

“...This day,
I have perfected your
religion for you,
completed My favor upon you
and Have chosen for you
Islam as your way of life. ”

(Quran, 5:3)

O Almighty Allah,
my Creator, Owner and Sustainer,
Watcher of all my deeds,
I implore You, beseech You, beg You
to accept this humble effort of mine,
help the readers of this book
to the Light of Guidance
and grant me pardon on the Day of Judgment
when nothing except Your Mercy and Blessings
will be of any Help.

Ameen!

ISLAM

For You

SYED HAMID MOHSIN



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ISLAM For You

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Etiquettes of reading the Names of Prophet Muhammad and his Companions

Saying “Sallal Laahu Alaihi wa Sallam” ‘May Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him’.

It is obligatory on Muslims to offer Durood (prayers) for Prophet Muhammad whenever his name is mentioned. Therefore, the supplication “Sallal Laahu Alaihi wa Sallam” (May Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him) follows the Prophet’s name.

The prayers offered for the Prophet, reinforces the Islamic belief that Muhammad is not God – but a human being, though leader of humanity and the final Prophet for all – he also needs the Mercy and Blessings of Allah. This is the most important implication that reminds Muslims of the Prophet’s position and warns them to refrain from elevating him to the status of God or equivalent to God or anywhere near Godhood. This basically safeguards the Islamic Creed, ‘Oneness of God.’

Saying ‘Razi Allahu Anhu’ for Prophet Muhammad’s Companions.

It is desirable for Muslims to offer the prayer ‘Razi Allahu Ta’ala Anhu’ (may God be pleased with him) as a mark of respect for the Companions of Prophet Muhammad whenever their names are mentioned.



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I

Islam

In this world, every religion has been named either after its founder or after the community or nation in which it was born. For example, Christianity takes its name from its prophet Jesus Christ; Buddhism from its founder, Gautama Buddha; Zoroastrianism from its founder, Zoroaster; and Judaism, the religion of the Jews, from the name of the tribe Judah of the country of Judea, where it originated. The same is true of all other religions except Islam, which enjoys the unique distinction of having no such association with any particular person or people or country. Nor it is the product of any human mind. The original founder of Islam is no other than the God Himself, and the date of founding goes back to the age of Prophet Adam, the first Prophet of Islam.

Islam is an Arabic word which means submission and obedience. Submission is acceptance of God's commands. Obedience means putting God's commands into practice. Submission and obedience to Allah bring peace, which is why Islam also means peace. A person who accepts the Islamic way of life and acts upon it is a Muslim.

Submission to the goodwill of God, together with obedience to His beneficial Law, is the best safeguard of peace and harmony. It enables man to make peace between himself

and his fellow men on the one hand, and between the human community and God on the other. It creates harmony among the elements of Nature. If we look around, we see that all things the sun, the moon and the stars, the high mountains and the mighty oceans-obey a law of God. We find no disorder or chaos in them. Everything is in its right place. We see perfect order and total harmony in the system of Nature that God has created. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west and there has been no exception to this rule. The moon and the stars shine at night. Night passes, a new day comes, and so the process goes on. Flowers blossom and the trees have green leaves in the spring. According to Islam, everything in the world or every phenomenon other than man is administered by God-made Laws. This makes the entire physical world necessarily obedient to God and submissive to His Laws, which, in turn, means that it is in a state of Islam, or it is Muslim. The physical world has no choice of its own. It has no voluntary course to follow on its own initiative but obeys the Law of the Creator, the Law of Islam or submission.

Everything has a set course that cannot be violated. Have you ever noticed any violation in the law of God by these objects of Nature? No of course not, Why? Simply because they are made to obey God, they have no choice but to obey. This is why we find eternal peace and order in the system of Nature.

But human beings are different: God has given us the knowledge, intelligence and ability to choose between right and wrong. Not only this, in case we forget He has also sent us constant reminders, by sending His prophets and books for our guidance. A Muslim accepts all the prophets previous to Muhammad without discrimination. He believes that all those prophets of God and their faithful followers were Muslims, and that their religion was Islam, the only true universal religion of God (see Quran, 2:128-140; 3:78-85; 17:42-44; 31:22; 42:13). The final messenger of God is Muhammad,

and the final book of guidance is the Quran.

God does not force us to obey Him. He has given us the choice either to obey or disobey Him. Why? Because He wants to test us. After this test there will be a Day of reward and punishment. This is the Day of Judgment. Those who pass the test will be rewarded with everlasting happiness and peace in Paradise and those who fail will suffer terrible punishment in Hell. We can earn this reward and escape punishment by obeying and worshipping God.

By their nature, all human beings like good things and dislike bad things. For example, we all like truthfulness and hate lies. Even a liar does not like to be called a liar! Why? Because we know in our hearts that telling lies is a bad thing. In the same way, helping others, showing kindness, politeness, respect for parents and teachers, honesty and all other forms of good conduct are always liked and appreciated; but rudeness, cruelty, lies, hurting others, disobedience to parents and teachers, using bad names and other bad conducts are disliked by everyone. So, we can say that human nature likes the Right and dislikes the Wrong. Right is Ma'ruf and the wrong is Munkar in the Arabic – the language of the Quran.

It is also human nature to love peace and hate disorder. Peace comes from obedience to Allah's Law, at the same time as disorder is the outcome of disobedience. Islam established this peace, which is part of man's nature; so, Islam is called the Religion of Nature, in Arabic that is Deen-ul-Fitrah.



Oneness of God The Bedrock of Islamic Belief

When the final prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him) was asked about God, the answer came directly from God in the Quran:

“Say: He is God the One and Only One; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He gives no birth, nor was He born; and there is none like Him.” (Quran 112:1-4)

This is a clear statement by God describing Himself to humanity without any room for confusion. God is One and is exalted above everything He creates and He is capable over all things.

“Allah! There is no god but He- The Living,- The Self-Sufficient; The Infinitely Enduring,- Slumber or sleep never reaches Him. All things are His, in the heavens and on the earth. Who is there who can plead in His presence except as He permits? He knows what (appears to His creatures), before or after or behind them. They shall not understand the smallest fragment of His knowledge except as He wills. His Throne extends over the heavens and over the earth, and He does not tire in guarding and preserving them; and He is the Most High, the

Supreme (in Glory).” (Quran, 2.255) [This Holy Verse glorifying Allah is known as Ayat-ul-Kursi.]

Religion, any religion, is a set of beliefs and practices—the central point being the concept of God. Once this focal point is rendered hazy, the whole system falls apart. The cardinal feature of Islam, as propagated by Prophet Muhammad and all other prophets before him, is the doctrine: ‘There is no god, but God’. He is the Creator and Sustainer of everything; He is Omnipotent and Omniscient; He has no associate in His Divinity.

Between Him and His creatures there are no intermediaries. This, in essence, is Islam’s conception of monotheism, which is absolute and uncompromising. No man or ‘god’ is allowed to mediate between God and His creation, animate or inanimate. God exists from all eternity to all eternity. He is the ultimate Reality: ‘call not on any other god but God: there is no god but He. Everything shall perish except His countenance. (28:88)

The Arabic word Allah is a shortened form of al-ilah, ‘The God’—He is God, the One and Only One. He is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Destroyer and the Resurrector of the universe. He is the Merciful, the most Compassionate. .. The Sovereign, the Holy, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Wise, the Just, the Clement, the Loving. God, He is the First, the Last, the Eternal, the Hidden, the Manifest. He is God, the Truth, the ultimate Reality... He is God, the One and Only One and ‘there is none like Him.’



One God, one Humanity

“When My servants ask you about Me, tell them I am indeed closest to them. I listen to the prayer of everyone who calls hence let them listen to My call. They must believe in Me and walk on the straight path.” (Quran, 2:186)

And again in the Quran,

“He is the Subtle, Who is ‘closer to man than his own neck [jugular] vein’.” (Quran, 50:16)

In thus setting man as it were face to face with God without any mediating spiritual or personal elements, Islam necessarily emphasised the contrast between them. It is a unique feature of Islam that it does not recognize the existence of a priesthood who might claim to intervene between God and man.

As a necessary corollary to this concept of closeness of men to God is the Quran: perception of equality of all men in their creaturely relation to God and the doctrine of brotherhood of men. Islam thus professes the most ideal vision of “One God, one humanity.”

God’s authority and sovereignty is Indivisible

As we look around, we find each family having a head of the family, every schools being presided over by a Principal, every State being led by a President or Prime Ministers and every

City a Mayor or administrator. Similarly, there is a producer behind a product, an artist behind an artifact. The sight of an object of beauty or wonder immediately prompts us to think of its creator. By the same token, the vast universe, the flawless canopy of the sky held aloft over all of us, the mountains that peg the earth, the oceans that bubble with tidal energy, the forests that soothe our eyes with their green cover, the rivers that snake through the earth, the ceaseless motion of the constellation that turns the day into night and vice versa, and transfers us constantly from winter to summer and back, the evaporation from the oceans that recycles the water leading to crops, food and frequently charging the sources of energy for the entire humanity and other creatures, instantaneously take our minds to a Supreme Master at whose behest the entire system functions in a systematic manner.

As a logical conclusion, then, there must be a force in action to keep everything in order. Behind this beautiful nature, there must be a Great Artist who must be planning each piece of the Universe in due measure endowing it with some purpose. His artistry and designing must be superior to all. The true believers recognize this Artist and call Him Allah or God. They call Him God because He is the Creator and the Chief Architect of the world, the Originator of life and the Provider of all things in existence. He is not a man because no man can create or make another man. He is not an animal, nor is He a plant. He is neither an idol nor is He a statue of any kind because none of these things can make itself or create anything else. He is not a machine. He is neither the sun nor is He the moon or any other star, because these objects are themselves subject to orders from someone else. He is above all these things, because He is the Maker and keeper of them all.

The maker of anything must be different from and greater than the thing which he makes. We also know that nothing can come to life on its own and that the marvelous world did

not create itself or come into existence by accident. The continuous changes in the world prove that it is made, and everything which is made must have a maker of some sort.

God's authority and sovereignty is indivisible. He is all-powerful and in full control of His creation and creatures. He has not distributed His authority nor has compartmentalized the functioning of His universe by vesting authority to run sun and moon in someone or placing the affairs of the creatures in some other agent. Had there been such division of authority and power, there would certainly have been utter confusion and chaos in the universe and could have robbed the world of the efficiency seen now.

The Maker and Sustainer of the world, the Creator of and provider for man, the Active force and Effective Power in nature are all one and the same, and that is known to be Allah or God. This is the Secret of all secrets and the Most Supreme of all beings.



Allah

His very name means Love

Allah as is understood by all Muslims — the One and Only object of worship, He who is served with full submission and He who is adored above all else; and this also summarizes the Islamic approach to worship.

Indeed, in Islam worship is not simply a once in a week obligation or chore, but it is a continuous expression of adoration, or immense love, for Our Creator and Sustainer. It is to worship Him not only by bowing our faces down to Him in honor and reverence, but also by obeying His commands. These commands are loving guidelines given to us by the One whom we love, and in fact the One who loves us, in order that we may be guided to success, honor and happiness and not fall into despair, disaster or misguidance. It is the same with parents who lay down rules for their children not for the purpose of oppressing them or causing them difficulty, but for the exact opposite reason—to protect them, secure them and lead them to ultimate success.

When the Companions (disciples) of the Prophet Muhammad asked him about Allah, Allah Himself answered them with the following beautiful words immortalized in the Quran:

“And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near; I answer the prayer of the every humble caller when he calls upon Me, so let them too listen My call and believe in Me that they

may be led to the right way.” (Quran, 2:186)

A Muslim knows that they are dealing with a God who loves them and loves what is good for them. In fact, the highest expression of love is mercy and forgiveness, which God has promised to those who believe in Him and act righteously.

Not only has He promised His devotees and worshippers His expansive forgiveness, but He has promised to fill their hearts with love as in the following words of the Quran:

“Indeed, upon those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, will [Allah] the Most Merciful will bless his love upon them.” (Quran, 19:96)

Muslims begin all their actions with the statement, “In the Name of Allah - the Most Merciful, the Most Graciously Merciful” as a reminder of how Allah’s Mercy, Love and Grace indeed encompass and infuse all things. It is also said in order to sanctify and bless their actions and as an indication of the sincerity of the deed for the sake of God alone. Muslims are commanded to reciprocate this love and mercy in all their dealings, not only with their fellow men, but also towards animals and the environment. Love and mercy are, as illustrated above, greatly common themes in both of the Holy Scriptures in Islam: the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (Hadith).

Also, when one considers the greatest bond of love that exists between human, most will agree that it is the bond which exists between a mother and her children. Prophet Muhammad once commented on this by illustrating to his companions the greatness of Allah’s Mercy to those who submit to Him and Worship him:


The Prophet once saw a women frantically searching for her missing child. When she found him, she took him, held him tightly against her stomach and breast-fed him. The

messenger of Allah thereupon asked those around him, “Can you imagine this woman throwing her child into the hellfire?” the companion said, ‘No, by God!’ whereupon he said, ‘Allah is more merciful to His servants than this [woman] is to her child.’”

So with this understanding, in Islam Allah calls Himself by 100 different names according to His different qualities and attributes. It is interesting to see that the two names Allah most often likes to be remembered by, after the name Allah, are His two names al-Rahmaan and Al-Raheem. Thus the first verse of the Quran – the opening line to the Quran – is “In the Name of Allah the Most Merciful, the Most Graciously Merciful.”

So then it follows that the Mercy of Allah should then be frequently mentioned in the Quran, and indeed it is. The number of times where Allah refers to Himself as the Most Merciful (*Al-Rahmaan*) is well over fifty times and the number of times He mentioned His Mercy in another forty times. The number of instances where He refers to Himself as the Most Graciously Merciful, (*Al-Raheem*) is also significant at about fifty-five times. Thus the Matter of Allah’s Mercy is reported in over 150 places in the Quran.

Compare this with only nineteen times where Allah mentions His wrath or anger in the Quran and the fact that Allah never calls Himself with any name containing any attribute of wrath or anger. What’s more, Allah also refers to Himself as the Most Forgiving almost one hundred times in the Quran as well !



Tawheed (Oneness of God)

The declaration that ‘There is no god but Allah’ is called Tawheed. Tawheed represents the Islamic outlook on life, the universe and everything: it is the worldview of Muslims.

The unity of God is reflected in the unity of person kind. Since we are all created by God, we are all equal before Him. There is no difference between people of one race and another, between rich and poor, between the powerful and the powerless, between men and women. Islam is uncompromising on its stance on human equality.

Moreover, since everything is owned by God, no one has an exclusive right to anything. All natural resources in the universe, land and capital belong to the whole of human race, and all its members have equal share and right of access to them. No person has a right to claim a bigger share, simply because he or she does not and cannot create or generate natural power independently.

Belief in Oneness of God

Belief in the Oneness of God is the main part of Faith, (*Iman*) and it is beautifully expressed in the Quran:

“Say; He is Allah, The One, Allah, the Eternal and absolute. None is born of Him, nor is He born. And there is none like Him.” (Quran, 112)

It means that, God is All-Knowing, All-Wise and All-Powerful. He is the Merciful, the Kind and the Most-Loving. He is with us all the time. He sees us, but we do not see Him. He was, is and always will be. He is the First and the Last. He has no partner, son or daughter, nor was He born of anyone. He gives us life and takes it away. Everyone must return to Him after death.

Everything on this earth is created by God, who looks after and provides for all the needs of every creature. He is the only Source of our Guidance.

The first duty of a Muslim is to declare his faith. To make this declaration a person must say in words and believe in his heart.

“La ilaha illallah Muhammad rasulullah.”

“There is no god except Allah;
Muhammad is Allah’s Messenger.”

A person must first cleanse his heart of the idea of any other god or any other object of worship; only then can faith in the Oneness of God take root inside the heart.

Let us try to understand this with an example. Suppose we have a piece of land which is full of weeds and bushes where we want to grow wheat. Now, if we sow very good wheat seeds in the land without first cleaning it fully, we cannot hope to get a good wheat crop. So what must we do? We must cultivate the land, clear the weeds and bushes and prepare the soil before we sow the seeds. Then we can expect good crops.

Let us compare the land with the human heart. If the heart is full of beliefs in false gods, we cannot expect Oneness of God, Tawheed, to take root there. So it must be cleansed of any other god or object of worship; only then will Oneness of God, Tawheed, take root and the light of faith will shine.

The Effect of *Tawheed* on Human life

Belief in 'La ilaha illallah' or Tawheed or there is no god but God has a far-reaching impact on our life:

A believer in Oneness of God, Tawheed, surrenders himself completely to the Will of God and becomes His true servant and subject. God has created all that is on the earth and in the sky for the service of mankind. When a person surrenders him to God's commands, he understands and appreciates that God has made all His Creation beneficial for him.

The Quran confirms this when it says,

“Have you not seen how God has made all that is in the earth to serve you?...” (Quran, 22:65)

“Do you not see how God has harnessed whatever is in Heaven and whatever is on earth for you? He has lavished His bounties on you both apparent and hidden...” (Quran, 31:20)

These two verses clearly indicate that God has created everything on the earth and in the sky for the comfort of the humans. The blessing of being served by other objects and creatures is only apparent when we believe and practice Oneness of God, Tawheed. This means we must be totally obedient to God.

1. It produces in the believer a high degree of self-respect, confidence and contentment. He knows that he depends on none but God for the fulfillment of his needs. He firmly believes that God alone has the power to provide all his requirements and no one else has any power to do or harm him.
2. When can a believer be confident and develop self-respect? He can be so only when he feels that he depends on none but His Creator for the fulfillment of his needs. He does not become worried because he knows that God will take care of all his needs if he is truly obedient.
3. This belief makes a believer humble and modest. He is never arrogant or haughty. He is fully aware that everything on earth belongs to God and He gains control over the rest of the creation only by being a subject of God. He also knows very well that whatever he has is from God. So there is no reason to be proud or arrogant.
4. Belief in Oneness of God, makes a believer dutiful and upright. The believer knows that he must carry out the commands of his Creator to succeed in this life and the life Hereafter. This awareness keeps him away from neglecting his duties and from other sins.
5. Belief in Oneness of God, makes a person brave and courageous. It removes from his mind the fear of death or concern for safety. The believer knows that it is God who will cause death at the appointed time and none but He can harm the believer's safety. So, if he obeys God, he has nothing to worry about. He goes on doing his duty without any fear.

6. A believer in Oneness of God, consciously feels himself to be part of the whole universe. He is the best of all creations of God—the powerful Master of the whole universe. This belief broadens his horizon and his outlook expands.

7. Belief in Oneness of God, produces in a believer, strong determination, patience and perseverance. The believer becomes single-minded and dedicates himself to seeking the pleasure of his Creator.

8. The most important effect of the belief in *La ilaha illallah* is that it makes a person obey God's commands. A believer in Oneness of God, is sure that God knows and sees everything and he cannot escape God's ever-watchful eye for a single moment. In fact, "God is nearer to him than his own Jugular vein." (Quran, 50:16)

9. A believer in Oneness of God, seeks the pleasure of God by making his actions reflect his beliefs. A belief without practice has no place in Islam.



Risalah
Prophethood

An Angel brings the message of God to a chosen man, and it is this latter who is charged with its communication to the people. In Quranic terminology, this human agent of the message is differently called Nabi (prophet), Rasool (messenger), Mursal (envoy), Bashir (announcer), Nadir (Warner) etc.

Prophets are men of great piety and models of good behaviour, spiritual as well as temporal and social. Miracles are not necessary for them (although history attributes miracles to all of them and they themselves have always affirmed that it is not they but God who did that); it is their teaching alone which is the principle of their authenticity and genuineness.

According to the Quran, there were certain prophets who had received the revelation of Divine Books, and there were others who did not receive new Books but had to follow the Books revealed to their predecessors. The Divine messages do not disagree on fundamental truths, such as the Oneness of God, the demand for doing good and abstaining from evil, etc.

Certain prophets were given the Divine mission of

educating members of a single house (tribe or clan), or of a single race, or of a single region whereas others had vaster missions, embracing the entire humanity and extending over all time.

Prophethood (Risalah) is a channel of communication between God and mankind. Allah, the Most Merciful, has provided man with Guidance to follow the right course and so make this world a happy and peaceful place to live in. There will be a great reward in the life after death for those who follow this Guidance.

Since the beginning of Creation, Allah has sent His Guidance for mankind through His chosen agents. They asked the people of their time to obey and worship Allah alone. They taught, guided and trained the people to follow the way of Allah.

Prophets were human being. We should never refer to them as the sons of God. God is One and He has no partner, son or daughter. It is a major sin to say that God has a son, daughter or partner.

The message of all the prophets is one and the same to worship God alone and to reject all false gods. "Indeed, We sent Nuh (Noah) to his people, and he said 'My folk, worship Allah, you have no other god except Him. I fear for you the punishment of an awful day.'" (Quran, 7:59) In other words, all the prophets preached the message of: There is no god except Allah.

You may ask why we need Guidance from Almighty Allah. The answer is simple: we human beings are weak and frail; we have no knowledge of the future and the knowledge we do have is limited. Also, we are not perfect. You can see that with so many weaknesses, we are unable to make any Guidance for ourselves which can hold good for all times and all conditions. This is the reason why Allah has blessed us with Guidance through prophets.

Prophets of God

According to a saying of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the number of prophet is one hundred and twenty four thousand. As Muslims, we must believe in all the prophets and messengers (Quran, 2:285). Allah's Guidance to mankind, which began with Prophet Adam (Peace be upon him), was completed with Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).


The Quran mentions only the twenty-five most prominent by names.

Prophets of God Mentioned in the Quran,

1.	Adam	Adam
2.	Idris	Enoch
3.	Nuh	Noah
4.	Hud	
5.	Salih	
6.	Ibrahim	Abraham
7.	Isma'il	Ishmael
8.	Ishaq	Isaac
9.	Lut	Lot
10.	Ya'qub	Jacob
11.	Yusuf	Joseph
12.	Shu'aib	
13.	Ayyub	Job
14.	Musa	Moses

15.	Harun	Aaron
16.	Dhul Kifl	Ezekiel
17.	Dawud	David
18.	Sulaiman	Solomon
19.	Ilyas	Elias
20.	Al Yasa	Elisha
21.	Yunus	Jonah
22.	Zakariyya	Zechariah
23.	Yahya	John
24.	'Isa	Jesus
25.	Muhammad	

(God's peace be upon them all)



4

ANGELS

Who are the angels ?

What do they do ?

Can we see them ?

How are they different from man ?

Angels are a special creation of Allah. They have been created from divine light (Nur) to perform specific duties. By comparison Prophet Adam, the first man, was created from clay. Angels are purely spiritual and splendid beings whose nature requires no food or drink or sleep. They have no physical desires of any kind nor needs material. They spend their days and nights in the service of Allah. There are many of them, and each one is charged with a certain duty and to glorify and praise Allah. They never get tired; they are always ready to obey Allah. If we cannot see the angels with our naked eyes, it does not necessarily deny their actual existence. There are many things in the world that are invisible to the eye or inaccessible to the senses, and yet we do believe in the existence. There are places we have never seen and things like Gas and Air that we could not see with our naked eyes, smell or touch or taste or hear; yet we do acknowledge their existence.

Angels have been given the qualities and powers necessary to carry out their duties; they always obey Allah and can never disobey Him. Man, on the other hand, has been given free will and can choose between right and wrong. This is why man will have to account for his actions on the Day of Judgment.

Angels do what Almighty Allah commands them to do. They are the sinless servants of God's will. They help men in the use of free will. Man decides what to do and angels help him to carry out the decision.

We cannot see angels unless they appear in the human form. Angel Gabriel once appeared in human form, before a gathering of the companions of the Prophet. He came to teach them, but only the prophet knew he was an Angel. Angles can take any suitable appearance to carry out their duties.

There are many angels in the kingdom of Almighty Allah. Prominent among them are:

Jibrail or Jibril (Gabriel)

Mika'il or Mikal (Michael)

'Izra'il (Malakul Mawt, also called Azrail)

Israfil

Gabriel brought the revelation from God to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) and to all the other prophets.

'Izra'il — also called the 'Angel of Death' (Malakul Mawt) is responsible for ending our life.

Israfil will blow the trumpet at the time of the end of the world and on the Day of Judgment.

Some angels are busy recording all that we do. They are called the Honorable Recorders (Kiraman Katibun). Not a single word we say goes unrecorded. (See Quran, 50:18)

Allah maintains His kingdom perfectly; and angels are His obedient servants. Angels will welcome in Heaven those of us who always obey God's commands and will throw the wrong-doers into Hell. (See Quran, 39:71-74)

5

Life^{after}
Death

The Hereafter and the Day of Judgement

Faith in the Hereafter is one of the fundamental of Islam. In the first chapter of the Quran, after Almighty God's attributes, the Most-Gracious and the Most Merciful, God states that He is the King of the Day of Judgment (Chapter 1:3). In the third verse of the next chapter, it is stated that believers are "...those who have faith in the Unseen..." (Chapter 2:3)

This concept of "the Unseen" also includes rising from the dead after death, the day of Resurrection, Paradise and Hell, in brief, everything related to the Hereafter. Indeed, in the fourth verse of the chapter Al-Baqara, in the Quran, with the words "...they are certain about the Hereafter"; the importance of faith in the Hereafter is reminded once more.

In very vivid, awe-inspiring language, the Quran sketches ever and ever the outline of the events of the Last Day. At a time when God sees fit, which is known only to Him, this world will be brought to an end in a terrifying cosmic

cataclysm frightful beyond imagination. And on that Day of Judgment, the bodies of the dead will be raised from their graves and rejoined with their souls, while those who are alive on earth at that time will die and be joined to this great assembly of men. All men, past, present and future will then stand before Allah, each one as totally alone and helpless as when he came into the world, to render their accounts. On this day of reckoning, only his Faith in God, good deeds, fair dealings with his fellow beings and other creations of God, will be of any avail to him.

As for those who believed in God, who obeyed and submitted to Him and lived their lives for His pleasure, and who left this life in a state of surrender to Him, a state of unimaginable contentment and satisfaction awaits.

Those who denied God and rejected His guidance, who devoted themselves to the worship of deities other than God, and who did evil deeds will be consigned to a fearsome and terrible abode in which their companions will be others, who, like themselves, are completely alienated from God. There they will be in a state of enduring torment and agony. They will long to have another chance to return to the world to live their lives differently in the light of their present knowledge of Reality but it will be too late.

Paradise as a reward and Hell as a punishment are but graphic terms to make us understand a state of things which is beyond all notions of our life in this world. Speaking of it, the Quran says:

“No soul knoweth what is kept hidden from them—
of joy as a reward for what they used to do.”

“In paradise there are things the like of which no
eye has ever seen, nor ear heard, nor mind ever
thought of.” (Hadith)

The life Hereafter [Eschatology or a branch of theology

concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind] in Islamic perspective may be described in a sequential order as follows: Last Day, Resurrection, Day of Judgment and Eternal bliss or punishment. The following Quranic verses will reveal graphic images of those events:

“When the sky is split apart; When the stars fall thrown around; When the oceans are made to burst apart; (into one big ocean covering the earth) And when the graves are turned upside down; (Then) each soul shall know what it has sent forward and (what it has) kept back. O man! What has misled you (away) from your Lord; Most Generous?” (Quran, 82:1-6)

“When the sun (with its spacious light) is folded up; When the stars fall, losing their glitter; When the mountains vanish (like a dream); When the she camels, ten months with young are left untended; When the wild beasts are herded together (in human habitations); When the oceans boil over with a swell; When the souls are sorted out, (Put together, righteous with righteous and unrighteous with unrighteous).” (Quran, 81:1-7)

“And, at last, when the day of Reckoning comes with its deafening noise, that Day shall a man flee from his own brother, and from his mother and his father, and from his wife and his children. Each one of them, that Day, will have enough concern of [his own] to make him indifferent to the others.”
(Quran, 80:33-37)

“When the Trumpet will sound and they shall come in crowds before the Lord...” (Quran, 78:18)

“That is when the stars are extinguished and when the sky is split open and when the mountains are crushed...” (Quran, 77:8, 9, 10)

“Everyone will return to Him, that is His promise. He creates, destroys and recreates. He rewards those who believe in Him and do good deeds, but those who reject Him shall suffer grievous hurt.” (Quran, 10:4)

“Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create another like them? Yes indeed! (He can recreate them.) He is the Supreme Creator, the All Knowing.” (Quran, 36:81)

“That will be a Day of Judgement when We will gather you all and all of these before you.” (Quran, 77:38)

“Then the scrolls [of the deeds of mankind] are spread...” (Quran, 81:10) “The infant girl will be asked: Why was she buried alive.” (81: 8-9)

“...Each soul will then realize what its records are.” (81:14)

“Whoever has done an atom of good will see it, And whoever has done an atom of evil will see it.” (99:7-8)

“Then, on that Day, not (even) one soul will be unfairly treated in the least, and you shall be only given the (just) reward for your past actions.” (Quran, 36:54)



To Believe or Not to Believe

Almighty Allah says in the Quran :

“To God belongs the Mystery of the heavens and the earth. And the Decision of the Hour [of Doomsday and the Day of Judgment is as the twinkling of an eye, or even quicker: for God has power over all things.” (Quran, 16:77)

All the religions of the world and also modern science, believe that the world is going to end, but the question remains: How? When we look around at the vast skies studded with stars we are tempted to ask: What will eventually happen to all this? In the heart of our hearts, each one of us is also concerned about his own existence. Believers and atheists are equally bothered by this thought. Is death the final destination? Or is there something beyond it?

There are People who do not care whether there is a life after death. Some do not even believe in it at all.

Doubts have been expressed by unbelievers about life after death. They cannot understand how God can raise men and women after death. But God can make human beings out of nothing so it is not difficult for Him to raise them after death (see Quran, 22:5-7 and 36:77-79).

Almighty Allah says in the Quran :

“Does man think that we shall not assemble his bones? Yes, surely yes, we are able to restore the very shape of his fingertips.” (Quran, 75:3-4)

And, there are still many people who find it difficult to come to terms with the ‘Life after Death’ and the ‘Resurrection.’ For them, this life is the only life and there is nothing after death. Ironically, holders of such beliefs try to

justify this on the basis of common sense and science. In this regard they consider themselves more progressive than others, and dub the opponents as old fashioned and orthodox. Oddly enough, they never realize that disbelief is as old as belief itself. Even while the Quran was being revealed, the people of Quraysh in Makkah also denied Life after Death. Their arguments were no different from the ones advanced by the “progressive minds” of today.

Almighty Allah says in the Quran :

“The chiefs of the people do not believe and deny the life to come... They say there is no other life but this world’s, we die and we live. And there is no rising for us from the death...” (Quran, 23:33-37)

The Quran states that disbelief in the ‘Life after Death’ has become fashionable with the exploiting classes in society. They neither fear God themselves, nor do they like others to follow the right path. Without any proof, they keep insisting upon their ignorance and wish others to follow them in their darkness.

The Quran repeatedly explains the inevitability of Life after Death as is urged by the moral consciousness of man. Actually the belief in Life after Death is logical corollary of the belief in One God. Without the accountability the status of God will be rendered ceremonial. It will be a god that would be an indifferent god: having once created man not concerned with his fate. God is Just. It would indeed demolish the very moral existence of the Human beings on the earth.

The Quran teaches that the present life is a trial in preparation for the next realm of our existence. A day will come when the whole universe will be destroyed and recreated, and the dead will be resurrected to stand in Judgment before God. (see Quran, chapter 14, verse, 19-20)

The Day of Resurrection will be the beginning of another life, one that will be eternal. It is then that every person will be fully compensated by God for his or her good and evil deeds.

There has to be a Day of Judgment, when justice must be done with everyone, to the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, the good and the bad, alike. That will be the Resurrection.

Prophet Muhammad said:

‘The first (thing) that will be decided among people on the Day of Judgment will pertain to bloodshed.’

Before the great trial and court proceeding, due process will be established. All the procedures for a fair trial will strictly be followed, records will be presented, and witnesses will be called:

Even our eyes, ears, and skin will testify:

And (remember) the Day when the enemies of God will be gathered together before the fire, they will be marched in ranks. At length, when they reach the (fire), their hearing, their sight and their skins will speak up against them, as to (All) their actions. Ad they will say to their skins: ‘why do you bear witness against us?’ they will say: ‘God has made us to speak, (He) who gives speech to everything: And He created you for the first time, and to Him you are (now) return back.’” (Quran, 41:19-21)

People who commit sins, neglect God and indulge in immoral activities, they will implore Almighty God to send them again to the world so that they would do good, abandoning unbelief and polytheism. They will pledge to embrace Islam. However, their pleas will be dismissed outright. They were foretold that they would not get another chance.

They will be destined for eternal disgrace. Angels will then drag them to Hell; People with good records will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to the heaven of God.

Majority of the human beings like to live a peaceful life, it is only a few mischievous ones who make every one's life difficult. Should they not be hauled up for their crimes? What if they escape the accountability in the worldly courts? Should they ever be allowed to go unpunished? God will punish the tyrants whose crimes are beyond count: having committed genocide, created corruption in the society, enslaved numerous persons to serve their whims etc.

And also, there are people who commit sins, neglect God and indulge in immoral activities, yet they seem to be apparently successful in politics or business. And there are virtuous and good-minded people, who live in misery and pain. This is puzzling and incompatible with the justice of God. If the guilty people can escape the ordinary man-made laws, worldly courts, unharmed and, in addition, be more prosperous, what is, then, left for the virtuous people? What will promote the cause of morality and goodness? There must be some way to reward goodness and arrest evil. If this is not done here on this earth—and we know that it is not done regularly or immediately—it has to be done some day, and that is the 'Day of Judgment.'

Accountability for the one's deeds is thus the essential need of justice. It is the need of the noble, weak and the poor, of everyone who is for justice.

The belief, faith in Life after Death, and the Day of Judgment not only guarantees success in the Hereafter; but also makes this world peaceful and happy by making individuals most responsible and dutiful in their activities, and provides the final relieving answer to many complicated problems of our world.

6

The Revealed Books

We human beings are the servants of God and His agents on earth. But we need guidance to carry out our duties as God's agents. We are unable to guide ourselves because we have many weaknesses within us and we have very limited knowledge of the past, present and future. Only Allah is above all these shortcomings and He alone has the power to give us guidance that is suitable for all times and places. We know that Allah has not left us without guidance and that He has sent prophets to show us the right path in life. In addition to this, He has also sent books of guidance through some prophets—His messengers.

Allah's blessings are countless. He provides us with all that we need. Just imagine how wonderfully He arranges our growth in the tender and affectionate care of our parents from birth to youth. Who provides us with food when we are in our mother's womb? Who fills our mother's breasts with milk to suckle as soon as we are born? Allah, the Merciful, of course.

Almighty Allah says in the Quran :

“Allah's greatest favour to mankind is His Guidance contained in the revealed books. The pure, perfect and most useful knowledge comes only from Allah, the Wisest and the Greatest.”


(Quran, 2:146-147, 4:163)

A Muslim believes in all the revealed books which are mentioned in the Quran. They are: the Tawrah (Torah) of Musa (Moses), the Zabur (Psalms) of Da'wud (David), the Injil (Gospel) of Isa (Jesus) and the Quran revealed to Muhammad. The Quran also mentions the Suhaf of Ibrahim (Scripture of Abraham).

Of the divine books, only the Quran remains unchanged, preserved in its original form. The original Tawrat, Zabur and Injil no longer exist. The texts available today were written by their followers many years after the death of their Prophets. The writers have changed and distorted God's words. They have mixed divine words with those of human beings.

The Bible, which is a collection of the books of the Old Testament and the New Testament, has been translated into English from available Hebrew and Greek manuscripts. A careful reader can easily find some of the additions and alterations made to them.

The Bible, as it is available today; has many human additions which do not appear to be correct. It is not a divine revelation. It contains numerous misleading misconceptions and false accounts of the prophets. The message of God sent through them was either lost or distorted, because of the neglect or folly of their followers. On the other hand, the Quran contains God's guidance for mankind in its original form and language, unchanged and undistorted. It restates in clear and unambiguous language the message of Allah which the followers of earlier prophets have lost. The message of the Quran is valid for all times.



The Quran

The Powerful Speech of God

The Quran is God Almighty's pure and powerful speech. Every word in this book is a message from God to the mankind. The Quranic words are the most powerful and enlightening words in human history. It is these words of the Quran that are motivating and steering the world towards the fastest growing religion, Islam.

One can read many books available everywhere all over the world. But the Quran is a divine book and over 1.7 billion Muslims respect and read it as a God-gifted guidance for their day to day lives. Muslims strongly believe that when they are reading the Quran, they are directly communicating with the Almighty Allah.

The Quran is a unique gift of God to humanity. The word Quran literally means reading or recitation. The Quran is the divine word revealed as such to mankind – in “Arabic, pure and clear – and it is all at once a reminder, a light, and a miracle.” Almighty God revealed the Quran to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) over a period of 23 years through Angel Gabriel. As soon as he received a revelation, the Prophet communicated this to his companions and asked them to learn it by heart—in order to recite it during the prayers – and also he ordered them to write it down.

The Quran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) approximately 1400 years ago between 610 CE and 632 CE in the land of Hejaz which includes then cities of Mecca and Medina. Arabia, at the time, was in the backwaters of history.

What is the Quran ?

The Quran cannot be compared to other religious texts, for example the Torah or the Bible or The Mahabharata and the Ramayana, because it is not a book of narrative records of ancient peoples — although it does contain some stories of prophets and earlier nations. It is not a ‘ linear ’ text with a chronological order or a ‘ Logical ’ beginning, middle and an end. It is rhythmic prose, epic poem and symphony all rolled into one sublime text. The whole text, containing 114 chapters or surahs, with a total of 6666 verses, thus has a lattice structure which connects every word with every other word by rhythm, rhyme and meaning. The structure of the Quran ensures that not a single dot of its text can be changed, for even the minutest change simply throws the text out of sync.

The Uniqueness of the Quran

It is because of its special structure, the interlocking character of ‘each word and verse, the eloquence and beauty of its language and the precision, economy and subtlety of its style that the Quran is said to be ‘ inimitable ’. It is not only physically impossible to change or corrupt it, but also beyond human capability to produce a single verse of similar literary merit as that of the Quran. The Quran itself challenges its readers to produce a single surah that could be deemed equal to any part of it;

“And if you doubt any part of what We have bestowed from on high, step by step, upon our servant (Muhammad), then produce a surah of

similar merit, and call upon any other than God to bear witness for you - if what you say is true! And if you cannot do it- and most certainly you cannot do it—then be conscious of the fire whose fuel is human beings and stones which awaits all who deny the truth.” (Quran, 2:23-24)

The special language and structure of the Quran makes it relatively easy to memorize. The language carries the reciter from word to word, the structure guides from verse to verse, propelled by imagery and picturesque style. The recitation of the Quran is a highly developed art form. It has two generally accepted techniques: a musically beautiful reading, Tajwid; and a slow, deliberately simple chant, tartil or proper order. Young Muslims are taught recitation of the Quran from a tender age when they also memorize the entire text. The Quran is thus the only book in the history of mankind which is memorized from cover to cover.

At any given time, there are literally millions of people who are hafiz—who know the Quran by heart.

Reciting the Quran five times a day in the prayer (Salat or Namaz), reading it at dawn, noon, dusk and night, the words of Allah have travelled over 1,400 years across the desert of Arabia to nations across the world. The words of Allah will continue to echo throughout the world in their pure and pristine form through centuries to come.

There seems to be misconception that the Quran was scripted by Prophet Muhammad. The very fact that the Prophet was unlettered, he could not read nor write, should dispel this misunderstanding. The words in the Quran are divinely ordained. The historical, scientific and the literary beauty and accuracy of the Quran can be attributed only to God, as it is only He who can create the magnificent words in this book. Even for a person who does not know Arabic, the intonation of the Quran casts a magical spell.

Purposes and Contents of the Quran

The Quran speaks to humanity as a whole, to nations, communities, families and individuals, race, region or time; complete with both an outer teaching and an inner teaching, it speaks both to persons and to souls. Further, it seeks to guide man in all walks of life; spiritual, temporal, individual and collective.

The Quran is addressed to all humanity without distinction of race, region or time. The Quran's major themes are God, human beings, society, nature, reason, prophethood and revelation. The Quran speaks of the transcendence of God, the fact that He is beyond all perception of human beings-and hence beyond confines of gender, describes His attributes and contains the appropriate modes for praising Him. It describes the responsibility of persons as individuals and in society as the trustee of God on earth. The Quran makes frequent and repeated statements about nature in which the magnitude, stability and regularity of natural phenomena are stressed. Some 750 verses, almost one-eighth of the Quran, are devoted to extolling the virtues of reason. There are 250 legislative verses that provide the rules relating to social and economic life and penal and international law.

The Quran seeks primarily to develop the personality of the individual-every being will be personally responsible to his Creator. With this purpose, the Quran not only gives commands, but also tries to convince. The Quran provides direction to help mankind judge between right and wrong, truth and false without which, man would surely be in loss.

The Quran reiterates the eternal truth about the Unity of God and calls upon His creatures to have unshakable and absolute faith in Him; do good deeds and lead a pious and virtuous life. These are the cardinal principles which it enjoins upon people for salvation and form the bedrock of Islam.

One of the shortest chapters (Surah 112), Al-Ikhlās, deals exclusively with the doctrine of Unity of God (Tawhīd) and is described by the Prophet as equivalent to one-third of the Quran.

- Almighty Allah informs us that He has no partner, no son, no equal, and that none has the right to be worshipped except Him alone. Nothing is comparable to God and none of His creation resembles Him. The Quran also rejects the notion of attributing human qualities and limitations to God.

“And your god is One God. There is no god but He,
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.”
(Quran, 2:163)

- Since God alone is the only one worthy of worship, false deities and false gods must be rejected. The Quran also rejects the notion of attributing divine qualities to anyone or anything other than God.

“And worship Allah and associate none with Him.”
(Quran, 4: 36)

The faith to which the Quran invites is simple and straight forward: *“La ilaha il Allah; Muhammad Rasool Allah.”*

It means: “There is none worthy of worship except Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of God.”

In Islam, worship is a comprehensive term that includes all actions and sayings (whether private or public) that Allah commands, Allah loves and is pleased with.

- Quran prescribes universal brotherhood. It rejects the thought that human beings have been created in castes or in different levels. God describes the Islamic concept of Universal Brotherhood.

“O mankind! We have created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another (not that you may hate each other)...” (Quran, 49:13)

- Equality and justice are two sides of the same coin and the Quran is champion of both. All human beings are equal in the sight of Allah, whether male or female, black or white, poor or rich, the ruler or the ruled, the noble or the plebeian... It is the piety, virtue and good deeds which grant excellence to one person over the other. As for differences in race, colour, language and nationality, the Quran maintains, these are merely for distinguishing and not for division, discrimination and superiority. The ideal vision of brotherhood of man and sense of justice is expressed in the Quran in the most eloquent terms: (See, Quran, 49:13, 4:135)
- The Quran reminds us that everyone will taste death and will be held accountable for all their actions, the principles of reward and punishment, the certainty of life after death, accountability before Almighty God on the Day of Judgment, the existence of Heaven and Hell and the truth and necessity of Revelation and so on.

The Quran gives a glowing description of the Paradise which will be awarded to the truly obedient servants of God. The severe punishment to be meted out to the evildoers is also described vividly in the Quran.

“What is this life on this earth, but a play and an amusement? It is the Hereafter that is the best for all who are righteous.” (Quran, 6:32)

- The Quran makes a fervent appeal to the people, loud and clear, to organize themselves in order to invite humanity to all that is good; to enjoin what is right; and to forbid what is

wrong:

“O you who believe! let their arise out of you a band of people, inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. They are the ones to attain felicity.” (Quran, 3:104)

- The Quran contains many verses which accurately describe natural phenomena in various fields such as embryology, meteorology, astronomy, geology and oceanography. Scientists have found its descriptions incredibly accurate and surprisingly precise for a book dating back to the seventh century.

“We shall show them Our Signs in the Universe and within their own selves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth.” (Quran, 41:53)

In fact, many of the scientific miracles mentioned in the Quran have been discovered only recently, through the modern advancement of technological equipments.

- The Quran is a comprehensive code of life dealing with each and every aspect and phase of human life. The Quran lays down the best of rules relating to international conduct, commerce, economics, politics, justice and social life, marriage and inheritance of property. It also gives penal laws, maintenance laws, divorce laws, civic laws, and so on.

It contains directions for the conduct of the head of a State, as well as a simple commoner, of the rich as well as of the poor.

- The Quran lays down broad guidelines for resolution of human miseries arising from hunger, poverty, inequality, injustice, wars, conflicts, over exploitation of Nature or fiddling with God’s creations and greed etc...

- Numerous verses in the Quran indicate that, Almighty God has made everything to serve the cause of mankind in the Universe. Modern science also proves that the ultimate purpose of everything in the world is to serve mankind. It is a world where one is for all and all are made to serve the one. This is the rule of nature. Accordingly, the purpose of the existence of mankind can be nothing else but to serve the cause of their Creator. One way of fulfilling this obligation is to serve the purpose of God's other creations, and of each other's. This is an act of worship, supreme form of which is to establish and maintain peace and harmony in nature. On this, the order of our Creator is:

“And do not make mischief on the Earth, after we have set it right...” (Quran, 7: 56)

- The Quran urges people to follow its guidance and teachings. The success of human beings on this earth and in the Life after Death depends on obedience to the teachings of the Quran. The Quran urges people to use their energies and wealth to establish the supremacy of Almighty God's Laws and removes all evils from the society in which they live.

- One of the significant characteristic of the Quran is its practicability. It does not promote impractical idealism. Nor do its teachings demand the impossible or float on a rosy stream of unattainable ideals. The Quran accepts man for what he is and exhorts him to become what he can be. It does not brand man as a helpless or hopeless creature, condemned from birth to death, and drowned in sin from womb to tomb, but it portrays him as a noble, honorable and dignified being.

The practicability of the Quranic teachings is established by the examples of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him).

The distinctive approach of the Quran is that its instructions are aimed at the general welfare of man and are based on the possibilities within his reach.

In this entire dimension, the Quranic wisdom is conclusive. It neither condemns nor tortures the body nor does it neglect the soul. It does not attempt to 'humanize' God nor does it deify man. Everything is carefully placed where it belongs in the total scheme of creation.

- The Quran is the only religious sacred text that has been preserved. Nothing has been added, removed or modified from it, since its revelation over 1,400 years ago.

Almighty God says in the Quran;

“We have, without doubt, sent down the Message;
and We will certainly guard it from corruption.”
(Quran, 15:9)

Not only has the Quran been preserved in written form, but also in the hearts of men, children and women. Today, millions of people have memorized the Quran from cover to cover, thereby eliminating the prospects of any tampering.

This verse uses a powerful image to express the spiritual status of the Quran:

“If we sent down this Quran on a mountain, surely, you would have seen it humble itself and split open with the fear of Allah. Such are the examples that We offer men that they may [deeply] think.”
(Quran, 59:21)

Prophet Muhammad said:

‘All of the prophets were given such miracles as inspired people to believe. And the miracle that I have been given is the Quran.’

Impact of the *Quran*

The Quran has had an unparalleled impact on human history. It is undoubtedly the most read, recited, memorized, debated, analyzed and venerated book in the annals of history - not excluding the Bible. Listen to Muhammad Asad, one of the most respected translators and commentators of the Quran in the 20th century:

The Quran, “more than any other single phenomenon known to us, has fundamentally affected the religious, social and political history of the world. No other sacred scripture has ever had a similarly immediate impact upon the lives of the people who first heard its message and, through them and the generations that followed them, on the entire course of civilization. It shook Arabia, and made a nation out of its perennially warring tribes; within a few decades, it spread its world-view far beyond the confines of Arabia and produced the first ideological society known to man; through its insistence on consciousness and knowledge, it engendered among its followers a spirit of intellectual curiosity and independent inquiry, ultimately resulting in that splendid era of learning and scientific research which distinguished the world of Islam at the height of its cultural vigour; and the culture thus fostered by the Quran penetrated in countless ways and by-ways into the mind of medieval Europe and gave rise to that revival of Western culture which we call the Renaissance, and thus became in the course of time largely responsible for the birth of what is described as the ‘age of science’: the age in which we are now living.”

Revelation

The Divine Transmission

The Angel Gabriel (Peace be upon him) appeared to Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) several times. The Prophet Muhammad was to report that the Angel Gabriel sometimes appeared to him in his angelic personality and sometimes as a human being. At other times, Muhammad would hear a bell-like sound and revelation would come suddenly, requiring of him such extreme concentration that he came close to suffocation. This last mode was particularly painful, even though at the end of the process, he was able to repeat word for word the contents of revelation he had received. For twenty three years, the Angel Gabriel was to accompany him and reveal, as the situation warranted, the verses and chapters that would ultimately constitute the Quran.

Revelations were not placed in order of the events in the book that was taking shape; they followed an order that the Angel Gabriel indicated to the Prophet. Every year, during the month of Ramadan, the Prophet would recite to the Angel Gabriel, all the revelations he had received of the Quran so far in the order the angel had indicated. This was like a regular verification of the contents and form of the Book that was slowly being constituted over a period of twenty-three years.

The Compilation of the Quran

Each and every word of the Quran was recorded as soon as it was revealed by God to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) through the Angel Gabriel. Angel Gabriel carefully instructed the Prophet in which order the verses should be put together, The Quran is not put together in the order the verses were revealed, or according to subject matter. Its order is according to the plan of God, and is yet another of its striking and unique characteristics.

The Prophet's secretary cum scribe, Zaid ibn Thabit, (may God be pleased with him) used to record them exactly as the Prophet told him. He would read back to the Prophet what he had recorded.

The Quran consists of 114 chapters. The short opening chapter, Sura Fatiha is followed by the longest chapter of the Quran, Sura Baqara (The Cow), with 286 verses. The chapters gradually get shorter. The shortest chapter is the 108th chapter, Sura Kawthar (The Abundance), which has just 3 verses, There are 6666 verses altogether. Chapters revealed when the Prophet was living in Makkah are known as Makki (Makkan) and those revealed in Madinah are called Madani (Madinan).

The Quran is also divided into 30 parts (Juz') of roughly equal size, which is convenient for recitation purposes.

Many of the early Muslims memorized the Quran immediately after the verses were revealed. Some of the

famous Huffaz (plural persons who memorized the Quran; singular: Hafiz) were; Mu'az bin jabal, 'Ubadah, Abu Darda' Abu Ayyub al-Ansari and Ubayy bin Ka'ab,

Shortly after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 CE, 'Umar (may God be pleased with him) suggested to the Khalifah, Abu Bakr, that the Quran be compiled in one volume. Up until then, the Quran was written down in separate sections. A committee was formed under the chairmanship of Zaid bin Thabit to gather the material of the Quran into one volume.

Great care was taken to compile the Quran exactly as it had been recorded during the time of the Prophet. After careful checking and rechecking the work was completed. During the Khalifah Umar, the copy was kept with Hafsa (may God be pleased with her), one of the widows of the Prophet Muhammad.

Later, many schools were established for the teaching of the Quran throughout the Muslim territories. During Khalifah Umar's time, one such school in Damascus had sixteen hundred pupils under Abu Darda, one of the famous Huffaz.

Far-sighted action by Khalifah Uthman made the uniform recitation of the Quran possible. Two original copies from the time of the Khalifah Uthman still exist today – one in the Topkapi Museum in Istanbul, Turkey and the other in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, The National Library of Karachi, Pakistan has a photocopy of the Tashkent original.



Seerah

The life of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is known as the Seerah and was lived in the full light of history. Everything he did and said was recorded. Because Prophet could not read and write himself, he was constantly served by a group of 45 scribes who wrote down his sayings, instructions and his activities. Prophet Muhammad himself insisted on documenting his important decisions. Nearly three hundred of his documents have come down to us, including political treaties, military recruitments, assignments of officials and state correspondence written on tanned leather. We thus know his life to the minutest details: how he spoke, sat, slept, dressed, walked; his behavior as a husband, father, nephew; his attitudes towards women, children, animals; his business transactions and stance towards the poor and the oppressed; his engagement in camps and cantonments, his behaviour in battle; his exercise of political authority and stand on power; his personal habits, likes and dislikes - even his private dealings with his wives. Within a few decades of his death, accounts of the life of Prophet Muhammad were available to the Muslim community in written form. One of the earliest and the most famous biographies of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), written less than hundred years after his death, is Seerat Rasul Allah by ibn Ishaq.

The *Hadith*

The daily utterances and discourses of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), from the day he received the first revelation of the Quran, till his death, are known as the hadith. Hadith literally means ‘statement’: the hadith, then, are the sayings or traditions of the Prophet Muhammad.

During his life, the hadith were written down by Prophet Muhammad’s scribes and companions on various media papyrus, palm fibres, bone tablets, hides, white stones and parchment—as well as memorized. After his death, Muslims developed a special science concerned with the transmitting, validating and authenticating of hadith. This method of hadith criticism became a hallmark of Muslim civilization and generated a vast corpus of literature.

By the age of ten, Anas (may God be pleased with him) had learned to read and write. His parents asked Prophet Muhammad to appoint him as his personal scribe and attendant. Prophet accepted; and the young Anas joined his band of scribes and accompanied Prophet Muhammad night and day. After the death of Prophet Muhammad, Anas became famous as a reporter of hadith. He used to unroll his sheets of documents and say: ‘These are the sayings of the Prophet, which I have noted and then also read out to him to correct my mistakes.’

Early Muslim scholars, Imam Bukhari, the famous compiler of hadith, collected and reported 7,275 traditions. These are collected in his famous book, *Sahih Bukhari*. Imam Muslim collected 9,200 which we find in his *Sahih Muslim*. There are six well known and widely used authentic collections of hadith, each known after its compiler. Apart from Muslim and Bukhari, they are: *Trimidhi*, *ibn Majah*, *Abu Dawud* and *An-Nisai*.

The *Sunnah*

Together the Seerah and the Hadith constitute the Sunnah. The word Sunnah means method, example, or path. The Sunnah, deeds and saying of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the enactment of Prophet Muhammad's Divine Mission in the world, is an integral part of his message. As such, it is taken as a model of ideal behaviour by every Muslim. It is through the Sunnah that Muslims know and learn the ritual and spiritual aspects of their faith - how to pray, fast and perform the pilgrimage to Makkah. But the Sunnah is also the guide in moral and social matters. Thus a Muslim seeking a pious life simply follows the norms and patterns established by the life and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) - the Sunnah is the way of Islamic life.

“The sunnah is a fundamental source of Islamic law. The Quran and Sunnah together are considered to be the theoretical and practical sides of Islam.”



Application of Faith

In this chapter we propose to deal with the major exercises of Faith as laid down by Islam. They are Prayers (Namaz), Fasting (Siyam), Almsgiving (Zakat) and Pilgrimage (Hajj) The way Allah has enjoined these exercises makes them serve all spiritual purposes and satisfy human needs. Some of them are daily; some weekly; some monthly; some bi-annually, some annually; and some are required as a minimum once in a lifetime. So they embrace all the days of the week, all the weeks of the month, all the months of the year, and all the years of life, and they above all, mark the whole course of life with a Divine touch.

Faith inspires man to be constant in his devotion and persistent in his practice.

Relevance of Faith

The interrelationship between Faith and practice in Islam has vivid reflections on the entire setup of the Religion and manifests the deep philosophy of its teachings. Islam does not recognize any kind of separation between soul and body, spirit and matter, Religion and life. It accepts man the way God has created him and recognizes his nature as composed of soul and body. It does not neglect his spiritual nature;

else he would be like an animal. Nor does it underestimate his physical needs; else he would be an angel, which he is not and cannot be.

Islam grants complete recognition of human nature as it is, and takes deep interest in the spiritual as well as the material well-being of man, it does not consider religion a personal affair or a separate entity from the current general course of life. In other words, religion has no value unless its teachings have effective imprints on the personal and public course of life. On the other hand, life is meaningless, if it is not organized and conducted according to the Divine law.

This explains why Islam extends its sense of organization to all walks of life: individual and social behavior, labor and industry, economics and politics, national and international relations and so on. It also demonstrates why Islam does not recognize separation of religion from man's daily transactions. The interaction between true Religion and meaningful life is vital. And this is why Islam penetrates into all walks of life to conduct all human activities in a sound and wholesome manner, acceptable to God and benevolent to man. As a result of this necessary correspondence between true Religion and daily life, Islam does not attend to the doctrine of "six days for me or the world and one day for the "Lord".

Similarly, if man earmarks six days for mockery or exclusive meditation and one day for himself, he would be better in no way. The balance would still be upset.



Five pillars of Islam

Both the message of the Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) reveal the comprehensiveness of Islam's way of life, its individual and corporate dimensions. Central to the faith are the five pillars, or basic duties, which are incumbent upon all Muslim believers.

The five pillars as mentioned in the Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him));

Shahadah	Declaration of Faith
Salah	Five compulsory daily prayers and attendance at the Friday congregational prayer.
Siyam	Fasting during month of Ramadan.
Zakat	Welfare contribution.
Hajj	Pilgrimage to Makkah.

Shahadah or Declaration of Faith

The Shahadah or Declaration of Faith which marks entrance into or membership in the Islamic community: The Arabic wording is,

'Laa ilaaha il'lal laah Muhammad Rasool Allah'

“There is no god but the God
and Muhammad is the messenger of God”.

Those who accept the Quran as the Word of God and Muhammad as the prophet of God are called Muslims. A Muslim becomes a Muslim by declaring the Shahadah the formula of faith.

This simple declaration has profound consequences;

1. It implies that true existence is that of God alone; person kind and the entire creation exist only because God wills them to exist.
2. Since we exist by the will and grace of God, we are totally dependent on Him—our relationship to God is that between servant and Master.
3. As such, we are responsible for all our thoughts and actions before God to whom we will have to render an account of our worldly deeds on the Day of Judgement and Who will decide our final destination in the Hereafter, or the Akhira.
4. To prepare ourselves for the Final Judgement we must live a responsible and virtuous life according to the Will of God.
5. The Will of God can only be known through His Messengers; belief in God therefore requires belief in revelation—the Books of God—and the Messengers of God.
6. Of all the Messengers, sent to every tribe and nation, Muhammad is the Last, being the seal of prophet hood and completing the process of revelation.
7. Since God is transcendent and beyond all human perception, He communicates His message to His Prophets through His functionaries – the angels.

Religious Practices and Devotional Life in Islam

Allah has created mankind to worship Him. He says in the Quran:

“Indeed I created jinn and human beings
for no other purpose but to worship Me.”
(Quran, 51:56)

Ibaadah

The Islamic word for the service of worship is ‘ibaadah, which is from the same root as ‘abd (i.e., slave). In other words, worship is what the slave does; the service is what the master desires of him.

Worship is the Pillar of Religion

Prophet Muhammad proclaimed :

‘Worship is the pillar of religion’. And he declared,
‘Submission to God is Islam and one should celebrate
the services of worship, observe annual fasting,
perform the Hajj (pilgrimage) and pay the zakat-
taxes.’

The Prayer or Salat or Namaz, five times each day at fixed times and attendance at the Friday congregational prayer.

“Indeed, I am God; there is no god except Myself;
so worship Me and establish Prayer to remember
Me.” (Quran, 20:14)

Masjid

Mosque

Namaz or the Islamic prayer is held five times in each and every mosque around the earth. A Muslim is supposed to pray five times, preferably in a mosque. This is recommended to reinforce social bonds between people and raise a society where people know each other and share joys and sorrows and concerns and commitments.

1. A mosque is a place of worship for followers of Islam, and it is the Place, where one prostrates (face down) oneself.
2. Many mosques have elaborate domes, minarets, and prayer halls.
3. No idol, sketch, relic, frieze, fresco or holy book is kept in front while praying in the Mosque.
4. Neither any entry fee, nor any offerings like coconut, sweets, essence sticks, chador, etc is required to be offered while entering the mosque for Namaz.
5. The Mosque serves as a place where Muslims can come together for Salah or namaz (prayer) as well as a center for information, education, and dispute settlement.

6. All Muslims, stand in a single row and pray. No person is treated with privileges in Mosque while offering the Namaz or allotted with a place at the front rows on the basis of his social, economic or political status.

7. Strict timings are followed; the fixed timings cannot be altered just to accommodate any important person.

8. Imam leads the prayer; Mosques do not follow any priesthood. Any learned person or a person whose bona fides are well established in the society can lead the prayer.

9. Non-Muslims are also allowed inside Mosque.

10. Animal sacrifice is not the part of Namaz in the Mosque.

11. Entry into Mosque after consuming alcoholic drinks is prohibited and even those who have chewed raw onion or garlic are advised to wash their mouths before gaining entry.



The whole Earth is a Mosque

Prophet Muhammad said, the whole earth is a Mosque, this saying of Prophet has the simple meaning that, Prophet was permitted (by Allah) to offer prayers anywhere on earth; no part of the earth was “unclean” as such. Similarly, Muslims following the Prophet are allowed (by the Islamic law) to pray anywhere. Hence one can routinely observe Muslims offering prayers in such diverse places as parks, by the roadside, on railway platforms, airport terminals, etc... The whole of the earth is a “place of worship” for Muslims; they remember God and offer prayers at the appointed time, wherever they may be.

Apart from this simple meaning, the saying of the Prophet Muhammad has another, more profound meaning. A Muslim realizes that a mosque is a ‘peaceful’ place; people enter it in a state of purity. Their body and their clothes are clean. Their minds and hearts are also clean; they approach the mosque as humble servants of God. When they enter the mosque, they pronounce Assalamu Alaikum (Allah’s peace be upon you) to those already present in the mosque. This is a declaration of ‘peace’ by the newcomers. The mosque radiates ‘peace’ and harmony and it gives the twin message of Tawheed (oneness of God) and human brotherhood.

Thus when the Prophet Muhammad likened the earth to a mosque, he was also emphasizing the need of making the earth a ‘Peaceful’ place. All human beings should be able to enjoy “Peace” everywhere on the earth, according to the Prophetic vision. The ideal of peace would be achieved when the earth actually resembles a mosque and, like a mosque, spreads the message of harmony and human brotherhood.

AZAN

The Prayer Call

In order to call people to the mosque for prayers, Azan is called from the minarets.

The Azan barely takes two to three minutes to be read out over the microphones.

The Prophet of Islam fixed the wordings and one would hear them from minarets jutting out into the skies from Jakarta to Casablanca. Azan was adopted as a distinctive call from the mosque from the then prevalent ringing of the bell in churches and blowing of conches in other temples. It will be useful if the meaning of the Azan too is brought to the people:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>Allahu Akbar</i> | Allah is the Greatest,
(repeated four times) |
| 2. <i>Ashhadu An La-ilaha Illa-l-Lab</i> | I bear witness that there
is no god but the One
God. (repeated twice) |
| 3. <i>Ashhadu Anna Mubammad
Rasulu-l-lha</i> | I bear witness that
Muhammad is the
Messenger of Allah,
(repeat twice) |
| 4. <i>Hayya 'Ala-s-salah</i> | Come fast to Prayer,
(repeated twice) |

5. *Hayya 'Ala-l-falah* Come fast to success,
(repeated twice)
6. *Allahu Akbar* Allah is the Greatest,
(repeated twice)
7. *La illaha illa-l-lah* There is no god but the
One and True God, (once)

• Two additional phrases are added after 'Hayya 'Ala-l-falah' for Morning Prayer's Azan, those are:

'Assalatu Khairum menan Naum' "Prayer is better than
sleep" (repeated twice)

This same, never changing call, based on the affirmation of God's greatness ('Allahu Akbar'), the profession of faith ("I bear witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger"), and an invitation to prayer and success in this world and the next, has for almost fifteen centuries been resounding through all places where Muslim have been living. In all its different accents, rhythms, and voices, this call in its musicality, has been singing praise of God and inviting people towards spirituality.

If it serves as a wake-up call at dawn, it comes as a reminder at the end of a hectic day in the evening and lends a finishing touch to the day after the night has settled.

It is a reminder of the One God, Allah, who intends to draw his servants (the people) for spiritual regeneration out of their busy schedules to remember God and go back recharged with piety to their duties after having renewed their commitment to Him.



Wadu

Ablution

Cleanliness is half of the Faith

Wudu' is essential for performing Salat.

Allah says in the Quran:

“O you who believe, when you prepare for Salat, wash your faces and your hands to the elbows; wipe over your heads and wash your feet up to the ankles.”
(Quran, 5:6)

‘Cleanliness is half of the Faith,’ says Prophet Muhammad. So, when intending to celebrate the service of worship, one has first to be clean body. Ordinarily there are simple ablutions for the daily services.

Ablutions are made in the following manner: The first step is to formulate the intention of purification, saying bismillah (with the name of God) and by saying ‘Praise be to God Who has made water pure and purifying’ wash the hands up to the wrists, rinse the mouth with water, clean the nostrils with water, wash the face from the forehead to chin and from ear to ear, then prays to God: ‘Brighten my face on Doomsday, and do not darken it;’ wash the right arm and then the left one upto the elbows (inclusive), pass the wet fingers on the head and in the ear holes and the neck and then say, ‘teach me useful knowledge.’ then wash first the right foot and then the left one up to the ankle - doing each act thrice (unless water is lacking, in which case once is sufficient) ‘Make my feet firm on the path when crossing over Hell, and do not let them stumble on the day when the feet of Thy friends will remain firm and the feet of Thy enemies will stumble.’

Make Intention (Niyyah)
saying:

Bissmillahir rahmanir rahim

'In the name of Allah, the
Most Merciful, the Most
Kind'

Then wash both hands up to
the wrists three times
making sure that water has
reached between the fingers.



Put a handful of water into
the mouth and rinse it
thoroughly three times.



Sniff water into the nostrils
three times to clean them
and then wash the tip of the
nose.



Wash the face three times
from right ear to left ear and
from forehead to throat.



Wash the right arm, and then
left arm, thoroughly from hand
to elbow three times.



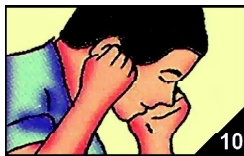
Move the wet palms of both
hands over the head, starting
from the top of the forehead
to the neck.



Rub the wet fingers into the
grooves and holes of both ears
and also pass the wet thumbs
behind the ears.



Pass the backs of the wet hands over the nape.



Wash both feet to the ankles starting from the right foot and making sure that water has reached between the toes and all other parts of the feet.



At the end of all the steps, recite:

Ash-hadu alla
ilaha illallahu wahdahu
la sharika lahu wa
ash-hadu anna
Muham-madan
'abdudu wa rasuluh.

I testify that there is
no god but Allah and
He is One and has no
partner and I testify
that Muhammad is
His servant and
messenger.



Salah The Prayer

Allah has created mankind to worship Him. He says in the Quran:

“Indeed I created jinn and human beings for no other purpose but to worship Me.” (Quran, 51:56)

“Indeed, I am God; there is no god except Myself so worship Me and establish Prayer to remember Me.” (Quran, 20:14)

Prayer (Namaz) is the practical proof of Muslims faith in One God and Islam, the final Message to humanity. It has been made compulsory at certain fixed timings. These prayers are obligatory, and form a direct bond between the worshipper and his Creator.

Islam does not call upon Muslims to merely perform this act of worship; it wants of them to purify their souls. Allah says, regarding Prayers:

“Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing.” (Quran, 29:45)

Every Muslim, male or female, must offer five daily prayers on time, if there is no lawful reason for exemption.

Timings of the Namaz (Prayers) are fixed according to the positions of the sun on the sky.

These daily prayers are:

1. **Fajr** : Early Morning Prayer (fajr) are held just before the sunrise.
2. **Zuhr** : Afternoon prayers (Zuhr) are held when the sun starts to incline from its apogee.
3. **Asr** : The third (Asr) prayer is said when the shadow of things become twice their own length.
4. **Maghrib** : The sunset (Maghrib) prayers are offered immediately after the sun sets.
5. **Isha** : The fifth or the final prayer of the day (Isha) is said when the darkness has completely settled or say after 90 minutes of the sunset.

The nature, body postures and the formulas uttered during the above referred obligator Salat are basically the same, but differ in their length, depending upon the number of repetitions of the process, technically called, Rakah (Unit). When a Muslim performs the Salat, he is in intimate and confidential converse with his Lord; and at that occasion he ought to know exactly what he says with his Lord.

When we analyze the Islamic Salat and study its unique nature, it will reveal to us that it is not merely a physical motion or a void recital of the Quran. It is a matchless and unprecedented formula of intellectual meditation and spiritual devotion of moral elevation and physical exercise, all combined. It is an exclusively Islamic experience where every muscle of the body joins the soul and the mind in the worship and glory of God.

Formal as it is, salat in Islam is a discipline imposed upon all Muslims. By subjecting the worshipper to it, Islam sought to discipline its adherents and keep them ever conscious of the presence of God. Salat punctuates the time and

habituates the Muslim to a healthy rhythm of life. Through ablution in fresh water, salat acts as a re-freshener and cleanser; and through the alternation of standing up, bow, prostration, and sitting down, it serves as an exercise for the body. Salat brings spiritual satisfaction and emotional fulfillment. To empty the consciousness of its daily cares, to concentrate upon God and His presence and Will, is an uplift of the self to the realm of the absolute and universal. From such an exercise, the worshipper emerges more ready to face life and its problems than before. The content of the salat, the ideas presented to the mind through the recitation, strengthen the self in its determination to will and do the good, to avoid evil, to fill the world with value. Finally, when performed in congregation, the packed straight lines readily suggest and exhort the Muslim to uphold social equality, universalism, brotherhood, and concern for the others.



How to perform Namaz or Prayer

At this stage you should be ready to start saying your Salat. Make sure you have Wudu, a clean body, clean clothes and a clean place. This is how you should do your Salat:

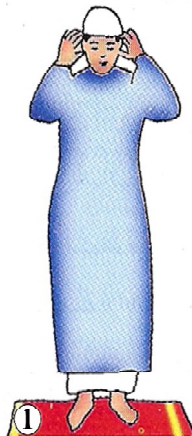
a. Stand upright in a clean place (like a prayer mat) facing the direction of the Kaabah. This is called Qiyam and the direction is called the Qiblah in Arabic. In India Qiblah is towards the West. In other countries the direction will be different. You will have to find out its direction before doing your Salat.

b. Say your Niyah (intention) either verbally or in your mind. Niyah is said with the words: I have turned my face to the One God Who has created the heavens and the earth, I being sincere and submissive while I am not one of those who give associates (to God). Verily my service of worship, my cult, in fact my life and my death belong to God, Lord of the worlds, to Whom none to associate. Unto this have I been commanded (to believe), and I am the first to submit.

i. Raise your hands up to your ears (women and girls up to their shoulders) and say;

Allahu Akbar

Allah is the Greatest

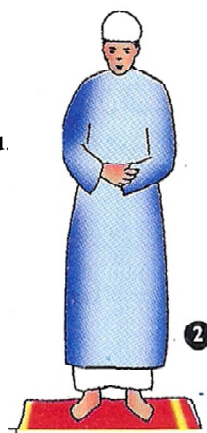


2. Place your right hand on your left hand just below the navel or on the chest (women and girls put their hands on their chest) and recite Sana':

O Allah, glory and praise are for You,
and blessed is Your name, and exalted
is Your Majesty; there is no god but You.

A'udhu billahi minash shaitanir rajim
I seek refuge in Allah,
from the cursed Satan. (Shaitan)

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim
In the name of Allah,
the Most Merciful, the Most Kind.



- Recite the rest of Chapter *Al-Fatihah* (the opening chapter) of the Quran:

All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Universe. The Most Merciful, the Most Kind. Master of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship, from You alone we seek help.

Guide us along the straight path. The path of those whom, You have favoured, not of those who earned Your anger nor of those who went astray (or who are misguided). (Quran, 1:1-7)

The recitation of al-Fatihah is a must in all prayers.

- Then recite some verses from the Quran. For example:

Bismillahir rahmanir rahim.

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind.

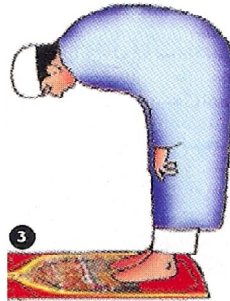
“Say, He is Allah, the One. Allah is Eternal and Absolute. None is born of Him nor is He born. And there is none like Him.” (Quran, 112)

3. Bow down saying Allahu Akbar,

then place your hands on your knees and say three times:

Subhana rabbiyal 'azim
Glory to my Lord, the Great.

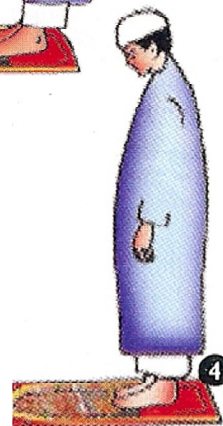
This position is called Ruku'



4. Stand up from Ruku' saying:
Sami 'allahu liman hamidah
Allah hears those who praise Him.

Followed by: Rabbana lakal hamd,
Our Lord, praise be to You.

This is called I'tidal as you return
to the position of Qiyam (standing).

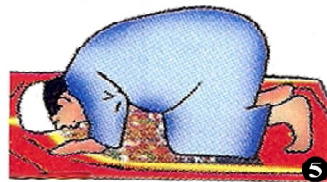


5. Prostrate saying Allahu Akbar,
with your forehead, nose, palms of both hands, your knees
and your toes touching the floor.

Recite three times:

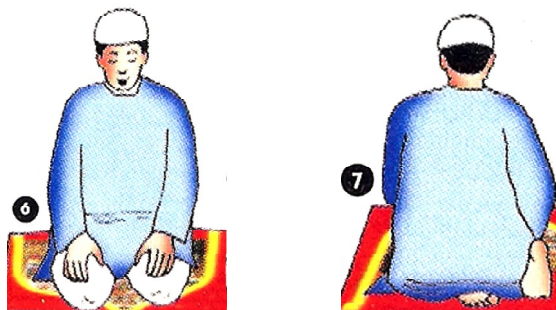
Subhana rabbiyal a'la.

Glory to my Lord, the Highest



This position is called Sujud. Your arms should not touch
the floor.

6 & 7. Get up from the floor saying Allahu Akbar and sit upright with your knees bent and palms placed on them. After a moment's rest prostrate again saying Allahu Akbar and recite Subhana rabbiyal a'la three times. Get up from this position saying Allahu Akbar.



This completes one rak'ah of Salat. The second rak'ah is performed in the same way except you do not recite 'Subhanaka, Ta'awwudh (A'udhu billahi...) or Tasmiyah (Bismillah...) then After the second prostration you sit upright and recite quietly at-Tashahhud: All compliments are for Allah, and prayers and goodness. Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the Mercy of Allah and His blessings.

Peace be upon us and on the righteous servants of Allah.

I testify that there is no god except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is His servant and messenger.

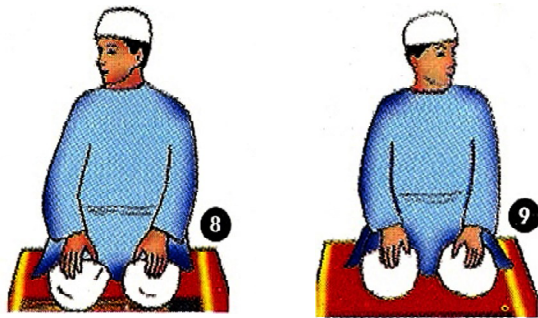
Then recite Darud, (blessings for the Prophet): O Allah, let Your blessings come on Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. Truly You are Praise worthy and Glorious. O Allah, bless Muhammad and the family of Muhammad as You blessed Ibrahim and the family of Ibrahim. Truly You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.

After this recite any of the following dua's (supplications):
 O Allah, I have been very unjust to myself and no one grants pardon for sins but You, so forgive me with Your forgiveness and have mercy on me. Surely You are the Forgiver, the Merciful.

“My Lord,
 make me steadfast in Salat
 and also my descendents; our Lord,
 and accept my prayer.
 Our Lord, forgive me and my parents
 and the believers on
 the Day of Judgment.”
 (Quran, 14:40-41)

8. Now turn your face to the right saying:

Assalamu 'alaikum wa rahmatullah, Peace and the mercy of Allah be upon you.



9. And then, to the left repeating the same words.

Assalamu 'alaikum wa rahmatullah
 Peace and the mercy of Allah be upon you.

This completes the two rak'ah Salat.

10. Some Du'a (supplications) after Salat: It is good practice to ask for forgiveness and mercy from Allah at the end of your Salat you can make du'a in your own words and in your own language but it is better for you to memories some dua's in Arabic.



Some Du'a or Supplications after Salat

“Our Lord, grant us good in this world, and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of Hellfire.” (Quran, 2:201)

“Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves and if You do not forgive us and have no mercy upon us, surely we will be among the loser.” (Quran, 7:23)

“O Allah, You are the source of peace and from You comes peace, exalted You are, O Lord of Majesty and Honour.” (Hadith)

“There is no god except Allah and He is One and has no partner, sovereignty is His, all praise is His and He has power over all things. O Allah, none can stop you giving what You want to give, nor give what You do not want given, and none with means can do anything with their means against You.” (Hadith)

The Significance of *Namaz*

The benefit which man can derive from the Islamic prayer is immeasurable, and the blessing of Prayer is beyond imagination. This is not just a “theory” or conventional assumption; it is a fascinating fact and a spiritual experience.

Here lies the significance and vitality of prayer in the life of man:

1. It brings men and women closer to Allah.
2. It is the practical proof of Muslims faith in One God and Islam, the final Message to humanity.
3. It keeps human beings away from indecent, shameful and forbidden activities.
4. It is a training program designed to control evil desires and passions.
5. It purifies the heart, develops the mind and comforts the soul.
6. It is a constant reminder of Allah and His greatness.
7. It develops discipline and willpower.
8. It is a guide to the most upright way of life.
9. It is a proof of true equality; solid unity and universal brotherhood.

10. It is the source of patience, courage, hope and confidence.
11. It is a means of cleanliness, purity and punctuality.
12. It develops gratitude, humility and refinement.
13. It is the demonstration of our obedience to our Creator.
14. It is a program which prepares us to match our actions with our words.
15. It is a matchless and unprecedented formula of intellectual meditation and spiritual devotion, of moral elevation and physical exercise, all combined.
16. It is an exclusively Islamic experience where every muscle of the body joins the soul and the mind in the Worship and Glory of God.

The best testimony is to experience the Prayer and avail oneself of its spiritual joys. Then one will know what it really means.



Ramadan and Fasting

Ramadan: Ramazan; in Urdu: is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar; Muslims worldwide observe this as a month of fasting. This annual observance is regarded as one of the Five Pillars of Islam. The month lasts 29-30 days based on the visual sightings of the crescent moon, according to numerous biographical accounts compiled in hadiths.

God has enjoined fasting upon the Muslims as He enjoined it upon previous nations. Almighty Allah says in the Quran:

“O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous.” (Quran, 2:183)

Literally defined, Fasting means to abstain “completely” from foods, drinks, intimate intercourses (sex), smoking and all kinds of disorderly, abusive and aggressive behavior, and worldly temptations and desires, before the break of the dawn till sunset, during the entire month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic year.

According to Islam, the rewards or sawab of fasting are many, but in this month they are believed to be multiplied. Fasting for Muslims during Ramadan typically includes the increased offering of salat (prayers) and recitation of the Quran.

Fasting is obligatory or wajib for adult Muslims, except those who are ill, travelling or going through menstrual bleeding.

The Quran institutes fasting as a form of worship, as both an individual and collective act, the Quran emphasizes the moral and spiritual aspects of fasting and suggests that its purpose is to learn 'self-restraint' (see Quran, 2:183) by controlling one's natural desires.

After fasting was established as a religious injunction, many Muslims in the Prophet's Medina thought it was illegal to have sex with their spouses during the month of Ramadan, even at night. This involved additional hardship; and the verse, "God wills that you shall have ease, and does not will you to suffer hardship; refers to the practice of early Muslims who avoided sex for a whole month. The Quran equates sex with hunger and thirst as natural desires. What applies to eating and drinking after the daily fast is over also applies to sex. There is also the idea of balance here; that the spiritual quest should not be at the expense of physical self. The body and soul need to be in harmony to attain closeness to God.

The idea of mutual balance is continued in the metaphor of 'garments' used to describe the relationship between husbands and wives (see Quran, 2:187). Just as garments protect one's body, so spouses protect each other, just as garments give comfort to the body so husbands and wives are a source of comfort for each other. Just as garments decorate and adorn the body, so the married accomplish each other, the weakness of one is made up by the strength of other in a spirit of mutual support. What could be more beautiful in a relationship than that?

The Quran prescribes fasting during Ramadan for a rather special reason: it is the month when the Quran itself was first revealed. The first verses of the Quran, 'Read in the name of your Lord...' (See Quran, 96:1-5), were revealed on 27th of Ramadan 611, C.E. Ramadan thus, in Muslim thought, has an intimate connection with God.

The Significance of Fasting

When Islam introduced this matchless institution, it planted an ever growing tree of infinite virtue and invaluable products. Here is an explanation of the spiritual meaning of the Islamic Fasting:

1. It is a one month spiritual training program to refresh Muslims for doing the duties for Allah, the Creator and Sustainer.
2. It teaches man the principle of sincere love; because when he observes the Fasting he does it out of deep love for God. And the man who loves God truly is a man who really knows what love is.
3. It cultivates in man a vigilant and sound conscience; because the fasting person keeps his Fast in secret as well as in public. In Fasting, especially, there is no mundane authority to check man's behavior or compel him to observe the Fasting. He keeps it to please God and satisfy his own conscience by being faithful in secret and in public. There is no better way to cultivate a sound conscience in man.
4. Fasting develops self-control and helps us to overcome selfishness, greed and laziness. Fasting enables man to experience the pangs of hunger and thirst. The Person can begin to appreciate what it must be like for the poor and the unfortunate - the millions who go hungry every day.
5. Anger, a common human weakness – can also be brought under control by fasting
6. It is an effective lesson in applied moderation and willpower. The person who observes his Fasting

properly is certainly a man who can discipline his passionate desires and place his self above physical temptations. Such is the man of personality and character, the man of willpower and determination.

7. It provides man with a transparent soul to transcend, a clear mind to think and a light body to move and act. Similarly, when he relieves his stomach and relaxes his digestive system, he is indeed insuring his body, not to mention the soul, against all harm that results from stomach overcharge. Medical instructions, biological rules and intellectual experience attest to this fact.

8. It originates in man the real spirit of social belonging, of unity and brotherhood, of equality before God as well as before the law. This spirit is the natural product of the fact that when man fasts, he feels that he is joining the whole Muslim society in observing the same duty in the same manner at the same time for the same motives to the same end.



Zakat

Right of the under-privileged

“Zakat is meant for the poor and the needy...‘This is ordained by God’.” (Quran, 9:60)

Zakat is an act of ‘Ibadah. ‘Ibadah is an Arabic term which means worship and obedience of God. Muslims pay Zakat to please and gain God’s favour.

Payment of Zakat, or sharing of one’s wealth, must be made for the welfare of the poor, out of one’s assets. It is not just a form of charity or alms-giving or tax or tithe; nor is it simply an expression of kindness. It is all of these combined, but much more. It is not merely a deduction of a certain percentage from one’s income or assets, but an abundant enrichment and spiritual investment. It is not simply a voluntary contribution to someone or some cause; rather, it is a duty enjoined by God and undertaken by Muslims in the interest of society as a whole. It is the right of the under-privileged on the wealth of the rich.

An important principle of Islam is that all things belong to Allah. Muslims are enjoined to earn and spend their wealth in ways that are acceptable to Allah. The divinely ordained system of Zakat is the right of Allah within His dominion.

Far-reaching Effects of *Zakat*

The literary and simple meaning of *Zakat* is Purification and growth. The technical meaning of the word designates the annual amount in kind or coin which a Muslim with means must distribute among the rightful beneficiaries. It is a duty enjoined by God and undertaken by Muslims in the interest of society as a whole. But the religious and spiritual significance of *Zakat* is much deeper and livelier. So is its humanitarian and sociopolitical value. Here is an explanation of the far-reaching effects of *Zakat*:

1. *Zakat* cleanses a Muslim of greed, selfishness, base covetousness, and the love of this temporal world. Allah says: "...And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul – it is those who will be the successful." (Quran, 59:9)
2. *Zakat* purifies the property of the people with means and clears it from the shares which do not belong to it anymore, the shares which must be distributed among the due beneficiaries. When *Zakat* is payable, a certain percentage of the wealth should be distributed immediately in the right manner, because the owner no longer has moral or legal possession of that percentage. If he fails to do so, he is obviously retaining something which does not belong to him. This is plain corruption from every point of view, moral and spiritual, legal and

commercial. It means that the unlawfully retained percentage makes the whole lot impure and endangered. But, on the other hand, if the poor's dividends are assorted and distributed among due beneficiaries, the remaining portions of the lot will be pure and decent. Pure capital and decent possessions are the first requisites of permanent prosperity and honest transactions.

3. Zakat does not only purify the property of the contributor but also purifies his heart from selfishness and greed for wealth. In return, it purifies the heart of the recipient from envy and jealousy, from hatred and uneasiness; and it fosters in his heart. Instead, good will and warm wishes for the contributor. As a result, the society at large will purify and free itself from class warfare and suspicion, from ill feelings and distrust, from corruption and disintegration, and from all such evils.


4. Zakat is a healthy form of internal security against selfish greed and social dissension, against the intrusion and penetration of subversive ideologies. It is an effective instrument in cultivating the spirit of social responsibility on the part of the contributor, and the feeling of security and belonging on the part of the recipient.

5. Zakat is a vivid and bright manifestation of the spiritual and humanitarian spirit of responsive interactions between the individual and society. It is a sound illustration of the fact that though Islam does not hinder private enterprise or condemn private possessions, yet it does not tolerate selfish and greedy capitalism. It is an expression of the general philosophy of Islam which adopts a moderate and middle but positive and effective course between

the individual and the society, between the citizen and the state, between Capitalism and Socialism, between Materialism and Spirituality.

6. Islam is a complete code of life which includes, among other things, the economic side of life. Islam has its own economic principles. *Zakat* is one of the basic principles of the Islamic economy, based on social welfare and the fair distribution of wealth. In addition to the compulsory payment of *Zakat*, Muslims are encouraged to make voluntary contributions to help the poor and needy and for other social welfare purposes. This voluntary contribution is called charity (*Sadaqah*).

7. Through the payment of *Zakat*, the rich share their wealth with the poor and thus the process of concentration of wealth is checked and a fair distribution of wealth is ensured. The categories for the use of *Zakat* are mentioned in the Quran. (see Quran, 9:60)



Hajj

Pilgrimage

“Fulfill the pilgrimage to Mecca for the love of your Lord.”
(Quran, 2:196)

Hajj is the fifth pillar of Islam. It is a visit to Kaabah, the House of Allah in Makkah, once in a lifetime by those Muslims who can afford to make the journey. It is performed during the period 8-13 Dhul Hijjah, the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. (see Quran, 3:97; 22:27-30; 2:197)

Kaabah, also known as Baitullah (House of Allah), is a cube-like one-storey building. It is the first house ever built for the sole purpose of the worship of Allah (Quran. 3:96), The Kaabah is the black draped cube at the centre of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah.

Hajj is the greatest annual gathering of humanity, when almost three million people from all corners of the globe, representing a myriad of nationalities, ethnicities, languages and cultures, join in the greatest collective act of religious witness. The Hajj provides some of the most important insights into the essence of Islam and the worldview it seeks to inspire.

Participation in the hajj is also a real demonstration and experiences of the way that Islam integrates the individual and the collective. It generates an extraordinary sense of community, of unity with the emphasis on equity. The unity of the Hajj is based on the eradication of all distinctions of race, culture, color, class. All pilgrims are dressed alike; ideally a king or a billionaire may walk alongside a pauper and not know the difference. If in the eyes of God, such distinctions are of such little moment, then we have reason not to be too

beholden or over powered by them in our daily lives; it is evidence of the balance we should strive to achieve. The Hajj is proof there are things more important than the social conventions of human invention, which can be perverse and contrary to the balance that Islam seeks to guide us towards. But then, there is even more profound insight that in a community with unity and equity, there is no dissolution of individuality. The most often repeated statement of the pilgrims is the ultimate personal statement: 'Labbaik!' Here I am!' 'Labbaik!' Here I am!' In this sea of humanity, before God each individual is known in their uniqueness, just as each will ultimately be judged and charged with responsibility only for their individual actions and intentions.

During the five days of hajj, Muslim pilgrims from all over the world come together in Makkah, pray and worship in unison, and move constantly from place to place. Before entering the holy areas, they are required to be in a state of grace. They abandon their worldly thought and desires and put on Ihram, two white, un-sewn sheets of cloth.

The holy areas are inviolate and nothing within can be harmed: Animals, plants, not even a fly. The pilgrims shun all signs of vanity and refrain from combing their hair, wearing perfume or clipping their nails. The whole being of the pilgrim should be completely devoted to God without attention to appearance. At the most intense moments of knowing God's presence, knowing the presence of the great mass of humanity and knowing oneself the ego should be suppressed, for in the power of these experiences we are most truly humbled. Desire, including sexual desire, should be put aside. The pilgrims come to Makkah, to seek God's mercy and desire His forgiveness. From the moment they don their ehram, the pilgrim declares, 'O Lord, here am I in response to your call'. Throughout their journey, they 'celebrate His praises' by uttering 'Allahu-Akbar (Allah is the Greatest)' and 'There is no god but Allah'.

Universal Brotherhood

The course of Hajj is another unique characteristic of Islam. It is enjoined by God to serve many purposes among which are the following:

1. It is the largest annual convention of Faith where Muslims meet to know one another, study their common affairs and promote their general welfare.
2. It is also the greatest peace conference known in the history of mankind. In the course of Hajj peace is the dominant theme; peace with God and one's soul, peace with one another and with animals, peace with birds and even with insects. To disturb the peace of anyone or any creatures in any shape or form is strictly prohibited.
3. It is a wholesome demonstration of the universality of Islam and the brotherhood and equality of Muslims. From all walks of life from all trades and classes, and from every corner of the globe the Muslims assemble at Makkah in response to the Call of God. They dress in the same simple way, observe the same regulations, and utter the same supplications at the same time in the same way. There is no royalty, but loyalty of all to Almighty God. There is no aristocracy, but humility and devotion.
4. It is to confirm the commitment of the Muslims to God and their readiness to forsake the material interests in His Service.
5. It is to acquaint the pilgrims with the spiritual and historical environment of Prophet Muhammad. so that they may derive warm inspirations and strengthen their Faith.

In the performance of Hajj it can easily be observed that it is a course of spiritual enrichment and moral rearmament,

a course of intensified devotion and disciplinary experience, a course of humanitarian interests and inspiring knowledge all put together in one single institution of Islam.

The last act of the pilgrimage- is to make an offering to Allah in the form of the sacrifice of an animal. However, it is made clear that

“It is not the animal’s flesh or his blood, that reaches God. It is man’s piety.” (Quran, 22:37)

Those Muslims, who are away from Mecca, be they anywhere in the world, also make the same offering on the day of Eid which is the culmination of the pilgrimage. This Eid is, therefore, called the Festival of Sacrifice or Eid ul Adha (more popularly, eid Qurban).

These are the five main obligatory duties that constitute the spiritual discipline for keeping a Muslim on the right path.

Conclusion

The Quran repeats often: “Establish worship and pay zakat-tax.” What could be a better manifestation of this unity of body and soul than the fact that the worship of the One God and payment of the duty towards society are commanded in one and the same breath! Spiritual duties are not devoid of material advantages, and temporal duties have also their spiritual values. Again, all are dependent on the intentions and motives that govern one’s performance of those duties.

The five pillars combine a sense of individual responsibility, social awareness, and collective consciousness or membership in the broader community of Islam.

The conversion to Islamic faith meant membership in a community dedicated to the worship of the One true God, Almighty Allah, the implementation of His will, and thus the creation of a socially just community.

8

THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF ISLAM

- The Concept of Life
- The Concept of Sin
- The Concept of Repentance, Tawbah
- The Concept of Faith, Iman
- The Concept of Nature
- The Concept of Trustee, Khalifah,
- The Concept of Righteousness
- The Concept of Moderation, ('I'tedal ')
- The Concept of Service
- The Concept of Freedom
- The Concept of Equality
- The Concept of Brotherhood
- The Concept of Justice
- The Concept of Knowledge, ilm
- The Concept of Peace
- The Concept of Morality
- The Concept of Jihad
- The Concept of Islamic Law, Shariah
- The Concept of Islamic Jurisprudence, Fiqh
- The Concept of Transform, Ijtihad
- The Concept of Consultation, Shura
- The Concept of lawful and unlawful, ' Halal and Haram ')

The Concept of Life

Life is a brilliant demonstration of God's wisdom and knowledge, a vivid reflection of His art and power. He is the Giver and Creator of life. Nothing comes to existence by chance, and nobody creates himself or anybody else. Life is a dear and cherish able asset and no sensible or normal person would like to lose it by choice.


Life is given to man by God, and He is the only rightful One to take it back; no one else has the right to destroy a life. This is why Islam forbids all kinds of suicide and self-destruction, and recommends patience and good faith when a dear soul passes away.

When God gives life to man, it is not in vain that He endows him with unique qualities and great abilities. Nor is it in vain that He charges him with certain obligations. God means to help man to fulfill the purpose of life and realize the goal of existence. He means to help him to learn the creative art of living and enjoy the good taste of life according to the Divine guidance. Life is a trust from God, and man is a trustee who should handle His trust with honesty and skill, with mindfulness of God and with consciousness of responsibility to Him.

The purpose of life is to worship God. This does not mean that man has to spend his entire life in constant seclusion and absolute meditation. To worship God is to try to know His Will; to love Him; to obey his commandments; to enforce His law in every aspect of life; to serve His cause

by doing the right and shunning the evil and to be just to Him, to ourselves and our fellow human beings. To worship God is to 'live' the life, not to run away from it.

Life may be likened to a journey starting from a certain point and ending at a certain destination. It is a transitory stage, an introduction to the Eternal Life in the Hereafter. In this journey, man is a traveler and should be concerned with only what is of use to him in the future life. In other words, he should do all the good he can and make himself fully prepared to move any minute to Eternity. He should consider his life on this earth as a chance provided for him to make the best of it while he can, because when his time to leave comes, he can never delay it for one second, if his term expires, it will be too late to do anything about it or extend it. The best use of life, therefore, is to live it according to the teachings of God and to make it a safe passage to the Future Life of Eternity. Because life is so important as a means to an ultimate end, Islam has laid down a complete system of regulation and principles to show man how to live it, what to take and, what to do and what to shun, and so on. All men are created by God, and there is no doubt that they shall return to Him. In one of his comprehensive statements, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) wisely advised man to consider himself a stranger in this life or a traveler passing by the world.



The Concept of Sin

Say: "Shall I seek for (my) Lord other than Allah when He is the Lord of all things? Every soul draws the reward of its acts on none but itself: No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. Your goal in the end is towards Allah: He will tell you the Truth of the things about which you disputed."
(Quran, 6:164)

Sin is willfully and knowingly disobeying God. The greatest of all sins is polytheism (belief in more than one god or in many gods). Though any intentional violation of the commandments of God is a sinful act. God, The Preventer, has prohibited a number of things that are harmful to the individual or to society. Murder, assault, theft, fraud, usury, fornication, adultery, sorcery, consumption of alcohol, eating pork, and the use of illicit drugs are all examples of sinful acts.

Islam rejects the doctrine of original sin. God says in the Quran, "No soul shall bear the burden of another." Each of us is accountable before God, if one person encourages another to commit a sin, both are punishable. One of them deserves punishment for actually committing the sin; the other deserves punishment for encouraging it.

When a person commits a sin, he or she is deserving of God's punishment. Fortunately, God is the Most Compassionate and The Most Forgiving. God acts out of infinite knowledge and justice. Muslims do not believe that Jesus, the son of Mary, had to die for the sins of mankind.

God, The Most Compassionate, forgives whomever He chooses. To believe that it was necessary for Jesus to suffer and die in order to have our sins forgiven denies God's infinite power and justice. God is unlimited in His mercy.

Repentance is a form of worship; a person can attain salvation by the mercy of Allah. Almighty Allah promises us that He will forgive us if we turn to Him directly in sincere repentance.

Sincere repentance has the following conditions:

1. The person must recognize and acknowledge that he or she has committed a sin and must truly regret having done so.
2. The person must humbly turn to God for forgiveness.
3. The person must have a sincere resolve not to commit the sin again.
4. If the sin caused harm to someone else, the person must make every possible attempt to remedy the harm.

This does not mean that if the person returns to the same sin in the future, his or her former repentance is null and void. What is needed is a serious commitment in the heart not to sin again. Because we do not know what the future holds, the door to repentance is always open. Almighty Allah, The Most Pardoning, is pleased when the children of Adam turn to Him for His abundant forgiveness.

No one can forgive sins except God. It is forbidden for a Muslim to seek divine forgiveness for sin through or by turning to anyone else, as Muslims believe this would be considered polytheism (belief in more than one god or in many gods).

Tawbah

Concept of Repentance

The Loving Merciful God never forgets us or lets us down or ignores our sincere calls upon Him. By His Mercy and Love He has shown us the Right Way and sent to us messengers and holy books—all are meant for our help and guidance. The Last Messenger from God is Muhammad (Peace be upon him), and the most genuine existing book of God is the Quran. From the traditions of Prophet Muhammad and the teachings of the Quran, we learn about the Forgiving God. If a person commits a sin or does something wrong, then he is violating the Law of God, committing a grave offense against God and abusing his own dignity and existence. But if he is sincere and wishes to repent, regrets his wrong deeds and wants to turn to God, faithfully seeks pardon from God and honestly approaches Him, then God will certainly accept him and forgive him.

Even those who reject God or His Oneness are assured of forgiveness, should they realize their erroneous attitude and resolve to come back to God.

Almighty God has guaranteed heaven for those who maintained righteousness, promised forgiveness for all those who committed sins and repented and warned those who reject. Even those who reject God or His Oneness are assured of forgiveness, should they realize their erroneous attitude and resolve to come back to God.

In this connection the Quran says:

Say: "O My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins: For He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful. Turn to your Lord (in repentance) and submit to Him, before the penalty comes on you; after that you shall not be helped. And follow the Best of the courses revealed to you from your Lord, before the penalty comes on you all of a sudden when you are not aware!" (Quran, 39 : 53 - 55)

In return for all these great favors and kindness, God does not need anything from us, because He is the Needless and the Independent. He does not ask us to pay Him back, for we cannot reward Him or value His immeasurable favors and mercy. What He commands us to do, however, is only to be thankful and appreciative, to embody all the good characteristics he has recommended. He is the One Who emancipates us from fear and superstitions. He does not desire to humiliate us because He is the One Who creates us and exalts our ranks above all other beings. So whatever rules and prescription He passes unto us are designed for our own benefit and good.



Iman

The Concept of Faith

Faith in Islam is a state of happiness, acquired by virtue of positive action and constructive conceptions as well as dynamic and effective measures.

The Holy Quran and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) define these required measures and establish the standards which build up a meaningful Faith. Thus, the true Muslim believers are:

1. Those who believe in God, His angels, His Books as completed by the Quran, His messengers with Muhammad being the Last of them all, the Day of Final Judgment, the absolute knowledge and wisdom of God.
2. Those who trust God always and enjoy unshakable confidence in Him.
3. Those who spend in the way of God of what He has given them in the form of wealth, life, health, knowledge, experience, and so on.
4. Those who observe their daily pray's regularly as well as the weekly and annual (Idd) Congregations.
5. Those who pay their religious taxes (alms or Zakat) to the rightful beneficiaries (individuals or

institutions), the minimum of which is two and a half percent of the annual “net” income., or of the total value of stocks if in business-after discounting all expenses and credits.

6. Those who enjoin the right and good, and combat the wrong and evil by all lawful means at their disposal.

7. Those who love God and His Messenger most, and love their fellow men, Muslim or Non-Muslim sincerely for the sake of God alone.

8. Those who love their near and distant neighbors and show genuine kindness to their guests.

9. Those who say the truth and engage in good talk, or else abstain.

10. Those who love and protect the nature and creations of God.

It is clear that the very meaning of Faith makes Islam penetrate deeply and constructively into every aspect of life. According to Islam, true Faith has a decisive effect on the spiritual and material lot of man, and also on his personal and social behavior as well as his political conduct and financial life.



Concept of Nature

Almighty God explained that, earth and all of its creatures, are obedient servants who are dear to Him and prostrate for His sake:

“Are you not aware that before Allah prostrate themselves all [things and beings] that are in the heavens and all that are on earth, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees? And many human beings [submit to God consciously], whereas many [others, having defied Him,] will inevitably have to suffer [in the life to come]; and he whom God shall scorn [on Resurrection Day] will have none who could bestow honor on him: for, verily God does what He wills.”
(Quran, 22: 18)

As such, nature is not there simply to be exploited and abused. Indeed, given the intimate connection between nature and man, its abuse is nothing but self – abuse. Just as human life is sacred, nature in the Quran is a religious, hence sacred institution.

“The earth, ‘with its fruits, with its palm trees with covered bunch, its shell grains, its fragrant plants’”
(Quran, 55:10 – 13) is there for our benefit. But it has to be treated with respect, justice and balance: “He has set the balance so you may not exceed the balance: weigh with justice and do not exceed the balance.” (Quran, 55:7-9)

The earth and its environment have rights. And it’s first right is the acknowledgement that we do not own it. We have not created it and hence we cannot own it. Rather, we have it on trust from its rightful owner. The concept of Tawheed emphasizes that nature has no meaning without reference to God; without divine purpose it simply does not exist. This is why the Quranic term for nature is created order’.

Khalifa Concept of Trustee

The second most important concept of Islam is the concept of Khalifa. It is usually translated as 'vicegerent' or 'trustee'. Those human beings are khalifa or trustees of God on earth are made clear in Quran, Chapter 2, verse 30, where God tells the angels: 'I am putting a khalifa on earth'. The khalifa comes as a representative of a higher authority. He or she has no exclusive right to anything. The function of trustees is to carry out their responsibility diligently and ensure that the trust survives and thrives. As trustees of God on earth, it is our individual and collective responsibility the balance or harmony of nature, preserve the environment with all its flora and fauna, and treat all God's creation with due respect and reverence. Thus, we are not independent of God but responsible and accountable to God for our activities on the planet: scientific and technological and business, individual and collective. The trust, maintaining the integrity of the earth and its environment, is a test from God; and we will be judge on how our responsibilities as trustees are carried out:

"It is He who has made you trustees on earth." (Quran, 6:165)

Nature, therefore, is a trust or Amanat, and a theatre for our moral and ethical struggle. While we enjoy temporary control over nature, we have no sovereign authority.

When we fail in our custodianship of nature, we also fail as human beings and become strangers in.

"Hence, do not spread corruption on Earth after it has been so well ordered." (Quran, 7:56)

Prophet Muhammad stated, "Be merciful to all that is on Earth and He who is in Heaven will be merciful to you."

The Concept of Righteousness

Islam always warns against superficial concepts and rituals, against lifeless formalities and non-effective beliefs. In one representative verse of Quran, God explains the full meaning of righteousness as follows:

“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces (in prayer) towards East or West; but it is righteousness to believe in God and the Last Day, and the Angels and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your wealth—in spite of your love for it—for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which you have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-minded.” (Quran, 2:177)

This is the Quranic portrait of the virtuous man. Righteousness is not the function of void utterances and superficial rituals. While the virtuous man should obey all the salutary regulations, he should be wholly and sincerely motivated by the love of God and the love of fellow men, for the sake of God.



I'tedal

The Concept of Moderation

The words for justice (Adl) and moderation, temperance, balance, equilibrium, harmony (I'tedal) are Islamic societal ethics, the very basis of society itself, is but a quest for equilibrium and justice, and hence felicity, with God, nature and history. It entails submitting oneself to the will of God, accepting the mandate of the trusteeship and striving to be a moderate community (Ummat e wastah). The goal of justice, Muslim consciousness affirms, is reached by treading the path of moderation.

Islam does not encourage extremism in human behavior; it favours neither mortification of the flesh nor indulgence; it prefers monogamy, but does not insist on it; it allows war under certain conditions but its central message is one of submission to God and of peace. In short, it seeks to regulate human conduct according to man's inherent capacity, requirement and limitation, but it refuses to radically transform human nature, as it is neither physically feasible nor spiritually desirable.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was a great teacher of moderation. He was directed his followers against celibacy, against exaggerated fasting, against pessimism and morose mood. Prophet's companions boasted of leading pious lives. The first said he did not marry; the second that, he did

not eat meat; the third that, he slept on bare ground; and the fourth that he fasted all the time. The Prophet told them,

“Do not do that! Fast on some days and eat on others. Sleep part of the night, and stand in prayer another part. For your body has rights upon you, your eyes have a right upon you, your wife has a right upon you, your guest has a right upon you.”

He once exclaimed, repeating it three times:

“Woe to those who exaggerate [who are too strict]!”

And on another occasion, he said:

“Moderation! Moderation!! Moderation!!!
For only with moderation will you succeed.”

Thus, Prophet struck a balance and emphasized that religious activity had to be combined with worldly pursuits. He neither gave excessive credence to material things nor did he undermine the significance of spiritual bliss. He denounced the acquisition of wealth and ‘the glitter of the world’, but did not favour harshness or abandonment. He did not divide life between God and Caesar.

One does not have to be a Muslim to benefit from such teachings. Thus, the words of Al Gore (vice president of United States of America) become relevant:

“The central concepts of Islam, taught by the Quran; Tawheed - Unity of God, Khalifa - Trusteeship and Adl - Justice - also serve as the pillars of the Islamic environmental ethic...”



The Concept of Service

In this world, some people are blessed with all the comforts of life while some are deprived of these. The Quran demands that the former should help the latter.

The man who is better placed in life should be thankful to God and the best way to thank Him is to serve those who are in need of our help. In everything God has graced us with; our fellow-beings have a share in it. Without this sharing, our thanks to Him would always be incomplete. After being so abundantly blessed, if we do not serve, we would be faint-hearted.

In Islam, service to humanity has been construed to be service to God. To help the people in their needs is to help God. Turning away a person empty handed is to refuse help to God. The best way to please God is to please His creatures. The heaven would not be kind to earth if the people on the earth cease to be kind to one another.

Service should be for all

Islam makes its adherents concerned, not only about Muslims, but also about every man on this earth. Bigotry teaches hatred and enmity. A man blinded in nationalistic bigotry could never be tolerant and sympathetic towards other nations. Islam is opposed to this. It considers all the creatures of God as one family. Anas (may God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) has said: 'All the creatures make the family of God. Among them the man who serves the family best is beloved of God.'

The Quran had given a common command to serve the needy, the indigent, the handicapped, the orphans and the unfortunate. It has never said that only Muslims or a particular group should be served. It wants that the entire

mankind should be served. Whether they are related to us or not, agree with us or not, they speak our language or not, all deserve to be served without any difference or distinction. Any man on this earth in affliction will not be left uncared for but would be helped to overcome his hardships, because in spite of different colors, nationality and homeland, human beings are one another's limbs as they are created from one essence. This fact is evident from traditions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

'You would never be people of faith unless you are merciful towards others.'

The companions pleaded,

Oh Messenger of God! Every one of us is merciful.

Then Prophet Muhammad proclaimed:

'It does not mean the mercy that you show towards your own kith and kin, but the mercy should be for all people.'

Self - Sacrifice

Islam emphasizes the cultivation of a sense of moral responsibility and accountability as viable means whereby human rights-and responsibility – could be ingrained in human consciousness. It is easy to pontificate and preach about human rights but extremely difficult if not impossible to put one self in the shoes of another person, as it were, and to be as sensitive about his likes and preferences as one is about oneself. This feat requires a good measure of selflessness, sincerity and compassion.

Prophet Muhammad declared:

'A Muslim cannot be a (true) Muslim unless he likes for others what he likes for himself.'

The Concept of Freedom

Freedom, both as a concept and as a value, has been denied many individuals, groups, and nations. It has been often misunderstood and abused.

Apart from this general idea, Islam teaches freedom, cherishes it, and guarantees it for the Muslim as well as for the non-Muslim. The Islamic concept of freedom applies to all voluntary activities of man in all walks of life. Every man is born free on the fitrah or in a pure state of nature. This means that man is born free from subjugation, sin, inherited inferiority, and ancestral hindrance. His right of freedom is sacred as long as he does not deliberately violate the Law of God or desecrate the rights of others.

The question of freedom with regard to belief, worship, and conscience is also of paramount importance in Islam. Every man is entitled to exercise his freedom of belief, conscience, and worship. In the words of the Quran, God says:

“Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error. Whoever rejects Evil and believes in God has grasped the strongest bond that never breaks. And God knows and hears all things.”
(Quran, 2:256)

Islam takes this attitude because religion depends upon faith, will, and commitment. These would be meaningless if induced by force. Furthermore, Islam presents the Truth of God in the form of an opportunity and leaves the choice for

man to decide his own course. The Quran says:

“The Truth is from your Lord. Let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve.”
(Quran, 18:29)

The Islamic concept of freedom is an article of faith, a solemn command from the Supreme Creator. It is built on the following fundamental principles. First, man's conscience is subject to God only, to Whom everyman is directly responsible. Secondly, every human being is personally responsible for his deeds and he alone is entitled to reap the fruits of his work. Thirdly, God has delegated to man the responsibility to decide for himself. Fourthly, man is sufficiently provided with spiritual guidance and endowed with rational qualities that enable him to make responsible, sound choices. Such is the foundation of the Islamic concept of freedom and such is the value of freedom in Islam. It is a natural right of man, a spiritual privilege, a moral right, and, above all, a religious duty. Within the framework of this Islamic concept of freedom, there is no room for religious persecutions, class conflict, or racial prejudice. The individual's right of freedom is as sacred as his right of Life; freedom is the equivalent of Life itself.

‘ There shall be no coercion in matters of Faith ’

Thus, Muslims respect the beliefs, teachings and institutions of other religions. Within a territory ruled by Muslims, all non-Muslims have the right to live according to their own rules and regulations and as equal citizens with all rights and responsibilities.



The Concept of Equality

One basic element in the value system of Islam is the principle of equality or, better yet, equity. This value of equality is not to be mistaken for or confused with identicalness or stereotype. Islam teaches that, in the sight of God, all men are equal, but they are not necessarily identical. There are differences of abilities, potentials, ambitions, wealth, and so on. Yet none of these differences can by itself establish a status of superiority of one man or race to another, The stock of man, the color of his skin, the amount of wealth he has, and the degree of prestige he enjoys have no bearing on the character and personality of the individual as far as God is concerned. The only distinction which God recognizes is the distinction in piety, and the only criterion which God applies is the criterion of goodness and spiritual excellence. In the Quran, God says:

“O mankind, verily We have created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is the most righteous.” (Quran, 49:13)

The differences of race, color, or social status are only accidental. They do not affect the true stature of man in the sight of God. Again, the value of equality is not simply a matter of constitutional rights or gentlemen’s agreement or condescending charity. It is an article of faith which the Muslim takes seriously and to which he must adhere sincerely.

The foundations of this Islamic value of equality are deeply rooted in the structure of Islam. It stems from basic principles such as the following:

1. All men are created by One and the Same Eternal God, the Supreme Lord of all.
2. All mankind belong to the human race and share equally in the common parentage of Adam and Eve.
3. God is just and kind to all his creatures. He is not partial to any race, age, or religion. The whole universe is His dominion and all people are His creatures.
4. All people are born equal in the sense that none brings any possession with him, and they die equal in the sense that they take back nothing of their worldly belongings.
5. God judges every person on the basis of his own merits and according to his own deeds.
6. God has conferred on man; man as such, a title of honor and dignity.

Such are some of the principles behind the value of equality in Islam. When this concept is fully utilized, it will leave no place for prejudice or persecutions. And when this Divine ordinance is fully implemented, there will be no room for oppression or suppression. Concepts of chosen and gentile peoples, words such as privileged and condemned races, expressions such as social castes and second-class citizens will all become meaningless and outdated.



The Concept of Brotherhood

“Mankind was created as one nation but it differed subsequently.” (Quran, 10:19)

“Verily this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood and am your Lord... People divide themselves off from the bond of unity, rejoicing in their own sects.” (Quran, 23:52, 53)

Another fundamental element in the value system of Islam is the value of human brotherhood. This value also is founded on the same principles which have been discussed in connection with freedom and equality. Besides those foregoing principles, human brotherhood in Islam is based on an unshakable belief in the Oneness and Universality of God the worshipped, the unity of mankind the worshippers, and the unity of religion the medium of worship. For the Muslim, God is One, Eternal and Universal. He is the Creator of all men, the Provider for all men, the Judge of all men, and the Lord over all men. To Him, social status, national supremacy, and racial origin are insignificant. Before Him, all men are equal and brothers of one another.

The Muslim believes in the unity of mankind with regard to the source of creation, the original parentage, and the final destiny. The source of creation is God Himself. The original common parentage is that of Adam and Eve. To this first parentage, every human being belongs and of it he partakes. As for the final destiny, there is no doubt in the Muslims mind that it will be to God, Creator, to Whom all men shall return.

The Muslim believes in the unity of God's religion. This means that God does not confine His religion or favors to any particular nation, race, or age. It further means that there can be no contradiction or fundamental differences in the Religion of God.

The Concept of Justice

In Islam, *adl*, or justice, is a supreme value. Indeed, Muslim scholars have argued that the main purpose of revelation of Quran and the basic task of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is to establish justice on earth. All social life in Islam revolves around the idea of justice and believers are enjoined to behave towards each other in a just way. Justice begins with oneself and involves fulfilling the needs of one's body, mind and spirit. Family relations have to be based on justice: respect towards one's parents and elders, showing equal love and affection towards all one's children, and honesty and loyalty towards one's spouse are all manifestations of just family behaviour. At communal level, justice demands that one fulfill one's social obligations and responsibilities. It is a duty of a Muslim to stand up against all kinds of oppression, even if this involves one's own blood, society or country.

Almighty Allah says in the Quran:

“O Believers! Stand firmly with God as your witness for fair dealing among people. Your hatred of a people should not seduce you to commit a wrong or depart from justice; for justice is next to piety.”
(Quran, 5:8)

“O Believers! Stand out firmly for justice as witness to God even if it be against yourselves, your parents or your kin and whether it be against rich or poor.”
(Quran, 4:135)

These verses from the Quran uphold, in unambiguous terms, an ideal vision of justice. They exhort and enjoin man to stand firmly on the side of justice, even if such a position runs counter to the concerns of his parents, relatives, friends or his own personal interests. The Quran further admonishes the Muslims not to deviate from the path of justice even when the adversary is their bitter enemy, or belongs to people hostile to Islam. It is the duty of a Muslim to bear witness firmly and without fear or favour, thereby assisting the administration of justice; and it is the religious obligation of a Muslim to oppose injustice and oppression;

“And why should you not fight in the cause of God and for those men, women and children who being weak are illtreated and oppressed ?” (Quran, 4:75)

Stand up before a tyrant ruler and to speak truth before him. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exhorted Muslim and people for Justice to raise their voice against oppression and for oppressed classes Quran says ‘Be friend of oppressed’ and resist (by proper means) the oppression by tyrant rulers and their corrupt ways.



ilm

The Concept of Knowledge

The establishment of justice in all spheres of human behaviour requires a certain degree of knowledge, *ilm*. Islam makes the pursuit of knowledge an obligation on every Muslim, male or female. A Muslim society can only be just when it is a knowledge-based society.

Thus, the pursuit of knowledge is also a social obligation. Muslim communities everywhere have to ensure that experts in certain branches of knowledge—e.g., law, medicine, education, engineering - are adequately represented in the community. The Islamic term for an expert in a particular field is *alim*. It is significant that religious scholars, a lawyer, a physicist, a sociologist, a philosopher—all are known as *alims*. In Islam, knowledge must be sought with modesty and humility, with the aim of promoting beauty and dignity, freedom and justice.

Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, said:

“The superiority of a learned man over one who only worships is like the superiority of the moon when it is full, covering the stars.”

“The search for knowledge is a sacred duty imposed upon every Muslim. Go in search of knowledge, even to China.”

The Concept of Peace

To appreciate how Islam approaches the question of peace, one has only to consider a few elementary facts about Islam. Peace and Islam are derived from the same root and may be considered synonymous. One of God's names is Peace. The concluding words of the daily prayers of every Muslim are words of peace. The greeting of the Muslims when they return to God is peace. The daily salutations among the Muslims are expressions of peace. The adjective "Muslim" means, in a sense, peaceful. Heaven in Islam is the abode of peace.

This is how fundamental and dominant the theme of peace is in Islam, The individual who approaches God through Islam cannot fail to be at peace with God, with himself, and with his fellow men. Taking all these values together, putting man in his proper place in the cosmos, and viewing life in the Islamic perspective, men of good faith and principles cannot fail to make our world a better world, to regain human dignity, to achieve equality, to enjoy universal brotherhood, and to build a lasting peace.



The Concept of Morality

The concept of morality in Islam centers around certain basic beliefs and principles. Among these are the following:

- (1) God is the Creator and Source of all goodness, truth, and beauty.
- (2) Man is a responsible, dignified, and honorable agent of his Creator.
- (3) God has put everything in the heavens and the earth in the service of mankind.
- (4) By His Mercy and Wisdom, God does not expect the impossible from man or hold him accountable for anything beyond his power. Nor does God forbid man to enjoy the good things of life.
- (5) Moderation, practicality, and balance are the guarantees of high integrity and sound morality.
- (6) All things are permissible in principle except what is singled out as obligatory, which must be observed, and what is singled out as forbidden, which must be avoided.
- (7) Man's ultimate responsibility is to God and his highest goal is the pleasure of his Creator.

The dimensions of morality in Islam are numerous, far-reaching, and comprehensive. The Islamic morals deal with the relationship between man and God, man and his fellow

men, man and the other elements and creatures of the universe.

More specifically, the Muslim's relationship with God is one of love and obedience, complete trust and thoughtfulness, peace and appreciation, steadfastness and active service. This high-level morality will, undoubtedly, nourish and reinforce morality at the human level. For in his relationship with his fellow men, the Muslim must show kindness to the kin and concern for the neighbor, respect for the elderly and compassion for the young, care for the sick and support for the needy, sympathy for the grieved and cheer for the depressed, joy with the blessed and patience with the misguided, tolerance toward the ignorant and forgiveness of the helpless, disapproval of the wrong and rise above the trivial. Moreover, he must respect the legitimate rights of others as much as he does his own. His mind must be occupied with constructive ideas and serious pursuits; his heart must beat with compassionate feelings and good will; his soul must radiate with peace and serenity; his counsel must be sincere and courteous. Truth and Virtue are his goal. Humbleness and simplicity, courtesy and compassion, are his second nature. To him, arrogance and vanity, harshness and indifference, are distasteful, offensive, and displeasing to God.

In a remarkable, typical passage, the Quran has laid down the grounds and philosophy of sound moral conduct. The passage may be rendered as follows:

O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer; eat and drink, but waste not by excess, for God loves not the wasters. Say: 'Who has forbidden the beautiful gifts of God, which He has produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He has provided) for sustenance?

“The things that my Lord has indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret, sins and trespasses against truth or reason; assigning of partners to God—and saying things about God of which you have no knowledge.” (Quran, 7:33)

The range of morality in Islam is so inclusive and integrative that it combines at once faith in God, religious rites, spiritual observances, social conduct, decision making, intellectual pursuits, and habits of consumption, manners of speech, and all other aspects of human life. Because morality is such an integral part of Islam, the moral tone underlies all the passages of the Quran and the moral teachings are repeatedly stressed in various contexts throughout the Quran.

God Says in the Quran:

“Serve God, and join not any partners with Him; and do good;-to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, the needy ones, neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, the companion by your side, the wayfarer (you meet), and what your right hands possess (captives, slaves, animals, birds, etc.): For God loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious;- (Nor) those who are niggardly or enjoining -gaudiness on others, or hide the bounties which God has bestowed on them; for We have prepared for those who resist Faith a punishment that steepens them in contempt; (Nor) those who spend of their substance, (out of hypocrisy) just to be seen of men, but have no faith in God and the Last Day. if any take the Evil One for their intimate, what a dreadful intimate he is !
(Quran, 4:36-38)



The Concept of Jihad

Constant struggle for justice manifests itself as Jihad. It means 'directed struggle' and can take a number of forms. A tradition of the Prophet declares that 'the supreme Jihad is against oneself: that is, against one's ego, greed and insatiable desires. Jihad could also, for example, be aimed at the social development of a community. It can also be intellectual-directed against oppressive and totalitarian thought or towards the intellectual uplifting of a society. Lastly, Jihad can also take the form of physical struggle against oppression and aggression. Jihad is thus much more than simply 'holy war'.

But Jihad cannot be a war of aggression, or a war for territorial gain, or to impose a particular political order on a people. It is a defensive war which places certain responsibilities on those who are called to engage in it. As a moral exercise, Jihad must be performed strictly under the Islamic rules of engagement. This means that innocent individuals, women, children and unarmed civilians cannot be harmed, property and environment cannot be destroyed, and places of worship of other faiths cannot be demolished. As such, kidnapping, hostage-taking, indiscriminate shooting of civilians, placing bombs in areas and buildings where people work are evil deeds that Islam totally condemns.

Moreover, Jihad cannot be declared by anybody on anybody. For example, Jihad cannot be declared by one Muslim country on another, or an oppressive dictator cannot declare Jihad on countries lined up against him, Jihad requires consensus of the whole Muslim community and a clear identification of the enemy as the aggressor or the oppressor of helpless victims.

Shariah

The Concept of Islamic Law

Shariah is an integral part of Islam. It is often defined as 'Islamic law,' causing one to assume that it consists mostly of criminal rulings and penalties. However, Shariah encompasses much more than the conventional understanding of law. While Shariah provides the legal framework for the foundation and functioning of a society, it also details moral, ethical, social and political codes of conduct for Muslims at an individual and collective level.

Shariah or Islamic law is the code of conduct for Muslims and is based on two main sources: the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet. It aims at the success and welfare of mankind both in this life and the life after death.

Shariah prescribes a complete set of laws for the guidance of mankind so that Good, Ma'ruf is established and Evil Munkar is removed from society. It provides a clear and straight path which leads to progress and fulfillment in life and the attainment of God's pleasure.


The Quran is the main basis of Shariah. It states the principles while the Sunnah of the Prophet provides the blueprint of how to apply them. For example, the Quran says: establish Salat, observe Sawm, pay Zakat, take decisions by consultation, do not earn or spend in wrong ways—but it does not describe how to do these things. It is the Sunnah of the Prophet which shows us how to act on God's commands.

The Quran is the main book of guidance and the Prophet taught us how to follow it. The Prophet not only told us how to follow the guidance, he also practiced it himself. Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) life was the living Quran.

The Aims of *Shariah*

The ultimate aim of *Shariah* is to establish justice in society on the basis of compassion between human beings and between government and the public. It seeks this aim by emphasizing the rights and responsibilities towards each other of individuals and society, the community and the state, the rulers and the ruled. The main aim is the creation of a morally responsible society, with the accent on social, economic and political justice. 'Shariah presupposes total freedom for human beings: freedom to act according to *Shariah* as well as freedom not to act according to *Shariah*. Those who wish to order their society according to the dictates of the *Shariah* do so willingly and consciously.

Shariah also envisages a free society, a society capable of self-determination and in charge of its own resources. Unless a society has the freedom to harness and utilize its resources, it cannot distribute its resources appropriately and establish social and economic justice. The development of self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-respect, both individually and collectively, are essential for a society that functions on the basis of *Shariah*.



Fiqh

The Concept of Islamic Jurisprudence

Fiqh is the science of Islamic law or jurisprudence. It refers to the explanation, collection and compilation of Islamic laws based on the Quran, and the sunnah of the prophet (peace be upon him). Literally, fiqh means 'intelligence' and 'knowledge'. Fiqh is thus what early Muslim jurists derived from the Shariah with their own intelligence and knowledge - it is a human construction. In its widest sense, fiqh covers all aspects of religious, political and civil life. . In addition to laws relating to worship and other matters of religious observance, it includes family law, the law of inheritance, property and contractual law, criminal law and law relating to the administration of state and the conduct of war.

Islamic Law or Shariah embodies the ideal Islamic life. Islam is the complete way of life and Shariah is the means to arrive at the ideal life recommended by Islam. Shariah enables us to bring our life in line with the will of Allah. It is the means of achieving our goal of life.

The scholars of Islamic Law have made Shariah easier to understand and practice by the science of Fiqh. A person who has a detailed knowledge and understanding of Fiqh is called Faqih. A person qualified to give a ruling on issues in Shariah is called a Mafti. The ruling he gives is called a Fatwa.

Ijtihad

The Principle of Change

The Shariah provides Islam with its permanent bedrock. But what is permanent in Islam is largely ethical: forms of worship, Injunctions which forbid certain social evils, and principles which aim at promoting social, economic and political justice, and encouraging the pursuit of knowledge and reason. Everything else is subject to change. Islam envisages a dynamic, thriving and progressive society.

The principle of change in Islam is known as *ijtihad*, *ijtihad* is defined as exerting oneself to the utmost degree to reach comprehension on a question of shariah. The exertion can take the form of new methods of reasoning, new social and intellectual insights, new ways of knowing and understanding. When the new understanding of the shariah acquired through *Ijtihad* has the *ijma* or the consensus of the Muslim *ummah*, the global Muslim community, it becomes a part of Islamic law.

It is on the basis of *ijtihad* (all-around reasoning), *ijma* (consensus) *Shura* (consultation): and *istislah* (public interest) that Muslim societies move forward, adjust to change, and Islamic law evolves and expands.



Shura

The Concept of Consultation

Shura, or consultation, embraces every facet of life and is easily adaptable to a variety of different situations. In Islam, it is encouraged not only in the political realm but on a social scale as well, involving families and professional entities.

The Quran mentions Shura when it refers to those 'who (conduct) their affairs by mutual Consultation.' (42:38) in the list of people that will have a lasting reward with God. Hence, Shura is a binding Islamic principle.

Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, used to decide matters of importance, be it within the community or in his home, with the consultation of those around him. He set numerous examples in which he exercised Shura, both in seeking advice and heeding it. In this way, he modeled how to be a just leader, an engaging military commander, and a father and husband that continually took counsel from his family. Indeed, Shura was an integral process for him and he made it a prevalent practice in his society, fostering dialogue, mutuality, and unity.


Almighty Allah says to the Prophet Muhammad :

“It is by the mercy of God that you were lenient [gentle] with them (Companions), for if you had been severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you. So pardon them and ask for God’s forgiveness for them; and consult them upon the conduct of affairs. Then, when you have taken a decision, put your trust in God, for God loves those who put their trust in Him.” (Quran, 3 : 159)

Shura among Families

Similarly, Shura among families as a whole – including children – is extremely important. Consultation strengthens the family unit and creates a culture of inclusive decision-making. It also cultivates confidence in children and nurtures a trusting relationship within the family. When shura is one of the family's building blocks, then it is easier to get through the bumps of life, such as growth stages in children, behavioral changes, economic challenges, loss of loved ones, etc. The Prophet has stated, "The believers with the most perfect faith are those with the most perfect conduct and manners. And the best ones amongst you are those who are best to their families."

Contrast this with our own behavior today. We often take the opinion of our womenfolk for granted and avoid consulting them even in as vital matters like marriage, investment, house-building and education of children in whose birth their role has been more than ninety percent. We feel that women are expendable. It is like wandering aimlessly around a plot of land unaware of the vast treasure buried below our feet. Women are secondary beings in the minds of many, including those self-appointed defenders of women's rights as well as those who occupy the high seats of juristic opinions. To the contrary, the women are part of a whole, a part that renders the other half useful. Their position is not even supplementary. It is complementary. The whole comes into existence only when the two halves come together. Without this unity, humanity remains from being complete, be it prophethood, sainthood or the common man.



Halal and Haram

The Concept of Lawful and Unlawful

Islam is a complete way of life. No part of the life of an individual or a community is left out of Islam. The economic aspect is an important part of life, so Islam gives detailed guidelines for the conduct of our economic life. It concerns mainly how we earn and use our wealth. The Islamic system is balanced and places everything in its right place.

Earning and spending money is essential for our living, but we do not live only for this. Man needs bread to live but he does not live for bread alone. We have a greater purpose in life. We are God's agents (Khalifah) on earth. We not only have a body but we also have a soul (Ruh) and a conscience. Without a conscience, our behavior would be worse than wild animals and would create enormous problems in society.

Everything in Islam is for the benefit and welfare of humanity. The economic principles of Islam aim to establish a just society in which we behave responsibly and honestly, not selfishly fighting for the biggest possible share of something without regard for honesty truth, decency, trust and responsibility.

The economic system of Islam is based on the following principles:

i. Earning and Expenditure by Lawful (Halal) means,

Muslims are not allowed to earn and spend in any way they like. Islam has laws, based on the Quran and the Sunnah (Practice and Teachings of Prophet Muhammad), to regulate earning and expenditure:

a. Earnings from the production, sale and distribution of alcoholic drinks are unlawful, as are earnings from gambling, lotteries and from Riba (interest or usury) transactions.

(See Quran, 5:90-91; 2:275)

b. Earning by falsehood, deceit, fraud, and theft is unlawful (Haram). Taking orphans' property deceitfully has been particularly forbidden. (See Quran, 2:188; 4:2; 6:152; 7:85; 83:1-5).

c. Hoarding food stuff and basic necessities, smuggling and the artificial creation of shortages are unlawful.

(See Quran, 3:180; 9:34-35)

d. Earnings from brothels and from other immoral sources which are harmful to society are also unlawful. (Quran, 24:23)

Islam strikes at the root of evil and wants to establish a just and fair society. A Muslim must earn his living in Lawful (Halal) ways and he should always bear in mind that whatever he does is known to God. He will be accountable for his actions on the Day of Judgment. He cannot hide anything from the knowledge of Almighty God.

Unlawful expenditure is not allowed in Islam. A Muslim should not spend his money irresponsibly. Rather, he should spend it wisely and thoughtfully. Extravagance and waste are strongly discouraged. (See Quran, 7:31; 17:26)

Application of Islam to Daily Life

Family life in Islam

Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, was assigned the task of guiding and reforming humanity spread across the entire globe. This included reforming both aspects of life, spiritual as well as physical. And he was told to carry out the task in accordance with the divine guidance conferred upon him in the form of the Quran.

The teachings of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad transcended the barriers of both, time and society and pertained to all sectors of human life, known as well as yet to be known. He offered a universal ideology and laid down norms and laws accordingly. This system forms the common heritage of the entire humanity and is accessible to everyone who seeks it.

Muslims and non-Muslims are further encouraged to go and explore more from the Quran and the teachings of Prophet, to learn how to become better people and better worshippers. Undoubtedly, Allah cares not for our worship if it is devoid of kindness and concern for the people, animals and environment around us.

Following are some of the successful principles that Islam has laid down for the humanity which kindle our path in today's adult and mature age of 21st century.

Duties towards Parents

Parents are regarded as the people most deserving of mercy, for the Quran connects Tawheed (God's Oneness) with being kind and merciful to them:

“Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents.”
(Quran, 17:23)

After giving commands to serve God, we have been asked to behave with kindness towards the people. In this regard parents are mentioned first.

“And do good to parents.” (Quran, 4:36)

At numerous places in the Quran, after the worship of God, kind behavior towards one's parents has been given prominence. It means that after God's favours, parents' favours are the greatest. They play a great role in man's existence, his birth, his up-bringing, his education and his moral and material progress. Without parental care, his progress would have been in peril. Even the illiterate and the indigent parents sacrifice so much for their children that there is no match to it in the whole society.

In the favour of the parents, we have the reflection of the favours of God. Worship in reality is to be thankful to the favour of God. Parents' status is not that of God's. So they cannot be worshipped, but they are treated with utmost respect. Kindness in treatment is the way to return their favours.

The Quran has commanded us to express our thankfulness to God and parents.

“Show gratitude to Me and to the parents. To Me is (the final) goal.” (Quran, 31:14)

Materialistic Society:

Modern civilization has disrupted the family institution. The higher values attached to this system have also been shattered. In the process, it has affected the aged parents to a great extent. Today people are discussing what to do with the aged parents who have lost their use. How long they could be tolerated when they could no more play any useful role in making the future. The parents, who are held in contempt to-day, once had so much power over their children that they could have easily exterminated them in their infancy, but they didn't do so. The modern generation was once at the mercy of these old parents, yet they toiled and spent the sweat of their forehead in bringing up their children. The Quran has commanded in particular to treat the aged parents with kindness and humility.

“If one of them or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them a word of disrespect, or scold them, but say a generous word to them. And act humbly to them in mercy, and say: ‘My Lord, have mercy on them, since they cared for me when I was small.’” (Quran, 17:23-24)

In Islam, it is not enough that we only pray for our parents, but we should act with limitless compassion, remembering that when we were helpless children, they preferred us to themselves. Mothers are particularly honored.

The strain of caring for one's parents / elders in this most difficult time of their lives is considered an honor and a blessing and an opportunity for great spiritual growth.

When parents reach their old age, they should be treated mercifully, with kindness and selflessness.

“Say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour.” (Quran, 17:23)

Women

Oppressed, inferior, and unequal – for many people, these are the first words that come to mind when thinking about women in Islam. These stereotypes confuse Islam with cultural practices and fail to recognize that Islam has empowered women with the most progressive rights since the 7th century. In Islam, women are not inferior or unequal to men. This chapter presents the actual teachings of Islam regarding the rights, roles, and responsibilities of women, with a special focus on gender equality in Islam.

At a time when female children were buried alive in Arabia and women were considered transferable property, Islam honored women in society by elevating them and protecting them with unprecedented rights. Islam gave women the right to education, to marry someone of their choice, to retain their identity after marriage, to divorce, to work, to own and sell property, to seek protection by the law, to vote, and to participate in civic and political engagement.

In 610 C.E., God began to reveal the message of Islam to Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him in Makkah. Prophet Muhammad called people towards the belief in one God and encouraged them to be just and merciful to one another. In reforming the pagan Arab society, he particularly transformed their mindset regarding the treatment of women. Islam abolished the practice of killing female children and raised the stature of women in society to one of dignity, esteem, and privilege.

God devotes an entire chapter of the Quran, the holy book of Islam, to women. In addition, God directly addresses women repeatedly throughout the Quran. Islam proclaims that all human beings, men and women, are born in a pure state. The goal of every Muslim is to preserve this purity by shunning evil tendencies and beautifying their inner being with virtuous traits.

Islam further confirms that both men and women are equal in the sight of God. In the Quran, God declares, "...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you..." (Quran, 49:13) At another place in the Quran, God clearly states that all humans are equal: "To whoever, male or female, does good deeds and has faith, We shall give a good life and reward them according to the best of their actions." (Quran, 16:97)

While Islam clearly establishes that men and women are equal, it does recognize that they are not identical. God created men and women with unique physiological and psychological attributes. In Islam, these differences are embraced as vital components to a healthy family and community structure with each individual contributing their own distinctive talents to society.

Hence, God's rules apply to both genders, but in diverse ways. For example, God commanded women to cover certain parts of their body, including their hair, to preserve their modesty. Men are also required to cover parts of their body out of modesty, but not in the same way as women. Therefore, God commanded both men and women to be modest; yet, the manner in which they observe it is different.

Similarly, the rights, roles, and responsibilities of women are evenly balanced with those of men but are not necessarily the same. As Islam has granted individual identities to men and women, a constant comparison between the two is futile. Each plays a unique role to mutually uphold social morality

and societal balance.

The following overview details a wide range of women's rights in Islam. It addresses some common misconceptions and provides insight into the diverse roles and responsibilities women fulfill in society. It must also be mentioned here that Muslims are not always representative of Islam and may follow their cultural influences or personal interests. In so doing, they not only disenfranchise women, they also go against the clear guidelines laid out in Islam regarding the treatment of women. Therefore, their practices go against the liberties and entitlements which Islam empowers women with, as shown below.

Education

Back in the 7th century, Prophet Muhammad declared that the pursuit of knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim – male and female. This declaration was very clear and was largely implemented by Muslims throughout history. One of the most influential scholars of Islam was Muhammad's wife, Aisha. After his death, men and women would travel to learn from her because she was considered a great scholar of Islam. The recognition of female scholarship and women's participation in academia has been encouraged and practiced throughout the majority of Islamic history. For instance, al-Qarawiyyin Mosque and University, the oldest running university, was funded by a woman, Fatima al-Fihri, in Morocco in 859 C.E.

Motherhood

In Islam, God clearly gives mothers a high status and elevates their position in the family. In the Quran, God mentions all the sacrifices mothers make in bearing children to remind people to treat their mothers with love, respect, and care. Emphasizing the importance of mothers, the Prophet Muhammad said, "Heaven lies under the feet of your mother."

On another occasion, a man repeatedly asked Prophet Muhammad, 'Who deserves the maximum love, companionship and rights in this world?' Each time, the Prophet replied, "Your mother." When the man asked for the fourth time, he replied, "Your father."

Prophet Muhammad told his companions to treat their parents with kindness, regardless of their faith. Asma reports, "My mother who is an unbeliever, traveled from Makkah to Medina to visit me and asked something from me. I asked the Prophet, "My mother has come to see me and is expecting something from me. Should I heed her request?" Should I show her affection and treat her with kindness?" He said, "Yes, be kind to your mother."

Politics and Social Services

Among the early Muslims, women were active participants in the cohesive functioning of the society. Women expressed their opinions freely and their advice was actively sought. Women nursed the wounded during battles, and some even participated on the battlefield. Women traded openly in the marketplace, so much so that the second caliph, Umar, appointed a woman, Shaffa bint Abdullah, as the supervisor of the bazaar.

In Islamic history, women participated in government, public affairs, lawmaking, scholarship, and teaching. To continue to uphold this tradition, women are encouraged to actively participate in improving, serving, and leading the different aspects of the community.

Inheritance

Before Islam, women all across the globe were deprived of inheritance and were themselves considered property to be inherited by men. Islam gave women the right to own property and inherit from relatives, which was a revolutionary concept

in the seventh century.

Whether a woman is a wife, mother, sister, or daughter, she receives a certain share of her deceased relative's property. This share depends on her degree of relationship to the deceased and the number of heirs. While many societies around the world denied women inheritance, Islam assured women this right, illustrating the universal justice of Islam's divine law.

Financial Responsibilities

In Islam, women are not obligated to earn or spend any money on housing, food, or general expenses. If a woman is married, her husband must fully support her financially and if she's not married, that responsibility belongs to her closest male relative (father, brother, uncle, etc).

She also has the right to work and spend the money she earns as she wishes. She has no obligation to share her money with her husband or any other family members, although she may choose to do so out of good will. For instance, Khadija, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad, was one of the most successful businesswomen of Mecca, and she freely spent from her wealth to support her husband and the cause of Islam.

At the time of marriage, a woman is entitled to a financial gift (dowry) from her husband.

This dowry is legally owned by her and cannot be used by anyone else. In the case of divorce, she has the right to keep whatever she owned before the divorce and anything she personally earned after marriage. The former husband has no right whatsoever to any of her belongings. This ensures a woman's financial security and independence, allowing her to support herself in the case of divorce.

Marriage

A woman has the right to accept or reject marriage proposals and her approval is required to complete the marriage contract. She cannot be forced to marry someone against her will and if this occurs for cultural reasons, it is in direct opposition of Islam. By the same principle, women also have the right to seek divorce if they are dissatisfied with their marriage.

In Islam, marriage is based on mutual peace, love, and compassion. God says about Himself, “And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy...” (Quran, 30:21) Prophet Muhammad embodied the best character and is a role model for all Muslims. His example of being helpful around the household and treating his family with compassion and love is a tradition that Muslims strive to implement in their daily lives. Prophet Muhammad treated his wives with the utmost respect and honor and was never abusive towards them. One of his traditions clearly states, “The best of you are those who are best to their wives.”

Dignity and Protection from Harm

Any form of emotional, physical, or psychological abuse is prohibited in Islam and the improper treatment of women is no exception to this rule. Indeed, there is no teaching in Islam, when studied in its complete context, which condones any kind of domestic violence. Islam clearly disallows any form of oppression or abuse, according to Dr. Zainab Alwani, a leading female Muslim scholar. It cannot be stated enough times that anyone who exercises unjust authority in the name of Islam is actually doing so to uphold their own cultural influences or personal interests. All of God’s creation is dignified and protected under Islamic law.

Modesty

In an environment which constantly emphasizes the physical form through various media, women are constantly faced with an unattainable standard of beauty. Although Muslim women are falsely classified as oppressed based on their modest dress, they are in fact liberated from such objectification by the society around them. This modest appearance, which includes veiling, highlights a woman's personality and character instead of her physical figure and promotes a deeper appreciation for who she is as a person. In this regard, Muslim women identify with Mary, the mother of Jesus (peace be upon him), who is known for her piety and modesty.

In conclusion, Islam has an extensive tradition of protecting the civil liberties of women based on the guidelines set forth by God and His Prophet. Women are empowered with many rights and protections under Islamic law and are honored with a dignified stature in society.

Father

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“A father has no better gift for his son than inculcating in him a noble character.”

And again;

“The best things a father can give his children are refined manners and fine education.”

Prophet said:

“A man's deeds come to an end by his death but for three things: Charity that benefits posterity, fruitful knowledge and the solicitations of his children who pray for him.”

Children

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) loved children, with their innocence, gentleness and ability to be present in the moment. Close to God, close to his own heart, he remained attentive to those who primarily understood the heart's language. He kissed children, carried them on his shoulders and played with them, reaching towards their innocence, which is in its essence the expression of a permanent prayer to God. The Prophet's attitude was a constant reminder of this. If his ritual prayer to God was disturbed by a baby crying, the Prophet would then shorten his prayer as if to respond to the child's prayer.

The Prophet was very kind to children and called them the "Flowers of Paradise." He also said, "Among the good fortunes of a man is the virtuous child."

When anyone brought the first fruits of the season, the Prophet would give it to the youngest child present. He used to greet children with a friendly kiss on the cheek or head. Once when he was greeting some children with a kiss, a Bedouin said, "You love children very much. I have ten children, and I have never kissed one of them." The Prophet replied, "What can I do if God takes away love from you?"

Prophet's love and kindness was not confined to Muslim children alone. In fact, he proclaimed each child's purity and innocence, "Every child is born with a pure nature".

The Prophet said:

'To lie is bad, be it in jest or in earnest. Do not make false promises to young children.'

Parents - Child Relationship

Islam assigns responsibility for bringing up children totally to the parents. Their duties include, besides physical care and nourishment, acculturation into Islam and socialization into the Muslim community. Shariah prescribes that parents must arrange to give their children instruction in the Islamic Faith, rituals, Islamic law and ethics. Parents should prepare them for a life of service to the extended family and society; correct them when they err; and advise and provide them with good examples at all times. The children must be exposed to modern (secular) education. In a plural society, having diverse beliefs, the child must be taught the basic teachings of various religions and the parents should instill in their children a sense of tolerance and respect to other religious philosophies.

The Elderly

Islamic teachings, also established a high regard and respect for the elderly, and to rejuvenate in them feelings of hope and vigor during the sunset of their lives. Anas reported that the Prophet said,

“If a young man supports an old man because of his old age, God will definitely assign people who will respect him when he is old.”

Prophet Muhammad once narrated that, “The Angel Gabriel commanded me to give priority to the elderly. He taught that, ‘When serving food and during ceremonies, the elderly people must be given priority over others.’”

He said, ‘Start with the elderly while serving food.’

The Prophet also said, “One who does not show mercy towards our young and does not respect our elderly is not among us (are not Muslims).”

Kinsfolk

Allah says in the Quran:

“Treat the Kinsfolk with kindness.” (Quran, 4:36)

After the parents, Quran has mentioned the kinsfolk as they deserve our kindness the most. Kinsfolk are related to us through our parents. Maintenance of ties with one’s kinsfolk makes social life pleasant. Where this is absent, social discord sets in. Sulaiman son of Aamir narrates from the Prophet: ‘To give propitiatory offering to any indigent person (who is not related) is mere offering but the same given to a relative is an offering as well as a mark of maintaining tie with one’s relation.’

It means spending on relations is doubly rewarded. It is a fact that man feels a natural attachment with his Kinsfolk but it is also a fact that these relationships are very fragile. Simple incidents snap these relations. Prophet says that these relations should not be allowed to snap. Every attempt should be made to maintain these relations.

Abdullah son of Umar narrates that the Prophet had said:

‘Maintaining of ties with relations does not mean that reciprocates the relations but in reality it means to mend relations when they are ruptured.’



Social Life in Islam

Neighbors

Neighbours enjoy a great number of privileges conferred on them by Islam, the people with whom we co-exist and the neighbors, with whom we have social contacts; cannot be left out. They enjoy more rights than those with whom we have no such links. Here the neighbors have been classified into three categories – the neighbors who are related to us, the neighbors who are not related; and those who accidentally meet us while on travel, in offices, in schools or colleges, or in work places. Such people are also neighbours.

In the following verses of the Quran, gentleness and mercy towards neighbors has been advised.

“Do good to neighbors who are near, neighbors who are strangers, and the companions by your side.”
(Quran, 4:36)

All the religions of the world have given importance to generous behavior towards neighbours, but Islam has not only given importance to this behavior, but has given such a wide meaning to the concept of neighbor that we cannot find its parallel elsewhere. Even brief togetherness of any kind is enough to establish their rights. If this togetherness is longer, the rights are equally more established.

Aisha wife of Prophet Muhammad narrated that the Prophet Muhammad had said:

‘Angel Gabriel has emphasized generosity in treatment towards neighbors to such an extent that I was afraid he would apportion the share of neighbors in the inheritance.’

Islam not only says that neighbours should not be hurt in any way but stresses that they deserve our moral and social help. We should treat them in the noblest manner so that every member of the society could live with the confidence that he is secure amongst the well-wishers who would be at his service at any time. In this regard, Islam's attitude could be inferred from the following traditions.

Abu Hurairah says that the Prophet repeated thrice:

‘By God, he is not a Muslim!’
 ‘By God, he is not a Muslim!’
 ‘By God, he is not a Muslim!’

When he was asked who that person was, he answered: “Someone whose neighbor is not safe from his mischief”

This tradition makes it clear that hurting a neighbor is in contradiction to faith.

In another tradition, Prophet said:

‘That person is not a Muslim, if his neighbour passes the night hungry while he has his stomach full.’

On another occasion the Prophet remarked:

“Do you know what the duties of a neighbour are? Help him if he seeks your help; assist him in distress if he seeks your assistance; give him loan if he seeks it; grant him relief [of loan] if he is in need; nurse him if he falls ill; follow his bier or Janazah when he dies. Congratulate him in his gains and joys; sympathize with him if any calamity befalls on him; raise not your building higher than his (without his permission), so that it may not obstruct his air; harass him not; give him a share when you purchase a fruit.”

Poor

Almighty Allah says in the Quran; “When it will be asked to some of the people who enter the hellfire, ‘What has brought you into hell fire?’ They will answer, ‘We were not among those who prayed, and neither did we feed the needy or poor.’” (Quran, 74:42-44)

Prophet Muhammad said to his wife Ayesha; “O Ayesha! Never turn away any needy person from your door empty handed. Give something, even if all you can give a half a date. O Ayesha, love the poor and bring them near to you, and God will bring you near to Him on the Day of Resurrection.”

The Prophet proclaimed : ‘The food served at a feast to which only the rich are invited and from which the poor are excluded is the dirtiest food.’

The Prophet’s companion Jafar loved the poor, sat with them, stayed with them and talked to them. The Prophet called him Abu Al-Masakin (father of the poor).

Another of the Prophet’s Companion Sa’ad was temperamentally slightly boastful and thought himself superior to the poor. The Prophet spoke to him, saying, “Whatever success and wealth you have is due to the labor of the poor.”

Sick Persons

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was particularly keen on calling upon sick persons and on visiting them, he enquired about their health, sat by their side, passed his hands over the sick person’s forehead and if they asked for anything to eat, he would arrange for it. He caressed the patient, pacified them and told them “God willing, you will recover soon.” The moment he heard of an illness of any person, Muslim or non-Muslim, he went to see them. He even called on Abdullah, son of Ubayy, enemy of Islam and the leader of the hypocrites, when he was ill.

Slaves / Servants

Abdullah bin Umar narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Give the laborer his wages before his sweat dries”.

Prophet Muhammad was particularly kind to slaves. He used to say, “They are your brothers and sisters, so give them to eat what you eat and give them to wear, what you wear.”

Slaves often felt humiliated when called as slaves. The Prophet advised his companions not to say, “My slave” or “my slave girl”, but “my son” or “my daughter”. He also told slaves not to call their masters “lord”, for God alone is the Lord. He was so kind to them that his last advice before he passed away was “Fear and respect God, in the matter of slaves”.

The Disabled

The Prophet (Peace be upon him), with his overflowing compassion and love, was extremely concerned about and gave special attention to those who were physically and or mentally challenged. Throughout history until the present day, societies have unjustly neglected the disabled and weak. They were and still are, treated as outcasts, unwanted burdens on society. The Prophet of mercy raised them from the abyss of misery and pity to the heights of happiness and success by teaching:

‘Show mercy to those on earth, and He who is in the heavens will have mercy upon you.’

This profound prophetic dictum encompassed the normally neglected sections of society: the blind, the deaf, and the mentally and/or physically disabled.

Orphans

The rights of parents and the kinsfolk have the foremost priority. After these people, the weaker sections of society deserve our kind treatment. In this regard, the orphans and the indigent persons have been mentioned first.

The Quran says:

“And treat with kindness the orphans and the indigent ones.” (Quran, 4:36)

The father’s or mother’s demise deprives a child of love, care and sometimes economic stability which are of basic importance. So it is the responsibility of a society to take care of these orphan children, and not to allow these children to feel the loss of their fathers or mothers. Any negligence on the part of the society would not only affect their physical growth, but impair them mentally and emotionally. It is very likely that such uncared for children may harbour rebellious tendencies against such heartless society. Instead of being good citizens, they could turn into anti-social elements.

The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet have repeatedly stressed the need to take care of these orphaned children, their educational needs and their property.

Orphans could not take care of their own rights because of their helplessness and lack of understanding. It is easy to grab their rights. The Quran has condemned such grabbers.

“Those who unjustly eat up the property of orphans, eat up a fire into their own bodies, they will soon be enduring a blazing fire.” (Quran, 4:10)

Islam makes the society responsible for not only taking care of these orphaned children, but also helps them to become God-fearing and civilized citizens who would be an asset to the society.

Mercy for All Creations

In the Quran, God's pre-eminent attributes are: Ar-Rahmaan (the Most Gracious) and Ar-Raheem (the Most Merciful). When combined, these two words encompass the meanings of mercy, love, benevolence, compassion, kindness and grace.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "When God created all things, He wrote in the sacred book with Him in the highest heavens, 'My Mercy precedes My wrath.'" God then states that He divided His Mercy into 100 parts, ninety-nine of which He kept with Himself and one part He sent down to Earth for the sake of all creation. By means of this single part, mercy in all created things towards one another is manifested.

Almighty God states, "We have sent you [Muhammad] as a mercy for all creation, a mercy for all the worlds." (Quran, 21 : 107)

The mercy, with which God endowed the Prophet, is not restricted to humanity alone; rather all of creation partakes in this greatest of divine favors.

The commentators of the Quran have stated that since the Quran is the spring of all mercy in the world, it was first taught to Prophet Muhammad, who would be the sole carrier of the message of mercy to humanity. Thus, this verse elaborates upon the one that states that Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to all creation, since without him there would have been no Quran.

Both the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad are manifestations of God's All-Embracing Mercy. The result is a portrait of a man who, in addition to his many other qualities, embodied the ideals of compassion and mercy.

Treatment of Animals and Birds

Almighty God says in the Quran:

“There is no animal on the earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings, but they are communities like your own.” (6:38)

“God created every animal from water. Some creep upon their bellies, others walk on two legs and still others on four.” (Quran, 24:45)

“The entire creation is the family of God and God loves him most who is good to His Family?”

Though animals are created by God primarily for the benefits and advantages of human beings, Islamic imperatives demand of men certain specific obligations and duties. According to the Quran, the creation and behavioural pattern of animal kingdom do inform a man of intelligence and reason a vision about the Signs of God in the universe. The Quran preceded entomologists by revealing the specific means of communication of ants (2.7:18) and also indicated that God considered bees as worth imparting His revelation to them (16:68,69). The Quran also refers to the curative property of honey. There are a number of chapters in the Quran that are named after animals and insects, such as: Al-Baqrah.: (the Cow, Chapter: 2), namal (Ant, Chapter: 27); ankabut (Spider, Chapter: 29); nahl (Bee, Chapter: 16). Islam has strictly forbidden to play with the lives of animals or to inflict torture upon them just for the sake of fun. The following traditions

(Hadiths) of Prophet Muhammad are illustrative:

- A Companion had once taken a baby-bird from a nest which caused mother bird to search in panic for it, and suddenly mother bird attacked the companion: The Prophet asked his companion to put the baby-bird back in the nest and told those companions who were present, “God’s goodness (mercy) to you is superior to that of this bird for its offspring.”

Prophet Muhammad had warned:

“Whoever kills a sparrow or a bigger animal without respecting its right to exist will be accountable to God for it on the Day of Judgment”.

Prophet Muhammad thus taught that an animal’s right to be respected, to receive the food it needs, and to be treated well could not be negotiated: it was part of the duties of human beings and should be understood as one of the conditions of their spiritual elevation.

- Prophet Muhammad forbade the burning of living creatures. When he once passed by an anthill that appeared to have been burnt, he asked: “Who burnt it?” When he was told that so and so had done it, the Prophet said: “Only the Lord has the right to punish with fire”, thereby instructing his people and protecting this vulnerable nation’s well-being.
- Prophet Muhammad considered even apparently harmful things in nature as part of the system that God created. Once, when the Prophet was with his companions in a place called Arafat near Makkah, a snake emerged from a cave and the companions tried to kill it, but it escaped. Thereupon, the Prophet said, “God saved you from its harm as He saved it from your harm.” The Prophet’s statement that “God saved it from your harm” has a profound indication that the snake also plays a role in the natural world. The Prophet considered

all creatures in the world as part of the system.

- Prophet Muhammad particularly loved cats but more generally, he constantly made his companions aware of the need to respect all animals. He once told his companion this story: “A man was walking on a road in scorching heat; he saw a well and went down into it to quench his thirst. When he climbed up again, he saw a dog panting with thirst and said to himself: ‘This dog is as thirsty as I was.’ He went down into the well again, filled his shoe with water, and climbed up, holding it between his teeth. He gave it to the dog to drink and God rewarded him for this and forgave his sins”.

The Prophet was then asked; “O Prophet, do we get a reward for being good to animals?” And the Prophet answered: “Any good done to a living creature gets a reward.”

- On another occasion, Prophet Muhammad narrated a vision in which he saw: A woman was punished for a cat, which she had imprisoned until it died. Because of this cat she went to hell. She did not give it food or drink, while she imprisoned it, nor did allow it to eat its prey”. Through such traditions, the Messenger stressed that respect for animals was part of the most essential Islamic teachings. He made use of every opportunity to insist on that dimension.

- While marching towards Makkah with his army, Prophet had advised that a dog’s puppies lying by the wayside be protected. When the Prophet noticed a dog feeding its pups, he immediately ordered his companion soldier, Juaail, son of Suraga, to stand guard so that the advancing army would not disturb them. He did so until the entire army had passed. This shows the extent of concern and compassion that the Prophet had in his heart for animals, for he was mindful of the predicament of that dog and her pups even while leading an army faced with enormous tasks.

Green Earth

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) proclaimed :

‘If any person plants a tree and people or other creatures of God eat of its fruits, it would be an offering on his part.’

In this tradition, the excellence of planting shady trees by the side of the road, raising social forestry, parks and conservation of forests have been stressed.

Prophet also said:

‘If a person cuts a tree in a desert that gives shade to passersby and animals, God will punish him or her on the Day of Judgment.’

This shows how keen the Prophet was to keep the earth green. The Prophet brought a completely different dimension to the idea of protecting the world in which we live, as it has rights over us and will expose our deeds to God on the Day of Judgment.

The Muslim believer’s conscience must thus, to the very end, be sustained by this intimate relation with nature, to the extent that one’s last gesture should be associated with the renewal of life and its cycles.

Green Belts

The hima zones were set aside outside cities specifically for the conservation of forests and wildlife. The Prophet declared the area surrounding Medina as hima; and, within the city, he established a number of haram zones.

One of such zones, known as Hima Al-Naqee was ordered to be set up in the valley of Aqeeq, 20 miles out of Medina. This was designated as the grazing ground for horses. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) organized planting of trees in large numbers. Soon the area became so green that it was difficult to spot a horse rider passing through it. He designated its boundaries by asking a person to call from a tree top. The place where his voice could not be heard was marked as its outer limit. No trees would be allowed to cut in the area.

Once Prophet Muhammad returned from the Valley of Aqeeq and described its beauty and serenity to his beloved wife Ayesha. Moved with the description, Ayesha suggested that the Prophet moved his residence to the Aqeeq. Several rich people from Medina later built their summer homes near the place. Soon the place turned into a resort for the citizens of Medina and families began to go there for the purpose of recreation.

The instruments of haram and hima were an integral part of Islamic law or Sharia, and there were Islamic law or Sharia for protection of animal rights. God says in the Quran, 'all the creatures that crawl on the earth and those that fly with their wings are communities like you.' (Quran, 6:38)

Popular Islamic culture reflected the love of animals, birds, nature and the urge for conservation.

Natural Resources

Nature is God's creation and its resources are His bounties to humanity. Thus, Almighty Allah commands us not to destroy it or even waste any part of it: Nature is God's creation and its resources are His bounties to humanity. Thus, He commands us not to destroy it or even waste any part of it:

“O children of Adam. Beautify yourselves for every act of worship, and eat and drink [freely], but do not waste: verily, He does not love the wasteful.”
(Quran, 7: 31)

The merciless plunder of natural resources is a vicious act against the Creator of nature and against humanity. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) taught his companions to be extremely conscious of using any natural or other resources. For example, he taught them to be as economical as possible when using water.

One day the Prophet passed by Sa'ad, a prominent companion who was performing his ablution (Wazhu). Noticing his extravagant use of water, the Prophet said to him, “Why such waste O Sa'ad?”, “Is there waste even when performing ablution?” Sa'ad asked and the Prophet answered, “Yes, even when using the water of a running stream.”

The Prophet taught Sa'ad and his other companions never to consider water, or any other element of nature as a simple means towards their spiritual edification; on the contrary,

respecting nature and using it moderately was already in itself a spiritual exercise in their quest for the Creator.

The Prophet's insistence on not wasting any natural resource, "even when using the water of a running stream" indicates that he placed respect for nature on the level of the essential principle that must regulate behavior whatever the situation and whatever the consequences.

Today, many countries face serious water shortage, these are timely reminder that we need to be thankful to the Creator, and with this in mind, be more careful how we use water in our personal lives. Thus, we all need to pay heed to these Prophetic reminders and avoid wasting anything and 'spreading corruption throughout the land.'

Karen Armstrong, A former catholic nun, who has become the well known writer on 'the Life of Prophet Muhammad, has referred to Prophet Muhammad as "a prophet for our time". She writes that, the Prophet's teachings concerning earth and her inhabitants – insects, animals, birds, trees, rocks, mountains, rivers and oceans – are everlasting in scope and nature.

Today, when humanity faces the dangers of environmental disaster, ecological imbalance, the depleting of the ozone layer, global warming etc., we can no longer afford to ignore the precious treasures of wisdom embedded in the vast books of Prophet's sayings and actions.



II

Personal Life

Personality Development

Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) specialty lay not merely in guiding the people, but training a large band of trainers who spread out through the vast territory that came under the influence of Islam within the next century of his passing away. The Prophet was a great mentor or what is termed as Muzakki in Arabic. He trained his companions in raising groups of people who turned into the living models of Islam harbouring high ideals of humanity. These standard-bearers of Islam in turn carried forward the torch that the Prophet lit in Makkah in the 7th century.

Often people mistake the religious men to be incarnations of God and take their diktats as Divine. The Prophet of Islam always maintained a distinction between what was revealed from God and what he himself would like to offer by way of consul, opinion and advice. While the Divine message were conveyed word to word exactly and people were told clearly about their being from God and obligatory in nature, in day to day affairs, the Prophet would make consultation with his wives, companion and the people around him. He had made it plain to the people that he was a human being and would like to settle the collective affairs in consultation with the members of the society. Though democracy as a concept of governance was still far from the mental horizons of the humanity in the 7th century, the Prophet introduced consultation or shoorā system as a prelude to democracy. He had thus made it abundantly clear that though he was

guided by Allah, he was not above the human tendency to commit errors of judgments and would therefore seek opinion of all those who mattered in any affairs.

The Prophet would encourage his companions to offer their advice, express their opinion and took due cognizance or perception of them in taking decision. He would often pose questions while in the midst of his companions in order to lit the spark of inquiry into them and trigger their critical faculties in order that reason and rationale took the central place by decision-makers in whose hands he would place the legacy of governance. Often the questions would be couched in a language that would set the companions thinking. They would appear contradictory to the spirit of Islam and would prompt the listeners to ponder over the matter more deeply. For example, he once said: "A strong man is not a man who overcomes his enemy." This aroused the curiosity of the companions sitting around him leading them to ask as to who, in the Prophet's view, was a strong man. A few moments later, the Prophet told them that a strong man was one who controlled himself while he was angry.

Sometimes the Prophet would speak figuratively. For instance, once he told the companions that "wealth does not lie in the riches one possessed". This made the companions think for a while. Soon thereafter, the Prophet declared: "True wealth is the wealth of the soul."

At times, the Prophet's statements would apparently seem to contradict common ethical rules. For example, he once asked his companions to help their brothers, whether they are just in their affairs or are committing injustice. The companions were a bit perplexed and puzzled until one among them expressed his wonderment and asked him, it is quite understandable that Muslims should help those who are being just, but how could one help someone committing injustice. The Prophet said: "Prevent him (the offender) from acting

unjustly; such is the way for you to help him.”

On another occasion, the Prophet warned his companions that prayers and supplications alone would not wash off sins and emphasized that on the Day of Judgment, people would not be let off the guilt of violation of human rights. He chose a circuitous route to lead the people to realize how grave were the sins they commit against other fellow human beings. He asked: “Do you know who is a destitute?” Their replies were on expected line i.e., “A destitute is one who has neither money nor resources.”

But look how the Prophet would use the opportunity to give a new meaning to the term destitute and discourage his followers from violating the rights of the fellow beings. He said : A real destitute is one who would come up with a lot of virtues on the Day of Judgment with his kitty overflowing with prayers, fasting, alms to the poor etc. But at the same time he would see claims from others who would complain of him having abused them, having talked ill of them at their backs, usurped someone’s money and maybe someone’s blood on his hands. Victims of his excesses would then be paid by withdrawing virtues from his credit side inasmuch all the virtues would be replaced with sins and he would be ordered to be dragged to the hell.

Thus the Prophet emphasized the social ethos that a believer was supposed to follow and brought home the point that compliance with obligatory rituals in themselves was no compensation for being lax with social values that go into cementing human bonds. He stimulated his companions’ critical sense and their ability to go beyond mere blind obedience or mechanical mind-destroying imitation. It sparked an intense urge among his followers to be ever vigilant against crossing the red line in matters of social behavior and upholding the rights of fellow individuals.

Moral Beings

Islam views man as essentially a moral being who has been endowed with the capacity for thinking, self-reflection and moral choice. As a moral being, it is his responsibility to create and sustain an environment that is conducive to righteousness, brotherhood, cooperation and harmony and to combat evil, cruelty and viciousness. An attitude of indifference and apathy not only encourages unethical values in society, but also weakens the foundations of one's cherished values.

Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

“If one of you witnesses an evil (being committed), he should stop it by physical force; if he cannot do this, he should try to counter it with his tongue; if he cannot do this either, he should condemn it in his heart. And this is the weakest part of faith”.

Self - Sacrifice

Islam emphasizes the cultivation of a sense of moral responsibility and accountability as viable means whereby human rights-and responsibility – could be ingrained in human consciousness. It is easy to pontificate and preach about human rights but extremely difficult if not impossible to put one self in the shoes of another person, as it were, and to be as sensitive about his likes and preferences as one is about oneself. This feat requires a good measure of selflessness, sincerity and compassion.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said, “*A Muslim cannot be a (true) Muslim unless he likes for others what he likes for himself*”.

Smiling is Charity

Prophet Muhammad said:

“Charity is prescribed for each descendant of Adam every day the sun rises.” He was then asked: “From what do we give charity every day?”

The Prophet answered: “The doors of goodness are many... enjoining good, forbidding evil, removing harm from the road, listening to the deaf, leading the blind, guiding one to the object of his need, hurrying with the strength of one’s legs to one in sorrow who is asking for help, and supporting the feeble with the strength of one’s arms—all of these are charity prescribed for you.”

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also said: ‘A benevolent word is Charity,’ or through a fellow being’s smile, “The smile you offer your brother [your sister] is charity.”

Social Justice

According to the Islamic view, all resources have been created by God for the sake of humans (see Quran 31:20;57:7). These resources are for the benefit of all mankind and not for just a few individuals, families or groups (see Quran 2:29). Man is therefore urged to partake of God-given resources (see Quran 7:32; 28:77). Livelihood is described in the Quran as God’s bounty (see Quran 2:198; 5:4; 17:66; 28:2; 62:10).

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said: “Seek for your family legitimate means of livelihood, for this is a jihad in the cause of God.”

Charity and Philanthropy

The Islamic tradition places a great deal of emphasis on compassion, altruism, sacrifice and charity. The Quran urges Muslims to spend on the poor and the needy. (see Quran 2:195, 219, 254, 264, 267, 274; 3:92; 14:31; 57:10 - 11; 76:8, 9).

The Prophet is reported to have said: "All mankind is (like) the family of God and the dearest of them in the sight of God is the one who is the most kind and beneficial to God's family".

The Prophet also said that: "A person who renders (some) service to widows and the poor is equal to one who is engaged in jihad in the path of God or to one who spends the whole day in fasting and the whole night in prayers".

Meeting and Greeting

The Quran says:

"When those who believe in Our signs come to you, say "peace be upon You..." (Quran, 6:54) "When you are welcomed with a greeting, then answer back with something finer than it or (at least) return it. Truly Allah takes count of all things." (Quran, 4:86)

"...When you enter houses salute one another with a greeting from Allah..." (See Quran, 24:61)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) proclaimed:

'Let the younger one salute the elderly, let the one who is walking salute the one sitting and let those who are small in number salute those who are large in number.' 'Do not sit between two men without the permission of both of them.'

Gentleness and Good Manners

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) proclaimed:

“O people! Surely God has chosen for you Islam as religion. Improve your practice of it through Gentleness and Good manners.”

Modesty and Faith

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) proclaimed:

‘Every religion has a special character and the characteristic of Islam is modesty.’

‘Modesty and faith are joined together and if either of them is lost the other goes also.’

God loves Goodness

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) proclaimed:

‘God Almighty is good and loves goodness; He is pure and loves purity.’

‘God does not look upon your bodies and appearances. He looks upon your heart and your deeds.’

Kindness

Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) proclaimed:

“Allah is not kind to him who is not kind to people.”

“Those who are kind and considerate to Allah’s creatures, Allah bestow His kindness and affection on them, Show kindness to the creatures on the earth so that Allah may be kind to you.”

Real Love

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had once told one of his Companions the secret of real love: “Keep away from [do not envy] what men love, and men will love you.”

God had inspired Prophet to follow the path of the Love:

“My servant keeps getting closer to Me through freely chosen devotions until I love him; and when I love him, I am the hearing through which he hears, the sight through which he sees, the hand through which he holds, and the foot through which he walks.”

God’s love offers the gift of nearness to the Divine and rising above of the self. God’s Love is a love without dependence, a Love that liberates and elevates.

Co-operation

The Quran says:

“...Co-operate with one another for virtue and piety and do not co-operate with one another for sin and transgression...” (Quran, 5:2)

“And hold fast together to Allah rope (Islam) and do not be divided...” (Quran, 3:103)

Thankfulness

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: “He who does not thank people does not thank Allah.”

Keeping a Promise

The Quran says:

“O you who believe, fulfill your contracts (promises, covenant)...” (Quran, 5:1)

Honesty

The Quran says:

“And give full measure when measuring out, and weigh with proper scales...” (Quran, 17:35)
“Whenever you speak, speak justly even if near relative is concerned...” (Quran, 6:152)

Truthfulness

God says in the Quran:

“O you who believe! Fear Allah and stand by those who are truthful.” (Quran, 9:119) “That Allah may reward the truthful for their truth and punish the hypocrites, if He wills.” (See Quran, 33:24)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Guarantee me six things and I shall assure you of Paradise. When you speak, speak the truth, keep your promise, discharge your trust, guard your chastity and lower your gaze and withhold your hands from high-handedness.”

“Surely truth leads to virtue, and virtue leads to Paradise.”

Trustworthiness

The Quran says:

“Surely I am a trustworthy messenger to you, so observe your duty to Allah and obey me.”
(Quran, 26:107-108)

“Allah orders you to restore things entrusted (to you) to their owners...” (Quran, 4:58)

Bringing about social change

The Quran says:

“...Surely Allah does not change the condition of people as long as they do not change what is in themselves...” (Quran, 13:11)

Politeness

Prophet Muhammad said:

“Allah is polite and likes politeness.”

Gentleness of Speech

Gentleness of speech is a religious virtue in Islam, and rudeness is sin. The Quran declares:

“Speak fair to the people.” (Quran, 2:83)

And Prophet Muhammad said;

“He who truly believes in Allah and the last day should speak good or keep silent.”

Business Dealings

The Quran gives a momentum to take up trade;

“There is no sin on you to seek wealth from your Lord... Spread over the globe and seek the bounties of God...” (Quran, 62:10)

The Messenger of Allah said,

“May Allah’s Mercy be upon a man who adopts a kind and easy attitude when he sells and buys, and when he demands repayment of loans he gave out.”

On Concealing the Faults of others

“Allah will cover up on the Day of Resurrections the defects (faults) of the one who covers up the faults of the others in this world”.

Seek Permission before Entering Someone’s House

“O you who believe! Do not enter houses other than your own without first seeking permission and greeting the people inside. That is better for you so that you may be heedful. And if you find no one therein, still do not enter until permission has been given...” (Quran, 24:27-28)

‘A man should accompany his guest to the door of his house.’
(Hadith)

Cleanliness is half of Faith

Prophet Muhammad, Peace be upon him, said, ‘Purification is half of Iman (faith)’. ‘The religion of Islam is based on cleanliness.’

Prophet Muhammad would always keep his body and clothing clean, he would bathe on a regular basis and instruct the companions to stay clean too.

The Prophet always exhorted his companions to keep their courtyard and market place clean.

Brotherhood

“Each of you is a mirror of his brother, if you see something wrong in your brother, you must tell him to get rid of it.” “Believers are like the parts of a building to one another—each part supporting the others.” (hadith)

Be friend of Oppressed

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exhorted Muslim followers to raise their voice against oppression and for oppressed classes, Quran says 'Be friend of oppressed' and resist (by proper means) the oppression by tyrant rulers and their corrupt ways.

Furthermore, the Quran says:

“And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the cause of God, and for those weak, ill-treated and oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is: ‘Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors; and let arise for us from You one who will protect, and let arise for us from You one who will help.’ (Quran, 4:75)

Learning and Knowledge

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) proclaimed:

“Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.’
‘Learn to know yourself.’ ‘God has not created anything better than reason, or anything more perfect or more beautiful than reason.”

“An hour’s contemplation is better than a year’s prayer To spend more time in learning is better than spending more time in praying. It is better to impart knowledge one hour in the night than to pray the whole night.”



Conduct and Behaviour

Back Biting

Quranic verses and Hadith show the vital importance attached to conduct and behaviour. Some of them are as follows.

The Quran says:

“O you who believe! Avoid much suspicion for indeed some suspicions are sins: and do not spy on each other, do not speak ill of each other, behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? No! You would hate it... But fear Allah: surely Allah is forgiving and the most kind.”
(Quran, 49:12)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said;

“If anybody pledges to me that he will keep his tongue under control, guard his chastity, will not speak ill of others nor indulge in slander and backbiting and refrain from adultery and similar sins, I shall assure him of Paradise.”

Suspicion

“Beware of suspicion, for suspicion may be based on false information, do not spy on another, do not disclose others’ hidden defects.” (hadith)

Lying

The Quran says:

“...Give up the filth of worshipping idols and stop lying.” (Quran, 22:30)

Further more;

“...Allah’s curse will be on him if he is of those who tell a lie.” (Quran, 24:7)

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) proclaimed:

‘It is great treachery that you tell your brother [sister] something he/she accepts as truth from you, but you are lying.’

‘Woe to him who tells lies to make people laugh !
Woe to him ! Woe to him !’ (hadith)

Assumptions are Sinful

Making erroneous assumption or speaking badly about other people without any reason is to be shunned; ‘Believers, avoid making too many assumptions—some assumptions are sinful—and do not spy on one another or speak ill of people behind their backs: moreover, one should not believe the hearsay stories or pay heed to rumours or gossip which more often than not are based on half truths or plain untruth and falsehood. The believers are advised to ascertain facts before commenting on others or events and use all restraint in expressing opinion about others:

The Quran says:

‘Believers, avoid being excessively suspicious, for some suspicion is a sin.’ (Quran, 49:12)

‘Believers, if a troublemaker brings you news, check

it first, in case you wrong others unwittingly and later regret what you have done' (Quran, 49:6)

An honest opinion, 'A good word' based on evidence and facts, expressed courteously, says the Quran, is 'like a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high in the sky, yielding constant fruit by its Lord's leave...' (Quran, 14:24-25)

The Quranic verse continues:

'But an evil word is like a rotten tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, with no power to endure.' (Quran, 14:26)

Furthermore, the Quran says:

Believers, men and women, are asked 'not to jeer at another, who may after all be better than them,' or 'speak ill of one another', or to 'use offensive nicknames for one another.' (Quran, 49:11)

Flagrant Sin

Almighty Allah says in the Quran:

"But if anyone earns a fault or a sin and throws it into one, who is innocent, he burdens himself with a false charge and flagrant sin." (Quran, 4:112)

Extravagance

The Quran says:

"...Do not squander (your money) extravagantly. Truly the extravagances are the brother of devil and the devil is ever ungrateful to his Lord." (Quran, 17:26-27)

Arrogance

The Quran says:

“Do not walk on the earth with arrogance. Surely you can not rip the earth apart, and cannot reach the mountains in height.” (Quran, 17:37)

“...Allah does not love arrogant and showy boasters.” (Quran, 57:23)

Desires

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

‘It is not poverty which I fear for you but that you might begin to desire the world as others before you desired it and it might destroy you as it destroyed them.’

Jealousy

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) proclaimed:

“Keep away from jealousy for as fire burns wood, so jealousy consumes good actions.”

“Nothing is more atrocious than injuring unjustly a Muslims reputation.”

Taunting

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Do not rejoice over the distress of others, for Allah may relieve his distress and put you in his position.”

Hoarding of goods

The Quran says:

“And let the hoarders not think that what Allah has bestowed upon them from His bounty is better for them. But it is worse for them. That which they hoard will be a burden for them on the Day of Judgment...” (Quran, 3:180)

“...Those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend them for Allah’s sake announce to them a painful punishment.” (Quran, 9:34)

ill-Gotten wealth

Money or property which is acquired through unfair means and anyone who makes use of it and spends it on his needs does him a great harm. As Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) has warned, his prayers will not find acceptance with Allah; his supplications will not be answered, his petitions will not be granted; and in case he does good deeds they will avail him nothing. In the hereafter, there will be no share for him in the special favours and good graces of the Lord.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) proclaimed:

“If a person earns or acquires anything through dishonesty means, and, then, gives away a part of it in charity, his act of charity will not be accepted, and if he will spend from it on his needs there will be no auspiciousness or real prosperity in it, and should he leave it behind to his descendants, on his death, it will serve for him as Hell’s provision. Believe it; Allah does not erase evil with evil (i.e., charity and almsgiving from ill-gotten gains can never lead to salvation). One impurity cannot remove another; it cannot make it pure.”

Furthermore he added: “Allah is pure Himself and He accepts only offerings that are pure.”

Cheating and Fraud

The Quran says:

“The cheaters will suffer terribly. These who insist on full measure when they have people measure something for them; but when they have to measure or weigh things for others, they give less than their due.” (Quran, 83:1-3)

The Prophet personally used to give surprise visits, once he found a trader had put dry grains on the wet grains. Prophet put the hand inside the heap of food grains to check adulteration and noticed that he had done this to cheat buyers. He asked the trader ‘Why did you do this?’ the trader replied it is due to rain.” Then Prophet said, “He is not amongst us who cheats others.”

Mischief and Corruption

The Quran says:

“...Eat and drink that which Allah has given you and do not act corruptly making mischief on the earth.” (Quran, 2:60)

Greed

Contentment is the key to success and happiness; and greed is just contrary to it.

Most of us believe that material wealth would bring us happiness. It can of course buy us comforts, but not the happiness which is internal to our nature and cannot be attained by mad pursuit of material riches. In reality, it is only contentment that ushers us into the realm of happiness

with a heart totally at peace with itself and body and soul freed from the clutches of greed. Greed or lust has no end. It grows in geometrical proportions as much as one fulfills it. The following tradition from Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) throws ample light on the natural instincts of human beings:

“If Adam’s son is given a valley full of gold, he would like to have two valleys, for nothing fills his mouth except dust. And God forgives him who repents to Him.”

Man is ever in the pursuit of wealth and material well-being. Striving for more is inherent to his nature. He is always eyeing opportunities to get rich, enhance his standard of life, add more to his style, and pursuing dreams of owning fast cars, elegant villas in scenic locales. In short, the wish-list of an individual is endless. He leaves no stone unturned to materialize his ambitions and achieve dreams. Such is our preoccupation with the material pursuits that we often forget the morals and ethics of the game.

Love for this world, with all its enjoyments, may distract us from seeking the Hereafter. We should always remember that the main purpose of our existence is to worship God.

Our Lord discourages us from the blind pursuit of material well-being and dubs the worldly glamour as a fleeting flash of opulence that will distract us from the main objective of remembrance of God. Here is a Quranic verse:

“And it is not your wealth, nor your children that bring you nearer to Us, but only he (will please Us) who believes, and does righteous deeds; for such (people), there will be a double reward for what they did, and they will reside in the high dwellings (of Paradise), in peace and security.” (Quran, 34:37)

Corruption

Now that we have zeroed in upon the cause of the greed, let it be told that it is the material lust that drives us to grab the share of others in the economic cake. Any attempt to fulfill the material greed through illegitimate means deprives the society of justice and equity. In common expression, this has come to be known as bribery which is rampant in our societies.

The Prophet had warned his followers and companions of illegitimate means of enrichment. On one occasion, a tax collector (Tehsildar) who came back from his duty furnished the goods collected before the Prophet, and said, this is the tax of the government and this is given to me as a gift; Some of the goods showed by him were described as goods collected as tax (*Zakat*) while another portion of goods were described as gift for himself.

Prophet smelt corruption. He immediately addressed the companions in his assembly and said: *Look at this collector, who says, 'this is the portion of Zakat and this is mine, having come as a gifts'. Now let him stay at home and then see if people still come to offer gifts to him.*

Wine and Gambling

The injunction forbidding wine and gambling comes in the Quran, Chapter 5 verse 90,

“O you who believe! Intoxicants (Wine and all kinds of alcoholic drinks) and gambling, stones (for sacrifice or idyllic gestures) and prediction by arrows are (all most) undesirable and filthy works of Satan tricks (and his works) avoid such (Undesirable things) so that you may prosper.” (Quran, 5:90)

The habit of consumption of liquor and gambling has dangerous and evil consequences for the wider society. It keeps

people away from productive pursuits and encourages them to turn to illegitimate means to acquire wealth. In most cases, it brings about the economic ruin of families, leading to indebtedness and even destitution. Furthermore, it weakens the moral fibre of society.

The celebrated British historian Arnold. J. Toynbee once observed that one of the most valuable and enduring gifts of Islam to humanity is the prohibition of alcohol and Gambling.

Riba or Interest or Usury

An Islamic economy prohibits all transactions involving Riba (interest or usury). In Islam there is no distinction between interest and usury. Islam allows only a zero rate of interest, that is, no interest at all. Whatever the name used, interest or usury, it is prohibited in Islam.

Interest is neither a trade nor a profit. It is a means of exploitation and concentration of wealth. The Quran says:

“They say ‘trade is like interest.’ But God has allowed trade and forbidden interest.” (Quran, 2:275)

“Whatever you pay as interest, so that it may increase in the property of (other) men, it does not increase with God.” (Quran, 30:39) “O you, who believe, do not take interest, doubling and multiplying, and keep your duty to God, so that you may prosper.” (Quran, 3:130)

“O you who believe, observe your duty to God and give up what remains (due) from interest, you are believers. But you do not do it, and then be warned of war from God and His messenger; and you repent, then you shall have your capital. Do not exploit and be not exploited.” (Quran, 2:278-279)

Interest (Riba) is an integral part of modern free-market economies. Unlike Zakah, which distributes wealth from the rich to the poor, interest takes wealth from the poor to the rich. Modern economies depend on interest; it is assumed to be impossible to live without it. This false assumption is challenged by the successful interest-free facilities offered by Islamic banks and investment companies throughout the world.

Abortion and Fear of Poverty

The Quran says: “And when the good news is given to any of them of a daughter, His face turns dark and he is filled with grief.” (Quran, 16:58)

In Pre-Islamic 7th century Arabia, the custom of killing female children was very common. They killed their children for three reasons and the Quran has mentioned all the three. First, they sacrificed their children at the altar of their gods to please them: (See Quran, 6:37 and again, see Quran, 6:140)

Secondly, they killed their children for fear of poverty. The Quran cautioned them against this and made it absolutely unlawful for anyone to kill their children:

“Do not kill your offspring for fear of poverty: for it is We Who provide for them and for you as well. Indeed their killing is a terrible sin.” (Quran, 17:31)

This verse cuts at the very root of birth control, which has been going on from ancient times to our present age. It was the fear of want that induced people to kill their children or resort to abortion. In our age, another means has been added to these, i.e., contraception and pre-natal ultra sound imaging.

A newly born girl child was a subject of embarrassment and she was buried alive in order to avoid disgrace of having

a female child, one out of every ten men was guilty of this crime. Not only men, but women also participated in the act. Mothers handed over their girl child for burial. These practices are continued in today's modern world in the form of female foeticide. According to a World Children's Report by UNICEF, boys are outnumbering girls in India; there are only 880 girls per 1000 boys in India. It also reveals the global sex ratio of 954 girls to 1000 boys. The drop in female birth rate is due to female foeticide.

An estimated number of about 70 million of Female children are caused to perish before their birth every year; these staggering figures must put the whole mankind to shame and must jolt from head to toe every person with conscience. But still, we are forced to believe that we are living in a civilised world that cares for the human rights?

The combination of a strong cultural preference for boys and pre-natal ultrasound imaging has led to couples identifying and aborting female fetuses so that their only permitted child is male.

The Quran mentions this in connection with accountability on the Day of Judgment when the murderer of the girl child will be questioned as to why they killed their daughter:

“On the Day of Judgment ‘When the infant girl buried alive is asked,’ for what crime she was killed.”
(Quran, 81:8-9)

Prophet Muhammad has clearly demonstrated that a girl is not a matter of humiliation to a family. On the other hand, she is a matter of pride. A man who brings up his daughters in a proper way will be among those who have the honor of standing close to the Prophet on the Day of Judgment.

Racism

“Superiority is by righteousness and devotion to God alone.”

(Quran 49:13)

Islam eradicated the problem of racial or color discrimination. During the Pre-Islamic Arabia, 7th century A.D, racism was prevalent in Makkah in the guise of tribalism. The Makkan Quraysh considered themselves (in particular) and Arabs (in general) superior to all other people. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) came with the Divine message and proclaimed that:

“No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, and no white person is superior to a black person.”

“Even if a black Abyssinian Muslim were to rule over Muslims, he should be obeyed.”

Even today, we all know how the black Negroes and backward classes are treated by the civilized white races and the upper castes. Consider the state of Bilal, a Negro slave in the days of the Prophet of Islam nearly 15 centuries ago. The role of calling Muslims to prayer was considered to be a position of honor in the early days of Islam and it was offered to this Negro slave. After the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet ordered him to call for prayer and the Negro slave, stood over the roof of the Kaabah, the most historic and the holy place in the Muslim world.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) declared that even if an Abyssinian Black Muslim were to rule over Muslims, he should be obeyed. Prophet eradicated the problem of racial or color discrimination so successfully that, for example;

- Whenever the second Caliph of the Islamic state, known to history as Umar, saw Bilal, a Negro slave, he immediately stood in reverence and welcomed Bilal by exclaiming,

“Here comes our master, here comes our lord”.

What a tremendous change was brought about by the Quran and Prophet Muhammad among the Arabs.

- Zayd son of Haritha was a slave. Prophet appointed him as commander over the Muslim Army he sent against the Byzantine (Roman) empire.

- Usamah was a slave, Prophet appointed him as commander in-chief of Muslim Army.

- One day Abu Dharr al-Ghifari was sitting next to a Muslim who was black. Abu Dharr addressed him as “black man.” Prophet Muhammad was very displeased on hearing this, and told Abu Dharr to make amends

“Whites are not superior to blacks,” *he added.*

As soon as the Prophet admonished him, Abu Dharr became conscious of his error. He cast himself to the ground in remorse, and said to the person he had offended: “Stand up, and rub your feet on my face.”

- The Prophet once saw a wealthy Muslim companion gathering up his loose garments to maintain a distance from a poor Muslim sitting next to him.

“*Are you scared of his poverty clinging to you?*”
the Prophet remarked.

- Prophet Muhammad thus brought about such a mighty transformation that the noblest and purest among Arabs by birth offered their daughters in marriage to Negro slaves.

This is the reason why Goethe, the greatest among the German poets, speaking about the Quran declared that,

“This book will go on exercising through all ages a most potent influence”.

This is also the reason why George Bernard Shaw says,

“If any religion has a chance of ruling over England, nay, Europe, within the next 100 years; it is Islam.”

Terrorism

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“God gives for gentleness what He does not give for violence or anything else.”

Prophet Muhammad also said:

“Near the Doomsday, unaccounted murders will be common, where the killer will not know his victim and the victim will not know why he was killed or who killed him.”

Fourteen hundred years ago, Prophet Muhammad had predicted the tragic situation we are facing today, and millions of innocent people are being killed in terrorist attacks, military raids by hostile countries and due to blockade, restrictions, and embargos on different countries, and also killings by police or military actions on their own citizens in various countries.

Innocents are being killed, they do not know who killed them, and why? And the killers do not know their victims and likewise the people being killed through such means may have no personal enmity with their killers.



Some Distinctive Aspects of Life

Food and Drink

Food and drink affect our health, growth and state of mind. Islam has given regulations about our food and drink. Islam aims to establish a healthy and moral society. It allows all wholesome and pure things to be taken as food and drink.

The Quran says:

“O Mankind, eat the lawful and good things from what is in the earth and do not follow the footsteps of the devil. Surely he is your open enemy.”
(Quran, 2:168)

Muslims should begin meals by saying Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim (In the name of God, the Most Merciful, and the Most Kind), and finish by reciting the following du'a': “All praise is for Allah who gave us to eat and to drink and made us Muslims.”

Prophet Muhammad asked us to eat with the right hand and to wash our hands before and after meals. It is better not to eat so much so as to fill the stomach. The Prophet also asked us not to drink water and other soft drinks in one go; rather we should pause whilst drinking and it is better to have three pauses.

Islam has forbidden only what is impure and harmful. Lawful things are called Halaal and forbidden things called Haraam in Islamic law (Shariah).

Islam forbids eating the meat of the following:

- a. Dead animals (i.e. those which died ‘naturally’).
- b. Animals slain without invoking Allah’s name.
- c. Animals strangled to death.

- d. Pigs.
- e. Carnivorous animals.
- f. Animals devoured by wild beasts.

Islam also forbids the eating of the blood of an animal (2:173; 5:3; 6:145; 16:115). Islam teaches respect and consideration for the life and welfare of animals. It is one of the many favours of God that He has created Herbivorous animals for mankind to eat by His permission, provided we slaughter them in the way He has commanded. God's name must be mentioned at the time of slaughter. The meat and by-products of animals not slain in this way are Unlawful (Haraam).

Alcoholic drinks are *Haraam*

All kinds of intoxicating (alcoholic) drinks such as beer, wine and spirits are prohibited. Alcoholic drinks are not at all conducive to a healthy society.

The Quran says:

“O you who believe, intoxicants and gambling, idols and divining arrows are filthy tricks of Satan; avoid them so that you may prosper Satan wants to incite enmity and hatred among you by means wine and gambling and prevent you from remembering God from Namaz (Salat). So will you not give them up?”
(Quran, 5:90-91)

Drinking alcohol causes serious social problems in society. It leads to many vices and sins. Islam aims to root out all evils to ensure that society remains healthy and peaceful.

The Islamic system of life has very beneficial regulations. We should try to follow these rules as best as we can. We should not end excuses to avoid Islamic laws and regulations rather we must make serious efforts to follow God's commands.

Dress

Almighty God has created man in the best of forms and He wants His servants to dress nicely and decently. We should bear in mind that we are the best of all creatures and our dress should reflect this. Proper dress helps prevent indecency immoral behavior, and adds beauty to our personality.

The Quran says:

“O children of Adam, we have revealed to you clothing to conceal your private parts and as a thing of beauty. But the garment of piety (Taqwa) is the best of all.” (Quran, 7:26)

Islam encourages simplicity and modesty. Dress expressing arrogance is disliked. The style of dress to wear depends on local custom and climatic conditions but the above guidelines still apply.

Abdullah son of Umar, states: “I submitted to the Prophet of Allah: ‘O Messenger of Allah! Would I be guilty of pride and arrogance if I wore fine and nice clothes? The Prophet observed: “It is elegant to wear nice dress and elegance of dress pleases Allah.”

Furthermore Prophet observed: “Put on best garments when saying prayers (in other words, dress yourself in full suit). Man owes it to Allah more than to any one else that he should go into His presence in his best apparel.”

In other words, elegant dress does not mean arrogance. Arrogance consists in ignoring the rights of others and looking down upon others as mean and base.

Festivals

Festivals in Islam are occasions of thanksgiving, happiness and joy. The two major festivals in Islam each year are 'Idul Fitr and 'Idul Adha'. These occasions are observed with devotion to seek the pleasure of God, not just for our own pleasure.

Idul Fitr

'Idul Fitr is observed on the 1st of Shawwal (the tenth month of the Islamic calendar), the day after the month of Ramadan. On this day after a month of fasting, Muslims express their joy and happiness by offering a congregational prayer, in an open fields, otherwise in Mosques. They express their gratitude to Almighty God for enabling them to observe a month of fasting. Special dishes are prepared and it is customary to visit friends and relatives and to give presents to children. Muslims generally wear their best clothes on this day.

Idul Adha

'Idul Adha is on the 10th of Dhul Hijjah (the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar) 'Idul Adha commemorates Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) readiness to sacrifice his son Isamil (Ishmael) following the command of God. Almighty God accepted Ibrahim's devotion and obedience and asked him to sacrifice a ram instead. This occasion of great importance comes every year during the days of Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah) and is observed by offering congregational prayer, as in Idul Fitr. After the prayer, Muslims who can afford it sacrifice animals like goat, sheep or camels to seek God's pleasure. The meat of the sacrificial animal is eaten and shared among relatives, neighbours and the poor. This sacrifice expresses the inner feeling of a Muslim that, if need be, he will sacrifice his most loved possession for Allah. This is the lesson of the occasion. (See Quran, 22:37)

Salatul Jumuah or Friday Prayer

Salatul Jumuah or Friday Prayer is offered in congregation. All adult Muslim men must take part. It is not a must for women, but they can join this prayer if it does not upset their household duties.

People assemble for this Salat immediately after noon. Upon arrival at the mosque or the prayer hall, they offer four or more rak'ahs Sunnah prayer and then the Imam (prayer leader) delivers a Khutbah (sermon). After the Khutbah, the Imam leads two rak'ahs Fard prayer. After the Fard prayer, six or more rakahs of Sunnah and Nafl prayers are offered individually by each person.

Muslims are a community. Salatul jumuah is a community prayer. Every week, on Friday, Muslims living in an area get together to offer this prayer. This day is likened to a weekly Eid, festival for Muslims.

Mosques were the centre of all Islamic activity during Prophet Muhammad's time, but this is not so nowadays.

Friday prayer is an occasion for the assembly of Muslims in any given area. It gives them an opportunity to meet, discuss and solve their community problems. It develops unity, cooperation and understanding.

In an Islamic state, the Head of State or his representative or the local leader is supposed to lead the five daily prayers and the Friday prayer at the central mosque of the capital city or the central mosque of the locality. Prophet Muhammad the first head of the Islamic state in Madinah, used to lead all the prayers in Masjid e Nabawi (Prophet's Mosque).

The Muslim World

Population

Muslims, wherever they are, form one nation (Ummah). It is faith that binds people together in Islam, not the geographical territory, colour, race or language. Citizenship of an Islamic state may be determined by geographical boundaries.

There are 57 Muslim countries in the world on the basis of a majority of the population. The total Muslim population in the world is nearly 1.7 billion, which is a formidable human power.

During the forties and fifties many Muslim countries gained their independence. The contemporary Muslim world straddles the global middle belt; from the shores of Senegal and Morocco to the Pacific Ocean and the islands of Indonesia, and north to south from the Mediterranean coast of Turkey to Somalia. The Muslim world consists of some 57 sovereign states at various stages of development, incorporating more than 60 languages and with ethnic backgrounds as diverse as those of the Arabs and Indians, the Turks and the Pathans, the Chinese and the Malays, the Uzbek and the Hausa.

The end of the cold war gave independence to six new Muslim states in Central Asia: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan. In Europe, Albania shed its Stalinist past and Bosnia-Herzegovina broke away from former Yugoslavia and was invaded by the Serbians.

Muslim Minorities

The global Muslim community, or the Ummah, is much more than just the Muslim world. It's a supranational entity with a common religious culture and history and a certain

consciousness of belonging together. One - third of the ummah exists as minorities in non-Muslim countries.

The Muslims of India - consisting of over 200 million (20 crore) people — are the world's largest minority. Over 80 million (8 crore) Muslims live in China. And there are large Muslim minorities in the Philippines, Burma, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Immigration

Hence the fifties, after the independence of many Muslim countries, Muslims have been migrating to the West. In Europe, this migration took place on a well-established route. Families from all over the Muslim world sought to make new homes in the countries of their former colonial masters. Thus, Muslims from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh went to Britain and USA. Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians went to France. Indonesians and Suriname's (Suriname is a country in northern South America) went to Holland. The relationship between Turkey and Germany during the wars led to the establishment of a substantial Turkish community in Germany. There are now an estimated over 20 million Muslims living in Europe.

Resources

The Muslim countries together produce two—thirds of the world's oil, about 70 percent of the rubber, about 75 percent of the jute, 67 per cent of the spices, two- thirds of the palm-oil, 50 percent of the phosphate and 40 percent of the tin. They also produce a large quantity of the world's cotton, tea, coffee, wool, uranium, manganese, cobalt and many other commodities and minerals. There is also a huge amount of natural gas in the- Muslim countries.

If we look at a world map, we find the Muslim countries situated at strategically important positions. 60% of the

Mediterranean Sea is bounded by Muslim countries. The Red Sea and the Gulf are fully within the Muslim region. In the course of history, Muslims lost their essential unity; it should be restored once again for the greater good of all mankind.

Muslims, who once contributed tremendously to the science and civilisation of the world, could do so once again if they unite on the basis of Islam. Real human progress can only be achieved by the faithful observance of the teachings of Islam. We should consciously try to restore the glory of Islam and make the present day problem-torn world a happy and peaceful place to live in. Pride in the past will be meaningful if the present can be shaped in the light of the past with a promise for the future. The Muslim community (Ummah) has the potential and the need is for the faithful practice of the teachings of Islam.

Conclusion

So it is hoped that Muslims will humbly turn back repentant to Allah and strive hard against the temptations of Satan so that they will truly become the ambassadors that this noble religion deserves, and the examples of mercy, charitableness, tolerance and general righteousness that this religion has undoubtedly produced throughout every century; calling all peoples towards the success and light that the worship of Allah alone brings—amen.

And further, for those who have not yet accepted the Truth are called upon to think deeply upon the evidences and arguments presented in this book, remembering that this life is certainly a gift and an opportunity that should not be wasted. How can you meet your Lord after your time has expired in this life having spent your whole life pursuing your own desires and not bowing yourself down to worship Him except on your own terms? Act before it's too late or you will have the rest of eternity to regret your inaction.

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Jizyah

Significance and Context

Orientalist and anti-Islamic writers have been misinterpreting various Islamic terminologies to defame Islam; one among those is the *Jizyah*. *Jizyah* has been wrongly defined and explained in out of context. The right approach to understand is to learn through original sources and to know its context and history.

The financial system of Islamic State comprises of Zakat, Ushr, Sadaqah and *Jizyah*. Among all these sources, *Jizyah*, is a minor source. The following paragraph helps readers to understand the truth about *Jizyah*.

Zakat - Right of the under-privileged

“Zakat is meant for the poor and the needy... ‘This is ordained by God’.” (Quran, 9:60)

Zakat is the right of the under - privileged on the wealth of the rich. Islam enjoined the Muslims to pay *Zakat* annually i.e., set aside 2.5% of their savings for the poor and the indigent in the society if their total savings exceed the value of 88 grams of gold. If they happen to live in an Islamic State, it will be the duty of the Islamic Government to collect *Zakat* from the Muslims. Besides, Muslims are encouraged to make voluntary contributions to help the poor and needy and for

other social welfare purposes, this voluntary contribution is called *Sadaqah* (unspecified charity) *Ush'r* compulsory tax to Government, i.e., 5%-10% of the farm produce, 20% of natural resources such as Petroleum, Gas, Mines, Coal, gold, silver, Diamonds; *Fitrab* (on the eve of *Eidul Fitr*), none of these were collected from any non-Muslim by Islamic state.

Jizyah – Protection tax

In lieu of *Zakat* for Muslims, the non-Muslims were asked to pay *Jizyah*. It was levied at a rate of 48 Dirham for the members of the elite and affluent, 24 Dirham for the middle class members and 12 *Dirham* for people of the lower strata annually. By all yardsticks it was a paltry sum which worked out much less than what Muslim subjects were paying through *Zakat* and *Ush'r*. They were exempted from recruitment in the army and were not liable to pay any religious charity. They enjoyed a special status guaranteeing them safety, security and dignity. They were sure in their knowledge that *Jizyah* was a substitute for non-Muslims in lieu of *Zakat* and *Ush'r* which Muslim subjects were paying.

Not an omnibus tax

Jizyah did not apply to all non-Muslim subjects. It was collected only from adult, able-bodied males. Women and children were exempted. Nor was it levied on the handicapped, old, sick, infirm people. Monks, hermits, priests, bishops, paupers and people in religious duties too were exempted. If the Islamic state failed to guarantee security and safety to any non-Muslim people, it returned their *Jizyah* money. The Prophet enjoined protection and security of non-Muslim subjects who complied with *Jizyah* provisions.

Exemption from Military Service

It will be in the fitness of things if we first look at the definition and ambit of Jizyah. Jizyah was not considered a punitive tax in Islam. It rather recognized certain people's right not be recruited into the army and still be protected by the Islamic State. Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, also levied Jizyah on non-Muslims living within the territory of Islamic State and gave them certain guarantees in writing. The contracts were written down to this effect. These guarantees were following:

1. Their life will be protected. If they come under attack by enemies, such attacks will be repulsed by the Islamic State and they will be protected from any physical harm.
2. Their properties, homes, farms and all their possessions will be safeguarded.
3. The collectors will approach them for collection of Jizyah. They need not come to deposit the same.
4. Their businesses, merchant caravans, and other sources of livelihood will be provided with protection by the State.
5. No attempt will be made to convert them from their religion, nor will their faith be vilified.
6. Their priests, monks and bishops will not be dismissed from their posts.
7. Their idols, images, crosses and places of worship and all religious symbols will be protected.
8. No military raids will be conducted on their habitations.

9. No Ush'r (tithe; one tenth of annual produce or earnings, formerly taken as a tax) will be collected from them.
10. None of their rights that were traditionally available to them will be curtailed.
11. These rules will be applicable to even those non-Muslims communities that will come into existence in future. (Ref. Dharma – Islam hindi men by Inshwar Nath Topa)

The Islamic State complied with these provisions fully. The fourth righteous caliph (Islamic Ruler) Hazrat Ali stated in categorical terms that all those people who have volunteered to remain non-Muslims, and have accepted payment of Jizyah, will be protected. Their blood is like our blood; their life is like our lives. Those of the non-Muslims who volunteered themselves to military draft were exempted from payment of Jizyah.

Not to win converts

Jizyah was not intended to coercing the non-Muslims into conversion to Islam. The rate at which it was collected was not so excessive as to be considered a punishment. And history bears witness that nowhere imposition of Jizyah was a reason for conversion to Islam.

No Subordination

In those times it was not even viewed as a declaration of subordination or subjugation of the non-Muslim subjects. As is known from history, Aurangzeb employed great many Hindu generals like Jaswant Singh (who was Defence Minister in his administration), Raja Rajrup, Kabir Singh, Arghanath Singh, Prem Dev Singh, Dilip Roy and Rasik Lal Crory. If indeed they construed payment of Jizyah as a punishment, they would

not have accepted such positions at the cost of their dignity. In fact, while Emperor Akbar had 14 Hindu *Mansabdars* (high officials in his court), Aurangzeb actually had 148 Hindu Mansabdars in his court. (Ref. Shri Ram Sharma, Mughal Government and Administration, Hind Kitabs, 1961)

It is said Alauddin Khilji was the first Muslim ruler who introduced the Jizyah as a tax for non-Muslims. It was during the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar that Jizyah was abolished. But it was reinstated by Emperor Aurangzeb who ruled between 1658-1707 AD. Curiously, the charge that Aurangzeb imposed it by way of punishment of Hindus also does not hold much substance when we come to learn that he simultaneously abolished nearly 65 types of taxes imposed by king Akbar and king Jahangir, which resulted in annual revenue loss of 50 million rupees to the national treasury of Aurangzeb Government. (Ref. *Jadunath Sarkar*, Mughal Administration)

No Taxes in the Mid-East

Finally, let us cast a look at the modern Islamic world. Nearly seven million Indians, preponderant majority of whom consists of non-Muslim workers and professionals are either working or doing business in the Muslim states of the Middle East today. None of these levies any kind of taxes on them, not even income tax which they would normally be paying had they been receiving those fabulous salaries in India. They even need not pay sales tax, service tax, on consumer purchases in those countries. Despite some of them being quasi-theocratic states, they avoid subjecting expatriate labour any kind of levies, Cess or tax. In fact, some of them provide free healthcare, travel allowances and insurance to retain their employees. All that is evident from this discussion is that Muslim rulers have been guided by rules of their religion and have shown keenness to accommodate people in various circumstances.



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