

Islam: The Fundamentals of Faith



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“O ye who believe! Believe in Allah and His messenger (Muhammad) and the Scripture which He hath revealed unto His messenger, and the Scripture which He revealed aforetime. Whoso disbelieves in God and His angels and His Scriptures and His Messengers and the Last Day, he verily hath wandered far astray.” (Qur’an;4:136)

Introduction

Muslims are well aware of the fundamentals of faith that are thoroughly memorized in childhood. However with the passage of time there is need to refresh the same, especially in the holy month of Ramadan, the month of annual spiritual reawakening and revival. While Muslims lay lot of emphasis in performance of rituals meticulously, the real spirit, performance of good deeds is generally ignored. In Christian theology Faith is considered sufficient for salvation but in Islam faith and performance of good deeds are intertwined, they complement each other:

“Do men think that they will be left alone on saying “We believe” and that they will not be tested?” (Qur’an;29:2).

“He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed: and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving;” (Quran;67:2)

Faith is the confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, an idea, or a thing. Belief does not require logical proof or material evidence. The theological virtue may be defined as secure belief (*aymaan*) in Allah and a trusting acceptance of Allah’s will. The Faith in Islam is belief (*aymaan*) as described in Qur’an:

“Say (O Muslims): “We believe in Allah and the revelation given to us and to Abraham Isma’il Isaac Jacob and the Tribes and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord we make no difference between one and another of them and we bow to Allah (in Islam).” (Qur’an;2:136).

“O believers enter into Islam completely and do not follow the footsteps of *Satan*, surely he is your clear-cut enemy.” (Qur’an;2:208).

Faith is by the Grace of Allah for those who use their reason, Allah says:

“It is not possible for anyone to believe except by the permission of Allah, and He throws filth on those who do not use their reason. Say: “Look at whatever exists in the heavens and the earth.” Signs and warnings do not benefit those people who do not believe.” (Qur’an;10:100-101).

The faith must withstand the test of time, as per Qur’an;

“We shall surely test your steadfastness with fear and famine, with loss of property, life and produce. Give good news to those who endure with patience; who, when afflicted with calamity, say: “We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.” Such are the people on whom there are blessings and Mercy from Allah; and they are the ones that are rightly guided.” (Qur’an;2:155-157).

“It is He who sent down Tranquility into the hearts of the Believers that they may Add Faith to their Faith; for to Allah belong the Forces of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom;” (Qur’an;48:4).

“Allah’s object also is to purge those that are true in faith and to deprive of blessing those that resist faith”. (Qur’an;3:141).

The faith is not complete when it is followed blindly or accepted unquestioningly. Man must build his faith on well-grounded convictions beyond any reasonable doubt and above uncertainty:

“Behold! Abraham said: “My lord! Show me how you give life to the dead.” He replied: “Have you no faith in this?” Abraham humbly submitted: “Yes! But I ask this to reassure my heart...” (Qur’an;2:260).

Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had complete faith in

Allah's power, but he wanted, with Allah's permission, to give an explanation of that faith to his own heart and mind. Islam insures freedom to believe and forbids compulsion in religion.

A Muslim also believes in a clear distinction between the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Qur'an is the word of Allah, a book of guidance and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the role model for its practical implementation. The sayings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are known as Hadith, where as the Sunnah is the examples of the Prophet's life; what he said, did, implemented and how he implemented, almost the same as the Hadith. Allah says:

"You have indeed, in the life of Messenger of Allah, the 'Best Model' for him whose hope is in Allah and the Day of the Hereafter, and who engages himself much in the remembrance of Allah."(Qur'an;33:21).

"To Him you shall all return. Allah's promise is true. He is the One Who originates the process of Creation and repeats it (will bring it back to life) so that He may justly reward those who believed in Him and did righteous deeds. As for those who disbelieved, they shall have boiling fluids to drink and shall undergo a painful punishment because they rejected the truth." (Qur'an;10:4).

"Now, special mercy is assigned to those who follow the messenger, the unlettered Prophet (Muhammad) - whom they shall find described in the Torah and the Gospel. Who enjoins them what is good and forbids what is evil; makes pure things lawful for them and impure things unlawful; relieves them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that were around their necks. Therefore, those who believe in him, honor him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent

down with him will be the ones who will be successful in this life and the hereafter."(Qur'an;7:157).

"Say: Obey Allah and the messenger. But if they turn away, Lo! Allah loves not the disbelievers (in His guidance)." (Qur'an;3:32).

Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are the primary sources of knowledge in Islam. If some one believes in Qur'an but not in the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), he will be misguided by negating the Qur'an.

Islam and Faith (Ayman)

In the Qur'anic terminology, 'Islam' and 'Faith' (Belief, *Ayman*) as well as 'Muslim' and '*Momin*' (Faithful) are generally used synonymously, comprehensively explained by Abul A'la Moududi in *Tahfheem-ul-Qur'an*. 'Islam' is the name of 'True Faith' which God has sent for the benefit of humanity, it encompasses both 'Belief' (*Aymean*) and 'Obedience, submission to the Divine Commands (Islam)'. The 'Muslim' is a person who believes truly in heart and practically obeys the Divine Commands, this is evident form Qur'an: "Then We saved all those who were believers (*Mu'minen*) in the town - We found none but one household of true Muslims (*Muslimen*)" (Qur'an;51:35-36), "The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His will):..."(Qur'an;3:19), "If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) never will it be accepted of him;" (Qur'an;3:85), "This day have I perfected your religion for you completed my favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."(Qur'an;5:3), "Those whom Allah (in His Plan) wills to guide He opens their breast to

Islam;"(Qur'an;6:125), ""Nay! I am commanded to be the first of those who submit to Allah in Islam" (Qur'an;6:14), "If they become Muslims they shall be rightly guided" (Qur'an;3:20).

Hence a 'Muslim' is the Faithful and believer (not merely by oral confession but believer from heart), as evident form Qur'an: "O believers! Fear Allah as He should be feared and die not but as true Muslims."(Qur'an;3:102), "He named you Muslims before in prior scriptures and in this (The Qur'an)," (Qur'an;22:78), "Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian but he was a Muslim, true in faith."(Qur'an;3:67), ""Our Lord! make of us Muslims bowing to Thy (Will) and of our progeny a people Muslim bowing to Thy (Will)" (Qur'an;2:128), "This was the legacy that Abraham left to his sons and so did Jacob, when he said: "O my sons! Allah has chosen for you this Faith, therefore, die not unless you are Muslims."(Qur'an;2:132).

It may also be kept in view that the terms 'Faith (*Ayman*)' and 'Faithful (*Momin*)' does not necessarily mean 'True Believer or Faithful', though mostly used to mean the same, but at many places these terms have been used for those who apparently declare to be the followers of faith of Islam, i.e. all believers, weather of strong faith, weak faith or may be hypocrites (*yaa 'ayy-u-haa'alla dena 'aamano*): "O ye who believe! be not like the unbelievers who say of their brethren when they are traveling through the earth or engaged in fighting: "If they had stayed with us they would not have died or been slain."(Qur'an;3:156), "O ye who believe! believe in Allah and his Apostle and the scripture which He hath sent to His Apostle and the scripture which He sent to those before (him). And who denies

Allah His angels His Books His Apostles and the Day of Judgment hath gone far astray.”(Qur’an;4:136), “O ye who believe! if any from among you turn back from his faith soon will Allah produce a people whom He will love as they will love Him lowly with the believers mighty against the rejecters fighting in the way of Allah and never afraid of the reproaches of such as find fault.”(Qur’an;5:54), “O ye who believe! obey Allah and his apostle and turn not away from him when ye hear (him speak).”(Qur’an;8:20), “O ye that believe! betray not the trust of Allah and the apostle nor misappropriate knowingly things entrusted to you.”(Qur’an;8:27), “O ye that believe! fear Allah and believe in His apostle and He will bestow on you a double portion of His Mercy.”(Qur’an;57:28), “O believers! Why do you say something which you don’t do?”(Qur’an;61:2).

It may be held that while the Faith (*Ayman*) is the name of inner state, Islam is its outward display by the faithful, as evident from the Hadith narrated Abu Huraira: One day while the Prophet (peace be upon him) was sitting in the company of some people, (The angel) Gabriel came and asked, “What is faith?” Allah’s Apostle replied, ‘Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, (the) meeting with Him, His Apostles, and to believe in Resurrection.’ Then he further asked, “What is Islam?” Allah’s Apostle replied, “To worship Allah Alone and none else, to offer prayers perfectly to pay the compulsory charity (*Zakat*) and to observe fasts during the month of Ramadan...”(Sahih Al Bukhari Hadith 1:47). Hence the person who possesses belief with certainty in his heart and displays obedience to Islam, may be called a *Momin* or Muslim, the synonymous terms.

There is an exception, where Islam and *Ayman* has been used distinctively in Qur’an, to distinguish between the true believers and those who orally profess Islam as favour, Allah says: “The Bedouin Arabs say: “We have believed.” Tell them:

“You have not believed; rather say ‘We have become Muslims;’ for faith has not yet found its way into your hearts. If you obey Allah and His Apostle, He will not deny you the reward of your deeds; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. The (true) believers are those only who believe in Allah and His messenger

aspects emerge: Firstly, a person may not be in a state of acceptance of faith nor denial rather is in a state of vacuum but in his actions reflect obedience to Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him). In such a state according to the rule no action of a man is acceptable to Allah without *Ayman* (Faith). None acceptance of such acts by Allah is in line with the Divine Justice but Allah due to His Mercy has also accorded acceptance of actions of such a person [indicated by His Names, Forgiving, Merciful (*Ghafoor and Rahim*), this is also the opinion of Egyptian scholar

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and afterward doubt not, but strive with their wealth and their lives for the cause of Allah. Such are the sincere.”(Qur’an;49:114-5).

The renowned scholar Dr. Israr Ahmad opine that in the Islamic state the citizenship is based upon Islam and not upon the Faith (*Ayman*) which, being hidden inner state can not form the basis for legal discussion and measurement. It is the compulsion that in the worldly matters the human relations can only be based upon the external displayed behaviour in which the oral expression of *Ayman* (Faith) can be included. Two

Syyed Qutab]. It may be kept in view that during the last days of Prophet (peace be upon him) when it was revealed; “you see the people entering Allah’s religion (Islam) in large numbers.”(Qur’an;110:2), the state of faith of most of the people was the same, later in every period, the majority of the Muslims fall in to the same category.

Faith & Jihad (Striving in the Cause of Allah)

The detailed definition of real Faith has been stated, elaborating that in reality Faith (*Ayman*) is the

firm belief in Allah and His Messenger without any doubt which must be strong and deep rooted in the heart and its foremost practical manifestation is through Striving for the cause of Allah (Jihad). This implies that man should preach the Divine message using all means and sacrificing his wealth and self being. This has been elaborated that only such persons are true to the Faith. As for those who profess Islam merely orally without affirmation by the heart and then adopt an attitude as if they had done someone a favor by accepting Islam, may be counted among the Muslims in the world, may even be treated as Muslims in society, but they cannot be counted as believers in the sight of Allah.

The basic pillars of Islam are five, but 'Strenuous Efforts' (Jihad) made sincerely for the cause of Allah, may be included as part of the Faith. The true believers may expect reward for their good deeds in the form of salvation. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said, "The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is the prayer, and the top of its hump is striving (Jihad) in the way of Allah." (*Fiqh-as-Sunnah*: 1.75).

The root of affirmation

The root of affirmation of 'Islamic Faith' is based on the conviction upon unity of Allah (Tawheed). In order to be a Muslim one has to believe in the Six Articles of Faith, which has been repeatedly mentioned in Qur'an at: 24:62, 2:136, 177, 285, 4:136, 3:114, 4:78, 54:3, 17:99, 29:20, 64:67 and many other places. A Muslim, affirms that; "I believe in Allah (God), His angels, His books, His messengers, and Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be His Last Messenger, Resurrection after death, and that the good and evil of Destiny are from Allah Most High. I

believe too in the accounting and the scales, hell and paradise. All the foregoing is reality."

The Islamic creed of confession (*Shahada*) is the verbal commitment and pledge to testify: "*La ilaha Illallah , Muhammad-ur- Rasul-Allah*" [None has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah].

The six 'Articles of Faith'

They are orally confessed by the Muslims (believers), which should also be deep rooted in the heart:

To affirm his/her belief in Allah (Single God).

To believe in His messengers (from Adam, Noah, Abraham to Moses and Jesus, 25 are mentioned by name in Qur'an), and Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be His Last Messenger for humanity.

His books, Qur'an and all scriptures revealed to His Messengers which also include the original Torah, Psalms (*Zabur*) and original Gospel (*Injeel*) to Jesus Christ (pbuh).

To believe in *Al Ghaib* [meta-physical creatures] like the angels, Jinn, etc.

Resurrection after death on the Day of Judgment, accounting and the scales, hell and paradise.

The good and evil of destiny are in the power of Allah, the Most High.

The 'Five Pillars of Faith'

These are the physical manifestation of combination of faith and practices, which are also the forms of worship (Qur'an; 2:21, 43:64, 69:52). These are the modes of worship, service to God:

"I created the jinn and humans for nothing else but that they may serve Me (yabidoon); (Quran; 51:56)

Only the jinn and men have been granted the freedom that they

may serve Allah within their sphere of choice if they so like; otherwise they can turn away from Allah's service as well as serve others beside Him. The rest of the creatures in the world do not have this kind of freedom. They do not have any choice whatsoever that they may not worship and serve Allah, or may serve any other. Therefore, only about the jinn and men it has been said here that by turning away from the obedience and servitude of their Creator within the bounds of their option and choice and by serving others than the Creator, they are fighting their own nature.

The word *ibadat* (service, worship) in this verse (51:56) has not been used in the sense of only Prayer, Fasting and other kinds of such worship so that one may understand that the jinn and men have been created only for performing the Prayer, observing the Fast and for praising and glorifying Allah. Although this sense also is included in it, this is not its complete sense. Its complete sense is that the jinn and men have not been created for the worship, obedience and carrying out of the orders of any other but Allah. They are not there to bow to any other, to carry out the orders of any other, to live in fear of any other, to follow the religion enjoined by any other, to look upon any other as the maker and destroyer of ones destiny, and to supplicate to any other than Allah for help. [Extract from "Tafheem ul Quran", by Syed Abu Ala Modudi]

These principles of faith are to serve man's spiritual functions, satisfy his human needs and to mark his whole life with a Divine touch. Allah instructed the Muslims to practice what they believe in. The basic articles of faith are not new, they were applicable to the followers of previous messengers as well in various forms, it is mentioned in

Qur'an: "And remember We took a covenant from the children of Israel (to this effect): worship none but Allah; (*Shahada*) treat with kindness your parents and kindred and orphans and those in need; speak fair to the people; be steadfast in prayer (*Salah*); and practice regular charity (*Zakat*). Then did ye turn back except a few among you and ye backslide (even now)"(Qur'an;2:83).

Narrated by Ibn Umar in the Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 1 Hadith No.7 : Allah's Messenger said: Islam is based on the following five (principles), which are also the forms of worship; the first two (*Shahada* & *Salah*) are daily, next two (*Zakat* & *Saum*) are annual and the last *Hajj* (Pilgrimage to Makka) is once in life:-

To testify (*Shahada*) that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad(peace be upon him) is Allah's Apostle. This is a spiritual form of worship.

To perform (*iqamat as Salah*), five canonical daily prayers. This is physical, spiritual and social for m of worship in congregation.

To pay *Zakat* (obligatory alms), a financial, social and spiritual form of worship.

To observe *Saum* (fast) during the month of Ramadan, a physical and spiritual form of worship.

To perform *Hajj* (Pilgrimage to Makka once in life time if one can afford financially and physically). This form of worship has physical, financial, social and spiritual aspects.

If a Muslim fails to perform some of his obligations and is remiss in practice or commits some such actions as are forbidden, yet he firmly believes in the liability of all above obligations and the impropriety of all unlawful deeds, he will continue to be a Muslim though he will be a sinner:

"On that Day, the scale of justice shall be established. Those whose

scale of good deeds will be heavy, they are the ones who will attain felicity, and those whose scale is light, they shall find themselves in loss for they had done injustice to Our revelations."(Qur'an;78-9).

The sinners must repent: "Our Lord! we have wronged Our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost"(Qur'an;7:23)

"Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen: but there are among them some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are by Allah's leave foremost in good deeds; that is the highest Grace."(Qur'an;35:32)

"Whosoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be in the company of those whom Allah has blessed - the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous: What excellent companions they will be!"[Qur'an;4:69,(also,18:87-88)]

Some Important Aspects

Oneness of God

The God (Allah) is One and the Only One. He is not two in one or three in one. This means that Islam rejects the idea of Trinity or such a unity of God which implies more than one God in one.

Oneness of Mankind

People are created equal in the Law of God. There is no superiority for one race over another. God made people in different colors, nationalities, languages and tribes to recognize each other. No one can claim that he is better than others. It is only God Who knows who is better. It depends on piety and righteousness.

Innocence of Man at Birth

Muslim believes that people are born free of sin. It is only after they reach the age of puberty and it is

only after they commit sins that they are to be charged for their mistakes. No one is responsible for or can take the responsibility for the sins of others. However, the door of forgiveness through true repentance is always open.

State and Religion

Muslims believe that Islam is a total and a complete way of life. It encompasses all aspects of life. As such, the teachings of Islam do not separate religion from politics. As a matter of fact, state and religion are under the obedience of Allah through the teachings of Islam. Hence, economic and social transactions, as well as educational and political systems are also part of the teachings of Islam.

Jihad-Important Element of Faith (Ayman)

Strenuous Efforts (Jihad) made sincerely for advancement of the cause of Allah, though not included among five pillars of Islam; but it is an important element of the Faith (*ayman*, Belief).(Qur'an;49:15). The aim of making Strenuous Efforts (Jihad) is three fold:

The first and foremost is to; 'Strive Against Selfish Desires' (*Nafs ammarah*), to purify the heart, so that the faith (*ayman*) of Islam is deeply rooted in the heart, to become fully subservient to the commands of God and His Apostle.

Secondly, making strenuous efforts (Jihad) to convey the Last message of God (Islam) to the humanity(Dawah) called Bigger Jihad (Jihad Kabira)(Qur'an;25:52).

Thirdly Jihad (warfare) is to be conducted by Islamic State to provide protection to Muslims and non Muslims against oppression. The specific word used exclusively for warfare is *Qitaal* (Qur'an;2:216-217) or *Qatelu, wa-Qatalu* (Qar'an;4 89-

91). The warfare is to be conducted with in laid down Islamic principles by the Islamic state, not by militant groups as being practice by the terrorists creating anarchy. Killing of innocent people and creating mischief on earth (*fisad fil ardh*) for power and glory is not Jihad.

The Prophet (pbuh) & Household

Muslims extremely love the Prophet and his household, Allah says: "The Prophet is closer to the Believers than their own selves and his wives are their mothers (*U m u h a t u l M o m i n e e n*)" (Qur'an;33:6). Hence they can not tolerate any blasphemy against them. The House Hold of the Prophet (pbuh), in addition to his wives also includes his daughter Fatima, her husband Ali Bin Abu Talib, their children Hassan and Husain. All the members of Household of Prophet (*Ahl-ul-bait*), were virtuous human being, they greatly contributed towards the cause of Islam. Prophet loved them all. Imam Hussein laid down his life for the just cause of Islam.

The Pious Companions of the Prophet (pbuh)

The Prophet (peace be upon him) had rightly guided successors among his blessed companions, who followed his footsteps (*Sunnah*) to the best of their abilities in spreading knowledge, preaching Islam, and managing the affairs of Islamic State. The disputes that took place among the Prophet's Companions were the result of sincere interpretations that they worked hard to reach. Whoever was right among them will be rewarded twice, and whoever was wrong among them will be rewarded once and his mistake will be forgiven. It may not be appro-

priate for any believer to criticize them rather they deserve of beautiful praise. (Qur'an;7:42-43, 57:10, 9:100 & 59:10).

"Allah (God) is One, not in a numerical sense, but in the sense that He has no partner". According to Qur'an: "Say: He is Allah the One and Only; God the Eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All Being ; He begets not, and neither is He begotten; And there is nothing that can be compared with Him."(Qur'an;112:1-4).

God does not resemble with any one of His creations, nor does anything among His creation resemble Him. He has been, unceasing, and He is, unceasing, with His names and attributes, both those relating to His Essence and those relating to His acts. As for those relating to His Essence, they are Life, Power, Knowledge, Speech, Hearing, Sight, and Will. As for those relating to His acts, they are Creativity, Sustenance, Originating and Fashioning out of nothing, making, and other active attributes. He has been, Unceasing, and He is, unceasing, with His attributes and names; Neither Attribute Nor Name was Created. He has always and unceasingly been a knower, by virtue of His knowledge, and His knowledge is a pre-eternal attribute. He has always and unceasingly been powerful, by virtue of His power, and His power is a pre-eternal attribute. He has always and unceasingly been speaking by virtue of His speech and His speech is a pre-eternal attribute. He has always and unceasingly been a creator, by virtue of His creativity, and His creativity is a pre-eternal attribute. He has always and unceasingly been an agent (power and authority to act), by virtue of His activity, and His activity is a pre-eternal attribute; the object of His activity is creation, and His activity is uncreated.

His attributes existed in pre-eter-

nity, without being created or called into existence at a particular moment. If some one think that they are created or summoned into existence at a particular moment, or is un-certain about the attributes and doubts them, is in a state of confusion and fallacy. If someone experiences difficulty with the subtleties of the science of divine unity, it is incumbent upon him to believe (without further investigation) what is correct in the sight of Allah Most High until he finds a scholar to consult. He should not delay in seeking such a scholar, for hesitation and suspension of judgment may result in unbelief. The Shari'a, preached and practiced by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is now the religion of Islam, which Allah has chosen for His servants: "Say, 'O mankind, I am Allah's Messenger to you all. To him belongs the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth; there is no god but He. He ordains life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words. Follow him so that you may be rightly guided" (Qur'an;7:158).

Avoiding Evil Acts

Apart from the above mentioned pillars and fundamentals; abstention from certain modes of behavior are also deemed as *ibadah* (worship). These are actions which any sensible person would deplore, such as killing without a valid reason, intruding on the rights of others, aggressive behavior and all forms of injustice, any kind of intoxication which would affect the brain, adultery, since it destroys honor and dignity and violates the sanctioned form of blood relationship. Other forms of forbidden behavior include usury, lying, betrayal and deserting any form of military service which seeks to glorify the Divine Writ, making

false oaths or producing false witnesses - and, above all, disobedience to one's parents or dismissing them and neglecting their needs. However, God forgives a Muslim who fails to carry out some of his duties and disobeys some of the Islamic laws but repents and asks for pardon. On the other hand, a Muslim who does not repent will be considered as a rebel, who will be punished in the next world. This punishment will, however, be only temporary and will not be equal to that of a non-believer. As for a Muslim who refuses to acknowledge any basic Islamic principle or belief, rejects his duties and Islamic regulations or denies even the smallest detail outlined in the Holy Qur'an, he will be considered as an apostate deprived of his Islamic identity. Apostasy is similar to a crime of high treason from the Islamic point of view. Unless a person gives up his un-Islamic beliefs and repents he will be given a death sentence.

Total Acceptance of Faith-No Hypocrisy

Faith has to be accepted in totality and, therefore, a denial of any aspect is deemed as a denial of the whole. Therefore, anyone who accepts 99% of the faith but denies 1% is considered an infidel. You may come across Muslims who are nonbelievers. They can be compared with someone who joins a political party or a society, attends all its meetings, pays his subscription - and does whatever is required of a member, but nonetheless refuses to accept its principles and remains unconvinced. It may seem that such a person has joined the party or society simply to find out what's going on or to create trouble. Such a Muslim is a hypocrite - hypocrisy is defined as "outward profession of faith and concealment

of disbelief". Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), used to say that a hypocrite can be recognized in three ways: failure to keep his promise, lying and betraying anyone's trust. A hypocrite pronounces statements of faith and performs his religious duties, yet deep and down he remains unconvinced. Such a person may be considered a Muslim by the outside world but not by God, Who knows what is hidden in our hearts and innermost beings.

among the men. This was also declared in Bible: "Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."(Isaiah; 45:21-22, also at Hosea; 13:4). Even in some of the

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Application of Faith and Practices

The Confession - Shahada: The 1st Pillar of Islam

Creed of Confession (*Shahada*) is the verbal commitment and pledge to testify: "*La ilaha Illallah , Muhammad-ur- Rasul-Allah*" (None has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad, peace be upon him is the Messenger of Allah). This is the first step to a become a Muslim. This declaration of faith is a simple formula which all the faithful pronounce. Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the messenger of God, the last message of guidance has come through a messenger from

writings of Paul, which the Church has taken to be sacred, Jesus (peace be upon him) is referred to as a "man", distinct and different from God. Paul writes: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."(1Timothy;2:5).

The Islamic Creed of Confession (*Shahada*) has many aspects, as mentioned below:

a: To Pledge a Covenant with Allah

To be a Muslim, one has to pledge a covenant with (Allah), the Creator of the heavens and earth, the Ruler of all that exists, the Lord of Majesty and Highness, on four points (or conditions):

b. Oneness of the Lordship of Allah (Tauhid-ar-Rububiyya)

A confession within heart that the Creator (of everything) is Allah; it is that to say; "I testify that the Creator of all the universe including the stars, the planets, the sun, the moon, the heavens, the earth with all its known and unknown forms of life, is Allah. He is the Organizer and Planner of all its affairs. It is He Who gives life and death, and He (i.e. Allah Alone) is the Sustainer, and the Giver of security." And this is called (confession for the)"Oneness of the Lordship of Allah," — '*Tauhid-ar-Rububiyyah*'. It also exist in Bible: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one;" (Deuteronomy; 6:4, & Mark 12:29).

c. Oneness of the Worship of Allah," (Tauhid-al-Uluhiyyah)

A confession within the heart that: "I testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah Alone." The word "worship" (*'Ibiddah*) carries a great number of meanings in the Islamic terminology: it conveys that all kinds of worship, obedience is meant for Allah Alone (and none else, whether it be an angel, Messenger, Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) - son of Maryam (Mary), 'Uzair (Ezra), Muhammad, saint, idol, the sun, the moon and all other kinds of false deities.) So pray to none but Allah, invoke none but Allah, ask for help from none (unseen) but Allah, swear by none but Allah, offer an animal as sacrifice to none but Allah, etc, and that means; all that Allah and His Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) order to do, (in the Qur'an and in the *Sunna* one must do, and all that Allah and His Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) forbids must not be done. And this is called the confession of Muslim faith-

ful for the "Oneness of the worship of Allah," -*Tauhid-al-Uluhiyyah* and that mankind worship none but Allah.

d. Oneness of the Names and Qualities of Allah (Tauhid-al-Asma'wal-Sifat)

A confession within heart that: "O Allah! I testify that all the best of names and the most perfect qualities with which You have named or qualified Yourself in Your Book (i.e. the Qur'an) or as Your Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has named or qualified You, with his statement, I believe that all those (names and qualities) are for You without changing their meanings or neglecting them completely or likening them (giving resemblance) to others." As Allah says: 'There is nothing like unto Him and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer.'"(Qur'an;42:11). This Verse confirms the quality of hearing and the quality of sight for Allah without likening them (giving resemblance) to others, and He also says : "To one whom I have created with Both My Hands," (Qur'an;38:75) and He also says : "The Hand of Allah is over their hands." (Qur'an;48:10). This confirms two Hands for Allah, but there is no similarity for them.

Similarly Allah says: "The Most Gracious (Allah) rose over (*Istawa*) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)." (Qur'an;20:5). So He rose over the Throne really in a manner that suits His Majesty. And Allah is over His Throne over the seventh heaven, as the slave-girl pointed towards the heavens, when Allah's Messenger (Muhammad, peace be upon him) asked her as to where Allah is. He comes down over the first (nearest) heaven to us during the last third part of every night and also on the day of 'Arafah (*Hajj*, i.e. the 9th of *Dhul-Hijja*), as mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him) but

He is with us by His Knowledge, not by His Personal-Self (*bi-Dhatihi*). It is not, as some people say that Allah is present everywhere — here, there, and even inside the breasts of men. He sees and hears all that we do or utter. And this is called (confession for the) "Oneness of the Names and Qualities of Allah" — *Tauhid-al-Asma' wal-Sifat* and this is the right belief, the belief which was followed by the Messengers of Allah from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus to Muhammad (peace be upon them all) the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)] and his righteous followers.

e. A Confession within Heart

"O Allah ! I testify that Muhammad (peace be upon him) is Your Messenger." That means that none has the right to be followed after Allah, but the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them) as he is the last of His Messengers. Allah says: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men (he is not going to leave any male heirs). He is the Messenger of Allah and the Seal (end) of the Prophets. Allah has the knowledge of all things."(Qur'an;33:40)."And whatsoever the Messenger (Muhammad, peace be upon them) gives you, take it and whatsoever he forbids you, abstain from it,"(Qur'an;59:7). And Allah says : "Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): 'If you (really) love Allah, then follow me (i.e. accept Islamic Monotheism, follow The Qur'an and The Sunnah).'"(Qur'an;3:31). As for others than Muhammad (peace be upon them), their statements are to be taken or rejected as to whether these are in accordance with Allah's Book (i.e. the Qur'an) and with the Sunnah (legal ways, orders, acts of worship, statements) of the Prophet

(peace be upon them) or not. The system of Divine revelation has been discontinued after Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them), it will not resume except at the time of the 'Descent' of Jesus, the son of Mary, who (Jesus) will rule the world with justice according to the Islamic laws, during the last days of the world as it has been mentioned in the authentic Hadith (narration of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him). (Sahih-Al-Bukhari, Vol.3, Hadith No.425).

f. Utterance of Confession - Shahada:

It is essential to utter: *La ilaha illallah , Muhammad-ur- Rasul-Allah* (None has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad, peace be upon him is the Messenger of Allah). When Abu Dharr Al-Ghaffari embraced Islam, he went to *Al-Masjidi-al-Haram* (Ka'ba) and he publicly proclaimed it loudly in front of the Quraysh infidels until he was beaten severely. It is narrated by Said bin Al Musaiyab from his father in Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith. No.2.442 that : When the time of the death of Abu Talib (guardian uncle of Allah's Apostle) approached, Allah's Apostle went to him and found (pagan leaders) Abu Jahl bin Hisham and 'Abdullah bin Abi Umaiya bin Al-Mughira by his side. Allah's Apostle said to Abu Talib, "O uncle! Say: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, a sentence with which I shall be a witness (i.e. argue) for you before Allah." Abu Jahl and 'Abdullah bin Abi Umaiya said, "O Abu Talib! Are you going to denounce the religion of Abdul Muttalib?" Allah's Apostle kept on inviting Abu Talib to say it (i.e. 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah') while they (Abu Jahl and Abdullah) kept on repeating their statement till Abu Talib said as his last statement that he was on

the religion of Abdul Muttalib and refused to say, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah.' (Then Allah's Apostle said, "I will keep on asking Allah's forgiveness for you unless I am forbidden (by Allah) to do so." So Allah revealed (the verse) concerning him [i.e. "It is not fitting for the Prophet and those who believe that they should invoke (Allah) for forgiveness for pagans even though they be of kin, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of the fire" (Qur'an;9:113)].

The confession of *Shahada 'La ilaha illal-lah,'* will entitle a believer for intercession by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on the Day of Judgment. According to Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith No. 9.507, Narrated by Anas, which is summarized; that the Prophet had said that Allah will gather the believers on the Day of Resurrection in the same way (as they are gathered in this life), and they will say, 'Let us ask someone to intercede for us with our Lord that He may relieve us from this place of ours.' Then they will go to each of prophets starting from Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses who would all refuse due to some sin committed by them, finally the believers will go to Jesus who will say, 'I am not fit for this undertaking, but you'd better go to Muhammad whose sins of the past and the future had been forgiven (by Allah).' So they will come to Prophet Muhammad and he will ask the permission of the Lord. Allah would allow him to intercede (for a certain kind of people) and will fix a limit on believers for admittance into Paradise. The Prophet will keep on repeating request till he said: There will come out of Hell (Fire) everyone who says: '*La ilaha illal-lah,'* and has in his heart good equal to the weight of a barley grain. Then there will

come out of Hell (Fire) everyone who says: '*La ilaha illal-lah,'* and has in his heart good equal to the weight of a wheat grain. Then there will come out of Hell (Fire) everyone who says: '*La ilaha illal-lah,'* and has in his heart good equal to the weight of an atom (or a smallest ant)." The time interval between various batches of sinners may be perceived keeping in view the Time of Allah. His Day (epoch) may be a thousand or fifty thousand years (Qur'an;70:4 & 32:5) of human reckoning . He guides, rules, and controls all affairs: and in the immense Future all affairs will go up to Him, for He will be the Judge, and His restoration of all values will be as in a Day or an Hour or the Twinkling of an eye; and yet to human perception it will be as a thousand years!

g. Physical Display of Confession (Shahada)

It is essential that the limbs and all the other parts and organs of one's body testify to it, and this is very important as regards its meaning (i.e., the meaning of *La ilaha illallah , Muhammad-ur- Rasul-Allah* (None has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the Messenger of Allah). So whoever has confessed this (to his Lord), he shall not commit sins like robbing, killing, stealing, illegal sexual intercourse, eating pork (meat of pig), drinking alcoholic beverages, taking undue advantage of orphan's property, cheating in trade, bribery and earning money through illegal means, telling lies, backbiting or otherwise the limbs and all the other parts and organs of his body will testify against him that he was a liar in his words which he pledged to Allah. In case he commits these sins, he should know that it is a sin that obliges him to repent to Allah,

and ask His Forgiveness, as (his) body parts (i.e. skin, private parts, hands, tongue, ears will testify to the above mentioned crimes (i.e. actions) against himself on the Day of Resurrection.

With the confession of this great sentence (i.e. principle); *La ilaha Illallah , Muhammad-ur-Rasul-Allah* (None has the right to be worshipped but Allah and Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the Messenger of Allah) a person enters in the fold of the Islamic faith accordingly.

Jewish Creed- [Shema Yisrael]

The Jewish faith recognizes a single creed called the Shmah or Shema Yisrael, a statement of faith in strict Unitarian monotheism, the belief in one God. According to Old Testament: "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,"(Deuteronomy; 5:7-9); "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve him, and swear by his name. You shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the peoples who are round about you; for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth." (Deuteronomy; 6:13-15). The Jewish creed is embodied in a single prayer recited at every prayer service: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One", also translated as "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is unique,

alone. "In Hebrew this is pronounced phonetically: " Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad."

Creed of Prophet Jesus, The Son of Mary (PBUH)

According to New Testament, Jesus (peace be upon him) said: "...Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:..." (Mark;12:29-30), "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me".(John; 5:30).

Christians- Nicene Creed

The present day Christians don not adhere to the creed of Jesus, they use the 'Nicene Creed' most widely, followed by the 'Apostles Creed'. This has elaborate statements concerning Christology and the Trinity. These reflect the concerns of the First Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E, and have their chief purpose, the rejection of Arianism doctrines which deny that Jesus was of the same substance as God and held the view instead that Jesus was only the highest of created beings. In the Roman Catholic liturgy the Nicene Creed is repeated during each Mass. The Nicene Creed clearly derives from the Apostles' Creed which states: "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us men and

for our salvation he came down from heaven: by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died, and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated on the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son. With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen."

Prayer; The 2nd Pillar of Islam

The performance of the daily prayers (*salah*) five times, to Allah is required of Muslims while facing towards the direction of Ka'ba. *Salah* is a direct link between the worshipper and Allah. Establishment of regular prayer and payment of Zakat (Charity) has been repeatedly mentioned in Qur'an: "Establish worship (*aqimus salat*), pay the poor-due(*zakat*), and bow your heads with those who bow (in worship)"(Qur'an;2:43). It is general misconception that the five prayers in a day are only practiced in the present day Islam which is the revived faith of Abraham. Prayers have been part of Islam right from the beginning. Once Abraham settled his son Isma'il at Makka he prayed: "O' our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near Your Sacred House. Our Lord! I have done this in the hope that they would establish *Salah*,

therefore, turn the hearts of the people toward them and provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks.”(Qur’an;14:37).”O my Lord! make me one who establishes regular Prayer and also (raise such) among my offspring O our Lord! and accept my Prayer.”(Qur’an;14:40). Prophet Shuaib (peace be upon him) was opposed by his people for insisting for prayer: “They said: O Shuaib! Doth thy way of prayer command thee that we should forsake that which our fathers (used to) worship,”(Qur’an;11:87). Prophet Zechariah and Jesus (peace be upon them) offered prayers: “And the angels called to him (Zechariah) as he stood praying in the sanctuary: “(Qur’an;3:39), “..and hath enjoined on me(Jesus) Prayer and Charity as long as I live;”(Qur’an;19:31). “Not all of them are alike: of the People of the book are a portion that stand (for the right); they rehearse the signs of Allah all night long and then prostrate themselves in adoration.”(Qur’an;3:113). The prayers have always been five times a day, as mentioned in the Hadith narrated by Abdullah Ibn Abbas: The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “Gabriel (peace be upon him) led me in prayer at the House (i.e. the Ka’bah). He prayed the noon prayer with me when the sun had passed the meridian to the extent of the thong of a sandal; he prayed the afternoon prayer with me when the shadow of everything was as long as itself; he prayed the sunset prayer with me when one who is fasting breaks the fast; he prayed the night prayer with me when the twilight had ended; and he prayed the dawn prayer with me when food and drink become forbidden to one who is keeping the fast. On the following day he prayed the noon prayer with me when his shadow was as long as himself; he prayed

the afternoon prayer with me when his shadow was twice as long as himself; he prayed the sunset prayer at the time when one who is fasting breaks the fast; he prayed the night prayer with me when about the third of the night had passed; and he prayed the dawn prayer with me when there was a fair amount of light. Then turning to me he said: Muhammad, this is the time observed by the prophets before you, and the time is anywhere between two times”. (Sunan of Abu-Dawood Hadith 393). The three prayers practiced by Jews were evolved by combining two prayers as practiced by Shi’a Muslims (Zohar with Asar and Maghrib with Isha). The prayer of a Muslim is not complete without recitation of The Opening Chapter (*Surah Fateha*) of Qur’an; “In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. All praise is for Allah, the ‘Lord of the Worlds. The Compassionate, the Merciful. Master of the Day of Judgment. O’ Allah! You Alone we worship and You Alone we call on for help. O’ Allah! Guide us to The Right Way. The Way of those whom You have favored; not of those who have earned Your wrath, or of those who have lost The Way.”(Qur’an;1:1-7).

Prayers in Bible

Similar prayers had been revealed in the previous divine scriptures, in Bible: “The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”(Exodus; 34:6-7), “Our Father

who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts, As we also have forgiven our debtors; And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil.”(Mathew;6:9-13) and also in Psalms; 7:1-17 and 8:1-9. Offering the prayers (*Salah*) has been repeatedly mentioned in Bible: “And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee.”(Genesis; 17:3-5). “And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD”.(Genesis; 18:22). “And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” (Genesis; 22:5). “And he built an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there: and there Isaac’s servants dug a well”.(Genesis; 26:25). “And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he built an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD”. (Genesis; 12:8). “And the people believed: and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.”(Exodus; 4:31).“And they said, The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our God; lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.”(Exodus;

5:3). "Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves." (Exodus; 5:7). "And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God." (Exodus; 5:8). "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiff necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." (Exodus; 34:8-9).

The Jews prayed with their faces toward the temple and Jerusalem: "What prayer and supplication so ever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house:" (1Kings;8:38); "If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name:" (1Kings;8:44); "And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gave unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name:" (1Kings;8:48); "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." (Daniel;6:10). "But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude

of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." (Psalm; 5:7). "As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me." (Psalm; 55:16). "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." (Psalm; 55:17). "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name." (Psalms; 86:9). "The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land". (Psalm; 95:5). "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker". (Psalm; 95:6). "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name". (Psalm; 138:2). "When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house:" (1 Kings; 8:33). "Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers." (1 Kings; 8:34). "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD." (Jeremiah; 7:2). "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:" (Daniel; 9:3). "And Joshua rent his clothes, and fell to the earth upon his face before the ark of the LORD until the eventide (The period between afternoon and night), he and the elders of Israel, and put dust upon their heads" (Joshua;7:6).

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when

the evening was come, he was there alone." (Mathew;14:23). "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting". (Mathew; 17:21). "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder". (Mathew; 26:36). "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt". (Mathew; 26:39). "Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour". (Acts; 3:1). "On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:" (Acts; 10:9). "And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying." (Acts; 12:12). "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither." (Acts; 16:13). "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." (Acts; 16:25). "And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all." (Acts; 20:36). "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when he rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, he found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." (Luke; 22: 44-46). "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." (Mark; 1:35).

“And he (Jesus) said unto them (disciples), This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting”. (Mark; 9:29).

Importance of Prayers in Islam

The importance of prayer is mentioned in Qur’an: “Recite what is sent of the Book by inspiration to thee and establish Regular Prayer: for Prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt. And Allah knows the (deeds) that ye do”. (Qur’an;29:45). *Salah* is the best way to cultivate in a man a sound personality and to actualize his aspiration. In *Salah*, the body joins the soul and the mind in the worship and glory of Allah. *Selah* is an act of worship. It is a matchless and unprecedented method of intellectual meditation and spiritual devotion, of moral elevation and physical exercise, all combined. Offering of *salah* is obligatory upon every Muslim male and female who is sane, mature and in case of women free from menstruation and confinement due to child birth.

Daily Five Canonical Prayers

The daily five canonical Prayers are offered at dawn (*Fajar*), noon (*Zuhr*), mid-afternoon (*Asar*), sunset (*Magharab*) and nightfall (*Isha*), and thus determine the rhythm of the entire day as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his companions and mentioned at different places in Qur’an: “And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day (*Fajr & Asar or Maghrab*) and at the approaches of the night (*Asar, Maghrab & Isha*): for those things that are good remove those that are evil: be that the word of remembrance to those who remember

(their Lord), (Qur’an;11:114). Guard strictly your (habit of) prayers especially the middle prayer (*Asar*) and stand before Allah in a devout (frame of mind) (Qur’an;2:238). Therefore be patient with what they say and celebrate (constantly) the praises of thy Lord before the rising of the sun (*Fajr*) and before its setting (*Asar*); yea celebrate them for part of the hours of the night (*Magrib & Isha*), and at the sides of the day (*Fajar & Maghrab*): that thou mayest have (spiritual) joy. (Qur’an;20:130). Establish regular prayers at the sun’s decline (*Zuhr*) till the darkness of the night (*Zuhr, Asar, Maghrab & Isha*) and the morning prayer (*Fajr*) and reading: for the prayer and reading in the morning carry their testimony. (Qur’an;17:78). “So (give) glory to Allah when ye reach eventide and when ye rise in the morning (*Fajr*); Yea To Him be praise in the heavens and on earth; and in the late afternoon (*Asar*) and when the day begins to decline (*Zuhr*) (Qur’an;30:17-18).

Salah should be offered in its due time, unless there is a reasonable excuse. Delayed obligatory *salah* must be made up. In addition to the prescribed *salah*, a Muslim expressed gratitude to God and appreciation of His favours and asks for His mercy all the time. Especially at times of, for example: childbirth, marriage, going to or rising from bed, leaving and returning to his home, starting a journey or entering a city, riding or driving, before or after eating or drinking, harvesting, visiting graveyards and at the time of distress and sickness. Cleanliness, purity and ablution has always been obligatory for prayer, it is mentioned in Bible: “And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet there at:” (Exodus; 40:31). “Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with

them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them”. (Acts; 21:26). Qur’an has provided relaxation in the ablution, if there is scarcity of water then dry ablution (*tayamum*) is permitted : “ye who believe! When ye rise up for prayer, wash your face, and your hands up to the elbows, and lightly rub your heads and (wash) your feet up to the ankles. And if ye are unclean, purify yourselves. And if ye are sick or on a journey, or one of you cometh from the closet, or ye have had contact with women, and ye find not water, then go to clean, high ground and rub your faces and your hands with some of it. Allah would not place a burden on you, but He would purify you and would perfect His grace upon you, that ye may give thanks.” (Qur’an;5:6).

Offering Prayers

There is no hierarchical authority in Islam, and no priests, so the prayers are led by a respectable, pious and learned among Muslims, who knows and can accurately recite the Qur’an in Arabic. He may be chosen or be acceptable to the congregation. In each of the five prayers Surah *Fateha* (The first Chapter of Qur’an) and some verses from the Qur’an are and recited in Arabic, the original language of the Revelation, which are words of Allah; It is mentioned in Qur’an: “We have given thee seven of the oft repeated (verses) and the great Qur’an.” (Qur’an;15:87).

The personal supplication (*Du’a*) can be offered in one’s own language. Although it is preferable to worship together in a mosque, a Muslim may pray almost anywhere at a clean place, such as in fields, offices, factories and universities. Prayers are central in the daily routine of Muslims.

Before the prayer congregation the call to the prayer (*Adhan*) is pronounced loudly. The Call to Prayer is translated as : "God is most great. God is most great. God is most great. God is most great. I testify that there is non worthy of worship except Allah. I testify that there is non worthy of worship except Allah. I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God. Come to prayer! Come to prayer! Come to success (in this life and the Hereafter)! Come to success! God is most great. God is most great. there is non worthy of worship except Allah".

Initially for over an year, the Muslims prayed while facing towards Jerusalem, but during the Prophet's lifetime, during his stay at Medina, the direction of prayer (*Qibla*) was changed to Ka'ba at Makka through a divine decree. This is just a direction for the uniformity, Muslims worship and pray to Allah alone.

Bigger Congregational Prayers

Apart from five daily prayers there is weekly bigger congregation prayer on every Friday (*Jummah*): "O ye who believe! when the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly) hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah and leave off business (and traffic): that is best for you if ye but knew!"(Qur'an;62:9). Special prayer is offered on *Eid-ul-fitr* & *Eid-ul-Azha* in bigger congregations. The prayer leader (*Imam*) delivers the sermon at the Friday noon community prayers and on special Eid prayers from the pulpit (*minbar*). Traditionally the Caliphs and Muslims rulers in the medieval period used to personally deliver the sermons on Fridays and Eid prayers; this tradition is now hardly followed.

There are other community prayers like the funeral prayer, special prayer for rains or to ward off calamities etc. Late mid night (*Tuhajjud*) prayer was obligatory for the Prophet (peace be upon him) while it is an additional voluntary prayer for the Muslims, Allah says in Qur'an: "And pray in the small watches of the morning: (it would be) an additional prayer (or spiritual profit) for thee: soon will thy Lord raise thee to a station of Praise and Glory!(Qur'an;17:79). Muslims have been provided the facility to shorten the prayer during journey and war, according to Qur'an: "When ye travel through the earth there is no blame on you if ye shorten your prayers for fear the unbelievers may attack you: for the unbelievers are unto you open enemies."(Qur'an;4:101).

The detailed methodology of offering prayer has been worked out by respective jurists of five schools of thought in *fiqh* based on the traditions of Prophet (peace be upon him). Prayer and almsgiving are very important pillars of Islam, Allah says in Qur'an: "Such as persevere in seeking their Lord's countenance and are regular in prayer and spend of that which We bestow upon them secretly and openly, and overcome evil with good. Theirs will be the sequel of the (heavenly) Home."(Qur'an;13:22). "And be steadfast in prayer (*Salah*) and regular in charity (*Zakat*): and whatever good ye send forth for your souls before you ye shall find it with Allah; for Allah sees well all that ye do."(Qur'an;2:110).

Obligatory alms – Zakat: The 3rd Pillar of Islam

Zakat is an important worship which involves looking after the deprived and underprivileged in the

community. It involves annual payment of a certain percentage of a Muslim's assets which is distributed among the poor or other rightful beneficiaries. One of the most important principles of Islam is that every thing belongs to God, and that wealth is therefore held by human beings in trust. The word *Zakat* means both 'purification' and 'growth'. The possessions are purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need, like the pruning of plants, which balances and encourages new growth; *Zakat* also results in spiritual growth. Each Muslim calculates his or her own *Zakat* individually. For most purposes two and a half percent of surplus capital & assets is given as alms (*Zakat*). The *Zakat* percentage is different on agriculture produce and live stock and other sources. Any Muslims may also give as much as he or she pleases as *Sadaqa*, and may do so preferably in secret. *Zakat* has always been part of previous divine scriptures and the messengers of God had been emphasizing its payment, which is mentioned in Qur'an at 2:83, 70:24, 5:121, 9:55, 19:31 & 21:73.

Zakat in Bible

This has also been emphasized in Bible: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe."(Numbers;18:25-26). "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the LORD. If a man wishes to redeem any of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it. And all the tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth ani-

mal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the LORD."(Leviticus;27:30-32). "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year." (Deuteronomy;14:22). "At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest." (Deuteronomy; 14:28-29). "When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;" (Deuteronomy;26:12). "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins" (1 Peter;4:8). "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone. You blind guides, who strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel".(Mathew;23:23-24).

In Christian thought, charity is the highest form of love, signifying the reciprocal love between God and man that is made manifest in unselfish love of one's fellow men. St. Paul's classical description of love (charity) is found in the New Testament (1 Corinthians; Chapter:13). In Christian theology and ethics, char-

ity (a translation of the Greek word *agape*, also meaning "love") is most eloquently shown in the life, teachings, and end of Jesus Christ.

St. Augustine summarized much of Christian thought about charity when he wrote: "Charity is a virtue which, when our affections are perfectly ordered, unites us to God, for by it we love him." Using this definition and others from the Christian tradition, the medieval theologians, especially St. Thomas Aquinas, placed charity in the context of the other Christian virtues and specified its role as "The Foundation or Root" of them all. Although the controversies of the Reformation dealt more with the definition of faith than with either hope or charity, the Reformers identified the uniqueness of God's *agape* for man as unmerited love; therefore, they required that charity, as man's love for man, be based not upon the desirability of its object but upon the transformation of its subject through the power of divine *agape*. The *agape* or feast of charity among the early Christians depended on the will of individuals and their influence; hence it was irregular and occasional. It is matter of history that the very irregularity led to the suppression of the 'feasts of charity' or love feast only short time after their introduction. Modern philosophical discussions of charity have compared it to other terms and concepts of love, notably to *eros*, which is understood as desire or yearning.

Significance of Zakat in Islam

Payment of Zakat has been repeatedly mentioned in Qur'an along with offering of Prayers (*Salah*): "...and establish regular Prayer and give regular Charity; and loan to Allah a Beautiful Loan.

And whatever good ye send forth for your souls Ye shall find it in Allah's presence yea better and greater in Reward. And seek ye the Grace of Allah: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful." (Qur'an;73:20). Qur'an has mentioned about recipients of Alms: "Alms are for the poor and the needy and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of Allah; and for the wayfarer: (thus is it) ordained by Allah and Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom".(Qur'an;9:60).

Zakat is an obligatory worship, while *Sadqa* is a voluntary charity. The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Even meeting your brother with a cheerful face is charity.' The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'Charity is a necessity for every Muslim.' He was asked: 'What if a person has nothing?' The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied: 'He should work with his own hands for his benefit and then give something out of such earnings in charity.' The Companions asked: 'What if he is not able to work?' The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'He should help poor and needy persons.' The Companions further asked 'What if he cannot do even that?' The Prophet (peace be upon him) said 'He should urge others to do good.' The Companions said 'What if he lacks that also?' The Prophet (peace be upon him) said 'He should check himself from doing evil, this is also charity.'

Methodology of Implementation

Following two Hadiths indicate the methodology of implementation of pillars of Islam:-

A Bedouin with unkempt hair came to Allah's Apostle and said, "O

Allah's Apostle! Tell me what Allah has enjoined on me as regards prayers." The Prophet said, "You have to offer perfectly the five (compulsory) prayers in a day and a night (24 hrs.), except if you want to perform some extra optional prayers." The bedouin said, "Tell me what Allah has enjoined on me as regards fasting." The Prophet said, "You have to observe fast during the month of Ramadan except if you fast some extra optional fast." The bedouin said, "Tell me what Allah has enjoined on me as regards Zakat." The Prophet then told him the Islamic laws and regulations whereupon the bedouin said, "By Him Who has honored you, I will not perform any optional deeds of worship and I will not leave anything of what Allah has enjoined on me." Allah's Apostle said, "He will be successful if he has told the truth (or he will enter Paradise if he said the truth)." And some people said, "The Zakat for one-hundred and twenty camels is two *Hiqqas*, and if the Zakat payer slaughters the camels intentionally or gives them as a present or plays some other trick in order to avoid the Zakat, then there is no harm (in it) for him." (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith No 9.88, Narrated by Talha bin Ubaidullah).

When Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) sent Muadh to Yemen, he said (to him), "You are going to people of a (Divine) Book. First of all invite them to worship Allah (alone) and when they come to know Allah, inform them that Allah has enjoined on them, five prayers in every day and night; and if they start offering these prayers, inform them that Allah has enjoined on them, the Zakat. And it is to be taken from the rich amongst them and given to the poor amongst them; and if they obey you in that, take Zakat from them and avoid (don't take) the best property of the people as Zakat." (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith No 2.537, Narrated by Ibn Abbas)

Fasting; the 4th pillar of Islam

Every year in the month of Ramadan, all Muslims fast from early morning till sunset, abstaining from food, drink, and sexual relations (with wife). It is a unique Islamic way of worship which creates sincere love to God. Fasting infuses creative sense of hope, devotion, patience, unselfishness, moderation, willpower, wise saving, sound budgeting, mature adaptability, healthy survival, discipline, spirit of social belonging, unity and brotherhood. The tradition of Fasting as a unique form of worship, different from Prayer and Zakat. This is very old form of worship which existed in very old societies. It is mentioned in Qur'an: "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil);"(Qur'an;2:183).

Fasting Mentioned in Bible

Prophet Jonah (Younas, peace be upon him) was sent to one of the nations in the area of the old civilizations of Nineveh and Babylon. His people initially denied him but later followed him. It is mentioned in the Bible: "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry

mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands."(Jonah; 3:5-8). "And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments."(Exodus; 34:27-28). "And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD."(Leviticus; 16:29-30). "Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the LORD, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD." (Judges; 20:26). "And they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword."(2 Samuel; 1:12). "David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth." (2 Samuel; 12:16). "And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the Passover at his appointed season. In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season:

according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it.”(Numbers; 9:1-3). “But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sack-cloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.” (Psalms; 35:13).“Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the Lord’s house upon the fasting day: and also thou shall read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.” (Jeremiah; 36:6). “Therefore also now, says the LORD, turn you even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And tear your hearts, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and relents from sending calamity”.(Joel; 2:12-13). “And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus said the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.” (Zechariah; 8:18).“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”(Mathew; 16:16-18).“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And

when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” (Acts; 13:2-3). “And he (Jesus) said unto them (disciples), This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”(Mark; 9:29). “Howbeit this kind goes not out but by prayer and fasting”(Mathew; 17:21). “And he (Jesus) said unto them (disciples), This kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting”(Mark; 9:29).

Significance of Fasting (Saum) in Islam

The significance of Fasting has been emphasized in Qur’an: “The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur’an, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, (let him fast the same) number of other days. Allah desires for you ease; He desires not hardship for you; and (He desires) that ye should complete the period, and that ye should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that peradventure ye may be thankful.” (Qur’an;2:185). Narrated by Abu Huraira: Allah’s Apostle said, “Allah said, ‘All the deeds of Adam’s sons (people) are for them, except fasting which is for Me, and I will give the reward for it.’ Fasting is a shield or protection from the fire and from committing sins. If one of you is fasting, he should avoid sexual relation with his wife and quarreling, and if somebody should fight or quarrel with him, he should say, ‘I am fasting.’ By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, the unpleasant smell coming out from the mouth of a fasting person is better in the sight of Allah than the smell of musk. There are two pleasures for the

fasting person, one at the time of breaking his fast, and the other at the time when he will meet his Lord; then he will be pleased because of his fasting.”(Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith 3.128).

Apart from obligatory one month fasting in Ramadan; the voluntary fasting brings higher rewards if done on every Monday and Thursday of every week, three days in the middle of each Islamic month, six days after Ramadan following the Feast Day and a few days of the two months before Ramadan. The Muslims have been allowed to eat (*Sehri*) till early morning, thereafter they abstain from eating and drinking till sunset (*Maghrib*). Muslims take special care to avoid all bad and prohibited acts and sins and try to do all good acts to seek pleasure of Allah. Extra prayers (*Tawraweeh*) are offered after *Isha* prayer, in which the prayer leader (*Imam*) complete one recitation of Qur’an in this holy month. The Muslims under take extensive recitation of Qur’an on daily basis to complete at least one recitation of whole Qur’an in the holy month of Ramadan. Fasting in the month of Ramadan is a an act of worship which is obligatory on every adult Muslim, male or female who are mentally and physically fit and not on a journey. Those who are sick, elderly, or on a journey, and women who are pregnant, menstruating or nursing are permitted to break the fast and make up an equal number of days later in the year. If they are physically unable to do this, they must feed a needy person for every day missed. Children begin to fast (and to observe the prayer) from puberty, although many start earlier. Although the fast is most beneficial to the health, it is regarded principally as a method of self-purification. By cutting oneself off from worldly comforts, even for a short time, a fasting person gains

true sympathy with those who go hungry while growing the spiritual life. Revelation of Qur'an was started during this month, the last ten days are specially revered because 'The Night of Power' (*Lailatulqadar*) is expected to fall in this period. Allah says: "We have indeed revealed this (Message) in the night of Power: And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand Months. Therein come down the angels and the Spirit by Allah's permission on every errand: Peace!... This until the rise of Morn!"(Qur'an;97:1-5). Some Muslims perform *aitekaif* by staying and spending last ten days & nights in the mosque in solitude for devotion and prayers as practiced by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). At the end of *Ramadan* (month of fasting) the feast of *Eid-ul-fitr* is celebrated by offering special prayer and paying alms (*fitrah*) to the poor.

Pilgrimage—Hajj; the 5th pillar

The *Hajj* (Pilgrimage) is performed by Muslims every year to revive the memory of pronouncement of Islamic monotheism (*Tawheed*) by Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) and his son Prophet Isma'il (peace be upon him) at Makka about four millennium ago. Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) was issueless, at old age Allah blessed him with first son, Isma'il through his second wife *Hajira* (Hagar). It is mentioned in Bible: "So, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, Sar'ai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife."(Genesis;16:3), "And Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael."

(Genesis;16:15). Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) had to leave his infant son with his mother *Hajira* in the wilderness at Makka, both survived miraculously due to the Will of Allah and prospered there. Many years later (probably 12-13 years) he returned to sacrifice Isma'il as willing obedience for the pleasure of God.

The great gesture was accepted by Allah, Abraham was again successful in the trial; hence instead of Isma'il, a ram was sacrificed. Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) rebuilt the Ka'ba along with his son Isma'il on the foundations of the first house of worship of One God first built by Prophet Adam (peace be upon him). Allah says in Qur'an. "Verily, the first house (of worship) appointed for mankind was that in Baca (Mecca), full of blessing, and guidance for all people." (Qur'an;3:96). The Bible also mentions about Baca: "As they go through the valley of Baca they make it a place of springs; the early rain also covers it with pools."(Psalms;84:6). Baca; in the ancient dialect is synonymous with Makkah. The spring is known as the Zamzam.

Apex Collective Worship

Hajj is an apex worship performed collectively in which the pilgrimage gather from all over the world, offering the sacrifice of their wealth (financial expenditure in traveling), physical discomfort and sacrifice of animal, to keep the tradition (*Sunnah*) of Abram alive. Hence the Hajj reminds the trials and tribulations of Prophet Abraham(peace be upon him), his wife *Hajira* (Hagar) and his eldest son, Prophet Isma'il (peace be upon him). The Jews due to historic jealousy claim that Abraham offered the sacrifice of his second son Isaac, not Isma'il (the ancestor of Arabs) though the his-

torical evidence through traditions and Bible suggest contrary: "He (God) said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Mori'ah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."(Genesis; 22:2). If at any-time, an offspring of Abraham (peace be upon him) can be described as "your only son" it could only be Isma'il (Ishmael), because for more than thirteen years, he was the only son and seed of Abraham (peace be upon him). It is the tradition to offer the sacrifice of firstling, moreover the difference of age between Isma'il and Isaac was about 12 or 13 years, so Isaac would have been just a toddler at that time.

The Rituals of Hajj in Brief

The annual pilgrimage to Makka, the Hajj, is an obligation, once in life time, only for those who are physically and financially able to perform it. Nevertheless, about two million people go to Makka each year from every corner of the globe providing a unique opportunity for the Muslims of different areas of the world to meet one another. Although Makka is always filled with visitors performing *Umrah* (minor pilgrimage), the annual Hajj begins in the twelfth month of the Islamic year (which is lunar, not solar, so that Hajj and Ramadan fall sometimes in summer, sometimes in winter). Pilgrims (called Hajjis or *Hujaj*) men wear special clothes called *Ahram*, comprising two unstitched simple white sheets which strip away distinctions of class and culture, so that all stand equal before God. There are many restrictions associated with *Ahram*, like avoiding sexual relations with wife or hunting of animals, not cutting nails or hair, avoid fighting etc. The women wear nor-

mal modest clean dress covering their head but face remains uncovered. The main Hajj rituals have been mentioned in Qur'an while the details are given in books of *Hadith & Sunnah*. In brief, first the circumambulation of Ka'ba is done seven times, followed by 'Sai' (circumambulation) of Safa and Marwa (small hills adjacent to Ka'ba, now just signs remain) seven times. On 8 *Zulhaji*, Hajjis proceed to Minna and stay there. Next morning (9 *Zulhaji*) they proceed to Arafat, the pilgrims stand together on the wide plain of Arafat, listen to the Hajj Sermon before *Zuhar* and join in prayers for Allah's forgiveness, often thought of as a preview of the Last Judgment, then offer shortened *Zohar* (noon) and *Asar* (after noon) prayers combined, continue to offer supplications and prayers, *Zikar* (remembrance of Allah) and after sunset move to Muzdalfa. There shortened combined prayers of *Maghrab* (evening) and *Isha* (early night) are offered and stay for the night. After *Fajar* (morning) prayer, Hajjis remain busy in supplications, *Zikar* and prayers.

After sunset they move to Mina and throw seven small stones at *Jumrah Aqba* (symbolic stoning the Satan at the place where Satan tried to beguile Abraham from offering sacrifice of his son Isma'il). The sacrifice of animal is done followed by shaving off the head or cutting some hair, then the *Ahram* is removed and normal dress is worn. The seven times circumambulation of Ka'ba (followed by seven times circumambulation of Safa and Marwa is done if not done initially). The circumambulation between the hills of *Safa* and *Marwa*, the selected altar for sacrifice of Isma'il, is an important rite of Hajj called 'Sai'.

There are two events related to 'Sai', according to first; Abraham stood at the hill of Safa and looked

at the altar (*Marwa*), then walked at quick pace towards Marwa (hill) to fulfill the desire of God to sacrifice his son. This incidence has been mentioned in Bible though for Isma'il, they incorporated Isaac, but the word 'only son' signifying Isma'il still remains at Genesis; 22:2: "Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you."(Genesis; 22:4-5). Hence the circumambulation between of *Safa* and *Marwa*, is like the rite of moving of the sacrificial thing prior to the sacrifice, later circumambulation was done with the piece of the sacrifice, according to Bible: "And thou shalt take the breast of the ram of Aaron's consecration, and wave it for a wave offering before the LORD: and it shall be thy part." (Exodus;29:26).

The other significance of this ritual is to commemorate the act of running between Safa and Marwa by Hagar to look for the source of water for her thirsty child (Isma'il) left in the wilderness by Abraham on will of Allah, (Fiqh-us-Sunnah: 5.85). The Hajjis return to Mina and stay for 2 or 3 days. Daily they throw seven stones first at *Jumra Ola* (1st), then *Jumra Wasta* (middle) and then *Jumra Alakhir* (last), the places where Satan thrice tried to beguile Abraham to disobey Allah, not to scarify his son. The distances between various places are manageable, most of the pilgrimage prefer to move by foot while some use transport specially while moving to and from Arafat.

The original rites of Hajj could not remain intact due to the long period from time of Abraham and Isma'il (peace be upon them). However the original sanctity of Hajj was restored by Prophet

Muhammad (peace be upon him) by removing the pagan practices. The rituals of the sacrifice of an animal is performed in commemoration of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his even willing and obedient son Isma'il to fulfill the command of Allah which was substituted with the ram provided by Allah.

Offering Sacrifice- Old Tradition

The worship through offering sacrifice to Allah started from the time of Adam. It is mentioned in Qur'an: "But recite unto them with truth the tale of the two sons of Adam, how they offered each a sacrifice, and it was accepted from the one of them and it was not accepted from the other. (The one) said: I will surely kill thee. (The other) answered: Allah accepts only from those who ward off (evil)."(Qur'an;5:27).

It has been explained in the Bible that Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock: "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.(Genesis; 4:1-5). The sacrifice has always been part of Abrahamic faith. It is mentioned in the Bible: "And thou shalt bring the Levites before the LORD: and the children of Israel shall put their hands upon the Levites: And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the

LORD for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the LORD. And the Levites shall lay their hands upon the heads of the bullocks: and thou shalt offer the one for a sin offering, and the other for a burnt offering, unto the LORD, to make an atonement for the Levites. And thou shalt set the Levites before Aaron, and before his sons, and offer them for an offering unto the LORD. Thus shall thou separate the Levites from among the children of Israel: and the Levites shall be mine. And after that shall the Levites go in to do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation: and thou shalt cleanse them, and offer them for an offering. For they are wholly given unto me from among the children of Israel; instead of such as open every womb, even instead of the first-born of all the children of Israel, have I taken them unto me.”(Numbers; 8:10-16).

Old Tradition in the Abrahamic Faith

There is a very old tradition in the Abrahamic faith, that the person making an offering (sacrifice) to God should not cut his hair till completion of his offering, it is also mentioned in Bible:” “All the days of the vow of his separation there shall no razor come upon his head: until the days be fulfilled, in which he separates himself unto the LORD, he shall be holy, and shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow.” (Numbers;6:5).“And this is the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: ”(Numbers; :13).“And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head

of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.”(Numbers;6:18).

The Muslims cut their hair in Hajj after offering the sacrifice, as part of this tradition of Abrahamic faith. The sacrifice of an animal is now a permanent tradition, performed by all adult Muslims (even those not performing Hajj) who can afford, it is part of *Eid-ul-Azha* feast and celebrations. Traditionally one third of sacrificial meat is given to the poor. The small Hajj (*Haj-Aashghar*) or Umrah can be performed by Muslims throughout the year. However: “If you are hale and secure then who wants to take the advantage of performing Umrah and Hajj together, he should make an offering which he can afford; but if he lack the means, let him fast three days during the Hajj and seven days on his return making ten days in all.”(Qur’an;2:196). Though not obligatory but most Muslim make it a point to visit the Prophet’s Mosque at Medina during pilgrimage (*Hajj or Umrah*) period.

Asceticism, Monasticism

There is no merit merely in abstention or asceticism, though the humility or unselfishness that may go with asceticism may have its value:

“Say: Who hath forbidden the adornment of God which He has brought forth for His devotees, and the good things of His providing? Say: “All these things are for the enjoyment of the believers in the life of this world though shared by others; but these shall be exclusively theirs on the Day of Resurrection. Thus do We make Our revelations clear for those who understand. Say: The things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds whether open or secret; sins and trespass-

es against truth or reason; assigning of partners to God for which he hath given no authority; and saying things about God of which you have no knowledge.”(Qur’an;7:32-33).

Asceticism often means the negation of art and beauty, it has no necessary sanctity attached to it. The beautiful and good things of life are really meant for, and should be the privilege of those with faith in Allah. If they do not always have them in this life, and if there is sometimes the semblance of others having them who do not deserve them, let it be remembered that this is a test from Allah. In the life to come they will be purely for the faithful. Use Allah’s gifts of all kinds with gratitude, but excess is not approved of by Allah. Christian monks are praised for particular virtues, though the monasticism is disapproved of:

“...But the monasticism which they invented for themselves We did not prescribe for them: (We commanded) only the seeking for the Good pleasure of Allah;...(Qur’an;57:27).

Allah certainly requires that men shall renounce the idle pleasures of this world, and turn to the Path which leads to Allah’s Good Pleasure. But that does not mean gloomy lives, nor perpetual and formal prayers in isolation. Allah’s service is done through pure lives in the turmoil of this world. “Our Lord! Give unto us in the world that which is good and in the Hereafter that which is good, and guard us from the doom of Fire.”(Qur’an;2:201). This spirit was lost, or at least not fostered by monastic institutions. On the contrary a great part of the “struggle and striving” for noble lives was suppressed.

The introvert and pessimistic approach would have disastrous

consequences. The *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) provides complete guidance; As per Qur'an; "It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered an apostle from among themselves to rehearse to them His Signs to sanctify them and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom although they had been before in manifest error"(Qur'an;62:2). **The Muslims gain spiritual satisfaction through unambiguous Islamic practices** like offering obligatory prayers (*Salah*) five time a day, if done with devotion, sincerity and concentration provide a direct link between the man and Allah. "Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul) and most suitable for (framing) the Word (of Prayer and Praise)."(Qur'an;73:6).The optional (*nawafil*) late mid night prayer (*Tahujud*), fasting, paying charity, *Zakat* and performing Hajj or Umrah (pilgrimage to Makka), *Aitekaf* (spiritual retreat during *Ramadan*) provide excellent absorbing mystical and spiritual experiences.

There are other supplications like recitation of verses of Holy Qur'an (with understanding and pondering); it is mentioned in Qur'an:

"..recite the Qur'an in slow measured rhythmic tones"(Qur'an;73:4)

"(This is) a Scripture that We have revealed unto thee, full of blessing, that they may ponder its revelations, and that men of understanding may reflect."(Qur'an;38:29).

"But keep in remembrance the name of the Lord and devote thyself to Him wholeheartedly."(Qur'an;73:8)

Zikar (reciting Holy Names of Allah); and *Darood* are the other easy means to seek blessings of Allah, which, can be performed in spare time while, sitting idle, wait-

ing, traveling, walking or resting. Islam being a practical faith caters for all the spiritual and material needs of its followers so that they don't have to look for un-Islamic spiritual practices. Muslim history is full of learned and pious men (*Sufi*) who while strictly adhering to the Islamic *Shri'at*, gained spiritual heights, and were instrumental in spread of message of Islam, resulting in to large scale conversion. They are highly revered but unfortunately some of their followers started indulging in un-Islamic practices (*bid'ah*) under the influence of un-Islamic local customs and practices not preached by great Sufis.

Deviations (Bid'ah) in Faith & Worship

The term '*Bid'ah*' is derived from a root '*bada'a*', which means "to invent, produce something new." In its linguistic usage, the word carries proper and commendable connotations. From the same root, the term '*badee*' is derived, which means "fine, excellent; and originator." When it is applied to God, it means "Creator." Thus God describes Himself in the Qur'an as "*Badee Al-Samawat wal-Ard*", which means "the Creator (Originator) of the heavens and the earth."(Qur'an;2:117).. Most people translate *Bid'ah* as innovation which means; the action of innovating; the introduction of a new thing; the alteration of something established, which from the Islamic point of view is wrong, as it seeks to invent some new practice or beliefs that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), has not sanctioned. The English word "innovation" carries good connotations, which are at variance with the Islamic concept. Hence, it is better to translate it as "Deviation" (Divergence from a course, method, rule, or established norm or doc-

trine). This is a more accurate rendering of the Islamic meaning of the word '*Bid'ah*'.

Deviations Not Acceptable in Worship and Faith

In matters of beliefs and worship *Bid'ah* acquires negative connotations of "Deviation" from the right path. The development of Christianity as a faith, totally different to what Jesus had preached is the most glaring example. Jesus did not claim divinity or called himself as begotten son of God, (the term son of God was used in the spiritual sense as per the Hebrew traditions, for messengers and pious faithfuls). It started as a *Bid'ah* or deviation by his followers (Paul) who first raised him to the level of Divinity and later developed the strange concept of Trinity (Three persons as One God), Original Sin, exemption from Law (of Moses), preaching to gentiles etc, attributing these deviations to Jesus' claiming that they received instructions from Jesus and Lord through '*VISIONS*.'

According to Bible, all the praises and prayers are to God: "I will call on the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies."(2Samuel;22:4). "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:" (Isaiah;55:6), "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:" (Matthew;7:7). "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray."(Psalms;5:2), "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews;4:16). "I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place."(Psalms;118:5), "And it shall come to pass, that before

they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” (Isaiah;65:24). “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2Corinthians;12:8-9), “Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.” (Jeremiah;33:3).

Hence Allah admonished them:

“O People of the Book! do not overstep the bounds (of truth) in your religious beliefs. Speak nothing but the Truth about Allah. Messiah Jesus, the son of Mary was no more than a Messenger of God and His Word “Be” which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit from Him which took the shape of a child in her womb. So believe in Allah and His Messenger and do not say: “Trinity.” Stop saying that, it is better for you. Allah is only One Deity. He is far above from the need of having a son! To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the Earth. Allah Alone is sufficient for protection.” (Qur’an;4:171).

This the reason that Muslims pray to Allah in every prayer (*Salah*); “O’ God! Guide us to The Right Way. The Way of those whom You have favored; not of those who have earned Your WRATH (Jews), or of those who have lost the way (Christians)” (Qur’an;1:6-7). Hence any deviation in the matters of faith and worship will result in loosing the straight path of Islam, this is the reason that in Islam, *Bid’ah* (deviation) has been strongly condemned from the very beginning.

In the matters concerned with the principles of faith and proper values, or about Islamic worship, it has to be kept in view that God has

made the religion of Islam perfect. He clearly states this in the Qur’an: “This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM.” (Qur’an;5:3). Man cannot make more perfect what God has perfected. Thus, any increase or decrease in the fundamentals of faith and acts of worship, or the types of worship the believers offer, is a deviation. Any status given to any human being, without relying on the Qur’an or the Hadith, is a deviation. Any belief or idea or concept regarding faith, worship, and basic principles of Islam that have not been stated or explained in the Qur’an or the Sunnah is a deviation. There are many Ahadith to elaborate the aspect of *Bid’ah* (deviation).

Narrated Ali ibn Abu Talib: Qays ibn Abbad and Ashtar went to Ali and said to him: Did the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) give you any instruction about anything for which he did not give any instruction to the people in general? He said: No, except what is contained in this document of mine. Musaddad said: He then took out a document. Ahmad said: A document from the sheath of his sword. It contained: The lives of all Muslims are equal; they are one hand against others; the lowliest of them can guarantee their protection. Beware, a Muslim must not be killed for an infidel, nor must one who has been given a covenant be killed while his covenant holds. If anyone introduces a deviation, he will be responsible for it. If anyone introduces a deviation or gives shelter to a man who introduces a deviation (in religion), he is cursed by Allah, by His angels, and by all the people. (Sunan of Abu-Dawood; Hadith Number: 2141).

It is narrated by Bilal ibn Harith al-Muzani, Transmitted by Tirmidhi:

Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) said: He who revived a Sunnah out of my Sunan, which has died after me, for him is the reward like the reward of those who acted upon it, without any decrease in that reward. He who introduced some evil deviation which Allah and His Messenger did not approve has (a burden of sin upon him) like the sins of one who acted according to it, without their sins being mitigated thereby in the least. (Al-Trimidhi Hadith Number 54).

It has been narrated by Jabir ibn Abdullah: When Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) delivered the sermon, his eyes became red, his voice rose, and his anger increased so that he was like one giving a warning against the enemy and saying: “The enemy has made a morning attack on you and in the evening too.” He would also say: “The last Hour and I have been sent like these two,” and he would join his forefinger and middle finger. He would continue: “The best speech is that embodied in the Book of Allah, and the best guidance is the guidance given by Muhammad. The most evil affairs are their deviations; and every deviation is an error.”.. (Sahih Muslim Hadith Number 425).

There is an other common *Bid’ah*; saying aloud ‘Peace and blessings upon the Messenger’ after the call for prayer (*adhan*): Ibn Hajr says in al-Fatawa al-Kubra, “Our *Shaikhs* and others have given a legal verdict about the prayers and salutations for the Prophet after the *adhan* (prayer call) and how the callers to prayer do it. Their verdict is that (the prayers for the Prophet) has its root in the Sunnah, but the manner in which they perform it is a *Bid’ah* (deviation). Muhammad ‘Abduh was asked about saying the prayers and salutation for the Prophet subsequent to the *adhan* and he said, “The *adhan*, as men-

tioned in al-Khaniyyah, is only for the prescribed prayers. It consists of fifteen phrases, the last being *La ilaha illal-lah*. Whatever is mentioned before or after it is a deviation. (Fiqh-us-Sunnah, Volume 1, Number 107b).

The Prophet (peace be upon him), has given a complete package of doctrine of faith and worship for the believers that admits no change or modifications. Hence, nothing can be added to basic fundamentals of Islamic faith and worship, or it will be a deviation (Bid'ah). In this sphere, there is no such a thing as good *Bid'ah*. The comments of 2nd Caliph Omar's about *Taraweeh* being offered in the form of congregation; "This is a good *Bid'ah*." are quoted to support deviations. These have to be put in proper context. The Prophet (peace be upon him), first offered the *Taraweeh* prayer in congregation. He offered it the first night with a number of his companions. On the second night, there was a much larger group of them and they offered it together with the Prophet (peace be upon him), leading the prayer. The third night, before coming out of his home he looked at the people gathering in the mosque for this prayer and he found the mosque full with hardly any room left for any newcomer. He did not come out for it. When he was asked later why he remained at home, he said: "I feared lest that this prayer should become obligatory for you." During his reign, Omar went out at night to find out how people were faring, as was his habit. He noticed that there were many people in the mosque, but there were several congregational prayers in progress at the same time. He did not like what he saw because it gave an impression of disunity in the Muslim community. He interfered to make all these groups join

one congregation, led by Ubayy ibn Ka'ab, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who was famous for his perfect recitation of the Qur'an. The next night, when Omar went to the mosque he found that all people were in one congregation. He commented saying: "This is a good *Bid'ah*." (Sahih Al Bukhari Hadith, Volume 2 Hadith Number 117, Narrated by Abu Hurairah).

From this it may be realized that Omar did not introduce anything new. Nor did he initiate something that was not done before. It was the Prophet (peace be upon him), who in practice recommended that night worship in Ramadhan, which is known as *Taraweeh*, be offered in congregation. When he absented himself from it later, this was for a specific reason. Then Omar brought it back to what was done by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Without the Prophet (peace be upon him), there was no chance that it would become obligatory as was mentioned by the Prophet (peace be upon him). Thus, this *Bid'ah* was to go back to the right practice. This was certainly good. To use this comment of Omar to justify something people invent is to quote it out of context. There can simply be no good *Bid'ah* in matters of worship. No one has ever been a more devoted worshipper of God than the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). If he did not do a particular act of worship, then it is not part of Islamic worship and can never be so. Anything new is a *Bid'ah* (deviation), and deviation in the religion named as Islam, perfected by God can never be good.

Deeds and Faith

In Islam, faith and performance of good deeds are intertwined, they complement each other:

"Do men think that they will be left alone on saying "We believe" and that they will not be tested?" (Qur'an;29:2).

"He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed: and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving;" (Quran;67:2)

The acceptance of the righteous deeds depends on the two basic conditions which must be fulfilled: (1) The intentions for good deeds must be totally for Allah's sake, without any show off or gaining praise or fame, etc. (2) Such a deed must be performed in accordance with the *Sunnah* (legal ways, orders, acts of worship, statements) of Allah's Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him), the seal (end) of all the Prophets and the Messengers. Good deeds are loosely linked with Faith:

"It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces Towards east or West; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah fearing." (Quran;2:177)

"... and whatever you do of good deeds, truly, Allah knows it well." (2:215)

"Those who believe, and work righteousness,- their Lord will guide them because of their faith: beneath them will flow rivers in gardens of bliss.(This will be) their cry therein:

“Glory to Thee, O Allah.” And “Peace” will be their greeting therein! and the close of their cry will be: “Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds!”(Younus:9-10)

“On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness there is no blame for what they ate (in the past), when they guard themselves from evil, and believe, and do deeds of righteousness,- (or) again, guard themselves from evil and believe,- (or) again, guard themselves from evil and do good. For Allah loveth those who do good”(Quran;5:93)

“... Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds forgiveness, and a great Reward.(Quran;48:29)

Allah cautions to guard against loss of deeds He says in Qur’an: “Do then those who disbelieve think that they can take My slaves (i.e. the angels; Allah’s Messengers; Jesus, son of Mary as *Auliya’* (lords, gods, protectors) besides Me? Verily, We have prepared Hell as an entertainment for the disbelievers. “Say: (O Muhammad) Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds? “Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works?” They are those who deny the *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) of their Lord and the fact of their having to meet Him (in the Hereafter): vain will be their works nor shall We on the Day of Judgment give them any Weight. That is their reward Hell; because they rejected Faith and took My *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc) and My Messengers by way of jest. As to those who believe (in the Oneness of Allah-Islamic Monotheism) and work righteous deeds they have for their entertainment the Gardens of

Paradise. Wherein they shall dwell (for aye): no change will they wish for from them. Say: “If the ocean were ink (wherewith to write out) the words of my Lord sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord even if we added another ocean like it for its aid.” Say: (O Muhammad to mankind) “I am but a man like yourselves (but) the inspiration has come to me that your *Ilah* (God-Allah) is one Allah: whoever expects to meet his Lord let him work righteousness and in the worship of his Lord admit no one as partner.”(Qur’an;18:102-110).

Narrated by Anas: The Prophet highlighted the relationship between Faith and Deeds, he said:

“Whoever possesses the following three qualities will have the sweetness (delight) of faith:(1).The one to whom Allah and His Apostle becomes dearer than anything else. (2) Who loves a person and he loves him only for Allah’s sake. (3)Who hates to revert to Atheism (disbelief) as he hates to be thrown into the fire.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith No.,1.15).

Narrated by Abu Musa: The Prophet said, “None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith No.,1.12, Narrated by Anas).

Some people asked Allah’s Apostle, “Whose Islam is the best? i.e. (Who is a very good Muslim)?” He replied, “One who avoids harming the Muslims with his tongue and hands.” (Sahih Al-Bukhari Hadith No.,1.10).

Faith and Sins

Whoever rejects the universal message of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), rejects the message of all messengers, even if he claims that he believes and follows some particular Messenger, is an unbeliever, not a Muslim. It is

mentioned in Qur’an: “Those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and wish to make division between Allah and His Messengers, and say: ‘We believe in some and disbelieve in others,’ wishing to take a midway course. Those indeed are the unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a humiliating punishment” (Qur’an;4:150-51). A believer should fully understand ‘Polytheism (*Shirk*)’, ‘Disbelief (*Kufr*)’ and ‘Hypocrisy (*An-Nifaq*)’ so as to strictly guard against falling in to unbelief.

No one should proclaim any Muslim an unbeliever on account of any sin, however great, unless it be that he regards his sin as permissible. Nor does he forfeit the name of belief; he or she would continue to be called a believer in essence. It is possible to be a sinful believer without being an unbeliever. Allah says in Qur’an: “Then We have given the Book for inheritance to such of Our servants as We have chosen: but there are among them some who wrong their own souls; some who follow a middle course; and some who are by Allah’s leave foremost in good deeds; that is the highest Grace.”(Qur’an;35:32). The believers must immediately repent after committing a sin and should not persist in evil. The Qur’an says: “Repentance with Allah (right to be forgiven by Allah) is only for those who do something evil in ignorance and repent as soon as they realize it; Allah will pardon them. Allah is the Knowledgeable, Wise. There is no repentance for those who persist in their evil deeds until death approaches anyone of them and he says: “surely now I repent.” Similarly, there is no repentance for those who die while they were still unbelievers; for them We have prepared a painful punishment.”(Qur’an;4:17-18).

After 9/11 the concept of *Takfir* has gained popularity among the extremist groups operating in Afghanistan, tribal areas of Pakistan, Middle East (Iraq) and elsewhere to justify the killing of fellow innocent Muslims not very religious in outlook and practice. *Takfir* is the pronouncement that some one is an unbeliever (*kafir*), no more Muslim, an infidel (*mur-ta'd*) hence liable to be killed. *Takfir* has its roots in Egypt, which reflect the twisted ideas of Sayyid Qutab, Mawdudi, IbnTymiyya, and Ibn Kathir. If a Muslim fails to perform some of his obligations and is remiss in practice or commits some such actions as are forbidden, yet he believes in the liability of all obligations and the impropriety of all unlawful deeds, he will continue to be a Muslim though he will be a sinner. Mainstream Muslims and Islamist groups reject the concept as a doctrinal deviation. Leaders such as Hassan al-Hudayabi (died 1977) and Yusuf al-Qaradawi refutes *Takfir* as un-Islamic and marked by bigotry and zealotry. This is the outcome of stagnation in thought process.

Conclusion

The faith in Islam is based upon belief in Allah (One God), His angels, His books, His messengers, and Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be His Last Messenger, Resurrection after death, destiny, trial, hell and paradise. A Muslims should practice the five pillars of Islam (worship); the first two; Declaration, Prayers (*Shahada & Salah*) are daily, next two Charity & Fasting (*Zakat & Saum*) are annual while Hajj is once in life. These are based on Abrahamic traditions, also mentioned in Bible. The aim of practicing the fundamentals of Islamic faith is to make Muslims as good

peaceful human being, who should care for others which earns pleasure of God. The great Syrian scholar Shaikh Ali Tantawi has summarized:

What Islam Expects From The Muslims?

To inhene in their best civilization and matchless culture in a manner that they surpass all the civilized nations of the world. They should be the most prosperous of all as far as the different branches of knowledge are concerned.

Invite the humanity towards Islam, by conveying the message with wisdom, peacefully, in a logical and convincing way. They should argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.

Not to kill the innocent people of any faith (including own self, through suicide) except by law, they don't have to create mischief on earth by creating anarchy or disturbing the peaceful coexistence.

Warfare against injustice and oppression and self defence is permissible, to be declared by the Islamic State but the rules lay down for its conduct by Shari'a (Islamic Law) be strictly adhered to. Those who surrender or do not fight or remain neutral are not to be disturbed. The prisoners are to be protected and provided peace and security.

To use the right of retaliation to any injustice or oppression with equality, not exceeding the

limits forgiveness and patience is however preferable.

To fulfill all bilateral and international accords (like UN Charter) for peace and stability of humanity.

To treat all members of society with equality fairness and justice.

Non-Muslims in minority enjoy complete protection and freedom to practice their faith in an Islamic state. The places of worship of non-Muslims should be protected by the State and society.

What is NOT demanded by Islam?

Islam does not demand from a Muslim to give up the world altogether.

Islam does not expect Muslims to be ignorant, lacking in knowledge of their faith and other branches of knowledge.

Nor does it require one to make the mosque a permanent abode, never to leave it.

Islam also does not insist that one should live in a cave and spend his whole life there, not at all.

If the fundamentals become rituals only devoid of spirit then Allah is not dependent upon any form of worship, He is above all this. Muslims must keep the spirit of faith in mind which should be manifested through their good behavior and deeds. ♦

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