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Essence of Ethics

"Verily, God commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin; and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion". – (Qur'an: 16: 90).

This 'Ayat' of the Holy Qur'an has been truly acclaimed by the commentators as the 'essence of ethics'. The basic requirement of human character is "justice". It is a comprehensive term which includes all virtues of philosophy. But to raise himself higher than this lowest rung of the ladder, a man needs something warmer and more humane – doing of good deeds even where they are not demanded by justice, returning good for evil, being kind to those who (in worldly language) have no claim on him.

After exhorting to be generous to all special mention has been made of those whose claims are recognized in social life: your kith and kin. This includes all moral and ethical, as well as legal and obligatory; duties of a man towards his family and relatives. It ensures a good society by ensuring a good family.

And the opposites, the evils, are to be avoided, because a cup of honey becomes poisonous if a few drops of poison are mixed with it. A man is to refrain from "shameful deeds", and injustice. In Islam, end does not justify the means. A just and good and must be reached through just and good means. Therefore, it was necessary to warm mankind of all shameful acts, unjust means.

And last, but not least, man is to guard himself against rebellion – rebellion against God, rebellion against good conscience. Some people say: "It is a very high standard; a very distant goal". And then they decide that distance is a good excuse to abandon the path.

This attitude is the result of the weakness of their spirit. Ironically, the spirit can be strengthened by pursuing the right path only. If you want to go from Dar-es-Salaam to London you have to make a start, otherwise you will never reach there. So, if you are to achieve perfection of character, you have to start the spiritual journey – in right direction. Distance of goals is not an excuse to sit idle on the road-side: rather, it is a challenge.

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