

Fundamentals of Islam Part I

Iman

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KNOWLEDGE

THE FIRST STEP

Allah's Greatest Gift

Brothers in Islam! We all as Muslims sincerely believe that Islam is the greatest blessing that Allah has given us in this world. We find our hearts filled with gratitude to Him for including us in the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, and bestowing upon us this unique blessing. Allah Himself describes Islam as His most invaluable gift to His servants: 'Today I have perfected your Din way of life for you, and I have completed My blessing upon you, and I have willed that Islam be the Way for you' (al-Ma'idah 5: 3).

To be truly grateful for this greatest favour, you must therefore render to Allah His due. If you do not do so, you are undoubtedly an ungrateful person. And what ingratitude can be worse than to forget what you owe to your God.

How can we, you may ask, render these dues?

Since Allah has been gracious enough to include you in the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammed, blessings and peace be on him, the best way of showing gratitude-and there is no other way-is to become totally committed followers of the Prophet. And, since He has made you a part of the Muslim Ummah, to become true Muslims. If you do not, the punishment for your ingratitude will be as great as the original gift was. May Allah save us all from this great punishment! Amin.

You will now ask: How can we become Muslims in the true sense of the word? This question I shall answer in considerable detail in my forthcoming addresses; but today I want to look at a point of fundamental importance, without which we cannot hope to

discover true faith. This, you must understand, is the first essential step on your road to becoming a true Muslim.

Is Islam a Birthright?

But, first, think for a while: What does the word 'Muslim', which we all use so often, really mean? Can a person be a Muslim simply because he is the son or grandson of a Muslim? Is a Muslim born a Muslim just as a Hindu Brahman's son is a Brahman, or an Englishman's son is born an Englishman, or a white man's son is born a white man, or a Negro's son is born a Negro? Are 'Muslims' a race, a nationality or a caste? Do Muslims belong to the Muslim Ummah like Aryans belong to the Aryan race? And, just as a Japanese is a Japanese because he is born in Japan, is a Muslim similarly a Muslim by being born in a Muslim country?

Your answer to these questions will surely be: No. A Muslim does not become truly a Muslim simply because he is born a Muslim. A Muslim is not a Muslim because he belongs to any particular race; he is a Muslim because he follows Islam. If he renounces Islam, he ceases to be a Muslim. Any person, whether a Brahman or a Rajput, an Englishman or a Japanese, a white or a black, will, on accepting Islam, become a full member of the Muslim community; while a person born in a Muslim home may be expelled from the Muslim community if he gives up following Islam, even though he may be a descendant of the prophet, an Arab or Pathan.

Such will surely be your answer to my question. This establishes that the greatest gift of Allah which you enjoy-that of being a Muslim-is not something automatically inherited from your parents, which remains yours for life by right irrespective of your attitudes and behaviour. It is a gift which you must continually strive to deserve if you want to retain it; if you are indifferent to it, it may be taken away from you, God forbid.

No Mere Verbal Profession

You agree that we become Muslims only by accepting Islam. But what does acceptance of Islam mean? Does it mean that whoever makes a verbal profession-'I am a Muslim' or 'I have accepted Islam'-becomes a true Muslim? Or does it mean that, just as a Brahman worshipper may recite a few words of Sanskrit without understanding them, a man who utters some Arabic phrases without knowing their meaning becomes a Muslim? What reply will you give to this question? You cannot but answer that accepting Islam means that Muslims should consciously and deliberately accept what has been taught by the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, and act accordingly. People who do not so behave are not Muslims in the true sense.

No Islam Without Knowledge

Islam, therefore, consists, firstly, of knowledge and, secondly, of putting that knowledge into practice. A man can be white and have no knowledge; because he is born white he will remain so. Similarly, an Englishman will remain an Englishman though he may have no knowledge, because he has been born an Englishman. But no man becomes truly a Muslim without knowing the meaning of Islam, because he becomes a Muslim not through birth but through knowledge. Unless you come to know the basic and necessary teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, how can you believe in him, have faith in him, and how can you act according to what he taught? And if you do not have faith in him knowingly and consciously, as fully as you can, how can you become true Muslims?

Clearly it is impossible to become a Muslim and remain a Muslim in a state of ignorance. Being born in Muslim homes, bearing Muslim names, dressing like Muslims and calling yourselves Muslims is not enough to make you Muslims; true Muslims know what Islam stands for and believe in it with full consciousness.

The real difference between a Kafir (who does not accept God's guidance and is ungrateful to Him) and a Muslim is not that of a name, that one is called Smith or Ram Lal and the other Abdullah. No one is a Kafir or a Muslim simply because of his name. Nor does the real difference lie in the fact that one wears a necktie and the other a turban. The real difference is that of knowledge. A Kafir does not understand God's relationship to him and his relationship to God. As he does not know the will of God he cannot know the right path to follow in his life. If a Muslim, too, grows up ignorant of God's will, what ground can there be to continue calling him a Muslim rather than a Kafir?

Dangers of Ignorance

Listen carefully, brothers, to the point I am making. It is essential to understand that to remain in possession of, or to be deprived of, the greatest gift of Allah-for which you are so overwhelmed with gratitude-depends primarily on knowledge. Without knowledge, you cannot truly receive His gift of Islam. If your knowledge is so little that you receive only a small portion of it, then you will constantly run the risk of losing even that part of the magnificent gift which you have received unless you remain vigilant in your fight against ignorance.

A person who is totally unaware of the difference between Islam and Kufr (rejection of God's guidance and ingratitude) and the incongruity between Islam and Shirk (taking gods besides God) is like someone walking along a track in complete darkness. Most likely his steps will wander aside or on to another path without him being aware of what is happening. Maybe he will be deceived by the sweet words of the Devil, 'You have lost your way in the darkness. Come, let me lead you to your destination. The poor traveler, not being able to see with his own eyes which is the right path, will grasp the Devil's hand and be led astray. He faces these dangers because he himself does not possess any light and is, therefore, unable to observe the road signs. If he had light, he would neither lose his way nor be led astray.

This example shows that your greatest danger lies in your ignorance of Islamic teachings and in your unawareness of what the Qur'an teaches and what guidance has been given by the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him. But if you are blessed with the light of knowledge you will be able to see plainly the clear path of Islam at every step of your lives. You will also be able to identify and avoid the false paths of Kufr, Shirk and immorality which may cross it. And, whenever a false guide meets you on the way, a few words with him will quickly establish that he is not a guide who should be followed.

Acquire Knowledge:

Brothers! On this knowledge, whose absolute necessity I stress once again, depends whether you and your children are true Muslim and remain true Muslims. It is, therefore, hardly a trivial matter to be neglected. You do not neglect cultivating your land, irrigating and protecting your crops, supplying fodder to your cattle or doing whatever else is essential to the well-being of your trades and professions. Because you know that if you do you will starve to death and so lose the precious gift of life. Why then should you be negligent in acquiring that knowledge on which depends whether you become Muslims and remain Muslims? Does such negligence not entail the danger of losing an even more precious gift—Your Iman (faith)? Is not Iman more precious than life itself? Most of your time and labour is spent on things which sustain your physical existence in this life. Why can you not spend even a tenth part of your time and energy on things which are necessary to protect your Iman, which only can sustain your being in the present life and in the life to come?

I am not asking you to become scholars, read voluminous books or spend a large part of your lives in the pursuit of knowledge. It is not necessary to study so extensively to become a Muslim. I only want each one of you to spend about one hour of the twenty-four hours of the day and night in acquiring the knowledge of his Din, the way of life, the Islam.

Every one of you, young or old, man or woman, should at least acquire sufficient knowledge to enable him to understand the essence of the teachings of the Qur'an and the purpose for which it has been sent down. You should also be able to understand clearly the mission which the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, came into this world to fulfil. You should also recognize the corrupt order and system which he came to destroy. You should acquaint yourselves, too, with the way of life which Allah has ordained for Muslims.

No great amount of time is required to acquire this simple knowledge. If you value Iman, it cannot be too difficult to find one hour every day to devote to this.

BETWEEN ISLAM AND KUFR

Muslims or Kafirs?

Brothers in Islam! Every Muslim believes, as you too must surely believe, that Muslims are different from Kafirs; that God likes Muslims and dislikes Kafirs; that Muslims will find God's forgiveness, while Kafirs will not; that Muslims will go to Heaven (Jannah) and Kafirs to Hell (Jahannum). I want you to consider why there should be so much difference between Muslims and Kafirs.

Kafirs are as much offspring of Adam and Eve as you. They are human beings like yourselves. They possess hands, feet, eyes and ears. They breathe the same air as you, drink the same water and inhabit the same land. The God who created you also created them. So why should they be ranked lower and you higher? Why should you go to Heaven and why should they be cast into Hell?

Consider carefully. Such a vital difference between man and man cannot be simply due to the fact that you have names like Abdullah and Abdur Rahman and they have names like Kartar Singh, Smith and Robertson, or that you are circumcised and they are not, or that you eat meat and they avoid it, or that they eat pork and you do not. Allah, who has created all human beings and who is the Sustainer of all, cannot be so unjust as to decide on such petty grounds which of His creatures to send to Heaven and which to Hell.

Where, then, does the real difference lie between Muslims and Kafirs? The answer is that it lies, simply, in the very nature of Islam and Kufr. The meaning of Islam is submission to God while the meaning of Kufr is denial and disobedience of God. Muslims and Kafirs are both human beings; both are slaves of God. But one becomes exalted and meritorious by reason of recognizing his Master, obeying His orders and fearing the consequences of disobeying Him; while the other disgraces himself by failing to recognize his Master and carry out His orders. This is why Allah is pleased with Muslims and displeased with unbelievers. That is why He promises true Muslims that they will be rewarded with Heaven and warns unbelievers that they will be cast into Hell.

Knowledge and Actions

The two things which separate Muslims and Kafirs are, therefore, knowledge and actions. That is, you must first know who your Master is, what His orders are, how to follow His wishes, which deeds please Him and which displease Him. When these things are known, the second step is to make yourselves true slaves of your Master by giving up your own wishes in deference to what He desires.

If your heart desires to do a certain act and your Master's order is against it, you should carry out that order. If something seems good to you but your Master says

that it is bad, you must accept it as bad. And if something else seems bad but your Master says it is good, then you must accept it as good. If you think a certain action will be harmful but your Master says that it must be done, then done, then done it must indeed be, even though it may entail you in loss of life or property. Similarly, if you expect to benefit from a certain action but your Master forbids it, you must refrain from it even though it might have brought all the worldly treasures.

This is the knowledge and actions by which Muslims become true servants of Allah, on whom He bestows His mercy and whom He rewards with honour and dignity. Conversely, Kafirs, since they do not possess this knowledge, are Allah's disobedient slaves and are denied His blessings.

Now, in all fairness, tell me: if you call yourselves Muslims but in fact are as ignorant and disobedient as a Kafir, can you in reality be superior to the latter merely on the strength of bearing different names, wearing different clothes and eating different foods? Can you on this basis be entitled to the blessings of God in this world and in the Hereafter? Islam is not a race or family in which membership is automatically passed on from father to son. A high caste priest's son will not command respect in the eyes of God, if he does wrong deeds, just because he is born into a priestly home; nor will He look down on the son of a low caste family, disregarding his good deeds, simply because of his birth.

On this point God has explicitly stated in His Book: 'Indeed the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing of you' (Al-Hujurat 49: 13). That is, the more you know God and the more you obey His commandments, the more honourable you are in His sight, Ibrahim was into the home of an idolator, but he came to know God and obeyed Him. That is why God made him Imam (leader) of the whole world. The son of Nuh was born into a prophet's home but he did not understand God and disobeyed Him. Despite his high family connection, God so punished him that the punishment became an object lesson for the world.

Understand, therefore, thoroughly that whatever differences there are in the sight of Allah between man and man depend entirely on the state of their knowledge and actions. Both in this world and the Hereafter, God's blessing is reserved for those who recognize Him, accept the right path shown by Him, and carry out His commandments. Those who do not do these things, whether their names are Abdullah and Abdur Rahman or Kartar Singh, Smith or Robertson, are identical in the sight of God. They are unworthy of His blessings.

Why Are Muslims Humiliated Today?

Brothers! You call yourselves Muslims and you believe that Allah showers His blessings on Muslims. But open your eyes and see if those blessings are in fact descending on you? You cannot know what will happen to you in the Hereafter until after your physical death, but you can most certainly look around you and see your condition here on earth.

There are so many hundreds of millions of you in the world that if each of you were to throw a single pebble they would make a mountain. But even though there are so many Muslims and Muslim governments, the world is in the hands of those who have rebelled against God. Your necks are in their grip, to be turned to whichever side they like; your heads, which should not bow before anybody except Allah, are now bowed before human beings. Your honour, which no one dared to touch, is now being trampled upon. Your hands, which were once always held high, are now lowered and stretched out before your enemies. Ignorance, dependence, poverty and indebtedness have subjected you to ignominy everywhere.

Is this the blessing of Allah? If it is not—but rather a sign of anger—then how strange it is that it is Muslims on whom it is descending! You are Muslims and yet are wallowing in ignominy! You are Muslims and yet are slaves! This situation is impossible as it is for an object to be white and black. If Muslims are the loved ones of God, how can they be treated disgracefully? Is your God (God forbid) so unjust that—while you, for your part, acknowledge His due and obey His orders—He allows the disobedient to rule over you, and punishes you for your obedience to Him?

If it is an article of faith with you that God is not unjust and obedience to God can never result in disgrace, then you will have to concede that there is something wrong in your claim to be Muslims. Although you may be registered as Muslims on your birth certificates, Allah does not base His judgments on what is written on pieces of paper. God prepares his own list of obedient and disobedient servants, and it is in this list that you must search to find your true position.

Allah sent you His Book so that you may know Him and learn how to obey Him. Have you ever tried to discover what is written in it? Allah sent His Prophet to teach you how to become Muslims. Have you ever tried to find out what His Prophet has taught? Allah explicitly informed you which behaviour debases man in this world and the Hereafter. Do you avoid such behaviour? What answers do you have to these questions? If you admit that you have neither sought knowledge from God's Book and His Prophet's life nor followed the way shown by him, then how can you claim to be Muslims and to merit His reward? The rewards you are getting now are in direct relation to how good Muslims you are; and your rewards in the Hereafter will be calculated on the same basis.

We have already seen that the only difference between Muslims and Kafirs is in the matter of knowledge and actions. Men who call themselves Muslims but whose knowledge and actions are the same as those of Kafirs are guilty of blatant hypocrisy. Kafirs do not read the Qur'an and do not know what is written in it. If so-called Muslims are equally ignorant, why should they be called Muslims? Kafirs do not know the teachings of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and the straight path he has shown to reach God. If Muslims? Kafirs follow their own desires instead of the commands of Allah. If Muslims are similarly willful and undisciplined, setting their own ideas and opinions on a pedestal, indifferent to God and a slave to lust, what rights have they to call themselves Muslims? Kafirs do not distinguish between Halal (what is

permitted by Allah) and Haram (what is prohibited by Allah) and make indiscriminate use of everything and anything, irrespective of whether it is Halal or Haram. If Muslims behave the same as non-Muslims, what difference is there between them and Kafirs?

Put simply: If Muslims are as devoid of knowledge about Islam as Kafirs, and if a Muslim does all those things which a Kafir does, why should he be considered superior to a Kafir and why should his fate not be the same as that of a Kafir? This is a question on which we must all reflect very seriously.

My dear brothers! Do not for a moment think that I am trying to brand Muslims as Kafirs. This is not my purpose at all. I ask myself, and implore each one of you similarly to ask his own heart, as to why we are being denied the blessing of God. Why are tribulations of all sorts descending upon us from all sides? Why are we disunited and shedding each Other's blood? Why are those whom we call Kafirs (that is, the disobedient slaves of God) everywhere dominating of us? And why are we, who claim to be His obedient slaves, living in servitude in so many parts of the world?

The more I have reflected on the reason for this situation, the more I have become convinced that almost the only difference now left between us and Kafirs is that of mere name; for we in no way lag behind them in neglect of God, in being devoid of fear of Him and in being disobedient to Him.

I say 'almost' because there is, of course, a difference between us: we know that

The Qur'an is the Book of God, while Kafirs do not, yet we treat it as a Kafir treats it. And this makes us all the more deserving of punishment. We know that Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, is the Prophet of Allah and yet we are as unwilling as a Kafir to follow him. We know that God has cursed liars, has positively declared Hell as the abode of all who give and take bribes, has denounced those who borrow and lend at interest as the worst of sinners, has condemned slander as being as bad as eating a brother's flesh, and has warned that obscene behaviour, pornography and debauchery will meet with the severest punishment. Yet despite knowing all this we freely indulge in all these vices as if we had absolutely no fear of God's displeasure.

This is why we are not rewarded: we are Muslims in appearance only. The fact that those who do not accept God's sovereignty rule over us and subject us to ignominy on every possible occasion shows that we are being punished for ignoring Islam –God's greatest gift to us.

Dear brothers! Nothing I have said today is intended as blame. I have not come to censure. My aim is to kindle to desire in you to recover a treasure that has been lost. Such a desire arises when a man realizes exactly what he has lost and how valuable it was. I have spoken sharp and pungent words only to awaken you and compel you to think.

Desire for Knowledge

To become a real Muslim, as I said, the foremost requisite is knowledge of Islam.

Every Muslim ought to know the teaching of the Qur'an, which ways were shown by the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, what Islam, is and what those things are which really differentiate Islam from Kufr. Nobody can be Muslim without this knowledge. The pity is that you show no desire to acquire this knowledge. This indicates that still you do not realize what a great gift you are being deprived of.

My brothers! A mother does not give milk to her child until he cries and demands it. When a man feels thirsty and he searches for water, God brings him to it. If you yourselves are not conscious of your thirst it will be useless if even a well brimming with water appears before you. You must first understand what a great loss you are suffering by remaining ignorant of Islam. The Book of God is with you but you do not know what is written in it. You do not even know the meaning of the kalimah (La ilaha illa'llah Muhammadu 'r-rasulu 'llah (There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is Allah's Messenger), by reciting which you enter Islam; nor do you appreciate what responsibilities devolve on you after reciting this Kalimah. Can there be a greater loss than this for a Muslim?

You know the damage caused if crops are burnt; you know the suffering which results from failure to earn a livelihood; you know the harm resulting from loss of property. But you do not know the loss of being ignorant of Islam. When you understand the nature of this loss, you will yourselves come and ask to be spared it. And when you make this request then, insha'allah, means will be available to restore this greatest of gifts to you.

HOW MUSLIMS TREAT THE QUR'AN

Brothers in Islam! Muslims are the only people in the world today fortunate enough to possess the word of God preserved in its original form, free from all distortions, and precisely in the wording in which it was sent down upon the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him. Paradoxically, these same Muslims suffer the misfortune of being denied the countless blessings and benefits which the word of God must give to those who believe in it. The Qur'an was sent to them for them to read it, understand it, act upon it, and, with its help, establish on God's earth the rule of His law. The Qur'an came to grant them dignity and power. It came to make them true vicegerents of God on earth. And history shows that whenever they acted according to its guidance, it did make them the leaders of the world.

Irreverence and Misuse

But now the Qur'an's usefulness, for many Muslims, consists only in keeping it in their houses to drive away jinns and ghosts, in writing its verses on amulets to hang round their necks or washing those amulets with water and then drinking it, or in reading its contents without comprehending their meaning in the hope of receiving some reward. No longer do they seek guidance from it for their lives. No longer do they ask it to tell them what should be their beliefs, morals and actions, nor how they should conduct transactions, what principles they should observe while dealing with enemies and friends, what the rights are of their fellow beings and of their own selves. Nor do they

turn to it to find what is true and what is false, whom they should obey and whom disobey, who their friends are and who their enemies, where honour, well-being and benefit are to be found and where disgrace, failure and loss.

We Muslims have given up looking for answers to these important questions in the Qur'an. Instead, we now ask Kafirs, idolators, misguided, selfish people, even our own ego and desires—and follow what they advise. What invariably happens to those who ignore Allah and follow the precepts of other has happened to us too. We are reaping only what we have shown everywhere in the world—in Palestine, the Middle East, Pakistan, Indonesia and many other places.

The Qur'an is the source of every good: it will give whatever and as much as you ask from it. If you seek from it such trivial, frivolous and spurious things as how to scare away jinns and ghosts, how to cure coughs and fevers, how to succeed in litigation and find a job—then you may get them, but only them. If you seek supremacy on earth and the power to rule the world you may get that too. And if you wish to reach near God's Throne ('Arsh), the Qur'an will take you there. If you receive only a few drops from the ocean, do not blame the Qur'an, blame yourselves. For the whole ocean is there waiting for him who knows how to take it.

Incomprehensible Contradictions

The cruel jokes, brothers, which we Muslims play with the Holy Book of Allah, are so inane that if we saw someone else doing such things in any other sphere of life, we would mock them and even brand them as lunatics.

Tell me, what would you say if somebody got a doctor's prescription and hung it round his neck after wrapping it in a piece of cloth or washed it in water and drank it? Would you not laugh at him and call him a fool? Yet this is the very treatment being given before your eyes to the matchless prescription written by the greatest of all doctors to provide a cure for all your ailments—and nobody laughs! No one even reflects that a prescription is not meant to be hung round the neck nor are its words to be washed in water and drunk.

Tell me, what would you think if some one who was ill picked up a book on medicine and began to read it, believing, thinking that this would cure him? Would you not say that he was deranged? Yet this is how we treat the Book which the supreme Healer has sent for the cure of our diseases. We think that just by flicking through all its pages, our diseases will disappear without our following the directions given in them or abstaining from the things which they pronounced harmful. Are we not in the same situation as the man who considers that reading a book on medicine will cure his illness?

If you receive a business letter in a language you do not know, you go to a man who knows the language to find out what it says. You remain anxious and restless until you

have found out what the letter says, even though it will bring only some partly worldly profit. But the letter sent to you by the Lord of the worlds which can bring you all the benefits of this—world and the Eternal Life is carelessly set aside. You do not show any uneasiness at not understanding its contents. Is this you astonishing?

I am not trying to make you laugh. Reflect for a while on these facts and your hearts will tell you that the greatest possible injustice is being done to the Book of Allah. Ironically, the culprits are the very people who proclaim their faith in it and proclaim their readiness to sacrifice their lives for it. No doubt they do have faith in it and love it more than their lives, but the pity is that it is they, more than anyone else, who treat it outrageously. And the consequences of such treatment are quite plain to see.

The Consequences

Understand fully that Allah's word does not come to bring misery, disgrace and suffering to man. 'We have not sent down the Qur'an upon you that you be wretched' (Ta Ha 20: 1—2). On the contrary, the Qur'an is the source of happiness and success. It is impossible for a people to possess God's word and yet suffer disgrace and ignominy, live under subjugation, be trampled on and kicked around, and carry the yoke of slavery on their necks, being led by the nose like animals. A people meet this fate only when they do injustice to the word of God.

Look at the fate of the Israelities. They were given the Tawrah and Injil, were told:

Had they established the Torah and Gospel and what was sent down to them by their Lord, they would surely have partaken of all blessings from above them [heaven] and beneath their feet [earth] (al-Ma'idah 5: 66).

But they adopted a wrong attitude towards these Books of Allah, and reaped the consequences:

An ignominy and helplessness were laid upon them, and they were laden with the burden of God's anger. That, because they used to disbelieve God's messages and slay the Prophets against all right; that, because they disobeyed and were transgressors (al-Baqarah 2: 61).

If people possess Allah's Book and still live in disgrace and subjugation, they are surely being punished for doing injustice to Allah's word. The only way to save yourselves from Allah's anger is to turn back from this grave sin and start trying to render His Book its due. Until you do, your condition will never change—even if you open colleges in each and every village, all your children graduate from universities, and you amass millions through unscrupulous means.

No Islam without Submitting To the Qur'an

Brothers! Two most important things every Muslim must know to do justice to the Book of God: who is truly a Muslim and what the world 'Muslim' means.

Human beings who do not know what humanity is and what the difference is between man and animal will inevitably indulge in behaviour unworthy of the human race and attach no value to being human. Similarly, people who do not know the true meaning of being Muslims and how a Muslim is different from a non-Muslim will behave like non-Muslims and will not be worthy of being Muslims.

Every Muslim, adult or child, should therefore know what it means to be a Muslim, what difference being a Muslim must make to his life, what responsibilities devolve on him, and what limits are set by Islam within which a man remains a Muslim and by transgressing which he ceases to be a Muslim.

Islam means submission and obedience to God. To entrust yourselves completely to God is Islam. To relinquish all claims to absolute freedom and independence and to follow God's will in Islam. To surrender your selves before the sovereignty of God is Islam. If you bring all the affairs of your lives under God you are Muslims and if you keep any of the affairs in your own hands or entrust them to someone other than God you are not Muslims.

To bring your affairs under God means to accept unreservedly the guidance sent by God through His Book and His Messengers. It, therefore, becomes necessary to follow only the Qur'an and Prophet's sunnah. Muslims follow no authority other than that of God, whether it be their reason or customs. In every matter they seek guidance from God's Book and His Messenger to find what they should do not what they should not do. They accept without hesitation whatever guidance they get from there and reject whatever they find opposed to it.

Such total surrender to God is what makes one a Muslim. By contrast, people are certainly not Muslims who, instead of following the Qur'an and the Sunnah, obey the dictates of their own reason and desires, follow the practices of their own reason and desires, follow the practices of their forefathers, accept what is happening in society, and never bother to ascertain from the Qur'an and Sunnah how to run their affairs, or refuse to accept the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah by saying: 'They do not appeal to my reason', or 'They are against the ways of my forefathers' or 'The world is moving in an opposite direction'. Such people are liars if they call themselves Muslims.

The moment you recite the Kalimah: 'La ilaha illa'llah Muhammadu' r-rasulu' llah', you accept that the only law you recognize is the law of God, only God is your sovereign, only God is your ruler, only God you will obey, and only the things given in God's Book and by His Messengers are true and right. It means that as soon as you become Muslims you must renounce your authority in favour of God's authority.

Consequently, you have no right to say, 'My opinion is this, the prevalent custom is

this, the family tradition is this, that scholar and that holy person say this'. In the face of Allah's word and His Messenger's Sunnah, you cannot argue in this manner. You should judge everything in the light of the Qur'an and Sunnah; accept what is in conformity with them and reject what runs counter to them, irrespective of the people who may be behind them. It is a contradiction in terms to call yourselves Muslims on the one hand, and, on the other, follow your own opinions or the customs of society or some person's words or actions as against the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Just as a blind person cannot claim to have eyes, nor a deaf person to have ears, so a person who refuses to subordinate the affairs of his life to the dictates of the Qur'an and the Sunnah cannot call himself a Muslim.

No one who does not want to be a Muslim can be compelled to be one against his will. You are free to adopt any religion you like and call yourselves by any names you like. But, once having called yourselves Muslims, you must fully understand that you can remain Muslims only as long as you stay within the bounds of Islam. These bounds are: to accept the word of God and His Messenger's Sunnah as the ultimate criteria of truth and justice and to consider everything opposed to them as wrong. If you remain within these bounds you are Muslims, but if you overstep them you cease to be part of Islam. To continue, in such circumstances, to consider yourselves and call yourselves Muslims is tantamount to both self-deception of others. 'Whose judges not according to what God has sent down, they are the unbelievers' (al-Ma'idah 5: 44).

TRUE MEANING OF IMAN

Difference the Kalimah Creates

Brothers in Islam! You become Muslims by reciting a few words called the Kalimah:

La ilaha illa 'Ilah Muhammadu 'r-rasulu 'Ilah

There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

On pronouncing these words a man is supposed to have radically changed. He was Kafir, now he is a Muslim; he was impure, now he is pure. He deserved Allah's displeasure; now he deserves to be loved by Him. He was going into Hell; now the gates of Heaven are open for him.

On a more concrete level, in social life, this Kalimah becomes the basis for differentiating one man from another. Those who recite it constitute one nation, while those who reject it form another. If a father recites it but his son refuses to, the father is no longer the same father, nor the son the same son. The son will not inherit anything from the father, his mother and sisters may even observe purdah from him. On the other hand, if a total stranger recites the Kalimah and marries into a Muslim family, he and his children become eligible for inheritance.

The power of the Kalimah is thus so strong that it takes precedence even over blood ties; it can join strangers together into a nation; it can cut members of the same family off from each other.

Is Mere Utterance Enough?

Why should the Kalimah make such a big difference between man and man? What is so special about it? After all, it contains only a few letters like 'L', 'A', 'I', 'M', 'R' and 'S'. Joined together and pronounced, do they somehow have the power to work magic so as to radically change a man? Can merely saying a few words create such an enormous difference?

Brothers! A little reasoning will immediately tell you that merely opening your mouths and uttering a few syllables can never have such an impact. Idol worshippers no doubt believe that by reciting some formula of holy words mountains can be moved, earth can be split and fountains can gush out of it, even though they do not know its meaning. This is because they ascribe supernatural powers to letters, and believe that only uttering them is necessary to make their powers work.

This is not so in Islam. The effectiveness of words lies in their meaning. If they do not penetrate deep into your hearts and have an impact powerful enough to effect a change in your thoughts, in your morals, and in your actions, then their utterance is meaningless and ineffectual.

A simple example will illustrate this point. Suppose you are shivering in cold weather and you start shouting, 'cotton, quilt! Cotton, quilt' The effect of cold will not be any less even if you repeat these words all night a million times on beads or a rosary. But if you prepare a quilt stuffed with cotton and cover your body with it, the cold will stop. Or suppose you feel thirsty and shout the whole day, 'water, water'; your thirst will not be quenched. What you need to do is to get some water and take a mouthful. Or again, suppose you are suffering from cold and fever and you decide the best remedy is to chant the name of medicines used to cure these illnesses. You will not get better; but if you actually take these medicines, cold and fever will disappear, insha'allah.

This is exactly the position of the Kalimah. Mere utterance of six or seven words cannot conceivably transform a Kafir into a Muslim, or an impure person into a pure one, or a damned person into a favoured one, nor can it send a man to Paradise instead of Hell. This transformation is possible only after you have understood the meaning of these words and made it penetrate your hearts and change your lives.

So, when you recite these words, you should be conscious what an important commitment you are making to your God, with the whole world as your witness, and what a great responsibility you are taking on as a result of your commitment. Once you have made the affirmation consciously, the Kalimah must inform all your thoughts

and reign supreme in your whole lives: no idea contrary to it should form part of your mental furniture. Whatever runs counter to the Kalimah alone true. After affirming this Kalimah you are not at liberty, as are the unbelievers, to do as you like. You have to follow what it prescribes and renounce what it forbids.

If you recite the Kalimah in this manner, only then can you become true Muslims, only then is created that overwhelming difference between man and man that we have just been discussing.

Meaning of the Kalimah

What, let me tell now, is the meaning of the Kalimah. What do you in fact pledge through it?

The literal meaning of the Kalimah is simple: there is no God but Allah; and Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, is the Messenger of Allah.

Covenant with Allah

The word 'ilah' found in the Kalimah means God. Only that being can be our God who is the Master, Creator, Nourisher and Sustainer, who listens to our prayers and grants them, and who alone is worthy of our worship and obedience.

Saying La ilaha illa 'Ilah means two things. First, you have acknowledged that the world has neither come into being without a God nor has many gods. God is there; He alone is God, and there is no other being except Him which possess divinity. Second, you have accepted that this same God is your Lord and Master as well as of the whole universe. You yourselves, and each and every thing that you have or is found in the world, belong to Him alone. He is the Creator and the Provider. Life and death are under His command. Both trouble and comfort come from Him. Whatever one receives is really given by Him; whatever is taken away is taken away by His command. He alone should be feared. From Him alone should we ask any and everything. Before Him alone should we bow our heads. He alone is worthy of worship and service. We are slaves or servants of nobody save Him, nor is anyone else our Master or Sovereign. Our duty is to obey Him abide by His laws---and His alone.

This is the covenant which you make with Allah as soon as you recite La ilaha illa 'Ilah, and while so doing you make the whole world your witness.

If you violate this covenant, your hands and feet, and tiniest hair on your bodies and every particle on earth and in the heavens, all that witnessed you breaking your pledge, will testify against you in God's court. You will find yourselves in such a hopeless position that not a single witness will be found to aid you. No barrister or trial lawyers will be there to plead your case in fact barrister and trial lawyers who in the courts of this world are themselves all too often guilty of bending the law to their

own ends, will themselves be standing there, like you, in the same hopeless position. That court will not acquit you on the basis of forceful pleading, false witnesses, or forged documents. You can hide your crimes from the police in this world, but not from God's police. The police here may be bribed, but not there. A witness in this world can give false evidence, but not Allah's witness. The judges of this world can do injustices, but God can never be unjust. And there is no escape from the jail to which Allah sends the guilty.

It is a great folly—the greatest of all follies—to enter into a false covenant with Allah. Before making the covenant, think it through thoroughly and then scrupulously adhere to it. You are under no compulsion to give a mere verbal pledge; but empty words shall not profit you.

Accepting the Prophet's Leadership

After *La ilaha illa 'llah*, you recite *Muhammadu 'r-rasulu 'llah* (Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). This means that you accept Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, as the man through whom Allah has sent you His guidance. If we acknowledge Allah as Master and Sovereign, it is essential to know what His will is. What deeds should we perform that would please Him and what deeds should we refrain from that would displease Him? What laws should we follow to receive His forgiveness and avoid His punishment? To explain all this to us, God appointed Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, as His Messenger; for this very purpose through him He sent His Book.

The Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, having lived according to God's guidance, showed us the way we should lead our lives. So, when you say *Muhammadu 'r-rasulu 'llah*, you pledge to follow the way and law given by him and to reject anything which runs counter to it. If, after making this pledge, you abandon the code of life brought by the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him, and follow different and conflicting law, however widely they may be accepted, there can hardly be any worse liars and more dishonest people than you.

For you enter Islam only by solemnly affirming that you accept the code of life brought by him as the only true law and that you will faithfully follow it. It is on the basis of this affirmation that you become brothers unto Muslims, become eligible for inheritance from your Muslim fathers; on the same basis you were married to Muslim women, your children became legitimate and you secured the right to ask Muslims to help you, to give you alms and to be responsible for the protection of your lives, property, honour and dignity. Nothing can be more dishonest if, in spite of all this, you break your pledge.

If you make the pledge of *La ilaha illa 'llah Muhammadu 'r-rasulu 'llah* with a full understanding of its meaning. Then it is inconceivable that you will not comply with the laws of God even though no police or court forcing you to do so is visible in this

world. To anybody who thinks that it is easy to break the laws of God because God's police, army, court and jail are unseen, and that it is difficult to break earthly laws because of the undoubted presence of the police, army, court and jails of the Government, I would clearly say: Your affirmation of La ilaha illa 'llah Muhammadu 'r-rasulu 'llah is simply not truthful. You are trying to deceive your God, the whole world, all Muslims, and your own selves.

Obligations of Commitment

Brothers and friends! Now that we know the meaning of this Kalimah I wish to draw your attention to the obligations that result from it.

What does it mean to say that Allah is the Master of everything? It means that your lives are not your property; they belong to God. Your hands are not yours, nor do your eyes, your ears or any limb of your bodies belong to you. The lands you plough, the animals who work for you, the wealth and goods you derive benefit from—none of these is your own. Each and every thing belongs to god, and has been given to you as a gift.

You, therefore, have no basis whatsoever to make claims like 'life is mine, the body is mine, wealth is mine'. It is absurd to claim ownership after having accepted some other being as the real owner. If you sincerely believe that god is the Owner of all these things, then two things automatically follow.

First, since God is the real owner and you are merely trustees of things owned by Him, you must use these things strictly as He has told you, If you do otherwise, you are abusing your trusteeship; this would amount to cheating God. You have no right to move your hands and feet against His wish, nor to make your eyes see what He dislikes. You may not stomach anything contrary to His command. You possess no right over lands and properties against the wish of the Master. Your wives and children, whom you assume belong to you, are yours only because they have been given to you by your Master. Even they, therefore, must be treated not as you desire but as directed by Him. If you contravene His directions, you make yourselves usurpers. Just as you call people dishonest who seize other people's belongings, you, too, will be dishonest if you look on the gifts of God as your own property, and utilize them according to your own wishes or according to the wishes of someone other than God.

If you suffer hardship by acting according to the wish of your Master, so be it. If lives are lost, bodies are injured, families are broken or money and property destroyed in the process, why should you be grieved? If the Owner Himself decrees loss of His things, it is perfectly within His right. Of course, if you act against the wish of the Master and suffer hardship, you will undoubtedly be guilty because you will have damaged His property. For example: you do not own your lives. If you give away your lives according to your Master's wishes you will only be rendering His due. Giving your

lives while working against Him, however, would be criminal.

Second, you do no favour to your Master nor to anyone else, if you spend something given by Him in His cause. You may give away anything, do any duty, or even sacrifice your lives—which to you are very dear—but you are not doing Him a favour. The most you have done is to have rendered His due for His favour done to you. Is this an achievement to boast about, to demand acclaim for? Should people be praised just because they have repaid a favour? Remember that a true Muslim never gets puffed up for spending something in his Master's cause or for doing his duty to Him. On the contrary, he remains humble. Boasting and pride destroy good acts. Anyone who seeks praise, or does good work in order to earn praise, loses his right to receive any reward from God: 'He has sought reward in this world and has already received it here'.

Our Behaviour

Brothers! Imagine the extraordinary kindness shown you by your master! He asks you for things which really belong to Him and yet promises that it is a purchase He will pay you for. What unbounded generosity this is! 'God has brought from the believers their lives and their possessions in return for Paradise' (al-Tawbah 9: 111).

Such is the kindness of your Master. Now look at your conduct. You re-sell things to others which were given to you by your Master and which He had bought back from you. And what a paltry price you accept for your precious things! The 'buyers' make you work against the wishes of the Master. You serve them as if they are your sustainers. You sell your brains and your bodies—indeed, everything that these rebels of God want to buy. Can anything be more immoral than this? To sell a thing already sold is a legal and moral crime, even in this world. Those guilty of such crimes are tried in courts for cheating and fraud. Do you think you will escape trial in the court of God?

WHY IS THE KALIMAH UNIQUE?

Brothers in Islam! Let us consider further the meaning and essential implications of the Kalimah; for it is the very foundation of Islam. Believe it and you enter Islam on its strength; understand it fully and mould your lives in accordance with it and you become true Muslims. Without it you can neither enter nor remain in Islam.

The Parable

Allah calls it Kalimah Tayyibah, a good, pure and wholesome 'word', and thus defines it:

Are you not aware how God sets forth the parable of kalimah tayyibah? It is like a good tree—firmly rooted, its branches reaching into heaven. It gives its fruits every

moment by the permission of its Lord. So God sets forth parables unto men that they may bethink themselves. And the parable of kalimah khabithah (evil word) is like a corrupt tree—uprooted from the earth, having no permanence. God grants firmness unto those who have believed in the firm word, in the present life and in the world to come, and wrongdoers He lets go astray, for God does whatever He wills (Ibrahim 14: 24---7).

Kalimah Tayyibah is here likened to a noble tree, whose roots are firmly fixed in the earth and whose branches reach to the sky; and all the while it continues to yield abundant fruit, as commanded by its Lord. Set against it is the kalimah Khabithah, that is, an evil or corrupt word, a false belief and a baseless saying, which may be likened to a self-seeded plant growing in poor, shallow earth and easily plucked out with a single pull because its roots have no firm base.

So striking and beautiful is the parable that the more you reflect on it the more you will come to absorb the lessons that can be learnt from it.

Two Kinds of Trees

Consider examples of the two kinds of trees.

Look at an oak tree. How firmly it is rooted, to what great height it reaches, how extensively its branches spread, what fine foliage it bears! How did this tree acquire such strength and magnificence? From the nature of its fruit, the acorn. Its seed has an inherent right to become a great tree. And this right was so self-evident that when it made its claim, the earth, the water, the air, the warm day and the cool night, in fact, all the elements concerned, acknowledged it, and whatever it demanded from them was given to it.

Thus by merit it developed into a great tree; by yielding beneficial fruit and by the nobility of its dimensions it continued to demonstrate that it deserved to become a tree of mighty stature and that the help given it by the combined forces of earth and heaven was totally justified. More! It was the duty of the elements to give such help because the power that is possessed by the earth, water and air and other elements to nourish, develop and mature trees is precisely meant for the purpose of helping trees of noble species.

But what about wild, self-seeded plants? Where are their strengths and virtues? Their roots are so shallow they can be pulled up by child. They are so weak they wither away in the wind. If you touch them you may well be picked by thorns. If you taste them they may well be bitter and harmful. God, only, knows how many of these sprout every day, and wither away. Why are they as they are? The reason is that they do not possess the intrinsic right to grow that the acorn does and which allows the growth of the mighty oak.

When there are no trees of noble species to grow, the earth, which by its nature cannot remain fallow, tolerates the growth of shrubs and weeds. Water does give nourishment, and some energy is supplied by the air, but none of the elements accepts the right of existence of these plants as they do of the oak. That is why neither the earth allows their roots to spread themselves within itself, nor is water willing wholeheartedly to give nourishment, nor is the air inclined to help them flourish. So when, with this poor subsistence, these plants grow unhealthy, tasting bad, often bearing thorns and poisonous fruits, it is conclusively demonstrated that earth and heaven are not created to help the growth of such plants.

Keep these two examples before you and then think over the difference between the Kalimah Tayyibah and kalimah khabithah.

Characteristics of the Kalimah Tayyibah

Kalimah Tayyibah is a true 'word'; so true that there cannot possibly be anything truer in the entire world; that the God of the whole universe is Allah alone. Each and every thing on earth and in heaven bears witness to this. Human beings, animals, trees, stones, particles of sand, flowing streams, the bright sun---is there a single thing out of all these which has been created by anybody but Allah, which can survive through anyone's care and sustenance but Allah's, which can be destroyed by anybody but Allah?

The whole universe has been created by Allah and its life and sustenance depend on His mercy; Allah alone is its Master and Ruler. So when you declare: 'In this world godhood and sovereignty belong to none but the One God', everything on earth and in heaven cries out: 'You have told the truth. We all bear witness to it'. When you bow before Him, everything in the universe bows with you because all things are obedient to Him. When you obey His commandments, everything in the universe does likewise. When you walk along His path, you are walk along His path, you are not alone. In fact, the countless hosts of heaven and earth will be with you: from the sun in the sky to the smallest particle of dust, everything is following the path He has laid down. When you trust Him, you are not putting your trust in some insignificant power but in that greatest power which is the Master of the universe.

All the forces of earth and heaven, you can now understand, will support anyone who has faith in the Kalimah Tayyibah and moulds his life in accordance with it. He will grow and prosper throughout his life with it. He will grow and prosper throughout his life on earth and on into the world to come. Not for a single moment will failure or defeat touch him. This is exactly what Allah has stated in the Ayah quoted in the beginning: this Kalimah is like a tree whose roots are firmly embedded in the earth and whose branches are spread over the heavens bearing fruit perpetually, by the command of Allah.

Characteristics of the Kalimah Khabithah

In contrast to this, what does *kalimah khabithah* mean? Only that either there is no God or that there is someone else in addition to Him exercising Divine power. Just think! Can there be a more false and empty proposition? Is there anything in the world which lends credence to it? The atheist says there is no God, but everything on earth and in heaven denounces him as wrong: 'Together with all of us, you have been created by God, this very God has given you the tongue with which to utter this falsehood.' The idolator says that there are partners in His Divine powers; they too provide sustenance, they too have power over things; they too can determine our fates; they too can benefit or harm us; they too can listen to prayers and grant wishes; they too deserve to be feared and trusted; their will too runs on God's earth and their commands and laws too should be obeyed alongside those of God. Yet everything on earth and in heaven refutes this claim as an absolute lie and totally against reality.

Now consider how a person who believes in such a false proposition and leads a life in conformity with it can ever prosper in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah has, in His mercy, allowed them freedom for a certain duration and promised them sustenance. The elements of nature will, therefore, provide nourishment to them for a while, but they will not concede it as their right. They will be like the self-seeded shrubs and weeds I have just spoken of.

Contrasting Results

The same contrast is to be found between their fruits. *Kalimah Tayyibah* produces sweet fruits: it establishes peace in the world. Goodness, truth and justice predominate and people benefit accordingly. But what branches can you grow from an evil root like the *kalimah khabithah*? The more it grows the more it shoots out thorny branches; poison runs in its very arteries. And what fruit can grow on such branches as these? Only such as are continually bitter and poisonous.

See with your own eyes what is happening in the world where *Kufr*, idolatry or secularism prevail: man is bent on destruction of his fellow beings. Preparations for war are constantly being made. Nuclear weapons and poisonous gases are being manufactured. Nations are set on destroying each other. The powerful subjugate the weak simply to snatch away their bread. The weak are cowed by the armies and police and threats of jail and execution. They can find no escape from the oppression of the strong.

And what of individuals? Their morals are so depraved that even Satan would be ashamed. Human beings are committing acts which even animals would hesitate to do. The rich suck the blood of the poor through exploitation and usury and force the poor to work as if they were slaves born just to serve them. Human dignity and rights are being trampled upon. Abortion is rife because people do not want their physical pleasures to be interrupted. Even wife swapping is practiced.

Little wonder whenever a plant has grown anywhere from this *kalimah khabithah*, it is full of thorns, and whatever fruit it produces is bitter and poisonous.

After giving the two parables, Allah says:

Thus God grants firmness unto those who have believed in the firm word in the present life and in the world to come, and the wrongdoers He lets go astray (Ibrahim 14: 27).

Thus Allah will grant strength and endurance in this world and in the Hereafter to those who have faith in the *Kalimah Tayyibah*. Conversely, He will set at naught all the endeavours of those wrongdoers who put their faith in the *kalimah khabithah*. They will not do anything good which will bear fruit in this world, or the next.

Why Are Believers in the *Kalimah* Not Flourishing?

You have heard, brothers, the difference between the *Kalimah Tayyibah* and the *kalimah khabithah* and their results. You will now surely ask: We believe in the *Kalimah Tayyibah*. Then how is it that we do not flourish and why are the unbelievers prospering?

I should answer this question, and I shall. But, rather than just becoming angry at my words, look into your hearts to see if I am speaking the truth.

In the first place, your claim that you believe in the *Kalimah* is not true. Believing in the *Kalimah* does not consist in its mere utterance. It must be rooted in the heart, it must drive out any belief opposed to it, it should make any actions in contravention of it well-nigh impossible.

Tell me, brothers, in the name of God, is this true of you? Are not hundreds of idolatrous and polytheistic beliefs prevalent among you – ideas totally opposed to the *Kalimah Tayyibah*? Are not the heads of Muslims being bowed before objects other than God? Are not Muslims afraid of forces other than Him? Do they not take others as their providers? Do they not sometimes put the laws of God aside and follow other laws instead without any qualms? Do they not sometimes openly state in the courts that they do not abide by the *Shari'ah* but by custom and usage? Are there not people among us who do not hesitate to violate the law of God for the sake of trifling material benefit? Are there not those who dread the anger of unbelievers but not the wrath of God? And those who are ready to go to any lengths to curry the favour of *Kafirs* but are unwilling to do anything to secure God's favour? And those who take the supremacy of *Kafirs* to be real but the rule of God as imaginary?

Tell me, for the sake of God, if all this is not fact? And if it is, what justification have you complaining that you are not prospering despite believing in the *Kalimah Tayyibah*? First you should become true believers in the *Kalimah Tayyibah*, and model

your lives on the pattern it lays down. If even then your lives do not become like trees which have firm and deep roots in the earth and which spread their luxuriant branches up to sky, then (I crave Allah's pardon) you may consider your God a liar for having made you false promises.

Are Followers of the Kalimah Khabithah Prospering?

Again, your contention that believers in the *kalimah khabithah* are prospering in this world is not correct. In the true sense, these people have never before prospered nor are they prospering now. You judge by their excessive wealth, their abundance of luxury goods and their outward trappings of splendour. Material prosperity is not real prosperity. Let their inner selves speak: how many of them have peace of mind? They are laden with luxury but their hearts are fiery furnaces which keep them anxious and restless. How has disobedience to the law of God turned homes into hell? How rampant is suicide in Europe and America? How widespread is divorce? How, through genocide, birth control and absorptions, is the human race being diminished? How are drugs and alcohol destroying the lives of many thousands of people? What a terrible struggle for markets and economic prosperity is raging among different nations and classes? How are jealousy, malice and enmity making men fight each other? How has the mad race for possessions made life bitter for so many people? And today's huge and magnificent cities, which look like paradise from a distance, contain thousands and thousands of people who are wallowing in misery. Do you call this prosperity? Is this what you are seeking so enviously?

Remember, my brothers, that the word of God can never be untrue. There is no Kalimah except the Kalimah Tayyibah by following which man may achieve glory in this-world and happiness in the world-to-come. Seek as you will, you will never be able to find any fault with it.

WHY BELIEVE IN THE KALIMAH?

Brothers in Islam! Why should we believe in the Kalimah, what benefits shall accrue to us by it? Let us try to find an answer to this important question.

Whatever work we do is done with some purpose or some benefit in view. We never do anything without some objective, goal or need. Why do you drink water? Because it quenches your thirst. If you were to discover that drinking water failed to quench your thirst, you would not waste your time doing it the next time you were thirsty. Why do you eat food? Simply because you want to satisfy your hunger and keep your strength to live. If it made no difference whether you ate food or not, you would naturally feel that it was a useless activity. Why do you take medicine when you are ill? Because you want to get rid of your illness and regain your health. But you soon stop taking medicines which do not work. Why do you work so hard cultivating land? So that crops, fruits and vegetables may be produced. But if nothing grew after you had sown the seeds, you would not again exert yourselves to plough the field, to sow the seed and water the ground.

Thus, whatever work you undertake always has an end in view. If the end is achieved, you consider the work fruitful, and if not, you say it was pointless.

Success in the Hereafter

Bearing this in mind, let us now ask: Why should the Kalimah be recited? The obvious answer is : to draw a distinction between a Kafir and a Muslim. But what is the nature of this distinction? Does it mean that if a Kafir has two eyes, a Muslim will have four? Or that if a Kafir has one head, a Muslim will have two? You will say: No. It does not mean that; it means that there should be a difference between the end result of a Muslim's life and a Kafir's life. The end result of a Kafir's life is failure: he will be deprived of God's mercy in that-world, in the Hereafter, and be totally wretched; while that of a Muslim's is success: he will win the pleasure of God and be happy and honoured there.

This-world and That-world

Your answer is correct. But now tell me: What is the nature of that-world? And, what is the meaning of being a failure in the Hereafter? What does it mean to be successful and honoured there?

We need not delay ourselves working out the answer to the first question, for it has already been given by the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him: 'This-world is the cultivating ground of the Hereafter'.

This-world and the Hereafter are not two separate entities, but a continuous process. This process begins in this-world and ends in the Hereafter. The relationship between the two is the same as that between cultivation and crop. You plough the land, sow the seeds, irrigate and tend field till such time as the crop is ready. When you have reaped the harvest, you feed yourselves it throughout the year.

You will naturally reap whatever you have sown in the land. If nothing is sown, nothing will grow. Whatever mistakes and errors you make in the course of ploughing, sowing irrigating and tending your fields, the effect will become apparent at the time of reaping the crop. But if you have carried out all the necessary preparations properly, you will get your reward at the time of reaping.

This is exactly the position in respect of this-world and that-world. This-world is like ground to be tilled. Man has been sent into this field for the purpose of raising a crop for himself by his own efforts and hard work. He has been allotted specific time---from birth till death---to do this task. Whatever type of crop he sows will be reaped in his life beyond the grave, and that produce will be the mainstay of his life in the Hereafter.

If you have sown good seed in the field of this-world throughout your lives and have

nourished it with water and careful supervision, you will find the fruits of your labours ready in the next life in the shape of beautiful gardens. You will be able to live happily on the fruits of the garden you have cultivated so assiduously throughout your earthly lives; you will not need to do any further hard work. This is Paradise, this is the success, the state of gratification in the Hereafter.

In contrast to this, if you sow thorns and grow bitter and poisonous plants during your lives on earth, you will reap a similar crop in the next life. You will not be given a second chance to grow a good crop and will have no choice but to sustain yourselves on the bad crop. You will have to lie on the bed of thorns which you have nurtured, and eat

The bitter, poisonous fruits you have grown. This is what is meant by being wretched and unsuccessful in the Hereafter.

Success in That-world

The same meaning of the Hereafter as I have described is given in the Qur'an and the Hadith. This shows that the success or failure of a man in the life after death depends on whether his knowledge and actions have been correct during his life on earth.

From the above it follows that the difference between Muslims and Kafirs in the Hereafter is determined by the difference which existed between them in the patterns of their lives on earth. Unless there is a difference between the knowledge and actions of a Muslim and Kafir in this-world there can be no difference between their ultimate states in the Hereafter. It is impossible that the knowledge and actions of a Muslim be the same as those of a Kafir without his suffering the fate that is destined for a Kafir.

True Purpose of the Kalimah

You said earlier that the purpose of reciting the Kalimah was to differentiate between the end results of a Kafir and a Muslim. Now, having discussed further the nature of the end result and of the Hereafter, we will have to rephrase your answer. Now you will have to say that the purpose of reciting the Kalimah is to set right man's knowledge and actions here in this-world so that ultimately he attains happiness in that-world. This Kalimah teaches us to plant that garden whose fruits we will pick in the Hereafter. If we do not believe in the Kalimah how can we plant the garden and from where will we pick its fruits in the Hereafter? And if we merely utter the words of the Kalimah without it correcting our knowledge and if our actions too remain the same as if we had not uttered it.

Would you, then, not agree that it is pointless to utter the Kalimah without letting it change our thoughts and deeds? There is no reason why our fates in this case should be different from those of Kafirs. We do not put God under any obligation by merely uttering the Kalimah. If we do not learn how to plant a garden, and instead sow

thorns all our lives, we cannot expect to inherit a flourishing garden with fruits in the next world. Several examples are before you to show that it is meaningless to do something if an identical outcome would result if you had done nothing. Medicine is not medicine if a patient's condition remains the same after using it. In the same way, if a Kalimah reciter's knowledge and actions remain the same as those of a non-reciter, such a recital is meaningless. If no difference exists between the lives of Kafirs and Muslims on earth, how can there be any difference between their lives in the Hereafter?

What Does the Kalimah Teach Us?

What, then, is the nature of the knowledge which the Kalimah Tayyibah imparts to us? And what difference takes place between the actions of a Muslim and a Kafir after acquiring this knowledge?

One: Submission to Allah. The first thing that you learn from this Kalimah is that you are slaves of Allah, and of Allah alone. Fully understand this profound truth, and you will be automatically led to the realization that, in this world, you must live according to the will be tantamount to rebellion against your Master.

Two: Obedience to the Prophet. The second thing that you learn from the Kalimah is that Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, is the Messenger of Allah. Having learnt this, it immediately becomes self-evident that, to grow flowers and fruits in this world instead of thorns and poisonous plants, you have to plant your gardens as he has taught you. If you follow his way, you will reap a fine harvest in the Hereafter; but if you act against his way, you will grow thorns in this world and reap only thorns in the Hereafter.

Actions Must Accord With Knowledge

When you have acquired this knowledge it is essential that your actions should be in conformity with it. If you believe that you have to die one day, that after death there is another life, and that in that life you will have to sustain yourselves solely on that crop which you produced in this world before leaving it, then it is scarcely possible for you to deviate from the path shown by the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him. Why do you cultivate your fields in this world? Simply because no crops will grow unless you do and that without a crop you will die of starvation. If you have not been certain of this, if you had thought that a crop could grow without cultivation, or that you could satisfy your hunger without crops, you would never have laboured to cultivate the fields. In other words, your actions accorded with your knowledge.

Judge your position with respect to the Kalimah in like manner. You assert that you accept God as your Master and the Muhammad, blessings and peace be on him, as Gods's Messenger. You also affirm belief in life after death. Why should, then, your actions run counter to Quranic teachings and the Prophet's Sunnah? Such undoubtedly

is the result of weak faith. If you really have faith that your fate in the Hereafter depends on your behaviour in this life, you would never risk being negligent in living as God wills you to live. Only someone who does not really believe that what he is sowing will produce thorns and that these thorns will cause him harm would do such a thing. You never pick up embers in your hand knowingly because you know that they will burn you. Only children put their hands in the fire because they do not know what will happen.

Fundamentals of Islam

ISLAM

Part II

By
Maulana Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi

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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 your 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 came to us to turn us form 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 imaging 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 if 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 day, 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 essentials 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 beings 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 o trace of brotherhood and fraternity between , but in reality we

observer 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 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 you 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 consist merely in bowing (ruku), prostration (sujud), Fasting (swan) and Pilgrimage (Hajj); nor is it 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 yours 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 server 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 in need of taxes from you, nor does He require building mansions, buying 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 not 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 of 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 cans 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 you're 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 t serves 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 you 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 tell you not to eat a certain thing because to 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 trail 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 tell 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 He 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 win 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 reserves 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 server 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 no to the Shari'ah. The meaning of the Shari'ah is 'why' and 'path'. You enter Din when you accept God as you 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 them 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: 'Whosoever 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-Dharyat 51:56).

This establish 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 if 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 hide this by always being present at the appointed hours of audience and losing no chance to sign his praises. If any of 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 behaves 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 beards, 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 earnings 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.