

Fundamentals of Islam, Part II

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The False Gods

Brothers in Islam! Come, let us now try to establish the minimum conditions you should fulfill and the least you should do so that you can be called Muslims.

What is Kufr and Islam?

You must, first of all, recollect one important thing: What is Kufr and what is Islam? Kufr means refusal to obey God, and Islam means total submission to God alone and refusal to accept any ideas, laws or commandments, which contravene the guidance, received from God.

This contrast between Islam and Kufr has been clearly described in the Qur'an Allah Says: 'who so judges not by what God has sent down they are the unbelievers' (al-Ma'idah 5:44). 'Judging' does not refer here to merely legal matter or court judgment. It applies to all those decisions, which we all have to make every day in our lives. You are all the time having to ask yourselves whether to do a certain thing or not, and how to act in varying circumstances.

One way to reach a decision in every eventuality has been laid down in the Book of God and in the Sunnah of His Messenger; other ways are prompted by your desires, by your culture and society, or by man-made laws. If you ignore the way laid down by God. If you decide to conduct your lives according to some other way, you are, then, following the path of Kufr. If you do this always and in every portion of your lives, you are totally Kafirs. And if you obey the directions of God in some matters, while in others follow your own self, desires, society, or man-made laws, then you are guilty of Kufr to the extent of your disobedience. You may be half Kafir, or a quarter Kafir or less or more. Put simply: Kufr exists in proportion to the extent of rebellion against the law of God.

Islam: Total Surrender

Islam is nothing but man's exclusive and total submission to God. He is not a servant of his self, or of his ancestors, or of his family and nation, or of any ruler, general, leader, Mulla, Sheikh or any other person. He is servant of God alone. Says Allah:

Say [O Prophet]: 'People of the book! Come to the creed common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate none with him, and none of us takes other as Lords, apart from

God.' But if they turn away, Say, 'Bear witness that we are Muslims' (Al 'Imran 3:64).

And further:

What! Do they seek a Din other than Gods whereas unto surrenders whoso is in the heavens and on earth, willingly or unwillingly, and unto him all must return? (Al 'Imran 3:83).

One fundament principle has been clearly and forcefully propounded here. True religion means total obedience and submission to God. Worshipping God does not mean merely that you bow before him Five times a day. It means that His Commandments should be carried out at all times. You should abstain from what He has commanded. In every particular find out what the commandment of God is. Never judge the right and wrong by what your own hearts desire, what your intellects suggest, what your forefathers used to do, what you families and relations scholars tell you, what a particular person orders or would be pleased by. If you follow any other person's orders or suggestions in preference to God's commandment, you are making that person a partner in Godhood. It would mean you were giving that status which exclusively belongs to God. 'Authority [to lay down what is right and what is wrong] belongs to God alone' (al-An' am 6:57).

Worthy of worship is He alone who has created you and who keeps you alive. Everything in the heavens and on earth obeys Him. No stone obeys another stone, no tree obeys another tree, no animal obey another animal. Are you then worse than animals, trees and stones, which obey only God, that you obey human beings like yourselves in preference to God? This is the central message of the Qur'an, simple and emphatic.

Three Reasons for Going Astray

Why do people disobey God and go astray? According to the Qur'an, there are three main reasons.

The First is love of one's own desires:

And who is more astray than he who follows his own likes and dislikes with out any guidance from God. Surely God guides not the wrongdoers (al-Qasas 28:50).

Thus, more than anything, it is man's own wishes and desires which lead his astray. For, the one who becomes a slave to his own desires can never become a true slave of God. He will always have only one consideration before him: what will bring fame and honour, what will give him pleasure and gratification, and what will provide him with comfort and ease. He will, therefore, do whatever is necessary to achieve his ends, irrespective of whether God has forbidden the kind of thing he is doing. And he will never do anything, which will not help achieve these ends, even though God may have ordered him to do so. The god of such a person is his own self-nafs-or his own desire, his like and dislike-hawa-and not Allah. How, then, can he benefit from God's guidance, asks the Qur'an:

Have you seen him who makes his own desire his god? Will you be a guardian over them? Or do you think that most of them hear or use their reason? Nay, they are but as the cattle; nay, nut they are further astray the way (al-Furqan25: 43-4).

To be a slave of one's desires is worse than being a beast of the field. No animal will overstep the limits set by God. Every animal eats what God has fixed for it; it performs only those functions, which are allotted to it. But such an animal is man that when he allows his desires to take over, he commits acts as would make Satan himself shudder.

Society and Culture

The second reason for going astray is following blindly the customs and practices, beliefs and notions, rites and ceremonies of society and regarding them as superior to God's guidance. Such a person, when reminded of God's commandments, insists that he should follow only what society approves and continue the traditions of his family or country. How can one who is suffering from such a disease be a servant of God? His gods are society, family and nation. What right has he to claim that he is a Muslim?

The Qur'an warns him thus:

And when it is said to them, 'Follow what God has sent down', they say, No, We will follow [only] what we found our fathers doing'. What! Even if their fathers did not use their reasons at all, nor were guided? (Al-Baqarah 2:170).

And, further:

And when it is said to them, 'Come now unto what God has sent down, and unto the Messenger', they say, 'Enough for us is what we found our fathers doing', what! Even if their fathers had no knowledge and no guidance? O believers! You are responsible for your own souls. Those who are astray can do you no harm, if you are rightly guided. Unto God shall you all return, and then He will tell you what you were doing (al-Ma'idah 5:104-5).

In every age, the people who refused to follow the Truth have been suffering from this disease. Always it has prevented them from accepting the guidance brought by the Messengers of God. When Musa invited people to submit to God's law, they said;

Have you come to us to turn us from what we found our fathers practicing (Yunus 10:79).

When Ibrahim tried to dissuade his fellow citizens from associating gods with Gods, they said:

People have, in all ages, made this same excuse to every prophet, 'what you say is contrary to the practice of our forefathers and this is why we cannot accept it.'

And even so we never sent a Warner before you to any people but its men who lived in the pursuit of pleasures said, 'We indeed found our fathers following a certain way, and it is their footsteps that we are following', He said, 'What! Though I should bring you a better guidance than you found your fathers upon?' They said, 'In what you are sent with, we disbelieve.' So we inflicted our retribution upon them; and behold how as the end of then that gave the lie [to the truth]! (Zukhruf 43:23-5).

Allah tells people that they can either follow their forefathers, their society and culture, or His Commandments. They cannot do both. If you want to be Muslims you must give up all things apart from God and obey what he has commanded:

And when it is said to them, 'Follow what God has sent down', they said, 'No, but we will follow what we found our fathers doing'. What! Even though Satan was inviting them unto the punishment of the blazing flame. And whosoever submits his will to God, and is a doer of good, he indeed has taken hold of the most firm handle. And with God rests the outcome of all affairs. And whoso disbelieves, let not his belief grieve you. Unto us they shall return, and we shall tell them what they did (Luqman 31:21-3).

Obedience to Human Beings

The third reason is obeying other human beings in preference to God. How does this happen? When we mistakenly believe that the person concerned is a great thinker whose word must be true. When we imagine that he controls our livelihood, having the power to withhold it from us or give us whatever he desires. When we think that he has the authority over us to do as he wishes. Or, when we subscribe to the notion that he can ruin us by laying his curse upon us or take us to Paradise with him if he is obeyed. Or, when we conclude that we must follow the ways of certain nations because they are progressive and modern and have made great advances in the world. If we behave in any of these manners, the door of Divine guidance is closed:

If you obey most of those on earth, they will lead you astray from the path of God (al-An'am 6:116).

We can be on the right path only when we have faith in one God, and follow His guidance only. How can we find that path when we have invented numerous gods, sometimes obeying this one and sometimes that one?

The Three main causes of going astray are now before you: self-worship or unrestrained gratification of one's desires; social conformity or blind following of the customs of society and notion; and servitude to human beings in general, especially rulers of the time, rich and false religions thinkers.

If you want to become true Muslims you must first break these three formidable idols that claim to be your gods. For with these three idols in your hearts you cannot become slaves of Gods. Merely by offering Prayers many times a day by ostentatiously observing Fasts, and by putting on the outward face of Muslims, you may deceive your fellow beings-as well, indeed, yourself-but you will never be able to deceive God.

Condition of Muslims Today

To be slaves of the three idols, I say, is the real Shirk (idolatry). You may have demolished the temples of bricks and mortar, you may have broken stone idols in them, but you have paid little attention to the temples within your own hearts. To smash these idols is the essential precondition to becoming a Muslim.

This applies to all Muslims throughout the world whatever sufferings you are going through, I am sure, are the result of worshipping these idols. But because I am facing Punjabi brothers here, I have particularly to tell them that the root of all their misery and humiliation is again precisely these three things. There are more than fifteen million of this land. But despite this we have no weight of our own. Some communities numerically far smaller carry much more weight.* and what is the reason? It is solely by being slaves to our own selves, to family customs and to other human beings in preference to God That our strength has been sapped from within.

Let us look at ourselves. We have created among us many castes, like Rajputs, Gakhars, Mughuls, Jats and many others. Islam asked all these ethnic groups to become one Ummah, to be brothers and to unite harmoniously like a solidly built wall of cemented bricks. But we are still clinging to the old pagan ideas. Just as there are separate castes among Hindus, so are we also split. We do not intermarry as Muslims should. There is no trace of brotherhood and fraternity between , but in reality we observe all those distinctions which were prevalent before Islam.

It is these distinctions, which have prevented us from becoming a strong wall. Each and every brick in the wall is disjointed. We can neither rise together nor face any adverse situation together. If we are asked, in accordance with Islamic teaching, to break these barriers and become one again, what is our answer? Just the same as the opponents of all the Prophets gave: We cannot go against the customs which answer was given by God to this obduracy?

Only this: You do not have to break these customs and you do not have to give up following the rites of Hindus. But we shall break you into pieces and shall put you to disgrace and dishonor in spite of your large numbers

Look further: Allah has commanded that your sons and daughters are both entitled to inheritance. What is your answer? 'No, for according to the custom of our forefathers, only sons and not daughters are entitled. We will follow the way of our forefathers in preference to the law of God'. Tell me, in the name of God, is this Islam? When you are asked to break this ancestral custom you say that you will break it. When asked why, you say because if others did not give a share to their daughters and we did, then we would be at a disadvantage when our sons took wives. Just consider what this reply means. Are we to obey the law of God only on condition that others commit adultery, we shall be saying next: If others commit theft, we shall also steal. In short, till such time as others give up sinning, we shall continue to commit sins.

In following your caste system and inheritance customs in such a manner all the three false idols we

have been discussing are being worshipped. There is slavery to the self, to society, and to Kafir nations. And at the same time, while serving all these idols, we still claim that we nonetheless somehow belongs to Islam!.

These are only two examples. We need only look at the situation with open eyes to see countless others. And in all these we will find that sometimes there are is worship of one idol, sometimes of two, sometimes of three. While these idols are being worshipped alongside the claims of allegiance to Islam and God, how can we expect Allah to shower His blessings on us-blessings, which have been promised only to true Muslims?

Can we call ourselves Muslims?

Brothers in Islam! You now understand that, according to the Qur'an, men go astray in three ways. The first is to ignore the guidance of God and become slaves of desire. The second is to give precedence to family, culture, society, customs and the ways of forefathers over the law of God. The third is to ignore the way enunciated by God and His Messenger and follow the ways either of so-called important people or of other civilizations and cultures.

A True Muslim

A true Muslim should be free from these three ailments. Only someone who is a slave of none but his Messengers can be truly called Muslim. A Muslim sincerely believes that the teaching of God and His Messenger is absolute truth, that whatever runs counter to it is false, and that it contains all that is good for man in this world and in the Hereafter. A Muslim who has complete faith in these truths will, at every step in his life, look only to God and the Messenger to guide him and submit to whatever they require. Such a person will never feel troubled in his heart about obeying God's commandments, or be concerned if members of his family or his society upbraid him, or if the entire world opposes him. In each case his response will be unequivocal: I am God's slave, not yours; I have faith in His Messenger, not in you.

What is Hypocrisy? Serving the Self

On the other hand, a person may say, 'this may be the directive of God and the Messenger, but it is difficult for me to accept it because it seems to be harmful. So I shall act according to my own opinion as against the guidance of God and the Messenger'. Obviously, no faith can be alive in the heart of such a person. He is not a true believer (Mumin) but a hypocrite (Munafiq). While he verbally claims to be a servant of God and a follower of the Messenger, in reality he is slave of his own self and a follower of his own opinions.

Adherence to society

Similarly, a person may say that whatever the injunctions of God and the Messenger may be, a certain practice cannot be given up because it has been followed since the times of his forefathers. He, too, must then be reckoned among the hypocrites, however prominent the mark on his forehead traced by prostration in endless prayers and however pious his face. The spirit of Islam has not entered his heart. Islam does not enter his heart merely in bowing (ruku), prostration (sujud), Fasting (swan) and Pilgrimage (Hajj); nor it is found in the face and dress of man. Islam means submission to God and the Messenger. Anyone who refuses to obey them in the conduct of his life-affairs has a heart devoid of Islam-'faith has not yet entered their hearts'. His prayers, his fasting and his pious appearance are nothing but deception.

Imitating other people

Again, someone may, in defiance of the book of God and the Messenger's directions, urge thus: Such and such ideas and practices should be adopted because they are prevalent in the west; this particular behavior must be accepted because other nations are making progress because of it; this point should be conceded because an important person is advocating it. Such a person is in grave danger of losing

his faith. This attitude is irreconcilable to Iman.

If you are Muslims and want to remain Muslims, then cast overboard every suggestion which is contrary to the injunctions of God and His Messenger. If you cannot, it ill behoves you to claim to be following Islam. To assert that you believe in God and the Messenger but to ignore their injunctions in the conduct of your lives in favour of others people's thoughts and practices is neither Iman nor Islam. It is sheer hypocrisy.

Allah leaves no doubt about the ridiculous nature of such conduct:

Indeed we have down revelations clearly showing the truth, but God guides whosoever He will to straight path. They say, 'We believe in god and the messenger, and we obey'. Then, after that, a party of them turns away; they are not [true] believers. And when they are called unto God and His Messenger that he may decide between them, behold, a party of them turns away; but if they are in the right, they will come unto him submitting willingly. What! Is there in their hearts sickness? Or are they in doubt? Or, do they fear that God and His Messenger mat be unjust towards them? Nay, it is they who are doing wrong. All that the believers say whenever they are called unto God and His Messenger that he may judge between them is that they say, 'We hear, and we obey'. It is they who are the successful. Whoso obeys God and His Messenger, and fears God, and has awe of Him, it is they who shall triumph (al-Nur 24: 46-52).

Reflect on the definition of Iman set out here. What is Iman? It consists in submitting yourselves, willingly and totally, to the Book of God and the guidance of the Messenger, Whatever guidance and commandments are received from these sources you must implicitly obey and no arguments against them should be listened to, whether they come from your own minds, or from members of your families, or from outsiders. You can only be a Muslim if you develop this attitude. If you do not, you are no more than hypocrite.

Compare, now, yourselves with those who had real and true Iman in their hearts and see how they obeyed Allah and the Messenger.

The Truth faith Abstinence from Alcohol

You know how widespread the drinking of alcohol was in Arabia. Men and Women, young and old, all loved to drink. They sand songs in its praise and were totally addicted to it. You also know how difficult it is to give up drinking after becoming addicted to it. An alcoholic would rather give up his life than stop drinking. If he cannot get alcohol he becomes worse than a physically-ill person.

Yet what happened when the prohibition order was given through the Qur'an Those same Arabs who loved alcohol more dearly than their lives broke with their own hands the containers they were drinking from. Alcohol flowed like water in the streets of Madina. One group of people, with drinking vessels in their hands, heard the proclamation of the Prophet, blessings and peace is on him, prohibiting alcohol; those who had vessels close to their lips put them away before a drop could enter their mouths.

Such is the strength of true Iman. This is one of the finest examples of submission of Allah and the Messenger.

Confession of Crime

You know what severe punishment Islam has prescribed for adultery-one hundred strokes on the bare back. The very thought makes a person shudder. And if a married person is involved, the punishment is stoning to death-one trembles at the very mention of such terrible punishment is strong to death-one trembles at the very mention of such terrible punishment. But have you heard the story of the man who committed adultery at the time of Prophets, blessings and peace is on him, and had the strength of faith to face its consequences?

There were no witnesses. There

Was nobody to take him to court, nobody to report him to the police. Yet the Iman in his heart admonished him: As you have gratified your desire in contravention of the law of God, you must undergo the punishment prescribed by God for it. So this person presented himself, of his own accord, before the Prophet, blessings and peace is on him, and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, I have committed adultery Please give me punishment'. On hearing these words the Prophet turned aside as if he had not heard the man, but he moves in front of him and repeated his request. The Prophet, blessings and peace is on him, again turned aside, and again the man went and stood in front of him and made the same request for the third time.

Such is the power of true Iman! For one who has such Iman in his heart it is easy to be punished with a hundred strokes on his bare back or even be stoned to death, but it is difficult to go before God as a disobedient servant.

Severance of Familial Ties

You also know that in this world nobody is dearer to us than our relatives. Fathers, brothers and sons, particularly, are so dear that we are willing to sacrifice everything for them. But now think of the battles of Badr and Uhud and see who fought against whom. A father, in Muslim army, was drawn against his son, who was in the army of the Kafirs; or the son was on this side and his father was on the other side. One brother was on this front and another brother on the other front. Close relatives confronted each other and fought as if they were strangers. It was not for the sake of money or chauvinism or personal enmity that man fought against own flesh and blood; it was for the sake of God and the Messenger that they had the strength and courage to sacrifice the love for their fathers, Sons, brothers and whole families.

Giving up Cultural Norms and Customs

You know, too, that Islam demolished practically all the ancient customs prevalent in Arabia. The greatest evil of al was idol-worship, which had been practiced for hundreds of years. Islam told people to give up this evil as well as alcohol, adultery, gambling, theft and armed robbery-all of which were rampant at that time. Women used to walk about unveiled; Islam enjoined them to observe purdah. They were not entitled to a share in inheritance; Islam decreed that they should have one. Indeed, no ancient custom was left untouched.

But do you know in what manner did those who truly believed in God and the Messenger submit to all this? These idols which had been worshipped for centuries and at whose altars scarifies had been offered for long they broke with their own hands. Family customs which had been passed down from generation to generation they totally abolished. Objects which had been considered sacred they trampled under their feet, when ordered to by God. At his command, too, things which had been regarded as prohibited became permissible; what had been considered clean suddenly became unclean and the unclean became clean. Practices which provided profit or pleasure during the day of kufr were given up for the sake of God. On the other hand, injunctions lay down by Islam. No matter how hard to be to obey they were gladly accepted.

This is what true Iman means; this is what is called true Islam. Suppose the people of Arabia had at that time said: 'We do not accept this things because it will harm our interests and we cannot give up that thing as it profits us greatly, we shall continue following this particular practice since it is what our forefathers did and our society approves, while we like certain ideas of the Romans and will adopt them and certain practices of the Iranians which appeal to us'. Had they in this was rejected all tenets of Islam, there would, as you can imagine, have been no Muslims in the world today.

The Way to God pleasure

Brothers! The Qur'an says:

Never shall you attain true piety unless you spend [in the way of God] out of what you love [Al Imarn 3:92].

Herein lives the essence of Iman; this is the real spirit of Islam; that you must be prepared to sacrifice for the sake of God, if necessary, whatever is dear to you.

In many affairs of your lives God's commandments beckon you in one direction while your own desires urge you in another. God commands you to do a certain deed but you think that it will cause trouble and loss. God forbids you from a certain action but you consider it to be pleasant and beneficial. On one side is God's pleasure and pitted against it is almost everything in this world. At every step in life you are faced with two paths. One is the path of Islam, and the other of Kufr and hypocrisy.

By giving up the things of this world and bowing to the commandments of God, you adopt the path of Islam. By rejecting God's commandments in order to satisfy the desires of your hearts and the temptations of the world, you take the path of kufr and hypocrisy.

Muslims of Today

So many Muslims today are all too ready to accept whatever is convenient in Islam but all too quick to change direction when conflict arises between Islam and kufr. This weakness is found even among some of those claiming to be the greatest of champions of the Islam. They will shout 'Islam! Islam!' and sing many songs parsing it until their mouths are dry. They will be seen doing some work for Islam. But if they are told, 'Let us now implant the law of Islam which you are parsing so highly', they will at once say, 'There are some difficulties and obstacles, it is better to leave things as they are for the time being'.

What they mean is that Islam is a beautiful toy, to be displayed on a shelf and praised from distance, but to be strictly avoided if the question is raised of enforcing its laws to govern ourselves, our families and relations and our businesses and the general conduct of our lives. This is the attitude of even some so-called religious people today.

As a result, neither Prayer nor Fasting nor Reciting the Qur'an nor outward adherence to the Shari'ah is effective. When the soul departs, what fears can a dead body perform?

Are we True Muslims

Brother in Islam! Who are true Muslims? Let us see what Allah and his Messenger have to say about their lives and hearts:

Say: My prayers and my sacrifices, and my living and my dying are for God alone, the Lord of all the worlds. No partner has He. Thus I have been commanded, and I am foremost among those who surrender [themselves unto him] (al-An'am 6: 163-4).

The same theme is elucidated by the Prophet, blessings and peace is on him:

One who loves for the sake of Allah alone and hates for the sake of Allah alone; and whatever he gives, gives for the sake of Allah alone, and whatever he with holds, withholds for the sake of Allah alone indeed, he perfects his Iman (Adu Daud).

The Qur'an makes clear what Allah demands of you. You should live for Him alone; you should die for Him alone. You, and the world around you, entirely belong to Allah; let nobody have a share in what belongs to Allah. That is to say, you should not serve anyone but him, nor live or die for anyone but Him.

The Prophet! Blessings and peace be on him, explains what the Qur'an has said. To be true believers you love and enmity for everything, all your affections, all relations and transactions in your lives, should have only one purpose: to seek Allah's pleasure without this your Iman itself will not be complete; the possibility of rising higher in the sight of God does not arise. The greater the deficiency in this respect, the more defective the Iman.

Some people think that these qualities are required only to reach higher spiritual stations and

are not essentials to Iman and Islam. In the other words, even without these qualities a person can be a good Mumin and a Muslim. This mistaken notion has arisen because people in general do not differentiate between legal Islam and true Islam which alone is truly authentic in the sight of Allah.

Two types of Islam

Legal Islam

Under legal Islam, on which jurists and states must base their dealings, what lies in your hearts and minds is not taken into account, nor can it be. Your verbal affirmation and those essential signs which must flow out of that affirmation are accepted as sufficient evidence of your Islam. Anyone who affirms by word of mouth belief in Allah, the Messenger, the Qur'an, the Hereafter and other articles of faith, and who also fulfils those necessary conditions which provide proof of his affirmation, is considered part of Muslim society and all dealing with him are to be conducted as with a Muslim.

This definition provides the legal and cultural basis on which Muslim society is organized. Its purpose is no more than that all those who enter into the Muslim Ummah are recognized as Muslims: nobody from among them must have the same mutual legal, moral and social rights; they should be entitled to marry among Muslims; they should be eligible to receive their share in inheritance; all other civil relations should be established with them.

True Islam

However, in the world-to-come, you cannot be judged as a Muslim and a Mumin on the basis legal affirmation, nor on this basis will God accept you as one of his chosen servants. What will count then is having faith in hearts, and willingly and wholly submitting lives to God. Whatever is verbally affirmed is meant for courts and for the common man and the Muslim society. For they can only see the exterior, but Allah see deep into your hearts and knows precisely the degree of your Iman.

How will He judge a man? Allah will see whether he lived and died for Him alone, whether his loyalties to Him superseded all the other loyalties, whether his obedience and his service, indeed his entire life, were devoted only to Him. If they were solely for Allah then he will be adjudged a Mumin and a Muslim, but if they were for someone else, then he will not be adjudged a Muslim or a Mumin. Whoever falls short of this criterion will, to the extent he falls short, be lacking in Iman and Islam, irrespective of how important a Muslim the world may judge him and of any high positions he may hold. With Allah only one thing matters: whether or not you have given away in His way all that He has given you. If you have, you will be granted the reward which is reserved for those who are loyal and render the service that is due. But if your submission has been his service, your claim to be Muslims, which implies that you have claim to be Muslims, which implies that you have wholly given up yourselves to God, will be a deceptive claim. Although you may be able to mislead the world and persuade the Muslim society to grant you its membership and all the rights of Muslims, God cannot be deceived into assigning a place for you among His faithful.

Reflect on the differences between legal Islam and true Islam and you can see that their consequences will vary greatly, not only in the Hereafter but also in this world; the life pursuits, character and disposition of a true Muslim will be totally different from one who merely parades the outward trappings of faith. You will always encounter these two types of Muslims.

Two Kinds of Muslims

Partial Muslims

Some Muslims profess faith in God and the Messenger and declare Islam as their religion; but then they confine this Islam to only a part of their lives. To the extent of this part, they express great attachment to Islam; extensively perform worship rituals like Prayers, use of the rosary, remembrance of God's name. They are very particular in conforming to outward piety in matters like food dress and other external social, cultural customs. Thus they are fully 'religious'.

But beyond these conceptions their lives are not ruled by God. If they love, they love for the sake of their own selves, their country, their nation, or for anything else, but not for Allah. If they

become displeased, are angry, hate someone, make enemies, or wage war, it too is for the sake of some worldly or selfish interest. Their relations with their businesses, their wives and children, families, societies will all be to a great extent unaffected by Islam and based on secular considerations. As landlords, traders, rulers, soldiers, professional people in all spheres they will behave as if they are autonomous, having in connections with their position as Muslims. When such people establish cultural, educational and political norms and institutions, these have nothing to do with Islam, even though they may seem Islamic.

True Muslims

The second kinds of Muslims are those who completely merge their personalities and existences into Islam. All the roles they have become subordinate to the one role of being Muslims. They live as Muslims when they live as fathers, sons, husbands or wives, businessmen, landlords, laborers, employers. Their feelings, their desires, their ideologies, their thoughts and opinions, their likes and dislikes, all are shaped of Islam. Allah's guidance holds complete sway over their hearts and minds, their eyes and ears, their bellies, their sexual desires, their hands and feet, their bodies and souls. Neither their loves nor their hatreds are formed independently of Islamic criteria. Whether they fight or make friends, it is purely for the sake of Islam. If they give anything to anybody, it is because Islam requires it to be given. If they withhold anything from anybody, it is because Islam wants it to be withheld.

And this attitude of theirs is not limited to personal lives; their public lives, their societies are also based entirely on Islam. Their collectivity exists for Islam alone; their collective behavior is governed by the precepts of Islam alone.

What kind of Muslims God Desires

The above two kinds of Muslims are significantly different from each other, even if, legally, both are included in the Ummah and the word 'Muslim' is applied to both equally. Historically the first kind of Muslims have made no achievement which may be worthy of mention or which merits our being proud of it. Nothing these 'Muslims' have done has left as Islamic imprint on the pages of world history. The world has received no benefit from their existence; indeed, Islam has suffered decay because of them. Because of the preponderance of such 'Muslims' in Muslim society, power and world leadership largely passed into the hands of rebels against God. For these 'Muslims' have been content merely with ensuring that they enjoy the freedom to live religiously within the narrow confines of their private lives.

God never desired to have such 'Muslims'. Nor did he send His Prophets or reveal His Books to create them. Indeed it is the second kind of Muslims who are desired by God. Only they can ever accomplish anything worthwhile from Islamic point of view.

Supreme Loyalty of Allah

This is not a phenomenon peculiar to Islam. In fact, no way of life can ever prevail in the world if its followers accord their faith and commitment a subordinate position in their lives. Or, if they live and die for causes other than their faith. We see even today that only those are considered real and true followers' creed or ideology that are loyal to it with their hearts and souls, every creed in the world desires such adherents and no creed can prevail in the world except through such followers.

However, there is an important difference between Islam and other creeds and ideologies. Although others demand from men total loyalty and dedication, they in fact have no such right upon him their claims are entirely unjustified. The objects they place before men are not the kind of objects for which a human being should sacrifice of life has a right upon us. Everything must be given in His way, for whatever exists in heaven and on earth belongs to Allah. Man himself, whatever he possesses, and whatever lies within him, all belong to Allah. It is, therefore, in perfect harmony with justice as well as reason that whatever belongs to Allah must be reserved only for him. Whatever sacrifice man makes for others or for his own benefit or to gratify his desire is indeed a breach of trust unless it is with the

permission of Allah. And whatever sacrifice is made for Allah is in reality a payment of what is due.

But, one lesson Muslims must learn from those who are sacrificing everything for the sake of their false ideologies and false gods: how strange it is that, while such unimaginable dedication, sacrifice and fidelity is being shown for false gods, not even a thousandth part of it is shown for the True God by those who profess faith in them.

Where do we stand?

Let us examine our lives by the crucial criteria of Iman and Islam as laid down by the Qur'an and the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him

If you claim that you have accepted Islam, have you oriented your living and you're dying towards God only? Are you living for His cause alone? Are your hearts and minds, your bodies and souls, your time and efforts, being devoted to the fulfillment of Allah's wishes? Is that mission being accomplished through you who He wants to be fulfilled by the Muslim Ummah? And, again, do you obey and serve only God? Have you eliminated from your lives subservience to selfish desires and obedience to family, brotherhood, friends, society and state?

Have you made your likes and dislikes totally subordinate to the wishes of Allah? If you dislike somebody, is that too for the sake of Allah? Is no element of selfishness involved in this? Do you give and withhold only for the sake of God? Are you spending on your own selves and giving wealth to other people, or withholding the same, because that is what God wants? Is your motive nothing but to gain His pleasure?

If you find such a state of faith and submission within yourself, you should thank God that he has bestowed upon you the blessing of Iman in its fullness. And if you feel any deficiency, you must give up every other concern and worry and concentrate wholly on remedying this deficiency. For on its removal depends your well-being in this world as well as your success in the Hereafter. Whatever success you may enjoy in the present life will not compensate you for the loss you will suffer in the Hereafter due to this deficiency, even if you gain nothing in this world, you will benefit immensely in the life to come.

Do not use this criterion to test or judge others and determine whether they are Muslims or hypocrites and Muslims and Kafirs; use it only to judge your own selves and, if you detect any deficiency, try to remove it before you meet Allah. How to mufti (religious jurist) or a court judges you should be of least concern to you; it is only the judgment of the Supreme Ruler and knower of the seen and unseen which matters. Do not become happy merely on seeing your names registered as Muslims, but remain anxious about how and where your names are entered in the Register to God.

Real success consists in your being judged as Mumins and not hypocrites, obedient and not disobedient, faithful and not unfaithful, by that God who is the final judge.

Why obey God?

Brothers in Islam! I have frequently emphasized that 'Islam' means total surrender to Allah and the messenger, and that no one can become truly Muslim unless he gives up obedience to anyone or anything apart from God.

But why is so much stress laid on obedience to God and His Messenger? You may ask: Does God need our obedience so badly that He has to demand it so insistently from us? Is He, too, like the rulers of the world so power-hungry that He has to insist His rule cannot be sustained without these subjugating us?

Let us try to examine these questions.

Our Well-being

Essentially, the demand for obedience to Allah is intended for the well-being and betterment of man himself. He is not like the rulers of the world. They subjugate people to benefit themselves, but Allah

needs nothing from anybody. He is not need of taxes from you, nor does He require building mansions, buys cars and amassing luxury articles at your expense. He is not dependent on anyone for anything. Whatever is in the world belongs to Him alone and He alone is the master of all treasures.

He demands obedience from you only because He does not want man-that creation of His whom He has declared to be the noblest- to be the servant of another man like him, or of Satan or bow his head before unworthy things. He does to desire that His vicegerents on earth grope in the darkness of ignorance and, like animals, become slaves to their desire and thus degrade themselves to the level of the lowest if the low. Therefore he urges: You obey me and walk by the light I have sent through my messengers. You will find the straight path. By walking on it you will receive dignity in this world as well as in the Hereafter.

No coercion is there in religion. Distinct has become the right way from [the way of] error. So whosoever rejects false Gods and believes in God has indeed taken hold of the most firm handle which shall never break. God is All-hearing, All-knowing. God is the friend of those who faith; He brings them out of darkness in to light into darkness; therein to abide forever (al-Baqarah 2:256-7)

Obeying others besides Allah

Why will a man Plunge into darkness by obeying others besides Allah and why is it that only by obeying Allah can his life be illuminated? Let us look into this important question.

Our lives are made up of countless relations and transactions. Our first relationship is with our own bodies: these hands, these feet, these eyes, these ears, these tongues, these hearts, and the mind, this belly- all these have been entrusted to you by Allah to server you. You have also been given freedom to decide what end to employ them.

What to put in your bellies, and what to avoid. What to make your hands do and what to keep them away from. Where to let your feet walk and when to hold back. What to let your eyes see and ears hear, and what to refrain from, what to allow your tongues to say, and when to fall silent. What kind of thoughts to make your hearts and minds reflect upon, and what to shun. These servants of yours you can make do good work or bad, as you choose. In return, they can make you ascend great heights or plunge you into abysmal depths.

Then you have relationships with the members of your family-with you fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, wives, children and other relatives with whom you have to deal continuously. You have to decide how to behave with these people, what rights they have over you. Your comfort, your happiness and your success in this world as well as in the Hereafter depend very much on how correctly you behave with them. If you behave wrongly, you will make this world a Hell for yourselves. And in the Hereafter, too, you will have to answer to God.

You have relationship with many other people. They are your neighbors, friends and enemies. There are also many who work for you in various ways. To some you have to give something. Some entrust you with their works while you entrust your works to others. You are in command over some people and others are in command over you. In this world, your happiness, your honor and your good names-all depend entirely on your ability to maintain these relationships properly.

In the Hereafter, too, you can acquire places of honour near God only by scrupulously avoiding abusing the rights of others and doing them injustices. There, let no one charge you with having ruined his life or having illegally his honour, life or property. You, therefore, have to maintain these relationships in a proper manner; actions which may spoil or disrupt these relations should be avoided.

Now consider: in order to maintain proper relationships with your one body, with the members of your families and with all other people, you need the light of knowledge at every step. You have to know what is right and what is wrong; what is true and what is false; what is just and what is unjust; what rights you have over others and what rights others have over you; in what there is real benefits and what lies real harm.

If you try to find this knowledge with the help of your reason and feelings alone, you will not find it. Because your self is overpowered by the urge to immediate gratification of desires. Your reason and feelings are, therefore, ruled by physical pleasure and immediate temptations. They will tempt you to earn money by doing illegal things, drink alcohol and commit adultery. They will lead you to usurp the right of others and with held things due to them on the grounds that such behaviour will profit you: take everything and give nothing. They will also make you exploit others to serve your ends while avoiding the doing of any service to anybody, arguing that this will make life easy and comfortable.

If you allow yourself to be led by a self who gropes in such darkness, it will drag you down to the level of selfish, depraved and corrupt persons and your lives both on earth and in the Hereafter will be ruined.

Alternatively, instead of following the self, you may rely on other human beings like yourselves, and place yourselves in their hands to take you in whichever direction they like. The dangers in such a course are obvious: selfish persons may make you slaves of their own desires, and ignorant men, who have themselves gone astray, may mislead you also. Tyrants may use you to perpetrate oppression and injustice on others.

From human beings like yourselves, too, you cannot get that light of knowledge which can guide you to distinguish between right and wrong, between good and bad, and direct you on the right path.

The only True Guidance

In the final analysis there remains only one source of truth: that one Supreme Being from whom you can get the necessary light. God is All-Knowing and All-seeing. He knows the inner reality of all things. He alone can tell you precisely what is to your benefit and what is to your detriment. He alone can lay down which actions are right of you and which are wrong. He has no vested interest and no axe to grind. He has no need to secure any benefit by deception. Therefore, whatever directions that Holy and Self-subsistent being gives you will be without any ulterior motive and will be intended exclusively for your benefit.

Allah is also the ultimate dispenser of justice. There is not the slightest element of injustice in that holy Being; His commandments are based totally on truth and justice. In following them there is no danger of you doing any injustice to yourselves or to other people.

How to benefit

Two things are necessary in order to benefit from the light given by God. First, you must believe sincerely in Allah and His Messengers, through whom this light has been transmitted. This means that you should be absolutely certain that whatever guidance the Messenger has brought from God is right and true, whether at a particular time you understand the wisdom behind it or not. Second, after you have believed, you should follow that guidance, because without obedience nothing can be achieved.

Suppose a man tells you not to eat a certain thing because it is poisonous and you say, 'You are undoubtedly right, it is poisonous and fatal'. Then, despite acknowledging this truth, you eat that thing. The result will obviously be the same as if you had eaten it unknowingly. So what is the point of just knowing something without acting on your knowledge?

You can achieve real benefit only when you obey Allah after affirming faith in Him, when you obey His commandments and not merely utter your belief in their truth. Similarly, you should not simply promise verbally to abstain from things which have been forbidden, but in fact abstain from them. That is why Allah repeatedly urges: 'Obey Allah and obey the Messenger' (al-Ma'idah 5:92). And: 'If you obey him, you will be guided' (al-Nur 24:54). And: 'so let those who go against His command beware, lest a trial befall them. Or there befall them a painful punishment' (al-Nur 24:63).

No blind Obedience

Let there be no misunderstanding about one thing. By saying that only Allah and the Messenger should

be obeyed I do not mean that you should refrain from listening to anyone else. No. The only thing is that you should not follow anybody unthinkingly: you should always examine whatever a person tells you to see if it is in accordance with the guidance given by Allah and the Messenger or not. If it is, you should accept what he tells you because you will in fact be obeying not him but Allah and the Messenger. If it is not, you should reject him because no one has a right to be obeyed as against Allah and His Messenger.

You understand that Allah does not himself appear before man and deliver His guidance. Whatever guidance He has to give he has conveyed through His Messenger. The Prophet, blessings and peace are upon him, too, left this world for his heavenly home about fourteen centuries ago. The commandments given by Allah through him are preserved in the Qur'an and Hadith. But the Qur'an and Hadith cannot in their nature come before you and give orders to do certain things and not to do other things. It is men who will help you conduct yourselves according to the Qur'an and Hadith. There is therefore no other course of action open but to obey the teachings of men.

What is essential is that you do not follow people with closed eyes. As I have just told you, you should first see whether they are advising you according to the Qur'an and Hadith or not. If they are, then it is incumbent on you to obey them. But if they want to lead you on to an opposing course, then it is forbidden to obey them.

Difference between Din and Shari'ah

Brothers in Islam! When talking of Islam we often hear and use two particular words: one is Din and the other is Shari'ah. But very few understand the true meaning of Din and Shari'ah. Not only the illiterate, but even reasonably educated people and many religious scholars too, do not fully grasp the important distinctions between the two concepts. Due to this ignorance, Din and Shari'ah are often confused with each other, creating serious malaises.

Meaning of Din

The word 'Din' is used in several meanings. The first is sovereignty, power, lordship, kingship, or ruler ship. The second is the opposite of this, i.e., submission, obedience, service or slavery. The third is to bring to account, to judge, or to dispense reward and punishment for actions. All those three uses are found in Qur'an.

Allah says:

The only [true] Din in the sight of God is [man's] self-surrender [to Him] (Al-Imran 3:19).

Here, Din is that way of life in which we recognize Allah alone as the possessor of all power and majesty and surrender ourselves to Him. We must not abase or humble ourselves before anybody save Him. We must regard only Allah as Master, Lord, and Sovereign, and must not be slaves or servants to anybody but Him. We must accept only Allah as the lord of reward and punishment. We should covet no reward; fear no punishment, except His. Islam is the name of this Din.

False Din arises when you ascribe real powers to anyone besides Allah, when you take anyone as a real ruler and master, as a dispenser of real reward and punishment, when you bow your heads before him in humility, when you serve him and obey his orders, when you covet his reward and fear his punishment more than Allah's. This kind of Din Allah never accepts because it is totally contrary to reality.

No other being in the whole universe except God possesses any power and might, nor does anybody else's sovereignty and kingship exist. We have not been created to be servants and slaves of anyone else except that real master who can judge us and award reward and punishment. In many places in the Qur'an these facts have been explained.

And whoso seeks a Din other than Islam. It will not be accepted from him (al-Imran 3:85).

Thus anyone who disregards the sovereignty and kingship of God, acknowledges someone else as his master and ruler, becomes his servants and slave, and considers anyone as a dispenser of reward and punishment in his own right, will never have his Din or conduct accepted by God because:

They were not enjoined anything but that they should serve God, making submission exclusively His, turning away [from all false gods] (al-Bayyinah 98:5).

God has not created human beings to serve anyone except Himself. It is, therefore, incumbent on them to turn away from all false gods and reserve their submission, and their true Din, for Allah alone. They should single-mindedly devote themselves to His service and consider themselves as being accountable only to Him:

What! Do they see a Din other than God's whereas unto Him surrenders whatever is in the heavens and on earth, willingly or unwillingly and unto Him all must return? (Al Imran 3:83).

How can we human beings incline to be servants and to submit to someone other than God, when all other things on earth and in the heavens are slaves and obedient servants of God alone, accounting for their deeds to no other authority than God? Does man want to adopt a deviant way for himself, some kind of independent and autonomous existence, in defiance of the entire universe?

He it is who has sent forth His Messenger with the guidance and the way of Truth, so that he makes it prevail over all ways [religions], however much Mushriks [who take gods besides God] may dislike it (al-Tawbah 9:33)

Allah has sent His Messenger with the true Din for the purpose of ending the sovereignty of all false gods and granting us immense freedom so that we live as servants of none but the Lord of the universe, no matter how much the idolaters and polytheists may dislike or oppose such a course.

And fight them, until there is no rebellion [against God] and all submission is to God alone (al-Anfal 8:39).

The lesson is clear: we must fight until the sovereignty of all begins other than Allah is brought to an end, until only the law of God rules in the world, until the sovereignty of God alone is acknowledged, until we serve only Him.

Thus these three meanings of Din stand out:

To acknowledge God as Lord, Master, and Ruler.

To Obey and serve only Him.

To be accountable to Him, to fear only His punishment and to covet only His reward.

Din also includes obedience to God's Messengers. For the commandments of God have been given to human beings through His Books and His Messengers.

Children of Adam! If there should come to you Messengers from among you, who convey My revelations unto you, who convey My revelations unto you, the whosoever refrains from evil and lives rightly-no fear shall be on them, and neither shall they sorrow (al-A'raf 7:35).

No individual receives Allah's commandments directly. Hence, whosoever acknowledges Allah as Ruler can be accepted as obedient to Him only when he becomes obedient to His Messengers and lives by the guidance received through them?

Din consists of these fundamental principles

Meaning of Shari'ah

We turn now to the Shari'ah. The meaning of the Shari'ah is 'why' and 'path'. You enter Din when you accept God as your sovereign, accept to live in service to him, accept that the Messenger holds authority on His behalf, and accept that the book has been sent by Him. The ways in which you then have to serve God and the path you have to travel along in order to obey him is called the Shari'ah

This 'way' or 'Path', too, has been given by God through His Messenger. It is he who teaches you how to worship the Master, how to make your bodies and hearts clean, what is righteousness and piety, how to discharge rights, how to undertake transactions and dealings with our fellow-beings, indeed how to lead our entire lives.

Nature of differences

The key difference between Din and Shari'ah is this: while Din always has been, and still is one the same, many Shari'ahs were revealed. Some were subsequently cancelled or changed, but without changing the Din. The Din of Nuh was the same as that of Ibrahim, Musa, Isa, Shu'ayb, Hud, Salih and Muhammad, peace be on them, but their Shari'ahs varied from each other to some extent. The prescribed ways of performing the Prayer and observing the Fast were different. Injunctions about Halal (permissible) and Haram (forbidden), rules of cleanliness and codes of marriage, divorce and inheritance also differed. In spite of this, all were Muslims- the followers of Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa or Isa, and we too, are all Muslims. Because Din is one and the same for all. This shows that Din is unaffected by differences in the regulations and laws of the Shari'ah. Din remains the same though precise details of following it differ.

An example will illustrate the difference between Din and Shari'ah. Suppose a master has many servants. If some of them do not acknowledge him as their master nor consider his orders worthy of obedience, they cannot be considered servants at all. But those who acknowledge him as their master consider it their duty to obey him clearly belong to the category of servants. The duties they perform and the way they serve him may be different, but they still remain his true servants.

If the master has shown one servant one way to serve him and a different way to another, no one has any right to claim that he alone is a rightful servant and that others are not. Similarly, if one servant understands his master's will in one way and another servant in another way, and both are equally good servants. Quite possibly one may err in understanding the meaning of a particular directive, but as long as he does not refuse to obey it, no one has a right to brand him as disobedient, or excommunicate him.

Understand clearly this difference between Din and Shari'ah. Before the Prophet, blessing and peace be upon him, Allah sent various Shari'ahs through various prophets. One mode of service was ordained through one prophet. Those who served the Master in these differing ways were all Muslims. Then, when the Prophet came, blessing and peace be upon him, the Master declared: Now we abrogate all the previous codes. From now on whoever wants to serve Us must follow the code which We are giving through Our last Messenger.

From then on, no servant has the right to serve according to the previous codes. If he does not accept the new code and continues to follow the old, he is in fact obeying his own dictates, not those of the Master. Such a person can no longer be legitimately called a servant; he becomes, in religious language, a Kafir.

Juristic Differences between Muslims

The first part of the example applies to those who came to follow the earlier prophets. The second part applies to the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, blessing and peace be upon him.

Anyone who believes that the Shari'ah given by him has been sent down by Allah, and therefore must be followed is Muslim. One person may understand the injunctions of the Shari'ah in one way and another person in another way, and both may follow them according to their particular understanding. However widely they may differ, both will be able to call themselves servants. For both will be acting in the consciousness that they are doing their Master's bidding.

In such a case, what right has one servant to say that he alone is the genuine servant while the other is not? The most he can argue is that he has understood the correct meaning of his Master's order while the other has not. But this does not give him the authority to expel the latter from the fold of servants (that is, call him a Kafir). Anyone who does display such temerity assumes, as it were, the status of the Master. He would seem to be saying, 'Just as it is compulsory for you to obey the Master's order, so also it is compulsory for you to accept my way of understanding. If you fail to do that, I shall, with my won power, dismiss you from the Master's service'.

For this very reason the prophet, blessing and peace be upon him, said: 'Whoever unjustified brands a Muslims as Kafir, his verdict will rebound on him' (Bukhari, Muslim). For, God has made the submission to His guidance the test of whether or not one is a Muslim. A person who insists upon such submission to his own interpretation and judgement and assumes such powers of dismissal for himself, irrespective of whether or not the other Muslim has in fact acted as a Kafir.

Brothers! I hope you now fully understand the important difference between Din and Shari'ah and also comprehend the fact that differences on the modes of serving God do mean deviation from Din. Of course, a person who follows a particular course must genuinely know and believe that God and the Messenger have actually enjoined him to do what he is doing, and in support of his actions, he should produce authentic evidence from the Book of God or the Sunnah of His Messenger.

Ignoring the Nature of Differences

Consider, now, what great harm is being caused to Muslims by not observing between Din and Shari'ah.

There are several ways of performing Prayers among muslims. We may rest our hands on our chests, or we place them on our navels. We may recite Surah al-Fatihah while praying behind the Iman, or we may not. We may utter Amin Loudly, or quietly. Each of us will be following his respective method in full consciousness of that fact that it was followed by the Prophet blessing and peace be upon him, and that we have the evidence to support this claim. each of us is. Therefore, equally a follower of the Prophet.

But some people take these issues of detail in Shari'ah as fundamental issues of Din itself. They have, therefore, established their own separate congregations and their own mosques. They have abused each other, forcibly driven their opponents from mosques, fought legal battles and split the Prophet's Ummah into various sects. When even this was not enough to satisfy them, they started, on the slightest of pretexts, labeling each other as Kafir, sinner and heretic. They are not happy unless they impose their understanding on everyone else.

The different schools (madhabib) of Hanafi, Shafi'I, Ahl-Hadith and so on which you see among Muslims all acknowledge the Qur'an and Hadith as their final authority and derive injunctions from them according to their own understanding. It may be that one school's understanding is correct and another's is incorrect. I myself am a follower of one of these schools and argue with those who are opposed to it in order to explain to them what is correct in my view and prove wrong what I consider to be wrong

But it is one thing for somebody's understanding to be wrong and it is quite another to expel him from Islam. Every Muslim has the right to follow the Shari'ah according to his understanding. If ten Muslims follow ten different methods, all of them are surely Muslims as long as they believe that they must submit to the law of God. they constitute one Ummah and there is no reason for them to form separate sects. Only those who do not understand this point split the Ummah into different factions for trivial reasons, set apart their congregations and mosques, prevent intermarriages and social relations and organize their groups as if each one is an Ummah by itself.

Sectarianism

It is impossible to overestimate the harm caused by Muslims by this sectarianism. On the face of it Muslims are one Ummah. In India alone today there are about eighty million of them. If such a big community were really united and worked together to make Allah's guidance supreme, who in the world would have the courage to oppose it? But sectarianism has led this Ummah to be split into hundreds of factions, their hearts sundered from each other. They are incapable of uniting even at times of gravest crisis. A Muslim belonging to one faction is often more prejudiced against a Muslim belonging to another faction than against a Christian or a Jew. At times, members of one Muslim faction have gone to the extent of siding with unbelievers to humiliate a member of another Muslim faction.

You should not, therefore, be surprised to see Muslims living in servitude to others. This is what they have earned by their actions. Upon them has descended that punishment which Allah has warned them of:

.... [He will] divide you in sects and make you taste the violence of one and another (al-An' am 6:65).

Dissension, cutting each other's throat, subjugation of tyranny and oppression, all these are forms of God's punishment visited upon Muslims of today throughout the world.

This punishment is very evident in the Punjab today. Here sectarian strife is very widespread. Consequently, in spite of your numerical majority, you are powerless. If you want to further your well-being, you must demolish these sectarian barriers united Ummah. There is no basis whatever in God's Shari'ah to make Shi'aah, Sunni, Hanafi, Ahl-Hadith, Deobandi, and Barelvi and so on into ignorance. Allah made us only one Ummah: the Ummah Muslimah.

True Meaning of `Ibadah

Brother in Islam! There is an important word which we Muslims use a lot but understand little. The word is `Ibadah. It is very important that we understand its true meaning and significance.

The sole purpose of our creation, the end of our lives, Allah says. Is to worship and serve Him alone.

And I have not created jinn and mankind except to worship and serve Me (al-Dhariyat 51:56).

This establishes beyond doubt that you must be fully aware of the meaning of Ibadah. Otherwise you will not be able to fulfill the purpose for which you have been created. And anything which does not fulfill its purpose is a failure. If a doctor cannot cure his patient, he may be considered to have failed in his work. If a farmer cannot raise a good crop, he may be held to have failed in his job. Similarly, if you have not been able to fulfill the purpose of your lives, Ibadah, you must be judged failures. Listen, therefore, carefully and understand the meaning of Ibadah the success or failure of your lives.

Meaning of `Ibadah

What, then, is worship of `Ibadah?

The Arabic word `Ibadah is derived from the same root as the word `abd, which means servant and slave'. Thus, `Ibadah means to perform the duties of a servant as does a slave or bondsman. A person is a slave of somebody only if he lives his whole life rendering service and obedience to him and behaves as one should behave to his master. But a person who is supposedly a servant and is being paid for his work but who does not render his master service and obedience as a slave ought, is guilty of disloyalty and rebellion.

How should a slave behave towards his master?

The first duty of a slave is to take only his master as his lord. He should be totally faithful to him alone who sustains, nourishes and protect him and give his loyalty to no one else.

The second duty of a slave is to be always obedient to his master, to carry out all his orders meticulously and to refrain from following his own desires or opinions or following anybody else contrary to his master's wishes. A slave is a slave, every moment and in all circumstances. He has no right to choose to obey a particular order and disobey another, or to say he will be a slave when it suits and ignore his duties for the rest of the time.

The third duty if a slave is to revere and adore his master. To express his reverence, he should follow the ways laid down by him. If he is constant and firm in his faithfulness and obedience, he must present himself at whatever time his master calls him for audience.

These are the qualities which together constitute 'Ibadah: first, loyalty to one's master; second, obedience to him; and third, reverence and adoration for him.

What Allah requires-when He says 'I have not created jinn and mankind except to serve and worship me'- is that we should be loyal, above all, to Him alone and to no one else; we should follow, against everything else, His commandments only; and we should honour and revere Him alone by kneeling and prostrating ourselves. Everywhere in the Qur'an the word 'Ibadah is used in this sense. This is also the substance of the teaching of our Prophet, and of all the prophets sent by god before him, peace be upon them. Each come with the same message, 'Worship and serve none except him, (Yusuf 12:40): there is only one Sovereign to who you must be faithful, and that Sovereign is Allah; there is one law which you must obey, and that is the law of Allah; there is only one Being you should worship, and that being is Allah.

Misunderstanding 'Ibadah

Now look at the following situations.

What would you say about a servant who, instead of performing the duties required of him by his master, just stands in front of him with folded hands and keeps on chanting his name? his master orders him to go and discharge his obligations to his fellow human beings, but he stays where he is Again and again he bows to his master, salutes him and remains standing up with folded hands. His master instruct him to go and fight against evil to eliminate it, but he does not budge an inch; instead he keeps on prostrating himself before him. His master commands him to cut off the hand of a thief, but the servant, still standing there, recites scores of times in an extremely melodious voice: 'cut off the hand of the thief, cut off the hand of the thief' , without ever trying to establish that orders which the hand of a thief may be cut off.

Would you say that this man was really serving his master? And what would be your verdict of you had servants and one behaved in this fashion? Yet how often you regard as devout worshippers so-called servants of God who behave exactly like this! What, for example about the man who reads from dawn to dusk the Divine injunctions in the Qur'an, but never stirs himself to carry them out, chanting instead the name of God on a thousand-bead rosary, praying uninterruptedly and reciting the Qur'an in a beautiful voice? When you see Him doing all this you exclaim: 'What a devout and pious person he is! You are misled because you do not understand the true meaning of 'Ibadah.

Here is another servant. This one is busy day and night carrying out duties given to him by people other than his master, while he constantly flouts the commands of his real master and tries to hides this by always being present at the appointed hours of audience and losing no chance to sign his praises. If any you had such a servant, what would you do with him? Would you not throw back his greeting in his face? If he called you 'Master' and 'Lord', would you not retort: 'You are an impertinent liar and a cheat, you take wages from me but work for others'. You pretend to call me master but actually serve everybody except me'. This is a matter of simple common sense which we can all easily understand.

But how astonishing that you think the Prayers, Fasting, chanting on rosary-beads, recital of the Qur'an, the Pilgrimage and Almsgiving of those people are in fact of worship, which day and night violate or ignore the laws of God and follow the orders of the unbelievers. Here, again, you are misled because you are unaware of the true meaning of 'Ibadah.

Now look at yet another servant. His uniform is perfectly tailored and always smart, just as desired by his master. He presents himself before his master showing the utmost honour and reverence. whenever he is given an order, he bows his head and says, 'With all my heart I will obey', as if no one could be more faithful. He is always to the forefront in parsing his master. Yet, at the same time, this man is serving the rebels and enemies of his master, participating in the conspiracies they hatch against him and co-operating with them in their efforts to belittle his name. In the darkness of night he commits burglary in his master's house, but in morning presents himself with folded hands before him like the most faithful servants.

What would you say about such a servant? Clearly, your verdict would be: he is hypocrite, a rebel, and disloyal. But what do you call this so called servant of God who behave just like this? You call them Sheikhs, Mawlanas, Pirs, and so on.

You consider them pious and godly men. This is because you have been misled by external trappings such as full breads, dresses above their ankles, prostration marks on their foreheads, their long sessions of the Prayers and their big rosaries of beads. Again, your error has arisen because you have not grasped the meaning of 'Ibadah and religiosity.

Too often you think that just facing the Qiblah with folded hands, bowing with your hands resting on your knees, prostrating yourselves with your face on the ground and uttering a few ritual words is in itself 'Ibadah. You think that just to be hungry and thirsty from mornings till evening every day from the first of Ramadan till the appearance of the Shawwal moon is 'Ibadah. You think that a mere verbal recital of some parts or Surahs of the Qur'an is 'Ibadah. You think that a visit to Makka and circumambulation of the Ka'ah is 'Ibadah. In short, you think 'Ibadah consists of merely performing certain outward worship rituals and ceremonies, and whenever you notice anybody doing these actions, and no more, you think that they have done their duty, they are true worshipers performing 'Ibadah of God, they have thus fulfilled the purport of the verse, 'I have not created Jin and Mankind except to serve and worship Me'.

'Ibadah, Lifelong Service

But in reality the 'Ibadah for which God has created you and which He has enjoined upon you is something quite different. It is this: you must follow at every step in your lives the law of God and refuse to obey all laws which conflict with his law. Everything you do must accord with the guidance given by God. only then will your entire lives turn into lives of worship.

In such a life, everything is 'Ibadah: whether you sleep or are awake, whether you eat or drink, whether you work or rest, whether you are silent or talk, are all acts of worship/ so much so that in going to your wives and kissing your children, too, you serve God. All these actions which are usually considered secular and worldly become religious, provided they during their performance you observe the limits laid down by God and remain conscious by God (Halal) and what is forbidden by Him (Haram), what is a duty and what must be avoided, which actions please God and which actions displease Him.

For instance, easy opportunities to earn money in a forbidden ways may occur during your life. If you resist this temptation and in obedience to God, confine yourselves to earning money in approved ways only, then work is itself worship. And you deserve rewards. And the earning you bring home for yourselves, your wives, your children and other have-nots will be blessed by Allah. Indeed whatever you do and whatever time you spend in doing. His will and in pleasing Him, you worship Him: when will and in pleasing Him, you worship Him: when you remove from road a stone or other obstacle which might hurt people; when you nurse an ill person or guide a blind man or help a person in distress; when you avoid lying, gossiping about people behind their backs, making sarcastic remarks and

slandering; when you refrain from hurting people; when you talk truthfully and justly.

Real worship of God, therefore, is to follow the way laid down by God and lead lives according to His commandments from childhood to death. There can be no fixed time for this worship; it must serve God. Since you cannot say: 'I am a servant of God at such a time', you cannot say that such and such a time is earmarked for God's service and the remaining time is not. If you truly honour and adore, love and fear God, all your actions will be motivated by these feelings and they will all constitute worship.

Brothers! You may now ask: 'What then is the position of prescribed worship rituals like Prayer (Salah), Almsgiving (Zakkah), Fasting (Sawn), Pilgrimage (Hajj) and so on?'

These acts of worship, which Allah has enjoined upon us, in reality, prepare us for that greater overall 'Ibadah that we have to perform throughout our lives. They are *the* means which turn our lives into lives of worship. Prayer reminds you five times a day that you are slaves of Allah and that Him alone you must serve. Fasting prepares you, for an entire month once every year, for this very service. Almsgiving repeatedly brings home to you the truth that the money you have earned is a gift of God. Do not just spend it on physical pleasures or even solely on material needs: you must render what is due to your Master. Pilgrimage engraves on your heart such a love and awareness of the majesty of God that once taken root; they remain with you all your lives.

If, by performing all these acts of worship, you grasp their true inner significance and your entire lives are transformed into an unceasing act of worship, then undoubtedly your Prayer is real prayer, your Fast is real fast, your Almsgiving is real charity and your pilgrimage is real pilgrimage. But if you do not, no purpose is possibly served by merely bowing, kneeling and prostrating yourself (*ruku* and *Sujud*), by spending days in hunger and thirst, by going through the formalities of the pilgrimage and by setting aside money for the Almsgiving. These worship rituals are like a human body: it is a living human being so long as it has a soul and moves about and does work; but if it is soulless, it is no more than a corpse. A corpse has hands and feet, eyes and nose, but you bury it under the earth because it is devoid of soul. So are worship rites if they are devoid of meaning, if they do not generate love and fear of God, loyalty and obedience to Him.

We should try to find out how each act of ritual worship prepares us for a life spent totally in worship; what a great and wonderful difference each can make to our lives if we perform them in full understanding of their meaning and purpose.

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