

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.)

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FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

BY

KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

Founder of

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ISLAM—PEACE AND WAY TO PEACE

ISLAM as a Faith is constituted of five principles: the formula of the Faith (Kalima Tayyiba) Prayer, Fasting, Almsgiving, and Pilgrimage.

Islam, as it literally signifies, is a religion of peace, and through these above-noted five principles it has tried to establish peace in the world and the hereafter, which only can be the goal of a religion from God.

Various rules have been laid down by different religious systems of the world for the attainment of the above object, but the religion which has been expounded by Muhammad (peace be upon him!), glories in the fact that it sets human reason as the test of its beneficence. The following looks very impressive and fascinating—in words—“Blessed are they who are peacemakers.” But just to say so is one thing, and to plan and scheme out ways and means whereby peace and fellowship may become the practical rule of human life is another. Islam gives due weight to human nature when it attempts to solve those difficulties which hamper the growth of any useful institution in the world. Accordingly, if we desire to secure peace, we must in the first place contemplate those circumstances which destroy it. Wars, private or national rivalries, and crimes are but the synonyms of disorder and the absence of peace.

THE PROBLEM OF "THINE AND MINE"

All of them have sprung from a common source, the one perennial root-cause, *viz.* "This is thine, and that is mine." The successive stages in the life of a family would perhaps furnish a very fitting illustration of my theme. There is a time up to which all the children in a family represent the various parts of one body-politic (family). The parents look to all their needs, and the affection they have one to the other is the common bond which unites them into one single whole. But the solidarity of this whole begins to be a little shaken when this passion for "thine and mine" begins to find expression - however feebly - in their little acts and words. This is the beginning of what causes disintegration in the midst of not one family, but a larger social unit as well, *viz.*, a nation or a community, and its still larger prototype the whole human race. The wars of one nation against another only represent on a very large scale the petty jealousy between one member of a family against another. The self-same motive of "thine and mine" being responsible everywhere.

Similarly we find this idea of "thine and mine" as the chief incentive to all civil crimes. We wish to possess the belongings of others by questionable means, and it leads to crime. Usurpation, theft, fraud are only different forms of unfair means which we use to convert "thine" into "mine" in a wrong way.

Let us enlarge our view-point and study the act of a whole nation in this light. We should find that the real aim of all wars and international rivalries lies in the motive of the rapacity of one to dispossess the other of a tempting prize, which may be a large piece of unexploited land, some trading interest, or any other similar object. However insignificant this source of temptation, the devastation and bloodshed which results from them is often appalling. Consequently the first concern of an institution aiming at the establishment of peace in the world should in the first place, be to attempt most seriously to solve this problem of "thine and mine." For where we find this motive of "thine and mine" in its abnormal aspects giving rise to quarrels and wars, we find it also the fountain-head of all our good activities. It is both a blessing and a curse, and the way how it might only be the former, and never the latter, is the duty and province of the religion from God to discover and expound. This idea of "thine and mine" is not altogether valueless. It creates, as a matter of fact, that instinct which makes people active in the hope that the reward of these activities would be theirs. If there were any law by which the price of John's labour could be handed over to James, the end of civilization would not be difficult to see. Any attempt to do away entirely with this personal motive of "thine and mine" would be a failure. Those who have tried to do so have miserably failed in their

efforts. They denude men from the very incentive to action. This unnatural phase of Socialism has proved to be its grave in the West. We read the same about Jesus Christ. He was a true prophet of God. He believed and tried to preach that all the bloodshed in the world was entirely due to the presence of the idea of "thine and mine." But he did not succeed in his mission. The age, perhaps, was too sordid to receive his message. He was taken to be a seditionist by his own men and a violator of the *status quo*. Candidly speaking, if what we find in the New Testament be taken as a genuine record of Jesus, his compatriots were not to be blamed too much if they could not see their way to endorse the visionary view of the dreamer. Leave apart others; will those who have undertaken to shepherd his flock care to act upon his following views?

"And he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither have two coats apiece.

"And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide, and thence depart.

"And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them."—ST. LUKE ix. 3—5.

The prime need of the world is not the ideal in its abstract form, but it is, on the other hand, the laying down of such practical rules and guidances—a

course of life-discipline which may enable us to read abstract ideas in the terms of actualities. The work of a reformer or preacher should not end at "Blessed-are-those-who-are-peacemakers," but should advance into the realm of practicalities and soar into regions of realities. It should definitely direct how this peace is to be made and the peace-making psychology created. That this highly personal motive "thine and mine" be allowed to work within desirable limits, and a rule of actual practice be brought into existence, it is desirable that practical ways be suggested which would regulate the activities of human life. Instead of bringing about equilibrium in the possession of individuals by means of force, it would be much better to inspire them with the spirit of charity and self-sacrifice. To deprive people of the fruits of their honest labour would not only be unnatural and preposterous, but freeze as well the very spirit of energy and bring the wheel of civilization to immobility. The world would be more prosperous and peaceful, too, if all were allowed to reap fully the benefits of their work, with a strong sense created in them to part voluntarily with their earnings in relief of distress and misery. This will chasten the evil aspect of the spirit of "thine and mine" into a blessing.

This was a big problem, and the Last of the Prophets came to solve it. He lays down through these five pillars of Islam a course of life which,

without killing the instinct of “ thine and mine ”—the sum-total of human consciousness—atrophies its evil consequences.

Nothing would deter us from giving up our all for the sake, and to win the goodwill of our object of adoration. Islam points that object to be Allah and it expects its votaries to stint nothing in all that they possess to win the goodwill of One who is the Best, the Holiest, and in every respect most fit to be the object of every true human devotion. “ By no means shall you attain to righteousness until you spend (benevolently) out of what you have ”—so says the Qur-ān.

Let me now show you a few of those things we love and for the achievement of which this guiding motive of “ thine and mine ” becomes a source of disaster rather than that of bliss for men, and makes them authors of limitless evil and harm. Money, as we all know, is the great token of exchange for everything in the world, and is obtained by spending one’s time in the best possible manner. Time itself means money. We need time to accomplish all great purposes. None of our great national triumphs would be realized until we spent our time freely in their pursuit. Next after time come those means which satisfy our physical hunger: the provisions which sustain life, and keep the vigour of life alive in us. After these are the needs of our body in the way of apparel. Next in the upward scale is our want of

conjugal life. We are animals, though rational, and our natural state of life after we are grown up demands a reasonable satisfaction of our human instincts which directs us to find in a conjugal life the best form of a happy and contented life; as a necessary corollary to the last mentioned is our need of finding means to successfully bring up our children and to provide all that is needful for their future happiness in life. The last great object of our attachment and devotion is our nation and the country to which we belong. All of these more or less directly move our activities in life, and become useful or harmful to other fellow-men according to the degree and interest with which they are served. The passion for our country as for instance, which we designate patriotism, has always been the cause of immense blood-spilling and ruin when it began to work beyond the limit of self-determination. Let it not follow from this that the love of one's self, one's belongings, one's wife and children, and of one's country, are nothing but evil. Far from it. On the other hand, man being a social creature depends for his well-ordered and progressive existence on these essential main-springs of his activities. The harm lies in his attachment to these interests to such a degree as would lead him to trample on the rights of others. A religion under which the rich man is confronted with the insuperable difficulty of making the camel pass through the eye of the needle before he can enter the kingdom of

heaven has never appealed to humanity. It would cause inertia and lethargy as it did in the days of the Middle Ages. We need a religion from God which may create the happy means and save us from the disasters of going to extremes. Religion without such solution is myth and fable and of no consequence to mankind. Mere belief in certain events in the history of the world is only fetishism in different form.

A true religion would create in us a spirit which if on the one hand would induce us to be ever-active in winning riches of life, it on the other would also make us ready to part with them in making others happy. It should create in us a spirit of self-sacrifice—making it meritorious in our eyes to spend our earnings in the interest of the other. Man is a worshipping animal. He has always adored the Unseen, and has ever been ready to give up everything near and dear to him to please the Deity. Islam has on the one hand, therefore, prescribed a course of discipline under which a Muslim would learn to give up his time, his wealth, his eatables and drinks, and his family and country attachments in the way of God, and on the other hand the religion of God impresses on the minds of its votaries that the cause of Allah is another name for the cause of humanity.

PRAYER

In the first place, Islam enjoins upon me to abandon all my worldly occupations, however

absorbing they be, at the time of offering my devotion and my duty to my Lord. I am commanded to rise very early in the morning and after making proper ablutions to stand in the Holy Presence of my Maker. Similarly I am commanded to repeat these exercises five times a day, in order that they may serve as constant reminders to me of my duty to spend my time in interest other than mine. If these holy, selfless, and pious activities so many times a day become the regular course of my life, it would not be a difficult thing for me to spend my time to help the happiness of others at the interest of my own business.

FASTING

In reality Islam has, through its rational teachings, induced its votaries not only to abandon that unlawful to them, but even to give up what otherwise rightfully belongs to them in the hope that it may tend to the welfare and happiness of others. For one who has become accustomed under the inspiration of Islam to take such a view of his relations to his mundane connections and belongings, it is never difficult to manifest a spirit of utter self-sacrifice in the cause of the Lord. For how utterly impossible it becomes for a man to acquire by foul means what he would cheerfully give up for the service of others, though his own by all laws of justice and equity. Here is the way how Islam meets and provides for the case. It is quite admissible for one to eat and drink

according to his means, but when we see that this same eating and drinking is given up for some time by a man through fear of nobody except for the love of God, then certainly it would be too hard for him to even over-indulge in it under ordinary circumstances. Likewise one has every right to enjoy the company and society of one's wife, but when he gives it up within prescribed time during the month of Ramadan, without any compulsion, he truly has developed his character to the extent of not even casting a lustful glance on any other woman in ordinary times. Prayer and fasting therefore are the first rungs on the ladder by which a genuine votary climbs higher and higher. Pass your eye down all the 90 per cent of the crimes which darken our society, and you will surely find a cure for all of them in the simple expression spoken by Holy Prophet Muhammad, who says: "If people would become responsible as to the right use of what lies between their lips and their feet, I stand responsible for their entry into Paradise." Islam prescribes the cure for this in fasting; which does not aim merely at this that we should torture our body, but that we should cultivate the habit of disallowing to ourselves the pleasures that are not ours, by disallowing to ourselves for the love of God those that are rightfully ours.

POOR-RATE

Every Muslim is expected to take stock of his savings once a year, and has to disburse $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.,

of this as "alms." Charity takes two different forms in Islam. One sort is optional and the other compulsory. The last named is called "zakát," the expenditure of which is not permissible to the payer himself. The "zakát," has to be paid into a fund under the supervision of a committee, who make use of it for eight different purposes as laid down in the Qur-án in this wise : —

"Alms are only for the poor and the needy, and the officials (appointed over) them, and those whose hearts are made to incline to truth and the ransoming of captives, and those in debt and in the way of Allah" : An ordinance from Allah, and Allah is knowing, wise (9 : 60).

The expression "in the way of God," which is the translation of "Fí Sabílláh" in the text, in the above verse signifies the dissemination of Islam and its truths to the non-Muslim. Similarly the fourth item of the disbursement of "zakát" refers to another aspect of Islamic propaganda. "Those whose hearts are made to incline to truth" are those who come with their adhesion to Islam. Their conversion to the faith makes them an object of persecution, and sometimes deprives them of the comfort they have been used to. A portion of the "zakát" should go to guard the interest of and secure happiness to these new members of the Muslim fraternity. Thus the verse clearly lays a duty on every Muslim to devote the quarter of his "zakát" in the spread of

Islam. Besides "zakát" other alms are undefinable. In the words of the Holy Prophet: "From giving a smile to one in distress, to devoting every thing dear to you in the cause of humanity," is optional charity.

The provisions of old age pensions, parish relief measures and other similar means of saving indigent members of a society from the ravages of poverty and want are but replicas of Islamic provisions of poor law.

It was Islam alone before all other religions of the world which systematized "alms" and gave charity the prestige and form of an institution. When asked what was the ultimate aim of "zakát," Holy Muhammad replied that it was a means whereby the rich had to give something out of their opulence for the help of those in need. Hence it is that by means of prayer, fasting, and alms, a Muslim, through giving up for the help and succour of others all that does belong to him, learns to practise rejecting all that does not belong to him lawfully. In this respect Islam is a wonderful system indeed.

I have pointed it out above that men's undue attachment to their worldly possessions, their relations and other objects, have been the fertile source of all manner of disorder in the world. To adequately meet this abuse, the tenet of Pilgrimage is laid down. Under this a Muslim has to undertake once in his

life a journey to Mecca.* He learns through undergoing all the hardships of such a long, arduous journey how it is to be deprived of the company of those near and dear to him. At some distance from the Holy Temple of the Lord all pilgrims have to divest themselves of their ordinary apparel and to don a uniform which is same for all. One sheet covers the upper body and the other the legs; and whatever the status of the votary the uniformity of the attire makes them all one and equal. I reserve a detailed description of other features of the "Haj" for a later article.

What I meant to show here was this, that through this Muslim institution the narrow patriotism of our day loses some of its worst aspects, and our feelings of love of our country become softened and regulated. Briefly, to revert to my original theme, Islam aims at the establishment of the real peace in the world, and to destroy every trace of all that tends to weaken such aim. Islam tries to show not only what real peace is, but also what constitutes and brings forth real peace. The recognition of "thine and mine" which brings forth happiness and comfort, also deters its proper course. Some remedy was needed to chasten it into something noble, and divest it of its abuse.

* See "Mecca in the Days of Pilgrimage," by the same author, price 2d.