

In The Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Preface

This brief survey of the Islamic concepts and fundamentals has been written on the suggestion of my esteemed friend and brother in Islam H.E. Sayyed Yusuf Hashim Al-Rifai of Kuwait. He felt that there was need for a booklet written in English dealing with the substance of Islamic concepts and fundamentals, leaving out their procedural details. This being only a brief introductory survey, it would lead the seeker after more knowledge to acquaint himself with more details separately. I saw several such booklets written in Arabic, which he had got printed and was making available to the public free of charge. I concurred in the noble idea of making something of similar size on Islam available in English free of charge, and wrote out this brief survey during the short period of my stay in Kuwait. I hope and pray it will serve the purpose in view.

S.Mohammed Jamil.

INTRODUCTION

All praise is due to Allah the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe who fully knows the inner-most and hidden thoughts and motives in the hearts of all and who created mankind so that they might know and purposefully obey Him (1) and thereby develop their personality and gain benefits from His celestial light. The details of this purposeful obedience and understanding are spread out in the Holy Quran. The basic foundation of all the directions and guidance is the proclamation and the need of understanding the fundamental unity and supreme oneness of the Almighty Creator and the necessity of single minded and complete devotion and submission to His August presence unmixed with the association of any person or thing with His most High Personality in the exercise of His Omnipotent and Omniscient will or as an object of worship in any form whatsoever.

(1) “I created the Jinn and humankind only that they might worship me”

Surat 51 (Adh-Dhariyat) Verses 56.

The basic overt manifestation of man's devotion to his Creator lies in the Salat, which comprehends and comprises the active devotion and submission of all parts of his body and soul. The elementary and basic understanding of Allah is gained through this prayerful communion and the knowledge of the contents of the Holy Quran and practical compliance with the directions contained therein. Allah has directed in the Holy Quran that people should approach and learn from the people who have understanding and that verily those who have understanding and those who have not are not equal. The Holy Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has stated that man should run after knowledge (of Allah's truths) even if he has to proceed therefore to distant places like China. The Holy Prophet, (peace be upon him) has also proclaimed that it is not correct for the ignorant to rest contented with his ignorance nor for the possessor of knowledge to rest contented with the amount of knowledge already gained. Therefore, the search for correct and basic knowledge and more knowledge regarding one's Creator and His objectives and regarding one's own beginning and destination and the correct manner of one's journey onwards is both edifying and an active expression of devotion to Allah, for it is through this effort that man attains understanding of his Creator and Sustainer.

Before we go into some detail of the various aspects and requirements of Islam, it seems desirable to give a brief definition of Islam and the background of its basic concepts.

Literally and substantially, Islam means surrender to and submissive communion with the Almighty Creator of this earth and of the entire universe that is a surrender in all phases of life to the direction of the Almighty Creator.

Fundamentally Islam proceeds on the factual basis that nothing in the world is an accident but everything is designed and governed by laws in every detail. Neither the earth nor the moon nor any other stars nor their movements in absolutely set directions and speeds are accidents. The life in infinite variety of forms, and in millions of species of animal and plant life, everyone of the species being complete in itself in design and provision for its maintenance and reproduction – all these are not accidents but are all subject to laws, and form part of an infinitely vast coordinated set of universes created and controlled by one Supreme Authority, Designer, Sustainer and Creator.

It would be evident that only that which has life can give life. Only one who has unlimited power to see, to speak, to hear, to think, to make and unmake, to discriminate between good and evil, to have emotions of love, justice, generosity, etc. can give these capacities to human beings and to other species; and the wisdom, knowledge and powers of the Creator of this unlimited variety of coordinated

creation must be and are unlimited. He is omniscient and omnipotent.

This living and creating and sustaining authority may be called by the name Allah, Elahi or other names, but necessarily he must be one and not a billion, or a million or a thousand or ten or three creators; but one and only one the self sufficient, omnipotent creator and sustainer Allah.

Another cardinal principle of Islam is the high role allotted to man both inherently and in his dynamic capacity as the representative of the Creator on this earth, and the concomitant fundamental principle that all the human creation of what ever race, color or country, are all equal individually, socially and in the eyes of the Creator. The only difference which Islam admits and proclaims in one arising out of the individual member being good or evil, and the measure of his obedience or disobedience, loyalty or

disloyalty to the Creator. Otherwise all human beings wherever they may be and whatever be their race, color, language or country are equal in every way, socially as well as individually.

Man has according to Islam, has been created on a very high pedestal as the agent and viceregent of the Creator and he has been given this life for the development of his personality in the

circumstances in which he may be placed from time to time and therein to bring out the best in himself. He has been given the will to move, to think and to act, and as a dutiful person he has to exercise his discretion within the limits of the regulations indicated. Everything in this world has been created for him, and he has been directed to utilize them to the best advantage in accordance with the laws and principles enunciated.

He has also been provided with the best of the physical equipment, both in his own person and in the surrounding environment of infinite variety, composition and beauty.

Every single item of this environment is a complete entity with all its objectives and methodology, and man is to develop his personality, physical, intellectual and spiritual by looking at them, exploring them, understanding them, working with them, and on them, tracing their interdependence and relationship with the Almighty Creator.

Bereft of this fundamental attitude and spiritual and cultural understanding, man gets lost in the mere exploration of the environment and of its utilization for his personal ends, and in the so called materialism which inevitably leads to a topsy-turvy condition of deep social conflicts, anarchy, and destruction of all real culture. Indifference to the Creator and His laws, and non-submission to

them is tantamount to their denial with all its consequences, direct and indirect.

Man starts with a clear slate, which he either decorates or disfigures by his actions and attitude of life. He does not start as a condemned individual but is placed on a high pedestal with rich equipage around.

For man's guidance in the great work of the development of his personality, the Almighty Creator has from the outset, been sending prophets in various regions and groups of people. When the world tolerably developed its means of communications, a universal set of regulations for the guidance of man was afforded, and it was ensured that this universal set of regulations for human guidance remains immune from alterations and interpolations. The Quran is the only book in the world which from the very beginning of revelations has been read daily and regularly by the faithful in the daily five-times prayers and is memorized by hundreds of thousands of people in more than fifty countries of the world, both Arabic and non-Arabic speaking.

The details of the regulations and principles adumbrated in the Quran were actually worked out by the universal Prophet in practical life in full to act as a beacon light and model to mankind in the various phases and branches of human life, personal, family, social

and political. Islam thus specifically proclaims that while the Almighty Creator provided an almost unlimited variety of articles to man for his physical existence in the matter of food, clothing, housing, transport, medicines etc., He has similarly provided means for man's cultural and spiritual existence and development by guidance delivered to mankind through His Prophets who are no more than human beings except that they act as the recipients of a light for transmission to the people around through their pure model life as human being. This light received through the prophets is called revelation and, after the introduction on a considerable scale of the art of writing, was in the circumstances of the case, reduced to writing. These writings in the course of time got mutilated or lost, and Prophets followed each other from time to time to renovate the guidance sent to mankind. And lastly, as indicated above, a universal set of regulations was sent through the last of the prophets, Muhammad, in the form of a permanent and complete book, covering every phase of life. But this prophet also was a creation of the Lord and a human being though of course hallowed by being the recipient and transmitter both by precept and example of the universal light of mankind for all time to come.

A corollary to the cardinal principle of the development of his personality by man is the fact that every individual person is responsible and answerable for his actions, good and bad, and that justice must in the end prevail. Islam specifically insists on the idea

of personal responsibility of every individual for his actions, good and bad, and on the transcendental view of life in which full justice for his actions good and bad will be afforded. Without this factual personal responsibility of every individual for his actions and the administration of justice on the basis of that responsibility, and with man, the supreme creation on this earth living a life of personal whims and irresponsibility, the creation of this earth, with all the infinite and wonderful equipment around would be reduced to a mockery and purposelessness instead of the factual and inevitably high purposefulness of this mightily organized Universe.

The idea of the atonement of the sins of mankind by the sacrifice furnished by an individual however great, is repugnant to the idea of responsibility and development of personality started above, and is therefore unacceptable.

With the above background of Islamic concepts we come to the fundamental Islamic concepts themselves. They are dealt with briefly in the form of questions and answers for convenience of reference by the casual reader.

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS OF ISALM

Question: What are the fundamental priorities for a Muslim to know?

Answer: There are three fundamental priorities for every person to know. (a) his Creator, (b) the tentes of his religion, and (c) the prophet through whom the message of his Creator was received and who showed the factual interpretation thereof through the practical working of the laws in all branches of life.

Question: What is the standard acceptable religion?

Answer: It comprises faith, firm and pure, in the Almighty Creator, free from doubt or pollution by association of others with Him and total submission to, and compliance with the divine laws revealed to

the Prophets for transmission to mankind, and this is called Islam. There is, and there can be, only one true religion.(1)

Anything other than the true religion can only be deviations or distortions and is therefore necessarily unacceptable. Any person following a way of life other than Islam would be the loser in the hereafter.

In this connection it is necessary to state that Islam makes no difference between the religion of the clergy and the religion of the laity, the religion for the Brahman and the religion for the Sudra, the religion of the monk and the religion of the Industrialist, businessman or the administrator, or the military; the religion

(1) (i) Religion with Allah is Islam (surrender to His will)

(Surat 3, Al-i -imran Verse19)

(ii) And whoso seeketh as religion other than Islam (Surrender to Allah) it will not be accepted from him, and he will be a loser in the hereafter.

(Surat 3 Al-i-imranVerse 85)

of a particular nation or geographical unit and for the religion or religions for the rest. It has already been stated that Islam does not brook any differentiat-ion between peoples of different colors, races or countries. Not only in words but also in actual practice it has

never permitted any such distinctions at any time or any place. What is here being brought out is that the religion and discipline of life is the same within the different classes of people as well, e.g. clergy or laity, monks or people engaged in the ordinary pursuits of life. In Islam there is no enforced celibacy or renunciation or restrictions or exalted condemnatory position for any class of people. The law and the discipline, the permissible and the non-permissible is the same for everybody and for members of all the nations of the world. If that were not so, it would not be the standard, it would not be the universal, it would not be the divine religion meant equally for all human life. Such distinctions are but another form of the obnoxious caste system which through sacred scriptures has subsisted until theoretically scrapped by man-made law but is still operative in some parts of the world.

Question: What are the characteristics of a Muslim? Answer: A Muslim is one who lives a life of submission to Allah's commandments in a full and proper manner and who does not cause injury or anxieties to anyone and particularly to fellow Muslims through his tongue or hands, deceitful actions or envy.

Question: What are the fundamentals of Iman (faith)?

Answer: The fundamentals of Iman are (a) sincere and authentic vouchsafing by heart of faith in Allah and His prophet and

commandments. (b) clear declaration thereof by the tongue and (c) an unequivocal determination to comply with the revealed injunctions and prescriptions. The component parts of Iman of faith are embodied in the following Kalimah :

(I do believe in Allah, in His angels, in the revealed Books, in the Prophets, in the day of Resurrection and Judgment and the determination of good and bad, resting in the hands of Allah the Most High, and in there being a resurrection of life after death).

Question: What are the fundamental tenets of Islam?

Answer: There are five fundamental tenets of Islam, namely:

- 1) An unqualified assertion that there is no creator, sustainer or power except Allah; and that Mohammed is His Prophet and the transmitter to mankind of His message.
- 2) Proper and due performance of the prescribed Salat.
- 3) Due payment of the Zakat.
- 4) Due observation of fasting in the month of Ramadhan.
- 5) And the performance of Haj by all those who are capable of doing so.

Question: What is the meaning and implication of “La ilaha illallah?”

Answer: The meaning and implication of the Kalimah “La ilaha illallah” is that there is no authority worthy of being worshipped or

regarded as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe or having any inherent powers except the Almighty Allah. The implications of La Ilaha Illallah are indicated in the following Kalimah:

(There is no authority worthy of being worshipped or regarded as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe or having any inherent powers except Allah. He is alone; He has no associate of any description, to Him belongs all sovereignty and to Him go all praises; He it is who is the Giver and Taker of life; all good of whatever description lies in His hands and He has power to do everything.)

A further authoritative indication of the implication of “La illaha illallah” is given in the holy verse:

Thee only do we worship and from Thee alone do we seek help.
(1).

Question: What are the Angels?

Answer: Angels are celestial spiritual creations of Allah who are invisible to human beings and who are Allah’s unseen agents in the universe. They do not eat or drink or sleep in the manner that we know, and they constantly keep in close touch with the Almighty Allah through thikr and complete submission and never for a moment deviate from His commandments.

(1) Surat 1, Al-Fatihah, Verse 4.

Question: What are the Holy Books sent as revelations by Allah?

Answer: Allah has sent revelations through His Prophets from the very beginning, but most of them have been completely lost or got mutilated through lapse of time. The Holy Quran has specifically mentioned three books previously revealed viz., the Tawrah, the Zaboor and the Ingeel, and has referred generally to other books e.g.

Suhuf Ibrahim. These books were revealed or addressed to different groups of people living in the respective regions. When the means of communication and the art of writing had developed sufficiently, a book for universal guidance of mankind was revealed to the last of prophets, Prophet Mohammed, (Sallalloho Alaihe wa Sallam.) This universal book for the all time guidance of mankind, viz, the Quran, was made by Almighty Allah immune from manipulations, mutilations, or alterations through the divine arrangement of the memorization of every word and line of it from the very beginning of Islam, and through its recitation by every member of the faithful community in their prescribed five time daily prayers. Thus the Holy Quran is the only extant Holy book, every word of which is fully authentic and exactly as revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) and is thus secure from any manipulations. There are hundreds of thousands of Muslims spread out in the various countries of the world who can recite the whole book as revealed to the Holy Prophet, word by word: The written

form of the book with every letter of the words enumerated and checked up is kept in every Muslim household in various parts of the world in the same script and this is in addition to the factual memorization and continual recitation of it in the five-time daily prayers. The authenticity of the Holy Quran as coming down to us and revealed to the Holy Prophet is thus beyond question and would remain so far all the time to come. The inimitability of any portion of the text of the Holy Quran has been a standing challenge and is by itself among others a proof of its divine origin.

Question: Who are the Rusul (Prophets) in whom the Muslims must believe?

Answer: The number of Allah's prophets in the various countries of the world and at various times from the earliest, is not known to us and is necessarily very large. The

Holy Quran has specifically stated that Allah has given the name of a few only of the prominent prophets and has not mentioned the bulk of them. The fact that all true religion in the world has been essentially one and the same, has also been categorically stated in the Quran and the basic common concepts if this religion have been clearly enumerated therein. The development of details from time to time does not affect the essential unity of the message revealed from time to time. The disappearance or mutilation of those messages with the lapse of time, has been one of the main causes

of successive revelations through prophets, one after another, until the revelation of the final message for universal guidance of mankind through the last of the prophets, Prophet Mohammed (Sallallahu Alaihe wa Sallam) and the vouchsafing of the authenticity of the message for all time rendered the sending of any further prophets and books unnecessary.

Question: What is the idea of predestination and fate in Islam?

Answer: The position of predestination and fate in Islam is that Almighty and All-knowing Allah has complete knowledge of what is going to happen in future and how it is going to happen. At the same time He has given full freedom to man to select his way of life including his reactions to the changing conditions and circumstances in which he is placed for the testing and development of his personality. The personality of a man is made or unmade not by the results produced in the world outside himself but by the manner of the exercise of his will and his choice in the selection of alternatives, good or bad both being open to him. If his choice and the exercise of his will is good i.e. in accordance with the standards and regulations set by his Creator, his personality develops and moves towards strength and purity. What is going to happen in the future as a result of the diverse factors around is known to and determined by only his Creator, but man is responsible for the choice which he makes between obedience and disobedience of directions. Man's knowledge or belief that no good can come and no harm can be

prevented without the knowledge or will of Allah and his consequent desire and determination not to deviate from the orders and standards of conduct set and prescribed by Allah is the making of his personality and is his responsibility. The knowledge and belief that no harm can come and nothing can happen without the determination of Allah has been the most potent factor for infusing bravery among Muslims and their standing firm in the face of tremendous odds and even in the face of certain death. Man's action in the reverse direction viz., acting without faith and in an unprincipled vacillating manner is the unmaking and destruction of his personality for which he would receive punishment unless he realizes his mistakes in time and prays for forgiveness. Allah's knowledge of what line of action a particular man will take is a different matter altogether and cannot be put as an excuse for his evil actions or for injury to, or destruction of his personality.

Question: a) What is the day of Judgment and b) What is the necessity therefore?

Answer: a) Life in this world is essentially a test life to enable man as a vice-regent of Allah to bring out the best in himself in the different and changing circumstances of his existence here. The ultimate results of this test life are to be given after it is over, not only for the individual but also for the society in which he leads his essentially dynamic existence. The day on which the Judgment on the individual of mankind will be accorded is called the day of

Judgment and is the basic idea of Islam preached by all the previous prophets and finally and deeply underlined by the last of them, Prophet Mohammed (Sallallahu Allaihe Wa Sallam). It is after the results are announced on the day of judgment that the successful man's life as the vice regent of Allah would begin in its immense proportions.

b) The expectation or certainty of receiving rewards for good deeds and punishments for evil action, in whatever forms the rewards or punishments may be, is the most potent factor for determining man's conduct, besides being the logical and natural corollary of the necessary and basic idea of justice. The idea of justice is nothing else than demand for due conformity of man's action to the prescribed laws. Deviations from or action against the physical laws of the universe instantly produce unpleasant results. Man some times is led to think that there are no corresponding by binding social cultural and spiritual laws, the non-observance of which would produce similarly unpleasant results. This obviously is not the case and to correct this mistaken notion and to provide guidance to mankind, the Almighty and Benign Creator sent prophets revealing social, cultural, and spiritual laws for man and indicating the unpleasant consequences of deviation there from, both immediate and ultimate. The immediate consequences of deviations from the social and cultural laws are partly provided by the administrative authorities, but of necessity, their reach is fractional and frequently doubtful. Neither the man who commits a thousand murders or

other heinous crimes and gets scores of men to do likewise, nor the man who saves, sustains, or purifies a thousand lives or more, nor he who does other unseen things good and bad, gets or can get adequate justice at the hands of the administrative authorities. Substantially, it is the attachment to the unseen Creator and Sustainer of mankind Who knows and sees everything and the consequent promptings of conscience and traditions there under that determine the healthy working of man as a social being.

The extent to which this attachment is strong and these convictions are deep and active among a substantial section of the community; to that extent there is a practical assurance against social disintegration. But the idea of the ultimate and unfailing scientific and correct justice for man's individual actions static and dynamic, personal and social can only rest with the Omnipotent and Omniscient Allah. To provide man with a free choice of the development of his personality, free justice for his actions good and bad, is not provided immediately, but is postponed till after the completion of the test life.

Question: What is “Ehsan” and who are the “Mohsineen”?

Answer: “Ehsan” is to worship Allah and conduct oneself in life as if one is himself seeing Allah or, if that feeling or consciousness not be possible, to worship Allah and conduct himself in life with the assurance that Allah is seeing him. “Mohsineen” is the name given

by Allah to those Muslims who humbly and devotedly conduct themselves in life in the manner mentioned above.

Question: Why has worship of Allah been ordained and prescribed?

Answer: Man has been created as Allah's vice regent on earth and Allah has ordained His worship by man in the various phases and spheres of life so that man's life may be disciplined and purified and he should through discipline and worship, understand and recognize and be in communion with his Creator, Sustainer and Master. This worship is not confined to what are called rituals but covers the entire field of life. This worship (or lack of worship) includes the manner in which a person conducts himself in the society, as a dynamic agent for the good and correct things in life (or vice versa), in his attitude towards and dealings with others. Compliance with the divine orders relating to human activity in the various fields of life as explained and worked out practically by His prophet is the comprehensive meaning of worship. The whole edifice of worship and discipline may be stated to stand on five pillars, viz., (1) a true comprehension of faith as described in the foregoing pages (2) a proper performance of Salat (3) the due payment of Zakat (4) the proper observance of fasting for the month of Ramadan and (5) the performance of Haj by people who have capacity to do so. These pillars are absolutely fundamental to the edifice, and provide the necessary gateways to the different parts of it and each one of the

pillars is a definite structure in itself but does not comprise the whole building.

We have already briefly dealt with the first item or pillar of faith. Now we shall briefly deal with the rest of the four pillars in the order stated.

SALAT

Question: What is “Salat” and what is its importance in the life of the individual and of the community?

Answer: Salat is the overt means of man's worshipful connection with and complete submissive devotion to his Creator and Sustainer and is the most direct and effective means of deriving power, guidance, and solace from the All-knowing, Omnipotent Master. Salat has been prescribed by Allah for granting man unlimited benefits of a comprehensive nature, individually and socially. It acts as a sustainer of man intellectually, spiritually and socially.

Salat with its five-time daily prescription affords to the individual and enforces upon him a regular course of physical cleanliness and purity of mind, and a regular gathering of the faithful in a spirit of unmistakable collaboration for carrying out the purposes of Allah in complete humility as His humble creatures.

The prescribed Salat not only provides the correct relationship between man and his Creator and the means to benefit from his Creator in a hundred ways and at every moment of his life, it also incidentally provides the Muslim individual and the whole Muslim community with a basic common time-table and the basic structure of the Muslim society on which to organize their lives. The Salat if properly performed as prescribed is the greatest, easiest and the surest means for personal cleanliness, of body and mind, disciplined life, invigorated and uplifted by contacts with the Almighty Creator and moving throughout the daily course of business of whatever

description in the consciousness of His Omnipotent omniscient Presence

By making this congregational Salat compulsory five times a day for every member of the faithful, Allah has provided mankind with a steel frame for their society, alike for the basic small units of residential or working neighborhoods, and for the townships, and for the annual international gatherings of the brotherhood at Mecca.

Quite evidently Salat is of such fundamental importance in Islam that anyone willfully omitting Salat from the normal routine of his life is not deemed a true Muslim at all.

Question: What are the basic rules regarding the correct performance of Salat?

Answer: These are briefly stated below, classified under the heads concerned

.a) Preparation for Salat:

- i) Physical cleanliness of the body and of clothes.
- ii) Performance of wodhu.

In addition to the general cleanliness of the body and clothes a Muslim must before the performance of Salat do his wudhu and this consists of:

- 1) Washing of the hands up to the elbows and of the face, by pouring water thereon

three times or only once if water be scarce.

- 2) Similar gargling of the mouth and washing the nose.
- 3) Massaging of the head and ears with water and
- 4) Washing of the feet up to the ankles with water.

The water used for washing the hands should not be used for washing the face or for gargling but should be fresh for each part of the body. The wodu once performed can be deemed to last until one urinates, breaks wind, goes to stool or happens to sleep or has sexual intercourse or wet-dreams (in either of which latter two cases a bath will be necessary but it is better if a fresh wodu is done before each congregational Salat).

iii) Taking a bath in case of a wet dream or sexual intercourse or the completion of

the monthly-course or postnatal bleeding in the case of women.

iv) Proper covering of the body.

This can be put under two categories: the minimum and the desirable. For the men the minimum is to cover the body from the belly to and inclusive of the knee. The desirable for the men is to cover their shoulder and arms up to the wrist and their legs slightly above the ankles and to cover their heads.

For the women the minimum is to cover their heads and foreheads, their necks, shoulders, arms up to their wrists and breasts down to and including their ankles. And the desirable is to have an additional

wrapping over their shoulders and breasts. In fact these are the normal standards of propriety of dress prescribed for men and women at times other than prayers as well.

v) Athan is a necessary preparation for all the five-time congregational prayers. It is a call to the faithful to come to Salat. The prescribed Athan is a natural, simple and effective introduction and invitation to the Salat.

vi) Number and timing of the congregational Salats and the number of Rakats in each.

A) The number of the prescribed daily congregational Salat is five viz.

Salatul Fajr	2
Salaruzzohr	4
Salatul Asr	4
Salatul Maghrib	3
Salatual Isha.	4

And their timings are as follows:

- 1- Salatul Fajr: After day break and before sunrise;
- 2- Salatuzzohr: Immediately after exact midday and before the sun casts a shadow of anything equal to its length.

- 3- Salatual Asr: After the sun has begun casting shadow of anything equal to its length and before sunset.
- 4- Salatul Maghrib Immediately after sunset and until the lasting of twilight approximating an hour and one-quarter; and
- 5- Salatul Isha: After the close of twilight up to the earliest signs of daybreak usually an hour and one quarter before actual sunrise. Usually the best time to offer these prescribed congregational Salats is the commencement thereof.

B) The number of the compulsory Rakats in the above mentioned five prescribed congregational Salats and the number of additional Rakats separately performed optionally before or/and after the congregational Salat is indicated below: -

Type of the Prescribed Usual	prescribed number of Rakats.	Usual additions
Congregational prayer additions		
congregational	Before congregational Salat	after the Salat

Salatul Fajr	2	2	--
Salatuzzohr	4	4	2
Salatul Asr	4	2	--
Salatul Maghrib	3	--	2
Salatual Isha.	4		2 + 3

Question: Why is the prescribed Salat performed in Arabic?

Answer: Islam is a universal religion, a religion for the whole of mankind, and its followers form an international community of brothers from the very beginning. The declaration: “The believers are naught else than brothers”, (1) is unqualified and intended to be a factual and permanent reality. There is no exclusiveness, geographical or racial. All the faithful, all the loyal and obedient servants of Allah wherever they may be and whatever their colors are equal in the eyes of Allah and are must behave as brothers and close friends. They must have a common culture, a common platform and a common language of inter-communication. Arabic has been this common language from the very beginning of Islam.

(1) Surat 49, The Private Apartments, Verse 10.

During the last thirteen hundred years there have been more books written in Arabic on Islam and Islamic literature by Arabs and in non-Arab countries than by Arabs in Arab countries. For the last two hundred years the missionaries and imperialist powers have been trying to disrupt this state of affairs by exercising subtle but

persistant pressure on Muslim countries to work on materialistic, geographical and parochial lines in everything, even in language, script and religion. They have failed because of the inimitable incontrovertibly divine Quran and because of the prescribed common Salat. But the Satanic disruptive efforts continue in the name of regionalism and nationalism, misguiding through their sophisticated agents the unwary, the thoughtless, and the de-Islamized materialist. But every true Muslim throughout the expanding world of Islam knows that any attempt to render Salat into the local language of any country would totally cut adrift not only the social body but the spiritual identity and universal cosmopolitan entity and real meaning of Islam.

This prescribed congregational Salat is performed in Arabic. The Holy Quran, the inimitable word of Allah is recited in Arabic. So also the personal Salat with its inimitable comprehensiveness and holy devotion. That also has to be performed in Arabic. Prayers thereafter or before it fall in a separate category and can be spoken and expressed in any language. Islam is a universal religion in point of fact and not in theory. It is a religion based on international equality and brotherhood irrespective of race, color or country and again in a point of fact and not in theory. The five-time prescribed congregational Salat is among other things the pivotal link in this important point of the universality of the religion and the factual international equality and brotherhood of man. For the attainment of

this high objective the learning of or familiarization with a common language is a comparatively small effort. The whole world cannot show a single instance other than Islam of a race-free or color free international civilization with completely free intermarriages and cultural, spiritual and social equality of a class-free, color-free society as has been seen from the beginning of Islam for the last fourteen hundred years throughout the world. The fundamental basic core of this truly international civilization has been the five-time congregational Salat in which the local man as well as the traveller, national and international participates. The Holy Quran is of course the central focal point on which everything revolves. This inimitable transcendental divine book has been translated in scores of languages but its beauty and comprehensive and superb divinity is not translatable and each word and each letter of the Holy Quran has been preserved as it was revealed, through its daily use, five times a day in every Rakat in every Salat. Nothing can replace either its beauty or its divine effects; and so millions of people in non-Arabic countries have memorized the whole book and can and do recite it by heart from one end to the other.

ZAKAT

Salat has been mentioned in the foregoing pages as the most outstanding pillar of Islam after the Shahadeh or solemn declaration that there is no God and no real power except Allah and that Mohammed (S.A.W.S.) is His Prophet. Now we come to the third most important pillar viz., Zakat. In fact Allah has specifically stated in the Holy Quran that the declaration of acceptance of Islam of only those persons can be accepted who fully comply with the provision regarding the performance of the five-time congregational prayers and the due payment of Zakat. It is for this reason that the great Caliph Abu Bakr (upon who are Allahs blessings) actually waged Jihad against those persons or tribes who wavered or refused to give Zakat.

“But if they repent and establish regular Salat and pay the Zakat then they are your brothers in religion. Thus we detail revelations for those who understand”. (1)

This Zakat is only the minimum prescribed by law for a Muslim. Much more to the society around is expected of a Muslim to win the

grace of Allah and this fact is repeated in numerous verses of the Holy Quran.

“Those who in charity spend their wealth by night and by day, secretly and openly, have their reward with their Lord, and on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve”. (2)

“Go forth, light-armed and heavy-armed, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the way of Allah! That is best for you if you but knew.” (3)

1. Surat 9, Repentance, Verse 11.

2. Surat 2, The Cow, Verse 274.

3. Surat 9, Repentance, Verse 41.

A Muslim’s life, on the material side, is to be led on the above principles, and Zakat is only the minimum payment prescribed by law, without which payment a Muslim would not remain a Muslim. In the earliest centuries of Islamic State Zakat used to be collected and disbursed by the State in accordance with the prescribed requirements.

In course of time, many of the Muslim governments left the payment of the Zakat to the initiative of the private individuals. When the Zakat was paid to, and disbursed by the State, the optional Sadaqat

and assistance to relatives, neighbours or friends were of course administered personally by the donors, and the Holy Quran has specifically provided the manner in which such assistance should be rendered. The assistance and donations should be given with enthusiasm and in a spirit of devotion and with a feeling of certainty that the person who gives is the real gainer by the transaction.

The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) used sometimes to refuse the donations from hypocritical subscribers who were known for their doubtful devotion.

“O Ye who believe, Render not vain your almsgiving by reminders of your generosity or by injury, like him who spendeth his wealth only to be seen of men and believeth not in Allah and the Last Day.” (1)

“The likeness of those who spend their wealth in Allah’s way is as the likeness of a grain which growth seven years, in every year a hundred grains, Allah given increase manifold to whom He will. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing”. (2)

It would be seen that if the prescribed Zakat and the specifically suggested donations, the rate of which is not prescribed, are given and the prescribed spirit thereof is

1. Surat 2, The Cow Verse 264.

2. Surat 2, The Cow Verse 261..

observed, then the welfare requirements of the needy in all the localities would be met in a suitable and dignified manner, creating harmony and love among the various classes of the community and at same time purifying and developing the personalities of the individuals living in it. It is the donor who is expected to seek out quietly the proper recipient and feel obliged to him for having accepted his assistance thus enabling him to gain Allahs blessings.

This is the spirit in which the payment of Zakat and other donations is to be made. The Holy Prophet was the embodiment of mercy and affection for all the world. His followers are expected to follow him and be the reflection of his personality for the localities and environments in which they live, and should serve the people around humbly and to the best of their capacity. This is specifically provided for in the Holy Quran.

Question: What is Zakat?

Answer: Zakat is the name given to payment in kind or money which a Muslim of means must pay either directly or through the State to the persons specified in the Holy Quran. The object thereof is on the one hand to assist the welfare work but mainly to purify the personality of the giver of Zakat.

“Take alms of their wealth wherewith thou may purify and sanctify them.” (1)

Question: What is the prescribed annual rate for Zakat ?

Answer: The annual rate of Zakat prescribed is 2.5%.

(1) Surat 9, Repentance Verse 103.

Question: Among whom and for what purpose is the Zakat to be distributed and utilized?

Answer: Zakat is distributed among the categories of Muslims, and for the objectives stated below:

1. The poor Muslims to relieve want and distress;
2. The needy Muslims for the supply of implements for earning their livelihood;
3. Those whose hearts are inclined towards Islam viz., the new converts for the purpose of consolidation of their attachment and to enable them to settle down and meet their immediate needs,
4. The Muslims in debt, for the purpose of freeing them from their liabilities incurred under difficult and pressing circumstances;
5. The Muslim wayfarers stranded away from their home;
6. The Muslim employees appointed for the collection or disbursement of Zakat;
8. Those engaged in the path of Allah to defray the expenses for the defense and propagation of Islam.

Question: What condition must be complied with for the fulfillment of the obligation of Zakat?

Answer: Zakat must be given to the State for the purposes noted above or be distributed privately on a personal basis for the purposes enumerated above with the express intention (or Niyyat) of fulfilling the obligation of Zakat. In fact in such payment it must be ensured that the recipient becomes the absolute owner of what is passed on to him as Zakat.

Zakat is obligatory on all Muslims who have in their possession for one complete year gold of the minimum weight of seven and a half tolas or silver of the minimum weight of fifty two tolas or commercial or industrial property of that value including camels, cattle, goats, articles of trade etc.,

*It may be observed here that Zakat is levied only on Muslims. **Non-Muslim residents in a Muslim State are exempt there-from.** This fact is often ignored by non-Muslim critics of Jezia which is a corresponding tax, on a much smaller scale and scope, levied on the non-Muslims living in a Muslim state. It should be pointed out that the non-Muslims are exempt from rendering military service which may be compulsorily demanded from a Muslim. The salutary nature of such exemptions both from the moral and from the administrative point of view would be clear to any thoughtful person.*

FASTING IN THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN

Islam, as the divine light of guidance for man, is the religion of a disciplined development of a vigorous personality, and fasting is one of the necessary means towards the achievement of this end. Far from weakening a person, it enables him to get connected with and draw more from the unseen Power close to him and within him but otherwise not physically apparent to him. In fact Allah has ordered specifically in the Holy Book that the faithful should draw assistance in their problems from Salat and from fasting.

It has further been stated that fasting has a direct connection with a disciplined conduct of life and the achievement of the purposes of the Holy Quran.

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may (learn) self-restraint”. (1)

“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for mankind, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the criterion (of right and wrong). And whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, let him fast the same number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and He desireth that you complete the period, and that you should glorify Allah for having guided you and that perchance ye may be grateful”. (2).

1. Surat 2, The Cow, Verse 183.

2. Surat 2, The Cow, Verse 185.

With the above introductory remarks we come to the basic information regarding the Ramadan fasting given in the form of questions and answers for convenience of reference.

Question: What items of abstinence are specifically comprised in the act of fasting?

Answer: Fasting requires one to abstain from (a) eating or drinking anything however small (b) smoking (c) having sexual intercourse or otherwise committing any intentional act of discharge of semen in any manner. This abstinence must be observed from the break of dawn (about 1 1/2 hours before actual sunrise) to sunset.

Question: Does the above mentioned abstinence in respect of the items stated complete the requirement of the discipline of fasting?

Answer: No. The above constitute only the necessary negative aspects of fasting. On the positive side, it is necessary that particular care is taken to see to the meticulous performance of congregational salat at the prescribed times and similarly to avoid any act in contravention of any specific orders of Allah. In this connection, it may be mentioned that in addition to the normal

prescribed congregational Salat in the month of Ramadan the Salatul Tarawih is particularly prescribed after the Isha Salat.

Question: Give a brief description of the Salatual Tarawih.

Answer: This Salat is performed just like other congregational Salawat; the difference being that it is performed in batches of two Rakats each up to a desirable maximum of 20 Rakats and a minimum of 8 Rakats.

Question: On whom is the observation of fasting obligatory?

Answer: The observation of fasting is obligatory on all Muslims, men and women, after the age of puberty, excepting the insane and the invalid. The invalid, including men and women too old or feeble to bear the hardships of a fast have to be declared as such by a proper physician for the exception to be conscientiously valid. At the same time they have to pay for each day of the fast omitted a Sadaqa equal to the feed of a poor person per day.

Question: Under what circumstances can one defer or postpone the observation of fast?

Answer: Fast can be postponed to a subsequent period:

a) If one is so sick that the observation of fast is likely to increase one's sickness

b) in the case of a woman (i) during the monthly period or post natal bleeding

(ii) if she is suckling a child and there is serious reduction in the supply of milk by fasting

c) in the case of a traveler who has reason to fear that fasting will render the journey too difficult.

It should be noted that in each case mentioned above the fast should preferably be performed or resumed as soon as the cause which prompted the postponement has disappeared.

Question: What is the significance of fasting?

Answer: As observed before, the main objective of fasting is the development of personality and consolidation of self-discipline. By foregoing meals and drinks etc. for the whole of the day and slightly longer, one incidentally comes to realize personally the pangs of hunger which other persons in destitute circumstances may sometimes perforce be undergoing and this may induce the development of a proper sympathetic attitude among the comparatively well-to-do. This may be a good thing but it is an incidental outcome of fasting and not the main objective.

Again fasting is a very good thing for physical health and results in all round overhaul and rationing of the various constituent parts of

the body, but again this is not the main objective. The main objective lies in the habit of self-control that fasting fosters and develops and enables one to raise high in the conduct of day to day matters so that one is able to save oneself from being an easy victim to temptation, and the chances of committing sins are thereby greatly reduced.

HAJ

Haj is one of those fundamental institutions in Islam which have maintained on a basis of international uniformity the spirit of complete submission to Allah's commandments and divine pleasure as summarized in these magically brief devotional words:

“Here am I, O Lord, to carry out Your pleasure, here am I. Here am I O Lord to receive your pleasure. There is no one who is Your associate. Verily all praises for all things go to You, and all the

benedictions, gifts and favours come from You. To You belongs all the sovereignty and there is no one who is Your associate.”

During the Haj, the Haji or pilgrim is expected to repeat these far-reaching beautiful and sacred words from the bottom of his heart day by day, hundreds of times until the completion of the Haj, and then to live up to this declaration the rest of his life.

Haj is not only the agency for the performance of this noble and fundamental function. It is also the means of the achievement of a host of other important objectives:

a) It is a factual rehearsal and commemoration of the manner in which the great patriarch of the prophets, Ibrahim, and his wife Hajer and his son Ismail, singly and together, placed themselves completely and devotedly at the disposal and pleasure of their divine Creator and Sustainer. No risks or sacrifices were too great in their devoted relationship with their Creator and Sustainer. And their Creator and Sustainer did not let them be destroyed through the tests and ordeals set for them but rather made them and their conduct a model for the generations and the centuries to follow.

Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W.S) following the lines of action set by Prophet Ibrahim raised the standards of devotion and constancy in efforts and sacrifices to new and still higher levels of achievements and spread the light to all the countries around and made it dynamic

and universal for all time to come. It was the complete submission and devotion of Prophet Ibrahim (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that made him what he was. It was the total identification of his complete self with the will of Allah as embodied in the Holy Quran that the Prophet Mohammed (S.A.W.S.) became the miraculous personality and shining light for all time to come. And anyone who approached him with Iman (faith) and got even a few minutes of his august and purifying company became proportionately a miracle in deeds and achievements. A thoughtful and wide-awake person going for Haj is reminded of these and other edifying things repeatedly during the course of his stay in the Holy Land.

b) The Haj provides a unique international gathering of men having altogether different mother tongues and local dialects but speaking one language in their five-time congregational gatherings and performing their Salat in a uniform pattern, standing and sitting together without the slightest reference to color, race, or country or class in life. Almost all read the Holy Quran in Arabic and read the translations available in their respective languages. Almost all get to have some knowledge of Arabic which is the common language for Muslims of the world. There being no priorities and no obstacles for anyone whatsoever, all participating persons and groups from various countries meet each other in a spirit of complete equality and brotherhood. Not only this; all and every one without exception

are required to wear a uniform unsewn dress during the period of Haj and until the Haj prescriptions are over. There are no formalities and no obstacles; and informal meetings of people from different countries, races and colors are frequent, and gradually provide a uniformity and dovetailing of culture and understanding of each other's condition.

c) Mecca Al Mukarrama is a place around which for scores of kilometers there are no plantations or trees and the city is surrounded by rows upon rows of barren hillocks of various heights and hues. Roads as we know them have been built by blowing up scores of rocky hillocks. Even for a considerable distance around Mecca there is hardly one kilometer of a straight road. Any thoughtful person would be surprised why and how the city came into existence. It was certainly a miracle initially caused by the miraculous sprouting up of water at the feet of Prophet Ismail (then an infant) and then through the reconstruction by Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail of the sanctuary for the worship of Allah. This sanctuary which was the first house in the world built for the worship of Allah has carried exceptional features which are abundantly noticeable to thoughtful persons.

“The First House (of worship) Appointed for men is that at Bakkah: Full of blessing and of guidance for all the people.” (1)

“O our Lord! I have settles some of my offspring in a valley without cultivation, by Thy sacred House; in order, O our Lord, that they may

establish regular Prayer; so fill the hearts of people with love towards them, and provide them with fruits that they may be thankful.” (2)

(1) Surat 3, Al-I-ilmran, Verse 96.

Hence the growing up of the city in this otherwise barren place, hence the availability in this barren place of fruits of all kinds coming from north and south and now from east and west as well. The spiritual magnetism and benefits of the place around the Kaaba are great and varied but they are matters of personal experience. The details thereof do not come within the limited scope of this small introductory book. Suffice it to say that the simple act of sitting anywhere in the place around the holy sanctuary (Kaaba) facing it and meditating on the details of one’s own past life and what it should be in the future, and imploring Allah’s forgiveness,

(2) Surat 14, Ibrahim, Verse 37.

His mercy and His Light, would by itself be a very revealing experience, cleansing and regenerating ones spiritual outlook. If it is followed or preceded by “Tawaf” of the sanctuary in the manner prescribed, and Salat, the benefit accrued and even palpably realized during the course of even one day is great and immeasurably valuable.

EHRAM, TAWAF and SAYEE

Ehram, Tawaf and Sayee are essential portions of both Haj and Umra and an understanding of these items is essential for the proper performance of either.

Question: What is Ehram?

Answer: Ehram is the starting point for both Haj and Umra and the manner of its starting is of prime significance.

The act of adopting Ehram is the symbolical start of a journey of the pilgrim, away from his usual preoccupations and environmental, and towards his Creator and Sustainer. While stilliving a man cuts himself off as much as he can from his usual preoccupations and surroundings with a view to come within the orbit of divine presence and pleasure and abstains from several specified things which may

be deemed luxuries or worldly and concentrates on his relationship with his Creator and Sustainer, repeating aloud or in undertones within his own hearing as often as convenient the previously mentioned declaration technically called Talbiah:

Here am I, Lord.....

Question: What things, otherwise permissible, become unlawful for those adopting Eham?

Answer: The things that become unlawful for those adopting the Eham and remain as such till the discipline of the Haj or Umra is over are:

1. Sexual intercourse or its preliminaries or approaches thereto.
2. Cropping or shaving or otherwise removal of hair from the body or filling or clipping of nails.
3. Wearing by men of any kind of sewn clothes or underwear, gloves or socks.
4. Using any perfumes or perfumed preparations on the body or the apparel.
5. Covering by men of head or face by headgear or in any other way.
6. Hunting of animals or aiding or abetting it.

TAWAF

Question: What is meant by Tawaf?

Answer: The performance of seven circuits round the sanctuary of Ka'aba (going round the Ka'aba).

Significance and meaning of Tawaf.

The Tawaf is somewhat like the hovering of a bird around the light that it loves and adores. In Holy Quran Allah the Most High has stated about His Divine Self:

“Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth. The similitude of His Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. This lamp kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth of itself though no fire touched it. Light upon light, Allah guideth unto His light whom He will. And Allah gives examples to mankind, for Allah is Knower of all things. (This lamp or light is found) in houses which Allah has allowed to be exalted wherein His name is remembered. Therein do offer praise to Him at mornings and evenings men whom neither merchandise nor sale beguileth from remembrance of Allah and constancy in prayer and proper performance of Salat and paying to the poor their due, and who think with fear of the day (of Judgment) when hearts and eyeballs will get rolled. Allah will reward them with the best of their deeds and further will increase their rewards out of His bounty. Verily Allah giveth blessings without stint to whom He will.” (1)

This divine light of Allah is to be found in mosques where Allah is thus remembered and every one of the items of devotion mentioned carries with it a blessing leading to the divine light of Allah. This happens at all places when Allah is thus worshipped. A thousand

times more deeply is this seen and felt in the central worshipping place round the Holy Kaaba sanctuary which was specifically built under Allah's orders by

1. Surat 24, Light, Verses 35 – 38.

Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail after the successful completion of the tests of their personality and pure devotion. The position is summarized in the following beautiful verses of the Holy Quran:

A) And (remember) when his Lord tried Ibrahim with (His) commands, and he fulfilled them. He said: Lo! I have appointed thee a leader for mankind. (Ibrahim) said: And of my offspring (will there be leaders)? He said: My covenant included not wrongdoers.

And when we made the House (at Mecca) a resort for mankind and sanctuary, (saying): Take as your place of worship the place where Ibrahim stood (to pray). And we imposed a duty upon Ibrahim and Ismail, (saying): Purify My house for those who go around and those who meditate therein and those who bow down and prostrate themselves (in worship) And when Ibrahim prayed: My Lord! Make this a region of security and bestow upon its people fruits, such of them as believe in Allah and the last day, He answered: As for him who disbelieveth, I shall leave him in contentment for a while, then I shall compel him to the doom of fire – a hapless journey's end!

And when Ibrahim and Ismail were raising the foundations of the House, (Ibrahim prayed): Our Lord! Accept from us (this duty). Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Hearer, the Knower.

Our Lord! And make us submissive unto Thee and of our seed a nation submissive unto Thee, and show us our ways of worship, and relent toward us. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Relenting, the Merciful.

Our Lord! And raise up in their midst a messenger from among them who shall recite unto them Thy revelations, and shall instruct them in the scripture and in wisdom and shall make them grow. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Mighty, Wise.

And who forsaketh the religion of Ibrahim save him who befoleth himself? Verily we choose him in the world, and lo! In the Hereafter he is among the righteous. When his lord said unto him: Surrender! He said: I have surrendered to the Lord of the Worlds.

The same did Ibrahim enjoin upon his sons, and also Jacob, (saying): O my sons! Lo! Allah hath chosen for you the (true) religion; therefore die not save as men who have surrendered (unto Him). (1)

1. Surat 2, The Cow, Verses 124 – 132.

B) Say: Allah speaketh truth. So follow the religion of Ibrahim, the upright. He was not of the idolators.

Lo! The first Sanctuary appointed for mankind was that at Becca, a blessed place, a guidance to the peoples!

Wherein are plain memorials (of Allah's guidance); the place where Ibrahim stood up to pray; and whosoever entereth it is safe. And pilgrimage to the House is a duty unto Allah for mankind, for him who can find a way thither. As for him who disbelieveth, (let him know that) lo! Allah is Independent of (all) creatures. (2)

This, in brief , is the context of the Haj (and of Tawaf) and the benefits of guidance and non divine light and purification of personality to which it opens the doors, and to which Allah invites the faithful and the obedient seeker of His light and blessings.

2. Surat 3, Al-i-imran, Verse 95 – 97

In short, Tawaf connotes a devotional beat on the part of His humble creature around the pleasure, sublimity, greatness and omnipotence of Allah the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. It is a miracle or miracles that this Tawaf of Allahs chosen and blessed sanctuary does not stop at any time of the day or night throughout the year and

has not stopped during the last fourteen centuries (except in exceptionally emergent cases like heavy flood).

SAYEE

Question: What is meant by the term Sayee and what does it signify?

Answer: Literally Sayee means effort and running, and in the phraseology of Haj it refers to that marching and running which a pilgrim does between the hillocks of Safa and Marwa in somewhat like the manner it was done by Hajer, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (and mother of Prophet Ismail then a suckling infant) to see if some passing caravan could be located which could give them some water. When she had done this frantic running for water six times (three times each way from Safa to Marwa and back) in vain. On the seventh round she found, to her joyous surprise, water sprouting from under the feet of her son and baby Ismail and she quickly surrounded it with rocky pebbles and sand so that the water gathers and does not fritter away. While so doing she shouted to it Zam

Zam (stop from running). This water which miraculously sprouted in this small barren valley surrounded on all sides by hillocks became by the grace of Allah a permanent unfathomable well from which thousands of gallons of water are taken out every hour without the well ever drying up and without the flavour or composition of water changing. It is miraculous well giving out water with miraculous health-giving effect, physically and spiritually experienced by hundreds of thousands of persons each year that gave birth to the township now known as Mecca.

Throughout Haj, one is expected to refrain completely from whatever may even remotely be called disobedience of the divine orders either in the form of commission or omission. And one is expected to be continually busy with one or the other positive acts of compliance with Allah's orders or with recitation of the Holy Quran or with remembrance of Allah and praying for forgiveness of past sins or acts of omission. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) has stated that whosoever performs his Haj properly and does not pollute it with any disobedience of Allah's orders becomes as free from sins and impurities as he was on the day he was born. As Haj is not performed usually more than once or twice, no one should miss the opportunity of getting the best out of Haj for his life and making it a symbol of pure life within and without and keeping it pure and shining later on.

It may also be mentioned that Haj has been one of the means of the spreading and consolidation of Islam from the very beginning. And it remains so to this day, and will remain until Allah wants the spiritual light to disappear and with it the life on Earth, to restart with the day of Judgment. Haj journey has been the great self-educating medium as well as the medium for learning and teaching Islam with a uniformity of ideas and practice when people from different countries travelled or travel by road and by sea, i.e. by other than aeroplane. The stay in Hijaz during Haj for varying periods according to personal programmes and convenience also provides similar opportunities. The intermixing of people from various countries coming for spiritual and religious purposes is by itself an educational means of dovetailing of ideas and cultures and co-ordination in the matter of improvement of moral and spiritual standards.

With the above introduction we deal briefly with basic information relating to the performance of Haj:

Question: What do you understand by Haj:

Answer: The pilgrimage to Mecca with the observance of the prescribed formalities and discipline, e.g. the adoption of Ehram at or before the night reaching Mount Arafat near Mecca on the ninth of Thilhijjah and staying there till sunset, performance of the Tawaf of Kaaba and doing Sayee in accordance with the procedure

prescribed therefore and staying in Mina on the appointed days, is called Haj.

Question: On whom is the performance of Haj obligatory?

Answer: The performance of Haj at least once in a lifetime is obligatory on all Muslims who have attained the age of puberty, provided they are in a position both physically and materially to undertake the journey to Mecca Al Mukarrama and make the necessary provisions for their dependents during the period of their absence.

Question: What is Umra?

Answer: Umra which is also known as the smaller Haj is a visit to Mecca-Al Mukarrama in the state and under the discipline of Eham and the due performance of the Tawaf of Kaaba and doing the Sayee in accordance with the prescribed procedure. Umra can also be performed at any part of the year and no dates therefore are fixed as are fixed in the case of Haj.

THE PERFORMANCE OF HAJ

Question: What are the basic points in the performance of Haj?

Answer: The preparatory acts for the performance of Haj viz., the adoption of Ehram and the items of Tawaf and Sayee have already been mentioned under the headings concerned and the one dealing with the performance of Umra. Haj includes all these and some substantial additional things. These additional things relate

a) to the proceeding on 9th Thilhijjah to Mount Arafat for the climax of supplications for forgiveness of one's past sins, and grant of his positive prayers for cherished objectives physical and spiritual and

b) to rehearse the complete submission of the Prophet Ibrahim to the pleasure of Allah the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. This submission of the Prophet Ibrahim to the pleasure of Allah was complete even when the pleasure of Allah was communicated through a dream, and even though it suggested a course of action to be adopted by the prophet which was manifestly outside of the ordinary. The Prophet Ibrahim (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) succeeded in the test to which he was put, and Allah rewarded the spirit of this total willing submission to His pleasure by the commemoration of the events every year by the faithful, individually in the different countries of the world outside Mecca wherever Muslims may be living and centrally through the medium of the international Haj.

The pilgrim for Haj after doing the inaugural Tawaf of Kaaba, signifying the focal sanctuary of divine pleasure, proceeds first to Mina and then to Mount Arafat. There he spends the whole afternoon of 9th Thilhijjah praying forgiveness of his past sins and making a firm resolve not to repeat them, and asking for complete purification of his personality and assurance of divine mercy and pleasure both in this and in the next world. After sunset he proceeds to Muzdalifah and spends the night in the same prayerful mood. Thus purified, he proceeds to Mina to offer his humble sacrificial oblations in the path of the Lord. But before making the symbolic sacrificial oblations, through the sacrifice of a goat, he rehearses the conflict with, and success over, the Satanic forces which try to keep one from the correct path of devotional submission to one's Creator and Sustainer. It is these conflicts with, and success over the Satanic forces that develop and consolidate the personality of the individual, and these conflicts with Satanic forces are specifically designed by Allah for the test, development, and benefit of the individual person tested, and the higher the qualities and personalities of the man, the greater are the temporary travails and tests arranged for him. It is not easy to contemplate the sacrifice of ones son – at the time, his only son (for Prophet Ishaq was not born till after the test regarding the sacrifice of Ismail) and this son Ismail was born after Prophet Ibrahim had undergone a unique test which concerned the sacrifice of his own person in the path of Allah,

and in which through his undaunted and unqualified devotion to the cause of truth, monotheism as against polytheism – he came out eminently successful. And this sacrifice by Prophet Ibrahim of his son Ismail was suggested in a dream. A prophet's dream however, is in the nature of an order though not a direct one conveyed in specific words. The position was correctly understood both by the father and the son. The whole context is clearly stated in these miraculously vivid but brief verses of the Holy Quran.

“And lo! Of his persuasion verily was Ibrahim”.

When he came unto his Lord with a whole heart;

When he said unto his father and his folk: What is it that ye worship?

Is it a falsehood – gods beside Allah -- that ye desire?

What then is your opinion of the Lord of the Worlds?

And he glanced a glance at the stars

Then said: Lo! I feel sick!

And they turned their backs and went away from him

Then turned he to their gods and said: Will ye not eat?

What aileth you that ye speak not?

Then he attacked them, striking with his right hand.

And (his people) came toward him, hastening.

He said: Worship ye that which ye yourselves do carve.

When Allah hath created you and what you make?

They said: Build for him a building and fling him in the red-hot-fire.

And they designed a snare for him, but We made them the undermost.

And he said: Lo! I am going unto my Lord who will guide me.

My Lord! Vouchsafe me of the righteous.

So we gave him tidings of a gentle son. And when (his son) was old enough to walk with him, (Ibrahim) said: O my dear son, I have seen

in a dream that I must sacrifice thee., So look, what thinkest thou?

He said: O my father! Do that which thou art commanded. Allah

willing, thou shalt find me of the steadfast.

Then, when they had both surrendered (to Allah), and he had flung him down upon his face,

We called unto him: O Ibrahim!

Thou hast already fulfilled the vision.

Lo! Thus do we reward the good.

Lo! That verily was a clear test.

Then We ransomed him with a tremendous victim.

And We left for him among the later folk (the salutation):

Peace be unto Ibrahim!

Thus do we reward the good.

Lo! He is one of Our believing slaves.

And We gave him tidings of the birth of Ishaq, a Prophet of the righteous ." (1)

Such extraordinary and onerous tests are not put to the ordinary men but the spirit of devotion and complete submission is necessarily required of every member of the faithful community and the lines of devotion and complete submission have been

specifically laid down by the Holy Quran and fully shown out by example and practice by the Holy Prophet and his devoted companions.

1. Surat 37, Those Who set the Ranks, Verses 83 – 112.

EPILOGUE

The basic concepts of Islam and their background and the fundamental items which a member of the faithful community must follow, have briefly been given in the foregoing pages. The procedural details of these fundamentals have not been given in this very brief survey. The interested readers would, it is hoped, be able to obtain these from other books or booklets meant for the purpose.

Here it is meant to emphasize that Islam provides a comprehensive code of guidance for every aspect of human life, social, economic, personal and administrative, national and international and international. What has been stated in the foregoing pages provides the general principles on which life is conducted and the pillars on which the Islamic structure and life is built.

The structure of Islamic life as a whole is given in the Holy Quran as interpreted and practically lived by the Holy Prophet and by the devoted companions under his guidance.

The Holy Quran and the Sunnah therefore, provide the basic code on which the life of a Muslim is regulated and organized. It would be difficult to make a summary of this basic code and in any case it is beyond the compass of this booklet. It is however, possible to give a brief outline thereof by reference to some of the verses of the Holy Quran giving the outstanding qualities of a Muslim and these are given below to act as pointers and guidance to all who want to follow the Islamic way of life. These are in addition to the commandments of the Holy Quran already reproduced in the foregoing page under the respective heads. It is thus eminently necessary to follow the Sunnah and the direction of the Prophet in every phase and walk of life.

1. Ye are best community that hath been raised up for mankind. Ye enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency; and ye believe in Allah. And if the People of the Scripture had believed it had been better for them. Some of them are believers; but most of them are evil-livers.

(Surat 3 Al-i-Imran, Verse 110)

2. The (faithful) slaves of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly, and when the foolish ones address them answer: Peace;

And who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing,

And who say: Our Lord! Avert from us the doom of hell; lo! The doom thereof is anguish;

Lo! It is wretched as abode and station;

And those who, when they spend, are neither prodigal nor grudging; and there is ever a firm station between the two;

And those who cry not unto any other god along with Allah, nor take the life which Allah hath forbidden save in (course of) justice, nor commit adultery – and whoso doeth this shall pay the penalty;

(Surat 25, The Criterion, Verses 63 - 86)

3. It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West; but righteous is he who believth in Allah and the

Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets; and giveth this wealth, for love of Him, to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask, and to set slaves free and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor-due. And those who keep their treaty when they make one, and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress. Such are they who are sincere. Such are the God- fearing.

(Surat 2, The Cow, Verse 177)

4. Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example for him who looketh unto Allah and the Last Day, and remembereth Allah much.

(Surat 33, The Clans, Verse 21)

5. Say, (O Muhammad, to mankind): If ye love Allah, follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

(Surat 3, Al-i-Imran, Verse 31)

6. Say: This is my way: I call on Allah with sure knowledge, I and whosoever followeth me – Glory be to Allah! – and I am not of the idolators.

(Surat 12, Joseph, Verse 108)

7. (Triumphant) are those who turn repentant (to Allah), those who serve (Him), those who praise (Him), those who fast, those who bow down, those who fall prostrate (in worship), those who enjoin the right and who forbid the wrong and those who keep the limits (ordained) of Allah – And give glad tiding to believers!

(Surat 9, Repentance, Verse 112)

8. Forsake the outwardness of sin and the inwardness thereof. Lo! Those who garner sin will be awarded that which they have earned.

(Surat 6, Cattle, Verse 121)

9. By the declining day,

Lo! Man is in a state of loss,

Save those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth and

exhort one another to endurance.

(Surat 103, The Declining Day)

10. And strive for Allah with the endeavour which is His right. He hath chosen you and hath not laid upon you in religion any hardship; the faith of your father Ibrahim (is yours). He hath named you Muslims of old time and in this (Scripture), that the messenger may be a witness against you, and that ye may be witnesses against mankind. So establish worship, pay the poor-due, and hold fast

to Allah. He is your Protecting Friend. A blessed Patron and a blessed Helper!

(Surat 22, The Pilgrimage, Verse 78)

11. Successful indeed are the believers Who are humble in their prayers

And who shun vain conversation,

And who are payers of the poor-due,

And who guard their modesty – Save from their wives or the (Slaves) that their right hands possess, for then they are not blameworthy,

But whoso craveth beyond that, such are transgressors –

And who are shepherds of their pledge and their covenant,

And who pay heed to their prayers.

These are the heirs

Who will inherit Paradise. There they will abide.

(Surat 23, The Believers, Verse 1-11)

12. O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end.

(Surat 4, Women,, Verse 59)

13. Thy Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him, and (that ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them to attain old age with thee, say not “Fie” unto them nor repulse them, but speak unto them a gracious word.

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

Give the kinsman his due, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and squander not (thy wealth) in wantonness.

Lo! The squanderers were ever brothers of the devils, and the devil was ever an ingrate to his Lord.

But if thou turn away from them, seeking mercy from thy Lord, for which thou hopest, then speak unto them a reasonable word.

And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked, denuded.

(Surat 17, The Children of Israel, Verse 23 - 21)

14. O ye who believe! Lo among your wives and your children there are enemies for you, therefore beware of them. And if ye efface and overlook and forgive then Lo! Allah is Forgiving Merciful.

(Surat 64,Mutual Disillusion , Verse 14)

15. Lo! We have given thee Abundance; So pray unto thy Lord, and sacrifice. Lo! It is thy insulter (and not thou).who is without posterity.

(Surat 108, Abundance)

16. Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright.

(Surat 16 ,The Bee, Verse ,125)

17. And come not near unto adultery. Lo! It is an abomination and an evil way.

And slay not the life which Allah hath forbidden save with right. Whoso is slain wrongfully, We have given power unto his heir, but let him not commit excess in slaying. Lo! He will be helped.

Come not near the wealth of the orphan save with that which is better till he come to strength; and keep the covenant Lo! of the covenant it will be asked. Fill the measure when ye measure, and weigh with a right balance; that is meet, and better in the end. (O

man), follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! The hearing and the sight and the heart – of each of these it will be asked.

And walk not in the earth exultant. Lo! Thou canst not rend the earth, nor canst thou stretch to the height of the hills.

The evil of all that is hateful in the sight of thy Lord.

(Surat 17, The Children of Israel, , Verses 32 - 38)

18. Lo! those who love that slander should be spread concerning those who believe, theirs will be a painful punishment in the world and the Hereafter. Allah knoweth. Ye know not.

(Surat 24, Light, , Verse 19)

19. Lo! Allah enjoineeth justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk, and forbiddeth lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorteth you in order that ye may take heed.

(Surat 16, The Bee,, Verse 90)

20. Whosoever doeth right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life, and We shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do.

(Surat 16, The Bee, Verse 97)

21. And whoso opposeth the messenger after the guidance (of Allah) hath been manifested unto him, and followeth other than the believer's way, We appoint for him that unto which he himself hath turned, and expose him unto hell – a hapless journey's end!

(Surat 4, Women, Verse 115)