

Uphold true teachings of

THE Al-Quran is a holy book which forms the faith and primary guideline of the Muslims. There is not even the slightest doubt about this. In fact, it is believed with the utmost of confidence.

If there is any doubt among Muslims in our belief of the Quran, no matter how small, then our position as a faithful Muslim will be adversely affected. This is because believing in the holy book is one of the *Rukun Iman* (Tenets of the Faith) and this requires absolute faith.

Belief in the Quran is not confined to just the belief that all its contents are the words of God, but one must be willing to practise all the teachings contained in its revelations. This covers the application of the contents in the affairs of individuals and society, referred to as *fardu ain* and *fardu kifayah*.

We are confident that the guidelines mentioned in the Quran ensure a prosperous and peaceful life in this world and the Hereafter. In this context, the Prophet had also reminded us that if we uphold and follow closely the teachings of the Quran and *Sunnah* (prophetic traditions), then our life will not go astray at any point in time.

We all believe in the Quran and do not want to deliberately breach its teachings. As such, all Muslims should

the interpreters or translators is wrong, then the understanding of those who follow them is also wrong. If it is accurate, then those who follow them will get the accurate messages from the verses of the Quran. But we know that there are differences among interpreters.

Sometimes, these differences are not obvious and do not change much of the messages in the Quran. But there are times when these differences are so glaring that the Muslims who follow the interpreters are split into contradicting *mazhab* (school of thoughts).

The Islamic religion which was conveyed to the Prophet is only one but there are various groups claiming to be Muslims whose practices and beliefs differ, and they even reject the practices of others who claim to be Muslims. Therefore, apart from the *sunni* and *syiah* groups with their respective *mazhab*, there are also the *Alawait* and *Druze* and others.

The differences among these groups are so glaring to the extent that there is a possibility that certain groups are actually not Islamic. They all refer to the same Quran but the interpretation of the teachings of the Quran differs, and therefore, their understanding and beliefs are no more one and the same. It is also high-

and guides the Muslims. If we accept this, then we cannot be wrong if we are to review and reject certain interpretations. And we should also not feel obstructed by suggestions that the door of *ijtihad* (effort) has been shut and that we cannot review the interpretations and contents of the teachings of the Quran anymore.

Adherence to the belief that the door to *ijtihad* is closed can possibly lead to the upholding of these wrongly interpreted teachings of the Quran and place them at par with God's revelations. This can lead us to believe that the interpretations are faultless and unchangeable.

The wrongly interpreted teachings of the Quran have spread widely in the Muslim world for centuries. Among the incorrect interpretations are that education and knowledge are only related to religion. The more specific and deeper the religious knowledge is, the better it is for a Muslim. It is believed it can bring many rewards and guarantee a place in heaven in the Hereafter.

No one can deny that religious knowledge is important and good for a Muslim individual. No one will dispute that a learned person in matters pertaining to religion and who performs his obligations is one who up-

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International Quran Seminar yesterday

the Quran

prosper and live in peace, free of humiliation, suppression and torture by any party. But the fact is that Muslims do not live happily and in peace. Actually, over one billion Muslims are under suppression and are suffering, are being made fool of, and are used by those with particular interests. Is this due to the Muslims' faith in the Quran or is it because the Muslims do not truly uphold the teachings of the Quran?

Human beings have weaknesses. And the Muslims are no exception. There are those who believe in the teachings of the Quran and yet do not practise these teachings. They know what they are required to do, and yet they do not do it. Hence, they do not achieve the prosperity in life as prom-

ised.

But the failure of the Muslims to achieve prosperity is not solely due to the unwillingness to practise the teachings of Islam. Most of their failures were caused by their lack of understanding of the real teachings of the Quran and this led to their practices being wrong as well. Therefore, they could not enjoy a prosperous and respectable life.

Why is there this misunderstanding? The reason is that even though some people are fluent in the Arabic language and are able to read it, the meanings and messages contained in the verses of the Quran cannot be so easily understood by self-reading. Therefore, Muslims who wish to understand the contents of the Quran are forced to depend

on the interpretations of the teachings of the Quran made by recognised interpreters.

In the effort to explain the contents of the Quran as understood by the interpreters, they have to use their own words and add to the verses of the Quran to explain the relevant meanings and messages. Certainly for Muslims who do not understand the Arabic language, they can only read the translation in Arabic or in their own language.

Hence, it is not the contents of the Quran which they receive as the teachings of the Quran but rather the translation and interpretation of these translations made by the interpreters and translators.

If the understanding of

ly possible that there are interpreters who are wrong and whose teachings deviate. In the history of Islam up to the present day, this normally occurs. And just recently this happens before our own eyes.

When Muslims accept and follow the wrongly interpreted teachings of the Quran with the belief that these are the true teachings of the Quran, certainly they will not achieve happiness in life. More than that, they may fail and suffer. The present sad state of affairs affecting the Muslims now is possibly due to their belief in the wrongly interpreted teachings of the Quran.

We must remember this all the time. When we dispute the teachings of Islam, we must remember that our conflict is not with the Quran or the verses in it, which are never wrong and never change. What we are disputing or debating are the interpretations by interpreters, who, no matter how knowledgeable they may be, are still ordinary human beings with weaknesses known to all mortals.

What a loss it would be for Muslims if we are to hold firmly and defend at all costs not the teachings of the Quran, but rather the opinions of ordinary human beings, which are certainly not on par with the revelations.

Is it not possible that the backwardness of Muslims is caused by wrongly interpreted teachings of the Quran? What is certain is that the backwardness is not caused by the teachings of the Quran, which teaches

holds his religion strongly.

For Muslims, a person who concentrates all his time on religion in terms of knowledge and practice is considered good and noble and must be followed without question.

Those who learn and specialise in religion believe that what they do actually fulfils their religious requirements. Since almost all the interpreters, religious teachers and Muslim missionaries are those who major and specialise in religion, their emphasis would certainly be in the field of religion.

Other fields are not considered important and they normally will not urge the Muslims to seek knowledge or jobs in other fields. At times they offer opinions that Muslims who excel or are educated in other areas will not get any reward in the Hereafter. These people are not considered strong Muslims.

With the spread of these kinds of views, the majority of the Muslims are not so keen in seeking knowledge which is not specifically related to the Islamic religion. If today there are Muslims who are backward in various aspects of knowledge and efficiency to the extent that they cannot preserve their dignity, protect Muslims from being attacked, subjugated and victimised, cannot exploit the abundant resources blessed by God to their countries; and if Muslims today do things not permitted by Islam, and even leave the religion, it is because they are frustrated with their weaknesses and

feel humiliated.

The fact that the Quran not only stresses knowledge in the teachings of Islam, but also hundreds of other matters related to life and the prosperity of the Muslims, is not given due attention by many interpreters and scholars. Actually, they have selected only a small portion of the teachings of the Quran.

Though we are required in the Quran to look at God's creations such as the sky and earth, cloud and

mah. If we really accept the teachings of the Quran, certainly we can learn various things which will enable us to invent and produce all kinds of modern self-defense equipment to save the Muslims from misfortunes such as being experienced in Bosnia, Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya and other countries.

These are only two of the teachings of the Quran which we do not take seriously. There are hundreds of other teachings which

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rain, fertile soil, hills and animals, we interpret these verses only as proof of God's supremacy. If we look at all these deeply, that is, if we conduct research on them, we will not only be more impressed with God's creations, but will gain a lot of knowledge which can help our life. Definitely, agriculture will be more developed and the acute starvation in Muslim countries can be avoided.

Similarly, we are required to provide horses and swords to defend the *um-mah*. But we do not bother about the safety of the *um-*

can make us successful without adversely affecting our position in the Hereafter, a point which we also do not give serious attention.

When Muslims become backward and are suppressed in this world, there are those who claim this is what Islam wants, that is, Muslims will suffer in this world while waiting for happiness in the Hereafter. So, just accept and endure the sufferings, misery and humiliation in this world. This is temporary. The Hereafter is eternal and Muslims, therefore, will live happily ever after.

As long as this understanding is accepted and disseminated, Muslims will not do anything to improve their life and Islam in this world. They will accept that their backwardness is happiness, as it reminds them of their better position in the Hereafter.

If Muslims are suppressed, subjugated and divorced from Islam, it is all right. Just wait (because) we are promised the heaven in the Hereafter. They do not feel at all awkward with their prayers that they be given happiness in this world and the Hereafter. This is only lip service.

All this is possibly because we misunderstand the religion and we select the teachings of the Quran by concentrating on a few verses only. Even though we do not acknowledge the fact that we reject or look down upon the bigger portion of the teachings, the truth is that this is what is happening. That is why Muslims do not experience happiness while in this world. Whether we will get happiness in the Hereafter is also uncertain.

The rewards in the Hereafter are not due to what we do for ourselves, which is *fardu ain*, but also for what we do to society, which comes under *fardu kifayah*. If we truly believe in the teachings of the Quran, then we should fulfil our obligations under *fardu ain* and *fardu kifayah*. God willing, Muslims will be happy and their dignity as well as the dignity of their religion will be redeemed.