

Fast 19: Fundamentals of Islam — 1

- The lengthy verse below from ch. 2 gives a list of the fundamentals of Islam:

<p>“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the traveller and to those who ask and to set slaves free and keeps up prayer and gives the due charity (<i>zakat</i>); and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict. These are they who are truthful; and these are they who keep their duty.” — ch. 2, v. 177</p>	<p>لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ ﴿١٧٧﴾</p>
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- Before this verse and after this verse various rules and regulations of Islam are laid down which have a physical form. Before it, the matters discussed are the direction to be faced while praying, pilgrimage, and lawful and forbidden foods. After this verse, the matters discussed include punishment for murder, making wills, fasting, fighting battles in self-defence, and pilgrimage again. Although all these teachings have a spiritual aspect, a Muslim carries them out physically and in a bodily form.
- This verse occurs in the middle of the mention of such issues in order to draw attention to the importance of the spirit of religion, its fundamentals, and the wider perspective of following religion.
- It begins by saying that turning your face in one direction or another for prayer does not, by itself, make anyone a good or righteous person. In addition, it may be referring to a statement in an earlier verse:

<p>“And Allah’s is the East and the West, so whichever way you turn, there is Allah’s purpose.” — ch. 2, v. 115</p>	<p>وَاللَّهُ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيُّمَا تَوَلَّوْا فَمُوجُهُ اللَّهِ</p>
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This is taken to be a prophecy that Muslims would conquer lands east and west. After the Holy Prophet’s death, whether Muslims turned east or west out of Arabia they were victorious. The verse 177 above indicates that conquest of lands and countries, turning your faces east and west, does not bring righteousness, which is your real aim.

More generally, it is emphasizing that performance of any religious duty in the physical sense, by movements and postures of the body in prayer and pilgrimage, or by stopping eating and drinking during fasting, or reciting the Quran by the tongue, does not by itself bring the person to righteousness.

- Then it tells Muslims what is righteousness. For idiomatic reasons the wording is translated as: “but *righteous* is the one who ...”. Literally it says: “but *righteousness* is the one who ...”. Obviously, a person cannot be “righteousness”. But this is a style of expression in Arabic, that a person is called by the name of a quality when he exemplifies that quality. In the Quran, it has been said about a certain person that he was “unrighteous conduct” (ch. 11, v. 46), meaning that he was a prime example of unrighteous behaviour. So what is meant here is that a person who fulfills the requirements of this verse, 177, becomes a living example of righteousness.
- First, the fundamental beliefs of Islam are mentioned, that for a person to become righteous he must hold these beliefs. But in the Quran the term “belief” means not only saying that you *believe* that something is true, but that you also *act* as if it is true. At one place the Quran says:

<p>“O you who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book which He has revealed to His Messenger and the Book which He revealed before.” — ch. 4, v. 136</p>	<p>يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَانكِتَبُوا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ عَلَىٰ رَسُولِهِ وَالْكِتَابَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ مِن قَبْلُ</p>
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What is the purpose of telling those “who believe” to “believe” in Allah etc.? It is to say that belief must not just remain a statement by word of mouth that you believe something. “O you who believe” must not remain at that level of belief. They need to believe in the full sense, which is that they must hold those beliefs *from their hearts*, not just on their tongues, and they must *act* according to those beliefs.

- The five fundamental beliefs of Islam are listed here. How these should be manifested in our lives practically is as follows:
 - The first is belief in Allah. Muslims are told in the Quran to say:

<p>“(We take) Allah’s colour, and who is better than Allah at colouring, and we are His worshippers.” — ch. 2, v. 138</p>	<p>صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ</p>
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To worship Allah means to imbue yourself with His colour. So just as He is *Rabb-ul-'Alameen*, Who meets all our needs for our development, we should try to help other people to make progress in their lives. Just as He is Merciful, we should be merciful

to others. He is *Maliki yaum-id-deen*, the great Judge who applies corrective measures to people for their own benefit, so we too should try to correct others where they have gone wrong, but do it only out of justice and for their benefit, not to demean them or look down upon them. Just as Allah is forgiving, we too should be forgiving to others, as the Quran says:

“And pardon and overlook. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.” — ch. 24, v. 22

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾