

What Islam Is?

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Preface

Should it be possible for the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon whom) to be sent down into the world once again by God what would his reaction be on seeing the conduct and behaviour and the general design of life of the community that passes today by the name of Muslim? And what advice and command would he give to such of his followers who still possess in their hearts some solicitude for the faith and whose souls have not yet frozen to and got completely bereft of devotion and allegiance to Islam? Sarcastic Without the least hesitation I can say that he will extremely pained at the spectacle of utter moral and spiritual degeneration the bulk of Muslims present these days, as much as he was by the brutal treatment meted out to him by the people of Taif or by the savage assaults made by the callous Polytheists at Ohud. And his message to earnest concern for the Faith will be to dedicate themselves whole-heartedly to the task of improving and reforming the lamentable religious state of his Ummat and of breathing into it again the spirit of Faith and Islamic way of life.

So, if you find yourself in agreement with me and your heart concurs with what I have said above you must resolve, here and now, and in all sincerity, to make this endeavour a part of your life. For my part, I am absolutely confident that it is the choicest way to earn the pleasure of God and the blessings of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and to make his soul happy.

By the grace of God, efforts for the moral and religious revival of Muslims are being made on a fairly large scale in India and Pakistan and in several other countries also in the form of a movement called Tabligh. Wherever you may be living you can take part in these efforts, according to your means and circumstances, along with other earnest sons of Islam of your place and also do what you can individually in respect of it.

This small book, which is now in your hands, is a part of this endeavour. It has been written specially to meet the needs of Muslim men and women who do not know much about Islam or who cannot avail themselves of more advanced books on it. They can read it themselves or have it read out to them by others and also communicate its contents to their brethren by reading the book publicly in mosques and at other Muslim congregations, and, do their bit towards their own religious correction and reform as well as that of others.

Though the book consists only of about two hundred pages the sum and substance of the Faith has been covered fully in it. Within its twenty lessons all those teachings of the Quran and the Traditions have been compressed by knowing which and by acting on which a common man can not only become a good Muslim but a perfect man of faith and a friend of the Lord also. Besides, it can be freely presented to non-Muslims who may be interested in knowing about Islam and its precepts.

The humble Author could only produce the book, which he has done. Now, to make it serve the purpose in a worthwhile manner, for which it has been written, depends solely on your choice and cooperation. Had his financial resources permitted, the Author would have got it printed in millions and sent a copy of it, free of cost, to every educated

Muslim in India. The conditions now prevailing in India particularly cry out for it. But, from the beginning, it has been the Will of God that those who cherish such aspirations seldom have the means to realize them and, without a doubt, there lies great wisdom of the Lord in it also.

Be it as may, it is beyond the power of the present writer to fulfill his desire. But, if Muslims in whose hands the book may reach decide, in their eagerness to propitiate God and give happiness to the soul of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and to earn for themselves a bountiful reward in the Hereafter, to make it available, or its contents, to as many of their brethren as possible, the real aim of its writing and publication can be fulfilled a good deal.

As it has been indicated already, in the new context of things in India the religious future of Muslims rests apparently on the sole condition that every follower of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) here who is alive to the importance of the Faith and knows what it means makes it a personal duty to strive for the Islamic regeneration of the general body of Muslims and a missions of his life to carry the message of Faith and the teachings of Islam to each and every member of his community.

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Lucknow.

Introduction

Brothers-You all will, perhaps, be aware that Islam is not the name of a caste or community so that anyone who is born in it automatically becomes a Muslim without having to do anything, on his own part, about it just as a child born in a Sheikh or a Syed family becomes a Sheikh or a Syed, as a matter of course, and there is nothing it can do in this regard.

Islam, on the other hand, is the name of that faith and that way of life which was brought into the world from God by His true and devoted Apostle, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), and is preserved to this day in its pristine purity in the Quran and they Holy Traditions. Thus, he alone can be called a Muslim who accepts that faith and practices that way of life. Those who are ignorant of the teachings or Islam, or do not act upon them, are not genuine Muslims by any means. We, therefore, conclude that two things are necessary for anyone to be a true Muslim:

Firstly, to acquire a proper knowledge of the teachings of Islam, or, at least, of its basic and fundamental doctrines;

And, secondly, to believe in these teachings as true and to resolve sincerely to live according to them.

This, in sum, is what Islam is. To acquire knowledge of the tenets of Islam, i.e., of its essential teachings is the first requisite of being a Muslim. A Tradition of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) reads:

“To acquire knowledge of the faith is the duty of all Muslims.”

It is necessary to bear permanently in the mind that to carry out what is described in religion as a duty is an act of worship in Islam. To exert oneself for the sake of obtaining an adequate knowledge of the faith, hence, is also an act of worship on which there is a

bountiful reward from God. The holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) has proclaimed great merit in it. Take these Traditions, for instance:

“He who goes forth in search of religious knowledge engages himself in the cause of God until he returns.”

“For him who goes out in search of religious knowledge God shall make easy the way to Heaven.”

“Thirst for religious knowledge and the pursuit of it atones for one’s previous sins.”

In short, the cultivation of religious knowledge, i.e., the knowledge of the essential teachings of Islam is binding on all Muslims, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, male and female, old and young, From the Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) quoted above we also learn that a rich reward awaits us in the Hereafter for the time spent and the pains taken for the sake of it. Let us all, now, make up our minds that we will strive earnestly to equip ourselves with adequate knowledge of the faith and a proper understanding of the basic doctrines of Islam.

For Muslims who, on account of their age or pre-occupation, cannot join a Muslim theological institution and take a regular course of Islamic religious instruction, the best thing will be that, if they are educated, they should develop the habit of reading reliable books on Islam regularly, and, if they are not or only nominally so, they should have such books read out to them by others who can read and understand. If the custom of reading religious books, individually or in groups, can become common in Muslim homes, mosques and at their other gatherings, the spread of religious knowledge to all classes and sections of the community will be greatly facilitated indeed.

This small book has been written solely to fulfill this purpose. All the necessary information regarding Islam and the teachings of the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him), which a Muslim ought to possess has been furnished in it in a simple language. Let us all learn these truths and precepts ourselves and impart them to others as well and make it a mission of our lives to popularize them in the world. A Tradition of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) says:

“If a person engages himself in the pursuit of Islamic religious knowledge with the object of reviving the faith through it (i.e., by instructing it to others and bringing them round to act on it) and he dies in the process, his place will be so very close to the Prophets in the Hereafter that there will be only a difference of one degree between them and him.”

May Allah grant us the great good fortune of learning the precepts of Islam ourselves and teaching them to others, and of acting on them and endeavoring sincerely to persuade others to do the same.

The Holy kalma

**THERE IS NO GOD (NO ONE IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP AND OBEDIENCE)
SAVE ONE GOD, AND MUHAMMAD (PEACE BE UPON HIM) IS HIS
APOSTLE.**

Brothers, - this confession is the gateway to Islam, the arch-stone of the faith. By affirming it and reciting it with sincerity and conviction even, a lifelong heathen or a polytheist can become a Muslim, a man of faith, and earn his title to salvation. The

condition, however, is that he should have accepted conscientiously and with full understanding the declaration of the Oneness of God and the Apostleship of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) contained in it. Thus, any one who repeats the confession mechanically, without understanding it and without knowing what the concepts of Divine Unity and Apostleship and Prophecy mean, will not gain recognition in the sight of God as a Muslim. It is, therefore, necessary to study its meaning and implications carefully.

The confession consists of two parts. The first part contains that no one except the Almighty is worthy of worship and obedience. Worship and obedience should be offered to Him alone because He and no one else is our Lord and Creator, Nourisher and Sustainer and the Dispenser of Life and Death. Sickness and health, poverty and riches, in short, all manner of God and evil, gain or loss, lies solely in His control. Apart from Him, whatever living things exist on the earth, or in the heavens, be they men or angels, are all His creatures and slaves. He is partnered by no one, no one has a share in His Divinity nor can any one amend or alter His Will, or interfere with His affairs. Hence, He and He alone is worthy of devotion and worship. He alone is the Supreme Being, the Almighty, to whom all our prayers and supplications should be addressed. He alone is the real Owner of the heavens and the earth, the Monarch of all monarchs, the Lord Sovereign. It is, therefore, necessary that all His commands and injunctions are strictly obeyed and faithfully carried out. As against His commands the commands of no one should be heeded to no matter whether they are of our parents or rulers or of the head of the community or a dear friend, or the biddings of our own heart. In a nutshell, when once we have realized and confessed the truth that God alone, and no one besides Him, is worthy of worship and obedience our conduct should also be in conformity with it, so much so that any one who sees us should know by our behaviour that we are the devoted servants of the Lord who carry out His commands dutifully and live and die for His sake alone.

Brothers, - this is the keystone of Islam and the first and foremost item in the teachings of all the Prophets. It commands the highest, the most important place in the religious scheme of things. A famous Tradition of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) reads:

“There are more than seventy departments of the faith and among them the most superior and exalted is belief in the Kalima of. For this reason, among the prayer – formulas also it is the best. States the Prophet (Peace be upon him): “Of all the prayer-formulas the best and most excellent is that of”.

In another Tradition it is related that once God gave this reply to a question put to Him by Prophet Moses:

“O Moses, if the seven heavens and the seven earths and all that is contained in them are placed on one side of the balance and on the other, the side on which placed will turn out to be heavier.

Brothers, this unique virtue and excellence of is due solely to the fact that it contains to solemn affirmation of Divine Unity, the assertion, the pledge and the declaration that we shall worship Him alone and offer our homage and obeisance to no one apart from Him, and shall make Him the sole pivot of our existence. It, indeed, is the life-breath of Islam.

That is why, the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) has advised Muslims to refresh and to reinvigorate their faith by repeating the Kalima frequently. It is narrated that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) once said, “O men! Keep on refreshing your faith”. Upon this the

Companions enquired, "O Prophet of God! How are we to do so?" The Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, "By reciting the Kalima frequently."

The Kalima holds the power to restore and revitalize the faith for the simple reason that it embodies the affirmation of Divine Unity and the covenant to worship Him alone, to do allegiance to none besides Him and to hold Him dearer and nearer to the heart than anything or anybody else in the world. As we have said earlier, it is the essence, the sustaining principle of Islam. So, the more we will utter it attentively, concentrating duly on what it stands for, the more will our faith gain in vitality and our covenant in strength and our whole life will, Insha Allah, get cast in the mould of The Second Part The second part of the Kalima consists of . In it the affirmation is made of the Divine Apostleship of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him). That Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is the Apostle of God means that he was raised up by the Almighty for the guidance of the world and whatever he taught, preached or revealed like the Divinity of the origin of the Quran, the existence of the angels, the certainty of the Last Day, the Resurrection, the Judgment, the award of heaven and hell according to one's deeds on the earth was hundred percent true and authentic. Indeed, the Apostleship of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) denotes nothing more and nothing less than this that all the things he taught to the world, all the truths he revealed to mankind, were based on Divine inspiration, that they were based on special and authoritative knowledge vouchsafed to him by God, and so they were absolutely correct and beyond dispute. There is not the least excuse, the slightest reason, for doubting or questioning his word. The guidance he gave to men, the laws he laid down, was Divine guidance and Divine laws which had been inspired to him by the Almighty. You would have realized that the acceptance of any one as a Divine Apostle automatically implies that each and every precept and command of his should be whole heartedly believed in and obeyed for God raised up His Apostles in the world solely to convey through them to mankind the commands and precepts He wants it to follow. Says the Quran:

We sent not an Apostle, but to be obeyed in accordance with the Will of God.

To believe in anyone as an Apostle and to accept him as such, thus, means simply to hold every word of his as true, to regard his teachings and guidance to be the teachings and guidance of God, and to decide, once for all, to lead one's life according to the precepts he taught. So, if a person recites the Kalima but does not, as a logical consequence of it, resolve firmly to hold all the teachings of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) to be wholly true and all that may run counter to them to be wholly false, and to abide by his Shariat (holy law) and his commands faithfully, he, of course is not a man of faith and a Muslim. He, probably, has not even understood what it means to be a Muslim.

It is obvious that once we have recited the Kalima and accepted the Prophet (Peace be upon him) as the true Apostle of God, it becomes obligatory for us to believe in his guidance, to adhere to his commands and to observe faithfully the Shariat he brought. A Covenant From the meaning and interpretation of the holy Kalima given above, you will have realized that it is a covenant. It embodies the pledge and the vow that we believe in Allah as the One and Only Lord Sovereign, Master and Creator, and regard everything that exists in this world and the Hereafter to be exclusively in His control, and that, since we do so, we will worship Him alone and carry out His commands the way a servant and a slave carries out the commands of his master, and love Him and adore him above all else, and, further, that we accept Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) as the true

Apostle of God, and will abide by his guidance as a loyal follower and fashion our lives according to the holy law laid down by him. In fact, faith denotes nothing except this pledge and covenant and this is precisely what the affirmation of Divine Unity and Apostleship means.

A Muslim should, therefore hold himself bound by this covenant and try his level best to shape his conduct in its light so that he may earn recognition in the eyes of God as a genuine man of faith and attain his salvation and place in the paradise.

Those who are blessed enough to bear faith honestly in both the parts of the holy Kalima and to give proof of it by word as well as by deed are the recipients of countless glad tidings like the one reproduced below:

It is related by Hazrat Anas that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) once said to Hazrat Ma'ad, "God has declared as forbidden the fire of the Hell for him who affirms the Kalima of with a true heart".

Brothers, affirm with a true heart and with a full knowledge and awareness of its implications and importance and resolve now and forever to lead your lives according to it in order that your attestation may not turn out to be false. On this very attestation depends your faith and your salvation.

Namaz

The first and most important duty in Islam after one has brought faith in God and in Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and borne witness to Divine Oneness and the Apostleship of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) is Namaz. It is a most special act of Divine worship, which a Muslim is called upon to perform five times a day. There are numerous verses of the Quran and the Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) enjoining the Namaz on us. It has been described as the pillar and the foundation of the faith.

Namaz, if it is offered with a sincere heart and proper devotion and mental concentration, is particularly vested with the property of cleansing the heart and reforming one's life and ridding it of sins and impurities. It generates love for piety and truth and promotes fear of God in man. Thus it is that Islam has laid greater emphasis on it than on all other religious obligations. When anyone came to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) to embrace Islam, the first promise the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) took from him, after instructing him in Divine Oneness, was that he will offer the Namaz regularly. In fine, after the Kalima, Namaz is the bedrock of Islam. Traditions We know from the Traditions that the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) used to equate neglect of the Namaz with infidelity. He denounced it as the way of the unbelievers. He would say that those who did not offer the Namaz had not share in the faith.

A Tradition of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) reads, "What separates a believer from infidelity is simply the Namaz".

This Tradition clearly warns that if a Muslim will give up the Namaz he will get associated with infidelity; his conduct will become the conduct of an infidel. In another Tradition the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said, "He has no share in Islam who does not offer the Namaz".

And here is another Tradition from which we can imagine what a great act of virtue and felicity is it to offer the Namaz regularly and how utterly fatal and ruinous is it to neglect it. Once while urging upon the Muslims to be most particular about the Namaz the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have observed:

“Whoever will offer the Namaz properly and regularly it will be for him on the Last Day a source of light. A proof of his faith and a mean to salvation. (On the other hand) whoever will not offer it carefully and regularly it will be for him neither a source of light, and the end of such a person will be with Karun, Fir’aun, Haman and Ubai-bin-Khalaf.

Brother, let us now imagine what our end is going to be if we fail to cultivate the habit of offering the Namaz correctly and regular

THE IGNOMINY AND DISGRACE OF THE DEFAULTERS ON THE LAST DAY.

The ignominy and disgrace the defaulters of Namaz will have to suffer at the very outset on the Day of Judgment has been spoken of in these words in the Quran:

The day that the shin shall be laid bare, and they shall be summoned to bow in adoration, but they shall not be able, their eyes will be cast down, ignominy will cover them, seeing that they had been summoned aforetime to bow in adoration while they were whole (and had refused). (XI: 42)

The verse tells that on the Last Day when the hour of Judgment will arrive (when all mystery will vanish and reality will be fully manifest) and gathered together, God will reveal Himself to them in full glory and splendor. Everyone will then be called upon to bow in adoration before Allah. The fortunate and the faithful among them who had been regular in their Namaz in the world and were, thus, accustomed to kneeling down before God will, at once, bow down in adoration, but those who in spite of being healthy and strong had not observed the Namaz in their lifetime will find that their backs had suddenly grown stiff like a board and they will remain standing with the infidels, unable to bend down and carry out the prostration. They will be covered with ignominy, their eyes will be downcast, they will not be able even to look up. Before the chastisement of hell, they will have to bear this chastisement of humiliation and disgrace. May Allah, by His Grace, save us all from it!

In truth, a habitual defaulter of the Namaz is a sort of a rebel against God and deserves all the humiliation and punishment that may be meted out to him. According to some legists of Islam, a Muslim who rejects the Namaz is liable to be punished with death like an apostate.

Brothers – We must realize it thoroughly and well that without the Namaz the claim to Islam is altogether meaningless. Namaz alone is the Islamic act that joins us with God and makes us deserving of His grace.

Blessings of Namaz

When a person stands before the Almighty with his arms folded, five times a day, and celebrates His praises and kneels down before Him and touches the ground with his forehead and makes earnest supplications to Him, he becomes worthy of His love and beneficence, his sins are forgiven with every Namaz he offers, his heart attains enlightenment and his life becomes pure. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) once gave an excellent example to illustrate this truth. He asked his Companions, “Tell me, if a stream

flows at the door of anyone of you and he takes a dip in it five times a day will there be left any grime on his body?” The Companions replied, “No, Sir. No grime will be left on his body”. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, “It is exactly the same with the five daily prayers. God removes all impurities and sins because of their auspiciousness.”

Superiority of Congregation

It appears from the Prophet’s Traditions that Namaz should be offered in congregation if one wants to derive full benefit from it. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) was so very particular about it that once while condemning the conduct of those who avoided coming to the mosque to say their prayers in congregation due to laziness or indifference he observed with anger that he felt like burning down their homes.

This one Tradition is enough to show how repugnant it is to God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that anyone should not offer his prayers in congregation. Another Tradition says: - “The reward on saying the Namaz in congregation is twenty times as much as on saying it alone.”

Apart from the reward in the Hereafter, there are many other advantages in offering up the Namaz in congregation. For instance, one acquires the habit of punctuality by attending the mosque regularly to say his prayers in congregation, it enables Muslim brethren of the locality to assemble at one place five times every day and this can be turned to great benefit, the practice of saying the Namaz regularly in the mosque congregationally makes a man thoroughly regular in his prayers for it has been seen that those who offer their prayers individually at home are often inclined to be neglectful. Yet another notable advantage in saying the prayers in congregation is that the Namaz of each participant becomes a part of the Namaz of the whole congregation in which, along with others, there are also generally present some venerable and virtuous servants of God whose Namaz is of a very high order. Their Namaz finds acceptance with Allah and the expectation from his Benevolent Grace is that when He will grant acceptance to the prayers of some members of the congregation He will, along with them, accept the prayers of the rest of the congregation too. Now, imagine what rich rewards and blessings do we deprive ourselves of when we do not go to the mosque to offer our prayers in congregation without a valid excuse.

Meekness and Humility

The offering up of the Namaz with meekness and humility means that, believing God to be Omni present and All-Seeing, the Namaz should be offered in such a way that the heart is filled with His love and stricken with awe by the thought of His Greatness and Magnificence as if a criminal was standing in front of a great judge or a mighty ruler. As a devotee stands up for Namaz he should visualize that he is standing in the presence of the Almighty – that he is standing out of reverence to Him. When he bows his head in Ruku or kneels down to perform the Sajda he should imagine that it was all being carried out in front of Allah and in expression of his own utter worthlessness and humility. Better still, whatever is recited during Namaz, whether while standing or in Ruku or Sajda, should be done with a proper understanding of its meaning, The real joy and beauty of Namaz is experienced only when it is offered with an intelligent appreciation of its

contents. It is not, at all, difficult to learn the meaning of the Suras that are generally recited in Namaz.

The devotion of the heart and the sentiments of awe and humility, indeed, are the very soul of the Namaz. The ultimate success and deliverance of believers who offer up such a kind of Namaz is assured. Declares the Quran: -

The believers must (eventually) win through those who humble themselves in their prayers. (XXIII-1)

Says the Prophet (Peace be upon him), "God has made the five daily prayers obligatory. Whoever did the Wazu properly and offered them up at the right time and carried out the Ruku and Sajda as they ought to be, humbly and reverentially, for him the promise of God is that he will be pardoned; and whoever did not do so (i.e., did not say his prayers in this manner), for him there is no such promise. God will pardon or punish him as He will please."

Method

When the time for prayers comes we should perform the Wazu carefully, believing that this washing and cleansing was necessary before we presented ourselves before the Lord and worshipped Him. The Almighty, in His benevolence, has invested the Wazu with great auspiciousness. The sins and transgressions of the parts of the body that are washed during it are forgiven because of it. The unholy effects of sins are, so to speak, washed away by the water used in the Wazu. After the Wazu, as we stand up for the Namaz, the predominant thought in our minds should be that we, the sinning and defaulting slaves were going to stand before a Lord and Master from whom nothing was concealed, who knew all about us, the hidden as well as the manifest, and before whom we would have to appear on the Day of Judgment. We should then formulate precisely the intention to offer the particular prayer and raising the hands up to our ears pronounce not only with the tongue but with our hearts, too, the formula. (Transcription Allah-o-Akbar)

God is Great

After it, with arms folded across the chest and a full awareness of the fact of our presence before the Almighty we should recite:

(Transcription: Subhaanaka Allahumma wa bihamdika wa tabara kasmuka wa ta'ala jaddo ka wa laa ilaaha ghairuka).

O God, with Thy glorification and Thy praise; blessed is Thy name, great is Thy glory, and there is no God except Thee.

(Transcription: 'Aaoozu Billah-i-Minash – Shaitanir Rajeem: Bismilla hir Rahmaanir Raheem).

I seek refuge in God from the wicked Devil and begin with the name of God, the Most Benevolent, the All-Merciful.

(Transcription: Alhamdu lil-laahi rabbil Aalameen, Ar Rahmaanir Raheem, Maaliki yaumid deen, Iyyaaka na'budu wa Iyyaaka nas-ta'een, Ihdinas siraatal mustaqeem, Siraatal ladheena anamta alaihim, ghairil maghdoobi alaihim, wa ladh dhaal leen. Aameen).

Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds the Compassionate, Thee alone do we worship, and to Thee alone do we beg for help. Show us the straight path: the path of those whom

Thou hast favoured; not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray. Amen!

Then some other Sura of the Quran, or a part thereof, should be recited. Here we give four brief Suras along with their translations.

(Transcription: Wal'asr, in-nal insaana lafee khusr, il-lal ladheena aamanu wa aamilus saali-haati wa tawaasau, bil haqqi wa tawaasau bis sabr).

By the Time! Lo, man is in a state of great loss, save those who believe and do good deeds, and exhort one another to truth, and exhort one another to patient perseverance.

(Transcription: Qul huwal laahu ahad, Al-laahus-samad. Lam yalid, wa lam yoolad, walam yakul laahoo kufuwan Ahad).

Say: "It is God, the Unique! God, the eternally besought of all! He begetteth not nor was begotten. And there is none comparable unto Him!"

(Transcription: Qul'aoozu be rabbil falaq, min shar re ma khalaq, wa min shar re ghasiqin iza waqab, wa min shar rin naffasat-i-fil uqad, wa min shar re hassidin iza hasad).

Say: "I seek refuge in the Lord of the Dawn from the mischief of created things; from the mischief of those who practice secret arts; and from the mischief of the envious' one as he practices envy".

(Transcription: Qul'aoozu be rabbil naas, malikin naas, ilaahin naas, min sharril was wasil khannaas, al lazi yo was wiso fi sudoorin naas, minal jin nat-i-wan nas).

Say: "I seek refuge in the Lord and Cherisher of mankind, the King (of Ruler) of mankind, the God (or Judge) of mankind, from the mischief of the sneaking whisperer, who withdraws (after his whisper), (the same) who whispers into the hearts of mankind among jinns and among men".

Anyhow, after the Sura of Al-Hamd Sharif some other Sura of the Quran, or a part of it, is to be recited. Only this much of the Quran is recited during each Rak'at of the Namaz, When the recitation has been completed, with the thought of the Majesty and Glory of God embedded in our hearts, we should say Allah-o-Akbar and perform the Ruku by placing our hands on our knees without bending them and pronounce a number of times the phrase: (Transcription: Subhaana rabbiyal azeem)

Glory be to my Lord, the most Elevated While reciting the above formula in the Ruku we should also meditate on its meaning, on the Glory and Magnificence of the Lord. Then the head be raised, from the Ruku, saying:

(Transcription: Sami'al laahu liman hamidah)

God has heard the servant who has praised Him (Transcription: Rabbanaa lakal Hamd) Our Lord! Praise be to Thee Then, again, we should say Allah-o-Akbar from the depth of our hearts and prostrate ourselves before the Lord and perform two Sajdas simultaneously. During the Sajda the under-mentioned formula should be repeated a number of times imagining inwardly that God was present right there, seeing and hearing everything, and we were addressing the words directly to him.

(Transcription: Subhaana rabbiyal a'laa) Glory be to my Lord, the Most High

While reciting these words in the Sajda, also, we should try sincerely to call forth within ourselves the realization of our abject helplessness and humility and the Supreme Might and Magnificence of the Lord. The deeper and stronger the realization, the better and truer will be the Namaz for this sentiment constitutes the very, life and soul of worship.

This completes one Rak'at. All the remaining Rak'ats are to be offered similarly except that (sub-haanaka-Allaahumaa) is recited only in the first Rak'at.

When we sit during a Namaz, or at the end of it, we recite (at-tahiyaat) which, indeed, is its essence and substance: (Transcription: Atthiyaatu lilaahi was salawaatu wattaiyyabaatu, as salaamu alaika ayyuhan nabeeyu wa rehmatul laahi wa bara kaatuh, as salaamu alainaa wa alaa ibaadil laahis saliheen, ash-hadu al-laa ilaaha il-lal-laahu, wa ash-hadu an-na Muhammadan abduhu wa rasooluh).

The most blessed greetings, the purest and most sincere inclinations unto Got. Peace be with thee, O Prophet, as well as the mercy of God and His blessings. Peace be with us also, and the pious servants of the Lord. I attest that there is no God if not God himself, and I attest that Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is His servant and Apostle.

If a Namaz consists of three or four Rak'ats, when we sit after the second Rak'at only the above invocation is recited, and, at the end of the last Rak'at, the Durood Sharif and a prayer are also added to it. The Durood Sharif runs as follows:

(Transcription: Allaahnmaa sal-li alaa Muhammadin wa alaa aal-I-Muhammadin kamaa sal-laita alaa Ibraaheema wa alaa a'l-I-Ibraaheema innaka hameedum majeed).

O God, bless Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his posterity (or followers) as Thou hast blest Abraham and his posterity (or followers); Verily, Thou art the Praiseworthy, the Majestic.

(Transcription: Allaahumma baarik ala Muhammadin wa alaa aal-I-Muhammadin kamaa baarak ta alaa Ibraaheema wa alaa a'l-i-Ibraaheem in-naka hameedum majeed).

O God, magnify Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and his posterity (or followers) as Thou hast magnified Abraham and his posterity (or followers); Verily, Thou art the Praiseworthy, the Majestic.

Though the Durood Sharif we invoke the favours and blessings of the Lord on the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and his family and all those who bear a special association with him. It is, after all, through the agency of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that the Divine boon of Islam and Namaz has reached us. God has, therefore, charged us with the duty of praying for him, his family and his descendants at the end of each Namaz as an expression of our gratitude to him. After the Durood Sharif it is required of us to recite the under-mentioned prayer for ourselves and with it the Namaz is brought to an end by turning the head, first to the right and then to the left, and wishing everyone peace and blessings of the Lord.

(Transcription: Allaahumma in-nee zalamtu nafsee zulman katheeran, wa laa yaghfirudh dhunooba il-laa anta, faghfir lee maghfiratum min indika warhmanee in-nika antal ghafoorur raheem).

O God, I have done my soul a great harm and no one can forgive sins if not Thee; so grant me forgiveness with Thy pleasure and have pity on me. Thou art Most Forgiving; Most Merciful.

By means of this prayer we make an open confession of our sins and misdeeds and beseech God for His Mercy and Forgiveness. It is best for us always to consider ourselves defaulters and transgressors and make an open hearted admission of our faults and lapses even after performing an act of worship of the class of Namaz, and to repose all our hopes in Divine Compassion and Mercy. We must not allow pride or vanity to come near us because of our devoutness or worship-fullness for, whatever we may do, we

can never hope to acquit ourselves fully of the duty of worshipping God and adoring Him and of rendering to Him what is His due.

All that is necessary to know about Namaz has been described in this lesson. Once again, we assert that Namaz is that elixir among the various modes of worship which can transform a man into an angel, in the sphere of his deeds and morals, provided that it is offered with due concentration and the feelings of reverence and humility. Brothers, we just cannot afford to take lightly the significance, worth and value of the Namaz.

So overpowering was the Prophet's anxiety for his followers to remain steadfast in the matter of Namaz and offer it regularly and unfailingly that he took pains to exhort them about it even during the last moments of his life when it had become extremely difficult for him to speak.

Muslims who neglect the Namaz and do nothing to establish it and to keep it alive in their midst should imagine, for the sake of God, how are they going to face the Prophet (Peace be upon him) on the Day of Reckoning, how are they going to look towards him, after disregarding so shamelessly his last will and testament during their life.

Come, let us all pray now in the words of Prophet Abraham:

(Transcription: Rab-bij alnee muqem-us-salaati wa min zurriyatee, rab-bana taqabal duaee, rabbanaghfirlee wa le waalidaiyya wa lil momineena yauma yaqoomul Hissab).

Oh my Lord! Make me one who establishes regular Prayer, and also (raise such) among my offspring; Oh my Lord! And accept Thou my Prayer. Oh our Lord! Cover (us) with Thy Forgiveness me, my parents (and all Believers) on the Day that Reckoning will be established.

Zakat

Among the fundamental tenets of Islam Zakat occupies a place next in importance only to belief and Namaz. As one would say, it is the third pillar of Islam.

Zakat means that a Muslim who is in possession of a certain amount of wealth, or more, is required by his religion to spend one fortieth of it at the end of every twelve months on the poor, the needy and the wayfarer, and on such other items of charity and good-doing as are prescribed for it by God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him).

Importance

At several places in the Quran Zakat has been enjoined on Muslims side by side with Namaz. While reading the Quran you would have come across a number of times the command: "Be steadfast in prayer; practice regular Charity." On several occasions it has been spoken of by the Quran as a characteristic feature of Muslims that, "They establish prayer and practice regular Charity". These two verses go to show emphatically that those who do not offer Namaz and fail to pay the Zakat are, in fact, not Muslims for the two basic attributes and distinguishing features of a genuine Muslim are not present in them.

Anyway, habitual neglect of Namaz and failure to practice the Zakat are, according to the Quran, not the qualities of a Muslim but of an atheist or a polytheist. About the Namaz we have a verse in Sura-I-Rum of the Quran, which reads:

Establish regular Prayer and be not ye among those who join gods with God:

And about the evasion of Zakat being the attribute of polytheists and infidels we have it in Surah Fussilat:

And woe to those who join gods with God, those who practice not regular Charity, and who even deny the Hereafter. (XLI: 76-77)

Dreadful Chastisement

The fate that awaits those who do not pay the Zakat and the punishment that is going to be handed out to them in the Hereafter is so dreadful that the mere thought of it is enough to make one's hair stand on end. For instance, it is stated in Sura-I-Tauba:

And there are those who bury gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God; announce unto them a most grievous penalty- On the Day when heat will be produced out of that (wealth) in the Fire of Hell, and with it will be branded their foreheads, their flanks and their backs. "This is the (treasure) which ye buried for yourselves. Taste ye the (treasures) ye buried." (IX: 34-35)

In one of his Traditions, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has explained in a little more detail the purport of this Sura. The Tradition when translated into English reads:

"He who possesses gold or silver (i.e., wealth) but does not fulfill the obligations that are attached to the possession of wealth (i.e., does not pay the Zakat etc.,) plates of fire will be prepared for him on the Day of judgment. These plates will be heated further in the fire of hell and then his forehead and sides and back will be branded with them. The plates will be heated up again and again to brand him and this will continue throughout the Day of Judgment which will be equal to fifty thousand years in this world."

Besides it, other horrible kinds of punishment are also mentioned in the Traditions. May Allah save us all from them!

Unjust and ungrateful

People who have been blessed by God with wealth and prosperity are, indeed, a most unjust and ungrateful lot if they do not pay the Zakat and shirk from spending their riches in His way as desired by Him. They richly deserve the punishment that is going to be meted out to them on the Day of Recompense.

Again, what is generally not realized is that it is our own poor and indigent brothers we serve when we pay the Zakat or spend our money on other acts of charity. By evading the Zakat we, as such, do a great wrong to our need and helpless brethren and play foul with their rights.

To think over it from another angle, whatever we have by way of property or wealth has, after all, been granted to us by God and we are His creatures and slaves. He commands full control and authority over our possessions as He does over our lives. Were He to demand from us every bit of our property or our life itself our duty, even then, would lie in placing everything before Him quietly and without demur. It is merely His kindness and benevolence that he has called on us to give away in Zakat only one-fortieth of the wealth He has bestowed on us.

Reward

Another extra-ordinary favour of the Lord is that He has placed an enormous reward on Zakat and other deeds of charity though whatever we give away is only out of the possessions and the wealth He has been pleased to bestow on us. It would be perfectly reasonable and justified if there had been no promise of a reward from Him on these things. If He is pleased with our conduct when we spend, from the resources He has favoured us with, in Zakat and in other charitable activities, as ordained by Him, and has given the assurance of a rich premium on such deeds of ours, it is solely due to His Infinite Kindness and Mercy. States the Quran.

The parable of those who spend their substance in the Way of God is that of a grain of corn: it growth seven ears and each ear hath a hundred grains. God giveth manifold increase to whom He pleaseth: for God careth for all and He knoweth all things. Those who spend their substance in the Cause of God, and follow not up their gifts with reminders of their generosity or with reminders of their reward is with their Lord: on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve. (II-261-262)

In the above verse, three promises have been made on behalf of God to those who practice Zakat and spend their money in His Way through other means”

One God, will repay them hundred-fold in this world for what they spend’

Two, they will be rewarded bounteously in the Hereafter;

Three, there will be for them neither fear nor grief on the Day of Judgment.

The holy Companions had the fullest faith in these premises. When verses extolling the spiritual merit of expending in the path of God and denoting what stupendous Divine reward there was on it were revealed to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the Companions came to know of them from him they were so deeply stirred that such of them as were poor and did not have the means to give away something in charity left their homes loads on their backs so that they could earn some money to spend for the sake of God.

We will reproduce here just one Tradition of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) revealing the significance and the outstanding worth and merit of Zakat.

States the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“There are three things, whoever acquires them acquires the real joy of faith Firstly, to worship Allah and no one besides Him; secondly, to believe sincerely in and, lastly, to pay the Zakat cheerfully on one’s possessions every year.”

Worldly Advantages:

Apart from the reward and recompense in the Hereafter, numerous worldly advantages also accrue from practicing the Zakat regularly and spending in other Divinely prescribed branches of charity. For example, a Muslim who discharges these obligations properly experiences a rare feeling of satisfaction and tranquility in his heart, the poor do not feel jealous of his wealth-on the other hand, they wish him well, pray for his welfare and look towards him with love and admiration, the world holds him in high esteem, everyone likes him and feels drawn towards him sympathetically and God bestows prosperity on him and multiplies his wealth.

A tradition of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) reads:

“The mandate of God is: ‘O Son of Adam! Go on spending the wealth I have given thee (on the poor, the needy and the destitute): I shall give thee more’.

And, another:

“I can swear no one will become poor because of expending in the way of God”.

May Allah endow us all with staunchest faith in the sayings of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and grant us the great good fortune to act on them!

After belief, Namaz and Zakat, the most important duty in Islam is Roza (or fasting). The Quran says:

Oh ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may (learn) self-restraint. (II: 183).

Fasting is obligatory for Muslims in the month of Ramzan. Failure to observe the fast on any day, without a valid reason, during this month is a great sin. We have it on the authority of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that, “Anyone who does not, without illness or any other valid excuse, keep fast on a single day during Ramzan will not succeed in making amends for it even if he were to keep fast daily throughout his life in atonement”. Recompense During the fast, a Muslim abstains from eating and drinking and denies himself the pleasures of legitimate carnal satisfaction solely as a measure of worship, and sacrifices his legitimate biological needs and urges exclusively for the sake of God.

God, too, therefore, has placed a most unique reward on it. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

“There is a fixed principle for rewarding all the good deeds of men, and every good deed will be rewarded in accordance with it. But the fast is an exception to this general principle. The standing will and pleasure of God is that since a man forgoes food and drink and crushes down his passions utterly for His sake, He will recompense him directly for it.”

“All the previous sins of a person are forgiven who undertakes the fasts of the month of Ramzan with full faith and with the object of propitiating God and earning His reward.”

“There are two moments of special joy for a person who fasts: one is when he breaks the fast and this he experiences here in his earthly existence, the other will come in the Hereafter when he will be presented before the Lord.”

“Roza is a shield against the fire of hell and a strong fortress (which will protect the believer from infernal chastisement).”

“The fast itself will plead with God for him who does fasting that he had gone without the day’s meals and shunned the cravings of the flesh for its sake (so he may be forgiven and rewarded to the full). God will accept the intercession”.

“The bad odour emanating from the mouth of a person who is fasting (which is sometimes produced because of empty stomach) is more pleasant in the judgment of God than the sweet smell of musk”.

Another outstanding feature of Roza, besides those given in the Traditions quoted above, is that it lifts man above the level of beasts. To eat and to drink at will and to copulate whenever the urge comes, this is the way of the animals. On the other extreme, to be immune from hunger and thirst and the impulsions of sex, to stay away permanently from

food and drink and cohabitation is the quality of angels. When a person fasts he rises above the animal existence and forges an affinity with angels.

Special Benefit

Moreover, Roza, promotes piety and righteousness in man. It produces in him the ability to control his physical desires. It teaches him how to subordinate his carnal appetites and longings of the heart to the will of God. It is, thus, most effective in the discipline and evolution of the soul.

But these benefits can be derived only when a person conscientiously strives from them and pays due respect, while he is fasting, to the instructions laid down by the Prophet (Peace be upon him) in this connection. It is most necessary to leave strictly alone not only food and drink but also all the major and minor sins. He must neither quarrel nor utter a lie nor engage himself in slander and back-biting. In brief, he should scrupulously avoid all sinful deeds, apparent as well as hidden, as is demanded of him in the Traditions. Some of the relevant Traditions are:

“When any of you keeps a fast he should not speak an indecent or filthy word on engage in a noisy scene, and were anyone to quarrel with him and call him names he should simply say, ‘I am keeping fast (therefore, I can not pay you back in the same coin)’.”

“God has no need for him to go without food and drink who cannot shun evil and falsehood even during a fast.”

“Many are there among you who fast and yet gain nothing from it except hunger and thirst.”

In sum, fasts can lead to the promotion of the virtues of piety and righteousness and impart the moral strength needed to control and discipline the sensual appetites when, together with abstention from food and drink, all the major and minor transgressions of the law of God are also zealously avoided while fasting, more specially the use of foul and filthy language, falsehood, slander and backbiting. If fasts are observed in the right spirit and with proper care and solicitude, the benefits indicated above can undoubtedly, be obtained from them.

Hajj

The last of the fundamental duties in Islam is the Hajj. Laying it down as an essential religious obligation of Muslims, the Quran says: Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to God, those who can afford the journey, but if any deny faith God stands not in need of any of His creatures. In this verse while the Hajj has been declared obligatory it has been made clear that it is applicable only to those who possess the means and material resources to undertake it. But care has been taken, in the last part of it, to warn that if Muslims whom God has blessed with the necessary material means to perform the pilgrimage still fail to carry out the duty through sheer ingratitude (as is common among the wealthy classes these days) then God does not stand in need of their pilgrimage. The Almighty, definitely, is not going to lose anything by their not performing the Hajj, the loss will entirely to theirs. They will forfeit His good graces, they will deprive themselves

of His benevolence, and God-forbid, a most lamentable fate will be waiting for them in the Hereafter. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have gone as far as to say: “A person whom God has given enough to perform the Hajj, if he still fails to do so then it does not matter at all whether he dies a Jew or a Christian,”

Brother, if there is any regard in our hearts for Islam, if we can boast of the least attachment to God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him), none of us who can afford to make the journey should remain without performing the Hajj after we have known this Traditions.

Spiritual Merit

The importance of the Hajj and the spiritual meritoriousness of those who perform it have been emphasized in a number of Traditions. We will reproduce a few of them here.

“Those who make the pilgrimage for the Hajj or the Umra they are guests of God: their petitions, if they make any to God, will be granted, and if they seek deliverance from sins, their sins will be forgiven.”

“He who performs the Hajj and commits no wicked or sinful deed during it and does not disobey God, he will return from it as pure and guiltless as he was at the time of his birth.”

“The reward for a pure and untainted hajj is paradise itself and nothing short of it.”

Immediate Gains

The remission of sins and the enjoyment of the supreme blissfulness of paradise as a result of the spiritual auspiciousness of the Hajj will, Insha Allah, surely be granted to the faithful in full measure in life to come, but the exquisite thrill and the sublime joy one experiences, the soul-stirring sensation of delight and wonderment one feels, on seeing that choicest seat of Divine splendour the House of Ka’aba and on visiting those special places in Mecca where the memories of Prophet Abraham and of our own Prophet (peace be upon whom) are still alive, are also things of the celestial world on the earth. Then the pilgrimage to the Prophet’s mausoleum at Medina, the offering up of Namaz in his own mosque, the addressing of the salutation and the benediction to him directly, the aimless wanderings in the streets and the wilderness of that blessed city, the breathing in of its air and the fragrance which always seems to be filling its atmosphere, the ethereal joy of his remembrance bursting upon one sometimes in laughter and sometimes in tears—all these things provided, of course, that one is blessed enough to feel them are the immediate rewards a pilgrim gets when he betakes himself to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Five Pillars of Islam

The five fundamental teachings of Islam we have discussed so far the Kalima, Namaz, Zakat, Roza and Hajj are known as the ‘Five Pillars of the Faith’.

A well-known Tradition of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) tells us that, “The foundation of Islam rests on these five things:

(i) The affirmation of Oneness of God, (ii) the establishment of Namaz, (iii) the payment of Zakat, (iv) the observance of Roza in the month of Ramzan, and (v) the performance of Hajj by those who can afford to make the pilgrimage.”

When these five items are spoken of as the ‘Pillars of Islam’ it means that these are the fundamental duties of the faith. If carried out properly these duties are capable of producing in us the ability to fulfill our other religious obligations as well. Here we have dwelt only on their importance and the intrinsic spiritual virtue that underlies them. Detailed rules and principles governing them can be learnt from reliable books on Islamic Jurisprudence or directly from a Muslim theologian.

Piety

The Piety forms part of the basic essentials of Islam. It means to observe the Divine Commandments conscientiously and scrupulously and to avoid all forbidden and wicked and shameful things, believing wholly and firmly in the Great Requital of the Last Day and fearing God and His wrath and punishment as a burnt child is supposed to dread the fire. In other words, it demands of us, on the one hand, to carry out, thoroughly and well, the duties prescribed by the Almighty and to fulfill zealously to the Divine law, and, on the other, to refrain strictly from doing anything that has been prohibited us by Him. It calls on us to make the fear of God our constant companion. Both in the Quran and the Traditions a very great emphasis has been laid on piety and righteousness and it has been urged on us most forcefully and persistently to cultivate it in ourselves. Some of the relevant verses of the Quran are: O ye who believe! Fear God as He should be feared, and die not except in a state of Islam. (III: 102) So fear God as much as you can; listen and obey. (LXIV: 16)

O ye who believe! Fear God and let every soul look to what (provisions) he has sent forth for the morrow. Yea, fear God; for God is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do. (LIX: 18)

The Quranic verses, further, reveal that there is a great favour of the Lord even in this world on those who fear God and practice piety and righteousness. God shows special munificence to them and makes His help available to them in a thousand ways:

And for those who fear God he (ever) prepares a way out, and He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine. (XLV: 2-3)

The Quran also tells: that those who lead a life piety and righteousness become ‘Friends of God’, and, then, for them there is neither fear nor shall they ever grieve.

Behold! Verily on the Friends of God there is no fear, nor shall they grieve, those who believe and (constantly) guard against evil; for them are Glad Tidings, in the life of the Present and the Hereafter. (X-62-64)

Some of the wonderful boons and blessings that await the pious and the righteous in the Hereafter have been revealed briefly in the following verses:

Say: Shall I give you glad tidings of things far better than those? For the righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home with Companions (pure and holy), and the good pleasure of God. For in God’s sight are (all) His servants.’ (III: 15)

And, verily, for the righteous, is a beautiful place of (Final) Return-Gardens of Eternity whose doors will ever be opened to them; therein will they recline (at ease); therein can they call (at pleasure) for fruit in abundance and (delicious) drink; and beside them will be chaste women restraining their glances, (companions) of equal age. Such is the

promise made to God for the Day of Account! Truly, such will be Our Bounty (to you) It will never fail. (XXXVIII: 49-54)

In the Quran, again, men of piety are given the very special tidings of place of exceptional nearness to God in the Hereafter: As to the Righteous, they will be in the midst of Gardens and Rivers, in an Assembly of Truth in the presence of a Sovereign Omnipotent. (LIV: 54-55)

The sole criterion of honour and superiority with God is piety.

Verily, the most hooured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. (XLIX: 13) Similarly, it has been declared by the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) in one of his Traditions that:

“Nearest and dearest to me are those who possess the virtue of piety no matter what race or nationality they belong to or which country they live in.”

Piety (i.e., fear of God and an over powering anxiety for the Hereafter) is the root of all virtue. It is the measure of all goodness. We will be as good and noble and as free from what is based on corrupt as there is piety in us. Another of the Prophet’s Traditions reads: “A holy Companion once said to the Prophet (Peace be upon him), Sir, I have heard so many of your valuable sayings that I fear I may not be able to remember them all. So I request you for a comprehensive advice, which may suffice for me always. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, ‘Fear God in proportion to your knowledge and make that fear and piety the guiding principles of your life.’”

“He who has fear will set out early and he who will set out early will reach the destination in time.”

The fortunate and the successful, indeed, are those who fear God and prepare for the life to come. Even a single tear shed out of fear of God and of His anger and punishment carries a great value in His eyes.

“There are two drops,” says the Prophet (Peace be upon him), “and two marks than which nothing is more precious to God. Of the two drops so exceedingly dear to Him, one is the tear that may have fallen from the eyes of anyone out of His fear, and the other is the drop of blood that is shed in His path. Similarly, of the two marks one is the mark sustained in the path of God (i.e., the scar left behind by a wound sustained in Jihad), and the other is the mark which may have developed as a result of the carrying out of a religious obligation (as for example, the marks one often sees on the forehead and knees of those who offer the Namaz regularly).” We will take up one more Tradition of the Prophet (Peace be upon him). It says:

“Never can he go to hell who weeps in the fear of God.” The sum and substance of the entire discussion is that it is great, indeed, to be blessed with true fear of God and a genuine solicitude for the Hereafter. It can literally revolutionize one’s whole existence.

Brothers, know it thoroughly and well that one who is God fearing in this transitory world will have absolutely nothing to worry in the Hereafter. He will have neither fear nor anxiety. He will dwell in eternal peace, comfort and happiness by the Grace of God. On the contrary, he who is not God fearing and shows no concern for After life and refuses to look beyond the pleasures of material existence for him there will be terrible anguish and distress in the life to come. For thousands of years he will be shedding tears of blood. The surest way to develop piety, i.e., God fearing-ness and solicitude for the Hereafter is to avail oneself of the company of the devout servants of the Lord who fear Him and obey His commands honestly. Then there are good and reliable religious books,

which should be read regularly, and, if a person is illiterate, he should have them read out to him by others. Lastly, it is advisable to meditate in solitude on death and on the rewards one is going to get from God for one's good and virtuous deeds and the punishment that is going to be awarded by Him for one's sins and transgressions against the Divine Law. One should dwell mentally on one's state and visualize what is going to pass in the grave, what will one's condition be when men will be raised up again on the Last Day and produced before God? What will one do when the balance sheet of one's conduct on the earth will be unrolled? Where will one, then, hide one's face?

Honesty in monetary dealings

Uprightness and honesty in monetary dealings forms a vital part of the fundamental teachings of Islam.

The Quran as well as the Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) are emphatic that a true Muslim is he who is honest and upright in his business and monetary transactions, keeps his word and fulfills his promises, shuns fraud and avoids deceit and perfidy, encroaches not upon the rights of others nor takes part in wrongful litigation, does not give false evidence, and abstains from making dishonest money as from usury and graft. Whoever is not free from these vices is, according to the Quran and the Traditions, not a true believer but a renegade and a worthless transgressor.

We now proceed to examine some of the relevant Quranic verses and Traditions. A short verse of the Quran says:

O ye who believe! Eat not up each other's property by unfair and dishonest means. (IV: 29)

The verse forbids Muslims against all unclean and corrupt means of making money, such as, dishonest trading, embezzlement, gambling, speculation and bribery. Then there are verses in which these hateful practices are dealt with one by one. For instance, a severe warning is given in the following verse to traders who cheat in weighment:

Woe to those that deal in fraud, those who, when they have to receive by measure from men, exact full measure, but when they have to give by measure or weight to men, give less than due. Do they not think that they will be called to account on a Mighty Day when (all) mankind will stand before the Lord of the Worlds. (LXXXIII: 1-6)

In the same way the under mentioned verse exhorts Muslims to be very particular about their trusts and about other people's rights.

God doth command you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due. At two places in the Quran a chief distinguishing feature of Muslims is said to be that they are:

Those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants. (XXIII: 8)

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) used often to say in his sermons:

“Remember, there is no faith in him who is not trustworthy; there is no place for him in religion who cares not for his pledged word or promise.”

Another Tradition says: “The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he is false; when he promises, he fails; and when he is trusted, he plays false.”

Condemning those who cheat in business the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said, “He who cheats is not of us. Deceitfulness and fraud are things that lead one to Hell.”

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) of God once came upon a heap of corn in the market of Medina and thrust his hand into it. His fingers felt damp. On being asked, the trader replied that rain had fallen upon it. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) observed, “Why did you not then keep (the wet portion of) it above the dry corn, so that men may see it? He who deceives is not one of us.”

Thus, traders who deceive by showing to customers a false sample or by concealing from them the defects of the article they offer for sale are not true Muslims in the judgment of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) and, God-forbidding, they are going to end up in hell. Another Tradition says:

“The seller must explain to the buyer the defects, if any, in the quality of the article offered for sale. Should this not be done, the seller will permanently be caught in the wrath of Allah (according to another narrator the exact words are, ‘he will always be cursed by the angels’).”

In short, all manner of deceit and dishonesty in business is prohibited in Islam. It has been proclaimed to be an act worthy of unqualified condemnation. The holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) has expressed his strong dislike for those who do so. He has said that he will have nothing to do with them; they do not belong to him. Likewise, bribery and usury, although they might be practiced by mutual consent and agreement, are totally disallowed to Muslims and those who are guilty of them have been condemned squarely in the Traditions. A well-known Tradition on usury reads:

“The curse of God rests on him who offers loan on usurious terms, and on him who receives, and on those who are witnesses to the transaction, and on the writer who writes the deed thereof.”

As for bribery, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has, in a Tradition, “condemned alike the giver of bribes, and the taker of bribes in deciding cases”.

A Tradition goes even to the extent of saying that, “If a person made a recommendation for anyone in a just matter and the gratified party gave him something as a gift (in return for it) and he accepted it then he committed a grave error (meaning that it, too, is a form of bribery).”

Worse still is the usurpation of another’s property by force or fraud or dishonest litigation. We have it on the authority of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that:

“Whoever occupies land belonging to another unjustly will be sunk into the ground along with that plot of land on the Doomsday till he reaches the lowest layer of the earth.

“He who acquires the property of a Muslim unjustly by taking a false oath (before an Officer) is debarred by God from entering Paradise and the Fire of Hell is made inevitable for him”, On hearing it a Companion is reported to have asked, “Even if it be a minor thing?” The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is said to have replied, “Yes, even if it be a twig of Pilo (a plant which grows wild. Its twigs are used for cleaning the teeth).

The Prophet (Peace be upon him), again is reported to have warned a person who was very fond of entering into litigation with others in these strong words, “Remember, he who will obtain the property of another by swearing a false oath will appear as a leper before God (in the Day of Judgment).

“Whoever laid his claim on a thing that was not his is not of us. He will do well to reserve a place for himself in the hell.”

It is narrated that one day, after the morning prayers the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) stood up and said thrice with great feeling that, “Perjury has been made the equivalent of Polytheism.”

III-Gotten Wealth

Money or property, which is acquired through unfair means, as we have just indicated, is positively unclean and unlawful and anyone who makes use of it and spends it on his needs does himself a great harm. As the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) has warned, his prayers will not find acceptance with God, his supplications will not be answered, his petitions will not be granted, and in case he does good deeds they will avail him nothing. In the Hereafter, there will be no share for him in the special favours and good graces of the Lord.

A Tradition says: “If a person earns or acquires anything through dishonest means and then gives away a part of it in charity, his act of charity will not be accepted, and if he will spend from it on his needs there will be no auspiciousness or real prosperity in it, and should he leave it behind to his descendants on his death it will serve for him as hell’s provision. Believe it, God does not erase evil with evil (i.e., charity and salvation). One impurity cannot remove another; it cannot make it pure.”

And another:

“God is pure Himself and He accepts only offerings that are pure.”

The Prophet (Peace be upon him), at the end of the Tradition also narrated the story of a man “who undertakes a long and tedious journey (to supplicate to God at a haloed place) and arrives (at his destination) in such a state that his hair is disheveled and his body is covered from head to foot with dust. He throws up his hands towards the heavens and cries out, “O Lord! O my Preserver!’ but his sustenance is of the impure and he has been brought up on what is polluted; how can his prayer be granted when such is the case?”

The above amply demonstrates that when a person draws his livelihood from impure means his prayers no longer remain worthy of being answered. Yet another Tradition of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) reads:

“If a person buys a cloth for ten dirhams and one of them is tainted (i.e., it has been earned dishonestly), none of his Namaz will be accepted by God as long as he wears it.”

And, here is one more:

“The flesh gathered on one’s body by means of unclean earning deserves to be thrown into the Fire”.

Brothers If we have the tiniest spark of faith left in our breasts we must make up our minds, once for all, after hearing these Traditions, that whatever poverty and hardship we may have to endure in the world we will never care to make a single penny from unclean and dishonest sources and will always content ourselves with what we earn through honest lawful means.

Clean Earning and Honest Trade

Just as Islam has condemned all unclean and unlawful means of making money as wicked and sinful and denounced all profits derived from them as filthy and devilish, in the same

way it has proclaimed great virtue in seeking one's livelihood honestly and in engaging oneself cleanly in trade or profession. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said:

“To earn a clean living is also a duty next only to the prescribed duties of the faith.”

“The cleanest food is that which has been earned by the labour of his hand. Indeed, Prophet (Peace be upon him) David used to work with his own hands for the food he ate.”

“The trader who plies his trade cleanly and honestly will rise in the hereafter in the company of Prophet (Peace be upon him)'s saints and martyrs.

Kindness and Compassion in Monetary Dealings

Islam has laid great stress on honesty and truth fullness in trade and other monetary dealings and described profound virtue and excellency in it. It has declared it to be a means of gaining nearness unto God. Islam, likewise, enjoins on us to be kind and avoid harshness and severity in our monetary transactions and has promised great spiritual advantage in it also. We will reproduce two of the Prophet's Traditions here:

“Blessings of God be on him who is mild and gentle in his business transactions and in the realization of his dues.”

“God will protect him from the agonies of the Day of judgment who allows respite to a poor and indigent servant of His in the payment of his debt or writes off the debt (altogether or a part of it).”

These Traditions are meant for merchants and other wealthy men from whom people borrow money in the hour of their need. As for the borrowers, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) used to urge them to do their best to pay back their debts quickly lest they die in a state of indebtedness, with the claim of anyone lying unsettled on their heads. How strict the Prophet (Peace be upon him) was in this regard can be imagined from the following Traditions:

“If a person is killed in the path of God then all his sins will be forgiven (by virtue of his martyrdom). But if he owes anyone anything even martyrdom will not secure his release from it.”

“By the lord in whose power lies the life of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), if a person falls a martyr in the path of God and returns to life and is killed again in the path of God and returns to life and is killed again in the path of God and returns to life only to be killed once more in the cause of God and there is still a debt outstanding against him, (until it is settled) even he will not be able to enter Paradise”.

These two Traditions are quite sufficient to show what great importance Islam attaches to monetary affairs and the rights of men. May Allah grant us the wisdom to understand their delicacy and significance and to make it our constant endeavour to assure that the claims of no one are left unsatisfied by us!

Social conduct and mutual relations

Social conduct, good manners and respect for the rights of each other, again, form an important part of Islamic teachings. One can become a good and true Muslim only when one also observes faithfully the social code of Islam by which we mean the rules and

regulations governing the modes and manners of behaviour between man and man and man and society as laid down by it. For instance, what should the attitude of parents be towards their children and of children towards their parents? What sort of conduct should prevail between brothers and between brothers and sisters? How should husband and wife live together? How are we to treat those who are older than ourselves and those that are younger? What are the rights of our neighbours on us? How should the rich behave towards the poor and the poor towards the rich? What mode of relationship should obtain between master and servant? And, so forth. Islam has provided us with a most precise and complete guidance on how are we to fulfill our social responsibilities and act in our dealings and relationships with all those individuals and groups with whom we come into contact, one way or the other, in the different walks of our daily life, and this is what we are going to discuss in the present chapter.

Rights of Parents

The most primary relationship in this world exists between man and his parents. In Islam the rights of parents have been described as next only to the rights of God. To quote from the Quran:

The Lord has ordained that ye worship none but Him; and to show kindness to your parents whether one or both of them attain to old age with thee; and say not to them "Fie!" neither reproach them; but speak to them both with respectful speech; and defer humbly to them out of tenderness; and say, "Lord! have compassion on them both, even as they reared me when I was little." (XVII: 22-24)

Another verse of the holy Book goes on to tell that should the parents of a person be polytheists and want him also to follow their faith, he ought to decline to obey them, but even then he should continue to treat them well and to behave towards them with respect.

The exact words of the verso are:

"But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and consideration)." (XXXI: 15)

Besides the Quran, and in the Traditions also, a very great stress has been laid on rendering full devotion and obedience to one's parents. To disobey one's parents, to ignore their feelings, or to disregard their comfort or happiness in any other way has been characterized by the Prophet (Peace be upon him) as a grievous sin. Take these Traditions, for example:

"In the pleasure of parents lies the pleasure of God, and in their displeasure, the displeasure of God."

Once a person enquired from the Prophet (Peace be upon him), "What are the rights of parents?" The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) replies, "Parents are the heaven and hell of their children (meaning that salvation and paradise could be gained by serving one's parents well while disobedience to and ill-treatment of them could lead one to hell.)"

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) once observed. "Every time a dutiful son or daughter looks with affection and respect towards his or her father or mother God writes against his or her name the reward of an approved Hajj," Upon this, some of the Companions enquired, "Our Master! Suppose a person does so a hundred times each day, while he,

even then, be given the reward of an approved Hajj for every glance he casts? ” “Yes”, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, “God is Most Great, Most Holy (meaning that the bounty of the Lord is boundless).”

“Heaven lies under the feet of the parents.”

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) once said to the Companions that the most mortal sins in the world were three:

“To associate anyone with God, to disobey parents, and to give false evidence.”

Again, “There are three types of men towards whom God will not look with mercy on the Day of Judgment, and one of them are those who disobey their parents.”

Rights of Children

Islam has laid an equal stress on the rights of children on parents also. We will leave out here the responsibility of parents to feed and clothe their children since there is found in them an instinctive awareness of it and they carry it out normally and in the natural way.

The rights of our children about which we are generally careless and neglectful are those concerning their moral and religious training and up-bringing. Islam has made it minding on us, as a matter of duty that we brought up our wards and children in such a way that they did not have to make their way to hell after death. We are required to be extremely careful in this respect. Says the Quran:

O ye who believe! save yourselves And your families from the Fire of Hell. (LXVI: 6)

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) has, in a Tradition, stressed the need of giving proper training to children in these words:

“No better gift can there be from a father to his children than the he brought them up properly.”

Some parents are more fond of their sons than daughters. They take a great interest in the upbringing of their male issues while the welfare and training of the female ones is generally neglected by them. Daughters are, sometimes, considered to be a burden. For this reason, Islam has devoted particular attention to the proper upbringing of the girls and extolled it as an act of great virtue. The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said:

“Anyone who has a daughter or a sister and he treats her well and looks after her welfare and training carefully and marries her at the right place, God will reward him with Paradise.”

Mutual Rights Between Husband and Wife

Conjugal relationship occupies a place of outstanding importance in the economy of human affairs. It is a most strong and intimate tie that binds husband and wife into a life-long partnership. Islam therefore, has furnished a complete guidance in respect of it as well. In a nutshell, Islam demands from wives to be scrupulously faithful to their husbands and to remain their best friends and true well wisher and never to betray their trusts. The Quran declares:

Therefore, the righteous women are Obedient, and guard (in the husband’s) absence. (IV: 34)

And from husbands it requires that they should give of their love ungrudgingly to their wives, maintain them as best as they can within their means and leave nothing to be desired by way of their emotional contentment. Says, again, the Quran:

Live with your wives on a footing of kindness and equality. (IV: 19)

In keeping with these teachings of the Quran, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) used to attach profound importance to the harmony of married life among Muslim. He used to urge upon Muslim husbands and wives to keep each other happy and to attend to each other's needs and interests with loving care. Some of his Traditions in this connection read:

“If a man calls his wife to him and the wife refuses and he stays annoyed with her during the night, the angels will not cease to curse her name till day break.”

“The woman who dies in such a state that her husband is pleased with her shall go to Heaven.”

“By the Lord in whose power lies the life of Muhammad (Peace be upon him), no woman can fulfill the rights of God who does not fulfill the rights of her husbands.”

“Charge you to be kind to your wives. Remember this advice of mine. See, they are subordinate to you and in your power.”

“Good among you are those who are good to their wives.”

“He is the most perfect believer (in God) who is perfect in his manners and most affectionate towards his wife and children.”

Rights of Relatives

Besides our parents and children and husbands or wives there also exists a special tie of kinship between us and our other relatives. Islam has paid due attention to this aspect of our social existence, too, and evolved certain rights and duties in respect to it. Thus, in the Quran we are told to be kind to our kinsmen and one who disregards and pays no heed to the bonds of kinship has been condemned as transgressor and a sinner of the worst order.

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) once said, “He who violates the rights of kinsmen and shows no respect for the bonds of kinship in his conduct shall not go to heaven.”

In this connection a special advice of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) is that if a relative violates the ties of relationship with regard to us even then we should continue to fulfil, on our part, the obligations we have towards him. The exact words of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) are, “If a near relative treats you indifferently and ignores the bond of relationship do not turn your back on him but keep on discharging, on your part, the obligations of relationship towards him.”

Rights of the Old on the Young and of the Young on the Old

It is a general principal of Islamic social behaviour that everyone should respect his elder and carry himself with due deference in their presence. In the same way, those who are older are required to treat those who are younger to them with kindness and affection, even if there be no relationship between them.

Said the Prophet (Peace be upon him): “He is not of us who is not affectionate to those who are younger than himself and respect to those who are older.”

“For the young man who will honour an old man because of his years God will appoint men who will honour him in his old age.”

Rights of Neighbours

Apart from relatives, there obtains a permanent association also between a man and his neighbours. In Islam full attention has, accordingly, been paid to it and definite instructions have been provided for our guidance in this behalf as well. The Quran calls upon us to be good and courteous in our behaviour towards our neighbour in the same way as it has commanded us to maintain the best of conduct towards our parents, brothers and sisters and towards our other near relatives:

Neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, the companions by your side (IV: 36)

Three categories of neighbours have been spoken of in this verse and it is expected of us to maintain cordial relations with all of them.

The phrase 'neighbours who are near' denotes neighbours who may also happen to be our relatives; 'neighbours who are strangers' denotes those with whom we have no family ties, and 'companions by your side' means persons with whom we come into contact temporarily in the course of our daily activities, like a casual acquaintance, an intimate friend, a fellow-traveler, a classmate and a colleague, whatever their religious denomination. Islam reminds us that we have an obligation to be friendly and sympathetic towards all the three categories of neighbour. Says the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him):

"He who believes in God and the Day of Recompense will never harm his neighbour."

"He is not a Muslim who eats his fill and lets his neighbour go hungry."

It is narrated that the Apostle of God once emphatically exclaimed, "He- He is not a believer in God." The question was asked, "O Apostle of God! Who is not a believer in God?" The Prophet (Peace be upon him) observed, "Whose neighbour does not feel secure on his account."

Yet another Tradition reads:

"He shall not go to Heaven from whose mischief his neighbour do not feel secure."

It is reported that once a Companion said to the Prophet (Peace be upon him), "Sir, there is a woman about whom it is said that she offers a great deal of prayers, observes a great deal of fasts and does a great deal of charity, but she also causes a great deal of trouble to her neighbour owing to the sharpness of her tongue." The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) observed: "She will go to Hell." The Companion then said, "O Apostle of God! There is another woman about whom it is said that she engages herself little in prayers, fasting and charity (that is, she observes the supererogatory prayers, fasts and charity less than the first woman) but never offends her neighbour by her tongue: " The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) observed, "She will be in Heaven."

Brothers, such are the rights of neighbours in Islam. Alas, how heedless have we now grown to them!

Rights of the Weak and Poor

So far we have dealt with the rights of men with whom we have an intimate personal connection of some kind, whether of family or neighborhood or business or friendship. In addition to these, Islam has conferred certain special rights on the weaker and the poorer sections of the society and on every kind of a needy person. It has been made the duty of

all well-to-do people to look after their well-being and to serve them in whatever way they can. The more prosperous among Muslims should realize that their less fortunate brethren, too, have a share in their wealth and other capabilities. The Quran has enjoined at a number of places that the needs of the orphans, the weak and the indigent and other needy and destitute persons should be taken care of, the hungry should be fed, the ill-clad should be clothed, and, so on.

It is narrated that once the Prophet (Peace be upon him) joined two of his fingers and showing them to the Companions said, “He who supports an orphan shall be as close to me in Heaven as are these fingers to each-other.”

He is also reported to have observed: “He who endeavors to relieve the widow, the depressed and the needy is as one who strives in the service of God, and, in Divine reward, he is as one who permanently fasts during the day and spends one’s nights in prayers.”

“Feed the hungry, visit the sick and free the captives.” “Help the distressed and be a guide to those who have lost their way.” No distinction has been drawn in the above Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. All poor and needy persons have a claim on us no matter to what religion they belong. We cannot withhold our helping hand from anyone on the ground that he is not a co-religionist. In some Traditions, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has exhorted us to show kindness also to animals and promised great reward to those who take pity on these dumb creatures of the Lord.

Islam, truly, is a blessing to the entire universe and the whole of creation, and our guide and master, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon whom), “a mercy to the worlds.” The pity is that we ourselves have wandered away from his teachings. Would to God that we, too, became a mercy to the whole world by becoming true Muslims.

Rights of Muslims on Each-Other

Further, there is a special claim of Muslims on each-other which flows out of the common bond of Islam.

Said the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“Every Muslim is a Muslim’s brother. He should neither harm him himself nor leave him alone (when someone else does so but try his best to help him and to protect him). Whoever among you will fulfill the need of his brother God will take it upon Himself to fluffing his needs, and a Muslim who will remove the distress of a Muslim brother will, in, return find a distress of his removed by God on the Day of Requit, and anyone who will hide the shame of a Muslim, his sins will be hidden by God on the Last Day.”

“Do not bear a grudge or enmity against each other, do not be jealous of each-other, and do not indulge in backbiting.”

“Live like brothers and the servants of One God. It is not allowed to a Muslim to cease to be on talking terms with a Muslim for more than three days.”

“The life, honour and property of a Muslim are sacred for another.”

We will not close the present discussion on social relations and mutual rights and duties with the following Tradition, which alone is enough to fill our hearts with fear.

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported one day to have put the question to the Companion, “Who is a pauper?” The Companions replied, “Our master! A pauper is a

person who is without a penny of his own.” The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, “No. A pauper among us is a man who will appear on the Day of Recompense with a large stock of prayers, fasting and alms-giving but in the world he would have abused someone, slandered someone, beaten someone and cheated and transgressed against someone. When he will be made to stand at the Place of Reckoning those against whom he would have been guilty of these transgressions will come forward and they will be given from his good deeds what will be due to them till all the fund of his good deeds will be exhausted and, then, the sins of the aggrieved parties will be forced down upon him and he will, ultimately, be thrown into Hell.”

Brothers, Ponder over this Tradition and think how utterly ruinous and disastrous it is for us to encroach upon the right of others and to indulge in back-biting, slander of abuse. If you have transgressed against anyone or usurped his rights, make amends for it in your lifetime, pay back to him what may be his due or seek his forgiveness, and resolve sincerely to be careful in future otherwise it is going to cost you very dear in the life to come.

Good manners and noble qualities

Good manners and noble qualities of mind and character enjoy a place of crucial importance in the structure of Islamic teaching. Moral evolution and uplift was one of the main objects for which the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) was raised up. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) himself has said:

“I have been sent down by God to teach moral virtues and to evolve them to highest perfection.”

Importance

An idea of the supreme importance Islam attaches to the cultivation of good manners and noble moral qualities can be obtained from the under-mentioned Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“The best of you are those who possess the best manners.”

“On the Day of Recompense nearest to me will be one who displays in one’s daily life the best of manners.”

“On the Day of Reckoning the most weighty item in the ‘Balance of Deeds’ will be good manners.”

Once a Companion asked the Prophet (Peace be upon him), “What is there that takes a Muslim to Paradise? ” The Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, “Fear of God and good manners.”

The Prophet (Peace be upon him), again, is reported to have said, “A Muslim with good manners and good moral disposition gets the same reward as he who fasts (permanently) during the day and spends his nights in prayer.”

The last Tradition tells that a believer who possess good manners and carries out scrupulously the moral duties imposed on him by God but does not engage himself much in supererogatory fasts and prayers attains the degree of excellence of the man who stands up in prayer all night and fasts all day long.

The Curse of bad manners

We have been warned by the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) in an equally forceful manner against the curse of bad manners. He has said:

“A man with bad manners and a bad moral conduct shall not enter Paradise.”

“No sin is more detestable to God than bad manners.”

Some More Important Virtues

Though in the Quran and the Traditions we are taught to cultivate all good and noble moral and social qualities and to avoid everything that is mean or wicked, here we will take up only such virtues as are more important and without which no one can hope to be a good Muslim and a true believer.

Truthfulness

Truthfulness is a matter of such supreme consequence in Islam that in addition to speaking the truth always a Muslim is exhorted also to keep company only with those that are truthful. The Quran states:

“O ye who believe! Fear God and be only with those who are true (in words and deed).” (IX: 119)

Says the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“He who wishes to love God and His Apostle, or wishes God and His Apostle to love him, must take care to speak nothing but the truth whenever he speaks.”

“Speak the truth even if you see your ruin or death in it for, surely, salvation and life lie alone in truth, and avoid falsehood even if it may hold out to you the promise of success and salvation for the end of falsehood is nothing but failure and frustration.”

Once the Prophet (Peace be upon him) was asked, “What is the hallmark of the dwellers of Paradise?” The Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, “Truthfulness.”

Conversely, another Tradition reads:

“To be a liar is one of the special sins of a hypocrite.”

Trustworthiness

Closely allied to truthfulness is the quality of trustworthiness. It is important branch of it. Islam has laid a special emphasis on it also. Here is what the Quran says :

God doth command you to render back you Trusts to those to whom they are due. (IV: 58)

And the Traditions:

“People! In whom there is no trustworthiness, in him there is, so to speak, no faith.”

“Look not alone at anyone’s prayers and fasts to decide about his spiritual excellence (that is, do not be impressed by anyone’s spirituality simply because you find him devout in his prayers and fasts). You should also see that he is truthful when he speaks, restores honestly what he has received in trust to whom it is due, and remains righteous in times of adversity and suffering.”

Justice

Justice is an integral part of Islamic ethics. We must practice it in all spheres of life. The Quran states:

God commands justice and doing of good. (XVI : 19)

In Islam we are commanded to be just and fair not only towards our own people or co-religionists but also towards others even if they be the enemies of our life, property or faith. It is candidly stated in the Quran that :

And let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety. (V: 9)

The above verse enjoins justice to those also, individuals as well as communities, who may be harboring ill-will against us. Otherwise, we are sure to incur the displeasure of God and become grievous sinners and criminals in His sight. To refer now to some of the Tradition:

“The most beloved of men in the sight of God, on the Day of Resurrection, and the nearest to Him, shall be the just leader; and the most hateful of men in the sight of God on the Day of Resurrection, and the farthest removed from Him, shall be the tyrannical ruler.”

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have enquired one day from the Companions. “Do you know who will be the first to come under the shadow of Divine Mercy on the Day of Requitall?” The Companions replied, “God and His Apostle know best.”

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) then said, “They will be those who accept a trust when it is offered to them and restore it willingly to the rightful claimant when they are asked to do so, and who judge in respect of others exactly as they would in respect of themselves.”

The pity is that we ourselves have forgotten the glorious teachings of Islam. If we can produce these qualities in us today and become truthful in word and deed, and honest in the matter of our trusts and promises, and just and fair in our dealings with others, the success of the world is bound to kiss our feet and we will attain a high place in the paradise too.

Compassion and Forgiveness

To feel pity on a fellow human being in distress, to be compassionately drawn towards him, to bring him succor, to pardon the guilty and the defaulter are virtues which are valued very highly in Islam. Take these Traditions, for instance:

“Show kindness, and kindness will be shown to you; forgive, and you will be forgiven.”

“They will not obtain the mercy of God in whose hearts there is no feeling of kindness for others.”

“His sins will not be forgiven by God who does not forgive the faults of the others.”

“God will have mercy upon them that are merciful. Treat kindly the dwellers of the earth, He who dwells in the heavens will treat you kindly.”

It is apparent from the last Tradition that our kindness and gentility is not to be confined to our own people alone. We ought to be kind and compassionate towards friend and foe alike and to all the creatures that exist on the earth.

It is reported from the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that once a person who was traveling by road saw a dog licking wet earth in the agony of its thirst. The traveler was moved by the spectacle and gave water to the dog to drink. This simple service of the man to the thirsting dog pleased God so much that he blessed him with salvation.

Tenderness

Tenderness is monetary dealings, and in all other fields of one's activity, and the readiness to oblige and to put others at ease are all virtues of the highest order in the Islamic pattern of morality. We will reproduce two Traditions of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) in support of our contention Said he:

“Hell's fire is forbidden for those that are mild and gentle and make it easy for others to deal with them.”

“God is compassionate and likes compassion in His creatures. He grants more to the kind and the tender-hearted than to those that are harsh and severe.”

Self- restraint

Tolerance, affability, self-restraint, and the ability to control one's temper and to overlook what is unpleasant and disagreeable are qualities that Islam wants everyone to cultivate. Believers who possess these fine moral attributes hold a very high place in the estimation of God.

In the Quran where a mention is made of the blessed ones for whom the paradise has been laid out such people are specifically referred to:

Who restrain anger and pardon (all men) (III: 134)

Said the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“God will hold back His punishment from him who will hold back his anger.”

Blessed, indeed, are men who remember these verses and Traditions during moments of provocation and exercise restraint, and, in return, God stays His chastisement from them!

Gentleness of speech

Gentleness of speech is a religious virtue in Islam and rudeness a sin. The Quran declares:

Speak fair to the People. (II: 83)

We have it from the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that:

“To speak politely is piety and a kind of charity.”

“To indulge in intemperate language and in harsh behaviour is to perpetrate an injustice and the home of injustice is Hell.”

“Rudeness in speech is hypocrisy (i.e., the quality of a hypocrite).”

Humility

Humility is a virtue Islam wants its followers to practice as a distinguishing feature of their moral and spiritual behaviour. It does not become a Muslim to be haughty or vainglorious.

Greatness with God is not for those who look down upon others. Instead, it belongs to those desist from thinking too highly of themselves and practice meekness and humility.

In the words of Quran:

And the servants of (God) Most Gracious are those who walk on earth in humility. (XXX: 63)

The Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not highhandedness or mischief on earth. (XXXVIII: 83)

The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said:

“He who observes humility God will make him so exalted that, ultimately, he will attain the highest grade in Paradise.”

On the other hand, pride is so greatly repugnant to God that the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) has warned us, again and again, against it in such strong words:

“Whoever has pride in his heart even of the weight of an atom shall be cast head-long into the Hell of God.”

“Whoever has pride in his heart even of the weight of a mustered seed, shall not enter Paradise.”

“Beware of pride! Pride was the sin which first of all ruined the Devil.”

May almighty God save us all from the Satanic evil of pride, and endow our hearts and minds with meekness and humility which He admires so much and which is the symbol of His slaves.

It needs, however, be remembered that it is demanded of us to practice meekness and humility in our personal matters and not in matters where truth of faith is involved. When it comes to faith or truth we must be bold and outspoken and give the fullest proof of courage and firmness of this is the will of God for such occasions.

The way of a Muslim, in sum, is that while he is meek and humble in his own individual sphere of existence, he is firm like a rock and allows neither fear nor weakness to come near him where faith or truth or justice is at stake.

Courage and fortitude

There occur periods of hardship and adversity in the lives of men. Sometimes there is want, sometimes there is disease, sometimes our enemies harass us. And, so forth. For such situations the teaching of Islam is that we should bear them with courage and fortitude, remain firm and stout of heart and do not waver from our principles in spite of thousands trials and calamities that may assail us. For such men there is the assurance of the Quran that they are the Beloved of God:

For God loves those who are patient and persevering (III: 146)

God, surely, is with those who patiently persevere. (II: 153)

And to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and through all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing. (II: 177)

And the Prophet (Peace be upon him) says:

“No boon conferred on man more precious than that of patience.”

“Patience is one-half of faith.”

Contrarily, impatience, chicken-heartedness and cowardice are the most lamentable of evils against which the Prophet (Peace be upon him) used to beg God for refuge in his prayers.

Sincerity

Sincerity is the life and soul of entire moral edifice of Islam, nay, of Islam itself. By sincerity we mean that all our deeds and actions should solely be for the sake of God and prompted by no other urge than to earn His approbation. Apart from it, there must be no other desire, motive or intention behind whatever we do.

Monotheism, which is the arch-stone of Islam, attains fulfillment through sincerity. Faith in Divine Unity remains imperfect unless all our acts are performed wholly for the sake

of God, and we have no other objective before us while carrying them out except and winning of Divine pleasure and reward. States the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“He who loves or hates, offers favours or withholds them, and whatever he does, does so for the sake of God, he perfects his faith.”

It shows that a perfect Muslim in the sight of God is only he who succeeds in subordinating his entire conduct, his social relations and all his other affairs to the Will of God and is not influenced in them by his personal desire or likes or dislikes or by any other urges or impulses.

Another Tradition reads:

“God is not regardful of your fine visages or your wealth. He is regardful only of your hearts and intentions.”

The idea of the above Tradition is that God will judge and requite on the basis of our motives and intentions. Now, here is a Tradition with which we propose to round off the present discussion. About this Tradition it is reported that Abu Huraira often used to faint while he related it. It says:

“The first of those who shall be called to account, on the Day of Resurrection, shall be one who had learned the whole Quran by heart, and he who had been killed in the way of God and he who had an abundance of wealth. Then shall God say to him who had got the whole of Quran by heart, ‘Did I not teach thee what revealed to my Prophet (Peace be upon him)?’ He will say, ‘Yes, my Lord!’ God will ask, ‘And what hast thou done with regard to what thou didst learn therein?’ He will say, ‘I was constantly at it in the hours of night and in the hours of day. I learnt it myself and taught it to others, and I did it all for Thy sake alone.’ God will say, ‘Thou art a liar; thou didst only desire that men should say that such an one was a reciter of the Quran and that has been said already’ “And the master of wealth shall be brought before God, and God shall say, ‘Did I not give thee an abundance of wealth, so that thou wast not in want of anything?’ He will say, ‘Yes, my Lord!’ God will say, ‘And what hast thou done with what I gave thee?’ He will answer, ‘I regarded the rights of kinship and gave alms and I did so for Thy sake.’ God will say, ‘Thou art liar; thou didst desire that men should say that such an one was generous man, and that has been said already.’ “Then shall he who had been killed in the way of God be brought before him, and God will say to him, ‘What was it that thou wast killed for?’ He will reply, ‘Thou didst bid us to do Jihad in Thy way and I fought and was killed.’ God will say, ‘Thou art a liar; thou didst desire that men should say that such an one was valiant man, and that has been said already.’

“These are the three men who, of all creatures, shall be first sent into Fire.”

Brothers, Now, let us examine our thoughts and deeds in the light of the above Tradition and see where do we stand in the sight of God! O Allah! Endue our hearts with sincerity and set right our motives and intentions and make us Thy devoted, dedicated slaves.

Love of God, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the faith

Islam requires of us to believe in God and His Apostle and to observe Namaz, Roza, Zakat and Hajj, and to lead a life of piety and honest and goodness and gentility and moral and social rectitude and self-discipline. In the same way, it is also one of its fundamental teachings that we should hold God, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the holy Faith dearer to our hearts than everything else, may it be our parents, children, life, honour, or property. In plain words what it means is that should a time come when it may involve the risk of life, honour or property or of any other worldly thing or interest to abide by the faith of Islam and to remain loyal to the injunctions of God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) then we must not break away from God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the holy Faith irrespective of what the consequences may be.

It has been stressed repeatedly in the Quran and the Tradition that those who may claim to be Muslims but do not possess as strong a devotion for God, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the Faith as these are, in fact, not true Muslims. What is more, they are deserving of Divine chastisement. Reads Sura-i-Tauba:

Say: "If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred: the wealth that ye have gained; the commerce in which ye fear a decline; or the dwellings in which ye delight are dearer to you than God, and His Apostle, or the striving in His cause; then wait until God brings about His decision; and God guides not the rebellious." (IX: 24)

Those who love their parents or children or life or honour or property more than they love God and care more for their protection or well-being than for His pleasure and the defence and progress of His faith are unquestionably disloyal to God and worthy of His punishment. A Tradition says:

"He alone will taste the sweetness of the faith who possesses these three qualities: the love of God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) comes to him before everything else; he loves whom he loves solely for the sake of God; the idea of going back to apostasy after he has embraced Islam is as repugnant to him as being thrown into the fire."

In the sight of God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) a true and genuine Muslim is a person whose devotion to God and His Apostle and the Faith is stronger than to any other person or thing in the world so much so that when he loves another human being he loves him for the sake of God, and who is so sincerely and powerfully attached to the Islamic faith that the very thought of leaving it and reverting back to apostasy may be as painful to him as being cast into fire.

Says the Prophet (Peace be upon him): "None of you can be an honest Muslim and a true believer unless his love for me exceeds the love he has for his parents, children or any other human being in the world."

Brothers, Islam, really is nothing besides surrender and submission to God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) with all one's heart and soul and the readiness to sacrifice every attachment, longing or interest for the sake of the Faith as the holy Companions had done and as the state is of the true and devoted servants of God even today, however small may their number be. May we also be one of them!

Preaching and propagation

Essential as it is for us to affirm faith in God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and to follow with righteousness and sincerity the straight path of Islam, it is also of no mean importance that we strove earnestly to guide the others, too, to the path of the faith who are ignorant of it or who may be unwilling to adopt it on account of prejudice or spiritual malaise. As God has placed on us the duty of being His pious, devout and faithful servants so also has He made it obligatory for us to work among His other creatures as well towards the same end, that is, towards making them also His pious, devout and faithful servants. That is what is meant by the service of faith and its preaching and propagation.

This work is so great in the sight of God that for it He sent down thousands of Prophets into the world. The Prophets bore tremendous hardships and went through the severest of trials and privations to carry out their mission. They work for the moral and spiritual reform and uplift of mankind (May the eternal blessings of God be on them their companions and supporters).

The glorious chain of Prophecy and Apostleship ended with the last of the Prophets, Prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of God be upon whom). Though him also God proclaimed to the world that no more Prophets would now be raised up for the guidance of humanity. The celestial mission shall now be carried on by those who had accepted his guidance and the religion he had brought with him into the world.

In sum, after the termination of the luminous line of Apostles the responsibility for preaching and propagation of faith and religious instruction and reform of mankind has fallen wholly upon the shoulders of the followers of the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him). This honour, indeed, is unique. In the Quran, the very object of the raising up of Muslims has been defined as nothing but this:

You are the best of Peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong and believing in God. (III: 110)

The Muslims were, thus, superior to all other peoples and communities for the simple reason that they, in addition to adopting for themselves the path of faith and righteousness, were charged with the special duty of striving to bring others also to practice what was right and to avoid what was wrong. It was because of this that they were given the distinction of being the 'Best of Peoples'. It is also evident from the above verse that should the Muslims fail to discharge the function they would not only forfeit the claim to the distinction but would also render themselves liable to be punished by God for neglecting the duty He had assigned to them. Let us take an illustration: suppose a company of sentries is posted in a town by the Government to check the immoral activities of its citizens and the sentries not only fail to perform their duty but, what is more, they themselves begin to indulge in the transgressions they were required to suppress. Now will they be retained in service and rewarded by the Government or taken severely to task by it for their negligence and misconduct? It will, certainly, not be improper or unjust if they were punished more severely than the other offenders.

The conditions prevailing in the entire Muslims world today are so extremely deplorable that what to speak of the preaching of the faith and the correction and reform of others, not more than five or ten percent of Muslims themselves are true to Islam and do good deeds and abstain from what is evil and prohibited. In these circumstances, it becomes our primary duty to carry out the mission of moral and spiritual reform and guidance

among our own people among such sections of them as have drifted mournfully away from the path of faith and moral uprightness.

One of the reasons for it is that those who call themselves, or are known as Muslims, whatever be their practical state, have, after all, forged a link between themselves and God and His Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the Faith, and become members of the Muslims brotherhood or Ummat, through the acceptance of Islam. Solicitude for their moral and spiritual well being is our first responsibility in any case in the same was as the responsibility of looking after the welfare of his own children and near relations is greater on a man than that of looking after the welfare of others.

And, secondly, before everything else, it is the actual condition of Muslims from which the world will generally judge about Islam, and the spectacle of degeneration that Muslims, on the whole, present these days is such that it cannot be expected to make a very favourable impression on anyone in respect of their faith. The non-Muslim world is not likely to think very highly of the excellent teachings of Islam as long as Muslims remain what they are today. On the other hand, it is a feeling of revulsion and dislike, which non-Muslims usually get about Islam when they look at the moral and spiritual depths into which the Muslims have sunk. It has always been like this. People have always formed their opinion, good or bad or indifferent, about a religion from the actual moral and social state of its followers.

In the past when Muslims used to be true Muslims, observing strictly the postulates of their faith, people were attracted towards Islam simply by seeing them. Whole nations and communities were converted to Islam in this way. But since the Muslims sank so low that the majority of them remained Muslims only in the name, their conduct and morals grew un-Islamic and their hearts got bereft of faith and righteousness the world has developed a prejudice against Islam itself.

In fine, we should realize the truth of it clearly that the daily life of Muslims, their social and moral and spiritual conduct and behaviour, is the biggest testimony and the chief measuring rod with regard to Islam. If the practical life of Muslims is good the world will form a good opinion about Islam, and if it is bad the opinion the world will acquire about Islam will also be bad. In later case, the preaching of Islam among non-Muslims is destined to be fruitless. Hence, the success of all the efforts aimed at the propagation of Islam among non-Muslims as well is dependent on the condition that Islamic life, i.e., the life of faith and righteous action became the chief attribute of the entire Muslim community. From this point of view also it is necessary to strive first for the guidance and reformation of Muslims and to launch the struggle with all our might for popularizing the values of Islamic life among them before we turned our attention to others.

The Quran has given the task of religious preaching, reform and guidance the name of Jihad-i-Akbar, the great Jihad. If it is undertaken in the right spirit, with sincerity and selflessness and solely for the sake of winning Divine approbation, this work, definitely, is a very great Jihad in the sight of God.

Many people suppose that Jihad means only a war, which is waged in the path of God and according to the rules and instruction laid down for it in the Shariat. But this is not correct. The truth is that whatever endeavour that can be made at a particular time for the preaching of Islam and the moral and spiritual correction and guidance of mankind is the Jihad of that age.

The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) remained in Mecca for about twelve years after the mantle of Apostleship had fallen upon him. During this period the Jihad of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and his Companions consisted altogether in adhering steadfastly to the faith in spite of the terrible persecution unleashed on them by the enemies of Islam and in doing all that lay in their power, openly as well as secretly, to spread the Divine message of Islam and to reform morally and spiritually those who lived around them.

To devote oneself to the noble task of guiding the ignorant, the wayward and the thoughtless to the straight path of Islam and of bringing them nearer to God, to spend one's time and money on it, and to sacrifice one's comfort, all this, in case, is Jihad in Divine estimation. In fact, it is the Jihad of the present age.

The rich reward that awaits those in the Hereafter who engage themselves in this lofty endeavour as well as the dreadful punishment that is going to fall to the lot of those who neglect it and do not participate in it can well be imagined from the Traditions we give below:

“A person who guides another to a deed of virtue shall receive the same recompense for it as the doer of the deed and there will be no reduction in the reward of the doer himself because of it.”

What the Tradition means is that suppose ten persons, or even five, were reformed through our effort and they came to believe in God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and to observe the Divine commandments- they began to offer the Namaz and to carry out other religious duties and avoided what was wrong and forbidden then the reward they will earn on it jointly will be granted to us alone also. A little thought will show that there is simple no other way in which a person can win so much reward-the reward of the prayers and other pious and virtuous deeds of hundreds of men.

Another Tradition of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) says:

“By the Almighty, if only one man receives guidance through you, it is better for you than red camels.”

As we have said earlier, the endeavour for mankind's moral and spiritual guidance and reformation is a service of the faith of the highest order and a thing of outstanding merit and excellence. It is the special heritage left to us by the Prophets. It means their deputyship; it means their vicegerency. What worldly gain, what earthly glory, can compare with it?

The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him), in the under-mentioned Tradition, has made use of a simple example to impress upon us the importance of the work of religious reformation and guidance.

He said, “Suppose there is a double storied boat in which the passengers of the lower deck have to fetch water from the upper deck. This causes inconvenience to the occupants of the upper deck and they do not like it. Now, if in their foolishness the passengers of the lower deck decide not to go to the upper deck and of their supply of water they begin to bore a hole in the bottom of the boat, and the passengers of the upper deck do not stop them from doing so, the entire boat, with all the passengers, will sink. But if the occupants of the upper deck somehow manage to dissuade the occupants of the lower deck from boring the hole, they will save the occupants of the lower deck as well as themselves from being drowned. The same is true with wickedness and sin. If a community, as a whole, dwells in a state of ignorance and sinfulness and its enlightened

and virtuous sections do not take steps to reform it and to bring it on the right path then Divine punishment will be sent down upon it because of its sins and transgressions and the pious and virtuous members of the community will also be caught in it. On the other hand, if an endeavour is made by them to reform the sinners and wrong-doers, the whole community will be saved.”

Again, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

“By the Almighty in whose power lies my life, do not neglect the duty of ‘enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.’ Remember if you neglected your duty it is quite possible that God might send down His punishment on you and then all your prayers and supplications will avail you nothing.”

Brothers, some of the most enlightened and spiritually evolved divines of our day are of the view that the disasters and humiliations that have been visiting Muslims for a long time, and the troubles and difficulties they are caught in universally these days and which do not seem to abate or relent a bit in spite of all their pathetic petitions to God and prayers etc., are due mainly to the very reason that they have ceased to discharge the function they were raised up for and for which they were made wholly responsible after the termination of Prophecy and Apostleship. Evidently, when a watchman fails to perform his duty he is dismissed from service and castigated sternly for his negligence. Come; let us resolve solemnly that we shall be found wanting no more in the discharge of our duty. God’s help will be with us. He has promised:

God, certainly, will aid those who aid His Cause. (XXII: 40)

Constancy

One of the special responsibilities a man owes to God once he has accepted the faith of Islam is that he remains firm and steadfast in his faith at all times and in all circumstances. He is expected to uphold the faith with all his courage and strength, however, adverse the conditions may be. He must not prove disloyal to Islam in any event. He must not give it up. This is what is meant by ‘constancy of faith.’ Such men have been spoken of very highly in the Quran and a bountiful reward has been promised to them in the Hereafter. It says:

In the case of those who say, “Our Lord is God, and further, stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them (from time to time): “Fear ye not” (they suggest), “Nor grieve! But receive the tidings of the Garden (of Bliss), which ye were promised! We are your protectors in this life and in the Hereafter! Therein shall ye have all that ye ask for! A hospitable gift from One, Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful!” (XLI: 30-32)

What wonderful tidings does the above verse contain for those who are constant in faith and who patiently preserve and remain steadfast in times of misfortune and peril. If one could attain this position even at the cost of one’s life, property and everything it would not be a bad bargain indeed.

It is related that once a Companion asked the Prophet (Peace be upon him) to tell him something that could suffice for him always and after which he would not have the need to turn for advice to anyone. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, “Say, ‘God (alone) is my Lord’, and stick to it (i.e., conduct your life in accordance with it unswervingly).”

For our benefit and guidance a number of extremely inspiring parables have been narrated in the Quran of devout and faithful servants of God who remained true to faith in circumstances of utmost distress and suffering. Neither fear nor greed could make them deviate from the path they had chosen. One such parable is of the prestidigitators of Egypt who were summoned to challenge Prophet Moses and great rewards and honors had been promised to them. Yet after the truth of Divine inspiration and the Apostolic message of Moses had dawned upon them they cared neither for the riches and honors the Pharaoh promised nor for the savage punishment they were sure to receive at his hands for disobeying his commands. Rising above the considerations of gain or loss, they boldly declared before the vast assembly of men, "We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses." Later, when they were threatened by that enemy of God, the Pharaoh, that he would have their arms and legs severed and then they would be hanged on the gallows they replied dauntlessly, displaying magnificent courage of conviction that: "So decree whatever thou desirest to decree: for thou canst decree (touching) only the life of this world, For us, we have believed in our Lord: may He forgive us our sins." (XX: 72-73)

Still more inspiring is the story of Pharaoh's wife. You know that Pharaoh was the all-powerful monarch of Egypt whose wife was the sole mistress of his heart. From this you can imagine how enviable would have been her lot. All the world's glories and luxuries were at her feet. Yet when the innermost depths of her soul were stirred by the Divine call of Moses she did not give a thought to what her husband would do to her or how her life of cloudless bliss would change into one of colossal distress and misery. Regardless of the consequences she proclaimed her faith and once she had done so she flinched not from the path of duty towards God and religion although the torture she was subjected to be truly barbarous, the very idea of which is enough to make our flesh creep even today. In return for it, such a unique honour was conferred on her by God that her name has been mentioned reverentially in the Quran and the patient perseverance displayed by her and her sacrifice have been held forth as an example to all Muslims.

And God sets forth, as an example to those who believe, the wife of Pharaoh: behold, she said! "Build for me in nearness to Thee, a mansion in the Garden, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from those that do wrong." (LXVI: 11)

Glory be! What rare honor, what matchless distinction, really, that God has chosen the constancy of faith of that blessed lady to serve as an example to the entire Ummat. From Hazrat Abu Bakar down to the last generation of Muslims before the Last Day.

It is related that when the atrocities perpetrated by the Polytheists of Mecca on Muslims exceeded all limits and the Companion approached the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) to pray to God for mercy and protection, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) remarked, "You have become disheartened so soon! Men of God before you were subjected to such brutal torture that combs of red hot iron were driven into their heads and the skulls of some of them were sawed off into two and yet they remained steadfast and did not abandon their faith."

Jehad

The believers are required emphatically to do whatever they can towards popularizing, defending and keeping alive and flourishing, as the best and the truest way of life, the way of Islam and servility to God they have chosen for themselves. This, in Islam, is called Jihad. It can take many forms depending on the circumfrom time to time and place to place.

Suppose there arises a situation in which it becomes difficult or even dangerous for a person or his family or community to profess Islam and to remain true to it. To be a Muslim may become the hardest thing to do in the world. In that case Jihad will lie in doing one's best for oneself, one's family or community to stay firmly devoted to Islam. It would, certainly, be a most splendid Jihad in those circumstances. Similarly, should Muslims, through their own folly or negligence, start drifting away from the faith, then, at such a time, to devote one's time and energy to their religious revival and reform, too, would constitute a kind of Jihad.

To carry the Divine guidance to those that are ignorant of it and to make an earnest effort to persuade them wisely and sympathetically to accept it is yet another form of Jihad.

Should believers in God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) be in power somewhere and the conditions demand that collective force be used for the defence and assistance of the faith then, in the case, the use of force for the defence and assistance of faith according to the rules laid down for it, will constitute Jihad. Two conditions, however, are essential for it. Firstly, such a step must not be motivated by any personal or national self-interest, greed or enmity. It should be taken solely to carry out the command of God and to serve the cause of His faith. And, secondly, that the rules prescribed for it are scrupulously observed. If force is used without the fulfillment of these conditions, it will not be Jihad according to Islam but wanton wickedness and mischief.

To speak a just word before a tyrannical ruler (be he a Muslim or a non-Muslim) is, again, a form of Jihad. In the Traditions it has been spoken as "the best of Jihad"

All these forms of religious struggle and endeavour, at their proper time and place, are among the obligatory duties of Islam, and, as we have seen, the term Jihad is applied to them in various degrees.

We now proceed to examine some of the verses of the Quran and Traditions of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) enjoining on Muslims the duty of Jihad and revealing to them what unique glory and spiritual merit lies in it. First, the Quranic verses:

And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you. (XXII: 78)

O ye who believe! Shall I lead you to a bargain that will save your from a grievous penalty? That ye believe in God and His Apostle, and that ye strive (your utmost) in the cause of God, with your property and your person: that will be best for ye if ye but knew! He will forgive ye your sins and admit ye to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity: that is, indeed, the Supreme Achievement. (LXI: 10-12)

After these, the Traditions:

"To believe truthfully in God and to strive in the cause of Faith is the best of all deeds."

"It shall not be that a person whose feet are covered with dust in the path of God went to Hell."

“For anyone of you to rise in the way of God (i.e., in the defence of Islam and to take some part in the struggle for its progress and glory) is better than seventy years of worship in the corner of his house.”

May it be allotted to us also by Allah to earn the Divine reward that is for those who make earnest exertions in the path of His faith!

Martyrdom

In the special language of Islam a person who meets his death in the path of faith either as a result of obeying its injunctions and carrying out its commands as a staunch and devoted follower or in the course of struggle for its defence is called a martyr. For such a man there is a place of unparalleled honour and distinction in the Hereafter. His lot is truly divine. About the martyrs it is said in the Quran that they should not be thought of as dead: they are alive, a very special existence is conferred on them and they are the recipients of boundless favours and blessings from their Lord.

Think not of those who are slain in God’s way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the presence of their Lord. (III: 169)

How marvelous is the fate of these true and noble sons of Islam, how mightily beloved of God they are and what glorious rewards are showered upon them by Him can be visualized from the Tradition we are going now to reproduce. The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

“No one among the dwellers of the Paradise will ever want to be sent back to the world, although all the worldly joys and riches may be his if he is sent back, except one who had been killed in the way of God; such a man will want to be returned to the earth and killed in the cause of God ten times over because of the high honor and splendid ceremony with which he will be received in the Heaven on account of dying a martyr’s death.”

The sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) himself was so enthusiastic about attaining martyrdom that he used often to say: “By the Holy Being in whose power lies my life, I wish I was killed in God’s way and brought back to life and killed once more and brought back to life and that this happened to me over and over again.” Another of the Prophet’s Traditions reads: “Six rewards are conferred on a martyr by God: one, he is forgiven immediately and his abode in the Paradise is shown to him; two, he is spared the punishment of the grave; third, he is granted freedom from the acute fear and anxiety of the Day of Requital that will grip the heart of every one (‘Except of those on whom there will be the favour of the Lord’); four, a crown of honour will be placed on his head, a single ruby of which will be more valuable than the whole world; five, seventy-two celestial brides will be given to him in marriage; and, six, his intercession will be accepted on behalf of seventy kinsmen.” “To fall a martyr in the cause of God atones for everything except a debt”. And, it should be remembered that the Divine reward and other wonderful favours promised on martyrdom are not dependent only a death occurring in the way of God. It is not that when a person is killed in the cause of God only then does he become entitled to them. Every loss or injury suffered, every pain and suffering undergone, in the service of the faith carries a bounteous reward. Any believer who may be persecuted, punished, beaten, insulted or tortured for the sake of Islam will be rewarded most lavishly in the Hereafter. God will raise him so high in honour that the

most exalted of saints and divines will envy his fate. Just as soldiers, in this world, who serve their motherland gallantly and care nothing for their own safety when the call of duty comes are honoured with awards and decorations by their governments in the same way the servants of God who suffer loss or humiliation for the sake of faith occupy a special place of glory in the celestial scheme of things. On the Day of Recompense when these blessed children of Islam will receive their awards and decorations and God Almighty will honour them with His exquisite favours and bounties, all the rest of men will regretfully wish that they, too, had undergone a similar experience in the world, that they, too, had been punished, tortured and humiliated for the sake of faith so that they would also get those magnificent favours and rewards on that Day.

Should a trial of this kind be destined for us as well, O God, at that fateful hour, keep us brave and steadfast and withhold not from us Thy grace!

Life after death

This much is known to everyone that whoever is born into the world has got to die one day or the other. But nobody knows on his own that happens or will happen after death. This is known only to God. God vouchsafes the knowledge of it to His Prophets and through the Prophets men like you and me also come to know about it. Every prophet of God, in his time, had revealed clearly to his people through what stages they would have to pass after death and how at each stage they would be recompensed for their deeds—good as well as bad—during their earthly sojourn. Since Prophet Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of God be upon whom) is the last of the Divine Apostles and Messengers and no Prophet is going to be raised up after him, the different stages through which a man has to pass after death have been explained by him in greatest detail and with utmost clarity. If all that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has revealed in this connection is brought together it would make a volume by itself. We will, therefore, give a very brief summary of it over here.

There are to follow three stages after death. It is called Barzakh. Whether a person is buried when he dies or he is cremated or cast into the river his soul does not perish with him. It is immortal; it lives. It only migrates from this material world or ours to another world. In this other world the angels question him about his spiritual state. If he is true believer, he gives the correct answers; whereupon the angels impart to him the glad tidings that he is going to live in peace and happiness till the Last Day. And if it is otherwise, that is, he is an unbeliever, an infidel or a sham or hypocritical Muslim, he is, at once, placed under dreadful punishment which is not to cease before the Day of Reckoning.

The next stage comprises of the Last Day and the Resurrection. The Last Day means that there will come a time when the entire material world will be destroyed by the command of God. Annihilation will descend suddenly on everything that exists around us. The whole world will be thrown topsy-turvy. Then, after a long time, when God will wish, all men will be raised up again. Every person born into the world will be re-created and called upon to render a full account of his doings on the earth. In the Great Reckoning those who will be found worthy of deliverance will be awarded a place in the Paradise

and those who will turn out to be guilty and deserving of Divine chastisement will be consigned to Hell.

After this, there will commence the last stage. The dwellers of the Paradise will live in a state of eternal bliss, supremely immune from every kind of pain, anxiety or suffering and exulting in the bounties of their Lord the like of which they would not have dreamt of in the world, while those that will be condemned to Hell will have to live permanently in a condition of unmitigated misery and distress. There will be for them nothing but horrible agony and castigation. This will be the ultimate stage after death. The above was the sum and substance of what the Prophets, specially the last of them, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), have taught mankind about the Hereafter and what is indicated about it in the Quran and the Traditions. We will now examine some of the relevant verses of the Quran:

Every soul shall have a taste of death: in the end to Us shall ye be brought back. (XXIX: 57)

Every soul shall have a taste of death: and only on the Day of Judgment shall you be paid your full recompense. (III: 185) The Last Day will be a frightful, horrible day. O mankind! Fear your Lord! For the convulsion of the Hour (of Judgment) will be a thing terrible! the Day ye shall see it: every mother giving suck shall forget her suckling-babe, and every pregnant female shall drop her load unformed! thou shall see mankind as in a drunkenriot, yet not drunk! But dreadful shall be the wrath of God. (XXII: 1-2) One day the earth and the mountains will be in violent commotion and the mountains will be as a heap of sand poured out and flowing down. (LXXIII: 14)

At length, when there comes the deafening noise, that Day shall a men flee from his own brothers, and from his mother and his father, and from his wife and children. Each one of them, that Day, will have enough concern (of his own) to make him indifferent to others. Some faces that Day will be dust-stained; blackness will cover them. (LXXX: 33:41)

On the Day of Recompense:

That Day shall ye be brought to Judgment! not an act of yours that ye hide will be hidden. (LXIX: 18)

One day we shall remove the mountains, and thou will see the earth as a level stretch, and we shall gather them, altogether, nor shall leave out any of them, And they will be marshaled before the Lord in ranks, with the announcement, “Now have ye come to US (bare) as We created ye first! Aye, ye thought we shall not fulfill the appointment made to you to meet Us?” And the Book (of Deeds) will be placed before you; and thou will see the sinful in great terror because of what is recorded therein; they will say, “Ah! Woe to us! What a Book is this! It leaves nothing small or great, but takes account thereof! “They will find all that they did placed before them: and not one will thy Lord treat with injustice. (XVIII: 47-47)

A man’s own limbs will depose against him before God on the Day of Recong.

That day shall be set a seat on their mouths. But their hands will speak to Us, and their feet will bear witness to all that they did. (XXXVI: 65)

The Quran, in fine, has portrayed most graphically and vividly the happenings of the Last Day: the terrific explosions and the dreadful tremors, the total annihilation of the world-even the mountains will be wiped out of existence, the rising again of men, the gathering

together of them for the Judgment, the presentation of the Book of Deeds, the deposing of one's own limbs against oneself, the judgment, and, finally, the execution of the Divine Verdict and the allotment of Heaven and Hell. All these events have been described so candidly in some of the chapters of the Quran that one can obtain a full picture of the happenings of the Last Day by reading them. The Prophet (Peace be upon him), thus, is reported to have observed, "Anyone who wishes to know about the Last Day as if the scene of it was drawn before his eyes should read these chapters of the Quran: Takvir, Infitar and Inshiqaq.

We will now see a few Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) appertaining to Barzakh and the Last Day. Says he:

"When anyone of you dies the place that is going to be his abode in the Heaven or in the Hell (on the basis of his conduct in the world) is brought before his eyes every morning and evening and it is said to him, 'Behold, this is your destination, and, surely, you will reach it'."

"When the Trumpet will first be sounded on the Last Day by the command of God everyone will faint and drop dead on the ground. When it will be sounded next all men will rise again.

They will then be commanded to proceed to make their presence before the Lord. The angels, thereafter, will be told to collect them together and here the investigation into their conduct on the earth will begin."

It is related that a Companion once enquired from the Prophet (Peace be upon him), "O Messenger of God, how will God raise up his creatures from the dead? Is there anything like it here in this world which may be cited as example?" The Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, "Has it never accured to you that you may have passed by a stretch of land in your country and found it dry and bereft of all vegetation, and, then, on coming upon it again, after sometime, discovered that it was covered lavishly with fresh, green grass?" The Prophet (Peace be upon him) remarked, "This typifies resurrection. God will raise from the dead in the same manner."

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have asked, after reciting the Quranic verse, On the Day (the earth) will declare her tidings, "Do you know what it means?" The companions are said to have replied, "God and His Apostle know best." The Prophet (Peace be upon him), the Tradition goes on to tell, then said, "On the Day of Judgment the earth will bear witness to all the deeds performed by men on it (i.e., at the bidding of God the earth will tell that such and such a person had done such and such a thing on it on such and such a day)."

Speaking of the Day of Recompense the Prophet (Peace be upon him), further, is reported to have said, "On that Day God will call upon everyone to come forward and be his own witness. He will say to him, today you are your own witness: Our recording angels are present; this much of evidence is enough'. Then by the command of God the lips of the person will become sealed and he will not be able to utter a word. His limbs (arms, legs, etc.) will then be commanded to speak and they will relate the whole story of his doings in the world."

It is reported that once a person went to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and said, "O Messenger of God, I have some slaves who sometimes disobey me, or they steal or tell me a lie. I sometimes scold them and, sometimes, I also punish them. How is it going to turn out for me on the Day of Requit?" The Prophet (Peace be upon him) observed,

“God will dispense justice correctly on the Day of Judgment. If the punishment you mete out to them is proportionate to their faults you will neither get nor have to give anything; you will be quits. If the punishment turn out to be of a lesser degree than what they merited you will be recompensed for it. If the punishment proves to be excessive you will have to recompense the slaves. “On hearing the Prophet’s reply the enquirer began to cry. He said, “Then, O Prophet of God, the best thing for me is to send them away. I declare before you that I have set them free.” The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is also reported to have recited the following verse of the Quran to him:

We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be (no more than) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it (to account)! And enough are we to take account: (XXI: 47)

Heaven and hell

In the preceding chapter it has been said that the Last Day will be the Day of Judgment. On that Day the believers who will also have done good deeds in the world and on whom there will be no punishment will rejoice. During the entire proceedings of the Day they will rest secure under the shadow of Divine benevolence and gain immediate admission into the Paradise. Such of them as well be adjudged worthy of deliverance but only after they have undergone a spell of punishment will be forgiven and admitted into the Paradise after they have suffered some of the agonies of the Day of Reckoning, or, at the utmost, after they have spent some time in Hell. In any case, those possessing the least amount of faith will, sooner or later, find their place in Heaven. Only men who will have departed from the world in a state of infidelity or polytheism will be doomed to live permanently in Hell. In sum, Heaven is the reward for faith, fidelity and good doing and Hell for infidelity, polytheism and revolt against God and transgression against His will.

The superlative, incomparable blissfulness of Heaven and the fearful, loathsome punishment and torture of Hell have been described in proper detail in the Quran:

For righteous are Gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home; with Companions pure (and holy); and the good pleasure of God. For in God’s sight are (all) His servants. (III: 15)

Verily the companions of Garden shall that Day have joy in all that they do; they and their associates will be in grove of (cool) shade; reclining on Thrones (of dignity); every fruit (enjoyment) will be there for them; they shall have whatever they call for; “Peace!” a word (of salutation) from a Lord Most Merciful. (XXXVI: 55-58)

There will be there all the souls could desire, all that the eyes could delight in; and ye shall abide therein (for eye). (XLIII: 71)

(Here is) a Parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine of joy to those who drink; and rivers of honey (pure and clear). In it there are for them all kinds of fruits; and Garden from their Lord. (XLVII: 15)

No sense of fatigue shall touch them. (XV: 48)

In short, Heaven is the abode of supreme and eternal blissfulness, felicity and happiness. There will not be the faintest trace of pain, sorrow or distress in it. Let us now see how will life in Hell be like:

But those whose balance is light, will be those who have lost their souls; in Hell they will abide. The fire will burn their faces, and they will therein grin with their lips displaced. (XXIII: 103-4)

For the wrong-doers We have prepared a Fire whose (smoke and flames), like the walls and roof of a tent will hem them in: if they implore relief they will be granted water like melted brass, that will scald their faces. (XVIII: 29) But those who deny (their Lord), for them will be cut out a garment of Fire; over their heads will be poured out boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies, as well as (their skins). In addition, there will be maces of iron (to punish) them. Every time they wish to get away therefore, from anguish, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said), “Taste ye the Penalty of Burning!” (XXII: 19-220)

Verily the tree of Zaqqum will be the food of the sinful, like molten brass; it will boil in their insides, like the boiling of scalding water. (A voice will cry) “Seize ye him and drag him into the midst of the Blazing Fire! Penalty of boiling water.” (XLIV: 43-48)

And he is given for drink boiling fetid water. In gulps will he sip it, but never will be near swallowing it down his throat: death will come to him from every quarter, yet will he not die; and in front of him will be a chastisement unrelenting. (XIV: 16-17)

Those who reject Our Signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins that they may taste the Penalty. (IV: 56)

But enough. Here are hundreds of verses in the Quran that tell the same story. To take now some of the Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“Says God, ‘For My faithful servants I have got ready (in Heaven) things no eye has seen, nor ear heard of nor the thought of which has ever crossed a human heart’.”

The delicious foods, the luscious fruit, the delightful drinks, the gorgeous clothes, the magnificent palaces, the splendid gardens, the delectable lakes, the wonderful houris (celestial brides) and other innumerable things of divine beauty and joy that will be available in Heaven are, to be sure, known only to God. We, on our part, believe in them implicitly and hold them to be absolutely true.

Says another Tradition: “As the dwellers will enter Heaven a heavenly herald will proclaim, ‘Stay healthy; disease is not going to touch you here. Live forever; death does exist for you no more. Remain young; you shall not grow old in Heaven. Be happy always; for you, now, there is neither pain nor sorrow.’”

But the greatest boon that will be conferred on the faithful, who also practise righteousness, after they have entered their celestial abode, is that they will see God in all His Divine Splendor. In the words of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) it will be like this:

“When the dwellers of Paradise have entered the home of celestial bliss God will enquire from them thus: ‘Do you want that I may bestow a favour upon you over and above the blessings you enjoy?’ The people of the Heaven will answer: ‘Our Lord! Thou hast illumined our faces, saved us from Hell and granted us the paradise. (What more can we want)? The veil will then be lifted and they shall see their Lord unhindered. All the endless joys and blessings of the Paradise will fade away before the glorious spectacle of the Almighty.’”

In another Tradition it is related that once the Prophet (Peace be upon him) while describing the marvelous pleasures of the Paradise and the extreme agony of the Hell observed:

“On the Day of Judgment a person will be brought who will have lived in greatest pomp and luxury in the world but will be condemned to hell because of his evil deeds. He will be dipped once into the fire of Hell and then taken out of it immediately and asked, “Have you ever known comfort?” The man will reply, ‘No, our Lord. I swear by Thy name, I have never known what comfort is.’ Afterwards, another person will be brought who will have led a life of rank misery and misfortune on the earth but will be found worthy of Paradise owing to his faithfulness of God and piety. He will be taken to Heaven and then led out of it immediately and asked, ‘Have you ever known pain or misery?’. ‘No, our Lord!’ he will reply, ‘I swear by Thy name, I have never known what pain or misery is?’”

In truth, God has provided such wonderful joys and comforts in the Paradise that a man who has passed his days in the world in utmost distress will forget all about it as soon as he has had a taste of them. Likewise, the Hell is such an infernal place that a person who has lived all one’s life in the world in rare luxury and happiness will at once feel, on stepping into it, that he had never known what it was to be happy or comfortable.

The severity and dreadfulness of the chastisement of the Hell can be imagined from this one Tradition of the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“The mildest punishment that will be inflicted on a person in the Hell is that he will be made to wear a pair of sandals made of fire which will be so hot as to set his brain boiling as if something was cooking in a pot on a stove.”

The fare that will be served there has been indicated in the verses of the Quran we have quoted already. Here, also, are two Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“The stinking pus people will be made to drink in Hell is such that if a bucket of it was thrown into the world the whole world would be filled with its infernal stench.”

“If a drop of Zaqqum were to fall on the earth it would be enough to pollute all the articles of food and drink that are found here.”

Brothers, all these things the holy Quran and the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) have told about the shape of things to come after death the Barzakah, the Resurrection, the Judgement and Heaven and Hell and we have discussed in this lesson and in the preceding one, are literally correct and true. There can be no doubting them at all. By the Almighty, they will come to pass exactly as the Quran and the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) have taught. We will see them ourselves, with our own eyes, after death.

The Last Day and Heaven and Hell have been dwelt upon in the Quran and the Traditions with such emphasis and thoroughness and referred to again and again a thousand times for no other reason except to arouse in us a living, genuine anxiety to do all that lies in our power to save ourselves from the fearful penalty of Hell and attain the cherished, supremely delightful goal of Paradise.

Brothers, life is transitory, One day we must die. Death is certain, and so is the Last Day. We will, surely, have to stand before God after death and answer for our deeds on the earth. What, then, is our eternal home going to be Heaven or Hell?

There is time still for us to mend our ways, to offer honest repentance for our misdeeds of the past and make a real, sincere effort for the attainment of Paradise.

Should, God forbid, the rest of our days in the world be also spent in neglect and folly, then, be sure, there is nothing in store for us in the Hereafter save regret and the punishment of Hell.

Zikr

Islam stands for self-surrender and submission to God. It calls on men to fashion their lives according to the Divine Will. It wants them to be loyal to Him in all circumstance and in every sphere of their conduct, personal as well as social. This can be possible only when our mind's eye is fixed permanently on the Almighty, and the consciousness of His lover and Glory overshadows all our thoughts and actions.

It is, as such, one of the special teachings of Islam that we remember God much and often and keep our tongues fresh with the recital of His names, praises and attributes. It is an excellent and well-tried method for producing in our hearts His love and the consciousness of His Greatness. It is natural for a man's heart to be filled with the love of anyone whose splendour and excellence his mind dwells all the time. In any way, it is a fact that frequent remembrance kindles the flame of love and lends strength to it and so also that the life of complete loyalty and submission to God which is the essence of Islam can be possible only through Divine love. It is love alone that makes one the willing bondsman of another. As a Persian verse says: What love is?

Say: "To be the beloved's bondsman."

Consequently, a very great stress has been laid in the Quran and by the Prophet (Peace be upon him) on Zikr (God remembrance). The Quran reads:

O ye who believe! Celebrate the Praises of God, and do this often; and glorify Him morning and evening. (XXXIII: 41-42)

And celebrate the Praises of God much and often: that ye may prosper. (LXII: 10)

There are two things, which lead one to forget God when one gets absorbed in them. These are wealth and family. So the Quran names them specifically and warns Muslims against becoming a prisoner to them.

O ye who believe! Let not your riches or your children divert you from the remembrance of God. If any act thus, the loss is their own. (LXII: 9)

The five daily prayers (Namaz) are obligatory for Muslims. These prayers, certainly, are a means of remembering God and a very good one too. But it would not be proper for a Muslim to stop at them considering that if he had offered the Namaz he had done all that was required of him by way of God remembrance and there was no need to do anything further. It is a clear commandment of Islam that, in addition to Namaz, one should also not neglect Zikr in whatever state one may be. It is said in Sura-I-Nissa:

When ye pass (congregational) prayers, celebrate God's Praises standing, sitting down or lying down. (IV: 1030)

Thus, even those engaged in Jihad are enjoined to carry out the Zikr of God keenly and enthusiastically. Says Sura-I-Anfal:

O ye who believe! When ye meet a force, be firm and call God in remembrance much (and often); that ye may prosper. (VIII: 450)

This verse, as the verse from Sura-I-Jum'a we have quoted earlier, "And celebrate the Praises of God much and often: that ye may prosper", shows that Zikr, by no means, constitutes an unimportant factor in the success and felicity of the believers. As against it,

the verse from Sura-I-Munafiqoon we mentioned a few lines ago candidly declares that those who neglect the Zikr do a very wrong thing. They are at a great loss. In Sura-I-Ra'ad, further, it is stated as a characteristic of Zikr that it imparts peace and tranquility to the mind and the soul.

For without a doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction. (XIII: 28)

It is related that once the Prophet (Peace be upon him) was asked who would be the most exalted among the servants of God on the Last Day. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, "Those who do the Zikr of God be they men or women".

Hazrat Abu Moosa relates from the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that, "Those who remember God and those who do not are like those who are alive and those who are dead (i.e. those who remember God and celebrate His praises are alive while those who don't are dead)".

Relates Hazrat Abdullah bin Omar that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) once said. "There is a polish for everything; for the hearts it is the Zikr of Allah. Nothing is more effective than Zikr for deliverance from Divine chastisement."

It should be understood clearly that the real meaning of Zikr is that a man should never be without the thought of God. In whatever circumstances he may be placed, with whatever thing he may be occupied, he must not allow himself to become unmindful of God, His laws and ordinances. Though for this it is not necessary that the tongue should also always be repeating His names, attributes etc., such a state of permanent and all-pervading God consciousness is commonly found only in devout servants of the Lord who succeed in producing within themselves and everlasting awareness of God and a feeling of infinite devotion to Him through frequent Zikr. There is developing a tendency among some of the modern educated people to hold the Zikr as futile. This is a grave folly. Zikr is a most valuable instrument for forging a living and all-embracing link with God. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) was very clear about its worth and importance.

It is related by Hazrat Abdullah bin Busr that once a man presented himself before the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and said, "O Prophet of God, there are numerous teachings of Islam. Please tell me something which I may hold fast forever". The Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied, "Keep your tongue wet always with the Zikr of Allah.

Another Tradition related by Hazrat Abu Huraira reads; "God says, 'when anyone remembers Me and his lips move in My Zikr, I am by his side'".

Some Zikr formulas of the Prophet (Peace be upon him)

The value and importance of Zikr would have become apparent from the Quranic verses and Traditions we have just quoted. We have seen how Zikr of Allah promotes and strengthens Divine love in our hearts. Below we give some of the favourite Zikr formulas of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him).

Foremost Relates Hazrat Jabeer from the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that:

"The best of all Zikrs is the Zikr of ."

Narrates Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) once remarked: "When anyone recites from the depth of his heart the gates of the heavens open for the Kalima till it reaches the seventh heaven provided, of course, that the devotee abstains from the major sins."

According to another tradition the Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said, "Once Moses begged the Lord to tell him something through which he could do His Zikr. The Lord told him to do so through the Kalima of upon which Mose said, "This is what every one does. I want something special. Came the reply, 'If the seven heavens and all the heavenly creatures and the seven climes on the earth and all that is contained in them are placed on one side of the balance and the Kalima of one the other, the later shall turn out to be heavier."

Such, indeed, is the splendour of People, unfortunately, take it to be a mere phrase. The present writer himself has heard it from an inspired devotee of the Lord in a moment of rare spiritual feeling that, "If someone with the entire wealth of the world at his command were to tell me to give him one Kalima of recited by me in return for his treasures this humble self shall refuse to do so."

The Third Kalima Relates Hazarat Sumara bin Jundub that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) once said that of all the spoken words and the Kalimas the most excellent were these four: Narrates Abu Haraira that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, "The Kalima of is dearer to me than the entire world on which the sun shines.

This Kalima is most complete and comprehensive and all the aspects of Divine Praise are covered by it. In some Traditions the phrase is also included in it. It occurs after . A revered spiritual mentor used to explain the import of the Kalima to the present writer in following manner:

'Glory be to God, Free from all faults and blemishes and other things that are not worthy of His Glory . 'Praise be to God, He is the embodiment of perfection and the center of every kind of virtue, (therefore) all praise is for Him, and when such is His Glory that He is absolutely blemishless and all the wonderful virtues are assembled in Him, He alone is our Lord and the sole object of our heart's desire . 'There is no God save Him, We are His own helpless slaves and of no one else . 'God is Great, He is Most Powerful, Almighty. We can never acquit ourselves of our duties to Him as His slaves nor can we ever gain nearness onto Him except that he himself blesses us with His grace.

'There is no power or virtue but in God.'

Tasbihat-I-Fatima

A well-known Tradition of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has it that the Prophet's beloved daughter (and Hazrat Ali's wife), Hazrat Fatima, used to perform all the domestic duties with her own hands. She had even to draw water from the well and to carry it home and to grind the corn in the millstone. One day she begged the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) to provide her with a domestic servant upon which the Prophet (Peace be upon him) observed, "I will tell you of something that will serve you better than a domestic servant. Recite 33 times, 33 times, and 34 times after each Namaz and on retiring to bed. This will be of greater value to you than a servant."

Another Tradition says, "Whoever will recite after each Namaz 33 times, 33 times, and 34 times, and, at the end of it, the Kalima of (There is no God but one God. He is alone. No partner hath. He Him belongs sovereignty and unto Him belongs Praise and He is all-Powerful) all his sins will be forgiven even if they be as profuse as the foam of the sea."

Subhan Allah we Behamdhi

It is related by Hazrat Abu Huraira that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said, "He who will recite a hundred times morning and evening regularly no one shall take with him a

greater provision of virtue to the Hereafter than him save the person who recited it even more.”

Another Tradition related again by Hazrat Abu Huraira says: “Two phrases sit very lightly on the tongue but are very heavy in the Balance of Deeds and God loves them very much. These are .” And .

There are many other Zikr-formulas commended by the Prophet (Peace be upon him). But the few we have given here are quite sufficient for anyone to adopt for regular recitation.

As regards the reward and recompense in the Hereafter promised in the Traditions it needs be noted that there is not fixed measure or a standard yardstick for it. Whoever will recite a Kalima of Zikr sincerely and with no other object than the propitiation of God will, Insha Allah, merit the full reward no matter how many times and at what hour he does so. But when a spiritual guide prescribes a Zikr for anyone for a particular purpose like the kindling of Divine love or the awakening of the heart and the creation of a permanent consciousness of God or for the eradication of a moral or spiritual ailment it is necessary to follow the routine he lays down and to do the Zikr as many times as he tells. Without this the desired results cannot be obtained by the devotee. For example, if a person recites the Sura of Al-Hamd-o-Sharif or any other Sura of the Quran as an act of religious merit there is no harm if he does so once in the morning, once at noon, once in the afternoon, once in the evening and couple of times in the night, but if he wants to learn the Sura by heart, also, he will have to recite it scores of times during one sitting. Otherwise he will not be able to memorize it. This is exactly the difference between an ordinary Zikr aimed only at Divine reward and the special Zikr which spiritual mentors prescribe to disciples for the cure of a spiritual morbidity or as a means for the attainment of any other objective of a similar category. Many people get caught in confusion because of not knowing this difference. This is why these few lines have been added here.

The reading of the Quran

The reading of the Quran is also a very good Zikr. A Tradition says:

“The superiority of the Word of God over any other word is the same as the superiority of God over any of His creature.”

And Hazrat Abdullah bin Masood relates from the Prophet (Peace be upon him) that: “He who reads one letter of the Quran for him there is one virtue and the reward on this virtue is equal to that on ten other virtues. When I say this I do not mean that is one letter but that is one letter, another and the third.”

Yet another Tradition, as related by Hazrat Abu Imama, reads:

“O People, read the Quran. On the Day of Judgment the Quran will intercede for those who will have been reading it (in their lives).”

Some Suggestions

1. There is no need for those in whose hearts Zikr of Allah has come to dwell permanently as a result of constant endeavour and become a part of their existence to follow a set routine or to make a special effort in this respect. But if common people like us want to strengthen their bond with God and to partake of its auspiciousness and blessedness they must practise the Zikr at a fixed time and in a fixed number according to

their individual circumstances. Better still, they should seek the advice of a spiritual guide while choosing a Zikr formula, for themselves. Or, they can select a Kalima from the Kalimas we have given above which may be most suited to their temperament. Time should also be set aside daily for the reading of the Quran.

2. As far as possible, the meaning of the Kalima used for Zikr should be kept in mind during the recitation. The Zikr should be done with an active awareness of Divine Glory and Magnificence and with the feeling and the belief that God was near, right there, listening to every word that was being recited.

3. Wazu is not necessary for Zikr. It can be done freely without the Wazu. The reward will not suffer because of it. But the effulgence and spiritual effectiveness of the Zikr is very much enhanced when it is done with Wazu.

4. It has been seen earlier that the third Kalima is the most comprehensive one among all the Kalimas. If it is adopted for recitation it can fulfill all the needs. This writer has seen that spiritual mentors generally prescribe it to their disciples along with Durood Sharif and Istighfar.

Du'a

When it is definite and beyond dispute that whatever happens in the world happens by the Will of God and that every thing that exists lies absolutely in His power and control, it is manifestly natural for us to supplicate to Him in our needs, big as well as small. Followers of all religions beseech God and address their petitions to Him. But in Islam it is a matter of paramount importance. States the Quran:

And your Lord says: "Call on Me: I will answer (your Prayer)." (XL: 60)

Say (to the rejectors): my Lord is not uneasy because of you if ye call not on Him. (XXV: 77)

Together with calling on us to supplicate to God in our needs the Quran also goes on to assure that God is very close to His servants: He hears their petitions and grants them.

When My servants ask thee concerning Me, I am indeed close to them. I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calleth on me. (II: 186)

The holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) also assures that to beg to God for our needs, to turn to Him and to make our petitions to Him, is the very essence and marrow of worship.

Says he:

"Du'a (making of earnest entreaties to God) is worship." (According to another version, the Tradition reads: "Du'a is the essence and marrow of worship)."

"Nothing enjoys a loftier place in the sight of God than Du'a".

God is displeased with those who do not beg for their needs to Him. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said, "God is displeased with His servant who does not supplicate for his needs to him."

Glory be! If a person approaches a close friend or a near relative with his needs every now and then they get sick of him, but God is so marvelously gracious and benevolent to His servants that He gets angry if they do not turn to Him in their need. A Tradition says: "For whom the doors of Du'a have opened for him the doors of mercy have opened."

Anyway, to pray to God for one's needs or for the realization of one's ambition is not only a means to their fulfillment but also a superb act of worship and God is very happy

with him who does so. He opens the gates of His mercy for him. This is true of all supplications whether they be of a religious or spiritual nature or for a worldly need. The only condition is that the object or need should be of a lawful and legitimate kind. To pray for an improper or sinful thing is also improper and sinful.

The greater the depth of feeling, the stronger the realization of one's own helplessness and the firmer the conviction of Divine Omnipotence and Benevolence with which a prayer is made, the greater the chances are of its acceptance. A prayer which does not spring from their heart but is uttered only by the mouth as a formality is not a prayer. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) says:

“God does not grant a prayer that is made with a sleeping heart.”

God listens to prayers at all hours but we learn from Traditions that there are certain occasions on which if a prayer is made it stands greater chances of acceptance as, for instance, after a Farz (obligatory) Namaz, during the later part of the night, at the time of breaking a fast or at any other moment of a similar nature when a good act is performed, and during the course of a journey particularly when it is undertaken for a religious purpose and for the sake of God.

It is not necessary for a man to be a saint, or innocent of sin, for his prayers to be granted. It is true that the prayers of noble and virtuous persons are granted more than those of others but it does not mean that the prayers of ordinary men and sinners are not heard at all. One, therefore, must not give up making supplications to God thinking what would the supplications of a sinner do. God, the Beneficent, the Merciful, listens to the prayers of His sinning servants, too, just as He feeds them and clothes them in spite of their misdeeds. Everyone should, therefore, pray. We have seen how Du'a is regular worship. Divine recompense will in any case be his who will engage himself in it.

It will be foolish to lose heart and cease praying if the object for which an earnest prayer is made to God is not realized. God, in any event, is not bound by our desires. Sometimes, in His judgment, it is in our own interest that our prayers should not be granted at once. Sometimes delay is found by Him to be better for us. But, we, in our ignorance, get disheartened. We are inclined to be hasty and when our prayers are not answered we give up praying as futile. As a Tradition of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) assures us:

“Du'a never wasted. But the forms of its acceptance vary. Sometimes a person gets what he begs for. Sometimes God does not think it best for him that the thing he prays for should be granted. So He does not give it to him but, in its place, a greater favour is bestowed on him or an impending calamity is averted or the prayer is made an atonement for his sins. (Since the supplicant does not know it he imagines that his entreaties and supplications have come to nothing). Sometimes the prayer is turned into the harvest of the Hereafter. The object for which a person prays is not granted to him in this life but a greater reward is reserved for him in the life to come as a compensation thereof.”

And here is another:

“Some people, many of whose prayers had not been granted in this world, when they will see in the Hereafter the glorious rewards and blessings that had been set aside for them as a recompense for their unfulfilled prayers, will exclaim mournfully how great would it have been had none of their prayers been granted in the world so that they could get the compensation for them all in the Hereafter.”

In fine, everyone who believes in God should make it a habit of his to call on Him for his needs with all his heart and with an unshakeable faith in the Omnipotence and the Benevolence of the Almighty and believing positively that the prayer will be granted. He must be sure in his heart that his prayer shall never, never go waste.

The endeavour should be to pray in words richly expressive of Divine Might and Magnificence and of one's own total helplessness. Many prayers are contained in the Quran and hundreds of them in the Traditions. These prayers, the prayers of the Quran and the Tradition, are by far the best. A selection of forty of these prayers is given at the end of the book.

Durood sharif

Durood Sharif is an invocation we make to God to bestow His choicest favours and blessings on the Prophet (Peace be upon him). It is a kind of prayer. The truth is that, after God, the greatest obligation on us is that of the sacred Prophet (Peace and Blessings of God be upon whom). He underwent tremendous hardship and endured the bitterest of persecutions in order to convey the divine guidance to us had he not borne these trials and sufferings the light of faith would never have reached us. We would be dwelling in the gloom of apostasy and making our home in hell after death.

Since faith is the greatest blessing on the earth and we have attained it solely through the merciful agency of the Prophet (Peace be upon him), our greatest benefactor, next to God, is Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him). There is nothing we can do to pay back the enormous debt of gratitude we owe him. We can only pray for him to God as a token of our loyalty and gratefulness.

But what prayer can we make that may be worthy of the Prophet (Peace be upon him)? Naturally, none besides that God may magnify him and bless him with His choicest favours. This is just what Durood is.

The Quran clearly enjoins on us to offer the Durood, and in what a wonderful manner does it do so:

God and His Angels send blessings on the Prophet (Peace be upon him): O Ye that believe! Send ye blessings on him and salute him with all respect. (XXXIII: 56)

In this verse we are first told that God Himself honours the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and holds him in strongest affection and that His Angels also do the same-they pay reverence to him and beseech God to bless him with His most marvelous favours. The verse then goes on to command us also, i.e., the believers to send blessings on him and salute him with all respect. Thus, before the command is given care is taken to explain to us that the thing we are being required to do is something which is particularly pleasing to God and which the angels also fondly do. After knowing it, what Muslim is there worth his name who will not make it a religious duty to offer the Durood?

Below we give a few Traditions of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) extolling the virtue and merit of Durood Sharif. The Prophet (Peace be upon him) is reported to have said:

“He who will send blessings on me once God will confer ten favours on him.” (In another Tradition it has also been said that, “God will forgive his ten sins and raise him higher in rank by ten degrees”).

“There are many angels of God whose special duty is that they keep on moving in the world and whichever follower of mine sends blessings on me they carry it to me at once.”

Gracious is the Lord! Our Durood is communicated to the Prophet (Peace be upon him) by the angels and through it we get a chance of being mentioned in his presence. What greater honour could there be for us, really.

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) says: “Closest to me on the Day of Requitil will be he who sends blessings on me oftener.” “That man is a big miser in whose presence my name is taken and he does not offer the Durood.” “May he be disgraced in whose presence my name is taken and he fails to offer the Durood.” In sum, to send blessings on the Prophet (Peace be upon him) is a foremost duty we owe to him a source of stupendous virtue and blessedness and the fountainhead of prodigious blessings in this world and the next.

Words of Durood

Once the companions asked the Prophet (Peace be upon him), “How are we to offer Durood and salutation.”

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) advised them about Durood-I-Ibrahimi which is recited in the Namaz. We have already reproduced it in Lesson II.

Very much similar to Durood-I-Ibrahimi, but a little shorter, is another Durood, which was also taught by the Prophet (Peace be upon him). It reads:

“O Allah! Magnify Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him), the Unlettered, his wives, the mothers of the faithful, his posterity (followers), and his family as Thou hast magnified the family of Ibrahim. Verily, Thou art the Praiseworthy, the Majestic.

Whenever we take the name of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) or talk about him or hear about him from anyone we should at once send blessings on him. On such occasions it is enough to say only or .

Daily Routine

Some determined persons with a natural flair and fondness for Durood-I-Sharif make it a regular habit to recite it thousands of times daily. But if weak-willed men like ourselves can manage to recite it a hundred times morning and evening with proper devotion and reverence they will profit so much by it and there will be such exquisite favours of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) on him that it is not possible even to imagine them in this world.

The following Durood Sharif is suggested to those who may be wanting to know a brief one:

O Allah! Magnify Mohammad (Peace be upon him), the Unlettered Prophet (Peace be upon him), and his family.

Tauba

God sent down His Apostles into the world and revealed His Books through them so that men may learn to distinguish good from evil, virtue from vice, and earn for themselves Divine approbation and deliverance in the life to come by abstaining from the wicked and

the unlawful and adopting what was good and virtuous. Thus, those who reject the faith and refuse to believe in the Prophets and the Divine guidance with which they had been raised up, their whole existence, so to speak, is one of defiance and transgression. They are totally indifferent to the message sent down by Allah. They will have nothing to do with it. Unless they believe in the Messengers and Apostles raised up by God and in the holy Scriptures revealed by Him, and, particularly, in the Last of the Prophets, Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him), and the Divine Book he brought, i.e., the holy Quran, and accept his guidance they can never hope to attain the good pleasure of God and success and salvation in the Hereafter. The denial of God, His Apostles and His Books is not pardonable. It cannot be condoned. This fact has been made abundantly clear by every Prophet of God during his time. In any case, it is essential for the salvation of the Apostates and Polytheists that they first of all renounced Apostasy and Polytheism and took to the path of Faith and Monotheism. Without it salvation is not possible.

Those who believe in the Prophets and affirm their intention to live according to their teachings also sometimes fall into error. They are misled by the Devil or by their own baser instincts and impulses into committing a sin. For such defaulters God has kept the door of Tauba (Repentance) open.

Tauba means that if a person many slip into folly and be guilty of a sin or an act of transgression against the law of God he should feel genuinely sorry and ashamed over it, and resolve sincerely not to do so again, and seek the forgiveness of God with all his heart. It is stated in the Quran and the Traditions that by doing only this much a man's sin is forgiven and he succeeds in winning the pleasure of the Almighty. It is essential to know that Tauba is not vocal penitence. It is not at all a matter of uttering so many words of repentance. The sorrow must be sincere, the shame must be felt in the heart and the resolution not to repeat the folly and be guilty of the sin again must be totally genuine.

It is like this. Suppose in a fit of temper or in a moment of acute depression a person swallows poison with the intention of killing himself. But when the poison begins to work and a thousand knives begin to tear his intestines into pieces and he knows that death is near, he repents his folly and cries out in desperation for medical relief. Now, at that time, his first thought will be that if he survived he would never touch the poison again or think of committing suicide. This exactly should be the state of the man who repents after sin. His heart should be seized by the fear of Divine Chastisement, the resolution not to do the thing again should be an honest resolution and so also his entreaties to God for forgiveness.

If such a state of feeling is realized by a person in any degree he should be sure that the stain of sin has been washed away and the gates of mercy have opened for him. After such a Tauba the sinner is completely absolved of his sin, he is thoroughly sanctified and becomes even dearer in the sight of God than he was before, so much so that sometimes a person succeeds in attaining, through Tauba, a place which would be hard to reach even after a hundred years of prayer and fasting.

All this that we have said on the subject of Tauba was derived entirely from the twin sources of the Quran and the Traditions. We are going now to consider some of the relevant verses of the Quran:

O ye who believe! Turn to God with sincere repentance: in the hope that your Lord will remove from you your ills and admit you to Gardens beneath which rivers flow. (LXVI: 8)

Why turn they not to God, and seek His forgiveness? For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (V: 77) When those come to thee who believe in Our Signs, say: "Peace be on you! Your Lord hath inscribed for Himself (the rule of) Mercy: Verily, if any of you did evil in ignorance, and thereafter repented, and amended (his conduct); lo, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (VI: 54)

Also, look at the following Traditions:

"God says, 'O My Creatures! You commit follies day and night and I can forgive them all. So, seek My forgiveness. I will forgive'."

"God extends the arm of Mercy and Forgiveness every night so that the sinners of the day may repent and seek His pardon and every day so that the sinners of the night may repent and seek His pardon and it shall be like this with God till the sun rises from the West near the Domsday."

"A man committed a sin and then he prayed to God, 'O Lord, I have sinned. Forgive me'. Upon this, the Lord observed, 'My servant knows that there is a God who can punish him for his sin as well as forgive. I have forgiven the sin of My servant. The person abstained from sin as long as the Lord wished after which he again went astray and fell into transgression. He once again prayed to God, 'O Lord, I have sinned. Forgive me.' The Lord observed, 'My servant knows that there is a God who can chastise him for sinning as well as forgive. I have forgiven the sin of My servant'. He remained free from sin as long as the Lord wished and then was again guilty of it. Once again he prayed to God, 'O Lord, I have sinned. Forgive me'. The Lord observed, 'My servant knows for certain that there is a God who can punish as well as forgive him for his sin. I have forgiven the sin of My servant'."

"One who seeks Divine forgiveness after sin becomes like one who has never been guilty of a sin".

These Traditions show how Merciful and Oft-Forgiving is the Lord. To get emboldened by them and to start indulging freely in sinful activities on the strength of Tauba is not worthy of a Muslim. Such verses and Traditions should, on the contrary, lend greater strength to the love of God. They should make one feel that it really was the height of meanness to act against the wishes of such a Compassionate and Benevolent Lord. If a master be of a most kind and affectionate nature, would it become his servants to pay back his kindness and affection by violating his wishes and disobeying his commands? What these verses and Traditions seek to convey is that should a person succumb to the temptations of the Devil or to his own ignoble desires and inclinations and commit a sin he must not despair of the mercy of the Lord and lose all hope of salvation. He should, on the other hand, turn his back immediately on the lapse and try earnestly to remove its stain through Tauba, by begging God, in all sincerity, His forgiveness. The Almighty, in His Infinite Mercy, will forgive and instead of being angry with him, He will become even more pleased for regretting sincerely what he had done and turning to Him hopefully for remission. A Tradition states:

"When a man turns to God after sin and repents sincerely for his folly it makes God even happier than a rider whose mount may have thrown him down in a vast desert and fled away with all the journey's provisions laden on its back, and, when the rider may have resigned himself to his fate and sat down under a tree to wait for his death, the animal may return, all of a sudden, with the provisions intact and the rider may catch hold of it and blurt out (stupidly) in sheer joy, 'O God, Thou, indeed, art my slave and me thy

Master;” If, after knowing these verses and Traditions, someone still fails to seek Divine forgiveness and approbation by offering repentance for his sins through Tauba and resolving not to fall into error again he, emphatically, is most unfortunate.

Many people are inclined to take a most complacent attitude towards Tauba. They say, “We are healthy and strong, so what’s the hurry? We will do Tauba before dying.” Brothers, this is an extremely dangerous deception, which the Devil practices on us. Deprived as he has himself of Divine Mercy and Beneficence and earned a permanent abode in the Hell, he wants us also to go his way. No one knows when death may strike. Thus, we should consider every day to be the last day of our lives and lose no time in begging the forgiveness of God if and when we have been guilty of an evil. This, alone, is the path of wisdom. It is stated candidly in the Quran that. God accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards; to them will God turn in mercy; for God is full of knowledge and wisdom. Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil, until death faces one of them, and he says, “Nor of those who die rejecting faith: for them have We prepared a punishment most grievous. (V: 17-18) We should catch time by the forelock and realize the value of life that is left to us. We should not put off Tauba by a moment; we must not procrastinate. We ought to set about, at once, reforming our ways. God alone knows when death is going to make its call on us, and, then, it may be too late. Who can tell whether, at that time, we will get the opportunity to offer Tauba or not?

Brother, we all have seen people dying. The general experience is that a person dies in the same state in which he has led his life. It does not happen that a person may have spent all his days in folly and negligence and, he, suddenly repented and turned into a saint a day or two before his death. Hence, a man who wants to die in a state of piety, for him it is necessary to become pious in his lifetime. Then alone can he hope to die as a good Muslim, by the grace of God, and to be raised up with the faithful and the righteous in the Hereafter.

If after offering repentance for a sin a person may be guilty of the same sin again there is no need for him to feel so frustrated over it as to lose faith in Divine Mercifulness. He should offer Tauba quickly again, and if again he may break it he should not hesitate in offering it once more even if it be a thousand times. Whenever he will repent with a sincere heart it is the promise of God that He will accept his repentance and forgive him. The Benevolence of the Lord, lie His Paradise, is Infinite.

Words of Tauba

Form the forgoing it would have been clear that in whatever words or language a person may offer Tauba God will listen and accept his penitence. But the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) has laid down certain specific phrases or prayers in this regard which he used to recite himself. These prayers, surely, are most pleasing to Him. We are reproducing some of these here for you to learn by heart and recite for seeking divine forgiveness.

I beg the forgiveness of the Lord save Whom there is no God, the living, the Eternal. Unto Him do I turn penitent.

The Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said, “Whoever will offer penitence to God and implore His forgiveness through this Kalima God will forgive him even if he has fled from the field of Jihad which is a most mortal sin in the sight of God.”

And again: “Whoever will recite this Kalima thrice before going to sleep God will forgive his sins even though they may be as profuse as the foam of the sea,” Sometimes the sacred Prophet (Peace be upon him) used to recite only (I implore the forgiveness of the Lord). It is a very brief phrase and we should try to cultivate the habit of repeating it every now and then.

Sayyidul-Istighfar

It is related that the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) once remarked that the following prayer was Sayyidul-Istighfar (the leader of all the prayer formulas of Istighfar).

O God! Thou art my Lord, There is no God save Thee. Thou art my Creator and I am Thy slave. I abide by Thy covenant and promise as best as I can. I seek refuge in Thee from the mischief of what I have wrought. I acknowledge unto Thee Thy favour, which Thou hast bestowed upon me, I also confess mine inequity; so forgive me for none forgiveth sins save Thee.

Says the Prophet (Peace be upon him):

“He who will offer repentance and beg the forgiveness of God reciting this prayer with faith and sincerity during day-time then if he died on that day, before nightfall, he shall go to Heaven, and he who will recite it at night, with faith and sincerity, and then if he died on that night, before day-break, he shall go to Heaven.”

The three Kalimas of Tauba we have mentioned above are quite easy to remember.

As a Tradition reads:

“Blessed, indeed, is the man in whose record the profusion of Tauba is written.”

Epilogue

What has been stated in the twenty lessons of this small volume will, Insha Allah, suffice for anyone for the attainment of Divine pleasure and paradise. It seems appropriate here to give a brief resume of the whole discussion before bringing the book to a close.

The first principle of Islam and the most essential pre-requisite of deliverance and the attainment of paradise is that a man affirms his faith in the Kalima of . After that, he should try to acquire knowledge of the tenets of Islam as least as far as it is necessary to know them in order to be a good Muslim. His constant endeavour should be to observe the Islamic teachings faithfully and to carry out sincerely the Divine commandments regarding the Rights of God as well as the Rights of Man and good social and moral behaviour. When there may occur a lapse on his part in respect of these matters he should feel genuinely sorry over it and repent to God and seek His forgiveness. He should resolve honestly not to be guilty of the transgression again. If he has transgressed against a fellow being by violating his rights or doing him any other harm he should seek his pardon and make amends for his fault or misconduct or pay suitable compensation as the case may be.

In the same way, the effort of a Muslim should always be that the love of God and of His Apostle and His Faith should be stronger in his heart than that of anyone or anything else in the world. He should remain steadfast in faith and waver not in the least form the path of duty to God and the Prophet (Peace be upon him) whatever the circumstances. He

should also, as a matter of duty, take some part or another in the preaching and propagation of Islam it is a thing of outstanding virtue and merit and a most special legacy of the Prophets. In the present age, particularly, its value is much greater than that of all other supererogatory prayers and forms of worship and when a person devotes himself to it his devotion to God, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) and the Faith also develops and becomes stronger.

Among the supererogatory prayers, if possible, one should develop the habit of Tahajjud. Its auspiciousness is of the very highest.

One must always be on one's guard against sin, specially against the major sins, like adultery, stealing, falsehood, drink, and dishonestly in monetary affairs. It is advisable to do some Zikr every day. In case it may not be possible to spare more time for it one should recite at least Kalima-I-Tamjid Or only and Istighfar and Durood Sharif, a hundred times each, morning and evening.

Time should also be set aside for the daily reading of the Quran. It should be done with due religious respect and reverence. After every obligatory Namaz and at bedtime the Tasbeeh-I-Fatima may also be recited.

For those who aspire for more the advice is to seek guidance from a spiritual mentor who may be worthy of it. The last thing to be said in this connection is that the company of true, pious and exalted devotees of God and attachment and devotion to them is the very elixir of religious and spiritual existence. If this can fall to the lot of anyone all the rest will follow automatically.

Appendices

Forty prayers from the Quran and the traditions

Below we give a selection of forty prayers from the Quran and the Traditions as indicated in Lesson XVII.

- 1) Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, the Compassionate, the Merciful, Owner of the Day of Judgment. Thee alone do we worship, and to Thee alone do we beg for help. Show us the straight path: the path of those whom Thou hast favoured; not the path (of those) who earn Thine anger, nor of those who go astray. Amen!
- 2) Our Lord! Give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and defend us from the torment of the Fire.
- 3) Our Lord! We have, indeed, believed: forgive us, then, our sins, and save us from the agony of the Fire.
- 4) O Lord! Forgive us our sins and anything we may have done that transgressed our duty: establish our feet firmly, and help us against this people that resisteth faith.
- 5) Our Lord! We have heard the call of one calling us to Faith, "Believe ye in the Lord", and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us

our inequities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous, Our Lord! grant us what Thou didst promise unto us through Thine Apostle, and save us from shame on the day of Judgment: for Thou never breakest promise.

- 6) Our Lord! We have wronged our souls; if Thou forgive us not and bestow not on us Thy mercy we shall certainly be lost.
- 7) Our Lord! Make us not a trail for those who practise oppression and deliver us by Thy mercy from those who reject Thee.
- 8) Creator of the heavens and the earth! Thou art my protector in this world and the Hereafter. Take Thou my soul at death as one submitting to Thy Will (as a Muslim), and unite us with the righteous.
- 9) O my Lord! Make me one who establishes regular prayer, and also raise among my off-spring, O our Lord, and accept Thou my Prayer. O our Lord! Cover us with Thy forgiveness-me, my parents and all Believers, on the Day that the reckoning will be established.
- 10) My Lord! Bestow on my parents Thy mercy even as they cherished me in my childhood.
- 11) O my Lord! Advance me in my knowledge.
- 12) O my Lord! Grant Thou forgiveness and mercy! For Thou art the Best of those who show mercy!
- 13) O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for Thy favour, which Thou hast bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and I may work righteousness such as Thou mayst approve; and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I turned to Thee and truly do I bow to Thee in Islam.
- 14) Our Lord! Forgive us, and our brethren who came before us into the Faith, and leave not, in our hearts, rancour (or sense of injury) against those who have believed. Our Lord! Thou art, indeed, full of kindness, Most Merciful.
- 15) Our Lord! Perfect our Light for us and grant us forgiveness: for Thou hast power over all things.
- 16) O Thou Living, Eternal One! Unto Thy Mercy do I appeal.
- 17) O God! Set aright my faith which is the safeguard of all my affairs; set aright my world wherein is my living, set aright my Hereafter whereto I have to return. Let life be unto me a source of advance in every kind of righteousness, and let death be to me a release from every kind of evil.
- 18) O God! I beg of Thee forgiveness and peace in this world and the next.
- 19) O God! I beg of Thee guidance and modesty and righteousness and freedom from want.
- 20) O God! I beg of Thee sustenance that is clean, knowledge that is useful, and conduct that is acceptable to Thee.
- 21) O God! Open the doors of Thy Mercy for us and make easy for us the doors of sustenance.
- 22) O God! Let Thy lawful sustenance suffice for me against unlawful sustenance, and let me be, by Thy Grace, dependent on no one besides Thee.
- 23) O God! Let it be my good fortune to do things that are pleasing to Thee and make the Hereafter better for me than this world.

- 24) O God! Guide me to the right path, to the path of truth and piety, and save me from the mischief of my own self.
- 25) O God! Help me in Thy remembrance and in being thankful to Thee and in good worship.
- 26) O Thou who controlleth the hearts! Keep my heart steadfast in Thy faith.
- 27) O God! Grant me that I may live as a Muslim and die as a Muslim.
- 28) O God! I beg of Thee Thy love and the love of him who loveth Thee and the conduct that will enable me to attain Thy love. O God! Let Thy love be dearer to me than myself, my wealth, mine household and water that is cold.
- 29) O God! Cover me with Thy Mercy and save me from Thy punishment.
- 30) O God! Keep me steadfast when feet beginz to waver.
- 31) O God! Judge me leniently on the Day of Judgment.
- 32) O God! Forgive me my sins on Day of Requital.
- 33) O God! Save me from Thy Chastisement on the Day Thou will raise up Thy slaves.
- 34) O God! Thy forgiveness is wider than mine inequities and I have better hope in thy Mercy than in my conduct.
- 35) O God! I beg of Thee Thy good pleasure and the Garden (i.e., Paradise). I also beg of Thee to spare me out of Thy Mercy the Punishment of Fire.)
- 36) O God! I seek refuge in Thy good pleasure from Thy displeasure, and Thy forgiveness from Thy retribution.
- 37) O God! Forgive me, be kind to me, have mercy on me Verily Thou art Most Kind, Most Merciful.
- 38) O God! Thou art my Lord. There is no God save Thee. Thou hast created me and I am thy slave. And I abide by Thy Covenant and Promise as best as I can. I seek refuge in Thee from the mischief of what I have wrought. I acknowledge unto thee Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me. I confees also my inequity: so, forgive me for none forgiveth sins save Thee.
- 39) O God! I seek refuge in Thee from the mischief of my ears, and from the mischief of my eyes, and from the mischief of my tongue, and from the mischief of my heart, and from the mischief of my carnal desires, and I seek refuge in Thee from the punishment of Hell, and from the punishment of the grave, and from the calamity of Dajjal, and I seek refuge in Thee from the trails and temptations of life and death.
- 40) O God! I beg of Thee all the good things that (Prophet) Mohammad (Peace be upon him) had begged of Thee, and I seek Thy refuge from all the evils from which (Prophet) Mohammad (Peace be upon him) had sought refuge in Thee.
- 41) O Allah! Magnify Mohammad (Peace be upon him) and his posterity and followers as Thou has magnified Abraham and his posterity and followers; verily, Thou art the Praiseworthy, the Majestic. O Allah! Send him down on the Day of Judgment into the place of special nearness unto Thee and elevate him to places of honour and intercession and grant him that place of choicest favour and worthiness which Thou promised of him, and bless us with his intercession on the Day of recompense: for Thou never breakest Thy promise.

Appendix

(II)

Prayers for Particular Occasions

Many prayers for specific occasions have also been taught to us by the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him), We are reproducing some of them here that are easy to learn and can be made use of by us in our daily life. They should be learnt by heart and recited habitually at moments for which they are indicated.

1. **At Day break**
O God! With Thy help do we enter upon the morning, and with Thy help do we enter upon the evening: with Thy help do we live and with Thy help do we die: and unto Thee shall be the Resurrection.
2. **When evening sets in**
O God! With Thy help do we enter upon the evening and with Thy help do we enter upon the morning: with Thy help do we live and with Thy do we die: and unto Thee shall be the Resurrection.
3. **On retiring to bed**
O God! In Thy name do we live and die.
4. **On rising up in the morning**
Praise be to God who restored us unto life, having caused to die, and unto Him shall be the Resurrection.
5. **Before entering the lavatory**
O God! I seek refuge in Thee from the wicked devils, both male and female.
6. **On coming out of the lavatory**
Praise be to God who relieved me of faeces and gave health.
7. **While performing the Wazu**
O God! Forgive me my sins, bless my household and grant auspiciousness and prosperity to my sustenance.
8. **When the Wazu is finished**
I bear witness that there is not except One God. He is alone: He hath no partner. And I bear witness that Mohammad (Peace be upon him) is His slave and His Messenger. O God! Make me among those that repent and among those that remain clean.
9. **On entering the mosque**
O Lord! Forgive me my sins and open unto me the gates of Thy Mercy.
10. **One coming out of the mosque**
O Lord! Forgive me my sins and open unto me the doors of Thy Bounty.
11. **Before commencing to eat**
In the name of God and upon the blessings of the Lord
12. **At the end of meal**
Praise be to God who fed us and gave us drink and raised us up as Muslims.
13. **When dining at someone's place**
O God! Feed him who fed us and give him drink who gave us to drink.
14. **When riding a beast of burden or a carriage**

Glory be to Him who hath subjugated it to us though we were unable to subdue it. Behold, we are assuredly to return unto the Lord.

15. When setting forth on a journey

O God! Make this journey of ours easy for us and roll up for us the distance thereof. O God! Thou art our Companion in the journey and the Caretaker of our households when we are away. O God! I seek refuge in Thee from the toil of the journey and from beholding a sad sight and a bad reverse in my fortunes and on my return.

16. On returning home from a journey

We return unto God, penitents, adorers and worshippers of the Lord.

17. When bidding farewell to anyone

I place thee in the hands of God, and thy things that need protection and the end of Thy deeds.

18. On seeing anyone in distress

Praise be to Lord who saved me from that from which lie hath afflicted thee, and made me better than of His creatures (purely out of His Mercy. I claim no credit for it).

19. On entering a town

O God! Bless this town for us and make it for us auspicious

20. When rising from a company

O God! Glory be to Thee, celebrate Thy praises; There is no Lord save Thee, I beg Thy forgiveness and I repent.

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