

### Fast 9: Faith or Belief (*īmān*)

- The Holy Quran repeatedly refers to faith or *īmān* and deeds or *'amal*. These two words are often used together to describe a believer — *those who believe and do good deeds* is the oft recurring description of true believers.
- The Quran uses the words for 'believer' and 'belief' to refer to three levels of faith:
  - 1) People who merely claim to believe by their words,
  - 2) People who are convinced of the truth of the belief in their hearts,
  - 3) Those who also reflect and express the belief in their actions.

- The Quran says:

“O you who believe! Believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book which He has revealed to His Messenger...” — 4:136

Those addressed as “you who believe” are people who merely claim to believe. They are told to “believe” in the true sense, of believing in their hearts and acting according to that faith.

- In another place, the Quran tells some Muslims, who said “we believe”, not to say “we believe”, because, it says, “faith has not yet entered into your hearts”. They are further told:

“And if you obey Allah and His Messenger, He will not diminish anything of your deeds. Surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

The meaning is that to whatever extent they follow Islam, they will have the benefit of it. The Quran then goes on to say:

“The *believers* are those only *who believe in Allah and His Messenger*, then they do not doubt, and struggle hard with their wealth and their lives in the way of Allah. Such are the truthful ones.” — 49:14–15

Here again the word “believe” is used in two different senses. To “believe in Allah and His Messenger” is just verbal expression of belief. The “believers” are required to do more than just believe in that way. They should have full faith, without doubt, and then struggle hard for self-improvement and for the cause of Islam.

- In Hadith, the word *īmān* is frequently used in its wider sense, as including good deeds:

“Faith (*īmān*) has over seventy branches, the highest of which is (the belief) that nothing deserves to be worshipped except Allah (*Lā ilāha ill-Allāh*), and the lowest of which is the removal from the way of that which might cause injury to anyone.”

“Faith has over sixty branches, and modesty is a branch of faith.”

These hadith are mentioning true faith and what qualities a true believer should possess. They mean that there are a large number of good qualities, from small to major, which a person must acquire in order to be a *complete* believer.

- The opposite of faith or *īmān* is *kufr* or unbelief. Just as the doing of a good deed is called *īmān* or a part of *īmān*, so the doing of an evil deed or omitting an obligatory duty is called *kufr* or a part of *kufr*.
- In hadith, the act by a Muslim to kill another Muslim is called *kufr*, and for a Muslim to omit saying his obligatory prayers is also called *kufr*. It is also reported:

“The Prophet said: ‘By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe! By Allah, he does not believe!’ It was said: ‘Who is that, O Messenger of Allah?’ He said: ‘That person whose neighbour is not safe from his evil’.”

But such Muslims do not become unbelievers or *kafir*. They remain *Muslims* in spite of committing *an act of unbelief*, in this case that act being to harm your neighbour.

- It is true that a **Muslim committing a wrong**, i.e., committing an act of unbelief, still remains a **Muslim**; and a **non-Muslim doing a good deed**, i.e., a deed which regarded in Islam as a deed of faith, still remains a **non-Muslim**. But this does **not** mean that the evil deeds of the Muslim are not punished, or that the good deeds of the non-Muslim are not rewarded. As the Holy Quran puts it in very clear words:

“So he who has done an atom’s weight of good will see it, and he who has done an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” — 99:7–8

A believer is capable of doing evil and an unbeliever is capable of doing good, and each shall be punished or rewarded by Allah for what he does.

- But whatever deed of unbelief a Muslim may commit, no other Muslim has the right to expel him from the brotherhood of Islam so long as he confesses the Unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad.