

THE PATHWAY TO HAPPINESS ISLAM

One of the common characteristics of man who has the top place in the world and who is equipped with wisdom, notion and super abilities, is the desire to be happy. Every individual tries hard to reach it, thinks more of tomorrow than today and makes preparations for it.

A human being is a creature that is the product of the unification of spirit and body. Therefore, Islam has taken both material and spiritual needs of man into consideration, on the other hand, it has laid down the principles necessary of-an individual's happiness, set up rules for the happiness and peace of the' society and pointed out the mutual rights and the duties of individuals.

Islam is the latest and the most perfect religion. Muhammed (peace be upon him) who conveyed it to the humanity, is the last of the prophets. The Holy Koran, the fundamental book of Islam, is the last message sent to the humanity by Allah Almighty through Muhammed (peace be upon him).

THE GOAL OF ISLAM

The goal of the rules and principles laid down by Islam is, by maturing man morally, to enable them to live in peace and happiness in this world and to reach the eternal happiness in the next world after death.

These principles are perfect enough to answer the needs of man and always in effect and are not subject to change in all ages.

Allah Almighty states in the Holy Koran:

"Religion with Allah is The Surrender (to His will and guidance) .(The Family of Imran 19)

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

We can put the rules and principles Islam brought under three headings in short.

Belief .Worship .Ethic

BELIEF

As our body which is our physical being, needs food so does our spirit which is our spiritual self.

The most important food for the spirit is the sound faith.

By means of faith man attains a big power and lives in peace. The principles of belief which are the sources of all kinds of goodness, influence man in a positive way to develop the sense of responsibility and to ripen him morally by bettering his behaviors.

The two foundations of belief in Islam are:

1-There is no other deity save Allah.

2-Muhammed (peace be upon him) is His prophet.

God

The faith in the oneness of Allah is the most essential principle in Islam. Allah, unlike His creatures, is a supreme being. He is eternal and has no beginning and no end. He has neither given birth nor been given birth. He is free from all kinds of defects, possesses endless omnipotence, knows, hears and sees everything.

Prophets

Prophets are the messengers between Allah and man. Allah chose the most meritorious ones of His servants for this duty. Allah Almighty has from time to time sent prophets to man to guide them and to let them hear His orders and prohibitions through them. Muhammed (peace be upon him) is the last prophet He chose among man. Muhammed (peace be upon him) was sent to all the humanity. He is the best example equipped with good disposition and merits.

Fundamental Principles of Belief

The principles of belief can be summed up in six headings as follows:

1- To believe in the existence and oneness of Allah.

2- To believe in the angels of Allah.

3- To believe in the holy books of Allah.

4- To believe in the prophets of Allah.

5- To believe in the resurrection after death.

6- To believe in fate and that everything takes place according to Allah's wish.

WORSHIPS

Worship is the way to show our deep respect to the Creator and at the same time to express our indebtedness in return for the countless blessings supplied to us by Him.

Worship is performed to carry out Allah's command solely and to win His consent. Performing worship with such a good notion is the most beautiful medium to get a believer closer to Allah and the safest shelter which protects him (her) from discomforts.

Worship is performed the way Allah orders and the way the prophet teaches. There is no deity worth worshipping except Allah.

Man with the help of worship becomes free of material ambitions, evil thoughts, negative approaches and behavior, gets better spiritually and ripens morally and becomes Allah's beloved servant. In the Holy Koran Allah Almighty states:

"O mankind! Worship your lord. Who hath created you and those before you, so that ye may ward off (evil,)." (The Cow21)

MAIN WORSHIPS

1- Prayer

It is the kind of worship carried out at five certain hours every day. Besides the daily worship there are also prayers carried out with congregation every Friday and twice a year on Bairam days.

Prayer is the best indication of being a good servant to the Great Creator.

At prayer a muslim enjoys the spiritual happiness caused by being in Allah 's presence and gets exalted spiritually by keeping oneself away from worldly concerns.

To perform a prayer it is necessary to wash certain parts of the body (like hands, face and feet), This is called "ablution". The body, the clothes that are worn and the place where prayer is performed have to be clean, in addition.

Prayer, by placing the feeling of responsibility in their hearts, purifies man out of all kinds of bad feelings and thoughts and by putting their behaviors under control and preventing them from committing badness exalts man morally.

In the Holy Koran Allah Almighty states:

"Establish worship. Worship preserveth from lewdness and iniquity." (The Spider 45)

The place where muslims perform prayers in congregation is called mosque (cami) and mescid (very small mosquelike place). Mosques and mescids are at the same time places where knowledge and information about religion and morals and training are given to muslims.

When the prayer time comes, "azan" is recited aloud from the minarets. Azan is the call to inform muslims about the prayer times. There is usually "a minaret" next to mosques from where azan is recited aloud. This is a religious tradition which goes back to the early days of the religion. There are, of course, mosques without minarets, too.

Prayer can be performed alone outside mosques or in mosques in congregation under the guidance of a religious leader (imam). But the Friday prayer and Bairam prayers can only be performed in congregation. A muslim can submit his (her) wishes directly to Allah Almighty while praying. He (she) asks of Allah to forgive the sins he (she) has committed, without the interference of anyone as a mediator.

The person who leads muslims in prayers is called "imam".

The special place in front of the congregation in mosques where imam stands is called "niche" (mihrap).

In mosques there is a "pulpit" (kürsü) from where imam preaches muslims and there is also another platform (minber) with stairs where imam reads the sermon at the Friday prayer and Bairam prayers.

2- Fasting

It is a month-long worship which is observed every year in the lunar month of Ramadan during which muslims abstain from eating, drinking and sexual desires from dawn to dusk.

Fasting strengthens volition by taming one's real self and so gives power to resist bad habits.

Allah Almighty states in the Holy Koran:

" O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil).(The Cow 183)

Fasting is a training of morals and behavior which improves the feelings of love, compassion and mercy and purifies soul of evils.

Besides, it is a known fact that fasting is a very good practice for health. This is also accepted in the medical world.

Concerning this Muhammed (peace be upon him) said:

"If you fast, you feel healthy."

3- Legal Alms (Zekat)

It is a worship observed by rich people by giving a certain amount of their certain possessions and money, every year to the people in need.

Zekat (Legal Alms) is a social philanthropic system that provides peace and solidarity in the society.

Zekat (Legal Alms) decreases the ambition for money and by improving the mutual love and respect among individuals prevents the enmity against wealth.

Thus it plays a major role in keeping the society in peace and safety.

4- Pilgrimage (Hac)

It is a worship performed once in a lifetime by the people who are in good health and can afford it. To perform it they pay a visit to the holy places on certain days.

Everybody wears the same type of clothing while performing this worship and this reminds of the day when we are in Allah's presence after death. It

makes it possible for believers to turn to Allah in a sincere way and to ask for being forgiven and acceptance of their repentance. Seeing the holy place gives man a spiritual excitement and strengthens the religious feelings. Pilgrimage which unites the people of different countries, colors and languages who come to the holy places about one goal, is an international assembly from social point of view.

As seen worships in Islam aim at maturing man morally and making them reach goodness and perfect and at the same time making it possible for the society to live in peace by purifying man of evils.

ETHIC

Ethic has prime importance in the religion of Islam. The goal of Islam is to mature man by making them have beautiful morals.

The prophet of Islam, Muhammed (peace be upon him) said:

"I was sent to complete the beautiful morals."

A muslim is valued by the beauty of his morals. With regard to this the Prophet said that those with beautiful morals were the nicest to him. When asked "Who are the most beloved servants with Allah? he answered " Those with the most beautiful morals.

Love and Mercy

Human love occupies a significant place in the foundation of moral behaviors. Therefore, one of the conditions of being a mature muslim is this human love.

Muhammed (peace be upon him) whose heart was full of love said:

"You cannot be mature believers unless you love one another."

The sign of love in hearts is to do people kindness and to treat people with mercy and compassion.

Muhammed (peace be upon him) said:

"Allah has mercy on those who have mercy on others."

In Islam, the term of love and mercy includes not only the love and mercy for man but the love and mercy for all the creatures as well.

Muhammed (peace be upon him) informed the humanity: "A woman who causes the death of a cat by keeping it hungry will be punished whereas a sinner who gives water to a thirsty dog will be relieved of his sins by Allah because of his behavior.

Tolerance

A muslim is broad-minded and merciful.

Allah describes the true believers as:

"Those who control their wrath and are forgiving toward mankind. (The Family of Imran 134)

Muhammed (peace be upon him) is the most beautiful model regarding tolerance.

Muslims have to treat with tolerance not only their

muslim brothers and sisters but the people of other religions as well.

Honesty

Honesty is an important moral rule. In the Holy Koran Allah states:

"So tread thou the straight path as thou art commanded." (Hud 112

Justice and Human Rights

Respect to justice and human rights is one of the invariable principles of Islam.

Allah Almighty states:

".. and act equitably. Allah loveth the equitable."

(The Private Apartments 9)

In the historical speech Muhammed (peace be upon him) made before more than one hundred muslims in 632, he declared to the humanity that:

All human beings are equal, their lives, property and chastity are sacred and they are protected against all kinds of assaults.

These are the untouchable rights of man. A muslim has to respect the rights of other people and refrain oneself from the behaviors that might damage others. Yet this is not enough. Being a mature muslim depends on the desire a person has for others for the things he wants for himself.

Muhammed (peace be upon him) said:

"None of you can be regarded as a real believer unless he (she) loves for his (her) brother (sister) the thing he (she) loves for himself (herself)."

Women and Children in Islam

To treat children with love and affection, to handle women kindly are of the moral principles strongly advised by Islam. Muhammed (peace be upon him) said:

"Those who do not have mercy on the young and do not respect the old are not of us."

"Those of you who treat women most kindly are the most beneficial."

To Work

Our religion orders us to work and to earn. Being lazy is contradictory to Islam. Allah states in the Holy Koran:

"... and neglect not thy portion of the world.

(The Story 77)

A good muslim is the one who works for both this world and the next world. Muhammed (peace be upon him) said about this:

"Those of you who do not neglect the next world for this world and vice versa and work for both and are not burden on others are the most beneficial."

Cleanlines

Cleanliness is one of the most important characteristics of Islam. It means both physical and spiritual cleanliness.

A muslim is a person who keeps his heart free from bad feelings and thoughts and keeps his (her) environment and his (her) body away from dirty things.

Allah Almighty states in the Holy Koran:

"Truly Allah loveth those who turn unto Him, and loveth those who have a care for cleanness. (The Cow 222)

About the importance of cleanliness Muhammed (peace be upon him) said:

Cleanliness is of belief.

Cleanliness is half of belief.

Keep your environment clean.

THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS

The principles of Islam that seek the happiness of man are summed up in these two sentences:

1- Respect to Allah's order.

2- Compassion and mercy on His creatures.

True muslim is the one who practises them. This is the path to the eternal happiness in the next