



Islamic Circle of North America

Tarbiyah Guide
Stage 1

Tarbiyah Booklet
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Important Notice:

- Please be advised that this book is compiled for the use and purpose of training for the workers and members of ICNA only.
- This Book is not for Sale.
- All the material in this book has been gathered from one of the mentioned books: *Let Us Be Muslims, Witnesses unto Mankind, Hidayaat, Fee Zalaamelul Qur'an, To Be a Muslim, Fiqh us Sunnah, An Introduction to the Study of Qur'an, Islam in Focus, 20 Ways to Show Off, Fundamentals of Tawheed, Hasan ul Muslim, Priorities of an Islamic Movement in an Upcoming Phase, Lawful and Prohibited in Islam, Al-Kabaair (Imam Dhahabi's), Short Lessons For Muslims (Shaikh Bin Baz), Individual and Collective notes of ICNA's Murabees (Sh. Abdool Rahman Khan, Irfan Sheikh, and others).*

Qur'an

Introduction to the Study of Qur'an

We are accustomed to reading books, which present information, ideas and arguments systematically and coherently. So, when we embark on the study of the Qur'an, we expect that this book too will revolve around a definite subject, that the subject matter of the book will be clearly defined at the beginning and will then be neatly divided into sections and chapters, after which discussion will proceed in a logical sequence. We likewise expect a separate and systematic arrangement of instruction and guidance for each of the various aspects of human life.

However, as soon as we open the Qur'an we encounter a hitherto completely unfamiliar genre of literature. We notice that it embodies precepts of belief and conduct, moral directives, legal prescriptions, exhortation and admonition, censure and condemnation of evildoers, warnings to deniers of the Truth, good tidings and words of consolation and good cheer to those who have suffered for the sake of God, arguments and corroborative evidence in support of its basic message, allusions to anecdotes from the past and to signs of God visible in the universe. Moreover, these myriad subjects alternate without any apparent system; quite unlike the books to which we are accustomed, the Qur'an deals with the same subject over and over again, each time couched in a different phraseology.

The reader also encounters abrupt transitions between one subject matter and another. Audience and speaker constantly change as the message is directed now to one and now to another group of people. There is no trace of familiar division into chapters and sections. Likewise, the treatment of different subjects is unique. If a historical subject is raised, the narrative does not follow the pattern familiar in historical accounts. In discussions of philosophical or metaphysical questions, we miss the familiar expressions and terminology of formal logic and philosophy. Cultural and political matters, or questions pertaining to man's social and economic life, are discussed in a way very different from that usual in works of social sciences. Juristic principles and legal injunctions are elucidated, but quite differently from the manner of conventional works. When we come across an ethical instruction, we find its form differs entirely from anything to be found elsewhere in the literature of ethics.

The reader may find all this so foreign that his notion of what a book should be that he may become so confused as to feel that the Qur'an is a piece of disorganized, incoherent and unsystematic writing, comprising nothing but a disjointed conglomeration of comments of varying lengths put together arbitrarily. Hostile critics use this as a basis for their criticism; while those more favorably inclined resort to far-fetched explanations, or else conclude that the Qur'an consists of unrelated pieces, thus making it amenable to all kinds of interpretations, even interpretations quite opposed to the intent of God Who revealed the Book.

What kind of a book is the Qur'an? In what manner was it revealed? What underlies its arrangement? What is the subject? What is its true purpose? What is the central theme to which its multifarious topics are intrinsically related? What kind of reasoning and style does it adopt in elucidating its central theme? If we could obtain clear, lucid answers to these and other related questions we might avoid some dangerous pitfalls, thus making it easier to reflect upon and to grasp that meaning and purpose of the Qur'anic verses. If we begin studying the Qur'an in the expectation of reading a book on religion we shall find it hard, since our notions of religion and of a book are naturally circumscribed by our range of experience. We need, therefore, to be told in advance that this Book is unique in the manner its composition, in its theme and in its contents and arrangement. We should be forewarned that the concept of a book, which we have formed from our previous readings, is likely to be a hindrance, rather than a help, towards a deep understanding of the Qur'an. We should realize that as a first step towards understanding it we must disabuse our minds of all preconceived notions.

The student of the Qur'an should grasp, from the outset, the fundamental claims that the Qur'an makes for itself. Whether one ultimately decides to believe in the Qur'an or not, one must recognize the fundamental statements made by the Qur'an and the man to whom it was revealed, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), to be the starting point of one's study. These claims are:

1. The Lord of the creation, the Creator and Sovereign of the entire universe, created man on earth (which is merely a part of His boundless realm). He also endowed man with the capacity for cognition, reflection, and understanding, with the ability to distinguish between good and evil, with the freedom of choice and volition, and

with the power to exercise his latent potentialities. In short, God bestowed upon man a kind of autonomy and appointed him His vicegerent on earth.

2. Although man enjoys this status, God made it abundantly plain to him that He alone is man's Lord and Sovereign, even as He is the Lord and Sovereign of the whole universe. Man was told that he was not entitled to consider himself independent and that only God was entitled to claim absolute obedience, service and worship. It was also made clear to man that life in this world, for which he had been placed and invested with a certain honor and authority, was in fact a temporary term, and was meant to test him; that after the end of the earthly life man must return to God, who will judge him on the basis of his performance, declaring who has succeeded and who has failed.

The right way for man is to regard God as his only Sovereign and the only object of his worship and adoration, to follow the guidance revealed by God, to act in this world in the consciousness that earthly life is merely a period of trial, and to keep his eyes fixed on the ultimate objective - success in God's final judgment. Every other way is wrong.

It was also explained to man that if he chose to adopt the right way of life - and in this choice he was free - he would enjoy peace and contentment in this world and be assigned, on his return to God the abode of eternal bliss and happiness known as Paradise. Should man follow any other way - although he was free to do so - he would experience the evil effects of corruption and disorder in the life of this world and be consigned to eternal grief and torment when he crossed the borders of the present world and arrived in the Hereafter.

3. Having explained all this, the Lord of the universe placed man on earth and communicated to Adam and Eve, the first human beings to live on the earth, the guidance, which they and their offspring were required to follow. These first human beings were not born in a state of ignorance and darkness. On the contrary, they began their life in the broad daylight of Divine Guidance. They had intimate knowledge of reality and the Law, which they were to follow, was communicated to them. Their way of life consisted of obedience of God (i.e. Islam) and they taught their children to live in obedience to Him (i.e. to live as Muslims). In the course of time, however, men gradually deviated from their true way of life and began to follow various erroneous ways. They allowed true guidance to be lost through heedlessness and negligence and sometimes, even deliberately, distorted it out of

evil perversity. They associated with God a number of beings, human and non-human, real as well as imaginary, and adored them as deities. They adulterated the God-given knowledge of reality with all kinds of fanciful ideas, superstitions and philosophical concepts, thereby giving birth to innumerable religions. They disregarded or distorted the sound and equitable principle of individual morality and of collective conduct and made their own laws in accordance with their base desires and prejudices. As a result, the world became filled with wrong and injustice.

4. It was insistent with the limited autonomy conferred upon man by God that He should exercise His overwhelming power and compel man to righteousness. It was also inconsistent with the fact that God had granted a term to the human species in which to show their worth that He should afflict men with catastrophic destruction as soon as they showed signs of rebellion. Moreover, God had undertaken from the beginning of creation that true guidance would be made available to man throughout the term granted to him and that his guidance would be available in a manner consistent with man's autonomy. To fulfill this self-assumed responsibility God chose to appoint those human beings whose faith in Him was outstanding and who followed the way pleasing to Him. God chose these people to be His envoys. He had His messages communicated to them, honored them with an intimate knowledge of reality, provided them with the true laws of life and entrusted them with the task of recalling man to the original path from which he had strayed.
5. These Prophets were sent to different people in different lands and over a period of time covering thousands and thousands of years. They all had the same religion; the one originally revealed to man as the right way for him. All of them followed the same guidance; those principles of morality and collective life prescribed for man at the very outset of his existence. All these Prophets had the same mission - to call man to his true religion and subsequently to organize all who accepted this message into a community, which would be bounded by the Law of God, which would strive to establish its observance and would seek to prevent its violation. All the prophets discharged their missions creditably in their own time. However, there were always many who refused to accept their guidance and consequently those who did accept it and became a "Muslim" (Muslim would

be anyone obeying God) community gradually degenerated, causing the Divine Guidance either to be lost, distorted or adulterated.

6. At last the Lord of the Universe sent Muhammad (peace be on him) to Arabia and entrusted him with the same mission that He had entrusted to the earlier Prophets. This last Messenger of God addressed the followers of the earlier Prophets as well as the rest of humanity. The mission of each Prophet was to call men to the right way of life, to communicate God's true guidance afresh and to organize into one community all who responded to his mission and accepted the guidance vouchsafed to him. Such a community was to be dedicated to the two-fold task of molding its own life in accordance with God's guidance and striving for the reform of the world. The Qur'an is the Book, which embodies this mission and guidance, as revealed by God to Muhammad (peace be on him).

If we remember these basic facts about the Qur'an it becomes easy to grasp its true subject, its central theme and the objective it seeks to achieve. Insofar as it seeks to explain the ultimate causes of man's success or failure the subject of the Book is MAN.

Its central theme is that concepts relating to God, the universe and man, which have emanated from man's own limited knowledge run counter to reality. The same applies to concepts which have been either woven by man's intellectual fancies or which have evolved through man's obsession with animal desires. The ways of life, which rest on these false foundations, are both contrary to reality and ruinous for man. The essence of true knowledge is that which God revealed to man when He appointed him his vicegerent. Hence, the way of life which is in accordance with the reality and conducive to human good is that which we have characterized above as "the right way". The real object for the Book is to call people to this "right way" and to illuminate God's true guidance, which has often been lost either through man's negligence and heedlessness or distorted by his wicked perversity.

If we study the Qur'an with these facts in mind it is bound to strike us that the Qur'an does not deviate from its main subject, its central theme and its basic objective. All the various themes occurring in the Qur'an are related to the central theme; just as beads of different sizes and color may be strung together to form a necklace. The Qur'an speaks of the structure of the heavens and the earth and of man, refers to the signs of reality in the

various phenomena of the universe, relates anecdotes of bygone nations, criticizes the beliefs, morals, and deeds of different peoples, elucidates supernatural truths and discusses many other things besides. All this the Qur'an does, not to order to provide instruction in physics, history, philosophy or any other particular branch of knowledge, but rather to remove the misconception people have about reality and to make that reality manifest to them.

It emphasizes that the various ways men follow, which are not in conformity with reality, are essentially false, and full of harmful consequences for mankind. It calls on men to shun all such ways and to follow instead the way, which both conforms to reality and yields best practical results. This is why the Qur'an mentions everything only to the extent and in the manner necessary for the purpose it seeks to serve. The Qur'an confines itself to essentials thereby omitting any irrelevant details. Thus all its contents consistently revolve around this call.

Likewise, it is not possible fully to appreciate either the style of the Qur'an, the order underlying the arrangement of its verses or the diversity of the subjects treated in it, without fully understanding the manner in which it was revealed.

The Qur'an, as we have noted earlier, is not a book in the conventional sense of the term. God did not compose and entrust it in one piece to Muhammad (pbuh) so that he could spread its message and call people to adopt an attitude to life consonant with its teachings. Nor is the Qur'an one of those books, which discusses their subjects and main themes in the conventional manner. Its arrangement differs from that of ordinary books, and its style is correspondingly different. The nature of this Book is that God chose a man in Makkah to serve as His Messenger and asked him to preach His message, starting in his own city and with his own tribe (Quraysh). At this initial stage, instructions were confined to what was necessary at this particular juncture of the mission. Three themes in particular stand out:

- I. Directives were given to the Prophet on how he should prepare himself for his great mission and how he should begin working for the fulfillment of his task.

- II. A fundamental knowledge of reality was furnished and misconceptions commonly held by people in that regard - misconceptions that gave rise to wrong orientation in life - were removed.
- III. People were exhorted to adopt the right attitude towards life. Moreover, the Qur'an also elucidated those fundamental principles, which, if followed, lead to man's success and happiness.

In keeping with the character of the mission at this stage the early revelations generally consisted of short verses, couched in language of uncommon grace and power, and clothed in a literary style suited to the taste and temperament of the people to whom they were originally addressed, and whose hearts they were meant to penetrate. The rhythm, melody and vitality of these verses drew rapt attention, and such was their stylistic grace and charm that people began to recite them involuntarily.

The local color of these early messages is conspicuous, for while the truths they contained were universal, the arguments and illustration used to elucidate them were drawn from the immediate environment familiar to the first listeners. Allusions were made to their history and traditions and to the visible traces of the past, which had crept into the beliefs, and into the moral and social life of Arabia. All this was calculated to enhance the appeal the message held for its immediate audience. This early stage lasted for four or five years, during which period the following reactions to the Prophet's message manifested themselves:

1. A few people responded to the call and agreed to join the Ummah committed, of its own volition, to submit to the Will of God.
2. Many people reacted with hostility, either from ignorance or egotism, or because of chauvinistic attachment to the way of life of their forefathers.
3. The call of the prophet did not remain confined to Makkah; it began to meet with favorable response beyond the borders.

In spite of the strong and growing resistance and opposition, the Islamic movement continued to spread. There was hardly a family left in Makkah one of whose members at least had not embraced Islam.

During the Prophet's long and arduous struggle God continued to inspire him with revelations. These messages instructed the believers in their basic duties, inculcated in them a sense of community and belonging, exhorted them to piety, moral excellence and purity of character, taught them how to preach the true faith, sustained their spirit by promises of success and Paradise in the Hereafter, aroused them to struggle in the cause of God with patience, fortitude and high spirits, and filled their hearts with such zeal and enthusiasm that they were prepared to endure every sacrifice, brave every hardship and face every adversity.

This stage was unfolded in several phases. In each phase, the preaching of the message assumed ever-wider proportions, as the struggle for the cause of Islam and opposition to it became increasingly intense and severe, and as the believers encountered people of varying outlooks and beliefs. All these factors had the effect of increasing the variety of the topics treated in the messages revealed during this period. Such, in brief, was the situation forming the background of the Makkan SURAS of the Qur'an.

It is now clear to us that the revelation of the Qur'an began and went hand in hand with the preaching of the message. This message passed through many stages and met with diverse situations from the very beginning and throughout a period of twenty-three years. The different parts of the Qur'an were revealed step by step according to the multifarious, changing needs and requirements of the Islamic movement during these stages. It therefore could not possibly possess the kind of coherence and systematic sequence expected of a doctoral dissertation. Moreover, the various fragments of the Qur'an, which were revealed in harmony with the growth of the Islamic movement were not published in the form of written treatises, but were spread orally. Their style, therefore, bore an oratorical flavor rather than the characteristics of literary composition.

Furthermore, these orations were delivered by one whose task meant he had to appeal simultaneously to the mind, to the heart and to the emotions, and to people of different mental levels and dispositions. He had to revolutionize people's thinking, to arouse in them a storm of noble emotions in support of his cause, to persuade his companions and inspire them with devotion and zeal, and with the desire to improve and reform their lives. He had to raise their morale and steel their determination, turn enemies into friends and opponents into admirers, disarm those out to oppose his message and show their position

to be morally untenable. In short, he had to do everything necessary to carry his movement through to a successful conclusion. Orations revealed in conformity with requirements of a message and movement will inevitably have a style different from that of a professorial lecture.

This explains the repetitions we encounter in the Qur'an. The interests of a message and a movement demand that during a particular stage emphasis should be placed only on those subjects which are appropriate at that stage, to the exclusion of matters pertaining to later stages. As a result, certain subjects may require continual emphasis for months or even years. On the other hand, constant repetition in the same manner becomes exhausting. Whenever, a subject is repeated, it should therefore be expressed in different phraseology, in new forms and with stylistic variations so as to ensure that the ideas and beliefs being put over find their way into the hearts of the people.

At the same time, it was essential that the fundamental beliefs and principles on which the movement was based should always be kept fresh in people's minds; a necessity, which dictated that they should be repeated continually through all stages of the movement... If these ideas had lost their hold on the hearts and minds of people, the Islamic movement could not have moved forward in its true spirit.

If we reflect on this, it also becomes clear that the prophet (pbuh) did not arrange the Qur'an in the sequence in which it was revealed. As we have noted, the context in which the Qur'an was revealed in the course of twenty-three years was the mission and movement of the prophet (pbuh); the revelations correspond with the various stages of this mission and movement. Now, it is evident that when the prophet's mission was completed, the chronological sequence of the various parts of the Qur'an - revealed in accordance with the growth of the prophet's mission - could in no way be suitable to the changed situation. What was now required was a different sequence in tune with the changed context resulting from the completion of the mission.

Initially, the prophet's message was addressed to people totally ignorant of Islam. Their instruction had to start with the most elementary things. After the mission had reached its successful completion, the Qur'an acquired a compelling relevance for those who had decided to believe in the prophet. By virtue of that belief they had become a new religious

community - the Muslim Ummah. Not only that but they had been made responsible for carrying on the prophet's mission, which he had bequeathed to them, in a perfected form on both conceptual and practical level. It was no longer necessary for the Qur'anic verses to be arranged in chronological sequence. In the changed context, it had become necessary for the bearers of the mission of the prophet (pbuh) to be informed of their duties and of the true principles and laws governing their lives. They also had to be warned against the deviations and corruptions, which had appeared among the followers of earlier prophets.

It would be foreign to the very nature of the Qur'an to group together in one place all verses relating to a specific subject; the nature of the Qur'an requires that the reader should find teachings revealed during the Madinan period interspersed with those of the Makkan period, and vice versa. It requires the juxtaposition of early discourses with instructions from the later period of the life of the Prophet. This blending of the teachings from different periods helps to provide an overall view and an integrated perspective of Islam, and acts as a safeguard against lopsidedness. Furthermore, a chronological arrangement of the Qur'an would have been meaningful to later generations only if it had been supplemented with explanatory notes and these would have had to be treated as inseparable appendices to the Qur'an. This would have been quite contrary to God's purpose in revealing the Qur'an; the main purpose of its revelation was that all human beings - children and young people, old men and women, town and country dwellers, laymen and scholars - should be able to refer to the Divine Guidance available to them in composite form and providentially secured against adulteration. This was necessary to enable people of every level of intelligence and understanding to know what God required of them. This purpose would have been defeated had the reader been obliged solemnly to recite historical notes and explanatory comments along with the Book of God.

Those who object to the present arrangement of the Qur'an appear to be suffering from a misapprehension as to its true purpose. They sometimes almost seem under the illusion that it was revealed merely for the benefit of students of history and sociology!

The present arrangement of the Qur'an is not the work of later generations, but was made by the Prophet under God's direction. Whenever a Surah was revealed, the Prophet summoned his scribes, to whom he carefully dictated its contents, and instructed them where to place it in relation to the other Surahs. The Prophet followed the same order of

Surahs and verse when reciting during ritual Prayer as on other occasions, and his Companions followed the same practice in memorizing the Qur'an. It is therefore a historical fact that the collection of the Qur'an came to an end on the very day that its revelation ceased...

Since Prayers were obligatory for the Muslims from the very outset of the Prophet's mission, and recitation of the Qur'an was an obligatory part of those prayers, Muslims were committing the Qur'an to memory while its revelation continued. Thus, as soon as a fragment of the Qur'an was revealed, it was memorized by some of the Companions. Hence the preservation of the Qur'an was not solely dependent on its verses being inscribed on palm leaves, pieces of bone, leather and scraps of parchment - the materials used by the Prophet's scribes for writing down Qur'anic verses. Instead the verses came to be inscribed upon scores, then hundreds, then thousands, then hundreds of thousands of human hearts, soon after they had been revealed, so that no scope was left for any devil to alter so much as one word of them.

When, after the death of the prophet, the storm of apostasy convulsed Arabia and the companions had to plunge into bloody battles to suppress it, many companions who had memorized the Qur'an suffered martyrdom. This led 'Umar to plead that the Qur'an ought to be preserved in writing, as well as orally. He therefore impressed the urgency of this upon Abu Bakr (The first Caliph). After slight hesitation, the latter agreed and entrusted that task to Zayd ibn Thabit-al-Ansari, who had worked as a scribe of the Prophet...The Qur'an that we possess today corresponds exactly to the edition which was prepared on the orders of Abu Bakr and copies of which were officially sent, on the orders of Uthman, to various cities and provinces. Several copies of this original edition of the Qur'an still exist today.

The Qur'an is a Book to which innumerable people turn for innumerable purposes. It is difficult to offer advice appropriate to all. The readers to whom this work is addressed are those who are concerned to acquire a serious understanding of the Book, and who seek the guidance it has to offer in relation to the various problems of life. For such people we have a few suggestions to make, and we shall offer some explanations in the hope of facilitating their study of the Qur'an.

Anyone who really wishes to understand the Qur'an, irrespective of whether or not he believes must divest his mind, as far as possible, of every preconceived notion, bias and prejudice, in order to embark upon his study with an open mind. Anyone who begins to study the Qur'an with a set of preconceived ideas is likely to read those very ideas into the Book. No book can be profitably studied with this kind of attitude, let alone the Qur'an, which refuses to open its treasure house to such readers.

For those who want only a superficial acquaintance with the doctrines of the Qur'an one reading is perhaps sufficient. For those who want to fathom its depths several readings are not even enough. These people need to study the Qur'an over and over again, taking notes of everything that strikes them as significant. Those who are willing to study the Qur'an in this manner should do so at least twice to begin with, so as to obtain a broad grasp of the system of beliefs and practical prescriptions that it offers. In this preliminary survey, they should try to gain an overall perspective of the Qur'an and to grasp the basic ideas, which it expounds, and the system of life that it seeks to build on the basis of those ideas. If, during the course of this study, anything agitates the mind of the reader, he should note down the point concerned and patiently persevere with his study. He is likely to find that, as he proceeds, the difficulties are resolved. (When a problem has been solved, it is advisable to note down the solution alongside the problem). Experience suggests that any problems still unsolved after a first reading of the Qur'an are likely to be resolved by a careful second reading.

Only after acquiring a total perspective of the Qur'an should a more detailed study be attempted. Again the reader is well advised to keep noting down the various aspects of the Qur'anic teachings. For instance, he should note the human model that the Qur'an extols as praiseworthy, and the model it denounces. It might be helpful to make two columns, one headed 'praiseworthy qualities', the other headed 'blameworthy qualities', and then to enter into the respective columns all that is found relevant in the Qur'an. To take another instance, the reader might proceed to investigate the Qur'anic point of view on what is conducive to human success and felicity, as against what leads to man's ultimate failure and perdition. In the same way, the reader should take down notes about Qur'anic teachings on questions of belief and morals, man's rights and obligations, family life and collective behavior, economic and political life, law and social organization, war and peace, and so on. Then he should use these various teachings to try to develop and

image of the Qur'anic teachings vis-à-vis each particular aspect of human life. This should be followed by an attempt at integrating these images so that he comes to grasp the total scheme of life envisaged by the Qur'an.

Moreover, anyone wishing to study in depth the Qur'anic viewpoint on any particular problem of life should, first of all, study all the significant strands of human thought concerning that problem. Ancient and modern works on the subject should be studied. Unresolved problems where human thinking seems to have got stuck should be noted. The Qur'an should then be studied with these unresolved problems in mind, with a view to finding out what solutions the Qur'an has to offer. Personal experience again suggests that anyone who studies the Qur'an in this manner will find his problem solved with the help of verses which he may have read scores of times without it ever crossing his mind that they could have any relevance to the problems at hand.

It should be remembered; nevertheless, that full appreciation of the spirit of the Qur'an demands practical involvement with the struggle to fulfill its mission. The Qur'an is neither a book of abstract theories and cold doctrines which the reader can grasp while seated in a cozy armchair, nor it is merely a religious book like other religious books, the secrets of which can be grasped in seminaries and oratories. On the contrary, it is the blueprint and guidebook of a message, of a mission, of a movement. As soon as this Book was revealed, it drove a quiet, kind-hearted man from his isolation and seclusion, and places him upon the battlefield of life to challenge a world that had gone astray. It inspired him to raise his voice against falsehood, and pitted him in grim struggle against the standard-bearers of unbelief, of disobedience of God, of waywardness and error...

One after the other, it sought out everyone who had a pure and noble soul, mustering them together under the standard of the Messenger. It also infuriated all those who by their nature were bent on mischief and drove them to wage war against the bearers of the Truth.

This is the Book, which inspired and directed that great movement which began with the preaching of a message by an individual, and continued for no fewer than twenty-three years, until the Kingdom of God was truly established on earth. In this long and heart-rending struggle between Truth and Falsehood, this Book unfailingly guided its followers

to the eradication of the latter and the consolidation and enthronement of the former. How then could one expect to get to the heart of the Qur'anic truths merely by reciting its verses, without so much as stepping upon the field of battle between faith and unbelief, between Islam and Ignorance? To appreciate the Qur'an fully one must take it up and launch into the task of calling people to God, making it one's guide at every stage.

Then, and only then, does one meet the various experiences encountered at the time of its revelation. One experiences the initial rejection of the message of Islam by the city of Makkah, the persistent hostility leading to the quest for a haven in the refuge of Abyssinia, and the attempt to win a favorable response from Ta'if which led, instead, to cruel persecution of the bearer for the Qur'anic message. One experiences also the campaigns of Badr, of Uhud, of Hunayn and, of Tabuk. One comes face to face with Abu Jahl and Abu Lahab, with hypocrites and with Jews, with those who instantly respond to this call as well as those who, lacking clarity of perception and moral strength, were drawn into Islam only at a later stage.

This will be an experience different from any so-called "mystic-experience". I designate it the "Qur'anic mystic experience". One of the characteristics of this 'experience' is that at each stage one almost automatically finds certain Qur'anic verses to guide one, since they were revealed at a similar stage and therefore contain the guidance appropriate to it. A person engaged in this struggle may not grasp all the linguistic and grammatical subtleties, he may also miss certain finer points in the rhetoric and semantics of the Qur'an, yet it is impossible for the Qur'an to fail to reveal its true spirit to him.

It is well known that the Qur'an claims to be capable of guiding all mankind. Yet the student of the Qur'an finds that it is generally addressed to the people of Arabia, who lived in the time of its revelation. Although the Qur'an occasionally addresses itself to all mankind of its contents are, on the whole, vitally related to the taste and temperament, the environment and history, and the customs and usages of Arabia. When one notices this, one begins to question why a Book which seeks to guide all mankind to salvation should assign such importance to certain aspects of a particular people's life, and to things belonging to a particular age and clime. Failure to grasp the real cause of this may lead one to believe that the Book was originally designed to reform the Arabs of that particular

age alone, and that it is only the Book an altogether novel interpretation, proclaiming that its aim is to guide all mankind for all time.

... If, while addressing the people of a particular area at a particular period of time, attempting to refute their polytheistic beliefs and adducing arguments in support of its own doctrine of the unity of God, the Qur'an draws upon facts with which those people were familiar, this does not warrant the conclusion that its message is relevant only for that particular people or for that particular period of time.

What ought to be considered is whether or not the Qur'anic statements in refutation of the polytheistic beliefs of the Arabs of those days apply as well to other forms of polytheism in other parts of the world. Can the arguments advanced by the Qur'an in that connection be used to rectify the beliefs of other polytheists? Is the Qur'anic line of argument for establishing the unity of God, with minor adaptations, valid and persuasive for every age? If the answers are positive, there is no reason why a universal teaching should be dubbed exclusive to a particular people and age merely because it happened to be addressed originally to that people and at that particular period of time.

... Indeed, what marks out a time-bound from an eternal, and a particularistic national doctrine from a universal one, is the fact that the former either seeks to exalt a people or claims special privileges for it or else comprises ideas and principles so vitally related to that people's life and traditions as to render it totally inapplicable to the conditions of other people. A universal doctrine, on the other hand, is willing to accord equal rights and status to all, and its principles have an international character in that they are equally applicable to other nations. Likewise, the validity of those doctrines, which seek to come to grips merely with the questions of a transient and superficial nature are time-bound. If one studies the Qur'an with these considerations in mind, can one really conclude that it has only a particularistic national character, and that its validity is therefore time-bound?

Those who embark upon a study of the Qur'an often proceed with the assumption that this Book is, as it is commonly believed to be, a detailed code of guidance. However, when they actually read it, they fail to find detailed regulations regarding social, political and economic matters. In fact, they notice that the Qur'an has not laid down detailed regulations even in respect of such oft-repeated subjects as Prayers and Zakah. The

reader finds this somewhat disconcerting and wonders in what sense the Qur'an can be considered a code of guidance.

The uneasiness some people feel about this arises because they forget that God did not merely reveal a Book, but that he also designated a Prophet. Suppose some laymen were to be provided with the bare outlines of a construction plan on the understanding that they would carry out the construction as they wished. In such a case, it would be reasonable to expect that they should have very elaborate directives as to how the construction should be carried out. Suppose, however, that along with the broad outline of the plan of construction, they were also provided with a competent engineer to supervise the task. In that case, it would be quite unjustifiable to disregard the work of the engineer, on the expectation that detailed directives would form an integral part of the construction plan, and then to complain of imperfection in the plan itself.

The Qur'an, to put it succinctly, is a Book of broad general principles rather than of legal minutiae. The Book's main aim is to expound, clearly and adequately, the intellectual and moral foundations of the Islamic program for life. It seeks to consolidate these by appealing both the person's mind and to his/her heart. Its method of guidance for practical Islamic life does not consist of laying down minutely detailed laws and regulations. It prefers to outline the basic framework for each aspect of human activity, and to lay down certain guidelines within which man can order his life in keeping with the Will of God. The mission of the Prophet was to give practical shape to the Islamic vision of the good life, by offering the world a model of an individual character and of a human state and society, as living embodiments of the principles of the Qur'an.

Meaning & Tafseer of the Surahs

Surah An-Nas

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Say: O seek refuge in the Lord of men, the King of men, the God of men, from the mischief of the slinking prompter, who whispers in the hearts of men, from among jinn and men. In the Shade of the Qur'an

Commentary:

In this Surah, as can be seen, refuge is sought in the Lord, Sovereign and God of mankind from the insidious whisperer, jinn or human who prompts evil ideas into people's minds. The Surah presents the relevant attributes of Allah to keep away this invisible evil, which the mind on its own cannot shut out. For the Lord is He who preserves directs, cherishes and protects mankind; the Sovereign is He, who owns, governs and independently runs the world; and the Deity is He who supercedes all other beings and absolutely supervises over all their affairs. The particular mention of mankind here brings man closer to Allah's protection and care.

Allah, the Merciful, instructs His Messenger and his nation or followers to recognize the attributes of His and seek His protection against this sneaking evil, which locates itself within their hearts. For they cannot rid themselves of such an evil which creeps into their hearts surreptitiously and imperceptibly without the aid of Allah, the Lord, the Sovereign, the Deity.

The nature of this evil-importing medium is identified in the text first as "*the slinking prompter*." Its function is outlined as to "*whisper in the hearts of men*". Then its origin is specified as "*from among jinn and men*."

The style adopted here is quite significant because it draws one's attention fully to the identity of this sneaking whisperer after describing its nature in order to show the process by which that evil is insinuated, so that one is alerted to watch and confront it. For when one is given the full picture one knows that this sneaking whisperer operates secretly. One

also realizes that it is jinn as well as human, for human beings are not exceptions in spreading evil while unseen.

We do not know how the Jinn perform this whispering, but we certainly find its repercussions in the behavior of individuals as well as in human life generally. We know for sure that the battle between Adam (man) and Iblis (Satan) is a very old one. Satan declared war between the two out of the evil inherent in him, his conceit and his envy and resentment of man. He was given Divine permission to carry out this battle for some purpose which Allah alone comprehends. But, significantly, man has not been left alone, dispossessed of the necessary means of protection. He has been provided with power of faith or "*Iman*", (that is, conscious belief in and knowledge of Allah and His attributes through conviction and sincere devotion).

Meditation and seeking refuge in Allah are among the most effective weapons. When man neglects these means of security and defense, he indeed has only himself to blame. Ibn Abbas related that the Messenger of Allah had said, Satan besieges the individual's heart, he subsides whenever one conscientiously remembers Allah, but insinuates his evil whenever one is un-thoughtful of Him.

As for humans we know a great deal of their curious ways of whispering and prompting and some types like the following are more devilish than the Devil:

A bad companion who injects evil into his comrade's heart and mind while he is unaware, as he is thought to be trustworthy, a ruler's counselor or advisor who "whispers" to him and turns him into a destructive tyrant, an unscrupulous slanderer who fabricates and decorates tales and makes them sound factual and convincing, a hustler of immoral business and dealings who tries to get through to people by exploiting their sensual, unhealthy desires, a hundred other "whisperers" who lay various traps inconspicuously utilizing people's different weak points which they detect and look for.

They are more devilish than even the jinn themselves. Faced with evil in this guise, man is not capable of ensuring his own safety. Allah therefore points out to him in this Surah the means he can employ in this fierce battle.

And there is a very direct significance in identifying the "prompter" as "slinking". For while this description indicates the secretiveness of this whisperer on the one hand, it is, on the other hand, an illusion to its intrinsic feebleness whenever it is discovered or resisted. It subsides and meekly withdraws when met in the open; or, as the Messenger said in his accurate illustrations, He (Satan) subsides whenever one conscientiously remembers Allah, but insinuates his evil whenever one is un-thoughtful of Him!

This presentation fortifies the believer's heart in face of this timid, subsiding whisperer. Nevertheless, the battle is everlasting since this "prompter" is always watchful for the right moment (when one neglects the remembrance of Allah) to implant its evils. For the believer to be conscious of Allah once in a while is not sufficient, as the war is continuous till the end of time; this the Qur'an vividly states in a lucid picture:

And when We (Allah) said to the angels, 'Fall down prostrate before Adam ', they fell prostrate except Iblis (Satan) who said, 'Shall I bow down before him whom You have created of clay?' Do you see this creature that You have honored above me? If You give me grace until the Day of Resurrection, I will certainly destroy his offspring, save but a few'. 'Be gone!' said He. 'But you and whoever of them follows you will have Hell for reward. An ample reward it shall be. Rouse with your voice whomever you are able. Muster against them your horsemen and your fool men. Be their partner in their wealth and in their off spring. Make them promises. Whatever Satan promises them is only for deceit. But over My true servants you shall have no power.' Your Lord is their all Sufficient Guardian. (Al-Qur'an 17:61-5)

This concept of the battle and the source of evil in it, whether provoked by Satan himself or by his human agent, fully inspires man to feel that he is not helpless in it; since his Lord, Sovereign and Deity controls all creations and events. Though He has permitted Satan to attack, He has supreme power over him and He has also provided guidance for man. Allah leaves to Satan only those who neglect Him their Lord, Sovereign and Deity, but those who live in consciousness of Him are safe and protected against his intimidations and incitements. Thus, righteousness is supported by the only true power of the Lord, Sovereign and Deity, whereas evil is backed by a slinking prompter, a sneaky whisperer, cowardly in the open field, quick to retreat in war, and easily defeated by one's seeking refuge with Allah.

This is the most perfect conception of the battle between good and evil. It is a conception, which protects the being against defeat and provides him with strength confidence and contentment.

Praise be to Allah at the beginning and at the end. From Him we derive confidence and success. To Him we turn for unfailing support.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Day break, from the evil of what He has created; from the evil of darkness when it gathers; from the evil of the conjuring witches; from the evil of the envier when he envies.

Commentary:

This Surah, along with the following one, "*Men*" contains a directive from Allah primarily to His Prophet and secondly to the believers at large, to take refuge in Him and seek His protection in the face of any source of fear, hidden or visible, known or unknown. It is as if Allah, the Exalted, is unfolding His world of care, and embracing the believers in His guard, and is kindly and affectionately calling on them to resort to His care where in they will feel safe and peaceful: *I know that you are helpless and surrounded by foes and fears ... Come on here for safety, contentment and peace...*

Thus the two Surahs start off with, *Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak, and, Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men.*

Several accounts have been handed down concerning the revelation and popularity of this Surah and they all fit in neatly with the above interpretation, that is, of Merciful Allah unfolding His care and offering shelter to His faithful servants. The Messenger of Allah himself loved this Surah deeply, as is clearly apparent in his traditions.

According to Uqba ibn 'Amir, the Prophet's companion, the Messenger of Allah once said *Have you not heard the unique verses that were revealed last night, 'Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak' and 'Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men.'* (Transmitted on the authority of Malik, Muslim, At-Tirmithi, Abu Dawood and An-Nissai).

Jabir, the Prophet's companion, said *The Messenger of Allah said to me once, 'Jabir recite!' and I asked, 'What shall I recite?' He replied, 'Recite "Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Daybreak," and "Say: I seek refuge in Lord of men." So I recited them and he commented, 'Recite them (as often as you can) for you shall never recite anything equivalent to them.'* (Transmitted by An-Nissai)

Tharr ibn Hubaish said that he had inquired from Ubay ibn Ka'ab, the Prophet's companion, about Al-Mu'awwathatain (as the two Surahs are called) saying, "Abu Al-Munthir, your brother, Ibn Masoud says so and so. (For some time Ibn Masoud was under the false impression that these two Surahs were not part of the Qur'an, but he later admitted his mistake). What do you think of that?" He replied, *I asked Allah's Messenger about this and he told me that he had been instructed to say the context of the Surahs and he had carried out the instruction. We surely say the same as Allah's Messenger has said.* (Transmitted by Al-Bukhari).

All these reports throw powerful light on that underlying factor of Allah's kindness and love to which the two Surahs draw attention. Allah, the Exalted, refers to Himself in this Surah by His attribute, *The Lord of the Daybreak*.

The Arabic term "*falaq*" simply means "*daybreak*" and yet it could be taken to mean "*the whole phenomenon of creation*" with reference to everything breaking out into life. This interpretation is supported by Allah's saying in Surah 6.

"The Cattle": Allah it is who splits (faliq) the seed and the fruit-stone (for sprouting). He brings forth the living from the dead ... He is the cleaver (faliq) of the daybreak, and He has ordained the night for rest, and the sun and the moon for reckoning. (Al-Qur'an 6:96-97)

If the meaning "daybreak" is adopted, refuge is being sought from the unseen and the mysterious with the Lord of the daybreak, Who bestows safety as He kindles the light of day. If, however, "faliq" is taken to mean "creation", then refuge from the evil of some creature is being sought with the Lord of all creation. In both cases, harmony with the theme of the Surah is maintained.

From the evil of what He has created. The phrase contains no exceptions or specifications. Mutual contact between various creatures, though no doubt advantageous, brings about some evil. Refuge from it is sought with Allah by the believer in order to encourage the goodness such a contact produces. For He who created those creatures is surely able to provide the right circumstances that lead them on a course where only the bright side of their contacts prevails.

From the evil of darkness (ghasiq) when it gathers (waqab). From the linguistic point of view, "*ghasiq*" means "substantially pouring out" and "*waqb*" is the name given to a little hole in a mountain through which water issues forth, "*waqab*" is the verb denoting such an action. What is probably meant here is the night, with all that accompanies it when it rapidly engulfs the world. That is horrifying in itself; in addition it fills hearts-with the possibility of an unknown, unexpected discomfort caused by a savage beast, an unscrupulous villain, a striking enemy or a hissing poisonous creature, as well as anxieties and worries (which entail depression and uneasiness) and evil thoughts and passions that are liable to revive in the dark during one's state of solitude at night. This is the evil against which the believer needs the protection of Allah.

From the evil of conjuring witches refers to the various types of magic, whether by deceiving physical human senses or by influencing people's will power and projecting ideas onto their emotions and minds. (The verse specially refers to a form of witchcraft carried out by women in Arabia at the time that tied knots in cords and blew upon them with an imprecation.)

Magic is the production of illusions, subject to a magician's designs, and it does not offer any kind of new facts or alter the nature of things. This is how the Qur'an describes magic when relating the story of Moses in Surah 20, "*Ta Ha*":

They (the magicians of Pharaoh) said, 'Moses, Will you throw down your gear first or shall we be the first to throw?' He said: 'Throw down yours. 'And by the power of their magic, their cords and staffs appeared to him as though they were running.

Moses conceived a secret fear within him. But We said: "Fear not! You shall have the upper hand. Throw that which is in your right hand! It will swallow up that which they have made. That which they have made is but the deceitful show of witchcraft.

Come where he may a magician shall never be successful. (Al-Qur'an 20:65-9).

Thus, their cords and staffs did not actually turn into snakes but it seemed so to the on lookers Moses included, to the point where he felt uneasy inside. He was restrained by the transformation of his stick into a real snake, by Allah's own doing, to destroy the phony ones.

This is the nature of magic, as we ought to conceive it, that through it one is capable of influencing other people's minds, causing them to think and act according to one's suggestions. We refrain from going any further with this. It is indeed an evil from which Allah's protection needs to be sought.

A few unsupported narratives, some of which have been quoted by authentic sources, allege that Labid ibn 'Assam, a Jew, hypnotized the Prophet for several days or months in Medina so that, as some relate he felt he was having a marital relationship with his wives when he was not; or, according to others, thought of having done something when he did not do so. This Surah and the next one "Men", according to these narrations, were revealed to release him from that state by reciting them.

But surely these stories contradict the idea of the infallibility of the Prophet in word and deed and do not agree with the belief that all his actions are exponent of the Islamic way of life for all Muslims. Above all, they conflict with the Qur'anic emphatic denial of his being influenced by any kind of magic whatsoever, as claimed by some opponents of Islam. Hence, we dismiss such stories, on the grounds that the Qur'an is the ultimate arbiter, and that singularly narrated traditions are left out in matters concerning the faith. These stories have not had proper backing and such backing is an essential qualification for a tradition to be rated as authentic. What weakens the stories most, however, is that the two Surahs were revealed in Makkah while these stories relate the incident as having taken place in Medina!

And from the evil of the envier when he envies. Envy is the evil, be grudging reaction one feels towards another who has received some favors from Allah. It is also accompanied by a very strong desire for the annihilation of such favors. Some harm to the envied may result from such a baseless grudge. Now, this may either be the outcome of some direct physical action of the envier or may result from the suppressed feelings alone.

We should try not to feel uneasy on learning that there is a countless number of inexplicable mysteries in life. There are several phenomena for which no account has been offered up till now. Telepathy and hypnosis are examples of such phenomena.

Very little is known about the mysteries of envy and the little that is known has often been uncovered by chance and coincidence. In any case, there is in envy an evil from which the refuge and protection of Allah must be sought. For He, the Most Generous, Most Merciful and the One who knows all has directed His Messenger and his followers to seek His refuge from this evil. It is unanimously agreed by the Islamic schools of thought that Allah will always protect His servants from such evils, should they seek His protection as He has directed them to do.

Al-Bukhari related that Aisha said that the Prophet would blow into both hands when getting into bed to sleep, and recite: *Say: He is Allah, the One...* and, *"Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of the Day break..."* and, *"Say: I seek refuge in the Lord of men"*, and starting with his head, face and front part of his body, he would then run his palms all over the rest of his body. He did that three times. (Also transmitted by the other major traditionists).

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Say: He is Allah, the one and only God the Eternal, the Absolute He begot none, nor was He begotten and there is none comparable to Him.

Commentary

This short Surah is "*equivalent to one third of the Qur'an*". Al Bukhari, the leading traditionist, was told about someone who had heard a man reciting, "Say: He is Allah..." repeatedly and had gone to the Prophet the following morning and told him disapprovingly about what he had heard. The Prophet commented, "I swear by Him in Whose hand is my soul that it (the Surah) is equivalent to one third of the Qur'an."

And, indeed, there is nothing surprising in that. For the unity of Allah that the Messenger was ordered to declare to the whole world is a belief to be ingrained in our beings, an explanation of human existence and a way of life in itself. From this standpoint, the Surah can be said to have embraced in the clearest terms the principal and most fundamental ideas of the great truth of Islam.

The Arabic term "*Ahad*" used here to refer to the unity of Allah is much more precise than the much more frequently used term "*Wahid*" which means "one". "*Ahad*" has the added connotations of absolute and continuous unity and the absence of equals.

The unity of Allah is such that there is no reality and no true and permanent existence except His. Moreover, every other being acquires what ever power it possessed from the effective power of Allah, which rules over this world. Nothing else whatsoever neither plans anything for the world nor decides, for that matter, anything in it.

This is the belief that should be entrenched in us. It is a full explanation of human existence. Once this belief has become clear and that explanation has established itself in the human mind, the heart is purified of all falsities and impurities and it is released from all ties except those of the one and unique Being who alone possesses the reality of being and who is the only effective power in this world. The human heart is then released from bondage to anything in this world, if not from attributing existence to anything else

altogether. Indeed, why should men's hearts aspire to something that has no permanent reality nor has any independent power to function in this world, since the real being is that of the Divine Being and the truly effective power is the Divine Will?

When the human heart releases itself from believing in anything but the one Truth, the Truth of Allah, and upholds this everlasting Truth, it liberates itself from all shackles, false ideas, evil desires, fear of earthly powers and from the confusions that mislead in this life.

For when the human heart finds Allah, it benefits and loses nothing. So why should it desire anything but the pleasure of Allah? And why should it fear anything, since there is no absolutely effective power but that of Allah?

When a conception that sees nothing in the world but the reality of Allah establishes itself in the human mind and heart, it is accompanied by the vision of this genuine, permanent reality in every other being that has sprung from it. This is the stage at which the heart feels the hand of Allah in everything and beyond which it feels nothing but Allah in the whole universe. There would be no other reality to be felt.

It is also accompanied by the attribution of every event and every movement in this life and in this universe to the first and only cause, that is, Allah that brings other causes about and influences their effectiveness. The Qur'an takes great care to establish this truth in the Muslims' concept of faith. It has always put aside apparent causes and associated events directly with the will of Allah. It says:

When you threw (a handful of dust) it was not your act, but Allah's. (Al-Qur'an 8:17)

There is no triumph except that given by Allah, (Al-Qur'an 8:10, 3:126)

You have no will except as Allah wills. (Al-Qur'an 76:30)

By disregarding all apparent causes and connecting matters directly with the will of Allah, a feeling of relief gently penetrates the human heart so that it knows the only Savior from whom it can ask whatever it wishes and by whom it is rescued from all it fears. It becomes unimpressed by the apparent influences, reasons and causes that bear no reality or true existence in themselves.

These are the steps of the way some mystics tried to climb, but they deviated too far from it. For Islam wants people to follow this route struggling with the realities of life with all its varied conditions and qualities, and to lead a human life in which they exercise their role of vicegerancy of Allah on earth with all their resources and the obligations laid upon them.

From this concept of the unity of Allah, stems a perfect path of life based on the explanation of human existence and whatever outlooks, feelings, and traits it stimulates. Such a path is based on the worship of Allah alone, who is the only real and permanent being, and whose will is the only effective power in the world. It is the path that makes its followers turn towards Allah alone and seek refuge in Him in time of need and fear, happiness and discomfort, luxury and hardship. For what is the use of turning towards a non-existent or a powerless being? This path has as its benefactor Allah alone. From Him we receive our beliefs, outlook, values, criteria, legislation's, institutions, systems, ethics and traditions. Such qualities must be obtained from the One and Permanent Being and the One Truth.

It is a path for performing activities, doing work and making sacrifices absolutely and only for Allah, and for wishing to be nearer the truth. This path also strengthens the links of love, brotherhood, mutual sympathy and responsiveness between all beings and Individual hearts. For when we speak of the liberation from complete submission to these feelings we by no means suggest that people should despise or hate them or escape from practicing them. They arise from the creative hand of Allah and they all owe their existence to Him. They are a gift to us from the Beloved and, therefore, they deserve our love.

It is a sublime and lofty path by whose standards this earth is so small, life is so short, its enjoyments and luxuries are worthless; and the breaking away from the various hindrances and falsifications is a supreme wish and a great aim for humanity. But in Islam, however, this release does not mean seclusion and neglect, nor does it mean contempt for or escape from life, but it simply means a continuous and sincere endeavor and an everlasting struggle to lead humanity to the submission of everything in human life to Allah

alone. Consequently, as was stated earlier, it is the fulfillment of man's role as Allah's vicegerent on earth with all its obligations.

The liberation of the human soul by priesthood and extreme spiritualism is available and easy to achieve but Islam does not approve of it, because, according to it, man's vicegerency on earth and the leadership of mankind are a part of its Divine path of liberation. This is a harder way that guarantees and secures the humanity of man and achieves the victory of the Divine will within his being. This is the real liberation, the flight of the human soul unto its Divine source and the achievement of its sublime truthfulness within the scope its wise Creator has chosen for it.

For the sake of all this, the first call to Islam was devoted to the establishment of the reality of the unity of Allah in the hearts and minds of men. For in this form it is a belief by the human soul, heart and mind, a full explanation of human existence, a way of life and not merely a spoken word or an inert belief. It is life in its entirety and religion in its totality and whatever faults follow after it are no more than the natural fruits of its establishment in the hearts and minds Of mankind.

All the deviations that afflicted the followers of earlier Divine religions, and which corrupted their beliefs, ideas and life arose, in the first place, from the deterioration of the concept of the absolute unity of God in their minds. But what distinguishes this concept in the Islamic faith is its deep-rooted ness in the entire human life and the construction of the latter on its basis and its being considered as s foundation for the realistic and practical system of human life with its effects clearly appearing in legislation as well as in belief.

"He is Allah, the one and only God," means that He is *"the Eternal and the Absolute,"* and that, *"He begot none nor was He begotten,"* and that *"there is none comparable to Him."* But the Qur'an states it all in detail for more emphasis and clarification.

"The Eternal, the Absolute" means the supplicated Lord without whose permission nothing is decided. Allah is the One Lord. He is One in His Divinity and all the other beings are but His servants. To Him and Him alone are addressed all supplications. He and only He decides everything independently. No one decides with Him. And since He is the one and only God this quality is already His.

"*He begot none, nor was He begotten,*" means that the reality of Allah is deep-rooted, permanent and everlasting. No changeable circumstances ever affect it. Its quality is absolute perfection at all times. Birth is descent and multiplication and implies a developed being after incompleteness or nothingness. It requires espousal, which is based on similarity of being and structure. All this is utterly impossible in the case of Allah. So the quality of "*One*" includes the renouncement of a father and a son.

"*There is none comparable to Him,*" means that no one resembles Him in anything or is equivalent to Him in any respect, either in the reality of being, or in the fact that He is the only effective power, or in any of His qualities or attribute. This is implied in the statement of his being "*One*" made in the first verse, but it is repeated thus to confirm and elaborate on that fact. It is a renunciation of the two-god belief, which implies that Allah is the God of Good while Evil has its god who, as the belief goes - is in opposition to Allah, spoils His good deeds and propagates evil on earth. The most well known two-god belief was that of the Persians, who believed in a god of light and a god of darkness. The people in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, where the Persians once had a state and exercised sovereignty, knew this belief.

This Surah is a firm establishment and a confirmation of the Islamic belief in the unity of Allah as was Surah 109, "*The Disbelievers*", a denunciation of any similarity or meeting point between the unity of Allah and anthropomorphic belief. Each Surah deals with the unity of Allah from a different angle. The Prophet used to start off his day reciting these two Surahs in his morning prayer (*fajr*). This, surely, was significant.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

May the hands of Abu Lahab perish; doomed he is. His wealth and his gains shall not avail him. He shall be plunged in a flaming fire, and his wife the carrier of firewood, shall have a rope of palm fiber rounder her neck.

Commentary

Abu Lahab, whose real name was Abduluzza ibn Abdulmuttalib, was an uncle of the Prophet. He was so nicknamed because of the radiant look he had on his face. With his wife Abu Lahab was one of the most unbending foes of the Messenger and the ideas he was propagating.

Ibn Ishaq related the report made by Rabiah ibn 'Abbad Ad-Daili who said, When I was a youngster I once watched with my father Allah's Messenger preaching Islam to the Arab tribes saying 'O sons of ... (calling their respective names), I am Allah's Messenger sent to order you to submit to and worship Him and nothing else beside Him, and to believe in me and protect me until I carry out what Allah has entrusted me with.' A cross eyed, bright-faced man was behind him, who used to say, after he had finished, 'O sons of ... this man wants you to forsake Al-Lat and Al Uzza (two prominent idols worshipped by the pagan Arabs) and your allies of the jinn, the children of Malik ibn Aqmas and to substitute for them these innovations and nonsense he has brought. Do not hasten to him, nor follow what he preaches.' I asked my father who that man was and he told me that it was Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle.' (Imam Ahmad and Tabarani also had the same version.)

This is but one incident of Abu Lahab's intimidation and ill will towards the Messenger and his call. His wife Arwa, the daughter of Harb Ibn Ummiya, a sister of Abu Sufyan, gave him unfailing support in his virulent, relentless campaign.

Such was the attitude of Abu Lahab towards the Prophet from the very start of his Divine mission. Al-Bukhari related, on the authority of 'Ibn Abbas that the Prophet went out to Batha' (a large square in Makkah) one day, mounted a hill and summoned the people of Quraish. When they came to him he addressed them and said,

Were I to tell you that an enemy is drawing near and will attack you tomorrow morning or evening, would you believe me? 'Yes,' they replied. 'So listen to me,' he went on, 'I am warning you of gruesome torment (from Allah).' Abu Lahab was there and snapped at him, 'Damn you!' For this you have called us?' (Another version goes: 'Abu Lahab stood up shaking the dust off his hands and saying, 'Damn you all day long...') Then this Surah was revealed.

Another instance was when the Hashimi clan (the Prophet's own clan) decided on grounds of tribal loyalties, under the leadership of Abu Talib to protect the Prophet despite their rejection of the religion he was preaching. Abu Lahab was the only one to take a different stand. He joined with the Quraish instead, and was with them in signing the document to boycott the Hashimi clan completely and starve them till they gave up the Prophet to them.

Abu Lahab also ordered his two sons to renounce the daughters of Muhammad, to whom they had been engaged before Muhammad's prophetic assignment, so as to burden him with the expenses of their maintenance and welfare.

Thus, Abu Lahab and his wife, Arwa, who was also called Umm Jamil, continued to launch their persistent onslaught against the Prophet and his message. The fact that they were close neighbors of the Prophet made the situation worse still. We are told that Umm Jamil used to carry thorns and sharp wood and place them in the Prophet's path (though it is thought that the phrase 'the carrier of firewood' in the Surah is used only metaphorically to indicate her lies and malice about him).

This Surah was revealed as a counter-attack against their hostile campaigns, Allah had taken over the command of the battle. *May the hands of Abu Lahab perish, doomed he is.*

The Arabic term rendered here as '*perish*' also signifies failure and cutting off. The term is used twice in two different senses. It is used first as an appeal, while in the second occurrence it implies the granting of the appeal and its fulfillment. So, in one short verse, an action is realized which draws the curtains upon a scene of a completed battle. What later follows is merely a description of what took place with the remark that '*his wealth and his gains shall not avail him.*' He can have no escape. He is defeated, vanquished and

damned. That was his fate in this world, but in the Hereafter *'he shall be plunged in a flaming fire.'* And his wife, the wood-carrier, will reside there with him having around her neck a rope of palm-fiber with which, as it were, she is being dragged into Hell; or which she used for fastening wood bundles together, according to whether a literal or metaphorical interpretation of the text is adopted.

The language of this Surah achieves a remarkable degree of beautiful harmony between the subject matter and the atmosphere built around it. Abu Lahab will be plunged into a fire with '*Lahab*', which is the Arabic word for flames of fire; and his wife who carries the wood, a fuel, will be met with the same fire with a palm-fiber rope around her neck. Abu Lahab will inhabit 'Jahannam' or Jehanna with fiercely burning '*Lahab*'. And his wife, who wraps up thorns and sharp woods, materials which, significantly, can increase the blaze of a fire, and puts them in the Prophet's way, will be subsequently dragged to Hell with a rope tied to her neck, bundled like firewood. How perfect is the matching between the words and the pictures; the punishment is presented as of the same nature as the deed - wood, ropes, fire and Lahab!

Phonetically, the words are arranged in a way, which provides a wonderful harmony between the sounds made by the pulling of the wood and the neck by ropes. Read in Arabic, the verse, '*Tabbat yada abi Lahabin watab,*' makes one feel a kind of hard sharp pull, analogous to that of bundles of wood or of dragging an unwilling person by the neck into a wild fire; all is in phase with the fury and the violent, bellicose tone that goes with the theme of the Surah. Thus, in five short verses of one of the shortest Surahs of the Qur'an, the vocal melodies click neatly with the actual movements of the scene portrayed.

This extremely rich and brilliant style led Umm Jamil to claim that the Prophet was in fact '*satirizing*' her and her husband. The arrogant and vain Arab woman could not get over being referred to with such a humiliating phrase as '*the carrier of firewood,*' who '*shall have a rope of palm-fiber round her neck.*' Her rage grew wilder when the Surah became popular among the Arab tribes who esteemed such a literary style!

Ibn Ishaq related:

'Umm Jamil, I was told, having heard what the Qur'an said about her and her husband, came to the Prophet who was with Abu Bakr at the Ka'abah. She was carrying a handful

of stones. Allah took her sight away from the Prophet and she saw only Abu Bakr to whom she said, 'Where is your comrade? I have heard that he has been satirizing me. Were I to find him, I would throw these stones right into his face. I, too, am gifted in poetry.' Then she said before leaving: 'The contemptible we obey not! Nor what he says shall we accept!'

'Abu Bakr turned around to the Prophet and said, 'Do you think that she saw you?' 'No,' replied the Prophet, 'Allah made her unable to see me.'

Al-Hafiz Abu Bakr Al-Bazar also related, on the authority of Ibn Abbas, that when this Surah was revealed Abu Lahab's wife sought the Prophet. While he was with Abu Bakr she appeared and Abu Bakr suggested, 'She will not harm you if you hide yourself away!' 'Don't worry,' said the Prophet in a soothing manner. 'She will not see me.' She came to Abu Bakr and said, 'Your friend has lampooned us!' 'By the Lord of this Ka'abah, he has not,' Abu Bakr assured her. 'He is no poet and what he says is not poetry,' he added. She said, 'I believe you,' and then left. Abu Bakr then enquired from the Prophet whether she had seen him and he said, 'No, an angel was shielding me all the time she was here.' So much was her fury and her indignation at what she thought was poetry and which Abu Bakr rightly refuted.

Thus, the humiliating picture of Abu Lahab and his wife has been recorded to last forever in this eternal book, the Qur'an, to show Allah's anger with them for their animosity to His Messenger and the ideas he was advocating. All those who choose to take a similar attitude towards Islam, therefore, shall meet with the same disgrace calamity and frustration, both in this life and in the Hereafter, as fitting punishment and reward!

Victory - a Nasr

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

When the victory granted by Allah and the Conquest come and you see people embracing the religion of Allah in large numbers then celebrate the praises of your Lord, and seek His forgiveness. He is ever disposed to Mercy.

Commentary

This short Surah brings the good news to Allah's Messenger concerning the advent of victory, the Conquest and peoples' collective acceptance of Allah's religion. It instructs him to turn towards his Lord in a devoted adoration and a humble request for His forgiveness. The Surah also presents the nature and the righteousness of this Faith and its ideology - how high humanity ascends to an ideal and brilliant summit unattainable otherwise than by responding to the call of Islam.

Of the several traditions regarding the revelation of this Surah, we quote that of Imam Ahmad, which goes as follows:

Aisha said that the Messenger of Allah used to repeat very frequently, towards the end of his life, 'Exaltations and praises be to Allah, whose forgiveness I ask; I repent of my sins.' He also said, 'My Lord told me I would see a sign in my nation. He ordered me to praise Him, the Forgiving, and ask His pardon when I see this sign. Indeed, I have. When the victory granted by Allah and the Conquest come...' (Transmitted by Muslim)

Ibn Katheer said in his commentary on the Qur'an:

The Conquest', it is unanimously agreed, is a reference to the conquest of Makkah. The Arab tribes were awaiting the settlement of the conflict between Quraish and the Muslims, before accepting Islam, saying: 'If he, Muhammad, prevails over his people, he would indeed be a prophet.' Consequently, when that was accomplished they accepted Islam in large numbers. Not two years were to pass after the conquest of Makkah when Islam, and, all thanks to Allah dominated the whole Arabian Peninsula; every Arab tribe had declared its belief Islam.

Al-Bukhari in his Sahih related

Amr ibn Salamah said that when Makkah was conquered, every tribe hastened to declare acceptance of Islam to Allah's Messenger. They were waiting for it to take place saying, Leave them to themselves. He would indeed be a prophet if he prevailed over them.

This version is the one, which agrees chronologically with the beginning of the Surah in the sense that its revelation was a sign of something to follow with some instructions to the Prophet, on what he should do when this event took place.

There is, nevertheless, another fairly similar version in agreement with the one we have chosen and it is that by Ibn 'Abbas which says:

Umar used to let me join the company of elders who were present at Badr, some of whom felt uneasy and asked why I should be allowed with them when I was young. But 'Umar said to them, 'You know that he is of high standing.' One day 'Umar invited them all and invited me as well. I felt that he wanted to show them who I was so he asked them, 'What do you make of Allah's saying, ' When the victory granted by Allah and the Conquest come?' Some of them replied, 'He ordered us to praise Him and seek His forgiveness when He helps us to triumph and bestows His favors on us.' The others remained silent. Then 'Umar asked me, 'Do you agree with this view, Ibn Abbas?' I answered in the negative. 'Umar asked me again. 'What then do you say?' I replied, 'It was a sign from Allah to His Messenger indicating the approach of the end of his life meaning, when the victory from Allah and the Conquest come, your end is near, so extol the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness.' 'Umar commented, 'I have known no more than what you have said. (Transmitted by al Bukhari).

So it is possible that the Messenger, having witnessed his Lord's sign, realized that he had fulfilled his mission on this earth and that it was time for him to leave, which was what Ibn 'Abbas actually meant.

However, there is another account narrated by Al-Hafiz al Baihaqi also attributed to Ibn 'Abbas who according to it said, When this Surah was first revealed, the Messenger of Allah called Fatimah and said, 'My death has been announced to me.' She was seen to start crying, and then she smiled. She explained later, 'I cried when he told me of his approaching death. But he said to me, 'Be restrained, because you will be the first of my family to join me', so I smiled.'

According to the last tradition quoted the time of the revelation of the Surah is actually fixed as coming later than the sign, that is, the Conquest and the people's collective movement into Islam. When events took place in this fashion the Messenger of Allah knew that his life would soon come to a close. But again the first account is more authentic and fits in more suitably with the outline of the beginning of the Surah, especially as the Fatimah incident is related in a different form, which gives more weight to what we have suggested. This other form goes as follows:

Umm Salamah, the Prophet's wife said: The Messenger of Allah called Fatimah to him sometime during the year of the Conquest and he said something to her. She cried. Then he spoke to her again and she was smiling. After he had died, I asked her about the incident and she explained 'The Messenger of Allah told me he was soon to die, so I cried. Then he told me that I would be the next most celebrated woman in Paradise after Mariam (Mary), the daughter of Imran, so I smiled.'

This narration agrees with the general meaning of the Qur'anic text and with what Imam Ahmad related which appears in the Sahih of Muslim - that is, there was a sign (in the Surah) between Allah and His Messenger and when the Conquest was accomplished the latter knew that he was soon to meet his Lord, so he spoke to Fatimah in the manner described by Umm Salamah.

Let us now consider the actual text of the Surah and the injunction it gives for all time: *When the victory granted by Allah and the Conquest come, and you see people embracing the religion of Allah in large numbers. Then, celebrate the praises of your Lord and seek His forgiveness. He is ever disposed to mercy.*

The beginning of the first verse implicitly presents a concept of what goes on in this universe: the events that take place in this life, and the actual role of the Messenger of Allah and his followers in the progress of Islam, and to what extent it depends on their efforts. "When the victory granted by Allah", denotes that it is Allah's victory and Allah is the One who brings it about in His own good time, in the form He decides and for the purpose He determines. The Prophet and his companions have nothing to do with it at all, and they obtain no personal gain from it. It suffices them that He does it through them,

appoints them as its guards and entrusts it to them. This is all they acquire from the victory of Allah, the Conquest and the people's acceptance en masse of His religion.

According to this concept, the duty of the Messenger and his companions whom Allah chose and gave the privilege of being the instruments of His victory was to turn to Him at the climax of victory in praise, expressing gratitude and seeking forgiveness. Gratitude and praise are for His being so generous as to have chosen them to be the standard bearers of His religion; for the mercy and favor He did to all humanity by making His religion victorious; and for the Conquest of Makkah and the people's collective acceptance of Islam.

His forgiveness is sought for the various unrevealed, defective feelings, such as vanity, which sometimes creep into one's heart at the overwhelming moment of victory attained after a long struggle. Human beings can hardly prevent this happening and therefore Allah's forgiveness is to be sought for it. Forgiveness also has to be sought for what might have been insinuated into one's heart during the long and cruel struggle and for petulance resulting from the belatedness of victory or the effects of convulsive despair, as the Qur'an brings out elsewhere:

Or think you that you will enter Paradise while yet there has not come to you the like of that which came to those who passed away before you? Affliction and adversity befell them; they were shaken as with earthquake, till the Messenger (of Allah) and those who believed along with him said: 'When will Allah's help come?' Now surely Allah's help is near. (Al-Qur'an 2:214)

It is also necessary to seek Allah's forgiveness for one's shortcomings in praising Allah and thanking Him for His favors, which are perpetual and infinite.

And if you were to count the favors of Allah, never will you be able to number them. (Al-Qur'an 16:18)

However much one's efforts in this respect, they are never adequate. Another touching thought is that seeking forgiveness at the moment of triumph arouses in one's mind the feeling of impotence and imperfection at a time when an attitude of self-esteem and

conceit seems natural. All these factors guarantee that no tyranny will afflict the conquered. The victorious is made to realize that it is Allah who has appointed him, a man who has no power of his own and is devoid of any strength, for a pre determined purpose; consequently the triumph and the conquest as well as the religion are all His, to Whom all things ultimately return.

This is the lofty, dignified ideal the Qur'an exhorts people to toil towards and attain, an ideal in which man's exaltation is in neglecting his own pride and where his soul's freedom is in his subservience to Allah. The goal set is the total release of human souls from their egoistic shackles, their only ambition being to attain Allah's pleasure. Along with this release there must be exerted a striving which helps man to flourish in the world, promote human civilization and provide a rightly-guided, unblemished, constructive, just leadership devoted to Allah.

In contrast, man's efforts to liberate himself while in the grip of egoism, shackled by his zest for worldly things, or overpowered by his cravings, turn out to be absolutely in vain unless he sets himself free from self and lets his loyalty to Allah override everything else, particularly at the moment of triumph and the collecting of booty.

Such a standard of behavior, which Allah wants humanity to aspire towards and to attain, was the characteristic feature of the Prophets at all times. So it was the case with Prophet Yussuf (Joseph), when all he wanted was achieved and his dream came true:

And he placed his parents high on the throne of dignity and they fell down prostrate before him. He said: 'Father! This is the fulfillment of my dream of old. My Lord has made it come true. He has been gracious to me. He has released me from prison and has brought you from the desert after Satan had stirred-up strife between me and my brothers. My Lord is gracious with all that He plans to do. He is full of knowledge and wisdom. (Al-Qur'an 12:100)

Then, at that moment of climax, Yussuf took himself away from the jubilations and from the embracing arms to turn towards his Lord, praising him with a pure feeling of gratitude:

My Lord! You have given me something of sovereignty and power and have taught me something of the interpretation of visions. Creator of the heavens and the earth!

You are my Protector in this world and the here after. Let me die in submission and join the righteous. (Al-Qur'an 12:101)

Thus vanished the feeling of predominance and reputation and the happiness brought by his reunion with his family, and the picture we are left with is of that individual, Yussuf, praying to Allah to help him remain submissive to Him until he dies and to let him, out of His mercy and grace, join His righteous servants. So, it was also with Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon), when he saw the Queen of Sheba's throne brought into his very reach in a flash:

And when he (Sulaiman) saw it set in his presence he said: 'This is of the bounty of my Lord, that He may try me whether I give thanks or remain ungrateful. He who gives thanks does so for his own good, and he who is ungrateful ... my Lord is all sufficient and bountiful. (Al-Qur'an 27:40)

And so indeed it was with Muhammad all through his life. In the moment of triumph, as the Conquest of Makkah was accomplished, he entered it on the back of his camel with his head bowed down. He forgot the joy of victory and thankfully bowed his head seeking his Lord's forgiveness, though he had just conquered Makkah, the city whose people had openly and unashamedly persecuted and expelled him. This also was the practice of his companions after him.

Thus, upon belief in Allah, was that great generation of humanity rose very high, reaching an unparalleled standard of greatness, power and freedom.

The Disbelievers - al Kafiroom

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Say: "Disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship nor do you worship what I worship. I shall never worship what you worship You have your own religion and I have mine."

Commentary

Although the Arabs before Islam were not disavowing Allah, they did not know Him by the true identity He accorded Himself as the One and the Eternal. They did not only depreciate Him and ineptly worship Him but they also ascribed to Him, as partners, idols that were supposed to represent their great and pious ancestors or, in some cases, the angels whom they claimed to be the daughters of Allah. Moreover, they alleged a kinship between Him and the jinn. They often ignored all these qualifications, however, and worshipped those idols themselves. But in all cases, as the Qur'an quotes them as saying, they only

"Worship them (the various gods) so that they may bring us near to Allah." (Al-Qur'an 39:3)

The Qur'an also states:

If you ask them who it is that has created the heavens and the earth, and subjected the sun and the moon (to fixed laws) they will say: Allah (Al-Qur'an 29:61)

And again:

If you ask them who it is that sends down water from the sky, and thereby revives the earth after it has died, they will say: ' Allah. (Al-Qur'an 29:63)

Moreover, Allah superseded their gods in their oaths and supplications.

But in spite of their belief in Allah, the polytheism they entertained fouled their conceptions as well as their traditions and rites to the extent that they assigned to their alleged gods a portion of their earnings and possessions, and even their offspring; in fact, they had often

been obliged to sacrifice their children. Concerning this, the Qur'an has the following to say:

They set aside for Allah a share of what He has produced in abundance of crops and cattle, saying: This is for Allah, so they pretend and this for the partner-gods we associate with Him. But nothing of the share of their partner-gods may ever go to Allah while the share of Allah may go to their partner-gods. How ill they judge! Thus those partner-gods of theirs have induced many polytheists to kill their children so that they may ruin them and confuse them in their faith. Had Allah willed, they would not have done so; so leave them to their false inventions. They say: "Such cattle and crops are forbidden; no one may eat of them save those whom we permit", so they assert. Further, there are cattle, which they prohibit men from riding, and others over which they do not pronounce the name of Allah .All these are lies they assert against Allah. He will surely punish them for their invented lies. They also say: "What is in the wombs of these animals is reserved to our males, forbidden to our females." But if it is still born, then they all partake of it. Allah will surely punish them for what they impute to Him. He is surely wise and He knows all." Lost are they who, in their ignorance, wantonly slay their children, and make unlawful what Allah has provided for them, inventing lies against Allah. They have indeed gone astray and heeded no guidance. (Al-Qur'an 6:137-41)

The Arabs were also convinced that they were the followers of the religion of Abraham and that they were better guided than the People of the Scriptures (i.e. Jews and Christians) inhabiting the Arabian peninsula at the time: the Jews and the Christians preached respectively that Ezra and Jesus were the sons of Allah whereas they, the Arabs, worshipped angels and jinn - the true offspring of Allah according to them. Their belief, they maintained, was more logical and more conceivable than that of the Christians and the Jews. Nonetheless, all was polytheism.

When Muhammad (peace be on him) declared his religion to be that of Abraham, they argued that there was no reason for them to forsake their beliefs and follow Muhammad's instead, since they too were of the same religion. In the meantime, they sought a sort of compromise with him proposing that he should prostrate himself before their gods in return for their prostration to his God, and that he should cease denouncing their gods and

their manner of worship in reciprocation for whatever he demanded of them! This confusion in their concepts, vividly illustrated by their worship of various gods while acknowledging Allah, was perhaps what led them to believe that the gulf between them and Muhammad was not unbridgeable. They thought an agreement was somehow possible by allowing the two camps to co-exist in the region and by granting him some personal concessions!

To clear up this muddle, to cut all arguments short and firmly distinguish between one form of worship and the other, between one doctrine and concept and the other this Surah was revealed in such a decisive, assertive tone. It was revealed in this manner to demarcate monotheism (Tawheed) from polytheism (shirk), and to establish a true criterion, allowing no further wrangling or vain arguments.

Using all the mentioned means, the Surah goes on to emphasize a negation in one sentence and an affirmation in another. "Say", this denotes a clear-cut Divine order, which conveys the fact that the whole affair of the religion belongs exclusively to Allah, nothing of it belongs to Muhammad himself, and that Allah is the only One to order and decide. Address them, Muhammad, by their actual and true identity: "Say: '*Disbelievers!*'" They follow no prescribed religion, nor do they believe in you. No meeting-point exists between you and them anywhere. Thus the beginning of the Surah brings to mind the reality of a difference, which cannot be ignored or settled.

"I do not worship what you worship" is a statement affirmed by shall never worship what you worship". *"Nor do you worship what I worship"* is also repeated for more emphasis and in order to eliminate all chances of doubt or misinterpretation. Finally, the whole argument is summed up in the last verse, *"You have your own religion, and I have mine"*, meaning that you (disbelievers) and I (Muhammad) are very far apart, without any bridge to connect us - a complete distinction and a precise, intelligible demarcation. Such an attitude was essential then in order to expose the fundamental discrepancies in the essence of the two beliefs and doctrines, in the source of the two concepts and in the nature of the two paths of monotheism and polytheism, faith and disbelief. Faith on the one hand, is the way of life, which directs man and the whole world towards Allah alone and determines for him the source of his religious concept, laws, values, criteria, ethics and morals. That source is Allah and nobody else. Thus life proceeds for him accordingly,

devoid of any form of polytheism, which, on the other hand, represents another way of life entirely dissimilar to that of faith. The two never meet.

On the whole, the distinction we are dealing with here is indispensable both for those who invite people to Islam and the people themselves, because Ignorant concepts are likely to be mixed with those of Islam especially in those societies which previously followed the Islamic method, but have later deviated from it. They are, to be sure, the most rigid and the most hostile to the idea of regaining faith in its healthy, clear and straight forward form, certainly more so than those who have not known Islam originally. They take it for granted that they are righteous while they grow more and more complicatedly perverse!

The existence of noble and base beliefs and thoughts in those societies may tempt the advocate of the Islamic system to hope for their quick return, thinking he may be able to strengthen the good aspects of their life and rightly correct undesirable features! This temptation is dangerously misleading. For Ignorance is nothing but Ignorance and Islam is altogether different from it. The only way to bridge the gulf between the two is for Ignorance to liquidate itself completely and substitute for all its laws, values, standards and concepts their Islamic counterparts.

The first step that should be taken in this field by the person calling on people to embrace Islam is to segregate himself from Ignorance. He must be separated to the extent that any agreement or intercourse between him and Ignorance is absolutely impossible unless and until the people of Ignorance embrace Islam completely: no intermingling, no half measures or conciliation is permissible, however clever Ignorance may be in usurping the role of Islam or reflecting it. The chief basis of the personality of the person inviting others to Islam is the clear manifestation of this fact within himself and his solemn conviction of being radically different from them. They have their own religion, and he has his. His task is to orientate them so that they may follow his path without any fraud or pretence. Failing this, he must withdraw completely, detach himself from their life and openly declare to them: *"You have your own religion, and I have mine."*

This is a sine qua non for the contemporary advocates of Islam. They badly need to realize that they are calling for Islam today in entirely Ignorant surroundings amongst ex-Muslim peoples whose hearts have grown harder and whose beliefs have now

deteriorated considerably. They need to understand that there is no room for short-term or half solutions, compromises, or partial redemption or adjustment, and that their call is for uniquely distinguished Islam, in contrast to what these people conceive of as Islam. They must face these people bravely and explicitly put it to them: "*You have your own religion, and I have mine.*" Our religion is based on absolute monotheism whose concepts, values, beliefs and laws cover all aspects of human life and are all received from Allah and none else. With out this basic separation confusion, double-dealing, doubt and distortion will certainly persist. And let it be clear in our minds here that the movement advocating Islam can never be constructed on any ambiguous or feeble foundations, but has to be built upon firmness, explicitness, frankness and fortitude as embodied in Allah's instruction to us to declare: "*You have your own religion, and I have mine*". Such was the way adopted by the Islamic call in its early days.

Abundance - al Kawthar

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Indeed We have given you abundance. So pray to your Lord and sacrifice to Him. Surely, he who hates you is the one cut off.

Commentary

Similar to Surahs 93 and 94, "*The Forenoon*" and "*Solace*", this Surah exclusively concerns the Prophet, cheering him up and assuring him of happier prospects in his struggle. In it Allah threatens the enemies of the Prophet with destruction while directing the Prophet to the path of thanksgiving.

The Surah represents a glimpse of the life of the Prophet and the course of his mission in the early period at Makkah. It deals with the plots and insults directed against the Prophet and the Divine message he conveys. The Surah is an instance of Allah's actual protection of His servant and the few who followed the Prophet and believed in Allah. It is an instance of Allah's direct support to the believers in their struggle, supplying them with fortitude, restraint and promise, while threatening a terrible fate to their antagonists.

In this way, the Surah symbolizes the reality of guidance, goodness and faith on the one hand and that of error, evil and disbelief on the other; the former category is one of abundance, profusion and expansive goodness, the latter one of scantiness, shrinking resources and annihilation.

Among the people of the Quraish (the Arab tribe which was dominant in Makkah) there were some impudent folk who viewed the Prophet and his mission with no small degree of antagonism. They would resort to machinations and taunts against him to deter the people from listening to the Truth, which he conveyed to them in the form of a Divine message. Among them were people like Al-Aas ibn Wa'il, 'Uqba ibn Abi Mu'yat, Abu Lahab, Abu Jahl and others.

They used to say about the Prophet that he was a man with no posterity, referring to the early death of his sons. One of them once remarked, "*Do not be bothered with him; he will die without descendants and that will be the end of his mission.*"

Such a trivial and cunning taunt had a wide impact in the Arab society of the time, which set great store by sons. This sharp taunt delighted the enemies of the Prophet and undoubtedly this was a source of depression and irritation to his noble heart. This Surah was therefore revealed, comforting the Prophet and assuring him of the abiding and profuse goodness, which Allah had chosen, for him and of the deprivation and loss awaiting his persecutors.

"*Indeed We have given you abundance.*" The word used in the Surah and rendered here, as "abundance" is "*kawthar*", derived from the stem word "*kathrah*" which signifies "*abundance*" or "*a multitude*". This "*kawthar*" is unrestricted and unlimited. It indicates the opposite meaning to the one the impudent folk of Quraish tried to attach to the Prophet. "We have given you" that which is plentiful, overflowing and rich, unstinting and unending.

If anyone wishes to pursue and observe this abundance, which Allah has given to His Prophet, he would find it wherever he looks and reflects. He would find it in Muhammad's prophet hood itself this link with the great Reality and the great Being, Who has no parallel and no partner. What indeed can the one who has found Allah be said to have lost? He would find it in this Qur'an, which was revealed to Muhammad every chapter of which is a fountain of richness, which flows incessantly.

He would also find this *kawthar* or abundance manifest in the of the Prophet's Sunnah (way of life) throughout the centuries, in the far flung corners of the earth, in the millions upon millions who follow in his footsteps, in the millions upon millions who pronounce his name with respectful affection and the millions upon millions of hearts that cherish, and would cherish his example and memory even to the Day of Resurrection.

He would also find this *Kawthar* or abundance manifest in the goodness and prosperity which have accrued to the human race as a result of his message, and which reach those who know and believe in him and those who do not. He would also discern this abundance in various and manifold phenomena, attempting to enumerate which would at best give only a passing feeling of a great reality.

This indeed is abundance in its absolute unlimited sense. The Surah therefore does not give it a specific definition. Several accounts relate that "*al-Kawthar*" is a river in Paradise

granted to the Prophet but Ibn Abbas, a learned companion of the Prophet, contends that the river is but one part of the abundance which Allah has furnished for His Prophet. Keeping the circumstances and the whole context in mind, Ibn Abbas's view is the more valid.

"So pray to your Lord and sacrifice to Him." Having assured the Prophet of this munificent gift, which disproves what the calumniators and conspirators say, Allah directs the Prophet to be completely and sincerely thankful to Him for His bounty; to devote himself to Him alone in worship and ritual slaughter, taking no heed whatsoever of all forms of polytheism and refusing to participate in the worship of the poly theists, especially when they pronounce any name other than that of Allah in their offerings.

Islam frequently lays emphasis on the pronouncing of Allah's name when slaughtering animals. It prohibits anything that is consecrated to any other being, which indicates the importance Islam attaches to the purification of human life from all forms of polytheism and all that leads to it. Islam does not aim merely at purifying the imagination and conscience, for it is the religion based on the unity of Allah in every sense. It pursues polytheism in all its manifestations, striving to eliminate its marks in the conscience of man, in his worship and rituals, and in his behavior generally. Life, Islam says, is one indivisible entity and must be treated as such. It must be cleansed inside out and completely oriented towards Allah, in all its aspects and spheres - worship, tradition and social behavior.

"Surely he who hates you is the one cut off". In the first verse, Allah specified that Muhammad was not the one who had no posterity but, on the contrary, was the one endowed with abundance. In this verse, Allah throws back the taunt on those who hated and reviled the Prophet. Indeed, the promise of Allah has come true. For, the influence and the legacy of Muhammad's enemies was short-lived, while his impact on human history and human life has grown and deepened. Today we are witnessing the truth of this Divine pronouncement as clearly as no one among those addressed by the Qur'an for the first time ever did or imagined.

Faith and goodness cannot be barren: they leave deep-rooted influence but falsehood, error and evil- no matter how fast they grow and spread, do ultimately come to nothing.

Allah's criteria are different from the criteria laid down by man. Men are often deceived when they vainly believe their sense of judgment to be the criterion. Before us is the eloquent and enduring example of the Prophet. Of what value or interest to humanity have those slanderers and foes of Muhammad been to anyone?

On the other hand, calling others to the religion of Allah, to truth and goodness, can never be called futile. Neither can the righteous and the true be called deprived or cut off. How can it be, when this message itself comes from and is supported by Allah, the Immortal, the Eternal? But deprived and sterile indeed are disbelief, error and evil as are their votaries, however strong and widespread they may appear to be at a particular moment.

Allah affirms the truth; the wily opponents are but liars!

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Have you seen him who denies Our religion? It is he who harshly repels the orphan and does not urge others to feed the needy. Woe to those who pray but are heedless of their prayers; who put on a show of piety but refuse to give even the smallest help to others.

Commentary

This Surah is a Makkan revelation according to some authorities and a Makkan-Medinan one according to others (the first three verses are said to have been revealed in Makkah and the rest in Medina). The latter opinion is perhaps more accurate. Yet the Surah is one interwoven entity, aiming at the establishment of one of the most fundamental aspects of Faith. For this reason we are more inclined to take it as being an entirely Medinan revelation. Its subject matter is more in line with the topics of the part of the Qur'an revealed in Medina. It is related to the phenomena of hypocrisy and false appearances, which were unheard of among the Muslim community in Makkah. But there is no need to reject the assertion that the Surah is a Makkan, Medinan revelation, because it is possible that the last four verses were sent down in Medina and integrated with the first three on grounds of similarity of subject. Having said that, let us now consider the Surah and its theme.

This Surah of seven short verses tackles an important and vital issue which could very well change the common meanings normally assigned the terms "faith" or "Iman" and "disbelief" or "kufr". Moreover, it brings forth the fundamental truth intrinsic in the nature of the Islamic faith, the enormous benefit it offers to all humanity and the abundant blessings with which Allah favored mankind when He sent them His last Message.

Islam is not a way of life built on ostentation and superficiality. The apparent aspects of the different acts of worship are, according to Islam, meaningless unless they are motivated by sincerity and devotion to Allah. Worship sincerely motivated produces effects within the individual's heart, which then cause him to act righteously and which are reflected in a social behavior, which elevates man's life on this earth.

No less true is the fact that Islam is not a loose, fragmentary, disjointed system from which one can pick and choose at leisure. On the contrary, it is a complete way of life with acts of worship and rites as well as individual and collective obligations that are mutually complementary. Together they lead to a goal of which mankind is the sole beneficiary, a goal which ensures that hearts are purified, life is ennobled, and men co-operate for the common good and progress a goal wherein abounds the blessings of Allah.

A man can profess to be a Muslim, that is, he accepts this religion and all its principles, offers prayers regularly and observes other of worship, and yet be lacking in the essence of faith and sincerity of belief. In fact, he may be very far from these. For there are signs which indicate the firm establishment of these qualities in men's hearts.

As explained in the commentary on Surah 103, *"The Declining Day"*, the essence of faith once firmly rooted in the hearts and minds will begin immediately to operate and manifest itself in men's behavior. The Surah stresses unequivocally that, if this is not the case, there is no faith.

"Have you seen him who denies Our religion? It is he who harshly repels the orphan and does not urge others to feed the needy." The Surah starts with a question addressed to all who can "see", generating suspense and holding their attention in order to make them discover the target and subject of the Surah. Ah! Who is this creature identified by the Qur'an as the one who denies the religion of Islam? Hence, the answer: "It is he who harshly repels the orphan and does not urge others to feed the needy." This definition of the disbelievers may sound surprising when compared with the traditional definition of faith, but this is the core of the whole matter. Indeed the one who denies the faith is he who wickedly repels the orphan, humiliating him and hurting his feelings! And who does not care for the needy or their welfare. For if the truth of Islam has in any degree touched his heart. He would commit no such acts. True belief in Islam is not a spoken word but an overall change of the individual's heart, motivating him to benevolence and goodwill for all his fellow beings that are in need of his care and protection. Allah does not want mere words from His servants but demands deeds to support the spoken words, which, otherwise, are as weightless and valueless as blown ash. Nothing can be more forceful than these three verses in affirming this fact, which represents most aptly the nature of Faith.

We do not intend here to indulge in a juristic discussion on the boundaries of faith and Islam. These are required in legal affairs, whereas this Surah states the facts from Allah's point of view and judgment, which is quite different from the legal aspect. Next, Allah offers a practical illustration of what is meant above: "*Woe to those who pray, but are heedless of their prayers.*" These verses contain Allah's invocation against, or a threat of destruction to those who offer prayers but are careless about them. Who exactly are such? They are those "*who put on a show of piety but refuse to give even the smallest help to others,*" those who perform prayers but do not aptly meet their requirements. They execute the mechanical aspects and pronounce the verbal formulae of prayers but their hearts are never alive to them, nor does praying nourish them.

The essence and purpose of prayer and its component parts (recitation, supplication and exaltation of Allah) are never present in their souls. They offer prayers only to deceive others and not out of devotion to Allah. Hence, they are inattentive when they pray. They only outwardly perform their prayers. Muslims are required to offer their prayers regularly, having in mind that their prayers are a manifestation of their servitude to Allah alone. Thus, prayer leaves no result in those who are neglectful and inattentive to it. Consequently they refuse to be kind or helpful to their fellow beings and deny the slightest charity to any of the servants of Allah.

Once again, we find ourselves presented with the fundamental truth and the nature of this religion, a Qur'anic verse threatens with destruction certain people who offer prayers precisely because they carry out meaningless movements devoid of any spirit or sense of purpose, intended for deceit and pretence, and not devoted to Allah. Since their prayers have not affected their hearts and behavior, they are not merely useless but rather a sin for which they are liable to severe punishment.

From all these, we gather the purpose behind what Allah demands of His servants when He instructs them to believe in, and worship Him. He seeks no benefit thereof for Himself, as He is All-Affluent, but all He cares for is their own welfare and prosperity, purification of their hearts and happiness in their lives. Allah wishes human life to be elevated, happy, based on pure motives and characterized by mutual compassion, brotherhood and purity of hearts and behavior.

To where then is humanity driving itself? Away from this abundance of mercy? Away from this wonderful and sublime path? How can mankind debase itself to living in the wilderness of a wretched and gloomy Ignorance when it beholds the sparkling light of faith before its very eyes at the crossroads where it now stands?

Surah Quraish

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

For the tradition of Quraish, their tradition of traveling in winter and summer. Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who provided them with food lest they should go hungry, and with security lest they should fear.

Commentary

When Abraham, the friend (khalil) of Allah, completed the building of the house of worship (the Ka'abah) and had purified it he turned to Allah with the following prayer:

Lord, make this a city of peace and sustain its inhabitants with the fruits (of the earth). (Al-Qur'an 2:126)

So Allah made that House one of peace; He made it free from all human authority and free from all tyranny. He granted security and peace to anyone seeking shelter in that House, while fear was all around it. Even when the people transgressed, ascribed Divinity to beings other than Allah and worshipped idols, there was peace and security; for Allah had designed a purpose for this sacred House.

When the people of the Elephant marched to destroy the House, there happened to them what is described in the preceding Surah, "*The Elephant*". Allah preserved for the House its peace, security and sacredness. Of those who lived around it, Allah says:

"Do they not then see that We have made a secure Sanctuary, and that men are being snatched away from all around them?" (Al-Qur'an 29:67)

The Elephant incident had an added effect in greatly enhancing the sanctity of the House amongst the Arabs all over the Arabian peninsula. It also strengthened the position of the Quraish, the custodians of the House, in all Arabia. They were thus able to travel far and wide in peace and security. Wherever they went they met with generosity and high esteem. This encouraged them to establish two great routes for their commercial caravans, to the Yemen in the south and to Syria in the north. They organized two enormous trading expeditions; one to the Yemen in the winter and the other to Syria in the summer.

In spite of very poor conditions of security in all parts of the Arabian peninsula at the time, and in spite of all the looting and plundering raids that were very common in that land, the sanctity of the House in the eyes of all Arabs guaranteed security and peace in their flourishing business to those who lived near it and were its custodians. It created for the Quraish a distinct and exclusive position and opened up to them extensive and guaranteed means of sustenance in peace, security and contentment. The Quraish became accustomed to these two profitable and peaceful trips, which were soon established among their traditional habits.

This is the specific grace of which Allah reminds the Quraish, as He had reminded them of the Elephant incident in the previous Surah. It is the grace of their being accustomed to the trips of winter and summer, and the abundance with which He endowed them in these two fruitful journeys. It is by the grace of Allah that while their land is desolate and dry, they still live a comfortable life. Out of His grace He secured them from fear whether in their hearths and homes, next to Allah's house, or in their trips and journeys. Their security is the result of their being the custodians of the House, the sanctity of which is ordained and preserved by Allah against any violation.

Allah reminds them of these graces in order that they may be ashamed of their submission to other beings, while He is the Lord of the House. Allah says to them in effect: for this tradition of Quraish, namely their trips of winter and summer, let them submit to the Lord of this House Who guaranteed their security and so encouraged them to take such beneficial trips. *"Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who provides them with food lest they should go hungry."* As their land is infertile, they would have starved had it not been for the sustenance supplied to them by Allah. *"And with security lest they should live in fear."* Poor as they are, and living in insecure surroundings, their life would have been one of fear and apprehension. But Allah granted them security and allayed their fear. And this is a reminder, which generates and leaves a deep shame in the hearts of the Quraish, who were not unaware of the great value of the House and the effect of its sanctity on their lives. At the moment of danger and difficulty, the Quraish used to appeal only to the Lord of that House and seek only His help. This was the case with Abdulmuttalib' who did not confront Abrahah with any army or physical strength. Instead Abdulmuttalib addressed himself only to the Lord of the House, because He was the only

one who could protect His House. Abdulmuttalib did not appeal to any of the idols or graven images for any help. He did not even say to Abrahah that these "gods" would protect their House. He only said to him, *I am only the master of the camels, but the House has its own Lord who is sure to protect it.* But Ignorance does not listen to any logic, or acknowledge what is right, or accept any reasonable argument.

This Surah seems to be an extension of the preceding one, "*The Elephant*," with regard to its subject matter and general tone. Nevertheless, it is an independent Surah with the usual beginning of the Qur'anic Surahs, namely, "*In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful*" Authorities state that nine Surahs were revealed between the revelation of Surah "*The Elephant*" and Surah "*Quraish*", but these two were put next to each other in the Qur'an because of their close similarity of subject.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the Elephant? Did He not cause their treacherous plan to be futile, and send against them flights of birds, which pelted them with stones of sand and clay? Thus He made them like devoured dry leaves.

Commentary

This Surah refers to a widely famous incident in the Arabian Peninsula, which took place before the commencement of the Islamic message. The incident shows very clearly how Allah protected the Holy land, which He willed to be the focal point of the last enlightenment, the cradle of the new ideology, from where it was to begin its blessed and holy march to exterminate Ignorance from all corners of the world and to establish in its place Allah's infallible guidance. The various reports on this incident relate that after the Abyssinians had expelled the Persians from Yemen and established their rule there, the Abyssinian governor of Yemen, Abrahah, built a superbly luxurious church in his area giving it the name of the Abyssinian emperor at the time. He did this after he had witnessed the love and enthusiasm of Yemeni Arabs - which were the same as those felt all over the Arab land - to the Ka'abah, the Holy Mosque at Makkah; with the aim of making them forsake their attachment to the Mosque of Makkah and turn instead to his new luxurious church.

But the Arabs did not turn away from their Holy House. They believed themselves to be the descendants of Abraham and Ishmael who built the House. For them, this fact was a source of pride in line with their tradition of taking pride in their forefathers. Besides, vain and hollow as they were, their beliefs were, in their eyes, better and more profound than those of the people of earlier revelations (Jews and Christians). They knew how the latter beliefs were conflicting and futile.

As a result, Abrahah made up his mind to pull down the Ka'abah in order to achieve his objective of turning the Arabs away from it. He therefore marched at the head of a great army equipped with elephants. In the front was a very big elephant, which enjoyed special fame among Abrahah's men. The news of Abrahah's march and his objective traveled in

the Arab land and there spread among the Arabs very strong feelings against the destruction of their Holy House. A nobleman of the royal family of Yemen, called Thu Nafar, tried to stop the Abyssinian governor, calling on his people and other Arabs to fight Abrahah and defend the Holy House. Some Arab tribes joined him in a battle against Abrahah which Thu Nafar lost before he was taken prisoner. Later, while Abrahah was on his way, he was attacked by Nafeel ibn Habab Al Khath'ami, who had mobilized two Arab tribes as well as troops from other supporting tribes, but Abrahah won the battle again and captured Nafeel. Nafeel then agreed to act as a guide for Abrahah to show him the way in the Arab land. When the Abyssinian governor approached Ta'if,' a number of its leaders went to him to say that the House he wanted to pull down was in Makkah and not at Ta'if. They did this in order that he would not destroy the house they had built for their idol "Al-Lat". They also provided him with a guide to show him the way to the Ka'abah.

Then on arrival at Al-Mughammas (a valley mid-way between Ta'if and Makkah), Abrahah dispatched one of his commanders to Makkah where he looted some belongings of the Quraish and other Arabs, including two hundred camels, which belonged to Abdulmuttalib ibn Hashim, the chief of Makkah and the Prophet's grandfather. Quraish, Kinana, Huthail and neighboring Arab tribes gathered to fight Abrahah but then they realized that they stood no chance of winning, so they did not proceed. Then Abrahah sent a messenger to Makkah to meet its chief and convey to him that the governor of Yemen did not come to fight the Makkans but to pull down the House; if they left him to accomplish what he had come for, he would be pleased not to cause any bloodshed. Abrahah also ordered his messenger to bring with him the Makkan chief if the latter did not propose to fight. When the messenger communicated his master's message to Abdulmuttalib, the latter said: By God, we do not want to fight him and we have no power to resist him. This is God's sacred House, built by His chosen friend, Abraham. If He protects it against him, it is because the House is His, and if He leaves it to him to destroy, we cannot defend it.

Abdulmuttalib then went with the messenger to Abrahah. Ibn Ishaq said that Abdulmuttalib was a most handsome, charming and attractive person. When Abrahah saw him he felt much respect for him. He felt that Abdul Muttalib was too noble to sit beneath his royal bed but at the same time he did not wish to be seen by the Abyssinians sitting with him on his royal bed, so he came down and sat with Abdulmuttalib on the carpet. Then Abrahah ordered his interpreter to ask his guest what he wanted. Abdulmuttalib said he wanted to

request the king to give him back his two hundred camels, which were looted by his commander. Abrahah ordered his interpreter to tell Abdulmuttalib on his behalf: I admired you when I first saw you but when I spoke to you I was disappointed. Do you come to talk to me about two hundred looted camels and forget about the House which is an embodiment of your and your forefathers' religion and which I have come to destroy? You did not even say a word to persuade me to spare it.

Abdulmuttalib said: I am only the master of my camels, but the House has its own Lord who is sure to protect it.

Abrahah snapped, "It cannot be defended against me". The Makkan chief said: "You take your chance!" Abrahah returned his camels to him. Abdul Muttalib went back to the Quraish and told them of his encounter with the Abyssinian commander and ordered them to leave Makkah and seek shelter in the mountains surrounding it. Then he went with a few personalities of the Quraish to the Ka'abah where he held the ring on its door in his hand. They all prayed hard to Allah for his help and protection of the House. Abdulmuttalib is reported to have recited the following lines of poetry in his prayer: Our Lord, a creature protects his property, so protect Yours. Let not their cross and their might ever overcome Your might. If You are leaving them to destroy our House of worship, then You surely have something in mind.

Abrahah, on the other hand, ordered his army to march with the elephants to complete their mission, but just outside Makkah the renowned big elephant sat down and refused to go any further. The soldiers exerted all efforts to persuade the elephant to enter the city but their efforts were in vain. This incident is a fact acknowledged by the Prophet. When his she-camel, Al-Qaswa', sat down some distance away from Makkah, on the day when the Hudaibiyah peace agreement was concluded, the Prophet said to those of his companions who claimed she had become mulish, that she had not and that mulishness was not part of her nature. "But", the Prophet added, "she has been prevented by the same will which debarred the Elephant from entering Makkah". On the day of the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet said: Allah protected Makkah against the Elephant but He allowed His messenger and the Believers to conquer it. Its sanctity today is the same as yesterday. Let those who hear this convey it to those absent.

Then Allah's will to destroy the Abyssinian army and its commander was fulfilled. He sent groups of birds to stone the attackers with stones of sand and clay, leaving them like dry and torn leaves, as the Holy Qur'an tells. Abrahah suffered physical injuries. The remainder of the army carried him on their way back to Yemen but his limbs began to separate from the rest of the body and he started losing one finger after another, until they arrived at Sana'a. Abrahah died after his chest was broken apart, according to various reports. Versions relating to this event vary with regard to the description of those groups of birds, their size and the nature of stones and the manner of their effect. Some of these versions add that smallpox and measles broke out in Makkah in that year. Those who are inclined to limit the scale of miracles and imperceptible phenomena and who seek to explain all events as resulting from the operation of familiar natural phenomena prefer to explain this event as an actual outbreak of smallpox and measles among the army. They further explain that "the birds" could have been flies or mosquitoes carrying germs. The word "bird" in Arabic refers to all that flies. Imam Muhammad 'Abduh, explaining this Surah in his commentary on the thirtieth part of the Qur'an, says: On the second day the epidemic of smallpox and measles broke out among the soldiers. Ikrimah said: "It was the first time smallpox had appeared in the Arab land". Yakoub ibn Utbah said: "That was the year when measles and smallpox appeared in Arabia. The diseases had an almost unparalleled effect on their bodies: their flesh began falling apart. The soldiers and their commander were horror-stricken and ran away. Abrahah was also hit; his flesh continued falling off his body, finger by finger, until eventually his chest broke and he died at Sana'a. This is what different reports have mentioned and what is logically acceptable. This holy Surah shows us that the smallpox and measles were produced by solid stones carried and thrown on the soldiers by colossal groups of birds, which are usually carried by winds. It is in line to believe that those birds referred to in the Surah were a kind of fly or mosquito which carries the germs of some diseases, and that the stones were of dried and poisonous clay which the wind carried and which might have stuck to the legs of those birds.

When this clay touched any organism, it penetrated deep into it and then caused complications of wounds and injuries which upset the whole body, leading to the dropping off of the flesh. Many kinds of these powerless birds are, as a matter of fact, the most efficient troops of Allah, which He uses for the destruction of whomsoever He wills. That little organism called now a days "germ" is within this classification. It gathers in big

groups, the number of which is unknown except to the Creator. It is not essential for the manifestation of Allah's might that the birds should be as big as mountain tops, or of a certain shape or color, and it is not essential for this manifestation that we should know the size of those stones and the way they work. For Allah has troops of all kinds: "In everything He has a sign attesting to His Unity", as the saying goes.

There is no force in the universe but is subject to His power. To that tyrant (Abraham) who wanted to destroy the House, Allah sent birds carrying smallpox and measles. Both he and his people were destroyed before entering Makkah. That was a grace and a blessing from Allah bestowed on the neighbors of His sanctuary in spite of their polytheism. Allah wished to protect His House until He sent the one who would protect it with the force of faith and ideology, that is, the Prophet. At the same time, it was a punishment from Allah inflicted on His enemies, the people of the Elephant, who wanted to destroy the House without any reason to justify their action.

This can be taken as a basis for understanding this Surah. Nothing else can be accepted without logical explanation, even if it is authentically reported. The Divine power would be exhibited more strikingly when those who manifested their might by recruiting elephants (the biggest four legged animals) should be destroyed and crushed by a tiny animal invisible to human eyes. For the wise, this is certainly greater, more fascinating and miraculous.

Neither this assumption (of smallpox or measles resulting from clay infected with germs of these diseases) advanced by the well-versed Imam, nor the opposite one described in some narratives, that the stones (thrown by the birds) split the heads and bodies of the Abyssinians and went through in them to tear their bodies apart leaving them like remnants of dry leaves - neither of the two explanations outweighs the other in manifesting Allah's might and neither needs be taken as a better explanation of the event. To me, both are the same with regard to their possibility and the exhibition of Allah's power. Whether the natural phenomena known and familiar to man operated to destroy the people Allah willed to be destroyed, or His purpose was accomplished through some Divine rules and phenomena of which man has no knowledge, are in my view exactly the same.

The Divine rules of nature are not circumscribed by the boundaries of man's knowledge or what is familiar to him. For man knows of the Divine rules of nature only a fraction which Allah has put before him and which is proportionate to his capacity of understanding and thought nourished by his experience through the ages. Hence, the so-called miracles are part of the rules of nature laid down by Allah, but they are miracles only when measured by human knowledge and experience.

Hence, there is no need for unease or doubt when faced with a supernatural event. Nor is there any need to seek an explanation for it, if the reports mentioning it are authentic, or if there are enough reasons, based on what is in the texts, to suggest that it was supernatural and did not comply with known natural laws. That a certain event should run according to familiar natural laws is not, in my opinion, less significant or less effective than its following supernatural laws. The natural rules familiar to men are in fact miraculous when weighed in the measures of man's powers and abilities. Sunrise is a miracle, though it occurs every day, and the birth of every child is superhuman in spite of it's happening every minute. If anyone wants to challenge this let him try to devise a birth! The employment of birds of any kind to carry ground stones infected with germs of smallpox and measles, then to throw them at that particular place and time, to afflict the raiding army with these epidemics at the moment when the army was about to overwhelm the city and destroy the House, is indeed a great miracle. That Allah's Will should have been realized in that way would comprise several miracles with each as a clear manifestation of Allah's might and will. Had that course been followed, it would not have been less significant or less striking than sending a certain kind of bird, carrying unfamiliar kinds of stones, to afflict human bodies with a peculiar sort of affliction at that particular time. The two courses are the same; both are supernatural and superhuman.

As for the event in question, the opinion advocating an unfamiliar, superhuman course carries more weight. This opinion visualizes that Allah sent groups of unfamiliar birds, carrying strange stones, which caused extraordinary affliction to human bodies. To accept this opinion does not necessitate the acceptance of those narratives, which describe the birds in a most striking and fascinating way, similar to descriptions of other incidents, which betray exaggeration.

The general tone of this Surah and the circumstances of the event tend to support this opinion. Allah had a scheme for the House: He wanted to preserve it as a refuge for

mankind where everyone finds peace, and to make it a gathering point for the followers of the new faith to march out in security in a free land, not subject to any external force or to any tyrannical government which might try to smother the new message in its cradle. Allah also wanted to make this event a permanent lesson, clear to everyone in all ages, so much so that in this Surah He reminds the Quraish even after the Prophet hood' of Muhammad (peace be on him) of this grace He bestowed on them, and gives it as an example of how He protects His sanctuaries and preserves them. There is no need for any attempt to impart a familiar image to this event that is exceptional and singular in essence and circumstances. This is all the more so especially when we take into consideration the fact that what we know of smallpox and measles and their effects on man does not fit in with what was reported of the effects of the incident on the bodies of the soldiers and their commander. Neither of the two diseases causes the falling off man's limbs, finger-by-finger and organ-by-organ, and neither of them causes the breaking up of one's chest. The Qur'an's narrative suggests very clearly that this is what happened: *"Thus He made them like devoured dry leaves"*. Moreover, the reports of Ikrimah and Yakoub ibn 'Utbah do not state that smallpox hit the army. Neither report says anything more than that smallpox broke out that year for the first time in the Arabian peninsula. Neither of the two men suggested that Abrahah and his army particularly fell victims to this epidemic. Besides, if the army only was hit with the disease while the Arabs around remained safe - that is, if the birds were meant to hit only the army - then this is again super natural. Since the event is in any case supernatural, why trouble our selves in limiting it to a certain explanation only because this explanation is based on what is familiar to human senses?

The motives of the rational school of which Imam Muhammad 'Abduh was the leading thinker, to limit the field of the supernatural and the imperceptible to our senses when explaining the Holy Qur'an, are commendable and understandable. This school tried to explain such events within the bounds of the known and familiar natural laws. It was confronted with the superstitious trend, which tightened its grip on the minds of the masses at that time. Moreover, it was facing a flood of legends and Talmudic narratives with which books explaining the Qur'an were over burdened, while the fascination with modern technology and science and doubt in the principles of religion was reaching its zenith. The rational school tried, therefore, to preserve the place of religion taking the standpoint that whatever it says is compatible with reason. Hence, this school strived to

keep religion pure from any association with any kind of legend and superstition. It also tried to establish a religious mentality, which understood the natural laws and recognized that they were constant and infallible, and which attributed all human and universal functions and operations to these natural laws. This mentality is in essence the Qur'anic mentality. For the Qur'an refers men to the natural laws as they constitute the permanent and infallible rule, which organizes individual operations and diverse phenomena.

But resisting the pressures of superstition on the one side and fascination with technology on the other left their stamps on that school. It became extra cautious, tending to make the familiar natural laws the only basis of the Divine Laws of nature. Hence the Qur'anic explanations of Sheikh Muhammad 'Abduh and his two disciples Sheikh Rasheed Rida and Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Mughrabi show clearly a strong desire to reduce the greater number of miracles to only the more familiar of Allah's natural laws rather than the supernatural. They explain some of these miracles in a way that would be in line with what is called "rational", and they are excessively cautious in accepting what is imperceptible to human senses.

But with this understanding and appreciation of the environmental factors behind this trend of the rational school, it may be noted that it has gone too far in overlooking the other side of the comprehensive concept, which the Qur'an aims to implant in the minds of the Muslims. This is that Allah's will and power are absolute, limitless and go far beyond the universal rules and laws He ordained, whether familiar to man or not. This absoluteness does not accept the human mind as a final arbiter. Neither does it accept the limits of the human mind as binding in such a way as to classify as probable only what may be acceptable to human reason, and to demand "rational" explanations for all which may be unacceptable to it. The advocates of this school frequently state this demand. Moreover, the Divine laws of the universe are not only those familiar to man. Indeed, what is familiar to man is only a fraction of these laws. Both these and the unfamiliar laws are the same in manifesting the greatness of the Divine power and the exactness and precision of Allah's designs.

Nevertheless, we must be well guarded against superstition and at the same time reject any unfounded legend with conscious moderation, so that we do not succumb to the

influence of particular environments nor be motivated by the need to resist a common tradition of a certain age.

There is a safe rule for approaching the Qur'anic texts, which may be appropriately stated here, viz, we cannot approach what the Qur'an states with prejudiced minds and preconceived ideas, whether generally or in relation to the subject matter of the statements under study. The opposite is the right way:

WE MUST APPROACH THE QUR'ANIC STATEMENTS IN ORDER TO DERIVE OUR CONCEPTS AND FORMULATE OUR IDEAS FROM THEM.

What the Qur'an states is final as it is. For what we call "reason" and its adjudication on what the Qur'an relates of events in the universe or in the history, in the world of man or of the imperceptibles, is no more than the net result of our finite human existence and experiences. Although this reason is, in essence an absolute force, not subject to, or limited by individual experiences or events, yet, it is, after all, confined to our human existence. This existence does not reflect "The Absolute" as this belongs to Allah. The Qur'an comes from Allah, the Absolute. Hence, it is binding on us in the sense that whatever it states is the basis of our very "rational" concepts. Then, no one can say about a certain statement of the Qur'an: "It is unacceptable to reason, so a logical explanation must be sought for it," as the advocates of the rational school frequently say. This does not mean that we should accept superstitions, it only stresses that human reason is not the arbiter of what the Qur'an states. When the expressions of a Qur'anic text are clear and straightforward, they determine how our reasons should approach it in order to formulate our views concerning its subject matter as well as regarding other universal facts.

Now we proceed to discuss the Surah itself and try to understand the significance of the story. *Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the people of the Elephant?*

It is a question, which draws attention to the wonders involved in the incident itself and stresses its great significance. The incident was so well known to the Arabs that they used to consider it a sort of beginning of history. They used to say, "This incident happened in the Elephant year", and, "That event took place two years before the Elephant year", or,

"This dates to ten years after the Elephant year". It is well known that the Prophet was born in the Elephant year itself. This is perhaps one of the fascinatingly perfect arrangements of the Divine will.

The Surah then is not relating to the Arabs something they did not know. It is a reminder of an event well known to them, aiming at achieving something beyond the actual remembrance of it. After this opening note, Allah goes on to tell the rest of the story in the form of a rhetorical question: "Did He not cause their treacherous plan to be futile?" Which means that the designs of the people of the Elephant were useless, incapable of achieving anything at all. They were like someone who lost his way and thus could not get to his own destination. Perhaps this is a reminder to the Quraish of the grace Allah bestowed on them when He protected and preserved the House at the time when they felt too weak to face the mighty aggressors, the people of the Elephant. Such remembrance may make them feel their disgrace when they persist in denying Allah after He has helped them out of their weakness. It may also curb their conceit and heavy handedness in their treatment of Muhammad and the few believers who supported him. Allah destroyed the powerful aggressors who wanted to pull down His House and sanctuary. Allah then may destroy these aggressors who try to persecute His messenger and suppress His message. The Qur'an superbly portrays how the defeat of the aggressors' designs were brought about: *And send against them flights of birds, which pelted them with stones of sand and clay. Thus He made them like devoured dry leaves.*

The birds were flying in groups. The Qur'an uses a Persian term, "*sijjeel*", which denotes "stone and clay" to describe the substance with which the birds struck the aggressors. The dry leaves were described as "devoured" to denote that insects or other animals had eaten them. It is a vivid image of the physical shattering of the Abyssinian soldiers when they were stricken with these muddy stones. There is no need to go into such explanations as that it was an allegorical description of their destruction with smallpox or measles.

The significance of this event is far reaching and the lessons deduced from mentioning it in the Qur'an are numerous. It first suggests that Allah did not want the polytheists to take the responsibility of protecting His House, in spite of the fact that they held it in deep respect and sought security in being its neighbors. When He willed to preserve the House

and made it clear that He Himself was its protector who looked after it, He left the polytheists to be defeated by the Abyssinians. The Divine Will then directly intervened to repel the aggression and preserve the sacred House of Allah. Thus the polytheists did not have the chance to hold the protection of the House as a '*favor they did to Allah*' or as "*an act of honor*". If they did, they would have been prompted by the fanatic impulses of Ignorance. This point gives considerable weight to the argument that the Divine Will of destroying the aggressors was accomplished through preternatural rules.

This direct intervention by Allah to protect the Holy House should have prompted the Quraysh and the rest of the Arabian tribes to embrace Islam, the Divine religion, when the Prophet conveyed it to them. Surely, their respect and guardianship of the House, and the paganism they spread around it, should not have been their reason for rejecting Islam! Allah's reminder to them of this event is a part of His campaign against them and His drawing attention to their amazingly stubborn attitude.

The event also suggests that Allah did not allow the people of earlier revelations, represented in this case by Abrahah and his army, to destroy the sacred House or to impose their authority over the Holy land, even when it was surrounded by the impurity of polytheism and the polytheists were its custodians. Thus the House remained free from any human authority, safe against all plottings and designs. Allah preserved the freedom of the land in order that the new faith would grow up there completely free, not subjected to the authority of any despot. Allah revealed this religion as the force, which keeps under its fold all other religions and all mankind and takes over the leadership of humanity. This was Allah's will concerning His House and religion. It was accomplished long before any human being knew that the Prophet, who was to convey the new message, was born in the same year. We feel contented and reassured when we realize this aspect of the significance of the event. We know the wicked ambitions of international crusading forces and world Zionism concerning the Holy lands. We realize that these forces spare no effort to achieve their wicked ambitions. But we are not worried. For Allah who protected His House against the aggression of the people of earlier revelations when its custodians were polytheists will protect it again, if He wills, and will protect Medina the city of His Messenger against the plottings and designs of the evil doers. The third aspect the event refers to concerns the reality of the Arabian situation at the time. The Arabs did not have any role to play on the face of the earth; they did not even have an identity of their own

before Islam. In the Yemen either the Persians or the Abyssinians subjugated them. If they had any government of their own it was under the protection of the Persians. In the north, Syria was subject to the Byzantine rule, which was either direct or in the shape of an Arab government under the protection of the Byzantines. Only the heartland of the Arabian Peninsula escaped foreign rule. But this also was in a state of tribalism and division, which deprived it of any weight in world power politics. Tribal war could drag on for forty years or more, but neither individually nor as a group did these tribes count as a power in the eyes of the neighboring mighty empires. What happened with regard to the "Elephant" aggression was a correct assessment of the real force of these tribes when faced with a foreign aggressor.

Under Islam the Arabs had, for the first time in history, an international role to play. They also had a powerful state to be taken into consideration by the world powers. They possessed a sweeping force that destroys thrones, conquers empires, and brings down the false deviating and ignorant leaderships in order to take over the leadership of mankind. But what facilitated these achievements for the Arabs for the first time in their history was that they forgot their Arabism. They forgot the racial urges and fanaticism. They remembered that they were Muslims and Muslims only. They carried the message of a forceful and all-comprehensive faith, which they delivered to humanity with mercy and compassion. They did not uphold any sort of nationalism or factionalism. They were the exponents of a Divine idea, which gives mankind a Divine, not earthly, doctrine to be applied as a way of life. They left their homes to struggle for the cause of Allah alone. They were not after the establishment of an Arab empire under which they may live in luxury and conceit. Their aim was not to subjugate other nations to their own rule after freeing them from the rule of the Byzantine or the Persians. It was an aim clearly defined by Rabaie ibn Amir, the Muslims' messenger to the Persian commander, when he said in the latter's headquarters:

Allah ordered us to set out in order to save humanity from the worship of creatures and bring it to the worship of Allah alone, to save it from the narrowness of this life so that it may look forward to the broadness of the life hereafter, and from the oppression of other religions so that it may enjoy the justice of Islam. Then, and only then, did the Arabs have an identity, a power and a leadership. But all of these were devoted to Allah alone. They possessed their power and leadership as long as they followed the right path. But when

they deviated and followed their narrow nationalistic ideas, and when they substituted for the banner of Islam that of factional bonds, they came under subjugation by other nations. For Allah deserted them whenever they deserted Him; He neglected them as they neglected Him.

What are the Arabs without Islam? What is the ideology that they gave, or they can give to humanity if they abandon Islam? What value can a nation have without an ideology, which it may present to mankind? Every nation, which assumed the leadership of humanity in any period of history, advanced an ideology. Nations, which did not, such as the Tartars who swept over the east, or the Berbers who crushed the Roman Empire in the west, could not survive for long. They were assimilated by the nations they conquered. The only ideology the Arabs advanced for mankind was the Islamic faith, which raised them to the position of human leadership. If they forsake it they will no longer have any function or role to play in human history. The Arabs should remember this well if they want to live and to be powerful and to assume the leadership of mankind. It is Allah who provides guidance for us lest we go astray.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Woe to every taunting slanderer and backbiter, who piles up wealth and keeps it counting again and again, thinking that his wealth will make him immortal. By no means! He will indeed be flung into the crushing one. Would that you know what the crushing one is! It is Allah's own kindled fire, which rages over men's hearts. It is closed on them from every-side, in towering columns.

Commentary

This Surah portrays one of the actual scenes in the early days of the Islamic call. Yet this scene is a pattern, which is repeated in every environment and society. It is the scene of the vile, mean one who is given wealth and uses it to tyrannies over others - until even he cannot bear himself. He thinks that wealth is the supreme value in life, the value before which all values and all standards come toppling down. He feels that since he possesses wealth, he controls other people's destiny without being accountable for anything he does. He imagines that his money and his wealth is a god, capable of everything without exception, even of resisting death, making him immortal and stopping the judgment of Allah and His retribution.

Deluded as he is by the power of his wealth, he counts it and takes pleasure in counting it again and again. A wicked vanity is let loose in his being which drives him on to mock other people's positions and dignity, to taunt and slander them. He criticizes others with his tongue, mocks them with his movements, either by imitating their movements and voices or by ridiculing their looks and features - by words and mimicry, by taunts and slander.

It is a vile and debased picture, one of the pictures of human beings devoid of the ideals of manhood and generosity and stripped of faith. Islam despises this abject sort of people because of its own high standards of morality. Islam emphatically forbids mockery and ridicule and faultfinding in others. But in this case the Qur'an describes these actions as sordid and ugly and adds warnings and threats to anyone who indulges in them. This suggests that it is referring to an actual case of some polytheists who have subjected the Prophet and the believers to their taunts and slander. The reply to these actions comes in

the form of strong prohibition and fearful warning. There are some reports which name certain people as being the traducers meant here, but they are not authentic, so I will not discuss them, but shall be content with what I have just stated.

The warning comes in the form of a scene of the hereafter portraying the mental and physical sufferings and giving an image of Hell which is both palpable and telling. It takes care to relate the crime to the punishment inflicted and to its effect on the culprit. On the one side there is the image of the taunting slanderer and backbiter who is given to mocking other people and ridiculing them while he gathers wealth thinking that he is guaranteed immortality in this way. This image of the cynical calumniator who seeks power through wealth is contrasted with the image of the slighted, neglected one flung into a crushing instrument which destroys all that comes in its way and thus crushes his structure and his pride.

The crushing instrument is "*Allah's own kindled fire*". Its identification as the fire of Allah suggests that it is an exceptional, unfamiliar sort of fire and makes it sound full of terrors. This fire "*rages*" over his heart and mind from which springs mockery and ridicule and in which lays his vanity and conceit. To complete the image of the slighted, neglected and crushed, this fire closes in on him from all directions and locks him in. None can save him and none asks about him. Inside he is tied to a column, as animals are tied, without respect.

The tone of the vocabulary used in this Surah is very strong "*Keeps counting it again and again; by no means! He will indeed be flung; rages, towering*". In the meaning of the expressions, forcefulness is conveyed by various forms of emphasis: "*He will indeed be flung into the crushing one. Would that you knew what the crushing one is! It is Allah's own kindled, fire*". The generalization and cryptic expression first, then the exclamation suggesting great horrors, and then the clear answer - all these are forms of forceful expression. The style also conveys warnings: "*Woe; he will be flung into, the crushing one; Allah's kindled fire; which rages over men's hearts, it is closed on them; in towering columns*". In all this there is a kind of harmony between imagery and feelings and the actions of the "*taunting slanderer and backbiter*".

At the time of its revelation, the Qur'an was following up the incidents faced by the Islamic call and leading it simultaneously along its road. The Qur'an is the infallible weapon, which destroys the cunning of the conspirators, shakes the hearts of enemies, and fills the believers with courage and steadfastness. Indeed we recognize two significant facts in Allah's care here as He denounces this sordid example: firstly, we are shown the ugliness of moral decline and how people are rendered so abject. Secondly, we realize that He defends the believers, preserves their souls against their enemies' insults, shows them that Allah knows and hates what is inflicted on them, and that He will punish the wrong doers. This is enough to elevate their souls and to make them feel their position high above any wicked designs.

The Declining Day – al 'Asr

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

I swear by the declining day, that man is a certain loser, save those who have faith and do righteous deeds and counsel one another to follow the truth and counsel one another to be steadfast.

Commentary

This short Surah of three verses outlines a complete system for human life based on the Islamic viewpoint. It defines, in the clearest and most concise form, the basic concept of faith in the context of its comprehensive reality. In a few words the whole Islamic constitution is covered and in fact, the nation of Islam is described in its essential qualities and its message in one verse only: the third. This is the eloquence of which Allah alone is capable.

The great fact which this Surah affirms is simply that throughout the history of man there has been one worthwhile and trustworthy path - that which the Surah indicates and describes. All other paths lead only to loss and ruin. As it says in outline, that path is first the adoption of faith, followed up with good deeds and exhortation to follow the truth and to steadfastness.

What does the adoption of faith then signify? We shall not give here its juristic definition. Instead, we shall describe its nature and its importance in human life. Faith is the characteristic by which the minute, transient human being attains closeness to the Absolute and Everlasting Originator of the universe and all that exists in it. He thus establishes a link with the whole world, which springs from that One Origin, with the laws governing it and with the powers and potentialities created in It. As a result, he breaks away from the narrow boundaries of his trivial self to the broadness of the universe, from his inadequate power to the immensity of the unknown universal energies, and from the limits of his short life to the "Eternity" that Allah alone comprehends. This proximity grants the human being a certain power, limitless scope and freedom. It endows him with great enjoyment of life, its beauty and its constituents with whose "souls" he lives in mutual friendship. Thus life becomes a pleasant journey for mankind everywhere and at all times.

From this everlasting happiness, delightful joy and true intimate understanding of life and all creation are derived. This is the invaluable gain, to lack, which is an immeasurable.

The qualities of faith are also precisely those of sublime and dignified humanity, such as the worship of one God which elevates man above servitude to others and establishes within him the truth of the equality of all men so that he neither yields nor bows down his head to any but the One, the Absolute. The result is that man will enjoy true liberty, which radiates from within his conscience following his realization of the fact that there is only one power and one Lord in this world. This liberation is spontaneously developed from such awareness, for it is the only logical sequence.

Godliness is the second quality of dignified humanity. This quality determines for man the source from which he derives his concepts, values, criteria, and considerations, doctrines, laws and whatever brings him into relation with Allah, the world at large and with human beings. Thus, equity and justice replace personal desires and self-interest. This strengthens the believer's realization of the value of his way of life and keeps him above ignorant concepts, values and interests and above all strictly mundane values. This is so even when the believer is the only one of his kind. For he counters these features with those, which he derives directly from, Allah and which therefore rank highest in value and are the most sound and the most deserving of devotion and esteem.

A third quality of faith and dignified humanity is the clarity of the relationship between the Creator and the created; the restricted creature is connected with the Everlasting Truth without any mediator. It supplies man's heart with light, his soul with contentment and gives him confidence and purpose. It eliminates from his mind perplexity fear, anxiety and agitation as well as unlawful haughtiness on earth and unjustifiable tyranny over people. Steadfastness along the path ordained by Allah is the next quality of such humanity. This must be maintained so that good does not occur casually, incidentally or without deliberation but springs from definite motives and heads towards certain aims. People united for Allah's cause collaborate. Thus, with a single definite purpose and a single distinguished banner, the Muslim community is raised. This is true for all generations that are similarly welded together. Another quality is belief in the dignity of man in the sight of Allah. This heightens man's regard for himself and restrains him from aspiring for a position higher than that which the Creator has defined for him. For man to feel that he is

dignified in Allah's sight is the loftiest conception he may attain of himself. Any ideology or concept which abases this valuation and ascribes a dishonorable origin to man, separating him from the Highest Society of Allah is, in effect inviting him to abjection and derogation, though it may not say so openly. Hence, the effects of Darwinism, Freudianism and Marxism are among the most horrid disasters human nature has encountered.

For they teach mankind that all abasement and downright animalism are natural phenomena with which we should be familiar and of which we need not be ashamed. Purity of motivation is yet another quality of the dignified humanity established by faith. This directly follows the realization of man's dignity in Allah's sight, His supervision over men's conscience and His knowledge of their innermost undertakings. The normal human being whom the theories of Freud, Karl Marx and their type have not deformed is bashful that another human being may come to know what incidental unhealthy feelings he may have. The believer feels the awesome presence of Allah in his innermost consciousness and his awareness makes him tremble. He therefore attends to self-purification and spiritual cleansing. A refined moral sense is the natural fruit of faith in a just, kind, compassionate, generous and forbearing God who abhors evil and loves goodness and who knows the furtive look and the secret thought. From this follows the responsibility of the believer, which results from his free will, and the comprehensiveness of Allah's supervision over him. It stimulates within him healthy awareness, sensitivity, serenity and foresight. It is a communal responsibility rather than an individual one and it is a responsibility towards all humanity in relation to goodness, pure and simple. The believer feels all these in every action. He achieves a higher degree of self-respect and calculates the results before taking any steps. He is of value in the world and the whole realm of existence and has a role in its smooth running.

The final quality is man's elevation above greed for worldly gains and the choice of Allah's richer, everlasting reward for which all men should strive, as the Qur'an directs them to do and which results in elevation, purification and cleansing of their souls. Of Immense help in this regard is the fact that the believer has a broad scope to move in: between this life and the next and between the heavens and the earth. The elevation of man lessens his anxiety about the results and fruits of his deed. He does good only because it is good and because Allah requires it. It is never his concern whether it leads to further goodness in

his own short lifetime. Allah, for whom he performs the good, never dies nor does He forget nor ignore any of men's deeds.

The reward is not to be received here, for this life is not the last. Thus, the believer acquires the power to continue to perform good deeds sustained by this overwhelming belief. This it is that guarantees that doing good becomes a deliberate way of life and not a casual incident or motiveless event. It is this belief that supplies the believer with the power and the fortitude to face evil, whether manifested in the despotism of a tyrant or in the pressures of Ignorance or in the frailty of his will-power to control his passions which arise primarily from his feeling of the shortness of his life to achieve aims and enjoyments and from his inability to comprehend the deeper results of the good and witness the victory of right over evil. Faith tackles these feelings radically and perfectly.

Faith is the great root of life from which goodness springs in its various forms and to which all its fruits are bound. What does not spring from faith is a branch cut from a tree: it is bound to fade and perish; it is indeed a devilish production, limited and impermanent! Faith is the axis to which all the fine fabric of life's network is connected. Without it life is a loose event, wasted through the pursuit of yearnings and fantasies. It is the ideology, which collects diversified deeds under a consonant system, following the same route and geared to the same mechanism, possessing a definite motive and a predetermined goal.

Hence, all deeds not stemming from this origin and not related to that path are completely disregarded by the Qur'an. Islam is invariably candid over this. In Surah 14, "*Abraham*", we read what may be translated as:

The likeness of those who disbelieve in their Lord: their works are like ashes, which the wind blows furiously on a tempestuous day. They have no power over anything they have earned.

In Surah 24, *Light's*, we have:

As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty traveler thinks it is water but when he comes near he finds that it is nothing.

Now these are clear statements discrediting every deed not related to faith, which, in turn, gives it a motive that is connected with the origin of its existence and an aim that is compatible with the purpose of the world in all creation. This is a logical view of an ideology that attributes all events to Allah. Whoever dissociates himself from Him vanishes and loses the reality of his existence.

Faith is a sign of health in a person's nature and soundness in his disposition. It also indicates man's harmony with the nature of the whole universe, and a sign of mutual effect between man and the world around him. His life, as long as his behavior is straightforward, must bring about an orientation, which ends up in his adoption of faith because of what this universe itself possesses of signs and testimonies about the absolute power that so created it. Were the contrary the case, something must then be wrong or lacking in the state of the recipient - i.e. the human being - that would be a sign of corruption that only leads to loss and nullifies any deed that might somehow give an appearance of righteousness.

So extensive and comprehensive, so sublime and beautiful, so happy is the believer's world that the world of the disbelievers around appears to him minute, trivial, low, feeble, ugly and miserable - that is, in a state of ruin and complete loss.

Doing what is righteous is the natural fruit of faith and a spontaneous activity generated at the same time as the reality of faith settles inside the human heart and mind. For faith is a positive and active concept that once it has pervaded the human conscience, hastens to activate it to the outside world in good deeds. This is the Islamic view of faith. It must be dynamic. If it is not, then it is either phony or non-existent, just as a flower cannot withhold its fragrance, which, if present, naturally spreads, or else it is not in the flower at all.

From all this we recognize the values of faith: dynamism, activity, creativeness and productiveness devoted to Allah's pleasure and not narrowness, negativity or isolation into self. It is not just sincere and innocent intentions that never develop into actions. This is the distinguishing characteristic of Islam that makes it a creative power in practical life.

All this is logical only as long as faith remains the link with the Divinely ordained path. This path is characterized by perpetual dynamism in the world among people. It is founded

according to a specific plan and orientated towards a definite goal. Moreover, faith propels humanity towards implementing, that which is good, pure, constructive and utilitarian.

Counseling one another to follow the truth and to steadfastness reveals a picture of Islamic society which has its own very special entity, a unique inter-relationship between its individual members and a single destination and which fully understands its entity as well as its duties. It realizes the essence of its faith and what it has to do of good deeds which include, among other tasks, the leadership of humanity along its own path. To execute this tremendous duty, counseling and exhortation becomes a necessity.

From the meaning and nature of the very word "counsel" appears the loftiest and most magnificent picture of that integrated, coordinated, righteous and enlightened nation or society which caters for right, justice and goodness on this earth. This exactly is how Islam wants the Islamic nation to be. Mutual counsel aimed at that which is right is a necessity because it is hard always to maintain what is right, bearing in mind that the obstacles in its way are innumerable: egoistic passions and predilections, the false concepts in the environment, and the tyranny, inequity and despotism of some. Hence the mutual exhortation urged here means reminding, encouraging and expressing the unity in aim and destination and equality in responsibility and charge. It also collects the individual efforts into a unified whole and thus increases the feelings of brotherhood in every guardian of truth, that there are others with him to exhort, encourage, support and love him. This is precisely the case with Islam, the righteous way of life whose establishment requires the care of a coordinated, interdependent, self sufficient and self-supporting community.

Counsel and exhortation to be steadfast are also a necessity because the sustenance of faith and good deeds and catering for right and equity are the hardest tasks ever to carry out. This makes endurance utterly indispensable. Endurance is also necessary when adapting oneself to the Islamic way of life, when confronting others, when afflicted with maltreatment and hardship. Steadfastness is necessary when evil and falsehood triumph. It is necessary for traversing the length of the route, putting up with the slowness of the process of reform, the obscurity of road-posts and the lengthy road leading to the destination.

Exhortation to endurance and steadfastness widens the capacities by inspiring unity of aim and direction and the feeling of togetherness in everyone, equipping them with love, fortitude and determination. It generates vitality in the community where the truth of Islam can survive and through which it is implemented.

Judging by the doctrine which the Qur'an outlines for the life of the successful group which attains salvation, we are gravely shocked to see the loss and the ruin in which humanity finds itself everywhere on this earth today. We are shocked by the frustrations humanity suffers in this present world and by witnessing how humanity turns away, in vain, from the goodness Allah has bestowed upon it. We are the more distressed by the absence of a righteous and faithful authority to stand up for the Truth. Moreover, the Muslims, or rather people claiming to be Muslims, are the farthest of all from what is good and the most averse to the ideology Allah ordained for their nation and the one route He prescribed for their deliverance from loss and ruin. People, in the very realm where this righteousness took its roots, have deserted the banner Allah raised for them, that of faith, to raise instead banners of race which have never done them any good all through their history or given them any reputation either on earth or in the heavens. Islam it was that raised for them the banner totally conforming to Allah's will, flying in His name only and identified with Him alone. Under this banner the Arabs triumphed, were predominant and gave humanity a righteous, strong, enlightened and successful leadership for the first time in their history and the long history of humanity. Professor Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi outlines the characteristics of this unique leadership in Chapter 3 of his valuable book, *Islam and the World*:

Once the Muslims were aroused, they quickly burst the bounds of Arabia and threw themselves zealously into the task of the fuller working out of human destiny. Their leadership held the guarantee of light and happiness for the world; it gave the promise of turning humanity into a single divinely guided society. Some of the characteristics of Muslim leadership were: The Muslims had the unique advantage of being in possession of the Divine Book (the Qur'an) and the Sacred Law (the Shari'ah). They did not have to fall back on their own judgment on the vital questions of life, and were thus saved from the manifold difficulties and perils that are attendant upon such a course. The Divine Word had illumined all the avenues of life for them and had enabled them to progress towards a

destination, which they clearly envisaged. With them it was not to be a case of trial and error. Says the Holy Qur'an:

Can he who is dead, to whom We give life and a Light whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of dark ness from which he can never come out? (Al-Qur'an 6:122).

They were to judge among men on the basis of the Revealed Word; they were not to diverge from the dictates of justice and equity; their view was not to be blurred by enmity, hatred or desire for revenge.

O you who believe, stand out firmly for God as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just; that is nearer to piety; and fear God, for God is well acquainted with all that ye do. (Al-Qur'an 5:8).

They had not by themselves leapt into power all of a sudden from the abysmal depth of degradation. The Qur'an had already beaten them into shape. The Prophet through long years of unremitting care had brought them to a high level of nobility and purity. The Prophet had conditioned them to a life of austerity and righteousness; he had instilled into their hearts the virtues of humility and courageous self-denial; he had purged them clean of greed and of striving after power, renown or wealth. It was laid down by him as a fundamental principle of Islamic polity that "We shall not assign an office under the government to anyone who makes a request for it, or shows his longing for it in any other way." [Al Bukhari and Muslim]

The Muslims were as far removed from falsehood, haughtiness and mischief as white is from black. The following words of the Qur'an had not in vain been grounded into them night and day:

That Home of the Hereafter We shall give to those who intend not high-handedness or mischief on earth; and the End is (best) for the righteous. (Al-Qur'an 28:33).

Instead of aspiring for positions of authority and trust, they accepted them with great reluctance and when they did accept an official position they accepted it as a trust from

God, to Whom they would have to render full account of their sins of omission and commission on the Day of Judgment. Says the Holy Qur'an:

God commands you to render back your trusts to those to whom they are due; and when you judge between man and man that you judge with justice. (Al-Qur'an 4:58).

It is He Who has made you (His) vicegerents on the earth. He has raised you in ranks, some above others, that He might try you in the gifts you receive; for your Lord is quick in punishment, yet He is indeed Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Al-Qur'an 6:165).

Further, the Muslims were not the agents of any particular race or country; nor were they out to establish Arab imperialism. Their mission was a universal mission of faith and freedom. They were happily free from all the sickly obsessions of color and territorial nationality. All men were equal before them. The Qur'an had pointedly said:

O mankind, We created you from (a single pair of) a male and a female; and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is Well Acquainted (with all things). (Al-Qur'an 49:13).

Once the son of 'Amr ibn al-'As, the Governor of Egypt struck an Egyptian commoner with a whip. The matter was brought to the notice of Caliph 'Umar. The Caliph did not show the least regard for the high status of the offender's father, and ordered the Egyptian straightaway to avenge himself for harm done to him. To the offender's father he administered this telling rebuke, "Why have you made them slaves when they were born free?" [Ibn Jawzi, *Tarikh, Umar bin Khattab*]

The Arabs were not stingy in making the benefits of Faith, culture and learning available to the non-Arabs. They did not care for the nationality or the family connections of the recipients when it came to the conferment of high honors and positions in the State. They were, as it were, a cloud of bliss that rained ungrudgingly over the entire world, and from which all peoples, everywhere freely profited according to their own capacity.' The Arabs

allowed a free and equal partnership to all nations in the establishment of a new socio-political structure and in the advancement of mankind towards a fuller and richer moral ideal. There were no national divisions, no color bars, no vested interests, no priesthood and no hereditary nobility in the Islamic Commonwealth. No special benefits were reserved for anyone. There was nothing to prevent the non-Arabs from surpassing the Arabs in the various fields of life. Even as Doctors of Fiqh and Hadith a number of non-Arabs attained to distinction for which the Muslims in general and the Arabs in particular feel proud.

Ibn Khaldun writes:

It is an amazing fact of history that though their religion is of Arabian origin and the Law that the Prophet had brought had an Arab complexion, with a few exceptions, all eminent men of learning in the Muslim Millat, in the field of theological as well as secular sciences, are non-Arabs. Even those who are Arabs by birth are non-Arabs by education, language and scholarship. [Ibn Khaldun, *Maquddima*, p. 499]

During the later centuries, too, the non-Arab Muslims continued to produce leaders, statesmen, saints and savants of exceptional merit. This would obviously not have been possible, had the Arabs been mean or prejudiced in sharing their opportunities with the people of other nationalities in the Islamic world. Humanity has many sides - physical, emotional, social, moral, mental and spiritual. We cannot neglect any one of them for the benefit of another.

Humanity cannot progress to its highest level unless every human instinct is brought into proper play. It would be futile to hope for the establishment of a healthy human society till an intellectual, material, moral and spiritual environment is created in which a man is enabled to develop his latent potentialities in harmony with God's plan of creation. We learn from experience that this goal must remain a dream so long as the reins of civilization are not held by those who attach due importance to both the material and the spiritual yearnings of life, and can, together with having a high moral and spiritual sense, fitly appreciate the claims of flesh and blood upon man and the inter relationship between the individual and the society.

He then speaks of the reign of the first four Caliphs who ruled after the Prophet:

We, consequently, find that no period in the recorded history of the human race has been more auspicious for it in the true sense of the term than what is known among the Muslims as Khilafat-ur-Rashida. During this epoch, all the material, moral and spiritual resources of man were brought into use to make him an ideal citizen of an ideal State. The yardstick of morality judged the Government, and the morals were judged by their utility to lift humanity in permanent values and establishing justice in human society. Though the Islamic Commonwealth was the richest and the most powerful State of its time, the popular heroes and ideal personalities in it used to be drawn from among those who possessed not earthly glory, but purity and nobleness of character. There was no disparity between power and morality. Material advancement was not allowed to out-run moral progress. That is why in the Islamic world the incidence of crime was very low in spite of the abundance of wealth and the great heterogeneity of its population. To put it in a nutshell, this epoch was the most beautiful springtime mankind has to this day experienced. [A.H.A Nadwi, *Islam and the World*, English editions, Lucknow, India, 1967, pp 75-80]

We know some features of that glorious period of human history whose generation lived under the Islamic Constitution, the pillars of which this particular Surah erects and under the banner carried by the group of believers who performed righteous deeds and encouraged each other to follow the truth and to be steadfast. Now what, in the light of all this, is the "loss" humanity is suffering everywhere and how great is its failure in the battle between good and evil because of a blind eye it turns to that great message the Arabs conveyed to it when they raised the banner of Islam and thus assumed the leadership of mankind? Having abandoned Islam, the Arab nation is in the forefront of the caravan, which is heading towards loss and ruin. Since then, the banners of mankind have been for Satan, falsehood, error, darkness and loss. No banner has been raised for Allah, truth, guidance, light or success. The banner of Allah, however, is still there awaiting the arms that will raise it and the nation, which under this banner will advance towards righteousness, guidance and success.

All that has been said so far concerned gain and loss in this life, which, though of great importance, is very trivial in comparison with the here after. There is an everlasting life and a world of reality - the real gain and the real loss, the attainment or deprivation of Paradise and the pleasure of Allah. There man either accomplishes the highest of

perfection allowed for him or completely collapses so that his humanity is crushed and ends up as worthless as pebbles or even worse in condition *On a day when a man will look on what his hands have forwarded and the disbeliever will cry: 'Would that I were dust'*

This Surah is unequivocal in indicating the path leading humanity away from loss, *"save those who have faith and do righteous deeds, and counsel one another to follow the truth and counsel one another to be steadfast"*. There is one right path and one only - that of faith, good deeds and the existence of a Muslim community whose members counsel each other to follow the truth and to show endurance and steadfastness.

Consequently, whenever two companions of the Messenger of Allah were about to depart from each other, they would read this Surah, after which they would shake hands. This was indicative of a pledge to accept this doctrine fully, to preserve this faith, piety and a willingness to counsel each other to follow the truth and remain steadfast. It was a mutual compact to remain good elements in an Islamic society established according to that doctrine and to preserve the foundation of this society.

Rivalry for Worldly Gain - at Takathur

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Rivalry for worldly gain distracts you, until you visit your graves. Indeed you shall know! Again, you shall certainly come to know. Indeed, were you to have certain knowledge ... You shall certainly see the fire of Hell. Yes, you will it with your eyes. Then, on that day, you shall be questioned about your joys and comforts.

Commentary

This Surah has a rhythm that is majestic and awe-inspiring - as if it were the voice of a Warner standing on a high place and projecting his voice, which rings out in weighty emphasis. He calls out to people who are drowsy, drunken, confused. They approach a precipice with their eyes closed and their feelings numbed. So the Warner increases the volume of his voice to the limit: "*Rivalry for worldly gain distracts you until you visit your graves.*"

You drunken and confused lot! You who take delight and indulge in rivalry for wealth, children and the pleasures of this life - from which you are sure to depart! You who are absorbed with what you have, unaware of what comes afterwards! You who will leave the object of this rivalry, and what you seek pride in and go to a narrow hole wherein there is no rivalry or pride! Wake up and look around, all of you! For indeed, "*rivalry for worldly gain distracts you until you visit your graves*".

With a deep and grave rhythm the Qur'an then strikes their hearts with the terror awaiting them after coming to the graves: "*Indeed, you shall know*". Then it repeats the same note with the same words and with the same firm and terrifying rhythm: "*Again, you shall certainly come to know*". Then it adds to the depth and awe of this assurance, and hints at the grave future that lies beyond, the terrifying essence of which they do not recognize in the flush of intoxication and rivalry for worldly riches: "*Indeed, were you to have certain knowledge...*" The conditional sentence is not completed in the text. This is acceptable as a refined form of Arabic. It adds to the feeling of awe generated by the Surah. The inference here is that had they known what they should know for certain, they would have not indulged in such rivalry for petty gains. The Surah then discloses the fearful fact, which has been withheld: "*You shall certainly see the fire of Hell*".

Then it emphasizes this fact and deepens its striking impact on people's hearts: "Yes, *you will see it with your very eyes*". Finally, it puts the last statement, which makes the drunken sober, the lethargic conscious, the confused, attentive and the self-indulgent tremble and feel apprehension at his indulgence in comforts and pleasures: "*Then on that day you shall be questioned about your joys and comforts*". You will be questioned concerning all that: How did you get it? How did you dispense with it? Was it obtained from a lawful source and dispensed with in a lawful way? Or from a forbidden source and in a sinful manner? Was it legal or illegal? Have you praised and thanked Allah for it? Have you given the poor their due? Have you given some of it to others? Or have you monopolized it all for your selves? "*You shall be questioned*" about your rivalry in gathering and amassing wealth and about what you take pride in. It is a burden, which you, in your preoccupation and enjoyment, think little of. But beyond it lie heavy responsibilities.

This is a self-expressing Surah. It leaves its impact on man's feelings by its meaning and rhythm. It leaves the heart occupied burdened with the problem of the Hereafter, inattentive to the trivialities of this worldly life and its petty concerns which please hollow-minded people.

This Surah portrays the life of this world as a fleeting wink in the long span of existence: "*Rivalry for worldly gain attracts you until you visit your graves*". The wink of this life is over and its small leaf is turned. Thereafter time stretches on and so do the burdens. The style of the Surah produces this inference, achieving harmony between the actual reality and the manner of expressing it.

Whenever a human being reads this awe-inspiring and majestic Surah, he feels its rhythm, which travels upwards in space at the beginning and travels downwards to the deep, deep level at the end. He feels the burden of this wink of a life on his shoulders as he walks heavily along the road. Then he starts questioning himself about the smallest and even the most trivial of his deeds.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

The striker! What is the striker? Would that you knew what the striker is! The day when men shall be scattered moths, and the mountains like carded wool. Then he, whose scales are heavy, shall enjoy a life of satisfaction. But he, whose scales are light, shall have the abyss for his home. Would that you knew what this is like. It is a raging fire.

Commentary

"*Al-Qari'ah*" or the Striker is the resurrection named in other places in the Qur'an as the *Overwhelming One*, the *Deafening Shout*, the *Stunning Blast* and the *Enveloper*. The term *al-Qaari'ah* also connotes hitting and knocking hard. It hits the hearts with its engulfing horrors.

The Surah as a whole deals with the Striker, its essence, what takes place in it and what it leads to in the end. Thus the Surah portrays one of the scenes of the resurrection. The scene portrayed here is one of horror directly affecting man and mountains. In this scene men look dwarfish in spite of their great number. For they are "*like scattered moths*"; they fly here and there having no power or weight, experiencing the dilemma and perplexity of moths which rush to destruction, having no aim or purpose.

Besides mountains, which used to be firm and solidly based seem to be like carded wool carried away by winds, and even by a light breeze. Thus, it is in harmony with this image that the Day of Resurrection is described as the one that strikes or knocks out. The connotations of the expressions used and the rhythm are in consonance with the effects of the Striker on both men and mountains. The Surah spreads an air of awe and expectation of the outcome of the reckoning.

"*The Striker! What is the Striker! Would that you knew what the Striker is!*" This Surah starts with the single word "*Al-Qaari'ah*" which stands for "*the Striker*". It is thrown alone like a shot without any further information or any predicate or adjective. As such it creates through its sound and connotations a feeling of resounding awe. The word is immediately followed by a question suggesting something alarming: "*What is the Striker?*" It is that

dreadful and formidable thing which arouses curiosity and questioning. Then comes the answer in the form of a cryptic exclamation, giving no clear indication: "*Would that you knew what the Striker is!!*" It is too great to be comprehended or imagined. Then follows the answer which states what takes place in it but refrains from stating its exact nature: "*The day when men shall be like scattered moths and the mountains like carded wool*"

This is the first scene of the Striker, a scene that leaves the hearts in panic and makes the limbs tremble with fear. The listener feels that everything he clings to in this world is flying all around him like dust. Then comes the end of all mankind. "*Then he whose scales are heavy shall enjoy a life of satisfaction. But he whose scales are light shall have the abyss for his home. Would that you knew what this is like! It is a raging fire*". It is useful for us to consider the "scales" and their being heavy or light. This means that there are standards which Allah credits with being valuable and others that are valueless. This is the general meaning of the statement, which Allah wants to convey. He, however, knows best the exact nature of these "scales". To indulge in a sophisticated, logical and linguistic dispute about the meaning of this term is in itself a departure from the Qur'anic spirit and indicates that the reader is not interested in the Qur'an and in Islam.

"*He whose scales are heavy*" according to Allah's measures and His evaluation, "*shall enjoy a life of satisfaction*". Allah makes this statement general without any detailed information. Thus, the statement imparts to man's feelings the connotations of content and satisfaction or, indeed, pure happiness. "*But he whose scales are light*", according to the same measures of Allah and His evaluation, "*shall have the abyss for his home*" The Arabic text uses the term "*mother*" for what is rendered here as "*home*". It is to his mother that a child turns for help and protection as he seeks shelter and security at home. But such people with light *scales* can turn and resort only to the abyss! The expression is a fine one, beautifully ordered. It has also a shade of obscurity preparing the way for subsequent clarification, which adds to the depth of the intended effect: "*Would that you knew what this is like!*" It is again the cryptic exclamation used often in the Qur'an, which emphasizes that it is beyond comprehension and vision. Then comes the answer in the closing note: "It is a raging fire". So this is the mother of the one whose *scales* are light. This is his mother to whom he turns for help and protection and for security and comfort. But what does he find with such a mother? - The abyss and the raging fire. It is a sudden shock rendered by the expression to represent the hard reality.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

By the snorting coursers, striking sparks of fire, by those which sour to raid at dawn, blazing a trail of dust, cleaving into the center of the enemy: man is surely un-grateful to his Lord, and of this he him self is a witness; and truly, he is passionate in his love for worldly riches. But he is un-aware that when the contents of the graves are scattered about, and what is in the breasts is brought out, surely their Lord will on that know all about them.

Commentary

This Surah is presented in rapid and violent touches. The text moves swiftly from one scene to another. As we come to the last verse, everything - the verbal expressions, the connotations, the subject matter and the rhythm - settle down in a manner similar to that of a courser reaching the finishing point. The Surah starts with the scene of war steeds running, snorting, striking sparks of fire with their hoofs, launching a raid at dawn and blazing a trail of dust, cleaving suddenly into the centre of the enemies, taking them by surprise and striking terror and fear in their hearts.

Then follows a picture of the human self: a scene of ingratitude, ignobleness, greed and extreme miserliness. Immediately after that there is a description of graves laid open and their contents scattered, and the secrets of hearts poured out. Finally the trail of dust, ingratitude and miserliness, the contents of the graves and the dragged out secrets all come to the same terminus. They come to Allah and settle down: "*surely their Lord will on that day know all about them.*"

The rhythm of the Surah is robust and thunderous and thus fits well with the dusty and clamorous atmosphere generated by the upturned graves and the secrets violently pulled out of the breasts. These characteristics of the rhythm are also appropriate to the picture of ingratitude, thank less ness and extreme miserliness. A framework for this picture is provided by a dusty and tumultuous atmosphere of horses racing and thundering. Thus the frame and the picture are in perfect harmony with each other.

"By the snorting coursers. Striking sparks of fire, by those which scour to the raid at dawn, blazing a trail of dust, cleaving into the centre of the enemy, man is surely ungrateful to his Lord. And of this he himself is a witness; and truly, he is passionate in his love for worldly riches".

Allah swears by the warhorses and describes their movements one after the other - running, snorting and neighing. They strike their hoofs against rocks, producing sparks of fire. They wage their attack early at dawn in order to take the enemy by surprise, producing a trail of dust during the unexpected battle. They pierce swiftly the enemy ranks creating disorder and confusion amongst them. These successive stages were well known to those who were first addressed by the Holy Qur'an. The fact that Allah swears by the horses provides an emphatic suggestion that the movement portrayed is a lovable one and men should respond to it actively. This they do only after realizing how precious it is in the measure of Allah, which is reflected in His paying attention to it. Added to all this is the harmony between this scene and the scenes which are the subject of the Divine oath, namely the state of the human soul when it is devoid of faith and its impetus. The Qur'an draws man's attention to this state in order that he may gather all his willpower to combat it. For Allah is perfectly aware of how deeply it is ingrained in man and what great pressure it exercises on him.

"Man is surely ungrateful to his Lord and of this he himself is a witness; And truly, he is passionate in his love for worldly riches". It is a fact that man reacts with ingratitude to all the bounties of his Lord. He denies the favors, which Allah confers on him. His thanklessness and ingratitude is reflected in a host of actions and verbal statements, which will serve as witness against him. Or perhaps, on the Day of Judgment, he may testify against himself, admitting his ingratitude: *"and of this he himself is a witness"*. For on the Day of Judgment he will speak the plain truth even against himself, without any contentions or excuses. *"And truly, he is passionate in his love for worldly riches"*. Man is a passionate self-lover. But he loves only what he imagines to be good for him: wealth, power and the pleasures of this world. This is his nature unless he has faith, which changes his concepts, values and even his concerns. Faith changes his ingratitude to humble thankfulness. It changes his greed and miserliness to benevolence and compassion. It makes him aware of the proper values, which are worthy of being the

object of ambition and hard competition. Indeed these are much more exalted than money, power and mundane pleasures.

Man without faith is an ignoble creature having only trivial ambitions and petty concerns. However big his desires, however strong his ambitions and high his objectives may seem, he remains sunk in the cesspool of this earth, confined within the limits of this life, imprisoned in self. He cannot be freed or elevated except by an attachment to a world superior to this earth, extending beyond this life; a world which originates from Allah who is the First Being and returning to Allah the Eternal; a world into which this life and the life hereafter converge and which has no end.

Hence, the final touch in the Surah provides the cure for ingratitude, greed and miserliness. It portrays the scene of resurrection in a way which makes man shudder, and puts his love for wealth and indulgence in worldly riches out of his mind, unshackling his soul and setting it free from earthly attachments: *"But is he unaware that when the contents of the graves are scattered about, and what is in the breasts is brought out, surely their Lord will on that day know all about them"*. It is a violent and frightening scene in which we witness the *"scattering about"* of the contents of the graves and the bringing out of the secrets of the hearts which were closely guarded, kept away from everyone. The Arabic terms used here for scattering and pulling are very forceful, suggesting an atmosphere of violence and force. Does he not know when this will take place? The mere awareness of all this is enough to inspire man to seek an answer and explore every avenue in search of it, while at the same time discerning all that may result from these wild movements. These nimble and agile movements finally come to where every matter and destiny is settled: *"surely their Lord will on that day know all about them"*. So to their Lord is their end. He *"on that day"* knows them and all their affairs and secrets. Allah certainly knows everything at all times and in all conditions but the knowledge of *"that day"* has some effects to which their attentions are drawn here. It is a knowledge, which necessitates the reckoning and reward. This implicit meaning is the one underlined here.

The Surah is a swift, vehement and breathless piece, with a sudden terminus of meaning, expression and rhythm. It reflects a unique Qur'anic method of expression.

Arabic Letters & Their Makhaarij

<i>Letter Name</i>	<i>Isolated Form</i>	<i>Final Form</i>	<i>Medial Form</i>	<i>Initial Form</i>
Alef	ا	ا		
Ba	ب	ب	ب	ب
Ta	ت	ت	ت	ت
Tha	ث	ث	ث	ث
Jeem	ج	ج	ج	ج
Ha	ح	ح	ح	ح
Kha	خ	خ	خ	خ
Dal	د	د		
Thal	ذ	ذ		
Ra	ر	ر		
Zai	ز	ز		
Seen	س	س	س	س
Sheen	ش	ش	ش	ش
Sad	ص	ص	ص	ص
Dad	ض	ض	ض	ض
Toa	ط	ط	ط	ط
Zhoa	ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ
Ain	ع	ع	ع	ع
Ghain	غ	غ	غ	غ
Fa	ف	ف	ف	ف
Qaf	ق	ق	ق	ق
Kaf	ك	ك	ك	ك
Lam	ل	ل	ل	ل
Meem	م	م	م	م
Nun	ن	ن	ن	ن
He	ه	ه	ه	ه
Waw	و	و	و	و
Ya	ي	ي	ي	ي

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Dua'a & Adhkaar

Before Sleeping and After Waking Up.

If the Messenger of Allah ﷺ wanted to sleep he would say:

بِسْمِكَ اللَّهُمَّ أَمُوتُ وَأَحْيَا

Bi'ismika 'allāhumma 'amootu wa 'ahyā

(It is in your name O' Allah that I die and I live).

And when he awakened from his sleep he used to say:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَحْيَانَا بَعْدَ مَا أَمَاتَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ النُّشُورُ

Al-hamdu lil-lāhi 'allathee 'ahyānā ba`da ma 'amātanā, wa 'ilayhin-nushooru.

(All praise be to Allah Who has caused us life after He had caused us death, and to Him is the return).

Reporters

Agreed upon by Bukhāri and Muslim, and Al-Albāni included it in The Authentic of Good Sayings as #24.

Upon Completing Wadhu

It is reported by way of 'Abi Sa'eed  that the Prophet  said: "Whoever performs Wadhu' then says after he has completed his Wadhu':

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَبِحَمْدِكَ، أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ، أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ وَأَتُوبُ إِلَيْكَ

**Subhānaka 'allāhumma wa bihamdika, 'ash-hadu 'an lā 'ilāha 'illa 'anta,
'astaghfiruka wa 'atoobu 'ilayka**



(Glorified are You O' my 'Ilāh and I am in Your praise, I testify that there is no 'Ilah except You, I ask Your forgiveness and repent unto You).

It would be written on vellum then sealed; thereafter, it would not be broken till The Day of Resurrection".

Reporters

Al-Albāni said it was sound in Sahih 'Al-Jāmi` as-Sagheer wa Ziyādatih and that it was reported by An-Nisā'ee, and Al-Hakim.

Upon Entering a Restroom (Toilet)

'Anas  said: The Prophet  was such that if he would enter the privy, he would say

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنَ الْخُبْثِ وَالْخَبَائِثِ

Bismillāhi, 'allāhumma 'innee 'a`outhu bika minal-khubthi wal khabā'ithi

(In the Name of Allah; my 'Ilāh I seek refuge in You from the male, and female devils (shayateen, which is the plural for shaytan)).

Reporters

Reported by 'Ibn 'Abi Shaybata, and Abu Dāwood. Al-Albāni said it was sound in Sahih Al-Jāmi` As-Sagheer wa Ziyādatih and it is in his Sahih Abu Dāwood. This supplication, without the Bismillāhi, was said to be sound by 'Al-'Adawee and he said that it was reported by Al-Bukhāri, page 343 of volume 1 of Fath Al-Bāree; Ahmed, pages 99, 101, and 383 of volume 3, and on pages 369 and 373 of volume 4 as part of the Hadith of Zaid bin Al-Arqam; Muslim, #375 according to the print of Abu Dāwood, page 15 of volume 1; Ibn Mājah, #298; An-Nisā'ee, page 30 of volume 1; At-Tirmithi who said it was comely-sound, and still others.

Upon Exiting the Restroom (Toilet)

It is reported by way of `A'isha رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا that the Prophet ﷺ was such that if he came out of the privy, he would say:

غُفْرَانِكَ

Ghufranaka

[[I ask] Your forgiveness.]

Reporters

'Al-'Adāwee said it was sound and that it was reported by Imām Ahmad, page 155 of volume 6 of his Musnad; Abu Dawood, Ibn Mājah, #300; At-Tirmidhi, page 48 of volume 1, and Ibn As-Sunni #23. At-Tirmithi said it was comely.

Upon Hearing Adhaan

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: "Whoever after hearing the Adhaan says:

اللَّهُمَّ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الدَّعْوَةِ التَّامَّةِ
وَالصَّلَاةِ الْقَائِمَةِ، آتِ مُحَمَّدًا الْوَسِيلَةَ وَالْفَضِيلَةَ، وَابْعَثْهُ مَقَاماً مَحْمُوداً الَّذِي وَعَدْتُهُ

'Allāhumma rabba hāthihi 'adda`watit tāmmati, was-salātil qā'imati, 'āti
muhammadan 'al waseelata wal fadheelata, wab`ath-hu maqāman mahmoodan
'allathee wa`adtahu.

(O' my 'Ilāh Lord of this perfect call [of not ascribing partners to You] and of the regular prayer which is about to be established! grant Muhammad ﷺ the Waseelata and virtue, and send him [on the Day of Judgment] to the praised status which You have promised him).

Intercession will be Halaal for him on the Day of Resurrection".

Reporters

Reported by 'Al-Bukhāri, and Al-Albāni said that Ahmad, and others also reported it. He also said that the addition wa-'addarajata ar-rafee`ata is not of the hadeeth even though it appears in some books as being traced back to 'Al-Bukhāri. As for the addition of innaka lā tukhlifu al-mee`ād at the end of the hadeeth it appears in Sunan 'Al-Bayhaqi; however, it is deviant. This term is used when a report is by way of a reliable person; yet, contradicts the report of a more reliable person. This Al-Albāni pointed out in Takhreej 'al-Manār #24, and Al-Albāni.

Upon Going Out of the Home

The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: Whoever says - upon going out of his home:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ، تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللَّهِ، لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ تَعَالَى

Bismillāh, tawakkaltu `alā 'allāh, lā hawla wa lā quwwata 'illā bil-lāhi ta`āla

(I put my trust in Allah; there is neither might nor strength, except by Allah, the Most High.)

It is said to him: You have been sufficed, protected, and guided, and the Shaytan would move aside from him, then say to another Shaytan: What access do you have to a man that has been guided, sufficed, and protected?"

Reporters

Reported by Abu Dawood, An-Nisā'ee, and At-Tirmidhi and he said it was comely-sound. Al-Albāni said it is as At-Tirmidhi said; rather, he said, it is sound, and he said that Ibn Hibbān also reported it in his Sahih. Al-Albāni included this hadeeth in The Authentic of Good Sayings as #44.

Upon Entering and Leaving the Masjid

About the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, he said: "When one of you enters the Masjid let him petition Salaam upon the Prophet ﷺ, and let him say:

اللَّهُمَّ افْتَحْ لِي أَبْوَابَ رَحْمَتِكَ

'Allāhumma 'iftahlee 'abwāba rahmatika

(O' my 'Ilāh open for me the gates of your mercy).

And upon leaving let him say:

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ فَضْلِكَ

'Allāhumma 'innee 'as'aluka min fadhlika

O' my 'Ilāh I ask You of your benevolence

In one narration he added: And petition salaam upon the Messenger ﷺ when leaving.

Reporters

Ibn Taymiyah said this hadeeth was sound, and that Muslim reported it with nearly the same wording. Al-Albāni clarified that this wording is that of Abu Dawood, as well as that of Abu `Uwānah in his Sahih except that Abu 'Uwānah's report added "and making tasleem when going out". Al-Albāni included this hadeeth in his Sahih 'Abi Dāwood and in his The Authentic of Good Sayings as#49

Topics Discussion

Knowledge: The First Step

The greatest favor of Allah

Every Muslim sincerely believes that the greatest boon of Allah in this world is Islam. He feels grateful to Him for having included him in the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) and for having bestowed upon him the blessings of Islam. Allah Himself has reckoned this as His greatest boon to His servants as is mentioned in the Qur'an:

"This day have I perfected your *Deen* (way of life) for you and completed My favor unto you, and have chosen for you *Al-Islam* as *Deen*."

(Al-Qur'an 5:3)

Obligation for the favor

It is obligatory for you to render Allah His due because of the favor He has conferred on you. Whosoever does not render Allah his due for his favor, is an ungrateful person. And the worst possible ungratefulness on the part of man is to forget what he owes to God.

Now, you may ask as to how can one render Allah His due for His favor to us? In reply I have to say that since Allah has included you in the Ummah of Muhammad (peace be on him) the best form of gratitude for this favor of His, is to become the sincere followers of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). Since God has included you in the Muslim community the only way for you to reciprocate this kindness is to become full-fledged Muslims. In no other way can you render what is due to Allah for this immense favor by Him. And if you do not render this due, the punishment for this ungratefulness will be as great as is the favor of Allah. May Allah save all of us from this punishment! Amen.

First step to become Muslim

After this you will ask: how can a man become a Muslim in the true sense of the term? The answer to this question requires adequate details and I shall deal with each and every part of it with full elucidation in my lectures on coming Fridays. But in today's address, I shall explain to you that point which is of primary importance and which can be termed as the first and foremost step in this direction.

Is Muslim the name of a race?

Please strain your mind to think as to what actually does the word Muslim, you use, signify?

Does a man bring Islam with him when he is born? Is a person Muslim because he is a son or grandson of a Muslim? Is a Muslim born as Muslim just as a Brahmin's son is born as Brahmin, or a Rajput's son as Rajput, or a Shudra's son as a Shudra? Is Muslim the name of a race or nation just as British? And just as a Jat is Jat because of being born in the Jat community, is a Muslim in the same way a Muslim for being born in a community that is called Muslim? What answers will you give to the questions that I have asked? You will surely reply: "No sir, such a man is not called Muslim. A Muslim is not a Muslim because of belonging to a particular racial group but because of accepting Islam, and if he renounces Islam, he ceases to be a Muslim. Any person who may be a Brahmin or a Rajput, an Englishman or a Jat, a Punjabi or a Black, will be incorporated in the Muslim community on accepting Islam, while another person born in a Muslim home is expelled from the Muslim community if he gives up Islam, though he may be the son of a Sayyid or a Pathan".

Well, gentlemen! You will surely give the above answer to my questions. So now this fact has been established from your own answer that the greatest boon of God i.e., the boon of your being a Muslim, which you enjoy, is not a racial asset which you automatically inherit from your parents and which clings to you mechanically all your life whether you bother about it or not, but that it is a boon for acquiring which you must make efforts. If you make an endeavor for it then you can acquire it and if you don't care for it, it can also be snatched away from you. May God forbid!

Meaning of accepting Islam

You say that a man becomes Muslim by accepting Islam. The question is: What does the acceptance of Islam signify? Does it mean that whoever makes a verbal profession: "I am Muslim or I have accepted Islam", becomes a Muslim? Or does it mean that just as a Brahmin worshipper recites a few mantras of Sanskrit without understanding them, if in the same way a man utters some phrases of Arabic without understanding them, he then and there becomes Muslim? Naturally you will answer that the meaning of accepting Islam

is that a man should consciously, and deliberately accept what has been taught by Muhammad (peace be upon him) and act accordingly. Whosoever does this is a Muslim and whosoever does not do this, is not a Muslim.

First requirement-knowledge

From this answer of yours the fact automatically comes to light that al-Islam is firstly the name of knowledge and then the name of putting that knowledge into practice. A man can be a Brahmin without having knowledge because he is born as a Brahmin and remains a Brahmin. So also a Jat can be Jat though he be bereft of knowledge because he is born as a Jat and remains a Jat all his life. But a man cannot become a Muslim without acquiring knowledge because he does not become a Muslim from birth but from knowledge. Unless he comes to know what is the teaching of Syyedna Muhammad (peace be upon him), how can he affirm faith in it and how can he act according to it? And if he has not affirmed faith knowingly and after full understanding of it, how can he become a Muslim? So it is clear that it is impossible to become a Muslim and remain a Muslim while in a state of ignorance. Whosoever is born in a Muslim home, bears a Muslim like name, dresses like a Muslim, and calls himself a Muslim, is in reality not a Muslim. But that person alone is a Muslim in the real sense that knows what Islam stands for and affirms faith in it with full consciousness. The real difference between a *Kafir* and a Muslim is not that of a name, that one is Ram Parshad and the other one is 'Abdullah, and so one is a *Kafir* and the other is a Muslim. Similarly, the real difference between a *Kafir* and a Muslim is not that of dress also, that one wears shrouds and the other pajamas, and so the former is a *Kafir* and the latter a Muslim. But the real difference between the two is that of knowledge. The one is a *Kafir* because he does not know what relation God has with him and what relation he has with God, and what is the right path for him to lead his life in the world in accordance with the wishes of God. If a born Muslim too is ignorant in this respect, then tell me on what ground do you differentiate between him and a *Kafir* and why do you say that one is a *Kafir* and the other is a Muslim.

Please listen carefully to the point I am stressing and reflect over it calmly. You must understand it thoroughly that to obtain or to be deprived of the greatest boon of Allah, on which you express thanks and gratefulness to Him, depends entirely on knowledge. If there is no knowledge, you cannot at all get this boon. Even if you have a little portion of it, then due to ignorance there is always the risk of losing the magnificent gift. The recipient,

only due to simple-mindedness, will be under the impression that he is a Muslim while in fact he is not. The likeness of that person who is totally unaware of the difference between Islam and *Kufr* and the incongruity between Islam and *Shirk*, is as the likeness of one who is walking in darkness on a track. May be that while following a straight line his steps swerve to another path and he be unaware of this deviation from the right course. And it is also likely that he may meet a *Dajjal* on the way who may tell him: "O beloved! You have lost your way in darkness. Come; let me lead you to the destination". The poor wayfarer being enveloped in darkness cannot see with his own eyes as to what is the right path. Therefore un-sophistically he will grasp the hand of *Dajjal* and the latter will lead him astray. The wayfarer faces these dangers for the very reason that he himself does not possess any light and so is incapable of observing the road-marks himself. If he is endowed with light, he will obviously neither lose his way nor be led astray by another person. You may guess from this example that the greatest danger to a Muslim lies in his own ignorance of Islamic teaching and his unawareness of what the Qur'an teaches and what instructions were left by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). Due to the lack of knowledge, he will grope his way and will also be led astray by *Dajjals*. But if he is blessed with the light of knowledge he will be able to see the plain path of Islam at every step in his life. He will discover and avoid the misleading paths of *Kufr*, *Shirk*, heresy and immorality, which will intercept him. And whenever an inveigler will meet him on the way he will realize after exchanging a few words with him that he is an evil force and so he should not be followed.

Importance of knowledge

On this knowledge depends your's and your children's being a Muslim and remaining a Muslim. This is not an ordinary thing, which may be neglected. You do not show any carelessness in cultivating your land, in irrigating and protecting your crops, in supplying fodder to your cattle and in other work of your profession, simply because if you do so you will be starved to death and will lose a precious thing like life. Then tell me, why do you show negligence in acquiring that knowledge on which depends your becoming a Muslim and remaining a Muslim? Does not this entail the danger of losing a precious thing like Iman? Is not Iman dearer than life? Out of the time and labor you spend on things, which sustain your life, can you not spend one-tenth part of them on things, which protect your Iman?

I do not say that every one of you should become a Maulana, read voluminous books and spend ten to twelve years of your life in this pursuit. It is not necessary to read so much to become a Muslim. I only want this much that each one of you should spend only one hour out of the twenty-four hours of day and night in acquiring the knowledge of Deen. At least that much knowledge should be acquired by every Muslim youth, adult and old person as may enable him to understand the essence of the teaching of Qur'an and the purpose for which it was revealed. He should be able to clearly understand the mission of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) with which he came into this world. What was the wrong he wanted to be demolished and what was the right he wished to be established? He should also get acquainted with that particular mode of life, which Allah has ordained for Muslims. Not much time is required to acquire this quantum of knowledge. And if Iman is dear to you, it is not so difficult to find one hour per day to acquire it.

Difference Between Deen & Shari'ah

In religious parlance you often hear two words and use them also. One is *Deen* and the other is *Shari'ah*. But there are very few among you who would know of the meaning of *Deen* and *Shari'ah*. The illiterate ones are, of course, incapable of understanding the nuance but fairly educated people, too, even many Maulanas, do not know the exact purport of these two words and the difference between their meanings. Due to this ignorance, *Deen* and *Shari'ah* are often mixed up with each other and this creates a lot of confusion.

Meaning of 'Deen'

There are several meanings of Deen. One meaning is honor, government, empire, monarchy, and ruler ship. The second meaning is quite opposite to it, i.e. subordination, obedience, slavery, servitude and subjection. Third meaning is to account, to give judgment, and dispense reward and punishment of actions. The word Deen has been used in the Qur'an in all these three meanings.

Allah says:

Deen with Allah is al-Islam. (Al-Qur'an 3:19)

This means that with Allah Deen is only that creed, which makes man recognize Allah alone as Possessor of Dignity and which does not allow him to bow himself before anybody except Allah. Man must regard only Allah as Master, Lord and Sovereign and must not be slave, servant and subservient to anybody except Him. He must consider Allah only as the Giver of reward and punishment, and must never be afraid of being accountable to anybody else except Him, must not be covetous of receiving reward from anybody else nor be afraid of punishment from anybody else. The name of this very Deen is Islam. If contrary to this, man considered some one else as possessor of real dignity, as a real ruler and master and as a real giver of reward and punishment, and bowed his head before him in humiliation, became servile to him, obeyed his orders, became eager for his reward and fearful of his punishment, then this will be false Deen, Allah never accepts this kind of Deen because it is totally contrary to the reality. No other being except God neither is the Possessor of honor and dignity in this whole universe nor does there exists anybody else's sovereignty and kingdom. Man has not been created to be a servant and slave of

anybody else nor is there anyone else except that real Master Who is capable of giving reward and punishment. This very fact has been pointed out thus in two verses:

"And whoso seek as Deen other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him." (Al-Qur'an 3:85)

That is to say that whosoever, disregarding the sovereignty and kingship of God, acknowledges someone else as his master and ruler, and becomes his servant and slave, and considers that being as a giver of reward and punishment, God will never accept his Deen, because

"And they are ordered naught than to serve Allah, keeping Deen pure for Him, as men by nature upright." (Al-Qur'an 97:5)

God has actually made human being His own slave and has not at all ordered them to be servile to anyone except Himself. It is, therefore, incumbent upon them to turn away from all directions and rivet their attention to their Deen, i.e. obedience and servitude, for Allah only. They should devote themselves to His service with single-mindedness, and be afraid of being accountable to Him alone.

"Seek they other than the Deen of Allah when unto Him submits whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly, or unwillingly, and unto Him they will be returned." (Al-Qur'an 3: 83)

This means: Does man want to be servile and subservient to someone other than God although all those things that are in the earth and the heavens are slaves and obedient servants of God alone, and for the accountability of their deeds they have to submit themselves to no other authority than God? Does man seeks to evolve a novel plan for himself in contravention the entire universe comprising earth and heavens?

"He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the Deen of truth, that He may cause it to prevail over all Deens, however, much the idolaters may be averse." (Al-Qur'an 10: 33)

This means that Allah has sent His Messenger with the true Deen for the purpose that should end the sovereignty of all false authorities and make man so emancipated that he should become servant of none except that of the Lord of the universe no matter what hue and cry the unbelievers and polytheists may raise against it because of their ignorance.

"And fight them until persecution is no more and Deen is all for Allah." (Al-Qur'an 8: 39)

This means that you wage war so that the evil sovereignty of beings, other than that of Allah is wiped out. And only the Law of God operates in the world. The sovereignty of God alone is acknowledged and man becomes submissive exclusively to God.

From this elucidation you must have understood the meaning of Deen.

- To acknowledge God as Lord, Master and Ruler.
- To obey and serve only God.
- To obey and be afraid of the accountability to God, to fear His punishment and to be greedy of His reward.

Since the commandments of God have been vouchsafed to human beings only through His Book and His Messenger, therefore, to recognize the Messenger as God's Messenger and the Book as God's Book and obey their injunctions is also the essential part of Deen as has been said in the Qur'an:

"O Children of Adam! If messengers of your own come unto you who narrate unto you My revelations then whosoever refrains from evil and amends--there shall no fear come upon them neither they shall grieve." (Al-Qur'an 7: 35)

From this it is clear that Allah does not send His commandments direct to every person but through the medium of His Messengers. Therefore, one who acknowledges Allah, as Ruler can be taken as obedient to Him only when he becomes obedient to His Messengers and carries out the orders received through the Messengers. This is exactly what Deen implies.

What is 'Shari'ah'?

The meaning of Shari'ah is mode and path. When you have acknowledged God as your sovereign and accepted His servitude and have also admitted that the Messenger is the

tangible ruler holding authority on His behalf and that He has sent the Book, it will mean you have entered Deen. After this, the mode in which you have to serve God and the path you have to traverse in order to obey Him is called Shari'ah. God through His Messenger who alone teaches the method of worshipping the Master and the way to become pure and clean has indicated this mode and path. The Messenger shows us the path of righteousness and piety, the manner in which rights are discharged, the method of carrying on transactions and dealings with fellow-beings and the mode of leading one's life. But the difference is this that while Deen always was, has been, and is still one and the same, numerous Shari'ahs came, many were cancelled, several were changed but these alterations did not change the Deen. The Deen of Noah was the same as that of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Shu'aib, Saleh, Hud and Muhammad (peace be on them) but the Shari'ahs of these Prophets varied from each other to some extent. The modes of saying prayer and observing fast were of one kind with one prophet and of another kind with the other. Injunctions about Halal and Haram, rules of cleanliness and codes of marriage, divorce and inheritance somewhat differed from one Shari'ah to another. In spite of this, all were Muslims---the followers of Noah, the followers of Abraham, the followers of Jesus and those of Moses, and we too are all Muslims because Deen is one and the same for all. This shows that Deen is unaffected by differences in the rules of Shari'ah. Deen remains one though modes of following it differ.

Nature of difference among ' Shari'ahs'

To understand this difference, suppose there are many servants of a master. The one who does not acknowledge the master as such and does not consider his orders worthy of obedience, is a disobedient fellow excluded from the sphere of service, while those who acknowledge him as master, consider it incumbent upon themselves to obey his orders and are afraid of disobeying him, are included in the category of servants. If their modes of discharging duty and serving their master differ from each other, the fact of all of them being servants remains unaffected. If the master has shown one way of service to one servant and a different way to another, the former has no right to say that he alone is a servant and the latter is not. Similarly, if one servant on hearing his master's order understands its purport in one way and another servant in a different way, and both carry out that order as understood by them, then both are equal to each other in the matter of

service. It is possible that one might have erred in understanding the meaning of the order and the other has understood the correct import, but as long as one has not refused to obey the order, no one has a right to tell him that he is disobedient and that he has been dismissed from the service of his master.

From this example you can very well understand the difference between Deen and Shari'ah. Prior to the Holy Prophet, Allah used to send various Shari'ahs through various prophets. One mode of service was sent forth for one prophet and another mode for another prophet. Those who served the Master according to all these modes were all Muslims though the systems of service were different from each other. Then when the Holy Prophet came, the Master commanded: *"Now We cancel all the previous modes. From now on whosoever wants to serve Us must follow the system which We are now promulgating through Our last prophet"*. After this no servant has the right to perform services according to previous methods, because if he does not accept the new method and is following the old methods, he is in fact not obeying the orders of the Master but following the prejudices of his mind. Therefore, he is dismissed from service or in the religious language, has become a Kafir.

Nature of difference between Juristic schools

This concerns the believers in the past prophets. As for the followers of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) the second part of this example applies to them appropriately. All those persons are Muslims who believe that the Shari'ah sent by Allah through the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) is Allah's Shari'ah and consider it compulsory to follow. Now if a certain person understands the injunctions of Shari'ah in one way and another person in a different way, while both follow these as their understanding. None of them will be dismissed from their service, irrespective of the differences found in their deeds, because each one of them who is following a particular mode is doing so with the consciousness that such is the master's order. In such a case, what right has one servant to say that he alone is the genuine servant while the other is not? The utmost he could say can be that he had understood the exact meaning of the master's order while the other had not, but how could he have the authority to discharge the latter from service? Whosoever displays such audacity assumes, as it were, the status of the master. He would seem to say: "Just as it is compulsory for you to obey the master's order, as is compulsory for you to accept my way of understanding. If you fail to

do that then I shall with my own power dismiss you from the master's service". Just imagine how serious this matter is! For this very reason the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "Whosoever unjustly brands a Muslim as Kafir, his verdict will bounce back on him". This is so because while God has made a Muslim subservient to His commandments, this fellow says: "No, you must also submit to my interpretation and my judgment. That is to say God alone is not your God but I am also a small god of yours. And if you do not obey my order I shall with my own power dismiss you from the servitude of God, irrespective of whether God Himself dismisses you or not". Whoever makes such a pretentious assertion involves himself in the danger of becoming a Kafir, irrespective of whether or not the other Muslim has turned a Kafir.

I hope you have fully understood the difference between Deen and Shari'ah. You must have also comprehended the fact that any difference in the modes of serving God does not entail deviation from Deen provided a man who follows a particular course is genuinely conscious of the fact that God and His messenger have actually enjoined what he is doing, and that in support of his actions he possesses authentic proof from the Book of God or the Sunnah of His messenger.

Detriments of not realizing difference between ' Deen' and ' Shari'ah'

Now I want to tell you what harm is being caused to your community by not realizing the difference between Deen and Shari'ah.

There are several ways of offering Salah among Muslims. One Muslim rests his hands on the chest while another one puts them on the navel. One man recites Surah Fatiha while praying behind the Imam and the other does not. One man utters Amen loudly while the other utters it in a subdued tone. Each one of them is following the respective methods in full consciousness of the fact that this very method was followed by the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and in support of it he has unimpeachable authority. Therefore, both are followers of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in spite of their ways of offering Salah being different. But those unkind people, who regard these problems of Shari'ah as problems of Deen itself, have declared these differences in methods as variations in Deen. They segregated their groups, isolated their mosques, hurled abuses at one another, forcibly drove out their opponents from mosques, fought legal battles and split Rasulullah's Ummah into factions.

When even this did not appease the minds of unreasonable elements, they started, on small pretext, labeling each other as Kafir or sinner and heretic. The position is that if a man evolves a principle according to his own understanding of the Qur'an and Sunnah, he does not confine it to himself but considers it necessary to impose it on others, and should they refuse to submit, he will ostracize them from God's Deen.

The different religious sects of Hanafi, Shafi'i, Ahl-al-Hadith etc., which you see among Muslims, all acknowledge the Qur'an and Hadith as final authority and draw injunctions from both of the sources according to their own understanding. May be that one sect's understanding is correct and that of the other one is incorrect. I am also a follower of one of these systems and consider it correct and also argue with those who are opposed to it in order to explain to them what is correct in my view and prove wrong what I consider to be wrong. But it is one thing if somebody's understanding is wrong and it is quite another thing to expel him from Deen. Every Muslim has the right to follow Shari'ah according to his understanding. If ten Muslims follow ten different methods, all of them are surely Muslims as long as they believe in Shari'ah. They constitute one Ummah and there is no reason at all for them to have the separate groups. But those who do not understand this point split the community into different factions on worthless matters, get severed from each other, set apart their Salah and Mosques, stop inter-marriages and inter-communications and organize groups of co-factionists in such a manner as if each group is an Ummah by itself.

Harmfulness of factionalism

You cannot assess what harm has been caused to Muslims by these factions. Merely to say that the Muslims are one Ummah. There are eight Million of them in Sub-Continent. If such a big community were really united and worked hand in hand to raise aloft Allah's Kalimah, who has the guts in the world to subdue them? But, in reality, due to this sectionalism this Ummah has been split into hundreds of factions. Their hearts are sore with each other. They cannot stand together even at the time of the gravest crisis. The Muslim belonging to one faction is as much, rather more, prejudiced against the Muslim belonging to another faction, as is a Jew against a Christian. There have been cases when a member of one Muslim faction sided with unbelievers to humiliate a member of another Muslim faction. In such a situation, don't be surprised to see Muslims

overpowered and dominated by others. This is what they have earned by their own hands. Upon them has descended that punishment which has been described thus by Allah in His Holy Book:

"...Or to bewilder you with dissension and make you taste the tyranny one of another." (Al-Qur'an 6:65)

That is to say, one form of punishment is that Allah divides you into different groups and you finish yourselves by cutting each other's throat.

This punishment, which is being suffered by Muslims in the whole of Sub-Continent, seems most pronounced in the Punjab (A province of Pakistan). Here, the intersections strife of Muslims are the highest in number throughout the country, and it is due to this fact that in spite of your numerical majority in the Punjab, your strength is ineffectual. If you want your well being, you must break these groups, live as brothers unto one another and become one united Ummah. There is nothing in the Shari'ah of God on the basis of which Ahl-al-Hadith, Hanafi, Deobandi, Brelvi, Shi'ah, Sunni etc. can constitute as separate Ummahs. These Ummahs are the product of ignorance. Allah made only one Ummah: "Ummah-al-Muslimah".

Meaning of 'Ibadah

In my previous lecture I had explained to you the meaning of *Deen* and *Shari'ah*. Today I elucidate before you the purport of another word, which Muslims generally use but few people know its correct meaning. This word is '*Ibadah*'. Allah has said in his Holy Book:

"I have not created the jinn and humankind for any other purpose except that they should worship Me." (Al-Qur'an 51:56)

It is clear from this verse that the purpose of your birth and of your life is no other than that of the worship of Allah. Now you can well imagine how much necessary it is for you to know the meaning of '*Ibadah*'. If you will not know the real meaning of this word you will not be able to fulfill the very purpose for which you have been created. And anything, which does not fulfill its purpose, results in fiasco. If a doctor cannot restore health to his patient, he is said to have failed in his profession. If a farmer cannot raise a good crop, he is said to have failed in cultivation. Similarly, if you have not been able to fulfill the real purpose of your life, i.e. '*Ibadah*', it should be said that your whole life has been a failure. For this reason I want you all to hear and understand with full attention the meaning of '*Ibadah*' and preserve it in mind because on it depends the success or failure of your life.

Meaning of 'Ibadah'

The word '*Ibadah*' is derived from '*Abd*'. The meaning of '*Abd*' is servant and slave. Therefore the meaning of '*Ibadah*' is servitude and slavery. If a person who is a slave of another person remains in his service as a slave and behaves with him as one should behave with a master, it is called servitude and '*Ibadah*'. As against this, if a person who is a slave of somebody and also gets full salary from him but does not serve him just as a slave ought to serve his master, it will be called disobedience and insubordination. In fact, more appropriately, it amounts to being unloyal to the master.

Now consider what should be the form of behavior for a slave towards his master.

The first duty of a slave is to regard his master as his lord, and to consider it incumbent upon himself to be faithful to that being who is his master, who nourishes him, protects and warden him, and firmly believe that no one except his master is worthy of loyalty.

The second duty of a slave is to be always obedient to his master, to carefully carry out his orders, never to draw back from his service, and to refrain from saying anything from his own mind or listening to anybody's words against his master's wishes. A slave is all the time and in all circumstances a slave. He has not the least right to say that he will obey a particular order of the master and disobey the other order or that he is his master's slave for a certain period and is free of his duty for the rest of the time.

The third duty of a servant is to respect and admire his master. He should follow the method laid down by his master for showing respect and reverence to him. He must definitely be present at the time fixed by his master for saluting him and should furnish proof of the fact that he is quite firm in his faithfulness and obedience to him.

These are the requisites which constitute together 'Ibadah'; firstly, fidelity to one's master; secondly, obedience to the master, and thirdly, respect and reverence for the master. What Allah has said in the verse: *"I have not created the jinn and humankind for any other purpose except that they should worship Me"*, actually means that Allah created these two species so that they will be faithful only to Allah and to no other being, that they will follow the commandments of Allah only, that they will not listen to the order of any body else against Him, and will bow their heads in respect and reverence only to Him and to none else. Allah has described these three things in the comprehensive term: 'Ibadah'. This is what is meant from all those verses in which Allah has commanded that 'Ibadah' be performed to Him. The gist of the teachings of our Holy Prophet, and of all the prophets (peace be upon them) sent by God before him, is:

"You worship none save Him." (Al-Qur'an 12:40)

Which means that there is only one Sovereign to whom you must be faithful, and that Sovereign is Allah, that there is one law which you should obey and that is the law of Allah, and that there is only one being who should be worshipped and that Being is Allah.

Results of wrong meaning of 'Ibadah'

Keep this meaning of 'Ibadah' in mind and then give answers to my questions.

What will you say about that servant who instead of performing the duties prescribed by his master stands all the time before him with folded hands and goes on chanting his name? The master orders him to go and redeem what is due to such and such persons but he sticks to his post, and bowing to the master salutes him ten times and again stands up with folded hands. The master instructs him to go and remove such and such wrongs but he does not budge an inch and starts prostrating before him. The master commands: "Cut off the hand of the thief ". On hearing this order the servant still standing there, recites scores of time in an extremely melodious tone: " Cut off the hand of the thief", "cut off the hand of the thief", but not once does he try to establish that system of Government under which the hand of a thief can be severed.

Can you say that this man is really serving his master? If any of your employees were to adopt such an attitude, I do not know what you will say about it. But I am surprised at you that a servant of God who behaves like this is regarded by you as a devout worshipper of God! This heartless person reads from dawn to dusk, God knows how many times, the Divine injunctions in the Qur'an but never stirs himself to carry out these injunctions. On the other hand, he starts offering Nawafil after Nawafil, chants the name of God on a thousand-bead rosary and recites the Qur'an in a melodious tone. When you see him in this position you exclaim: "What an amazing devout and pious person he is!" This misunderstanding arises because you do not know the correct meaning of 'Ibadah'.

There is another servant who is busy day and night discharging duties entrusted to him by other people. He obeys their orders, and acts according to their laws, while he consistently flouts the commands of his real master but presents himself before him at the time of saluting and wags his tongue in chanting the master's name only. If an employee of any of you were to follow such a course, what will you do with him? Will you not throw back his salutation on his face? When he will address you as master and lord, will you not at once turn back and retort: "You are an infernal liar and a deceiver; you take salary from me and perform services for others. You verbally call me master and actually serve everyone else except me". This is a matter of simple common sense, which every one of you can easily understand. But how astonishing it is that you consider as 'Ibadah' of God the prayers, fasting, chanting on rosary-beads, recital of Qur'an, pilgrimage and Zakah of those people who day and night violate the law of God, act on the orders of unbelievers and polytheists, and never care for the commandments of God in the affairs of their life.

This misunderstanding is also due to the fact that you are unaware of the real meaning of 'Ibadah'.

Take the example of yet another servant. The uniform fixed by the master for his servant is worn by this man with perfect trimming. He presents himself before the master showing the utmost respect and reverence. On hearing orders, every time he bows meekly and says: " With all my hearts I will obey", thus giving the impression that no other servant is more faithful than him. At the time of saluting, he stands ahead of everybody and excels all other servants in chanting the name of the master. But, on the other side, this very man renders services to the rebels and enemies of his master, participates in the conspiracies they hatch against him and co-operates with them in their efforts to efface his name from the world. In the darkness of night he commits burglary in his house and in the morning present himself with folded hands before him like an extremely faithful servant. What will you say about such a servant? Only this that he is a hypocrite, rebel and unfaithful. But what do you call those servants of God who behave like this? You call them Pir Sahib, Maulana, religious people, pious persons and devotees of God. This is just because on seeing beards of full measure on their faces, their pants two inches above their ankles, knobs due to Sajdah on their foreheads, their long sessions of Salah and their rosaries of big beads, you consider them highly religious and full of adoration to God. This misunderstanding arises also because you have not correctly grasped the meaning of 'Ibadah' and religiousness.

You think that standing towards Qibla with folded hands, bowing with your hands resting on the knees, prostrating with the hands, knees and forehead placed on the ground and uttering a few stereotyped words – only such few actions and movements are by themselves 'Ibadah. You think that to be hungry and thirsty from morning till evening every day from the first of Ramadan till the appearance of Shawwal moon is called 'Ibadah. You think that a verbal recital of some parts of Surahs of the Qur'an is called 'Ibadah'. You think that a visit to Mecca and circum-ambulation of Ka'aba is called 'Ibadah'. In short, you call Ibadah only the outward aspects of some actions, and whenever you notice any person doing these acts in their external forms, you think that he has performed 'Ibadah' of God and fulfilled the purpose of the verse:

"I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me." (Al-Qur'an 51:56)

After that he is quite free to do whatever he likes all his life.

'Ibadah' – Servitude throughout life

But the actual reality is that the 'Ibadah' for which God created you and which He has commanded you to perform, is something quite deferent. It is this: You obey the law of God in your life at every step and in every condition and free yourself of the shackles of every such law as is opposed to the law of God. Your every move should be within the limits prescribed for you by God. Your every action should be in conformity with the method laid down by God. As such, the life that you will spend in this manner will be an embodiment of Ibadah. In such a life, your being asleep, being awake, eating food and drinking water, even moving around and talking, are all 'Ibadah'. So much so that you going to your wife and kissing your child are also 'Ibadah'. The deeds which you call totally worldly, are all religious acts and 'Ibadah'. Provided during their performance you observe the limits imposed by God, and watch at every step what is allowed and what is not allowed by God, what is Halaal and what is Haraam, what has been made incumbent and what is forbidden, with which deed is God pleased and with which displeased? For instance, you go out to earn your livelihood. In this pursuit, many opportunities arise for you to acquire forbidden (Haraam) money easily. If, for fear of God, you abstained from that money and earned only Halaal livelihood, the time you spent in the latter, endeavor is all counted as 'Ibadah'. And the bread you brought home, ate yourself and fed your wife and children with it and also fed those who are deserving of it as prescribed by God – for all these acts you become worthy of reward and blessings of Allah. If, while walking on the road, you remove a stone piece or a thorn lest it should hurt the slaves of God, this is also 'Ibadah'. If you nurse a patient or show the way to a blind man or help a person in distress, this is also 'Ibadah'. If while conversing with people, you abstained from lying, backbiting, slandering and passing of sarcastic remarks, and feeling afraid of God, told the truth only then all that time you thus spent in clean talk will be reckoned as spent in 'Ibadah'.

Therefore, the real Ibadah of God is to follow the law of God and lead a life according to His commandments from the period of adolescence to the time of death. There is no time

fixed for 'Ibadah'. It must be performed all the time. There is no one particular shape of this 'Ibadah'. In every work and in every form God's Ibadah must be performed. Since you cannot say: "I am servant of God at such a time and I am not a servant of God at such a time", you cannot also say that such and such a time is assigned for God's service and 'Ibadah' and the remaining time is not meant for that purpose.

You have now come to know the meaning of 'Ibadah' and also the fact that to serve God and to be obedient to Him throughout life in all circumstances is called 'Ibadah'. Now you, may ask: "What then these things such as Salah, fasting and pilgrimage teach?" The answer is that the aim of these 'Ibadaat', which Allah has enjoined as obligatory upon you, is in reality to prepare you for that big Ibadah that you have to perform throughout your life in all conditions. Salah reminds you five times a day that you are a slave of Allah and to Him alone is due your servitude. Zakah repeatedly brings home to you the truth that the money you have earned is a gift of God. Do not spend it on animal urges only, but render what is due to your Master. Hajj makes such an impression of love and majesty of God on the heart that if once this impression gets rooted, its effect will never abate during the whole life. If after performing all these 'Ibadaat' your whole life becomes an embodiment of the 'Ibadah' of God, then undoubtedly your Salah is Salah, your fast is fast, your Zakah is Zakah and your Hajj is Hajj. But if this object is not achieved, no purpose is served by doing Ruku' and Sajdah, by spending days in hunger and thirst, by going through the formalities of Hajj and by setting aside Zakah money. These outward functions may be likened to a body, which if it has a soul and moves about and does work, is certainly a living human being, but, if it is soulless, it is no more than a corpse. A corpse has everything like hands and feet, eyes and nose but is devoid of soul. So you bury it under the earth. Similarly, if the rules of Salah are being fulfilled, but if the fear of God, love for Him and loyalty to Him, for development of which Salah and fasting have been made compulsory, are missing, it will also be a soulless exercise.

In my future lectures I shall explain to you in detail how each one of those 'Ibadaat' which have been made compulsory, prepares man for that big 'Ibadah'. I shall also explain that if you perform these 'Ibadaat' with full understanding and try to fulfill their main objective, what a great effect it can produce in your life!

Aqeedah

The Categories Of Tawheed

Literally *Tawheed* means "unification" (making something one) or "asserting oneness", and it comes from the Arabic verb (*wahhada*) which itself means to unite, unify or consolidate.¹ However, when the term *Tawheed* is used in reference to Allah (i.e. *Tawheedullaah*²), it means the realizing and maintaining of Allah's unity in all of man's actions, which directly or indirectly relate to Him. It is the belief that Allah is One, without partner in His dominion and His actions (*Ruboobeeyah*), One without similitude in His essence and attributes (*Asmaa wa Sifaat*), and One without rival in His divinity and in worship (*Ulooheeyah* / *'Ebaadah*). These three aspects form the basis for the categories into which the science of *Tawheed* has been traditionally divided. The three overlap and are inseparable to such a degree that whoever omits any one aspect has failed to complete the requirements of *Tawheed*. The omission of any of the above mentioned aspects of *Tawheed* is referred to as "*Shirk*" (lit. sharing); the association of partners with Allah, which, in Islamic terms, is in fact idolatry.

The three categories of *Tawheed* are commonly referred to by the following titles:

1. *Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Lordship")
2. *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Names and Attributes")
3. *Tawheed al-'Ibadah* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Worship")³

The division of *Tawheed* into its components was not done by the Prophet ﷺ nor by his companions, as there was no necessity to analyze such a basic principle of faith in this fashion. However, the foundations of the components are all implied in the verses of the Qur'an and in the explanatory statements of the Prophet ﷺ and his companions, as will

¹ J.M. Cowan, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (Spoken Language Services Inc., New York, 3rd. ed., 1976), p.1055.

² The word *Tawheed* does not actually occur in either the Qur'an or in the statements (*Hadith*) of the Prophet (–). However, when the Prophet (–) sent Mu'aadh ibn Jabal as governor of Yemen in 9AH, he told him, "You will be going to Christians and Jews (*ahl al-Kitaab*), so the first thing you should invite them to is the assertion of the oneness of Allah (*Yuwahhidoo Allah*)." (Narrated by Ibn 'Abbaas and collected by al-Bukhari (Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), (Riyadh: Maktabah ar-Riyaad al-Hadeethah, 1981), vol.9, pp. 348-9, no.469) and Muslim (Abdul Hamid Siddiq, *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1987), vol.1, pp.14-5, no.27). In this *Hadith* the present tense of the verb from which the verbal noun *Tawheed* is derived was used by the Prophet (–).

³ Ibn Abil-'Ezz al-Hanafee, *Sharh al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p.78.

became evident to the reader when each category is dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

The necessity for this analytical approach to the principle of *Tawheed* arose after Islam spread into Egypt, Byzantium, Persia and India and absorbed the cultures of these regions. It is only natural to expect that when the peoples of these lands entered the fold of Islam, they would carry with them some of the remnants of their former beliefs. When some of these new converts began to express in writings and discussions their various philosophical concepts of God, confusion arose in which the pure and simple Unitarian belief of Islam became threatened. There were also others who had outwardly accepted Islam but secretly worked to destroy the religion from within, due to their inability to oppose it militarily. This group began to actively propagate distorted ideas about Allah among the masses in order to tear down the first pillar of *Iman* (faith) and with it Islam itself.

According to Muslim historians, the first Muslim to express the position of man's free will and the absence of destiny (*Qadar*) was an Iraqi convert from Christianity by the name of Sausan. Sausan later reverted to Christianity but not before infecting his student, Ma'bad ibn Khaalid al-Juhaneer from Basrah. Ma'bad spread the teachings of his master until he was caught and executed by the Umayyad Caliph, 'Abdul-Malik ibn Marwaan (685-705), in the year 700 CE.⁴ The younger *Sahabah* (companions of the Prophet ﷺ) who were alive during this period, like 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar (d. 694 CE) and 'Abdullah ibn 'Abi Awfaa (d. 705CE), advised the people not to greet those who denied destiny nor make funeral prayers for those of them who died. That is, they considered them to be disbelievers.⁵ However, Christian philosophical arguments for free will continued to find new supporters. Ghailaan ibn Muslim from Damascus studied under Ma'bad and championed the cause of free will until he was brought before Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azeez (717-720CE). He recanted his beliefs publicly, however, [and] on the caliph's death, he resumed teaching free will. The following caliph, Hishaam ibn 'Abdul-Malik (724-743CE), had him arrested, tried and executed.⁶ Another prominent figure in this controversy was al-Ja'd ibn Dirham, who not only supported the philosophy of free-will, but also attempted to re-interpret the

⁴ Ibn Hajar, *Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb*, (Hydrabad, 1325-7) vol. 10, p.225.

⁵ 'Abdul-Qaahir ibn Taahir al-Baghdaadee, *Al-Farq bain al-Firaq*, (Beirut: Daar al-Ma'rifah), pp.19-20.

⁶ Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Kareem ash-Shahrastaanee, *Al-Milal wan-Nihal*, (Beirut: Daar al-Ma'rifah, 2nd ed., 1975), vol.1, p.30.

Qur'anic verses containing descriptions of Allah's qualities according to neo-platonic philosophy. Al-Ja'd was at one point a tutor for the Umayyad prince, Marwaan ibn Muhammad, who later became the fourteenth caliph (744-750CE). During his lectures in Damascus, he openly denied some of Allah's attributes, like seeing, hearing etc., until the Umayyad governor expelled him.⁷ He then fled to Kufah, where he continued to propound his ideas and gather followers until his heretical opinions became widely publicized and the Umayyad governor, Khaalid ibn Abdillaah, had him publicly executed in 736 CE. However, his main disciple, Jahm ibn Safwaan, continued to defend his master's doctrines in philosophical circles in Tirmiz and Balakh, when his heresies became widespread, he was executed by the Umayyad governor, Nasr ibn Sayyaar, in 743CE.⁸

The early caliphs and their governors were closer to Islamic principles and the consciousness of the masses was higher due to the presence of the Prophet's companions and their students. Hence, the demand for the elimination of open heretics received immediate response from the rulers. In contrast, the later Umayyad caliphs were more corrupt and as such cared little about such religious issues. The masses were also less Islamically conscious and thus were more susceptible to deviant ideas. As greater numbers of people entered Islam, and the learning of an increasing number of conquered nations was absorbed, the execution of apostates was no longer used to stem the rising tide of heresy. The task of opposing the tide of heresy fell on the shoulders of the Muslim scholars of this period who rose to meet the challenge intellectually. They systematically opposed the various alien philosophies and creeds by categorizing them and countering them with principles deduced from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It was out of this defense that the science of *Tawheed* emerged with its precisely defined categories and components. This process of specialization occurred simultaneously in all of the other areas of Islamic knowledge as it has done in the various secular sciences of today. Therefore, as the categories of *Tawheed* are studied separately and in more depth, it must not be forgotten that they are all a part of an organic whole, which is itself the foundation of a greater whole, Islam itself.

Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah (Maintaining the Unity of Lordship)

⁷ Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Ar-Radd 'alaa al-Jahmeeyah*, (Riyadh: Daar al-Liwaa, 1st ed., 1977), pp.41-43.

⁸ Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Kareem ash-Sharastaanee, *Al-Milal wan-Nihal*, vol.1, p.46.

This category is based on the fundamental concept that Allah alone caused all things to exist when there was nothing; He sustains and maintains creation without any need from it or for it; and He is the sole Lord of the universe and its inhabitants without any real challenge to His sovereignty. In Arabic the word used to describe this creator-sustainer quality is *Ruboobeeyah*, which is derived from the root "*Rabb*" (Lord). According to this category, since God is the only real power in existence, it is He who gave all things the power to move and to change. Nothing happens in creation except what He allows to happen. In recognition of this reality, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ used to often repeat the exclamatory phrase "*La hawla wa laa quwwata illaa billaah*" (There is no movement nor power except by Allah's will).

The basis for the *Ruboobeeyah* concept can be found in many Qur'anic verses. For example, Allah says:

"Allah created all things and He is the agent on which all things depend."⁹

"And Allah created you all and whatever you do."¹⁰

"It was not you who threw, when you threw, but it was Allah who threw."¹¹

"And no calamity strikes except by Allah's permission."¹²

The Prophet ﷺ further elaborated on this concept saying, *"Be aware that if the whole of mankind gathered together in order to do something to help you, they would only be able to do something for you which Allah had already written for you. Likewise, if the whole of mankind gathered together to harm you, they would only be able to do something to harm you which Allah had already written to happen to you"*¹³

⁹ Surah az-Zumar 39:62.

¹⁰ Surah as-Saafaat 37:96.

¹¹ Surah al-Anfaal 8:17. This was in reference to a miraculous incident, which took place when the Prophet (ﷺ) gathered some dust in his hand and threw it at the enemy (at the beginning of the Battle of Badr). Allah caused the dust to reach the faces of the enemy in spite of their great distance.

¹² Surah at-Taghaabun 64:11.

¹³ Reported by Ibn 'Abbaas and collected by at-Tirmidhee. See Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson - Davies, *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith*, (English Trans.), (Damascus, Syria: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1976), p.68, no.19.

Thus, what man conceives as good fortune and misfortune are merely events predestined by Allah as part of the tests of this life. The incidents follow patterns set only by Allah. Allah has said in the Qur'an,

"O Believers! Surely there is in your wives and children an enemy for you, so beware of them."¹⁴

That is, within the good things of this life there are severe tests of one's faith in God. Likewise, in the terrible events of life there lies test as is mentioned in the verse,

"Surely We will test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth and life and the fruits of your work, so give glad tidings to those who are patient."¹⁵

Sometimes the patterns are recognizable, as in the case of cause and effect relationships, and sometimes they are not, as in the case when apparently good results come from evil means or bad results from good means. God has explained that the wisdom behind these apparent irregularities is often beyond man's immediate comprehension due to his limited scope of knowledge.

"Perhaps you may dislike something which is really good for you or like something bad for you, but Allah knows (what is best for you), and you do not."¹⁶

Apparently evil events in human lives sometimes turn out to be for the best and apparently good things which people desire turn out to be harmful. Consequently, man's realm of influence in the course of events, which make up his life, is limited to the mental choice between options presented to him and not the actual results of his choice. In other words "man proposes and God disposes". Apparent "good fortune" and "misfortune" are both from Allah and can not be caused by good-luck charms such as rabbit's feet, four-leaf clovers, wishbones, lucky numbers, zodiacal signs, etc., or by omens of bad luck like Friday the thirteenth, breaking mirrors, black cats, etc. In fact, the belief in charms and omens is a manifestation of the grave sin of *Shirk* (association) in this form of *Tawheed*. 'Uqbah, one of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ, reported *that once a group of men*

¹⁴ Surah at-Taghabun 64:14.

¹⁵ Surah al-Baqarah 2:155.

¹⁶ Surah al-Baqarah, 2:216.

approached Allah's messenger to give their allegiance to him, and he accepted the oath from nine of them but refused to accept it from one. When they asked him why he refused their companion's oath, he replied, "Verily, he is wearing an amulet"¹⁷ The man who was wearing the amulet put his hand in his cloak, pulled the amulet off and broke it then made the oath. The Prophet ﷺ then said, "Whoever wears an amulet has committed Shirk."¹⁸

As for using the Qur'an like a charm or amulet by wearing or carrying Qur'anic verses on chains or in pouches to ward off evil or to bring good fortune, there is little difference between such practices and those of the pagans. Neither the Prophet ﷺ nor his Companions used the Qur'an in this fashion, and the Prophet ﷺ said, "Whoever innovates in Islam something which does not belong to it will have it rejected."¹⁹ It is true that the Qur'anic chapters, an-Naas and al-Falaq, were revealed specifically for exorcism (that is, for removing evil spells), but the Prophet ﷺ demonstrated the proper method by which they should be used. On an occasion when a spell had been cast on him, he told 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib to recite the two chapters verse by verse and when he became ill he used to recite them on himself.²⁰ He did not write them down and hang them around his neck, tie them on his arm or around his waist, nor did he tell others to do so.

Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat (Maintaining the Unity of Allah's Names and Attributes).

This category of *Tawheed* has five main aspects:

1. For the unity of Allah's names and attributes to be maintained in the first aspect, Allah must be referred to according to how He and His Prophet ﷺ have described Him without explaining away His names and attributes by giving them meanings other than their obvious meanings. For example, Allah in the Qur'an says He gets angry with the disbelievers and the hypocrites. He says:

¹⁷ A charm worn to bring good fortune or avert evil.

¹⁸ Collected by Ahmad.

¹⁹ Reported by 'Aa'eshah and collected by al-Bukhari (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic - English) vol.3, p.535, no.861), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.) vol.3, i, 931, no.4266 and no.4267) and Abu Daawood (Ahmad Hasan, *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1st. ed., 1984), vol.3, p. 1294).

²⁰ Reported by 'Aa'eshah and collected by al-Bukhari (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol.6, p.495, no.535) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.3, p.1195, no.5439 and 5440).

"That He may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the pagans men and women, who have an evil opinion of Allah. A circle of evil is around them; Allah is angry with them, curses them and has prepared for them an evil end."²¹

Thus, anger is one of God's attributes. It is incorrect to say that His anger must mean His punishment since anger is a sign of weakness in man and, as such, not befitting of Allah. What Allah has stated should be accepted with the qualification that His anger is not like human anger, based on Allah's statement, *"There is nothing like him"*.²² The process of so-called "rational" interpretation when taken to its logical conclusion results in the denial of God's very existence. For, Allah describes Himself as living and man lives, therefore, according to the rationalist argument, God is neither living nor existing. The fact is that the similarity between God's attributes and those of mankind is only in name and not in degree. When attributes are used in reference to God, they are to be taken in the absolute sense, free from human deficiencies.

2. The second aspect of *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* involves referring to Allah as He has referred to Himself without giving Him any new names or attributes. For example, Allah may not be given the name al-Ghaadib (the Angry one), in spite of the fact that He has said that He gets angry, because neither Allah nor His messenger has used this name. This may seem to be a very fine point, but it must be maintained in order to prevent the false description of God. That is, finite man is in no position to define the infinite Lord of creation.

3. In the third aspect of *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* Allah is referred to without giving Him the attributes of His creation. For example, it is claimed in the Bible and Torah that Allah spent the first six days creating the universe then slept on the seventh.²³ For this reason, Jews and Christians take either Saturday or Sunday as a day of rest in which work is looked at as a sin. Such a claim assigns to God the attributes of His creation. It is man who tires after heavy work and needs sleep to recuperate.²⁴ Elsewhere in the Bible and Torah, God is portrayed as repenting for His bad thoughts in the same way that

²¹ Surah al-Fat-h 48:6.

²² Surah ash-Shooraa 42:11.

²³ Genesis 2:2, "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done." (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version (Nelson, 1951), p.2).

²⁴ In contrast Allah says explicitly in the Qur'an, **"No tiredness overcomes Him nor sleep..."** (Surah al-Baqarah 2:255).

humans do when they realize their errors.²⁵ Similarly the claim that God is a spirit or has a spirit completely ruins this area of *Tawheed*. Allah does not refer to Himself as a spirit anywhere in the Qur'an nor does His Prophet ﷺ express anything of that nature in *Hadith*. In fact, Allah refers to the spirit as part of His creation.²⁶

The key principle, which should be followed when dealing with Allah's attributes, is the Qur'anic formula,

"There is nothing like Him and He is hearer and seer of all."²⁷

The attributes of hearing and seeing are among human attributes, but when they are attributed to The Divine Being they are without comparison in their perfection. However, when these attributes are associated with men they necessitate ear and eye apparatuses, which cannot be attributed to God. What man knows about the Creator is only what little He has revealed to him through His prophets. Therefore, man is obliged to stay within these narrow limits. When man gives free rein to his intellect in describing God, he is liable to fall into errors by assigning to Allah the attributes of His creation.

In their love of pictorial representations, Christians have painted, carved and molded innumerable human likenesses and called them images of God. These have served to pave the way for the acceptance of Jesus' divinity among the masses. Once they accepted the conception of the Creator as being like a human being, accepting Jesus as God presented no real problem.

4. The fourth aspect of *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* requires that man not be given the attributes of Allah. For example, in the New Testament Paul takes the figure of Melchizedek, king of Salem, from the Torah (Genesis 14:18-20) and gives both him and Jesus the divine attribute of having no beginning or end," For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first,

²⁵ Exodus 32:14, "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people." (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

²⁶ Allah clearly states that in the following verse: **"They ask you (Muhammad) about the spirit. Tell (them) that the spirit (exists) by my Lord's command"** (Surah al-Israa 17:85).

²⁷ Surah ash-Shooraa 42-11.

by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.

He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the son of God he continues a priest forever."²⁸

"So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, 'Thou art my son, today I have begotten thee'; as he says also in another place, 'Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek'.²⁹

Most *Shi'ite* sects (with the exception of the *Zaidites* of Yemen) have given their "*Imams*" divine attributes of absolute infallibility³⁰, knowledge of the past, the future and the unseen, the ability to change destiny³¹ and control over the atoms of creation.³² In so doing they set up rivals who share God's unique attributes and who, in fact, become gods besides Allah.

5. Maintaining the unity of Allah's names also means that Allah's names in the definite form cannot be given to His creation unless preceded by the prefix '*Abd*' meaning "slave of" or "servant of". Many of the Divine names in their indefinite form like *Ra'oof* and *Raheem* are allowable names for men because Allah has used some of them in their indefinite forms to refer to the Prophet ﷺ.

²⁸ Hebrews 7:1-3, (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

²⁹ Hebrews, 5:5-6, (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

³⁰ Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar states in his book *Faith of Shi'a Islam*, (U.S.A.: Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2nd ed. 1983): "We believe that, like the prophet, an **Imam must be Infallible, that is to say incapable of making errors or doing wrong, either inwardly or outwardly, from his birth to his death, either intentionally or unintentionally**, because the Imams are the preservers of Islam and it is under their protection." (p.32). See also *Islam*, (Teheran: A Group of Muslim Brothers, 1973), p.35, by Sayed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi.

³¹ Al-Muzaffar further states: "We maintain that the powers of the Imams to receive inspiration has reached the highest degree of excellence, and we say that it is a Divinely - given power. By this means **the Imam is able to understand information about anything, anywhere, and at any time**, and he understands by means of this Divinely - given power at once, without recourse to methodological reasoning or guidance from a teacher.

³² Al-Khomeini states: "Certainly the Imam has a dignified station, a lofty rank, a creational caliphate, and sovereignty and mastery over all atoms of creation." (Aayatullah Musavi al-Khomeini, *al-Hukoomah al-Isaameeyah*, (Beirut: at-Talee'ah Press; Arabic ed., 1979), p.52).

"A messenger has come to you from among yourselves to whom anything which burdens you is grievous. He is full of concern for you and is full of pity (Ra'oof) and full of mercy (Raheem)".³³

But *ar-Ra'oof* (the One Most Full of Pity) and *ar-Raheem* (the Most Merciful) can only be used to refer to men if they are preceded by 'Abd as in 'Abdur-Ra'oof or 'Abdur-Raheem, since in the definite form they represent a level of perfection which only belongs to God. Similarly, names like 'Abdur-Rasool (slave of the messenger), 'Abdun-Nabee (slave of the Prophet), 'Abdul-Husayn (slave of Husayn), etc., where people name themselves slaves to other than Allah are also forbidden. Based on this principle, the Prophet ﷺ forbade Muslims from referring to those put under their charge as 'Abdee (my slave) or *Amatee* (my slave girl).³⁴

Tawheed al-'Ibadah (Maintaining The Unity of Worship)

In spite of the wide implications of the first two categories of *Tawheed*, firm belief in them alone is not sufficient to fulfill the Islamic requirements of *Tawheed*. *Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah* and *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* must be accompanied by their complement, *Tawheed al-'Ibadah*, in order for *Tawheed* to be considered complete according to Islam. This point is substantiated by the fact that Allah Himself has related in clear terms that the *Mushrikoon* (idolaters) of the Prophet's time confirmed many aspects of the first two forms of *Tawheed*. In the Qur'an Allah tells the Prophet ﷺ to say to the pagans:

"Say: 'Who is it that gives you all sustenance from the sky and earth, governs sight and hearing, brings forth life from dead (matter) and death from the living, and plans the affairs of man?' They will all say 'Allah'".³⁵

"If you asked them who created them, they would surely say, 'Allah' "³⁶

"If you asked them who brings down water from the sky and with it brings the earth to life after its death? They will most certainly say, 'Allah'".³⁷

³³ Surah at-Tawbah 9:128.

³⁴ (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.3, pp. 1385-86, no.4957).

³⁵ Surah Yoonus 10:31.

³⁶ Surah az-Zukhruf, 43:87.

The pagan Makkans all knew that Allah was their creator, sustainer, their Lord and Master yet that knowledge did not make them Muslims according to God. In fact, Allah said:

"Most of them do not believe in Allah except while joining partners to Him."³⁸

Mujaahid's³⁹ commentary on this verse was as follows: "Their belief in Allah represented by their statement, 'Allah created us, provides for us and takes our lives', did not stop them from worshipping other gods along with Allah."⁴⁰ From the previously mentioned verses, it is clear that the *Kuffaar* (disbelievers) knew of Allah's sovereignty, dominion and power. In fact, they used to faithfully devote various types of worship to Him like Hajj, charity, animal sacrifices, vows and even prayers in times of dire necessity and calamity. They even used to claim that they were following the religion of Abraham. Because of that claim, Allah revealed the verse:

"Abraham was not a Jew nor was he a Christian, but (he) was a true Muslim and not among those who joined partners with Allah."⁴¹

Some pagan Makkans even believed in the Resurrection and the Judgment and others in predestination (*Qadar*). Ample evidence of their belief can be found in pre-Islamic poetry. For example, the poet Zuhayr was reported to have said:

"It is either delayed, placed in a book and saved for the Day of Judgment or hastened and avenged."

'Antarah was quoted as saying:

"O 'Ebil to where will you run from death, if my Lord in the sky has destined it?"⁴²

³⁷ Surah al-'Ankaboot, 29:63.

³⁸ Surah Yoosuf, 12:106.

³⁹ Mujaahid ibn Jubayr al-Makkee (642-722) was Ibn 'Abbaas' most outstanding student. The narrations of his *Tafseer* (commentary) of the Qur'an has been compiled by 'Abdur-Rahmaan at-Taahir and published in two volumes under the title, *Tafseer Mujaahid*, (Islamabad: Majma' al-Buhooth).

⁴⁰ Collected by Ibn Jareer at-Tabaree.

⁴¹ Surah Aal' Imraan, 3:67.

⁴² Quoted in Sulaymaan ibn 'Abdul-Wahhaab's *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, 2nd., 1970), p.34.

In spite of the Makkans' confessions of *Tawheed* and their knowledge of Allah, Allah classified them as disbelievers (*Kuffaar*) and pagans (*Mushrikoon*) simply because they worshipped other gods along with their worship of Allah.

Consequently, the most important aspect of *Tawheed* is that of *Tawheed al-'Ibadah*, maintaining the unity of Allah's worship. All forms of worship must be directed only to Allah because He alone deserves worship, and it is He alone who can grant benefit to man as a result of His worship. Furthermore, there is no need for any form of intercessor or intermediary between man and God. Allah emphasized the importance of directing worship to Him alone by pointing out that this was the main purpose of man's creation and the essence of the message brought by all the prophets. Allah says:

"I did not create the Jinn and Mankind except for My worship."⁴³

"Verily, We have sent to every nation a messenger (saying), 'Worship Allah and avoid false gods'."⁴⁴

Understanding the purpose of creation in a complete sense is beyond man's innate abilities. Man is a finite created being and cannot reasonably hope to fully comprehend the actions of the infinite Creator. Hence, God made it a part of man's nature to worship Him, and He sent prophets and books of divine revelation to clarify the aspect of the purpose of creation, which was within man's mental ability to grasp. That purpose is, as was previously mentioned: the worship of God (*'Ibadah*) and the main message of the prophets was to worship God alone, *Tawheed al-'Ibadah*. Consequently, the gravest sin is *Shirk*, the worship of others instead of Allah or along with Allah. In Surah al-Fatiha, which every Muslim is required to recite in his or her prayers at least seventeen times daily, verse four reads, **"You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help"**. A clear statement that all forms of worship should only be directed to the One who can respond, Allah. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ confirmed the concept of unity of worship saying, *"If you ask in prayer ask only Allah, and if you seek help, seek it only from Allah."*⁴⁵

⁴³ Surah adh-Dhaariyat, 51:56.

⁴⁴ Surah an-Nahl, 16:36.

⁴⁵ Reported by Ibn 'Abbaas and collected by at-Tirmidhee. See *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith*, (English Trans.), p.68.

The absence of any need for intercession is further emphasized by the many verses indicating His closeness to man. For example:

"When My servants ask you (O Muhammad) about Me (tell them), 'Verily I am close (to them), I listen to the prayer of every one who calls on Me. So let them respond to Me and believe In Me in order that they may be guided aright.'"⁴⁶

"It is We who created man and We know what his soul whispers to him, for We are nearer to him than his jugular vein."⁴⁷

The confirmation of *Tawheed al-'Ibadah* conversely necessitates the denial of all forms of intercession or association of partners with Allah. If someone prays to the dead seeking their influence on the lives of the living or the souls of those who have passed away, they have associated a partner with Allah, because worship is being shared between Allah and His creation. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, in no uncertain terms, "*Prayer (Dua'a) is worship.*"⁴⁸ And, Allah, Most Great and Glorious, said:

'Do not worship besides Allah that which can not help or harm you.'⁴⁹

"Those on whom you call besides Allah are only slaves like yourselves."⁵⁰

If someone prays to the Prophet ﷺ, to so-called saints, *Jinns* or angels asking for help or asking them to request help from Allah for them, they have also committed *Shirk*. The concept of "Ghaus-i-Azam" (*al-Ghawth al-Adham*), a title given by the ignorant to 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee⁵¹, is also an expression of *Shirk* in this form of *Tawheed*. The title literally means "the greatest source of rescue; the one most able to save someone from danger" and such a description only belongs to Allah. When misfortune occurs, some

⁴⁶ Surah al-Baqarah, 2:186.

⁴⁷ Surah Qaaf, 50:16.

⁴⁸ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol.1, p.387, no.1474.

⁴⁹ Surah al-Anbiyaa, 21:66.

⁵⁰ Surah al-A'raaf, 7:194.

⁵¹ Abdul-Qaadir (1077-1166) was a principal of a school of Hanbalite Law and a Ribaah (monastery) in Baghdad. His Sermons (collected in *al-Fat-h ar-Rabbaane*, Cairo 1302) were strictly orthodox with some, mystic interpretations of the Qur'an. Ibn 'Arabee (born 1165) declared him the *Qutb* of his time and stated that he had a rank which placed him above all beings except God. 'Alee ibn Yousuf ash-Shattanawfee (d. 1314 CE) wrote a book called *Bahjat al-Asraar* (Cairo, 1304) in which he attributed many miracles to 'Abdul-Qaadir. The Qaadiireeyah Sufi order is named after him and its spiritual exercises and regulations traced back to him. (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp.5-7 and 202-205).

people call on 'Abdul-Qaadir by this title seeking his aid and protection even though Allah has already said:

"If Allah allows harm to befall you none can remove it except Him." ⁵²

According to the Qur'an, when the Makkans were questioned about directing their prayers to their idols, they answered,

"We only worship them so that they may bring us closer to Allah."⁵³

The idols were only used as intermediaries yet Allah called them pagans for their practice. Those among Muslims who insist on praying to other than Allah would do well to reflect on this fact.

Christians, influenced by the teachings of Saul from Tarsus (later called Paul), deified Prophet Jesus and directed their prayer to him and his mother. The Catholics among Christians have saints for every occasion to whom they direct their prayers in the belief that these saints can directly influence the affairs of this world. The Catholics also use their priests as intercessors between themselves and Allah in the mistaken belief that the priests are closer to Allah due to their celibacy and piety, and thus more likely to be listened to by Allah. Most *Shi'ite* sects have devoted certain days of the week and hours of the day for prayer to 'Alee, Faatimah, Hasan and Husayn⁵⁴ due to their distorted belief in intercession.

Worship (*'Ebaadah*) in the Islamic view, includes more than just fasting, paying *Zakaah*, Hajj and animal sacrifices. It includes emotions like love, trust, and fear, all of which have degrees, which should only be directed to God. Allah has addressed these emotions and warned against excesses in them as follows:

⁵² Surah al-An'aam, 6:17.

⁵³ Surah az-Zumar, 39:3.

⁵⁴ Faatimah was the Prophet Muhammad's youngest daughter who married the Prophet's cousin 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib, and Hasan and Husayn were their sons.

"There are among men those who take (for worship) others besides Allah as equals to Him. They love them as they should only love Allah. But those who believe have a much greater love of Allah..."⁵⁵

"Will you not fight people who broke their oaths, plotted to expel the messenger and were the first to (attack) you? Do you fear them? Allah has more right to be feared if you are truly believers."⁵⁶

"Put your trust in Allah if you are truly believers."⁵⁷

Since the term *'Ebaadah* means total obedience and Allah is considered the ultimate Lawgiver, the implementation of secular legal systems not based on divine law (*Shari'ah*) is an act of disbelief in the divine law and belief in the correctness of such systems, such a belief constitutes a form of worshipping other than Allah (*Shirk*). Allah said in the Qur'an:

"Those who do not rule by what Allah has revealed are disbelievers (*Kaafiroon*)."⁵⁸

On one occasion, the Prophet's companion 'Adee ibn Haatim, who was a convert from Christianity, heard the Prophet ﷺ recite the Qur'anic verse, "They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allah,"⁵⁹ so he said: 'Surely we did not worship them,' The Prophet ﷺ turned to him and said 'Did they not make forbidden (Haraam) what Allah had made allowable (Halaal)⁶⁰, and you all made it Haraam, and did they not make Halaal what Allah made Haraam⁶¹ and you all made it Halaal?' He replied, 'We certainly did.' The Prophet ﷺ then said, 'That was how you worshipped them'.⁶²

Hence, a significant part of *Tawheed al-'Ebaadah* involves the implementation of *Shari'ah*, especially in lands where Muslims form the majority of the population. Divine law has to be re-introduced in the many so-called Muslim countries where governments now rule

⁵⁵ Surah al-Baqarah, 2:165.

⁵⁶ Surah at-Tawbah 9:13.

⁵⁷ Surah al-Maa'idah, 5:23.

⁵⁸ Surah al-Maa'idah, 5:44.

⁵⁹ Surah at-Tawbah, 9:31.

⁶⁰ Christian clergy made *Haraam* the marrying of more than one wife and the marrying of first cousins. Roman Catholicism forbade priests from marrying and forbade divorce in general.

⁶¹ The Christian Church made *Halaal* the consumption of pork, blood and alcohol. Some of them also made allowable painting and statues depicting God as a man.

⁶² Collected by at-Tirmidhee.

according to imported capitalist or communist constitutions, and Islamic law is either totally extinct or relegated to a few areas of minor importance. Likewise, Muslim countries, where Islamic law is on the books but secular laws are in force, have also to be brought in line with the *Shari'ah* as it pertains to all aspects of life. The acceptance of non-Islamic rule in place of *Shari'ah* in Muslim lands is *Shirk* and an act of *Kufr*. Those in a position to change it must do so, while those unable to do so must speak out against the rule of *Kufr* and call for the implementation of *Shari'ah*. If even this becomes impossible, un-Islamic government must be sincerely hated and despised for the pleasure of God and the upholding of *Tawheed*.

The Categories Of Shirk

The study of *Tawheed* cannot be considered complete without a careful analysis of its opposite, *Shirk*. Some mention of *Shirk* has already been made in the previous chapter and examples of it have been given to illustrate how *Tawheed* may be obliterated. However, in this chapter *Shirk* will be looked at as a separate topic whose grave importance Allah has attested to in the Qur'an,

"Surely Allah will not forgive the association of partners (Shirk) with Him, but He forgives (sins) less than that of whomever He wishes."⁶³

Because the sin of *Shirk* denies the very purpose of man's creation, it is to God the gravest of sins; the unforgivable sin.

Shirk literally means partnership, sharing or associating,⁶⁴ but Islamically it refers to the act of assigning partners to Allah in whatever form it may take. The following analysis of *Shirk* is according to the three broad categories developed in the study of *Tawheed*. Hence, we will first look at the main ways in which *Shirk* can occur in the area of *Ruboobeeyah* (Lordship), then *Asmaa was-Sifaat* (Divine Names and Attributes) and finally in *'Ebaadah* (Worship).

Shirk in Ruboobeeyah

This category of *Shirk* refers to either the belief that others share Allah's Lordship over creation as His equal or near equal, or to the belief that there exists no Lord over creation at all. Most religious systems fall into the first aspect of *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* while it is the philosophers and their man-made philosophies that tend to fill the second aspect.

(A) Shirk by Association

Beliefs which fall under this sub-category are ones in which a main God or Supreme Being over creation is recognized, however His dominion is shared by other lesser gods, spirits, mortals, heavenly bodies or earthly objects. Such belief systems are commonly referred to by theologians and philosophers as either monotheistic (having one God) or

⁶³ Surah an-Nisaa, 4:48.

⁶⁴ *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p.468.

polytheistic (having more than one God). According to Islam, all of these systems are polytheistic and many represent various degrees in the degeneration of divinely revealed religious systems all of which were originally based on *Tawheed*.

Within Hinduism, the Supreme Being *Brahman* is conceived as indwelling, all-pervading, unchangeable and eternal, the abstract impersonal Absolute, in which all things have their origin and end. While the god *Brahma* is the personified creator of the universe who forms a trinity with the preserver god, *Vishnu* and the destroyer god, *Shiva*.⁶⁵ Thus, *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* is expressed in Hinduism by the delegation of God's creative, destructive and preservative powers to other gods.

Christian belief states that the one God reveals himself in the three persons of Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and *Holy Spirit*. These three persons are nevertheless regarded as a unity, sharing one 'substance'.⁶⁶ Prophet Jesus is elevated to divinity, sits on the right hand of God and judges the world. The *Holy Spirit*, who in the Hebrew Bible is the means by which God exercises his creative power, in Christian thought becomes a part of the Godhead. Paul made the *Holy Spirit* the alter ego of Christ, the guide and help of Christians, first manifesting itself on the day of Pentecost.⁶⁷ Consequently, *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* occurs in the Christian belief that Jesus and the *Holy Spirit* are God's partners in all of His dominion, in their belief that Jesus alone pronounces judgment on the world and in their belief that Christians are helped and guided by the *Holy Spirit*.

Zoroastrians (Parsis) conceive of God, *Ahura Mazda*, as being the creator of all that is good, and is alone worthy of absolute worship. Fire is one of the seven creations of *Ahura Mazda* and is considered his son or representative. But they also commit *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* by conceiving of evil, violence and death as being the creation of another god called *Angra Mainyu* whom they represent by the symbol darkness.⁶⁸ Hence, God's sovereignty over all creation (i.e. His *Ruboobeeyah*) is shared with an evil spirit elevated to the level of an opposing god due to man's desire to not attribute evil to God.

⁶⁵ W.L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), pp.66-67 and 586-7. See also John Hinnells, *Dictionary of Religions* (England: Penguin Books, 1984) pp.67-8.

⁶⁶ *Dictionary of Religions*, p.337.

⁶⁷ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p.231.

⁶⁸ *Dictionary of Religions*, pp.361-2.

In the Yoruba religion, followed by over 10 million people in West Africa (mainly Nigeria), there is one supreme God, *Olorius* (Lord of Heaven) or *Olodumare*. Nevertheless, modern Yoruba religion is characterized by a multitude of *Orisha* worship, so that Yoruba religion appears as strict polytheism.⁶⁹ Consequently, Yorubas commit *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* by turning over all of God's functions to minor gods and spirits.

The Zulus of South Africa believe in one God, *Unkulunkulu*, meaning the ancient, the first, and the most revered one. The principal specific titles for God are; *Nkosi yaphezulu* (Lord-of-the-Sky) and *uMvelingqanqi* (the first to appear). Their Supreme Being is represented as a male, who, along with the earth female, bring forth the human world. Thunder and Lightening are in Zulu religion acts of God, whereas sickness and other troubles in life may be caused by the ancestors, the "*Idlozi*" or "*abaphansi*" (those under the earth). The ancestors also protect the living, ask for food, are pleased with ritual and sacrifice, punish neglect and take possession of fortune-tellers (*inyanga*).⁷⁰ Thus, *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* takes place in the Zulu religion not only in their concept of the creation of the human world but also their attribution of good and evil in human life to the work of ancestral spirits.

Among some Muslim people, *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* is manifested in their belief that the souls of saints and other righteous humans can affect the affairs of this world, even after their deaths. Their souls, it is believed, can fulfill one's needs, remove calamities and aid whoever calls on them. Therefore, grave worshippers assign to human souls the divine ability to cause events in this life, which in fact only Allah can cause.

Common among many *Sufis* (Muslim mystics) is the belief in "*Rijaal al-Ghayb*"⁷¹, chief of whom occupies the station called "*Qutub*" from which the affairs of this world are governed.⁷²

(B) Shirk by Negation

This sub-category represents the various philosophies and ideologies, which deny the existence of God either explicitly or implicitly. That is, in some cases God's non-existence

⁶⁹ *Dictionary of Religions*, p.358.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁷¹ Literally, "men of the unseen world". The world is supposed to endure due to the intercessions of a hierarchy of "averting" Saints whose number are fixed, the place of one who dies being immediately filled. (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, p.582).

⁷² *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp.55.

is stated (Atheism), while in other cases His existence is claimed, but the way in which He is conceived actually denies His existence (Pantheism).

There are a few ancient religious "systems" in which God does not exist, foremost among them is the system attributed to Gautama Buddha. Buddhism, a reformist movement in Hinduism opposed to the caste system, was founded in the 6th century BC during the same period as Jainism. During the 3rd century BC it became the state religion. Eventually it was assimilated by Hinduism, Buddha himself becoming one of the *Avatars* (incarnations of God). It disappeared from India but became dominant in China and other Eastern nations. *Hinayana* Buddhism (400-250 BC), the earlier and stricter of the two interpretations of Buddhism, which arose after Gautama Buddha's death, makes it clear that there is no God; hence the burden of salvation belongs to the individual alone.⁷³ Thus, this ancient strain of Buddhism could be classified as an example of *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* wherein God's existence is explicitly denied.

Similarly in the teachings of Jainism as systematized by Vardhamana, there is no God, but liberated souls achieve something of this status, having immortality and omniscience; and the religious community treats the liberated ones as though they were divine, building temples to them and venerating their images.⁷⁴

Another ancient example is that of the Pharaoh of Prophet Moses' time. Allah mentioned in the Qur'an that he negated the existence of God and claimed to Moses and the people of Egypt that he, Pharaoh, was the only true lord of all creation. Allah quoted him as saying to Moses, **"If you chose a god besides me, I will surely imprison you"**⁷⁵ and to the people, **"He proclaimed, 'I am your Lord, the Most High'"**⁷⁶

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a number of European philosophers asserted the non-existence of God in what became known as the "death of God philosophy". The German philosopher Philipp Mainländer (1841-1876) in his principal writing, *The Philosophy of Redemption*, 1876, states that the world begins with the death of God, since God is a principle of unity shattered in the plurality of the world and a principle of joy denied in the law of suffering which dominates the world.⁷⁷ In Prussia Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) supported the idea of the "death of God" proposing that God was nothing

⁷³ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p.72.

⁷⁴ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 262-3.

⁷⁵ Surah ash-Shooraa, 26:29.

⁷⁶ Surah an-Naazi'at, 79:24.

⁷⁷ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p.327.

more than a projection of man's uneasy conscience and that man was the bridge to the Superman.⁷⁸ Jean Paul Sartre, a French philosopher of the twentieth century also echoed the "death of God" thought. He claimed that God could not exist because He was a contradiction in terms. The idea of God, according to him, is a projection which man must make being what he is.⁷⁹

Darwin's (d. 1882) proposal that man was merely a glorified ape was widely adopted in the theories of social scientists and philosophers of the nineteenth century as it provided a "scientific" basis for the non-existence of God. According to them religion evolved from animism to monotheism along with man's supposed social evolution from an independent individual to a national state and his physical evolution from ape to man.

They attempt to escape the questions surrounding creation by claiming that there was none and by attributing Allah's attribute of being without beginning and end to matter, which He has created. Present day holders of this belief are the followers of Karl Marx, communists and scientific socialists, who claim that the origin of everything in existence is matter in motion. They further claim that God is a figment of man's imagination created by the ruling classes to justify their hereditary rule and divert the attention of the oppressed masses from the realities in which they live.

An example of this form of *Shirk* among some Muslims is that of many *Sufis* like Ibn 'Arabee who claim that only Allah exists (All is Allah, and Allah is all). They deny the separate existence of Allah and thereby in fact deny His existence. This idea was also expressed in the 17th century by the Dutch Jewish philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, who claimed that God is the total of all parts of the universe including man.

Shirk in al-Asmaa was-Sifaat

Shirk in this category includes both the common pagan practice of giving Allah the attributes of His creation as well as the act of giving created beings Allah's names and attributes.

(A) Shirk by Humanization

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.391.

⁷⁹ *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, pp.508-9.

In this aspect of *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*, Allah is given the form and qualities of human beings and animals. Due to man's superiority over animals, the human form is more commonly used by idolaters to represent God in creation. Consequently, the image of the Creator is often painted, molded or carved in the shape of human beings possessing the physical features of those who worship them. For example, Hindus and Buddhists worship countless idols in the likeness of Asian men and consider them manifestations of God in creation. Modern day Christian belief that Prophet Jesus was God incarnate; that the Creator became His creation is another good example of this type of *Shirk*. There have been many so-called great Christian painters like Michelangelo (d. 1565), who painted pictures of God as a naked old European man with long flowing white hair and beard on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. These pictures have in turn, been held by the Christian world in the highest of esteem.

(B) Shirk by Deification

This form of *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* relates to cases where created beings or things are given or claim Allah's names or His attributes. For example, it was the practice of the ancient Arabs to worship idols whose names were derived from the names of Allah. Their main three idols were: al-Laat taken from Allah's name al-Elaah, al-'Uzza taken from al-'Azeez and al-Manaat taken from al-Mannaan. During the Prophet Muhammad's era there was also a false prophet in a region of Arabia called Yamaamah, who took the name *Rahman* that only belongs to Allah.

Among the *Shi'ite* sects is the *Nusayreeyah* of Syria, who believe that the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib, was a manifestation of Allah and give him many of Allah's qualities. Among them is also the *Ismai'is* also know as Agha Khanis who consider their leader, the Agha Khan, to be God incarnate. Also included in this category are the *Druze* of Lebanon who believe that the Faatimid Caliph al-Haakim bin Amrillaah, was the last manifestation of Allah among mankind.

Claims of *Sufis* (Muslim mystics) like al-Hallaaj that they have become one with God and as such exist as manifestations of the Creator within His creation may also be included in

this aspect of *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*. Modern-day spiritualists and mediums like Shirley Maclaine, J.Z. Knight, etc., often claim divinity for themselves as well as mankind in general. Einstein's Theory of Relativity ($E = mc^2$, Energy is equal to mass times the square of the speed of light) taught in all schools is in fact an expression of *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*. The theory states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed; it merely transforms into matter and vice versa. However, both matter and energy are created entities and they both will be destroyed as Allah clearly states:

"Allah is the creator of all things..."⁸⁰

"Everything in (the world) will perish..."⁸¹

The theory also implies that mass and energy are eternal having no beginning nor end since they are supposed to be uncreated and transform into each other. However, this attribute belongs only to Allah who alone is without beginning or end. *[MSA-USC Editor's note: Understand that the author is pointing out a flaw in an informal part of the theory of relativity, that is, that matter and energy are eternal. The author is not arguing against the mathematical relationship between these two, but rather against their independence from Allah's all-encompassing power - both creative and destructive.]*

Darwin's theory of evolution is also an attempt to explain the evolution of life and its forms from lifeless matter without the intervention of God. One of the leading Darwinists of this century, Sir Aldous Huxley expressed this thought as follows:

"Darwinism removed the whole idea of God as the creator of organisms from the sphere of national discussion."⁸²

Shirk In al-'Ebaadah

In this category of *Shirk*, acts of worship are directed to other than God and the reward for worship is sought from the creation instead of the Creator. As in the case of the previous categories, *Shirk* in *al-'Ebaadah* has two main aspects.

⁸⁰ Surah az-Zumar, 39:62.

⁸¹ Surah ar-Rahmaan, 55:26.

⁸² Quoted in Francis Hitching's, *The Neck of the Giraffe*, (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1982), p.254 from Tax and Callender, 1960, vol.111, p.45.

(A) Ash-Shirk al-Akbar (Major Shirk):

This form of *Shirk* occurs when any act of worship is directed to other than Allah. It represents the most obvious form of idolatry, which the prophets were specifically sent by Allah to call the masses of mankind away from. This concept is supported by Allah's statement in the Qur'an:

"Surely we have sent to every nation a messenger saying, worship Allah and avoid Taaghoot (false gods)"⁸³

Taaghoot actually means anything, which is worshipped along with Allah or instead of Allah. For example, love is a form of worship, which, in its perfection, should only be directed to Allah. In Islam, the love of God is expressed by total obedience to Him. It is not the type of love which man naturally feels toward creation; towards parents, children, food, etc. To direct that type of love towards God is to lower Him to the level of His creation which is *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*. Love, which is worship, is the total surrender of one's will to God. Consequently, Allah told the Prophet ﷺ to tell the believers:

***"Say: If you love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you."*⁸⁴**

The Prophet ﷺ also told his companions, *"None of you is a true believer until I become more beloved to him than his child, his father and the whole of mankind"*.⁸⁵ Love of the Prophet ﷺ is not based on his humanity but on the divine origin of his message. Thus, like the love of Allah, it is also expressed by total obedience to his commands.

Allah said in the final revelation:

"Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah,"⁸⁶

And

***"Say: Obey Allah and obey the Prophet..."*⁸⁷**

⁸³ Surah an-Nahl, 16:36.

⁸⁴ Surah Aal' Imraan, 3:31.

⁸⁵ Reported by Anas and collected by al-Bukhari (*Sahih Bukhari* (English- Arabic), vol.1, p.20, no.13) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, p.31, no.71).

⁸⁶ Surah an-Nisaa, 4:80.

⁸⁷ Surah Aal'Imraan, 3:32.

If man allows the love of anything or anyone to come between himself and Allah, then he has worshipped that thing. In this way, money can become one's god or even one's desires could become a god. The Prophet ﷺ said, "*The worshipper of the Dirham will always be miserable*"⁸⁸ and Allah said in the Qur'an

"Have you not seen the one who takes his desires as his god?"⁸⁹

Much emphasis has been placed on the evils of *Shirk* in '*Ebaadah* (worship) because it contradicts the very purpose of creation as expressed in Allah's statement:

"I have not created Jinn or mankind except for my worship."⁹⁰

Major *Shirk* represents the greatest act of rebellion against the Lord of the Universe, and is thus the ultimate sin. It is a sin so great that it virtually cancels out all good a person may do and guarantees its perpetrator eternal damnation in Hell. Consequently, false religion is based primarily on this form of *Shirk*. All man-made systems in one way or another invite their followers to the worship of creation. Christians are called upon to pray to a man, a Prophet of God named Jesus, whom they claim to have been God incarnate. Catholics among Christians pray to Mary as the "mother of God", to the angels like Michael who is honored on May 8 and September 29, Michaelmas Day, as St. Michael,⁹¹ as well as to human saints, whether real or fictitious.

Muslims whose acts of worship fall into this category of *Shirk* are those who pray to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ or to mystics in the *Sufi* hierarchy of saints believing that they can answer their prayers, though Allah has clearly said in the Qur'an:

"Say: Think to yourselves, if Allah's punishment came upon you or the Final Hour, would you then call on other than Allah? (Reply) if you are truthful."⁹²

(B) Ash-Shirk al-Asghar (Minor Shirk):

⁸⁸ Reported by al-Bukhari (*Sahih Bukhari*, (English-Arabic), vol.8, p.296, no.443).

⁸⁹ Surah al-Furqaan, 25:43.

⁹⁰ Surah adh-Dhaariyaat, 51:56.

⁹¹ William Halsey (ed.), *Colliers Encyclopedia*, (U.S.A: Crowell-Collier Educational Foundation; 1970, vol.16, p.110.

⁹² Surah al-An'aam, 6:40.

Mahmood ibn Lubayd reported, "Allah's messenger ﷺ said: *"The thing I fear for you the most is ash-Shirk al-Asghar (minor shirk)." The companions asked "Oh! Messenger of Allah, what is minor Shirk?" He replied "Ar-Riyaa (showing off), for verily Allah will say on the Day of Resurrection when people are receiving their rewards, 'Go to those for whom you were showing off in the material world and see if you can find any reward from them.'"*⁹³

Mahmood ibn Lubayd also said, *"The Prophet ﷺ came out and announced, 'O people, beware of secret Shirk!' The people asked, 'O messenger of Allah, what is secret Shirk?' He replied, 'When a man gets up to pray and strives to beautify his prayer because people are looking at him; that is secret Shirk.'"*⁹⁴

Ar-Riyaa

Riyaa is the practice of performing any of the various forms of worship in order to be seen and praised by people. This sin destroys all the benefits that lie in righteous deeds and brings on the one who commits it a serious punishment. It is particularly dangerous, because it is natural for man to desire and enjoy the praise of his fellow men. Doing religious acts to impress people or in order to be praised by them is, therefore, an evil that deserves man's utmost caution. This danger is really significant to the believers whose goal is to make all of the acts of their lives religious acts dedicated to God. In fact, the likelihood that knowledgeable true believers would commit *ash-Shirk al-Akbar* is small, since its pitfalls are so obvious. But, for the true believer like everyone else, the chance of committing *Riyaa* is great because it is so hidden. It only involves the simple act of changing one's intention. The motivating forces behind it are also very strong, since it comes from man's inner nature. Ibn 'Abbaas alluded to this reality when he said, *"Shirk is more hidden than a black ant creeping on a black stone in the middle of a moonless night."*⁹⁵

Thus, great care has to be taken to ensure that one's intentions begin pure and remain pure whenever righteous deeds are being done. In order to ensure this, the saying of Allah's name is enjoined in Islam before all acts of importance. A series of *Dua's*

⁹³ Reported by Ahmad. at-Tabaraanee and al-Bayhaquee in *az-Zuhd*. See *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, p.118.

⁹⁴ Collected by Ibn Khuzaymah.

⁹⁵ Reported by Ibn Abee Haatim and quoted in *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 587.

(informal prayers) have also been prescribed by the Prophet ﷺ before and after all natural habits like eating, drinking, sleeping, sex, and even going to the toilet, in order to turn these everyday habits into acts of worship and develop in Muslims a keen awareness of Allah. It is this awareness, called *Taqwaa*, which ultimately insures that intentions remain pure.

The Prophet ﷺ also provided protection against the inevitable acts of *Shirk* by teaching certain specific prayers which may be said anytime. Abu Moosaa said, *"One day Allah's messenger delivered a sermon saying 'O people, fear Shirk for it is more hidden than the creeping of an ant.' Those whom Allah wished asked, 'And how do we avoid it when it is more hidden than the creeping of an ant, O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'Say: Allaahumma Innaa na'oodhu bika an nushrika bika shay'an na'lamuh, wa nastaghfiruka limaa laa na'lamuh (O Allah, we seek refuge in you from knowingly committing shirk with you and we ask your forgiveness for what we do not know about)."*⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Collected by Ahmad and at-Tabaraanee.

Ikhlaas

Allah SWT says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَاحِدٌ فَمَن كَانَ
يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ ۚ أَحَدًا



Say (O Muhammad SAW): "I am only a man like you. It has been inspired to me that your *Ilāh* (God) is One *Ilāh* (God i.e. Allah). So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord."

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ حُنَفَاءَ وَيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَيُؤْتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَذَلِكَ دِينُ الْقَيِّمَةِ ۝

And they were commanded not, but that they should worship Allah, and worship none but Him Alone (abstaining from ascribing partners to Him), and perform *As-Salâh* (*Iqâmat-as-Salât*) and give *Zakah*: and that is the right religion.

Ikhlaas means nothing should come between you and Allah SWT in your actions. It is that one's speech/action/emotions are free from all impurities of the soul. Ikhlaas is to battle the whispers of Shaytan when you do a good deed.

Sahl bin Abdullah: There is nothing tougher upon the soul than Ikhlaas. How many times have I tried to extinguish Riyaa from my heart and it is as if it has appeared in a different color.

One of the challenges of doing good deeds is to maintain the pureness of intention for Allah SWT alone throughout that deed:

- ❑ Before the action (Niyyah)
- ❑ During (Ittiba')
- ❑ After the action (Shukr)

Beware of the Ego!

- It is not the action alone that matters although the action should be done according to the statutes and ordinance of The Qur'an and the guidance of Rasoolullah SAS. Rasoolullah SAS sent a man to redo his Salah.
- But more important is the fact that our inner self can help this deed to be accepted or our inner self can destroy not only the action but also destroy the soul and a means of severe punishment on Day of Judgment. This no one can see except Allah SWT. Even ourselves if we are blinded by our Nafs we cannot see the inner self.

We read in Sahih Muslim, At-Tirmidhi, and An-Nasa'i on the authority of Abu Hurairah (RA):

I heard The Prophet of Allah Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him saying:

- The first of people against whom judgment will be pronounced on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who died a martyr. He will be brought and Allah will make known to him His favors and he will recognize them. The Almighty] will say: And what did you do about them? He will say:
I fought for you until I died a martyr. He will say:
You have lied - you did but fight that it might be said [of you]: He is courageous. And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire.
- [Another] will be a man who has studied [religious] knowledge and has taught it and who used to recite the Qur'an. He will be brought and Allah will make known to His

favors and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: And what did you do about them? He will say: I studied [religious] knowledge and I taught it and I recited the Qur'an for Your sake. He will say: You have lied - you did but study [religious] knowledge that it might be said [of you]: He is learned. And you recited the Qur'an that it might be said [of you]: He is a reciter. And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire.

- [Another] will be a man whom Allah had made rich and to whom He had given all kinds of wealth. He will be brought and Allah will make known to His favors and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: And what did you do about them? He will say: I left no path [untrained] in which You like money to be spent without spending in it for Your sake. He will say: You have lied - you did but do so that it might be said [of you]: He is open-handed. And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire.

These three individuals represent:

- One's life - Shaheed
- One's time – Spent to learn
- One's wealth- Spending

Everything else in our lives, fall under these!

وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ
وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

And indeed it has been revealed to you (O Muhammad SAW), as it was to those (Allâh's Messengers) before you: "If you join others in worship with Allah, (then) surely (all) your deeds will be in vain, and you will certainly be among the losers."

But how do we develop Ikhlaas in our deeds?

Ikhlaas cannot coexist in a heart that possess two qualities:



A heart which [embraces] the love of praise and commendation,



A heart that yearns and craves [to obtain] that which is possessed amongst the people.

How to train the soul not to crave for praises:

- Develop firm knowledge and conviction that there is no individual who can [confer] benefit upon or beautify his praise more than Allah SWT. (Mu'iz)
- Nor is there any individual who can inflict damage upon or disgrace him save Allah alone. (Mu'zhil)

- *In the Dua'a of Rasoolullah SAS when he was in Taif:*
- *If all of mankind were to gather to benefit you...*
- *So it is important to be more concerned with the praises of Allah SWT and be more concerned with His defamation.*
- *We have to stop making people the goal of achieving praises or being defamed by people.*

How to train the soul not to crave for what people possesses:

- Firm knowledge that Allah SWT alone possesses The Treasures. What we see in people's hand is only very temporary.
- Firm knowledge that no individual can furnish the slave with [those Treasures] save Allah SWT.
- A servant can achieve this Treasure through Ibadaat

This calls for patience with Allah SWT.

Yacub Al-Makfoof:

A sincere person is the one who hides his good deeds just like he hides his evil deeds.

How to confront our Ikhlaas?

For example, whenever we come to this Masjid or do a good deed we need to ask ourselves:

- ❖ Why are we doing this action?

- ❖ Is it done to please Allah SWT alone?
- ❖ What do I hope to achieve from this action?
- ❖ Do I do it to be seen by others?

We read from Sahih Al- Bukhari from Umar (RA) who said: I heard Allah's Apostle saying:

"The reward of deeds depends upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended. So whoever emigrated for worldly benefits or for a woman to marry, his emigration was for what he emigrated for."

Rasoolullah (asws) advised Abu Dharr:

- ❖ *Make sturdy and strong your ship, for the sea is deep.*
- ❖ *Increase in your provisions for the journey is long.*
- ❖ *Relief your back of its load for the journey is wearisome and tiring.*
- ❖ *And be sincere in your actions for the one who will pay you is All Seeing.*

RIYA

A person can receive great rewards from Allah on account of his good intentions alone, even if he is prevented from carrying out the intended deed. On the other hand, the deeds that he performs can become bereft of blessings if they are not accompanied by a good intention. Such deeds can actually be sinful.

There are many Ahadīth that warn us against destroying our good deeds. One of the most serious causes of our deeds going to waste is that of showing off.

The Prophet (peace be upon him) relates to us that Allah will say: *“Go to those who used to show off in the world and see if they found their reward.”*⁹⁷

He also relates that Allah says: *“I am in no need of partners. Whoever does a deed for the sake of others as well as me, I leave his deed for those others.”*⁹⁸

The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *“A man will be brought forward on the Day of Resurrection and thrown into the Fire. His entrails will come forth from his throat and he will hang from them going around like a donkey goes around a mill. The inhabitants of the Fire will gather around him and ask: ‘What is with you? Didn’t you used to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong?’ He will reply: ‘Yes, I used to enjoin what is right but not do those things myself, and I used to forbid what is wrong but not refrain from them myself.’”*⁹⁹

Some people might get the idea that this man was punished because he enjoined what is right and forbade what is wrong while he was had many shortcomings in his own deeds. This is a big mistake, because the task of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is worthy of reward in and of itself as long as the person engaged in it is sincere and has the right intention. This man was being punished because he did the very evil deeds he forbade others from doing and he abandoned the very duties he called others towards. He was merely beautifying his outward conduct while his inner being remained

⁹⁷ Musnad Ahmad (23119, 27442).

⁹⁸ Sahih Muslim (2985).

⁹⁹ Sahih Muslim (2989).

corrupt. His punishment was for his sins, not because he enjoined what is right and forbade what is wrong.

As for the verse:

“Do you enjoin right conduct on others and forget to practice it yourselves and yet you recite the Scripture? Do you not have any sense?” [Sûrah al- Baqarah: 44]

It means that Allah rebukes them and punishes them because they turn away from the truth though they know it full well. This makes them different from those who are ignorant of the truth, who if they come to know it would most likely follow it. Therefore, we should know that enjoining what is right is something we owe to the people, even if we fail to do what is right ourselves. The same goes for forbidding what is wrong. A poet once said:

If no sinner exhorts others to righteousness, Then who will exhort the sinners after Muhammad?

No one after Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) is divinely protected from committing sins. It is, however, the duty upon every person to do the following four things:

1. Do what is right.
2. Enjoin others to what is right.
3. Abstain from what is wrong.
4. Forbid what is wrong.

Failure to perform one of these four duties does give us the right to neglect any of the others. Therefore, someone who commits a sin still has the duty to call others to avoid it. Showing off in words and deeds is a sickness that can get a person thrown into the Hellfire. That person on the outside appears to be righteous. His concern for what others think of him earns him the reward of their high esteem but not the pleasure of Allah. The praise of the people is sufficient for him.

This is the type of hypocrisy that the earliest Muslims were afraid of falling into. Al-Hasan al-Basrî said, speaking about the tendency to show off: *“I swear by Him in whose hand is my soul. No one feels safe from it except for a hypocrite and no one fears it except for a believer.”* They were afraid that it would creep unnoticed into their deeds as Allah says:

“...Lest your deeds become vain and you perceive it not.” [Sûrah al-Hujrât: 2]¹⁰⁰

Al-Bukhârî placed in his Sahîh a chapter entitled: *“A person being afraid that his deeds will become vain while not perceiving it”*. In this chapter, he mentions a Hadîth related by Anas b. Mâlik that Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) inquired of the whereabouts of Thâbit b. Qays. A man said he would go and find out about him. The man found Thâbit sitting in his house with his head hanging down.

The man asked: *“What is the matter with you?”*

Thâbit replied: *“It is very bad. A person used to raise his voice above the voice of the Prophet (peace be upon him) so his deeds have become vain and he is now one of the people of the Fire.”*

The man returned to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and informed him of what Thâbit had said. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said to the man: ***“Go back to him and say to him: ‘You are not from the people of the Fire but from the People of Paradise’.”***¹⁰¹

Since the tendency to show off is so dangerous, we must be very wary of it and know its causes and the ways that it can come about. With this in mind, we will discuss twenty different ways that this tendency to show off can manifest itself.

- 1- Publicizing one’s good deeds: Some people go around intentionally taking about the things they have done, boasting about their virtues. They cannot sit with others without saying: *“I did this and I did that... I spent so much in charity.”* The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *“O people! Pray in your homes, for truly the best prayers are those that a person prays are at home, with the exception of the prescribed prayers.”*¹⁰² It is, therefore, preferable for voluntary prayers to be made in the privacy of one’s own home. The same goes for charity. Allah says: *“If you make public your charity, it is well, but if you conceal it and give it to the poor, then it is better for you.”* [Sûrah al-Baqarah: 271]. Some people do charitable works publicly to get their names printed in the papers or to receive official recognition for

¹⁰⁰ The entire verse reads: **“O you who believe, raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet nor speak aloud to him in talk as you may speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become vain and you perceive it not.”**

¹⁰¹ Sahîh al-Bukhârî (3613). Sahîh Muslim (119).

¹⁰² Sahîh al-Bukhârî (731).

their works. If the intention of such individuals is to garner more public support for the charitable efforts in question, then it is good. Otherwise, it is merely showing off. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *“Actions are but by intentions, and every person will only get what he intended.”*¹⁰³ Allah says: “Whether you hide your words or make them known, He certainly has full knowledge of what is in the hearts. Should He who created not know, and He is the Subtle, the Aware?” [Sûrah al-Mulk: 13-14].

- 2- Making false claims: There is a type of person who likes to boast about things he never did. He may claim that he struggled for Islam with patience and forbearance. He may even claim to have suffered persecution and hardships in the path of Allah. If he meets someone who does not know about his past, he goes on to tell him: *“I used to do this and I used to say that...”* speaking about a past more embroidered than true. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *“A person who claims to be given things he has never been given is a double liar.”*¹⁰⁴
- 3- Becoming a show off after having been sincere: A person begins doing something for the sake of Allah alone, like offering prayer, spending in charity, or glorifying Allah in an audible voice. Then he realizes that people can see him. This makes him do even more. He prays a little longer, spends a little more, or glorifies Allah with even greater eloquence. When a person finds himself in this situation, he should fight against the urge to show off. He should say what the Prophet (peace be upon him) taught Abû Bakr to say to ward it off: *“O Allah! I seek refuge with you from associating partners with you knowingly and I seek your forgiveness for what I do unknowingly.”*¹⁰⁵
- 4- Abandoning deeds because of the people: Al-Fudayl b. `Iyâd had harsh words for those who abandoned performing good works because of the people. He said: *“Abandoning deeds because of the people is showing off. Performing deed for their sake is polytheism. Sincerity is where Allah protects you from both.”* Abandoning one's good deeds is a grave error. What the worshipper must do is cease to worry about created beings altogether, neither performing anything for their sake nor abstaining from anything for their sake.
- 5- Making worship noticeable in a subtle way: A person might conceal his worship, or at least seem to be doing so, while making sure people know about it in a

¹⁰³ Sahîh al-Bukhârî (1).

¹⁰⁴ Sahîh al-Bukhârî (5219). Sahîh Muslim (2130).

¹⁰⁵ Al-Bukhârî, Adab al-Mufrid (716). Al-Hakîm al-Tirmidhî, Nawâdir al-`Usûl (4/142).

roundabout way. For example, a man might be busy with praising Allah or seeking his forgiveness. He keeps his remembrances quiet, but he moves his lips in a conspicuous manner so that anyone who sees him will know that he is engaged in the remembrance of his Lord. He might even raise his voice once in a while ever so slightly to bring attention to himself. What he desires is for people to praise him for what he is doing.

- 6- Conspicuous humility: A person might make a show of deprecating himself, stating all the time how deficient he is. He says how he does no good works and how his deeds are not enough. All he means by all this is to make a display of his humility. Whether or not he actually believes himself deficient, he goes on in this way until Satan makes him believe that he is free from showing off, when actually Satan has been accompanying him in his absurd display all along. What is needed for a person to be balanced, neither deprecating himself for public viewing, nor praising himself.
- 7- Bringing attention to the faults of others: Satan can approach a person by way of the faults of others. By criticizing someone else's mistake, a person implies that he is free from the same. A man might say: *"You know – God forbid! – So-and-so never gets up at night to offer prayers!"* Translation: *"I pray at night."* *"I never saw such-and-such fast a day in his life."* Translation: *"I fast a lot."* *"What's-his-name never gives in charity, though he has much more money than I have."* Translation: *"I am not like him. I give in charity."* If this person had any sense, he would say as a poet once said: *Because of myself I weep, not because of others, For myself, from myself. Bother the people!* Or maybe he should say as al-Shâfi`î said: *Let not your tongue mention the shame of another, For you yourself are covered in shame and all men have tongues. If your eye falls upon the sins of your brother, Shield them and say: O my eye! All men have eyes!"* Those who busy themselves with the shame of others have many specialized ways of backbiting at their disposal to help elevate them above those they criticize. Ibn Taymiyah, in his *Fatâwâ*¹⁰⁶, mentions a number of these: One strategy is to frame one's slander in the form of concern for the religion and for reform. Statements of the following sort ensue: *"Now, it is not my general practice to say anything but good about other people. I hate backbiting and lying. I only wish to inform you about this person."* *"I swear by Allah, he is a good man, but he does such-and-such."* *"We must pray for him. O*

¹⁰⁶ These strategies employed by people for backbiting others can be found in Majmû` al-Fatâwâ (28/237).

Allah! Forgive us and forgive him.” With these statements, a person can ridicule another while at the same time seeking to deceive Allah about what he is doing, as if that was possible. Then there are those who belittle others just to make themselves look good. A person like this might say: *“If only I prayed for him yesterday, I would not have heard this horrible thing about him today.”* To make himself appear clever, someone might say: *“So-and-so, you must understand, has a weak intellect.”* Another person makes his slander of others appear in the form of jest, as if his only intention is to make others laugh. However, what he does to make his companions laugh is ridicule another person, belittle him, and mock him. Another uses amazement and astonishment an excuse to say something bad about someone else. He might say: *“I am startled that so-and –so does not do that!”* or: *“How it is that he can do such a thing!”* In this way, the slanderer maligns the name of another with the excuse that he was overcome with amazement. Someone else feigns concern or pity in order to get in his nasty remarks. He might say: *“Poor so-and-so, I am so sorry about what happened to him. It is a pity what he got himself involved with.”* Someone who hears this might think the speaker is genuinely distraught about what happened to that person. In reality, though, he would probably increase that person’s miseries if he was able to do so. He might even say these words in front of that person’s enemies in order to give them the chance to take their revenge on him. This is a very serious sickness of the heart and a horrible form of deception. Then there is the person who makes a show of anger and righteous indignation in order to backbite another. He may use the most eloquent words possible with the seeming intent of condemning an act of wrongdoing, but his true intentions are vile indeed.

- 8- Safeguarding one’s status and reputation: When a person becomes known for righteousness and piety, he tends to love building his reputation further in the same manner. He begins to fear losing the esteem of others that he presently enjoys. He guards himself from any apparent laxity in his conduct. He makes sure to keep pace with others or to outdo them in the good works that he performs, or at least in what he shows to them. He does not do this out of any religious devotion, but merely in order to maintain their respect. He may speak to them, preach to them, and exhort them to do what is right, not because he feels that they need it but because he feels that they expect it from him. The meaning of what he says is not his concern. It is only his reputation and status that matter.

- 9- Speaking about matters in a way that alludes to the idea that one is engaged in them: A person might say the following: *"If a worshipper recites the Qur'an a lot, it becomes easy on his tongue, and he reads with more fluidity, especially when he prays late at night."* Translation: *"I did this act and had this experience."* Likewise, a person might say: *"Some people think fasting is tiring and difficult."* Translation: *"I am in the habit of fasting."* A person's secret devotions can become public in this manner. A man says: *"You know, so-and-so made the call for the Morning Prayer a half hour before its time."* In this way, he reveals to everyone that he is in the habit of getting up before this time. Let us look at how the scholars of old handled a similar situation. Sa'îd b. Jubayr asked his fellows: *"Which of you saw the shooting star that went across the sky last night?"* Husayn b. `Abd al-Rahmân added: *"I did."* Then he quickly added: *"I had not been praying; I had been stung by a scorpion."* The reason he mentioned that a scorpion had stung him was to dispel the obvious conclusion that his companions would come to: that he had been praying throughout the night. The early Muslims were very careful to avoid praising themselves and did not like mentioning their own virtues. Those who mention such things in order to show off may earn the people's praise, but their deeds lose all blessings. If, however, somebody makes such statements without the intention of showing off, then their secret devotions still become public. He will be rewarded for them, but the blessings of those devotions will be less.
- 10- Putting oneself on a pedestal: A person embarks upon learning about a certain religious topic. He delves into it deeply, investigating every minor issue and every subtle detail. He commits whole texts to memory and learns the opinions of many authorities. Then, when he sits among a large number of people, he begins to speak. Of course, he speaks on that very topic that he investigated so thoroughly, rattling off the names of different scholars and what they had to say, giving every citation from memory, down to the page number. He pours out to them everything he has memorized. What is the reason for all of this? It is so people will point to him and call him a scholar. He may have the pretension to use turns of phrase reserved for true people of knowledge. He might say things like: *"I see the matter to be such-and such..."* *"What is quite evident to me is that it is..."* *"The stance that we take on this issue is..."* He has the audacity to speak in the manner of an authority in the field, while he is a mere beginner. A poet writes: *They say: "This is, in our opinion, impermissible". Who are you, though, to have an opinion?*

- 11-** Refuting the people of knowledge: A person may be incited by Satan to speak badly about the people of knowledge or to try to refute and contradict them. His purpose in doing so is to make himself visible by standing upon their shoulders. He wants people to say that he refuted or dumbfounded a certain scholar. He wants news to spread that he got into a debate with a certain prominent sheikh and overwhelmed him with his arguments.
- 12-** Seeking knowledge to acquire fame: A person may be incited by Satan to seek religious knowledge and to study it extensively with the sole purpose of becoming a mufti who people will come to with their questions, or a scholar whose name will go down in history, or maybe an Islamic activist who people will rally around. The Prophet (peace be upon him) mentioned that three people would be the first on the Day of Resurrection to be scorched by the Hellfire. One of these three was: *“...a man who acquired knowledge and taught it to others, who recited the Qur’an. He will be summoned and asked what he did during his lifetime. He will say: ‘I acquired knowledge and taught it to others and I recited the Qur’an for your sake. Allah will tell him: ‘You lie! You only acquired knowledge so people would call you a scholar and read the Qur’an so you would be acclaimed as a Qur’an reciter. These things were indeed said about you.’ At this point an order will be given and this man will be dragged on his face and cast into Hell.”* The others mentioned in this Hadith were a man who fought in Allah’s cause and a man who gave in charity, both with the intention of showing off.¹⁰⁷
- 13-** Feigning humility: Satan may incite a person to make a pretentious show of modesty and humbleness. He will clasp his hands together, raise his shoulders, and lower his head in an insincere and inordinate display of submissiveness. Often the behaviors exhibited in these displays go against the Sunnah of Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him). `Abd Allah al-Qurashî relates that `Umar b. al-Khattâb once saw a young man lowering his head in prayer. `Umar said to him: *“Raise your head. Humbleness does not increase on what is actually in the heart. Whenever people make their humbleness visible, they are just making a visible display of hypocrisy.”*¹⁰⁸ The Sunnah of how the worshipper should carry himself in prayer is well known. The correct thing for the worshipper to do is to focus.

¹⁰⁷ Sahîh Muslim (1905).

¹⁰⁸ Al-Daynûrî, al-Majâlisah (1692, 3434).

- Ibn Jawzî devotes a chapter to this type of showing off in his superb book entitled *Talbîs Iblîs* (The Devil's Deception). He writes:

Chapter: The Devil's deception through false humility, lowering of the head, and establishing law

If fear embeds itself in the heart, the body will show it. Such a person will not even be able to conceal his feelings. What is reprehensible is for a person to make an effort to show humility, induce crying, and visibly hang his head in order to appear like an ascetic and have people come up to him to take his hand or kiss it or beseech him to pray for them. He prepares himself for supplication as if he can bring down an answer from heaven.

We have mentioned how Ibrâhîm al-Nakha'î, the prominent student of the Companions, used to detest it when people asked him to make a prayer for them. Some people display so much fear that it makes them very shy and submissive, unable to raise their faces to the sky. This is not a virtue, because there is no humility greater than that shown by Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him). In *Sahîh Muslim*, there is the Hadîth of Abû Mûsâ al-Ash`arî where he says that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) used to often raise his head to the sky.¹⁰⁹ This Hadîth shows that turning one's face to the sky is a recommended practice for the sake of drawing lessons from the signs in its creation. Allah says: **"Do they not look at the sky above them, how We made it and adorned it and there are no flaws in it?"** [Sûrah Qâf: 6] He also says: **"Say: Look at what is in the heavens and on Earth. "** [Sûrah Yûnus: 10 101]. This shows the falsehood of those Sufis who go years without ever looking at the sky out of what they claim to be a show of humility.

- Abû Salamah b. `Abd al-Rahmân said: *"The Companions of Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) were neither deviant nor were they like dead people. They used to recite poetry in their gatherings and talk about the times of ignorance. However, if you were to attack any one of them in matters of religion, his eyes would become like those of a madman."*
- Kahmas b. al-Husayn relates that a man in the company of `Umar breathed sighing breaths as if he was trying to show grief, so `Umar struck him. `Âsim b. Kulayb al-Jarmî relates: *"My father met with `Abd al-Rahmân b. al-Aswad who had a habit of walking along the side of the wall out of false humility. My father said to him: 'What is it*

¹⁰⁹ *Sahîh Muslim* (2531).

with you that you walk against the wall like that? I swear by Allah, when `Umar walked, he planted his feet firmly on the ground. He made his voice heard when he spoke.”

- Abû Khaythamah relates that al-Shifâ bint `Abd Allah saw some young people walking meekly and speaking slowly. She asked them: *“What is this?”* They replied: *“We are ascetics.”* To this she said: *“I swear by Allah, when `Umar spoke he made himself heard, and when he walked he walked briskly, and when he hit someone, he inflicted pain. And he was an ascetic for real.”*¹¹⁰

14- Overemphasizing certain conspicuous works, even to the point of going against the Sunnah: Some people become fixated on a certain type of work to the point where Satan can incite them on account of it to go against the Sunnah or to violate Islamic law. Take jihad for instance, since some of our young people today have become very interested in it. No doubt it is a great act of devotion. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: *“There are one hundred levels in Paradise that Allah has prepared for those who engage in jihad for the cause of Allah. The distance between any two levels is like the distance between the sky and the Earth.”*¹¹¹ He also said that the pinnacle of Islam is jihad in the way of Allah.¹¹² Allah makes jihad the greatest of works when he says: **“Do you consider the giving of drink to the pilgrims or the maintenance of the Sacred Mosque equal to the service of those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and strive¹¹³ with might and main in the cause of Allah? They are not equal in the sight of Allah; and Allah guides not those who do wrong. Those who believe and emigrate and strive with might and main in Allah’s cause with their wealth and their lives have the highest rank in the sight of Allah. They are the people who shall achieve success. Their Lord gives them glad tidings of mercy from Himself, of His good pleasure, and of Gardens for them wherein are delights that endure. They will dwell therein forever. Verily with Allah is a great reward.”** [Sûrah al-Tawbah: 19-22].

15- Making a show of religious zeal: A pious person begins to talk about sinners. He speaks at length, describing, nit picking, and bewailing. He might even go so far as to curse people and threaten them. He exaggerates matters to the extreme as if he

¹¹⁰ Ibn al-Jawzî, *Talbîs Iblîs* (280-283). Al-Minbariyyah Publishers.

¹¹¹ *Sahîh al-Bukhârî* (2790).

¹¹² *Musnad Ahmad* (21542). *Sunan al-Tirmidhî* (2616). *Sunan Ibn Mâjah* (3973).

¹¹³ The word Allah used in Arabic is: *wa Jaahada Fee Sabeelillah* - meaning: made Jihad in the path of Allah. It is incorrect to translate the word Jihad to mean strive/striving because Jihad is a legal terminology with a specific meaning, and that is, fighting in the path of Allah and the struggle therein. Translating the word Jihad to mean 'Striving' is misleading as it gives a meaning different to the intending meaning in the verse. Unfortunately, this error has become a common practice amongst the translators, so let them be careful from falling into such errors.

is trying to say: *“I am very zealous about the sanctity of the religion, righteously indignant when it comes to my Lord, the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the believers”* What he does not realize is that the way he is showing off is a far graver sin than many of those that he is discussing and condemning so viciously.

- 16-** Conspicuously neglecting one’s outward appearance: This is one of the subtlest ways of falling into the sin of showing off. Satan might inspire an individual to go about with disheveled hair and humble attire and make an ostentatious display of asceticism and humility. The Sunnah, on the other hand, encourages a person to care about his appearance. The Prophet (peace be upon him) used to take good care of his hair. He would comb it and apply scent to it. It is related that the Prophet (peace be upon him), however, used to forbid people from oiling their hair excessively.¹¹⁴ It is also related that he said: *“Whoever has hair should honor it.”*¹¹⁵ It is befitting for an Islamic worker to dress nicely, be tidy, take care of his hair, stay presentable, and smell nice. He should keep his hair combed and nicely arranged. He should take care of his appearance without going overboard and wasting his time on it.
- 17-** Making a display of lowering one’s gaze: A person can make turning away from something into a conspicuous act. When a man sees a pretty woman or something else a Muslim should divert his eyes from, he not only diverts his eyes but also lowers his head or turns it away. Now, this is not necessary. All that is required from him is to divert his gaze. He does not have to make a big show of it. Such behavior is pretentious. It may be that Satan causes this same individual to continue to sneak discreet glances. Allah says: “Allah knows the treachery of the eyes and all that the hearts conceal.” [Sûrah Ghâfir: 19].
- 18-** Abandoning one’s worship from fear of falling into hypocrisy: Among the most serious of problems is when Satan fools somebody into abandoning his worship of Allah to avoid being a hypocrite or being called one. Take, for example, a reciter of the Qur’an, a teacher, or an Islamic worker who falls into some unseen sinful acts on some occasions, like looking at someone unlawfully. Such a person should repent to Allah and try to avoid falling into the sin again. Satan, though, does not give up that easy. He suggests to that person that he is a hypocrite, since he

¹¹⁴ Musnad Ahmad (16793). Sunan al-Tirmidhî (1756). Sunan Abî Dâwûd (4159). Sunan al-Nasâ’î (5055). Al-Tirmidhî declared it a good and authentic Hadith. (hasan sahih)

¹¹⁵ Sunan Abî Dâwûd (4163). Mustadrak al-Hâkim (8485). Al-Manâwî discusses this Hadith in Fayd al-Qadîr (11439), saying: “(Al-Suyuti) indicates that it is a good Hadith. This comes originally from Ibn Hajar who writes in Fath al-Bârî that it’s chain of transmission is good. The Hadith is also supported by a Hadith of `Â’ishah found in al-Ghaylânîyât, which also has a good chain of transmission.

presents an image of piety to the people but commits sins in secret. Now, Satan is not going to suggest as a solution that the person should strive to overcome his sins and rectify himself. Instead, Satan encourages him to give up the good works that he is doing and to forsake the company of righteous people. He encourages him to give up teaching others and leading prayers. His argument is that it is not fitting for that individual to do such outwardly good deeds while sinning inwardly. Satan may say to him something like: *“If the people know what you do when you are alone, they would spit in your face and avoid you like the plague.”* Satan keeps at him like this until he gives up doing any good deeds. Allah says: “And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night. Indeed, good works remove evil deeds. This is a reminder for those who are mindful.” [Sûrah Hûd: 114].

- 19-** Withdrawing from the company of others and going into seclusion: A person may turn away from the company of his fellow men and eschew their company because he thinks he is better than they are. If he had, on the other hand, decided to avoid others so they could be safe from his harm and abuse, he may have had a point. This is what Imam Ahmad did when he limited his interactions with others at the end of his life. People said to him: *“O Imam! It is being said that you are renouncing the company of others.”* Imam Ahmad replied: *“Who am I to renounce other people? Quite the contrary, it is the people who are renouncing my company.”* It is wrong to renounce the company of people out of a sense of superiority to them. This is nothing but pride and arrogance. It is a way of praising oneself. In a Hadîth it is related: *“Whoever says: ‘The people are in ruination!’ is the most ruined of the lot.”*¹¹⁶
- 20-** Being deceived by some fleeting act of devotion: Satan can trick a person into thinking that some singular act of devotion, like shedding pious tears, is good enough to suffice him. Some people bring themselves to weep during prayer at nights in the month Ramadân – and maybe only one night out of the year – or maybe they will attend the Tarâwîh prayer, then Satan convinces them this made up for everything wrong that they have so far committed. In this way, he encourages them to keep up their sinful ways.

¹¹⁶ Sahîh Muslim (2623).

We ask Allah to protect us all from the wiles of Satan and from this special type of polytheism that he likes to cultivate in our hearts. We seek refuge with Allah from the evils of our deeds and ourselves.

Ahadith Regarding Ikhlāas
and Cautioning from Riyāa'
al-Haafidh al-Mundhiri's "at-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb"

1. Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri (RA) reported that the Prophet (saw) said in the Farewell Pilgrimage: ***"May Allah make bright and verdant a man who heard my words and memorized them. As perhaps a carrier of knowledge is not one who understands. There are three things which, if present in the heart of a believer, no jealousy or rancor will enter into it: sincere action for the sake of Allah, giving advice to the leaders of the Muslims and staying amongst their ranks, since their supplication encompasses those who are behind them (under their authority)".***
2. Mis'ab bin Sa'd reports about his father that he thought he had superiority over the other companions of the Messenger of Allah (saw). So the Prophet (saw) said, ***"Indeed Allah helps this Ummah with its weak ones, due to their supplications, their prayers and their sincerity."***
3. Abu Dardaa' (RA) reports that Allah's Messenger (saw) said: ***"The world is cursed (and) whatever is in it is cursed except that by which Allah's Face is sought".***
4. Ubayy bin K'ab (RA) said: "Allah's Messenger (saw) said: ***"Give good tidings to this Ummah of honor, Deen and elevation and establishment in the earth. Whoever did an action of the Hereafter for the world will have no portion in the Hereafter".***
5. 'Abdullah bin 'Umar (RA) said, "I heard Allah's Messenger (saw) say, ***"Whoever made the people hear about his actions. Allah will make all His creation hear about him, will belittle him and hold him in contempt."***
6. Allah's Messenger (saw) said: ***"There is no servant who sets out seeking to be heard of or showing off except that Allah will make him heard of in front of all the creation on the Day of Judgment".***

7. Rabeeh bin 'Abdur-Rahman reports from his grandfather, Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri that he said: 'We went out with Allah's Messenger (saw) and we were talking about Maseeh ad-Dajjaal. Allah's Messenger (saw) said, "Shall I not inform you about something which I fear more for you than Maseeh ad-Dajjaal?" We said, "Of course, O Messenger of Allah". He said, ***"The hidden shirk! A man stands for prayer and beautifies his prayer to those who are watching him."***

8. Mahmood bin Lubayd (RA) said: "Allah's Messenger (saw) came out with us and said: ***"O people! Beware of the shirk of the innermost feelings and secrets."*** They said, "O Messenger of Allah! What is the shirk of the innermost feelings and secrets?" He (saw) said, ***"A man stands for prayer and strives to beautify his prayer due to the people looking at him - that is the shirk of the innermost feelings and secrets."***

9. Mahmood bin Lubayd also reports that Allah's Messenger (saw) said, "The thing which I fear for you most is minor shirk." They (the people) said: "And what is minor shirk, O Messenger of Allah?" He said: ***"Riyaa! Allah the Mighty and Majestic will say, when He rewards people for their actions: "Go to those to whom you used to show off in the world and see if you can find any reward from them"."***

10. He (saw) also said, ***"When Allah gathers together the first and the last for the Day of Judgment, the day about which there is no doubt, a caller will call: "Whoever used to associate anyone with Allah in his action, let him request his reward from him. Indeed, Allah is so Self-Sufficient that He has no need of any partners.""***

11. Abu 'Ali, a man from Banu Kaalil, said, "Abu Moosa al-Ash'ari addressed us and said, ***"O people! Fear this shirk as it is more hidden than a crawling ant."*** 'Abdullah ibn Hazm and Qays bin al-Madaarib both stood and said, "By Allah! You should clarify what you have said, otherwise we shall bring 'Umar with authority on our behalf or without it". He then said, "Rather I will explain to you what I said. Allah's Messenger (saw) addressed us one day and said, ***"O People! Fear this shirk as it is more hidden than a crawling ant."*** Then someone whom Allah had willed to speak said: "And how shall we save ourselves from it when it is more hidden than a crawling ant, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, ***"Say "Allahumma inna na'oodhu bika min an nushrika bika shay'an na'alamuhu wa nastaghfiruka limaa laa na'alamuh [O Allah! We seek refuge in You***

from associating partners with you while we are aware of it and we seek forgiveness from You for that which we are unaware of]".

What is a witness and Duty of being a witness?

The Purpose and Duty of the Muslim Ummah

Responsibilities and Duties

To the Muslims we have only one very simple thing to say: Understand and fulfill the responsibilities and duties that fall upon you by virtue of your being Muslims. You cannot get away with merely affirming that you are Muslims and that you have accepted God as your only God and Islam as your religion. Rather, as soon as you acknowledge Allah as your only Lord and His guidance as your way of life, you take upon yourselves certain obligations and duties. These obligations you must always remain conscious of, these duties you must always endeavor to discharge. If you evade them, you shall not escape the evil consequences of your conduct in this world or in the Hereafter.

What are these duties? They are not merely confined to the affirmation of faith in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, and the Day of Judgment. Nor are they confined to performing the Prayers, observing the Fasts, going on the Pilgrimage, and paying the Alms. Nor are these duties exhausted by observing the injunctions of Islam relating to marriage, divorce and inheritance. Over and above all these duties, there is one which is the most important: that your lives bear witness to the Truth that you have been given by God before all mankind, the Truth which you believe to be true.

The Only Purpose of Existence

The Qur'an clearly states that witnessing to the Truth in a manner that would leave mankind with no justifiable ground to deny it is the only purpose behind constituting you as a distinct Ummah (community), named Muslims.

And thus We have made you a community of the middle way, so that you may be witnesses [to the Truth] before all mankind, and the Messenger may be witness [to it] before you (al-Baqarah 2: 143).

This mission is the sole objective for which your Ummah has been brought into being; it is the *raison d'être* of its existence as a society of human beings. Unless you fulfill it you are squandering your life. For this is no ordinary duty; it is a duty enjoined on you by God. It is a Divine command and a Divine call:

O believers, be ever steadfast in standing up, for the sake of God, bearing witness to justice (al-Ma'idah 5: 8).

It is not a mere trifle but an emphatic and grave mandate, for Allah also says:

And who is a greater wrongdoer than he who suppresses a witness entrusted to him by God (al-Baqarah 2: 140).

You have been warned of the consequences of evading this duty. Look at the history of the people of Israel. They too were appointed to stand in the witness box; but sometimes they suppressed the Truth, and sometimes they witnessed against it. By their conduct, they, in fact, became witnesses to falsehood rather than witnesses to the Truth. The consequence was that God forsook them and a curse fell upon them.

And so, humiliation and powerlessness afflicted them, and they earned God's anger
(al-Baqarah 2: 61).

Witness to the Truth

What does this duty of witness imply? Consider it carefully: You have been given Divine guidance; you have been shown the Truth. You must, therefore, establish by your testimony and witness its authenticity and truthfulness before all mankind. This is a testimony that will make the authenticity and truthfulness of Divine guidance self-evident, for all to see, and a witness that will make it clear and indisputable for all people.

For this very purpose all the Messengers were sent to the world; this was their primary duty. After them, their followers were entrusted with the same duty. And now the Muslim Ummah, as the successor to the Last Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, is charged with this very mission, just as he was charged with it during his lifetime.

Nature and Importance

What is the importance of this witness? You will know its importance only when you understand that man has been made accountable for his conduct and will be rewarded and punished in the Hereafter under the Divine Law which rests entirely on this witness.

God is All Wise, All Merciful, and All Just. His mercy, justice and wisdom are not such that He should punish people for living against His will while they had no knowledge of it, that He should take people to task for deviating from the right path of which they were ignorant, that He should hold people accountable for things of which they were unaware. It was as a provision against this that the first man He created was a Messenger, and that after him many more were sent from time to time. They were all to be witnesses to mankind, to make it understand and remember the will of God. They were all to teach human beings the proper way of conducting their lives, the code of behavior that they should adopt to win God's favor, the acts that they should perform, the acts that they should avoid, and the things for which they will be brought to account.

This witness was given by Allah's Messengers so that the people may not be in a position to say to God: How can we be punished for things of which we were not warned? The Qur'an says:

[We sent] all Messengers as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, so that men may not have any argument against God, after [the coming of] these Messengers; God is indeed All-mighty, All-wise (al-Nisa' 4: 165).

In this manner God made His Messengers bear the crucial responsibility for guiding man on His behalf. They were thus charged with a very delicate and grave responsibility: if they bore witness to the Truth properly, the people would be accountable for their own actions, but if they failed in their duty, they themselves would be called to account for their people going astray. In other words, unless the Messengers made people responsible for their conduct by giving them conclusive and indisputable testimony to the Truth, the people would hold the Messengers responsible for their own misdeeds, saying: 'The knowledge that God gave you, that you did not communicate to us; the way of life that He showed you, that you did not show US.' That is why all the Messengers always remained acutely conscious of the burden of this responsibility, and that is why they endeavored so hard to bear witness before the people to the Truth entrusted to them.

Responsibility of the Ummah

All those who were led by the Messengers to the knowledge of the Truth and Divine guidance were formed into a community, an Ummah. Every Ummah was charged with the

same mission as the Messengers of witnessing to the Truth. As successors to the Messengers, every Ummah has the same crucial role and responsibility as they had. Thus, if an Ummah properly fulfils its duty of witnessing to the Truth and yet the people do not pay heed, it will be rewarded and the people will be brought to account. However, if the Ummah neglects its duty, or if it gives false witness, it will deserve to be punished more severely than the people. The Ummah shall be accountable not only for its own misdeeds, but also for the misdeeds of those who went astray or turned to error and wickedness because the testimony given to them by the Ummah was misleading or false.

This, brothers, is the nature and logic of that grave and crucial duty which lies upon me, you and all those who consider themselves part of the Muslim Ummah, or those who have become sufficiently aware of God's Book and the guidance brought by His Messengers.

How Should We Witness to the Truth?

Let us now see in what manner we should discharge our duty of witnessing to the Truth. Witnessing is of two types: one, witness by words, or the word-witness; the other, witness by acts and deeds, or the act-witness.

Word-witness

In what way should our words witness to the Truth? Through our speech and writing, we should proclaim and explain to the world the guidance that has come to us through God's Messengers. This, in sum, is the word-witness. Employing all possible methods of education, using all possible means of communication and propagation, mastering all knowledge provided by the contemporary arts and sciences, we should inform mankind of the way of life that God has laid down for man. The guidance that Islam gives to humanity in thought and belief, in morality and behavior, in culture and civilization, in economics and business, in jurisprudence and judiciary, in politics and civil administration that is, in all aspects of inter-human relations we should clearly and fully expound before mankind. By rational discourse and convincing evidence, we should establish its truth and soundness. By soundly reasoned critique, we should rebut all that is contrary to the guidance given by God.

The task is enormous. Full justice cannot be done to it unless the thought of guiding man to the right path seizes the whole Ummah as completely as it did each Messenger

personally. It is essential, too, that this task should become the central objective of all our collective endeavors, that we should commit all our hearts and minds, all of our resources, to this cause. Uppermost in all our actions should be this objective. Under no circumstances should we allow any voice within ourselves to bear witness against the Truth and Divine guidance that we have.

Act-witness

In what way should our acts and deeds witness to the Truth? For this purpose, the guidance that we hold to be true we must put into practice. Our actions should demonstrate the principles we profess to believe in.

Put simply: let our lives speak the truth, and let the world hear it not merely from our lips but also from our deeds; let mankind witness all the blessings that the Divine guidance brings to human life. Let the world taste in our conduct, individual and collective, that sweetness and flavor which only the faith in One God can impart to character and morality. Let the world see what fine examples of humanity are fashioned by Islam, what a just society is established, what a sound social order emerges, what a clean and noble civilization arises, how science, literature, and art flourish and develop on sound lines, what a just economy compassionate and free from conflict is brought about. Indeed, how every aspect of life is set right, developed and enriched.

We shall not be doing our duty to this task unless our lives, individual and collective, become a living embodiment of Islam: unless our personal characters are a living proof of its truth, our homes are fragrant with its teachings, our businesses and factories are illuminated by its rules and laws, our schools and institutions are shaped by its ideas and norms, and our literature and media reflect its principles. Indeed until our entire national policy and public life make its truth manifest and self-evident.

In short, wherever and whenever any individual or people come in contact with us it is our duty to convince them, by our example, that the principles and teachings which Islam proclaims to be true are indeed true, and that they do improve the quality of human life and raise it to better and higher levels.

The Islamic State

Finally, I should state one more important thing. This witness of ours would not be complete unless we establish a state based on the principles and teachings of Islam. By translating its ideals and practices, its norms and values, its rules and laws, into public policies and programs, such a state would demonstrate how the Divine guidance leads to equity and justice, reform and upliftment, caring and efficient administration, social welfare, peace and order, high standards of morality in public servants, virtue and righteousness in internal policies, honesty in foreign policies, civilized conduct in war, integrity and loyalty in peace. Such public conduct would be a living testimony for all mankind that Islam is indeed the true guarantor of human well being that only following its tenets can ensure the good of mankind.

Only when the Truth is witnessed in this manner, by both words and actions, will the crucial responsibility laid upon the Muslim Ummah be fully discharged. Only then will no ground remain for mankind to deny or turn away from the Divine guidance. Only then, in the Hereafter, will the Muslim Ummah be in a position to take the witness-stand after the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and declare that: Whatever truth and guidance we were given by this Prophet, that we conveyed to mankind; those who did not follow it are themselves to blame for going astray, not us.

This is the real meaning and scope of the witness that we as Muslims ought to have been giving to the world, both by our words and our deeds. But now let us turn to the actual state of affairs and examine the witness that we in fact are giving in favor of the Divine guidance.

Where Do we Stand?

Our Word-witness

First, look at the testimony that is being given by our word-witness. There are few people amongst us who are using their tongues and pens to witness to the truth of Islam. Still fewer in number are those who are doing so in an appropriate and adequate manner. Otherwise, in almost every respect Muslims, on the whole, are giving their witness against Islam and not in its favor, as they should.

What is the witness of our landlords? That the Islamic law of inheritance is wrong and that the customs, which came down from the pre-Islamic days, are correct. What is the witness of our lawyers and judges? That all the laws of Islam are bad laws, and that their very basis the sovereignty of God is unacceptable. They tell us that only the man-made laws, which have come to us through the British, are good laws.

What is the witness of our teachers and educational institutions? That in philosophy and science, history and sociology, economics and politics, law and ethics, the only true and valid knowledge and thought is that derived from the Western secular world-view. That in all these disciplines the Islamic approach is not even worthy of consideration. What is the witness of our writers? That their literature has the same message to impart as that of the godless writers of the secular West. They demonstrate that as Muslims they have no distinctive literary approach of their own. What is the witness of our press and media? That the only issues and debates that they consider important and which preoccupy them, and the only methods and standards of communication that they consider fit to employ, are those which bear the hallmark of the non-Muslim media.

What is the witness of our businessmen and industrialists? That the rules laid down by Islam for economic transactions are impracticable, that business can be conducted only by the methods devised by Kafirs.

What is the witness of our leaders and rulers? That they have the same slogans of nationalism and motherland to mobilize people, the same goals to pursue on national levels, the same methods of solving national problems, the same principles of politics and constitution-making as are practiced by Kafirs. They declare that Islam has no guidance to offer in this respect.

And what is the witness of our masses? They testify that they have nothing to speak about except worldly matters, that they have no such Deen, which desires to be propagated or which demands that they spend part of their time for this purpose. This, then, is the state of witness being given by our whole Ummah by means of its words. This is the case not only in this country but also throughout the whole world.

Our Act-witness

Now let us turn to our act-witness and look at the witness being given by our actions and deeds. Here our conduct is even more scandalous than that in respect of our witness by words. No doubt there are a few good Muslims whose lives are a true example of Islam. But consider how the overwhelming majority of the Ummah, the society at large, is conducting itself.

What is the witness being given by the life of a typical, ordinary Muslim? That the persons shaped and molded by Islam are in no way better than, or different from, those prepared by Kufr. If anything, the former are worse than the latter: for instance, it is more likely that a Muslim would speak a lie, that he would betray and breach a trust placed in him, that he would oppress people and do wrong to them, that he would abandon his promise, that he would steal and rob, that he would engage himself in disorderly and violent conduct, that he would indulge in all sorts of indecent acts. Indeed, in respect of all these immoral actions the level of Muslim 'performance' is no less than that of any Kafir people.

What is the witness of our social life? Look at our life-styles, our customs and ceremonies, our festivities, our fairs and religious gatherings, our meetings and processions: in no aspect do we truly represent Islam. Indeed, on the contrary, our social life is a pathetic testimony that the followers of Islam consider the un-Islamic ways to be better and preferable than the Islamic.

Similar is the testimony of our other social institutions and collective pursuits. When we set up educational institutions, we import everything from Kafirs our knowledge, our educational system, our philosophy, our spirit and objective. When we form parties and associations, we model everything on the patterns set by Kafirs our ideals and goals, our structures and constitutions, our policies and methods. When we, as a people, launch a struggle, our cause, our slogans and demands, our issues and debates, our programs and procedures, our resolutions, statements, and speeches, are all true replicas of the practices of Kafir communities and nations.

Things have come to such a pass that even our independent states, where they exist, have borrowed their constitutions, their codes of law, and their guiding policies and principles from Kafirs. In some states, the Islamic law has been reduced to a mere personal law; in some others even this personal law has been altered. An English writer

tauntingly remarks: In view of the many charges leveled by Indians at the British administration, it is important to realize that the British were extraordinarily slow to introduce any innovations in the law . . . [Indeed] as far as Islam is concerned the result of the British connection with India has been to establish on a firmer basis the Muslim personal and religious law . . . while all the rest of the Shari'ah has been abolished . . . On the other hand Albania and Turkey have both become secular states [adopting European penal and civil codes, even altering Muslim penal law] . . . [Thus, it can be said, as Lindsay says, that] 'The Muslim doctrine that legislation is not within the competence of an earthly sovereign was never, indeed, anything more than a pious fiction . . .'

This, then, is the witness being given by the actions of almost all Muslims. This witness, too, goes against Islam. It is not in its favor. Whatever lip service we might pay to Islam, our public conduct proves that there is no aspect of Islam that we approve of, that we do not consider its laws to be good and conducive to our well-being.

And With What Consequences!

Our Punishment

In view of our conduct, we are guilty of giving false witness, of perjury and concealing the Truth. As a consequence, we are facing precisely the same punishment that has been prescribed in the Law of God for such grave and heinous crimes.

What is this law? When a people reject and turn away from God's guidance, when they are guilty of perjury and disloyalty to their Creator, and when they turn traitors to Him, then God punishes them severely in this world as well as in the world-to-come. This law was applied to the Children of Israel. Now it is we, the Muslim Ummah, who stand in the dock. God had no personal vendetta against the Jews that He should have punished only them. Nor does He have any kinship or special relationship with Muslims that He should set us free even though we are now committing the same crime as they did then.

In This World

The punishment meted out to Muslims for their crimes in this world is there for all to see. Indeed, the extent and pace of our decline has been in true proportion to the extent and pace of our negligence and failure to do our duty to witness to the Truth and our 'progress' in witnessing to falsehood. During the last one hundred years, from Morocco to Indonesia,

country after country has been lost by us to alien subjugation; one Muslim people after another have fallen under the yoke of colonial rule and domination. No longer does the word 'Muslim' stand for dignity, no longer does it command respect; rather it has become a mark of degradation, humiliation, gross backwardness, and utter powerlessness.

How powerless have we become? We have lost all honor and respect in the eyes of the world. In some places, our blood has flowed like water and we have been subjected to large-scale massacres; in other places, we have been driven out of our homes; in others, we have been tortured and persecuted; in still others, we have been reduced to living as serfs. If in some places Muslim states have survived, they have suffered defeat after defeat until they have been reduced to positions of fear and impotency in the face of foreign powers. If only they had witnessed to Islam by their words and deeds, the secular powers would have stood in awe of them.

Why go so far a field? Just look at your situation in India. + Because you evaded your duty of bearing witness to the truth of Islam, indeed because you went further and gave false witness against it both by your words and deeds, the entire country was wrested from your control. First, the Marathas and Sikhs vanquished you, and later, servitude to the British rule became your fate. And now still greater calamities stare you in the face.

Today your minority status has become your greatest anxiety; you live in fear of the Hindu majority lest it subjugates you and you meet the same fate, as did the untouchables. But, for God's sake, tell me: Could a majority have threatened you if you had only been true witnesses of Islam? Will not this problem of majority and minority vanish within a few years if today your words and actions bear true witnesses to Islam?

In Arabia, an extremely hostile and oppressive majority set out to exterminate an insignificant minority of about one in one hundred thousand. With what result? Within ten years, this minority, by its truthful and trustworthy witness in favor of Islam, turned into a one hundred per cent majority. Later, when these witnesses of Islam emerged from Arabia, within twenty-five years, from Turkistan to Morocco, people after people trusted the probity of their witness and joined them in their faith. Where no one but Zoroastrians, Christians and pagans once lived, now only Muslims live. No intransigence, no

chauvinism, no religious bigotry, proved strong enough to resist the living, true witness of the Divine guidance that Muslims gave.

If you are being trampled upon today, if you fear greater catastrophes tomorrow, is this not but the punishment for your false witness and concealment of the Truth?

Punishment in the World-to-Come

This is the punishment you are receiving in this world; but a more severe punishment is likely to be meted out to you in the world-to-come. How can you be absolved of the blame for every evil and every wrong to which man has been subjected only because you failed to do your duty as witnesses of the Truth? Unless you do your duty, whatever oppression and corruption is perpetrated in the world and whatever immorality and wickedness prevails; there is no reason why you should not be held accountable for it. You may not be responsible for originating them yourselves, but you are certainly responsible, because of your false witness, for maintaining and perpetuating them, for their origination by others, and for allowing them to spread.

What is Our Real Problem?

Pseudo Problems

By now, brothers, you must have understood how we, as Muslims, ought to have been living and behaving, and how we in fact are living and behaving. You must also have realized what grave consequences we are suffering because of our conduct. You should, therefore, have no difficulty in seeing that the problems which Muslims consider crucial for their societies and which they are doing their utmost to solve by various devices some of them invented by them, but mostly copied from others are not their real problem. The time, energy and resources that they spend on solving these problems are simply being wasted.

For example, we look upon ourselves as a minority engulfed by an overwhelming alien majority, or as a majority deprived of its sovereignty within its own territory, or as a nation subjugated and exploited by a foreign power, or as a people suffering from backwardness and poverty. Then we devote all our efforts to achieving objectives, which emanate from these conceptions and images of ourselves. For instance, to objectives such as safeguarding and securing our status in a country as a minority, or to achieving

sovereignty within our territorial boundaries, or to winning freedom from foreign domination, or to achieving the same levels of economic progress and development as those of the advanced nations.

These and other similar issues may be the foremost concerns of those who are not Muslims, who do not accept God as their Lord and Guide, and may form the central objects of their endeavors. But for us Muslims they are not the primary problems; we face them only because we have been, and still are, neglecting to do our duty. Had we been true witnesses of Islam, we would not have found ourselves lost in such a dense jungle of complex and inextricable problems. If we now direct all our attention and endeavors to doing our duty instead of dissipating our energies on clearing the woods, they will clear in no time, and not only for ourselves but for all mankind. For, keeping the world clean and improving it is our responsibility; as we have forsaken our appointed duty, the world has become infested with thorny woods. And no wonder that the thorniest part has fallen to our lot.

Unfortunately, our religious and political leaders do not try to understand this simple but crucial reality. Everywhere they continue to convince the Muslims that their problems are the problems of a minority as against a majority, of material progress, of national security, of winning freedom and independence as a nation state. Furthermore, even the solutions that they recommend have been borrowed from non-Muslims. But just as I believe in God, so I believe that you are being misled, and that by following such paths you will never achieve your well-being and destiny.

Our Real Problem

What, then, is our real problem? If I do not tell you that clearly, without any reservation, I shall be doing you a great disservice. To my mind, your destiny, now and ever, depends on one issue only: How do you conduct yourselves in respect of God's guidance that has come to you through His Messenger, blessings and peace be on him?

Because of this guidance you are Muslims. Because of this guidance, whether you like it or not, you have agreed to become ambassadors of Islam to the entire world. Therefore, only if you follow Islam totally and devotedly, if your words and actions bear true witness to its teachings, if your social and public conduct faithfully represents every aspect of

Islam, will you rise from glory to glory in this world, and receive highest honors in the world-to-come. Then, in no time, the dark clouds of fear and anxiety, of disgrace and humiliation, of subjugation and slavery will disperse. Then, the truth of your message and the virtue of your character will capture mind after mind and heart after heart. Then, your prestige and reputation, your influence and authority, will hold sway over the world. Hopes of securing justice will be pinned on you, trust will be placed in your integrity and honesty, prospects of virtue will be confided in you, and authority will be accorded to your world.

In contrast, the leaders of secularism will lose all credibility and authority. Their philosophy and world-view, their economic and political ideologies, will prove fake and spurious when confronted by your truth and right conduct. The forces that today belong to the secular camp will, one by one, break away and join the camp of Islam. A time will, then, come when communism will live in fear of its very survival in Moscow itself, when capitalist democracy will shudder at the thought of defending itself even in Washington and New York, when materialist secularism will be unable to find a place even in the universities of London and Paris, when racialism and nationalism will not win even one devotee even among the Brahmins and Germans.

The present era of abject humiliation will, then, become consigned to the pages of history. It will only serve to remind us of the days when the followers of a faith as universal and powerful as Islam were reduced to such stupidity that they trembled in the face of sticks and ropes while they held the staff of Moses under their arm.

This future is yours! But only if you follow Islam sincerely and exclusively and serve as its faithful witnesses. Your present conduct, however, is entirely contrary. You have been blessed with the Divine guidance, but, like a snake guarding treasure, you neither benefit from it yourselves nor allow others to benefit from it. By calling yourselves Muslims, you have assumed for yourselves the position of Islam's representatives, but the combined witness of your words and deeds is being given mostly in favor of Ignorance (Jahillyah), idolatry, materialism, and immorality. You have the Book of God with you, but you have put it on the shelf and, to seek guidance, you turn to all sorts of persons who lead to Kufr, and to sources, which lead you astray. You claim to be the servants of the One God, but in fact you are serving every false god, every Satan, and every power in rebellion against God. You have friends and enemies, but it is always your personal, selfish interests that

determine your friendship and enmity. In both cases you use Islam as a party to your cause.

Thus, your conduct has, on the one hand, deprived your lives of the blessings that Islam has to offer you, and, on the other, you are alienating mankind rather than attracting it to Islam. If you continue to behave in this manner, you can attain no good, either in this world or in the world-to-come. Its outcome, according to the Law of God, is that miserable situation in which you find yourselves. What the future holds for you may be much worse.

To be truthful, perhaps, if you remove the label of Islam from yourselves and follow Kufr openly and sincerely, then you might at least make as much worldly progress as America, Russia and Britain have made. But, claiming to be Muslims and yet behaving as non-Muslims, closing the door of Divine guidance to mankind by representing Islam falsely before it, is such a heinous crime that it will never allow you to prosper in this world. There is no way you can avert the punishment prescribed by the Qur'an for this crime. Jewish history provides a living proof of this reality. You may turn to secular nationalism as a lesser evil, you may get yourself accepted as a separate nation and achieve whatever Muslim nationalism seeks to achieve. But none of this will help you.

There is only one way to ward off the punishment of God. Turn back from your sin, and repent.

Islamic Movement

The Islamic Movement: Its Task, Characteristics, And Tools

The duty of the Islamic movement is to help people submit to Allah as individuals and groups by working for the establishment of an Islamic community deriving its rules and teachings from the book of Allah and His Prophets' Sunnah.

The General Task: Universal Outreach

The Islamic movement is a universal organization that reaches out to encompass the workers in the Islamic field all over the world. This outreach is a precondition for success in conveying purely and clearly the Islamic message in ways relevant to the needs of the present time. This outreach is designed to call people to Islam, strengthen their belief in it, and organize them to work and to wage jihad in its cause.

In order to establish Islam functionally in the world the Islamic movement must strive against the thoughts and philosophies left over from colonialism, whether of European socialism or American capitalism, until the Ummah or Muslim community can recover its independence and genuine identity. From the very inception, the Islamic movement has been almost obsessed with the need to purify Islam from the garbage of unlawful innovations and superstitions, and to introduce it to the people of the world in a pure form worthy of its excellence and greatness above all contending religions and ideologies.

The Islamic Movement is rooted in some basic principles, namely, that:

- 1- Islamic teachings and rules are comprehensive and designed by Allah to govern the affairs of man at all levels of community, from the family to the whole of the human race.
- 2- The fundamental theme of Islam throughout history has been – there is no god but Allah – which means, that Allah alone is Divine and Sovereign.
- 3- Islam alone can provide the power for Muslims to liberate oppressed peoples from the control of those who worship the false gods of modernist and postmodernist cultures, namely, from taghut, so that these false gods will no longer be in a position to persecute or put obstacles in the way of sincere people and so all religion will be exclusively for Allah.

- 4- The adoption and adaptation of capitalist, socialist, communist or other manmade systems, either in whole or in part, constitutes a denial of Islam and disbelief in Allah the Lord of the worlds. Such adoption and adaptation diverts Muslims into unguided, haphazard, and wasteful efforts. Allah, the Almighty, has said:

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah), never will it be accepted of him and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good). [Qur'an 3:85]

Hasan Al-Banna summarized the Islamic movement's general task of universal outreach as follows:

Our task in general is to stand against the flood of modernist civilization overflowing from the swamp of materialistic and sinful desires. This flood has swept the Muslim nations away from the Prophet's leadership and Qur'anic guidance and deprived the world of its guiding light. Western secularism moved into a Muslim world already estranged from its Qur'anic roots, and delayed its advancement for centuries, and will continue to do so until we drive it from our lands. Moreover, we will not stop at this point, but will pursue this evil force to its own lands, invade its Western heartland, and struggle to overcome it until all the world shouts by the name of the Prophet and the teachings of Islam spread throughout the world. Only then will Muslims achieve their fundamental goal, and there will be no more "persecution" and all religion will be exclusively for Allah.

"With Allah is the decision, in the past and in the future: on that day shall the believers rejoice." [Qur'an 30:4]

Within this general task, there are many specific duties. The Islamic movement must develop:

- 1) Internal governance sensitive to Allah's command: **Judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and follow not their vain desires, but beware of them lest they beguile you from any of the (teachings) that Allah has sent down to you.** [Qur'an 5:52]

- 2) Public relations designed to carry out Allah's injunctions: **Thus have We made you a community justly balanced, that you may be a witness over the nations.** [Qur'an 2:143]
- 3) A practical judicial system reflecting the authority of Islamic law: **By your Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make you judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against your decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.** [Qur'an 4:65]
- 4) Military defense adequate to all demands in accordance with Allah's decree: **Go forth, (whether equipped) lightly or heavily, and strive and struggle with your goods and your persons in the cause of Allah. This is best for you, if You (only) knew.** [Qur'an 9:41]
- 5) Economic institutions and policies designed to foster the production of wealth through broadly based private ownership with proper regulation to avoid concentration of either economic or political power. **To those of weak judgment do not entrust your property, which Allah has made a means of support for you.** [Qur'an 4:5]
- 6) Educational and cultural infrastructure designed to overcome ignorance and evil and to carry out the instruction of Allah in the first revealed verse of the Qur'an: **Proclaim! (Or read!) In the name of your Lord and Cherisher who created.** [Qur'an 96:1]
- 7) Family values to shape and train the character of young boys and girls, in accordance with the saying of Allah, **"O you who believe! Save yourself and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones."** [Qur'an 66:6]
- 8) Spiritual encouragement so that in their private lives people find it easier to advance in wisdom and in peace of soul: **"Truly he succeeds who purifies it."** [Qur'an 91: 9]
- 9) Personal empowerment to bring alive as civil activists every person in society, either as a leader or follower, according to the saying of Allah, **"But seek, with the (wealth) which Allah has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and do not forget your just enjoyment of this world; but do good as Allah has been good to you and avoid occasions for mischief in the land."** [Qur'an 28:77]
- 10) Leadership at all levels of human community, in the family, neighborhood, national government and international institutions, in order to bring together Muslims

everywhere so they can excel again in all endeavors, and recover the flag of jihad and call mankind to Allah and the good news of His Revelation.

General Characteristics

The most important features or characteristics of the Islamic movement required for it to carry out this general task are the following five:

1) Guided by Allah

The direction and methods of the movement must come from the eternal religion of Allah. The movement serves Allah and not its members, in accordance with Allah's teaching:

Say: Truly, my prayer and my service of sacrifice, my life and death, are all for Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds. [Qur'an 6:162]

The Islamic movement is not a political party that aims to gain or achieve some vested interest or power as is common in ordinary parties. Its leaders are expected to obey only the commands of Allah.

2) Self Motivated

This movement originates in the reality of Islam and not in reaction to or as an outgrowth of the socialism and capitalism of the secular West. The movement calls only to Islam, the true religion, which fact is its major source of power.

3) Growth-oriented

The Islamic movement is designed to liberate man in dynamic change, not enslave him in efforts to stabilize and control the world, as do most utopian movements, including capitalism, in the West. Unlike these secular manmade systems, the Islamic movement addresses human needs and everyday problems from the spiritual and moral perspective of Revelation. It stands in awe of the universe, every aspect of which is merely a sign from its Creator and therefore promotes science and technology not to gain power or to register new discoveries but to learn more about the greatness of Allah.

The Islamic movement promotes progress in developing improved tools of economic growth because Muslims are enjoined to multiply the bounties of Allah and benefit from all

that is good. This is the essential meaning of the Prophet's saying: *"Take wisdom from whatever container it comes from," and "Knowledge is what every Muslim should seek the most; wherever he finds it, he is the one who most deserves it."*

4) Comprehensive and balanced

The Islamic movement addresses all the needs of man in proper balance. Therefore it is referred to as:

- a) Salafi Da'awah, because it derives from the pure sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah;
- b) The Sunni way, because it works to revive the Sunnah of the Prophet (s) in its members and in every human community;
- c) The Rabbani covenant, because it teaches that a pure and clean heart and a close relationship with Allah are the basis and origin of all good; and
- d) The Political movement, because it tries to address everyone's needs by changing both public policy and the institutions of society from which such policy issues.

5) Unity in diversity

The Islamic movement recognizes the legitimacy of different positions on public issues, but it requires unity in basic principles (usul), and seeks to bring people together around the fundamentals of Islam. In the words of Imarn Hasan Al-Banna: *'We are not a political party, although politics in accordance with Islam is deeply rooted in our ideas; and we are not a welfare organization nor a sports team, although welfare and sports are part of our method; we are not any of these because these are all forms, techniques, or means designed for specific objectives and for a limited period of time. We are, however, an idea and a creed, a system and a syllabus, which is why we are not bounded by a place or a group of people and can never be until the Day of judgment, because we are the system of Allah and the way of His Prophet (s). We are the followers of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, and the Raisers of his flag as they raised it, and like them, popularizers of his way, and the memorizers of the Qur'an as they memorized it, and the preachers of his Da'awah as they preached it, which is why we are a mercy for mankind.*

Organizational Characteristics

In addition to these five general characteristics, the Islamic movement must have seven specifically organizational ones, namely:

- 1) Freedom from the special Interests of politicians and powerbrokers, especially those who dominate the government. This organizational independence, however, does not preclude members of the movement from holding political and appointive office as long as they work to protect the movement from harm and to secure its sincerity of intent and purity of action.
- 2) Gradualism In both thoughts and action, because the road to success is hard and long and the goals are ambitious and grandiose. The gradualist strategy pursues these goals through a tactic of incremental steps; each planned to build on the previous step in a carefully optimized time frame. Imarn Hasan al-Banna in his Instructional Discourse divided the stages of Da'awah into three stages:
 - a) Introductory: Disseminating concepts and ideas among the people through oratory and writing, civic action and other practical methods.
 - b) Preparatory: Identifying good and reliable cadre to bear the burden of initiating and sustaining jihad. This is a period of building wisdom among the leaders and military discipline among the recruits. At this stage no one will be admitted to the movement except those willing to carry out their responsibilities in full obedience.
 - c) Execution: The stage of relentless combat and constant effort to achieve the goals. This stage will weed out all but the most honest and sincere, both in their own commitment and in their obedience to the chain of command. [Risalat Ta'alim (Arabic)]
- 3) Low-Profile, with a maximum of productive action and a minimum of publicity, in order to:
 - a) Purify action from the desire to be seen and praised by others;
 - b) Save energy and time for productive and constructive action; and
 - c) Ensure the safety of the movement and its members. The Prophet Muhammad (s) said, "Seek secrecy in what you do."
- 4) Strategic orientation for long-range victory. The hugeness of the task ensures that the way will be long and hard, so the people working in this field should prepare themselves both mentally and physically to meet any hardship and to sacrifice: **Do men think that they will be left alone on saying we believe, and that they will**

not be tested? We did test those before you, and Allah will certainly know those who are true from those who are false. [Qur'an 29:1-3] Members of the Islamic Movement should adopt and follow a long term plan so they do not lose the way or seek the fruit before it is ripe. This requires a full understanding that securing power for an Islamic government is a means for a larger goal, so when they gain power they will thank Allah and not retreat from their task out of fear. **"There is no help except from Allah;"** [Qur'an 2:26] and **"You will not, except as Allah wishes."** [Qur'an 76:30] If someone retorts: "But crooks and tools of outside interests gain power a lot faster and more easily," then reply that the two ways are different and the Islamic Movement will accept power only clearly gained in justice. If it would accept the reins of power held by others, it would have gained a false and fraudulent power, as have so many others. "Now then, for that (reason) call (them to the faith) and stand steadfast as you are commanded, and do not follow their vain desires."

- 5) Openness in work but secrecy of organization. One may not work for Islam in secret, or through a front, and still claim to exhibit wisdom. The message of Islam should be broadcast from the housetops and the truth should be witnessed always and everywhere. Those who hide the truth through silence are not merely dumb but evil. "Whoever sees a wrong-doing should change it by his hand; if he cannot, by his tongue; and if he still cannot then by his heart, and that is the weakest of faith." Those who call to Allah should proclaim the truth at their place of work and to all around them in every way. Allah says, **"Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching."** [Qur'an 16:125] This does not mean, however, that the Islamic Movement should reveal all its strategies, plans, and organization, because this would be foolhardy and put the movement and its members in danger. The slogan should be, "Work in public but organize in secret" which accords with the Prophet saying. "Seek secrecy in what you do", and "War is dissimulation."
- 6) Psychological independence. There has been much discussion about the -feeling of isolation- that Syed Qutb called for when he said, *"There should be a group that takes the lead and proceeds alone in the middle of the ignorance found everywhere on this earth. This group should be in this environment but isolated from it, and should not be of this environment, though it should communicate with*

it." The concept of isolation referred to here by Syed Qutb is distinct from the nihilist or rejectionist isolation of many non-Muslim groups. Muslims are isolationist in the sense of psychological independence, based on the manner and behavior, and of their feelings. This is what the Prophet (s) called when he warned: *"Do not be a follower who says, I am with the people right or wrong. But maintain disciplined behavior, so when people do good, you should too and when they do evil, you should avoid it."* Effective work, movement, and Da'awah are not possible if one is physically isolated and out of contact with people, because one must be sensitive to their differences and tailor one's approach accordingly. These people who are committed to Islam as individuals but reject the duties of work in a movement must be approached in one way. Some people are open enemies of Allah and his Messenger (s), both as individuals and as members and leaders of non-believing groups. Other people are proud of being Muslims but do not live in accordance with its rules. These people, who represent the majority of Muslims today, cannot be equated with those who deny non-believers. Each group must be addressed distinctly and with the personal knowledge that comes from communication. The message of the callers to Islam should be adapted to the closeness or distance of the potential audience, to their acceptance or rejection of the message, and to their friendship or enmity. Some of them need awareness, education, and guidance, while others, as a last resort in self-defense need the sword. This flexibility requires the callers to Islam to remain in contact with all elements of society. This relationship should aim at affecting the others positively, while avoiding a negative effect on oneself, and at purifying their lives while avoiding contamination of one's own. The Prophet (s) said: *"The patience of one of you (in jihad) is better than (worshipping) Allah for 60 years."*

- 7) Moral consistency. For a Muslim the end never justifies the means, no matter what the aggravation. Unlike most un-Islamic movements, who are Machiavellian even in excess of their own teachings, the Islamic movement must be principled in action. How many people or parties actually practice what they preach in either the executive or legislative branch of government? These people and parties do not subscribe to a spiritual and moral creed designed to protect them from the hypocrisy endemic in the arena of politics. The interests of secular people change and are translated into party programs, and these are often directed toward the self-serving advantage of party leaders, who sell out the interests of their

supporters for personal gain. They gain power easily and manipulate it even more easily, because they are not constrained by religious and moral obligations. Instead they have objectives, strategies, and tactics that need to be accomplished regardless of the cost. In contrast, the laborers in the Islamic field do not work for themselves. They are bound by religious and moral obligations, which they cannot discard or change. This characteristic of moral consistency is based on five principles:

- a) Islamic work must not be contaminated by any un-Islamic means in pursuit of its goals and objectives, even if these means be only words or slogans. Say: **The truth is from your Lord, let him who will, believe and let him who will, reject it.** [Qur'an 18:29]
- b) Islam is an organic whole and cannot be partitioned. Giving up part of it is abandoning it all. We need only recall the story of the "Quraish" when they made the Prophet Muhammad (s) a very tempting offer in return for giving up part of the Message of Islam. Allah instructed him to refuse their offer: **Say O you who reject faith, I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship, and I will not worship what you have ever worshipped, nor will you ever worship what I worship. To you be your way, and to me mine.** [Qur'an 109:1-6]
- c) Islam requires major effort and sacrifice. The magicians of Pharaoh when they learned the truth of Allah from the Prophet Moses (s), ignored Pharaoh's threats and replied, **"Never shall we regard you as more than our Creator. So decree whatever you desire to decree: for you can only decree [what concerns] the life of this world."** [Qur'an 20:72] When the Prophet (s) was offered kingship, honor, and money merely to slacken somewhat his efforts and compromise his message, he refused and said, By Allah, if they put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left to abandon this call, I will not until Allah gives victory to this din or I die struggling for it.
- d) Righteous people must stay on guard against those of the non-Muslims who have a disease in their hearts, and the righteous must remain close to Allah so they cannot be easily swayed or accept the imposition of unsuitable solutions. **"And this (He commands), judge between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their vain desires, but beware of them lest they beguile you from any of the (teaching) that Allah has sent down to**

you. And if they turn away, be assured that for some of their crimes it is Allah's purpose to punish them, for truly most men are rebellious."

[Qur'an 5:52] When Ka'ab ibn Malik, the famous companion of the Prophet, was approached by an envoy of the king of Gassan with a letter from the king which read, "We know that your friend is treating you harshly (the Prophet had ordered a social boycott of the three Muslims, including Ka'ab ibn Malik, for failing to join the expedition of Tabuk, and no one was allowed to speak to them), so come and join us." When Ka'ab read it, he said, "this is another test." He realized that his situation had reached the point where a non-believer wanted to convert him to fight the Prophet, so he burned the letter.

- e) Truth and knowledge of right and wrong can be known only from revelation, not from human reason alone, and one must accept divinely revealed truth even it be against one's will. From the Islamic perspective, dishonesty and cheating people, regardless of how small the matter, is hypocrisy. The Prophet (s) said *"The one who pleases people by making Allah angry will receive from Allah only humiliation, and the one who pleases Allah but thereby makes people angry will receive from Allah only honor."* The Prophet also said, *"Do not be a follower who says, I am with the people, right or wrong. But maintain disciplined behavior, so when people do good, you should too, and when they do evil, you should avoid it."*

Tools of the Islamic Movement

Imarn Hasan Al-Banna proclaimed, "Our tools are the tools of our righteous predecessors, and our weapons are what our guide and leader, the Prophet Muhammad (s) and his companions used to address the world, despite their limited number and resources. These tools are five:

- 1) A deep internal love of Allah and belief in His help and His support. **"If Allah helps you, none can overcome you: if He forsakes you, who is there, after that, that can help you?"** [Qur'an 3:160]
- 2) A conviction that the Qur'an is a universally applicable guide. **"There has come to you from Allah a (new) light and a perspicuous Book, with which Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety."** [Qur'an 5:17-18]

- 3) A strong sense of the rights and importance of brotherhood. **"The believers are but a single brotherhood."** [Qur'an 49: 10]
- 4) Firm reliance on Allah's love and justice. **Because all their sufferings and efforts were reckoned to their credit as deeds of righteousness whether they suffered thirst, or fatigue, or hunger, in the cause of Allah, or took any steps that angered or confounded the unbelievers, or sustained any injury whatever from an enemy; for Allah does not fail to give a just reward to those who do good.** [Qur'an 9:120]
- 5) Supreme confidence that they are among those chosen by Allah to bring truth, justice, and peace to the world.

Our predecessors in faith heard the call to Allah, so they believed, and we pray that Allah will make this faith beloved to us as it was to them because this love of Allah and Islam is our faith. Our faith is our greatest strength and our most powerful tool; it is also the source of the second most powerful instrument of the Islamic movement, which is jihad. The companions of the Prophet (s) knew that Islam prevails only through the sacrifice of self and wealth in jihad, and they were right.

They heard the call of Allah, **"Say, if your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred, or the wealth that you have gained in commerce and fear to lose, or the dwellings in which you delight, are dearer to you than Allah or His Messenger, or striving in His cause, then wait until Allah brings about His decision, for Allah guides not the rebellious."** They answered the call and offered everything willingly, rejoicing in their bargain with Allah Almighty.

When they fought in the Cause of Allah, they fought to death. Some donated all their resources, saying we have kept for our families only Allah and His Messenger, while others exclaimed while the sword was readied above their necks, "Strike on either side. It makes no difference as long as I die as a Muslim for the sake of Allah." As they were committed in battle and magnanimous in sacrifice, so shall we be.

Islamic Movement Today!

What Do We Mean By Islamic Movement?

By "Islamic Movement", I mean that organized, collective work, undertaken by the people, to restore Islam to the leadership of society, and to the helm of life in all walks of life.

Before being anything else, the Islamic Movement is work: persistent, industrious work, not just words to be said, speeches and lectures to be delivered, or books and articles are indeed required, they are merely parts of a movement, not the movement itself (Allah the Almighty says, Work, and Allah, His Messenger and the believers will see your work} [Surah al-Tawbah: 1 05].

The Islamic Movement is a popular work performed for Allah's sake

The Islamic movement is a popular work based mainly on self-motivation and personal conviction. It is a work performed out of faith and for nothing other than the sake of Allah, in the hope of being rewarded by Him, not by humans.

The core of this self-motivation is that unrest which a Muslim feels when the Awakening visits him and he feels a turmoil deep inside him, as a result of the contradiction between his faith on the one hand and the actual state of affairs of his nation on the other. It is then that he launches himself into action, driven by his love for his religion, his devotion to Allah, His Messenger, the Qur'an and the Muslim Nation, and his feeling of his, and his people, neglect of their duty. In so doing, he is also stimulated by his keenness to discharge his duty, eliminate deficiencies, contribute to the revival of the neglected faridas [enjoined duties] of enforcing the Shari'ah [Islamic Law] sent down by Allah; unifying the Muslim nation around the Holy Qur'an; supporting Allah's friends and fighting Allah's foes; liberating Muslim territories from all aggression or non-Muslim control; reinstating the Islamic caliphate system to the leadership anew as required by Shari'ah, and renewing the obligation to spread the call of Islam, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and strive in Allah's cause by deed, by word or by heart - the latter being the weakest of beliefs - so that the word of Allah may be exalted to the heights.

Inadequacy of Other Organizations & Official Work

Distinguishing The Movement From Specialized Organizations

Those who join the Islamic movement should do so after careful study, so that they know how it differs from all other Islamic organizations, both in goals and methods, and can distinguish between Islamic and non-Islamic groups. There are four kinds of organizations with inadequately universal goals:

First, there are spiritual groups. Most of these groups stress personal spiritual growth but neglect other essential aspects of Islam, such as thought, politics, strategic planning, and work. Such inner-directed groups may become isolated and unable to understand the environment in which they live. Therefore they cannot directly influence or change the environment.

Second, are ecumenical groups. These groups exist in order to address problems jointly with Christians and Jews. These groups usually restrict their goals to the limitations imposed by non-Muslims. Because to that extent, they are non-Islamic and will give a distorted image of Islam.

Third, are welfare organizations. These organizations were formed in order to help those in need of various kinds of help, such as medical, financial, and shelter. Although they have done a good job in their fields - these jobs are required by Islam - they are restricted in their work to their goals. These groups cannot be considered as a movement of reformation, because their goals are not to establish an Islamic society nor to move forward to the Islamic way of life.

Fourth, are political movements. They may operate under the name of Islam, but they rarely base their work on the Islamic creed or principles. In some situations, these political movements, without hesitation, violate the principles of Islam. They justify this by claiming that they want to exhibit the flexibility of Islam or pursue the general good of the people. They rely on the non-believers and on man-made systems of government, and usually focus on insignificant matters of marginal value.

None of these four groups work for the real and comprehensive objective of Islam, which is to transform the jahili society into an Islamic community in order to save the world from the false gods of modernism rampant in Western civilization by building the human person, family, community, and government in the Islamic mold.

The work of all these organizations is deficient and incomplete. Some of these groups even condemn Islam, although, they claim to work under the name of Islam. The compartmentalization of being and action on which these groups are based give the erroneous impression that Islam is similarly based on such erroneous premises. This implies that man-made systems are acceptable, which will only prolong their life.

Any groups, no matter what their names are, in any country who work under the name of Islam, with a goal of preparing or establishing a complete change in all aspects of society are indeed the right groups to join because all of their work converges on a single understanding and on common goals and methods.

Imarn Hasan Al-Banna clarified the characteristics of the group that best works for Islam by saying: My brothers, you are not a welfare organization, nor a political party; you are not a limited-goals organization, but a new spirit that moves in the nerves of people. You are the new light that will destroy the darkness of materialism. You are the voices that echo the message of Prophet Muhammad (s).

Official Work

It is by this popular work performed solely for Allah's sake that the Islamic Movement is established. The official, or semi-official work, such as establishing boards, higher councils, associations or unions for Islamic affairs supervised by the ministries of *awqaf* [lit. endowments, used in a wider meaning to refer to Islamic affairs] or any other government bodies, could more or less benefit Islam and Muslims, in proportion to the intent and enthusiasm of those in charge of it, as well as to how much they place their loyalty to their religion before their loyalty to this earthly life that embraces them and embraces those who appoint them to their positions.

However, this official or semi-official work is always inadequate and deficient in many ways, as follows:

- 1- It revolves in the orbit of the domestic policy of the state that starts and finances it. Its very movement is dictated by that policy, and hence it does not express pure Islam or the greater Muslim nation as much as it expresses that particular state.
- 2- It is not based, in most cases, on men proven by work, seasoned by struggle and tested in the field, but on "appointed" men who are in the favor of the financing

state and therefore seek to please it out of their ambition or out of their fear. Such men cannot, therefore, disobey the state's orders, or ask "Why", or say "No". I am speaking of the overwhelming majority here, as among the "official" workers there may exist some who do better than some "popular" workers in their loyalty to Allah, their jealousy for their religion and their endeavoring to realize this religion in a proper way.

- 3- It often lacks the true intent to defend Islam, and may even be aimed at a purely political gain. In most cases, this sort of work is similar to "the Mosque of Mischief" mentioned in the Qur'an: its superficial objective may be to serve worship and piety, but its hidden aim is to divide the believers and hinder the efforts of faithful workers.
- 4- It is, for all these reasons, under accusation from the masses and peoples, and deprived of their sympathy and support. Even those official "ulama" (scholars) who put themselves at the service of the state's policy - that is, speaking up of keeping silent as required - lack the confidence of the masses, who call them "the scholars of the authorities" or "the agents of the police".

For all these reasons, the official or semi-official Islamic work, so long as Muslim rule is absent, is unable to establish a true Islamic Movement. However, given its capabilities, it can render some academic and practical services and provide financial and moral support to the popular Islamic work and its institutions, especially if such official or semi-official work is headed by faithful, brave leaders.

The Movement is an Organized, collective work

Besides being a popular work done solely for Allah's sake, the Islamic Movement is an organized collective work. It is not enough for Islam's well - being that volunteering individuals should work **"Separately and in scattered areas, though their effort will be added to their balance on the Day of Judgment, for Allah shall not waste the effort of man or woman, and everyone shall be rewarded for his deeds according to his intention and perfection of his work. And anyone who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it)"** [Surah Al-Zalzalah: 7].

Individual work, under the contemporary circumstances of the Muslim Nation, will not be enough for bridging over the gap and realizing the aspired hope. Collective work is a must, and it is ordained by religion and necessitated by reality.

Religion advocates "the sense of congregating" and opposes "straying". Allah's hand is with collective effort, and he who strays shall stray into Hell. It is only the stray sheep that the wolf devours, and a prayer is not invalid if the worshipper performs it separately from the congregation or stands ahead of the rank. A believer to another believer is like one firm brickwork each part supporting the other. Cooperation in righteousness and piety is one of the faridas of religion; and the mutual teaching of truth and patience is one of the preconditions of saving oneself from loss in earthly life and the Hereafter.

The sheer state of affairs makes it inexitable for a hopefully fruitful work to be collectively done. It takes two hands to clap, and one is weak by himself, strong by his fellows. Great achievements are only made through concerted efforts, and decisive battles are won only through the unity of hands, as the Qur'an says: **'Allah loves those who fight in His cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure.'** [Surah al-Saff: 4]

Collective work should be organized and based on a responsible leadership, a solid base and clear- cut perceptions that define the relationships between the leadership and the grassroots according to fundamentals of obligatory Shura [consultation] and compulsory seeing obedience.

Islam recognizes no collective work that is not organized. Even collective prayer is based on organization, for Allah shall not look at the row, which is not straightened; and rows are to be closed. No gap should be left in a row of worshippers for it will be filled by Satan standing shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot. It is a unit of movement and appearance as much as it is a unity of doctrine and direction "do not differ so that your hearts may not differ".

An Imam is required to oversee the alignment of the row behind him until it is straightened and closed before starting prayer, and he advises the worshippers to "be responsive to the [guiding] hands of your brothers", as the prayer in congregation requires a measure of flexi band responsiveness for harmony of the rank as a whole.

Then comes the obedience to the imam, (The imam is appointed to be followed: say "**Allah Akbar**" after he utters it bow when he bows; prostrate when he prostrates and listen when he recites.

Nobody is allowed to break the rank, or precede the imam in bowing or prostrating so that he may not introduce a wrong note into this harmony and create an irregularity in such an organized, coordinated structure. He who does that should fear that Allah will metamorphose him into a man with a donkey's head.

However, should the imam make a mistake, it is the right, even duty, of those behind him to rectify this mistake, whether it is the result of impropriety or forgetfulness, involves word or deed, or happens in recital (of the Qur'an) or in other fundamental parts of prayer.

Even women in the back ranks in prayer are allowed to clap their hands if the imam makes a mistake, so as to attract his attention to the mistake.

Congregational prayer is a miniaturization of the overall Islamic congregational system and of what the interrelation between the commander and the troops should be like: there is neither infallible leadership nor absolute, blind obedience.

The Movement's mission is to revive Islam

What is the mission of the Islamic Movement?

The Islamic Movement has come into existence to revive Islam and reinstate it at the helm of life once again, after removing the obstacles from its path.

The revival of Islam "is not an expression of mine: it was used by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in the sound Hadith narrated by Abu-Hurayrah: *Allah shall send down a man who will revive the religion of this Nation at the start of every hundred years* [Abu-Dawud & Al-Hakim].

Most of those who interpreted this Hadith tended to take the word "who" to mean a specific individual who will revive the religion. They have actually tried to name such individual from among the prominent theologians and imams whose death fell near the end of a century of the hijra calendar, such as Omar ibn-Abdel-Aziz (died 101 A.H.) and Al Shafe'i (died 204 A.H.) and so on. However, they differed much on the issue of who the reviver of the third hundred years might be.

Meanwhile, some of the Hadith commentators regarded the word "who" in this Hadith as suitable to imply the plural just like it would be proper to imply the singular, indicating that the "reviver" could well be a group and not an individual. This is what Ibn Al-Athir thought most likely in his book "Al Jam'i Lil Usul - collection of fundamentals". Al Hafez, Al Dhahabi and others supported this concept, too.

I have more to add to this: the reviver of Islam should not necessarily be a group in the sense of a number of people including so and so and so, but may be a group in the sense of a school, a movement of thought and action that works in union to revive the religion.

This is what I take to be the most likely interpretation in understanding and applying this Hadith to the century [A.H.] that has just ended and the century that has just started. We pray to Allah to make our present days in this new century better than our past days, and to grant us still better days in our future.

How should the required revival be achieved?

The revival to be achieved by the Islamic Movement should I take three directions:

The first direction would be the formation of an Islamic vanguard, capable, through integration and cooperation, of leading the contemporary society with Islam without isolation or leniency, and remedying the ailments of Muslims with medicines that have been prescribed by Islam alone. This vanguard must comprise individuals whose ranks are glued by deep-rooted faith, sound learning and close ties.

The second direction would be the formation of a Muslim public opinion representing the broad popular base which stands behind Islam's protagonists, loving and supporting them after having become aware of their general objectives and confident of their faithfulness and capability, and also after having rid itself of the effects of the mud-throwing campaigns against Islam and Islam's protagonists and movements.

The third direction would be the preparation of a world, public climate that will accept the existence of the Muslim Nation when it understands the true aspects of the Islamic Message and civilization, and becomes free of the evil effects left by the fanaticism of the

Medieval Ages and the lies and distortions concocted by anti-Islam campaigns. Such public opinion would tolerate the emergence of Muslim power beside other global powers, realizing that Muslims have a right to rule themselves according to their own creed since they are the majority in their own countries - as called for by the democratic principles that are so often praised and advocated - and to promote their universal humanitarian message as one of the great ideologies of the world: an ideology that has a past, a present and a future and lays claim to over one thousand million adherents in this world in which we now live.

The multitude of the Movement's fields of action, and which is more deserving
Diversification of Fields of Work

The fields of work awaiting the Islamic Movement in the coming phase are wide and expansive. The activist leaders and intellectual theorists of the Movement should make a careful scientific study of these fields. Such a study must be based on documented and confirmed statistics and data.

There is Educational Work

This field of work is important for forming human "cadres" and Islamic vanguards bringing up the aspired generation of victory, whose members will understand and believe in Islam in full, including knowledge, work, call and struggle. Members of this generation will carry the call of Islam to their Nation first and then to the rest of the world. They will be able to do that only after they commit themselves to Islam as a clear - cut perception in their minds, a deep - rooted doctrine in their hearts, a line of behavior governing all aspects of their life, worship of Allah and dealing with other people, and a path of culture that will improve the state of affairs of the Nation and bring it together on the Word of Allah and lead the confused humanity to what is best and most proper.

There is Political Work

This kind of work would be aimed at extricating the rule from the hands of weaklings all traitors to place it in the hands of the powerful and honest who seek neither to be high and mighty on the land nor to corrupt it, who, if Allah establishes them in the land, establish prayer and give alms, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong.

There is Social Work

This work would be aimed at remedying poverty, ignorance, disease and vice, and facing up to those suspect institutions that make social and philanthropic work a tool for altering the Nation's identity and weakening its ties with its creed.

There is Economic Work

This sort of work would contribute to the development of the community to free it from subordination and lift off its burden of usury - based loans, as a prelude to building Islamic economic institutions.

There is the Work of Struggle (Jihad)

It would be aimed at liberating Muslim land, fighting the forces that oppose the Islamic Call and the Muslim Nation, and preserving the freedom of the Muslim will and the independence of the Muslim decision.

There is Media and Propaganda Work

It would be aimed at spreading Islamic ideas and explaining the teachings of Islam in such a way that would restore their middle - course nature and comprehensiveness and eliminate all the ambiguities and lies that may mar their clarity. It should use all the types of media available, from publications to audio and visual aids.

There is Intellectual and Scientific Work

It would be aimed at correcting the perception of Islam in the minds of Muslims and non-Muslims alike, and setting right those wrong concepts and deficient Fatwas (legal Islamic opinion) which have proliferated among some groups of the Islamists themselves, so as to lay down a mature, inspired understanding of the Islamic Movement. Such understanding will be based on a legal foundation derived from the texts and goals of Shari'ah, and it must be especially established among the elite of educated and cultured Muslims who did not actually have a chance to know Islam in a right and proper way.

Distribution of Forces Among the Fields of Work

I believe that all these fields are necessary and that none of them should be neglected or put off. What must be done is to distribute forces and capabilities among them according

to what each of them needs on the one hand and what forces and capabilities we have on the other hand.

The Holy Qur'an forbade that all of the Muslims at the Prophet's time should go to the field of jihad - and what a holy field it was! - And neglect another field that was no less sacred than the field of jihad, and might even have been more sacred at some times because it paved the way for it and reminded Muslims of it and warned them against neglecting it: it is the field of learning their religion well.

In Surah Al-Tawbah [Repentance], which denounced those who held back from jihad and promised severest punishment for those who dragged their feet on the way to the battlefield, Allah the Almighty says **"Nor should the believers all go forth together. If a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion and admonish their people when they return to them, so that they (may learn) to guard themselves"** [122].

This is a strong call for specialization and for distribution of forces among the fields that need them.

What should be Emphasized and Given Priority?

The Islamic Movement should address several matters that have a particular significance in the next phase in the light of the Fiqh of priorities already mentioned. These matters are:

1. Focusing on certain concepts that have to be clarified, generalized and deepened in the intellectual field. This is what we call the "new Fiqh.
2. Focusing on certain social brackets to which the Movement should spread and which the Awakening should include in the field of Muslim call.
3. Focusing on a certain qualitative standard in the preparation and qualification of the readerships of the future in the educational field, particularly where the nurturing of faith and thought are concerned.
4. Focusing on the development of ideas and practices with regard to local and world political relations, so as to break the Movement's domestic isolation and external blockade and ensure its universality and flexibility in the political field.

Ibadaat

Importance of Salah

The prayer is a type of worship consisting of specific statements and actions. It is begun by pronouncing the greatness of Allah, and is concluded with salutations of peace. As prayer is the essence of Islam, we will discuss it here in detail.

To state it simply, prayer must exist, for without it Islam can not stand. The Prophet, upon whom be peace, said, "*The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is the prayer, and the top of its hump is jihad in the way of Allah.*" It was the first act of worship that was made obligatory by Allah. Its obligation was revealed directly to the Prophet, during his ascension to heaven. Said Anas (RA), "The prayers were made obligatory on the Prophet, upon whom be peace, the night of his ascension to heaven. At first, they were fifty in number, but were reduced several times until they were five. Then it was proclaimed, 'O Muhammad, the order is not changed. These five are (equivalent) to the fifty.'" As to the authenticity of the report, it is related by Ahmad, an-Nasa'i and at-Tirmidhi, who said it is Sahih.

Salah is the first act that the person will be held accountable for. 'Abdullah ibn Qart related that the Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, said "The first act that the slave will be accountable for on the Day of Judgment will be prayer. If it is good, then the rest of his acts will be good. And if it is evil, then the rest of his acts will be evil." (Related by at-Tabarani.) It is the last thing that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, recommended to his nation before he died, saying, "Prayer, prayer and what your right hand possesses." It will be the last thing taken away from the religion. When it perishes, Islam will perish. The Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, said, "*If Islam were stripped away, piece by piece, people would hold tight to the next one. The first thing taken would be ruling and governance, and the last thing would be prayer.*" (Related by Ibn Hibban from the Hadith of Abu Umamah.) In many verses of the Qur'an, Allah follows up prayer with the remembrance of Allah. **"Lo! Worship preserves (one) from lewdness and iniquity, but verily, remembrance of Allah is more important."** (Al-'Ankabut 45); **"He is successful who grows and remembers the name of his Lord, so pray** (al-A'la 14-15); **"So serve Me and establish worship for My remembrance"** (Taha 74). Sometimes He mentions prayer along with Zakah: **"Establish prayer and pay Zakah"** (al-Baqarah 110). And at times, with patience: **"Seek help in patience and prayer"** (al-Baqarah 45), and with hajj:

"So pray unto your Lord and sacrifice" (al-Kauthar 2); "Say: Lo! My worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the Worlds. He has no partner. This am I commanded, and I am the first of those who surrender (unto Him)" (al-An'am 162-163). At other times, Allah begins the acts of piety with prayers and ends with them, as in the verses about the ma'arij (ascension to heaven): "Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers," and the verses, "And who pay heed to their prayers. These are the heirs who will inherit Paradise. There will they abide" (al-Mu'minun 1-29-11).

The importance of Salah is so great that one is ordered to observe it while traveling or not, while one is safe or in fear: **"Be guardians of your prayers, and of the mid-most prayer, and stand up with devotion to Allah. And if you go in fear, then (pray) standing or on horseback. When you are safe, remember Allah, as He has taught you that which (heretofore) you knew not" (al-Baqarah 238-239).**

Allah explains how to pray during fear, safety or wartime

"And when you are among them and arrange their prayers for them, let only a party of them stand with you (to worship) and let them take their arms. Then, when they have performed their prostrations, let them fall to the rear and let another party come to pray with you, and let them take their precautions and arms. They who disbelieve long for you to neglect your arms and your baggage that they may attack. It is no sin for you to lay aside your arms, if rain impedes you or if you are sick. But take your precautions. Lo! Allah prepares for the disbelievers shameful punishment. When you have performed your prayer, remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining. And when you are in safety, observe your prayer properly. Prayer at fixed hours has been enjoined on the believers" (an-Nisa' 102-103).

Allah also strongly warns those who tamper with their prayers or are heedless

Says Allah in the Qur'an, **"Now there has succeeded them a later generation who have ruined their prayers and have followed lusts. But they will meet deception" (Maryam 59); "Ah, woe unto worshippers who are heedless of their prayers" (al-Ma'un 4-5).**

Prayer is one of the most important acts in Islam

Prayer is one of the most important acts in Islam, and thus it requires a special guidance. Ibrahim asked his Lord to give him descendants who abided by their prayers: **"My Lord! Cause me and (some) of my offspring to remain constant in prayer. And O our Lord! Accept my supplication"** (Ibrahim 40).

One Who Ignores His Prayers

Not praying and denying its obligation is seen as disbelief and places the person outside the religion of Islam. All scholars agree on this point. They base their opinion on several Hadith, some of which are:

Jabir reports that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, said, *"Between a person's belief and disbelief is discarding prayer."* (Related by Ahmad, Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah.)

Buraidah reported that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, said, *"The pact between us and them is prayer. Whoever abandons it is a disbeliever."* (Related by Ahmad, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah.)

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aas reported that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, one day mentioned the prayer and said, *"Whoever guards and observes his prayer, prayers will be the light and the proof and a savior for him on the Day of Resurrection. Whoever does not guard and observe them, they will not be a light or a proof or a savior for him. On the Day of Resurrection, he will be with Qaarun, Fir'aun, Haman and Ubayy ibn Khalf."* (Related by Ahmad, at-Tabarani and Ibn Hibban. Its chain is excellent.)

That one who does not pray will be with the leaders of the unbelievers in the Hereafter makes it evident that such a person is an unbeliever. Says Ibn al-Qayyim, *"The one who does not pray may be preoccupied with his wealth, kingdom, position or business. If one is kept away from his prayers by his wealth, he will be with Qaarun. One whose kingdom keeps him away from the prayers will be with Haman, and one whose business keeps him away from the prayers will be with Ubayy ibn Khalf."*

Says 'Abdullah ibn Shaqiq al-'Aqeely, *"The companions of Muhammad, peace be upon him, did not consider the abandonment of any act, with the exception of prayer, as being*

disbelief." (Related by at-Tirmidhi and al-Hakim, who said it met al-Bukahri's and Muslim's conditions.)

Says Muhammad ibn Nasr al-Mirwazi, *"I heard Ishaq say, 'It is authentic (that) the Prophet (said or ruled): One who does not pray is an unbeliever.' It is from the Prophet himself that one who intentionally does not pray until the time for the prayer is over is an unbeliever."*

Says Ibn Hazm, *"It has come from 'Umar, 'Abdurahman ibn 'Auf, Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Abu Hurairah and other companions that anyone who skips one obligatory prayer until its time has finished becomes an apostate. We find no difference of opinion among them on this point."* This was mentioned by al-Munzhiri in at-Targheeb wat-Tarheeb. Then he comments, *"A group of companions and those who came after them believed that an intentional decision to skip one prayer until its time is completely finished makes one an unbeliever."* The people of this opinion include 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, Mu'adh ibn Jabal, Jabir ibn 'Abdullah and Abu ad-Darda'. Among the non-companions who shared this view were Ibn Hanbal, Ishaq ibn Rahwaih, 'Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, an-Nakha'i, al-Hakim ibn 'Utaibah, Abu Ayyub as-Sakhtiyani, Abu Dawud at-Tayalisi, Abu Bakr ibn Abu Shaibah, Zuhair ibn Harb, and others.

Some Hadith make it clear that such a person should be killed. For example:

Ibn 'Abbas reported that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, said, *"The ties of Islam and the principles of the religion are three, and whoever leaves one of them becomes an unbeliever, and his blood becomes lawful: testifying that there is no god except Allah, the obligatory prayers, and the fast of Ramadan."* (Related by Abu Ya'la with a hassan chain.) Another narration states, *"If anyone leaves one of them, by Allah he becomes an unbeliever and no voluntary deeds or recompense will be accepted from him, and his blood and wealth become lawful."* This is a clear indication that such a person is to be killed.

Ibn 'Umar related that the Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, said, *"I have been ordered to kill the people until they testify that there is no god except Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and they establish prayer and pay the Zakah. If*

they do that, their blood and wealth are protected from me save by the rights of Islam. Their reckoning will be with Allah." (Related by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

Umm Salamah related that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, said, *"There will be rulers over you who will do good and evil things. Whoever hates these (latter) acts will be innocent of them. Whoever denies them will be safe, but (not) one who accepts and follows them."* They asked, *"Should we kill them?"* He said, *"Not if they pray."* (Related by Muslim.) Therefore, he made it unlawful to kill even an unjust ruler who observes his prayers.

Abu Sa'eed reported that *'Ali, while he was in Yemen, sent the Prophet some gold, which he then divided among four people. A man said, "O Messenger of Allah, beware of Allah." The Prophet said, "Woe to you. Of all the people of the earth, am I not the most dutiful in being aware of Allah?" Khalid ibn al-Walid said, "O Messenger of Allah, shall I kill him?" He said, "Perhaps he is one of those who pray." Khalid said, "How many people say with their tongues what is not in their hearts?" The Prophet said, "I have not been ordered to look into the hearts of people, nor to rip open their bellies."* (Abridged from al-Bukhari and Muslim.) In this Hadith also, prayer is given as the reason for not killing a person. It is understood, therefore, that not praying would have resulted in the person's killing.

Even though the preceding Hadith clearly rule that one who discards Salah becomes an unbeliever and should be killed, many early and later scholars (excluding Abu Hanifah, Malik and ash-Shafi'i) believe that such people become evildoers who must repent. If such a person does not repent, he is to be killed, that being the prescribed punishment, according to Malik, ash-Shafi'i and others. Abu Hanifah maintains that such a person is not to be killed, but must be given a minor punishment and confined until he prays. They say the Hadith that calls such people unbelievers refer to those who deny the prayers, and so on. They say that any other interpretation is contradicted by other texts. For example, Allah says, **"Lo! Allah does not pardon one who gives Him partners. He pardons all save whom He wills"** (an-Nisa' 116). There is also a Hadith related by Abu Hurairah and recorded by Ahmad and Muslim in which the Prophet, upon whom be peace, said, *"Every prophet has a special supplication that is answered. Every prophet hastened to make his supplication, but I concealed mine and will use it for my nation on the Day of Resurrection. It will be granted – Allah willing – to whoever dies without associating any partners with*

Allah." Al-Bukhari also recorded that Abu Hurairah reported that the Prophet, upon whom be peace, said, "The person who will be the happiest due to my intercession is the one who says, 'There is no god but Allah' sincerely from his heart."

Says ash-Shaukani, "The truth of the matter is that he becomes an unbeliever who is to be killed for his unbelief. The Hadith authenticates that Islamic law calls one who does not pray an unbeliever. It has also put the performance as the barrier between a believer and an unbeliever. Abandoning prayer means he may be called an unbeliever. We need not concern ourselves with arguments presented by those of the opposing opinion. We can say to them: It is not impossible that some types of unbelievers may obtain forgiveness or may have a right to intercession, such as the unbelief of those who pray to (our) Qiblah. Nevertheless, the fact remains that they commit some sins, which the Islamic law views as unbelief. To turn to the other narrow interpretations is just redundant."

The Purpose of Prayer

Prayer constitutes one pillar of Islam and is considered the Foundation of Religion. Any Muslim who fails to observe his prayers and has no reasonable excuse is committing a grave offense and a heinous sin. This offense is so grave because it is not only against God, which is bad enough, but is also against the very nature of man. It is an instinct of man to be inclined to adore the great beings, and to aspire to lofty goals. The greatest being and the loftiest goal of all is God. The best way to cultivate in man a sound personality and actualize his aspirations in a mature course of development is the Islamic Prayer. To neglect prayer is to oppress the good qualities in human nature and unjustifiably deny it the right to adore and love, the right to aspire and ascend, the right to excel in goodness and achieve noble aims. Such oppression and denial constitute a very serious and destructive offense. Here lies the significance and vitality of prayer in the life of man.

It should always be borne in mind that God does not need man's prayer, because He is free of all needs. He is only interested in our prosperity and well being in every sense. When He emphasizes the necessity of prayer and charges us with any duty, He means to help us; because whatever good we do is for our own benefit, and whatever offense we commit is against our own souls. Here too, man is the center of gravity, and his common interest is the main concern. The benefit which man can derive from the Islamic prayer is immeasurable, and the blessing of prayer is beyond imagination. This is not just a "theory"

or conventional assumption; it is a fascinating fact and a spiritual experience. Here is an explanation of the effectiveness of the Islamic prayer:

1. It strengthens the belief in the Existence and Goodness of God and transmits this belief into the innermost recesses of man's heart.
2. It enlivens this belief and makes it constructive in the practical course of life.
3. It helps man to realize his natural and instinctive aspirations to greatness and high morality, to excellence and virtuous growth.
4. It purifies the heart and develops the mind, cultivates the conscience and comforts the soul.
5. It fosters the good and upright elements in man, and suppresses the evil and indecent inclinations.

When we analyze the Islamic prayer and study its unique nature, it will reveal to us that it is not merely a physical motion or a void recital of the Holy Book. It is a matchless and unprecedented formula of intellectual meditation and spiritual devotion, of moral elevation and physical exercise, all combined. It is an exclusively Islamic experience where every muscle of the body joins the soul and the mind in the worship and glory of God. It is difficult for anyone to impart in words the full meaning of the Islamic prayer, yet it can be said that it is:

1. A lesson in discipline and willpower;
2. A practice in devotion to God and all worthy objectives;
3. A vigilant reminder of God and constant revelation of His Goodness;
4. A seed of spiritual cultivation and moral soundness;
5. A guide to the most upright way of life;
6. A safeguard against indecency and evil, against wrong deviation and stray;
7. A demonstration of true equality, solid unity, and brotherhood;
8. An expression of thankfulness to God and appreciation of Him;
9. A course of inner peace and stability;
10. An abundant source of patience and courage, of hope and confidence.

This is the Islamic prayer, and that is what it can do for man. The best testimony to this statement is to experience the prayer and avail oneself of its spiritual joys. Then one will know what it really means.

Meaning of Salah

What Do You Recite In 'Salah'

Salah prepares a man for Allah's '*Ibadah*', i.e. servitude and obedience. Whatever I said in this connection should have helped you to comprehend that if one offers *Salah* regularly considering it his duty according to the Divine injunction, it keeps alive in his mind the fear of God, the belief in His Omniscience and Omnipresence and the conviction that he is accountable before Him, even though he may not understand the meaning of what he is reciting. By this continuous practice the belief that he is slave of none but God and that God alone is his real Sovereign and Ruler, becomes a living consciousness in his mind. The habit of being dutiful and ready to carry out God's commandment is developed. All those qualities are automatically developed in him, which are necessary to transform the entire life of a man into one of servitude and worship of God.

Now I want to stress the fact that if a man were to observe this very *Salah* with a full understanding of its contents and consciousness of what he is reciting. Imagine what a tremendous effect will it produce on his thoughts, habits and natural qualities and to what great extent his power of faith will develop and how his life will be refashioned.

'Adhaan' and its effects

Let us first take the case of Adhaan. You are summoned by it five times a day with the following words:

Allahu Akbar, (repeated four times)

Allah is the Greatest of all,

Ash-hadu al-la Ilaha ill-Allah (repeated twice)

I testify that there is no god but Allah.

Ash-hadu anna Muhammad-ar-Rasulullah (repeated twice)

I testify that Muhammad (peace be on him) is the Messenger of Allah.

Hayya' ala-a-Salah (repeated twice)

Come for prayer.

Hayya'ala-a-falah [repeated twice]

Come for well-being.

Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar,

Allah is the Greatest of all; Allah is the Greatest of all.

La ilaha ill-Allah,

There is no god but Allah.

See how forceful a call it is! How this voice reverberates five times a day and reminds you that. "All the big entities on the earth that you see laying claim to divinity are liars. In the earth and the heavens there is only one Being Who possesses the attribute of greatness and He alone is worthy of worship. Come and worship Him. In His worship alone lies your well-being of this world and that of the Hereafter". Who is there who will not be moved on hearing this voice? How is it possible for anyone who has faith in his heart to hear such a great testimony and so powerful a call, and yet sit heedlessly and not run to bow his head before his Master?

Wadhu' (Ablution)

On hearing the above voice you rise from your seat and first of all see whether your body is clean or not, whether you have done Wadhu' or not? This shows that you are conscious of the fact that the matter of attending the court of the Lord of all the worlds is different from all the other affairs of the world. Other works can be done in every condition but here it is highly disrespectful to attend without cleanliness of body and dress and, over and above it, without further purity, i.e. Wadhu'. With this feeling you first satisfy yourself about your being clean and then begin doing Wadhu'. If in the course of Wadhu', while washing your limbs, you remember Allah and after finishing it recite the prayer taught by the Messenger of Allah (peace be on Him) not only your limbs but along with these your heart also will be washed clean. The words of this prayer are:

Ash-hadu al la ilaha ill-Allahu Wahdahula Sharika lahu Wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan 'abdu-hu wa rashuluhu Allah-umma j'alni min-attawwa bina waj'alni minalmuta-tahirin.

"I testify there is no god save one single God, Who has no associate and I testify that Muhammad is Allah's slave and messenger. O God! Include me among the repentents and make me keep pure."

Beginning

After this, you stand up for Salah with your face toward Qibla. Neat and clean you are attending the court of the Sovereign of the universe. First and foremost, you utter the words:

Allahu Akbar

"Allah is the Greatest of all ".

Admitting this superb reality, you raise your hands to your ears as if you have relieved yourself of the world and whatever there is in it. Then you clasp your hands around yourself so that you are now standing reverently before your Sovereign with folded hands. After this you make the following submission:

'Tasbih'

Subhanak-Allahumma wa bi-hamdika wa tabarakasmuka wa ta ala jadduka wa la-Ilaha ghairuk.

"O Allah, I affirm Thine purity and that too with your praise. Highly blessed is Thy name. Sublime is Thine greatness and there is no god save Thou".

'Ta'awwudh' (Seeking refuge with Allah)

A'udhu billahi min-ash-shaitan-ir-rajim

I seek refuge in God from the intermeddling and mischief of cursed Satan".

'Bismillah' (In the name of Allah)

Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim

"I begin with the name of Allah Who is most Beneficent and Merciful."

'Hamd' (Praise of Allah)

Al-hamdu lillahi Rabbil-alamain

"Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds".

Ar-Rahman-ir-Rahim

"The Beneficent, the most Merciful ".

Maliki Yaum-id-din

Master of the Day of Judgment".

Iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in

"Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone we ask for help".

Ihdi-na-a-sirat-al-mustaqima

"Shows us the straight path ".

Sirat-allazina an'amta 'alaihim

"The path of those whom Thou hast favored ".

Ghair-il-maghdubi 'alaihim wa la-ddallin

Not (the path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray "

Amen (Surah Al-Fatiha)

"O God! Let it be so. O Lord! Grant this our prayer."

After this you recite some verses of the Qur'an each of which is wisdom and beauty. There are instructions, admonitions and lessons as also directions to guide you to the same straight path for which you have prayed in Surah Al-Fatiha.

For instance:

Different Surahs Of Qur'an

1. 'Wal-Asr' (103)**Wal-'Asr-i Inn-al-Insana lafi Khusrin**

By the time," "Lo! Man is in a state of loss."

Illallazina amanu wa 'amilus-salihati

"Save those who believe and so do good works "

Wa tawasau bil-haqqi wa tawasau bi-s-sabr

And exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance. "

This Surah teaches us that the only way for man to be saved from destruction and failure is to believe and do good work. And this too is not enough. There ought to be a class of believers who should help each other in keeping Deen intact and in establishing it.

Or for instance:

2. 'Humazah' (104)**Wail-ullikulli humazatin lumazati**

"Woe unto every slandering traducer,

Nil-lazi jama'amala wa 'addadah

"Who hath gathered wealth (of the world) and counted it.

Yahsabu anna malahu Akhladah

He thinketh that his wealth will render him immortal.

Kalla layunbazanna fil hutamah

"Nay, but verily he will be flung to the Consuming One is!

Nar-ullah-il-muqadat-ullati tattalio'alal afidah

"(It is) the fire of Allah, kindled, "Which leapeth up over the hearts (of men).

Innaha 'alaihim musadatun fi amadam mumaddah

"Lo! It is closed in one of them"

"In outstretched columns."

Or for instance:

3. ' Al-Ma'un ' (107)

Ara-ait alladhi yukazzibu biddin

Hast thou observed him who belieth accountability?

Fadhalik alladhi Yadu 'ul-yatim

That is who repelleth the orphan,

Wala Yahuddu 'ala Ta am-ul-miskin

"And urgeth not the feeding of the needy,

Fa-wail-ul-lilmusallin-alladhina hum'an salati-him sahun. Alladhina hum Yura'un Wa Yamna'un-al Ma'un

"Ah, woe unto worshippers"

"Who are heedless of their prayer;"

"Who wish to be seen (at worship)

"And refuse small kindnesses".

This Surah teaches us that faith in the Hereafter is the essence of Islam. Without it a man can never walk on that which is the path of God. In short, whichever Surahs or verses of the Qur'an you recite in the Salah they impart you some kind of instruction or guidance and point out to you what are those commandments of God, which you should follow in this world.

'Ruku' (bowing)

After reciting these instructions you say Allahu Akbar and do Ruku'. Placing your hands on the knees you bow before your Master and utter repeatedly (either three times or five times or seven):

Subhana Rabbi-al-'Azim

" Blessed is my Lord the Magnificent ". Then you stand straight and say:

Sami'-Allahu li-man hamidah

" Allah listened to him who praised Him".

'Sajdah'

Then saying Allahu Akbar you prostrate twice in Sajdah and repeatedly utter:

Subhana Rabbi-al-Aa'la

" Blessed is my Lord Who is most High and Sublime".

'At-Tahiyyat' (Salutation)

Then you raise your head saying Allahu Akbar and sit reverently and recite:

Atta-hiyyatu lillahi was-salawatu wat-tayyibatu as-salamu'alaika ayyuh-an-Nabbiyu wa rahmat-ullahi wa barakatuhu As-salamu 'alai-na wa 'ala'Ibadullahi-is-Salihin Ash-hadu an-la-Ilaha ill-Allah Wa ash hadu anna Muhammadan 'abduhu wa Rasuluh

"Our salutations, our prayers and all pure things are for Allah. Salutation to you O Prophet and Mercy and Blessing of Allah. Peace be on us and on all pious servants of Allah. I testify that there is no god save Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is the servant and messenger of Allah".

While giving this testimony you raise your first finger because this constitutes in the Salah a declaration of your faith and it is necessary while uttering it to give special attention and emphasis to it. After this you recite Durud blessing upon Muhammad (peace be upon him):

'Salah'

Allahumma Salli ala Muhammadin wa 'ala Ali Muhammadin Kama Sallaita 'ala Ibrahima wa 'ala ali Ibrahima Innaka Hamid-um-Majid Allahumma barik'ala Muhammad-in-wa'ala ali Muhammadin Kama barakat 'ala Ibrahima wa 'ala ali Ibrahima innaka Hamid-um-Majid

"O God! Bestow benediction on Muhammad and on his progeny just as You showered blessings on Abraham and on his progeny. Most certainly You are adorned with the best qualities and are sublime. O God! Confer blessings on Muhammad and on his progeny just as You conferred blessings on Abraham and on his progeny. Most certainly You are adorned with the best qualities and are sublime. After reciting this Durud you supplicate Allah:

'Dua' (Supplication)

Allahumma inni a'uzu bika min 'azabi Jahannam wa a'uzu bika min'azabil Qabri wa a'uzu bika min fitnatil Masihiddajjal wa a'uzu bika min fitnatil mahya wal mamati wa a'uzu bika min-al ma-sini wal maghrim

"O God! I seek Your protection from the torture of hell, and I seek Your protection from the torture of the grave and I seek Your protection from the mischief of Dajjal pretending as Messiah and I seek refuge with You from the mischief of life and death. O God! I seek refuge with You from the responsibility of misdeeds and from indebtedness."

'Salaam' (Salutation at the time of concluding the prayers)

After reciting the above Dua, Salah is complete. Now you return from the court of your Master, and what is the first thing you do on return? You turn your head to the right and to the left and pray for the safety and blessings of all those present and everything in the world:

As-Salaam-o-Alaikum wa Rahmatullah

(Peace to you and mercy of Allah).

This is like good tidings that you have brought for the world on your return from the court of God.

The above is the Salah, which you offer at dawn on rising from bed before you start the work of the world. Then after being busy for a few hours in some work you present yourself in God's court in the afternoon to offer the same Salah again. Then after keeping busy for some hours you repeat it before dusk. Then again you repeat it at dusk. Ultimately, on being relieved from the worldly work, and before going to bed, you present yourself for the

last time before your Master. The concluding part of this final Salah consists of Witr, in the last rak'ah of which you submit a grand covenant before your Master. This is called Dua-i-Qunut. The meaning of Qunut is affirmation of humility, subservience and servitude before God. Listen carefully to words with which you make this affirmation:

'Dua-al-Qunut'

Allahumma inna nasta-'inuka wa nastahdika wa nastaghfiruka wa nu minubika wa natawakkalu 'alaika-al-khaira wa nashkuruka wa la nakfuruka wa nakhla'u wanatruku manyyafjuruk Allahumma iyyaka na'budu walaka nusalli wa nasjudu wailaika nas'a wa nahfidu wa narju rahmataka wa nakshha 'azabaka inna 'azabaka bil-kuffari mulhiq.

"O God! We seek help from You. We ask for Your guidance. We seek Your forgiveness. We affirm faith in You. We rely on You only and say all praise exclusively for You. We express gratitude to You and do not commit ungratefulness. We will abandon every such person and sever connection with him, who disobeys You O God! We are servile to You and we offer Salah and Sajdah to you only, and all our endeavor and striving are aimed at seeking Your pleasure only. We look for Your mercy and fear Your retribution. Certainly Your dire punishment will befall those who are unbelievers.

'Salah' and Character-Building

Imagine a person who hears the voice of Adhaan five times in a day and feels that some big thing is being testified and we are being summoned to the presence of a highly powerful sovereign; who every time on hearing this call, leaves all his work and runs to that Sublime Being Whom he considers Master of himself as also of the entire universe; who before every Salah purifies his body and soul with Wadhu' and who performs with full understanding all these things again and again in the Salah which I have just now described to you.

How is it possible that fear of God will not arise in his heart that he will not feel ashamed to violate God's commandments, that his soul will not shudder during his repeated attendance before God on account of his sins and evil doings? How is it possible that a man who affirms servitude and obedience to God, and believes in His being Master of the Day of Judgment, will, on resuming his worldly work, indulge in lies, dishonesty, usurping

of others' rights, taking and giving of bribe, taking and giving of interest, causing injury to slaves of God and commit obscene and illicit acts, and yet go again in the presence of God loaded with all these misdeeds and have the guts to repeat these very affirmations? How is it possible that after making affirmation with full consciousness before God thirty-six times a day that **"Thee (alone) we worship; Thee alone we ask for help"** and worship others besides God and extend your hands before them for help? If once you have committed violation after making the affirmation, the second time when you go before God your conscience will censure you and you will feel embarrassed.

The reproach will be greater at a second violation and the heart will upbraid you from within all the more. How can it happen throughout your life that you are continuously offering Salah five times a day and yet your deeds are not set right, your morals are not improved and your life is not fundamentally changed? For this very reason Allah has emphasized the characteristic of Salah as: "Verily Salah prevents man from committing indecency and lewdness". Yet if there be such a man who is unaffected even by such a tremendous reformatory process, then it is due to the wickedness of his own self not the fault of Salah. It is not the defect of soap and water. The reason is coal's own blackness.

There is very great deficiency in your Salah. And it is this that you do not understand what you recite in it. If you spend a little time you can learn by heart the meaning of all these Dua'as (supplications) in English or in your own tongue. Its benefit will be that you will understand what you recite.

Why Has 'Salah' Become Ineffective

In today's lecture I have to explain to you as to why *Salah*, the numerous benefits of which I have been continuously describing to you in my several discourses, is not now yielding these benefits. Why is it that although you offer *Salah*, yet your life is not ameliorated, your morals do not become pure, you do not become a powerful army of God, the unbelievers are dominating over you, and you find yourselves in a wretched and destitute plight?

A brief answer to this question could be that, firstly, you do not generally offer *Salah* and, secondly, when you offer it you do not perform it in the manner prescribed by Allah and His Messenger. Therefore you cannot expect those benefits from *Salah*, which elevate a *Momin* to the highest degree of excellence. But I know this much answer will not satisfy you. Therefore I shall explain this point to you in some detail.

One example – clock

You see in the clock fixed on the wall before you that lots of small parts in it are joined with each other. When you wind it, all the parts start working and as these parts move, the result of their movements starts showing on the white disc outside, i.e. both the hands crawl to denote each second and each minute. Now you observe carefully. The purpose of making the clock is that it should indicate the correct time. With this aim in view all those parts, which are necessary to show the correct time, have been fitted in. Then all these have been joined with each other so that together they move synchronously, while every part performs that much specific work which it must to give the correct time. Then the winding system was made so that these parts do not remain stationary but move recurrently. Thus when all the parts were adjusted correctly and winding was done, then only did this clock begin fulfilling the purpose for which it was made.

If you do not wind it, it will not show time. If you wind it but not according to the method prescribed for it, it will stop, or, even it works, it will not give the correct time. If you remove some of the parts and then wind it, it will be a futile effort. If you replace some of the parts with those of the sewing machine and then wind it, it will neither indicate the time nor sew any cloth. If you keep all its parts inside it but disjoin these from each other then no part will move even after winding it.

Although all the parts will be present inside it yet their presence will not serve the purpose for which a clock is made because you have disrupted their arrangement as well as their connection with each other as a result of which they cannot move together. In all these positions which I have described to you, although both the existence of the clock and the act of winding it become useless, an observer from a distance cannot say that it is not a clock or that you are not winding it. He will surely say that its shape is just like that of a clock and will expect that it will be as useful as a clock. Similarly, when from a distance he will see you winding it he will take it as a genuine effort on your part to do the job hoping to notice the result, which comes off from winding a clock. But how can this expectation be fulfilled when it looks like a clock only from a distance while in reality it has lost its existence.

Aim of Muslim 'Ummah'

You can understand the whole situation from the example I have given you. You can judge Islam on the lines of this clock. Just as the purpose of the clock is to indicate the correct time, in the same way the aim of Islam is that you live in this world as the vicegerent of God, as a witness of God against mankind and a standard-bearer of the campaign of Truth in this world. You must yourselves follow the commandments of God, enforce these on all people and make them submissive to the law of God. This objective has been clearly stated in the Qur'an: **"You are the best community that has been raised up for mankind. Your task is to enjoin righteousness on all and prevent them from misdeeds, and believe in Allah."** (Al-Qur'an 3:110) **"And thus We have made you the best community so that you be witness against mankind."** (Al-Qur'an 2:143) **"Allah has promised such of you as believe and do good work that He will surely make them His caliph in the earth."** (Al-Qur'an 24:55)

"And fight them till the mischief of servitude to other than Allah is annihilated and the worship is Completely for Allah alone." (Al-Qur'an 8:39)

Islamic orders are coherent like parts of clock

In order to fulfill this purpose, in Islam also all the parts, like those of the clock, have been assembled which are considered necessary and appropriate. Religious beliefs and principles of morality, rules for worldly dealings, rights of God, rights of His slaves, rights of one's own self, rights of everything in the world which you encounter, rules of earning livelihood and methods of expenditure, law of war and rules for making peace, laws of

governance and the manner of obeying the Islamic government – all these are parts of a clock, are fastened to each other in such a sequence that as soon as winding is done, every part, in conjunction with the parts starts moving and with the movement of all these parts, the real result, i.e. domination of Islam and preponderance of God's laws in the world, starts continuously manifesting itself just as with the movement of the parts of the clock in front of you.

The result goes on appearing on its white disc. In order to fasten together the different parts in the clock; some nails and small pieces of metal have been used. Similarly, in order to keep together all the parts Islam had to maintain their correct sequence, there is one instrument, which is called Nizam-ul-Jama'ah. There should be a chief of the Muslims equipped with correct knowledge and adorned with the quality of piety and the brains in the Jama'ah, should jointly help him and the limbs of the Jama'ah should obey him.

With the strength of them all, he should enforce the laws of Islam and prevent the people from violating them. In this way when all the parts are joined together, and they are properly arranged, then to set them in motion and to continue their movement, winding is necessary and that winding is provided by Salah which is offered five times in a day. Then it is also necessary to clean this clock and for this purpose fasting constitutes the cleaning process which is observed for thirty days in a year. And this clock requires to be lubricated. Zakah is that oil which is applied to its parts once in a year. This oil does not come from outside but some parts of this clock themselves produce oil. Then it is also necessary to overhaul it off and on. Hajj is that overhauling which is necessary to perform at least once in a lifetime. And the more it is done, the better it is.

Joining disparate not useful

Now you should note that this process of winding, cleaning, lubricating and overhauling can be useful only when all the parts of the clock are present in the frame. When each one of these is joined with the other in the same order as was followed by the clock-maker, and all are so fitted that immediately on winding they start moving and begin showing results.

But here, the situation has become quite different. First of all, the very Nizam-ul-Jama'ah with which the parts of the clock were fastened together, has ceased to exist, with the result that all the fittings have got loosened and disjointed, and the parts left scattered.

Now everybody does whatever comes into their mind. There is nobody to question anything. Everyone is independent. If they desired, they would follow the Islamic law, otherwise not. When even this did not satisfy them, they pulled out many parts of the clock and in their place everybody, as they chose, brought any part they wished from some other machine and tried putting these foreign parts into the clock. One person brought a part of sewing machine, which he liked, another brought a part which he liked, and yet another brought something from a car, which he admired, and they all fixed these pieces in the clock.

The simile is quite appropriate because, you, being a Muslim, carry on business in usury, you have insured your life with an insurance company, you get involved in bogus law suits, you render loyal service to Kufr, your daughters, sisters, and wives are being turned into western models, your children are being imparted materialistic education. Mr. Gandhi is also being followed along with singing of songs in praise of Mr. Lenin. In short, there is no un-Islamic gadget, which our Muslim brothers have not thrust in the frame of the clock of Islam.

Those desirous of unexpected results

After doing all these antics you now desire this clock to operate on winding it, and show the same result for which it was made. Also by the supposed cleaning, lubricating and overhauling of it you expect the same benefits that naturally follow a genuine process. With a little wisdom you can easily understand that in the condition to which you have reduced the clock, no result can be achieved even if you wind it, lubricate it, and overhaul it for your whole life. Till such time as you do not remove the parts brought from outside and in their place put the original ones and fix and tighten them with the same arrangements as was followed in the beginning, you can never expect those results which were once shown by the clock.

Real reason why religious practices are ineffective

Please understand fully that the above is the real reason why your Salah, fasting, Zakah and Hajj are inconsequential. In the first place, there are so few among you who offer Salah, observe fast, give Zakah and perform Hajj. Due to the dissolution of Nizam-ul-Jama'ah, everybody has become totally independent. Whether he fulfils these obligatory duties or not, nobody is there to question him. Neither those who perform these functions,

do so in a befitting manner. There is no constancy among them in attending congregational Salah and if that practice is found anywhere, such persons are selected as Imams in the mosques who are fit for no other work in the world. Those who subsist on the charity-bread doled out to mosques and are uneducated, having no caliber and morally depressed, have been appointed any one of you as Imams of that Salah which was ordained to make you Allah's vicegerent upon the Earth.

Likewise, the condition of fasts, Zakah, and Hajj are such that they defy description. In spite of all these facts you may assert that even now there are certainly numerous Muslims who discharge their religious duties in proper order. But as I have stated, when the position is this that the parts of the clock have been disjointed and scores of pieces from outside have been inserted in it, it makes no difference if you wind it or not, clean it or not, lubricate it or not. Of course from a distance it does look like a clock. An observer would say: "This is Islam and you are Muslims". When you wind this clock and clean it, a distant onlooker would conclude that you are doing it quite genuinely. Nobody can obviously deny its being "Salah" and Fasting", but what do the observer know that inside this outward frame all sort of "workmanship" has been spoilt?

Our deplorable condition

I have explained to you the real reason why religious deeds of yours are today unproductive of result and why, despite offering Salah and observing fasts you are in the clutches of unbelievers and an easy prey to every oppressor, instead of becoming a divine inspector. But if you won't take it ill, I may tell you a far more distressing fact. You no doubt regret this plight and feel its pang but there are nineteen hundred and ninety-nine in a thousand such people, even more, who are not willing for a change through the proper remedy. They cannot bear prefabrication of this clock of Islam, which has been dismembered and infested with accretions by all and sundry according to their individual liking, because when the extraneous material will be thrown out in this process each and every body's pet article will be inevitably removed. It cannot be that things liked by others are done away with but the extraneous part you have inserted is retained.

Similarly, when your piece is riveted, all other pieces will also be riveted alongside. It is not possible at all that the pieces of all others are tightened and your pieces alone are left

loose. The central point, therefore, is that when these will be tightened, others also will be tightened, and it is a difficult labor to be tolerated by the people cheerfully.

That is why they want this clock to remain as it is as a piece of decoration on the wall for people to be brought and shown from a distance as a bundle of miracles. Those who are greater well-wishers of this clock than others would like to repeatedly and zealously wind it in this very condition and also clean it most laboriously but will never have its parts properly reset and tightened, and it is a difficult labor to be tolerated by the people cheerfully.

That is why they want this clock to remain as it is as a piece of decoration on the wall for people to be brought and shown from a distance as a bundle of miracles. Those who are greater well-wishers of this clock than others, would like to repeatedly and zealously wind it in this very condition and also clean it most laboriously but will never have its parts properly reset and tightened, nor will they desire to get rid of the extraneous parts.

I wish I could fall in line with you, but I am helpless because I cannot negate my knowledge. I assure you that, in view of deplorable condition, if besides the five-time prayers, you were to offer Tahajjud, and Ishraq prayers, and also read the Qur'an for five hours a day, and observe, over and above Ramadan, extra fasts for five and a half months in the remaining eleven months, even then no benefit will be achieved. The position you ought to understand is that only after the original parts are set properly in the clock and are riveted firmly, then even a slight winding will make it operate smoothly, and a little cleaning and lubrication of it will also produce the desired result. Otherwise, if you wind it for the whole of your life, the clock will never work. "Wama alaina illal balagh."

There is no responsibility on us except conveying the truth.

The Conditions of Prayer

The nine conditions of prayers are as follows:

- 1) Islâm,
- 2) Sanity,
- 3) Maturity,
- 4) Performing the ablution (*Wadhu*),
- 5) Cleanliness from impurities (on the body, clothes, and place of prayer),
- 6) Dressing properly
- 7) Having the intention of prayers,
- 8) Facing the right direction of *Qibla* (direction of Ka'aba at Makkah), and
- 9) The praying at the proper time.

The Kinds of Prayer

Obligatory (Fard), which includes the five daily prayers, the Friday's noon congregation and the funeral prayer. Failure to observe these prayers is a serious and punishable sin, if there is no reasonable excuse.

Supererogatory (Wajib and Sunnah), which includes the prayers accompanying the obligatory services, and the congregations of the two great festivals (Eids). Failure to observe these is a harmful negligence and a reproachable conduct.

Optional prayer, which includes all voluntary prayers at any time of the day or the night. Two periods have a special preference: the later part of the night until just before the breaking of the dawn and the mid-morning period.

The Times of Prayer

Every Muslim, male or female, must offer at least five daily prayers in time, if there is no lawful reason for exemption, combination, or temporary delay, They are:

- The Early Morning Prayer (Salat-ul-Fajr), which may be offered any time after the dawn and before sunrise, a total period of about two hours.
- The Noon Prayer (Salatu-z-Zuhr) This prayer may be offered anytime after the sun begins to decline from its Zenith until it is about midway on its course to setting. For example, if the sun sets at 7:00 p.m. the prayer time begins a little after 12:00 noon and continues until a little after 3:30 p.m. Soon after that the time of the next prayer begins. However, there are accurate calendars telling the time of each prayer. But if there is none available, one must resort to one's best judgment.
- The Mid-Afternoon Prayer (Salatu-l-'Asr), which begins right after the expiration of the Noon Prayer time and extends to sunset.
- The Sunset Prayer (Salatu-l-Maghrib). The time of this prayer begins immediately after sunset and extends till the red glow in the western horizon disappears. Normally it extends over a period of one hour and twenty to thirty minutes.

- The Evening Prayer (Salatu-l-'Isha'), which begins after the red glow in the western horizon disappears (nearly one hour and thirty minutes after sunset) and continues till a little before the dawn.

It is noticeable that Islam has set the times of prayers in such a way that our spiritual recreation remarkably coincides with our physical nourishment, and combines the peace of mind with the relaxation of body. The Early Morning Prayer is due in the regular period of breakfast; the Noon-Prayer coincides with the lunch period; the Mid-Afternoon Prayer falls about the break time for tea or coffee; the Sunset Prayer is about the supper time; and the Evening Prayer corresponds with the late snack. It is also noticeable that the Muslim, by observing these prayers, marks the whole day with a spiritual stamp in the beginning, at the end and throughout. So he combines religion and life, feels the presence of God within him throughout the day, concludes his daily transactions with a spiritual feeling and builds up his moral prestige on strong foundations. Moreover, in this way the Muslim introduces spiritual vitality into all aspects of his life, and religion presents itself to all fields of activity. It becomes effective in shops and offices, homes and farms, factories and plants. It extends its light to every circle of business and work. Indeed, this timetable of prayer is remarkable because it is the work of God and the product of Islam.

It is always preferable to offer the prayer as soon as the time sets in, lest some things cause unexpected delay or postponement. These prayers are Divine contests. The reward for those who pass the contests is immeasurable, and their delight is beyond imagination. The happiness they attain, the rejoicing they feel, and the honor they receive cannot be expressed in words. On the other hand. Failure to participate in these contests is a punishable sin. It causes severe penalties, spiritual deprivation, mental agony and social isolation.

The Noon (Zuhr) and the Afternoon, ('Asr) Prayers may be offered together, if a person is traveling or sick. The same permission is granted with regard to the Sunset (Maghrib) and the Evening ('Isha) Prayers.

Arkaan (Pillars) of Salah

The fourteen Basic Elements (*Arkaan*) of prayers:

- 1) Standing (if one is able);
- 2) Saying “*Allâhu Akbar*” which means: Allâh is the Greatest,
- 3) Reading the opening *Surah* of the Qur'an (*Al-Fatiha*);
- 4) Lowering the head and back down at the right angle (*Ruku*);
- 5) Resuming the initial standing position;
- 6) Prostrating with the toes of both feet, both knees, both hands and the forehead touching the ground (*Sujud*);
- 7) Rising in a sitting position;
- 8) A short rest in a sitting posture between the two prostration;
- 9) Tranquility in all actions;
- 10) Performing the Basic Elements of prayer in order;
- 11) The last *Tashahud* (the second part);
- 12) Sitting for the last *Tashahud*;
- 13) Exalting the Prophet Muhammad (asws); and
- 14) Turning the face to the right side and to the left one saying “*Assalamu Alaykum wa Rahmatullah*” (Peace and Mercy of Allâh be upon you) one time on each side.

The eight obligatory acts of the Salah

- 1) All the occasions of saying "*Allâhu Akbar*" other than *Takbeerat Al-Ihram*;
- 2) Saying "*Sami Allâhu liman Hamidah*" (Allâh accepts any who are thankful to Him) by the Imam as well as the one who is praying alone, and
- 3) Saying "*Rabbana wa laka Al-Hamd*" (Our *Rabb*, Allâh is the True God and Sustainer, praise be to You) for both the Imam and the individual;
- 4) Saying "*Subhana Rabbi Al-Adheem*" (Glory to my *Rabb* (Allâh), the Most Great) in *Ruku*;
- 5) Saying "*Subhana Rabbi Al- A'la*" (Glory to my *Rabb* (Allâh), the Most High) in *Sujud*;
- 6) Saying "*Rabbighfir li*" (Oh! my *Rabb*, grant forgiveness to me) between the two prostrations;
- 7) The first part (*At-Tashahud Al-Awwal*); and
- 8) Sitting for it.

The Sunan (supererogatory) acts of the Salah

1. The opening call of the prayer.
2. Placing the right hand over the left one with both over the chest while in the standing position.
3. Raising the hands up to the level of the shoulders or near the ears with the fingers being close together (not separated) when saying *Allâhu Akbar* at the beginning of the prayer, when performing the *Ruku*, when resuming the standing position after *Ruku*, and when standing to begin the third unit of the prayer.
4. Saying *Subhana Rabbi Adheem* and *Subhana Rabbi Al-A'la* more than once in *Ruku* and *Sujud*, respectively.
5. Saying *Rabbighfir li warhamni wahdini warzuqni wa'afini, ' wqjburni* (Allâh, My Rabb, grant me forgiveness, have mercy on me, guide me, provide me with Your blessings and console me) more than once between the two prostrations.
6. Bowing down making the head and back on one level. This is the position of *Ruku*.
7. While prostrating, the arms should not be brought close to the sides nor the abdomen to the thighs or the thighs to the legs.
8. Raising the arms in *Sujud*.
9. Praying for the Prophet and the family of Muhammad r, Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim (as in *Tashahud*).
10. Performing the early morning prayer and the first two units of the sunset and the evening prayer with an audible voice.
11. Sitting between prostrations on the outer side of the left foot (i.e., laying it flat) keeping the right foot erected with the internal pads of the toes touching the ground. The same position is to be taken while sitting in the First Part of *Tashahud*.
12. Taking the position of "*Tawar'ruk*" during the recitation of the full *Tashahud*. The person sits on his left foot laid down with his right foot erected.
13. Making *Dua'a* (to invoke Allâh) following the recitation of the last *Tashahud*.
14. Whispering the recitation in the *Dhuhr* (noon), *Asr* (late afternoon), the third *raka'* of *Maghrib* (Sunset) prayer, and the last two *raka'at* of the *Isha'* (Evening) prayer.
15. Reciting another passage from the Holy Qur'an after the opening *Surah* of *Al-Fatiha*.

Invalidators of the Salah

Any prayer is invalid and nullified if any of the following acts are committed:

- 1) Intentional talking,
- 2) Laughing,
- 3) Eating,
- 4) Drinking,
- 5) Uncovering the parts of the body of which are not allowed to be uncovered during prayer,
- 6) Excessive alteration in the direction towards the *Qibla*.
- 7) Excessive moving outside the regular acts and movements of prayer, without a proper reason and
- 8) Nullifying the ablution.

Congregational Salah

What qualities does 'Salah' produce?

I have already told you that real 'Ibadah consists in considering oneself perpetually a slave of God, living in subjection to the will of the Master like an obedient servant, and being constantly ready to execute His orders. And Salah equips man to perform this very 'Ibadah. I have also pointed out to you that whatever qualities are required to enable man to do this 'Ibadah, are all developed by Salah. Consciousness of being a slave, faith in God, in His Messenger and in His Book, belief in the Hereafter, fear of God, acknowledgement of God as Knower of the unseen and considering Him always close to yourself, readiness in all conditions to obey God and awareness of His commandments, these and all other such qualities needed to make man, God's slave in the real sense of the word, are developed in you by Salah.

Complete servitude not possible by one man alone

But if you examine a little carefully you will come to know that a man, however, perfect he may be in his own place, cannot fulfill all the requirements of being a servant of God unless other servants of God also assist him. He cannot carry out all the injunctions of God until all those people with whom he has to live day and night and with whom he has to carry on dealing all the time, cooperate with him in this task of obeying God. Man is not alone in this world nor can he do any work singly. His whole life is bound in relationships with his fraternal associates, friends, neighbors, men with business dealings and countless companions in life.

Allah's commandments too are not confined to one single man but are meant to set right these very relationships. Now if all these people cooperate with each other in carrying out the injunctions of God and render mutual help, all of them can jointly become obedient servants of God. And if all are bent on disobedience or if their mutual relations are such that they cannot help each other in following the injunctions of God, then it is impossible for a single person to act wholly according to the law of God in his life.

Not possible to fight alone with Satan

When you read the Qur'an carefully you will know that God does not command that you alone should become His submissive and obedient slave but that He has also ordered that along with yourself you should make the world around you too submissive and

obedient to him and propagate and enforce his law in the world. Also, exterminate the law of Satan wherever it is prevalent and then establish in its place the paramount of the law of Allah. This tremendous duty entrusted to you by Allah cannot be performed by one Muslim alone and even if millions of Muslims try to do it in individual capacity they cannot subdue the organized force of the servants of Satan. For this purpose it is necessary for Muslims to become one team helping and backing up each other, and all striving together for one single objective.

What is desired is compliance with order

Then when you look at it with a deep insight, the fact will become evident to you that for such a grand objective it is also necessary that this union should be formed on the right lines. That is to say the party of Muslims should be organized in such a manner that their relations with each other are as correct and proper as these ought to be. There should be nothing wrong in their mutual relationship. They should have a unified aim. They should obey one chief. They should develop the habit of moving at his command. And they should also understand how far and in what manner they have to obey their chief and what are the occasions to disobey him.

Benefits Of Congregational Prayers (*Salah*)

Keeping in view all the above facts you can now perceive how congregational *Salah* performs all this work.

Assembling on one call

It is ordained that hearing the call of Adhaan you should leave your work and go to the mosque. The rising of Muslims from all sides on hearing this call and gathering at one centre creates in them the same condition as is found in the army. Soldiers on hearing the sound of the bugle understand that their commander is calling them. On hearing this summon only one feeling arises in the minds of all soldiers, i.e. the thought of obeying the order of the commander and in response to this call all of them do only one work, i.e., they run at the sound of bugle and gather from every side assemble at one place. Why is such a system followed in the army? For this very reason that firstly the habit and trait of obedience be cultivated in every soldier and to carry out orders separately one by one and then simultaneously all such obedient soldiers become one group, and one team, and develop the habit of gathering on the commander's order at one place and at one time so

that when a war takes place, the entire army should gather on one call and work together for one single objective.

It should never happen that all the soldiers, who may be great warriors by themselves, when called to perform a task do not assemble to put up a fight and go about their own way according to their individual wish. If such would be the condition of an army, a platoon of fifty soldiers of the enemy can finish one thousand brave soldiers of this army where the soldiers work individually. Exactly on this principle has the rule been made for Muslims also that whichever Muslim hears the voice of Adhaan he should at once leave all his work and go to the mosque so that all Muslims joining together become an army of Allah. They are obligated to practice this assembling five times a day because the duty of this army of God is harder than that of all the armies of the world. For other armies a war takes place after long periods and for its sake they have to do all these military exercises at intervals. But this army of God has to fight with satanic forces perpetually and has to carry out the orders of the commander without break. And yet it is a very great concession to it that only five times a day, this army is ordered to hurry up on hearing the divine bugle and assemble in the cantonment of God, i.e. mosque.

Purposeful assembly

This is the benefit accruing from Adhaan only. Next you gather in the mosque and this gathering itself provides innumerable advantages. Here you meet each other, recognize each other and come to know each other. It is in this capacity that you are all slaves of God, followers of one Prophet, believers in one Book, and there is only one aim of life for you all. You have all gathered here to fulfill this aim only and you have to carry on fulfilling it even after going back from here. This kind of attachment and this type of acquaintance automatically creates in you the feeling that you are all one community, you are soldiers of the same army, you are brothers unto each other, and your interests, your aims, your losses and profits are all common, and your lives are integrated with each other.

Mutual sympathy

Again when you will look, at each other, it will not be like an enemy but like a friend looking at a friend and a brother looking at a brother. As such, when you will notice that your brother is in tattered clothes, another with sorrowful looks, some other has come with a starved face while yet another is disabled, crippled or blind, then inevitably sympathy

from them will arise in your heart. Those of you who are well-off will take pity on the poor and the helpless among them. The afflicted ones will have the courage to approach the rich ones and acquaint them with their plight. When it will be known about someone that he did not come to the mosque due to illness or any calamity, it will occur to someone to visit him to enquire about his welfare. If the news will reach of anybody's death all will join to perform his funeral Salah and share the grief of the bereaved family. All these things are conducive to your mutual affection and the spirit of helping each other.

Gathering for a sacred purpose

Now see that you have gathered at a sacred place for a sacred purpose. This is not an assembly of thieves, drunk and gamblers whose hearts are reeking with impure intentions. This is a gathering of slaves of Allah for the purpose of worshipping Allah, in Allah's house. All have come here to affirm their servitude to Allah. In a setting like this, in the first place an honest person would feel ashamed of his sins within himself, but in case he has previously committed any sin in front of any of those present there, this confrontation will make him extremely repentant. And if there is desire among Muslims to admonish each other and if they know how to improve each other's condition with sympathy and love, be sure that this gathering will be a source of blessing and beneficence. In this way all the Muslims together will remove each other's deficiency and the whole community will gradually become a community of virtuous and pious people.

Brotherhood

The above blessing emanate from the mere act of Muslims gathering in the mosque. Now, next to it, there are many more latent blessings in offering Salah with the congregation. You stand in a row shouldering each other. No one is high or low nor is there anyone holding a high rank or have a low status. In the divine court in the presence of God, all belong to one class. Nobody gets polluted if any fellow-worshipper's hand or body touches him. All are pure because all are human beings. All are slaves of God and believers in one Deen only. There is distinction among Muslims of families, tribes and countries. Someone is Sayyid, someone is Pathan, someone is Rajput, someone is Jat, someone belongs to one country and someone to another, some speaks one language and some another, but all are standing in one row engaged in worshipping God. This signifies that all comprise one nation. The division of family and lineage, tribes and nations, is all false. The greatest

relation between you is that of servitude and worship of God. When you are one in this matter, why should you be separate in any other matter?

Uniformity in movements

Then, when you stand shoulder to shoulder with each other, it appears that an army is obediently standing for service before their Master. By standing in a line and by making movements simultaneously, a spirit of singleness of purpose develops in your minds. You are obligated to practice this, to become one in the servitude of God in such a manner that all of you raise your hands together and move your feet together as if you are not ten, twenty, hundred or thousand persons but have jointly become like a single man.

Prayers

What do you do after thus standing together in one line? With one voice you submit to your Master:

Iyyaka na'budu wa iyyaka nasta'in

"Thee alone do we worship; Thee alone do we ask for help".

Ihdi-na-s-sirat-al mustaqim

"Shows us the straight path".

Rabba-na lakal-hamd

"Our God! Praise is for You only".

As-Salaam-o-'Alai-na wa ' la ibadillah-is Salihin

"Blessing be on all of us and on the pious servants of God".

Then after finishing Salah you pray thus for blessing and benediction to each other:

As-Salam-o-Alaikum wa rahmat-u-Allah.

This means that all of you are well-wishers of each other. All pray united to only one Master for the well-being of all. None of you is alone and by himself. None of you ask for everything for himself only. Everybody's wish is that God's benevolence be bestowed on all, all be granted the ability to walk on the one straight path only, and all share together the blessing of God. In this way Salah unites your hearts, creates harmony in your ideas and develops among you a relationship of well-wishing for each other.

Congregation under an Imam (Leader)

But note that you never offer congregational Salah without an Imam. Even when two men pray together, one of them will be the Imam and the other Muqtadi. When the Jama'ah is formed, it is strictly prohibited to say Salah away from it. If you do that such a Salah will not be valid at all. Late-comers are ordained to join the Jama'ah behind the same Imam. All this procedure is not restricted to Salah only. In fact a lesson has been given through it that if you want to live as Muslims, live as a united party like this. Your party cannot be a party at all unless you have an Imam. And when the party is formed, to be separate from it means that your life has ceased to be the life of a Muslim.

Quality and significance of Imamah

It is not confined to this much only. The relation between the Imam and his followers has been established in a manner as to let you know that if the position of your Imam is such in this small mosque what position your Imam occupies in that grand mosque which is called "earth". What are his duties, what are his rights, how should you obey him, in which matters you should follow him, what should you do if he makes a mistake, to what extent you should follow him when he goes wrong, on what occasion you have the right to check him, when can you demand from him to correct his mistake and at what juncture you can remove him from Imamah. All this amounts to a practice on a small scale for running a big government – a practice that you are obligated to perform five times a day in every small mosque.

Conditions And Rules Of Imamah

There is no time here to go into all the details but I state a few broad points:

1. **Pious and virtuous** It is ordained that such a person should be made Imam who is virtuous, advanced in scholarship, has greater knowledge and understanding of Qur'an than others and is also advanced in years. The order of priority of these qualities has been explained in the Hadith. On this basis, instructions have been given as to which attributes should be kept in view while choosing a national leader.
2. **Representative of majority** It is ordained that the Imam should not be a person whom the majority of the Jama'ah does not like. Usually, there is hardly anybody who has no opponent but if an over-whelming number of persons in the Jama'ah dislike a person; he should not be made Imam. Here again a rule has been expounded for the election of a nation's leader.

3. **Sympathetic to followers** It is ordained that the person who has been made Imam should conduct Salah in such a way that no strain is caused even to the oldest man in the congregation. He should not recite lengthy verses nor do long Ruku' and Sajdah which may suit only the young, strong, healthy and people with much time at their disposal, rather, he should take note of those also who are aged, sick, and weak as well as those who are busy people wanting to finish the Salah soon and go back to work. The Holy Prophet (peace be on him) has set an example of so much kindheartedness and affection that while leading the Salah if he heard the cries of children he used to shorten the Salah in order that their mother, if she is present in congregation, may not get worried. This serves as an advice to the national leader as to what he should do when elected to that office.
4. **He should vacate if disabled** It is ordained that if the Imam while leading the Salah meets with an accident which incapacitates him for his task, he must immediately quit and put in his place one of the men behind. This means that it is obligatory for the national leader also that when he feels unable to carry on his functions he should himself withdraw and make room for a competent person to take over. In this there is no element of shame nor of selfishness.
5. **Complete obedience to Imam** It is ordained that the actions of the Imam should be strictly followed. To move before he moves is strictly prohibited, so much so that in regard to a person who goes into Ruku' or Sajdah before the Imam does so, it has been said in a Hadith that he will be raised after death as a donkey. Here the nation has been given a lesson as to how it should obey its chief.
6. **Admonition at mistake** If the Imam commits a mistake in the Salah, e.g. he stands up when he has to sit, or sits down when he has to stand up, the order is that he should be called to attention by the word: "Subhan Allah". Subhan Allah means that Allah is pure and holy. To say Subhan Allah at the mistake of the Imam means: "Allah alone is above mistake; you are a human being it is not surprising from you to make an error". This is the method to point out the mistake of the Imam and when he is thus warned it is incumbent on him to correct his mistake without any feeling of discredit. Of course, if in spite of this notice of correction the Imam is confident that what he did was right he can continue as he thinks fit and in such an eventuality it is the duty of the Jama'ah to follow him in spite of knowing that he is wrong. After finishing the Salah the followers have a right to convince the Imam of his mistake and demand from him to conduct the Salah again.

7. **No obedience in sin** This treatment of the Jama'ah with the Imam is limited to situations, which involve mistake in small matters. But if the Imam, contrary to the Prophet's Sunnah, changes the method of the Salah or knowingly recites the Qur'an incorrectly in the Salah, or, while conducting it, indulges in acts of Kufr or Shirk, or commits a clear sin, it is incumbent on the Jama'ah to immediately discontinue the Salah and break away from the Imam.

All those directions are such in which a complete teaching has been given as to how you should treat your leader in your national life.

You would have judged from the benefits I have related, which accrue from congregational Salah, that how Allah, in this 'Ibadah being offered five times in the whole day for a few minutes only, has combined for you the well-being of this world and the Hereafter, how this one single practice enriches you with all possible blessings and how it prepares for the servitude of Allah and for the sovereignty of the world.

Different Types of Salah

- ❑ The Witr Prayer
- ❑ The Late Night Prayer, Tahajjud (Qiyam al-Layl)
- ❑ The Tarâwîh prayer
- ❑ The Duha prayer
- ❑ The Funeral prayer
- ❑ Istikharah
- ❑ Salatut Tasbih
- ❑ Salatut Hajah, the prayer for need
- ❑ Salatut Tawbah, the prayer of penitence
- ❑ Salatut Kasuf, prayer of the solar and lunar eclipse
- ❑ Salatut Istisqa, prayer for rain
- ❑ Tahyyatul Masjid, The prayer of salutations to the mosque
- ❑ Tahyyatul Wadhu, The prayer of salutations to the Wadhu
- ❑ Salatut Khawf

FASTING

Fasting Was Made Obligatory For Every Ummah

The second '*Ibadah*', made obligatory for you by Allah, is fasting. Fasting means abstinence during the day from eating, drinking and sexual intercourse. Like *Salah* this '*Ibadah*' has remained obligatory in the *Shari'ahs* of all the Prophets from the beginning. All the past *Ummahs* used to observe fasts in the same way as the *Ummah* of Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him). However, in regard to rules of fasting, the number of fasts and the periods required for fasting, there has been a difference among various *Shari'ahs*. Even today we see that fasting is ordained in most of the religions in some form or other although people have mutilated its shape by adding to it many things of their own. It has been stated in the Holy Qur'an:

"O Muslims! Fasting has been made obligatory for you in the same way as it was made obligatory for *Ummahs* before you" (Al-Qur'an 2:183)

It appears from this verse that all those *Shari'ahs* which were sent by Allah have never been devoid of the '*Ibadah*' of fasting.

Why fasting was made obligatory?

Please ponder as to what importance is there in fasting for Allah made it obligatory in each and every period:

1. Aim of life-servitude of God

I have already explained to you several times that the real aim of Islam is to make the whole life of man transformed into '*Ibadah*' of Allah. Man is born as slave, and slavery, i.e., servitude is ingrained in his very nature. Therefore, he must not be free for a single moment from '*Ibadah*', i.e. servitude to Allah, in thoughts and deeds. He must check up at every move in the affairs of his life as to which step he ought to take so as to earn the pleasure of God and which one will entail His displeasure and wrath. The principle, therefore, is that the path leading to Allah's pleasure must be followed and that leading to His displeasure must be eschewed just as embers of fire are avoided. A man must adopt the course approved by Allah and keep away from that which is disapproved by Him. When his whole life is suffused with this color then only can he be considered as having

discharged his obligation of servitude to his Master and as having fulfilled the purport of "***I created the Jinn and Humankind only that they might worship me***". (Al-Qur'an 51:56)

2. 'Ibadat'—training of servitude

I have stated this point before that the real purpose of the religious duties like *Salah*, *Hajj*, fasting and *Zakah* has been made obligatory for us, is to train us for a big '*Ibadah*'. The fact of these acts being obligatory does not mean that you have acquitted yourself of what you owe to Allah if you have done *Ruku'* and *Sajdah* five times in a day, have suffered hunger and thirst from dawn to dusk for thirty days in Ramadan and, in case you are wealthy, have given *Zakah* every year and have performed *Hajj* once in a lifetime, and that having done all this, are now released from His servitude to be free to do what you like. In fact, the underlying purpose of making these religious duties obligatory is to train a person in such a manner as to enable him to transform his whole life into a regular '*Ibadah*' of God. Now let us see, with this aim in view as to how fasting prepares a man for this full-time '*Ibadah*'.

3. Fasting is a hidden 'Ibadah

All religious duties except fasting are performed by some outward movement or the other. For instance, in *Salah* a man stands, sits, and does *Ruku'* and *Sajdah* which is visible to everybody; in *Hajj* he goes on a long journey and travels with hundreds of thousands of people. *Zakah* is also given by one person and received by another person. All these religious works cannot be concealed. If you perform them, other people come to know about it; if you do not perform apparently then also it becomes known to others. As against this, fasting is an '*Ibadah*' which is not manifest. All-Knowing Allah alone knows that His servant is observing fast. One might partake of *Sohr* before others and abstain from eating and drinking anything openly till the *Iftar* time but if he stealthily eats and drinks anything in between, then nobody except God can know about it. The whole world will be under the impression that he is observing fast while in reality he will not be fasting.

4. Fasting—Sign of Strength of 'Iman'

Keep this nature of fasting before you and ponder over the fact that how strong is the faith of the man, who keeps fast, in God being the Knower of the unseen. He actually observes fast; he does not stealthily eat or drink anything; even in the severest summer, when the throat dries due to extreme thirst, he does not drink a drop of water; even in the worst

condition of hunger, when life seems drooping, he is not inclined to eat anything! See what firm conviction he has in the fact that none of his actions can be concealed from Allah, though it may be concealed from the whole world! How his heart is full of fear of God that he undergoes a severe agony but simply out of fear of Allah, he does not do anything, which will result in breaking his fast! How profound is his belief in the reward and punishment of the Hereafter that for full one month he fasts for at least 360 hours and not for a moment does an iota of doubt enters his mind about life after death! Had he the slightest doubt about the future life, where reward and punishment will be meted out, he could have never completed his fast. When doubt arises, it is not possible for a man to stick to his resolve of not eating and drinking anything in obedience to God's commandment.

5. One month's continuous training

In this way, Allah puts to test a Muslim's faith for full one month in a year and to the extent a man emerges successful from this trial, his faith becomes firmer and firmer. This is as it were, both a trial as well as training. When you deposit anything as a trust with somebody, you are as if testing his integrity. If he proves successful in his test and does not commit breach of trust, he develops greater strength to bear the burden of trusts and becomes more worthy of trust. Similarly, Allah puts your faith to severe test continuously for one month, twelve to fourteen hours a day, and when you emerge triumphant from this test, further ability develops in you to refrain from other sins due to fear of God. Therefore, realizing that Allah is the Knower of the unseen, you should abstain from breaking His law even covertly, and, on every occasion, you should duly remember that day when everything will be exposed, and, without any consideration, you will be requited good for good and evil for evil. This is the purport of the following verse:

"O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, just as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off evil." (Al-Qur'an 2:183)

6. Long practice of obedience

There is another peculiarity of fasting. It makes one obey the injunctions of Shari'ah without break for a long period of time. The duration of Salah is not more than a few minutes at a time. The time for paying *Zakah* occurs only once in a year. In *Hajj*, however, the time spent is long but its opportunity comes once during lifetime, and that too not for

all. As against these, fasting is an exercise in following Shari'ah of Muhammad for full one month in a year, day and night. You have to get up for *Sohr* early before dawn, stop all eating and drinking precisely at the breaking of dawn, do such and such work and abstain from such and such work during the day, take *Iftar* in the evening exactly at the time of sunset, then have dinner and relax, then hurry up for Tarâwîh. In this way, every year for full one month, from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn, a Muslim is kept continuously tied up with rules and regulations like a soldier in an army, and then he is released for eleven months so that the training he has received for one month may show its effects, and if any deficiency is found it may be made up in the training of the next year.

7. Favorable collective environment for training

It is not expedient in any manner to impart training of this type of each and every person separately. You see in the army also that every individual is not ordered to do parade separately. All have to rise simultaneously on the sound of the bugle and have to work together on hearing the bugle so that they may develop the habit of working together as a team and along with it all may assist in the training of each other, i.e. whatever is wanting in one person's training may be made up by other and the deficiency in the second person may be removed by the third person. Similarly, the month of Ramadan was earmarked for fasting and all Muslims were ordered that all of them should fast together.

This order has turned individual '*Ibadah*' into collective '*Ibadah*'. Just as number one when multiplied by a million becomes a formidable number of one million, in the same way the moral and spiritual benefits accruing from fasting by one person are increased a million fold if millions of people fast together. The month of Ramadan fills the whole atmosphere with the spirit of piety and virtuousness. In the whole nation, the farming of piety flourishes. Every person not only tries to avoid sins but, if he has any difficulty, his many other brothers who are fasting like him come out to help him. Every person feels ashamed to commit a sin while he is fasting, and the desire automatically arises in everybody's heart to do some good work, to feed a destitute, to clothe a naked man, help one in distress, to take part in some good work being done anywhere and prevent evil if it is being indulged in openly at some place. A general environment of goodness and piety is created and the season starts for the flourishing of beneficial activities just as you see that every crop grows luxuriantly at the peak of its season and is found covering the fields all over. For this reason Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) said that: "*Every deed of*

man gets some increment or other from God. One good deed flourishes ten times to seven hundred times. But Allah says: fasting is exempt from this. It is exclusively for Me and I give reward for it as much as I want".

From this *Hadith* we come to know that all deeds flourish both in proportion to the motive of the doer of the good deed as well as its results, but there is a limit to their development. In the case of fasting, however, progress is unbounded. Ramadan is a season for the flourishing of goodness and piety, and in this season not one but millions and billions of people jointly water this garden of virtue, the compass can expand immeasurably. The more you perform well-motivated deeds in this month, the greater will you avail yourselves of its blessings, and radiate their benefits to your other brothers; and if you maintain the effects of this month at a high pitch during the subsequent eleven months, to that extent this garden will flourish, and thus developing process will go on infinitely. It will be your own fault if you circumscribe it by your own lack of action.

Where are the results of 'Ibadah now?

On hearing the above results of fasting the question will arise in the mind of everyone of you that where are these results to be found today? "We observe fasting and offer prayers but the results you describe are not visible". I have already told you the reason for this situation that after separating the component parts of Islam from each other and after mixing with it many new things, you cannot expect those results as can be obtained when the whole system is intact and unimpaired. Besides this, the second reason is that your point of view regarding 'Ibadah has changed. Now you believe that mere abstention from food and drink, from morning till evening, amounts to 'Ibadah and accordingly you perform this 'Ibadah this way. Similarly, you regard only the outward shade of the kinds of worshipping also as, 'Ibadah, and 99% or even more among you are unmindful of the real spirit of 'Ibadah which should permeate each one of your deeds. That is why these 'Ibadaat do not produce there a full benefit since everything in Islam depends on intent, power of understanding and perception.

The Real Purpose Of Fasting

A Purpose For Every Work

There are essentially two components or factors in any work, which a man has to perform. The first thing is the purpose for which a work is done and the second thing is the

particular shape of that work which is chosen to achieve that purpose. For instance, take an example of eating food. Your objective in consuming food is to remain alive and maintain your strength. The method of achieving this object is that you take a morsel, put it in your mouth, masticate it and push it down the throat. You adopt this method since it is the most effective and proper one to achieve this objective. But every one of you knows that the main thing is the purpose for which food is taken and not the form and procedure of this action. What will you say if anybody were to make a morsel of saw-dust or cinder or mud, put it in his mouth, chew and gulp it? You will only say that his brain is out of order. Why? Because this idiot did not understand the real purpose of eating and is suffering from the misunderstanding that only the aforesaid four component acts constitutes eating.

Likewise, you will call that person also mad who soon after taking the food induces vomits by thrusting his fingers into his throat and then complains that the benefits said to accrue from consuming food have not been availed by him and that, contrarily, he is getting weaker eachday and is on the verge of death. This fool blames the food for his growing weakness not realizing that it is due to his own stupidity. He imagined, due to his intellectual deficiency, that life vitality could be achieved by fulfilling those requirements, which constitute the act of eating. As such, he thought why should he sustain the load of food in his stomach? "Why not throw it out so that the stomach may become light? I have already fulfilled the requirements of eating", he surmises. Naturally he has himself to blame and suffer the penalty of harboring such a foolish idea and then implementing it also. He ought to have known that until the bread gets digested after entering the stomach and then transformed into blood, and is diffused into the whole body the vitality of life cannot be obtained.

Although outward actions are also necessary, because without them the bread cannot reach the stomach, yet the object cannot be achieved by merely fulfilling the outward actions. There is no magic in these actions that by merely fulfilling them, blood starts running magically in the veins of a man. Blood will be obviously produced according to the law prescribed by Allah. If you break it, you will kill yourself by your own hands.

Consequences of considering the outward as real

If you ponder over the example I have just placed before you in detail, you can understand why your 'Ibadaat have become inefficacious today. As I have already pointed out

repeatedly, the greatest mistake of all is to regard the acts of Salah and fasting and their outward shape as real 'Ibadah and you suffer from the delusion that whoever fulfilled these requirements performed the 'Ibadah of Allah. You are just like that person who thinks that performance of four acts, i.e. making the morsel, putting it in the mouth, masticating it and pushing it down the throat makes up the process of eating, and that whoever did these four things has eaten the food and so should receive the benefits of eating irrespective of whether he pushed down in his stomach mud and stone, or vomited the bread soon after eating it. If you have a little sense then tell me how a man who is fasting and is thus engaged in the 'Ibadah of God from morning till evening, can in the midst of that 'Ibadah utter a lie and indulge in backbiting? Why does he quarrel at the slightest pretext and utter abuses from his mouth? How dare he encroach on other people's rights? How does he indulge in acquiring illicit money and giving money to others illicitly? And having done all these things, he still thinks that he has performed 'Ibadah of Allah? Does this not resemble the work of that person who eats cinder and mud and thinks that by merely completing the four requirements of eating he has actually done the job of eating?

Again freedom from restrictions after Ramadan

Then tell me how is it that when you are relieved after doing Allah's 'Ibadah for about 360 hours throughout Ramadan all the effect of this whole exercise in piety disappears on the 1st of Shawwal? You practice during the 'Eid days all those acts which Hindus perform in their festivals, so much so that in the cities even adultery, wine-drinking and gambling are resorted too on 'Eid day. And I have seen some wretched people who keep fast during the day and drink wine and commit adultery in the night. The general Muslims, by the grace of God, are not degenerated to that extent but after the end of Ramadan how many of you are there who retain some effects of piety and virtuousness on the second day of 'Eid also? Which law of God is left inviolated? What part of your time is devoted to good deeds, and how much is selfishness reduced?

Result of wrong conception of 'Ibadah'

Think and ponder as to what after all can be the reason for this? I assure you that its only reason is that the very meaning and purport of 'Ibadah has become twisted in your mind. You think that mere abstention from eating and drinking throughout the day is called fasting and that this alone is 'Ibadah. Therefore you observe it meticulously. You feel the

fear of God to that extent that you avoid every transgression, which even slightly endangers the break-up of the fast so much so that even if the life is at stake, you are not prepared to break the fast. But you do not know that being merely hungry and thirsty is not real 'Ibadah' but only a form of it. And the purpose of prescribing this form is to create in you the fear of God and love of God, and thereby develop in you so much strength that by repressing yourself, you are enabled to avoid the seemingly profitable things, which reality displease Allah. On the other hand, by controlling your self you make yourself agreeable to those things which possibly entail risks and losses but definitely please God.

This strength can be developed only when you understand the purpose of fasting and make use of the practice you have gone through for curbing the corporeal urges, under fear of God and love for God, and then making these urges work according to the pleasure of God. But soon after Ramadan you throw these practices out of the windows as well as the virtues acquired from it just as a man after taking food vomits it by thrusting his fingers into his throat. In fact, some of you spew the virtuousness of the whole day soon after breaking the fast.

Now you yourself decide, is there in Ramadan and fasting a magic that by mere completing their outward shape you can acquire that strength which in reality should emanate from genuine fasting? Just as physical strength cannot be obtained from the bread until it is digested after entering the stomach and until it is transformed into blood and penetrates every vein, in the same way spiritual power cannot be obtained from fasting until the person who keeps fast does not fully comprehend the purpose of fasting and allows it to permeate his heart and mind and dominate his thoughts, motives, intentions and deeds.

Fast, source of becoming pious

This is why Allah said after ordaining fasting: "La'allakum tattaqoon" i.e. fasting is made obligatory on you, so that may be you become pious and virtuous. It is not said that you will certainly become pious and virtuous because this outcome of fasting depends on the perception and intention of the man concerned. Whoever will understand its purpose and will try through it to achieve its objective, will become pious to the desired extent, but one who will not comprehend its purpose and will not even try to get at it, cannot hope to gain any thing out of it.

Real Aims Of Fasting

1. Abstention from lying

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has drawn attention in various ways towards the real aim of fasting and has explained that to be hungry and thirsty without keeping in view the objective is in no way useful. He said: *"Whoever did not give up lying and practicing falsehood, Allah is in no need of his giving up food and water"* In another Hadith he said: *"Many are the fasters whose fasting does not bring them anything except hunger and thirst and many are those who keep standing in the night but their standing does not bring anything except being awake in the night"*.

The purport of both these Ahadith is quite plain. It means that being merely hungry and thirsty is not by itself Ibadah but an instrument of performing real 'Ibadah. And real 'Ibadah consists in not violating the law of God for fear of God, and for the love of God an eager pursuit of every such work as would please Him, and lastly, avoidance of satisfying corporeal urges as far as possible. Whoever remained heedless of this real 'Ibadah, unnecessarily caused inconvenience to his stomach with hunger and thirst. Why should Allah need to make him merely give up food and water for twelve to fourteen hours?

2. Faith and self-scrutiny

The Prophet has drawn attention to the real aim of fasting thus:

"Whoever observed fast imbued with faith and with the expectation of reward from Allah, all his past sins are forgiven".

The reference to faith implies that the belief in God with a Muslim should remain fully fresh in the mind of a Muslim; Ihtisab denotes that man should be desirous of only Allah's pleasure constantly keeping an eye on his thoughts and actions to check if he is doing anything against the pleasure of Allah. If, in accordance with these two principles, a person were to observe all the fasts of Ramadan, he will have all his past sins forgiven because even if he was once an unruly and disobedient slave he has now turned fully repentant to his master – and *"A penitent is like one who has, as it were, never committed a sin at all"* this the Prophet said.

3. Shield for protection from sins

In another Hadith it is said: *"Fasts are like a shield (just as a shield is meant for protection from the enemy's assault, so is fasting for protection from Satan's attack). Therefore when a man observes fast he should (utilize this shield and) abstain from disorderly behavior. If anybody abused him or quarreled with him, the person who keeps fast should tell him: Brother, I am fasting (do not expect from me that I shall take part in such activities of yours)".*

Temptation of goodness

The Prophet (peace be on him) has directed in other Ahadith that man while fasting ought to do more and more good works and should be eager to perform benevolent acts. Particularly during fasting, he must develop with full intensity a sympathetic sentiment for his other brothers because being himself in the throes of hunger and thirst he can all the more realize what is befalling other slaves of God in their plight of destitution and misery. It is related by Syyedna Ibn 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with him) that the Prophet (peace be on him) used to become especially kind and benevolent during Ramadan. No beggar in that period went empty-handed from his door, and the slaves secured emancipation.

Reward for providing 'Iftar'

According to a Hadith the Prophet (peace be on him) said:

"Whoever in Ramadan provide a person, who is fasting, with Iftar this act will become a source of forgiveness for his sins and safety from Hell Fire and he will get as much reward as will the keeper of fast get without any reduction in the recompense of the latter."

Who Must Fast?

Obligation of Fasting

The Fasting of Ramadan is compulsory upon every Muslim, male or female, who has these Qualifications:

1. To be mentally and physically fit, which means to be sane and able;
2. To be of full age, the age of puberty and discretion, this is normally about fourteen. Children under this age should be encouraged to start this good practice on easy levels, so when they reach the age of puberty they will be mentally and physically prepared to observe the Fasting;
3. To be present at your permanent settlement, your home town, your farm, your business premises, etc. This means not to be traveling on a journey of about fifty miles or more;
4. To be fairly certain that the Fasting is unlikely to cause you any harm, physical or mental, other than the normal reactions to hunger, thirst, and etc.

Exemption From Fasting

1. Children under the age of puberty and discretion;
2. The insane people who are unaccountable for their deeds. People of these two categories are exempted from the duty of fast, and no compensation or any other substitute is enjoined on them;
3. Men and women who are too old and feeble to undertake the obligation of fast and bear its hardships. Such people are exempted from this duty, but they must offer, at least, one needy poor Muslim an average full meal or its value per person per day. This compensation indicates that whenever they can fast even for one day of the month, they should do so, and compensate for the rest. Otherwise they are accountable for their negligence;
4. Sick people whose health is likely to be severely affected by the observance of fast. They may postpone the fast, as long as they are sick, to a later date and make up for it, a day for a day;
5. People in the course of traveling of distances about fifty miles or more. In this case such people may break the fast temporarily during their travel only and make up for it in later days, a day for a day. But it is better for them, the Qur'an tells, to keep the fast if they can without causing extraordinary hardships;
6. Expectant women and women nursing their children may also break the fast, if its observance is likely to endanger their own health or that of their infants. But they must make up, for the fast at a delayed time, a day for a day;
7. Women in the period of menstruation (of a maximum of ten days) or of confinement (of a maximum of forty days). These are not allowed to fast even if they can and want to. They must postpone the fast till recovery and then make up for it, a day for a day.

Important Points to Remember While Fasting

1. It should be understood that here, like in all other Islamic undertakings, the intention must be made clear that this action is undertaken in obedience to God, in response to His command and out of love for Him.
2. The fast of any day of Ramadan becomes void by intentional eating or drinking or smoking or indulgence in any intimate intercourses, and by allowing anything to enter through the mouth into the interior parts of the body. And if this is done deliberately without any lawful reason, the penalty is to observe the fast of sixty consecutive days or, as a second alternative, feed sixty poor persons sufficiently, besides observing the fast of one day against the day whose fast was made void.
3. When the fast of days other than those of Ramadan is broken for a lawful reason like those classified under the heading "Exemption" above, the person involved must make up for that fast later, a day for a day.
4. If anyone, by mistake, does something that would ordinarily break the fast, his observance is not nullified, and his fast stands valid, provided he stops doing that thing the moment he realizes what he is doing.
5. On completion of the fast of Ramadan, the special charity known as Sadqatu-1-Fitr (Charity of Fast-breaking) must be distributed.

General Recommendations

It is strongly recommended by Prophet Muhammad to observe these practices especially during Ramadan:

- To have a light meal before the break of the dawn, known as Suhoor;
- To eat three dates and have a drink of water right after sunset, saying this prayer: Al-lahumma laka sumna, wa 'ala rizqika aftarna. (O God! for Your sake we have fasted and now we break the fast with the food You have given us); To make your meals as light as possible because, as the Prophet put it, the worst thing man can fill is his stomach;
- To observe the supererogatory prayer known as Tarâwîh;
- To exchange social visits and intensify humanitarian services;
- To increase study and recitation of the Qur'an;
- To exert the utmost in patience and humbleness;
- To be extraordinarily cautious in using the senses, the mind and, especially, the tongue; to abstain from careless and gossipy chats and avoid all suspicious motions.

Prohibited Fasting

- 1- The Two Eids.
- 2- Three days following Eid-ul-Ad'ha, *The days of Tashreeq*.
- 3- Singling Out Fridays for Fasting.
- 4- Singling Out Saturdays for Fasting.
- 5- Fasting on the Day of Doubt, *Yaum ush-Shakk*.
- 6- Fasting whole year or for life, *Sawum-ud-Dahr*.
- 7- No Woman Should Fast (non obligatory fasts) without the Permission of Her Husband.
- 8- Continues Fast of Day and Night without break, *Wissal*

Preferred Fasting Other Than Ramadan

- 1- Fasting Six Days of Shawwal, *Sittu Min Shawwal*
- 2- Fasting on The Day of 'Arafah
- 3- Fasting in Muharram
- 4- Fasting of Sha'aban
- 5- Fasting on Mondays and Thursdays
- 6- Fasting of Da'oud (Fasting Alternate Days)

Mu'amlaat

Morals in Islam

The Moral System Of Islam

Moral sense is inborn in man and through the ages it has served as the common man's standard of moral behavior, approving certain qualities and disapproving others. While this instinctive faculty may vary from person to person, human conscience has given a more or less uniform verdict in favor of certain moral qualities as being good and declared certain others as bad. On the side of moral virtues, justice, courage, bravery and truthfulness have always elicited praise. History does not record any period worth the name in which falsehood, injustice, dishonesty, and breach of trust may have been upheld. Fellow-feeling, compassion, fidelity, and magnanimity have always been valued while selfishness, cruelty, miserliness and bigotry have never received the approval of the human society; men have always appreciated perseverance, determination and courage and have never approved of impatience, fickle-mindedness, cowardice and imbecility. Dignity, restraint, politeness, and amiability have throughout the ages been counted among virtues, whereas snobbery, misbehavior and rudeness have never found recognition as good moral qualities.

Persons having a sense of responsibility and devotion to duty have always won the highest regard of men; never have people who are incompetent, slothful and lacking in sense of duty been looked upon with approval. Similarly, in respect of the standard of good and bad in the collective behavior of society as a whole, the verdict has always been almost unanimous. Only that society has been looked upon as worthy of honor and respect which possesses the virtues of organization, discipline, mutual affection and fellow feeling and has established a social order based on justice, freedom and equality of men. As opposed to this, disorganization, no-discipline, anarchy, disunity, injustice and social imbalance have always been considered as manifestations of decay and disintegration in a society. Robbery, murder, larceny, adultery, fraud and graft have always been condemned. Slandering, scandal mongering and blackmailing has never been considered as wholesome social activities.

Contrary to this service and care of the aged, help of one's kith and kin, regard for neighbors, loyalty to friends, assistance of the weak, the destitute and the orphans, and nursing the sick are qualities which have always been highly valued ever since the dawn

of civilization. Virtuous, polite, mild and sincere persons have always been welcomed. Individual who are upright, honest, sincere, outspoken and dependable, whose needs conform to their words, who are content with their own rightful possession, who are prompt in the discharge of their obligations to others, who live in peace and let others live in peace and from whom nothing but good can be expected, have always formed the core of any healthy human society.

This shows that human moral standards are in fact universal and have been well-known to mankind throughout the ages. Good and evil are not myths to be hunted out. They are well-known realities and are equally well-understood by all. The sense of good and evil is inherent in the very nature of man. Hence, in the terminology of the Qur'an virtue is called "Ma'roof" (something to be announced) and evil is designated as "Munkar" (something to be denounced); that is to say virtue is known to be desirable for every one and evil is not known to commend itself in any way. The Qur'an mentions this fact when it says:

"And (Allah gave to the Soul) it's enlightenment as to its wrong and its right...

(Qur'an, 91:8)

Why Differences?

The questions that arise are: if the basic values of good and evil have been so well-known and there has virtually been a universal agreement thereon, then why do varying patterns of moral behavior exist in this world? Why are there so many and do conflicting moral philosophies? Why do certain moral standards contradict each other? What lies at the root of their difference? What is the unique position of Islam in the context of the prevailing ethical systems? On what grounds can we claim that Islam has a perfect moral system? And what exactly is the distinctive contribution of Islam in the realm of ethics? These questions are important and must be squarely faced; but justice cannot be done to them on the brief span of this talk. To cut a long story short, I shall briefly sum up some of those important points which strike us at the very outset when we undertake a critical examination of the contemporary ethical systems and the conflicting patterns of moral behavior.

- (a) The present moral system fail to integrate various moral virtues and norms by prescribing their specific limits and utility and assigning to them their proper place. That is why they fail to provide a balanced and coherent plan of social conduct.
- (b) The real cause of their differences seems to lie in the moral systems offering different standards for good and bad actions and enunciating different means of distinguishing good from evil. Differences also exist in respect of the sanction behind the moral law and in regard to the motives, which impel a person to follow it.
- (c) On deeper reflection, we find that the grounds for these differences emerge from different peoples conflicting views and concepts about the universe, the place of man in the universe, 'and the purpose of man on the earth. Various theories of ethics, philosophy and religion are but a record of the vast divergence of views of mankind on these most vital questions viz. Is there a God and a Sovereign of the universe and if there is, is He One or are there many gods? What are Divine Attributes? What is the nature of the relationship between God and the human beings? Has God made any arrangements for guiding humanity through the rough and tumble of life or not? Is man answerable to God or not? If he is, then what are the matters for which he is to be answerable? What is the ultimate aim of man's creation, which he should keep in view throughout his life? Answers to these questions will determine the way of life, the ethical philosophy and the pattern of moral behavior of the individual and the society.

It is difficult for me in this brief talk to take stock of the various ethical system prevalent in the world, indicate what solutions each one of them has proposed to these questions and what has been the impact of these answers on the moral evolution of the society believing in these concepts. Here I can confine myself to the Islamic concept only and this I shall try to propound.

Islamic Concept of Life And Morality

The viewpoint of Islam, however, is that this universe is the creation of God Who is One. He created it and He alone is its unrivaled Master, Sovereign and Sustainer. The whole universe is functioning under His Divine Command. He is All-Wise, All-Powerful and Omniscient. He is Subbooh and Quddoos that is, free from all defects, mistakes,

weaknesses and faults and pure in every respect). His God-hood is free from partiality and injustice. Man is His creature, subject and servant and is born to serve and obey Him.

The correct way of life for man is to live in complete obedience to Him. It is not for man to determine the mode of worship and obedience; it is for God to decide this. God, being the master, has raised from time to time prophets for the guidance of humanity and has revealed His books through them. It is the duty of man to take the code of his life from these sources of divine guidance. Man is answerable to God for all his actions in life. The time for rendering an account will be in the life-hereafter and not in this world. The short span of worldly life is really an opportunity to prepare for that great test. In this life all efforts of man should be centered on the object of soliciting the Pleasure and Blessings of God in the Hereafter. During this test every person is responsible for all his beliefs and actions. He, with all his faculties and potentialities, is on trial. There will be an impartial assessment of his conduct in life. By a Being Who keeps a complete and correct record not merely of his movements and actions and their influence on all that is in the world from the tiniest speck of dust to the loftiest mountains but also a full record of his innermost ideas and feelings and intentions.

Goal of Moral Striving

This is Islam's fundamental attitude towards life. This concept of the universe and of man's place therein determines the real and ultimate goal which should be the object of all the endeavors of mankind and which may be termed briefly as "seeking the pleasure of God". This is the standard by which a particular mode of conduct is judged and classified as good or bad. This standard of judgment provides the nucleus around which the whole moral conduct should revolve. Man is not left like a ship without moorings, being tossed about by the blows of wind and tides. This dispensation places a central object before mankind and lays down values and norms for all moral actions. It provides us with a stable and flawless set of values, which remains unaltered under all circumstances. Moreover, with making the "pleasure of God" as the object of man's life, a highest and noblest objective is set before humanity, and thus, unlimited possibilities are opened for man's moral evolution, unstained at any stage by any shadow of narrow selfishness or bigoted race or nation worship.

While providing a normal standard Islam also furnishes us with means of determining good and evil conduct. It does not base our knowledge of vice and virtue on mere intellect, desire, intuition, or experience derived through the sense-organs, which constantly undergo shifts, modifications and alterations and do not provide definite, categorical and unchanging standards of morality. It provides us with a definite source, the Divine Revelation, as embodied in the Book of God and the Sunnah way of life of the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him). This source prescribes a standard or moral conduct that is permanent and universal and holds good in every age and under all circumstances. The moral code of Islam covers the smallest details of domestic life as well as the broad aspects of national and international behavior. It guides us in every stage of life. These regulations imply the widest application of moral principles in the affairs of our life and make us free from exclusive dependence on any other source of knowledge, except as an aid to this primary source.

Sanction Behind Morality

This concept of the universe and of man's place therein also furnishes the sanction that must lie at the back of every moral law. Viz., the love and fear of God, the sense of accountability on the Day of Judgment and the promise of eternal bliss and reward in the life hereafter. Although Islam wants to cultivate a powerful and strong mass opinion, which may induce individuals and groups to abide by the principles of morality laid by it and also aims at the evolution of a political system which would enforce the moral law, as far as possible, through its legislative and executive power. Islam's moral law does not really depend on these external pressures alone. It relies upon the inherent urge for good in every man, which is derived from belief in God and a Day of Judgment.

Before laying down any moral injunction, Islam seeks to firmly implant in man's heart the conviction that his dealings are with God Who sees him at all times and in all places. That he may hide himself from the whole world but not from Him. That he may deceive everyone but cannot deceive God. That he can flee from the clutches of any one else but not from God's. That while the world can see man's onward life, only God probes into his innermost intentions and desires, that while he may, in his short sojourn on this earth, do whatever he likes but in any event he has to die one day and present himself before the Divine court of justice where no advocacy, favor, recommendation, misrepresentation, deception or fraud will be of any avail and where his future will be decided with complete

impartiality and justice. There may or may not be any police, law court or jail in the world to enforce the observance of these moral injunctions and regulations but this belief firmly rooted in the heart, is the real force at the back of the moral law of Islam which helps in getting it enforced. If popular opinion and the coercive powers of the state exist to give it support so much the better; otherwise, this faith alone can keep a Muslim individual and a Muslim community on the straight path of virtue, provided, the spark of genuine faith dwells in their hearts.

Motives and Incentives

This concept of Islam about man and his place in the universe also provides those motivating forces, which can inspire a person to act in conformity with the moral law. The fact, that a man voluntarily and willingly accepts God as his own Creator, and the obedience to God as the mode of his life and strives to seek His Pleasure in his every action, provides a sufficient incentive to enable him to obey the commandments, which he believes to be from God. Along with this, the belief in the Day of Judgment and the belief that whosoever obeys Divine Commands is sure to have a good life 'in the Hereafter, the Eternal Life, whatever difficulties and handicaps he may have to face in this transitory phase of life, provides a strong incentive for virtuous life. On the other hand, the belief that whoever violates the Commandments of God in this world and dies in a state of Kufr (unbelief) shall have to bear eternal punishment however superficially nice a life he may have led in this temporary abode, is an effective deterrent against violation of moral law. If this hope and fear are firmly ingrained, and deeply rooted in one's heart, they will provide a strong motive-force to inspire one to virtuous deeds even on occasions when worldly consequences may appear to be very damaging and harmful, and it will keep one away from evil even on occasions when it looks extremely attractive and profitable.

This clearly indicates that Islam possesses a distinctive criterion of good and evil, its own source of moral law, and its own sanction and motive force, and by them its virtues in all spheres of life after knitting them into a balanced and comprehensive plan. Thus, it can be justifiably claimed that Islam possesses a perfect moral system of its own. This system has many distinguishing features and I shall refer to the three most significant ones, which in my opinion can be termed its special contributions to ethics.

Distinctive Features of Islamic Moral Order

By setting Divine pleasure as the objective of man's life, it has furnished the highest possible standard of morality. This is bound to provide limitless avenues for the moral revolution of humanity. By making Divine Revelation the primary source of knowledge, it gives permanence and stability to the moral standards which afford reasonable scope for genuine adjustment, adaptations and innovations though not for perversions, wild variations, atomistic relativism or moral fluidity. It provides a sanction to morality in the love the fear of God, which will impel man to obey the moral law even without any external pressure. Through belief in God and the Day of Judgment, it furnishes a motive force, which enables a person to adopt the moral conduct with earnestness and sincerity, with all the devotion of heart and soul.

It does not, through a false sense of originality and innovation, provide any novel moral virtues nor does it seek to minimize the importance of the well-known moral norms nor give exaggerated importance to some and neglect others without cause. It takes up all the commonly known moral virtues and with a sense of balance and proportion it assigns a suitable place and function to each one of them in the total plan of life. It widens the scope of their application to cover every aspect of man's individual and collective life his domestic associations, his civic conduct, and his activities in the political, economic, legal educational and social realms. It covers his life from home to society, from the dining table to the battlefield and peace conferences, literally from the cradle to the grave. In short, no sphere of life is exempt from the universal and comprehensive application of the moral principles of Islam. It makes morality reign supreme and ensures that the affairs of life, instead of being dominated by selfish desires and petty interests, should be regulated by the norms of morality.

It stipulates for man a system of life, which is based on all good and is free from all evil. It invokes the people, not only to practice virtue, but also to establish virtue and eradicate vice, to bid good and to forbid wrong. It wants that the verdict of conscience should prevail and virtue must not be subdued to play second fiddle to evil. Those who have responded to this call and gathered together into a community (Ummah) are given the name "Muslim" and the singular object underlying the formation of this community (Ummah) is that it should make an organized effort to establish and enforce goodness and suppress and

eradicate evil. The Qur'an is quite explicit on this fact as can be seen from the following verse:

"Ye are the best for Peoples, evolved For mankind, Enjoining what is right, Forbidding what is wrong, And believing in God. If only the People of the Book Had faith, it were best For them: among them Are some who have faith, But most of them Are perverted transgressors." (Qur'an, 3:1 10)

And also in the following verse:

"(They are) those who, If we establish them In the land, establish Regular prayer and give Regular charity, enjoin The right and forbid wrong: With God rests the end (And decision) of (all) affairs." (Qur'an, 22:41)

It will be a day of mourning for the community and a bad day for the entire world if the efforts of this very community were at anytime directed towards establishing evil and suppressing good.

Al-Kabaair

- Associating partners with Allah (Shirk).

Great Shirk: worshipping beings other than Allah (proof all over Qur'an)

Small Shirk: Riyaa

The Prophet ﷺ, *"Should I not inform you of that which I fear for you even more than the dangers of Dajjal? It is the hidden shirk: A person stands to pray and he beautifies his prayer because he sees the people looking at him".* (Sahih; Sunan ibn Majah)

- Committing murder: (Furqan; 68)

- Performing Sorcery (2: 102)

- Not performing the Prayers (Maryam: 59)

- Withholding the Zakah (Charity) (3: 180)

- Breaking the fast of Ramadan or not fasting in that month without a valid excuse.

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Islam is built upon five pillars: testifying that there is no true god except Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, performing the prayers, paying the Zakah, making the pilgrimage to the house, and fasting the month of Ramadan"* (Sahih al-Jami # 2837)

- Not performing the pilgrimage when one has the ability to do so (above Hadith)

- Disobeying one's parents (al-Isra: 23)

- Cutting off the ties of relationships (Muhammad: 22)

- Committing adultery or fornication (al-Isra: 30)

- Committing sodomy.

The Prophet ﷺ said, *"Allah will not look at a person (with pleasure) who commits sodomy with a man or a woman"* (Sahih al-Jami # 7678)

- Taking or paying interest (2: 275)

- Devouring the wealth of orphans (4:10)

- Forging statements concerning Allah or forging Hadith (al-Zumar: 60)

- Fleeing from the battle (al-Anfal: 16)

- Wrongdoing, deception or oppression on the part of the ruler (al-Shura: 42)

- Being arrogant, boastful, vain (al-Nahl: 23)

- Giving false testimony (al-Furqan: 72)
- Drinking alcoholic beverages (5: 90)
- Gambling (5: 90)
- Slandering innocent women (al-Nur: 23)
- Misappropriating something from the booty (3:161)
- Stealing (5:38)
- Committing highway robbery (5: 33)
- Making false oath.

Prophet ﷺ said, *"If someone is ordered to take an oath and he takes a false oath in order to take possession of property of a Muslim, then he will incur Allah's wrath when he meets Him"* (Sahih al-Jami # 6083)

- Committing oppression (al-Shuara: 277)
- Levying illegal taxes

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Do you know who the bankrupt is? The bankrupt from my nation is the one who appears on the Day of Resurrection having performed the prayers, fasted and paid the Zakah, but had also abused that person, slandered that person, wrongfully taken the wealth of that person and spilled the blood of that person. These people will take from his good deeds. If his good deeds are thereby exhausted, he will be given their sins and then he will be thrown into the hell-fire"* (Sahih al-Jami #87)

- Consuming forbidden wealth or taking it by any means (2: 188)
- Committing suicide (4: 29)
- Being a perpetual liar (3: 61)
- Ruling by laws other than the laws of Islam (5: 44)
- Engaging in bribery (2: 188)
- Women appearing like men and vice-versa.

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Allah's curse is upon women who appear like men and upon men who appear like women"* (Sahih al-Jami # 4976)

- Being a Day youth.

Dayyouth: is the one who approves the indecency of his womenfolk and who is void of jealousy or the pimp who facilitates indecency between two people. Prophet ﷺ said, *"Allah has forbidden the Paradise to three people: the alcoholic, the runaway*

slave, and the one who is complacent in the face of the evil deeds that his family is performing" (Sahih al-Jami # 3047)

- **Marrying for the purpose of making a woman allowable for another (Baqarah)**
- **Not keeping clean from the remains of urine.**

Ibn Abbas reported that Prophet ﷺ passed by a grave and said, *"These two are being punished and they are not being punished for something hard. But it is a great sin. One of them did not keep himself clean from his urine and the other went around spreading tales"* (Sahih al-Jami # 2436)

- **Acting for show (al-Ma'oon: 4-6)**
- **Acquiring knowledge only for worldly gain or concealing knowledge (2: 160)**
- **Breaching trusts (al-Anfal: 27)**
- **Reminding people of one's kindness (2: 27)**
- **Denying predestination (al-Qamar: 49)**

"If Allah were to punish the inhabitants of the heavens and earths, then He would punish and He would not be doing injustice to them. If He were to have mercy on them, His mercy would be greater than from their actions. If a person had amount of gold equivalent to Mount Uhud or similar to Mount Uhud and spent it in the Path of Allah, (that spending) would not be accepted from him by Allah until he believes in the preordainment of good and evil. And until he knows that what afflicted him was not going to miss him and what missed him was not going to afflict him. If you were to die with any belief other than that, you would enter the Hellfire" (Kitab al-Sunnah by Ibn Abu Asi # 245. Albani says that its chain is Sahih)

- **Eavesdropping on other's private conversation (Hujrat: 12)**
- **Spreading harmful tales (al-Qamar: 10)**
- **Cursing others.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Abusing a Muslim is evil and fighting him is disbelief"* (Sahih al-Jami # 3598)

- **Not fulfilling one's promises.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Whoever has a four characteristic is a complete hypocrite. Whoever possesses any of these characteristics has the characteristics of hypocrisy until he gives it up; whenever he makes a promise, he breaks it up..."* (Bukhari)

- **Believing in what soothsayers & astrologers say.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Whoever goes to fortuneteller and asks him about something will not have his prayer accepted for forty nights"* (Sahih al-Jami # 5816)

- **A wife being rebellious to her husband (4: 34)**
- **Putting pictures of beings with souls on clothing, curtains, rocks and any other items.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"...the people who will receive the greatest punishment on the day of judgment are those who compete with Allah in creation [those who make pictures or statues]"* (Sahih al-Jami # 1691)

- **Striking one's self, wailing, tearing one's clothing, pulling one's hair & similar deeds as a form of mourning.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"One who strikes his cheeks or tears his clothing and shouts in the manner of pre-Islamic culture is not one of us"* (Sahih al-Jami # 5713)

- **Committing injustice (al-Shura: 42)**
- **Being overbearing or taking advantage of the weak, slaves, wives or animals.**
- Prophet ﷺ said, *"Allah will torture those who torture people in this world"* (Muslim)
- **Harming neighbors.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"A person whose neighbor is not safe from his mischief will not enter paradise"* (Sahih al-Jami # 7002)

- **Harming and abusing Muslims (al-Ahzab: 58)**
- **Wearing one's clothes too long, i.e. below the ankles.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"What is below the ankles will be in the hellfire "* (Bukhari)

- **Harming the slaves of Allah.**

Prophet ﷺ said that Allah said, *"Whoever shows enmity to a slave of Mine (Allah's) I shall be at war with him"* (Sahih al-Jami # 1778)

- **Men wearing silk & gold.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Gold and silk have been permitted for the females of my nation and forbidden for its males"* (Sahih al-Jami # 209)

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Men who wears silk in this world will have no portion [of heavens] in the hereafter"* (Muslim)

- **Running away of a slave.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"If a slave runs away, his prayers will not be accepted"* (Sahih al-Jami # 257)

- **Sacrificing animals for other than Allah.**

Prophet ﷺ said, *"The one who sacrifices for other than Allah is cursed by Allah"* (Sahih al-Jami # 4988)

Claiming that somebody is one's father while the claimant knows it is not true.

Prophet ﷺ said, *"One who claims that someone is his father and knows that it is not true will be forbidden of paradise"* (Sahih al-Jami # 5865)

- Arguing or quarreling for show & not seeking the truth

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Whoever argues in support of something that is wrong and he knows it Allah will be angry with him until he stops"* (Sahih al-Jami # 6073)

- Not allowing excess water to flow to others.

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Whoever doesn't allow the access water or pasture for others will not share in the blessings of Allah on the day of judgment"* (Sahih al-Jami # 6436)

- Not measuring the weights properly (al-Mutafafifeen: 1-3)

- Thinking that one is safe from Allah's planning (al-Araf: 99)

- Eating carrion, blood or pork meat (al-Anam: 145)

- Not praying in the congregation & praying by one's self without a valid excuse.

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Whoever hears the call to prayer and doesn't come to prayer, there is no prayer for him say for the one who has valid excuse"* (Sahih al-Jami # 6176)

- Continually not performing the Friday prayers and congregational prayers without any valid excuse.

Prophet ﷺ said, *"If people don't stop abandoning the Friday Prayers Allah may seal their hearts and they will become headless"* (Muslim)

- Harming others by manipulation one's bequests (4: 12)

- Being deceitful or deceptive (Fatir: 43)

- Spying on the Muslims & pointing out their secrets (al-Kalam: 11)

- Abusing or reviling anyone of the Companions of the Prophet

Prophet ﷺ said, *"Do not revile my companions for, by the one in whose hands is my soul, if you were to spend in charity a mountain of gold similar to mount Uhud it would not be equal to a handful or a half a handful (or what they have done)"* (Sahih al-Jami # 7187)

Please make sincere repentance to Allah before as Ali (RA) said:

Today is deed without reckoning and tomorrow is reckoning without deeds '

Sincere repentance has four conditions:

Feeling bad for the sin

Firm commitment in intention not to repeat sin (whether it happens again is not a condition if one tried his best)

Make repentance to Allah by Dua'a and asking or better crying for forgiveness

If some person has been wronged because of this sin then one needs to make up to this person

... And Allah Knows Best...

Tawbah

The word Tawbah (Repentance) in Arabic literally means 'to return'. In an Islamic context, it refers to the act of leaving what Allah has prohibited and returning to what He has commanded.

The subject of repentance is one, which concerns all people who believe in God, and is vital one for the Muslims to understand because our salvation in the hereafter is dependent on our repentance to Allah, as is shown by Allah's order:

"And Turn You All Together In Repentance To Allah O Believers, That You May Be Successful" [An-Noor (24): 31]

In Surah al-Baqarah, Allah tells us:

"Surely Allah Loves Those Who Turn Unto Him In Repentance And Loves Those Who Purify Themselves." [2:222]

This shows how pleasing our repenting is to Allah. Also, the Prophet, Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam gave us an example of just how pleasing to Allah our repenting is an authentic Hadith in which he, Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam said:

"Allah is more delighted with the repentance of His servant than one of you would be, who suddenly finds his camel laden with supplies after losing it in a barren land".¹¹⁷

Try to imagine your joy if you were to suddenly retrieve everything you ever possessed after losing all hope of recovering what you had lost. Then think that Allah's delight is even greater than this when His slave repents to Him. So much so, that if man stopped repenting to Allah, He would replace us with another creation that would turn to Him for forgiveness. The Prophet, Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam said:

¹¹⁷ Narrated by Anas and collected in the Hadith collection of al-Bukhari (eng. trans. vol.8 p.214 no.321) & Muslim (eng. trans. vol.4 p.1434 no.6611).

"If you did not commit sins, Allah would sweep you out of existence and replace you by another people who would commit sins, ask for Allah's forgiveness and He would forgive them."¹¹⁸

The problem with many of us today, is that we don't fear Allah, which means that we don't think twice about disobeying Him and therefore falling into sin, which we give no real thought to. So perhaps we should think about the statement which Ibn Mas'ood¹¹⁹ radi Allaahu 'anhu, made: "A believer sees his sins as if he were sitting under a mountain which he is afraid may fall on him, whereas the wicked person considers his sins as flies passing over his nose and he just drives them away like this (and he moved his hand over his nose in illustration)."¹²⁰

Never Despair

Someone might say, 'I want to repent but my sins are too many.' But Allah says:

"Say: O My Slaves Who Have Transgressed Against Themselves! Despair Not For The Mercy Of Allah, Verily Allah Forgives All Sins. Truly He Is Oft Forgiving, Most Merciful." [Az-Zumar (39): 53]

Therefore, we should never lose hope or stop asking for Allah's forgiveness. Its importance is shown to us in a Hadith in which the Prophet, Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam said:

"O people! Turn to Allah in repentance and seek His forgiveness, for surely I make repentance a hundred times every day."¹²¹

Repentance is such a great act of worship that doing it can totally erase our sins altogether, as the Prophet, Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam said: "One who repents from sin is like one without sin."¹²²

¹¹⁸ Narrated by Aboo Ayyoob & Aboo Hurayrah & collected by Muslim (eng. trans. vol.4 pp.1436-7 nos.6620-2).

¹¹⁹ ABDULLAAH IBN MAS'OOD (d. 32H) was one of the earliest six to embrace Islam. Amongst the virtuous things that the Prophet, Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam said about him, was his saying: "Affirm that which Ibn Mas'ood informs you." [Sahih - Ahmad & Others].

¹²⁰ Collected by al-Bukhari (eng. trans. vol.8 p.214 no.320).

¹²¹ Reported by al-Aghaar ibn Yasaar & collected in Sahih Muslim (eng. trans. vol.4 p.1418 no.6523).

¹²² HASAN - Reported by Abu 'Ubaidah ibn 'Abdullaah & collected by Ibn Majah Authenticated by al-Albaanee.

Only Allah Can Forgive Sins

Forgiveness for our sins is not something that comes automatically; it is something that must be sought sincerely and with consciousness. Also we should remember that it is only through Allah's Mercy that anyone will ever enter Paradise. The Prophet, Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam advised: "Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and rejoice, for no one's good deeds will put him in Paradise." The Companions asked, "Not even you O Messenger of Allah?" He replied. "Not even me unless Allah bestows His pardon and mercy on me."¹²³

Therefore in Islam, salvation rests on faith (which includes), good actions and hope in Allah's mercy, all combined in truly unique manner, which is not found in any other religion or system.

Furthermore, it is only Allah who can forgive our sins and He is not in need of any intercessor. The proof for this is in a Dua'a (supplication) which the Prophet Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam taught his closest Companion Abu Bakr¹²⁴:

"O Allah, truly I have wronged myself and none can forgive sins except you."¹²⁵

Therefore it is a complete waste of time asking forgiveness from the people such as "saints", pious people or even the Prophet Sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam. Allah say in reply to people who do such things:

"Verily, Those You Call Upon Besides Allah, Are Only Slaves Like Yourselves." [Al-A'raaf (7): 194]

It is important that we never despair of Allah's Mercy - no sin is too great to repent for... or too little for that matter. As one of the Salaf (Pious predecessors) said: "Do not look at the insignificance of your sins, but consider the greatness of The One you are disobeying."¹²⁶

¹²³ Reported by Aboo Hurayrah & 'Aa'ishah & collected by al-Bukhari (eng. trans. vol.8 p.315 no.474).

¹²⁴ ALL of Ahl-us-Sunnah are agreed on the fact that Abu Bakr, radi Allaahu anhu was the most superior amongst all the Companions. The Prophet, said, "There is no one of greater help to me than Abu Bakr & he assisted me with his person, his property & he married his daughter [Aa'ishah] to me." [HASAN - at-Tabaraanee]. He was appointed Khaleefah after the death of the Prophet & died two years after him at the age of 63.

¹²⁵ The full text of this Dua'a can be found in Sahih al-Bukhari (vol.1 p.442 no.776), Muslim (vol.4 pp.1419-20 no.6533), at-Tirmidhee & Ibn Majah.

¹²⁶ Collected in al-Baihaquee's 'Sh'abul Eemaan' (5/430).

Ta'alluq Billah (Attachment with Allah)

The first and foremost instruction, always given by all the Prophets, the rightly-guided caliphs and the pious among the Ummah (Muslim Community) to their companions had been to inculcate fear of Allah, implant His love in one's heart and to promote attachment with Allah. Hence following their footsteps, I also have chosen it as the first advice to the workers and in future I will continue to do so whenever I get a chance, for it deserves a preferential and priority treatment.

Belief in Allah is the most important over all other articles of faith. Hence association of heart with Allah should have priority in prayers. Fear of Allah should have priority in morals and soliciting the pleasure of Allah should have priority in all personal dealings. In short, the proper orientation of our entire life is to be based on the desire to win the pleasure of Allah and this should have priority over all other motives, efforts and endeavors. Particularly this hard task of ours, for which we stand as an Islamic Jama'ah (organized group) and a Movement, can only thrive on the motivating force of our attachment with Allah. It will be strong or weak in proportion to our attachment with Allah.

It is an admitted fact that whatever task a man stands for, be it worldly or heavenly, the main force behind has been the purpose for which one has risen, and zeal can only engender when he has deep interest and enthusiasm towards achieving that aim. A self-seeker cannot succeed without being selfish. Intensity in love for self leads him to the service of his self with the eagerness of the same strength. A man working for his children, by being devoted to their love, sacrifices his own pleasures and comforts for the welfare of his children, and sometimes stakes not only his worldly gains but even the benefits of the Aakhirah (Hereafter), so that they may prosper to the utmost. A man working for his nation or country is a captive of its love and because of this love he endures monetary losses, as well as hardships of detentions and jails. He works hard day and night and sometimes even sacrifices his life for the freedom, defense and supremacy of his nation or state.

Now, if we are struggling to establish the Islamic way of life, not for our own selfish ends; neither for any motive of family interests nor any national or state interest but only with

sincere desire to please our Creator, Allah Almighty alone, and if we have engaged ourselves in this work only because we are convinced that this is His work, you can certainly realize that this work cannot be advanced unless and until our attachment with Allah is real, strong and deep. Zeal for this work develops only when all our inclinations are concentrated in the endeavors for propagating the Word of Allah. For all those who have joined hands in this work, it is not enough that they might be connected with "Allah also", but that their connection should be with "Allah only". In other words, it should not be 'a' connection but 'the' only real and true connection. We should always be vigilant and conscious that our attachment with Allah does not decrease but always increase and gets deeper and deeper with time.

Attachment with Allah is the main guiding spirit of our mission. Praise be to Allah, no member of our Jama'ah is unmindful of this fact and ignorant about its significance. Yet many are often not clear as to what does the term Ta'alluq Billah exactly mean, what is the method of inculcating and promoting it, and how to find out whether one really has any connection with Allah or not and if one has, then to what degree. I have often felt that lack of knowledge and understanding in this respect leaves people in wilderness, knowing not where do they stand and where are they to go and how much distance have they yet to cover. Consequently some of the workers get lost in vague ideals and some get inclined towards ways and methods that never lead them to their destination. Some find difficulty in differentiating between closely related and far related things and others are just astounded.

I shall not, therefore, only confine myself to advice about Ta'alluq Billah but also, try to present clear cut answers to the said questions, to the best of my knowledge.

The Meaning of Ta'alluq Billah

Its meaning according to the Qur'an is that a person should live and die for Allah and his worship and sacrifices should also be meant for Him alone.

Surely my prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are all for Allah the Cherisher of the worlds. (An'am: 162)

He should worship Allah with full devotion and subject his life exclusively to unqualified submission to Allah. The Qur'an says:

They had been ordered nothing but that they should worship Allah with sincere devotion and being true in faith to Him. (Bayinah: 5)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has, on different occasions, explained this relationship in such clear terms that there is no ambiguity left in its meaning and purpose. It is explicitly clear from his statements that the nature of this relationship is nothing but—*To fear Allah in all matters—open or secret— (Bayhaqi). And to rely on the might of Allah rather than one's own resources. (Bayhaqi)*

He should be ready to face the anger of men to solicit the pleasure of Allah, and never prepared for the vice versa. And when this attachment with Allah rises to the extent that all love, enmity, giving and withholding by a person is for the sake of Allah alone, and with no other motive behind, it means that he has attained perfection in his attachment with Allah. The Prophet (p) said: *Whoever loved for Allah, and hated for Allah gave for Allah and withheld for Allah, is the person who has perfected his faith (Bukhari).*

Now look into the meanings of the Qunut which you recite every night. Every word of it points towards the connection you should have with Allah. Just ponder over its words and see for yourself the promise you make with Allah about the kinds of connections you should have with Him.

O Allah, we seek Your help and crave for pardon from You We believe wholly in You and solely depend upon You, (so) we praise You in the best words, we are thankful to You, and not ungrateful to You, (Hence) we abandon and reject (leave) all those who transgress Your Commands. O Allah, we worship You alone, offer prayers for Your sake, bow down to You and all our endeavors and efforts are meant to lead us towards You. We are hopeful of mercy from You and are afraid of Your punishment. Undoubtedly Your punishment is to fall on the rejecters.

This attachment with Allah is also clearly reflected in the special Dua'a (Supplication) of the Prophet (p), which he used to recite at the time of Tahajjud. He used to say:

O Allah, I have bowed down to you, declared my faith in You, placed my reliance in You, always took recourse to You, fought for You and placed my case before You.

How to Increase Ta'alluq Billah?

The above mentioned is the correct interpretation of this subject matter. You should revisit this study time and again to retain it in your attachment that a firm believer should have with Allah. Now let us consider the method of acquiring and increasing it. The only method of acquiring it is to believe in Allah and accept Him the One with no partner, as the Provider, the Deity and the Master of his own self as well as of the whole Universe, and to accept all the attributes, the rights and the privileges of divinity as reserved for Allah alone, and thus cleaning one's heart from all possible effects of polytheism (Shirk). When this is achieved, connection with Allah is duly established. Now the strengthening of this relationship with Allah is that you are His vicegerent, and custodian of his commandments, i.e., one is of thinking and understanding and the other is to practice.

First you are required to fully grasp and understand your relationship with Allah by nature as well as logically incumbent upon you in practical life with the help of the Qur'an and the Hadith (sayings of the Prophet (p)). The correct perception, discernment and appreciation of this relationship is only possible through deep and intensive study of the Qur'an and Hadith and by repetition of this study time and again to retain it in your mind. Consequently whatever aspects of your relationship with Allah dawn upon you, ponder over them and look into yourself as to how much are you meeting the demands of that relationship and where and to what extent are you failing. Your attachment with Allah will increase in proportion to your self assessment and understanding of your required role.

For example, your first and foremost relation with Allah is that of a worshipper with the worshipped. Your second relationship is that you are responsible for innumerable trusts (Amanah). Your third relationship with Allah is that you have executed a sale deed by declaring your faith and conviction in Him and through this Contract you have bartered your life and property to Him and He has purchased it in consideration of paradise for you in return. Your fourth relationship with Allah is that you stand responsible to Him. You are

not accountable to Him only for your acts and deeds that are open and visible but also a record is being maintained concerning your intentions and aspirations. In short, these and many other relations exist between you and Allah. Hence the strengthening or weakness of your relationship with Allah depends upon proper understanding, realization and fulfillment of the demands of these relationships. Your relation with Allah will grow weaker and weaker if you do not care for the demands of this relationship and will get deeper and stronger if you are duly conscious of and attentive to its demands.

But this conceptual method can neither be fruitful nor maintained for long unless it is strengthened and reinforced through practical means. And that practical method is the unqualified obedience of the command of Allah and all out efforts to perform these tasks which please Allah. True obedience to Allah's commands means total compliance—open as well as secret— not unwillingly but with full eagerness and zeal, without any worldly aim and solely to please Allah. At the same time, abstain openly, as well as in secret, from all activities forbidden by Allah, with full abhorrence and deep contempt and fearless of any worldly loss, save the fear of the wrath of Allah only. This conduct in life will raise you high up to the position of Taqwah (abstention from the displeasure of Allah). Further when you engage yourself in spreading all that pleases Allah and suppressing and eliminating all that displeases Allah, you do not hesitate in sacrificing any thing including your life, money, time, efforts and intellect for this purpose. Moreover you do not boast of any of your such sacrifices, nor do you consider it any favor to anyone. Instead you regard your biggest sacrifice short of the due right of your Creator. Then this is the attitude that elevates you to the position of Ihsan (beauteous submission to the will of Allah).

Means of Growing Ta'alluq Billah

In reality it is not so easy to develop such attitude. It is an uphill task, which requires a lot of energy. This energy can be generated with the help of the following four things.

Salah (Prayers): You should offer not only the obligatory prayers (Fard), but also the Sunnah (additional prayers) offered punctually by the Prophet (p) and the Nafil (supererogatory prayers) as many as easily possible. But make it a point that you offer the Nafil indoors and in secrecy, so that your personal attachment with Allah might increase, and sincerity of purpose develop in you. Show of Nafil or Tahajjud prayers gives way to

hypocrisy and self-importance, which is detrimental to sincere belief. Same is the case with other Nafl deeds, which are diminished by show and publicity.

Dhikr-Allah (Remembrance of Allah): Remembrance of Allah is a continuous process throughout the life in all circumstances. The best and most appropriate way to remember Allah is the way that Prophet (p) practiced himself, taught to his companions, and not the techniques invented or borrowed from others by the sufis in the later period. Try to learn by heart, as many Dua'as as possible, taught by the Prophet (p), fully grasp their meanings and recite them off and on keeping the meanings present in your mind. It is very effective in maintaining your attention and devotion to Allah.

Sawm (Fasting): Apart from the obligatory fasting of the month of Ramadan, observe some Nafl fasts also. The easiest and most practical way is to fast for three days every month with a determination to attain the same degree of Taqwah during these three days, which is the real purpose behind fasting according to the Qur'an.

Infraq-fi-Sabilillah (Spending in the way of Allah): This spending, Fard as well as Nafl to the extent of one's means, should be continuously done. But one thing should always be kept in mind. The real worth is not of the quantity of what you spend but of the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of Allah. A penny from a poor man by cutting his food expenses is much more precious before Allah than the thousands spent by a millionaire that amount to only one-tenth or one-twentieth of his expenses on luxuries. You should also realize the importance attached to Sadaqah (spending in the way of Allah), which is described by Allah and His Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the best means of purifying one self. You can yourself experience the effects of Sadaqah. Suppose you commit a wrong unintentionally. When you realize it you repent (Tawbah) and beg His pardon. Then again the same thing happens. This time you add some Sadaqah to your repentance. You shall yourself feel the difference it makes. You shall note that the repentance followed by Sadaqah makes you purer and stronger to resist the vile inclinations.

This is the pure and simple method of getting closer to Allah, taught to us by the Qur'an and the Sunnah. If you follow this method, you can increase your attachment with Allah, without adopting the typical sufic techniques and methods, and leading a normal life at home with your family and carrying on all your worldly activities as usual.

Measuring Ta'alluq Billah:

Now comes the question of assessing the extent and degree of relationship with Allah and that how can we know of any increase or decrease in this attachment. Let me tell you that you need not wait for any revelation in dreams, any divine inspiration, any supernatural power or heavenly light in dark solitary cells. The measure has already been provided by Allah in every man's heart. You can judge it awake and in full day light. Recount your lifelong activities, efforts and desires. Check yourself as to how far you are honoring the commitment you have made by declaring your belief and conviction in Allah. Are you true to Allah in the discharge of trusts and responsibilities or flouting the trust? What proportion of your time, efforts, ability and property is devoted to the cause of Allah and what is reserved for other activities?

Compare the degree of your annoyance, grief and uneasiness when your own personal interests and passions are hit, as against your feelings and reaction when Allah's authority and commandments are flouted. You can thus test your attachment with Allah in so many ways and find out daily whether your attachment with Allah is on the increase or decrease. Do not bother about the sufic technicalities of Basharat (glad tidings), Karamat (excellence), Kashf (inspiration) and Tajalliat (divine lights). In fact there is no awareness (Kashf) greater than the awareness of the oneness of Allah in this world of deceptions and fallacies. No excellence (Karamat) is higher than to stand firm in the face of apprehensions created and temptations offered by Satan and his followers. There is no better perception of Allah's lights than to witness the truth in the groping darkness of infidelity (Kufr), impiety (Fisq) and perdition (Dalalah) all around. The greatest possible Basharat that a believer may get is through his staunch belief in Allah and steadfastness in His way.

Surely those who said that Allah is our Provider and then they stuck to this declaration, Allah sends His angels to them who say "Do not be afraid, nor be grieved, but be delighted to hear the happy news of being awarded the Paradise as promised to you. (Ha-Mim: 30)

Preference of the Aakhirah (Hereafter)

My second advice to you after Ta'alluq Billah is to give preference to Hereafter over this world, in each and every matter. In every affair of this life, your aim should be to attain

success and blessing in the life Hereafter. The Qur'an tells us that our eternal abode is the Hereafter; we are in this world only temporarily, to be examined as to who among us are going to prove their competency of winning the eternal life of Paradise, by acting properly within the limits imposed by Allah—of course within the limits of our resources, our authority, time stipulated to us, and opportunities afforded by Him. We are here being tested not for our achievements in industry, commerce, agriculture or statecraft, nor for the splendid buildings and roads we construct, nor even for the extent of our success in establishing a grand culture.

But the real test pertains to the extent of our ability to perform our duties as Allah's vicegerent in respect of the trusts placed in us, and whether we lead our life as an outlaw and a rebel or as an obedient and law-abiding person? Whether we comply with the will of Allah on His earth or the will of our own self or of other claimants to divinity other than Allah? Whether we are trying to adorn and administer Allah's world according to His standard or trying to corrupt and destroy it? And whether we struggle and fight the Satanic forces for the sake of Allah or meekly lay down our arms and surrender to those forces? The first test of Adam and Eve (peace be upon them) in the Paradise was just the same. Hence all persons selected for the eternal inhabitation of Paradise from the entire humanity shall have to pass this test.

Thus the real criterion of determining success or failure does not lie in considering the status of the individual at the time of trial i.e., whether the individual's merit was tested as a king or by putting his head on the executioner's block. Also whether that individual was given a vast kingdom or he had to undergo the trial in his humble cottage. These temporary phases of success or failure in the mortal life are no proof of success or failure in the life Hereafter. The true success which should be our goal is that irrespective of the position we hold in this world and with whatever bounty we have been put to trial, we should prove ourselves obedient servants of Allah and followers of His Wishes in order that we may achieve that position in the Hereafter which is reserved for the faithful servants of Allah.

This is the reality. It is not enough to understand or accept it only once—but great effort is needed to refresh it time and again. Otherwise, there is always a possibility that, in spite of our not being a nonbeliever, we might step into the shoes of those who work for worldly gains forgetting the Hereafter. This happens because the Hereafter is imperceptible and it

is evident only after death. In this world we can perceive its good or bad results only through intellect. On the contrary, this world is an easily perceptible thing, offering its sweet and sour tastes every now and then, and its achievements and failures are always there to deceive us.

The loss of Hereafter may only give us a little pricking in our conscience if it at all exists. Whereas the loss of this world is felt by us physically. Our family, our relatives, acquaintances, friends and the people in general all not only feel it but also make it felt. Similarly the accomplishment of the Hereafter provides a little comfort and satisfaction to the conscience only if heedlessness has not sedated it. But the prosperity in this world serves as a pleasure for our whole existence. We feel it with all our senses and every one around us shares this feeling. Hence it is really very difficult to translate the faith in Hereafter into practice and base the whole outlook and working of day to day life upon this faith, although it may not look so difficult to accept it as a faith and belief. It might be easy to say that world is a trifle, but to face and reject the worldly attractions and refuse to concede to the worldly desires is not at all an easy job. It can only be possible after a great struggle and can be retained with persistent efforts.

Means to Develop Concern for Akhirah

You might ask as to what is the method to acquire this quality and what are its requirements? I would again say there are two methods, reflective and practical.

The reflective method is that you should not be contented only after declaring 'I believe in Hereafter' rather make it a habit to study the Qur'an fully grasping its spirit and meaning. This method of studying the Qur'an will gradually develop such a conviction in Hereafter as if you have seen it with your own eyes. There is not perhaps a single page in the Qur'an where the Hereafter is not mentioned in one way or the other. At places you will find the Hereafter portrayed in such a detail as if an eye witness account is being reported. At many places in the Qur'an, life in Hereafter is projected in such an exquisite manner that the reader feels himself present as an observer. Only if the camouflage of this world is removed, one can witness with his own eyes whatever is being narrated in the Qur'an Hence continuous study of the Qur'an with full comprehension can gradually raise one to a position where the concern for the Hereafter gets complete hold of his mind,

and he begins to feel actually at all times that he is to prepare himself in this temporary worldly life for his permanent abode of life after death.

This attitude and perspective gets stronger by the study of the Hadith wherein details about life after death are often described just like eyewitness accounts. This reminds us of the fact how the conviction and firm belief in the Hereafter dominated the lives of the Prophet (p) and his companions.

This conviction in Hereafter is further strengthened by visits to graveyards, which should be made solely to achieve the purpose of remembering ones own end as advised by the Prophet (p). One should remember while living in this world of desires and passions that a day will come when he will also depart from this world like his predecessors. However one should be careful that those tombs and shrines will not serve any purpose, which the wayward people claim to be the centers where every wish is granted and all problems are resolved. Instead you should visit the graveyards of the common men or the grand mausoleums of monarchs deprived of the pomp and show of bodyguards and aide decamps to make the people observe the formalities in the presence of such monarchs.

Now let us take the practical method. While living in this world and taking part in the affairs of your community, friends, acquaintances, your city, country or in the matters of your own efforts. Outside help can only be acquired by profession or finances you often find yourself at the crossroads. Belief in the life Hereafter calls you towards one way while material gains and interests press you to go the other way. Try your level best to proceed on the way mentioned first. If you have chosen the other way because of any weakness or unawareness retrace your steps as soon as you realize the mistake, unmindful of how far have you gone the wrong way. Look unto yourself and try to find out how often did the worldly interests and attractions succeed in getting you absorbed in it and how many times did you succeed in avoiding detraction from the right path, and consideration for the life Hereafter dominated over you.

This assessment of your own self shall tell you exactly how much your concern for the life Hereafter has increased and to what extent you are required to make up the deficiency. Whatever deficiency you feel, try hard to make it up keeping away from the companionship of materialists and by developing friendship with the pious people who

prefer the gains of the life Hereafter over this world. But remember, there is no way yet known to develop or discard any quality in you without your own efforts or potentials.

Avoid Takabbur (Arrogance)

My third advice to you is that you should not feel proud of the improvements you have made in your person and in your collective morality. You should not, individually or as a Jama'ah and Movement, fall into the fallacy that you have achieved perfection and that you have reached your goal and there is no room left for any further improvement in your practical life and that no more target to be achieved.

Often I and the other responsible persons of the Jama'ah are faced with a teasing problem. Some people have been trying to belittle the position of the Jama'ah and, in fact, of the Islamic Movement, which is real purpose of the Jama'ah. They label it as a political party working for the same goal that of the other political organizations. Piety and purity as well as spiritualism is nowhere traceable in it. It utterly lacks attachment with Allah and concern for Hereafter; its leadership has no link with any school of Sufism and have got no grooming, in any sufic centre of piety and excellence in spiritualism. Hence there is no chance for its associates to get such grooming.

The idea behind this campaign is to spread dissatisfaction among the workers of the Jama'ah so that they might recapitulate to the same old religious centers that consider any partial service to Islam under the over all patronage of Kufr (infidelity) as a great achievement and those who can never even imagine to establish Islam as a complete and comprehensive code of life. They have labeled every such attempt as an anti-religious move with all the eloquence at their command. They have always opposed any move to establish Islam as a dominant force in the society against infidelity and impiety (Fisq) by painting all such attempts as purely mundane and motivated by material ambitions and worldly gains.

Under these circumstances we are constrained to explain the real difference between the concept of piety put forward by the sufic spiritualism and the concept of Islamic piety and purity. We have to explain what is real Taqwah (fear of Allah) and Ihsan (excellence in submission to Allah) as desired in Islam and how it differs with the Taqwah and Ihsan, which is taught by the so called authorities on piety and religiosity. Simultaneously we

have also to explain in detail the technique and methods of reform and training adopted by the Islamic Movement and its consequences, so that anybody sincere to Islam and having a correct and unadulterated concept of Islamic order may easily know that once convinced and impressed by the revolutionary message of Islam one automatically undergoes a great change in his outlook and concepts. This conviction develops true piety, fear of Allah and excellence in submission to His Will. Such a sort of sincerity and conviction is altogether missing in the stereotype sufic methods of training of piety and excellence not only in the trainees but in their teachers and guides as well.

We have to explain all this because of the unjust and unfair attitude of our critics. We do not mean to defend ourselves. But we feel this explanation necessary in the interest of the Islamic Movement. We seek the protection of Allah against any vanity or pride about our own selves by the above exposition or any misconception that we have perfected ourselves. Allah forbid, such a misconception and deceitful pride may deprive us of all that we have achieved so far.

To avoid this mishap I would like you to fully understand the following three points and never forget them:

My first point is that perfection knows no limits and its point of excellence is out of our sight. You go on climbing up and never consider any point as the highest one. In fact you are never perfect. The moment one considers himself perfect, his strife for the better and consequently his development stops, and decline begins. Never forget that a continuous struggle is needed for not only reaching a height but also for keeping yourself there. The moment you stop striving upward the downward pull starts working. The wise never look down to assess their achievement but look up to know how much is left unattained, and how far is their target.

My next point is that the standard of humanity set by Islam is so high that it starts from where the other isms and ideologies conclude their excellence and perfection. It is not at all an utopic ideal. It reflects in the practical life of the Prophets as well as in the lives of the devoted companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the pious among the Ummah. Always keep that standard in mind. It will save you from misapprehension of having attained perfection. It will make you realize your own lowliness as well as present before you new heights to achieve. Even after a lifelong struggle you

will feel that many a heights are yet unattained. Never feel proud of your health while patients around you are breathing their last every moment. Look at the monuments of morality and piety of the past, whom you are replacing in the fight against evil. A true believer is he who always keeps in mind those who are richer in Islamic knowledge and deeds so that the thirst for accumulating this wealth does not die out. As regards material wealth, he always compares, himself with the poorer and thanks Allah for what He has given him, satisfying his thirst with whatever he has got.

My third point is that the qualities actually acquired by us so far appear impressive only because deterioration has debased us and our society a lot. The little light provided in the pitch darkness has earned prominence; otherwise it is a fact that we lack a lot in our personal lives when we assess ourselves on the criterion and the minimum requirements of faith in Islam. Hence confession of our shortcomings should not be a formality. It must result in a thorough purging of all of our faults and vices that we find and locate in our own personal life.

Attend to your kith and kin

I would also advise you to pay special attention towards reforming your kith and kin. The Qur'an says:

Save yourselves and your kith and kin from Fire. (*Tahrim: 6*)

You are very much particular about the food and clothing of your families. But you should be much more particular to save them from the fuel of Hell. Try your best for the betterment of their life Hereafter and put them on the way to Paradise. If any one of them goes astray, in spite of your efforts, you shall not be held responsible for it. The point is that you should in no way be involved in his failure in the Hereafter. I often receive complaints that workers of the Jama'ah do not pay much attention to the betterment and reform of their own family as they do for others. These complaints may be true in some cases, and may be exaggerated in some other. It is not possible for me to investigate the case of every individual. So I give a word of general advice. All of us should not only have a longing and desire but sincerely strive to put our near and dear ones on the path to peace and salvation to get real consolation.

I advise to all workers of the Jama'ah to take interest in each other's lives and strive for the betterment of not only their own children but the children of their fellow workers too. Often a child is not influenced by his father but is greatly impressed by his father's friends.

Mutual Islah (Betterment)

I also advise you not only to strive for the betterment and reformation of your own self and your families but also for the betterment of your fellow workers. Those who have joined hands to work as an Islamic *Jama'ah* for the sake of Allah and to establish His authority and supremacy in the world needs to cooperate and co-ordinate with each other. They must know that they cannot attain their high ideal without getting strong in their collective morals and group discipline. This understanding should result in mutual help and co-operation in their moral improvement and betterment and proceeding in the way of Allah. This is the only way of collective purification (*Tazkiyah*) in Islam. If you find me going off the track, hurry up to bring me back on the track and if I find you slipping or staggering I should lend you a helping hand. If there is dust on my sleeve you blow it away and if I find a stain on your robe I clean it. Convey to me whatever you feel better for me and in my best interest and I should convey to you whatever I feel necessary for your betterment. We know that we flourish in our worldly life through our mutual transactions. The same is true in our moral and spiritual life and we profit and flourish as an Islamic *Jama'ah* in this sphere as well when we cooperate and supplement each other morally and spiritually.

The correct method of reformation is to wait and see and avoid any hasty action whenever you find anything wrong in your fellow worker or any complaint crops up against him. First try to understand the situation and then contact the person concerned and talk to him directly in confidence about the complaint without even mentioning the matter before anybody else or anywhere in the absence of the person concerned. The later is simple back-biting, which is very much abhorred in Islam.

Collective Ihtisab (Criticism)

Mutual criticism is also a fruitful way of collective reform. Bring to the notice of your fellow workers their faults and shortcomings in a very polite and sincere manner. But be careful, as it may prove disastrous if the etiquettes of sincere criticism are not duly observed. The etiquettes of fair criticism are as under:

Criticism should not be made every time and everywhere.

Before criticizing anybody first examine your own heart considering Allah as a witness whether you are criticizing out of sincerity and for the well being or it is motivated due to personal impulse. In the case of the former, the criticism is indeed fully justified otherwise you should hold your tongue and try to get rid of this impurity from your personality.

Your words and manner of criticism should make everyone feel that you really want reform and betterment. Be sure that your complaint is based on real and hard facts before criticizing anybody. Baseless criticism without getting sure of its facts is a sin and create disorder.

The person who is criticized should give a calm hearing to the complaint, and then ponder over it without any prejudice. He should concede to the truth plainly and counter the wrong with impassive reasoning. To get annoyed on criticism shows arrogance and vanity.

The criticism, and its rebuttal should not prolong and turn into a permanent altercation. Discussion is worth while till both the viewpoints are duly elaborated but if the matter is not settled, postpone discussion and let both of them reconsider the whole matter coolly and separately.

The criticism within such limits is not only helpful but also necessary to set right our social life. No Islamic Jama'ah can keep itself on right direction without such constructive criticism Nobody in the Jama'ah should be above criticism. I regard it indispensable for the stability of the Islamic Movement and I am sure that the day this healthy criticism is stopped, the Movement would succumb to various ills resulting in its destruction. That is why I had always been convening a special meeting after the general meeting of the Jama'ah ever since its inception, to critically assess the whole work of the organization and its structure. In such special meetings I offer myself first for criticism, so that any objection or complaint against me or my performance should be brought openly before all without any hesitation. Either the criticism will correct me, or my explanation will clear the misunderstanding of the critic as well as all those whose thinking are identical.

Sama'a and Ta'a (Obedience and Discipline)

One more fact that I consider necessary to bring to your notice is lack of discipline and submission. There is no doubt that we look very disciplined people when compared with other organizations. But when we look at the standard set by Islam, and also considering, the difficult task before us, we really find our discipline far below the mark.

You are fully aware that you are very few in number with still fewer resources at your command in the field. The task before you is to change, in its form and spirit, the whole system of life based on impiety and ignorance, a system which is a thousand times stronger and resourceful. Compare yourself in number or resources you are no match to it. There is nothing with you to bank upon for achieving success in this struggle except moral superiority and strict discipline. You can succeed in your great mission only when you establish your moral credibility and demonstrate such a discipline and organization that you may be able to show your strength any moment and at any place with full confidence.

In an Islamic *Jama'ah* striving for the establishment of the Islamic way of life, obedience to the lawful commands of the *Jama'ah* authorities is in fact in submission to Allah and the Prophet (p). Whosoever contributes his time and energy to this mission for Allah's sake only, and who submits to the authority of his *Jama'ah* Chief (Amir or Nazim) in order to serve the cause of Allah, obeys Allah and the Prophet (p). The greater the attachment to Allah and the Prophet (p), the stronger is the spirit of obedience in him. Similarly the lesser the attachment the weaker is the spirit of obedience. Which sacrifice can be more valuable than that offered by you while obeying a person who has otherwise no authority over you, but you have accepted him as your Chief only to work for the sake of Allah, and you carry out his orders without any grudge like a loyal subordinate, even though his orders may sometimes go against your wishes and interest. As this sacrifice is for the cause of Allah, its reward also is very great with Allah. On the other hand, if anyone refuses to accept subordinate position, and regards this subordination below his dignity, or feels hurt when ordered to do a thing and shows uneasiness or hesitation in complying with the orders that go against his own wishes or interests, practically proves that he has not yet surrendered to Allah and his own self still dominates his thoughts and actions.

Devotion and Sacrifice

My last advice is that all those who stand for this mission and movement should develop in themselves a trend to spend for the cause of Allah and give this cause preference over their own material Interests and pursuits. Try to cultivate such a deep attachment with this mission that may not let you rest till you spend every bit of your energy and resources for this cause.

Dedicate not only your person but your purse and finances too for the cause of Allah. Never forget that Allah has His right not only on you and your being but on your time and your money as well. Allah and the Prophet (p) has prescribed the minimum limit but for maximum there is no limit. It is for you to decide and assess as to what extent should you spend in the way of Allah to satisfy yourself that you have paid the due. None can judge it better than yourself. The best judge is your own conviction and conscience. I need not say any more than that you learn a lesson from those who have no faith in Allah or Hereafter and, yet they make such a great sacrifices for their fake ideals. We the believers in Allah and Hereafter should feel ashamed of ourselves.

I also find most of the workers lacking in the level of interest and devotion needed for the establishment of Islamic order. No doubt some of us do work with utmost zeal for which we should feel happy about and I pray for them from the core of my heart But most of the workers lack the required devotion. Only a few of us feel as a believer should feel upset on the rampant vices, wretchedness and helplessness of those who profess belief in the Allah Almighty. This state of affairs should cause at least as much worry and despair as you feel when your child is sick or your house is in danger of being under fire. Here too, it is very difficult for anyone to fix any limit or extent to which this despair and worry must go and the keenness one must show. It is again for individual to decide himself at the call of his own conscience as to what extent should he strive to satisfy himself that, as one who believes in the ultimate reality, has fulfilled his duty. Yet for the sake of contrast it is enough to cast a glance on the endeavors of those striving for the establishment of their fake and false ideals and staking all that they have at their command.

Clothing and Adornment

Islam permits, and in fact requires, that the Muslim be careful about his appearance, dress decently, maintain his dignity, and enjoy what Allah has created for the purpose of clothing and adornment.

From the Islamic point of view, clothing has two purposes: to cover the body and to beautify the appearance. Allah Subhanahu wa Ta'ala counts His bestowal of clothing and adornment upon human beings as one of His favors to mankind:

O children of Adam! Verily, We have bestowed upon you clothing to cover your shame as well as to be an adornment to you... (7:26)

Whoever neglects either of these two aspects, covering or adornment has deviated from the way of Islam toward the path of Satan. Accordingly, Allah warns people concerning both nakedness and neglect of good appearance, as these are snares of Satan, in the following verses:

O children of Adam! Do not let Satan seduce in the same manner as he expelled your parents (Adam and Eve) from the Garden, stripping them of their raiment in order to expose their shame... (7:27)

O children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but do not be wasteful... (7:31)

Islam has made it obligatory on Muslims to cover their private parts, which everyone naturally feels a sense of shame at exposing in order that they may be distinguished from the naked animals; in fact, it instructs them to avoid uncovering these parts of their bodies even when they are alone so that they may attain perfection in morals and religion.

Bahaz ibn Hakim, on the authority of his grandfather, reported the latter as saying: *I asked, 'O Messenger of Allah! What should we conceal and what can we show of our private parts?' He replied, 'Let no one see them except your wife or your bondwoman.'* I then asked, *'What if some people live together (e.g., during travel, or camping)?'* He

replied, 'If you can manage it, try not to let anyone see them ' I then said, 'And what if no one is present (meaning if one is alone)?' He said, 'Allah Tabarak wa Ta'ala is most deserving of your modesty.' (Reported by Ahmad, Abu Daoud, al-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah.)

Cleanliness and Beautification Are Characteristics of Islam

Before directing its attention to the questions of adornment and good appearance, Islam addressed itself in considerable depth to the question of cleanliness, for cleanliness is the essence of good appearance and the beauty of every adornment.

It is reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) said: *"Cleanse yourself, for Islam is cleanliness."* (Reported by Ibn Hayyan.) *"Cleanliness invites toward faith, and faith leads its possessor to the Garden. (Reported by al-Tabarani)." The Prophet (peace be on him) placed a great emphasis on keeping the body, clothing, houses, and streets clean, and he laid special stress on cleaning the teeth, hands, and hair. This emphasis on cleanliness is not to be wondered at in a religion which makes cleanliness the key to its principle form of worship, Salah, for the Muslim's Salah is not acceptable unless his body, clothing, and the place where he performs his Salah are all clean. In addition to this requirement' there are the obligatory types of cleansing, either of the entire body in the form of ghusl (total washing), or of those parts of the body which are exposed to dirt, in the form of wadhu (ablution for Salah).*

The desert environment of Arabia and the nomadic life of its people were not very conducive to cleanliness and refinement, and most of them neglected these aspects. The Prophet (peace be on him), with his lively instruction and to-the-point admonition, gradually led them out of their uncivilized habits and taught them refinement and civil manners. Once a man approached the Prophet (peace be on him) with his hair and beard disheveled. The Prophet (peace be on him) made some gestures as if asking the man to comb his hair. He did so, and when he returned the Prophet (peace be on him) said to him, *"Is not this better than that one should come with disheveled hair, looking like a devil?"* (Reported by Malik in Al-Muwatta.) On another occasion the Prophet (peace be on him) saw a man with unkept hair and remarked, *"Does he have nothing with which to comb his hair?"* (Reported by Abu Daoud.) Upon seeing another man with dirty clothes he

remarked, *"Cannot he find anything with which to wash his clothes?"* (Reported by Abu Daoud.)

A man came to the Prophet (peace be on him) wearing cheap-looking garments. "Do you have property?" the Prophet (peace be on him) asked him. "Yes," the man replied. "What kind of property?" asked the Prophet (peace be on him) "Allah has given me all kinds of wealth," he said. The Prophet (peace be on him) then said to him, "Since Allah has given you wealth, let Him see the effects of His favor and bounty upon you." (Reported by al-Nisai.)

The Prophet insisted that people come to general gatherings, such as the Friday and the 'Eid prayers, nicely dressed and well-groomed. He said, *If you can afford it, it is befitting that you wear garments other than your working clothes to Friday prayer.* (Reported by Abu Daoud.)

Gold and Pure Silk are Haraam for Men

Beautification and elegance are not merely permitted but are required by Islam, and in general it repudiates any attempts to prohibit them.

Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah, which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good things of His providing? (7:32)

Islam has, however, prohibited two kinds of adornment for men, while permitting them to women. These are, first, gold ornaments and, second, clothing made of pure silk. 'Ali reported that the Prophet (peace be on him) took some silk in his right hand and some gold in his left, declaring, *"These two are Haraam for the males among my followers."* (Reported by Ahmad, Abu Daoud, al-Nisai, Ibn Hayyan, and Ibn Majah, who reports the additional phrase, *"but Halaal for the females."*) 'Umar reported that he heard the Prophet (peace be on him) say, *"Do not wear silk, for those who wear it in this life shall not wear it in the Hereafter."* (Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim. A Similar Hadith is reported by them on the authority of Anas.) On another occasion, referring to a silken garment, he said, *"This is the dress of a man who has no character."* (Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim.)

The Prophet (peace be on him) once saw a gold ring on a man's hand. He immediately took it from him and threw it down saying, *'Does a person pick up a piece of burning coal and hold it in his hand?'* After the Prophet (peace be on him) had left the place, someone asked the man, *'Why do you not pick it up and benefit from it?'* He replied, *'No, by Allah! I shall not pick it up after the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) has thrown it away.'* (Reported by Muslim.)

The same prohibition which applies to the gold ring likewise applies to what we observe among conspicuous spenders, i.e., the gold pen, gold watch, gold cigarette case and lighter, gold teeth, etc.

The Prophet (peace be on him), however, permitted men to wear silver rings. On the authority of Ibn 'Umar, al-Bukhari reported the former saying, *"The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) wore a silver ring. After him, Abu Bakr and then 'Umar and 'Uthman wore it, until it fell off his finger into the well of Arees."* (Reported by al-Bukhari in the chapter on "Clothing" (Al-Libas).) As for other metals such as iron, there are no sound texts prohibiting them. On the contrary, in the *Sahih* of al-Bukhari we find that the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) advised a man who wanted to marry a woman to, *"Present her with a gift, even if it be ring made of iron."* On the basis of this *Hadith* al-Bukhari inferred the permissibility of iron rings.

The Prophet (peace be on him) made concessions in the wearing of silken garments for medical reasons, as he gave 'Abd al-Rahman bin 'Auf and al-Zubayr bin al-'Awwam, both of whom suffered from scabies, permission to wear silk. (Reported by al-Bukhari.)

The Wisdom of These Two Prohibitions Concerning Men

By means of these two prohibitions, which concern men, Islam's aim is to achieve certain noble educational and moral objectives.

Since it is the role of *jihad* (striving) and strength, Islam must safeguard the manly qualities of men from any show of weakness, passivity, and lethargy. Allah has made the physique of the man different from that of the woman, and it does not befit a man to wear clothes made of fine material or to adorn his body with costly ornaments.

There is, however, a social aim underlying these prohibitions. The prohibition of gold and silk to males is part of a broader Islamic program of combating luxuriousness in living. From the Qur'anic point of view, luxurious living leads to weakness among nations and to their eventual downfall; the existence of luxury is also an expression of social injustice, as only a few can afford luxurious items at the expense of the deprived masses of people.

In addition to this, luxurious living is an enemy of every call towards truth, justice, and social reform. The Qur'an says:

And when We intend that We should destroy a township, we permit its luxury-loving people to commit wickedness therein. Then the word is proved true against it, and We then destroy it utterly. (17:16) And again, And We did not send a warner to any township without its luxury-loving people saying, 'Assuredly we are disbelievers in that with which you have been sent.' (34:34)

In keeping with the spirit of the Qur'an, the Prophet (peace be on him) forbade Muslims any indulgence in conspicuous consumption. He not only forbade the use of gold and silk to men but also forbade men and women alike the use of gold and silver utensils.

Finally, economic considerations also carry some weight here. Since gold is a universal medium of exchange, using it to make household utensils or ornaments for men does not make sense in economic terms.

Why Gold and Silk are Permitted to Women

Women have been exempted from this prohibition out of consideration for her feminine nature, as the love of jewelry and ornaments is quite natural and becoming for women. However, they are not to use their adornments to attract men and arouse their sexual desires. According to a *Hadith*, *When a woman puts on perfume and goes among people so that its scent reaches them, she is an adulteress, and any eye, which is attracted to her, is that of an adulterer. (Reported by al-Nisai, and also by Ibn Khazimah and Ibn Hayyan in their respective Sahih's).* And Allah Ta'ala warns women

...That they should not stamp their feet in order to make apparent what is hidden of their adornment... (24:31)

The Dress of the Muslim Woman

Islam makes it *Haraam* for women to wear clothes, which fail to cover the body, and which are transparent, revealing what is underneath. It is likewise *Haraam* to wear tightly fitting clothes, which mark out the parts of the body, especially those parts that are sexually attractive. Abu Hurairah narrated that the Messenger, of Allah (peace be on him) said, *I will not be a witness for two types of people who are destined for the Fire: people with whips, like the tails of cows, who beat the people (i.e., tyrannical rulers who are the enemies of their own people), and women who, although clothed, are yet naked, seducing and being seduced, their hair styled like the tilted humps of camels. These will not enter the Garden nor will its fragrance even reach them, although its fragrance reaches a very great distance. (Reported by Muslim.)*

The Prophet (peace be on him) described such women as being clothed, yet naked, since their clothing, being transparent and fine, does not do the job of concealing the body but is rather intended to reveal it; such is the dress of the women of our time. The Prophet (peace be on him) likened their hair-style to the hump of a special breed of camel (*bakht*) that has very large humps, because they put up their hair in a beehive shape from the middle of their heads. It is as if the Prophet (peace be on him) were looking beyond the centuries to the present age, when dressing the hair of women and styling it in variety of shapes has become a profession dominated by men who charge top prices for their work. And this is not all. Many women, not satisfied with what Allah gave them in the way of natural hair, buy wigs made of artificial hair to add to their own in order to increase its body, beauty, and luster, imagining that this renders them better looking and more sexually attractive.

The astonishing thing about this *Hadith* is the connection of political oppression with moral laxity. This connection is borne out by facts, since it is the way of rulers to keep people preoccupied with their personal desires and lusts so that they have no time to think about public affairs.

Concerning Woman's Imitating Man and Vice Versa

The Prophet (peace be on him) declared that a woman should not wear a man's clothing nor a man a woman's. He cursed men who imitate women and women who imitate men.

(Reported by al-Bukhari and others.) Aspects of such imitation include the manner of speaking, walking, dressing, moving and so on.

The evil of such conduct, which affects both the life of the individual and of society, is that it constitutes a rebellion against the natural ordering of things. According to this natural order, there are men and there are women, and each of the two sexes has its own distinctive characteristics. However, if men become effeminate and women masculinized, this natural order will be reversed and will disintegrate.

Among those who are cursed by Allah and His angels, both in this world and in the Hereafter, the Prophet (peace be on him) has mentioned the man whom Allah has made a male but who becomes effeminate by imitating women, and a woman whom Allah has made a female but who becomes masculinized by imitating men. (Reported by al-Tabarani.)

For this reason the Prophet (peace be on him) forbade men to wear fabric decorated with large, loud, or bold designs. In his *Sahih*, Muslim reported 'Ali as saying, *The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) forbade me the wearing of a gold ring, a silken garment, and clothing with bold designs.*

Muslim also reports a *Hadith* from Ibn 'Umar, who said, "The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) saw me wearing two garments having bold designs, and he said, *"This is what unbelievers wear. Do not wear such things."*

Dressing for the Sake of Ostentation and Pride

The general rule for the enjoyment of the good things of life, such as food, drink, and clothing, is that their use should be without extravagance or pride.

Extravagance consists of exceeding the limits of what is beneficial in the use of the *Halaal*, while pride is something related to the intention and the heart rather than to what is apparent. Pride is the intention to look superior and above others, and **Allah does not love any proud boaster**, (57:23). The Prophet (peace be on him) said: *"On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will not look at the person who trails his robe behind him out of pride."* (Agreed upon by Bukhari and Muslim.)

In order to avoid even the suspicion of pride, the Prophet (peace be on him) forbade Muslims to wear garments of "fame" that is, clothes which are worn in order to impress others and which generate competition in vain and idle pursuits. According to a *Hadith*, *On the Day of Resurrection, Allah will clothe the one who wears garments of fame with the garments of humiliation. (Reported by Ahmad, Abu Daoud, al-Nisai, and Ibn Majah.)*

A man asked Ibn 'Umar, "What kind of clothes shall I wear?" Ibn 'Umar replied, "Such as would neither invite the scorn of the weak-minded (because of their being cheap and ugly) nor the blame of the wise (because of their being immoderately expensive)." (Reported by al-Tabarani.)

Going to Extremes in Beautification by Changing What Allah Created

Islam denounces such excesses in beautifying oneself as require altering one's physical features as Allah created them. The Qur'an considers such alterations as inspired by Satan, who

...Will command them (his devotees) to change what Allah has created... (4:119)

The Prohibition of Tattooing, Cutting the Teeth, and Undergoing Surgery for Beautification
Among such excesses are tattooing and shortening the teeth. (A beautification practice of the pre-Islamic Arabs. (Trans.)) *The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) cursed the tattooer and the one who is tattooed, the shortener of teeth and the one whose teeth are shortened. (Reported by Muslim.)*

As far as tattooing is concerned, it permanently disfigures the face and other parts of the body with blue pigment and repulsive designs. Some Arabs, especially women, were in the habit of tattooing large portions of their bodies, while people of certain religious sects tattooed pictures of their deities or religious rituals on their hands and chests. To all these abominations is added the pain and agony, which the person being tattooed must undergo from the pricking of the needles. Because all of this, both the tattooer and the one who is tattooed have been cursed.

As for cutting or shortening the teeth, the Prophet (peace be on him) cursed both the men and the women who do it and the women who request it. If a man does it, he merits an even greater curse. Similarly, the Prophet (peace be on him) prohibited widening the spaces between the teeth, and he cursed ...*Women who widen the gaps between their own or others' teeth for the sake of beauty, changing what Allah has created.*

Now, Allah obviously created some women with gaps between their teeth and others without. Some women who have no such gaps desire to create them artificially, either by filing or by cutting away parts of the adjoining teeth. Islam considers this a form of deception and excessive involvement with personal beauty, both of which it discourages.

From these *Ahadith* of the Prophet (peace be on him), we also know the ruling of the Islamic *Shari'ah* concerning plastic surgery. Surgeries for beautification are in vogue today as the result of the materialistic outlook of Western civilization, a civilization stressing the body and its desires. Men and women spend hundreds and thousands of dollars to reshape their noses or breasts, or whatever they consider misshapen. This behavior most certainly belongs in the category of excessive beautification, unnecessarily changing what Allah has created, and it merits the curse of Allah and His Prophet (peace be on him). It likewise involves torture, pain, and waste of money merely for the sake of one's appearance; it is, moreover, an expression of an individual's preoccupation with form rather than substance, with body rather than with spirit.

It may happen that a person has an unusual physical defect, which attracts the attention of others to the point of inflicting physical and psychological pain every time he meets people. In this case, he may treat the defect and thus alleviate the embarrassment, which made his life miserable. Allah the Most Merciful has imposed no hardship on us in religion.... (Al Bahee al-Khooly, *Al Mar'ah Bain al-Bait wal-Mujtama'*, 2nd edition, p. 105.)

This statement is perhaps supported by the *Hadith* concerning widening the gap between the teeth for the sake of beautification, for what is disapproved here is doing this merely for the sake of achieving good looks and artificial beauty. However, if it is needed to eliminate pain or distress, there is nothing wrong with it; but Allah knows best.

Plucking the Eyebrows

Among the extremes of beautification prohibited by Islam is *al-nams*, which denotes removing the hair of the eyebrows by plucking in order to thin or shape them. The Prophet (peace be on him) cursed both the women who do the plucking and those who seek to have it done. (Narrated by Abu Daoud on good authority.) This practice is particularly frowned upon because it is customarily done by prostitutes.

According to some Hanbali scholars, if the husband approves it, the removal of facial hair (other than that of the eyebrows) and the use of powder, creams, and other beauty aids are permitted to women, as this is part of feminine adornment. Al-Nawawi is somewhat more strict, considering the removal of facial hair to be *al-nams* and hence forbidden. In contrast to his opinion, we may, however, mention Abu Daud's statement in his *Sunan* that "*al-nams* is plucking the eyebrows in order to thin them," from which we may conclude that *al-nams* does not include the removal of facial hair.

Al-Tabari reports a narrative concerning the wife of Abu Ishaq, who loved to beautify herself. Once she visited 'Aisha and asked, "What if a woman removes the hair from her forehead to please her husband?" 'Aisha replied, "Remove what is harmful from yourselves whenever possible." (*Fath al-Bari*, under the explanation of the *Hadith* by Ibn Mas'ood in the chapter entitled "Pluckers of Eyebrows," in the book *Clothing*.)

Wigs and Hairpieces

In the category of female adornments, the addition of any other hair, real or artificial, to one's own hair—that is, the wearing of wigs and hairpieces—is also prohibited.

It is reported by al-Bukhari on the authority of 'Aisha, her sister Asma, Ibn Mas'ood, Ibn 'Umar, and Abu Hurairah that "*The Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) cursed al-wasilah and al-mustawsilah, al-mustawsilah, wasilah denoting a woman whose profession is making wigs and hairpieces' and mustawsilah a woman who uses them.*

Men are prohibited such things to an even greater degree, whether they are a wasil (coiffeur or hairdresser) or a mustawsil, like today's effeminate, long-haired young men of the "hippie" mould.

The Prophet (peace be on him) was very strict in combating such deceptions, so much so that if a woman lost her hair due to some illness, he did not permit her to add other hair to that on her head, even if she were soon to be married. Al-Bukhari reports 'Aisha's narrative concerning a girl of the Ansar who was married and subsequently fell ill, losing her hair. Some people wanted to add other hair to her own, but when they asked the Prophet (peace be on him) about this he replied, Allah has cursed the wasilah and the mustawsilah (Reported by al-Bukhari, in his book Clothing, in the chapter entitled "Adding to the Hair")

Al-Bukhari also reports Asma's narrative concerning a woman who said to the Prophet (peace be on him), "O Messenger of Allah, since my daughter has had measles, her hair has fallen out, and I am about to give her in marriage. Shall I add some strands of hair to her hair?" and the Prophet (peace be on him) replied, *"Allah has cursed the wasilah and the mustawsilah. (Reported by al-Bukhari.)"*

Sa'id ibn al-Musayab narrated that Mu'awiyah delivered a public address during his last visit to Madinah. In the course of it he took out a strand of hair, saying, "I have not seen anyone using this besides the Jews. Indeed, the Prophet (peace be on him), referring to the adding of hair to one's own hair, called it forgery." According to another report, he said to the people of Madinah, "Where are your scholars? I heard the Prophet (peace be on him) prohibiting the use of this and saying, *'The Children of Israel were destroyed when their women started using this.'* "

The Prophet's terming the use of false hair "a forgery" indicates the reason for its prohibition. It is, in fact, fraud, falsification, and deception, and Islam condemns deception and dissociates itself from those who practice it either by material or psychological means, for *"The one who deceives us is not of us."* (Reported by a number of Sahabah (Companions of the Prophet).)

Khattabi said, Harsh punishments are promised (in the Hereafter for such practices because they involve deception and fraud. If any of these is allowed, the door will be open for other types of forgeries. Moreover, this involves the alteration of God-given features, as mentioned in the Hadith of Ibn Mas'ood concerning 'The alterers of Allah's creation. (Fath al-Bari, in the chapter entitled "Adding to the Hair.")

What is prohibited in these Ahadith is the addition of other hair whether natural or artificial, to one's own, as this is a form of deceit and fraud. What is not included in this prohibition is the use of material other than hair, such as thread or cloth, which can be interwoven with natural hair. On the authority of Sa'id ibn Jubair, we have the saying of the Prophet (peace be on him): *There is nothing wrong with tawamil, (Mentioned in Fath al-Bari on the authority of Abu Daoud.)* meaning the use of wool or silk to make braids. Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal has also commented on its permissibility. (Fath al-Bari.)

Dyeing the Hair

Another aspect of beautification relates to dyeing the gray hair of the head or the beard. It was reported that the Jews and Christians refrained from dyeing the hair, regarding such beautification and adornment as contrary to piety and devotion, and not befitting rabbis, priests, and ascetics. The Prophet (peace be on him) forbade Muslims to imitate these people or follow their ways, in order that Muslims might develop their own distinctive and independent characteristics in appearance and behavior.

Al-Bukhari, on the authority of Abu Hurairah, reported the Messenger of Allah (peace be on him) as saying, *"The Jews and Christians do not dye their hair, so be different from them."* (Reported in al-Bukhari's chapter on "Dyeing the Hair" in his book *Clothing*.) This is, however, not a command but only a recommendation, as is evident from the actions of the Sahabah, such as Abu Bakr and 'Umar, who used to dye their hair, while others, such as 'All, Ubay ibn Ka'b, and Anas did not.

The question now remains as to what type of dye is to be used. Should its color be black or can there be other colors? Or should black be avoided? If a man is of a very advanced age, with white hair and beard, it would hardly be appropriate for him to use black dye. On the day of the conquest of Makkah, Abu Bakr brought his aged father, Abu Qahafah, carrying him until he had seated him in front of the Prophet (peace be on him). On seeing Abu Qahafah's snow-white hair, the Prophet (peace be on him) said, *"Change this, but avoid black."* (Fath al-Bari, in explaining the above mentioned Hadith (in the chapter on "Dyeing"). However, if a man is not of such advanced age or feebleness as Abu Qahafah then was, there is no harm in his using black dye. In this regard al-Zuhri said, "We dyed our hair black when the face looked young, but discarded it when the face became

wrinkled and the teeth decayed."(Reported by Ibn Abu 'Asim in the book on "Dyeing the Hair.")

Some of the early Muslims, including some Sahabah such as Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, 'Uqbah ibn 'Amr, al-Hassan, al-Hussein, Jarir, and others permitted the use of black dye. Some scholars, on the other hand, do not consider the use of black hair dye as permissible except during time of war, when the enemy might be impressed by the fact that all the soldiers of the Muslim army look young.

Abu Dharr narrated the Hadith, *The best thing with which to dye gray hair is henna and katm (Mentioned in Fath al-Bari)*. Henna makes the hair red, while katm, a plant from Yemen, colors it black tinged with red. Said Anas, "Abu Bakr dyed his hair with henna and katm, and 'Umar dyed it with henna only."

Letting the Beard Grow

The growing of beards is also related to our topic. Al-Bukhari, on the authority of Ibn 'Umar, reported the Prophet (peace be on him) as saying, *"Be different from the polytheists (mushrikeen): let the beard grow and trim the moustache."* The purpose here, as the Hadith states, is to be different from the polytheists, who, in the particular instance cited, were Zoroastrians, the worshippers of fire, whose practice was either to clip or shave their beards. The Prophet's command to be different from them was intended to train the Muslims in developing an independent personality, distinct in its inner reality as well as in outward appearance, in substance as well as in form. At the same time, shaving the beard is an affront to the masculine nature, as it is an attempt to resemble women, while the beard is an integral part of masculinity and a distinctive feature of the male sex.

However, letting the beard grow does not mean letting it grow wild or so long that it becomes a nuisance. One should certainly trim it in both length and breadth. This has been recommended in a Hadith reported by al-Tirmidhi; moreover, the Muslims of the first generations did so. Said 'Ayyad, (The twelfth century author of a well known book about the characteristics of the Prophet. (Trans.)) "It is Makruh to shave the beard or to drastically cut or shorten it, but it is Mustahab (commendable) to remove something from its length and breadth if it grows big."

Abu Shamah voiced the complaint that "Some people have started shaving their beards, and that is a step further than the Zoroastrians, who used only to trim them." (Fath al-Bari, in the chapter entitled "Growing Beards.") In my view it is regrettable that at the present time the majority of Muslims shave their beards in imitation of the foreign elements that have occupied their lands. It is an unfortunate fact that the conquered always imitate their conquerors. Today's Muslims have ignored the Prophet's command that they be different from non-believers and avoid imitating them. Indeed, anyone who *"imitates a people is one of them."* (A Hadith reported by Abu Daoud on the authority of Ibn 'Umar.)

A large number of jurists consider shaving the beard to be Haraam on the basis of the Prophet's command. This command to let the beard grow renders it an obligation, especially because it is for the purpose of being different from non-Muslims, since maintenance of this distinction from those who do not believe is obligatory for Muslims.

It has never been reported that any of the Muslims of the earliest generations neglected this obligation. However, some modern scholars permit the shaving of the beard under the impact of events in response to public opinion, arguing that the growing of the beard was a personal preference of the Prophet (peace be on him) which was not related to religious practice, and hence it need not be followed. But the truth of this matter is that growing the beard is required not merely because the Prophet (peace be on him) had one but because he explicitly commanded it in order to maintain the distinction from non-believers. Ibn Taymiyyah has convincingly argued that to make the Muslims different from non-believers was the aim of the Lawgiver, for resemblance in appearance produces love, friendship, and affinity in feeling, just as love in the heart produces resemblance in outward appearance. This psychological fact is borne out by experience and observation. Says Ibn Taymiyyah:

The Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the consensus of Muslim scholars all teach Muslims to be distinct from nonbelievers and in general to avoid resembling them. Anything, which is likely to cause corruption in a hidden and diffuse manner, is related to this matter and is likewise prohibited. The imitation of the appearance of the non-believers will lead to imitation of their immoral behavior and evil qualities—indeed, even of their beliefs. Such influences can neither be brought under control nor easily detected, and consequently it

becomes difficult or even impossible to eradicate them. Accordingly, the Lawgiver has prohibited whatever is a cause of corruption. (Refer to Kitab Iqtida al-Sirat al-Mustaqeem.)

Thus, we note that there are three opinions with regard to the shaving of the beard: one, that it is Haraam, which is the opinion of Ibn Taymiyyah and others; two, that it is Makruh, the opinion of 'Ayyad as mentioned in Al-Fath al-Bari but of no one else; and three, that it is permitted, which is the opinion of some modern scholars. Perhaps the second opinion, that it is Makruh, is nearer to the truth and more moderate. As the stated reason for growing the beard is to be different from the non-believers, it is similar to the matter of dyeing gray hair in order to be distinct from the Jews and Christians; it is known that some of the Sahabah did not dye their gray hair, signifying that it was commendable rather than obligatory. Similarly, growing the beard may be regarded as commendable but not obligatory, and, accordingly, shaving it would be classified as Makruh rather than Haraam. It is true that none of the Sahabah was known to have shaved his beard. Perhaps there was no need to shave, and perhaps growing the beard was a custom among them.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Intro to the Study of Qur'an (6-11)
Before Sleeping (110)
Knowledge: the first Step (118-122)
Importance of Salah (232-238)
Moral System of Islam (295-297)

Week 2

Intro to the Study of Qur'an (12-17)
After Waking up (110)
Difference between Deen & Shari'ah (123-131)
Purpose of Salah (239-240)
Islamic Concept of Morality (297-303)

Week 3

Intro to the Study of Qur'an (18-23)
After Wadhu (111)
Meaning of 'Ibadah (132-138)
Meaning & Blessings of Salah (241-244)
Al-Kabaair (304-309)

Week 4

Hifz & Tafseer of 114 (24-27)
Introduction to Aqeedah (139-141)
Meaning & Blessings of Salah (245-250)
Al-Kabaair (304-309)

Week 5

Hifz & Tafseer of 113 (28-32)
Tawheed Ar-Rububiyah (142-144)
Why is Salah Ineffective Today (251-257)
Al-Kabaair (304-309)

Week 6

Hifz & Tafseer of 112 (33-38)
Key Points of Rububiyah (142-144)
Pre-Requisites of Salah (258)
Al-Kabaair (304-309)

Week 7

Hifz & Tafseer of 111 (39-43)
Tawheed Al-Asmaa wass Sifaat (145-148)
Kinds and Times of Salah (259-261)
Tawbah (310-313)

Week 8

Hifz & Tafseer of 110 (44-50)
Key Points of Tawheed Al-Asmaa wass Sifaat
Arkaan of Salah (262)
Ta'aluq Billah (314-317)

Week 9

Hifz & Tafseer of 109 (51-55)
Tawheed Al-Uluhiyyah (149-155)
Arkaan of Salah (262)
How to Increase TB (317-319)

Week 10

Hifz & Tafseer of 108 (56-59)
Key Points of Tawheed Al-Uluhiyyah
Wajibaat of Salah (263)
Growing & Measuring TB (319-321)

Week 11

Hifz & Tafseer of 107 (60-63)
Consequences of Shirk (156-158)
Wajibaat of Salah (263)
Preference of Aakhirah (321-325)

Week 12

Hifz & Tafseer of 106 (64-66)
Shirk in Allah's Rububiyah (159-160)
Sunan of Salah 264-265)
Avoiding Takabbur (325-327)

Week 13

Hifz & Tafseer of 105 (67-81)
Shirk in Allah's Asmaa wass Sifaat (161-163)
Sunan of Salah (264-265)
Attending to Kith & Kin (327-328)

Week 14

Hifz & Tafseer of 104 (82-84)
Shirk in Allah's Uluhiyyah (163-166)
Actions Nullifying Salah (266)
Ihtisaab (328-330)

Week 15

Hifz & Tafseer of 103 (85-97)

Ikhlaas (168-173)
Blessings in Congregation (267-272)
Sama'a & Ta'at (328-331)

Week 16

Hifz & Tafseer of 102 (98-100)
Riyaa (174-190)
Conditions of Imamah (273-275)
Devotion & Sacrifice (331-332)

Week 17

Hifz & Tafseer of 101 (101-103)
Riyaa (174-190)
Different types of Salah (276)
Islamic Dress Code (333-349)

Week 18

Hifz & Tafseer of 100 (104-107)
Ahadith Relating to Ikhlaas & Riyaa
Different types of Salah (276)
Islamic Dress Code (333-349)

Week 19

Makhaarij of the Letters (108)
Entering Bathroom (112)
What is a Witness & its Duties? (191-197)
Why is Fasting Obligatory (277-282)
Islamic Dress Code (333-349)

Week 20

Makhaarij of the Letters (108)
Leaving Bathroom (113)
Where do We Stand? (197-206)
Purpose of Fasting (282-287)
Adaab of Giving Khutbah

Week 21

Basic Tajweed Rules
After Adhaan Ends (114)
Islamic Movement (207-211)
Who Must Fast? (288)
Adaab of Giving Khutbah

Week 22

Basic Tajweed Rules
Leaving the House (115)
Org. Characteristics of an IM (212-217)
Who Are Exempt from Fasting (289)
Adaab of Public Speaking

Week 23

Basic Tajweed Rules
Entering Masjid (116)
Tools of Islamic Movement (217-219)
Actions Nullifying Fasts (290)
Approaching News

Week 24

Basic Tajweed Rules
Exiting Masjid (116)
IM and other Organizations (220-223)
Key points While Fasting (291)
Scanning/Analyzing News

Week 25

Basic Tajweed Rules
IM Today and in Future (224-231)
Prohibited Fasting (292)
Scanning/Analyzing News

Week 26

IM Today and in Future (224-231)
Recommended Fasting (293)
Responding to a News