

4.1. FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The following constitute the Five Pillars and the core tenets of Islam:

4.1.1. Iman and Shahadah, Unity of Allah and His Attributes

4.1.2. Salaah (Prayers)

4.1.3. Zakah (Poor Due)

4.1.4. Saum (Fasting)

4.1.5. Hajj Pilgrimage to Makkah

Prophet Muhammad(saws) also stressed that “Islam is built upon the following five pillars: testifying that there is no God except Allah and that Muhammad is his Messenger, the establishment of prayer, the giving of Zakat, the fast of Ramadhan and the pilgrimage to Makkah” (Sayyed Sabiq –op-cit p: 108-As-Siyam)

Piety is the essence of Islam. It implies God – Consciousness and that a Muslim should always act righteously for he/she is accountable to Allah (SWT) for all his/her earthly deeds. Man is a Vice-Gerent of Allah (swt) on earth and in physical form he has also imbibed the divine spirit. Consequently he/she must strive to harmonize the physical and spiritual demands of his existence and should make a conscious effort to strike a balance between the two. Human beings possess angelic qualities but they cannot rise to the status of angels; they have animal instincts as well but they should not enslave themselves to their animal desires and behave wildly and shamelessly.

The Five Pillars of Islam are divinely designed to constantly remind Muslims to move along the straight path, adhere to truth and justice, help the poor and the needy, be patient and persevere, maintain peace, unity and equality of mankind and fear Allah for,

nothing can be concealed and kept secret from Him. Allah is Supreme and His Authority stands unchallenged on the Earth, in the Heavens and in between. These Five Pillars, if practiced as prescribed with solemnity and sincerity, will ensure the purity of heart and mind, will maintain balance between spiritual and physical components of human needs and desires and finally will make man more human, nearer to God, will elevate his spiritual status and discipline his physical desires. They also bring about a healthy and meaningful interaction between religion and realities of life and blend them harmoniously. This naturally leads man to behave righteously. Prophet Muhammad(saws) Siyam)

4.1.1. Creed of Muslims: Iman and Kalemahs, Unity of Allah and His Attributes

1. The Creed of Muslims is unequivocally, concisely and categorically proclaimed in I'maan (articles of faith) and in Kalemahs (the Words).
2. I'maan (Articles of faith) proclaims the belief of Muslims in the Unity of Allah and His Attributes, in all divinely commissioned prophets and in the Day of Judgment when all the dead will be resurrected. They are expressed in brief (Mujmal) as well as in detail (Mufassal):
 - A. 1. **I'maan Mujmal (Expression of Faith in brief):** "I proclaim faith in Allah as He is with all the names and attributes and accept and submit to all His commands unreservedly".
 - A. 2 **I'man Mufassal (Expression of Faith in detail):** "I proclaim firm belief in Allah, His Angels, His books, His Messengers, destiny in the good of it and evil of it from Allah the most High, and in resurrection after death."
 - B. **The Kalimahs (The Words):** The Kalimah's constitute a basic component of the creed of Muslims. They pronounce and assert the Unity of Allah and stress on the prophethood of Muhammad (saws). There are five categories of Kalimahs but the two most recited by Muslims are Kalimah-at –Tayyib and Kalema al Shahadah. For details about Kalimahs see monograph No.2 Basic Tenets of Islam.

B.1 Kalimah-at Tayyib: There is no god except Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.:

B.2 Kalemahat Shahadah: "I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, the One and none is His partner nor I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger."

C. Oneness or Unity (Wahdaniyat) of Allah and His Attributes:

C.1 Unity of Allah:

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are considered to be the three monotheistic religions and believe in the Unity of Allah or God.

Judaism and Christianity have compromised with the concept of Unity Allah. The Jews consider that Ozair was the son of Allah. Similarly Christians worship Jesus as the son of Allah (God) 9:30

The Islamic concept of Allah is undiluted and uncorrupted. The Muslims firmly believe that there is only one God and do not associate any partners with Him. The Qur'an asserts: "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah; the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like Him." (112:1-4).

The Qur'an asserts and Muslims believe that Allah (swt) is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe: The Qur'an categorically declares: "He initiates creation, then reproduces it: that is easier for Him. His is the most exalted attribute in heaven and earth. He is the Mighty, the wise one." (30:28-29).

This is forcefully reiterated in another verse of the Qur'an "He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. How could He have a son when He has no consort? He created all things and has knowledge of all things. That is Allah your Lord. There is no god but Him, the Creator of all things. Therefore worship Him. He is the Guardian of all things. (6:100-101)

- Allah is thus Eternal without a beginning and Everlasting without an end.

- Allah is Unique. He is incomparable and there is nothing like Him in the Universe (42:11)
- He is beyond comprehension. “No imagination can conceive of Him, and no understanding can comprehend (Shaykh Muhammad Yahya Al Ninowwy).
- He is attributed to life and is not subject to death (Shaykh Muhammad Bin Yaha Al-Ninowwy)
- “He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth! When He decrees a thing, He needs only to say, “Be” and there it becomes” (2:117).
- Allah is supreme as creator, the best of all the creators. His creations are perfect and flawless. The perfection of God’s creation is emphasized in Surah-al-Mulk (Chapter 67 Sovereignty). The Qur’an reveals ‘Allah created seven heavens, one above the other. Do you find any flaw in this divine creation? Examine closely with your eyes, can you detect any breach in the sky? Your eyes will be tired and weary and will not be able to detect any defect (67:3-4).
- The idea that the Universe is created by a single supreme power with limitless authority is also very logical. The harmony and the orderliness that we find in the universe can be accomplished only if there is a single controlling authority. There will be total chaos in the event of multiple authorities as the Qur’an logically points out “If there were many gods, behold each God would have taken away what he had created and some would have Lorded over others.” (23:91)

D. SHIRK (Joining Partners with Allah) is a heinous and unpardonable sin – Those who commit this sin will be severely punished.

Thus Allah is the only creator and sustainer of the Universe. He has no partners in creation and does not need any ones help in his creation. He is all knowledgeable and the source of all Knowledge. He is the source of all enlightenment. He commands all power and total authority on all affairs on this

Earth, in the Heaven and in between. "He has only to command, "Be" and it is done. Glory to Him, who has control of all things." (36:82-83)

Allah is thus omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. It is, therefore, strictly forbidden in the Qur'an to asocial partners with Him and it is a great sin to do so. "The Qur'an stresses that "serve no other gods besides Allah, lest you be despised and forsaken. Your Lord has enjoined you to worship none but Him". (17:22)

It is forcefully reiterated in another verse "Invoke no other god with Allah. "There is no other god but Him. All things shall perish except His face." (28:88). There are numerous verses in the Qur'an where this point has been emphasized. Finally it has been declared a heinous sin, which will not be forgiven. All the Prophets right from Nuh (AS) to Prophet Muhammad warned against committing such a sin.

Prophet Isa (Jesus) (AS) sternly warned Bani Israel "Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord, he that worships other gods shall be in the fire. Unbelievers are those that say "Allah is one of three. There is but one God. If they do not desist from saying this they shall be sternly punished." (5:72-73). Luqman, a wise man, lived probably during the period of Aad. He lived to a very old age and besides being a wise man he was also respectfully called "Muammar" (old). He admonished his son "my son associate none with "Allah for to associate Him with others is a grievous sin." (31:13)

- The Qur'an categorically warns that associating other gods with Allah is Shirk a heinous sin that shall not be pardoned at all on the Day of Judgment, while

others may be pardoned (4:47). This stern warning is reiterated: “Allah will not forgive setting up partners with Him. He will forgive when He will, all other sins. He that sets up partners with Allah has strayed far from the truth.” (4:116)

- **Climax of Allah’s Compassion:**

Although Allah (swt) is strict in punishing persons committing heinous sins but

He is also the Most Merciful and Compassionate:

The Qur’an opens stressing the compassionate attribute of Allah: “In the name of Allah the most gracious, the most merciful” (Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim).

Surah (chapter) 55 is titled “The Most Gracious (Ar-Rahman).

The sins committed by human beings, including that of “Shirk” i.e. associating other gods with Allah, cannot be concealed from Allah for “He is all seeing, all hearing and all knowing”. Besides He is aware of our thoughts even in the inner core of our hearts.

The Qur’an reveals that “Allah knows the mysteries of the heaven and the earth. He knows that which is in men’s hearts” (35:38)

Despite this perfect knowledge of deeds of all human beings, Allah, almighty is always in a generous and compassionate mood to pardon even the greatest sins if it is sincerely repented and firm commitment made not to commit the sin again.

It may thus be observed that wherever in the Qur’an there is an assertion of divine wrath or anger it is immediately followed by an equally strong expression of divine compassion and mercy. As for instance addressing Prophet Muhammad(saws),Allah declares emphatically “Nothing has been said to you that has not been said to other apostles before you. Your Lord is forgiving but stern in retribution.” (41:43)

- In another verse it is reiterated “Swift is your Lord in retribution; yet He is Forgiving, Merciful”. (6:165).

- If the repentance is sincere Allah will transform repentants' evil deeds with virtue. "He that repents and does good deeds truly returns to Allah, for then Allah will change his sins to good actions. Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful" (25:70).
- This generosity towards human beings is highlighted in the Qur'anic verse which declares: "If you avoid the grave sins you are forbidden, we shall pardon your evil deeds and admit you to Paradise" (4:31)
- The climax of unbounded generosity of Allah is strongly expressed thus "O My servants, you who have sinned against your souls, do not despair of Allah's mercy for he forgives all sins. He is the Forgiving one, the Merciful. Turn your Lord in repentance and bow to His will." (39:53-54).

- **ATTRIBUTES OF ALLAH (SWT)**

Allah (SWT) has 99 names which describe his attributes but the most eloquent expression of His attributes are in the following verses in four different chapters of the Glorious Qur'an.

1. Surah Al-Baqarah (Chapter) 2, Verse 255: (The Throne Verses – or Ayat al Kursi)

"Allah: there is no god but Him, the Living, the Eternal one. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. His is what the heavens and the earth contain. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows all about the men at present and in the future. They can grasp only that part of His knowledge, which He wills. His throne is as vast as the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not weary Him. He is the most exalted, the supreme in glory."

2. Surah Ali-Imran(Chapter) 3: Verses 26-27

"Say Lord, Sovereign of all sovereignty. You bestow sovereignty on whom you will, and take it away from whom you please; you exalt whomever you will please and abase whomever you like. In your hand lies all that is good; You have power over all things. You cause the night to pass into the day, and the day into the

night; you bring forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. You give sustenance to whom you please without measure.” (3:26-27)

3. Surah- Al Noor (Chapter) 24: Verse 35

“Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth. His light may be compared to a niche that enshrines a lamp, the lamp within a glass which (looks) as if it were a brilliant star. (It is) lit from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western. Its very oil would almost shine forth, though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allah guides to His light whom He wills. Allah sets forth parables for men. He has knowledge of all things.” (24:35)

4. Surah Al Hashr (Chapter) 59: Verses 22 to 24

He is Allah, besides whom there is no other god. He knows the visible and the unseen. He is the compassionate and the merciful. He is Allah, besides Him there is no other god. He is the sovereign Lord the Holy one, the giver of peace, the keeper of faith, the Guardian, the mighty one, the all powerful and the most high! Exalted be He above the partners they ascribe to Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Originator, the Modeler. His are the most gracious names, All that is in heaven and earth glorifies Him. He is the mighty the wise one. (59: 22-24)

Signs about the Existence God

Allah is not physically present whom we can see and talk to. He was not even visible to His Prophets who received their inspirations and divine guidance through angels. Prophet Musa (Moses) was the only Prophet with whom Allah directly communicated without being visible. There are however so many indications, distinct and clear, that we can clearly visualize the presence and existence of God without ever sighting Him. For instance:

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of day and night, there are indeed signs for men of understanding.” (3:190)

“If Allah were to make the night perpetual to the Day of Judgment, what god is there other than Allah to give you Light of day. Similarly if Allah were to make

the day perpetual who other than Allah can bring back night for you to rest.”
(28:71-72)

If the earth ceases to revolve round the sun there will be no change of seasons, who other than Allah can make the earth to revolve again.

The Qur’an pointedly draws our attention to the rain water from clouds and the wood that feeds the fire and rhetorically asserts: “Consider the water which you drink. Was it you that brought it down from the cloud or We. If We wanted We could have made it salty. Why then do you not Thank Me? Similarly, observe the fire which you light. Is it you that create its wood or We”. (56: 68 to 73)

It is Allah (SWT) who has gifted human beings with multiple of resources for their benefit, comfort and convenience. He has given them wisdom also to utilize these resources. Human beings should make the optimum use of these resources. The Qur’an states “Are you harder to create than the heaven which He has built? He raised it high as an arch and perfected it, giving darkness to its light, and brought out sun to light the day. And the earth he expanded wide and stabilized it; and then drew from it water and pastures. He fixed the mountains and made them resources to be utilized by human beings and their cattle.”
(79:27 to 33).

“Among His signs is the fact that He has created you from dust; then you were propagated as human beings. Among His signs is the fact that He has created spouses for you from among yourselves so that you may console yourselves with them. He has planted affection and mercy between you; in that are signs for people who tend to ponder.” Among his signs are the creation of Heaven and Earth as well as diversity in your language and complexion (white, brown, black, yellow, etc.). In that are signs for men of knowledge. Among His signs is your sleeping by night, and by day your pursuit of His bounty. In that are signs for those who listen. Among His signs is how He shows lightning for both fear and hope. He sends down water from the sky so He may revive the earth with it following its death. In that are signs for people who reflect and rationalize.

Among His signs are in fact the earth and sky stand firm and fast by His command. Then whenever He calls you forth out of the earth once and for all, you will all come forth. To Him belongs everything that is in the heaven and earth, all are obedient to Him. (30:20-26).

4.1.2 Salaah (Prayers)

Next to Iman, Salaah or offering prayers five times daily is a fundamental obligatory component of Islam. It must be regularly offered and to ignore it deliberately is a major sin. The Qur'an categorically states "Surely salaahs are made obligatory for the believers at their prescribed times." (4:163)

Salaah was also made obligatory for all the prophets preceding Muhammad (saws). Ibrahim (Abraham) prayed "O my Rabb! Make me and my descendants establish salaah." (14:40).

Ishaq (Isaac) and Yaqoob (Jacob) son and grandson of Abraham respectively were also prophets. They were commanded by Allah (swt) to "establish salaah (prayers) and pay Zakah (poor due)". (21:73). Ismail, the elder son of Ibrahim and brother of Ishaq, also asked his people "to establish salah and give zakaah." (19:55). Musa (Moses) was also commanded by Allah "to establish salah for my remembrance." (20:14) and (10:87). By the command of Allah Isa (Jesus) spoke as an infant. Addressing a group of people he said that "Allah has commanded me to establish salah and give zakah so long as I live in this world." (19:31). Even the wise man Luqman, who lived during the period of Aad exhorted his son "to establish salah, enjoin good and forbid evil." (31"17)

This establishes the antiquity of Salaah as a way of prayer and submission to Allah (swt). It also speaks for the continuity and striking similarity in the obligatory nature of prayer divinely prescribed by Allah since the descent of Adam on earth.

Salah is the most visible facet of Islamic worship. The obligatory five times daily Salah was gifted to Prophet Muhammad (saws) during his ascent to the Heaven

(Me'raj) for the benefit of mankind. The benefits of performing five daily obligatory prayers have been raised tenfold as they will be treated by Allah (swt) equal to fifty obligatory salaahs.

According to Prophet Muhammad (saws) the whole world has been made a mosque to the Muslim for it can be offered at any neat and clean place, open or covered. "Wherever you may be and the prayer (salaah) becomes due, perform the prayer therefore the whole earth was made a Masjid." (Bukhari and Muslim and Tafsir Ibn Kabhir, vol. 2, p: 217).

A priest or a qualified Imam is not essential to lead the Salah. Any adult, sane Muslim, who knows the correct procedure, can lead the prayer. Salaah can be offered individually or collectively. It is however more rewarding to offer collectively under the leadership of an Imam, preferably in a mosque or any other neat or clean place, open or covered if a mosque is not accessible.

- One of the significant benefits of offering Salah regularly is that it "restrains from shameful and evil deeds." (Surah Al-Ankabut – 29:45) –
- Further regular and sincere offering of the Salah:
Strengthens belief in the existence, Unity, Eternity Supremacy of God and in His love, compassion and generosity toward mankind.
Salah establishes direct communion between individuals and God without any intermediary.
- Assists a person to attain high morality and act virtuously as ordained in the Qur'an.
Demonstrates true equality, unity, brotherhood among fellow human beings.
Provides an excellent lesson in discipline, total devotion and submission to the will of God in humility and without ego.

Salat ul Jumu'ah (Friday Congregational Prayer):

The Qur'an stresses the importance of the Friday congregational prayer and commands the believers to join this congregational prayer leaving aside all worldly business: "O believers! When the call for salah is made of Friday hasten

to the remembrance of Allah and cease your business. That is better for you if you but knew.” (62:9).

The importance of Friday prayers was also emphasized by the Prophet. He said: We are the last of the people to come but first on the day of resurrection. They received their books before and we got ours after them. This day was obligatory upon them but they differed concerning it but Allah guided us. Those people therefore follow us: the Jews tomorrow and the Christians day after tomorrow.” (Agreed upon: Muslim and Bukhari).

Efficacy of Salat-ul Jumu'ah, Reflection of a Jew Convert:

Said bin Hasan an Alexandrian Jew who converted to Islam in 1928 speaks of the sight of the Friday in a mosque as a determining factor in his conversion to Islam. During a serious illness, a voice told him in his dream to convert to Islam: “And when I entered the mosque and saw the Muslims standing rows like angels, I heard a voice speaking within me, This is the community whose coming was announced by the prophets (on whom be blessings and peace!); and when the preacher came forth clad in his black robe, a deep feeling of awe fell upon me And when he closed his sermon with the words ‘verily God enjoineeth justice and kindness and the giving of gifts to kinsfolk, and He forbiddeth wickedness and wrong oppression. He warneth you; haply you will be mindful’ (16:92). And when the prayer began, I was mightily uplifted, for the rows of the Muslims appeared to me like rows of angels, to whose prostrations and genuflections God Almighty was revealing Himself, and I heard a voice within me saying, ‘If God spoke twice unto the people of Israel throughout the ages, verily He speaketh unto this community in every time of the prayer.’ And I was convinced in my mind that I was created to be a Muslim.” (Thomas Arnold: The Spread of Islam in the world pp 417-418)

Salatul Eidain (The Eid Congregational Prayers):

Besides the five obligatory prayers including the Friday congregational prayers there are two annual congregational prayers called Eidain. One is Salatul Eid ul-

fitr which is offered immediately following the end of the month of fasting (Ramadhan) and the other is Salatul Eid Adha, commemorating the symbolic sacrifice of Ibrahim (Abraham) of his elder son Ismail, in submission to the command of Allah communicated in Ibrahim's dreams. The Eidain are wajib salah and are obligatory. Even women are encouraged to participate in these congregational prayers.

- The Muslims are advised to wear their best clothes in these salahs, apply the best perfume available and sacrifice the best animal. According to a tradition "the Prophet used to wear his most beautiful clothes in the Eidain and used to put on a special Yemeni cloak on these occasions." (Sunan Sayyed Sabiq, Salah volume, p

4.1.3. Zakah (Poor Due):

The Qur'an lays great emphasis on the payment of Zakah (the Poor Due) to help the poor and destitute members of the society. "And in their wealth there is due share for the beggar and the deprived." (51:19); "Those who believe and do righteous deeds, and establish regular prayers and give zakah will have their reward with their Lord." (2:277).

Payment of Zakah was also stressed by other prophets to their respective followers:

"O Muhammad! Also mentioned to them in the book the story of Ismail: He was always true to his promise, and he was a messenger of Allah and Prophet who enjoined upon his people prayer and Zakah, and found favour in his Sustainer's sight." (19:54)

"And remember We took a covenant from the children of Bani Israel: worship none but Allah, treat with kindness your parents and relatives, and orphans and destitute; speak fair with people; be steadfast in prayer and give zakah." (2:83);

Jesus said: "I am indeed a servant to Allah. He has given me revelation and made me a prophet and He has blessed wherever I be and has enjoined upon me prayer and Zakah as long as I live." (19:30)

The concept of Zakah expresses eloquently the ideological imperatives of a Islamic state. It projects a revolutionary ideological frontier, and unlike taxation which is resented by a large section of society, zakah is given willingly in order to earn the pleasure of Allah. As a fiscal policy it projects the moral and spiritual climate of members of the Islamic society and of the Islamic state. Zakah also reflects God's attribute of compassion in human beings His Vice-Gerent on earth, and is faithfully implanted in the psyche of Muslims the world over. It also imparts a sense of achievement because man feels that he has contributed to improve the quality of life of the poor, the needy and the destitute.

Zakah is one of the most important pillars of Islam and is obligatory on those who have income above a prescribed limit. Non-payment of the Zakah is a major sin. The literal meaning of Zakah is purification, which is of great spiritual significance. Wealth in Islam belongs to God and hence part of it has to be returned to Allah for the benefit of those who are less fortunately placed. The spiritual significance is that by parting with the designated portion the rest of the wealth is completely purified which he/she can use for his/her personal use with justification. It purifies an individual from his/her stinginess, greed and absence of remorse and sympathy for the poor and the destitute. The Zakah fund can minimize the sufferings of the needy, provide them with social security and can guarantee them a life of honour and dignity in the society they live. The payment of Zakah also removes from our heart, and minds, the feeling of greediness to acquire and amass wealth for only personal comforts and luxuries. It gives immense personal and spiritual satisfaction that through the payment of Zakah one has been able to share his wealth in order to mitigate the sufferings of others in need. Islam is the only religion where a share of the affluent section of the community is earmarked for the poor and the needy and for the disabled and deprived members of the community. It is an excellent system for the redistribution of wealth from the 'haves' to 'have-nots.'

Abu Bakr (RA) first Caliph of Islam treated Zakah almost equal to Salaah in importance. He refused to exempt some rebellious tribes from the payment Zakah and waged wars against them to enforce its payment.

An individual must possess a specified amount of wealth in the form of bank deposits, cash, gold and silver ornaments, stocks in the share market and any property used for commercial purposes. There are prescribed rates for the payment of Zakah, which can be found in any authentic book on Zakah. (See MEDNET Monograph No.4 on Zakah).

Recipients of Zakah Money

The Holy Qur'an itself has listed those eligible to receive support from Zakah funds(9:60). The recipients are classified into eight categories.

They are: 1. The poor (Fuqara); 2. The Needy (Masakin); 3. The Administrators of Zakah (Amiluna Alaiha) 4. Those whose hearts are to be won over (Muallafatu Qlubukum); 5 Slaves (Ar-Riqab); 6. Those in debt (Gharimum); 7. The wayfarer (abna as-Sabil) and; 8. The warriors (Mujahidin)

It is stated in a Tradition that one companion approached the Prophet (saws) seeking support from the Zakah fund. The Prophet replied that "Allah did not leave matter of Sadaqat i.e. Zakah to be decided by the Prophets nor to others He Himself classified it into eight categories. If you fit into any one of these categories I will give your due." (Sayyed Sabiq op. cit. Zakah Volume page: 54)

Sadaqatul-Fitr or Zakatul-fitr:

In addition to obligatory Zakah there is another obligatory charity in Islam called Zakatul-fitr or Sadaqatul-fitr. The object of this sadaqa is to collect funds from the affluent section of the community for the poor and the needy who cannot

afford to buy new clothes and buy good food to celebrate Eidul-fitr with joy and happiness. The amount collected under this head is to be distributed among the poor and the deprived section of the community to enable them to celebrate Eid festival appropriately. It is interesting to note that even children of the affluent Muslims are not exempted. Parents have to clear the dues for their children. A fixed amount in cash or quantity in commodity for each member of the family, young or old, has to be offered before offering Salaah Eid ul- Fitr. In fact, it is preferable that the dues are cleared much in advance so that the bounty could be distributed among the poor ahead of the commencement of the Eid festivities to enable them to celebrate Eid cheerfully.

The concept of Zakah thus clearly demonstrates the deep concern Islam has for the poor and the destitute and its keenness to mitigate their sufferings to the maximum extent.

4.1.4. SAUM (FASTING)

Saum or Fasting is a spiritual exercise. It is religiously obligatory and spreads over a period of one lunar month (29 or 30 days depending on the visibility of the moon) during the Islamic month of Ramadhan. Fasting implies that one must abstain for one full month from food, drink, smoking and sex from dawn to dusk. In fact, they are advised to keep away from all evil deeds and thoughts as well. By designating one particular month, Islam brings about uniformity in its observance among Muslims all over the world and binds them together as Muslim Ummah. It was during the month of Ramadhan that the Qur'an was brought from the highest to the lowest level of heaven. This has been referred in the following verse in the Qur'an: **"Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, and clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spend it in fasting .."** (Surah Al-Baqarah – 2:185)

- **According to a Tradition recorded in Sunan Imam Ahmad the Prophet said that other divine books were also revealed in the month of Ramadhan: “The Suhuf of Ibrahim was revealed during the first night of Ramadhan. The Torah was revealed during the 6th night of Ramadhan. The Injil was revealed during the 13th night of Ramadhan. Allah revealed the Qur’an on the 24th night.” (Tafsir Ibn Kathirin English, Vol.1, page 499).**

Fasting was obligatory also for the followers of prophets preceding the Prophet Muhammad (saws) as revealed in the Qur’an: “O believers! Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before so that you may learn self restrain.” (2:183)

One observes fast to seek simply the pleasure of Allah (SWT) and keeps it conscientiously in private and public with no material benefit in sight. According to a Tradition the Prophet stated “Allah said every action of the son of Adam is for him excepting fasting for that is solely for Me. I give the reward for it.” (Bukhari). While fasting one should not use foul language, should not lose temper and raise one’s voice. According to another Tradition reported by Abu Hurairah the Prophet said “Fasting is not abstaining from eating and drinking only but also from vain speech and foul language. Allah does not need the fast of one who does not abstain from false speech or acting according to his false speech.” (Sayyed Sabiq-Sunan, Volume on Siam, pages 132-133).

This meticulous observance of fast for 29 or 30 consecutive days, observing prescribed abstinence, fills one with great spiritual satisfaction and clean conscience. This is unique to Islam, although fasting, in one form or other, is prescribed in other religions as well. The observance of Saum inculcates in human beings patience and perseverance, adherence to commitments, a spirit of self denial of the comforts and pleasures of life, adaptability to changing situations and stirs a feeling of sympathy and compassion toward the unfortunate conditions of other human beings who are deprived of the comforts

of life. Fasting also makes a Muslim disciplined, steadfast and resilient. This enables him to be flexible and adaptable in his habits and exercise self-control on his physical needs during the day time particularly food, drink and sex. Fasting is also a serious test of an individual's honesty, integrity and sincerity. This exercise in self-control and voluntary endurance of hardship can be extremely useful in times of real hardship. One of the most crucial battles of Islam – Battle of Badr (2 Hijra) – was fought during the month of Ramadhan.

Lailatul Qadr (The Night of Power)

- **Lailatul Qadr is the night when the Qur'an was brought down by the angels from the Seventh Heaven to the Lowest Heaven and preserved there in "Lawh-Mahfooz" for Eternity. The Qur'an declares this night to be the most blessed night surpassing even one thousand months in Divine Blessings (97:3). According to Tafsir Ibn Kathir "It is the night when angels including Arch Angel Jibrael (Gabriel) descend from Heaven to earth. On Laylatul Qadr, the Divine decrees of the coming year including life span, provision and what will happen until the end of the year (44:4)." (Volume 8, page: 671).**
- **The date of Laylatul Qadar differs from the date on which Muhammad (saws) received the first revelation, which was the night of 24th Ramadhan. It has to be one of the odd nights in the last ten days of the month of Ramadhan. According to Ubayy ibn Ka'ab: "He who likes to seek that night should do so on the 27th Ramadhan. It is the night during which Prophet ordered us to make prayers." (Muslim, Abu Dawud, At-Tirmidhi and Ahmad)**

4.1.5. Hajj Pilgrimage

The Fifth and the last article of faith in Islam is the annual pilgrimage to Kab'ah, the sacred House of Allah or Baitul Haram in the lunar month of Zilhajj from 1st to 10th. It is obligatory, once in a life time on all adult Muslims provided they can

afford it, and enough provision is left behind for the maintenance of dependants. Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an commands the performance of the Hajj Pilgrimage (Surah Al-e-Imran -3:96-99 and surah al-Hajj: 22:26 to 29). The Hajj was made obligatory in the ninth year after Hijrah. The first Hajj pilgrimage was performed the same year. Abu Bakr (r.a) was appointed its leader.

Kab'ah is the oldest House of Worship for Allah on earth built by Prophet Ibrahim and his son Ismail (Surah-Baqarah-2:127-128) around 2500 B.C. The Qur'an reveals that "the first house of worship appointed for men was that at Bakkah (ancient name of

Makkah)** full of blessing for mankind in it are signs manifest (for example) the station of Ibrahim (Maqam Ibrahim) – whoever enters it attains security; pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah.... those who can afford the journey." (3:96-97) They also were the first two persons to circumambulate around Kab'ah. It symbolizes the focal point for

****Besides Bakkah, Makkah has many other names such as "Al-Bayt al-Atiq", Al-Bayt al-Haram (Sacred House), "Al-Balad al-Amin (the city of safety), "Al-Mamum (the city of security), Umm-Rahm (the mother of Mercy), Ummul-Qura (the mother of cities), etc.**

the submission of Muslims to Allah (SWT) on earth from all over the world. They face Kab'ah wherever they may be while saying their Salah. Kab'ah is therefore called the Qiblah of Muslims.

The Hajj pilgrimage commemorates a unique event in the history of Islam. In obedience to the command of Allah (SWT), Ibrahim (AS) laid the head of his son Ismail (PBUH) on the altar to sacrifice him. Allah (SWT) accepted this supreme sacrifice but Ismail was divinely rescued and replaced by a lamb. This Pilgrimage

epitomizes the true spirit and meaning of Islam i.e. total submission to the will and command of Allah (SWT).

It also makes man feel small and insignificant before the majesty and glory of Allah (SWT). Man's ego collapses and nothingness overwhelms him when he circumambulates around the House of Allah (SWT), dressed in a simple unstitched two-piece of cloth (Ehram) bereft of all his pomp, dignity and vanity. The Hajj pilgrimage eloquently highlights the universality, equality and unity of mankind. All differences and distinctions based on ethnicity, caste, colour, wealth and worldly status simply disappear, replaced by a sublime and unique bond of brotherhood and fraternity, irrespective of the region one comes from, the language one speaks and the vocation one pursues. Here the king and the commoner, the rich and the poor stand on par with each other as they will be, standing before Allah (SWT) on the Day of Judgment.

The Hajj pilgrimage also commemorates Hajera's (Hagar's) anxious moments in desperate search for water for his thirsty and bitterly crying infant son Ismail. She ran impatiently seven times between the hillocks of As-Safa and Al-Marwa. Her anxiety was divinely relieved when she found spring of water, called "Zam Zam", gushing out of the ground where Ismail was agitatedly rubbing his heels while crying in anguish. This agonizing experience of Hajera has been immortalized in Qur'an: "Verily As-Safa and Al-Marwah are among the signs of God." (2:153). The Prophet used to perform Sa'i regularly. According to a Tradition "The Prophet said I start with what Allah has commanded me to start with (meaning start with Sa'i (i.e. fast walking) from the As-Safa". (Tafsir Ibn Kathir, volume I, page: 450). Sa'i is considered as Wajib.

- **The Prophet himself led the second Hajj pilgrimage in the 10th Hijrah. It was his first and last pilgrimage, has been called Hajjatu-Waida. During this pilgrimage he delivered his last memorable Sermon. One from Jabal Ar Rahmah (Mount of Mercy), in the Plains of Arafat on 9th. Dhul Hajj**

and the other in Muzdalfah on 10th. Dhul Hajj or Yaum Al-Nahr (day of sacrifice). In the sermon from Jaba Ar Rahmah he proclaimed unambiguously: “O people! Listen to my word, for I do not think that I and you will meet again in his place and perform Hajj together after this year. O people! Allah (swt) says “O people! We created you from one male and female and made you into tribes and, so as to be known to one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of Allah is he who is the most righteous.” (49:13)Your Lord (Rabb) is one and your father Adam is one who was fashioned out of clay. An Arab has no superiority over an Ajami (non-Arab)nor an Ajami over an Arab. Similarly neither a red coloured person is superior to a black coloured one nor a black coloured one to red-coloured one, but for their Taqwa (fear of God).” He further added that “every claim of privilege whether that of blood and property belongs to pre-Islamic period and is under my feet” As the Prophet concluded his sermon from Jabal Ar Rahmah (Mount Mercy) in the plains of Arafat that the verse relating to the perfection of the Deen was revealed to him: “Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you and approved al-Islam as a Deen (way of Life) for you.” (5:3).

- Thus the concept of privileges based on wealth and cast and colour and complexion were abolished and equality of mankind was firmly established and are among the cardinal principles of Islam. These principles candidly reflect the true spirit of the Hajj pilgrimage.

It may not be out of place to mention that since Islamic religious services follow the lunar calendar the hardships involved in the performance of these services are equally borne by Muslims the world over because of the cyclical nature of seasons and changing duration of days and nights.