



“WHY I BECAME A MUSLIM”

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I am often asked when and why I became a Muslim. I can only reply that I do not know the precise moment when the truth of Islam dawned upon me. It seems that I have always been a Muslim. This is not so strange when one remembers that Islam is the natural religion that a child, left to itself, would develop. Indeed as a Western critic once described it, ‘Islam is the religion of common sense.’

The more I read and the more I studied, the more convinced I became that Islam was the most practical religion, and the one most calculated to solve the world's many perplexing problems, and to bring to humanity peace and happiness. Since then I have never wavered in my belief that there is but one God; that Moses, Jesus, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and others before (peace be on all of them) were prophets, divinely inspired, that to every nation God has sent an apostle, that we are not born in sin, and that we do not need any redemption, that we do not need anyone to intercede between us and God, Whom we can approach at all times, and that no one can intercede for us, not even the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, or Jesus, and that our salvation depends entirely on ourselves and on our actions.

The word 'Islam' means surrender to God. It also means peace. A Muslim is one *who is* 'in harmony with the decrees of the author of the world', one who has made *his* peace with God and His creatures.

Islam is based on two fundamental truths: (a) the Oneness of God and (b) the Brotherhood of Man, and is entirely free from any encumbrances of theological dogma. Above everything else it is a positive faith.

The influence of the *Hajj* cannot be exaggerated. To be a member of that huge congregation gathered together from the four corners of the earth, on this sacred occasion and on the sacred spot, and to join with this mass of humanity, in all humility, in the glorification of God, is to have one's consciousness impressed by full significance of Islamic ideal, is to be privileged to participate in one of the most soul-inspiring experiences that have ever been granted to human beings. To visit the birthplace of Islam, to tread the sacred ground of the Holy Prophet's struggle to call erring humanity back to God, is to re-live those hallowed by the memories of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, long toil and sufferings in glorious years of sacrifice and martyrdom, is to have one's soul kindled by that celestial fire which lighted up the whole earth. But this is not all. The *Hajj* above everything else makes for unity among Muslims. If there is anything that unifies the scattered forces of

Islam and imbues them with mutual sympathy it is the pilgrimage. It provides them with a central-point to which they rally from all corners of the earth. It creates for them annually an occasion to meet and know one another, to exchange views and compare experiences and unite their various efforts to the common good. Distances are annihilated. Differences of sect are set aside. Divergences of race and colour cease to exist in this fraternity of faith that unites all Muslims in one great brotherhood and makes them conscious of the glorious heritage that is theirs.