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Branches of Religion

Now allow me to give here a short list of some of the `Branches of Religion.' These are called `ibadaat or `Worship of God.' According to Islam even alms-giving is an act of worship.
However, the most important branches of religion are ten in number:

First of them is `**salat,**' that is, the prayers five times a day and special prayer on Fridays and `id (Islamic festivals) days and some other occasions.

Second is `**sawm**,' that is, fasting during Ramadan.

Thirdis `**hajj**,' that is a special pilgrimage to Mecca once in life-time.

Fourth is '**zakat,**' that is giving for the pleasure of Allah a portion of gold, silver, cattle and farm produce.

Fifth is `**khums,**' that is giving 20% of the net income of the year after deducting the lawful expenses of the year.

Sixth is **jihad**,' that is the holy war. This topic requires some explanation. Islam does not like to exterminate wrong-doers, it wants to remove the wrong. Evil deeds are like disease. They need treatment and every doctor wants to cure the ailments with medicines as far as possible. But sometimes the ailment reaches a stage where no medicine can do any good; he feels that surgical operation is necessary if the life of the patient is to be saved.

Then he decides, not happily but reluctantly, to amputate one or more limbs of the patient. It may cause hardest pain for the time being; but it is not torture, it is mercy.

Likewise, suppose that this humanity is a compact body, some of its parts become infected with spiritual disease and every medicine of sympathetic persuasion and rational pleading has failed. And there is a danger that their infection is causing and inflicting hardships upon other parts, and the spiritual doctor, I mean the Prophet or Imam who is guided by Allah, is confident that now the surgical operation is essential to save other parts of mankind from trouble. Then, and only then, he will order a Holy-War; and then also it will be limited to that part which is most necessary to remove.

But even if you feel that there is necessity of a surgical operation you will never entrust this most dangerous task to an unauthorized person. It will be a very foolish and irresponsible action. You can never be satisfied that the operation is essential unless a qualified doctor tells you so. Therefore, according to Ithna`Ashari law, a war cannot be started unless specifically authorized by the Prophet or Imam himself, and that also to the limits prescribed by that Representative of Allah. After all, life is a creation of Allah and it should not be destroyed unless it has been authorized to do so by a Representative of Allah. Accordingly, the Holy-War is forbidden for the Shi'ah Ithna `Ashari during the period when our Imam is hidden from us.

The Prophet himself never started any war unless it was thrust upon him by the enemies. A study of the map of Arabia will show the actual facts. As I have mentioned earlier, when the Prophet took refuge in Medina, the Meccans became infuriated because they could not satisfy their anger against him. So they made repeated attacks on him. The battle places of three important wars will tell the story. The first was `Badr' was fought at Badr in the second year of Hijrah. Badr is 30 miles from Medina and 220 miles from Mecca. Is there any doubt that the Meccans were the aggressors? The second war named ` Uhud' was fought next year at Uhud.

Uhud is 3 miles from Medina and 247 miles from Mecca. Three years after Uhud, Medina was surrounded by Meccans and Jews for about one month. They had come 250 miles from Mecca to attack Medina. Is there anybody who can say that the Prophet should not have fought in self-defence? The first ayah of Qur'an permitting the war, after fourteen years of continual oppressions, speaks for itself. Qur'an says:

"Permission to fight is given to those upon whom war has been thrust, because they are oppressed … " (***22:39***).

Regarding those wars that were fought after the death of the Prophet to conquer neighbouring countries, everybody knows that our Imams had nothing to do with them. Our Imams were the right authority to allow or disallow those wars. But they had no political power. And all those wars were fought without their authorization. So, according to the Ithna`Ashari law, all such wars were political manoeuvres; they were not Holy-Wars or Religious Jihad.
And Islam is not responsible for them.

To discourage such unauthorized wars, it is laid down that any booty obtained in such wars will not belong to the fighters. Instead, all of it will vest in the Prophet or Imam, as his personal property; and he may dispose it according to his own discretion. The Holy Prophet sometimes in such circumstances used to return the booty to its former owners. But if it appears to the Imam that the enemy might use that returned booty against Islam, he will not return it at all and use it according to his discretion. That is why it has been declared as his own property to keep his hands free.

This is our law about the Holy-War, Self-defence is permitted at any time. But to start a war is forbidden

without specific authority of the Prophet or Imams. Holy-Wars cannot be started for political or worldly gains.

Seventh and Eighth of the branches of religion are
(i) To propagate good works and

(ii) To desist others from bad deeds and evil doings.

Ninth and Tenth are to love the Holy Prophet, his daughter Fatimah and the Twelve Imams; and to remain aloof from their enemies.

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