

The Gist of Islam:

The Heart of the Matter

Edited by S. Mumtaz Ali

Part I:

excerpt from *Islam in a Nutshell*
by Dr. M. Hamidullah

Who can define Islam better than the Holy Prophet of Islam himself? For this purpose we shall base ourselves on a celebrated report, called the Hadith of Archangel Gabriel, recorded by Bukhari and many other best sources. It is as under:

One day the Holy Prophet was sitting in the grand mosque of Medina, surrounded by a number of his companions, when a stranger arrived, sat in front of the Holy Prophet, put to him questions and received his replies as under:

What is the Faith? It is that you believe in the unique God, in His angelic messengers, in books revealed by Him; believing also in His human messengers (prophets) and in the Resurrection after the death.

What is the religious submission? It is to worship God without associating anybody else in His divinity, celebrate services of prayer, to give to the poor fixed portion of your savings, to fast the whole month of Ramadan, and to perform once in life the pilgrimage of the House of God (in Mecca).

What is the embellishment (of acts)? It is to worship God and perform your duties to Him as if you are seeing Him (present): although you do not see Him, yet He sees you.

When will come the hour (of the end of the world)? I do not know that better than you (it is a secret of God). But I can tell you the signs that will precede it ...

Thereupon the stranger got up and went away. Soon the Holy Prophet told those present: Make him come back. But the man had completely disappeared. Later the Holy Prophet said: It was Gabriel that had come to teach people their religion.

As seen, it teaches three things: Faith, Practice and Method. Some details are called for.

1. The Faith and Belief

The religion of Islam - which term literally means "submission" (to God our Creator) - teaches the following dogmas:

a) To believe that there is no God if not God Himself, He having no parents, no mate, no child, unique, eternal in the past and in the future, and He rests invisible to us.

b) That God has many celestial servants, the angels, some of them bring messages of the Lord and communicate them to the prophets.

c) That God has sent from time to time a number of human messengers (prophets) to guide their peoples to the path of the pleasure of God. One must believe in all of them, but must practice the commandments of only the last of them, Muhammad, after which there is to be no new prophet. The divine orders revealed to many a prophet have been recorded in book form for the benefit of posterity, but one must abide by only the latest and the last of them, the Holy Qur'an.

d) A Muslim has also to believe in the Hereafter: after our ineluctable death. God is going to resurrect us all and demand account of our behaviour during the earthly life, in order to reward or punish according to what each one merits.

e) Regarding free-will and predestination, one must believe that God is the creator of all, and that each man is responsible for what he performs.

The creed in Islam is as follows: I believe in God, in His angels, in His revealed books (commandments), in His human messengers (prophets), in the Hereafter, and that all Good and Evil is determined by God.

This creed is resumed in the formula: I attest that there is no God if not God Himself, and I attest that Muhammad is the messenger of God (*ash-hadu al laa ilaaha illal-laah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammad-ar rasulullaah*). This excludes both atheism and polytheism.

All Muslims are brethren, equal, without least discrimination on account of race or mother tongue. The Qur'an emphatically says: "*The most noble among you is the one who is the most pious (God-fearing).*" In fact the same religious duties are imposed from the ruler to the humblest of the ruled.

2. Religious Practices (submission)

I) Attestation of the unity of God, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God. The divine messages that this latter received have been collected in the book called the Qur'an. Its original is in Arabic, but more or less faithful translations exist in all the big languages of the world.

II) Services of Worship of God, the prayers, are to be celebrated five times every day, from dawn to early night. Each prayer takes a few minutes to perform, but it is obligatory to every Muslim, man or woman. It has certain postures to make (standing, bowing, prostrating and sitting), certain formulas to pronounce, certain portions of the Qur'an to recite from memory in Arabic, and preferably to celebrate in congregation, along with other Muslim brothers and sisters. The prayer is performed only in Arabic, the language God has chosen for revealing His last message. So every Muslim, whatever his or her mother tongue, has to memorize necessary Arabic texts, which are not at all long or very numerous. As one has to repeat them several times every day, one does not forget them.

II/a) On every Friday, there is a more solemn prayer, to be celebrated only in congregation, not isolated and individually. It is to note that it takes place soon after midday, so the usual second of the five prayers is suppressed on that day. The *imam* (leader of this congregational prayer) pronounces also a sermon in Arabic in two parts. (Its translation could be pronounced before the Arabic sermon).

II/b) There are two annual prayers, on the feast days, but they are in addition to the five daily prayers, and are celebrated soon after sunrise, in congregation.

II/c) Adult women must not celebrate the prayer during their monthly period of menses, and when they give birth to a child.

III) Fasting: every adult man or woman must fast, that is to abstain from all eating, drinking, smoking and sexual intercourse, for one whole month from dawn to sunset. The name of this month is Ramadan, and it is the ninth of

the Muslim lunar calendar (which is shorter by eleven days than the Gregorian calendar).

III/a) Ramadan is the month in which the holy Prophet assumed the function of the Messenger of God; and also received revelation of the first portion of the Qur'an. In thanksgiving to God, he not only fasted during the daytime, but also celebrated supererogatory prayer during the night. It is called *taraaweeh*, consisting of 8 or 20 rak'ats, according to the schools of Muslim law. The Malikites alone have 8 rak'ats, all others have 20 rak'ats. More act, more divine recompense. So the Malikites also join with others. The 20 rak'at are celebrated in 10 cycles, each of 2 rak'ats.

IV) If a Muslim man or woman has saved some money which lies idle during a whole year, he or she has to give 1/40th of it to the poor persons. If one has a commerce or cultivates land, he too has to pay this religious tax, called *zakat* (spiritual purification). Unlike the *zakat* on cash, which the owner spends privately, the *zakat* on commerce and agriculture is collected by government agents. The law is that the spared money should at least be 200 dirhams (about 25 US dollars), and remain unutilized during a whole lunar year. If the savings are less than that, one is not required to pay this tax. The *zakat's* beneficiaries are mentioned in the Qur'an 9:60, preferably to the poor, to charitable purposes like mosques and schools, preaching of Islam, feeding the travellers in transit, and in the path of God.

(V) Every Muslim, man or woman, who has necessary travelling expenses, must go at least once in life to Mecca, to perform the pilgrimage of the House of God that exists there since the time of our ancestor Adam. Even inhabitants of Mecca must do that. It is not a touristic travel, but has deep spiritual and symbolic meaning. God has chosen to remain invisible to us, but we love Him and want to be obedient to Him. This building is named House of God. God must be in His house, even invisible to us. So the pilgrim presents himself before the House of the Lord to show his or her submission. The Holy Prophet has said that the Black Stone, brought by Adam from Paradise and inserted in a corner of this building, is the Right Hand of God. So to take allegiance, the pilgrim places his right hand on this stone, and then makes a seven-fold ritual going around the House of God, as if mounting the guard of the Palace of the King. Kings nominate only the most trusted of their servants to guard their residence. The pilgrim visits also two sacred spots nearby: first Arafat, where Adam is said to have found his wife Eve who had lost the way when coming from Paradise to earth. The second is at

Mina: the Prophet Abraham had received an order of God that: *"If you love Me above all else, then immolate your first born and unique son."* Without the least hesitation or murmur, Abraham wanted to perform the duty. Thereupon God said: *"The intention is enough and sacrifice instead a goat."* All these ceremonies take five days, whereafter the pilgrim returns home.

V/a) It is to remind one that during their prayers, Muslims turn towards the Ka'bah, this House of God in Mecca, wherever they may be on the earth or the airplane or boat or submarine: to East-Southeast in Philadelphia, to the North in Alaska, and so on and so forth. (See a globe to find out the exact direction to take from your place to Mecca.)

3. Embellishment of the Daily Life

As the above mentioned report of Gabriel says, the best method of the embellishment of one's conduct is to think and to act as if God is present and watching us. Which servant can in the least permit himself to be negligent in his duty when the master is present and watching?

The first and foremost duty is to perpetually remember God, and that is the Islamic mysticism.

Then the morality, which is practically the same in all religions. They command charity. Forbidden are murder, theft, illicit intercourse with women, and the like. Forbidden to Muslims are also alcoholic drinks, pork, meat of edible animals which are not ritually slaughtered with the pronouncement of the name of God (to tell them that you are like us and we kill and eat you only because the Lord, our common creator, has allowed us that). Forbidden are also animals killed by drowning and strangling; their throat must be cut and blood must be gone away. Forbidden are also gambling, interest of banks on savings. (The interest must not be left to the bank, but recovered and spent on charitable purposes, not at all on one's self, eating, paying rents or taxes, or even on one's near relative like father, mother, brother, sister, children, etc.) Forbidden for men (not for women) is wearing silk dress, gold rings or other decoration.

Obligatory is to treat all other Muslims as brothers and sisters.

Such is in short what Islam will demand of every Muslim, man or woman. Those intending conversion must know these duties beforehand, and be prepared to perform these duties, especially the five daily prayers, which the

Holy Prophet (pbuh) calls "Pillars of Islam".

Apostasy after embracing Islam is a political crime, revolt against the community; so it is punished severely. Better not embrace Islam, rather than abandoning it later.

Islam is the last of the divinely revealed religions. If the Legislator promulgates several laws on the same subject, one after the other, it is the latest one that is to be abided by. Older laws are respectable as divine commandments, but not to practice, just like an old unused bus ticket when the tariff is changed by the authority concerned.

Conclusion

This much may suffice those curious to know what is Islam.

As to a new convert, the most important thing is the celebration of the five daily prayers. There are Arabic texts to learn by heart. These are cited, translated and transliterated in my bigger work *Introduction to Islam*.

To end, we pray God to guide us to the path of His pleasure, and to bless His Prophet who taught us all Divine orders.

[The foregoing passages do nicely serve the purpose of providing the basic information in a nutshell as the author Dr. M. Hamidullah intended. The moral duties, however, are set out in a very brief manner and the whole matter is settled by stating that morality is practically the same in all religions - they command charity and forbid murder, etc. It is impressed upon me that if I were to expand on this statement and add a whole section on moral duties, it would enhance the usefulness of this Newsletter for the youth and the new and older Muslims alike.

One could perhaps expand the general sense of Hamidullah's statement, by way of elaboration, that all human societies subscribe to certain common, broad essential values of what may conveniently be described as a universal moral-cum-social culture. For example, all religions recognize the main elements of family life and matrimonial relations, and similar processes of social cohesion, economic co-operation, political organization, dispensation of justice, common occasions of festivity and mourning, and appreciation of fine arts and architecture. All religions agree on universal principles of morality and ethics (e.g., generosity, selflessness, truthfulness, honesty, bravery, chivalry, etc.). All these

are approved as desirable virtues and their opposites are condemned as undesirable vices. All these essential elements of universal moral-social culture have not only been upheld and recommended by the Shariah where they were useful to serve the purpose of universal expediency, but they were also appropriately rectified or modified to eliminate excesses for the general welfare of humanity at large. Islam, in other words, prescribes or proposes no course of action which is totally foreign to the cultural imagination of people.

So, for the benefit of those who will be interested in learning about these special modifying aspects of universal morality, I have decided to do two things:

(a) reproduce Paragraphs 233 and 234 from *An Introduction to Islam*, a popular work by the same author, and

(b) provide our abridgment of certain relevant chapters of another popular book under the title of *What Islam Is?* by Maulana Mohammed Manzoor Nomani. It is to be noted, however, that although there is bound to be some overlapping of information, the coverage will be in a different style and with a different approach.] - Editor

The Islamic System of Morality

Abolishing the ineluctable inequalities - based on race, colour of skin, language, place of birth - Islam has proclaimed (and realized more than any other system) the superiority of the individual based solely on morality which is a thing accessible and open to everybody without exception. This is what the Qur'an (49:13) has said:

"O mankind, lo! We have created you of a male and a female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another; verily the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is the most pious; lo! God is Knower, Aware."

Twelve Commandments

In a beautiful passage (17:23-39), the Qur'an gives twelve commandments to the Muslim community, and says:

(i) *Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him.*

(ii) *And that (ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them were to attain old age with thee, say not 'Fie' unto them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious word. And lower unto them the wing of*

tenderness through mercy, and say: My Lord! Have mercy on them both, as they did care for me when I was little. Your Lord is best aware of what is in your minds. If ye are righteous, then lo! He is ever Forgiving unto those who turn (unto Him) in repentance.

(iii) *Give the kinsman his due, and the poor, and the wayfarer, and squander not (thy wealth) in wantonness. Lo! the squanderers are ever brothers of the devils and the Devil was an ingrate to his Lord. But if thou has to turn away from them, waiting mercy from thy Lord, for which thou hopest, then speak unto them a convenient word.*

(iv) *And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked, denuded. Lo! thy Lord enlargest the provision for whom He will and straineth (it from whom He will). Lo! He is ever Knower, Seer of His slaves.*

(v) *Slay not your children, fearing a fall to penury; we shall provide for them and for you. Lo! the slaying of them is a great sin.*

(vi) *And come not near unto fornication. Lo! it is an abomination and an evil way.*

(vii) *And slay not the life which God hath forbidden save with right. Whoso is slain wrongfully, We have given power unto his rightful representative, but let him not commit excess in slaying. Lo! he will be helped.*

(viii) *Come not near the property of the orphan save with that which is better till he come to strength;*

(ix) *And keep the covenant. Lo! of the covenant it will be asked.*

(x) *Fill the measure when ye measure, and weigh with a right balance; this is meet, and best refuge.*

(xi) *Follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart - of each of these it will be asked.*

(xii) *And walk not in the earth exultant. Lo! thou canst not rend the earth, nor canst thou stretch to the height of the hills. The evil of all that is hateful in the sight of thy Lord. This is part of the wisdom wherewith thy Lord had inspired thee (O Muhammad). And set not up with God any other god, lest thou be cast into hell, reproved, abandoned.*

These commandments, comparable to and more comprehensive than those given to Moses, were revealed to the Prophet during the *Mi'raj*.

Part II:

from *What Islam Is*

by Maulana M. Manzoor Nomani

A) Piety

Piety forms part of the basic essentials of Islam. It means to observe the Divine Commandments, conscientiously and scrupulously, and to avoid all forbidden, wicked and shameful things, believing wholly and firmly in the great Requital of the Last Day and fearing God and His Wrath and punishment as a burnt child is supposed to dread the fire. In other words, it demands of us, on the one hand, to carry out thoroughly and well the duties prescribed by the Almighty and fulfill zealously the rights of men who have a claim on us according to the Divine law, and on the other, to refrain strictly from doing anything that has been prohibited to us by Him. It calls on us to make the fear of God our constant companion. Both in the Qur'an and the Traditions, a very great emphasis has been laid on piety and righteousness and it has been urged upon us most forcefully and persistently to cultivate it in ourselves.

B) Honesty in Monetary Dealings

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

The Qur'an as well as the Traditions of the Prophet (pbuh) are emphatic that a true Muslim is one who is honest and upright in business and other monetary transactions; keeps his word and fulfills his promises, shuns fraud and avoids deceit, encroaches not upon the rights of others and abstains from wrongful litigation, does not give false evidence and abstains from making dishonest money as from usury or graft. Whoever is not free from these vices is, according to the Qur'an and the Traditions, not a true Believer, but a renegade and a worthless transgressor.

In short, all manner of deceit and dishonesty in business is prohibited in Islam.

C) Social Conduct and Mutual Relations

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

man and man and between man and society, as laid down by it. Islam has provided us with a most precise and complete guidance on how are we to fulfill our social responsibilities and act in our dealings and relationships with all those individuals and groups with whom we come into contact, one way or the other, in the different walks of our daily life.

(i) Rights of parents: The most primary relationship in this world exists between man and his parents. In Islam, the rights of parents have been described as next only to the rights of God, as clearly stated in the Qur'an.

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

Besides the Qur'an, and in the Traditions, also, a very great stress has been laid on rendering full devotion and obedience to one's parents. To disobey one's parents, to ignore their feelings, or to disregard their comfort and happiness in any other way has been characterised by the Prophet a *grievous sin*.

(ii) Rights of children: Islam has laid an equal stress on the rights of children on parents also. Apart from the responsibility of parents to feed and clothe their children, the rights of our children about which we are generally careless and neglectful are concerning their moral and religious education and upbringing. Islam has made it binding on us, as a matter of duty, that our wards and children be brought up in such a way that they do not have to make their way to Hell after death.

Daughters are sometimes considered to be a burden. For this reason, Islam has devoted particular attention to the proper upbringing of girls and extolled it as an act of great virtue.

(iii) Mutual rights between husband and wife: Conjugal relationships occupy a place of outstanding importance in the economy of human affairs. Islam, therefore, has furnished a complete guidance in respect of it as well. In a nutshell, Islam demands from wives to be scrupulously faithful to their husbands and to remain their best friends and true well-wishers and never to betray their trusts.

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

In keeping with these teachings, the Prophet used to

attach profound importance to the harmony of married life among Muslims. He urged Muslim husbands and wives to keep each other happy and to attend to each other's needs and interest with loving care.

(iv) Rights of relatives: In the Qur'an, we are told to be kind to our kinsmen and whoever disregards and pays no heed to the bonds of kinship has been condemned as a transgressor and sinner of the worst order.

The holy Prophet (pbuh) has said: "If a near relative treats you indifferently and ignores the bond of relationship, do not turn your back on him but keep on discharging, on your part, the obligations of relationship towards him."

(v) Rights of the old on the young and of the young on the old: It is a general principle of Islamic social behaviour that everyone should respect his elders and carry himself with due deference, in their presence.

In the same way, those who are older are required to treat those who are younger to them with kindness and affection, even if there be no relationship between them.

(vi) Rights of neighbours: The Qur'an calls upon us to be good and courteous in our behaviour towards our neighbours in the same way as it has commanded us to maintain the best of conduct towards our parents, brothers and sisters and towards other near relatives.

A Tradition of the Prophet (pbuh) reads: "He shall not go to Heaven for whose mischief his neighbours do not feel secure."

(vii) Rights of the weak and poor: Islam has conferred certain special rights on the weaker and the poorer sections of society and on every kind of a needy person. It has been made the duty of all well-to-do people to look after their well-being and serve them in whatever way they can. The more prosperous among Muslims should realize that their less fortunate brethren, too, have a share in their wealth and other capabilities.

We cannot withhold our helping hand from anyone on the ground that he is not a co-religionist.

(viii) Rights of Muslims on each other: Further, there is a special claim of Muslims on each other which flows out of the common bond of Islam.

Says the Prophet (pbuh):

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

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

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

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

We will now close the present discussion on social relations and mutual rights and duties with the following Tradition which alone is enough to fill our hearts with fear.

The Prophet (pbuh) is reported one day to have put the question to the Companions. "Who is a pauper?" The Companions replied, "Our master! A pauper is a person who is without a penny of his own." The Prophet said, "No. A pauper among us is a man who will appear on the Day of Recompense with a large stock of prayers, fasting and almsgiving, but in the world he would have abused someone, slandered someone, beaten someone and cheated and transgressed against someone. When he will be made to stand at the Place of Reckoning, those against whom he would have been guilty of these transgressions will come forward and they will be given from his good deeds what will be due to them, till all the funds of his good deeds will be exhausted, and then, the sins of the aggrieved parties will be forced down upon him and he will, ultimately, be thrown into Hell."

Brothers, ponder over this Tradition and think how utterly ruinous and disastrous it is for us to encroach upon the rights of others and indulge in backbiting, slander or abuse. If you have transgressed against anyone or usurped his rights, make amends for it in your lifetime, pay back to him what may be his due or seek his

forgiveness, and resolve sincerely to be careful in the future, otherwise it is going to cost you very dear in the life to come.

D) Good Manners and Noble Qualities

Good manners and noble qualities of mind and character enjoy a place of crucial importance in the structure of Islamic teachings. Moral evolution and uplift was one of the main objects for which the sacred Prophet (pbuh) was raised up. The Prophet himself has said: "I have been sent down by God to teach moral virtues and to evolve them to highest perfection."

Importance An idea of the enormous importance Islam attaches to the cultivation of good manners and noble moral qualities can be obtained from the undermentioned two traditions by the Prophet (pbuh):

- (1) "The best of your are those who possess the best of manners."
- (2) "No sin is more detestable to God than bad manners."

Some More Important Virtues Although in the Qur'an and the Traditions we are taught to cultivate all good and noble moral and social qualities and to avoid everything that is mean or wicked, here we will take up only such virtues as are more important and without which no one can hope to be a good Muslim and a truthful Believer.

1) Truthfulness

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

Says the Prophet (pbuh): "He who wishes to love God and His Apostle, or wishes God and His Apostle to love him, must take care to speak nothing but the truth whenever he speaks."

2) Fulfilling Promises

It is also a part of truthfulness that when a promise is made, it should be fulfilled. The Qur'an and the Traditions are very clear on this point. Our faith demands of us never to go back on our pledged word.

3) Trustworthiness

Closely allied to truthfulness is the quality of trustworthiness. It is an important branch of it. Islam has laid a special emphasis on it also.

Here is a Tradition of the holy Prophet (pbuh) on this

point:

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

4) Justice

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

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

5) Compassion and Forgiveness

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

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

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

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

6) Tenderness

Tenderness in monetary dealings, and in all other fields of one's activity, and the readiness to oblige and put others at ease are all virtues of the highest order in the Islamic pattern of morality

7) Self Restraint

Tolerance, affability, self-restraint, and the ability to control one's temper and overlook what is unpleasant and disagreeable, are qualities that Islam wants everyone to

cultivate. Believers who possess these fine moral attributes hold a very high place in the estimation of God.

8) Gentleness of Speech

Gentleness of speech is a religious virtue in Islam and rudeness a sin. The Qur'an declares : "*Speak fair to the people.*"

We have it from the Prophet:

"To speak politely is piety and a kind of charity."

"To indulge in intemperate language and in harsh behaviour is to perpetuate an injustice and the house of injustice is Hell."

9) Humility

Humility is a virtue. Islam wants its followers to practice it as a distinguishing feature of their moral and spiritual proof of courage and firmness, for this is the Will of God for such occasions.

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

10) Courage and Fortitude

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

"For God loves those who are patient and persevering" (11:153).

The holy Prophet (pbuh) has said: "Patience is one half of Faith."

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

11) Sincerity

Sincerity is the life and soul of the entire moral edifice of Islam, nay, of Islam itself. By sincerity we mean that all

our deeds and actions should solely be for the sake of God and prompted by no other urge than to earn His countenance. Apart from it, there must be no other desire, motive or intention behind whatever we do.

Monotheism, which is the arch-stone of Islam, attains fulfillment through sincerity. Faith in Divine Unity remains imperfect unless all our acts are performed wholly for the sake of God, and we have no other objective before us while carrying them out except the winning of Divine pleasure and reward. States the Prophet (pbuh): "He who loves or hates, offers favours or withholds them, and whatever he does, does so for the sake of God, he perfects his faith."

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

Let me conclude, then, by reiterating and re-emphasizing the importance of sincerity by quoting another beautiful Tradition which gives a graphic description of what would really count on the Day of Judgment. It reads as follows:

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

The idea of the above tradition is that God will judge and requite solely on the basis of our motives and intentions."

12) Love of God, the Prophet and the Faith

It is also one of the fundamental teachings of Islam that we should hold God, the Prophet and the holy faith dearer to our hearts than anything else, may it be our parents, children, life, honour or property. In other words, what it means is that, should a time come when it may involve the risk of life, honour or property or of any other worldly thing or interest to abide by the faith of Islam and remain loyal to the injunctions of God and the Prophet, then we must not break away from God and the Prophet and the holy faith, irrespective of what the consequences may be.

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

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

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

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

It is, as such, one of the special teachings of Islam that we remember God much and often and keep our tongues fresh with recital of His Names, Praises and Attributes. It is an excellent and well-tried method for producing in our hearts His love and consciousness of His Greatness. It is natural for a man's heart to be filled with the love of anyone on whose splendour and excellence his mind dwells all the time.

Anyway, it is a fact that frequent remembrance kindles the flame of love and lends its strength to it, and so also that the life of complete loyalty and submission to God, which is the essence of Islam, can be possible only through Divine love. It is love alone that makes one the willing bondsman of another. As a Persian verse says:

"What is love?
Say: to be the beloved's bondsman."

Consequently, a very great stress has been laid in the Qur'an and by the Prophet on *zikr* (God-remembrance). The Qur'an says:

*"O ye who believe! celebrate the Praises of God, and do this often, and glorify him morning and evening."
"When ye pass (congregational) prayers,*

celebrate God's Praises standing, sitting down or lying down."

"For without doubt in the remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction."

13) Constancy

One of the special responsibilities a man owes to God once he has accepted the faith of Islam is that he remain firm and steadfast in faith at all times and in all circumstances. He is expected to uphold the Faith with all his courage and strength, however adverse the conditions may be. He should not prove disloyal to Islam in any event. He must not give it up. This is what is meant by 'Constancy of Faith'.

14) Preaching and Propagation

It is also of no mean importance that we strove honestly to guide the others, too, to the path of faith who are ignorant of it or who may be unwilling to adopt it on account of prejudice or spiritual malaise. As God has placed on us the duty of being his pious, devout and faithful servants, so behaviour. It does not become a Muslim to be haughty and vainglorious.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) has said:

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

"Beware of Pride! Pride was the sin which first of all ruined the Devil."

It needs, however, be remembered that it is demanded of us to practice meekness and humility in our personal matters and not in matters where truth or faith is involved. When it comes to faith or truth, we must be bold and outspoken and give the fullest also as he made it obligatory for us to work among His other creatures as well towards the same end, that is, towards making them also His pious, devout and faithful bondsmen. That is what is meant by the service of faith and its teaching and propagation.

15) *Jihad*

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

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

16) Martyrdom

In the special language of Islam, a person who meets his death in the cause of faith, either as a result of obeying its injunctions and carrying out its commands as a staunch and devoted follower or in the course of a struggle for its defence, is called a martyr. For such a man, there is a place of unparalleled honour and distinction in the Hereafter. His lot is truly divine. About the martyrs it is said in the Qur'an that they should not be thought of as dead; they are alive, a very special existence is conferred on them, and they are the recipients of boundless favours and blessings from their Lord: *"Think not of those who are slain in God's way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of their Lord"* (Al-Qur'an).

A tradition of the Prophet says: "To fall a martyr in the cause of God atones for everything except a debt."

And it should be remembered that the Divine reward and other wonderful favours promised on martyrdom are not dependent only on death occurring in the way of God. It is not, when a person is killed in the cause of God, that only then does he become entitled to them. Every loss or injury suffered, every pain and suffering undergone in the service of faith carries a bounteous reward. Any Believer who may be persecuted, punished, beaten, insulted or tortured for the sake of Allah will be rewarded most lavishly in the Hereafter.

After the termination of the line of Apostles, the responsibility for preaching and propagation of Faith and religious instruction and reform of mankind has fallen wholly upon the shoulders of the followers of the sacred Prophet. This honour indeed is unique.

Now, here is a Tradition with which we propose to round off the present discussion. About this Tradition, it is

reported that Abu Huraira often used to faint while he related it. It says:

"The first of those who will be called to account, on the Day of Resurrection, shall be the one who had learned the Qur'an by heart, and one who has been killed in the way of God and one who had an abundance of wealth. Then shall God say to him who had got the whole Qur'an by heart, 'Did I not teach thee what I revealed to My Prophet?' He will say, 'Yes, my Lord!' God will ask, 'And what has thou done with regard to what thou didst learn therein?' He will say, 'I was constantly at it in the hours of night and in the hours of day. I learnt it myself and taught it also to others, and I did it all for Thy sake alone.' God will say, 'Thou art a liar; thou didst only desire that men should say that such a one was a reciter of the Qur'an and that has been said already.'

"And the master of wealth shall be brought before God, and God shall say, 'Didst I not give thee an abundance of wealth so that thou wast not in want of anything?' He will say, 'Yes my Lord!' God will say, 'And what hast thou done with what I gave thee?' He will answer, 'I regarded the rights of kinship, and gave alms, and I did so for Thy sake'. God will say, 'Thou art a liar; thou didst desire that men should say that such a one was a generous man, and that has been said already.'

"Then shall he who had been killed in the way of God be brought before Him, and God will say to him, 'What was it that thou wast killed for?' He will reply, 'Thou didst bid us to do *Jihad* in Thy way, and I fought, and was killed.' God will say, 'Thou art a liar; thou didst desire that men should say that such a one was a valiant man, and that has been said already.'

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

Brothers. Now, let us examine our thoughts and deeds in the light of the above Tradition and see where do we stand in the sight of God!

O Allah! Endue our hearts with sincerity, and set right our motives and intentions, and make us Thy devoted, dedicated slaves.