reform, collective farming and other matters, largely following the Russian methods subject to certain local adjustments. However, on 31 July 1955, Mao decided to accelerate formation of the agricultural cooperatives by exhorting the Chinese people to implement his own plans and policies even though his own comrades often opposed them. In 1956, soon after Nikita Khrushchev succeeded Stalin as the party secretary in Russia and denounced the latter's purges of the Soviet Communist Party in Russia since 1934, Mao declared his policy of letting the people express ideas freely or "letting a hundred flowers to bloom" in order to prevent development in China of any oppressive era similar to that of Stalin. Although this was also an attempt to seek the cooperation of intellectuals and experts with Mao's policies, it worked otherwise because its critics now questioned the very leadership of the country remaining with the Communist Party. Having received scant cooperation from the intellectuals and experts, in 1957 Mao set himself on the road to the "Great Leap Forward," which concentrated on the economic development of the country through labor-intensive small units of production enterprises requiring a good degree of local initiative as against the earlier capital-intensive heavy industries. In 1958, his new policies based on "people's communes" were set in motion and these spread quickly to the countryside. In contrast to Lenin's Russian model of the intellectuals and specialists leading the workers and the workers leading the peasants, who were traditionally supposed to be backward, Mao handed over control of both political and economic affairs to party secretaries at the commune levels who were mostly peasants themselves. Unfortunately for Mao, his new policy backfired as the industrial production suffered due to the hasty introduction of the communes in the countryside as this system was not field tested earlier in Chinese environments. Natural calamities also played a part in poor production of grains leading to food shortages. As opposition to his policies mounted, Mao was forced to adopt conventional solutions to overcome economic problems including centralized planning and providing material incentives.

What has been happening in China since the death of Mao Tse-Tung is probably a realization of the truth of life. The Chinese Communist leadership has at least, probably, realized in hardly thirty-three years of costly trial at home that it is not in the abolishment of private property alone that the principle of socialistic society can develop. Unfortunately, the Russian Communist leadership has not yet realized this basic fact even after sixty-five years. Further, elsewhere in the world there are many instances that have landed a whole prosperous, hardworking and serious people in a dwindling economy, idleness and a "don't care" attitude due to the replacement of the capitalist rule (bourgeois) by the working class (proletariat) rule. What in fact has happened in these and communist models is that the switch has been made from the "private" to the "socialist" channel, the totalitarian, despotic and cruel administration of the capitalist having been taken over by what is called the "Communist" administration, whereby even freedom for the expression of ideas freely and criticism of the bad methods of the administration by the individual, which had been available with the former, has been made punishable crimes by the latter. If man is forced to work and live against his own nature, how can he succeed in his mission? Selfishness being a quality built into the specification of man, control of his selfishness within acceptable social levels by the state and providing incentives for the individual to putting his best in every sphere of work are two of the important natural methods of attaining a welfare state of contentment and prosperity.

The very concept of Marxism and Communism is based on a prolonged class war in which the proletariat class would eventually come out victorious over the bourgeois class and then the latter has to be kept suppressed from raising its head on the principle of "the end justifies any means." Whereas moral values guided by spiritual concepts do not permit the human being to resort to any foul means is a principle with the theist, the atheist who believes that every creation is its own master cannot even appreciate such a principle. It is only love that can bind the millions of human beings into one world fraternity, and love is due to selfishness alone. A feeling of "something is mine, I love it" alone may tempt one to live and this is selfishness, no doubt. Without it, no matter, father, children, wife, family, friends, human fraternity will not survive! The same principle is true as far as property is concerned. If something is mine, I work for it and otherwise not. If this feeling of ownership is removed, who will care for anything? But the human society limits the arena of operation of this selfishness in quantity and value so that the rest of the human fraternity too enjoys life to some reasonable extent.

There is nothing more needed, perhaps, than an example that

"Communism" is not the panacea for the political, economic and social illness of human being: A totalitarian party rule, which while ignoring the individual has tried to create a Communist society in Russia under the strict guidance of dedicated specialist teams of ideologists, planners, militarists,, scientists, economists, technicians, administrators and the secret service men all working in a regimented unision for sixty-five years suppressing public opinion and without caring for spiritual values, has today brought the communist Soviet Russia and her camp followers into an unfortunate situation. Apart from other consumer goods, even in the field of food production they have to depend upon the capitalist world for millions of tons of food grains to feed their population, which is only about a third of the total world population. In what are they self-sufficient except war materials and destructive weapons?

Sixty-five years is almost more than the useful life span of a man of today and how much more time is to be wasted in this sort of futile trials when the utopian socialistic welfare state of Marxists and Communists is yet far far away beyond the horizon?

Chapter 5

Confucianism

Not a cult or religion in the strict sense of the terms, Confucianism may be called a cultural movement with an underlying philosophy to order the lives of a people and was the product of the thoughts of a teacher named Confucius of China, who lived between, probably, 551 and 497 B.C.E. Called "*Ju*," in Chinese meaning, "weaklings," the followers of this cult were originally specialists in ceremonies, music, archery, charioteering, history and numbers. Confucius was, probably, the first in China to teach the six arts to all including the aristocrats and the common man as well as to apply them to government and social development. His followers, the *Ju*, were so called because of their meekness. Confucius, who was the founder of a branch of this school, in fact wanted to convert the "weak" *Ju* into a group of moderates, if not very strong, for which reason his movement was launched. His teachings are summarized in the Chinese word "*Jen*," which means love of humanity, human-heartedness and goodness. The essence of the teachings of Confucius is in two parts: one is to be true to one's own morals and the other is to treat others as one treats oneself. After the death of Confucius, the cult broke up into two divergent groups: "The Great Learning," which was social and political, and "The Doctrine of the Mean," which was religious and metaphysical. The first group concentrated on "manifesting one's clear character, renovating the people and doing the highest good" through the eight steps of investigation; extension of knowledge, sincerity of the will, setting the heart right, cultivation of the self, family harmony, natural order and world peace. The second group, probably initiated by the grandson of Confucius (483-402 B.C.E.), defines it as "The Central Harmony," by which it is understood that one's central self or moral being is considered as "The Great Basis of Existence," and the harmony or order as "The Universal Law in the World;" realization of both results in the conception of the universe becoming a cosmos, leading to attainment of full growth and development by everything therein. The basis of this concept is absolute, intelligent and indestructible realness, sincerity or truth. Only those whose selves are real can fulfil their own nature, the

nature of others, the nature of things and thus partake in the creative work of heaven and earth.

During the third and fourth centuries B.C.E., further developments took place whereby one group under Mencius taught "nourishing the mind and exerting the mind to the utmost," while the other group under Hsun Tzu taught discipline through ceremonies, music, religious rites, law and rectification of names. Hsun Tzu was naturalistic, nearly on the lines of Taoism. Subsequent years saw a shift from Taoism to Confucianism with the Yin-Yang philosophy of negative cosmic force (Yin) and positive cosmic force (Yang), resulting in the development of Tung's Theory of correspondence between nature and man in which every human event is supposed to have its counterpart in nature and vice versa. In this scheme, the ruler corresponded to heaven, both being YANG, the father and husband becoming the standard but the mother and wife becoming the subordinates.

In 136 B.C.E., the Han rule proclaimed Confucianism as the state doctrine and due to the state patronage, the cult dominated Chinese ethics, education, government, and became, to a certain extent, the religion of China. However, during the ninth century C.E., when Taoism and Buddhism threatened Confucianism, the Confucian Han Yu persecuted the followers of the two rival cults, which have shown a decline ever since. By then, Buddhist and Taoist philosophies and ways which remained popular had already penetrated deep into the Confucian cult as well as the ways of life. As a result, a neo-Confucianism dominated Chinese life during the Ming period (1368-1644 C.E.), which emphasised practical application of knowledge and the use of scientific methods. Continued modifications and synthesis with the Western logical concepts have continued, particularly through the efforts of the nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers like Sun Yat-sen, Liang Shu-Ming, Fung Yu-Lan and Hsiung Shih-Li. Thus, teachings of Confucius still prevail in Chinese society today.

The central theme of Confucianism is *Jen*, meaning love, humanity, human-heartedness, benevolence and so on which, in other words, is tantamount to "Perfect Virtue," particularly the three Confucian universal virtues of wisdom, love and courage and the five constant virtues of love, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and good faith, the general virtue being the source and foundation of all goodness. In short, "*Jen* is that by which a man is a man in the original goodness of his nature, or it means love, affection and universal love," as Mencius puts it. Love is considered as man's native virtue because it is inherent in his natural goodness, which is endowed by heaven. The great characteristic of heaven and earth according to Confucianism is to produce and reproduce,

an expression of love, and in partaking in the process, man inherits this virtue. In other words, the philosophical expression of "Heaven is my father, earth is my mother, all people are my brothers and sisters and things are my companions" of the neo-Confucianist Chang Tsai in fact explains the ethical goal of Confucianism to form one harmonious whole with heaven and earth. In the sphere of day to day living, the Confucian ethics concentrate on moral obligations inherent in the relationship between the ruler, the minister, father and son, elder and younger brothers, husband and wife as well as friend and friend. The virtue of filial piety is particularly respected and all these virtues and obligations are considered on a reciprocal basis.

Confucius avoided discussion on spirits and life after death. Although he taught men to respect spirits, he advised to keep them at a distance. He used to pray to the heaven, and therefore he apparently believed in the power of Heaven and its mandate. Thus resulted the worship of Heaven, honoring of the ancestors and commemoration of the great men by Confucians. Ancestral rites are performed sincerely, not because ancestors will give them rewards and punishment in return for good or evil, but to continue the human relation, which should not be terminated on death, so as to provide a foundation for the moral life as well as to remember the origin of our life, because filial piety is the first of their virtues. Temples were built for great men and seasonal rites also performed for them, not as gods, but only to honor them. Confucius too, is honored accordingly as the great perfection, ultimate sage and foremost teacher, but never deified.

Confucius neither claimed for himself any prophethood, nor mentioned God. Confucianism has no scripture, church, clergy or creed and therefore is not an institutional religion in the sense generally conceived of religions.

As Confucianism is a way of life aimed at virtuous living and a society maintaining tranquility within the community, nation and the world, it is devoid of what is called the spiritual aspect of life and therefore the entire concept of the society is modelled on the pattern of a complete family life, in which the state is equated to a family and headed by a sovereign comparable to a father. The government should be benevolent, aiming at the welfare of the people, who are more important to the state than the ruler or the territory. The sovereign does not rule, but reigns by the mandate of Heaven and whether this is so is to be judged from whether or not the people are happy and people abroad are attracted towards the country. A ruler failing in the mandate should therefore abdicate in favor of a virtuous man or be overthrown by revolution, if need be. The ruler should be kind and the subjects

loyal. Moral examples and not force should remain as the chief instrument of the government. The laws should be made by good men and governmental laws should be few and the punishments light. In other words, the government should be in the hands of educated and virtuous men. In the old Confucian society, therefore, selection to the civil service was through competitive examination and the military officials were subordinated to the civil service. Like a family, the state is a single indivisible unit and as a whole, the moral aspect of Confucianism is thus apparent.

Confucius himself never mentioned God, nor the life after death, nor the rewards and punishments after death, nor redemption of the soul, nor God's pardon, and for the reason that there is no divine scripture associated with him, the way of life shown by him is not a religion as a matter of fact. Nevertheless, it served as a great force in ordering the home, society, institution of the state and human behavior on the basis of high morals and, of course, for elimination of the animistic and pagan worship of the different objects of nature through a unique concept of the prayers directed to the Heaven, which was very necessary for the ordering of the vast people of his era.

Chapter 6

Hinduism

Hinduism, in its present various forms, with a large following of people in India and a good minority in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia, can easily claim a total world population of over 600 million. It may be considered as a way of life and culture predominated by a mixture of the many forms of worship of different objects of nature, known and unknown, in the shape of deities; it was practiced by the inhabitants of the countries mentioned above and modulated by the Vedic cults that were originally brought into the Indo-Ganges plains of India by the migrating Aryans during their trek from Central Asia to the east through Turkistan, Iran and Afghanistan, 3000–4000 years ago. During the early Vedic and Epic periods, the Hindu life of the two highest castes or echelons of the society, under scriptural sanction, had been divided into four distinct stages called Ashramas, namely, Brahmacharyam, Grahastham, Vanaprastham and Sanyasam. Hinduism seems to have spread from India to the Far East and Sri Lanka during ancient times.

Evolution of Hindu Religion

Although the exact dates cannot be determined, the evolution of Hinduism may be categorized, perhaps, into the following three broad divisions:

The Vedic period	1,500 B.C.E. to 600 B.C.E.
The Epic period	600 B.C.E. to 200 B.C.E.
The period of the six systems	200 C.E.

The Vedic Period and Literature

The Vedic literature consists of:

The four Vedas, *Rg*, *Yajr*, *Sama* and *Adharva*, of which the most important is the first, containing hymns, spells and prayers addressed to gods as well as many directives to the devotees;

The Brahmanas, which are the ritual treatises;
The Aranyakas, which are the forest treatises; and
The Upanishads, which are the religio-philosophical texts, otherwise known as the Vedantha, which are the sacred doctrines.

It appears that the Vedic literature is a collection of different strata of thoughts of successive generations of thinkers of the old past. It is considered by Hindus as eternal, not created or revealed by God, to promote the inspiration of gifted men known as "Rshis" (Sages) to enable them to see the eternal truth directly without the earthly senses through recitation of "Mantras" (Secret Chantings), considered as an effective means of coming in contact with the unseen. It is safe to assume that much on the same lines of the first thoughts of the prophet Abraham about the Creator, the early Aryan too must have thought about the mighty and awe-inspiring objects of the earth and the heavens but, unlike Abraham's deep rooted monotheism in the Only One Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient God, only polytheism and pantheism developed in him. Accordingly, deities were assigned to each mighty object and phenomena of nature such as wind, thunder, seas, lightning, rivers, mountains, stones, fire, sun, moon, planets and so on and they were worshipped. However, gods such as Indra and Varuna (the lords of physical and moral order), who appear to have no connection with objects of nature as such, also existed. Later on, deities such as Prajapathi (the lord of creatures), Sradha (faith) and Manyu (wrath) also appear. As time went on, the cluster of gods and goddesses became confusing whereby the Supreme God is identified at times with Prajapathi, sometimes with Hiranyagarbha and at other times with Brahaspathi. Thus, there was a great need for unification and therefore, in later verses of the *Rg Veda*, the idea is evolved that "the Real One the learned call by various names; priests and poets with words make into many, the Hidden Reality, which is but One!"

The cosmology of the *Rg Veda* fluctuates between two theories as far as the creation of the universe is concerned, one being that it is the work of a great architect and the other being that it is the result of natural generation. According to the first theory, the expanse of earth and the dome of heavens were made by Indra by measuring out six regions. He and other gods built a cosmic house of timber framed on posts, but raftless (why the sky does not fall is a mystery). The earth having been made fast with the hands of Savithri, Vishnu fixed it with pegs and Brahaspathi supported it at its ends. In a frame, Indra fixed the air; the morning light enters by the portals of the east, and so on. However, according to the second theory of natural generation,

dawn (Ushas) born of night generates the sun and the morning sacrifice. Heaven and earth, containing all, are the universal parents, the sky being the father, the earth the mother and the dawn the daughter; Vayu (the wind) fathers the storm gods, Soma the plants and Saraswathi the rivers; gods are sons of immortality and skill. Agni is the son of night, Pusan of freedom, Indra of truth. In the latter part of the *Rg Veda*, the world is depicted as a giant from whose members sprang up the universe. From his mouth Indra and Agni (the fire), which also became Brahmana (the priest class); from his arms Rajanya (the warrior or Kshatriya class); from his thighs the Vaishya (traders, artisans and agriculturists); his head became the sky, his navel the air, and his feet, which also produced the Shudra (the menial and untouchable workers), the earth. All gods, particularly Varuna, are moral, undeciful and friendly to honesty and righteousness. The *Rg Veda* also says, elsewhere, the Purusha, the primal man, was fused from the figure of Narayana (scion of man) with Prajapathi, who is the lord of beings and the patron of procreation. For the ritualist Hindu, therefore, Prajapathi was in the forefront as the highest god of creation and was even the father of all gods. As the complex one whole, Prajapathi was therefore identified with the highest of gods. As per the *Rg Veda* again, by dividing himself up, Prajapathi created the universe as well as all beings and then he became disintegrated and differentiated as "ALL" of the phenomenal world, exhausting himself to prepare for a new phase of creativity by means of a rite of sacrifice where he was identified as the rite itself. Thus, by identifying himself with the rite, a sacrificer may, temporarily, reintegrate within himself Prajapathi through a restoration of oneness and totality between himself and the universe, which is the essential spiritual theme behind the sacrificial rite of a Hindu. In general, the Vedic gods lack individuality and clearness of outline even casually, not to speak of appeal to reasoning. The *Rg Veda* identifies more than thirty-three gods, but the figure also goes on increasing later. Vagueness and confused overlapping of jurisdictions exists in the definition of Vedic gods. While all gods have some common attributes, none has any absolute monopoly, however. Side by side with gods, goddesses also exist. The *Rg Veda* implies a life after death available only for penitents, heroes and donors of sacrifices. Though the earlier hymns mention the burial of the dead, cremation is preferred because the soul can ascend to the heaven with the smoke. b

Vedas, which may be translated as "knowledge," are, according to some Hindu philosophers, the earliest documents of the human mind that we possess. Of the four Hindu Vedas, the *Rg Veda*, far from being an expression of primitive or unsophisticated religion, contains some

fine pieces of poetry supposed to have been composed by priestly as well as princely poets and patrons. A collection of poems, mostly hymns of praise and prayer addressed both to a specific god and groups of gods, it contains over a thousand pieces in ten books. Rather than detailed narrations, they contain allusions to myths, such as the victory of some gods over dragons and evil forces. Most of the hymns are to serve sacrificial rituals without specifying the type of rites concerned. In the *Rg Veda* all gods are general, there being no tribal or local deities. The *Sama Veda* is exclusively a collection to serve the public worship and rituals and contains prose as well as poetry. Although much of it is found in the *Rg Veda* also, these and even the independent hymns of the *Sama Veda* provide no lessons of their own except that they are so arranged as to be sung at sacrifices. In the *Yajr Veda*, both prose and poetry are arranged in the order in which they are to be made use of at the sacrifice and they serve no purpose other than ritualism. The *Atharva Veda* is a collection of independent contents and from the spirit of accommodation that is found in it in respect of new gods, demons and spirits who were worshipped by the original inhabitants of the Indo-Ganges plains and the northern parts of India that Aryans invaded, it appears that this Veda is a product of a later Indian era of the Aryans.

Some knowledgeable Hindus as well as others have stated that the hymns of the *Rg Veda* are neither the product of single-handed efforts nor even the compositions of peoples of the same age, but that they were handed down by mouth over generations until sometime perhaps prior to 1500 B.C.E. they were compiled, edited and recorded into the present form, again by many hands. Hindu philosophers like Dayanand Saraswathi, Ram Mohan Roy, Arobindo Ghosh, Dr. Radhakrishnan, as well as others who had made a deep study into the Vedic literature, have stated that the early Aryans of the *Rg Veda* era had possessed monotheism, however vague and primitive it might have been; that the different views on the spirit of the Vedic hymns as held by competent scholars who have made these old scriptures their life study is that the Vedic gods are the allegorical representations of the vast attributes of the supreme Deity; that the hymns of the *Rg Veda* are the sacrificial compositions of a primitive race; that the Vedas are replete with suggestions of secret doctrines as well as mystic philosophies, the depiction of gods in them being mere symbols of psychological functions, and so on. Nevertheless, one cannot close his eyes to the final conclusion that after a thorough study of them these philosophical interpretations on themes of bygone authors are unwarranted because the Vedic concepts appear as contradictory expressions

of confused minds relying on the powers of a multiplicity of gods who are believed to have specific prerogatives that may be evoked by the devotees through recital of hymns of praise, devotion, propitiations, sacrifices and so on without the need of the Supreme God at all. This is certainly a concept of a primitive race that had not been blessed at all by any divine revelation through a prophet of God. It is baffling indeed because, in Yoga, like mesmerism, when the highest order of concentration may be achieved with or without any object to be concentrated upon physically, why could the Vedic man not evoke through meditation the Transcendent God directly without there being a demigod in between? The question becomes hopeless when even the modern man of perfected intelligence and science considers that the absolute power and prerogative of the Transcendent God is delegated at the will of the devotee to any mythical being represented by even a idol that cannot help itself, whatever be the reason assigned to this process!

Each Veda contains three parts: Mantras, Brahmanas and Upanishads, of which the Mantras are also called the Samhittas. The Brahmanas include the precepts and religious duties and the Upanishads the philosophical aspects.

One important aspect of belief that is not found in the Vedas, but introduced subsequently through the Epics, especially the Geetha and the Upanishads, is the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, which has predominated ever since the spiritual philosophy of Hinduism. The fact that Buddha was deified by the Hindus as the ninth Avathar of Vishnu long after his death, gives a certain clue that this concept as well as the transmigration doctrine were introduced along with the concepts of the Rama-Krishna Avathars into the Hindu philosophy during the compilation of the Epics and Upanishads—perhaps at the time of the decline of Buddhism in India—particularly because history has no conclusive record of the exact period and authors of the Epics as well as the Upanishads nor even the Six Systems.

The Hindu Vedic Worship

On the authority of the Vedic scriptures and the Upanishad hymns, it is a practice with the Hindu devotee that he not only worships the various gods, but also their wives and children. Even their legendary carrier vehicles are either held sacred or worshipped. The Supreme God in the form of Bhagwan, Vasudevan, Brahman and many other concepts, along with his two main manifestations of Vishnu (the creator and sustainer aspect) and Shiva (the destroyer aspect), are the prime

objects of worship. There are scores of other gods, goddesses, demigods, animals and other objects such as Bhadra Kali, Bhāgwathi, Chandi, Durga, Chamundi, Ganapathi (elephant form), Ganesha, Hanuman (monkey), Kali, Krshna, Lakshmi, Lingam (male organ of procreation), Parvathi, Skanda, Pashupathi, Rudra, the cow, the eagle, peacock, snake, certain rivers, mountains, trees, plants, and so on which are either worshipped or held sacred by the Hindus.

Vishnavites and Shivites are the two main Hindu religious sects that appear to have been evolved as the result of the fusion of Harappa cults of Phallus and Pushupati, which are the Vedic cults of Rudra and Shiva, as well as many a post-Vedic Shiva cult from different parts of India known under different regional names. The worship of Vishnu goes back to Vedic times and that of Shiva to even earlier. As evidenced by the Lingam and Pashupathi excavations, Harappa culture is found to be associated with Shiva worship in procreation and lord of cow aspects respectively dating back to pre-Vedic times, as Shiva does not find a place in the early Vedas. The *Rg Veda* prominently mentions nature gods such as the thunder god, Rudra. Shiva is mentioned only subsequently. The *Rg Veda* mentions Vishnu as a minor deity but only as an aspect of the sun god. The important Vedic gods Mitra, Varuna, Rudra, Indra, Agni, Prajapathi and Savitar gradually lose their importance while some others like Vishnu and Varuna later change their character altogether. Finally, the trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva replace the rest. Brahma, who does not occur in the Vedas, seems to have been taken to by the Brahmana and Kshatriya upper classes of the four-caste Hindu system. This notwithstanding, presently even Brahma has lost importance, leaving Shiva and Vishnu as the two important deities, along with the other popular gods and goddesses such as Parvathi, Ganesha, Skanda, Krshna, Lakshmi, Hanuman, Ganapathi and others. However, there had been attempts to unify the various godhoods into one and the result was the final emergence of one three-headed Trimoorthi in order to bridge the intense sectarian Shiva and Vishnu cult differences as well as rivalries. Still, it is an interesting phenomena that out of the only two Vishnu incarnations in human form, namely Rama and Krshna who are the central figures of the Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharatha, only the latter is usually worshipped as a deity.

The nature worship manifested through the Vedas was superseded gradually by the philosophy of the Upanishads (the Sacred Doctrines), which preoccupy in themes like the nature of the universe and the destiny of the human soul. When the identity of Atman and Brahma was established by the Upanishads, the true knowledge of the self and

realization of this identity through meditation was substituted for the Vedic ritual methods. In the Upanishads, although there is a dominating bias on the pantheistic explanation of the universe, theistic as well as dualistic ideas find expression in them. Incarnation of Brahma in Vishnu aspect as Avathars from time to time as mentioned in Vedic and other scriptures is conceded by the *Bhagavat Geetha*. However, the *Geetha* does not spell out any incarnation other than Krshna. The later writings, such as *Narayaniya* and *Moksha Dharma* which followed *Bhagavata Geetha*, add the doctrine of Vyuha (expansion), according to which Vishnu exists in four forms during his ascension to Brahma. Vishnu, identified with primeval matter, was drawn from the womb of his mother and placed in Rohini. Vasudeva is identified with Krshna. While *Narayaniya* also mentions ten Avathars of Vishnu, another writing, *Anugeetha*, spell out only six.

The Upanishads

Developed about the fifth century B.C.E. in the Indo-Ganges valleys by the Kshatriyas, who occupy the second caste in the Hindu social ladder after the Brahmanas, the Upanishads (the sacred documents) introduce Vishnu and Shiva as the two symbols of Brahman, the Supreme Hindu God. They teach that knowledge and wisdom can give enlightenment leading to union with God, a state that alone may give relief to the soul from the agonies of rebirth, which is also the basic objective of the Buddhist Samadhi. There are a number of Upanishads such as: Aithereya, Brahadaranyaka, Chandogya, Isha, Jaiminiya, Katha, Kena, Maitrayani, Maitri, Mandukya, Mundaka, Prashna, Radha, Svedasvatara, Taittiriya and others.

Another compilation of laws and penalties on social, political, economic and religious ethics as well as morals enjoying as much importance as Vedas, Upanishads, *Geetha*, and Brahma Sutra is the Manu Smrithi of the sage Manu, although the second, third and fourth of these, called the Prasthanathraya (the triple canon), carry almost equal authority. Some of the Upanishads written by various thinkers are extinct, however.

The Epic Literature

The *Ramayana* and the *Maha-Bharatha* are the two religious epics considered as the backbone of Hindu scriptures. While *Ramayana* deals with the life of Rama, the Aryan Kshatriya king of India who is

considered one of the incarnations (Avathars) of the Vishnu god in human form, *Maha-Bharatha* is a narration of the Arya-Vartha in northern India during the period about 400 B.C.E. concentrating on the life of Krshna, considered by the Hindus as the most complete human form of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. The *Bhagavat-Geetha*, sometimes considered as a separate scripture is, in fact, a part of *Maha-Bharatha* and is considered as the personal utterances of Krshna himself and therefore is greatly valued as the divine scripture of Hindus.

The Bhagavat Geetha

Believed to have originated about the fourth century B.C.E., this Hindu epic strengthens the Hindu four-caste social system distributed according to the inborn nature of persons; the doctrine of divine incarnation in which Krshna is the most important and complete incarnation in human form; and the Karma recycling process of the soul through Samsara (transmigration of soul from one body to a new one after death) until the absolutely pure and selfless soul attains Nirvana (complete union with the divine Absolute, cutting off further rebirths), which were all advocated by the Upanishads are stated in *Geetha* in a much more philosophical, refined and accommodative manner. Although the *Bhagavat Geetha* tries to highlight the doctrine of monotheism, it falls much short of the objective by getting mixed up with the polytheistic beliefs contained in the Vedas and Upanishads, Samkhya and the doctrine of divine incarnation, leading to worship and devotion of all such incarnations, directly or indirectly as God Himself in addition to scores of other Vedic gods, goddesses and demigods, which is the act of animists and polytheists. Further, the *Geetha* condones the worship of gods other than Brahma, the Supreme God, by directing Arjuna to worship the Krshna incarnation through the term "Worship me" and the laxity given to worship gods other than himself, as in Chap. IX: 20, 21, 23, 25, and others. However, on a concentrated and close study of the *Geetha*, no one can miss the one important message conveyed by it that no one, other than the Only One Supreme God who is the Creator and Sustainer of the entire universe, shall be worshipped and loved as the Deity, although the writer and the poet who compiled the literature has portrayed Krshna as an incarnation of God in human form for which, being contained in the closed well of Vedic learning and thoughts, he cannot be blamed singly because even a slight glimpse into the lofty concept of One God must have been too difficult in the era of acute polytheism. However, if Krshna of the *Bhagavat Geetha* is considered as a prophet in the chain

of the innumerable prophets whom God has been sending to the world ever since the creation of man, and the *Geetha* is taken as the message of God to the world, the prophet only conveying it in the first person of God, then the incarnation aspect disappears entirely, the concept of incarnation being considered as a schism created by the overenthusiastic followers who continued to remain in the halo of polytheism as in the case of the followers who deified Christ (peace be on him) after his death more or less on the same basis through the Trinity. According to the *Geetha*, devotion, worship and sacrifice are to be made to Krishna, who is the incarnation of God in human form. The four caste system as well as the worship of gods, twice born, teachers and the wise approved in the Vedas are confirmed by the *Geetha* too. The animal sacrifice enjoined by the Vedas is, however, toned down in the *Geetha* to sacrifice only to Krishna. The *Geetha* declares that there is no creature either on earth or again among the gods in heaven free from the three modes born of nature, that the activities are distinguished in accordance with the qualities born of their nature and that the duties of Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra are all born of the nature of each. It also says that worship of God through performance of one's own duty enables a person to attain perfection and elevation to the Brahmana. Although the *Geetha* does not compartmentalise the Vedic doctrine of the four castes as such, it leaves the whole thing wide open without any contest. As much may be said on either aspect, the Vedic-sponsored caste system still remained with firmer impregnable barriers between the four as sanctioned or at least as approved by the *Geetha* too, there being no practical mechanics suggested by the *Geetha* as how to get a Shudra elevated to the Vaishya, Kshatriya and Brahma orders of the society.

That the *Geetha* is definitely an improvement on the Vedic concept of a plurality of gods and goddesses who had to be adored, worshipped and satisfied by animal sacrifices befitting the jurisdiction of each, is amply proven from the firm instruction in it that the best way of getting salvation, as stated in Chap. IX: 34, is to "Fill the mind with thoughts of Me, be devoted to Me, give Me thy offerings, bow down unto Me having united the soul thus, taking Me as the supreme goal so that you shall come to Me alone." The *Geetha* suggests that the best way to attain union with the Supreme God is to do one's duty without attachment, ego and desire, leaving the result to God, and continuously striving for the attainment of wisdom so as to know the Lord God of all worlds through faithful meditation (Yogam) with the inner self merged in God. No doubt such a dispensation clearly gives a demarcation between the realm of God and that of man contrary to the conten-

tion of the Hindu philosophers and sages that the *Geetha* teaches that man is a part of God Himself. Seeking redemption from the mortal world of desire, ego, pleasure, sorrow, jealousy, sin and so on to abide forever in peace under the eternal pleasure of the kind and merciful God is also something entirely different from the above metaphysics.

There is no mention in the *Geetha* in confirmation of the Vedic necessity that everyone must go through the four stages of life (Ashrams)—Brahmacharam, Grahastham, Vanaprastham and San-yasam—enjoined by the Vedas. The *Geetha* stresses the necessity of Yoga (renunciation) for obtaining wisdom, knowledge about God, enlightenment and for getting a disciplined control of one's own mind and self for which how to concentrate has also been indicated. It is stated that one who has attained the ultimate wisdom through Yoga and has become a Yogi does not bother about law or work, meaning that he goes into the state of a super ascetic who, for all human purpose, should look nothing different than a lunatic, who behaves and works without any purpose or objective, a miserable situation indeed! The question of transmigration of souls of the dead into several further lives through rebirths, one after another, until completely purified by the Karma cycle is stressed by the *Geetha* while pointing out that even a fallen Yogi gets reborn into a Yogi family. This as well as what is stated in IV:13 of the *Geetha*, "The fourfold order (born of the nature) was created by me according to the divisions of quality and work. *Though I am its creator, know me incapable of action or change,*" and "But the Yogi who strives with assiduity, cleansed of sins, *perfecting himself through many lives*, the man of wisdom resorts to me, knowing that Vasudeva (the Supreme) is all that is" (VI:45; VIII:19), clearly show that there is no possibility, even for the Supreme God, to pardon any devotee on the basis of sincere repentance as well as Karma. Therefore, the only course open even to a Yogi is to undergo transmigration of soul to live out to the very end of repeated life cycles undergoing continuous agony and suffering until every bit of the past sins is washed off through counteraction. Nevertheless, unless the person or thing against which sin was committed is also alive in time and space as well as in effect along with the doer himself, how and when the D day of the final redemption would be at hand is a big question that nobody can answer. But as the *Geetha* itself points out, "Such a great yogi soul is very difficult to find" (VII:19) and therefore, how even a reasonable cross section of the large majority among the human race may obtain ultimate solace in the kingdom of God knowing that, after all, man has to live in this world subject to his inherent nature that is built into his specification by God alone, is not answered by *Geetha*,

which is claimed by Hindus as the personal utterances of the supreme incarnation of the Supreme and Absolute God.

Although the *Geetha* confirms the Vedic doctrine of incarnation (Avathar) of God in human and other forms, there appears to be a probability to suspect that the Vedic concept of ten Avathars including Krshna and Buddha was a later adaption in favour of Krshna worship introduced after Buddha. Otherwise, it is not explainable why Buddhism, which was introduced in India by Buddha Avthar who came after the Krshna era, was not opted for by the Hindus in place of Hinduism, if Buddha had already been designated as an incarnation in the pre-Krshna Vedic period.

The *Bhagavat-Geetha*, which contains about 700 verses, is considered as an orthodox scripture of the Hindu religion on equal authority with the *Upanishads* and the *Brahma-Sutra*, the three being known as the triple canon (Prasthanathraya). It is a compilation of a discourse, highly philosophical in nature, between Krshna, who is considered by Hindus as the most important and perfect incarnation in human form of the Vishnu aspect of Brahma and his dear friend and disciple, Arjuna, when the former was driving the latter in a chariot on their way to the battlefield for the epic war of succession between Pandavas headed by Arjuna and Kauravas led by Duryodhana. It is believed that the *Geetha* was compiled about the year 400 B.C.E. by Veda Vyasa, to whom is also attributed compilation of the longest religious epic, the *Maha-Bharatha*, in which is included the eighteen-chapter *Geetha* as chapters 23 to 40 under Bhishmaparva. The *Geetha* tries to reconcile with many contradicting aspects of the contemporary Hindu philosophy and ways of life such as the Vedic cults of worship of and sacrifice to innumerable gods, goddesses and demigods, and the Upanishad concept of the transcendent Brahman God, the theistic devotion of the Bhagavatha cult, the Samkhya dualism and so on. To a limited degree, the *Geetha* may be said to lay down the basis towards monotheism, although not fully and strictly, by emphasising the worship of the Absolute One God through total dependence of the devotee on Krshna Avathar alone, in preference to the Vedic gods. Therefore, the Hindu philosophers consider the *Geetha* as an inevitable bridge for the evolution of a common spiritual bond and consolidation of a common way of life for the variety of people and cultures of the vast Indian subcontinent so as to include in its folds a very large multiracial society of individuals in the name of one single religion. However, as the *Geetha* too strengthens the earlier Vedic concept of the social classification of people by born nature into four distinct classes, namely, the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and Sudras, naturally, based

on the pre-Geethaic doctrinal literatures like the *Manusmrithi* which lay down strict rules of religious and social conduct of the Hindu society as well as drastic penalties for contravention of them, the cursed institution of untouchability continued to thrive with more vigor as sanctioned by the *Geetha* too, despite the fact that it states that through Dharma, Jnana (knowledge), Karma (work) and Bhakthi (devotion) the highest goal of redemption, subject to the law of Samsara, may be reached also by the lowly born women, Vaishyas as well as Sudras, although it is easier for the Brahmanas and devoted royal saints from Kshatriyas. Thus, the ideas contained in the *Geetha*, while being highly philosophical in nature and tending towards limited monotheism, are so very flexible in nature that their spiritual interpretations have been adapted to suit divergent views of the leaders of many a school of Hindu philosophical thought.

Thus, Shankara's (788–820 C.E.) views on the *Geetha*, as developed later by Anandagiri (thirteenth century), Sreedhara (fourteenth century) and Madhusudhana (sixteenth century) and others, are that action is essential as the means for the purification of mind, but when wisdom is attained, action falls away; that Vedic rites are meant for those who are lost in ignorance and desire; that the aspirants to salvation should renounce the performance of ritual deeds and so on. On the other hand, Ramanuja's (eleventh century C.E.) commentary on the *Geetha*, refuting the doctrine of unreality of the world as well as the path of renunciation of action, concludes that the Brahman is the highest reality of spirit with attributes of self-consciousness, knowledge of himself and a conscious will to create the world as well as to salvage his creatures. According to him, the Vedic gods are the servants of Brahman appointed in places to perform specific ordained duties. Madhava (1199–1276 C.E.), however, interprets the *Geetha* on the lines of dualistic (dvaitha) philosophy and contends that the Supreme and the soul are two entities different from each other, partial or entire unity between them being untenable. He sees devotion as the main theme emphasized in the *Geetha*. Nambarka (1162), however, observes the dual-nondual (dvaidā dvaitha) doctrine predominating the *Geetha* and therefore, in his *Brahma Sutra*, he holds the view that though the soul, the world and God are different from each other, the existence and activity of the former two depend on the will of God. He also emphasizes the devotional aspect of the *Geetha*. Vallabha (1479) develops the theory of pre-nondualism (Shudha dvaitha), which considers that pure soul blinded by illusions and Brahman are one and therefore that the release of soul that is a particle of God cannot be obtained except through the grace of God, the Supreme, attainable through devotion alone. There

are many other commentaries of the *Geetha* like those of M. K. Gandhi, Arobindo, B. K. Tilak, S. Radhakrishnan and others, each of whom had drawn his own conclusion from the *Geetha* to support the philosophy of each. Notwithstanding, one thing common to all these different schools of thought is the consensus that the main theme of the *Bhagavat Geetha* is devotion to the Supreme God through the exclusive worship of the Krishna Avathar.

To one who goes through the *Bhagavat Geetha* intently, it should be quite clear that the author wanted to convey the message that exclusive devotion to Krishna, recitation of the *Geetha* and meditation of Krishna considering him as the personal god can alone provide ultimate attainment of wisdom and enlightenment whereby union with the Supreme God may be attained, getting rid of the endless Samsara cycle. One cannot but suspect that this was an attempt of the author of the *Geetha* and the *Maha-Bharata* to advance the cult of Krishna worship exclusively. However, the contradiction between the various discourses in the *Geetha* makes it a philosophical document to be interpreted in many different ways. On the theme of Karma (work) it has two ideas, one opposing the other, namely, that after attainment of enlightenment and wisdom the need for work ceases although one may work for work's sake only and also that work is better than renunciation. Generally speaking, therefore, there appears to be a lot of confusion in the concept of the immutable God, personal gods, Iswara, Keshava, karma, soul, jiva, state of enlightenment, life after death and so on because of the fact that the idea conveyed about each is different on different occasions as well as interrelated at others. The *Geetha* even goes to the extent of saying that "For the yogi who has become accomplished as the result of having drunk the nectar of wisdom, no further duty remains; if any remains, he is not a real knower of truth." Such philosophies are difficult for the world dwellers to understand. If work ceases altogether, then will not the end of the world have come?

The idea behind the concept of God and his Avathars as enunciated in *Geetha* are:

"Though unborn, and myself unperishable, though the Lord of all creatures, yet establishing myself in my own nature, I come into being through my power" (IV:6).

"Whenever there is decline of righteousness and rise of unrighteousness, then I send forth myself" (IV:7).

"For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and for the establishment of righteousness, I come into being from age to age" (IV:8).

Although ten Avathars (incarnations) of Vishnu have been spelled out in the Vedic and other scriptures, the *Geetha* does not specifically mention any others than Krishna whom alone it sponsors as the exclusive incarnation of the Supreme God Himself, and not Vishnu, to whom complete devotion for redemption is due. At the same time, it is a point not to be lost sight of that although there are both the Vishnu and Shiva aspects of Brahman as sponsored by the Vedic and other literature, no Shiva incarnation is ever mentioned although the incarnations all arrived for the destruction of evil forces. And even so, although Rama also is considered as an incarnation of Vishnu in human form, usually he is not worshipped except in very, very rare cases. Further, Rama is not mentioned in the *Geetha* even once by name. The big question that still worries one is, for destruction of evil forces and restoration of order, should the Almighty God Himself incarnate at all? Can't he just order things so that they come into being as natural events and finish the job?

The Six Systems

Evolved by the Hindu philosophers after the year 200 C.E., the Six Systems was an endeavour to bring the ideas in the Vedic and epic literature in line with a metaphysical approach and consists of:

- the Jnanam (knowledge), which goes through the process of experience, induction, causation, comparison and metaphysics;
- the Vyseshika (particularity), which is the sixfold classification of objects;
- the Samkhya;
- the Yogam;
- Purva Meemamsam; and
- the Vedantha (Sacred doctrines and Upanishads).

Through the Six Systems, perhaps, it was the endeavour of the philosophers of Hindu ways of thought to develop a platform on which the many conflicting faiths, beliefs, devotions, worships, social norms and views could be defended and explained to some degree of cohesion and reasonableness so as to show them all at least not opposing each other and sensible through a step by step process of arriving at One Supreme God especially in the light of the teachings of the various new religious movements such as Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity, which had been established from about 600 B.C.E. onwards. The process of the Six Systems has continued ever since through the untiring efforts of so many Hindu thinkers such as Shankara, Ramanuja, Dayanand,

Ram Mohan Roy, Anne Besant, Arobindo, Tilak, Tagore, Ramanand, Radha Krishnan, Gandhi and many others, particularly since the seventh century C.E. when the full effect of the two dynamic religions, Christianity and Islam, with belief in One and Only God and universal brotherhood, started making inroads into the polytheistic and caste-ridden Hindu society of India. Nevertheless, by and large, faith in personal deities and plurality of gods and goddesses for varying purposes has remained so attractive among the masses and even educated classes of Hinduism that it is unthinkable that a Hindu can ever remain without having installed in his mind the efficacy of at least a couple of gods and goddesses who are believed to preside over material aspects such as life, safety, wealth and fortune, disaster, knowledge and so on in addition to the Supreme Narayana, Keshava, Brahman, Krshna, Paramathma or Bhagwan as may suit him, as well as the great Vishnu and Shiva. No temple can be found in the large length and breadth of India that has not at least one presiding idol of a god or goddess or even both, which is personally propitiated and taken refuge in, in the heart of hearts in times of happiness or sorrow by both the uneducated as well as the enlightened of the masses.

The Hindu Cosmology and Belief

The Hindu Supreme God, the attributeless Brahman, is manifested through the two powerful rival gods Vishnu and Shiva, who are the gods of creation as well as maintenance and destruction respectively. These, as well as scores of other gods and goddesses with wives and children are worshipped as deities for specific ends. The Hindu devotees are essentially categorized into either Vishnavites or Shivites who feud on the question of faith as to which of their deities is more powerful. Again, on the question of faith, some of the followers of Hinduism are so much opposed to each other that they do not even believe in some of the basic concepts of Hinduism like Karma, as in the case of the Lingayats of south India, nor do they consider the Vedas as anything sacred in nature, being nonrevelatory, and others, such as the hedonistic and almost atheistic Chakravats, reject many traditional Hindu doctrines like Dharma. The modern Hindu society has since long been forced by necessity of circumstances and impracticability, so to say, of the Hindu Dharma and codes to acquire such laxities as the eating of fish, eggs, and onions (by even a section of Brahmanas in Bengal) that are forbidden to those elsewhere and the eating of beef, which is the meat of the "Mother Cow" not only held as sacred but even worshipped by them. There is hardly any highly educated Hindu professional or

businessman who must not have gone overseas or taken to eating beef in spite of the penalty imposed on a Hindu of excommunication from the Hindu fold, as prescribed in the scriptures.

In Hindu cosmology, every major deity has several forms of manifestation. For example, Shiva is also Gangadhara, Mahadeva, Iswara, Neelankanta, Natraja and so on. Similarly, Vishnu has several incarnated as well as other forms, each referring to a mythical incident in which the particular form or quality plays the part. This is because Hinduism has a bias towards pantheism, at the root necessitating the worship and propitiation of countless deities. Puranas, which are old Sanskrit verses considered sacred and which detail the various Hindu religious rites, extol each deity as the greatest, at convenience.

In Vedic and other scriptural literature, while Brahma or "Iswara" is the one supreme Hindu God, Vishnu is also the god and pillar of the universe, identified with sacrifice and in whose "three footsteps or strides all things and beings are said to dwell, his abode being the realm of heaven in the third stride beyond the mortal reach and knowledge." He is also associated with the ten incarnations of god of whom Krshna, and very rarely Rama, the two incarnations in human form, is worshipped and adored along with his consort "Sri," mainly by the Vaishnavites as the supreme God himself. However, Svetasvatara Upanishad (about 400 B.C.E.) started the Shiva cult, developed in the name of "Rudra" of the Vedas who also is described as the god of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe, parallel with the then prevailing Krshna personal god cultured by the *Bhagavat Geetha* in the name of Vishnu. However, the *Bhagavat Geetha* emphatically declares that attainment of the pleasure of Brahman is easier through the worship of the Krshna incarnation of Vishnu. These and other directives of many other scriptures for the adoration and worship of scores of other gods and goddesses, have also developed into strong traditions with scriptural sanction over thousands of years with the same solemnity and devotion due to the One Supreme God. In fact, these have provided to the Hindu ample scriptural authority as well as incentive to substitute any convenient object in the name of personal gods for every possible occasion in the place of the Supreme God.

During the fourth to the eighth centuries C.E., during the Gupta rule of India, the Tantric as well as the Shakti devotional rites and cults as well as the compilation of ancient stories called "Puranas" came into being. The Tantric and Shakti cults, described in more detail later, were essentially associated with the Shiva cult. Thus a strong rivalry between the Vishnu cult and the Shiva cult, each claiming to represent the worship and adoration of the Supreme God, came to stay

in Hinduism, there being perhaps no worship directed towards the Brahman One God without intermediaries.

Kinds of Hinduism

Vedism was the religion of the earliest Aryan settlers of the Indo-Ganges plains about 2000 years B.C.E., their original religious texts being known as Vedas. Later on Brahmanism was evolved out of, or perhaps, as a part and parcel of Vedism itself, with a priestly elite from both Aryan and Indian stocks (remnants of the Aryan stock may still be identified in "Nambudiris" of Kerala and perhaps, others elsewhere too) to vouchsafe the interests of the ruling class called the "Kshatriyas." The priestly order, generally known as "Brahmanas," originally worshipped most probably, the One Supreme God Brahma and the similarity in the two designations is of great interest. It is quite possible that the nomadic migrating Aryans, on their way to the Indo-Ganges plains ultimately, must have had their sojourn in the southern Caspian area of Iran and Iraq where they must have gotten exposed to the teachings of Prophet Abraham (peace be on him) and his divine book and, later, to the teachings of others such as Zoroaster, thereby acquiring a variety of philosophies prevalent in those areas. The similarity between the words of Abraham (peace be on him), Brahman and Brahmana is worth noting in this connection. It was, however, in the Indian subcontinent that the two main doctrinal categories of the Vishnavites and Shivites worshipping Vishnu and Shiva respectively as supreme gods for all intents and purposes without the least thought about the Brahman Supreme One God during the worship had developed. Here the Vedic Hinduism which too had enough legacy of the worship of the gods and goddesses supposed to personify the various celestial bodies became interwoven with the animistic and pagan concepts of worshipping anything and everything that is either awe-inspiring or believed to be capable of benefitting the human being or warding off evils from him, a practice acquired from the middle east as well as locally. Today there are many groups among Hindus each consisting of many hundreds of thousands of people worshipping a variety of objects on the earth and the heavens as gods and goddesses who are believed by the respective suppliants as infallible and capable of answering their prayers apart from the Only One Brahma or Iswara. Among them are the Tantra, Shakti and Bhakti cultists concentrating on esoteric, magical and devotional aspects of worship as well as rituals connected with both Vishnu and Shiva. Finally, the folk Hinduism of the masses, being a mixture of the above cults with local folk beliefs

and practices but always centering round a particular demigod or goddess, considered as personal deity, family deity, local community deity and so on coexists, particularly among the two lower castes of Hindus.

Thus, although it is impossible to define Hinduism within any rigid framework because there are no beliefs and institutions that are firmly common to all Hindus, yet it is possible to identify a Hindu from others. Notwithstanding, some institutions such as Karma; Dharma; the four impregnable caste systems and associated untouchability; the Sathi ritual (immolation of the widow in the funeral pyre of the dead husband); the Brahman One God with the two rival deities Vishnu and Shiva, whose worship has perpetrated acute sect rivalry between the two factions of Hindu devotees; the worship of multifarious other gods and goddesses also as deities both in homes and temples and the offering of sacrifices to them as propitiation for gains and warding off evils; and unquestionable belief in astrological forecasts as well as signs (shagunams) as portending good or bad omens for acts are some of the ideas and institutions identifying a Hindu. The most important characteristics of a Hindu, however, are that he worships a plurality of gods and goddesses, treats a cow as a sacred animal, regards certain rivers, plants, mountains, and animals as holy, accepts the Brahmana class as infallible and holy and adheres with respect to the impregnable caste system. Those who abstain from the above are not in fact Hindus, but are without a religion of their own and believe in a lax and free life, having gotten exposed to so many environmental factors such as other superior kinds of beliefs, philosophies, free society or even Communism. The hill tribes of India, such as the Santhals, Bhils, Gondas, Nayadis and the original Nagas and others who follow the oldest forms of pre-Vedic animist religions, although taken as the untouchable Sudras for religious reasons, they are, however, categorized as hill tribes and scheduled castes, otherwise and politically too.

Vishnu is believed to have descended as avathar (incarnation) identifying with certain mythological, quasihistorical and historical figures. As has already been stated earlier, however, the *Geetha* specifies that the avathars and particularly Krshna are incarnations of the Supreme God and not of Vishnu as the rest of the scriptures bring out. According to the Vedic literature too, Vishnu incarnates in various forms to restore peace and order in the world at times when these have been destroyed by evil forces and ten such avathars have been mentioned. These are; the fish, the tortoise, the bear, the monster who was half-man and half-lion, a dwarf, Rama, Rama son of Amadgini, Krshna, Buddha and Kalki. The tenth, Kalki, which is a white winged horse, is believed yet to arrive.

It may safely be said that the Hindu culture is a way of life rather than a religion because one cannot find an easy way to become a Hindu through proselytization as in the case of Christianity or Islam, which have certain prescribed ways to do so that remain the same whoever wants to enter the folds of these religions. Due to the four-caste system there appears to be no specific entry point for a non-Hindu to join Hinduism because as no one would want to have the pleasure of joining the rank of the untouchables, and the higher castes, particularly the Brahmanas, being of the sacred "Twice Born," are barred to the new entrant. Therefore, in order to consolidate as well as to attract any new entrant to the folds of Hinduism, the abominable caste system has to get abolished. Perhaps, it was due to the impact of Islam during the rule of India by Muslims that toward the close of the fifteenth century C.E. a proselytizing adaption of Hinduism called Sikhism was evolved. Guru Nanak, a Hindu material reformist from the Punjab in India, prescribed a standard method of conversion to his casteless cult with certain distinguishing signs and dogmas and with a particularly martial spirit to not only rival Christianity and Islam, but also to prevent the two new religions from making inroads into the Hindu cultural life on account of them being more rational, particularly in ~~the field of creation of a classless society.~~ The Sikh renaissance movement appeared to attract, for a short time, considerable Hindus to its fold from the two lower castes for the reason that they had been groaning for centuries under the acute social discrimination imposed on them by the Hindu caste system backed by the scriptures. Nevertheless, the very fact of history that during the period of five centuries the cult has not attracted more than fifteen million Hindus, mostly from the two lower castes, to its fold out of the vast 600 million Hindu population of India proves that even this new effort was not able to emancipate the downtrodden hundreds of millions of lower caste Hindus of India, particularly of the Shudra class.

Unless one goes through the four Vedas, the Upanishads, the two epics and other scriptural literature such as the *Manusmriti*, one may not be able to get a complete picture of the almost rigid and impregnable cultural barriers posed by the Hindu caste system sanctioned and maintained by scriptural penal codes against their contravention, especially by the lower castes, as well as the elaborate purification rituals to be undertaken scrupulously by the higher castes as a result of pollution by the lower castes. The punitive scriptural law goes to the extent of even laying down the punishment of pouring molten lead into the ears of a Shudra who happens to steal into hearing when Vedas are recited by the Brahmanas. Under the circumstances remaining ignorant, how

a Shudra may attain "the highest goal" of redemption through Dharma and Karma as enjoined by the *Bhagavat Geetha* appears to be a mirage indeed. Thus, it is nothing but a statement of fact that the Indian culture as seen today, built up over tens of centuries through the cults of worship of scores of gods and goddesses as deities, modulated by the Aryan four-caste system, refined from time to time to the best of ability through the ceaseless efforts of patriot reformers who had been proud and zealous of maintaining their own national identity has continued to remain a way of life evolved through assimilation of a variety of cultures rather than a religion.

The Hindu Form of Worship

From what has been brought out in the foregoing pages, it should be clear that the concept of basic worship and devotion in the Hindu way of life is through a god or goddess called a deity who is adored and extolled for one or a couple of the many aspects of the Almighty God but from whom all sorts of bounties are sought by the devotee. Sacrifices and devotion are also offered to this deity as to the Almighty God Himself, there being different deities for different tribes, communities or even different persons in the same family and for different purposes. Nowhere in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and elsewhere in the world where Hindu culture exists can one find one single house or temple of worship where anything other than a demigod in the shape of either an idol or a illuminated picture is worshipped, the worship of the Absolute and formless One God being totally a myth. Even the concept of the supreme Brahman or Bhagwan supposed to be installed in the mind of a believer in the *Bhagavat Geetha* has been sized up to measure to the extent of Krshna by the scripture itself, and that too always as an idol or image suggesting that the personal god worship is better than the worship of the Absolute formless God. Even according to the Vyuha doctrine, developed in the *Narayaniya* and *Moksha Dharma* which followed *Bhagavat Geetha*, to reach at the Brahman through the Krshna incarnation is again a five-tier climb impossible except to a very few yogis only who are difficult to find even according to the *Geetha*. Ironically, even the *Geetha* states that a large majority of yogis also fall off without reaching their goal to be reborn, perhaps in a yogi family or in the house of such as are "pure and prosperous."

Nevertheless, the Hindu religion, as is understood from its scriptures by the large majority of the masses in India and elsewhere today,

finds expression in the strict observance of the caste system through rules of pollution and purity to be practiced by one and all scrupulously, in performing prayers and offerings as well as sacrifices to specific but mostly different deities as required by the family caste tradition; in partial fasting; propiation to the dead ancestors and personal or family deities as the case may be through offerings of food and sacrifices; listening to public readings of Harikatha epics and the scriptures and going on pilgrimage under vows to temples and shrines of famous deities everywhere as well as for bathing in sacred rivers. As essential as the above are the consulting of an astrologer and seeking the pleasure of the local or family deity through appropriate prayers, offerings and sacrifices prior to the commencement of specific important acts or during crises. For the commencement of each act of import, the most appropriate and auspicious time is watched by a Hindu through signs (Shaguna) of approval and nothing is undertaken against signs that are considered as opposing. In the course of day to day life, certain animals, particularly the cow, plants like Tulsi, reptiles like the snake and birds like peacocks and eagles are always held sacred and never harmed. The intellectuals concentrate on reading the Upanishads, the *Bhagavat Geetha* and the writings of the great teachers (Acharyas) while also following the daily deity worship as well as the customs of the general masses of the people, almost all of which have strong scriptural sanctions. Sathi practice has, however, disappeared from the Hindu society altogether consequent on its ban a long time ago by the British Indian government, but the widow remains unmarried.

The Hindu Caste System

It is impossible to detach the caste system from Hinduism, whether one likes it or not, whatever argument the modernist may try to put forward. In fact, the argument that there is no caste distinction as advocated by the Hindu scriptures is one of ignorance of the scriptures. The *Manusmriti*, attributed to the sage Manu who, according to the *Geetha*, had been so wise that "the imperishable yoga was proclaimed to him by the Lord through Vivasvan" (IV:1), and is the main canon of social laws, morals and punishments of Hindu religion, is emphatic on the question of strict class segregation because the classes were "born of nature" and the Hindu high castes were twice born, whereas the Shudras were by birth as well as profession unclean and, therefore, untouchables. Strict corporal punishments to the Shudras for approaching within an unsafe social distance, even having their shadows falling

on the Brahmana and for stealing a hearing into the reading of Vedas by Brahmanas are provided in the *Manusmṛithi*, while drastic purification ceremonies to be performed by the higher castes to reinstate the purity of the desecrated person and the holy place have also been indicated. Under the circumstances, the argument of the modern reformist Hindu that Hinduism does not advocate caste distinction and untouchability is tantamount to an act of apostasy. In fact, it has been an endeavour to counteract the superiority that Christianity and Islam have over Hinduism on the matter of extreme equality between brother and brother on the one hand and sister and sister on the other irrespective of race, colour, birth, family or profession. Going into more details, it is seen from the *Rg Vedic* hymn "Purusha Sukhtha," that the four castes (Varnas) or orders formed the limbs of the primaeval man (Purusha), who was a victim in the divine sacrifice that produced the Cosmos. The Brahmana emerged from his mouth, the Kshathriya from his arms, the Vaishya from his thighs and the Shudras from his feet. Thus, the impregnable four-caste system, acute untouchability, refusal of the higher castes even to permit the low castes to worship in temples and to take baths in public rivers and tanks, not to speak of eating together and free social mixing, have all become accepted and deep-rooted social evils in the Hindu society against which the lifelong fight of Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave did not bear much fruits during this century. This was because of the fact that the supremacy of the Vedas having been taken for granted by the Hindu masses, they are resigned to the inevitable fate governed by the scriptural Karma-Samsara cycle through which they are morally afraid of getting reborn and reborn as lower classes or even creations to face the consequences of scriptural sins such as breaking of the firm caste barrier. So, nothing can be done by anyone about it unless the lower castes convert to another religion that promises them equality between man and man as well as a philosophy that frees them from the Samsara doctrine altogether.

New Dimensions of Hindu Philosophy

Since the eighth century C.E., a number of Hindu philosophers have distinguished themselves in giving new dimensions to Hindu thoughts and ways of life, as the result of having been exposed to the impacts of science and technology on the society on the one hand and of the two important religions of modern times, namely Christianity and Islam, on the other, both religions having some common points of advantage over Hinduism, particularly in the areas of unity of God, salvation and internationalism. While Hinduism became stagnated

after having placed the society in the grips of pantheistic polytheism, the impregnable caste system and the Karma-Dharma oriented Sam-sara (transmigration of soul) rebirth cycle, the two new movements had quite a lot to offer to mankind in the field of salvation through good work as well as the pardon of the just, kind and merciful One God, in the fields of social equality and equal opportunity in all spheres. Naturally, the two religions had great appeal to the followers of Hinduism. Therefore, primarily to safeguard Hinduism from erosion by the two new religions, as well as to remove some basic inconsistencies, quite a lot of efforts involving reinterpretations and reequations of the various contradictory and outdated doctrines existing in the Vedic, Upanishad and epic scriptures which had hitherto been considered uncontestable became a dire necessity of circumstance. This was first provided through what are called the "Shakti" (energy) and "Bhakti" (devotional) cults.

The Shakti Cult

Although a revitalising movement aimed actively at implanting the Vedic doctrines, this provided the much-needed action of the Hindu devotees to exhibit their acute devotion to the Vedic gods. In effect, the Shakti cult is the worship of the female personification principle in the creation of the universe. Instead of the usual worship of the deity, the worship of Parvathi, the wife of Shiva, takes precedence in the Shakti cult by worshipping with great pomp and show in some of her manifestations such as Devi, Jagan Matha, Durga, Kali, Bhagawathi and Chamundi. However, worship on the same lines of Lakshmi, who as the consort of Vishnu is rare, although she is worshipped as the goddess of wealth by all Hindus both in homes and temples. The Bhakti cult is elaborated in the *Tantras*, believed to have been written during the sixth and seventh centuries C.E. The cult has gone as far as the worship of Parvathi in her different forms with five Ms prescribed in the *Tantras*, namely *Mamsa* (flesh), *Matsya* (fish), *Madya* (wine), *Maidhuna* (copulation) and *Mudra* (mystical finger signs) accompanied by the sacrifice of animals and sometimes even human beings among some of the extreme hill tribes of the Vamachari branch of the cult.

Bhakthi Cult

The Bhakthi cult is one of the important modern philosophies of Hindus mainly in the North of India. Based on the Vishnavite devotionalism of the Panchathanthra school of the twelfth century C.E.,

the Ramanuja version of the cult is derived from the qualified monism (Vishishta Daita). While it is associated in northern India with Vishnu, particularly in Krshna incarnation, in the south of India it is associated with both Vishnu and Shiva. Even Shankara (788-820 C.E.) who was the exponent of extreme monism (Kevala Dvaita) is believed to be the author of some devotional verses sung in honor of Devi, Shiva and Vishnu. The basic Vedic cults worshipping a variety of gods and goddesses have, however, been sized down through the various revitalizing movements to the minimal trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) accompanied by the worship of Vishnu represented by the Krshna incarnation, Shiva, the wives of the deities as well as some of their progeny gods and goddesses.

Subsequently, as the result of contacts with Arab Muslim traders first, followed by both Christian and Muslim evangelists and in later years as a result of Muslim Arab, Afghan and Moghul as well as Christian conquerors from the western areas of India, similar cleaning-up Hindu movements had taken shape in India spearheaded by philosophers such as Madhava and Ramanand (fourteenth century C.E.), Arya Samaj of Dayanand Saraswathi, Brahma Samaj of Ram Mohan Roy and the Theosophical Society of New York City, founded by Helena Blavatsky of Russia and later shifted to India to be succeeded by Madame Anne Besant (nineteenth century), Ramakrishna and Vivekanand and many others to give new dimensions to the Hindu philosophy with the objective of consolidating the Hindu society from the onslaughts of the more dynamic religions of Christianity and Islam in particular and, as much as possible, to bring about integration and toleration among the three prime religions of India. Although the Hindu intelligentsia, mainly from the upper castes of Hindu society, was generally enthusiastic about these new movements, the lower Hindu castes, particularly the Shudras, found nothing much attractive in them because the irrevokable Hindu caste system had grass roots in the masses and society with fears of rebirth as the result of scriptural Samsara doctrine implanted in their minds. Therefore, the only solution for emancipation of society and the individual soul from the age-old bondages could be achieved only through entering the folds of either Christianity or Islam. Thus, by and large, the occasional Hindu renaissance movements did not become as fruitful as they were intended to be. The untiring efforts of the Arya Samaj through the *Shuddi* (cleaning up) movement to induce social, cultural and economic incentives as well as advantages to the depressed and scheduled castes on the one hand and vigorous private and public exhortations to the higher castes to refrain from the abominable caste distinction as well as untouchabil-

ity, sometimes under martial pressures that have many a time led to communal clashes in India have, however, not proven too successful except for very short periods. The tendency to convert is still a cherished hope and characteristic of most of the downtrodden members of the Hindu lower castes and generally it has been finding realization very frequently in all parts of India whenever a favorable atmosphere occurs. There was a time in the living memory of the present older generation when the *Harijans*, as the untouchables are usually called in India, under the leadership of Ambedkar, who had mustered the following of over six million such miserable people, having threatened to convert to Christianity and Islam, were prevented from doing so by the Indian Hindu nationalist leader M. K. Gandhi who tried all he could, including a fast unto death, to coerce the Savarnas (the upper castes) not only to abstain from the practice of untouchability and discrimination between themselves and the Avarnas (the lower castes), but also to throw open all public institutions such as bathing places, temples, schools and so on to the Avarnas, unconditionally. The movement, of course, had some effect but soon the tempo diminished and today, again, a similar situation has, in fact, come to threaten the Hindu society of India. Since the independence of India in 1947, the earlier efforts of the British government involving educational incentives, job opportunities, special colonisation schemes and intervention of the civil administration to quell unreasonable oppression of the Avarnas by the Savarnas were reinforced by declaring the practice of any kind of social discrimination unlawful. The laws now offer equal opportunity and even incentives to the lower castes as well as the scheduled castes in all spheres of life. Nevertheless, the social problem of religious discrimination, which has its root in scriptural sanction under the spiritual threat of getting involved in the Karma-Dharma-Samsara vicious circle always haunts the searching minds of all four castes of Hindu society, making it impossible to root out this abominable social evil in its entirety.

The Hindu Philosophy

Accommodation of any philosophical viewpoint that suits any occasion in the form of a personal god, if need be through suitable interpretation, has been the underlying feature behind the survival of Hinduism in spite of the undeniable facts that it is a way of life built on polytheism with perhaps many thousands of gods, goddesses and demigods who, along with the souls of ancestors, are revered and worshipped as deities for specific advantages and salvation from the effects of evil forces and

in spite of acute social discrimination practiced on the basis of work and birth. There is no redemption from sin except through living out in full through several life cycles based on the doctrine of Karma and transmigration of soul from one dead body into another until such time that the bad fruits of the entire sins are tasted in this world itself and then one attains union with the Absolute God through yoga so as to get rid of the rebirth cycle for good. That even the Absolute God is not able to alter the course of events of the ordained law is amply proven from the utterances of Krshna in the *Bhagavat Geetha* with the result that the Supreme God has no compassion so far as Dharma and Karma are concerned. Thus for a Hindu there is no prayer for the pardon from sins. The Hindu religion does not have any institution called a prophet or a messenger of God. Instead, it believes in the doctrine of incarnation of God in the form of a creature, who may be man, animal or both as the occasion demands so as to destroy a particular evil or injustice and to restore order in the world. There are ten such incarnations mentioned in the scriptures (enlarged to twenty-two in the tenth century C.E.), two of which were in human form with a full span of human life and the last, a white horse, yet to come. The doctrine of incarnation as well as the Samsara (transmigration of souls) have Vedic as well as Geethaic authority and the Hindu cannot have mental solace on account of the Dharma-Karma-Samsara concept advocated by the scriptures. Thus, the entire process of evolution as well as the life cycle, according to the Hindu philosophy, is based on this trio cycle. The Dharma (duty) of any person is identified with his caste in the society and thus the criterion of work is different for different classes, the best having been allotted by nature and birth to the twice born and all toils to the people of the two lower castes.

Some of the important aspects of Hindu philosophy that are associated with day to day human life are the endless rebirths through the doctrine of transmigration of souls as different kinds of creatures in relation to Karma (work) performed during the previous life; the abominable caste system, which is so impregnable that even God cannot alter it; abstention from consumption of certain foods only by the Brahmanas; designation of one class of the society, the Brahmanas as the priestly class, the Kshatriyas as the ruling and fighting class and the exclusive allocation of agriculture, trade and artisanship to the Vaishya, and Shudra untouchable class; worship of many thousands of deities as well as souls of dead ancestors and their timely propitiation for profit; attribution of powers of creation, sustenance and destruction to rival gods; denial of acquisition of higher knowledge to the Shudra class; prohibition from going overseas under threat of expulsion from

the society (Bhrisht); canonical belief on astrological forecasts about the unknown future through dice throwing and estimating the position of planets as well as the scrupulous adherence to the conclusions arrived thereat; and most of all, the firm belief that the deity worshipped as god or goddess must help the devotee to attain the desired objective.

It is thus evident that for modern developed mankind that aspires to get material emancipation by entering an era of plenty, prosperity and social justice for all human beings, irrespective of color, race or profession and to get salvation of the soul through work and mercy of God, the Hindu philosophy and ways punctuated by social injustice and primitive polytheist and mythical concepts regarding God and redemption does not fit into the scheme as such for adoption as a meaningful international way of life providing social, moral and spiritual satisfaction to the large masses of people inhabiting this world (which is approaching five billion mark). It is quite likely that it was in realization of this fact that as early as the sixth and fifth century B.C.E. two new religions, Buddhism and Jainism, with some minor deviations from Hinduism but not much in deeper details, were evolved in the north of India; these too, after thriving for a couple of centuries under royal patronage from Kings Asoka and Kanishka, faded away, only the former seeking new pastures in Sri Lanka, Burma and the Far East, without leaving much of their heritage in their birthplace of India except archeological monuments and a short but glorious past history.

An attempt, therefore, was made again during the fifteenth century C.E. by a Hindu reformist by the name of Guru Nanak to make improvements to the spiritual, moral and social aspects of Hinduism by founding the Sikh way of life in the Punjab area of northern India. Although known as a separate religion with an entity distinct from its mother Hindu religion, Sikhism has been considered, by far, as an adaption of Hinduism.

As has been explained earlier, in spite of repeated attempts on the part of several Hindu philosophers and reformists since the eighth century C.E. onwards to give new dimensions to the Hindu scriptural philosophy firstly by trying to interpret the polytheistic and pantheistic worship of innumerable idols supposed to represent demigods and goddesses of Hindu scriptures as nothing but another way leading to monotheism, and secondly by arguing that the caste system advocated by the Hindu scriptures rather than being discriminating is only a classification of people for the convenience of the social life; the abolition of the scripturally ordained Sathi ritual of self-immolation of women in the funeral pyre of the dead husband by the British Indian govern-

ment about two centuries ago on the one hand and more recently the action of the government of the independent India in forbidding observance of the scripturally ordained untouchability and segregation, making it unlawful to prevent the lower castes from worshipping in temples or eating in restaurants or bathing in community rivers and lakes along with the high castes and so on, on the other, by way of copying such innovations from the other dynamic sister religions with advantages aimed at social emancipation of the scripturally downtrodden lower castes; these, however, have not enabled the contradicting and mythical Hindu philosophy and irrational way of life of the religion of the Vedas, Epics and Vedantha to reconcile with science, logic and reason of the fully developed mankind of today.

Chapter 7

Islam

The Religion

Islam, with about a billion followers today, and generally spoken of by non-Muslims as "Mohammedanism" due to their ignorance, is in fact the religion of "Peace" as the very word in Arabic denotes—peace for oneself, peace for the society, peace for the entire world and peace during the life after death. To put the matter straight, Islam is not the religion evolved by its prophet, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) either as an invention or as an innovation of his own, but "It is the religion with Allah," as declared in "Al-Quraan," which is the holy scripture of Muslims believed to have been revealed to the prophet by Allah through the archangel "Jibreel" (Gabriel). To call Islam "Mohammedanism" is to call the religion propagated by the Torah and the prophet Moses (peace be on him) "Mosaism." Islam recognises the "Sole One" planner, designer, creator, sustainer and disposer of the entire Universe as well as everything in it and beyond by the unique and irreplaceable "Quraanic" term of "Allah," a concept perhaps like the unique Tbrahic concept of "Yahweh." For the simple reason that the term "God," with whatever sanctity and respect it may be used to denote the "One Lord" of the Universe, because this may be also used to represent plurality, femininity and to designate creations of the "Only One Lord of the Universe," it cannot be used by Muslims to replace or even to represent the unique concept of Allah whatsoever. It is thus a unique proper name and even in pronouns referring to Allah, the words are written with an initial capital letter, as in the case of a proper noun. No pronouns other than singular ones such as He, Ye, Thou, are used while referring to Allah. However, in the Holy Quraan, Allah addresses Himself as both "T" and "We," the latter to represent His all-embracing sovereignty, majesty and power but not in the plural sense. The Quraan declares that "the religion before Allah is Islam" (3:19) and that "You (Muslims) are the best of people evolved for mankind enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah" (3:110). Thus, Islam is "Submis-

sion of one's whole self to the will of Allah" (3:83) and "Belief in Allah and what is revealed by Him to (the last of the prophets) Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), as well as what was revealed to prophets Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes and in books given to Moses, Jesus and prophets (peace be on them) from their Lord" (3:84).

The Holy Prophet of Islam

Muhammad, the unlettered and orphan prophet of Islam (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) who had been known as "Al-Ameen," meaning "The Truthful," or "The Trustworthy," and through whose dedicated mission Allah completed and perfected the religion to be a guide for the whole of developed mankind, was born in Makkah (Mecca) in the Hijaaz area, some seventy-four kilometers to the east of the port city of Jeddah in the present kingdom of Saudi Arabia. His father was the most loved of all the children of Abdul Muthalib, the chief of the prestigious Qureish clan of Makkah, and his mother, Aminah, was the daughter of Abdul Manaaf, the chief of the Zuhrah tribe. Abdullah had died at Madinah during a business trip when Aminah had not yet delivered a baby, who was named "Muhammad" (the praised), a name not usually found among men then in Makkah. The exact year, month, date or time of the birth of the baby is not known because of the varying reports available on this information. However, it is generally believed that he was born on the twelfth of Rabiul Awwal, the third month of the lunar calendar of the year 570 C.E., which was known as the year of the elephant because it was in that year that the Abyssinian governor of Yemen, Abraha, went to demolish the house of God in Makkah known as the "Ka'abah," which is believed to have been built by the prophets Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son, (Ismail) (peace be on them) for the worship of the One Lord of the universe about 2,000 B.C.E. and which had been considered holy ever since even by the pagan Arabs of Makkah as well as of areas far around it. As per the custom of the Qureish, the baby was looked after in the desert by a wet nurse by the name of Haleemah of Banu Sa'd tribe for the first two years until weaning, but as the lady Haleemah and her people had developed exceptional affection for the radiant baby, and perhaps also due to superstition, because he was thought to have brought fortune to the family, she volunteered to look after him up to his fifth year. Thereafter, until his mother's visit along with him to relatives in Madinah where the mother died, he had been living with his grandfather Abdul Muthalib. The orphan boy who had now lost his father

as well as mother was looked after by the grandfather as the apple of his eye until he attained the age of eight. However, on the death of the grandfather, his uncle Abu Thalib took good care of the boy, and at the age of twelve he also took the boy, on his insistence, on a business trip to Syria. It is reported that while in Syria, the boy was spotted by a Christian monk by the name of Baheerah, who advised Abu Thalib to protect the child from Jews, as he had found signs of the coming prophet in the child and the Jews may, therefore, try to harm him. Except for this and some other minor incidents that are not corroborated unanimously, the young Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) grew up among the pagan Arabs of Makkah, without any miracles being associated either during his birth or during his early days.

As a youth, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) usually turned away from unwholesome recreatory pursuits of boys of his age. His ways and conduct were so perfect, just and honest that, rightly, he earned from the Makkans the unanimous title of "Al-Ameen," meaning "The Trustworthy," or "The Truthful."

Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) had the profession of herdsman of the family during his younger days and as reported, he used to recollect later, proudly and joyfully, "God sent no prophet who was not a herdsman. . . Moses and David were herdsmen and I too was commissioned as a prophet while I grazed my family cattle at Ajjad." At the age of twenty-five, young Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) became an employee of a wealthy merchant lady by the name of Khadeejah to become her agent for trade between Makkah and Syria. The extraordinary business success of the youth resulted in his marriage to Khadeejah at her insistence, which turned out to be one of the happiest of married lives, in spite of the disparity of ages between the two, lady Khadeejah being forty and he only twenty-five at the time. Approval and respect that young Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) enjoyed among the Qureish, young and old, as well as the other tribes of Makkah, is demonstrated by the incident relating to the arbitration that he made when the rebuilding of the Ka'abah was being done soon after his marriage to lady Khadeejah. It is said that when the time came for placing the sacred black stone in its place in the eastern wall of the Ka'abah, each of the tribes insisted, some even at the cost of bloodshed, that this great honour should go to them, and Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) was made the arbitrator unanimously. With great intelligence, political foresight and ability he arranged the stone to be lifted jointly by the representatives of the contesting tribes

by placing it on a sheet of robe and then himself placing it in position on their behalf, to the unanimous approval of all and preventing any tribal rift and bloodshed.

The First Revelation

Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) had made it his routine to visit as often as he could a cave, Hira, on the top of Mount Noor, or "Light," a couple of kilometers on the outskirts of Makkah from where he could see the Ka'abah and its precincts in order to meditate peacefully, the cave being approachable by most with determination. About 610 C.E., when Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) had attained the mature age of forty, one day while he was meditating in the cave, an angel, who was later known to be the archangel Jibreel (Gabriel), appeared before him with a sheet and asked him to "Read." As he could not read and write, he asked, "What shall I read?" The angel then pressed him tight severely and repeated as before, "Read!" But he again asked, "What shall I read?" The angel reapplied the squeezing pressure, this time more severely and asked him to "Read," but for the third time he said with terrific fear, "What shall I read when I cannot read or write," expecting another harder squeeze. The angel then said, after a third and much harder squeeze, "Read in the name of your Lord, the Creator, who created man of a clot of blood. Read! your Lord is Most Gracious who taught man by the pen what he did not know," and Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) repeated what the angel said and memorised it. Thus came to the prophet the first revelation as the sign of his commission.

Fear-stricken, trembling, not knowing what it meant and what to do, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) hurried home to seek solace from his dear wife, Khadeejah. He was in bad shape, down with high fever and rigor, and he asked Khadeejah to wrap him up in blankets. As he narrated the whole incident to her, she at once consoled him, saying that she had the hope that he would be the prophet of the Arab nation. However, as he went to sleep, she hurriedly consulted her learned Christian cousin Warqah Bin Nowfal, who assured her that he was convinced of the fact that it must have been none other than the Great Spirit who had spoken to Moses (peace be on him), and that Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) must be the prophet of the Arab nation. On her return, she found that her dear husband was again shivering, breathing deeply and perspiring. When he opened his eyes, he could hear the angel say, "Oh, you who lie

wrapped in your mantle! arise and warn. Glorify your Lord. Purify yourself. Shun uncleanness. Give not in order to have more in return. For the sake of your Lord endure patiently." Again she consoled him, narrating what her evangelist cousin had told her of the incident in the cave. She became the first believer in the prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him). Later, when Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) had gone for circumambulation of the Ka'abah, Warqah Bin Nowfal, who was also there, personally assured his support to the former, declaring that the same spirit who had gone to Moses (peace be on him) had visited him also, that he was the prophet of the Arab nation and that the struggle ahead would be very hard. The revelation stopped after that for a while. However, the prophet had started on his mission of purification of self, reinforcing his belief in the only One Allah and eschewing the idols in the Ka'abah and elsewhere who could not see, hear, speak or help themselves. It was after a considerable lapse of time when the prophet was in the cave of Hira on the same "Mount of Light" that he received the next revelation of the ninety-third chapter of the Quraan, "The Morning Light" or the "Forenoon," a reassurance to him that "Neither had his Lord forsaken him nor had been displeased with him and that he will be well pleased with the bounty of the Lord. . . ." Soon Allah taught His prophet how to say his prayers and worship (Salat) his Lord, and on seeing him and lady Khadeejah praying together, his nephew Ali Bin Abu Thalib, who became the fourth caliph later and was also living in the same house, embraced Islam while still a boy. This was followed by Zaid Bin Harith, who was a slave bought by the prophet before the revelation and adopted as his son. However, the Makkan Qureish resisted the innovation of Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) because it eschewed the traditional gods of their forefathers, 360 or more of them having been installed in the Ka'abah alone. Soon the first man from outside the house of the prophet to embrace Islam was his trusted friend, Abu Bakr, who became the first caliph on the former's demise twenty-three years later. Soon after Abu Bakr's public announcement of his conversion, he started inviting his friends also to embrace Islam and quite a few from the clan of Qureish as well as others did join them, but for fear of enmity and antagonism of the clan leadership, many of them used to hide the fact of their conversion. They used to offer their prayers, therefore, outside the city of Makkah. Revelation of Quraan continued in the meanwhile unabated, however. It was three years after the first revelation that Allah commanded Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) to proclaim Islam among the relatives of the prophet and the masses openly (Al-Quraan 26:214-216; 15:94).

The Qureish, on their part, challenged him when he took the initiative of attacking their idols. They ridiculed him in poems and asked him to show miracles similar to what Moses and Jesus (peace be on them) had done before or to transform the mounts Safa and Marwa in Makkah to gold or to bring down the calamity of his God over them and so on and so forth. The prophet, however, remained solid as a rock, unmoved, telling them that he had been sent as a messenger to warn them by conveying the divine message and as a blessing to the universe rather than to be a diviner or invoker of curse and calamities. Although his uncle Abu Thalib had not become a Muslim, he continued to provide protection to his beloved nephew. Nevertheless, when the Qureish finally showed their determination to harm his nephew, Abu Thalib was forced to tell Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) to save himself as he was not able anymore to bear the burden which he could not carry. In reply to this, after a serious pause, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) replied to his uncle that even if they placed the sun in his right hand and the moon on his left, he was not prepared to renounce the cause of Allah and retrace his steps. Hearing this, the sympathy and love was aroused in his uncle, who blessed him in his mission and swore not to betray him to enemies, a promise which he upheld thereafter.

Islam being a scientific process and method based on intense investigation by observation, classification, comparison, experimentation and drawing of sensibly logical conclusions from the results, the call of Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), guided by revelations of Allah, the originator and sustainer of the universe, from time to time, was nothing but the call to get into harmony with the nature in all walks of human thought and action and he went on appealing to the Arab people. Their deep-rooted orthodoxy and paganism, although acute in the beginning, began to be overpowered by the nucleus of exemplary and selfless society that was being established by selected few persons from many tribes of Arabia under the banner of Islam and leadership of Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him). However, the incorrigible pagans under the leadership of the Makkan Qureish stalwarts continued their oppression of Muslims, some of whom, being their slaves, were mercilessly beaten and tortured as they refused to retrace their steps to paganism and leave Islam. When the persecution of Muslims increased, the prophet asked his followers to disperse to the rest of the world and on his advice, a small group of them sought refuge in Abyssinia. Nagus, the Abyssinian king, gave protection to the Muslim emigrants until they returned to Makkah after a while, on hearing that Umar Bin al-Khattab, who

became the second caliph on the demise of Abu Bakr in later years, had embraced Islam. But their calculation had gone wrong because on the conversion of the strong and passionate Umar, the Makkan Qureish had split into two powerful opposite camps, one under the Muslims Abu Bakr, Hamza and Umar, and the other under pagan Abu Lahab, another uncle of the prophet, the latter and his supporters having intensified their oppression and persecution of Muslims. Consequently, a group of about seventy Muslims again went back to Abyssinia, where they lived until the emigration (Hijrah) of the holy prophet and his companions to Yathrib (Medinah) later. The Makkan Qureish had even blockaded the houses of the local Muslims altogether, some of whom had even to die of it. Later, however, a better sense of clanism prevailed due to the intervention of some wise pagans and the blockade was finally removed. It was soon after this incident that lady Khadeejah, the prophet's wife, and his protector uncle Abu Thalib passed away. The hostility against the prophet and Muslims increased after the demise of lady Khadeejah and Abu Thalib, both of whom were quite influential. The Qureish even had resorted to throwing rubbish and filth on the prophet during his prayers. When the oppression became unbearable, the prophet undertook a secret trip to the neighbouring city of Taif, where the tribes not only rejected him but also stoned him severely, bleeding him. On hearing this news, the Qureish became trigger happy and increased their oppression of the prophet and the companions with more vigour. It was during this period that Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) became engaged to Ayishah, the eight-year-old daughter of Abu Bakr, but the marriage was held in abeyance until the girl attained her maturity of twelve years. However, for the sake of a companion and solace during those days of intense trial, he married lady Sowdah, a widow of one of his companions who on his return from Abyssinia had died.

Almost the same time, about 621 C.E., had taken place the epoch-making, great "Al-Mi'raj" or "Isra'a" (Ascension) of the holy prophet, a journey of a part of the night to reinforce his spiritualism and knowledge of the unseen about which the Lord of the universe alone knows. The journey from the sacred mosque at Makkah (the Ka'abah) to the sacred mosque in Jerusalem (Masjidul Aqsaa) with a vision of the glory of Allah, the celestial beings, the beauty and splendour of the paradise promised to the faithful and meetings with the souls of the earlier prophets is unique in that the very belief in this narrative of the "Truthful" messenger of Allah provides the touchstone of the belief of the faithful. Without going into any discussion as to whether it was a vision, spiritual ascension or bodily ascension, which anyway does not

provide any useful analysis on this only one unique phenomenon that neither happened to anyone before nor will happen to anyone in the future, it may only be said that this was one of the greatest of miracles on which the faith and belief of Muslims in the greatness of the Lord of the universe, the greatness of the "Crown of Prophets" and the certified honesty of this great prophet of Islam rest quite a lot. It was an incident that could not even be comprehended by the pagans of Makkah, although they had blind faith in the powers of the innumerable stone statues who could not see, hear, feel or even help themselves and were enshrined in not only the holy Ka'abah but everywhere to help the devotees in all eventualities! They were devoid of comprehension beyond a camel ride through the barren desert from south of Arabia to the Syrian capital in the north, or a sailing voyage across the Red Sea lasting for weeks and months with no forecastable results. However, for the man of science of today, the very term "Buraq" evolved from "Burq," meaning lightning, electricity or even electronics and so on, which is used to denote the conveyance used by the angel of Allah to carry the holy prophet from Makkah to Jerusalem by air and the unknown method represented by a glittering ladder, so to say, which was the medium for ascending him to the sanctum sanctorum through the various stages of the heaven in a few hours during the silent part of the night and the fantastically long return trip should not pose any problem as far as understanding the technique is concerned. Even a young child of today does not get flabbergasted when the newsflash about a space probe directed toward space or the skylab flight lasting from a few days to several years in space and back is given on the radio, television or news media. Decades have lapsed after nuclear submarines and ships have been put into the sea without being refuelled at all. Several millions of kilometers are involved in each of these journeys, quite a number of them, including returns being controlled by stations on the earth! The scientist of today is well aware of the law of interchangeability of material mass and energy. From the viewpoint of science through the process of conversion of matter into energy, it should be possible to attain the velocity of light, but how to attain it is the only problem. If man could place space probes in orbit and also retrieve them at will, will it be difficult for the Lord of the universe to perform such a miracle as the prophet's ascension in body? If light, which is the threshold of the theory of relativity as far as mankind is concerned, may travel over a billion kilometers in an hour and nearly nine billion kilometers in eight hours, can anyone even comprehend how far another super energy at super velocity at the control of the Lord of the universe much, much above the human

threshold, may travel in as much time? Sitting in an armchair looking at the wonderful sky, cannot the comprehension of man travel right into the so-called "black hole" far beyond the Milky Way at the supposed "end of space" and also return into his own vision in a split second? As far as the conversion from matter to energy and vice versa are concerned, this field in many cases is child's play for man today. Is it then anything at all for the Lord of the universe? Thus, the incident of the ascension of the prophet is nothing that can be considered as fiction in today's language of science. Therefore, whether it was a vision of comprehension or a physical act should not matter to the scientific man of today. After all, he was carried by an angel in a special vehicle so far unknown to man! The only question is whether one is prepared to believe or not the prophet who narrated it with his social background of unanimous approval as "The Truthful" by one and all of his time. The real believers all believed the prophet's statement and those who did not became apostates. It was as simple as that. Many followers too left the prophet after the incident of Ascension was disclosed by him. When the oppression of the Muslims by the enemies was stepped up and the desertion of some followers diminished the ranks of the companions, instruction was received by the prophet from Allah to emigrate to Yathrib (Madinathul Munawwarah), where he had cultivated enough sympathisers. It was the city of a number of his relatives as well. Moreover, a number of companions who had already migrated to Madinah earlier had been impatiently awaiting the arrival of their leader. The prophet and Abu Bakr managed to slip away by night without the enemies ever knowing it, as the information was received by them that the enemies had made plans to assassinate the prophet. On arrival in Madinah, the prophet and Abu Bakr were received by the Madinites with brotherly warmth and affection. It was in Madinah that the foundations of the Islamic welfare society and state were laid by Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) after winning a number of essential religious wars (*Jihad*), including the conquest of Makkah, the home. These wars for survival of Muslims were imposed on him by the Makkan Qureish, pagans, Jews and others in the Arabian peninsula.

Finally, after completion of revelation of the final book of Allah's guidance to mankind, the Quraan, laying down comprehensive principles of law and practice for the evolution of an indiscriminating Muslim welfare society and state at all occasions, not only for the Arabs, but also for the entire world, at the age of sixty-three, Muhammad, the last and final prophet of Islam (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), breathed his last in the year 632 C.E. in Madinathul Munaw-

warah, leaving a philosophy and way of life that are a standard and ideal for developed mankind to follow until the last day of the human species on this earth.

Muhammad, the Prophet (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), being the last of prophets to appear before mankind on this earth, has demonstrated a complete model life for mankind as a boy, youth, husband, father, teacher, ruler, and a prophet, all in one, being himself nothing exceptional from any other human being except his special status of prophethood. He stressed the importance of good thoughts, words and deeds in all walks of life, always becoming a model and example for others to follow easily.

The Sources of Islam

The Quraan and Hadeeth (the traditions of the Holy Prophet) are the two main sources of the religion of Islam.

The Holy Quraan

The Holy Quraan was revealed by Allah to His prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) through the archangel Jibreel (Gabriel) over a period of about twenty-three years, the first verses having been revealed "in the night of Power" (97:1), "a blessed night" (44:3), which most commentators consider as the last ten days of the sacred month of Ramadhan. That the Quraan is magnificent Arabic literature, unsurpassed in beauty, content and without any contradictions is acknowledged by many non-Muslim writers. That the Quraan was preserved correctly to the letter and punctuation as in the revelation without pollution, has been amply proven by the fact that the Quraan, since its day-to-day revelation to the prophet, had been faithfully committed to the memories of many a disciple as well as preserved in writings to such correctness and perfection that all over the world millions of copies of the Quraan have been existing over the ages until today without even a letter being different from one copy to another. The *Janam Sakhis* (life stories) of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, written by "gurus" like Guru Dangji and others within fifty to eighty years after the death of their leader, show that Guru Nanak had said, "We have carefully seen Torah, Zabur, Injil and Veda but for the world the code of complete guidance is only Quraan (page 147); "If there is any book of faith, it is only Quraan (page 149)." George Sale,

in the preliminary discourse (section 3, P. 47-48) of his translation of the Quraan writes, "It (Quraan) is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue. . . . The Quraan is generally beautiful and fluent, especially when it imitates the prophetic manner and scriptural phrases. It is. . . enlivened with florid and sententious expressions, and in many places, especially where the majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent." Again, in the translation of the Quaraan, J. M. Rodwell (p. 15) says, "It must be acknowledged too, that Quraan deserves the highest praise for its conceptions of the divine nature in reference to the attributes of power, knowledge and universal providence and unity; that its belief and trust in one God of heaven and earth is deep and fervent; and though it contains fantastic legends and visions, teaches a childish ceremonial, and justifies bloodshedding, persecution, slavery and polygamy, yet at the same time it embodies much of a noble deep moral earnestness and sententious oracular wisdom, and has proved that here are elements in it on which mighty nations, and conquering, though not, perhaps, durable, empires can be built." Further, Sir Hamilton Gibb says in his *Mohammadanism* (p. 49-50, second edition, 1957), "It seems reasonably well established that no material changes were introduced (in Quraan) and that the original form and contents of Mohammad's (peace be on him) discourses were preserved with scrupulous precision." It is also of interest to know that in his *History of Religions* (volume II, 1950, p. 386), George Foot Moore writes, "Islam is the most recent of the great religions, and its rise and early progress lie more fully than any other in the daylight of history. The revelations of the prophet during the twenty years, more or less, of his career were collected in Quraan within the next years after his death, and of the authenticity of its contents there has been never any substantial question." In the Life Publication of *The World's Greatest Religions* (110-123) is found, "It is not certain that Mohammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) could read or write, but almost from the start his followers took down what he recited using scraps of parchments of leather, tablets of stones, ribs, pieces of board and breasts of men. Soon after Mohammad's (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) death in 632 A.D., these fragments were collected and the Quraan was assembled."

In his book *The Bible, the Qur'an and Science*, Dr. Maurice Bucaille examines the holy scriptures in the light of modern scientific knowledge. He has proven conclusively, not only that the only holy scripture that does not provide any contradictions to the modern concepts of science is the Quraan, but also that the insights provided by this scripture into the secrets of creation, life, and the universe are actually in

accordance with the scientific facts of this century. This would be inconceivable if the Quraan were the work of a single man or were copied from earlier scriptures, particularly the Bible.

As per the consensus of the disciples, based on the discourse of the holy prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), himself being illiterate, he was unable to read the revelation from Allah when it was first conveyed to him by the archangel Jibreel. It contained the famous Quraanic verses 1 to 5 of chapter 96, "Read in the name of your Lord who created, created the man from a clot of congealed blood; Read and thy Lord is most bountiful who taught the use of the pen, taught man what he knew not." It is said that when the prophet replied to the angel that he could not read and write, the latter embraced him, pressing him tightly, and the resulting miracle was that he could read. Subsequent revelations of the magnificent Quraan in parts large and small, in all 6,666 verses and comprising 323,760 words, all occurred during his vision of the angel whom no one other than himself saw, the revelations being instructions given from time to time according to the need of the particular occasions during the entire prophetic period of about twenty-three years. During the first thirteen years of this period, spent in Makkah, the revelations concentrated on proclamations, first in secret and later in public, against both "Negation of Allah (Kufr)" and "Assigning of partners to Allah (Shirk)" as well as strengthening the belief and concept of "Unity of Allah (Tawheed)." Open enmity of Makkans, which culminated in oppression of the believers and their social boycott, forced the prophet and his followers to migrate (Hijrah) to Madinah where the locals received the prophet and his followers with open arms. Here the Muslims, under the able leadership of the prophet, established an Islamic society and later the foundations of the model Islamic state. The revelations during the Madinah period contained instructions on war and peace, captives, bounty of the war, treaties and agreements, administration of justice, moral uplift of society, economic and social development, rights of the rulers and the ruled, men and women, parents and children, husband and wife, friends as well as neighbours and relations, citizens and foreigners, as well as orders regarding prayers, fasting, Hajj and Zakaat. Completing the revelations in the twenty-third year of the prophethood was the verse on the "Completion of the revelation and perfection of Islam." As is seen from the Quraan, the various religious orders were given in steps, the Salat (prayer) having been first ordained during nights only in the first year of the Makkan period because it was not safe to offer prayers during daytime among enemies who used to ridicule, try to hamstring and molest Muslims, including

the prophet, during prayers. Later, the morning and the evening prayers were enjoined, completing instructions on offering of the five compulsory prayers after the Mi'raj (Ascension) which, however, was still being offered secretly in valleys until the conversion of the great Omar Bin Khattab, who became the second caliph later, when offering of prayers in public was commenced. Fasting, saying the prayer call (Adhan) and payment of Zakaat too were started during the Madinah period. Turning to Makkah to face Ka'abab (the house of Allah built originally by the prophet Abraham—peace be on him) for the daily prayers instead of to Jerusalem was also instructed in Madinah. All these acts were as a result of Quraanic revelations of Allah to the holy prophet delivered from time to time by Jibreel, the archangel.

Not only were the revelations of the Quraan memorised by several of the followers of the holy prophet as soon as each portion was revealed, but they were also recorded in writing on leather, bones, stones and even on the chests of some of the followers, after being read over to the prophet to prevent mistakes in order that nothing of the original was omitted, nor lost later. Even sequence and the serial of each verse and chapter of the entire revelation had been indicated by the holy prophet and, thus, the Quraan in its natural order had been available not only in memorised form but also in recorded documentary form with several disciples of the prophet. However, when during the caliphate of Abubakr, the first caliph, he found several disciples who had memorised the Quraan (*Haffaz*) had been martyred in the wars, he decided to get more authentic copies of the Quraan prepared and distributed to all cities of the state. Later, during the time of the second Caliph, Omar, as reported by Ibne-Hisham, as many copies as 100,000 in "Khattal-Amiri" (Amiri script) were available in various parts of the Islamic state. During the time of the third caliph, Othman, a board of twelve famous disciples of the holy prophet was commissioned to prepare the Quraan according to the "Quresh" accent and send it to Makkah, Madinah, Basra, Kufa, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain. During the reign of the fourth caliph, Ali, Abul Aswad, a trusted disciple, put the phonetic marks to the Quraan text in order to make it readable correctly even by nonArab Muslims and to maintain uniformly correct reading of the verses (*Qir'at*). The Quraan also has remained a current literature of freshness throughout the ages until this day through its recitation by Qaariyoon and Haffaz during offering of daily prayers and particularly during the optional Tarawih prayers of the fasting month of Ramadhan when the entire Quraan is recited several times during the month. During every era of the past 1400 years after the revelation of the Quraan, there existed and exist even today hundreds

of thousands of such Haffaz who have memorized the whole of the Quraan and reproduced it from memory daily. Thus, the genuineness and exactness of the Quraan has been kept alive over the years without even its punctuation and phonetics altering at all. There is no other religious scripture or Book revealed by Allah, including the Torah or Injeel, that can claim such acute authenticity, nonpollution and correctness. Further, the Qir'at competition, wherein Qaariyoon from all over the Muslim world take part in recitation of the Quraan correctly, has also continued to exist all over the past centuries as it does today. This is in fact what has been guaranteed by Allah in the Quraan, "Surely, We have revealed it (Quraan) and surely, We are its Guardian" (15:9).

Allah Himself declares in the Quraan: Quraan is truth (2:91), clear (24:46), manifest (2:99, 12:1), plain (41:3), light (42:52; 64:8), wisdom (17:39; 10:1; 31:2; 36:3; 15:1), guidance (27:2; 45:20; 31:3), full of blessings (6:156). It verifies and confirms previous books of God (2:41, 89, 91, 97; 3:3; 4:47; 5:48; 35:31; 46:30); Bani Israel knew it as it was mentioned in their Holy Books (26:196); It makes no discrimination between the prophets of Allah (2:136, 285; 4:152); the purpose of this Book is to bring forth men from darkness into light (14:1, 52); It is a message for the people that they may know that He is One Allah and that men of understanding may mind (14:52; 17:41).

The Quraan has repeatedly challenged the highly literate critics as well as enemies of the "Unlettered Prophet of Islam" and the unbelievers to produce, by themselves, ten Suras (Chapters), or one Sura or even a recital like it jointly with their witnesses and helpers, if they believed that the Quraan was not a miracle of Allah, that it was a forgery and that it was a fabrication, or it was never correct at all (2:23; 10:38; 11:13; 52:33, 34). Therefore, Allah rightly confirms also in the Quraan that nobody could produce its like even if all men and Jinn were to help each other (17:88). This challenge which remained uncontested during the lifetime of the holy prophet has also remained so throughout the past 1,400 years or more as it will continue to remain so for all time. Further, the recent computer-aided mathematical research has revealed that the holy Quraan, the infallible words of Allah, has been guarded from tampering and corruption by means of a wonderful mathematical interlocking system by which there is an almost impossible—one in six hundred and twenty-six septillions (626×10^{24})—chance of producing a similar total document by any creation from the point of numerical locking alone!

The Quraan reveals that in truth it is the Book confirming what went before it as Allah's guidance to the human beings from time to time such as the Torah or the Law of Moses (peace be on him), the

Zaboor or the Psalms of David (peace be on him), the Injeel or the Gospel of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) and the books as well as revelations sent to many other prophets before Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) (3:3); that Allah sent inspiration to Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) as he had sent it to Noah and other messengers of Allah after him such as Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail, Ishaq (Isaac), Yacoob (Jacob), and the Tribes, Isa (Jesus), Ayoub (Job), Haroon (Aaron), Sulaiman (Solomon), Dawood (David) and Moosa (Moses) (peace be on them) from time to time (4:163). It also states that divine Book was revealed to Ibrahim (87:19). However, the specific Books of past prophets mentioned by name in the Quraan are the Torah of Moosa, Zaboor (Psalms) of Dawood, Injeel (Gospels) of Isa and Quraan of Muhammad (peace be on them). Thus, while confirming and testifying the earlier step by step divine guidances through Books and criteria between right and wrong that were revealed by Allah to the various prophets, the Quraan makes it compulsory for all Muslims to have faith in them (2:4, 136, 285; 3:3, 84; 5:49-51; 6:92-93) because all messengers of Allah were bearers of good news and warnings (4:163; 6:85-87; 19:53; 21:85). It also says, "Peace be to Noah, Ibrahim, Moosa and Haroon, Elias and all prophets, (37:79, 120, 130, 181) and declares that Ibrahim, Ishaq, Yacoob, Noah, Dawood, Sulaiman, Ayoub, Yousuf, Moosa, Haroon, Zakariya, Yahya, Isa, Ilyas, Ismail, Al-Yasa'a, Yunus, Loot (peace be on them) were all amongst the benefactors, righteous and exalted ones who were given the Book, authority and prophethood (6:84-87; 6:89). Thus, the stand of the Quraan is that all the prophets of Allah, their divine Books and revelations all proclaimed and preached the same Islam that was highlighted by Muhammad (peace be on him) and the Quraan. However, as shown under the chapters of Christianity and Judaism, as the earlier revelations and books of Allah had become either polluted, lost or become insufficient to cover the total life pattern of the fully developed human beings of the enlightened modern age, the Quraan was revealed as the final revelation for the believers as the final book containing previous revelations and as the total and final guide for the human beings forever. This is the exact positions of the Quraan and the mission of the last of the prophets.

The Traditions of the Holy Prophet (Hadeeth)

It is an act of belief with Muslims that in accordance with the commandment of the holy Quraan, it is essential also to follow the directives and advice given by the holy prophet Muhammad (Blessings

of Allah and peace be on him) as well as emulating his great way of life, especially because all his directives and advice as well as his way of life had revelational background and, in many instances, they had explained in detail the contents and meaning of the many verses of the glorious Quraan which generally only refer to quite a few essential matters. Thus, for example, about the compulsory five time prayers and how they should be offered, while the Quraan only gives the fundamental idea, the minutest details had been demonstrated by the holy prophet during his prophetic period as a continuous explanation. So much so, unless the prophet's way of life is taken as an essential supplement, the way of offering of daily prayers cannot be detailed. On most of the aspects of Islamic philosophy, thoughts, beliefs, faith, law and conduct, thus, the traditions of the holy prophet, comprised of sayings as well as actions, occupy an integral relationship with the holy Quraan.

Also, for the clarifications of any minor differences, the Muslims refer to the various actions and ways adopted by the first four caliphs, Abubakr, Omar, Othman and Ali, who are considered as the authorities on Islamic jurisprudence, administration, Shariah and the social welfare state, because these four had the closest association with the holy prophet, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), and unrestricted approach to him during his lifetime. As far as the traditions (Hadeeth) of the holy prophet are concerned there are thousands of them covering almost all aspects of human thought and life to guide Muslims to the right course of Allah within the framework of the glorious Quraan. Several great Muslim scholars, well versed in religious jurisprudence, have done lifelong research to sift the most authentic traditions, tracing them back to either his honest wives or the most trusted disciples of the holy prophet or both. Having become fully satisfied with their undisputed reliability as a result of corroboration by more than one source they have provided compilations of these "correct and strong traditions," which are not only referred to as authority and also recited by the Muslims but even committed to memory just as is the holy Quraan. The proven traditions had been thus compiled by six different scholars of the ninth century C.E.—Bukahri, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi, Nasai and Ibn Maaja—which are the accepted references in the field.

Two other dynamic institutions that existed during the second century Hijri (eighth century C.E.) were Ijma' and Ijtihad.

In order to overcome individual and regional differences of opinion that could have occurred later, the legal theory and practice of Islamic Shariah (path) were standardised by the consensus of eminent Ulemas

(religious scholars) referred to as "Mujtahidoon" of the first few generations after the demise of prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), strictly within the guidelines provided by the Quraan and Hadeeth. Having thus covered almost all important aspects of the Shariah through *Ijma'*, this institution was considered as closed. Therefore, after the close of that century, questioning of any of the concerned decisions, already arrived at on the basis of the Quraan and Hadeeth, became prohibited ever since.

Ijtihād, meaning, "to endeavour" or "to exert oneself," is the means of obtaining a solution, legally and doctrinally, to new problems on a new consensus on the basis of individual opinions (*Ra'y*) of eminent Muslim scholars. In the second century Hijri, *Ijtihād* was replaced by *Qiyas* (reasoning by strict analogy) based on Quraan and Hadeeth texts. Although acceptance of a definite body of Hadeeth on most of the day to day problems appears to have ended after the *Ijma'* period, later Muslim scholars of great stature and universal Muslim acceptance, such as Al-Gazzali (twelfth century), Shah Waliullah (eighteenth century) and others, having held that *Ijtihād* could still vest with the consensus of the eminent religious scholars of the Muslim nation, in respect of problems not covered earlier, which may confront Muslims of the modern era, the institution of *Ijtihād* still is available to the Muslim nation if a need for it arises in future, strictly based on the Quraan and Hadeeth.

The Philosophy of Islam

i. The Concept of Belief and Faith

The Islamic faith is based on the firm belief that Allah, being the Sole and Only One supreme Planner, Designer, Creator, Sustainer and Disposer of the entire universe and everything in it and beyond, He alone is worthy of devotion, worship and seeking spiritual help; that Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) was the last prophet of Islam in the chain of many similar prophets who preceded him and that the last prophet was strengthened by Allah with guidance through revelations including the holy Quraan through the archangel Jibreel (Gabriel) throughout the former's twenty-three year prophetic mission. Muslims have been repeatedly warned, like the children of Israel, against worshipping idols, deifying Allah in any physical or other form, attributing any temporal characteristic such as passion, or family, and attributing any share of His powers to any kind of creation

whatsoever. In short, like the Jews, Muslims have also been directed by Allah to be strict monotheists with belief in Him alone.

The Quraan has made clear

- that Islam, "The Religion Before Allah," had been revealed to human beings from the earliest of times when man had commenced his life on earth, in a step-by step process, through His prophets of Allah through the ages had been essentially: to be with holy revelations, miracles and books in due measure as was needed for guiding people of each respective age;
- that the same Islam that was preached by all the earlier prophets, some of whom are named, and many who are not named, in the Torah and Quraan, who were sent to preach over specific communities and nations in order that none was deprived of guidance, was also preached in its complete and perfect form by the last of prophets, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), who was reinforced with divine revelations as well as the final book of Allah's criterion and guidance, the Quraan;
- that the essence of Islam as preached and followed by the various prophets of Allah through the ages had been essentially; to believe in the Only One Allah who is the Sole Planner, Designer, Creator, Sustainer and Disposer of the universe; to obey Him alone and to rely on His sole guidance and protection; not to worship any other than Him; not to attribute any partner whomsoever to the sole power, authority and majesty of Allah; and to be just and true;
- that the revelatory process and assignment of prophets came to a close with the advent of prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him)) as the last of the prophets and the revelation of the Quraan as the final criterion and guide for all time and perfecting as well as completing the religion of Islam through this last prophet and the Quraan; and
- that the followers of this perfected religion of Islam have been made "the best of people evolved for the mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah."

ii. Creation of the Universe

The Quraan states that the universe consisting of "seven firmaments and the earth" was created in six days (7:54) of which four were for the earth and two for the firmaments evolved from "smoke" (41:10,11), a day in the reckoning of Allah being thousands of human years (70:4), the earth having been prepared for the habitation of man

from an unknown time when the latter's creation in due time had been contemplated by Allah. Further, in the shapes of guiding hints to the human beings in this regard, the Quraan also states: "Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation) before We cloved them asunder? We made from water every living thing: will they not then believe? And We have set on the earth mountains standing firm lest it should shake with them(21:30,31).

iii. The Creation of Man

The events that preceded and followed the creation of the first man and woman as given in the Quraan compare with what is given in Genesis of the Bible except in some fundamental aspects. As stated in the Quraan, when Allah disclosed to the angels his intention to create man, a new creation to be His "viceregent on earth" (2:30) from "the best of moulds" (95:4) and gifted with certain faculties (90:8-10) over them and Jinns (a species created earlier from smokeless fire of scorching wind as mentioned in the Quraan at 15:27 and 55:15), they were of the view that when they were already there to celebrate His praise and to glorify Him, there was no need of creating the new species, which would make mischief and shed blood on earth. However, Allah overruled them, saying that He knew what they did not (2:30). Thus, Allah created Adam, the first man, from sounding clay, moulded him into shape (15:26; 55:14), put life into him and taught him names of all things, and directed the angels to name the things. This they could not do for the reason, as they said, that they did not know beyond what was taught to them by Allah (2:31,32). Then Allah asked Adam to name them which he readily did, and then Allah ordered them to honour Adam by prostrating to him. This was obeyed by all except Iblis, the leader of Jinns, who had, earlier, been elevated to the company of angels due to his knowledge, wisdom and devotion to Allah. Iblis argued that, having been created from smokeless fire, he was superior to Adam, who was created from clay, and therefore he could not prostrate before Adam (2:33,34). For the pride, disobedience and rebellion on the part of Iblis, he was exiled by Allah from the company of angels, and designated as "Shaitan" (Satan) the despised (7:13). The first woman, Hawwah (Eve), was also created by Allah as a companion for Adam and both were provided an abode in Paradise with permission to eat and enjoy everything but only to refrain from committing the transgression of approaching a "particular tree" (2:35,7:19). Earlier, rather than

realising his own fault of rebellion against Allah, repenting and seeking His pardon and grace, Iblis had chosen to seek permission of Allah to let him have respite as well as power to seek revenge on Adam and his progeny until the "last day" (15:36), as he had the idea that his own fall was brought about because of the creation of Adam and not, alas, due to his own pride, haughtiness, disobedience and rebellion against Allah! This request was granted with the warning that he and those who followed his wrong and devilish ways would certainly be subjected to eternal punishment in the "Hell," a dangerous abode of burning fire (7:14-18). Thus, while Adam and Eve had been passing their temporary period of dwelling in Paradise, Iblis, having vowed to take revenge on them at the first possible instance, prompted them to eat of the forbidden tree, swearing to them that Allah had restrained them from approaching the tree because, in such an event, "they should become angels or such beings as would live forever" (7:20). Adam and Hawwah, having succumbed to the temptation of Iblis, ate of the tree in contravention of the earlier explicit command of Allah and as an immediate result, "having their shame become manifest to them" (7:22), both regretted and repented their disobedience to Allah, which was accepted and pardoned. However, Paradise was no longer fit to be their abode in the overall plan of Allah. Along with Iblis, both Adam and Hawwah were thus sent out of Paradise to live on earth until the "last day," multiplying their respective progeny as enemies of each other. Allah in His kindness, however, promised to Adam that his progeny would be blessed with divine guidance from time to time through selected prophets and apostles among themselves, so that by leading a clean and devoted life shown by them, eschewing the evil promptings and ways of Iblis and his henchmen, the eternal but lost paradise could be regained by the human beings (2:36-39; 7:23-25).

iv. Concept of Prophets in Islam

According to the philosophy of Islam, this promise of Allah became fulfilled through various prophets and apostles from Adam (peace be on him), who was first, down to Muhammad (Blessings and peace of Allah be on him), who was the last in the continuous chain of known as well as unknown prophets and apostles (messengers) of Allah, some of whom—such as Noah, Ibrahim (Abraham), Lot, Ismail, Ishak, (Isaac), Ilyas (Elias), Zakariah, Yunus (Johan), Yahya (John), Yacob, Yousuf (Joseph), Moosa (Moses), Haroon (Aaron), Dawood (David), Sulaiman (Solomon), Idrees, Dulkifl, Al Yasaa, and several others—who have been mentioned in the Torah revealed to Moosa

(peace be on him) and the Quraan revealed to Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on them) (Al-Quraan 4:163-165; 5:21; 6:84-90; 23:23-50; 57:26-27). That these prophets and apostles were men of supreme character, nominated and designated as such by Allah to guide certain people, tribes and communities of each respective age, duly reinforced with Allah's revelations and divine books that contained the laws and guidelines necessary for leading a balanced spiritual and social life fit for the emancipation of the human beings and aimed at the prime objective of regaining the lost eternal paradise; that each of these prophets preached the same religion of Islam fit for their own times with emphasis on fair play, justice, and belief of as well as devotion to the only One Allah who is the Sole Planner, Designer, Creator, Sustainer and Disposer of the entire universe and everything in it (42:13); that all these prophets had been assigned to their respective ages with limited jurisdictions to lead and guide only a section of people except the last prophet and messenger, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), who alone had been assigned by Allah as the final prophet to propagate the completed form of Islam with the finally revealed divine book, Al-Quraan, which is the "words of Allah" and guaranteed from any tamperings until the "last day" as well as revelations with self-sufficient codes to serve as the ultimate guide for the spiritual emancipation of the fully developed human beings as a whole by leading a balanced social life in the world until the "last day" (2:87; 4:82; 5:92; 6:19,92; 9:6; 15:9; 27:6; 45:2; 56:77,78)—these are among the cornerstones of Islamic faith and belief.

The position of prophets in Islam, as testified in the Quraan, is that all messengers of God were bearers of good news and warnings (57:26; 11:25). Adam, Noah, and descendants of Ibrahim and Imran were chosen by God (3:32). Ibrahim was made a leader of men, selected in this world and righteous in the next and a model of virtue, truthful and a prophet (2:124,130; 16:129). Ismail was truthful in promise and a prophet (19:54). Moosa was one purified and a prophet (19:56). It declares that Ibrahim, Ishaq, Yacob, Noah, Dawood, Sulaiman, Ayub, Yusuf, Moosa, Haroon, Zakariya, Yahya, Isa, Elias, Ismail, Al Yasaa, Younus, and Looth were all among the benefactors, righteous and exalted ones (6:84-87) and that they were given the Book, authority and prophethood. (6:89).

Thus, Muslims must believe in the three books—The Zaboor (Psalms), The Tbrah (Old Testament) and The Injeel (the Gospels)—that were revealed by Allah to the respective apostles and prophets—Dawood (David), Moosa (Moses) and Isa (Jesus) Peace be on them,—prior to the advent of Al-Quraan, which was revealed as the final guide

to the last and final of the prophets, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) (3:3; 4:136). Further, Muslims do not differentiate between one prophet and another except in that the religion that was preached by the earlier prophets on the basis of revelations sent to them by Allah, though sufficient for their respective generations and peoples, was not in the completed and final form preached by the last of prophets, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), who was sent as the "seal of prophets" reinforced by revelations and the final divine book of guidance, Al-Quraan, perfecting and completing Islam for the fully developed mankind (4:150,152). It is therefore that the Quraan has permitted Muslims to eat of the clean foods and to marry the women of Jews and Christians, who have been designated as "the people of the book", and because they also believe basically in the only One God as required in their divine scriptures.

v. Belief, Faith and Action in Islam

The six canonical beliefs of a Muslim are:

- Belief in the only One God (Allah);
- Belief in Allah's angels;
- Belief in Allah's prophets;
- Belief in Allah's revealed books;
- Belief in the *"The last judgement day" of this universe; and*
- Belief in the phenomena that good and bad are all from Allah alone (in conformity with the overall plan of Allah according to His will).

Similarly, the five pillars of the religion of Islam are:

- Believe and say, "There is no god except Allah and Muhammad is the (last) prophet and messenger of Allah";
- Perform the five canonical prayers daily at the appointed times;
- Keep fast from dawn to dusk during the whole lunar month of Ramadhan, abstaining from food and drink as well as from undesirable thoughts, words, and actions;
- Pay with pleasure Zakaat (the sharing of legitimately earned wealth among the poor and other deserving sections of the society) on products, assets, trade and cash reserve;
- Perform once in a lifetime the sacred pilgrimage to the "House of Allah" at Makkah to perform the Hajj rites, if one is fit to do so physically and financially.

vi. Islamic Ethics

Apart from the aspects of belief, faith and actions as detailed above that have been enjoined on Muslims in order to establish a just, clean and prosperous society directed towards the ultimate aim of regaining the lost eternal paradise, the Muslims have been directed through the Quraan and other revelations of Allah to the prophet to inculcate moral values of the highest order to make them the best of the peoples, and to practice honesty in all walks of life (33:35; 4:69); to be just in all dealings (as one would expect justice to oneself) 4:58; 4:135; 7:29; 16:90; 57:25); to be extremely patient, oathkeeping, benevolent and considerate to fellow beings, particularly towards the parents, the poor, the needy, the orphans, the wayfarers and to be just to the orphans at all costs (2:83,177,215;;4:2,3,6,8,10,36; 17:34); to be tolerant and protectors of adherents of other religions as long as they remain law-abiding citizens and do not obstruct Muslims from practicing their own religion (22:40); to keep one's body clean by taking a bath, particularly after sexual engagements, performing ablution by washing all exposed parts of the body prior to saying the five time daily prayers (5:6); to keep one's mouth clean by frequent brushing of the teeth; to dress up cleanly, preferably in white robes; not to commit theft (5:38); not to say falsehood or conceal evidence (39:3; 40:28; 52:11; 24:7; 2:283; 70:33); not to indulge in lending on interest (2:275,276,278-281); not to engage in gambling and use of intoxicants (2:219; 5:90,91); not to even approach prostitution or adultery both of which are shameful and evils leading to other evils (17:32; 24:2,3); not to take a life except for just cause or slay such life as Allah has made sacred (17:33; 25:68); to refrain from committing either suicide or self-torture (4:29); to refrain from eating pork, blood, dead meat, any animal that has been killed without slaughtering it in the name of Allah with blood flowing out freely, or any food given as a sacred offering to any gods (5:3; 6:145; 16:115), and so on. It is also stressed that there should be no compulsion in religion and belief (2:266; 10:99), whereby nonMuslims are free to follow the religion of their own choice as long as Muslims are not obstructed from following their own. This, however, is not applicable to a Muslim, who has to follow Islam, having accepted it on his free will. Wasting anything that may be of use to others is prohibited and taking a middle course by avoiding spendthriftiness on the one hand and miserliness on the other in all walks of life is enjoined (17:27,29). Prostitution and adultery have been condemned (17:32) and made punishable drastically (24:2), as they are vices that not only disrupt and endanger the social life of the people but also become a source of evil leading to other evils, such

as perpetual hatred, and the cause of fights between even relatives and friends. However, in exceptional cases where it becomes necessary either due to fear of committing prostitution or adultery or injustice to the orphans (and never for lust alone), permission has been given as a very special case to marry up to four wives, only when one may remain reasonably just to all of them (4:3). Nevertheless, practice of patience or self-restraint in these matters is recommended (4:25). Divorce is made legal for both men and women on questions of incompatibility and proven immorality, but reunion between the divorced husband and wife is permitted after not more than two divorces. However, after the third divorce, the same couple may not remarry unless the divorced woman marries a second husband and is also divorced by him naturally (2:229,230). The object of providing two chances for reconciliation with a waiting period between the estranged couple through the efforts of themselves, social elders and relatives is in order to avoid, as far as possible, a total and final break of the sacred marriage ties, endangering the future welfare of themselves, and the children in particular, if any. The divorced men and women may, however, remarry any others freely as they choose, after expiration of the ordained waiting period (2:232). On the occasion of wedding, the husband must pay a suitable present to the wife according to his status and ability before he lays his hands on her, and this present may not be taken back at the time of divorce (4:4, 19, 20, 21).

In the field of work, Islam expects everyone not only to perform his duty with objectivity, sincerity, patience and as best one can leaving the result to flower as destined by Allah, but also not to indulge in dishonesty nor begging. Belief of a Muslim in "destiny" is often ridiculed by non-Muslims. In fact, this is the only course left to man when we consider that the net result of any action cannot confine strictly only to the immediate physical, chemical and converted reactions in time but, in abstract terms, to the total reaction in terms of the effects of the action in all its total aspects including the vast indeterminable consequences that are attributable to the purpose, intent and objective in mind as well as later "harmonic-like" aftereffects, in future time and space all put together. All must be considered in full depth. Therefore, with what intention, to what perfection and with what all-known and hidden purposes in mind each different action of a human being is performed and what resultant final effects accrue thereto in what space and time are known only to Allah, who is the only "all-knowing planner, designer, creator, sustainer and disposer of all matter and energy created in the universe." Rightly, the Quraan states; "And of surety, your Lord (Allah) will pay back to all (in full recompense) of

their deeds: for He knoweth well all that ye do" (11:11). Nevertheless, the Quraan also states; "Allah does not change the state of a people unless they themselves have a will to change it" (13:11) and that Allah is absolutely just and kind to all His creatures, letting His laws of nature act evenly on all, but with advantage to the faithful who seek good ways, and normally on the unfaithful. Finally, it is assured in the Quraan that "Allah does not let the good deeds of any person go without reward" (2:62). Allah is so kind as to let even the vicious have respite until the "last day" (14:142) unless almost all of a people continue to create mischief or practice repression and oppression, in which event He checks one section of the people with another for the good of the human beings (22:40). As in the case of the peoples of prophets Noah, Hud, Shoaib, and Salih, versus persons like Firaon (Pharoah), Haman and Qaroon (Korah)—mentioned in the Quraan—Allah destroyed an entire bad people who repeatedly erred knowingly, saving the good among them, to serve as a lesson for posterity. Assures the Quraan; "Nor will thy Lord (Allah) be the one to destroy communities for a single wrongdoing, if its members were likely to mend" (11:117). Through these and other advices as well as directives almost every problem confronting the society of the developed human beings that has something to do with their spiritual emancipation directly or indirectly has been solved by the Quraan and the prophet's teachings in just manner for all times.

vii. Islamic Economy

On the economic front, Islam advocates a just and natural socialism. While owning of private property by both men and women through right and just efforts has been legalised on the one hand, payment of the compulsory Zakaat to its rightful recipients, such as the poor, the needy, the indebted, the orphans, and the social reformers among Muslims, and payment of charity (sadaqah) in addition, and as much as possible for the uplift of the less affluent in the society has been stressed on the other, at several places in the Quraan. The Zakaat has been so designed that if the accumulated earnings of a person are kept idle without getting circulated in business and investments, they get reduced to half in about twenty-five years and to nothing in less than fifty years, which is not even a lifetime. Therefore one is indirectly encouraged to keep his wealth in productive circulation, a prerequisite for economical progress of the people at large. Zakaat, which is a compulsory religious tax payable on wealth, capital, trade, cattle, and

produce such as agriculture, crops, mined wealth and others, varies from two and a half to twenty per cent according to each kind. For the cattle it is assessed in the form of numbers. This is a means for preventing poverty on the one hand and accumulation of much fabulous wealth on the other among the various sections of Islamic society, as well as for meeting the day to day expenses of the Islamic state. Naturally, neither the masses suffering from acute poverty nor millionaires with excessive and hoarded cash stock may thus develop in a society that rightly follows the Quraanic instruction. In trade, making excessive profit on essential items of necessity is forbidden. Even hoarding of food grains and items of basic essential goods required for the masses, either by creating shortage or with the intention of selling them later at higher profits is also forbidden. All contracts and agreements have to be honoured scrupulously.

While all legitimate kinds of trade devoid of excessive profitmaking is permitted, lending money on interest has been totally prohibited in Islam. This again may be found as a means for preventing the wealthy class from enjoying a steady income without getting exposed to any kind of risk that is unnatural and from keeping their valuable time idle or engaged in undesirable pursuits that often persons with big wealth and income are often tempted to indulge in. However, partnership investment, which exposes itself to both profit and loss alike, is encouraged. This, again, keeps the partners engaged in fruitful business activities—a must for economic and social progress. In all kinds of business, whether trade, agriculture, industry or any other activity where employer-employee relationship occurs, a fair and reasonable wage to the worker on the one hand and a similarly just return to the investor or employer on the other, in consideration of all aspects of the business whereby both sections are benefitted on the basis of brotherly feelings and cooperation avoiding confrontation of any kind is ordained. Thus the Islamic economic system is a natural one in which even the thought of class war or exploitation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is overcome, being unnecessary. What is left over after payment of Zakaat on produces, assets and reserves on the one hand and government taxes on the other is one's own private property, sacred and pure, to which no one has any claim; even the government. Islam, rightly having taken into account the most important nature of the human being that incentive is needed for work, has therefore also granted this right of owning clean wealth badly needed for acquiring the means for leading a comfortable life. However, no Muslim who is aware of the directives of the Quraan can have peace of mind unless he also spends freely in sadaqah (charity) out of his wealth in order to

ameliorate the condition of the less affluent of the neighbors—orphans, widows, the old and those who groan under the burden of debt. This, although a voluntary institution, is generally and devoutly practiced by not only most of the wealthy and middle-class people among Muslims but also even by the less affluent section of the brotherhood, mostly in secret, as the Quraan and the holy prophet have commended those charities that "are given away by the right hand without the left hand even knowing about it."

The business of the state on the economic front is to be confined to administration of the state affairs, of welfare schemes and of the religious common trust properties such as mosques, orphanages, schools, hospitals, poor homes and the like, apart from ensuring that no one in the state goes hungry and destitute on account of an inability to earn either due to health hazards or lack of work. The ownership of private property by confiscation as in a communist state is not the duty of the government because the duty of the state is not to act as a capitalist, owning the property that people must possess. As far as Islamic outlook is concerned, if any property becomes an impediment to the state, in the act of discharging its most important duty of "encouraging virtues and discouraging evil," the state has the right of punishing the owner of the concerned property according to Islamic Shariah Laws. Further, if the state finds that any particular wealth has been amassed by illegal means, the state machinery has the means to recover its dues from the owner as well as to ensure that the portion of the wealth belonging to others is also returned to the rightful owners without resorting to undue harassment and witch-hunting. Such actions may be instituted only after due evidence according to Islamic law is obtained in favour or against as the case may be. Exparte decisions without proving any charge against the citizen is also forbidden.

viii. Crime and Punishment

A Muslim is supposed to be the model for others to follow, as is testified by the Quraan (3:110), if the course chalked out by it and the teachings of the holy prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) are followed. However, the human being, as its nature is, is acutely selfish as well as pleasure-seeking and is under the bad influence of Shaitan, who tries his best to deflect every person from the right course in accordance with his vow that he had made in Paradise to seek revenge on Adam and his progeny until the last day and the respite that was given to him by Allah at the time of his

expulsion from there. Therefore, a Muslim too may lose his guard at times and commit certain crimes that Allah has directed him to refrain from. Further, in any society there can be bad elements who may try to disturb the peace by indulging in crimes forbidden under the Shariah of Islam. Morally, while every person will have to answer to Allah on the judgment day for all the actions committed by oneself, for the reason that the relevant bad acts committed by the individuals may have far-reaching adverse effects on the society, due worldly punishments also have been prescribed in the Quraan to be meted out to the offenders involved in certain specific crimes. For the reason that such punishments have been prescribed by Allah Himself, who knows all His creations thoroughly, the state authorities entrusted with carrying out the relevant punishments, having no discretion in the matter, have also been directed by the Quraan to administer such punishments without showing any sympathy so as to serve as deterrents for others. Like the laws of the Torah, these are on the principle of "an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth and life for a life," except for crimes like drinking in public, theft and adultery, for which respectively, stripes, cutting of the hand and stripes or stoning have been prescribed.

ix. Status of Women in Islam

This is a question generally commented upon adversely by non-Muslims and cruelly, too, without appreciating its Islamic implications. That woman has been created as a partner for man mainly with the sex and reproductive process in view; as with any other animal, is accepted by all. Man, being the most refined of the animal species, has also to act as such. Complete freedom to associate in sex has already created chaos in the society of today. That the relationship between man and woman has to be regulated is an essential necessity of the civilized society. A socially acceptable union termed "marriage" is thus accepted by all religions and societies in the world because without this institution, the family, the society all go into chaos. If any man is permitted to have sex with any woman and vice versa, the organised norms of social life must crumble, leaving an atmosphere of intense jealousy, fighting and even class wars. Islam has recognised the fundamental need to put the social order as a whole on a correct footing where jealousy, fighting and class wars may be abolished altogether. As has been done in the case of economy and wealth, Islam has also placed the relationship between man and woman on a realistic footing in view of the emotional qualities of the human being. As jealousy breeds hatred and war, and one of the causes of jealousy is sexual desire, the most impor-

tant cause that produces sexual desire being free mixing of sexes without restrictions, has been forbidden in Islam. The Islamic law has specified the categories of woman who cannot be taken as a wife, such as mother, sisters, daughters, daughters of sisters and brothers, mothers-in-law, two sisters simultaneously, wives of sons and so on mostly being near blood relations and those who, by marital relations, have become so in status. Free mixing of men and women who do not fall in this group is discouraged in the interest of a clean society. This is so because, by and large, men and women are attracted to each other due to sexual desire. It is only due to this reason that man, generally, likes the company of women and vice versa. Socially, morality needs that this be discouraged. Marriage being a license to have sex between man and woman with the sacred objective of creating progeny, it must be considered as a great moral institution of any society where the law of acute possession must prevail. Therefore, the necessity of having freedom for any man to have close association with any woman other than the blood relations or own wife should not arise. If such an unrestricted freedom is available, familiarity usually develops into love followed by sex, which is dangerous for an organised society because apart from the development of jealousy and hatred even between blood relations, the question of genetics may come into dispute. If one woman has sex with more than one man, even the woman may not always be able to identify the father of the child and this failure may dismantle the very organisation of the family and society. Therefore, prohibition in Islam on free mixing of men and women in general and women not being permitted to marry more than one man at the same time, unlike men, may be justly explained.

The horrible degradation of moral values as far as sex is concerned in Western countries in general and the social problems this has created for most nations in particular need not be repeated here, as the world has become aware of this acute problem with no solution at this stage except adopting the social norms in this regard as provided by Islam. At the same time, Islam has granted a certain amount of freedom and respect to women with full realisation of the natural status of women, which they themselves generally, accept as the "weaker sex." In the Western as well as Eastern countries, while separate state laws had to be evolved to provide equality to women with men in specific fields, Islam has however granted this privilege to them 1400 years ago when even women were not so enlightened as to even appreciate that they needed such a status. The Quraan declares: "Men are the protectors of women" (4:34). This along with the explicit Quraanic instructions that not only the wife must be elevated to the economic status of the husband

before he lays his hands on her, but that such dowry (Mahr) remains the property of the wife not to be taken back even in the event of a divorce; that the woman has the right to own wealth and properties of her own as well as to inherit property of deceased relatives; that the wife must be treated with kindness and understanding and that the woman has also the right of divorce in certain cases, have all made the position, social as well as economic, of a woman secure in Islam, which right no other religion has given to her. Naturally, such rights and protection oblige her also to become subordinate to man in some respects that have great moral and social bearings. Complete equality is a mirage only when we realise that even nature has created the woman with such terrible inequality against her as conception, maternity and the rearing of children, pangs that have to be borne with patience and fortitude by the woman only and never by the man.

An important aspect of Islamic sexual morality is that it recognises the nature of man as generally being biologically superior to woman, not only in thinking, but in the power of taking decisions, actions and responsibility. Man seldom wavers, whereas it is a trait usual with woman. Further, the strength of a man, except in very rare cases, is much superior to that of a woman. Sexually too, man expresses his passion much more vividly than women. Even in the area of prostitution, which is a social evil, the woman serves as a means of satisfying the man's passions and very seldom vice versa. A woman normally keeps her excessive passions dormant, if there be any, whereas man generally does not do so. Thus, if a reasonably large number of men biologically need more sex, rather than permitting the antisocial and illegal ways of prostitution and adultery, Islam has given man the license to marrying more than one wife provided he can afford it, keeping all the wives reasonably alike socially and economically as well. In fact, during a period of war when either woman prisoners are captured in large numbers or orphan girls are left behind due to deaths, or when the ratio of women to men in a society goes up, such an exceptional provision becomes a blessing. The alternative of allowing those women to go into prostitution or adultery, as has legally or illegally existed in many parts of the world, has remained a social problem for which no solution has yet been forthcoming except through provisions like those that exist in Islam. Even this license has been restricted so as not to be used loosely by limiting the maximum number permissible at any time to no more than four, so that the progeny of wedlock may live as honourable citizens enjoying respect and hereditary legal rights and not as despised bastards in shame, as is the case now in modern world societies.

x. Personal, Social and Community Life

On the social front, Islam gives great importance to the universal brotherhood firstly by declaring that 'Muslims are but a single brotherhood' (49:10), and as the prophet said "A Muslim is forbidden from eating while his neighbor is starving." Great stress is placed on caring for the comforts and inconveniences of others as well as avoiding undue annoyance to others. Cleanliness and straightforwardness in every dealing, remaining steadfast on keeping words, agreements, promises and refraining from committing social crimes such as cheating, uttering lies or falsehoods, concealing evidence, practicing deception, thefts and so on are enjoined on Muslims. While guarding one's own chastity, undue exhibition of one's own personal beauty, which may attract an unconcerned person and even engagement in unnecessary talks with strangers, have been prohibited for women, and men have been warned not to stare at or remain in the company of unconnected women, alone, for an undue time for any reason whatsoever. While the women are not only permitted but also encouraged to shoulder their responsibilities towards the society, segregation between the sexes is recommended. These are to discourage the man and woman from becoming too familiar with or appreciative of each other, ~~which may result in~~ development of passion or sexual desire between them. Far from being a directive based on suspicion against men and women, this is with the motive of preventing any possible corruption in society. No sensible and understanding person can deny the fact that this is a necessity for development of a clean and balanced society in any age. The prime cause for the breakdown of many a marriage between happy couples today, not only in the Western society but also elsewhere in the world, may be rightly traced to the source of illicit relationships between men and women other than their own married partners, developed first in offices, public functions, parties and dances followed later by secret meetings, and all due to unrestricted exposure to each other. In fact, as long as one knows of the beauty and traits of one's own husband or wife only, one remains attracted and devoted exclusively to him or her. But the moment one is exposed to the beauty and traits of anyone else of the opposite sex, by and large, consideration of these qualities in his or her partner does become relative whereby, in many a case, one is inclined to feel that others are more attractive, graceful, talented and what not than one's own spouse, a nature prompting the human being to acquire or possess what it considers better, rightly or wrongly. Every intelligent person understands this grave problem that has been ever confronting the human society. Therefore, Islam has taken adequate

steps to prevent this social evil from even trying to raise its head by permitting unrestricted association between specified women and men only and prohibiting the rest for good.

I have already discussed the economic structure of Islamic philosophy and way of life earlier, clarifying how Islam has shown the right way to develop a balanced economy for the individual, the society, the state and the world community as a whole under the umbrella of Islam, each being complementary to the other, absolutely free from exploitation, confrontation and class war whatsoever. After all, in any system right or wrong, adequate exhortation, guidance, policing and deterrent punishments are necessities for keeping the individual as well as the society at large on the standard track and Islam is no exception. This function which is an essential aspect of the Islamic way of life is performed by the two living institutions known as the "Shariah Laws" and "Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is Evil."

Performance of the five compulsory prayers daily by all men in congregation, shoulder joined to shoulder, the first to come occupying the forward positions devoid of any reservations based on social or colour distinctions; performance of the Hajj pilgrimage rites during the annual gathering at Makkah and its suburbs during the second week of the lunar month of Zilhajjah every year, as well as the lesser pilgrimage rites of Umrah at the sacred Mosque, also at Makkah round the year in devotion and total submission to the call of Allah by all people with health and means from all over the world as equal brothers and sisters without any social, racial or colour discrimination whatsoever (all men dressed in the same symbolic, unique and simple attire of a pair of two-metre-long pieces of cloth and all ladies dressed in simple but modest clothes; eating by sharing the same kinds of foods available there for the millions of people in plenty; sleeping in the open or in tents exposed to the extreme weather and environment of the desert land, very seldom comfortable), remind the Muslim peoples of the absolute equality that Islam advocates among all Muslims. During the pilgrimage rites, the women, however, shall be present in full dress, exposing only the face and forearms, with a view toward modesty.

In Islam there is no specific and compulsory religious rest day (Sabbath) like the Saturday of the Jews and the Sunday of the Christians when no work is permitted. In Hebrew as well as Arabic the word "Sabbath" denotes Saturday. However, it is compulsory for all able-bodied Muslims to attend the midday prayer every Friday in congregation, and preferably, at the local mosque of each area when, prior to the saying of prayers, a sermon is delivered from the pulpit by the

Imam (leader) of the congregation on important topics connected with religious and social matters concerning the brotherhood as well as the need for strengthening the faith of the believers in the only One Almighty Allah. After this Friday prayer is over, the people may seek their professions as usual. Ladies may also attend this congregation, if they like, as in the case of other daily prayers for which separate areas are usually allocated in many mosques. The instructions to offer all daily prayers as much as possible in mosques and in congregation at the appointed times as well as to perform the mandatory Friday congregational prayer, in the local prime mosque preferably, by all able-bodied men, have deep social meaning attached to them because not only do they provide opportunity to make the brotherly bonds between each other firmer but also to know of the social and economic conditions of each other, whereby brotherly assistance may be provided to the distressed and the needy voluntarily.

The instruction on the necessity of performing compulsory prayers five times a day at the specified times, preferably in congregation and in mosques, all facing the Ka'abah at Makkah from anywhere in the world—a symbol considered as the first house on the face of earth built by the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) for the worship of the "Only One Allah"—is aimed at, it appears, remembering Him every day many times as well as thanking Him for His unlimited kindness as well as guidance to every individual, apart from being an exercise to inculcate the essential qualities of strict punctuality, uniformity and equality among all Muslims. Washing of all exposed parts of the body (ablution) before saying prayers, brushing of the teeth as many times as possible and wearing clean clothes, preferably white, are directed towards inculcation of the habit of clean living. Taking a bath after sexual intercourse for all and for women after the monthly cycle of menses is made essential because the body gets exhausted after these events and, therefore, in order to tone it up as well as to keep it hygienic, there is nothing like a good, clean bath. It does not in any way mean that this instruction—to have a bath after legal sexual intercourse—is because it is considered an unclean act, as some critics of Islam have painted it. It is known that the medical profession is in no doubt that during the menstrual cycle and during the delivery of babies quite a lot of dirty blood and other matter are cleansed off the bodies of women and to clean their bodies a bath is the only means. Similarly, it is also accepted by the medical profession that excretions of the digestive and circulatory systems—feces and urine—of all animal species, including the human being, are unhygienic and unclean. Therefore, and rightly too, in the Islamic hygienic code both these excretions of the human

beings, as well as those of other animals and birds, have been considered unclean, requiring the excreting parts of the human body as well as any part of the human body or dress that comes in contact with these wet excretions to be washed thoroughly with clean water.

On the social front, giving away charity (sadaqah) to the poor and the needy by identifying them has been enjoined by Islam on all Muslims frequently. In addition, the payment of the compulsory Zakaat (the sharing of prosperity with the deserving less-affluents in the society) compulsory fasting for the whole of the twenty-nine or thirty days, as the case may be, during the lunar month of Ramadhan every year through complete abstention from all kinds of food, drinks and smoking from dawn to dusk has also been prescribed for all able-bodied men and women. This latter experience must naturally bring to the mind of every person the extreme hardship and misery that a hungry person must undergo, day in and day out, thereby prompting the society as a whole to ensure that no one really goes around hungry for want of food and water, the most essential things to sustain life, after air.

Thus, socially, every Muslim is expected to be absolutely clean, in body, mind, speech, behaviour and actions as best as possible and eager to assist one another, sharing each other's prosperity and woe so that the society progresses as a whole like a single body that feels as a whole the agony or comfort caused to any part of the limbs of the social body. Naturally, it is no wonder that remaining clean and loving brothers, concerned about the well-being of the other brothers, Muslims are much concerned about their coreligionists abroad beyond the otherwise normally accepted nationality limitations. All should eat from the same plate as well as drink from the same cup, as expected by Islam. This is the social ideal projected by Islam to evolve a just model society not only for a group, a society, a country alone, but for a state and even for the whole world.

The Holy War and Treatment of NonMuslims

Fighting the vicious enemy for rightful self-preservation, in self-defence and for the preservation of Islam on the orders of Imam (the leader of Muslims), when the infidel enemy continues religious oppression, is an act of faith enjoined on every Muslim by Allah through the Quraan and by the holy prophet, for which the reward is martyrdom, immortality and eternal paradise. A Muslim must fight until death for the cause of Islam or until he is free to practice his faith. A just truce is acceptable, and only as long as the enemy too upholds the

terms of the treaty and then no more war is permitted. The Quraan declares; "And say not of those who are slain in the way of Allah 'they are dead'—nay, they are living, ye perceive it not," and "Think not of those are slain in the way of Allah as dead. Nay, they live finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord. They rejoice in bounty provided by Allah. And with regard to those left behind who have not yet joined them (in their bliss) the martyr's glory is that on them is no fear, nor have they (cause to) grieve" (2:154; 3:169,170). Even according to the human law, the dead in the cause of defending freedom are termed "martyrs" who in fact, are not only ever remembered, but their dependents are also well provided for. Islam is no exception in holding this view in respect of a person who dies in the way of Allah. When a Muslim has to love Allah and his faith more than anything else, it is only just that he too be prepared to die in the battlefield for the sake of his principles. On the offer of a just truce by the enemy, with guarantees to refrain from tumult and oppression, the war must be stopped, honouring agreements and truce terms as long as the enemy too abides by them. Keeping of words as well as solemn promises and fulfillment of contracts are also enjoined on Muslims.

In Islam, there is no ban on loyal nonMuslims occupying administrative and other positions of the state that do not entitle them to the administration of either Islamic Shariah laws or enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong in Islam. This is a logical sequence on account of the fact that in an Islamic State consisting of a population that is predominantly Muslim, a nonMuslim can neither be expected nor ordered to propagate Islamic values and law. For the same reason a nonMuslim cannot become the head of state of an Islamic state. Just as Muslims pay Zakaat, part of which is spent on maintaining an Islamic army and security forces, the nonMuslims who do not pay Zakaat are expected to pay a security tax called "Jizya" (in token of having accepted the supremacy of the state as a loyal citizen), whereby he is also guaranteed security of the state (9:29). Further, in an Islamic state, no law repugnant to the injunctions of the Quraan may be enacted. Subject to these few conditions, any nonMuslim citizen who does not openly oppose the Islamic values and faith has the same freedom including worship as any Muslim. In this regard, the Quraan states clearly:

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits: For Allah does not like transgressors; and slay them wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse

than manslaughter: but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque (Kaabah at Makkah) unless they first fight you there: But if they fight you, slay them: Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease Allah is Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them until there is no tumult or oppression and there prevail justice and faith in Allah; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression(2:190-193);

To those against whom war is made, permission is given because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid; they are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right for (no cause other) than that they say 'Our Lord is Allah.' Did not Allah check one set of people by another, surely they would have pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure . . . (22:39,40);

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out from error; whomsoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks; and Allah heareth and knoweth all things (2:256).

The above passages from the Quraan have been quoted for dispelling once and for all the grave mistaken notions in respect of religious toleration, religious war and propagation of Islam that, unfortunately, have become embedded in the minds of nonMuslims for no fault of this great religion and its sincere followers during the lifetime of prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) as well as ever since his death 1400 years ago.

Faith and Belief on Life in This World and Life after Death

It is a faith and belief with Muslims that the human being is accountable for all his actions. All the human beings who were dead will be resurrected to face the final judgment of Allah on the "last day" of this universe, the day when "the stars become dim, when the heaven is cleft asunder, when the mountains are scattered as dust" (79:8-10) "and when the earth is flattened out and casts forth what is within it and becomes empty" (84:3,4), and the judgment will be delivered justly on the basis of a balance sheet of all deeds, good and bad, performed by each individual during his only one lifetime in this world. This is so because human beings have been bestowed with discriminatory and thinking faculties to judge for themselves what is good and bad in relation to the guidance provided to them at all ages through the

prophets among them. The choosing of either good or bad lay squarely on their own individual shoulders, just the same way that the laws of a country also operate. The Quraan is very clear on this point, as is stated at 11:115; "And be steadfast in patience for surely Allah will not suffer the reward of the righteous to suffer," "And then on that (judgment) day, not a soul will be wronged in the least and ye shall be repaid the meeds of your past deeds" (36:54). It is said in the Quraan that the deeds of each and every person are recorded in a Book of Deeds, exclusively for each person, by two dedicated angels, one for recording the good deeds and the other for recording the bad deeds (50:16,17;18), and that on the judgment day the Book of Deeds of each person, which "leaves out nothing small or great but takes account thereof," shall be produced before him as concrete proof in this connection as evidence for and against each deed (8:49). That keeping a dedicated record of each person's actions is possible even for the developed man with the help of computer can give a clear idea to us how Allah, the Creator of the very man who invented the computer, as well as the rest of the universe, may get any document He needs by much more superior and efficient means as He likes, and therefore there should be nothing unimaginable or wonderful in this issue. It is clearly stated in the Quraan that on the "last judgment day," each and every person shall be dealt with justly on the basis of his own Book of Deeds and that no excuse or intercession by anyone else without the specific permission of Allah shall be accepted.

Concept of Heaven and Hell

The rewards and punishments are but two only; either an eternal life in paradise, enjoying and subjecting oneself to everything good and wholesome at one's own command under the blessing and in the presence of Allah, or an eternal life in hell, presented as burning fire with dirt, filth and everything horrible and terrible. As far as what kind of existence man shall face in paradise is not revealed in the Quraan, except that it will be entirely different from man's worldly existence, on a different plane altogether where care, worry, death or need may not crop up. On the contrary, a garden of plenty where everything one desires shall be within the easy reach of all and nothing but peace, bliss and tranquility in the glorious presence of Allah and in the midst of none but good people punctuated by prophets, martyrs, honest and pious people, all living for ever. After the complete disintegration of

the existing universe, what comes next is within the exclusive realm of Allah, the Absolute and Super Planner, Designer, and Creator of everything.

The Divine Guidance Provided to Every Human Being

The "conscience" within every individual is the "divine guidance" from Allah that prompts him to do what is good and to refrain from evil thoughts as well as actions. Nevertheless, the selfishness of the human self reinforced by the promptings of the evil forces of Shaitan (Satan) wins over his conscience so that one falls prey to the promptings of Satan. Only thus does a human being fall into the trap and commit evil deeds, himself being wholly and totally responsible and accountable for each and every action brought into motion due to his or her own choice, Allah being never partial to any creature except to the extent that He blesses all good actions. The consequences of each action, whether good or bad, is attributable to the laws of Allah. However, their causation is the result of the decision and follow-up of the human being. In order to aid the children of Adam, however, Allah has provided guidance through the books and revelations sent to His prophets and finally through the promptings of one's own "conscience" which all tend to put them on the course of virtues, whereas, the promptings of Satan to elect the evil courses tend to deviate them from the rightful thoughts and actions. The result whether good or bad is, thus, exclusively as a result of the decision taken by the human beings only for which they are to be answerable, themselves.

Politics and Law

Man being the "viceregent" of Allah on earth, the absolute allegiance and sovereignty of man also must be to Allah alone. The Muslim therefore is the caretaker for administration of the laws of Allah among the people. Subject to this basic principle, the best person among Muslims is to be selected to be the leader of Muslims and this leader is responsible for the well-being of the people in all walks of spiritual, political, economic, and social life. On all matters of Islamic law, including the law on crime and punishment, the Imam is to follow the law of the Quraan and the teachings of prophet Muhammad (Blessings and peace of Allah be on him) and any aspect of public life which is not covered by the above two principles is to be decided on the basis of consensus of his advisers selected from the "good" and knowledgeable

Muslims, but no such decision that goes against or ignores either any specific injunction of the Quraan or any specific teaching of the prophet in this regard may be amended by such consensus even by the doctors of religious jurisprudence. Thus, just because the rest of the world has accepted any particular system conflicting with the law given by Allah through the Quraan—say, for example, the case of punishment of killing the murderer which according to the modern consensus is that instead of executing the killer to death, he should be sent to jail for changing his mental outlook—cannot be adopted also by Muslims for the reasons that it is against the specific directive of the Quraan, which has prescribed the law of “equality” (Qisas), whereby the punishment to the killer is death, unless the aggrieved party is prepared to accept “blood money” of its choice. The “canonical” punishment prescribed by the Islamic Shariah laws based on the Quraan and the examples set by the holy prophet must be administered by the rulers without showing any mercy. That this is the only deterrent for minimising crime has been totally proven in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, where the Islamic Shariah law, with its drastic punishments ordered by Allah, has successfully operated among Muslims as well as on expatriate non-Muslims for the last four decades or so, making this the unique country in the world where crime rates are the lowest. It also cannot be forgotten that even now there is a clamor from the people, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, to reintroduce the death penalty to the killers and rapists because these kinds of crime have recorded an increase, putting the safety and honour of people in jeopardy.

There is a misunderstanding that Islam has prescribed only a democratic government and therefore a so-called king is not acceptable. Such an idea is contrary to Islam. Islam has kept this open for the people to decide. In fact the Quraan states that both Dawood (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) (peace be on them) were kings as well as prophets. The acceptance of the ruler by the people is what is essential. A benevolent ruler (leader of good morals who leaves no stone unturned to keep all sections of the people happy and satisfied as far as security and honour of the individual, availability of essential needs of life at prices one can afford, social welfare and equal opportunity to rise in any field on natural merit to all in the state are concerned), should therefore be acceptable to Muslims provided that he is acceptable to them on due merits irrespective of the fact whether he be elected, self-appointed, one person, a few persons or a group of people. It should not be forgotten that even in democratic as well as communist ways of government, a strong minority of people, at times quite large but only a little less than half the total population of a democratic country

and even a majority of people in a communist country, is forced to obey the decisions of the ruling party although the opposition, supposed to be also representing many tens of millions of people, does not agree with the essential policies and ways of the ruling party. In fact, the finest examples set by the first caliphs of Islam provide insight into how Imam of Muslims should be. Abubakr on his election as the first caliph in 11 A.H., after the demise of the holy prophet in Madinah, had exhorted the people to obey him only as long as he obeyed Allah and the prophet, and about Omar II (Bin Abdul Azeez, 99-101 A.H.), who is considered as the fifth legal caliph, it is said, he was found weeping, pleading to Allah for a show of mercy on him, because he did not know what reply he could give on the "last day" if it was found that people were starving under his leadership! All first caliphs used to work for their own living and obtained only meagre compensations from the government treasury for their expenses and in most occasions, nothing. The first four caliphs used to consult their few advisers only in certain cases, because the Quraan and the Sunnah (the ways) of the holy prophet were what they were guided by.

Islamic system, thus, has paved the way for a total welfare state for the progress of the Muslim as well as other peoples politically, socially, morally, spiritually, economically and in other worldly affairs that nourish human knowledge, body, mind and the human society. Every act of Islam is totally devoted to meet the end, encouraging the human being to lead a clean personal as well as social life, nationally as well as internationally in accordance with natural laws and environments on the basis of the directives of Allah and the last of the prophets. A non-Muslim may be surprised by the fact that the holy prophet advised his people 1400 years ago to go even to China in search of knowledge, knowing full well that the knowledge available there then was anything other than the study of Islam.

Islam also requires that, subject to the ultimate sovereignty and allegiance of the self to Allah alone and observance of Islamic tenets, a Muslim must obey all rightful laws of any ruler who rules over his domain. He may resist and fight only when either he or the Muslim community is prevented from practicing the tenets of his own religion. Such a doctrine, in fact, permits a Muslim to exist peacefully not only in an Islamic state, but even in a non-Islamic state—a realistic approach to worldly affairs indeed. The Quraan suggests to a Muslim that he has full freedom to seek the rightful bounties of this world as well as to gain knowledge through investigation of one's own body, and environments as well as the vast firmaments around him to discover the bounties, wonders and the functioning of the universe as a whole, which are more wonderful than himself, in order to have a firm concep-

tion of the greatness and powers of Allah who alone has planned and created them all to function harmoniously within the specified limits and order allocated to each. Thus, Islam encourages the faithful to go in pursuit of research, science and technology that may enrich body, mind and the environment.

Philosophy of Life in Islam

The Quraan states, "Not for (idle) sport did we create heavens and the earth and all that is between" (21:16); that Islam is the religion before Allah (3:19), that "the Jinns and mankind have been created only for serving Allah" (51:56); that "Muslims are the best of people evolved for mankind enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong and believing in Allah" (3:110); and "that man is to be created again after death in new forms of which he does not know" (56:60,61), "the earth and heavens being changed to different ones on the last marshalling day" (14:48). It is also understood from the Quraan that the life of man on earth is a very small portion as compared to his eternal life after death, which he must live ever after, either enjoying the bliss of the paradise or the tribulations of the hell as the case may be, justly in accordance with the balance sheet of his "Book of Deeds," opened before him on the judgment day after resurrection. Thus, the choice of paradise and hell is with the human being alone. Allah, being absolutely just all the time, guides the human being during his only one life on earth to the right path without forcing him against his own will either way as a test of his intelligence and finally compensating him on the merits of his own worldly deeds with either paradise or hell as the case may be. In his magnanimity as the "Super Force," and out of compassion and love, particularly to the human being, Allah has not only covenanted to pardon any human being who, being in the wrong path, duly repents for his past actions by due amends in all respects, vowing to be in the right course of Islam without having further recourse willingly to wrong thoughts, speech and deeds, but also to assist him through divine guidance, enabling him to remain in the prescribed right course if he has the will to do so. Such pardons Allah has promised again and again, provided the person has been sincere in his approach and not a hypocrite. It is quite clear from the Quraan that Allah provides such an opportunity to the human being throughout his life on earth, but it also warns that having indulged in lifelong wickedness, viciousness and negation of Allah's guidance, if one repents only either at the deathbed with little good deeds to his credit or on the "last day" when all shall face their due judgments on

the basis of their "Books of Deeds," such repentance shall not be accepted by Allah. Such a person shall not be given one more chance by Allah to live in the world or elsewhere for making amends either.

Islam does not tolerate either taking any partners in the powers of Allah or His worship or adoration, or paying absolute sovereignty to anything other than Allah, to whom no demigods, sons, wives, relations, proxies or agents may also be attributed whatsoever. He is only One, without beginning, end, limitations of time or space and is All knowing, All powerful. When He decides to set into motion His absolute will, He only says "Be", and "It is There." He is Omnipotent, Omniscient, Omnipresent, limitless and transcendent. Sole planner, designer, creator, sustainer and disposer of what is in the universe and beyond. Allah is just, beneficent, benevolent and kind to all His Creations. This is the acute faith of the Muslims. All the above shows that the universe and the human beings have all been created with some definite purpose in view which Allah, the only creator, alone knows!

Conclusion

As seen from the preceding detailed analysis, it should be quite clear that all the guidelines and laws of Islam on the total life of the human beings are objective and rational, aimed at the development of a regulated society mainly on the basis of spiritually-based moral values and love; to evolve a welfare state for all where "Milk and Honey" could flow, not by compulsion, but as the result of honest endeavours of each member of the society according to the needs and with mutual consideration, ushering in an era of plenty and contentment. In such a society, everything would be produced out of love and without compulsion at all in such plenty that rather than need, things will get distributed according to requirement. See how contrasting this approach to human life is with a life consisting of eternal war between classes and mutual confrontation assumed by manmade ways of life, such as Communism. Alas, due to ignorance of the great practical religion of Islam, which was evolved by Allah for the total emancipation of mankind, some of the nineteenth century philosophers concocted new theories and practices such as "Communism" out of the small and very limited knowledge they had of the potential and behaviour of the human being, the nature around him and the larger harmonic universe with a false hope of creating an era of satisfaction. During the early twentieth century, the organisation of the Bolsheviks brought into

existence the "Communist State" as a supposed euphoric panacea for inauguration of the "socialist era of plenty" by merciless repressions and killings of the bourgeoisie as well as the proletariat on the principle of "the end justifies the means," on the crude notion that the sacred human life is basically one of intense class war and confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and on the fallacy that the socialist welfare state of their conception could be brought into real existence on the basis of confrontation, class war, hatred and killings, but not with love. However, today, after sixty-five years, the Communist brotherhood and international that originally had been evolved as a party of the proletariats still functions as a party over them yet continuing its harping on the so-called destruction of the bourgeoisie! The net result of the new trial has been that the world and, perhaps, the Communist leadership itself, is finding to its utter dismay that the Communist system ushered into Russia is just another "Utopian concept" for the simple reason that, after the practice of the concept under all-round vigil of experts, specialists and party men for over six decades, the Communist state has still to live with a huge shortage of even food grains required to feed its people, not to speak of other items comprising the essential necessities of modern life! Has the human being of this Sputnik age so much time to waste any more in trying such "pet theories" one after another? Having drastically failed in the "Communist Welfare State Theory," then why not as a whole revert to the practical and convincing philosophy advocated by Islam? At least we have concrete historical evidence that when tried sincerely more than once in the past, Islam has been able to establish a classless and contented social order unsurpassed so far by any other system because of no reason other than it is based on the sovereignty of Allah, the guidance of the Quraan and the teachings of the holy prophet. It is, after all, a fully tried concept dictated by the Creator and sustainer of mankind as well as the rest of the universe.

Thus, if the holy Quraan and the life of the last prophet of Islam, Muhammad (blessings of Allah and peace be on him), are studied closely as well as dispassionately, one cannot but be convinced that Islam is "The Religion" that is in resonance with nature and the only way of life that has been designed for the fully developed mankind not only to attain the just goal of a total welfare state in this world but also to emancipate the soul through his truthful effort as well as the mercy of the Lord of the universe for attainment of a blissful eternal life after death. After all, the finite human being must also continue to exist after his death in some other unknown state or form because nothing, particularly the soul, can be destroyed for good, and, for the

logical reasons detailed earlier, it cannot be assumed to merge into Godhood. In fact, Islam, the religion assigned by Allah, who is the sole creator of the universe, as the religion for the entire mankind explains this very natural law by providing some logical and convincing clues to know the hitherto unknown shape of things that await men after death. No doubt, those convincing explanations on the goal for the human soul after death have been made by Allah so that mankind may work relentlessly for the attainment of the promised reward—a real, bountiful paradise where one will not find missing the good things he likes and everything will be at his own command.

Thus Allah, who is the planner, creator, sustainer and disposer of the universe and who knows fully of the matter, pattern of behaviour and the specification of each and every creation, big or small, has also declared rightly that Islam is “the religion with Allah” and that Muslims are “the best of peoples for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah. . . (3:110). With a complete code of life covering the thought, contemplation, speech, action, behaviour and what not of the individual, the home, the society and international relations applicable to all times as laid down by the creator, Islam is the only religion and way of life that is appealing to logic, reason, conscience, science and in harmony with the nature leading to the emancipation of the soul through a meaningful life in this world followed by a blissful eternal life after death with the mercy of the Lord of the Universe. For the logical reason that Godhood and creation do stand out as two distinct entities on two entirely different levels, one being the Absolute and ultimate master of the other, the very thought of both merging with one another at any time appears to be nothing but an illusion. Further, if everything of the billions of creations between the infinite past to the infinite future is considered as the integral part of one Godhead in action, to be united or merged with each other sometime or other as some religious philosophies tend to explain, will anything other than the Godhood remain ultimately? The very thought of this ultimate catastrophe is revolting to reason, logic and science. Creative activity of God must, instead, continue ad infinitum, and at least one practical and realistic state of acquired salvation for the souls of many large numbers of good ones among the human beings, enabling them to enjoy the fruits of their continuous toil all their lives on earth, must be available to them after the last hour. The era of human life on the earth must end one day when the earth as well as its environments and the universe may have to readjust to the new gravitational and other changes happening due to the dying out of a number of major and minor existing celestial

bodies after exhaustion of their designed normal spans of life.

Thus, how wonderful indeed it is that the final laws and guidelines given by Allah to the fully developed mankind 1,400 years ago through the Quraanic revelation and the model life demonstrated by the last of the prophets, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), a man much like any other throughout his life in general and during his twenty-three-year prophethood in particular, have remained unpoluted and fit for application to all peoples of yesterday, today and all tomorrows for evolution of a total welfare state for all peoples on earth and emancipation of the soul after death! Seek, it shall be found; ask, it shall be given!

Chapter 8

Jainism

Introduced about the sixth century B.C.E. by Vardhamana Mahavira, Jainism, which probably appears to have been adhered to by dissenters from Hinduism, is almost as old as Buddhism. Referred to in the Buddhist canon as the religion of the rival sect of the 'Nigaranthas' (free from bonds), it has a strong monastic order. Numbering less than two million people, inhabiting mainly the northern areas of the Indian west coast, the wealth of the Jains has given them greater influence than their small number in a country whose population is about 800 million.

The Jain traditions claim that Mahavira was the descendant of a line of twenty-three earlier saints or prophets (Thirthakas) called "Jainas" (conquerors or leaders), who had all attained redemption (Nirvana), the first of them being the mythical Rishabha (the golden bull) and the twenty-third being Parshva (blue snake), who lived 250 years before Mahavira. Thirtanakaras (saints) are worshipped as gods (devas). Nemi (black conch), who is supposed to be Parshva's predecessor and related to Krishna of the Hindu *Bhagavat Geetha*, is worshipped in many Jain temples. Like all his predecessors, Mahavira is said to have been a Kshatriya by caste, belonging to Vaishali, a place in the Indian state of Bihar. Brought up a Jain, he became a monk who discarded his clothes and, after getting a following of eleven disciples, died at the age of seventy-two about 477 B.C.E. The religious centres of the sect are Mount Abu in Rajputana, Gerar, Santrunjaya and Ellora, all in India.

The Jain tradition states that Mahavira, a contemporary of Buddha but slightly older, was the twenty-fourth Jaina (saint or prophet) of the cult whose predecessor was Parshva (Blue Snake), who lived two and a half centuries earlier, and that Mahavira preached his code of ethics without knowing that the same was preached by his predecessor earlier. The code of conduct of Jainism as preached by both are:

—Not to kill living beings;

—Not to tell a lie;

—Not to take articles of use unless they are given;

—Not to ^{own} have worldly possessions except clothes; and

—To live the life of celibacy by not taking a wife.

The only notable difference between the followers of the two schools of thought is that while the Mahavira Jains put on simple white garments, the Parshva Jains tried to go naked as often as they could, showing that even during the short lapse of two and a half centuries, as much civilisation had been acquired by the people of the area as to put on clothes, 2,500 years ago. The very fact that the two new religions, Jainism and Buddhism, had appeared as contemporary adaptations of Hinduism—both trying to get rid of, among others, the two big social evils of pantheism, which required worship of too many gods, and social discrimination on the basis of birth and profession, both with sanction, nay, directives, from the Vedic scripture—shows that Vedas had really become outdated at least 2,500 years ago. Further, was not the emergence of the two new religions in ancient India with some similarities and a few differences between themselves and Hinduism after Krshna Avathar himself had shown the yoga way to attain “Nirvana” through Geetha a demonstration that the Veda and Geetha ways were insufficient to attain the desired goal of Nirvana? The two new movements, Jainism and Buddhism, therefore, attempted to show different ways for the same ends especially because Buddha, at least, was since considered as the avathar too.

Jains say that theirs is not a purely ethical system alone, but also a philosophy based on the doctrine of possibilities known as “Anekanta” or “Syadvada,” which is basically the doctrine of many possibilities, looking at the two aspects of anything, the “eternal” and “noneternal.” The migration of souls, (also of the Hindu philosophy) is according to good or bad deeds. As the Jain philosophy regards that the Jiva soul exists in everything, no soul is to be injured at all. In order to enable the soul to be free from Samsara, it should be kept pure by practicing restraint for which one must acquire right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. While Mahavira chose the path of self-mortification and Buddha the doctrine of the middle path, the result perhaps was the same—that is, “blowing out through Samadhi” under great physical and mental suffering until death.

The order of Jain monks eschews ownership of anything mundane, even garments, which the Digambara ascetics do still as often as possible. About 317 B.C.E. or so, under Bhadrabahu, Jainism expanded

vigorously in northern India. Inscriptions also show that during the second century B.C.E. the Jains were powerful in the part of India called Orissa in the northeast. Later, as the result of schism, the lax new sect of Ardhamphalakas appeared during the time of Bhadrabahu, which by about the year 80 C.E. had developed into the white-robed Swathambaras. The conversion of the powerful Sidharaja of Gujrat gave Jains their first royal patron, under whom and some of his successors Jainism acquired a strong position in the west of India. The Digambaras possess the older Sanskrit religious literature and the Swathambaras, the canon.

The Jainist cult has no absolute godhead. Sharing the theoretical pessimism of the Buddhist, Samkhya and yoga philosophies, Jainism aims at the liberation from the transmigration of souls (Samsara) of the Hindu doctrine. While matter exists as something, it may become anything; being infinite is complex. All substances are divided into lifeless ones and souls or lives (jiva), the former becoming anything and in the realm of the lowest stage of development, the elements being bodies of souls. Although souls are substances, they are not matter; yet they are capable of expansion, indestructible and characterised by intelligence that cannot be destroyed. Souls are of two kinds—mundane and liberated, the former subjected to the transmigration cycle and the latter being disembodied for ever, just the same as in the Hindu philosophical doctrine. Into the mundane soul is poured suitable matter, ready to be transformed into karma of eight kinds, and combining with the soul it forms a subtle body determining its state and lot; having done its work, every karma is purged off the soul until it is light enough to ascend to the top of the universe. However, in the actual life, fresh karma tends to replace those eliminated and the souls must enter a new body at the time of death. The soul has six transcendental colours—three good and three bad indicating its character and the soul itself may enter various stages according to whether the karma is neutralised, annihilated or partly one or the other. The first of the many vows is not to kill, observance of which demands a remarkable care to preserve all living things and for the strict practice of which the mouth should be kept covered with a cloth lest the life in the air be either injured or even polluted. Vermin may be removed, but not injured or killed, and the home should be kept scrupulously clean. Enforcement of intense monastic discipline consisting of bodily restraints, chastity, abstinence from alcohol, meat, honey and roots, as well as the maintenance of mental discipline, purity of thought, contemplation, confession and repentance are the essential aspects of Jainism, which denies attainment of Nirvana (ultimate redemption) by women.

There is no doubt that like other derivations of Hinduism like Buddhism and Sikhism, the evolution of Jainism too was the inevitable result of the utter confusion caused by the innumerable deities, caste system and the impossible Karma-Dharma-Samsara oriented redemption process, among other things, with the objective of evolving a sound, logical and practical philosophy, basically from the known Hindu way of thought and life, ensuring equality among men and attainment of redemption from rebirths. Nevertheless, as proved by history, none of these newer movements did actually succeed to align even a reasonable number of the bulk of the masses of Hindu India behind them except for a very short time. As compared to Buddhism, which emphasised complete renunciation of the world for the attainment of Nirvana (complete redemption by union with the Supreme essence) of the soul through Samadhi (blowing out), due to the association of a limited laity to the renunciation doctrine through permission granted by Jainism to carry on with secular pursuits by the devotee, made it more attractive to the dissidents from Hinduism, making Jainism thrive with royal patronage for some time in limited areas of India. A layman, thus, may make vows of renunciation after he has made sufficient progress without actually entering the monastic order or taking full obligations on him. This is the reason why there are many persons of affluence and fortune found among Jains in India as compared to the rest, considering their insignificant total population. While suicide is a sin, both ascetics and laymen may hasten death by voluntary starvation, though to the latter this is permissible during old age only. The real disadvantage of Jainism is that it is essentially a creed of a cultivated and affluent class from which, naturally, the bulk of the masses is excluded. As schism developed in the sect, which had gone too far, in the fifteenth century C.E. Longa Sha, the Jain, denounced idol worship and founded Dhundia (Searchers) or Shanakavasi sect, which in turn further split up into several subsects.

Although believed to be vast, very few of the Jain literature have been published. The Digambaras say that most of the older ones are lost and the Swatambaras have preserved only a part of theirs. Books are, however, strictly safeguarded and even zealously concealed. In architecture Jains have excelled, and although Buddhist models were adopted in stupas and cave temples, they carried the art of carving in stone to a very high degree of precision and beauty. Jain temples display a mixture of their own and Moghul features and architecture.

As is seen from the foregoing, Jainism is an order and creed fit for the affluent class of the dissident Hindu society which, after getting rich, may go into strict monastic discipline after taking vows to uphold

chastity and renunciation of everything mundane with the aim of liberating the soul from transmigration through attainment of Nirvana, which, however, is denied to women. The creed usually excludes the common mass of the people from its ranks. Whereas Hinduism has the main trinity godhead of Trimoorthis and thousands of other gods and goddesses to worship as deities for specific purposes, Jainism does not believe in God, although the souls can reach a divine status, the soul and the world being self-existent and eternal. The chief aim of Nirvana is the performance of austerities by which one may destroy the old Karma and prevent the formation of the new by subjecting oneself to the right faith, right knowledge and right conduct at all time.

Chapter 9

Judaism

Judaism, Jews and the Children of Israel

Judaism is the religion and way of life of the ethnic community of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, known generally as Jews. Based on rigidly strict monotheism, shunning idols and images, the Jews worship the Only One God and have a set of basic beliefs and values concentrating on actions, social order, culture, statement and concepts of the individual as well as community which are preferential to the people belonging to the twelve children of the patriarch Jacob (peace be upon him), who was redesignated by God as Israel. Siddour, the prayer book of Jews, emphasises that God is One. Shema, the Jewish confession of faith, states that God, who is the creator of the universe and who has chosen Israel in love by giving them the Torah (teaching, guidance, direction, or simply "The Law"), is "One" and that His love is to be reciprocated by Israel through obeying the Torah, for which they will be rewarded and the rebellious punished.

As found from the Hebrew scriptures and traditions, foundation of the Israeli religion was laid after the exodus from Egypt, about the thirteenth to fifteenth century B.C.E. when the only One God of prophets Abraham, Isaac, Ishmail and Jacob (peace be upon them), in His love, liberated the children of Israel from Egypt under the able leadership of prophet Moses (peace be upon him), punishing their oppressors, consisting of Pharaoh and his men with plagues and other calamities, with final drowning at the sea. At Sinai, God spoke to the children of Israel through Moses (peace be on him), made them His selected people and gave them His covenant regarding their conduct towards Him as well as with each other and the rest of men so as to make them a holy nation for the purpose of leading the rest of the people for the first time in the history of the children of Adam (peace be on him) on the earth. After sustaining them miraculously with a supply of heavenly food during their forty years of nomadic life in the wilderness of the Sinai, as a punishment for their first rebellious disobedience—particularly the worship of the cow and refusal to occupy the land to the north

promised earlier by God to their patriarch forefathers, ultimately God enabled them to live in the same land, which is the present land of Palestine. Essential to these events were God's apostles Moses and his brother Aaron (peace be on them), who were commissioned by God to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, mediate God's covenant to them and bring them toward Canaan. The main institutions of the Jews are the priesthood, the sacred-shrine, the Covenant, as well as its rules and administrative tribal council. Though Moses and Aaron (peace be upon them) are compared to prophets, the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) does not mention them as such.

The Jews claim that the history of the children of Israel dates back 4000 years, which is roughly 2000 years before Christ (peace be upon him). However, the distinctive features of Judaism appear only with Moses (peace be upon him). The name of the God of Israel is said to have been revealed and interpreted to Moses (peace be upon him) in Sinai as "YHWH," a mystic divine phrase that is not quite clear, purported to mean, "I am what I am," or "I will be what I will be." Perhaps it means the Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient Only One Living God connected with the Hebrew term "Hayah," or "to be." The covenant detailing the obligations of Israelites is stated to have been received directly by Moses (peace be upon him) during his meditation with YHWH at the Sinai mountain as the head of the people of Israel. It is seen from the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, which contains the Pentateuch as well as other scriptures of Hebrews, that the larger as well as the smaller covenant codes in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and the Ten Commandments of the Law as well as the ordinances in the Book of the Covenant of Deuteronomy, are the expressions of God's sovereign and unilateral will given through His personal utterances to Moses (peace be upon him) at Sinai. These are explicitly addressed, directly, to the people of Israel as a whole, the prophet merely acting as an intermediary to convey the message. The Covenant holds the entire children of Israel as responsible for the strict observance of the rules and laws contained in it. The liberation of the Israeli people by YHWH from long captivity under slavery of Pharaoh made them obliged to have untinged loyalty to YHWH as well as to worship Him exclusively without any images,—graven, molten or otherwise—eschewing all other gods.

The Jewish Scriptures

The Torah, the Talmud and Midrash are the three essential religious books of the Jews. Of these the Torah is considered as the scripture and contains three parts the Law (the Pentateuch or five books), the

Nabiim (the Prophets), and the Kitabim (the Books). The Torah is found in the Holy Bible of Christian faith known as the Old Testament. The Pentateuch, containing Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy of the Old Testament, traditionally called the five books of Moses (peace be upon him), is the most revered of all the religious books of the Jews. It is the main canon of Jewish faith, morals, worship, sacrifice, and questions of law and conduct. In fact, Torah being God's revelations to Moses, (peace be upon him) these five books only should have been considered as "Torah." The Nibiim (Prophets), a collection of eight books according to the Jews but showing in twenty-one chapters in the Old Testament of Christians, is ascribed to major and minor prophets of Israel after Moses (peace be upon him) as well as to several others describing the history and contexts of the eras of the different prophets. The remaining, called "Hegiagraph" or sacred writings (Kitabim) contain psalms, proverbs, songs and the like constituting poetic literature of the Old Testament.

The Mishna (the Rabbinic Law) appears to have been compiled and used as a standard royal version by Prince Judah sometime between 220 and 175 B.C.E. from the then existing practices and the Mirdashim of the various recognised schools of Jewish thought. Because the Mishna did not give enough freedom to the Jewish rabbis to further interpret the Law as tradition demanded, it soon came into disfavour with the clerical intelligentsia, and therefore became semicanonical. Therefore, the Mirdashims on the Pentateuch was compiled and brought into use. About the same period, the Talmud (Teachings), containing the Mishna, commentaries and other matters based on the Palestinian and Babylonian collections, was also compiled. The main law of Jews has been based on Deuteronomy, which in the Bible is seen as the fifth book of Moses (peace be upon him). As stated at the outset of this narrative book, these are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness but not referred to as the words of God given to the children of Israel through Moses (peace be upon him). However, in the four books of the Law of the Covenant in the Pentateuch considerable material appears in the first person commands of God to the Israeli people, although the first book, Exodus, is mostly third person narrative.

Jewish Law and Ethics

The Jewish scripture the Torah, which is believed by the Jews to be the Law of God given to the children of Israel through Moses (peace be upon him), apart from requiring them to worship and seek the Only One God, protects the value of life, limb, labour, social solidarity, rela-

tions between men within and without their own clans, and rights as well as obligations of the individual. However, the laws do discriminate between the children of Israel and others, being preferential to the children of Israel. It orders the performance of sacrifice by Jews of oxen, rams and cereals, as well as burnt offerings exclusively to the Only One God at the appointed altars only as a tribute or way of expression of gratitude, thanksgiving or as a guilt offering. It abolishes involuntary perpetual slavery of Hebrews and a seven year limit is set on such bondage. However, the selling of one's own daughters is not forbidden (Exod. 21:7-11) under certain conditions. One who beats his slave to death is also to face death and one who maims his slave must set him free. Asylum is denied to a murderer, who may not ransom himself from death. For injuries done intentionally to the limbs of another's body, justice on "an eye for an eye" principle is ordained and monetary punishments are provided for harming properties and committing theft. Priesthood is reserved for the sons of Aaron, the brother of Moses (peace be upon them), the family of Levi assisting as the ministers at rites of the altars and none else. Death is the punishment for taking gods other than the Only One God, homosexuality, cursing of parents, adultery, and posing as mediums or wizards. However, in the event of committing adultery with a slave woman betrothed to another man, "a guilt offering at the altar" may grant pardon to the culprit. Marriage between near blood relations is prohibited, the penalty imposed for contravention being death. For committing indecencies, such as seeing the nakedness of blood relations or of a third woman, punishment of either cutting off from their people or divine punishment of dying childless or bearing a sin or inequity is mentioned. The buying and selling of slaves from non-Israelite stock is permitted and they may be kept for life as one's own property. Strict observance of the sacred calendar and holy times as well as circumcision and the weekly sabbath on every Saturday, on which work of any kind is forbidden on the grounds that after creating the world in six days even God rested on the seventh day and hallowed it (Gen. 2:1-3), are ordained. Theft, telling lies, swearing falsely on God, eating blood or dead meat or meat of certain specified creatures, which includes swine, camel, rock badger, hare and carnivorous animals and birds, are forbidden. Usury is prohibited among Israeli brethren, but is permitted while lending to non-Israelites. The Torah permits polygamy (Deut. 21:15) as well as divorce for indecency. However, a bill of divorce is to be given to the woman who, while not prevented from marrying another person, may not be remarried by the divorcing man even after divorce by another. The elaborate rituals as specified in Exodus, chapters 35 and 36, of the Old

Testament—such as the assembly in the tent of the meeting housing the tabernacle and containing the Ark, the Covenant, the mercy seat, the lampstead, the incense, the anointing oil, the altars of sacrifice as well as burning, the garments of the priests, the specification of the animals to be sacrificed how, when and where, and how the meat and blood of the sacrificed animals are to be disposed of and so on—have become the symbol of Jewish priesthood.

The Early Life of the Children of Israel

In the early days, the goal of the Israelite people for many centuries being conquest and retention of the land promised to their forefather patriarchs by God, their religion too had a warlike feature. The religion was therefore confined to the children of Israel alone, as so was it intended by YHWH too. As seen from Exod. 12:14, the Israeli people finally organised as an army called hosts of YHWEH and encamped in a protective square around their palladium, which was a tent housing the tabernacle and its paraphernalia, of which the most important constituent being the Ark housing the stone tablets containing God's Covenant to the children of Israel. While travelling, the sacred things were carried and guarded by the Levites, the Aaronites having the absolute monopoly of the priesthood. God—YHWH, sometimes called "The Warrior"—marched with the Israeli army and, in wars, part of the booty was delivered to the ministers, the priests and Levites. After conquest of Canaan, during the time of Joshua soon after the death of Moses (peace be upon him), the Israelites started life along with the older Hebrews there who were already settled tribes down from the patriarchal times. Israel's eastern and western neighbours appeared now as new enemies and the period of "Judges" or leaders, champions, began.

Rise and Fall of Faith, Apostasy and Punishment

Soon after the death of Joshua, who had succeeded to lead the children of Israel after the death of Moses (peace be upon him), they had taken to worship of Baal and Ashtroth and many other inequities acquired from the local communities, which was in contravention of the Law of the Covenant. The second Book of the Old Testament, Exodus, states that rebellion and apostasy of the children of Israel had started even during the lifetime of Moses (peace be upon him) when, soon after God spoke and gave the Covenant to them, they had taken

to cow worship for which they were punished with the death of all those who were responsible for this act of apostasy. Repeated cycles of apostasy, demigod worship and oppression punctuated by Divine punishments and subsequent appeals to God followed. God in His infinite mercy had been so kind to the people that in spite of their blasphemies their appeals had been responded to through God-sent champions such as Othneil, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Samson and others mentioned in the Book of Judges, whereby through miraculous rescue operations the faith of the Israeli people in God had been kept alive. The Book of Judges states that they had gone after the worship of gods of Canaanites (Baal and Ashtaroth) the gods of Syrians, (Moab), Ammonites, Philistines, Sidon and others, many a time in succession. As per the Book of Samuel, Gideon refused to found a dynasty on the plea that the popular demand for a king was tantamount to a rejection of the Kingdom of God. Arrival of a number of inspired saviours through Jerubaal, Bedan and Jephtah to Samuel followed. However, on the plea of Samuel that monarchy is a gift of God designed to rescue the people from the Philistines, contradicting the views of Gideon, Saul was made the King through divine election and popular acclamation soon after his victory over the Ammorites, and thus dawned the era of Kings. During the reign of the prophet King David (peace be upon him), the Ark was redeemed and installed in the City of David in Jerusalem about 900-1000 B.C.E. again in a tent as during the post-Mosaic period. It was during the reign of the prophet King Solomon (peace be upon him) that the temple of God was built in Jerusalem and worship inaugurated in it with all the grandeur it deserved, in accordance with the plan of his father, David (peace be upon him). It is stated that 153,600 people were engaged for twenty years in building the temple.

The Proven Records of Crime

On the authority of the old Testament, the children of Israel, at various times in their long history starting from the days of prophet Moses (peace be upon him), had not only gone away from the Covenant of God (peace be on him), to the extent of deviating from faith in and worship of the Only One God of which, as is repeatedly said in the Old Testament, they "did what was evil in the sight of God," but also had persecuted several prophets of God (I Kings 19:14; Jer. 2:30; Matt. 24:34) and even tried to kill some of them as is said in the Gospels by Jesus himself (peace be upon him). The action of the learned children

of Israel of not only hating Jesus Christ (peace be on him), the prophet of God (peace be on him), but also of going to the extent of collaborating with the Roman heathens to kill him has been detailed as a pathetic horror story in the Bible. All the Gospels of the New Testament state that the Jews even preferred the murderer Barabbas to be pardoned than Jesus Christ (peace be on him), the messenger of God (peace be on him), whose supposed "crime," in fact, was that he preached among the Jews to repent, obey God and seek the right path of the law and the prophets shown by his Gospels from none other than the God of their own forefathers. It is thus a safe conclusion that the final dispersal of the children of Israel all over the world after the final destruction of the Jewish state of Palestine during the latter part of the first century C.E. until the new Zionist state of Israel was established in 1948 C.E., and the earlier mass conviction of Jews to concentration camps as well as the murder of millions of them by firing squads and in gas chambers under the orders of Hitler during the ten-year Nazi rule prior to the defeat of the Axis Powers in the Second World War cannot but be considered as a link in the chain of punishments inflicted by God on the children of Israel for doing what was evil in the eyes of God, their Lord. It cannot also be lost sight of that even after the creation of the Zionist state of Israel, it seems as though it has remained in a state of seige from the Arab nations around because, established in a land rightly belonging to Arabs, the question of rehabilitation of millions of Palestinian Arabs who were displaced from the new state of Israel has still remained a burning question over three decades since. The repercussions of this tragedy have not only affected the good relationship between all the nations of the world, but have also kept the Arab countries and the Zionist state in perpetual confrontation, resulting in wars of attrition between the two more than once during the last thirty or more years. Even today the foundations of the holy state of the children of Israel does not appear to be on strong ground because as all know, the three million of them concentrated in the holy land have had to be in state of war readiness, wasting billions of dollars on war materials since the founding of the state thirty-five years ago.

Nevertheless, what all the children of Israel have been doing since the creation of their new state under a halo of religious obligation and duty may appear to them as necessary acts for regaining and consolidating the holy land that their forefathers had lost by way of divine punishment tens of hundreds of years ago due to their own misdeeds after it was given to them by the extreme mercy of YHWH, as stated in the Old Testament. However, looking at it dispassionately from the viewpoint of the fully developed modern man of today, it cannot but be said that they have been personally responsible not only for the

eviction of millions of native Arabs including women, children and the old from their ancestrally owned homes and lands forcing them, almost as many as the Jews of Israel itself, to live as abject refugees and beggars for decades with no end in sight for termination of their suffering, many of whom having been maimed and tortured or killed during the hostilities. The irony is that this has been happening against a people who are also believers in the same One God of the children of Israel. Will not history then repeat as before, yet again, for these acts of the children of Israel for doing "what is evil in the eyes of God," to repeat what is oft repeated in the Old Testament? The world has yet to see!

The Story of the Ark, Tablets and Torah (The Book of the Covenant)

It is stated that when "The Ark" was placed by Solomon (peace be upon him) in the new temple, there was nothing in it except the two tablets on which the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments (Exod. 34:28) that Moses (peace be upon him) had put there at Horeb where the Lord made the Covenant with the people of Israel when they came out of Egypt (II Chron. 5:10). This proves that the law that Moses (peace be upon him) is supposed to have completed, writing down in his own hand just before his death, and what was required to be kept by the side of the Ark to be a witness against them (Deut. 31:24-27), had been lost altogether, as is meant by the expression, "there was nothing in it except the two tablets." II Chron. 34:14 also states that during the reign of Josiah, about 600-700 B.C.E., while they were bringing out money that had been brought into the house of the Lord, Hilkiah, the priest, found "the Book of the Lord given through Moses." Further, it is said that a prophetess by name of Huldah, who intervened between God and the king and found the contents of the "Book of Law" to be true. Thus it was read out to the inhabitants, Levites as well as priests, and that thereafter the Covenant was renewed and acted upon (II Chron. 34:22-33) as if prior to this incident there was no one among the Levites and the learned who knew what the lost original "Book of Law" had contained! Nevertheless, again during the reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedkiah, who "did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord, their God, and because the children of Israel kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words and scoffing at his prophets, Nebuchadnezzar, the Chaldean king, was sent against them." While in the first round the Chaldeans bound King Jehoiakim in chains and took him to Babylon, carrying also part of the vessels of the house of

the Lord, in the second round "they slew their young men with sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of the Lord, and all the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. And they burned the house of God, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its places with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became the servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the Kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord, through the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years" (II Kings 24:9-17; II Chron. 36:17-21; and Jer. 25:11-12). The Babylonian captivity of the Jews is stated to have lasted for nearly two centuries.

History and Authenticity of the Torah and Jewish Scriptures

The Old Testament says that the Ten Commandments inscribed on the stone tablets were delivered by God to Moses (peace be on him) when the former spoke to the latter at the Sinai mountain as the head of the Children of Israel. Then, "when Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book, to the very end," he commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the Covenant of the Lord: "Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord, your God, that it may be there for a witness against you: For I know how rebellious and stubborn you are; behold, while I am yet alive with you, today you have been rebellious against the Lord; how much more after my death!" (Deut. 31:24-27), and "At the end of every seven years, at the set time of release, at the feast of booths when all Israel appear before the Lord your God at the place He will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing . . ." (Deut. 31:9-13). The law must have been revealed to Moses (peace be on him) during the period of his ministry which probably was conferred on him at the age of 40 years or so of his reported life of one-hundred twenty years. The style of the writing of at least the first five books attributed to Moses (peace be on him) four of which contain the law, does not appear to be as originally revealed by God to Moses (peace be on him). The whole book of the Bible appears like a narrative or story, only quoting some words of God and the prophets here and there. A holy book from God must remain completely in the first person of God as given through his specific spokesmen, the prophets. It therefore seems that after losing the original holy tablets and the words of God's law written by Moses

(peace be on him), in a book written in the prophet's own hand in later years, some scribes compiled the books as they appear today from hearsay, all of which may not be correct reproductions of the originals of even Ezra. The original stone tablets supposed to have been given to Moses (peace be on him) and the Ark as well as the book written by Moses (peace be on him) which were all required to be preserved as witnesses had been certainly lost altogether by the children of Israel long before the advent of Jesus (peace be on him) because these are not available anywhere today.

Going back to Biblical history itself, the oldest translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew original seems to have been the Septuagint of the third century B.C.E. which was in the Greek language. Prior to that, the literature remained a Hebrew document. It is seen from verses 36:14–21 of the Chronicles of the Old Testament that "all the leading priests and the people likewise of Israel were exceedingly unfaithful following all abominations of the nations and they polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem . . . they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words, and scoffing at His prophets till the wrath of the Lord rose against His people till there was no remedy. Therefore, He brought against them the king of Chaldeans who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged; He gave them all into his hands. . . . And they broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its places with fire. . . . He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the Kingdom of Persia. . . . All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to full seventy years." It was during the rule of Cyrus about 500–600 B.C.E. that the Israelites numbering then less than 50,000, were let off from Babylonian captivity and allowed to return to Palestine. It was a few years later and after the rebuilding of the destroyed temple in Jerusalem by the Israelites that the Persian king Artaxerxes ordered the Jewish scribe Ezra under a royal charter "to set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to do it and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel" (Ezra 7:10). It is thus the only conclusion that with the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem by fire and the killing of all young old and old men of even the slightest knowledge and importance, not a bit of the original law, the Ark and the stone tablets including "the written word of this law in a book to the very end," which Moses (peace be on him) himself having written, was entrusted to the Levites "to be put by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord, your God, that it may be there for a witness against you," and

kept in the temple at Jerusalem (Deut. 31:24-29), could have escaped total destruction by fire. Seventy years of desolation of Jerusalem and two centuries of captivity of the Israelites under heathens in Babylon as slaves following the holocaust and total destruction is a very long period indeed. It is therefore quite unreasonable to expect that any authentic version of the original Torah could have ever survived even orally among the less important Israelites who survived the genocide in Jerusalem and were taken to Babylon as captives of the heathens. Further, "as Jerusalem lay desolate celebrating Sabbath for full seven decades of the captivity," as is stated in the Old Testament, clearly shows that no Israelites were ever left behind there for the whole period. In the circumstance, it was left to Ezra the scribe to collect from hearsay whatever bits and pieces of folklore that remained with the Israelite community polluted by the Babylonian heathen culture, faiths and worship over their two hundred year captivity, and produce a new compilation of the lost Mosaic Law that had, long before the Babylonian holocaust of Jerusalem, become corrupted due to "all the leading priests and people likewise (of Israel) being unfaithful following all abominations of the nations" (Chron. 36:14). In this extremely difficult situation, it is not at all surprising that the new Torah—consisting of the "supposed-to-be" five books of Moses (Pentateuch) and the subsequent nine chapters up to Ezra compiled, perhaps, by Ezra himself (and others) about 499-500 B.C.E. and later —contains too many repetitions as should be normally expected in any such compilations from corrupted oral traditions that through error transmission by mouth from decade to decade became polluted by heathen superstitions and cultures predominated by worship of a plurality of gods and goddesses in societies like the ones where the Israelis were forced to live as abject slaves for twenty decades, away from any possibility of getting moral and spiritual guidance on the lines of the original Law. A particular example is the first book of Genesis, which cannot, from any spiritual consideration, be expected to have emanated from a learned Rabbi, Ezra himself or anyone else, not to speak of from All Knowing and Exalted God Almighty. This is for the reason that Genesis and Exodus and the prophets of the Old Testament in particular are full of expressions damaging the mighty position of the Almighty God, his pure angels and prophets of exemplary character, such as to wit a few as below:

God telling a lie to Adam and Eve that "In the day you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2:17); God resting on the seventh day, having finished with the creation in six days as if he was tired or had nothing to do (Gen. 2:2); Adam and Eve hearing the sound of the Lord God

walking in the garden on a cool day (Gen. 3:8). "The sons of God saw that the daughters of men were fair and they took to wife such of them as they chose . . . when the sons of God came into the daughters of men and they bore children to them" (Gen. 6:2-4). "When the Lord God smelled the pleasing odour" (Gen. 8:21); "and the Lord came down to see the city and tower which the sons of man had built" (Gen. 11:15). Abraham the prophet (peace be on him) said to his wife, Sarah, to say a lie) that she was his sister" (Gen. 12:12). The Lord God said, "I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me, and if not I will know" (Gen. 18:21). "The Angels ate the leavened bread offered to them by Abraham" (Gen. 19:4). "Lot (the prophet) said to his people, 'Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man . . . do them as you please'" (Gen. 19:8). Lot's daughters made their father drink wine at night and lay with him in turn to preserve offspring through him and thus sons were born to both of them (Gen. 19:32-36). "Abimelech, the king of Gerar, took Sarah, the wife of Abraham (the prophet) (peace be on him) to sleep with him because Abraham (peace be on him) said she was his sister . . . but as a result of a dream when the king knew that Sarah was the wife of prophet Abraham (peace be on him), the former admonished Abraham (peace be on him) in the morning saying that he had brought a sin to the king and the kingdom" (Gen. 20:1-11). Regarding Aaron, who was not only made co-prophet with his prophet brother Moses (peace be on them), but whose sons were made priests forever by God, there is an allegation against him of making the golden calf and his association with its worship also, along with the children of Israel (Exod. 32:2-6). Regarding the prophet King David (peace be on him), there is an allegation that when he saw a beautiful girl taking a bath while he was walking on the roof of the king's palace, inspite of knowing that she was the wife of another neighbour, David (peace be on him) took her and lay with her (this apostate act against the Ten Commandment having been called the purification of the woman); she conceived a child as the result and after her husband was arranged to be killed by Joab, David (peace be on him) married her; but this act of David (peace be on him) displeased God (II Sam. 11:2-27). About the prophet king Solomon (peace be on him), it is stated that he had 700 wives and princesses, and 300 concubines and that when he was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods and that his heart was not perfect with his God as was the heart of his father, David (peace be on him), because of having gone after Ashtoreth, the goddess of Zidonians and after Milcom the abomination the Ammonites. Solomon (peace be on him) is also stated to have not only built high palaces for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill before Jerusalem and for Molech,

the abomination of the children of Ammon, but also palaces for his foreign wives that burnt incenses and sacrificed to their gods, and therefore God was angry with Solomon (peace be on him). Because his heart was turned away from the Lord God of Israel, who appeared to him twice and had commanded concerning this thing that he should not go after other gods, he did not keep what the Lord commanded (I Kings 11:1-11). And the list goes on.

It is also not known whether the books written by Ezra were in the Hebrew or Aramaic languages that were spoken by the Jews, by and large, on their return from captivity. Ezra's version was that the very large majority of the Rabbis were fond of keeping what knowledge and books each had as a well-guarded secret, and it is no wonder that the originals of the compilations of Ezra are not now available. It is said that Ezra had dictated ninety-four books but all but twenty-four of them were kept secret! Further, Ezra himself is reported to have lamented that "the world is shrouded in darkness, and its inhabitants are without light; for your Law was destroyed in the fire" (2 Esdras 14:20-22), confirming that the original Torah had been totally lost earlier. There is also not a single version of even Ezra's Torah available in the original because today not a single agreed version of the Old Testament in Hebrew or Aramaic that may be traced back to Ezra is available. However, from the history of "how the Bible came to us," as shown in the revised standard version of the Bible edited by John Stirling in 1952, it is seen that the earliest Greek Bible (Old Testament) was of the third century B.C.E. and that before that the Bible remained as the Hebrew version, copied by the scribes on scrolls down the centuries. But from which authorised Hebrew version this was translated into Greek is not known. The legend says that the Septuagint, so-called because it was composed by seventy or more scribes, was produced as a result of the intense work of many hands over a period of more than a century. However, for the reason that the text of the Septuagint is chaotic and the confusion created as the result of misreading the Hebrew text, as is evident in some of its passages, complicates the problem when it is used as a guide to understand the Hebrew text, quite many scholars doubt its reliability. Even as early as the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. due to the difference both in Canon and text from the accepted Hebrew versions, the Septuagint was unacceptable to the conservative rabbis. Thus about 140 C.E., even among the Greek Jews, the more liberal translation of Aquila had, to some extent, replaced the Septuagint. Two Latin translations of the Bible, one made for Italian use and another for North African use, became popular during the second and third centuries C.E. Having become displeased with the confusion created by the two Latin versions as well as others available

then, Pope Damasus I authorised Saint Jerome in the fourth century to edit a new authorised version of the Bible to be known as "The Vulgate," which took nearly two decades to complete. It was published in 404 C.E. Despite the endorsement of Saint Augustine and others, the Vulgate and the Latin versions did not receive immediate support of all, mainly because of differences between the Vulgate and Latin versions. The council of Trent, however, adopted the Vulgate as the standard Latin version of the Bible. Its new edition, prepared in 1590, was revised and issued in 1592. As the result of its re-edition by an international commission ordered by Pope Pius X in 1907, the first volume of the "New Vulgate" appeared in 1926. The first English version of the whole Bible, however, had been published by Miles Coverdale in the year 1535. The New Testament alone had been published earlier in English in the year 1526 by William Tyndale. The Great Bible that the official commission prepared was adopted by leaders of the state and church and published in 1539, to be enforced as the only official and permissible version of the scripture. However, as other versions still remained popular, another revised version of the Great Bible under the title of the "Bishop's Bible" was published in 1568; this too could not become popular. It was in 1611 that another authorised English translation known as the "King James Bible" was published. This again had to be revised as the result of criticism and yet another new version of it was issued about 1885, followed by the American Standard Version of 1901. The American Standard Version too was more drastically revised in the standard version of the New Testament in 1946, the Old Testament in 1952 and the Apocrypha in 1957 C.E. Later, the entirely new translation of the New Testament that appeared in 1961 C.E., as well as the Old Testament and the Apocrypha that appeared in 1970, were the product of the work of a commission of scholars from Great Britain who started the work in the year 1947. Thus, from the history of the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments, it appears that during the last twenty centuries or so not even one of the translations has been able to receive unanimous approval of all sections of the churches. As far as the original Old Testament is concerned, it has already been seen that the Torah had been lost much earlier than the era of David (peace be upon) and what was relied upon later to be the lost Book of the Law was the one that was supposed to have been found in the temple at Jerusalem by Hilkiah the priest about 600 to 700 B.C.E. during the reign of Josiah and confirmed as the words of God by a prophetess through mediation with God! Since then, even this was lost in the fire during the destruction spree of the Chaldeans in Jerusalem under the orders of their king. Thus the new Torah of Ezra

prepared two centuries or so later had practically no authentic connection with even this "Book of the Law" found by Hilkiah. There is no trace of the new Torah compiled by Ezra about the fifth century B.C.E. Finally, it is not only surprising but unbelievable how so many apostate and unholy attributions to the majesty of God and his guided holy prophets and angels such as the ones detailed earlier in this chapter happened to be authenticated and accepted as canonical and holy by the brain trusts who have revised the scripture many times in the past.

From what has been stated in the foregoing analysis, there is no difficulty in appreciating that "The Law" and Judaism have been intended solely for a very small section of the world population called the twelve tribes of the children of Israel and their progeny and not for the people of the whole world, and that even "The Law" or the Torah available with them is not, as a whole, the real words of God as given originally to them through the prophet Moses (peace be upon him). No wonder that quite a lot of inconsistencies and unwholesome references to God, his pure apostles and angels have therefore crept into it due to the long associations of the Israelites with idol worshipping and superstitious heathens over the last 3000 years. Nevertheless, it may also not be categorically stated that nothing of the original Torah and the revelations of God sent to the many prophets after Moses (peace be on them) is contained in the existing Old Testament, particularly because it is absolutely firm at least in one important aspect of human conduct that nowhere does it tolerate any god other than the Only One God, the Lord of the universe, a fundamental belief of devotion that is universal in concept and common to all the three sister religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Chapter 10

Shintoism

It appears that Shintoism in Japan is at least as old as Christianity—about twenty centuries. Shinto is the Sino-Japanese reading of *Kami-no-Michi*, meaning “The Way of the Kami” or “The Way of the Gods.” It is the way of life that has developed around the beliefs and ceremonies associated with the worship of the old, indigenous deities of Japan. The name has probably come into use consequent with the introduction of Buddhism into Japan about the sixth century C.E. in order to distinguish the indigenous cult from Buddhism. In Japan the “Affairs of Worship” (*Matsuri-goto*) had been in vogue from ancient times to indicate festivals and ceremonies dedicated to Japanese deities. Culture and religion being the same for the people, ceremonies before the gods as well as to cover matters of state were the same. After the restoration of the emperor in the year 1868 C.E. this ancient union of culture and state was particularly revived and in this context the shrines of Shinto were projected as the prime agencies for dramatising, celebrating and supporting the major interests of the national life in Japan.

Existence of Shinto today is in two forms: Shrine shinto (*Jinja Shinto*), formerly State Shinto (*Kokka shinto*), and a peoples’ Shinto (*Shuha Shinto*), consisting of over one-hundred sects. While the former has shrines called *Jinja*, varying in size from small wayside temples dedicated to guardian spirits of local fields and families to large ones commemorating rulers and heroes who died for the state or the sovereign, the *Shuha* temples (*Kyokai*) of the latter are just small and ordinary places of sectarian worship.

Although Japan has no state religion today, all religions being treated equally, from 1940 onwards as a result of placing all Shinto shrines under the bureau of shrines of the Japanese government, the state Shinto shrines had received some amount of state patronage. The sectarian Shinto consists of some with the Confucian influence, others with the pure Shinto beliefs and ceremonies, and some with either extraordinary emphasis on purification rites or with the cults of mountain worship or faith-healing. Mount Fuji, which is known as *Fujiyama* to the world, is respected and revered by all Japanese not

only as a divine object but as a national and state symbol of Japan because of the reciprocity between the state and the national culture. Since the Second World War things have changed drastically with no state support to Shintoism by the total renunciation of divinity by the Japanese emperor in the year 1946. Earlier, there were roughly forty-eight million adherents of Shintoism confined to Japan alone who believed that their emperor was holy, being the descendant of the sun god.

Starting with nature worship by the agriculturists, there is no limit to the number and type of deities in the Shinto cult. "The Kamis" are the divine personages of the world of nature worshipped as deities, gods and goddesses, which includes anything such as the sky, the earth, the sun, the moon, the storm, the trees, the springs, the rivers, the seas, the rocks, the mountains, growth, fertility, the stars, the planets, any mysterious appearance, and so on. In the older Shinto eras it is said that there were "Yao-yorodzu-No-Kami," which meant "the eight hundred myriads of gods." In modern times, during the post-World War eras, in order to foster the sentiment of reverence to the imperial family as a basis for national unification, the world of the gods of Shinto was further enlarged to include the spirits of kings as well as heroes and warriors who died in wars and military service of the sovereign and the country, as exhibited by the national Yasukuni shrine on the Kun-dan Hill in Tokyo purported to give sanctuary to the spirits of those who lost their lives during the recent wars and who are supposed to have been rewarded with elevation to the ranks of the immortal hosts from the world of spirits who are believed by the Shinto to be guarding the destiny of the nation.

With the threat of erosion of the Shinto culture by Buddhism, a Japanese revival of Shintoism on more solid and active foundations became necessary for the strengthening of the national and cultural unity of the Japanese people. Accordingly, during the period of the Tokugawa dynasty, the scholars of the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries C.E. developed a theory that "the sun goddess Ameta-rassu-Omi-Kami was the first founder of the Japanese imperial genealogy, that the divinely established sovereignty thus rests in the imperial succession unbroken from the ancient ages destined to rule Japan eternally, and that because of this emotional identification with the Great Kami of the ancient age of the gods, the Japanese is braver, more virtuous, and more intelligent than all other races." Thus, they developed the doctrine that the emperor descended from the gods is also ordained by the will of the gods to extend his sway over the entire world and that the Japanese race is divinely endowed to do what is morally right without the need of any external precepts that the less

favoured peoples are obliged to depend upon. Until the defeat of the Japanese in the Second World War, this doctrine prevailed in Japan. This doctrine based on a racial psychology, believed to be divine, had become acceptable to the Japanese people as a national faith and it guided the sentiments, institutions, rituals, system of morals, thoughts and outlooks of the race as a whole having been projected as "Yamato Damashii" (The Yamato Soul) and "Bushido" (The Way of the Warrior), and expressed in the current literature as "The Nippon Seshin" or "The Japanese Spirit." This notion of "The Japanese Spirit" and firm belief in the doctrine that as children of gods with the oldest imperial line begun from the ancient time of gods, still unbroken, the Japanese race was assigned with a divine mission to save the rest of the world backed and reassured by intense government propaganda, was responsible to make the Japanese people a powerful military state and war machine with extraordinary courage and devotion in battle, orderliness, discipline and loyalty, in active collaboration with the Nazis who too had a similar notion of Aryan race superiority.

However, the defeat of the Japanese and the Nazis in the Second World War helped to remove the above myth from their minds for the good of themselves as well as the rest of the world. Consequently, the Shinto ideology transformed into internationalism not only to win the support of the world society, but also to make it a religion of good will. Accordingly, the unified rituals that were prepared by the National Shrine Association of Japan in the year 1946 for use in all Shinto Shrines contained prayers for world peace and brotherhood. Naturally too, the vast majority of the Japanese people subscribed to this new idea, which is still respected by them. Simultaneously, the prominence of the sun goddess and the associated grand shrine of Ise (Amaterasu-Omi-Kami) was preserved as the Japanese god, again according to the Japanese tradition, to continue the links that the Japanese people had since older times when the same Shintoism with different ideology from the present had been the state religion of Japan.

Chapter 11

Sikhism

Jaidev, the composer of Geetha Govind, a Hindu philosopher and thinker, had taught in the eleventh century C.E. that the practice of Hindu yoga was useless as a replacement of the worship of God in thoughts and words. Later, influenced by Islam, the religion of the Moghul rulers of India, Kabir, the Indian mystic poet philosopher (1440–1518) had also denounced the idolatry and ritualism advocated by the Hindu scriptural philosophy where by worship of , and offering to, thousands of gods and goddesses had become synonymous with the very way of Hindu life of his times. At the close of the same century Ramanand also had tried to free his followers from the curse of the Hindu caste system. As has been already pointed out earlier under Hinduism, many a similar renaissance and confirmation movements had been started by many Hindu thinkers and philosophers since the seventh century C.E., which had not been a matter of simple coincidence of events only. In fact, this was the century when the religion of Islam was introduced to the world as a complete way of life confirming the earlier monotheistic religions of Judaism and Christianity as the forerunners establishing the supremacy of the only One God as well as the undeniable internationalism of man wherever he be in the world.

Earlier, Christianity had already been introduced into Hindu India and now on account of the rational as well as lofty views of Christianity and Islam on God, man and the universe as well as through the life styles of the evangelists of the two religions they had already started to make their impacts on the religious and cultural life of India through large-scale conversions from Hinduism to the two new religions. Naturally, not knowing any better philosophy than the one highlighted through the Dravidian-Aryan cultures developed over many thousands of years based on the Vedic as well as subsequent literature, the strategy of the Hindu thinkers and philosophers had to soon change from their earlier efforts of strengthening the belief of the Hindu devotee through intense ritualisms such as Shakti, Bhakti and other cults that concentrated on exhibition of the mythical strength and prowess of the concerned Hindu god to a cleansing campaign, and the Shudhi Movement,

aimed at not only preventing Hindus from converting to other creeds but also to lure those Hindus who had already converted to other religions back into the folds of Hinduism itself at all costs. Still, the rupture of the dam could not be mended because the velocity of the current of the new movements, particularly that of Islam, was too great to be stopped. Together with the stresses and strains introduced during the Muslim conquests of India, when Islam had become a strong minority religion of India with large-scale conversions taking place everywhere, it became very essential in the interest of at least making Hindu culture not obsolete altogether, to interpret its philosophy to suit the changed situation. But this was not easy because Hindu philosophies of the scriptures had made a deep impression on the cultural life of the masses on the one hand and the custodians of the scripture, the upper castes, particularly the Brahmanas, were in no mood to make any concession on the other. Therefore, at the close of the fifteenth century C.E., yet another reformer, Guru Nanak, a Hindu, introduced his new religion of Sikhism so as to rid Hinduism of not only the vested priesthood, but also of its centuries-old disadvantages such as belief in plurality of gods, idol worship, ritualism, caste distinction, rebirth cycle and so on, in the name of introducing a neo-religion, which, according to its founder, was based on a mixture of the best of the two philosophies of Islam and Hinduism with the idea of bringing the two religions together.

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh cult and a contemporary of Martin Luther, born in the year 1469 C.E., was a stern monotheist. The Sikh tradition, in the context of the strong hold of Hindu philosophy even on this faith, attributes that he was a reincarnation of the Hindu Upanishad patron Kshatriya King Janaka of Videha. Born a Hindu, but brought up under close association with Muslims, Guru (teacher) Nanak was influenced by the teachings of Kabir and other Muslim Soofis. Having got fed up with the concepts of the numerous gods and the caste system advocated by Hinduism on the one hand and the rivalry as well as the acute misunderstanding between the opposing Hindu polytheism and Muslim monotheism on the other, Nanak launched his new religion, which was monotheistic in concept with the best of intentions, perhaps. Accordingly, he taught to his followers the worthlessness of some of the important vestments of the Hindu faith such as idol worship, renunciation, ostentatious prayers to gods and deities in preference to the One God, penances, pilgrimages, caste system and the like. He brought down the impregnable wall of caste segregation enjoined by the Hindu Vedas and scriptures by declaring that all men being equal before God, everyone had the right to seek

knowledge, irrespective of the caste he was born to by the act of nature. His creed was thus kept open to persons of all denominations without any caste distinction being practiced. There is no doubt that the two main factors that might have contributed to his new approach were that while born and brought up in a segregated Hindu caste environment and worship of idols, he lived his early life, in direct contrast, with his Muslim benefactors whereby he must have been impressed by the loftier ideas and practices that were found in Islam on these and many other aspects of life.

It has already been said before that in approach Guru Nanak had the basic fervour to reform Hinduism in an era when it had come into direct confrontation with the much more appealing philosophy of Islam that had been introduced into the Punjab area of India by the Moghul and Afghan Muslim rulers. However, later his thoughts got realigned also towards bringing about a rapprochement between the two religions. However, the course of history in India has amply proven how much his ideas did miss the marks from the facts that soon the followers of the Sikh cult turned against not only Muslims but also against Hindus themselves during recent years.

Belief in One God eschewing idols; leading a clean life; prayers through mediation of God through chanting His name (Nam) for enabling the soul to pass through different life cycles until it unites with God; a casteless one society and abstention from intoxicants are the essentials of Guru Nanak's Sikh cult. Before his death in the year 1539, Nanak had designated his successor, another kshatriya by the name Lehna, known as Guru Angad. The credit for the inception of the holy book of Sikhs, The Granth Sahib, goes to Guru Angad. The Granth Sahib is not a revelation of God, but a compilation of what Lehna had heard from the Guru, adding his own thoughts and reflections to it. The invention of the Sikh language, Gurumukhi (teacher's language), with modified Sharada script to mark the sacred character of the religious book is also credited to Guru Angad. Kshatriya Amar Das, who succeeded Guru Angad, further reformed the cult by separation of The Udasi Order founded by Guru Nanak's own son, Shri Chand, from laity, denunciation of Sati (ceremonial burning of one's wife in the funeral pyre of the dead husband) of the Hindus and by stressing Nanak's condemnation of the Hindu caste system by making all Sikhs eat together. Guru Ramdas who succeeded Amar Das was responsible for building the Golden Temple at Amritsar in 1579 on the piece of land that was granted to Sikhs for the purpose by the Moghul Muslim Emperor Akbar.

During the seventeenth century C.E., the tenth and last Guru,

Govind Rai, or Govind Singh, further remodelled the Sikh cult under the aegis of the Sikh Organisation that was named "The Khalsa" (pure), introducing the Sikh initiation rite (Pahul) for admittance into a militant Sikh Order. The five symbols of the Sikh cult found today—which are Kesh (the unshorn hair), Katcha (the drawers up to the knee), Kada (the iron bangle), Kripan (the small dagger), and Kanga (the comb), known as the "Five Ks"—were also introduced as compulsory for all Sikhs thereafter. Although spiritual values are attributed to each of the five symbols, the fact remains as accepted that these made the Sikhs a martial race with specific identity to fight at a moment's notice. As a corollary to these changes, meat and liquor were permitted to all Sikhs as for the warriors in contrast to the order of the founder, Nanak, while tobacco, being a narcotic, was prohibited. A communion (Kara Prasad) of flour mixed with butter and sugar eaten together irrespective of caste distinction was also instituted by Guru Govind Singh at congregations.

The effort of Govind Singh had been to evolve a politico-religious entity to fight against the Muslim (Moghul) power in India. Before his assassination in the year 1708, Govind Singh terminated the lineage of Gurus, vesting the future Guruship in "The Granth Sahib" as the representative of God on earth to guide the Sikhs. Thenceforth, the Sikh cult was transformed into a militant theocracy. Growth of Sikh political power transforming this religious sect into a military organisation inspired with severe hatred towards Muslims, had started with the death of Emperor Akabar in the year 1605. Banda Bairagi, who had proclaimed himself as the eleventh Guru of the Sikhs, had even formed an army to fight the Moghuls and had been taking allegiance of Hindu Hill rulers until his death in the early seventeenth century. By the year 1767, the Sikhs were in control of the large tract of land between the rivers Indus and Jamuna. However, in the year 1808, Ranjit Singh annexed the entire Sikh territory, setting up a monarchy under him up to Peshawar, including the territory of Kashmir. After the death of Ranjit Singh in the year 1839, lawlessness developed and the political power passed to the army of the Sikh Khalsa.

In the 19th century, although the Sikhs continued to maintain their separate identity, they remained, by and large, a collection of Hinduised sects. After the death of Ranjit Singh, the Sikhs fought a couple of times with the British. However, after their final defeat in Gujrat, which led to their ultimate surrender in the year 1849, and in particular after the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Sikhism revived again as a religious force rather than a militarist, stimulating anti-Muslim feelings. Thenceforth, the Granth Sahib again became their Guru. The

book of common prayer, the Panch Granthi, including the five poems from the Granth, was recited daily by the Khalsa Sikhs, the followers of Guru Govind Singh. However, the Sikh ascetics also used to make pilgrimages to the Hindu temples. The Khalsa College of Amritsar was founded and the Khalsa Diwan started making grants to Sikh schools and Sikh societies. The laity also had started creeping into Sikh sects. In later years sectarian conflicts prevailed within the Sikh community, necessitating the intervention of the British authority in India as well as M.K. Gandhi for the reestablishment of order within the community. Thereafter, the Sikhs started joining the British Indian armed forces as well as the defence and the civil services of India in large numbers. During the partitioning of India into Bharat and Pakistan, the strong position of the Sikhs in the armed forces and civil service of India in general and in the Punjab in particular as well as the anti-Muslim feeling of the Sikh community were responsible for the unfortunate mass massacres of Muslims and Hindus in many a northern Indian city where the Sikhs as a whole aligned themselves against the Muslims.

Thus, although it may appear that the Sikh cult was an effort on the part of its founder to bring about a rapprochement between Hindus and Muslims of India, in fact it turned out to be a martial regrouping of thought and action of the Hindu society aimed at its political and social consolidation against erosion by more dynamic religions of India, particularly Islam. With no concrete new philosophy regarding the life after death except the same old Hindu doctrine of transmigration of souls until the ultimate reunion with god, the new movement of Sikhism too did not fulfil the dynamic need of the modern man who is in search of a balanced, logical and meaningful philosophy as well as way of life blending his materialistic existence in the world with his life after death.

How strange indeed it is that in spite of what is found in "Guru Janam Sakhi Kalan Bhai Bala," having seen the Torah, Zabur, Injeel and Quraan carefully, Guru Nanak said that he had found the code of complete guidance for man in Quraan alone, that if there is any book of faith it is Quraan, and that, Quraan being the book of complete guidance, it should be believed and followed; however, he preferred to press forward his new Sikh religion rather than gracefully accept Islam, which is the religion advocated by the very Quraan itself!

Chapter 12

Taoism

Founded by Lao-Tzu in China, and more or less akin to Confucianism, Taoism, in two distinct movements, one with a philosophy called Tao-chia (The Taoist School) and the other called Tao-chiao (The Taoist Religion) has been part of the Chinese philosophy and life for over 2000 years. The origin of "Tao-te-ching," or the Tao philosophy, is obscure. Tao, meaning way in the Chinese language, is a key word in Confucianism too. It appears that the Taoist philosophy developed about the fourth century B.C.E. in two channels—Tao-te-ching and "Chuang-tzu."

Tao-te-ching

The essence of Tao-te-ching is naturalism through Wu-Wei (inaction), which means taking no unnatural action. Everything should take place spontaneously, and one should assist and support all things in their natural state and change spontaneously too. Without leaving anything undone, the Tao undertakes no activity for its own purpose. Actually, it shapes into production and rearing of things without taking possession of them and doing work without taking pride in its performance. Truly, a government according to the Tao philosophy should function spontaneously without there being any law, regulations or ceremonies and the best government therefore should be one that is not even noticed by the people. Thus, while Tao-te-chin strongly condemns not only artificialities and formalities, but also war, taxation, punishment, superficial knowledge and conventional morality, it also promotes the spirit of rebellion.

While emphasising nonbeing, it also states that before coming into existence, there is a state of nonbeing. Coming from the same source and appearing in different names, it confirms states of both eternal being and eternal nonbeing. Thus, the Tao is "the principle of existence," "the source of heaven and earth" and "the mother of all things." While producing all things, the Tao contains them in a harmonious whole.

To know this harmony is called "the eternal" and knowing "the eternal," is called "insight."

Comparison of the natural way is made with the ways of water, the female and the infant, the latter are considered as the weak. Water, although it is soft and weak, there is nothing better for attacking hard and strong things. While the weak has been glorified, simplicity is stressed. A simple life has been defined as one that discards profit, abandons cleverness, eliminates selfishness and reduces desires. It is a life that is bright as light, but does not dazzle, repays evil with kindness, perfection that seems to be incomplete, fullness that seems to be empty, unity, contentment, tranquility, constancy, enlightenment, long life, and so on.

Chuang-tzu

According to this, nature is the state of incessant and spontaneous self-transformation without any Lord to direct it. "The ideal pure man" is a companion of nature, aiding it but not trying to replace its ways by his own, his goal being absolute spiritual freedom and peace to be achieved through Wu-wei (inaction), adopting his own true nature and nourishing it with the process of nature, thereby gaining "Great Wisdom," which makes no distinctions, entertains no subjectivity and abides by the universal. All being embraced in one, to the Taoist things and opinions are all equal because everything is relative and concerned mutually with each other. This unity makes him to "roam with the Creator," making friendship with life and death. There is some amount of mysticism, inaction and fatalism in the teaching, but the ultimate aim is the preservation of natural originality and absolute spiritual freedom of the individual.

In the fourth and fifth centuries B.C.E., the cult of life preservation had become so strong in China that Yunchu, a Tao reformist, would not even enter an endangered city or exchange even a bit of his own sacrifice for anything in return. The neo-Taoism that developed during the third and fourth centuries B.C.E. also continued to remain influenced in one form or other by the basic doctrine of Wu-Wei. Nevertheless, with the advent of Buddhism into China, the two movements started to influence each other. Along with the introduction of Taoism in China, another movement aimed at making it a religious cult had also been started by priest-magicians offering divination and magic for acquiring inward power, youth restoration, superhuman power and immortality on earth. During the time of Chang-liu, a religious leader who was famous for healing the sick organised this movement in about 143 C.E.

by requiring every follower to donate a quantity of rice. Earlier, it had also advocated the philosophy of the cosmic positive and negative forces and assimilated some aspects of Confucianism to blend with Taoism for providing a synthesis for prolonging life through the practice of alchemy by a so-called method of harmonising the positive and negative cosmic forces to concentrate the "Vital Force" (Chi) of the universe on the human body. During the fifth century C.E. under the influence of Kouchien-chieh who regulated the Taoist ceremonies, fixing the names of deities and formulating its ideology, Taoism had become an organised religion with a firm theoretical foundation and elaborate ritual practices. Thereafter, it became the state religion with the royal patronage of the T'ang dynasty and remained the religion of the illiterate masses in general until the early twentieth century C.E. when new movements tried to make it more in line with the other developed contemporary religions, eschewing glaring superstitions. Search for earthly immortality still remained and, to promote internationalism, worship of the deities of other religions, promotion of moral culture and charity were added to the cult. The distinguishing features of Taoism today are, thus, a multiplicity of gods, there being a god for anything one may conceive of, the search for blessings and longevity, superstitions of every kind and sects. In the fields of devotion and spiritualism, thus, stars, many animate and inanimate things, the whole as well as parts of the human body, ancestors, historic beings as well as ideals, the Jade emperor, the three pure ones—heavenly honoured ones with form, without form and the Brahma form, the dipper star, the great unit, gods of literature, wealth, medicine, kitchen and the goddess of mercy are some of the many gods the Taoist worships, there being no conception of an Only One God and a life after death or spiritual values. Numerous immortals such as the ten heavenly Grottoes, and the thirty-six subsidiary heavenly Grottoes as well as seventy-two blessed places where the immortals rule and await people to seek the "way," are also revered and worshipped.

From what has been said above, it is seen that the devotion and piety in Taoism is absolutely the worldly material happiness and well-being such as happiness of all sorts, health, wealth, children and longevity. In order to realise the three original principles of Essence, Vital Force and Spirit, which according to Taoism is necessary for attaining the objective, elaborate system of practices such as breath control, baths, diet, mental concentration, sex hygiene and physical exercise—akin to yoga of Hindus—are specified for the Taoist devotee. In addition, use of medicines, charms, and many potions aimed at changing the bodily form and even disappearance as well as to change mercury into

gold are attempted and practiced by the Tao society. Nevertheless, the process of alchemic investigations and development of medicines led to many scientific discoveries that did benefit contemporary Europe and the West. In the field of superstition, Taoist harbours many, such as geomancy, divination, fortune telling and the extensive use of charms and potions for any purpose.

The sects have their own temples, images of worship, clergy and even canons. In North China, the Northern School called the "Complete Unity Sect" prevails around the prime white temple of Peking as the chief shrine emphasising man's life—man's vital force, which according to them may be prolonged with proper diet and medicine. Their priests renounce home, are vegetarians and live in temples. The Southern School, called the "True Unity Sect," emphasises man's nature, which is his true self or spirit, and use of charms as well as magic to preserve it. Their priests marry, live at home and regard the Heavenly Teacher, who lived in the Dragon and Tiger Mountains in central China, as their head.

In practice, it is seen that the mix-up of Confucianism, Buddhism, Shintoism and Taoism in one way or other has resulted in evolution of almost a common way of life for the peoples of the Chinese peninsula, the Far East and Japan.

Chapter 13

Zoroastrianism

History of the People

Zarathustra in old Persian, Zartosh in new Persian and Zoroaster in Greek, was the founder of the religion of the people known as Zoroastrians, who had flourished in old Iran from about the seventh century B.C.E. to about tenth century C.E., but now a small minority of people numbering about 200,000 and found mostly in the port cities of Bombay of India and Karachi of Pakistan, and called Parsees, a name derived from their ancestral home, Persia. An affluent and peaceful people known for their well-knit community life and philanthropy, exhibited through their donations for building trust educational institutions, hospitals and public parks in the two cities, mainly during the British rule of India, which stand much more prominently than the small size of the community's population, Parsees had started their migration from Persia to the area called Gujrat in the Bombsay state of western India during the 10th century C.E. when Islam had become the predominant religion of Persia replacing the two earlier ones of the country, namely, the old Iranian polytheistic cults and the dualist cult of Zoroaster. During the early days of their migration to India, the Parsees had been an agricultural and cattle breeding community, but during the process of their initial social and economic integration with India, had taken to the local Hindu ways of dressing. However, soon on attainment of prosperity, they concentrated their efforts on commerce, industry and real estate development in the two prime port cities of Bombay and Karachi. During the subsequent years of British rule of India, they also took to the English way of dressing. During the early part of this century, Parsees occupied prominent positions as elites in commerce, industry, real estate, local self government as well as in establishing charitable institutions in the two cities where quite a number of schools, parks and hospitals may be seen today bearing the name of their illustrious Parsee donors.

Zoroaster was born somewhere in the agricultural area, perhaps of northwest Iran, where animal husbandry and farming may have been the main profession of the people. Although the era of Zoroaster as well as the exact place of his birth are obscure, it is conjecturally placed between 600 and 700 B.C.E. The Parsee tradition states that he lived 258 years before Alexander, the Persians locating him to the days of Hystapes. Whether Hystapes was the father of Darius or some other is also not known from any records, although it is clear that Darius and his successors were Zoroastrians. Zoroaster, who is attributed to have been, probably, the legendary founder of the "wisdom of Magic" and practices of occult science that prevailed for quite many centuries from 300 B.C.E. to 300 C.E. in the Middle East and Greece, is mentioned by Plato as the son of Oromazdes. The early Christians thought that Zoroaster was the prophet Ezekiel mentioned in the Jewish Torah. Different scholars, however, assign him to different regions as far as his place of origin is concerned. The Avesta says that he was born at Airyanem Vaejo on the river Daitya, the old sacred country of gods. The Veda says that it was at his father's place on the river Dareja; in Bandahish it is at Airan Vej on the river Daitya, and in Yasna it is at Ragha. The thirteenth chapter of Spend Nask devoted to Zoroaster's life, is, however, lost. Nevertheless, the seventh book of Dinkard, which is stated to have been written in the ninth century C.E., and containing biographies supposed to have been based on the lost thirteenth chapter of Avesta, the Shahnama and the thirteenth century Zardusht-Nama speak of wonders, fabulous stories and even miracles associated with the life of Zoroaster.

Zardusht Nama says that Zoroaster was born laughing, unlike the traditionally crying newborn children, that he lived in the jungle on cheese, that he was supposed to have had communication with the celestial beings and that he was an admirer of the Greek deity Zeus to such an extent that he disappeared into the forest, out of love for wisdom and righteousness, to live in solitude upon a mountain which, when it caught fire, he escaped unscathed to speak to the people. It is stated in the later Avesta that Zoroaster was a half-mythical person, the last in a series of East Iranian legendary heroes. However, in Gathas he is depicted as a historical personage whose success is attributed to his power and good example and that he was the pioneer of the doctrine revealed by Ormazd.

Born and brought up in a region of animal husbandry and farming

subjected to frequent attacks and looting by nomads, Zoroaster considered such atrocities to be aggression by the "followers of the Lie." Zoroaster seemed to have been a priest of a certain Ahura with the name of "Mazda" (wise), whom he himself has mentioned along with Ahuras. Having received a vision from Ahura Mazda (the Wise Lord) appointing him to teach the truth, he did not drastically oppose the old Iranian polytheistic cults in the beginning. On the other hand, he gave prominence to Ahura Mazda as the head of the "kingdom of justice" that promised immortality and ultimate bliss. Still, the "followers of the Lie," the "Dregvant," as Zoroaster called the animists, polytheists and mischief mongers, were opposed to his doctrine. The later Avesta writings of Zoroastrians speak of Zoroaster as a legendary light and a person endowed with supernatural powers. The Yasht and Vendidad, in particular, talk of nature rejoicing on his birth, of his conflicts with demons to get the earth rid of them, of Satan tempting him to change his faith, and so on. Zoroaster is supposed to have started his mission at the age of forty and to have preached for thirty-seven years. It is seen that one of his daughters married a minister of the court of King Vishtapa, who is believed to have been a patron and disciple of Zoroaster. Finally, he is supposed to have lived in the court of the king and died there at the age of seventy-seven. The Greeks regarded him as a philosopher, a mathematician, astrologer, prophet, architect, skilled craftsman, healer and the originator of the Magician cult. Although Zoroaster appears to have made an original attempt at the unification of contemporary polytheistic religions and ways of life such as those of the Greeks, Aryans, Latins and other animistic peoples under the umbrella of the worship of One Supreme God, Zoroasterism today is not so much a monotheistic religion as either Judaism or Islam.

The Zoroastrian Scriptures

Avesta, the main scripture of Zoroastrianism, consists of Yasna, which are Gathas (Hymns) of Zoroaster, and seven other chapters, mainly prose, which are said to have been composed and added to the text after the founder. The Yasna is recited by the priests during the sacrificial ceremony known also as Yasna. The Visp-Rat (All the Judges) is a modified version of Yasna with some additions that are supplications and offerings to the Lords (Ratus) of the various classes of beings. The Vendidad (the law exposed to the Daevas), also called "Vendidad," consists of two sections, detailing how the law was given to man, followed by eighteen sections of rules. While the Siroza details

the deities presiding over the thirty days of the month, the Yashta is a collection of hymns that are supplications to be addressed by devotees to each of the twenty-one deities such as Mithra, Anahita, or Verithrughna and so on. The Hadhoxt Nask (sayings) describe the fate of the soul after death and the Khurda or small Avesta contains minor texts. The Denkart (the Acts of Religion) written in Pahlavi language of the Sasasin period of Zoroastrian renaissance during the ninth century C.E. under the Muslim influence in Persia, cites a list of twenty-one books of the Nasks which were available then, but only one of which, found in Vendidad, survived the march of time. The Gathas (old hymns) are stated to have been the speech that Zoroaster himself had delivered to the people at the age of forty during and after the time he appeared to promulgate his new philosophy and religion at the court of King Vishtapa. The Gathas depict Zoroaster as a just man, firm in realism, relying and trusting in God alone under the protection of the angels. It appears as if he was upset not only by external opposition to his doctrine from the masses, but also on account of disbeliefs and insufficient support from his own adherents as well as, perhaps, his own misgivings as to the truth and ultimate victory of his doctrine. The Gathas contain solemn prophesies, assertions and admonitions with hidden and doubtful meanings directed towards princes and one's own disciples. These are in the form of dialogues with God and angels invoking them as witnesses with indirect references to one's own person.

The Gathas emphasised in terms of divine commands, devotion to Ormazd, good deeds and bad deeds, avoiding the ways of the devil, the protection of cows (maybe derived from the Aryan Vedic concept that later became an inseparable act of devotion of the Indian Hindu Brahman religion) and the purity of soul as well as the body, but no ceremonial worship. While it shows Zoroaster's convictions of the ultimate triumph of the good, it also contains revelations on the state of things to come in the future, of happiness or sorrow, of souls, rewards of the believers as well as warnings to the unbelievers. As shown by the Gathas, Zoroaster believed that the arrival of a prophet was for a special cause and purpose and that the "Opportune time" and "The Kingdom of God" were both at hand. Further, the hymns visualise the ultimate victory of the faithful very soon over the evil forces with the intervention of Ormazd, followed by a general ordeal and establishment under a unified world kingdom in the eternal fellowship of Ormazd and his angels, of a millenium where the sun will always shine, all the faithful live happily without interference from any evil forces, each believer having been presented with the bounties of the Vohu Maro (good sense) and an inexhaustible cow.

Almost every hymn of the Gathas has some mention or other of the fate awaiting man after death, which is depicted as a continuity of the life of this world. The soul passes over the bridge of the Requiem (Cinvat), looked upon with fear and anxiety by every soul because, on passing of judgment by Ahura Mazda, the good only enter the everlasting kingdom of bliss and light (heaven) and the bad enter the everlasting regions of darkness and horror (hell). Zoroaster, perhaps, was a devotee of Mazda (the Wise), one of the Ahuras, because of his mention of Mazda along with the Ahuras in one of his hymns in the Gathas. Zoroaster used to invoke saviours who would come to the world like the dawn of new days and he hoped himself to be one of them. Therefore, after his death the belief in the arrival of saviours developed in Zoroastrianism as well as the expectation of the return of Zoroaster, if not personally, then in the shape of his three sons every thousand years after his semen, the last of whom having been named "Astavast Erat" (the Justice Incarnate), or the "Saoshyans" (The Saviour).

The Doctrine and Mythology

Ahura Mazda is the highest God who alone is worthy of worship whom the Gathas say is the Creator of the heavens (the spiritual world) and the earth (the material world), the source of the alternating day of light and night of darkness, the sovereign lawgiver, the originator of the moral order, the absolute judge of the entire world and, in fact the centre of the very nature. He is surrounded by half a dozen or more Amasha Spentas (beneficent immortals) whose names occur frequently in the Gatha hymns.

According to the Gathas, Ahura Mazda is the father of Spenta Mainyu (Holy Spirit), of Aha Vahishta (Justice or Truth), of Vohu Manah (Righteous Thinking) and of Sparta Armaithi (Devotion). There are three other entities supposed to personify the qualities of Ahura Mazda, namely Khshathra Vairya (desirable dominion), Haurvat (wholeness) and Amret Amretat (Immortality). These qualities are to be earned by both gods and men so that both are bound by the same ethics.

— According to Yasna, two spirits existed in the beginning, one representing the good and the other evil, and both possessing creative power, one positive and the other negative. Ormazd, who is light and life, creates all that are pure and good in the ethical world of law, order and truth. His opposite, Ahriman, is darkness and filth, having produced all that are evil in the world. The two spirits counterbalance but the triumph of the good spirit is what is demanded by the Zoroast-

rian ethics, through consciousness. The Gatha projection is more biased towards the Ahura Mazda than to the evil spirit. To the good Zoroastrian, Ormazd is the only God and Lord depicted as the ideal figure of a benevolent Oriental king with angels attending on him being the personifications of ethical values, depicted as Amesha-Spentas (Immortal Holy Ones), serving as creatures, instruments, attendants and servants, which are:

- Vohu Mano (good sense);
- Ashem (the genius of truth, right, law and rule);
- Khshathrem or Khshathrem Vairum (the power and kingdom of Ormazd which is yet to be manifested in all its majesty);
- Armaiti (Due reverence for the divine daughter of Ormazd, Verecundia, regarded as having her abode somewhere on earth);
- Haurvatat (Perfection);
- Ameretat (Immortality);
- Geush Urvan (the genius and defender of animals); and
- Sarosha (the genius of obedience).

The entire activity of the world is in fact a fight between the two opposing forces of Ahriman and Ahura Mazda. Man having been created by Ormazd neutral, giving him freedom of choice and action, and the soul being the object of this fight between good and bad, he naturally has to face the consequences of his actions before Ormazd either way. True confession of faith, good deeds, words and thought, can keep man on the track of Ahura Mazda while the opposite attaches him to the ways of Ahriman.

Monotheism and Dualism

As is known, Zoroaster's philosophy was exclusively based on the cult of Ahura Mazda. Although it had a strong bias towards monotheism, due to the close association with an age that had gone deep into the polytheism of the Persians themselves and of the Vedic pantheistic gods of the Aryans who, perhaps, lived in Persia for considerable time on their way in search of a better place to settle down, later in the east in the Indus-Ganges plains, as said in the very beginning, it appears from the scriptures that Zoroaster had to compromise quite a lot to win support to his doctrine. Otherwise, if monotheistic like Judaism or Islam, how could he have kept quiet on the Persian and Aryan-Persian Vedic god of Mithra (Vedic - Mitra associated with Varuna) is inexplicable. The very concept of the Supreme Ormazd as

the only God, although depicting a desire for strong montheism, however, not only dualism but pantheistic polytheism is also exhibited in the very doctrine of Zoroaster as depicted through Ahriman, Ahura Mazda (both being of equal power) and Amesha Spentas.

The old Iranian folk religion had some similarities between the Aryan Vedic religion. This was because of the fact that the Aryan invasion of the Indus-Ganges plains was preceded by a good period of sojourn by Aryans in Iran. Zoroaster's was a new religion that has come out of the old Iranian cults with some diversities. The evil spirit called "Daeva" in the Avesta of Zoroastrianism and "Div" in modern Persia, is the term used to represent a good spirit or one of the many gods in Vedic terminology. On the other hand, while the term "Ashura" is a Vedic term to represent an evil spirit in Vedic Hinduism, the corresponding term "Ahura," used in the old Iranian cult and in Zoroastrianism, is used for a good spirit. Zoroaster, however, elevated the term Ahura to denote "the concentrated whole of the one divine character," designating it as Mazdao (the wise) and pulled down the concept of Daeva to represent devils or evil and malicious forces and spirit. To him, "the wise Lord," originally "Ahuro Mazdao," which later became "Ormazd," is the primeval spiritual being, "the all father who was existent before even the world arose, and from whom the world emanated and whose courses are governed by his foreseeing eye." His guiding spirit is thus the "Holy Spirit," which, though it wills the good, yet is not free, being restricted in its temporal sphere of action by its own twin brother, the Evil Spirit" (Angromainush Ahriman), who, from the beginning, was banished by the Good Spirit through the famous ban found in Yasna, and since then drags on his existence in the darkness of hell. However, according to the outlook of the Gathas, the Supreme Ormazd is above the Good Spirit Mazda and the Evil Spirit Ahriman, the latter two being the two opposing forces in the world. Later, the Evil Spirit and the Supreme Ormazd are made equivalent to each other, with the slogan, "Here Ormazd and there Ahriman. The Daevas," who are held in high esteem as the perfect and definite gods and worshipped as idols by the old popular Iranian cults, are however, not only considered by Zoroaster as the corrupted children Ahriman, devils and enemies of mankind, but also as spurious and their devotees, as idolators and misguided.

Zoroastrianism after Zoroaster

As shown by Yasna, Zoroaster considered that he had been commissioned by Ahura Mazda or Ormazd to "purify religion from the gross sensual elements of Daeva worship." Although his theory of the uni-

verse and the dualistic principle were focussed on monotheism, for the reason that his own concepts appear as dubious and obscure with contradictions such as the acceptance of Mithra, the several Ashura Spentas considered as personifications of Ahura Mazda and the dualistic concept of the Good and Evil Spirit of the monotheistic God that subsequently became two powerful contesting gods, and so on, create such an uncongruous spiritual philosophy that no wonder that soon after him, polytheistic practices of deity devotion crept into the life of his followers.

The philosophy contains two aspects, the life on the earth and the life after death, the latter being a continuation as the result of the former adjudged in the heaven by a court of reckoning, "Aka," probably by Rashnu (the genius of justice) and Mithra on the basis of a "book of life," the final judgment being dependent on the arithmetical balance sheet of good and evil actions committed in the worldly life by each individual. Although Zoroaster's philosophy had no mention of redemption from the sins, bad deeds or sins washed out as the result of repentance was included in the philosophy later. An accounting bridge, Cinvato Pereto, lying on the way to heaven (Garō Damana) where all arrive after death and where on being sorted out after the accounting, each goes either to heaven or hell forever, according to good or bad respectively on the basis of the final balance sheet. In the case of a tie, however, the soul is kept in an intermediary stage of existence called "Hamestakeans" for a final decision only at the last judgment. The course of law may be reversed neither by sacrifice nor even by the grace of God.

The later Avesta initiation of the order of priesthood (Athravano), the fire temple and the deification of Mithra as well as the variety of angels such as victory, Verethraghna, Anahita, the goddess of water, Sirius and other planets and stars, which are invoked by Zoroastrian for special purposes, are all innovations introduced after Zoroaster. In the new Zoroastrian eschatology, the end of the world is expected 3000 years after Zoroaster when a new Soshyant will be born of the seed of Zoroaster, the dead brought to life and the incorruptible world begun, the last of this eschatology being slightly at variance with the idea contained in the earlier philosophy on the disposal of the souls of the dead as soon as they reach the bridge of Requiter, explained earlier. Also, in the later Avesta, the gods that Zoroaster eschewed and even ignored, such as Mithra, Airyaman (a replacement of Sraosha), Analuta, Apam Napat, Verethraghna Vayu and so on, all reemerged in the cult. Thus the many gods under Supreme Ahura Mazda (Ahura Mazda) rule the post-Zoroaster creed. Later, even the Bounteous Spirit got submerged in Ahura Mazda; according to the Yasht, the two spirits fought each other; according to the Videvdad, Ahura Mazda and the

destructive spirit opposed each other creating the good and bad things respectively. Thus, on the face of so many inconsistencies in beliefs, Ahura Mazda could not be considered as the father of the twin spirits being faced as equals opposing each other, one being god and the other anti-god. This started the degeneration of Zoroastrianism by about the time of Aristotle in the fourth century B.C.E.

The Zoroastrian theory of the origin of the world according to Bundhshn is that Ormazd (Ahura Mazda) and Ahriman were separated by the void although both of them seem to have existed since eternity. It was to defeat Ahriman that Ormazd created the world as a battlefield. He knew that this would be a limited fight extending over 9000 years in accordance with an understanding between them. In the first contest, Ormazd defeated Ahriman through the Ahuna Vairya prayer (which is the most sacred prayer of Parsees) and as a result he lay prostrate for another 3000 years, the second in a four round contest. At the end of this period he was stirred up by a prostitute, the primal woman, and he attacked again in the material universe. Killing first the Prime Bull, whose marrow gave birth to the plants and whose semen collected and purified in the moon, from which were produced the useful animals, Ahriman then killed Gayomart, the primal man, whose body produced the metals and from a part of whose semen preserved and purified in the sun produced rhubab, from which the first human couple was born. The first human couple was perverted by Ahriman and it was with the advent of Zoroaster that the 3000-year-old Ahriman supremacy came to an end. From then on Ormazd and Ahriman fight on equal terms until after 3000 years Ormazd would ultimately triumph over Ahriman. Bundhshn also illustrates the cosmogony of man as a miniature model world or microcosm, who is mortal since the attack of the aggressor. However, he has five immortal parts in him: Ahu (life), Daena (religion), Baodah (knowledge), Urvan (Soul), and Fravashi (pre-existent souls), the last being perhaps symbolic of the Greek as well as Egyptian and Iranian concepts of the spirits or heroes.

Mazdean orthodoxy says that when Ormazd created the material world, he first produced from infinite light a form of fire out of which all things were born. This form of fire is "white, bright, round and visible from afar." Gayomart, the primal man, was also conceived as spherical in the image of the sky. According to the Pahlavi work Manushchihr, "Ormazd, the Lord of all things, produced from infinite light a form of fire whose name was that of Ormazd himself and whose light was that of fire." In spite of there being so much literature, scriptural as well as others, the entire cosmology and cosmogony of

the cult is so very complicated, obscure and dubious that quite a lot of the statements, philosophy and doctrines cannot be understood, being illogical and mythical. About the ninth century C.E., there appeared a short-lived renaissance movement when modifications to ward off some basic inconsistencies of faith were tried to be introduced through Zurvanism, Manichaeism and others in the face of competition from other rational religions, particularly Islam. However, due to the opposition of the Mazdean orthodoxy itself these had to face natural deaths, having been dubbed as heretical for the reason that they had upset the entire earlier concepts of the religion.

The Parsi Worship and Temple Rites

Fire occupies the central position of the Zoroastrian faith, belief and rituals. Although initially Zoroaster himself offered a monotheistic doctrine and philosophy, perhaps due to a spirit of adjustment with contemporary old Iranian cults towards the end of his own life they became so much diluted that the dualism as well as indirect polytheism could be seen even in the Gathas attributed to himself. In later times, with the advent of Avesta and further association with the Vedic as well as Old Iranian polytheism, and initiation of ritualism centering around the fire altar and sacrifices that were rigidly developed and maintained by the clergy class on the lines of the Jewish priests and Levites, even deities with male and female concepts got introduced into the religion. The Gathas do not mention ceremonial worship, or Haoma, or the protecting guardian angels attributed to the Farvashi (confession of faith) developed after Zoroaster. The later Avesta period made the order of priests, making them responsible for the systemisation and organisation of the doctrines of the faith and worship by laying down the elaborate laws of the Vendidad relating to the variety of duties, personal as well as social, such as ablutions, baths, bodily punishments, truthfulness, good works, improvements, culture of trees, assistance to co-religionists, chastity, extending alms, land improvements, cattle farming, protection of useful animals like dogs, destruction of harmful animals, prohibitions on burning of dead bodies and cremation, and so on. The dead body is left exposed to the sun to be eaten by vultures and animals at a specified place, usually a high tower (Dhakma).

During the worship and sacrifice in the temple, drinking of intoxicants called "Hoama" (the same as the Soma plant juice referred to in the Hindu Bhagavatgeetha, which the Vedic Yogis also used to drink during yoga as well as sacrifices, and which was in vogue in old Iranian cults due to Aryan association) has much prominence. However, the Zoroastrian temple, with no images to worship, centers on the Lord and burning of his fire forever on an altar installed at the centre of the temple, and hence the name of the Zoroastrian temple came to be "the fire temple." Various sacrifices and masses with offering of meat, milk, bread, fruits, flowers and sacred water are performed in the sanctuary of these temples, more or less on the lines followed by the Hebrew priests at their tabernacle. The priestly order, like the sons of Aaron and the Levites of the Jews, perform the temple rites such as sacrifices, penances, purification ceremonies, spiritual guardianship and religious care of the laymen. The new young believer is girt at the early age of seven to ten years with the holy lace (much like the holy thread of a Hindu Brahman) and new dress—a shirt (sadre) and a girdle (kusti)—given to him, which he has to wear all his lifetime.

The sacred fire is considered holy from many angles of faith and is to be kept burning continuously, fed at least five times during the day. The installation of a new fire is done with an elaborate ceremony, there being special rites for purification of the fire as well as for its regeneration.

Penance is making a firm resolve by a Zoroastrian not to commit sin again, after confession of sins is made to a priest, Dastour. "Patet" is recited during this ceremony. Yasna, sacrifice of haoma (the sacred liquor), is done before the sacred fire with recitation of Avesta, making offerings of bread, milk, meat and fat.

There are three types of purifications. These are the Pandiyab or ablution, the Baresnum a ritual performed at special places with the participation of a dog whose left ear is to be touched and whose gall is supposed to put the evil spirits to flight. It lasts for several days.

After death a special dog with a spot above each of its two eyes is brought before the dead body. The rite is performed five times a day. After the first time, the fire is brought into the room where the corpse lay where it is kept burning for three days after the removal of the corpse to the tower of silence (Dhakma), where it is left naked. Then the fire is removed during daytime. The interior of the tower of silence is built in three concentric circles, one each for men, women and children. After vultures eat the flesh, the loose bones and other remain

get dried on the tower and are disposed off by throwing them in the central well. The mourning is on the fourth day when the soul is believed to have arrived at the other world to appear before the judges and is a very solemn occasion.

There are few seasonal festivals (gahanbars): the day of remembrance of the dead at the end of the year, Noruz, the new year festival in honour of Rapihwin, who is the personification of noonday and summer, and the festival of Mithra or Mehragan, which is celebrated with honour. Further, each day of the month and each month of the year is dedicated to a specific diety.

Downfall of Zoroastrianism

Apart from schisms, mainly accommodation of intense dualism and deities as well as priesthoods, Zoroastrianism lost its original appeal to the old adherents of Iranian cults, because of there being not much to be gained spiritually, particularly so after the Qadsiyah victory of the Muslims in the 635 C.E. over Persians under Yezdergerd III of the Sasanid dynasty, when the Zoroastrian cult could not be a match to the absolute montheism as well as dynamism of Islam. Therefore the complete, rational, practical and dynamic philosophy offered by the new Islamic order having attracted the followers of Zoroastrianism as well as other animist cults in Iran in large numbers into the fold of the former, almost all those polytheist cults including Zoroasterianism had become uprooted from the religious scene of Iran by about 1000 C.E. However, some of the conscientious objectors among the Zoroastrians—numbering about a hundred thousand or more of those who had been left behind—found fit to migrate to the Indian subcontinent where the religion survived but remained almost stagnant since confining itself to the two port cities of Bombay and Karachi only, there having not much appeal to anyone other than the born Zoroastrians to remain in the fold of the religion in India and Pakistan.

Chapter 14

Comparative Study

The Criterion

Human life consists essentially of three aspects: the physical body, the mind and the soul. While the body and mind may be defined and identified as matter, the soul cannot be. It may be felt only as a way to distinguish the living from the dead. The body and mind exist such as long as the life is present in the shape of a contained soul and both become useless the moment the soul departs. The natural science investigate the body and mind as well as some kinetic and potential aspects of soul that partake in the total life of the former two. While the scientific process postulates certain theories based on philosophical concepts on matter and cosmos and proves them through experiment producing uniform deductions, philosophical concepts regarding soul and the secret of creations have so far remained theories only, which cannot be proved scientifically. Even in the case of scientific matters that had been considered as absolute facts for a long time, these have been drastically modified subsequently as a result of gaining more and more knowledge. Thus, when the twentieth century scientist looks back to his nineteenth century predecessor, the laws and proofs, for example, on the structure of the atom, have changed so much that the atom which was even quite lately considered as indivisible, has not only been shattered, but the theory of fundamental particles developed recently has created a new dimension in the structure of matter all together. Moreover, the old concept of transmutation of elements of the lately ridiculed alchemists has in fact become a total reality today. Similarly, even the epochmaking theory of relativity of Einstein has been challenged and in some aspects been almost proved to be incorrect within a life time. However, the knowledge on thought, life and soul still remains as confidential as ever before even after the anthropologist's assessment of over a million years of human existence.

It is a fact that the soul cannot be identified or imprisoned after a specific but unforeseeable duration, during which time it keeps the body and mind a going concern, the motive force driving the body a

mind being the soul. The body has only one function, and that is to do substantive work on the orders of the mind which has to take decisions of its own, the soul remaining the force through which the agency of life enables both the mind and body to function of their own in synchronism. What is called "conscience" appears to be an attribute of the soul, trying to guide the mind through directives called criterion—the permissible "rights" and the objectionable "wrongs." Here comes the question of what is right and what is wrong. A tangible definition of right could be anything that is universally good for the individual as well as the society and a similar definition of what is wrong could also be anything that is universally bad for the human being and the society.

Thought, gratitude, anger, passion, love of everything that makes one's life comfortable or pleasant, fear of any phenomena that seem to possess powers far beyond one's own imagination and supposed to be capable of either causing benefit or harm, an acute sense of selfishness by which one covets as much wealth and other possessions as possible for one's own use, pride, accumulation of power and authority over others, and so on are some of the important traits of the human being. Of these, the faculty of thinking is the most important one by which, in nature, a person discovers through his intuition what in fact are the safe limits for the exercise of the various traits mentioned above, and even this discovery cannot surface unless one is brought up and continues to live in society guided by certain norms and limits acceptable to others. However, love, pride, selfishness and passion generally do not let him subjugate himself easily to the dictates of others. History has ample proofs that such a situation developing in more than one individual has always given vent to wars and killing of fellow beings.

But, then, what is good for one human being and certain society could be bad for another being and society according to the context facing each. However, for the evolution of a universal "one world society," or in other words, a universal "one world welfare state," such a disparity could be dangerous. For instance, while any civilised society of today considers theft as bad on the one hand and assisting a fellow being as good on the other, a society of thieves and cruel people do not consider so. The question of morals thus depends solely on the environments of each society. It is thus clear that if the responsibility of law-making or evolution of the criterion between right and wrong is vested in the human society, uniformity cannot be achieved. What is facing our present societies unfortunately in any part of the world is the same basic turmoil that has existed over thousands of years in the past—the question of deciding what is naturally right and wrong for the human being. By a sheer random chance, it has often happened that while

some criteria have coincided as far as several societies were concerned, many others have remained either wide apart or even opposing, some instances being the concept of so-called capitalism and socialism, certain ethics relating to the relationship between man and woman, concept of God, crime and punishment, and so on.

The twentieth century has after all found out that uniformity is needed in as many aspects of life as possible and it was with this view that first the League of Nations, and then the United Nations were formed with the participation of all nations of the world. In spite of so much scientific and technological progress achieved by the modern man and woman, quite a lot of differences do still exist even on some essential aspects of international life, unable to be bridged by sane discussion and consensus at the world forums, because all the decisions of each society are based on what each considers right or wrong under specific biases in their own way and therefore the views do not coincide. An international code devised by a Super Force that controls and knows everything about the body, mind and soul of each individual alone can, therefore, decide what is good or bad for human beings as a whole both in near and far spaces of time. Therefore, if the criteria of right and wrong for human beings and societies are laid down by such a Force, then alone could the entire human beings be persuaded to accept such criteria. Such a criteria shall then be in complete accordance with the nature and cosmos around. Let us then investigate whether such criteria did exist at all in the past and whether they still exist.

Irrespective of the fact whether the theory of "Evolution in Time and Space" or "The Big Bang" has been responsible for the billions of things we see around on earth and in the heavens, a human being invested with a thinking faculty cannot but conjecture and conclude without any hesitation that, after all, without a creator nothing could come into being. Whether this creator is called nature or God, it is not what matters initially because we are now investigating, from the first principles, this important Power that provides credentials to life itself. No one can therefore dispute that there has been and there is a Force that has full control of the universe in its entirety, creation, sustenance and end, and that this unique Force must have existed without any change since the infinite past to the infinite future, or in other words, without a beginning nor an end in time and space. Fundamentally, even a small project that one may envisage requires quite a lot of planning and designing before creation. An essential prerequisite of this planning is the knowledge of the time and space that the creation has to survive. It is then only that all possible safeguards can be built into it to ensure that, on the creation, the project in question will live

its planned life under safeguards not only without disturbing other projects in time, space and compatibility, but also in supplementary unison with all other projects around. What an extent of superplanning, superdesigning and superknowledge of shape of things to come in the infinite future of time and space must have gone into this tremendously fabulous creation of cosmos consisting of the skies or the universe, of which our earth, although it occupies only a speck, has, however, considerable varieties of life far more complex than what we have discovered since the earth was inhabited by human beings, for how many thousands of years, no one knows even to a near guess!

Having thus come to realise the greatness, superiority, all-powerfulness and knowledge of time and space that must have been at the command of this Supreme Planner of the universe, we can readily agree sensibly that none other than only One Super Power could have been the initiator of the universe as a going concern for the simple reason that coordination, harmony and perfection to the minutest detail of everything we see around cannot have occurred if more than one Power had controlled them as a whole. No doubt, after creation to an overall plan, we may conceive that command as dictated by this Super Power is possible to be vested with many a subordinate. However, while we assume this delegation, we cannot forget that the planning, designing, creation, sustenance and the end of everything lay at the personal command of the Supreme Power alone and none else. The activities of the subordinates are confined to pure delegations of specific jobs according to the pattern planned by the Supreme Power and not the delegate who has no power to alter any course as originally set by the creator in accordance with natural laws of the Supreme Power Himself. To make it clearer, it is like nature's DNA system in human, plant, and animal cells, or a human-engineered robot that performs wonderful tasks using its built-in sensors and computer memory stores, which contain vast information. The robot itself has no power whatsoever to change the preassigned tasks, which are performed strictly within the sphere of specific logic delegated by its maker. Clearly, we would consider it a foolish fantasy if one were to think that this robot acquired its limited decisive powers and capabilities independently, without the help of its makers, who retain for themselves the absolute prerogative to alter the programmes in whatever manner they consider necessary. This concept has been acknowledged, fortunately, by all historic religions. Thus we have the first point of common agreement between all religions of today. The second point of common agreement is that this Supreme Power is called God, the One, but known with different names in different languages—Allah, Brahman, Yahweh,

Mazda, and so on. The third common point among all religions is that God, in His extreme mercy, has revealed His supreme guidance through selected human beings who did live short or long as human beings fortified by miracles that no other contemporary could excel. Reports about the miracles may, however, differ, as one can understand.

Thus, no one should find trouble in accepting that every religion that has a basic concept of Only One Super Power, God, as the Planner, Designer, Creator, Sustainer and Disposer of the entire universe, had been also revealed by God to the human beings of the respective ages through a man selected by Him out of the mortal human beings of the respective age. For the same reason, it is also quite reasonable to believe that each of the scriptures found with the adherents of the various religions and attributed to prophets, great men, sages, and so on also had their foundation in oral revelations or revealed books of God given to His prophets. There is no difficulty in explaining their pollutions over the ages due to poetic exaggerations, unfaithful transmissions orally as well as through incomplete or unrealisable written records or even destruction. But, the very destruction or pollution of any original is in itself a conclusive proof that it was not intended by God to be a set of revelations that was anything but to last for a certain period and not for all time. This is proven from the scriptures of Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity. Particularly so, because while the majesty of the Supreme One God is preserved, the Law has become successively modified from time to time through various prophets and messengers in the case of the children of Israel from Moses to Jesus (peace be on him) and through various incarnations and sages in the case of Hinduism, otherwise known as "Brahmanism." Thus, we have at least the following two main common points as a basis for a comparative study of the major religions of today:

- i. Faith in the Only One God, known by different names in different languages as Allah, Brahman, Yhweh, Mazda and so on, who is the ultimate and undisputed Supreme Power totally responsible for the planning, design, creation, sustenance and end of all matter and energy known and unknown in the universe.
- ii. Continuity of God's guidance to the human beings through revelations sent to selected persons among them orally, through books, or both since this earth was inhabited.

To a close student of the various religions, it should appear that the root of all the revealed religions including Brahmanism lay in the wide area known as the Middle East, comprising the territory of present Greece, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt

and western Iran adjacent to Iraq. It is quite clear from the Old Testament and New Testament of the Bible as well as the Quraan that the various prophets from Adam to Mohammed, including Noah, Abraham, Lot, Issaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David, Solomon, Elijah, Jonah and Jesus Christ (Peace be on them all) had all preached in this area and that they all died in the same area. It is also known that the Aryans migrated from central Asia and it is safe to assume that when they had their temporary sojourn in Iraq and western Iran, they were exposed to some of the doctrines about the Supreme God of the prophet Abraham (peace be on him) who is mentioned in the Bible and Quraan as the forerunner of the religion of the children of Israel and the Muslims, whereby the very name of the custodians of the scriptures among these migrating Aryans were and are even today known as 'Brahmanas,' and their Supreme God as "Brahman," which has no explanation other than their being derived from this great founder prophet Abraham, or Ibrahim (peace be upon him). It is stated in the early life story of this prophet that during his search for the God of the universe, he refused to accept stars and planets including the sun, and the variety of idols that his contemporaries in the present region of Iraq considered as gods of convenience because he found all the celestial bodies rising and setting and the idols could not help themselves. Thus it is said that he came to the firm belief through reasoning that nothing other than the creator and sustainer of all creations could be the Lord of the entire universe. Perhaps the idol worship and the worship of various celestial bodies as well as objects that inspired awe and surprise in the human mind, such as mountains, rivers, the various powers of nature, and so on, was acquired by the migrating Aryans first from the same regions of Iraq and Iran through which either they passed on in which they made their temporary homes during their onward march to the fertile Indusganges plains of India, which had finally become their ultimate home. The religion of Hinduism, thus although having its root most probably in some of the ways of the prophet Abraham or Ibrahim (peace be upon him), glimpses of which could still be found in Hindu Vedas, must have become polluted by worship of the nature, idols and celestial bodies that had been prevalent in the Middle East and India during olden times and retained as a traditional legacy up to the present day. It cannot also be ignored that among other things, some of the medieval and modern Hindu philosophers have also opined, perhaps rightly too, that the Brahmanism of the Vedas is devoid of caste distinction and idol worship, although in Hinduism as conceived and practiced by both Brahmans and the lower casts in India as a whole in the past as well as today, these two ingredients have been built into the Hindu way of life as

integral parts, perhaps as a long time legacy of a traditional way of life and culture.

Now, coming to the human life itself, it is accepted that a concept that does not cover the aspects of growth of the mind as well as the body with full cognizance of the salvation of soul cannot be a complete one, indeed. The autonomy granted to the human being to conduct himself in this world satisfying the essential needs of mind and body with the objective of emancipating the soul or otherwise is undisputed by all prime religions. Most of the prime religions also base their philosophies and ways of life on certain holy scriptures that are claimed to be the law and words of God. However, the only dispute is in how to attain this goal. Let us see how the various religions of today view these aspects and how far their scriptures project themselves as the real laws of God preserved over the ages.

Buddhism and Hinduism

The Hindu and Buddhist ways of life maintain that salvation of soul may be attained only through action (Karma) by which an individual has necessarily to face the consequences of all his actions squarely without any element of the pardon of God ever intervening in the ultimate redemption of the soul. Naturally, this brings in the concept that the human being has to undergo a cycle of several rebirths and deaths in this world itself until he washes off the results of all his past bad speech, deeds and thoughts by going through an indefinite number of life cycles, of which the final one must be a hundred per cent pure life span. Although it may appear as a solution, when deeply analysed however, it gives no hope at all to the distressed human being created with dire limitations. The random chance rule as applied to the human being, rather, always works to his disadvantage. It is never like the gold getting purified more and more in every melting and cleaning cycle. Even so, a physicist or chemist can well imagine the almost impossible physical possibility of obtaining a really one hundred per cent purity of even this non-oxidising element. Even after the $n + 1$ cycle of purification, one may still expect some impurity to remain in the commercial product, whereby obtaining the pure quality of gold economically is practically impossible, although there is, theoretically a one in infinite chances to obtain this purity. When applied to the life of the human being, however, in spite of being extremely careful the chances are that people will falter more than once in each practical life cycle of the world, with the result that instead of improving the

score, one worsens it during each recycling process in almost all cases. The drill that has been prescribed by the Hindu philosophy for the improvement of one's performance is, therefore, a forest life for good, until one dies there selfless through the final process of solid penance, the last two of the four stages in the life of a human being, known as the "Vanaprastham" and "Sanyasam," respectively. Even this formula gives a grim outlook on the process of redemption because the slightest impurity left behind in the sanyasi or yogi (penitent) may lead to his soul being rejected from union with the Supreme Essence, which is all pure, necessitating rebirth to further purify it. But, as revealed by the Bhagavatgeetha, "only extremely few yogis attain the goal of Mukthi (salvation)." If so, then what about the very large majority of the people at large? No salvation at all? On the other hand, taking for granted that the large majority of the human beings of any age go into such a forest life to become penitents for good, seeking redemption, how could the world continue as a living entity? It is thus clear that unless, firstly, an element of mercy of God comes into play in the affairs of human beings and, secondly, God, the Kind and the Benevolent, undertakes to pardon the sins of every devotee in consequence of earnest repentance, amends and vows not to repeat sins in the future intentionally, it should be practically impossible for anyone to attain the ultimate status of redemption through one's action (Karma). Then again, what is left as a reward for those rare few who may, theoretically, be considered as having crossed successfully the threshold of redemption? The Hindu philosophy of the Geetha shows forth that the souls of such people get merged with Godhood either by attaining equivalence with it or, maybe, becoming part and parcel of God Himself (Geetha 5:24, 25; 7:27; 8:5), ending the limitless cycle of rebirths (Geetha 8:16). However, the Geetha also confirms that the human beings are born of either "divine" or "demonaic" nature (16:1-20)—like the Ormuzd and Ahri-man concepts of Zoroastrian philosophy—that even the man of knowledge acts in accordance with his nature because the beings follow their nature, and that through abandonment of the threefold gateway of lust, anger, and greed by following the declared rules of scripture (Geetha 16:21-24) even the lowborn, women, Vaishyas and Shudras devoted to their own duty attain perfection and the highest goal (Geetha 9:32; 18:45).

Nevertheless, the contradiction that is contained in the two differing views—that the person "born" with the demonic nature who is positively devoid of the natural blessings of God can attain perfection in the same way that one born with "divine" nature and with his own efforts against his born nature—appears to be a quite unrealistic

philosophy. However, even if a few people do get identified with God as the result of redemption, getting dissolved in Godhood and leaving nothing but God Himself, is it going to be any compliment to the majesty of God whose definition, even according to the Geetha is "Creator of life itself, ad infinitum?" If, on the other hand, such redeemed souls continue to exist, having attained "equivalence" with God, how can this anomaly of more than one God exist against the view of the Geetha itself that there is only One Supreme God? Elsewhere, what is suggested at 16:14 of the Geetha, the worship of gods, the twice born, of teachers and the wise, purity, uprightness, continuance and nonviolence are said to be the penance of the body, is, in fact, in opposition to the oft-repeated directive of Krshna to worship and rely on him alone as the Supreme God even above the conventional Brahman, who too is designated as the Supreme one God of convenience (8:16), as pictured at chapter 13 of the same Geetha.

Scientifically, too, it is not correct to assume that the matter and energy in human and other creations get destroyed when, if as projected in the philosophy of the Geetha that the redeemed souls get identified with Godhood without any addition to Godhood, because this assumption is contrary to the scientific truths as conceived by the human beings that nothing gets either created or destroyed altogether, but a change in the state of existence only takes place. Nevertheless, even for the sake of argument, it is conceded for a moment that the redeemed souls get merged with Godhood, as is alleged, then Godhood must either have some "vacancy," so to say, to absorb the extras or, at least, Godhood should get enriched to some negligible extent in matter, energy, quantum and so on. But then is this a rational concept about God, who is considered by all religions including the Geetha philosophy as the Supreme Complete Essence wanting in nothing? Thus it is seen that in Hindu philosophy, there appears to be no satisfactory explanation that is capable of convincing the human mind scientifically, logically and rationally about the purpose of and objective of life, the universe, the fate of the human soul after death and ultimate shape of things after the soul gets redeemed. The concepts on the important issues discussed above are almost the same as far as Buddhism and Jainism are concerned, two offshoots of Hinduism.

The fantastic, unbelievable and varying stories of the creation of man and the universe as detailed in the scriptural Vedas; the drills of paying divine homage in homes and temples of worship to inanimate images and idols of multifarious gods and goddesses supposed to represent "incarnations" and manifestations of demigods who are considered as deputising for the Supreme One God in purpose and intent as well

to innumerable creations of God such as human beings, birds, snakes, animals, mountains, rivers, celestial bodies, powers of nature and so on either because they are awe-inspiring or are believed to be capable of causing benefit or harm or considered mythically as being connected with the various demigods; the institution of permanent classification of the Hindu masses into four distinct castes or classes of society with impregnable barriers between, as authorised by the scripture and pre-

ed over by the Brahmana priestly class; the strict segregation between the high caste and low caste masses ordered to be maintained under scriptural authority to such a deplorable limit that even a listening by the Shudra (lowest class) Hindu into the reading of the scripture by the higher castes (according to the Manusmriti) shall be punishable by pouring molten lead into the ears of the listener; the restrictions placed on approach of the Shudras to the members of the higher castes, particularly to the Brahmanas, as well as to the temples of worship under segregation laws to such an extent that, in the event of their contravention, elaborate cleansing rites such as washing ceremonies of the desecrated areas and persons, shall be carried out as prescribed; the philosophy of the horrible and infinite Karma-rebirth-redemption cycle with its preordained course, totally precluding mercy and pardon of the kind God from ever altering it; the Sathi rites prescribed as a duty for a widow to burn herself to death in the funeral pyre of the deceased husband and many other similar scriptural aspects solidly integrated into its philosophy make the Hindu religion and way of life not only obsolete but also unsuitable for ordering the life of the cultured human society of today and tomorrow, which is in search of a way and pattern of life on the concept of international brotherhood based on complete equality between all peoples irrespective of colour, race, profession, wealth, birth or position and a philosophy that reconciles with reason and the provings of science giving a meaningful purpose to the life in this world as well as hopes for a reward to be won by the soul after death in just proportion to the actions and deeds of the human being during his one life in this world under the aegis of the mercy and pardon of the ever kind God. Notwithstanding, the Bhagavatgeetha

a wonderful compilation dealing with very deep and abstract philosophy. Except for some portions that deal with the attributes of God purporting to convey a tint of polytheism along with monotheistic concepts; the redemption cycle of an innumerable number of rebirths by the same person until his soul is finally released through his Karma alone; the incarnation philosophy by which All-powerful, Omnipotent, Omniscient and All-knowing God Himself is supposed to personally intervene on occasions to save and guide the human being on earth,

living the life of a mortal man or another creature; the permission granted, although not as a directive, to worship gods and creatures other than the One God; the sanction given to maintain the classes as born in nature, and so on, has also indications in it not to reject it totally as a source of divine revelation. It is perhaps as old as or even older than the Torah and the Gospels of Christ (peace be on him). Although both were divine revelations, they had also been found to have been polluted much from their possible originals due to the very long time factor as well as deficiencies of oral transmission, the real originals having been lost. The dialogue between Krshna and Arjuna appears in the Geetha as a third person narrative, the author quoting the two, several centuries later, as if he had been present himself during the dialogue. It is an interesting literature on this score. Therefore, and for the reasons given earlier, Krshna and the Geetha stand on the same footing as Christ and the Gospels of Christianity, both being polluted as far as the unity of the Almighty God is concerned. In both cases the two leaders of the two scriptures claim oneness with the uncomparable majesty and power of the One God, one having been pictured as the God's incarnation and the other as the only son of God.

Judaism

It has been seen from the chapter on Judaism that this religion, as projected by the existing Torah, and which for all purposes is contained in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible, is a stringent life of conquests to gain the "promised land" of Palestine and retention of the territory by the twelve tribes of the "Children of Israel" and their descendants under the guidance of the only one God, Yhweh. In fact, the history of the religion starts with the oppression of the people who were the descendants of prophet Jacob (designated by God as "Israel") by the Egyptian Pharaoh and their rescue by prophet Moses, (Peace be upon him) through various acts ending with the drowning of the oppressor king and his henchmen in the sea. The people had multiplied in Egypt earlier, from the time when Joseph, Benjamin and their step-brothers along with their father, Jacob (Peace be upon him), had settled down in Egypt when Joseph had been the next in command of the Egyptian king of his time.

In the religion there is a stress of great importance on the practice of undiluted monotheism. However, application of all laws on crime, punishment and moral values affecting social life is preferential to the

twelve tribes of the children of Israel. For example, when it comes to the question of lending money, while the community is forbidden from doing so on interest, lending money on interest to the Gentiles (a term used for non-Israelites) is permitted. Similarly, when a time limit of seven years exists for slavery of a Jew, a non-Jew may be kept as a slave for a lifetime, and so on. The various prophets, champions, judges and so on who are mentioned in the Old Testament had also been sent by God during the long period of thirteen centuries or so between Moses and Jesus (Peace be upon them) with the specific mandates of saving and guiding the children of Israel back to the Law, when on each such occasion calamities and destruction had visited them as punishment for breaking the covenant that their forefathers had repeatedly made with God to be acute monotheists and just. An essential aspect of Jewish religion is the strict class distinction ordered to be maintained in society, by which the order consisting of the sons of Aaron assisted by the members of the Levite family are to be priests exclusively over the rest of the masses of Jews to conduct all ceremonials of the temple where the most important of the religious functions ordained in the Law centers around performance of sacrifices.

Another important discriminating factor in the religion is that no one other than those who can show documentary evidence of being a progeny of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel may either be admitted or may have a claim for admission to the community of Jews, the simple reason that the Law of the Torah was intended to be exclusively for them. According to the Torah, the children of Israel are preferential people of God. It is for these reasons that in spite of the claim of the Jews that their religious ancestry is forty centuries old, they say they only constitute a society of less than twenty million people, including a large number who, on the issue of persecution by the communist regime of Russia, spread out in the past as they are doing even now to other countries including Israel with a claim to have belonged to this ethnic community irrespective of whether they had uncontested titles to the claim on the basis of proven genealogy or not and got distributed all over the world in small groups, the largest concentration among them being in the state of Israel, with about three million only, and about seven million all over the United States. In effect, the Jewish religion is still a struggle for preservation of the race as well as the proverbial holy land that their forefathers possessed more than 2000 years ago.

Surely, a religion thus restricted to one particular ethnic race amounting for only a negligible 0.50 per cent or less of the world population, excluding the huge 99.50 per cent or more of the rest of

the humanity from entry into its fold cannot have any claim for becoming an international religion and the way of life for all the peoples of the world. True, Judaism also does not claim so.

Christianity

We have found earlier from the chapter on Christianity that while the followers of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) claimed that the prophet had repealed the Laws of the Torah, introducing new ones, on a close scrutiny of the New Testament one cannot find any specific law at all, not to speak of any new law, on matters relating to the various aspects of social life of human beings. On the other hand, it is also agreed by them that the old Testament in the Bible is left intact, as part of the Christian scripture because it contains some good points governing the social life of man and woman. In fact, what is evident from these is that the architects of Christian faith, adopted as such many years after the ascension of Jesus Christ (peace be on him), having found no specific amended laws on social life in the Gospels to be considered as divine ones, they had been forced to keep the older Jewish laws to govern the life of the Christian society they invented.

On the matter of belief, although God in his essence is recognised by Christianity as only one, being the Planner, Designer, Sustainer, and Disposer of the universe and everything in it, the doctrine of the Trinity developed after Christ on the "Father, Son, Holy Spirit, tie up, ascribing divinity to Jesus Christ and attributing to him the exclusive sonship of God, has overshoot the essential objective of absolute monotheism. In latter years, the doctrine took such a dangerous shape that even God, the One, is sidetracked; Jesus, the son, and Mary, the mother, have come into prominence almost as deities of worship and pardon. The very belief that whatever sin a Christian believer commits, because of his faith in Jesus (peace be on him) as not only the living son of God acting as and on behalf of God but also as one with the prerogative to pardon any believer on and behalf of God as the eternal living God among men, cannot be considered as a belief any different from the Hindu concept of "Incarnation" of the supreme "Brahman" god in his Vishnu manifestation, particularly in the "Supreme Krishna incarnation" who lived on earth in human form to be seen, worshipped, emulated and to be sought as refuge for the redemption of soul by the human beings. It must not be forgotten that the schisms such as the assignment of divinity to Jesus Christ (peace be on him), the Virgin Mary, the Cross and saints based on the doctrine of the "Trinity" as

well as the adoption of the name of "Christian" by the followers of the prophet had all happened, not under any directive from the master to do so during his life time, but long after his ascension on the basis of dreams, imaginations, halucinations and trance-visions of the "living god Jesus" as a result of what is known as "certain disciples and followers having been FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT," a term continuously used by the followers since the prophet left this mortal world. This, then looks as if there is a strange parallel system in existence whereby Jesus Christ sends revelations to certain selected followers called "saints" through the medium of the Holy Spirit, more or less in the same manner as God himself had been sending his revelations to His prophets through the archangel Gabriel. This very idea cannot be accepted as any different from blasphemy for the simple reason that what Jesus Christ (peace be on him), the son of Virgin Mary and the prophet of God, had taught and commanded under the guidance of God during his short prophetic mission about God, faith and religion, no disciple or follower had the authority to modify on the pretext of "conclusions drawn as the result of trance-revelations as a result of the disciples, apostles and followers having been filled with the Holy Spirit" as alluded to in the New Testament records. Most important of all, it is rather beyond the imagination of an intelligent person that he should believe that Jesus Christ, the prophet of God (peace be on him) born to a human mother, Virgin Mary, is the only son of God because of the fact that he was born without a human father when the Genesis of the Old Testament, which forms the chapter of the very same Bible of the Christian faith, declares that the first man, Adam (peace be on him), was created by God Almighty "of dust from the ground" without there being the need of a father and mother at all; surely our Christian brethren do not believe that Adam was the first son of God and Jesus (peace be on him) the second! Instead, as clarified under the chapter on Christianity, the New Testament records prove clearly that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) himself had on various occasions referred to his disciples and the audience about God as "your father and my father" in general terms, which shows that in this respect he was no different from any other man. Further, there is no positive uncontested proof that Jesus Christ, (peace be on him) the prophet of God, had taken at any time the terrible risk of claiming for himself any divinity, not to speak of ascribing to himself the status of "the only son of God" and the prerogative of exercising the absolute power of God Himself to pardon "the original sin of man" or the sins committed by a person after believing in him. It is an entirely different matter worthy of belief that the way of life preached by Jesus Christ (peace be on him), the

great prophet of God, was one that could lead to the attainment of redemption and forgiveness of sins committed by the followers if they repented of their past mistakes; this prophet of God heralded the theme, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" The Gospels, as they exist today, but not the Acts, which are accounts of history after the ascension of Jesus (peace be on him), prove that Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) never repealed the "Old Laws" by any "New Laws" because there are no "New Laws" at all found in them. So also, the claim of Christians that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) "made all forbidden foods clean" is not substantiated by the Gospels. Can the existing laws of any country, people or society that are in cold print be replaced by any new laws except by repealing them with specific new laws in lieu thereof, these also having been put into cold print? Where are then these new Laws that the Christian Church claims the Gospels to contain? The facts as testified by the reportings (Mark 7:14-21, Acts 10:9-16, 44-48, and Acts 11:1-18) of the New Testament and other historical records clearly show that declaring of all forbidden foods of the Torah as lawful to Christians, throwing open of the Christian fold to the non-Israeli Gentiles, exemption granted from circumcision to the Gentiles converting to Christianity, institution of church and congregational worship in them, declaring of Sunday as the Sabbath instead of Saturday of the Jews, naming of the followers of Christ as Christians, the edicts on the acceptable versions of the Gospel as well as on the deification of Christ through the Trinity institution and many other things were certainly schisms adopted for promotion of vested interests after the ascension. It is also established by the various Epistles in the New Testament and other historic records that the evolution of "Christian Virtues," assignment of divinity to Mary as the "mother of God" and the saints, conferment of the Christian Ecclesiastic and saintly hierarchy by the Church on any selected follower, making of confessions before the clergy followed by assurance of pardon and redemption on behalf of Christ (peace be on him) on the basis of "the Holy Spirit in the Church," administration of the "Extreme Unction" at the time of death by the clergy assuring atonement of sin through participation in the crucifixion of Christ (peace be on him), and so on were all innovations introduced without any authority whatsoever from Jesus Christ (peace be on him) under the able leadership of the antichrist Greek Jew, a Roman national by name of Saul and later Paul or Saint Paul, who, on his way to Damascus during the fourth decade after the ascension of Christ (peace be on him) converted as a follower of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) as the result of a vision of the prophet declaring in the synagogue that Jesus Christ (peace be on him) was "the son of God!" However, circumstantial evidence provided by the Epistles, Gos-

of the New Testament as well as the historical records and the prolonged researches of some eminent scholar writers prompt also an impartial observer to suspect, and logically too, that the myths of the crucifixion of Jesus (peace be on him), the subsequent deification of the prophet and the mother Mary, the so-called supercession of Torahic laws by the new laws of the Gospels (there being no new laws in fact), declaration of all foods forbidden by the Torah as clean for Christians, exemption from circumcision for Christian converts from the Gentiles, adoption of the theory of "one in essence but three in the person of God in Father, Son and the Holy Spirit," naming the followers of Christ as Christians at Antioch, substitution of Sunday for Saturday as Sabbath, and on the top of them all, as if to add insult to injury, making the Old Testament (Pentateuch and the other divine books of the Jews) itself the first and integral part of the Christian Bible, were perhaps yet other acts of Jews pressed into service to discredit this last prophet of the Children of Israel in the chain of their often repeated crimes as mentioned in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament Gospels.

Nevertheless, even the Gospels, projected by the Church as the holy scripture that was given by God to Jesus (peace be on him) in fact as stated before, do not contain any specific "New Laws" on the lines of the "Old Law" of the Old Testament as found in the "Leviticus" "Numbers" and "Deuteronomy" to replace the old Laws. Even the Gospel according to Barnabas does not contain any specific law or directive that may be a replacement of the Torahic old laws. In the circumstance, it could also be a logical conclusion that for the purpose of the Law, the architects of the new schism named Christianity had no alternative but to rely on the laws of the Old Testament only, after providing a few relaxations on food, (like making lawful all forbidden foods), on circumcision, Trinity and so on as they liked. There appears to be no other reason for making the Old Testament a part of the Christian Bible in spite of the contention of the Christian church that the Old Laws had been modified by the Gospels. On the whole, there is nothing in the New Testament to prove that the way of life that was actually preached and shown by Jesus Christ (peace be on him) was not the same as was highlighted by his forerunner prophets of the children of Israel, such as Moses, David, Solomon and others (peace be on them). These having become corrupted through the ages at the hands of the Pharisees, the Scribes, kings and high-handed people among the Children of Israel, Jesus Christ (peace be on him) arrived with the Gospel to correct them. Unfortunate it is that even this original Gospel also appears to have been lost!

The Christianity that was evolved by Paul as its main architect after the ascension of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) did get an impetus

in the early fourth century C.E. during the rule of the Roman emperor Constantine I, the Great, who, though not a Christian himself, backed the movement as it suited his political ambitions. It was thus that Christianity received his recognition and support. Acceptance of Christianity by subsequent Roman emperors helped the founding of a general council as a means of adjudicating on controversies. During the era of "Doctrine and Discipline," the classical Christian dogmas of "Trinity" and the "person of God in Christ," which have been made the ruling criterion of the Christian Church ever since, were thus developed from the decisions of these general councils between the fourth and sixth centuries C.E.

The Christian doctrine evolved thereafter has its pivot in the conviction and trust that God sent 'His son,' Jesus Christ (peace be on him), to earth to live a human life, suffering like a human, to die for human redemption from sins and to rise again, "gloriously." Accordingly, the statements that "Christ, the eternal son of God, was equal with God, the Father," and that "God is One in essence, but three in persons—Father, Son and the Holy Spirit—the eternal son of God being truly God by virtue of being truly a man, having been born of the Virgin Mary," form essential parts of the first and second classic confessions respectively of the Christian orthodoxy, at least since the Nicæan Council of 325 C.E., when the Paulists won the battle of Trinity against the Unitarians whose leaders were, among others, Barnabas whose version of the Gospel which negated the divinity of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) which became objectionable thereafter, not to be possessed by any Christian believer.

It is a fact of history supported by clear proofs that the Bible had been edited and reedited by eminent scholars several times in the past and that additions, corrections, modifications and restorations of earlier materials had been made in later versions. While the changes had been ~~at times confined only to correction of language alone,~~ there had been instances of making changes in the matter of doctrines and history as well. Today different versions of the Bible are possessed by different sects of Christians, one not recognising the other versions at all. Even in the four versions of the Gospel accepted by the Christian Church, differences exist even on the genealogy of Jesus (peace be on him), which while Matthew has derived through twenty-five ancestors from David to Joseph the carpenter (Matt.1:6–16), Luke has traced back to David through forty ancestors, many with different names and in two different lists of parentages altogether (Luke 3:23–31), both the reporters supposed to have been inspired by God to write the Gospel! Nevertheless, it is an irony that neither has been able to connect the

parentage of Jesus to David and Ibrahim (peace be on them) for the simple reason that genealogy is derived from the father and not the mother. In the case of Jesus (peace be on him), it is accepted that he had no human father, and that Joseph was not his father at all for the reason that his miraculous conception through the will of God had already taken place prior to the Virgin Mary's marriage to Joseph the carpenter. Thus strictly speaking as per the Gospels, Jesus (peace be on him) was not of the paternal stock of the Children of Israel, although Joseph was. These and many other similar discrepancies and contradictions in the Bible, which have already been highlighted earlier in the chapters on Christianity and Judaism, must, no doubt, have shaken whatever faith had remained with the European and other Christians, particularly of the eighteenth century and after, in the Bible and the Christian doctrines of the Church.

Finally, on the big question of the life after death, the Gospels of the Bible leave nothing even by way of contemplation. There is not even a hint in the four Gospels that there is a redemption for the human soul and what this redemption is like. It was, perhaps, to satisfy the human appetite to know of this burning question of a philosophy that the architects of Christianity had to evolve the theme of "Jesus pardon" and consequent state of redemption of the soul. But it just stops at that without giving any more information on this matter of the greatest importance to the inquiring human intelligence. It is so important a question that the toiling human being who tries his best to do only what is good, subjecting himself to all difficulties and refraining from all possible temptations, would like to be sure of whether or not all his efforts are of any real consequence to win a better redemption in his favour as compared to another fellow being who had been always succumbing to temptations and doing very little good deeds. Alas! The redemption doctrine in Christianity is so vague that one is led to believe that to do good only is not of any consequence because, in any case, anyone who just believes in Jesus Christ (peace be on him) is assured the redemption irrespective of his deeds for the reason that as the Christian doctrine on the subject teaches, "believe in Jesus and you are redeemed" from the so-called "original sin" as well as your own sins committed until death. Thus, to a Christian believer in Christ (peace be on him), as the doctrine states, it is for the Christ (peace be on him) to answer or be responsible for the sins committed by the former and not he himself. If this be the case really, then what moral incentive is there for a person to be honest, kind, considerate, compassionate, loving and so on, not generally easy on the one hand, and for another to refrain from evils and sins on the other? However, the

Gospels also say that Jesus (peace be on him) instead had been insisting that his followers do good and refrain from evil. How did this discrepancy and contradiction come up at all? The framers of the Christian doctrine have so far not explained this grave matter as to why Jesus (peace be on him) himself had been requiring his followers to refrain from committing sins if the blanket pardon and redemption had been promised by him to every believer in him? Strange, indeed. This is another important reason for concluding that the real Gospel of God that was given to His prophet Jesus Christ (peace be on him) has not been handed down in all its ORIGINAL form and content.

Naturally, the masses of the people had been steadily losing the spiritual appeal of Christianity, as it fell too short of the requirements of the fully developed human being for leading a commendable social life in the world now as well as in the future—that is, it lacks a faith that does not contradict human reasoning, and a philosophy on the redemption of the soul agreeable to human logic. It is also an undeniable fact that all efforts of the human beings must be aimed at specific objectives if they are not to go waste. Therefore, if the faith and way of life of the human being are not aimed at the attainment of the two objectives of life referred to above, it is a foregone conclusion that the lifelong efforts are wasted. What happens to the human being and his soul after death is known only to God alone who is the sole planner, designer and disposer of the universe, and to no one else. Naturally, the two great secrets—namely what is the objective of life itself and what happens to the human soul after death—are also known only to God. Therefore, in order to live a full life that will take the human being to the right conclusion as planned by God it is only right that the course set for him by God alone is chosen. It thus becomes clear that a faith and way of life other than what are designed by God, and revealed to the human beings through His selected messengers from among men in any age and preserved in the form of an authentic and correct document without undergoing any changes or alterations at the hands of even the most intelligent of human beings alone can guide mankind to the desired objective of life and redemption of the soul. Such a faith and way of life being in complete harmony with the natural environments must succeed as they must be fully satisfying to the logic and reason of the developed mankind as well. All others must invariably fail, being unreal philosophies. This is what is happening to the faith and way of life because they had been manufactured to a large extent by men and not by God, a fact that has been already proved in the foregoing pages.

What had been happening of late, therefore, is that the aftereffects of the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution—such as the dissemina-

tion of knowledge through printing and the great strides made in the field of scientific and technological discoveries in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—continued to slowly erode the Christian faith, making it almost outdated, it being inseparably linked to world views. The full impact of the implications of the scientific discoveries, at least, have been tending towards making what little of the “faith” that remained with the few believers also to become diluted, if not totally extinct. The net result was that, particularly in Europe, where the Christian faith was deep-rooted, the allegiance of the masses had shifted by the early part of the twentieth century either to Communism or negation of religious values of any kind altogether, for the reason that not very many really knew much about their own faith, not to speak of other sister religions in the world. Honestly, even the very few who knew about their own religion could not give any convincing dimensions to their faith in the original sin of man, the Trinity, God in Christ, arbitrary atonement, blanket pardon, the Holy Spirit in the Church and similar myths.

Notwithstanding, the Christian faith is a conviction about God, The Only One, and a trust in the ways of God through the ways of Christ (peace be on him) based on the divine revelation as a disclosure of these ways in the history of the Children of Israel and of the unity of the church. The sheet anchor of this conviction and trust is, though unrealistic enough, not very much different from that of other polytheistic religions; God Almighty, commanding everything and causing anything to happen through His sheer will alone, had to send “His only son” (or incarnation as in other faiths) to be born, brought up to live and die as any other mortal, guide the common man and woman on the earth! How strange this faith and trust appear to be when one contemplates dispassionately, using his imagination supported by solid reasoning, whether the common man or woman could ever be capable of emulating the standards set and shown in person, as is alleged by Christianity and some religions, by either God Himself, or by an alleged incarnation or a son of God, or even by an angel or superhuman being at all. God’s guidance to the human beings must arrive through none other than another similar human being alone so that the latter may become an example and model for the rest to easily emulate, the miracles only becoming a means to convince the unbelievers of the prophet’s credentials of being a messenger of God, acting not on his own, but on the commands of God.

The foregoing detailed and critical analysis shows how, while the existing Christian scriptures, religion, faiths and law, which in their original form, no doubt, were from God, they are unconvincing, insufficient and unappealing to reason of the fully developed human kind

of today and tomorrow for the reason that the various divine books in original such as the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Torah of Moses, the Psalms of David and the criterions of the various other prophets of God between Moses and Jesus (peace be on them) having got either lost or polluted had been replaced by man-made substitutes. Because man's innovations are evolved not only under acute limitations as far as even events of the present are concerned but also without any insight being possible into the future time and space altogether, such notions can serve only as pure and simple stopgap solutions. Thus, the formula and laws for the attainment of a ideal welfare state based on a one world concept sufficient for all times—a logically explainable universal philosophy and a just, reasonably sensible process for the redemption of the human soul after death—are not available in the Christian doctrine.

Zoroastrianism

This, no doubt, appears to be a religion within the meaning of the term because of the facts that its founder, Zoroaster, had claimed to be a prophet of the supreme God of his concept—Ormzad or Ahura Mazda, appears to have rejected worship of any other gods and is stated to have preached for establishment of a just and peaceful order in the society. The philosophy contains, to some degree, the formula for development of a just society, adoration and worship of the Supreme God Ormazd only and the ultimate concept of the redemption of the human soul but without much logical understandable information beyond. Zoroaster appears to have made an attempt to reform the erstwhile Greek, Aryan and Iranian animistic and polytheistic ways of life and religions by rejecting the cult of gods other than One Ahura Mazda or Ormazd, the Supreme God. The confession of faith of the Zoroastrian, as found in Yasna-XII states: "I repudiate the Daevas. I confess myself as the worshipper of Mazda, a Zoroastrian, an enemy of Daevas, a prophet of the Lord, praising and worshipping the Immortal Holy One. To the Wise Lord, I promise all good, to him, the good beneficent, righteous, glorious, venerable, I vow all the best to him from whom is the cow, the law, the luminaries, with whose luminaries blessedness is conjoined. . . ." Also discarded by Zoroaster was the old Iranian cult rites of blood and Haoma sacrifice to gods. He, however, retained the fire sacrifice, because, according to him, fire was a symbol of truth and order. This may be compared to the "offering of burnt sacrifice" at the altar of the tabernacle by the Children of Israel under the direction

and in attendance of the priests and Levites and the Vedic sacrificial rites with fire performed by Hindus under the supervision of Brahmana priests.

As far as the Zoroastrian scriptures are concerned, the Manichaean work *Kephalaia* in Coptic is known to contain a passage that Zoroaster did not write any books during his lifetime and the existing books attributed to him had been written by his disciples and followers after his death. It is also said in the Parsee traditions that about 500 B.C.E. there were probably, seventy sects each possessing its own Avesta, each claiming reality and originality, and that therefore King Arthneskes selected a committee of seven out of over eighty thousand scholars to produce a standard Avesta. However, even this book is stated to have been extinct for a very long time. Elsewhere it is also stated that the twenty books or so written by Zoroaster himself were all lost during the conquest of Alexander the Great and that it was under the direction of King Ardeshir Babekan that Dastur Tonsar compiled the twenty-one volumes (*Nasks*) from whatever could be remembered from memory. It is also stated that the first two volumes of the *Dinkard* (*Act of the Religion*), an encyclopaedia on Zoroastrianism in nine volumes compiled in the ninth century C.E., are also lost. The eighth and ninth books of *Dinkard* discuss the contents of the Avesta, which was also extinct at the time of the writing of the *Dinkard*. Thus, from what information is available, it appears to be almost correct to conclude that a large part of the original authentic books or preachings of Zoroaster seems to have been lost and that, perhaps, only some bits and pieces of them have been left behind for the information of posterity. Further, no one may also be sure as to which of the existing scriptures are the real ones or even parts of Zoroaster's own original preachings for the reason that over the ages a number of scriptural matter had been added by many scholars to available scriptural literature of all ages. To this category belongs books such as the *Dinkard*, *Smaller Avesta* and so on and even much of the Avesta except the *Gathas*, which are the only ones unaimously attributed to the teacher himself, probably by almost all Zoroastrians. Thus, as it would appear, the status of the Avesta too is on the same footing as the Jewish Torah or the Christian Gospels as far as its authenticity, reliability and originality as the revelations transmitted by God through Zoroaster are concerned, if he is accepted as a prophet.

In any case, a Zoroastrian doctrine stands today, although it contains some coherent ways for development of a materialistic human society, the dualism of God in his two opposing characteristics of Ormazd, the good force, and Ahriman, the evil force, both having equal

divine powers of God and the concept of Ahura Mazda being the father of the Holy spirit, justice, right thinking and devotion as depicted in the Gathas and Yasna respectively, do really undermine and contradict the concept of Ahura Mazda being the highest one God worthy of worship. Further, the deification of the Amesha Spentas mentioned in the Gathas, blood and Haoma sacrifice, the priestly order, the peculiar method of disposal of the dead bodies as well as the performance of funeral rites and, most of all, the myths on cosmogony, the creation of man and other beings, which are neither appealing to logic nor reason nor reconciling with scientific concepts, make the Zoroastrian religion far from being a model to be emulated as a complete philosophy and way of life by the fully developed mankind of today and tomorrow.

No wonder that the followers of the religion are negligible today in number and even so confined only to the two cities of Bombay and Karachi in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent although their religious ancestry is claimed to be 4000 years old or more.

The Far Eastern Religions

The philosophies and ways of life such as Confucianism, Shintoism, Taoism and their various other derivatives that were introduced by their respective founders among their peoples during the few centuries preceding the advent of Jesus Christ (peace be on him) had certainly served the great purpose of ordering the temporal life of the individual and the societies of the respective ages when these were in utter confusion. Although there appears to be no evidence to show that any of their founders had either claimed prophethood for themselves or their philosophy to be divine in nature or having received any revelation from God, there is also no reason to believe that they had received no divine inspiration at all for the reason that God could not have kept any nation or age totally devoid of the blessings of His guidance, and because of the undisputed fact that the philosophies had been able to create order in the relevant societies not through force, but through love and regard, which is one of the most important purposes of religions. Nevertheless, as is found today, none of those ways of life fit into our definition of revealed religions because no divine scriptures appear to have been attributed to them either by historians or by their followers or their very founders themselves. Further, all of them, as has been found from the discussions under the chapters allocated to each, lack any content of divine spiritualism and scientific philosophy that may satisfactorily answer questions about the purpose of the universe, life

in general, human life in particular and the emancipation of the human soul except to limited extent only, as the result of getting mixed up with Buddhism and Hinduism. As we are in search of a religion that provides a total philosophy offering solutions for all the essential problems of life arising while facing realities of nature and the universe at all times based on divine guidance for leading a wholesome life in the world with balanced growth of mind and body and most of all with the hope for the salvation or redemption of the human soul after death, none of these Far Eastern religions, some of which provide no insight into the redemption question or the life after death at all, do not fulfill our requirement, although probably 500 million or more people in the Far Eastern countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and others consider themselves belonging to one or more or even all of the allied religions of Confucianism, Shintoism and Taoism with a strong tint of Buddhism in particular, without many of them being strictly dedicated to any of them specifically. To them, the main concern is comfortable, peaceful and amenable social life modulated by the worship and adoration of nature, environments, heroes and the souls of ancestors as well as an intense sense of nationalistic patriotism, but not much of spiritualism or thoughts about philosophies such as what is the purpose of life or the universe and what happens after death or even the concept of God and so on.

Most of the Far Eastern philosophies find real difficulties in reconciling with the provings of science and logic of the fully developed mankind of today, particularly on cosmogony and the creation of man. Moreover, most of them have very seldom any stress on the firm belief in one God of the universe and His adoration which, to put it mildly, is nothing but expression of simple gratitude to the Great and Kind Creator of the universe and the benefactor of the intelligent mankind in particular, an attitude that should spontaneously spring up from the comprehending mind of the human being because this unique aspect has been built into the specification of the human being. Thus, none of the Far Eastern religious ways of life detailed above is found to be acceptable as a complete model that, while containing a logical and realistic complete philosophy appealing to the developed human mind and explaining the purpose of the creation of the universe and human life in the world as well as what lay in store for the human beings after death, also shows a practical and just methodology for the evolution of a real welfare state for the entire mankind in any era of existence based on internationalism, universal brotherhood, love and mutual respect.

It has been seen earlier under its own chapter that Communism was the social, economic and political system designed and created by certain people who, having had either very scant knowledge of their own religion or practically no knowledge at all of other religions that mattered, and therefore having gotten totally disillusioned with then existing socio-economic and political systems to shape a just socio-economic society free from exploitation and oppression, tried on their own to devise a new theoretical way of community life as best as they could imagine. Unfortunately enough, the main architect of this system, Karl Marx, due to his own social background and inherent spiritual limitations came to the wrong conclusions, firstly that it was not the consciousness of men that determined their existence but on the contrary it was their social existence that determined their consciousness, and secondly that the past human history had always been a struggle between one group of like-minded vested interests against another, otherwise termed the class confrontation for existence; therefore, unless the proleteriat group succeeded in the "total elimination of the bourgeois and their stooges a socio-economic welfare state of the working class was impossible to be evolved and maintained." Clearly, one cannot but note that essentially neither the architects of the Communist order theory nor the creators of the order had any belief in God. It is therefore that the Communist philosophy and the Communist society have either ignored or totally eliminated God from the affairs of the human being altogether. Only the materialistic aspect of life is the concern of the Communist and he has no thoughts at all of any life after death. He considers that life in this world is an affair concerning exclusively the law of nature depending on the random logic of spontaneous birth, life and death but nothing beyond. Thus for the Communist philosophy, man and woman are without any spiritual past, present and future beyond the sphere of material life of the world. How sad it is that the architects and followers of this strange philosophy have not been able to take valuable lessons from the philosophy of science that without a purpose none of the billions of objects that get born and destroyed in the universe, some seen and many more unseen, and on which quite a lot of energy is being spent every moment had been necessary at all. When man finds that he himself refuses to move a centimeter unless there is a necessity for it, that he refuses to create anything himself unless there is a purpose, use or reason for it and that nothing gets created without a need for it and a maker for it, how can he remain contented by getting into an illusion that every-

thing found in the universe came on their own without an overall plan, purpose, use or creator? If one reasons that the sun is for keeping life moving, what reason can he assign to the necessity of having life at all? Is it a plan or for nothing? Certainly not. It is sensible logic, therefore, that there is a purpose for creating everything around and also there is a creator of them all who alone knows the cause, reason and purpose of everything seen and unseen that exists in the universe.

The life histories of the architects of the Communist theory and practice given under the chapter on Communism have amply proved that each one of them had forced themselves to land into the dreamland of Communist ideology due to their own inability to deal with the realism of life, laziness and lack of knowledge of any religion. Almost all of them had been failures in their practical lives. Particular critical study of Karl Marx, the architect of Marxism, should convince any sane person that during the nineteenth century when education was scanty, although Marx had a law degree and there was no shortage of job opportunities in a Europe that had none of today's movement restrictions, it is a wonder how he managed to remain jobless spending nearly a decade of his life in destitute conditions in a great city like London, where it is said he and his family had to live virtually on barley and potatoes, living like a pauper, depressed and worried and seeing the death of five of his children due to illness attributed to malnutrition and lack of money. Still, his mania made him misread the human history as a class war between the bourgeois (the middle class) and the proletariat (the poor wage-earning class). In fact, one may easily read between the lines that Marx did not want to do hard work, even in consideration of looking after his large family as a duty, and therefore opted for the unfortunate alternative of living in poverty and hardship, himself being responsible for the death of some of his children due to illness accountable to malnutrition. This tragedy cannot be categorised as anything short of the height of his laziness, cruelty, irresponsibility, lethargy and what not. Critical study of the life histories of almost all Communist leaders of the time will convince that none of them really wanted to work the hard way of a peasant, factory worker or even a white collar person for earning enough to pay for two square meals a day for themselves and dependents although each of them had been paying lip service to the hardships and exploitation undergone by the proletariat by the bourgeois with the objective of starting a perpetual class war in the society. It must not be forgotten that if the planners and the architects of Marxism and Communism were sincere and honest in their search for a philosophy aimed at even a purely materialistic welfare state, there was enough guidance and directions to evolve one

on the basis of true love of the neighbours, help and assistance to the poor, doing goodness for goodness's sake, feeding the poor, healing the sick, and so on, which were and are considered as virtues essential for evolution of a good materialistic society by all human beings, and found in the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount of the Bible which, if not as believers in Christianity, at least as educated and scholarly persons, should have been known to every one of them who were brought up in Christian background at least. However, these were disregarded by them altogether, obviously because the Marxist and Communist leadership could have realised that in that event they would not have been able to get exclusive distinction as the originators of the idea and become the bosses of the new show.

No doubt, there had been other reasons also to play up the idea of confrontation and class war. In fact, the European society of the eighteenth century being imperialistically inclined, conquest of the Asian, African and South American continents by the European colonialists with the object of exploiting the former's wealth and raw materials through global trading companies financed and supported by banks, capitalists and rulers of Western nations had been in progress. This, in turn, created rivalry among the Western nations such as the Germans, the Dutch, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the British and many others causing atrocious and destructive wars, counter to the teachings of Christianity. The financing as well as the soldiery of these wars had, naturally, to be done by the masses of the conquering nations through taxation and supply of men under duress. The clergy class, particularly of Tsarist Russia, who had been depending heavily on the huge contributions of the capitalists to the Christian charities for keeping the poor masses happy to some extent through payment of doles, had also found it convenient not only to keep quiet but even to encourage the war efforts in the hope of spreading the church religion far and wide deep into Asian, African and American continents. To add fuel to the fire, the Renaissance and Industrial Revolution had already sparked off the quest for knowledge and spread of liberalism, particularly as the result of the earlier invention of the printing press, and the consequent spread of literature among the masses making them disillusioned and critical as they started questioning the many unrealistic doctrines of the Church. The cumulative effect of these forces had been that with the spread of knowledge, the educated masses who had hitherto been forced to take for granted many a tradition, ways and faith propagated by the Church, having found no logical explanation in support of the myth-like faith and doctrines, had started not to believe them any more. The support of the capitalists and imperialists by the clergy also became responsible for the dislike of the latter and

the Church by the masses. The time was thus ripe for a switch over to acute materialism and utilitarianism in Europe through acceptance of the revolutionary ideals of Communism aimed at evolution of a purely materialistic welfare state controlled exclusively by the proletariat, eliminating the bourgeois altogether, and highlighting the dogmas such as "the religion is the opium of the people," "the end justifies any means," and so on.

Thus, Communism prospered year by year until, perhaps, at least more than a third of the present-day world population has become either Communist or subscribes to its ideology or is sympathetic to the ideology, rightly or wrongly. Nevertheless, the image this movement has been able to create in the minds of people at large after its field trial is that in spite of the regimented discipline backed by tremendous military power, technocrats, huge finances, vast natural resources, scientists, specialists all working together with modern technology and under dedicated supervision of the party hierarchy, the Communist world of Europe has not even been able to overcome shortage of food grains during the Communist party dictatorship of the last sixty-five years, not to speak of the shortages in other socio-economic areas. The only aspect it has been able to fulfill so far is a self-sufficiency in the production of destructive weapons and war materials as well as subjugation of other nations for the sake of spreading Communism in the world. Thus the trek along the field trial of the new Communist ideology during the last sixty-five years even in one important materialist sector of socio-economic development by a huge mass of world population has proved to be a failure, demonstrating without any doubt that Marxism and Communism have serious deficiencies in their philosophies even in the field of evolution of a welfare state embracing only a small part of the world population.

Further, as the Marxist-Communist ideology does not even consider the divine aspect of existence of God and as it has no concern about what happens to the human soul after death or about the purpose either of the human life or the universe, it does not serve as a complete philosophy showing a way of life to cover the physical and spiritual growth of the mankind at par with a revealed religion.

Islam

As has been found earlier from the detailed discussion on the religion of Islam under the chapter of its own, it consists of a faith, belief and a living methodology both for the individual and the society embodying a philosophy of mutual consideration and brotherly love

among the peoples of the world irrespective of race, colour, positions or affluence so as to attain eternal salvation of the human soul during the life after death on the basis of one's own good deeds and mercy of Allah, the Only One God of Creation and sustenance of the universe. The structure of the society is built on the firm edifice of good thoughts, words and actions of the individual so as to make a wholesome society, nation and one-world community, for which criteria have been laid down by none other than Allah Himself through the Quraan, which is believed as the final book of Allah, revealed to his last of the prophets, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him). It is, no doubt, a real blessing to mankind that He made Islam the final religion through His last of prophet and His final book, confirming and completing the real revelations bestowed on earlier prophets because through this process He has warded off for all time from the believers the state of indecision that could have enveloped them if yet other prophets of God were to arrive, for all those who believed in a false prophet or who did not believe in true prophets would have gone astray as it happened with the Children of Israel. Thus Muslims have the divine assurance that no more prophets or divine books will be sent to them after the last prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) and the final book of revelations, the holy Quraan.

As far as the Muslim faith is concerned, it is the logical concept that the Planner, Designer, Sustainer and the Disposer of the entire universe is the only One Allah, above any materialistic conception, All Powerful, Omnipotent, Omniscient and the Master of time and space, who is 'the Present' only, shares His supreme power with none, the concept being unique for maintenance of serene majesty and order in the whole universe. He sends His guidance to mankind through revelations to His selected prophets of superior qualities among men only so that other fellow creatures may easily emulate them, and not any supernatural beings total emulation of whom is an impossibility for the common human being. The God, Allah, of Islamic concept is merciful, kind, just and extends His pardon repeatedly to the devotees who promise not to err intentionally after repenting. The philosophy of Islam says that mankind has been created for no purpose other than worshipping Allah and that everything in the universe has been created for the benefit of the life of the human being on earth. The norms of conduct of the Muslim in all walks of life in this world have been standardised and spelled out in detail in the holy Quraan and these, supplemented by the directives and actions of the holy prophet Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him) should be sufficient to evolve a total welfare state in the world at all times with all races

sharing the prosperous life as equal brothers and sisters without discrimination but with the ultimate objective of winning salvation of the soul on the basis of individual effort during the only one span of life in this world and the mercy of Allah, the salvation being a carefree full life in an entirely different form altogether.

Islam advocates peace for self, peace for the society, peace for the nation, peace for the whole world and finally peace for the Muslim during the eternal life after death. While Islam negates compulsion in religion, it ordains all possible kinds of opposition to injustice and even war in the interest of just preservation of the Islamic society until tumult and oppression cease. Toleration of other religions that do not interfere with the peaceful life of Muslims is a cardinal principle of Islamic philosophy on the ground that if Allah had desired so, He would have made every one of the human beings a Muslim. Thus the philosophy of Islam stresses the point that, subjected to the worldly environment, a Muslim must find his right way towards the salvation of soul, following the directives of the religion wherever one is obliged to live.

Islam encourages acquisition of all kinds of right knowledge needed for enabling a Muslim and the nation to live in this world rightfully, and doing fruitful research to unveil the wonders of nature in order to make the faith of the Muslim stronger as well as to subjugate the powers of nature (Al-Quraan, 45:13) to make life comfortable within reasonable limits avoiding all kinds of excesses and with humility. Hints provided in the Quraan about some of the unknown secrets of creation—such as the evolution of the universe from smoke in stages stretching over thousands of years; the cleaving asunder of the heavens and earth, which were earlier one single unit joined together; the subsequent readjustment of the earth and seven firmaments to form a harmonious system; the dynamical function of the mountains as balancing weights to avoid undesirable gyratory motions of the earth during its spin and course through its trajectory; the creation of the first man from clay; the subsequent creation of the first woman as his partner to procreate the human species in natural evolutionary process until his perfection; process of the creation of the human species from blood in various stages until the birth of the newborn—and many other basic facts of nature had not been visualised by the scientists even in the domain of theories until the time when the Quraan was revealed to the unlettered prophet of Islam. It is also a fact that most of the theories developed up to this day on such topics are yet unconfirmable as well as inconclusive conjectures on which the world of modern science has differing views, all yet unproven! The object of the Quraan in providing

some clear basic concepts on such issues may be appreciated as an effort on the part of Allah to ward off conjectures and to provide the human beings positive starting points for conducting further useful research and investigations standing on sound and valid ground in order to strengthen the inquiring mind of the fully developed human being of the greatness of the One and Only One almighty Allah, the Creator of the universe, as well as to encourage the human effort in the direction of understanding some of the secrets of nature for his own benefit and to realise his own puniness as compared to the mightiness of the All Powerful Allah.

The personal and social laws of Islam are objective to save the society from crimes and to make it safe for everyone to live in peacefully. The prohibitions placed on some foods like certain kinds of meats and intoxicants have biological and social implications affecting the health of the person and the society about which the scientists have been able to know much, lately, to clear their earlier misgivings. It is interesting to note that some of the prohibitions on foods, similar in nature, are in the Torah of the children of Israel too. It is undeniable that the character of creatures is, to a great extent, governed by the genetics, food, and so on. The philosophy of Islam, therefore, takes it as a matter of faith, and rightly too, that Allah, who is the creator of human beings as everything else too in the universe, alone knows what biological changes leading to exhibition of what character by the human being may take place on account of eating what kind of food. Apart from matters of faith, codes governing maintenance of law and order; family; succession to property; what is good and bad; the relationship between the ruler and the ruled; dealings between Muslims and non-Muslims; worship and remembrance of Allah; economics; dealings between individuals; rights and duties of individuals; total relationship between the rich and the poor on the one hand and the employer and the employee on the other; crime and punishment; human behaviour on any occasion; contracts and agreements; war and peace; the one-world-welfare state; and in short, every essential aspect of the life of man, woman and the society has been prescribed justly by Islam in such clarity and unambiguity, applicable to any situation, any time, that it is impossible to find any aspect either uncovered or that cannot be covered by the application of a reasonable extension of existing codes in the Islamic Shariah. It may be emphatically claimed therefore that there is no other religion or even way of life in the world that can take this important challenge of Islam. It is a matter of great distinction to Islam that in acknowledgment of the honour of the human being, Islam has enjoined on every Muslim 1400 years ago when mankind had not even

realised that equality and freedom were the birth rights of human beings, that any human being was equal and free as any other in the eyes of Allah and that there was no compulsion in religion. These cardinal principles could be discovered by the elite human forums of this century only. Complete brotherhood and equality between any Muslim and another ably demonstrated by Muslims all over the world when they pray in congregation five times a day, shoulder joined to shoulder, the first to come occupying the forward positions without any distinction based on status, position, wealth, colour or race and during performances of pilgrimage rites at holy Makkah when all males are to wear the same kind of dress (a set of two unstitched pieces of cloth only with the head exposed) for a few days without exception sleeping in almost the same type of tents or in the open, sharing every facility available there without grumbling, nay, with a smile at each other in complete submission to the call of Allah and with complete brotherly equality and devoid of any distinction or prejudice on account of position, status, race or colour, cannot but impress the thoughtful and intelligent world community of the high standard of practical toleration, equality and fraternisation that has been built into the philosophy of Islam. This is the reason why Allah has stated in the holy Quraan that Islam is the religion with Allah.

Chapter 15

Conclusion

The earnest and sincere endeavour of the author has been to provide a complete pen picture of all the existing religions and important ways of life that exist today based on the scriptures and other important books on them written by famous authorities with a view to enable the reader to have a detailed understanding of the philosophies and standard practices of each, together with explanations, and analysis of the more important aspects of each. Further, the author has tried his level best to quote references of the relevant books, mainly scriptures, as felt necessary and to base his criticisms on specific quotations from the scriptures in order to assure the reader that they are not hearsay, the relevant passages being always available in the relevant books for reference of the reader if need be. It is thus the duty of the readers to satisfy themselves that what they are being told is authentic. As facts remain facts always, the question of misunderstanding the motive of the author should not arise.

From the detailed exposition of all the available facts that the author has been able to obtain from scores of reference books as well as his own experience over the last fifty-five years of his life as a conscientious person receptive to the knowledge found everywhere he travelled or lived, associating with people from different walks of life—students, teachers, officials, workers, priests, doctors of religions and philosophy, industrialists, moneylenders, businessmen, physicians, religious scholars, and so on—he has been absolutely convinced of the fact that if there is any religion and way of life that has a realistic philosophy appealing to reason and embraces the total life of the mankind covering any field of his activity—thoughts, work, contentment, social behaviour, internationalism, to cite a few only—and encourages the human being to live a full lifespan reconciled with nature and provings of science and with hope for attainment of a logically just salvation of the human soul after death, it is the youngest of all the revealed religions, which is Islam, the religion of peace. If only Islam is accepted as the religion of the world communities, we have all the

guidance in it for a balanced growth of the entire human race towards attainment of a one-world government free from want, hunger, racial discrimination, war and confrontation. A new world economic order based on the Supreme Laws of the Creator of the world, the One and Only One Allah, could then be established outlawing all kinds of injustice, exploitation and oppression, leading to a really great millennium of plenty, harmony, contentment and love—the euphoria of all ages, including that of the Communist. How satisfied and peaceful then the human race could be, without discriminations of colour or race that the modern world is struggling against today. How great will it be then if only all the great achievements of modern science and technology are channelled into making the life of every human being happier, rather than being used to destroy each other on false suspicions? Only the laws of God, the absolute Lord of the universe beyond the limits of time and space, can claim universal application for all time. Man-made laws are contestable and cannot be applied universally and man's comprehension, being limited to a small part of the present, also cannot survive the onslaughts of time and space.

In this unique era of biological perfection of man, when the sublime desire of unification of mankind by strengthening the bond of universal brotherhood, outlawing discrimination, want, hunger and poverty and even the evolution of a one-world government, the politician and the administrator worried about the modern corrupt and lawless society as well as acute materialism but very little or no spiritual content at all and the man of science still unable to cross the barriers of human limitations and the frontiers of the speed of light, all should ponder well on the greatness of Islam. The grim but sensible message is clear: Islam is the only possible rescuer, being the only religion and way of complete life that invites the mankind of any time towards an ideally balanced faith, belief and satisfying total life combining essential materialism with such spiritualism and moral rearmament that offers a just reward for every human soul in this world as well as during the real, eternal life that no doubt is in store for him after death in a different world in some other form in just proportion to one's own thoughts, words and deeds in this world subject to the fountain of mercy and kindness of the repeatedly pardoning only One Lord of all time, matter and space. As this study shows, there is no other religion or way of life so convincing, practical and all embracing.

The solemn duty of the author finishes the moment this unique and valuable message in the way of enlightenment of the world at large about the great religion of Islam is conveyed through this treatise. I say "great" because there is no other philosophy that covers the life of

this world and an ideal, realistic, logical, scientific, convincing and hopeful concept on the much-sought of salvation of the human soul after death in such detail as the Islamic philosophy. As far as other philosophies are concerned, there are no internationally acceptable and applicable norms that may be applied to all nations of the world of today and tomorrow without making drastic modifications. Then the next questions would be which, and will it be then complete and standard, applicable for all time? The firm answer is "No." In the field of salvation, other philosophies tend to lead mankind either to an endless chain or no thought of anything after man's one span of life in this world. In the area of faith and belief, Islam provides a real contrast in the supermercy of the unique One and Only One God, Allah, the absolute Lord of all matter, time and space, as well as without limitations of any kind whatsoever, not only capable of administering the entire realm of the past, present and all future without the need of any helper, but also pardoning sins over and over again and answering direct the calls of devotees without any intermediary because He is "nearer to them than their own jugular veins." Creation of any matter or action He contemplates follows on His unique order of "Be" and "It is there!" As compared to this sophisticated concept, we have the faiths and beliefs of some other religions and ways of life that attribute deputies to God in various forms, who are to be propitiated, befriended and worshipped in one form or other for one or more ends followed by a bleak and terrible future life, one following another ad infinitum until one finally lives a fully rectified and atoned life without the least tint of God's pardon possible, which is nothing but a fantasy. Some other religions and philosophies offer a blanket pardon and salvation of the human soul to anyone who has faith in it, while others do not simply bother about any eternal life after death, or even of God or of anything happening after death altogether. The atheists and Communists on the other hand totally negate God and judgment, contending that the life of the human being is a matter of random and natural chance with no post-existence. Thus everyone on the crossroads of faith and action has to carefully consider all aspects fully and decide for himself what he wants, and therefore the great religion of Islam avers rightly, "There is no compulsion in religion; the truth stands out from the falsehood."

Let not the intelligent contemporary wonder what all the erstwhile followers of this great religion of Islam have done so far to evolve a model for the world. Let me make it absolutely clear that the past history of Islam has no doubt set wonderful examples of the Islamic pattern of complete life, at least during the lifetime of its prophet (Blessings of Allah and peace be upon him) and during a few decades

after him, and as such this is a philosophy fully field-tried. It is now, therefore, to the intelligent reader and mankind to study this great model religion from all critical angles without any prejudice and preconceived notions and see for himself whether it is not the ultimate guidance for the mankind given through the unlettered, orphan and honest last prophet of Islam, Muhammad (Blessings of Allah and peace be on him), and preserved in the final book of Allah, the Quraan, unpolluted over 1400 years and vowed by Allah to be kept as such until the last day, a guidance that confirms the true revelations and guidance provided by God to earlier prophets but superceding the earlier books that had been polluted one way or other over the passage of time.

Let not human ego, love of race, culture and tradition or a feeling of what today's erstwhile adherents of the great international religion have after all done then disturb the clean conscience of the modern fully developed human being. After all, Communism, which could not see beyond a totally material welfare state of plenty and that too only in theory, was put on its field trial more than six and a half decades ago by its sponsors who had the dire limitations of not only being mortals but also having had no say in the working of the nature around. They had no previous experience of what in effect their theory would mean, and we have seen that it is not workable as far as the intelligent, self-conscious and comprehending human being is concerned. But here we have this model religion of Islam, which has a glorious record—first, during the time of its prophet and then immediately after his demise for a few decades when the real welfare state of plenty as well as contentment on the one hand and an Islamic society consisting of people who tried to excel each other in upholding moral values and goodness for the sake of claiming the promised seat in paradise on the basis of their own efforts and Allah's mercy had been created in a land that had practically nothing of them to even to show to the world prior to the advent of Islam there. Ever since, the glory of Islam has continued to enrich the world at large in many ways for which the successive generations are indebted to the message of Islam. It is now up to the modern world of reason, enlightenment, science and technology to pick the thread if it really wants a one-world order free from fear, want, oppression, poverty and racial discrimination.

The present world population has exceeded four billion and the Muslims are just or about a thousand million or so distributed over all the habitated continents. Thus there is a real opportunity for the world to reform the present civilisation through this great religion that can directly satisfy even the otherwise unattainable, euphoric, one-world

welfare state dream of the architects of Marxiam and Communism in a practical way. This is the only last hope to rid the world of all injustices, oppression and exploitation and to establish a real welfare state in all respects reinforced by moral rearmament and so gain salvation of the distressed human soul. Will mankind move decisively in the correct direction after all, taking lessons from history?

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