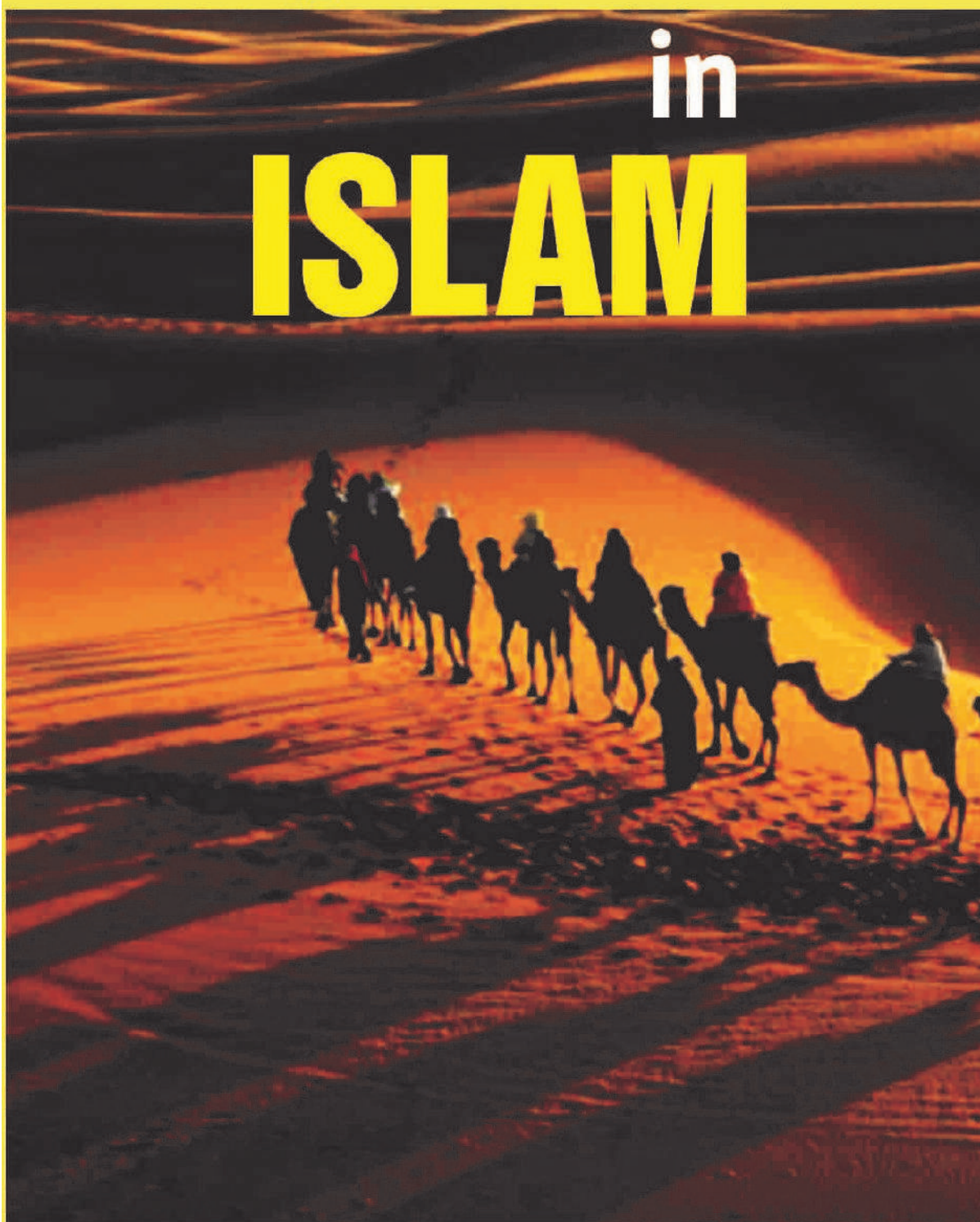


Search of Truth, Series - 07

Prophethood

in

ISLAM



In the name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

PROPHETHOOD IN ISLAM

Belief in Prophethood is one of the three basic tenets of Islamic faith. The other two are (1) Tauheed, which means absolute oneness and uniqueness of God. And (2) Akhirah which means Life after death or Rebirth of all humans on the day of Resurrection. It will be the day of judgement; they will be accountable for their worldly acts and deeds and accordingly either Paradise will be rewarded, or the Punishment of the Hell-fire will be given.

The concept of Prophethood is not unknown to other religions. In Hinduism 'Avtarvad' understood correctly, would correspond to it. Here it should be clear that there is a misconception about the word Avtar. 'Avatar' never means that God himself appears physically on earth; but in fact it means God sends His messengers (Avtars) for the salvation, success and guidance of human beings. These messengers are human beings; they have no divinity in them.

In Arabic the word 'Risalah' is used for Prophethood, which literally means Apostleship. In technical term it means the office of an Apostle or Prophet who is sent by Allah to Mankind to Convey His message. Another word used for Prophethood is 'Nubuwah'.

Now the question is what is the need and necessity of Prophethood in human life? There may be many dimensions to the answer to this question.

The first dimension is to ponder over this universe, formation of this universe and the movement of this universe.

We know that Almighty Allah created man. He has fulfilled all human needs and necessities abundantly. Human baby's formation started in the mother's womb and afterwards the child was born. When a child opens

his eyes in this universe, he discovers his food in his mother's breast. The second most important need of a child to live and grow is 'love & affection'. This is instinctively found in the hearts of parents and relatives who look after him. They bring him up and sacrifice all their comforts for his well being. It is amply clear that everything essential to man has already been provided. Be it air, light, heat, water or other amenities.

Our logic and reason ultimately testify that Almighty God, provided us all facilities; even the smallest requirements of human beings have been met. He must have guided us towards His path as guidance is the greatest and most vital need of human life.

It is absolutely illogical to think Almighty God created man and fulfilled all his needs but that He would not guide him. Definitely he revealed the way of virtue, piety and righteousness. He gave man the knowledge about aim of life and taught mankind the values of morality. He selected human messengers to reveal His guidance to them. These selected men wisely conveyed His message to people. These noble persons are called Prophets and Messengers of God and this process of revelation is called 'Prophethood'.

Prophets fulfilled the most vital need of humanity. By all accounts, they were the ideal personalities of the society. Their life was most pious among their people. They strived and acted under direct supervision of Almighty Allah. Being apostles they did not make even a minor mistake. They conveyed God's message exactly as it was revealed to them. Not only did they convey the message, they were also bound to act according to it as their foremost duty. Therefore, according to the Qur'an, a Prophet declares :

***"I am the fore most of those who
surrender (to Him)".*** (Quran, 6:163)

It is to be noted that Prophets were not like mere postman whose only duty is to deliver a communication. On the contrary, they were bound to act upon those teachings. Therefore they were the best ideal for humanity.

Now we explore another dimension of this theme

When we decide to obey and submit to Almighty Allah, we become curious to know the injunctions of our Master which we are required to obey. We become anxious and keen to know what pleases Him and what displeases Almighty God. Without knowing this vital truth, we will not be able to take even a single step on the path of submission to Allah.

The question naturally arises that how we can know the injunctions and will of Allah? How can we discover what Allah has enjoined upon us and what He has forbidden to us? To know about His injunctions and will there may be three logical possibilities :

One is that we ascertain his commandments through our reason. But Human beings are not capable of answering this question on the basis of reasoning. We can never find out what attributes our Creator and Nourisher has. What are His commandments? Due to inherent shortcomings of human reason no one can reach the truth, by rational faculty alone.

The second possible means may be our own intuition and conscience. But this second choice is also not much better than the first. The most vigorous efforts to develop intuition cannot help to achieve this objective. Unless Allah Himself describes His injunctions and inculcates them in one's heart, it is impossible for one to know the commandments of Allah in spite of spiritual purification. Therefore, this also is a very unlikely way of knowing the divine injunctions.

The third possible means may be a collective contemplation of people. But even a multitude of blind men working unitedly cannot attain the position of someone whose vision is unimpaired. Thus even a group of men will not be able to know the injunctions of Allah.

This means of knowledge is as imperfect as the other two mentioned above. So it would not be wrong to say that none of these three suggested means can fulfill the need of man for guidance.

On one hand man's reason and intuition are incapable of knowing the Divine injunctions; while on the other hand his need for them is a pressing one. It is more important than food or drink. In these circumstances there is no alternative but to accept that arrangements have been made by Allah for his guidance.

It is inconsistent with His justice and mercy to omit necessary arrangements for man's guidance. Hence, Allah arranged for guidance and in technical term this arrangement of Allah is known as "Prophethood". A person through whom guidance is conveyed is called "Prophet".

The faith in Prophethood is absolutely as essential as you need the light to see in spite of having eyes.

Now let us cast light on this topic from yet another angle.

There are a few questions to ponder over. And they are: Who am I?.....Where have I come from?.....Where have I to go?.....What will happen after death?.....What is the aim of my life?.....What is good conduct and what is bad?.....Who created me?.....Is there any creator or not?.....If there is, what is the relation between the creator and me?.....What is the relation between other creatures and me?

There are two groups of men who have given the answers to above mentioned questions. One is called the group of philosophers and the other is called the group of Apostles or Prophets. But logically we can say that the answers given by the philosophers are totally wrong, because they could not answer these questions with any confidence. They always used to confess that they could reach the stage of tentative answer after pondering in the dark. Therefore they did not agree among themselves.

On the other hand the answers given by Prophets were definite and unequivocal. They gave the answers confidently, because, those answers were given by

Allah and they had been revealed by Allah. So the answers given by them were consistent and there is not even a single instance of difference among the Prophets. Hazrat Adam, the first Apostle of Allah said that the creator of men and this universe is 'One God', the very same notion was given by the last Prophet of Allah Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). Similarly Prophet Adam had declared that none is worthy of worship except Allah; Prophet Muhammad also announced the same truth. Prophet Adam had warned that man would have to render his account of life before Allah in the life hereafter, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said the same.

Obviously we can conclude that the answers to these ultimate questions about human life were absolutely correct and final as they were given by Prophets. So belief in Prophethood fulfils the most significant need of human beings, viz the need of guidance.

Hence Sincere obedience to Prophet's instruction is absolutely essential. And this obedience should not be merely verbal. It must be expressed by whole-hearted actions.

Some important aspects of Prophethood

(1) Prophethood is not a position which can be acquired by effort. On the contrary, it is bestowed by Allah. Prophethood is bestowed upon them only whom Allah chooses for this purpose. Man's own effort or intention is irrelevant in this context.

(2) To communicate His guidance unto men Allah has always chosen human beings, themselves. These messengers were neither angels nor jinns nor of any other species. Nor has it ever happened that Allah came to human society in the shape of man. Whenever a Prophet was sent he was a human being. Allah says:

“O Muhammad! All the messengers, whom we sent before you, were also human beings, and they lived in similar habitations.”
(Quran, 12:109)

Like us the Prophets had bodies and souls, human powers and desires. They had wives and children. They were born in normal fashion and led their life under the natural laws. They ate and drank, worked and slept, felt happy or were grieved similar to other people. They kept good health and also suffered from illness and died like other men. In short they were similar to other human beings in every respect and had all the characteristics of humans apart from being chosen by Allah for Prophethood. Allah says in Holy Quran:

“Say (O Muhammad) I am a human being like you.” (Quran, 41:6)

(3) According to the Qur’an Allah sent his messengers to every community. Allah says:

“Every people has its guide.” (Quran, 13:7)

(4) The Divine revelation was also in the same language which was spoken by those people. Allah says :

“We never sent a messenger but he has addressed his people in their own language that he might make the message clear for them.” (Quran, 14:4)

Two outstanding aspects of the Islamic belief in Prophethood.

As far as belief in Prophets is concerned Islam does not differentiate between the Prophets. Islam enjoins upon every Muslim to believe in all Prophets. In Holy Quran Allah says: ***“(Believers say) We make no distinction between any of His messengers.”*** (Quran, 2:285)

Denial or rejection of even one Prophet is equivalent to the rejection of all Prophets because the message of Prophets was same. Allah says in Holy Quran : ***(O, My people! serve Allah, you have no other god than Him.”***(7:59,65,73,85;11:50,61,84;23:23,32).

When someone disbelieves in any of the Prophets, he virtually disobeys the authority of the Lord of the

universe. It is a revolt against God. It is as if a person recognizes all the representatives of Govt. but excludes one of them. Therefore all Prophets are respectable. Muslim loves Abraham, Moses and Jesus as they love Muhammad(PBUH).

To accept Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the last Prophet is also essential and it is also a part of Prophethood. Quran says : “*Muhammad is not the father of anyone among you but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the Prophets.*” (Quran, 33:40).

After Muhammad, there will be no Prophet in future, because there is no need of a new Prophet. The teachings of the last Prophet are alive and they are fully preserved. Allah says: “*Indeed it is We Who have revealed it and it is indeed We Who are its guardian.*” (Quran, 15:9)

The last guidance from Allah (Qur'an) is not only fully preserved but it is also complete and valid till the day of resurrection. It is also a fact that the last message of Allah (Qur'an) is not only for Arabs, but for all human beings.

One is led to the firm conviction that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the last Prophet and the Qur'an is last message from Allah. And now it is the only source available to human beings to know the message, guidance and will of Almighty God. To follow Muhammad (PBUH) and Qur'an is the only way to achieve success and salvation.

It is amply clear that faith in Prophethood is essential for human life. Without Prophethood one can not locate the right path to success and salvation. Without prophethood man will be misguided by whims and desires.

We pray to almighty Allah that He may shower His blessings upon us and guide us to the right path and grant us the courage to accept the tauth.

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