

# The Life and Teachings of Muhammad

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### LECTURE 1

[Page 1] In speaking to you this evening one thing I want very much to do is try to lead a better understanding between the two vast populations of Hindus and Mussalmans in this country. I feel sure that if they understood each other better, they would feel as a single people. There is far more misunderstanding of Islam than there is I think of the other religions of the world. So many things are said of it by those who do not belong to that faith. Several things are said attacking those who follow the faith, not realising that it has gone far and wide over many nations and has brought reform and improvement to some of the very barbarous nations of the world; and the religion is blamed because while it has much improved them, it has not been able to entirely eradicate [Page 2] much which makes other nations hostile to them. Then there has been a good deal of deliberate misrepresentation. When the banner of the great Prophet was first carried to Europe, it came at a period of intellectual darkness. When the Roman catholic faith was a persecuting faith, and when the Moors invaded Spain and founded wonderful Universities, when they brought the light of science to Europe and for six centuries carried a torch of illumination to the European nations — in that time they were looked upon less as scientific teachers than as religious heretics; and because the Crescent instead of the Cross was blazing on their standards, their teaching was banned and they themselves were regarded as enemies.

It is well to remember that from the 8th century to the 14th it was from the Mussalman source that the light of knowledge spread over Europe, that the Muslims revived the knowledge of Greece and of Alexandria as it had been advanced and strengthened in the great University of Baghdad, sending out its messengers in all directions. From that entry into Europe there arose a prejudice against Islam as Islam which was not due to a knowledge of its religious teachings, but as a heretical faith; and therefore all its teachings of every kind were to be banned by good Christian people.

You can hear in England today good, kindly people saying of Islam that it denies to woman the [Page 3] possession of a soul. You can find others stating that the religion is evil, because it sanctions a limited polygamy. But you do not hear as a rule the criticism which I spoke out one day in a London Hall where I knew that the audience was entirely uninstructed, I pointed out to them that monogamy with a blended mass of prostitution was a hypocrisy and more degrading than a limited polygamy. Naturally a statement like that gives offence, but it has to be made, because it must be remembered that the law of Islam in relation to women was until lately, when parts of it have been imitated in England, the most just law, as far as women are concerned, to be found in the world. Dealing with property, dealing with rights of succession and so on, dealing with cases of divorce, it was far beyond the law of the West, in the respect which was paid to the rights of women. Those things are forgotten while people are hypnotised by the

words Monogamy and Polygamy, and do not look at what lies behind it in the West — the frightful degradation of thousands of women who are thrown into the streets when their first protectors, weary of them, no longer give them any assistance.

So it is that Islam has to deal with an amount of prejudice. There is much of course in the exclusive claims of Christianity which make it hostile to other faiths. But none the less that is no excuse for an ignorance of one [Page 4] of the great religions of the world — an ignorance that I think ought to be regarded as a duty by the Muhammadan world to diminish by making known the real character of the Lord Muhammad and by spreading a knowledge of his teachings in countries where those teachings are misrepresented. It is then that I had the idea of putting before you who hold that faith, and of putting before others who do not hold it, a way in which it may be regarded, which will replace mistrust with trust, which will make friendship instead of hostility. It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I now put to you I shall say things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel, whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence to that mighty Arabian Teacher. In order to understand his work at all, you want to consider the conditions under which he came.

What was the kind of country into which this teacher was born ? What the surroundings that were his in childhood, what the kind of opposition he had to meet, not only as to teaching, but as to life ? I cannot summarise more effectively than by borrowing a passage written many years ago by myself, but taken from great authorities, which [Page 5] sums up very briefly the condition of the country when this Child was born.

"When the sixth century of the Christian era had broken over the world, come with me, and see what is the state of Arabia the fair, or Syria, the land trodden by the Christ. Religious war on every side that breaks up homes and separates the people: quarrels brutal and bloody; blood-feuds that last from generation to generation; hatreds that divide man from man, and clan from clan, and tribe from tribe. Look at Arabia, Arabia where there is a fierce and cruel idolatry that even offers up human beings in sacrifice to idols, and where the worshippers feast on the bodies of the dead; where lust has taken the place of human love, and utter licentiousness the place of family life; where bitter and bloody wars break out on the slightest provocation; where kinsman slays kinsman and neighbour neighbour, and life is almost too foul for words. Into that seething hell of human passion, murder, lust and cruelty a child is born." [The Religious Problem in India, by Annie Besant, page 4]

Now that is not an exaggerated description, but may readily be found by the statement made by some of his early disciples after he had taken to teaching and when terrible persecution was making life impossible in Mecca, a statement made by them of the change that the teaching of this Child when it came to manhood had made in their lives. "O King!" (the address was made to a monarch [Page 6] from whom they claimed protection) "we were plunged in the depths of ignorance and barbarism; we adored idols; we lived in unchastity; we ate dead bodies, and spoke abominations; we disregarded every feeling of humanity and the duties of humanity and neighbourhood; we knew no law but that of the strong; when God raised among us a Man, of whose birth, truthfulness, honesty and purity we were aware; and He called us to the Unity of God, and taught us not to associate anything with Him; He forbade us the worship of idols, and enjoined us to speak the truth, to be faithful to our trusts, to be merciful and to regard the rights of neighbours; He forbade us to speak evil of women, or to eat the substance of

orphans; He ordered us to fly vices and to abstain from evil; to offer prayers, to render alms, to observe the fast. We have believed in Him; we have accepted His teachings".

There is contemporary evidence to the change brought about by the teaching of the Prophet, and I submit that that ought to be familiar to everyone of you who live in a country where seven crores of people, follow his teachings and reverence his memory; and these people, you must remember, were not mere speakers of empty words, for we find of them that when they were frightfully persecuted, they willingly endured it and died blessing his name. A man who could raise such intense devotion, a man who was followed with [Page 7] such passionate love was a man, certainly, who among the surroundings, that I have described to you, must have been inspired by God, a true Prophet to the people to whom he came. And then you find that he lived up to what he taught, when you find that he never revenged himself on an enemy, when you find that in the days when he was at war instead of killing the prisoners of war, as was the brutal habit of this time, he not only gave them life, but his followers gave them all the bread they had and only kept the dates for themselves. So much were they inspired by the teaching of the Prophet that they began to realise that they were face to face with one of the mighty Ones of history, a man whom all men should reverence, whether they be followers of his special teachings or not.

I would then ask you to consider the conditions under which he had to teach, to teach the unity of God and to teach the duties of man to man — no easy task and for a long time unsuccessful. Let us remember how he was loved in the place where he lived. Little children would run to him and cling to his knees. His neighbours called him *Al Amin*, the trustworthy, the testimony to the character of which any man might be proud. And when at first he began to wonder what was to be his work in the world after he had married Khadija — he was 24, she very much older, one of the ideal marriages of the world for they lived [Page 8] twenty-six years of married life in perfect harmony and she was his first disciple — there came that terrible time in his life when for fifteen long years he was struggling for himself and wondering about his duties. You will read of him, time after time and months after months, living in the desert, separating himself from all human influence, praying aloud for light, crying aloud for teaching and nothing came. And then you hear how now and then a voice would be heard, he knew not whence, simply saying "cry", and he knew not what he was to cry nor what the voice demanded of him.

It was after fifteen years of those mental struggles, of that agony of mind and that rending anguish of human soul struggling in darkness to find the light, that one day as he was lying on the ground in his agony, a light shone around him and suddenly an Angel appeared before him and said to him: "Thou art the Prophet of God; rise up and cry". His answer was: "What shall I cry?" He was an ignorant man on these points. And then it took him and taught him of the world and of the divine life of the Angels and of man and then sent him back to the world with its Message. He went back still troubled, anxious and broken, and when he reached his home again he threw himself on the ground and said: "Who am I.? What am I ? How shall I cry ? And it was then that he made his first disciple his wife, [Page 9] who loved and trusted him and who spoke words so wise and so true that they are worthy of ever being remembered. "Nay ..." she said. "thou art true and faithful. Thy word is never broken, men know thy character; God does not deceive the faithful. Follow the voice then. Obey the call". In that there lies a great truth. A man who is true to his fellowmen, who never lies, whose word is trusted, that man has in himself a truth which would not be deceived by Him who is Truth Himself. The inspiration that came to him has built up the great faith of Islam. Over one country after another it flew; among the many countries it carried the light of knowledge.

You may say there was much cruelty and persecution. Have you ever tried to discriminate something about that and to judge the religion by the teaching of its Prophet rather than by the excess of its adherents? You should always take a religion at its best and not at its worst, from its highest teachings and not from the lowest practices of some of its adherents. If you like to take an example from recent history, think of the white Huns who swept down to Europe, who destroyed some of the great monuments of Buddhist learning in the three chief Universities, and then notice how going out of India westward they destroyed the splendid University of Baghdad, although nominally they were Muslims. They hated learning and therefore they destroyed [Page 10] indiscriminately. It is true there was much destruction of idols, but against the teachings of the Prophet. You remember how he said: "Revile not the idols which they worship beside God".

A Prophet is always much wider than his followers, much more liberal than those who label themselves with his name. You may remember that wonderful statement of his that in the day of resurrection God would explain to the different religions the things in which they differed, and that until then they should live together in peace, not hating nor injuring each other. If those teachings were to be carried out in India, hatred would cease between Mussalman and Hindu and Parsi, Jew and Christian. Take this example. A bier passed by with the corpse lying on it and someone said to him that it was the body of a Jew. "Whether it be the body of a Jew or Christian or Mussalman", answered the Prophet, "you should stand up as the bier passes by". And so it is that when studying his teachings you cannot help avoiding a deep reverence and even a respectful love for the man. So beautiful was the teaching that fell from his lips and so inspiring was his example.

The Prophet did not succeed very much. At the end of three years he had thirty followers, and last there came a time when the terrible persecutions scattered them all over the country and only three men were left; and then his uncle who had been [Page 11] so marvellously faithful to him throughout turned to him and said: "Give up your teaching, because it is hopeless". And the answer was: "As God is my witness if they place the sun on my right hand and the moon on the left I will not forsake this cause". And when the uncle seemed a little annoyed with him, he turned away and left him throwing his mantle over his head to hide his grief at seeing the breaking of the tie. And then his uncle cried after him: "Stop, stop, teach what you will, but do not go away". At last out of the three, there was only one left. And with him the Prophet wandered lonely across the desert and when the disciple said: "We are only two", the answer of Muhammad was: "Nay, we are three, for God is with us".

There is one story which I want to read to you because it shows that Lord Muhammad has a sense of humour in him. Sleeping one day under a palm tree he awoke suddenly to find an enemy standing before him with drawn sword. Then the man asked: "Who is there now to save thee?". "God answered Muhammad. Then the enemy dropped his sword. Muhammad seized it and asked him who was there to save him. "No one", replied the enemy. Then the Prophet handing the sword with the hilt turned towards the enemy said: "Then learn from me to be merciful". So it was that he was fearless at all times, because he knew that he was never alone. [Page 12]

Then he came to Medina where he went his way. There is one scene in that so beautiful as showing the great love that his followers felt for him that I think it worthwhile to read it now. There has been a battle and a victory and the spoil has been divided; and those who have followed him longest have not shared the spoil and they complained to him that they were badly used. He said: "I have learnt the discourse that you were holding among yourselves. When I came amongst you, you were wandering in darkness and

the Lord gave you the right direction. You were suffering and He made you happy. You were at enmity amongst yourselves and He has filled your hearts with brotherly love. Was it not so? Tell me". "Indeed it is true, as thou sayest, to the Lord and His Prophet belong the benevolence and the grace was the reply. "Nay, by the Lord", said the Prophet, "but ye might have answered and answered truly, for I would have testified to its truth myself: Thou camest to us rejected as an impostor and we believed in thee; thou camest as a helpless fugitive and we assisted thee; poor and outcaste, and we gave thee food and shelter. Why disturb your hearts because of the things of this life. Are you not satisfied that others should have the flocks and herds and that I should dwell in the midst of you ? By Him who holds my life in His hands while you go back to your homes I will never abandon you. If all mankind went one way I would go with them. The Lord be [Page 13] favourable unto them and bless them, and their children and their children's children". It is written that these rough warriors wept till the tears ran down their beards.

Now that is the impression he made on the people, this intense love, and that is the one reason why you never find a Mussalman ashamed of his religion, while you will see him, when the time of prayer comes, pray in the very midst of those who revile his Prophet and care nothing for these. That is very rare in those who follow any other faith. It is because the memory of that wonderful influence has come down through centuries, and also that that influence still spreads from him over the hearts of his followers and makes a tie between the Prophet and disciple, that nothing can avail to break it. There is indeed a strong humanity, a strong feeling of the greatness of this Teacher, the more remarkable, because they have never allowed their love to defy him or to look on him more than as a great Prophet.

The Prophet never in any way tried to conceal any possible mistake he might have made. I remember one story and I must rely on my memory. A poor and blind man had gone to him and asked for teaching. The Prophet was talking to a man of high rank at the time, and he took no notice of this poor man. Three times the man asked and three times he was disregarded. The next morning the Prophet sent for this man and told him that he [Page 14] had a message in the night, which is now in the Al Quran, that he had repulsed a poor man who cried out for knowledge and that he had not done well. Then the Lord Muhammad took him, placed him in a seat of honour and treated him always with the greatest courtesy because he said that "on account of this man my Lord rebuked me". Now that kind of thing, the humility of thought, the readiness to repair a blunder, the frank admission of a mistake, is not so common among the great Teachers of the world and yet you find it in him over and over again.

All through his teachings there is this thing which has so much influence on the character of the Muslim nations, a certain determination to stand on their own feet, to be under obligation to none, feeling proud to some extent; one of the best forms which pride can assume so that you find them independent as well as always ready to be hospitable throughout from their childhood — these are the precepts of their Teacher.

Then there are some remarkable points about the teaching which I mean to read to you because they are very impressive in the exact words of the Teacher. There is a phrase that you must all know well. "The pen of the scholar is more valuable than the blood of the martyr". That was one of the things that caused Ali, his beloved son-in-law, to start the great circle of pupils and begin the growth of marvellous steady discovery which [Page 15] characterises the great Arabian scholar of Baghdad. If you take what happened during the 8th century you will not marvel at the discoveries that were made by the followers of the Prophet, how they had two other sciences, how they took up one, how taking the great astronomical works of the Hindus they translated them into Arabic, and basing themselves on those went on to new

discoveries in Astronomy that have been later passed on into Europe. You find that they studied mathematics and added very largely to mathematical knowledge. You find their wonderful skill in architecture, some of the most exquisite monuments in India having been built by Muslim Emperors. And so you find some splendid record of knowledge.

Now how is it that with such a record there are so many ignorant among the Muslims today — so many that they are sometimes spoken of as a backward class in education ? If you look into it carefully, I think you will find that knowledge lingered on after the Great Emperors, Akbar, his son and grandson had passed away, when the court of the emperor was the resort of all men of learning from all the countries, practically all the nations of the world. In one way, the fact that the school was attached to the mosque had the same effect upon it later on as the fate of every temple of the Hindu and Buddhist that had the school attached to it; it brought the destruction of the schools very often, because the worship in the temple was [Page 16] objected to, and so when foreign rule came holding another religion, there was the tendency to try to discourage the religion and through that the teaching. Even now you will find in very many mosques elementary schools existing where the young Islamite learns his sacred books and his prayers before he is allowed to go to a general school where he might learn other forms of literature or art.

So I would ask you to consider — especially those of you who have time to study carefully — the writing of the Muslim doctors from the 8th to the 14th century. I would ask you to study this, because they are the real bridge between the two religions, because you will find the Advaita Vedanta in the Sanskrit religion is practically identical with the presentment of that high Metaphysics in Arabic by the doctors of Arabia. After that I would point out to this great audience of Muslims that here they may find the reconciliation between their own faith and the ancient religion of this land, not in the external but in matters of the intellect and of the spirit; that it is by the translation of those wonderful writings into modern languages that very much might be done in order to prevent hostility between the different faiths. For it is there you will find some of the most wonderful metaphysics of the world — metaphysics as subtle from those keen Arabian brains as you may find among Indians with the [Page 17] admitted subtlety of their metaphysics. It is there that I find one bridge of union, not in the outer surface, which is different, but in the fundamental teaching of the Unity of God, the nature of the Supreme; they link hands together and there is practically no difference between the two.

Then again in the ethics you will find another point of union. You will find the most exquisite moral teachings. Sometimes I have thought of putting more effectively what they call the science of the Lord Muhammad, for even in Al Quran itself that is so written, in translations by people who do not believe it, that it is very difficult to get at the real spirit of the original. If it is translated by Muslims it makes an enormous difference in effect and the depth of the teaching. There is a little book published as the *Science of the Prophet Muhammad*, full of the most exquisite ethics. One phrase in it that you should never forget if you hear that Islam is unfair to women, is his saying: “Heaven lies at the feet of mothers”. Or you may read how he preached to the Muslims to be reverent to their parents, that they should pray to God that He be kind to them, for they took care of them when they were little children. So looking at the metaphysics on the one side and the ethics on the other, we find so much in common between the two faiths that no adherent of either should mistrust or dislike the other. Many will try to make oppositions, will try to [Page 18] prevent reconciliation; but all the best men of both faiths will join together to link the hands of Islam and Hinduism in a brotherly clasp which shall not be broken again by any. It is there that lies the greatness of the country in the future.

India is a country in which every great religion finds a home. Go back as far as you will and you will find that Hinduism exists. Go down later and you will then find Buddhism establishing itself with its wonderful ethics. Go down further still, and you will find Jainism almost contemporary with Buddhism. But you will find Christianity in the first century after Christ and on the west coast. It has to become one of the Indian religions and no longer only the religion of the foreigner. Then still later you will come to the great Prophet of Arabia and his people together with the exiles from Persia, the Parsis; the whole of them are here in India in a common motherland, and have a common interest, and should have a common pride. It is in these ways by studying each side that so much will be gained.

You will find passages of exquisite beauty in Persian which may vie with any of the ecstasies of the Hindu Yogis. You will find that there is a yearning after God, a love of God and a testimony to His infinite compassion that you cannot tell is Hindu or Sufi but for the language in which the [Page 19] identical feelings are clothed. Why then should not this land which has all the religions, be a temple to the world of the truths of God, as it were, where all the religions would be brethren and only rival each other in good deeds ?

You know what religions are. They are like the broken rays of the white light of the Sun; the truth broken in the prism of the intellect, which cannot reach the great truth of the unity of the Spirit. If you were inside some great cathedral in Christendom, you would see windows of different colours, some green, some blue, and some yellow. You will see differences of colours in the world around you where the white light of the Sun is broken up in the flowers. and they shine with reflected rays of the colours that are hidden in the white light of the Sun. It is only if you are outside the temples of religion that you see the differences in them; from inside you see the truth through a coloured glass of religion which is adapted to the times, to the people, to the wants of the age, when the Prophet gives his teaching to the world. Do not sit outside them all: rather enter into all of them and worship in all of them, the one Supreme, and then you will see the white light, which the lamps there are throwing out — the white light which is coloured by the glass of the windows and not from any change in the light. Go into all religions and love them, learn them, respect them, realise their spiritual unity, and then [Page 20] India will have a religion in which all the beauties of every faith shall be blended together as it were and shall give out to a wondering world the pure white light of God. [Page 21]

## LECTURE 2

I PROPOSE to discuss today the teachings of the great faith founded in Arabia, given by the mouth of the Prophet, and now followed by many, many millions of people — to discuss them in their bearing on life, bearing on the evolution of man, and bearing on the welfare of states.

Perhaps no religion is more misunderstood than Islam, by those who do not follow it. In Europe, for instance, we find a deeply-rooted prejudice against Islam, which is based on ignorance of that which is disliked. It is the duty of the followers of Islam to spread through the civilised world, a knowledge of what Islam means — its spirit and message. They should spread a knowledge of the teachings of the great Prophet, and not allow the more ignorant to narrow down the limits of his teachings. Islam is misunderstood. because of ignorance; and I propose to preface my address with the nature of the prejudices requiring to be met:

1). The first objection against Islam is, that it was spread, by the sword, is fanatical, leads to [Page 22] persecution and religious wars and causes blood-shed. Such accusations come from the Christians, who have been notorious for their persecutions. The Inquisition, the Crusades and various forms of persecution employed by the Christians deprive them of the right to attack another faith.

There are two ways in which this accusation may be met:

(a) When the religion was proclaimed, it was spread, in a population universally hostile, step by step, by the power of its great Teacher. For three years the religion only attracted the members of his family, and he was persecuted by the rest. The earlier Muslims took up the sword in self-defence to protect themselves against persecution. History tells us of the means adopted by the pagan Arabs to persecute the earlier Muslims, which took the form of tortures horrible, unbearable almost by human flesh and blood. They tore his followers in pieces; they thrust them through with stakes; they put them on the burning sand with faces up- turned to the Arabian sun; and with heavy rocks upon their chests. "Would you not rather that Muhammad were in your place, and you at home?" was the question put to a poor wretch suffering all these agonies. His chivalrous answer was: "As God is my witness, I would not be at home with wife and children and substance, if Muhammad were for that to be pricked by a single thorn". A man who thus wins the hearts of his disciples, must [Page 23] have some great qualities at least. Only great men can have such disciples.

Because of the persecution of his enemies, the Prophet had to flee with his disciples to Medina where he was received as a refugee. He had armies of assailants and enemies upon enemies. It was only then that he appealed to the God of war. Notice how over and over again, when he bids the sword to be taken up, it is for self-defence only. Al Quran distinctly says in many places: "Take up the sword against the unbelievers when they have attacked and persecuted you".

(b) But it may be urged that there are many other passages in Al Quran where this proviso does not occur, where it is merely said: "Fight and destroy the unbelievers". It is an established canon of interpretation that when once a command is given with a proviso, and it is again repeated in another place, but, without the proviso, the proviso is applicable at the latter place also. Even if we disregard the canon, we shall find, looking to the circumstances under which such commands were given, that they were given at a time when the Muslims were engaged in some holy war against odds, and it was necessary to fire their spirits. An exactly similar thing would the general of an army do, when leading his men to battle.

2). Let us appeal to the Prophet's teaching. It is said that he taught bigotry, narrowness and exclusiveness. Muhammad has said: "There is no [Page 24] faith but Islam, no religion but Islam, and those who believe it, will escape from Hell". But what does Islam mean, and how does he use it? Islam means bowing to, surrendering, and religiously surrendering to the will of God. That is the one religion, says the Prophet, and truly it is so; perfect submission to the divine will. But did it begin with the Prophet of Arabia? No, he said the very opposite. "Verily the true religion in the sight of God is Islam; and they who had received the Scriptures dissented not therefrom, until after the knowledge of God's unity had come unto them, out of envy among themselves". [Al Quran, Chapter 3] Islam believes in many Prophets, and Al Quran is nothing but a confirmation of the old Scriptures. Unbelievers are those who are wicked, profligate, hypocrites and deceivers. Doing right, being charitable and worshipping God are the



signs of believers.

3). Note the liberality and inclusiveness of Islam. It is declared in Europe that Islam sanctions polygamy, and leads to the degradation of woman. When Muhammad began his teaching, Arabia was plunged in the grossest licentiousness and sensual degradation; no union between the sexes was recognised; profligacy was found on every side; and so the Prophet began by narrowing down the limits within which there might be connection; so he limited the number of wives to four, but made a provision which would gradually lead [Page 25] to a close union; for he declared: "Take a second wife only if she could be loved and cherished as the first".

It is so very easy to try to pick holes in another man's faith, but what Westerner shall dare to speak against the limited polygamy of the East, so long as there is prostitution in the West? There is no monogamy as yet in the world save here and there among the purer-living men. It is not monogamy when there is one legal wife, and mistresses out of sight. In thus speaking, I do not speak to attack, but to strive that men may give justice to each other.

I often think that woman is more free in Islam than in Christianity. Woman is more protected by Islam than by the faith which preaches monogamy. In Al Quran the law about woman is juster and more liberal. It is only twenty years that Christian England has recognised the right of women to property, while Islam has allowed this right from all times. Says Al Quran: "Be ye kind to your wives; be just to them; if there is a quarrel, seek a reconciliation before divorce". The period of divorce is intentionally prolonged so that the parties may come to a better understanding in the interval. Muhammadan law in its relation to women, is a pattern to European law. Look back to the history of Islam, and you will find that women have often taken leading places — on the throne, in the battle-field, in politics, in literature, poetry, etc. [Page 26]

It is a slander to say that Islam preaches that "women have no souls". Al Quran does not authorise this: on the contrary it expressly lays down: "Whoso doeth evil shall be rewarded for it, and shall not find any patron, or helper beside God; but whoso doeth good works, whether he be male or female, and is a true believer, they shall be admitted into Paradise, and shall not, in the least, be unjustly dealt with". [Al Quran, Chapter 4] "Verily, the Muslims of either sex, and the true believers of either sex, and the devout men and devout women, and the men of veracity and the women of veracity, and the patient men and the patient women and the humble men and the humble women, and the alms-givers of either sex, and the men who fast and the women who fast, and the chaste men and the chaste women, and those of either sex who remember God frequently; for them hath God prepared forgiveness and a great reward". [Al Quran, Chapter 33] "I will not suffer the work of him among you who worketh to be lost, whether he be male or female; the one of you is from the other". [Al Quran, Chapter 3] When the wives of the Prophet claimed more than other women, he said to them: "If any one of you will have worldly goods, garments and ornaments, let her leave the Prophet and go into the world. But as for the rest, they shall have a [Page 27] double reward for their righteousness, and their sins shall be doubly punished".

Moreover, great respect to women was inculcated by the Prophet. "O men I fear your Lord, who hath created you out of one man, and out of him created his wife, and from them two hath multiplied many men and women; and fear God by whom ye beseech one another, and respect women who have borne you, for God is watching over you". [Al Quran, Chapter 4] "Men's souls are naturally inclined to covetousness; but if ye be kind to women and fear to wrong them, God is well acquainted with what ye

do". [ Al Quran, Chapter 4 ]

4). The fourth point of attack from Christendom is on the Prophet's person. This is extraordinary, as it can be clearly proved from history that the Prophet was really a great man. Ignorance and rank prejudice have contrived to throw a cloud over his greatness. The introduction to Sale's Quran is a long libel and slander. The reason of this prejudice against Islam is, that when the Saracens and the Moors conquered Europe, and brought knowledge and light into it, religious hatred against the conquerors was excited in the minds of the conquered, and this led to prejudices against them, and circulation of all sorts of false stories against their religion. The Muslims then conquered a great part of Europe, and also held [Page 28] Jerusalem. One duty upon Muslims now is to show up the Prophet in all the splendour of his character.

Taken as a young man travelling through Syria, Arabia, etc., he saw round him scenes of constant bloodshed, rioting, profligacy and a frightful state of society — people being merged in the rankest ignorance for want of guidance. Human sacrifices prevailed. It was by the greatest favour of God, and merely as a miracle that the Prophet's own father escaped being sacrificed in the temple of the people. His heart was stirred in him on seeing such things about him. He, married the noble Khadija, the immortal Khadija, who, though much his senior in years, remained the sole empress of his heart, till he was fifty years old. It is true, that after her death, he married other younger wives, but all these marriages were for affording protection against unbelievers or for alliances among the believers. They were political marriages and not profligate or licentious.

Wander through Arabia, and, you will find that he is known as *Al Amin* — the Trustworthy. This is the noblest name that can be given to a man, and implies that he was truth-telling, honourable, just and upright.

He was loved by children who clung round his knees, climbed up into his arms, and, played with him. A man who is loved by children, cannot be a bad man. [Page 29]

Then came the crisis of his life. He used to go to a mountain-cave, and pass the time there in fasting and prayer. He lived there as a recluse, and, remained silent for days and days together, fasting and praying. The condition of the nation and the sufferings of his people impressed his heart. He prayed aloud to God for help; he prayed and fasted and fell into agonies. No wonder then that a Heavenly messenger — the Archangel — came down in answer to the passionate pleading of the man and gave the message of the Lord: "Cry aloud".

5). It has been said that the Prophet was ambitious, and sought power and fame, and was influenced by lower motives. This accusation is hurled at him by those who cannot see his self-sacrifice, as their eyes are blinded by selfishness. When the heavenly messenger asked him to cry aloud, he said: "Who am I that I should cry! What am I to cry!" "Cry", the Angel says; and then he teaches him of the building of the worlds, and the making of man, teaches him of the unity of God and of the mystery of the Angels, teaches him of the work that lies before him. He is the most solitary of men, with a nation around him, he is to go forth and cry, and cry in the name of his Lord.

Forth he goes home, and Khadija is there. "What shall I do!" he says to her. "Who am I ! What am I !" Her golden answer was: "Thou art true and faithful, thy word is never broken, men know thy **[Page 30]** character; God does not deceive the faithful; follow the voice then; obey the call". He was thus reassured, and, never again did a doubt enter his mind about his Heavenly mission. He said to his uncle Abu Talib: "Though the sun were on my right, and the moon on my left, and both against me, still in the name of the Lord, shall I go forward !" A character so lofty should be better understood, and some of his followers should rise to purify his memory from unfair attacks. He was as great in prosperity as in adversity. At the first battle fought by the Prophet, his followers said: "We are too few to go against our enemies". The Prophet replied: "God is with us, and that is enough"; so they marched against overwhelming odds and conquered. It was the Arab custom to slay the defeated foe. When his followers asked the Prophet what was to be done with the prisoners taken in battle, he replied: "Nay, show mercy to the fallen, and shed no blood. Treat these men as brothers". The result of this teaching was that the conquerors who had with them dates and bread (the latter being considered a dainty in Arabia) contented themselves only with the dates and divided the bread among the conquered foe. What a noble example of mercy to a fallen foe ? This is the first time in history that conquerors had been feeding the conquered.

He was just but merciful; stern but kind. He put down riots with a stern hand, and punished **[Page 31]** those who betrayed him, with death. Like a wise governor, he was kind enough to forgive, but strong enough to punish, when sternness was required. Attempts were made at his life a number of times, but he never took revenge. He was always ready to forgive personal injuries.

Look at the candour of the man. When his follower said that he was infallible, he calmly and frankly replied: "I am such a man like yourself". Only one instance of his frank self-condemnation whenever a mistake was committed by him, will suffice. One day as he was talking to a rich man whom he desired to win to his cause — for to win the rich and powerful man meant life for those who followed him — a blind man came along and cried aloud: "O Prophet of God, teach me the way of salvation"; but he did not listen. He was talking to the high-born and the well-to-do, and the blind beggar, why should he interrupt! And the blind beggar, knowing not that he was engaged, cried aloud again: "O Prophet of God, show me the way". The Prophet frowned and turned aside. The next day there came a message that for ever remains written in Al Quran, "wherein he put it that all might remember". The Prophet frowned and turned aside because the blind man came to him: and how dost thou know whether he shall peradventure be cleansed from his sins, or whether he shall be admonished and the admonition will profit him ? The man who is wealthy thou receivest respectfully; **[Page 32]** whereas, it is not to be charged on thee, that he is not cleansed; but him who cometh unto thee earnestly seeking his salvation, and who feareth God, dost thou reject. By no means shouldst thou act thus". **[Al Quran, Chapter 80]** Ever after, when the Prophet saw the blind man he treated him with great respect, saying: "This man is welcome, on whose account my Lord hath reprimanded me"; and he made him governor of Medina twice.

He preached the doctrine of unity fully. "Say God is one God. He begetteth not, neither is He begotten; and there is not anyone like unto Him". **[Ibid., Chapter 112]** People were then merged in the basest idolatry and unity was preached over and over again to bring them back from the idolatry.

The ideas of morality taught by the great Teacher were quite noble. "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces in prayer towards the East and the West; but righteousness is of him who believeth in God, and the last day and the Angels and the Scriptures and the Prophets; who giveth money for God's sake unto his kindred, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the stranger, and those who ask, and for

redemption of captives; who is constant at prayer, and giveth alms; and of those who perform their covenant when they have covenanted, and who behave themselves patiently in adversity, and hardships, and in times of violence; [Page 33] these are they who are true, and these are they who fear God." [Al Quran, Chapter 2 ] "Wrong not your brother, defend the weak from the injury. All things shall perish; God alone will survive". This simple, clear, definite declaration relating all actions to the source is the fabric of a simple and noble morality.

Charity is more fully enjoined in Al Quran than in any of the other Scriptures:

"Be not niggardly, but give in charity for the religion; for he who is niggardly, is niggardly to his own soul. God wants nothing; but thy own soul wants. God is high above all needs, but you profit". "Charity enlarges the mind and expands the sympathies." And how beautiful is the following from a sermon on charity preached by the Prophet! " Every good act is charity. Your smiling in your brother's face is charity. An exhortation addressed to your fellow-men to do virtuous deeds is equal to alms-giving. Putting a wanderer in the right path is charity; assisting the blind is charity; removing stones and thorns and other obstructions from the road is charity; giving water to the thirsty is charity". [*The Spirit of Islam*, by Syed Ameer Ali, M.A.. C.I.E. p.135]

In Islam the duty of alms-giving is a definite duty. One-fifth of the spoils taken in battle should be given to God, to the Prophet and his kindred and to strangers and orphans. Every Muslim is enjoined to give a definite portion of his property [Page 34] and earning in charity, and the result is that the idea of brotherhood is fully inculcated. People understand that the poor and the miserable have great claims on the wealthy. The idea of charity also serves to strengthen the bonds of religion.

Islam warned against keeping the letter and neglecting the spirit. "It is not righteousness merely to pray, but it is righteousness to be charitable, to be generous and religious. Mere prayers are not sufficient". This is the refrain of Islam's moral commands.

*Muhammadan Philosophy.* It is as great as it is noble, as spiritual as that of any other religion in the world. Now here in modern Islam there is much to miss; but what Islam was in the days of the might of its thought, no words can be too strong to express. "Acquire knowledge", the Prophet says in one of his sermons, "because he who acquires it in the way of the Lord performs an act of piety; who speaks of it praises the Lord; who seeks it adores God; who dispenses instruction in it, bestows alms; and who imparts it to its fitting objects, performs an act of devotion to God. Knowledge enables its possessor to distinguish what is forbidden from what is not; it lights the way to Heaven; it is our friend in the desert; our society in solitude, our companion when bereft of friends; it guides us to happiness; it sustains us in misery; it is our ornament in the company of friends; it serves as an [Page 35] armour against our enemies. With knowledge, the servant of God rises to the height of goodness and to a noble position, associates with sovereigns in this world, and attains to the perfection of happiness in the next". [*The Spirit of Islam*, pp. 431, 532 ] Again: "The ink of the scholar is more valuable than the blood of the martyr". [ *Ibid.*, p. 537] The result of this preaching was an outburst of learning which led to the foundation of a great philosophy and of a great University. Muhammadan philosophers flourished in large numbers in Spain in the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries. Their philosophy is identical with Advaita Vedanta. Their works are in Arabic or in Monkish Latin, and are not known. There can be no nobler work for Muhammadan States than the discovery and translation of such works and the consequent spread and

revival of Muslim philosophy.

The time at my disposal being over, I have to leave the consideration of the mystic side of Islam to another time. [Vide Appendix below, for the lecturer's views on this subject]

Hindus and Muhammadans should make a common cause and live in harmony if they wish to see India prosper.

What Hindu will object to the following prayer with which I close this lecture:

"Praise be to God the Lord of the Universe — the most merciful and compassionate — Master of the [Page 36] Day of Judgment. Thee do we worship and from Thee do we seek assistance. Guide us in the right path — the path of those Thou hast blessed, and not the way of those that have offended Thee or are led astray." [ Al Quran, Opening Chapter ]

## APPENDIX

(From a former lecture delivered at Madras)

I HAVE said that part of a religion is mysticism, and Islam must have a mystic side. Ali was the beginner, and the followers of Ali the transmitters. In the year following the flight from Mecca, forty-five poor men bound themselves together to follow God and His Prophet, to live as a community and to observe ascetic practices. It is the seed of Sufism, the mystic side of Islam. They teach that "all is from God". They teach there is nought save God, and that all the Universe is but a mirror of Him. They teach that there is one perfect beauty and that all that is beautiful is but a ray from Him. They teach there is only one love, the love of God, and all other loves are only loves as they form part of that. They teach that He alone is True Being and that all else is non-being, and that man who is Himself can by illumination rise from non-being to Being and return whence he [Page 37] came. Ah ! See how they have sung of His love, the devotion which breathes in the poetry of Persia:

"Thou art absolute Being; all else is but a phantasm,  
For in Thy Universe all beings are one.  
Thy world-captivating Beauty, in order to display its perfections,  
Appears in thousands of mirrors, but it is one.  
Although thy Beauty accompanies all the beautiful,  
In truth the unique and incomparable Heart- enslaver is one" [ Jami ]

And again:

"Not-Being is the mirror of absolute Being,  
Whence is apparent the reflection of God's splendour.

When not-Being became opposed to Being,  
 A reflection thereof was at once produced.  
 That Unity was manifested through this Plurality;  
 One, when you enumerate it, becomes many.  
 Numeration though it has one for its basis,  
 Hath, notwithstanding, never an end.  
 Since Not-Being was in its essence clear,  
 Through it the hidden Treasure became manifest.  
 Repeat the tradition ' I was a hidden Treasure', [Page 38]  
 That thou mayest plainly behold the hidden mystery.  
 Not-Being is the mirror, the Universe is the reflection, and man  
 Is the personality concealed in it like the eye in the reflection.  
 Thou art the eye of the reflection, while He (God) is the light of the eye;  
 By means of that eye the Eye of God beholds itself.  
 The world is man, and man is the world.  
 No clearer explanation than this is possible.  
 When thou lookest well to the root of the matter.  
 He is both the Seer and the Eye and the Vision." [Gulshan-e-Raz]

Ant then listen how in the 13th century Sufism taught the truth of evolution which Darwin taught  
 Christendom in the 19th:

"I died from the mineral, and became a plant.  
 I died from the plant, and reappeared in an animal.  
 I died from the animal, and became a man.  
 Wherefore then should I fear? When did I grow less by dying?  
 Next time I shall die from the man,  
 That I may grow the wings of the angel.  
 From the angel, too, must I seek advance; 'all things shall perish save His Face'.

[Al Quran, Chapter 28]"[Page 39]

Once more shall I wing my way above the angels;  
 I shall become that which entereth not the imagination.  
 Then let me become naught, naught for the harpstring  
 Cryeth unto me: 'Verily unto Him shall we return' " [ The Mesnavi of Jalalud-din-Rumi]

Sufism, according the *Awarif -ul-maarif* teaches how the path is to be trodden. This is divided into three stages; *Shariat*, the Law; *Tarikat*, the Way; *Hakikat*, the Truth. These are thus illustrated :  
 A man asked a Shaikh — spiritual teacher — what were the three stages. He answered: "Go and strike each of the three men you see sitting there". He went and struck the first; the man leapt to his feet and returned the blow. He struck the second; the man flushed up, made a motion to rise, clenched his fists, but restrained himself. He struck the third; the man took no notice. "The first", said the Shaikh, "is in the Law; the second in the Way; the third in the Truth". The Prophet Muhammad is, of course, recognised as the supreme authority, but to tread the Path, a Shaikh is necessary, and the Mureed, the disciple, must show him the most absolute devotion and submission; he must obey him in everything without reserve or

hesitation. "If thou art bidden to drench the prayer-carpet in wine, do it, for [Page 40] the Shaikh knows all that thou knowest, and more." Prolonged meditation is enjoined, and goes up the various stages to Wajd — Samadhi — ecstasy. Rabia, a woman mentioned by Ibn Khallikan (A.D. 1211-1282) would go to the house-top at night and say: "O God! hushed is the day's noise; with his beloved is the lover. But I have Thee for my lover, and alone with Thee I joy". Only God contents the Sufi, the dervishes say: "Neither fear we hell, nor desire we heaven". Asceticism of the most severe kind is enjoined, fasts lasting many days and other austerities. But they are the most liberal of men: "The ways unto God are as the number of the breaths of the sons of men".