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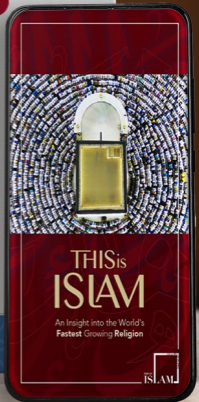
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THIS is ISLAM

An Insight into the World's
Fastest Growing Religion

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LAUNCHING
CURIOSITY

An aerial photograph of Muslim worshippers facing the Ka'bah, which God ordered Prophet Abraham to build and Muslims to face - wherever they might be - during their prayers.

THIS IS
ISLAM



THIS is ISLAM

An Insight into the World's
Fastest Growing Religion

Fahd Salem Bahammam



- **Aren't you interested** in having a much clearer picture of the most controversial religion in the media?
- **Isn't it worth pausing and thinking** for a moment to learn about a religion, which is, according to global statistics, one of the most widespread and fastest-growing religions?
- **Don't you find it exciting** to explore others' cultures and explore their view of life, religion and the world around us?
- **Won't you give yourself the opportunity to look** into well-documented information about the religion of Islam from its sources and then try to assess it, using your own reasoning and thinking?

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, then this book was written for you.

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Thought-Provoking Questions



At

At one point each one of us must have asked ourselves these questions: "Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? What is my eventual destiny after death? What is the purpose of existence? Why long for this transient life when the ultimate end is death, dust and nothingness?"

Muslims and followers of other divine religions believe that the life of a person who does not believe in a just creator and a life hereafter, is meaningless and sheer absurdity, that leads to unrewarded suffering and a futile unsuccessful experience, where as the righteous will be rewarded.

The faithful believe that it is impossible to comprehend the contradiction, injustice and the suffering of this life without believing in a just and wise creator who is the disposer of all affairs and who has made an end for this life, after which each person will reap the fruits of their deeds.

Only then, can profound faith in all the values and concepts such as justice, love, compassion, honesty, patience and mercy become a fact that is consistent with one's personality. Only then, challenges can be given true purpose and meaning, achievement be given taste and patience be given sweetness.

The Qur'an, the Holy Book of Islam clearly points to this and informs us in 3:191 that those who are endowed with understanding **"... reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth, saying, 'Our Lord, You have not created this in vain. Glory be to You! ...'"**



It is impossible to comprehend contradictions in life, right and wrong, and the real purpose of suffering and trials and tribulations without believing in a just and wise lord and creator who disposes of all affairs.

The Religion of Islam

Most world religions are named after a person, a nation or a country where the religion originated. For instance, Christianity was named after Jesus Christ, Judaism after the Tribe of Judah, Buddhism after its founder and Hinduism after India.

Islam, however, is not named after any particular person, tribe, ethnic group or nation. Islam does not exist for the purpose of a specific human nation, nor was it founded by anyone to be named after its founder. It is only called Islam, which simply means total submission to God's will.



The Meaning of the Word 'Islam'

A cursory look at the root of the Arabic word 'Islam' will reveal that it comprises a number of meanings including submission, obedience, sincerity, devotion, peace and tranquillity.

Islam means total submission to The Lord, The Creator and True King, and freedom from all forms of worship to other than Him.

This is the very meaning that the Qur'an stresses in a number of verses.

In (31:22), we read that **"whoever surrenders himself sincerely and completely to God, obeys His commands and avoids what He has prohibited has indeed grasped the firmest handhold, attained safety and realized all good"..**

Thus, Islam means total submission to God and rejection of all other forms of worship besides Him. By the same token, a follower of Islam, a Muslim, is someone who submits himself completely to God, sincerely worships Him, leads a life of inner peace and spreads peace all around him.

However, is this the message of all God's messengers?



Islam is the Religion of All God's Messengers

The Qur'an stresses that God sent messengers to all past nations in different eras to teach them God's religion. Addressing Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him - PBUH), the Qur'an (35:24) states, "We have sent you with the truth as a bearer of good news and a warner. There is no nation to which a warner has not come." Therefore, all God's messengers came with the true religion, and they do not differ regarding the fundamentals of faith and morals.

The Religion of Islam was brought by Prophet Muhammad (PUBH), the final messenger, over 1,400 years ago. Prophet Muhammad's (PUBH) message is the same in essence to that given to all God's messengers before him and thus constitutes an extension of the religion with which all previous God's messengers came. The Qur'an (2: 136) requires Muslims to believe in the revelation sent down to previous



The Arabic word '*Islam*' comprises a number of meanings including submission, obedience, sincerity, devotion, peace and tranquillity.

God's messengers, such as Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jesus.

It is worth noting that the Qur'an (2: 132) relates to us the commandment of Abraham to his children before his death, just as it relates to us that of Jacob to his children, saying to them that God had chosen the true religion for them and warning them not to die except as Muslims meaning, in full submission to God.

Therefore, Islam is an extension of the religion of all God's messengers. The set of beliefs remain in its original and undistorted nature that is essentially the same, and differences only exist in the laws and their niceties that change according to various times, places and the general circumstances. Muhammad (PUBH) is the last messenger in the chain, and he was sent to all humankind with the final divine law.

Thus, the Qur'an (3:19) clearly states that religion is one, namely Islam, and the differences we perceive among followers of divine religions in regard to beliefs are mere distortions that have set them apart from what their messengers actually brought them.



Islam is by no means named after any particular person, tribe, ethnic group or nation; for it is not for a particular human nation, nor was it founded by anyone to be named after its founder. It is only called Islam, which means total submission to God's will.

UNIVERSALITY OF ISLAM



It is

It is amazing that the word 'Arab' is not mentioned in the Qur'an despite the fact that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic to Prophet Muhammad (PUBH), who was sent from amongst the Arabs. Arabs today constitute a minority totalling less than %20 of the world's Muslim population. In fact, the most populous Muslim majority nation is Indonesia, a sovereign state in Southeast Asia. Even Muslims of India alone, still a religious minority in the country, account for approximately double the population of the largest Arab country.

T

This is essentially due to the fact that Islam was introduced as mercy and guidance to all nations of the world, regardless of their nationality, race, gender and traditions. As the Qur'an (21:107) states, **"We have only sent you [O Muhammad] as a mercy to the worlds."**

In fact, Islam presents a global view of human diversity unparalleled to other religions and totally unknown to other nations of the world.

Let us carefully consider the following divine statement in which God addresses all people without exception, regardless of their race and beliefs. The Qur'an (49:13) says, **"O mankind, indeed We have created you from a male and a female and made you peoples**



and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Indeed, God is All-Knowing and Aware.”

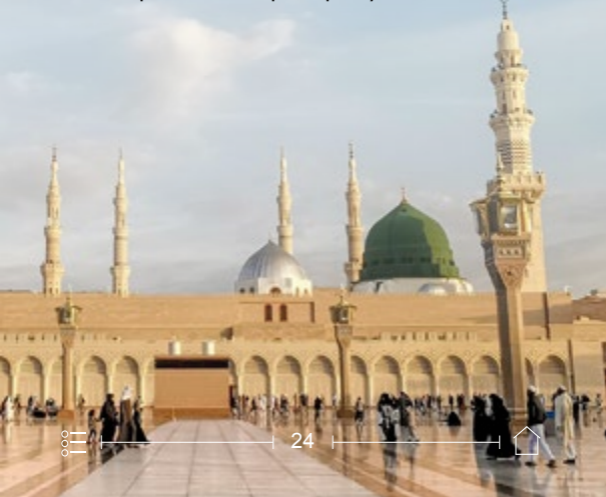
In this verse, the Qur'an stresses that all people, regardless of their color and race, are all descended from Adam and Eve, and that the differences between them are not meant to favor one over another, but rather to get them to know and cooperate with one another. It further states that superiority and honor belong to those who worship God and lead a pious life.



Islam presents a global view of human diversity unparalleled in other systems and totally unknown to other nations of the world.

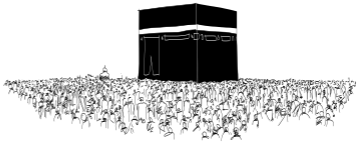
The Qur'an (30:22) even draws our attention to the fact that language diversity, skin color and cultural differences constitute a divine blessing and one of the signs of God's creative power in this universe, similar in its greatness to the creation of the heavens and the earth. It also mentions that only sensible people who have knowledge perceive and reflect on these signs.

While it is true that Article 1, arguably the most significant article, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) — which provides that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” — was adopted in 1948 and was implemented later, it is equally true that, over 1,400 years ago, Prophet Muhammad turned a new chapter in human history when he made a statement pertaining to human rights. He said while delivering a historical speech, “O people! Your Lord is one and your father [Adam] is one. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white person has no superiority over a black person, nor does a black person have any superiority over a white person except in piety.” (Ahmad: 23489)



The
year

630



Muhammad, the Messenger of Islam

“O people! Your Lord is one and your father [Adam] is one. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; a white person has no superiority over a black person, nor does a black person have any superiority over a white person except in piety.”

The
year

1948



the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

which provides that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”



Taking Care of the Environment Is a Part and Parcel of Faith

Some philosophers consider man the absolute master of the universe who can dispose of its resources for his own benefit and in fulfilment of his desires. As the absolute master he could do whatever he pleases with impunity, even if it means the destruction of the universe or the species within. In stark contrast to this, others regard man as having no advantage over others and that he is amongst millions of other species who inhabit Earth. How does Islam then view man's relationship with the universe?

The Islamic view of the nature of man's relationship with the universe is grounded in faith and intellect, resulting in detailed provisions to govern the relationship with fellow human beings, animals, natural resources and Earth.

The first thing that draws attention to this relationship is the balance the Qur'an strikes between man and the universe. In fact, God has honoured man and favoured him above the rest of the creatures (17: 70); He has subjected to man the universe and the creatures around him to benefit from and to care for (14: 32-33).

Thus, man is not merely a creature amongst the millions of other creatures; rather, he is an honoured and dignified creature for whom nature has been subjected for his own benefit (2: 29).

At the same time, the Qur'an stresses that man is not the absolute master of the universe who can do as he pleases. The lofty position man occupies in no way authorises him to destroy Earth and its natural resources. It emphasises that the Sovereign is the True God and Creator, and that man's role and position lies in being a vicegerent of God in the world. This means that God has appointed man custodian, a right entitling him to utilise resources and serve as the Earth's caretaker. God has also commanded man to engage in development and production of Earth for the general welfare of humankind without harming fellow human beings or other creatures (2: 30; 11: 61).

To highlight this fact, Islamic Law, or *Shari'ah*, has laid down detailed regulations to govern this close relationship between man and the universe. The following are examples of such regulations:

1. Caring for Animals

Numerous statements are attributed to Muhammad (PBUH) promoting animal rights, promising those who show kindness to animals a great reward in the Hereafter. The Prophet (PBUH) warned against animal abuse and cautioned against severe divine punishment awaiting perpetrators of animal cruelty.

The first society promoting animal welfare, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), was founded in Great Britain in 1824 and the first bill criminalising animal abuse was approved in 1949. The law protecting animals outside of Islam is a modern development. In comparison, Islam forbade and criminalised animal abuse and cruelty more than 1,400 years ago. Numerous practices are attributed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who warned against animal abuse. Acts such as starving, torturing, over-burdening, injuring, and slapping animals across the face for personal amusements. All such acts of cruelty are forbidden in Islam. Narrations to these teachings are well known and can be found in texts on Islamic law.

Perhaps the reader may realise the extent to which Islam promotes animal welfare by reading Muhammad's statement in which he mentions that a female prostitute from among the Children of Israel once saw a dog panting out of excessive thirst. Feeling a surge of pity for it, she filled her shoes with water from a nearby well and gave the dog to drink. God forgave her because of this act of kindness (Al-Bukhari: 3280).



In **632** CE, Islam forbade animal abuse, including, amongst other things, starving animals, torturing them, burdening them more than they can bear or inflicting harm on them



The first society promoting animal welfare was founded in Great Britain in **1824**



The first bill criminalising animal abuse was approved in Great Britain in **1949**





2. Caring for Plants

Islam urges its adherents to care for plants and agriculture, whether for one's own benefit or for the benefit of mankind as well as other creatures.

In one narration, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) informs us that if a person plants or helps plant something that is of benefit to others such as a bird, a person or a beast and he eats from it, this will be considered charity on his behalf for which he will be rewarded (Al-Bukhari: 2320).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), even goes as far as calling Muslims in the darkest and most challenging times to leave no stones unturned in caring for the environment and developing the earth even if they are certain they will not benefit from doing so. In one narration, he mentions that if the Day of Judgement takes place while someone is still holding a palm-tree seedling to plant it, he should plant it as much as possible, so that this act is counted for him as an act of charity (Ahmad: 12981).

The tradition considers Earth development in the darkest and most challenging times as one of the goals of Islam and an act of worship. It further stresses that nothing should prevent one from engaging in such a noble deed, even in times of great turmoil and terrifying circumstances.



3. Caring for Natural Resources

Islam also stresses the importance of caring for the environment. The emphasis on taking care not to squander, destroy or pollute its resources is obvious in the teachings of Islam. In respect, it provides a comprehensive plan based on the principle, “an ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure.” The plan, amongst other things, details the importance of personal care, conservation of natural resources and criminalisation of those who abuse them.

- Islam forbids wasting natural resources, foremost the wasting of water, even if one intends to use it as an act of worship for ablution before performing prayers.

- It also prevents influential people from monopolising natural resources in such a way as to cause harm to others. Thus, it forbids denying others water (natural resource), fire (energy) and pasture (food). (Abu Dawud: 3477)

”
Taking good care of the environment is, as the Messenger of Islam once declared, part and parcel of faith.

- Islam also forbids anything that is bound to spoil the environment. Examples include the prohibition of urinating in stagnant water which leads to water pollution. The prohibition extends to relieving of oneself on pathways and places frequented by people, such as shades where people walk and rest.

These are but a few examples from a long list of practices that are not alien to Islam. The messenger considers caring for the environment and taking an active part in performing simple acts such as removing harm from one's path, not only a righteous deed but also part and parcel of true faith (Muslim: 35).



Islam Promotes Knowledge and Science

It is no coincidence that the first of the Qur'anic word revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was 'Read'. The Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition stresses the importance of acquiring all forms of knowledge in the vast fields of human interests. It considers the path that a Muslim follows in seeking knowledge a path that eventually leads to Paradise. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) once observed, "God will ease the way to Paradise for him who treads a path in search of knowledge" (Muslim: 2699).

The Prophet (PBUH) also demonstrated through illustration, that the superiority of a learned person over a devout worshiper is like his own superiority over the least virtuous of all Muslims (At-Tirmidhi: 2685).

It is for this reason that Islam has never witnessed a conflict between religion and science, as with other religions. Scientific inquiry has never been stifled, nor have scientists been persecuted due to their scientific opinions and conclusions. During the Middle Ages, also known as the Dark Ages, and described as the period of intellectual darkness and economic regression, numerous scientists were persecuted and imprisoned or lost their lives in Europe for their scientific curiosity. On the contrary, Islam has always promoted science and knowledge and has called its adherents to acquire it and teach it to others as long as it is bound to benefit humanity.

It is not surprising, then, that most Muslim scientists started their education by studying and memorising the Qur'an and understanding their religion. After that, they excelled in their respective fields of specialisation.

Islam honours knowledgeable people who enlighten others and impart knowledge to them. It holds them in high esteem and confers the highest honour upon them, so much so that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), once remarked that all God's creation pray for those who enlighten and teach people (At-Tirmidhi: 2685).



LAUNCHING

CURIOSITY

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The majority of Muslim scientists and doctors started their lives by studying and memorising the Qur'an, which urged them to excel in the various sciences and fields of interest.



Notable Muslim Scientists



1. Al-Khawarizmi (Baghdad, 850-790):

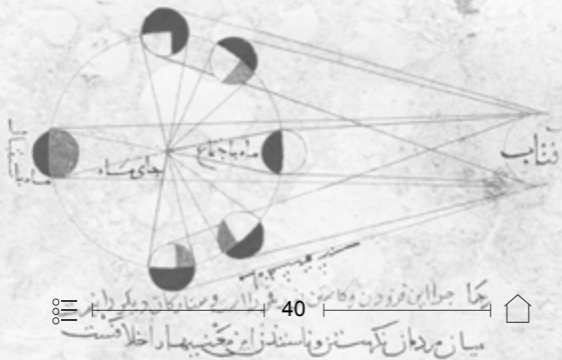
A renowned mathematician, astronomer and geometer. He is indisputably the original inventor of algebra and it was through him that such Arabic words as algebra and zero were borrowed by European languages.



2. Ibn Al-Haytham (Cairo, 965-1040): Known by his Latinised name, Alhazen: He was a physicist, a mathematician and an astronomer who made significant contributions to the principles of optics, astronomy and mathematics, among other sciences. The principles in the invention of the camera are attributed to him. In fact, many researchers in the field of physics, mathematics and astronomy have proven that the word camera comes from the Arabic qumra, or dark room, which he is also given credit for inventing. Ibn al-Haytham devised the camera obscura, which is a darkened box with a convex lens or aperture to illustrate the principle that rays of light, reflected from an illuminated object will pass through a tiny hole in a dark room and project an image of the object upside down on a white wall inside the room.



3. **Al-Biruni** (Chorasmia, 973-1048), known as Alberonius in Latin and Al-Biruni in English: He was one of the greatest scholars of the medieval Islamic era and was well-versed in physics, mathematics, astronomy and natural sciences, among other scientific fields. He described the Earth's gravity and was the first scientist to introduce the theory that the earth spins around its axis as it orbits the sun.





4. Az-Zahrawi (Andalusia, 936-1013), known in the West as Albucasi: He was a Muslim surgeon who has been described by many as the father of modern surgery. His works, which were translated into multiple languages provided major references for books in medicine and surgery for centuries. In fact, his pioneering contributions to the field of surgery, including the instruments used in surgical procedures have been captured in numerous books. Az-Zahrawi's books had an enormous impact in the East and West, where some of his discoveries are still applied in medicine today.



5. Ibn Sina (Bukhara, 980-1037), known by his Latinised name Avicenna: He was a distinguished doctor and philosopher whose talents and skills were at a level far beyond his time in which he lived. He described numerous medical phenomena and prescribed treatment that were previously unknown. In addition, he also promoted scientific research in medical studies and made remarkable discoveries which are still valid today. This is clear in his famous work, *The Canon of Medicine*, which remained the standard medical authority for seven centuries. *The Canon of Medicine* continued to be the standard medical text in Europe until the mid-17th century.

As a famed leading figure in the field of medicine, Ibn Sina provided free medical treatment to patients, both as a humanitarian gesture and as a way of expressing gratitude to God for conferring the gift of knowledge upon him.



6. Ibn An-Nafees (Damascus, 1213-1288): He was an eminent scholar of Islamic law as well as one of the most remarkable doctors and physiologists in human history. He is famous for being the first to discover and describe the pulmonary circulation. He also put forward a number of medical theories that are still valid today.



Islam Embraces All Aspects of Human Endeavour

Much to the surprise of many people, Islam is not merely a set of ritual acts and general moral teachings, as is the case with many familiar faiths.

Indeed, Islam is not simply a spiritual need fulfilled by Muslims in mosques through prayers and supplications.

Nor is it a mere set of views and beliefs espoused by its adherents, comprehensive economic and environmental system, set of rules and principles for building society and a system, nor a set of moral values and manners for dealing with others.

Islam is a comprehensive way of life. It covers all aspects of life and more. Despite this, Islam does not restrict people's freedom in as much as it eases their lives so that efforts are geared towards creativity and building of civilisation. In fact, it is one of the greatest blessings, as the Qur'an (5:3) stresses, that God has ever bestowed upon humanity.

Once, a non-Muslim sarcastically said to the Prophet's companion Salman Al-Farisi, "Your Prophet has taught you everything even the proper manner of urinating and defecating." Salman replied, "Yes, he did indeed." Then he went about showing him the etiquette of using the toilet (Muslim: 262).



Islam is a comprehensive way of life, which covers all aspects and dimensions of life without exception.

Islam Embraces this Life and the Hereafter

The Ancient Egyptians mummified their dead and buried along with them all their precious possessions because they believed that they would need them in the afterlife.

Tibetan Buddhists still practise sky burial where the body of a dead person is dismembered and scattered atop of mountains for vultures and scavengers to eat. Hindus still cremate their dead because they believe that the burning of a dead body signifies the release of the spirit.



These are but few examples of funerary rites practised by followers of various faiths to bid farewell to their dead. Such practices have changed and varied according to time and in accordance to the religious beliefs held by people regarding life after death. Such practices give rise to a number of questions that require convincing answers: Is there life after death? If yes, what is its nature, and what will we need there?

The answers are of paramount importance because death is the ultimate truth that is universally acknowledged to be beyond doubt and is awaiting all of us without exception. This is the case whether or not we believe in a life hereafter, whether or not our beliefs are confined only to the material world we perceive with our senses, and whether or not we are prepared for that crucial moment or try to ignore it by engaging distractions and amusements.

Despite all attempts to ignore this ultimate truth, the question persistently imposes itself whenever we stop and think: is death the ultimate end therefore, is there nothing else after it? To put it simply, is our existence in vain?



Death is definitely the ultimate truth that is universally acknowledged to be beyond doubt and is awaiting all of us without exception — whether we believe in a life hereafter, or whether our beliefs are confined only to the material world we perceive with our senses.

This question frequently comes to our minds, and is repeated in the Qur'an in different ways, stating at the same time that many people on the Day of Judgement will regret not stopping and thinking about it and thus failing to make the necessary preparations to depart this world. Some will remorsefully say, **"Oh, if only I had prepared in advance for this life of mine!"** (89:24); others will lament their fate, saying, **"Oh, if only I were dust!"** (78:40)



All followers of divine religions believe in life hereafter and in reward and punishment.

It is a known fact that all followers of divine religions believe in the life hereafter. They believe in reward and punishment, for indeed this is the intent of the message with which all messengers were sent. In addition, the intellect testifies to the fact that life, religion and moral values will be meaningless and futile in absence of another life in which people will be rewarded or punished according to their deeds.

Many people, however, mistakenly believe that religion and worship cannot go hand in hand with acquiring wealth, entertainment and development. The misconception is that one must live either for this life or for the hereafter, given that this life and the afterlife cannot come together, just as day and night can never come together.

In fact, their amazement knows no end, and it is even hard for some to believe that the apparent barrier between worship and entertainment, or between worship and wealth does not exist in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) informs us that one will be rewarded for whatever right one does as long as it is with the best of intentions. Even the simplest of acts such as removing a harmful object, like a thorn, from the road or putting a morsel of food into the mouth of one's spouse (Al-Bukhari: 56).



Islam stresses the importance of leading a well-balanced life. While it urges people to hasten to worship God to be rewarded in the hereafter, it prompts them, at the same time, to strive hard in this world to seek God's bounty and earn a living.

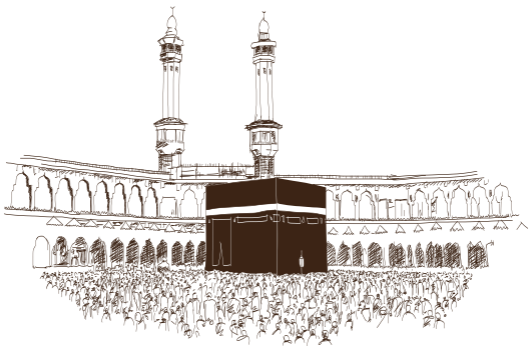
When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), once informed his companions that ways of doing good are endless and he gave them an example, much to their great amazement. He said, "... and in the very sexual act of each of you there is a charity." They asked, "How can we be rewarded for satisfying our sexual desire?" He replied, "If you satisfy it unlawfully, will you be committing a sin?" "Yes," they replied. "Likewise," he said, "by satisfying it lawfully [with your spouses], you will certainly be rewarded for it" (Muslim: 1006).

Hence, anyone who learns about Islam notices from the first moment that they are introduced to this faith, the balance Islam strikes between the present life and the afterlife, as clearly described in the Qur'an. While the Qur'an prompts people to hasten to worship God for rewards in the hereafter, it stresses, at the same time, the importance of striving hard in this world to seek God's bounty (62:9-10). Thus, they are worthy of reward as long as they intend to do so, thereby seeking the good pleasure of God. Since Islam encompasses all aspects of life, all human acts are considered acts of worship as long as they are done with this intention. A Muslim is required to worship God by doing his job properly to earn a living, raise his children, take care of his health and his environment and improve society, just as he

worships God through prayers, fasting and giving to charity.

This constitutes one of the secrets behind the psychological well-being and inner peace within a Muslim, when he perceives the harmony that exists in Islam. The harmony between this life and the life hereafter, and between amusement and worship has no conflicts; rather, they complement each other.

Therefore, Islam stresses a Muslim's motto, which encompasses Islam's viewpoint in this respect and commands him to avow: I dedicate my life in all its aspects to the worship of God, and not only prayers and my devotions, and I anticipate reward from Him for doing so. He alone will judge my deeds and will reward me for them after death, thereby adhering to God's commands and His religion, Islam (6:162).





Islam Promotes Communication with Others

The manuscript written by Ahmad Ibn Fadhlān, the renowned Muslim traveller, represents the earliest known eyewitness account of Russian and Viking life and its societies. In the manuscript, he describes events that occurred in these societies in vivid detail.

In 921 CE, Ahmad Ibn Fadhlān set out on an amazing journey, which may be considered the most important journey of cultural communication in the Middle Ages. He left Baghdad, known as the capital of science and civilization at that time, and visited a

large number of countries and encountered numerous peoples. He documented the events he had witnessed in his manuscript, which was later found in Russia. His experiences were published for the first time in book form in 1923.

The importance of Ahmad Ibn Fadhlán's writings, as American author Michael Crichton describes in his book, *Eaters of the Dead*, lies in the fact that the Arabs of Baghdad "were Muslim and fiercely dedicated to that religion. But they were also exposed to peoples who looked, acted and believed differently from them. The Arabs were, in fact, the least provincial people in the world of that time, and this made them superb observers of foreign cultures." (HarperCollins publishers, 1976, p. 10)



Islam, therefore, requires its adherents to join hands with others and take an active part in reform and building the civilisation, as well as mingle and communicate at the highest degree of ethical behaviour despite cultural and religious differences. It stresses that isolation and social aloofness is not a characteristic of true Islam. It is for this reason that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) observed that a person who mingles with people and endures their Annoyance with patience is far better than one who does not mingle with people and endure annoyance with patience (Ibn Majah: 4032).

**ONE CREATOR
WHO ALONE
DESERVES TO BE
WORSHIPPED**



Islam

Islam stresses that theoretical beliefs are not sufficient to be a true believer. Thus, if one believes that the Lord and the Creator is One, it follows, then, that one must worship none but Him.



The Arabic word '*Allah*', the proper name of God, denotes the following three principles all combined:

- The One who deserves to be worshipped, the One to whom people offer sincere prayers and fast. The One to whom all their hearts turn and to whom they direct all their acts of worship;
- The Greatest in His being, attributes and glory to such an extent that the limited human mind cannot fathom His greatness and understand its reality;

- The One to whom hearts are attached and for whom they yearn, and the One whom people find peace and tranquillity in their hearts when they remember Him and experience great delight in getting closer to Him and worshipping Him.

The Qur'an stresses the importance of correcting one's concepts of God and endeavouring to purify these concepts from all distortions and imperfections attached to it, which attempt to disparage God's greatness and glory.

Thus, God, as the Qur'an explains, is The Creator and The Originator of this universe and its minute intricacies as well as the laws He has placed in it. He is The sole Creator, and everything comes into being with His absolute will and total knowledge. No female conceives or gives birth except with His knowledge and will. No drop of rain falls, or a change that takes place at night or in the day, whether it is apparent or hidden, in any aspect of this vast universe, except that He encompasses it with His ability, knowledge, mercy and compelling power (41:47; 6:59).

God has the best, the perfect and the most beautiful names. He is the All-Powerful, to whom perfect power belongs and He is never overpowered; the Most Merciful whose mercy embraces everything; and the Supreme Being to whom no imperfection whatsoever may be attached.



The necessity of sincere worship of God alone without worshipping anyone else besides Him is the issue that Islam emphasises the most and makes abundantly clear. Indeed, all God's messengers called their people to this very important matter.

When people once claimed that God made the heavens and Earth in six days and that on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed, the Qur'an (50:38) disproved this false claim, saying, **"We created the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, in six days; and no weariness affected us."** In fact, false claims of this nature are only made as a result of likening God to the creatures the human mind is familiar with, but nothing could be further from the truth, for God is The Creator and all other things other than He are His creatures. How then could the Creator be similar to His creation? As the Qur'an says, **"There is nothing whatsoever like Him, and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing"** (42:11).

According to Islam, God almighty is The Just Judge who does not wrong anyone by even as much as an atom's weight. Whatever we perceive in this life attests to His absolute wisdom and unlimited grace. Just as a young child may not be aware of the wisdom behind certain acts of his parents and cannot comprehend or explain them due to the immense difference between his intellectual and thinking capacity and theirs, human understanding cannot perceive the wisdom and purpose of God regarding some aspects of His creation and will.

Islam further proves that theoretical beliefs are not sufficient to be a true believer. Thus, if one believes that the Lord and The Creator is One, then one must worship Him alone. No acts of worship should be directed to other than Allah, nor should any supplication made to other than Him. Rather, one should worship God without any intermediaries or intercessors, for The Creator is high above all that.

Whereas kings or presidents may not be aware of the needs of the destitute and the weak amongst their subjects and cannot grant their requests and support them without the help of their aides and associates, God Almighty knows what is revealed and what is hidden. He is The All-Strong and The True Sovereign who has power over all things.



The entire universe is under His control and when He decrees a matter, He needs only to say, "Be," and it is. Why then turn to other than Him?

The Qur'an clearly states that contentment and happiness cannot be fully realised unless a Muslim turns to his Lord and prays to Him to grant his requests and fulfil his needs. Indeed, God has power over all things and He is the Great and the All-Glorious who loves and shows His creation immense kindness in ways they do not perceive. He also rewards them proportionate to their turning to Him and showing humbleness before Him (2:28; 27:62-62).

Thus, the point in which Islam emphasises and makes abundantly clear is the very issue to which all God's messengers called to their people. It is the necessity of sincere worship of God alone without associating others with Him (16: 36). No messenger, angel, or saint, regardless how devout they may be, should be invoked besides God on the pretext of being intermediaries between God and His servants. Ultimately, they are God's creatures and His slaves and there should be no intermediaries between God and His slaves, for He is ever near, and He can hear their voices and answer their prayers as long as they sincerely worship Him alone.

A person who has sincerely turned to God will definitely experience the sweet taste of happiness and enjoy inner peace and tranquillity. He will experience no confusion, perplexity or anxiety, for he knows that The Creator and possessor of everything is One, and thus he turns to no else but Him and seeks no one's refuge but His.

This meaning is contained in a very short chapter (*surah*) titled *Al- Ikhlass* (sincerity), which is known as one of the most famous and momentous chapters of the Qur'an.



LAUNCHING

CURIOSITY

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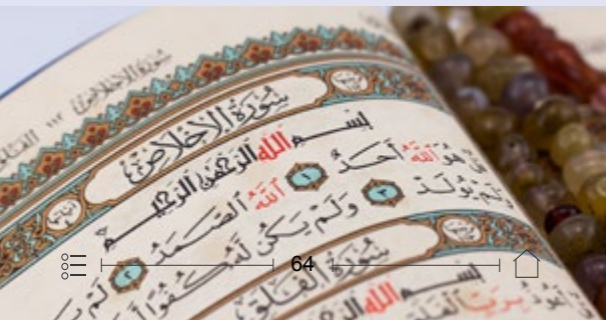
The Qur'an emphasizes that everything happens with Allah's knowledge and will; even the falling raindrops and tree leaves.



Surat Al-Ikhlass — the Qur'anic chapter 'Sincerity'

In this surah, God commands Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to declare the following, as though he was answering the question, "Who is God?"

- God is One, has no partners and is alone worthy of worship.
- All creatures without exception depend on God and turns to Him for their needs and requests to be fulfilled and granted.
- Glorified is He and Highly Exalted above the claim that He was begotten or begot, for He is the First (*Al-Awwal*), Who has always existed and not preceded by anything or anyone.
- He has no equals, and no one is comparable to Him in His Being and attributes, for He is The sole Creator of everyone, and everything and all are His creatures.



The Harmony between Laws of the Universe and Islamic Law

God created the universe in which we live. From the smallest cells that make up the human body and what is yet far smaller to the most distant galaxies. It was created with the utmost accuracy and amazing regularity, without which life and nature could not be maintained. All naturalists confirm that any imbalance or disorder in this system, regardless of how small, will inevitably lead to total destruction and devastation.

A Muslim believes that the Creator of this miraculous system in its accuracy and regularity knows the laws, provisions and way of life that is best suited for humankind. The religion He has prescribed is the only system that is fit for humankind and the one that is bound to bring all aspects of human life into harmony. God Almighty explains in the Qur'an that the Creator of the universe knows best what is in the best interests of His creation: "Does He who created not then know? He is the All-Pervading, the All-Aware." (67:14)

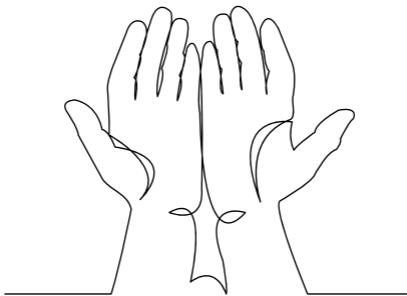


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Absence of Priesthood in Islam

Many religions have given the religious prerogative to certain individuals to the exclusion of all others. People's faith and worship is conditional on the consent and approval of these individuals. According to these faiths, the individuals act as intermediaries between people and God, granting forgiveness and claiming to know the unseen and consider those who oppose them doomed to utter loss and misery.

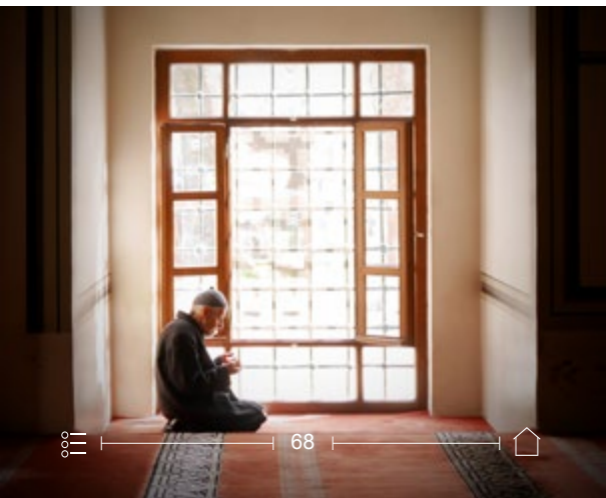
In Islam, however, there is no such office of 'priest'. In fact, Islam has honoured man, held him in high esteem and freed him from any spiritual authority that comes between him and God. It completely rejects the idea that human happiness, repentance or worship should hinge upon the will of certain individuals, no matter how virtuous and devout they may be.



Islam has honoured man, held him in high esteem and freed him from any spiritual authority that comes between him and God. It completely rejects the idea that human happiness, repentance or worship should hinge upon the will of certain individuals, no matter how virtuous and devout they may be.

Islam has also freed man from all authority claiming that religious knowledge is its prerogative. We find that the Qur'an not only regards religious knowledge and understanding of the Qur'an to be the right of all people, but also considers it a duty. It commands all Muslims without exception to read the Qur'an, understand it, ponder upon its meaning and then act on its dictates.(38:29)

Therefore, faith and acts of worship are between man and his Lord and no one has the right or privilege to act as intermediary between man and God. Indeed, God Almighty is ever close to His slaves. He hears their prayer and responds to it. He sees their worship and their prayers and rewards them for it. No human being has the privilege of granting forgiveness and accepting repentance. Thus, when a person sincerely turns to God, God readily forgives him and accepts his repentance. As the Qur'an (2: 186). says, "When My servants ask you about Me, say that I am near. I respond to the call of one who calls, whenever he calls to Me: let them, then, respond to Me and believe in Me, so that they may be rightly guided."





“

The Qur'an makes it clear that God is ever close to everyone as long as they sincerely turn to Him and invoke Him.

Are there any Special Rituals to Embrace Islam?

A person who, out of conviction, wishes to convert to Islam need not perform any complex rituals at all. He need not convert in a special place or in the presence of a certain authority figure. All he needs to do is profess the two testimonies of faith, fully aware of their meanings, believing in them and being prepared to act on their dictates. The two testimonies of faith are:

Ash hadu an laa ilaaha illallaah, (I bear witness that there is no god but Allah). This means: I firmly believe that there is no God worthy of worship except Allah, and I am willing to worship Him alone and not associate anyone or anything with Him.

Wa ash hadu anna Muhammadan rasul-ullaah (And I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). This means: I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah whom He sent to all humankind. I will obey his orders, avoid whatever he declared prohibited and worship Allah according to his guidance and practice.



**THE TRUTH
ABOUT GOD'S
MESSENGERS**



God

God created people to worship Him and sent to them messengers to teach them God's law and to remind them of His religion. The messengers reinforce people's religion and worldly affairs, through examples to emulate, oppose corrupt practices and call them to the straight path, so that they will have no argument for rejecting faith. What is then the truth about these messengers?



They Were Human

The Qur'an stresses in countless verses that all the prophets and messengers were human beings whom God favoured with revelation and a divine message. Despite the human likeness between the prophets and us, they are different from us in that they enjoyed a high status of purity and uprightness, for God had chosen them to convey His message and religion to humankind. As the Qur'an states, **"Say, 'I am only a human being like you, but I have received revelation ...'"** (18:110).

Thus, all God's Messengers were human beings, who were born, who die and fall ill, like all human beings. They shared all qualities with humans and shared their needs.

They have no divine qualities whatsoever, for only God has divine attributes. They are human beings to whom God revealed through the angels or inspiration, among other ways.

Past nations found it so surprising that God should reveal to a man among them. God disapproves of them being surprised at this, stating that their surprise is unjustified, for it is only through revelation that God's guidance and the teachings of His religion can reach people (10:2).

Their True Position Should Not Be Exaggerated

God had chosen the best among humankind to convey His message. They reached the highest level of righteousness and integrity. The Qur'an (6:84-87) describes them as, 'rightly-guided', 'honourable', 'righteous', divinely chosen and 'favoured over other people'.

Whenever any of the messengers made a mistake, God would disapprove; He would remind the messengers of it so that he would abandon the wrong and turn to Him. Such a mistake, however, was due to personal reasoning and was in no way intentional.

Hence, the Qur'an provides an accurate and unexaggerated description of the prophets. They are infallible in the sense that they did not commit major sins and they did not make mistakes when conveying God's message to the people and conveying what God revealed to them. Despite all this, they are human beings; they are not gods, nor the sons of God, nor do they have any divine attributes.



The Qur'an stresses that all the prophets and messengers were human beings whom God favoured with revelation and a divine message.

The dialogue which the Qur'an mentions that will take place on the Day of Judgement absolving Prophet Jesus (PBUH) of the claim that he told people to worship him besides God, makes this point crystal clear: "God will say, 'Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people: Worship me and my mother as two gods besides God?' He will say, 'Glory be to You! It is not for me to say what I have no right to say! If I had said it, then You would have known it. You know what is in my inner self though I do not know what is in Yours. Truly, You, only You, are The All-Knower of all that is hidden and unseen. Never did I say to them except what You commanded me to say: Worship and obey God my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness to them as long as I lived among them. After You took me up to Yourself, You were the Watcher over them, and You are Witness over all things'" (5:116-117).





The Qur'an mentions Jesus Christ, peace be upon him, praising him and absolving him of false accusations 25 times. It also mentions Moses, peace be upon him, 136 times, while it mentions the name of Muhammad, peace be upon him, to whom the Qur'an itself was revealed, only five times.

Islam's View of Prophets and Messengers

Some people erroneously believe that the Qur'an is nothing but a detailed account of God's Messenger, Muhammad (PBUH). However, they express great amazement when they learn that the Qur'an mentions Jesus Christ (PBUH), praising him and absolving him of false accusations 25 times, and Moses 136 times, while it mentions the name of Muhammad (PBUH), to whom the Qur'an itself was revealed, only five times.

While most followers of other religions accept only their own prophets and some show enmity towards other prophets, anyone who reads the Qur'an will find that numerous verses stress that a Muslim cannot be called as such unless he believes in all of God's messengers. A Muslim will definitely leave the fold of Islam if he denies any of them, doubts the divine message or accuses him of falsehood. The Qur'an (2:285) clearly states that Muhammad (PBUH) and his followers believe in God, His angels, His books, and His messengers and that they make no distinction whatsoever between any of the Messengers.

Anyone who is acquainted with the Qur'an will find that some of its sections or chapters (called *suwar*, sing. *surah*) into which it is organized are named after some prophets, such as Abraham and Joseph. Even an entire *surah* of Qur'an is named after the Pure Virgin Mary (PBUH).

Islam's View of Jesus Christ



According

According to Islam, Jesus Christ (PBUH) is one of the most significant figures in history and one of the greatest of those who have brought goodness to humankind. However, people have expressed different views regarding him. Some claim he is God; some believe he is the 'Son of God'; yet others bitterly oppose him and make false accusations against him. What does Islam then say about Jesus (PBUH)?



1

Jesus is one of the greatest messengers.

The Qur'an stresses that Jesus (PBUH) is one of the greatest messengers, that he is held in high esteem, and that his mother, Mary, was a chaste, pious and truthful virgin who devoted herself entirely to the worship of God. By God's leave, she gave birth to Jesus after miraculously conceiving him without a human father; his likeness in this being as that of Adam, whom God created without a father or a mother. The Qur'an (3:59) says, "The example of Jesus in the sight of God is similar to that of Adam; He created him from dust, then He said to him, 'Be,' and he was."

2 A Muslim must believe in his miracles.

A Muslim believes in the miracles Jesus (PBUH) performed by God's permission. The ability to heal the lepers and the blind, bringing dead people back to life and informing his people of what they ate and stored in their houses, all by God's leave. In fact, God gave him the ability to perform such miracles to prove he was a true prophet who came with a divine message from God.

3 The Gospel, the Holy Book, was sent down to him.

The Qur'an stresses that God Almighty sent down on Jesus (PBUH), one of His greatest holy books, namely the Gospel (*Al-Injeel*), as light, mercy and guidance for people. However, the original text of this holy book has undergone significant alterations, distorting it in many respects.



4**He was a human being with no divine attributes.**

Islam emphasises that Jesus, (PBUH) was a human being whom God favoured by sending him to guide the Children of Israel and supported him with a number of miracles. It also stresses that he had no divine attributes and thus should not be worshipped. As the Qur'an (43:59) says, "He is only a slave on whom We bestowed Our blessing and whom We made an example for the Children of Israel."

5**He was not crucified but was lifted up to heaven.**

According to Islam, Jesus was neither killed, nor crucified. Rather, God raised him up to heaven and when his enemies sought to kill him, God gave someone else Jesus' appearance. This caused everyone to believe that Jesus was crucified, and this is clearly stated in The Qur'an (4:157-158).



The Tree of the Prophets

The prophets of God are many, and the following are some of the most famous of them.

Adam:

He was the first man, the father of humankind. God created him from clay, made the angels bow down to him, and sent him down from Paradise to Earth.

Noah:

He called his people to the worship of God, but they rejected his message calling him a liar. God then punished them by sending a massive flood, in which they all drowned. Only Noah and his followers, who boarded the Ark, were saved.



Abraham:

He is called “the Father of the Prophets” because from him descended all the prophets who came after, including Muhammad, (PUBH). Abraham was one of the greatest messengers. He called to the Oneness of God and was the first to build the Ka’bah, a cube-shaped building inside the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, which is the direction Muslims face in prayer.

Ishmael:

He was one of Prophet Abraham’s sons, and he helped his father build the Ka’bah.

Isaac:

He was one of Prophet Abraham’s sons. He was born after the angels gave Abraham (PBUH) “good tidings of Isaac, a prophet among the righteous” (37:112).



Jacob:

He was the son of Isaac (PBUH). He is also called Israel and all the Children of Israel are his descendants.

Joseph:

He was the son of Jacob (PBUH). He was subjected to a series of severe tests, but his patience and piety was rewarded, and he eventually became the ruler of Egypt.

Moses:

He was one of the greatest messengers. God sent him to the Children of Israel, revealed the Torah to him and supported him with a number of miracles. Pharaoh arrogantly rejected him as a prophet, and so God caused him and his army to drown in the sea and saved Moses and his followers.



David:

He was a prophet whom God made king over his people.

Solomon:

He was a prophet whom God gave “a mighty kingdom” (4:54) and subjected to him many of His creatures.

Zechariah:

He was one of God’s prophets from the Children of Israel. He was the guardian of Mary, mother of Jesus, (PBUH), looking after her and teaching her. God granted him John despite his old age and his wife’s infertility.



Jesus:

He was one of the greatest messengers. God made his mother, Mary, conceive him without a father and He sent him to the Children of Israel. He also revealed to him the Gospel and supported him with innumerable miracles.

Muhammad:

He is the "Seal of the Prophets"; that is, the last in a series of prophets. God sent him to all humankind and revealed to him the Qur'an, which is so divinely preserved that falsehood cannot approach it from anywhere.



**Who Is the
Messenger
of Islam?**

Muhammad

'Muhammad' is the name of the Prophet of Islam. It is one of the most common names in the world today, and simply means 'the one whom people admire and praise for his morals and good actions.' Who is Muhammed, then?

The Name of the Messenger of Islam

Muhammad (PBUH) (570-632 CE) was the son of *Abdullah*, son of *Abd Al-Muttalib* of the *Banu Hashim* clan of the *Quraysh*.

Muslims believe the following about him:

He is the Messenger to All Mankind

God sent Muhammad (PBUH) as a messenger to people of all races, classes and colours, and He made it everybody's duty to obey him. The Qur'an (7:158) states, "Say, 'O Mankind, I am the Messenger of God to you all ...'"

The Qur'an was Revealed to Him

God sent down to him the last and the greatest of His divine scriptures, namely the Qur'an, which is divinely preserved and cannot be influenced by falsehood (41:42).

He was the Seal of the Prophets and Messengers

Muhammad (PBUH) was the final prophet sent by God; therefore, there will be no prophet after him, as evidenced by the verse: "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the Messenger of God and the Final Seal of the Prophets ..." (33:40).



A Brief History of the Messenger of Islam — Muhammad, Peace Be upon Him

1. His Birth

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was born in Makkah into the tribe of *Quraysh*, on the western part of the Arabian Peninsula, in 570 CE. His father died before his birth, and his mother died when he was very young. Thus, he was placed under the care of his paternal grandfather, *Abdul-Muttalib*. After his grandfather's death, he was placed under the care of *Abu Talib*, one of his paternal uncles.

2. His Life and Upbringing

Muhammad (PBUH) spent forty years in the Makkan tribe of *Quraysh* before receiving the revelation. During this period (570-609 CE) he came to be known amongst his people as *as-sadiq al-ameen* (the truthful and trustworthy) because of his honesty and excellent manners. He worked as a shepherd and later as a merchant.

Before the advent of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH) maintained the pure monotheistic beliefs of Prophet Abraham (PBUH), worshipping Allah alone without ascribing any partners to Him and rejecting idol worship and pagan practices. He was also illiterate.

3. His Mission as a Prophet and Messenger

When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) turned forty, he started the practice of frequent retreat to the Cave of Hira. He spent his days on the peak of Mount Noor on the outskirts of Makkah, in present-day Saudi Arabia, meditating and worshiping God. It was there that he started receiving revelations from God. The message was clear; read with the help of God, the One Who created you; the first verse he received was, **“Read (learn) in the name of your Lord Who created...”** (96:1). This verse ushered in a new era of knowledge, reading, light and guidance. The Qur’anic revelations continued until his death, twenty-three years later.



4. The Beginning of His Mission

After three years of preaching Islam secretly, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) spent another ten years preaching openly. Most of his followers were from among the weak and the poor, as was the case of all prophets' followers. During this period, he and the faithful were subjected to the worst forms of injustice and persecution at the hands of the pagans belonging to Muhammad's own tribe, the *Quraysh*. Not losing heart, he began presenting himself during the pilgrimage season to the pilgrims who came from various tribes, calling them to the new faith. Pilgrims from Madeenah accepted Islam and, soon afterwards, Muslims started migrating to Madeenah in successive groups.

5. His Migration

In 622 CE, at the age of fifty-three, God's Messenger (PBUH) migrated to Madeenah, which was then called *Yathrib*, after the *Quraysh* notables who had opposed his mission plotted to kill him. He spent ten years there, inviting people to Islam, and enjoined the Muslims with prayer, charity (*zakat*), noble manners and other Islamic rituals.




6. His Efforts to Spread Islam

Following his migration to Madeenah (622-632 CE), Muhammad (PBUH) laid the foundations of Islamic civilisation and determined the aspects of the Muslim society. He eradicated tribal fanaticism, spread knowledge and established the principles of justice, righteousness, fraternity, cooperation and organisation. Some tribes attempted to eradicate Islam, leading to a number of skirmishes and wars, but God supported His Messenger and made Islam reign supreme. Then, people of Makkah and of most cities and tribes of the Arabian Peninsula began entering this great religion in hoards, fully convinced that it is the true religion.

7. His Death

In the lunar month of Safar, 11 AH (June 632 CE), after Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) disseminated the message of Islam and God had completed His favour upon the Muslims by perfecting His religion for them, the Messenger (PBUH) had a sudden onset of fever which led to his death on Monday 11, *Rabee' Al-Awwal* 11 AH (8 June 632 CE) at the age of 63. He was buried where he died, in the room of his wife 'A'ishah, which is now housed within the Prophet's Mosque in Madeenah.





**Prophet Muhammad
in the Sight
of Fair-Minded People**

Regardless

Regardless of the culture, impartial individuals who study the biography of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), find themselves fascinated and impressed by the details of the timeless biography. Scientists, philosophers, and writers from the East and the West have attested to this in their writings. The following are statements of some of these unbiased individuals.



Mahatma Gandhi writes in *Young India* (1924),

“I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission. These and not the sword carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle. When I closed the second volume of *The Prophet's Biography*, I was sorry there was not more for me to read of that great life.”

Mahatma Gandhi, statement published in *Young India*, 11/9/1924.



“I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind ... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life.”

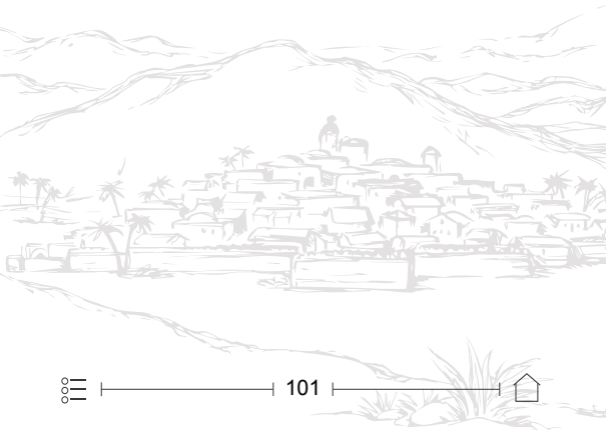




In his famous book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, **Michael H. Hart**, states the reason why he has chosen Prophet

Muhammad to be the first person on his list of the 100 people who most influenced human history. He writes, "My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels."

Michael H Hart. (2017). *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, 1st Edition, Carol Publishing Group, p. 3.



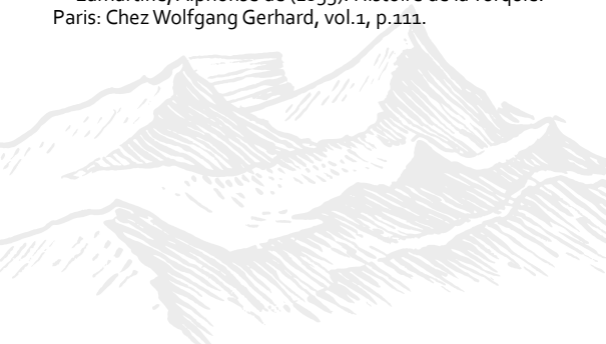


French writer, poet and politician Alphonse de Lamartine writes in his book *Histoire de la Turquie* (History of Turkey), «Si la grandeur du dessein, la petitesse des moyens, l'immensité

du résultat sont les trois mesures du génie de l'homme, qui osera comparer humainement un grand homme de l'histoire moderne à Mohammed?»

This translates as follows: If the grandeur of the aim, the smallness of the means, the immensity of the results are the three measures of a man's genius, who would dare humanly compare a great man of modern history with Muhammad?

Lamartine, Alphonse de (1855). *Histoire de la Turquie*. Paris: Chez Wolfgang Gerhard, vol.1, p.111.

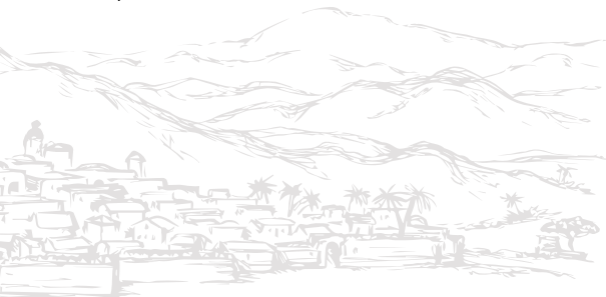




Indian philosopher, psychologist, parapsychologist, educationist, teacher, researcher and administrator Koneru Ramakrishna Rao

notes in his book Muhammad the Prophet of Islam, "Circumstances changed, but the prophet of God did not. In victory or in defeat, in power or in adversity, in affluence or in indigence, he is the same man, disclosed the same character. Like all the ways and laws of God, Prophets of God are unchangeable."

Koneru Ramakrishna Rao, Muhammad the Prophet of Islam, 1st ed. Riyadh: World Assembly of Muslim Youth, p.24.





German poet, playwright, novelist and statesman, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote a

famous poetic drama in praise of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which

he called *Mahomets Gesang* "The Song of Muhammad". He admired Islam so much that he once remarked, "Even though I am seventy-seven years old, my admiration for Islam has never slackened in the least and that it was increasing and getting all the more established." Goethe und die arabische Welt p. 177.

In his book Islam and Its Founder, James William Hampson Stobart writes, "In the man, no one can fail to see elements of power and human greatness ... Judged by the smallness of the means at his disposal, and the extent and permanence of the work he accomplished, no name in the world's story shines with a more specious lustre than that of the prophet of Mecca." *Islam and Its Founder*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, (New York: Pot, Young and Co, 1878), pp.227-228.





Edward Gibbon also writes

in *A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, "It is not the propagation but the permanency of his religion that deserves our wonder, the same pure and perfect

impression which he engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved, after the revolutions of twelve centuries by the Indian, the African and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran."

A History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,
Vo. 3, (New York: Haper and Brothers, 1837) p.406).



"... the same pure and perfect impression which he (i.e. Muhammad) engraved at Mecca and Medina is preserved, after the revolutions of twelve centuries by the Indian, the African and the Turkish proselytes of the Koran." (Edward Gibbon)



American writer, historian, and philosopher William Durant writes in *The Story of Civilization*, an eleven-volume set of books covering Western history for the general reader, which he wrote in collaboration with his wife Ariel Durant:



“If we judge greatness by influence, he (Muhammad) was one of the giants of history. He undertook to raise the spiritual and moral level of a people harassed into barbarism by heat and foodless wastes and he succeeded more completely than any other reformer; seldom has any man so fully realised his dream. He accomplished his purpose through religion not only because he himself was religious, but because no other medium could have moved the Arabs of his time. He appealed to their imagination, fears and hopes and spoke in terms that they could understand. When he began, Arabia was a desert flotsam of idolatrous tribes but when he died it was a nation. He restrained fanaticism and superstition; and upon Judaism, Christianity and the [pagan] creed native to his country, he built a religion simple, clear and strong, as well as a morality of ruthless courage and racial pride which, in a generation, marched to a hundred victories in a century to empire and remains to this day a virile force through half the world.”

Will Durant (1950). *The Story of Civilization: The Age of Faith*, Vol. IV, 1st edition, New York: Simon and Schuster, p. 174.



Abu Sufyan, one of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) mortal enemies, relates an amazing story about him after his conversion to Islam. When Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) letter reached Heraclius, the Eastern Roman Emperor, in 628 CE in which he invited him to Islam, Heraclius was amazed by such a letter. Heraclius ordered that an Arab who knew and was related to the sender, be brought back to be asked about Muhammad. *Abu Sufyan*, a prominent leader of the *Quraysh* and one of Muhammad's (PBUH) deadliest enemies at that time, was engaging in some business of his in the then Greater Syria (today's Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan), was called to him. Along with a group of men *Abu Sufyan* was called to the palace. Heraclius asked them, through an interpreter, very intelligent questions to find out whether or not the Prophet (PBUH) was truthful.

When he heard Abu Sufyan's answers to his questions, Heraclius said to him,

I asked you about his family and your reply was that he belonged to a very noble family. In fact, all the messengers come from noble families amongst their respective peoples. I asked you whether anybody else amongst you claimed what he claimed, and your reply was in the negative. If the answer had been in the affirmative, I would have thought that this man was following the previous man's statement.

I further asked whether he was ever accused of telling lies, and your reply was in the negative. Thus, I wondered how a person who does not tell a lie about others could ever tell a lie about God.

I then asked you whether the rich or the poor followed him. Your reply was that the poor followed him. In fact, all the messengers have been followed by this very class of people. Then I asked you whether his followers were increasing or decreasing. You replied that they were increasing. In fact, this is the way of true faith until it is complete in all respects.

I further asked you whether there was anybody, who, after embracing his religion, became displeased and discarded his religion. Your reply was in the negative. In fact, this is the sign of true faith, when its delight enters human hearts and mixes with them completely.

I also asked you whether he had ever betrayed anyone. You replied in the negative and likewise God's messengers never betray anyone.

Then I asked you what he ordered you to do. You replied that he ordered you to worship God alone and not to worship anything besides Him and forbade you to worship idols and ordered you to pray, to speak the truth and to be chaste.

If what you have said is true, he will very soon occupy this very place underneath my feet, and I knew it [from the scriptures] that he was going to appear, but I did not know that he would be from you. If I knew I could reach him, I would do whatever it takes to meet him" (Al-Bukhari: 7).



Aspects of Prophet Muhammad's Life and His High Moral Standards



The

The Prophet (PBUH) was the epitome of good character and personal integrity. All fair-minded people from all parts of the world, including his own enemies, have testified to this fact. Indeed, his manners were so refined that the Qur'an (68:4) describes him as such.



When his wife 'Ai'shah (May God be pleased with her) was asked once about the character of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), she replied, "His character was the Qur'an itself" (Muslim: 746), meaning that he translated the teachings of the Qur'an into his daily living.

The following are some aspects of his life and high moral standards.

Humility

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was so humble that he did not like people to rise to their feet upon his arrival and he forbade them from doing so. Although he was the dearest to his companions, they would not rise for him when they saw him coming, for they knew that he disliked that (Ahmad: 12345).

- His actions and movements while in the company of his companions were characterised by simplicity and utter humility, so much so that a stranger would not be able to tell who he was. Once, a man came and asked, “Who amongst you is Muhammad?” (Al-Bukhari: 63).
- Some of his companions say that while he was preoccupied, he did not refrain from going to spend the needs of the people and their interests, no matter how small. Indeed, he was so humble that even a female slave of Madeenah, would just take hold of his hand and take him wherever she needed his assistance (Al-Bukhari: 5724).



The Messenger of Islam would mend his own personal belongings, shared household chores with his wives and helped them around the house.

- He would mend his own personal belongings, shared household chores with his wives and helped them around the house. His wife 'A'ishah (God be pleased with her) once said about him, "He used to keep himself busy helping members of his family" (Al-Bukhari: 644). She also said in another occasion, "He used to do what one of you would do in his house. He mended his sandals and patched garments and sewed" (Ahmad: 24749).
- He once declared, "A person who has an atom's weight of pride in his heart will by no means enter Paradise" (Muslim: 91).

Mercy and Kindness

The Prophet (PBUH) said, "The Most Merciful will have mercy on those who are merciful [to others]. Show mercy to those on the earth and The One above the heavens will show mercy to you" (Abu Dawud: 4941).

His mercy and kindness embraced countless aspects, including the following:

Kindness Towards Children

- Even though prayer is considered the pillar of Islam and one is not allowed to engage in talking and frequent movements during it, once he performed prayer while carrying his granddaughter Umamah, daughter of *Zaynab*. Whenever he prostrated, he would put her down, and whenever he stood up, he would carry her again (Al-Bukhari: 494).
- If he heard a baby crying while the mother was praying behind him, he would shorten the prayer so that the mother could attend to the baby's needs. He once said, "When I begin the prayer, I always intend to make it long; however, if I hear a baby crying, I shorten it, as I do not wish to cause his mother any distress" (Al-Bukhari: 675).

Kindness Towards Women

- The Prophet (PBUH) urged his companions to look after girls and to show kindness to them; he used to say, "Whoever is in charge of any of these girls and treats them well, they will be a shield for him against Hellfire" (Al-Bukhari: 5649).
- During his last major public address, he stressed that women ought to be given their rights and be well cared for and commanded Muslims to make this issue

their concern and to advise one another to do so: "Take good care of women" (Al-Bukhari: 4890).

- He was a shining example of kindness to family members. He would sit beside his camel and bend his knees so that Safiyyah would mount the camel by placing her foot on his thigh (Al-Bukhari: 2120).
- Whenever his daughter Fatimah (May God be pleased with her) visited him, he would get up to welcome her, take her by the hand, kiss her and make her sit in his place. (Sunan Abu Dawud: 5217)

Kindness Towards the Weak and the Vulnerable

- The Prophet (PBUH) commanded people to sponsor orphans and look after them. "A person who takes care of an orphan and I will be like this in Paradise," he once said, joining his forefinger and middle finger together by way of illustration (Al-Bukhari: 4998).
- He considered a person who looks after a widow or a poor person just like one who fights for God's cause, or like one who performs voluntary prayers all night without slackness and fasts continuously without ever breaking his fast (Al-Bukhari: 5661).

- He regarded showing kindness to the weak and vulnerable members of society and giving them their rights as means of gaining subsistence and victory over the enemy: “Seek out the weak ones for me, for you are given provision and divine help only because of the weak amongst you” (Abu Dawud: 2594).



He regarded showing kindness to the weak and vulnerable members of society and giving them their rights a means of gaining subsistence and victory over the enemy.

Justice

- The Prophet (PBUH) upheld and administered justice under all circumstances. He judged by God's rule even if that was against one of his closest family members, in compliance with God's command, "O you who believe, be upholders of justice, bearing witness for God alone, even against yourselves or your parents and relatives ..." (4:135).
- When some of his companions came to intercede with him on behalf of a noble woman who had committed a theft so that she would be spared the prescribed punishment, he said, "By Him in whose hand is Muhammad's soul, even if Fatimah, the daughter of Muhammad, committed a theft, I would definitely cut off her hand" (Al-Bukhari: 4053).
- When he declared all forms of usury (riba) forbidden, he stated that the first usury he declared entirely abolished was that of *Al-Abbas ibn Abd Al-Muttalib*, his own paternal uncle: "The first usury that I abolish is our usury — the usury due to *Al-Abbas ibn Abd Al-Muttalib*. It is all abolished" (Muslim: 1218).

- A civilized and cultivated society in his estimation is one in which the weak can claim their rights without fear or hesitation. "May that nation not be purified," he once warned, "among whose members the weak cannot obtain their rights without trouble" (Ibn Majah: 2426).

Benevolence and Generosity

- On another occasion, a man approached him and asked him for some money. The Prophet (PBUH) said to him, "I do not have anything right now, but you can buy something in my name, and I will certainly pay for it when I get the money." Umar (God Be Pleased with him) turned to him and said, "God has not made it compulsory for you to do something beyond your capacity." This comment offended the Prophet (PBUH) a great deal. The man then said to him, "Spend in charity without fearing poverty, for The Lord of the Mighty Throne will not decrease your wealth." The Prophet (PBUH) smiled and his face was radiant with happiness (*Al-Ahadith Al-Mukhtarah*: 88).

- Once he received eighty thousand dirhams, so he placed the amount on a mat and gave it in charity, not turning away anyone who asked him for something until the full amount was distributed (Mustadrak Al-Hakim: 5423).

Patience and Tolerance

- The Messenger of God (PBUH) left Ta'if, a mountain town 90 km away from Makkah, after he had visited it to preach Islam to its people. Upon his journey home to Makkah, feeling deeply dejected following the harm and abuse meted out to him by them, God sent him an angel who asked him if he wanted the people of Ta'if destroyed. "No," he replied, "I would rather hope that God would raise from among their descendants those who will worship God alone and will not ascribe any partners whatsoever to Him in worship" (Al-Bukhari: 3059).

- His patience and tolerance is best demonstrated by his treatment of the people of Makkah who had driven him out of his native city, meted out verbal and physical harm to him and left no stone unturned in their attempt to destroy him and his followers. When God granted him with victory over them upon his triumphant return to Makkah, he rose and addressed the assembled multitudes of the *Quraysh* pagans who had gathered to see what he would do regarding the atrocities they had committed against Muslims for years. "People of *Quraysh*, he said. What do you think I shall do to you now?" "Good, they replied. You are a noble brother, son of a noble brother. He then said, I shall say to you what my brother Joseph (referring to Prophet Joseph, son of Jacob, whose brothers had thrown him into a well) said to his brothers, 'This day let no reproach be (cast) on you: God will forgive you, and He is The Most Merciful of those who show mercy!' (12:92). Go your way, for you are all free" (Al-Bayhaqi: 18275-18276).



Islamic sources mention that the Messenger of Islam never hoarded any type of wealth.

Abstention from Worldly Luxuries

- The Messenger of God (PBUH) always kept in mind the following Qur'anic verse: "Do not strain your eyes in longing for the things We have given for enjoyment to parties of them, the splendour of the life of this world, through which We test them, but the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring" (20:131).
- Once his companion Umar ibn Al-Khattab paid him a visit while he was lying down on a mat made of date palm leaves. There was a visible impression on the side of his body which can be seen as he sat up. Umar said, "I cast a glance at the room, but I could not see anything of importance, so I said to him, 'Invoke God to make your followers prosperous, for the Persians and the Byzantines have been made prosperous and given worldly luxuries, though they do not worship God.'



Thereupon he said, 'Do you have any doubt, son of Al-Khattab, that the hereafter is better than this world? These people have been given rewards of their good deeds in this world only'" (Al-Bukhari: 2336).

- He used to say, "What have I to do with the world? I am like a rider who halts under the shade of a tree for a short time and, after taking some rest, resumes his journey and leaves the tree behind" (At-Tirmidhi: 2377).
- Up to three consecutive months would sometimes pass by with no food being cooked in his house, surviving only on dates and water (Al-Bukhari: 2428). He could not even find dates of inferior quality with which to fill his stomach (Muslim: 2977), and he never ate his fill of barley bread even for three consecutive days until the last days of his life (Muslim: 2976).



The Messenger of Islam once compared himself vis-à-vis the worldly life to a traveller who took a rest under a shade of a tree, but he soon got up and left it.

Faithfulness and Constancy

- Faithfulness and constancy are amongst the loftiest and noblest aspects of moral character, which become dearer if observed to repay kindness without the existence of a binding pledge between two parties. Indeed, this was the usual custom of the Messenger of God (PBUH), who would repay kindness with greater kindness even in the absence of binding pledges, let alone if there were any such serious promises.
- Enquiring about Prophet Muhammad's character traits, Heraclius, the Eastern Roman Emperor, asked the *Quraysh* pagans, "Has he ever betrayed anyone?" "No," they replied. "Likewise, God's messengers never betray anyone" (Al-Bukhari: 7).
- He observed the highest degree of loyalty and faithfulness to his first wife Khadijah. He recognized her special status, appreciated the great role she had played in his life and the services she had rendered to the Muslim faith, and was always keen to honor her female relatives and friends.

- 'A'ishah, one of his wives, once mentioned an incident testifying to his faithfulness to Khadijah, who died during the early days of his mission and whom 'A'ishah did not know. She said, "I did not feel jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet as much as I did of Khadijah though I did not see her. He used to mention her very often, and whenever he slaughtered a sheep, he would cut it into number of parts and send them to her female friends. When I sometimes said to him, 'You treat Khadijah in such a way as if there is no woman on earth except her,' he would say, 'Khadijah was such-and-such,' and would start enumerating her numerous good qualities" (Al-Bukhari: 3607).
- The Negus, the *Abyssinian* king who had given refuge to Muslims in the early beginnings of Islam, once sent a delegation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Upon the arrival of its members, he arose to serve them himself. His followers said to him, "We will serve them instead." "They received my followers warmly and were kind to them," he insisted, "and I would like to repay their kindness" (Shu'ab Al-Eemaan: 8704).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) set the finest examples of excellent moral character in all aspects of life, in compliance with God's orders and following in the footsteps of the noble prophets before him.

The Prophet's Mosque, which he built in Madeenah, a holy city that is second in importance only to Makkah. Prophet Muhammad migrated to it and built his mosque in it, and he was later buried there. The Prophet's Mosque is visited by millions of Muslims every year.



SOME SAYINGS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD





Muslims

Muslims have taken great care in preserving the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by committing them both to memory and to paper. Indeed, highly skilled memorizers and scholars demonstrated unmatched commitment to writing them down with the utmost care. By so doing, they presented the world with a superb system of verifying statements, distinguishing the genuine from the fabrications. The process focused on the minutest details of sentences and words, determining whatever additions have crept into them.

The following are examples of some of Prophet Muhammad' sayings:

- **"Actions are but by intentions,** and every person will have but that which they intend." (Al-Bukhari: 1).
- **"Righteousness is good morality,** and wrongdoing is that which wavers in your soul and which you dislike people finding out about." (Muslim: 2553).
- **"Obey God wherever you are,** follow up a bad deed with a good one and it will wipe it out, and behave well towards people." (At-Tirmidhi: 1987).
- **"Be indifferent to this world,** and God will love you. Be indifferent to what is in people's possession and they will love YOU." (Ibn Majah: 4102).
- **"My similitude in comparison with the prophets before me** is that of a person who constructed a building that was quite imposing and beautiful and made it complete but for one brick in one of its corners. People went round it, admiring it and saying, 'If only that brick were put in its place.' I am that brick and I am the last of the prophets." (Al-Bukhari: 3342).



“

“You will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not truly believe until you love one another. Shall I show you something which, if you do, you will love one another? Extend the greeting of peace to one another” (Muslim: 54).

- **“If anyone relieves a believer of some worldly hardship, God will relieve him of some of the hardships of the Day of Judgements. If anyone makes it easy for a debtor, God will make it easy for him in this life and in the hereafter, and if anyone conceals the faults of a Muslim, God will conceal his faults in this world and in the hereafter. God helps His slave as long as he helps his brother, and if anyone follows a path in pursuit of knowledge, God will make easy for him a path to paradise ...”** (Muslim: 2699).
- **“None of you will truly believe until you love for your brother what you love for yourself.”** (Al-Bukhari: 13).
- **“A true Muslim is one does not harm Muslims with his tongue and hands, and an emigrant, [besides being one who leaves his country,] is one who leaves what God has forbidden.”** (Al-Bukhari: 10).
- **Do not wrong a non-Muslim, force him to work beyond his capacity, or take anything from him without his consent. If you do, I will plead for him on the Day of Judgement”** (Abu Dawud: 3052).
- **“The merciful will be shown mercy by The Most Merciful. Show mercy to those on the earth, and The One above the heavens will show mercy to you”** (Abu Dawud: 4941).



“Whoever who does not show mercy to our young ones or recognise the rights of our elders is not one of us.” (At-Tirmidhi: 1920).

- **“Whoever cheats is not one of us”** (At-Tirmidhi: 1315).
- **“In their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy, the believers are like one body. When one of the limbs aches, the whole body responds to it with sleeplessness and fever”** (Muslim: 2586).

- **“All of you are guardians and are responsible for your wards.** The ruler is a guardian and is responsible for his subjects; a man is a guardian and is responsible for his family; a woman is a guardian and is responsible for her husband’s house and his offspring. Thus, all of you are guardians and are responsible for your wards” (Al-Bukhari: 4892).
- **“The believers with perfect faith are those who have the best manners,** and the best of you are those who treat their wives the best” (At-Tirmidhi: 1162).
- **“The best of you are those who are the best at treating their wives,** and, of all of you, I am the best at treating my wives” (At-Tirmidhi: 3895).
- **“God loves kindness and gentleness in every matter.”** (Al-Bukhari: 5678); **“He who is deprived of forbearance and gentleness is deprived of all good”** (Muslim: 2592).
- **“The signs of a hypocrite are three:** Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie; whenever he makes a promise, he breaks it; and whenever he is entrusted with something, he betrays the trust.” (Al-Bukhari: 33).

- **“Part of someone’s being a good Muslim** is his leaving alone that which does not concern him.” (At-Tirmidhi, 2317).
- **“While a man was walking along a road, he became very thirsty.** He soon found a well, so he lowered himself into it, drank his fill and came out. Then he saw a dog panting and eating mud because of excessive thirst. The man said to himself, ‘This dog has become just as exhausted from thirst as I.’ He lowered himself into the well again, filled his shoe with water and gave the dog some water to drink. God accepted this good deed from him and forgave him.” The people asked, “Messenger of God! Will we be rewarded for taking care of animals?” “Yes,” he replied, “You will be rewarded for taking care of every living thing.” (Al-Bukhari: 2466).



Description of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the Qur'an

The Qur'an sheds some light on a wonderful aspect of Prophet Muhammad's personality and his interaction with those around him. The Qur'an reveals his outstanding manners, sublime moral character and humanness:

- He is a mercy to all humanity (21:107), not only to Muslims.
- He had excellent manners and sublime moral character (68:4).

- He was very keen to guide people to the truth and felt so profoundly distressed for the not rightly guided that the Qur'an repeatedly stresses that his mission was only to invite people to Islam and convey God's message to them and that it is God Who guides whom He wills (11:12), (6:107) (18:110).
- He makes allowance for others' faults and forgives them for their mistakes (9:43).
- He keeps asking God to forgive his enemies until he is told to refrain from doing so (9:80).
- He is distressed by the believers' suffering and is most kind and compassionate to them (9:128).
- He may sometimes feel annoyed by some people's lengthy stay at his home, but his incredibly respectful shyness prevents him from making his feelings known to them (33:53).
- He is kind-hearted, shows extreme gentleness towards his companions and consults them even in the most difficult circumstances (3:159).

The Qur'an — The Eternal Miracle of Islam





What

What is the Qur'an? The Book often rises up the bestseller list, is the most widely distributed book in the world, and is followed by over a billion and a half devout Muslims.

The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam which Muslims believe have the following characteristics:

- It is the Word of God, which He sent down to His Messenger Muhammad (PBUH) as guidance and light to humankind.
- It is the last divinely revealed book.
- It is divinely protected against all forms of alteration and corruption.
- Reciting or reading the Qur'an is considered an act of worship, and so is its memorisation as well as the implementation of its laws.

The Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through the Archangel Gabriel (Peace Be Upon Him) after the former turned 40 years old. The first verse to be revealed was, "Read in the name of your Lord Who created" (96:1). It was revealed at intervals under various circumstances whenever the need arose.

The first verse to be revealed was, "Read in the name of your Lord who created" (96:1). The Qur'an was revealed piecemeal during 23 years under various circumstances whenever the need arose.

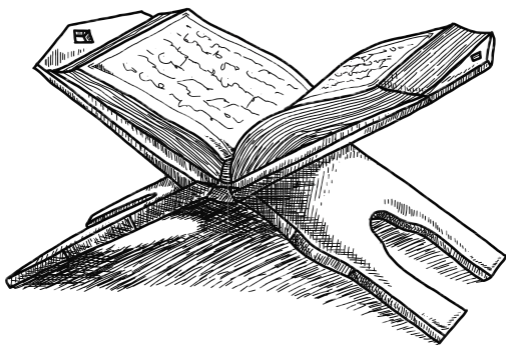
The Qur'an consists of 114 sections or chapters (*suwar*, singular *surah*), covering a wide variety of subjects in which different literary mechanisms are employed. However, it is unanimously agreed that it is characterized by the highest order of eloquence and beauty of expression. Qur'an is mainly geared towards providing true guidance and calling people to worship God alone.

The major themes of the Qur'an include the following:

1. Proving and establishing the oneness of God and refuting the misconceptions and fallacies of those who worship others besides Him
2. Giving an account of the prophets and the nations
3. Inviting people to contemplate the vast universe and creatures around us and drawing their attention to some of God's countless blessings on them
4. Expounding religious laws and detailing the lawful and the unlawful activities according to God
5. Outlining the qualities and good moral character of the faithful and warning against bad character

6. Talking about the Day of Judgement and reward for the good and the punishment for the wicked
7. Enlightening and teaching the believers the lessons by commenting on the events that occurred to Prophet Muhammad (PUBH) and his companions

This is an overview of select distinguishing characteristics of the Qur'an.





Inimitability through Committing the Qur'an to Memory

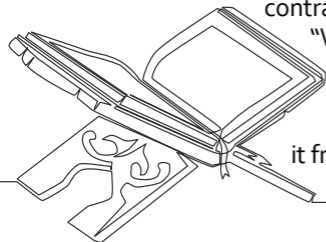
God named His last revealed book "*the Qur'an*" (literally, "the recitation" or "the reading"), because it has been committed to memory. He also calls it in many verses "The Book" because it has been committed to writing. Indeed, the Qur'an was preserved through memorisation and writing. When Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received a revelation, the chosen individuals would memorise the revelation directly from him, and also committed to writing in his presence. What was written would not be approved unless it was consistent with that memorised directly from the Prophet.

As for the Gospels, the Christian theologians admit that contradictions within the book are expected. This is due to the multiplicity of sources from the writers, their conflicting dates and the nature of their indirect revelation. Even so, if they provide within their estimation, guidance for humanity.

Any sincere and unbiased person who studies the Qur'an will readily admit that it is completely free of contradictions and inconsistencies; it is clearly the Word of God, in both its words and meaning. The Qur'an was memorised directly from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and committed to writing in his presence under his direction. This was done immediately after its revelation, without any additions or deletions whatsoever. In addition, Muslims regardless of the different schools and orientations, do not differ regarding this.

The Qur'an has been preserved and transmitted from one generation to the next throughout history with the highest degree of diligence, accuracy and precision. The Qur'an contains no addition, deletion or manipulation of a single word within its writing, its methods of pronunciation, reading, memorisation, and the process in which it was written. In fact, if one were to purchase a copy of the Qur'an today from the far reaches of China or Central Africa for comparison with the museum-secured Qur'anic manuscripts written a thousand years ago, one would discover the amazing fact that the manner of the pronunciation and rules of its reading are remarkably the same, despite the passage of time and the multiplicity of languages. This would be the case whether one heard it from a child reciting it from memory in Indonesia today or from a Muslim scholar teaching in Makkah a thousand years ago. As the Qur'an says, "Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an? Had it been from any besides God, they would have surely found in it many contradictions" (4:82);

"We have sent down the Reminder (i.e. the Qur'an), and We will surely guard it from corruption" (15:9).



Rhetorical and Psychological Inimitability

A person who reads the Qur'an carefully and with concentration will surely find that it addresses him directly and personally and that it does not stop confronting him and communicating with him. More amazing still, it precedes the reader's thoughts and even directs them, as if he were reading them before he himself expresses them!

Although an artist may be able to draw the eye so that it seems to follow its beholder wherever he goes, how can a book possibly follow and anticipate its reader's ideas and answer his questions even before he himself asks them. This happens despite the various types of readers, the diversity of their cultures and the circumstances of their lives?!

In fact, the Qur'an possesses this amazing method of diagnosing human tendencies, exposing man's secrets and his weakness, which may, at first sight, seem harsh to its reader. However, it soon awakens the reader's soul to confront both the mind and the heart with questions that he has long postponed in attempts to avoid answering.

When we earnestly read the Qur'an and learn we become aware of our secret thoughts, states of mind and attitudes.

This includes those who are misguided and those who are rightly guided, at which point an awareness arises to take stock of our lives. As the various Qur'anic verses give rise to images and examples depicting this state, it gradually reveals the truth and deeply affects the heart without realisation. The Qur'an becomes the very mirror of the soul, revealing its true nature, shortcomings, potentials and opportunities. In this way, the Qur'an profoundly permeates the soul, convincing it that there is no god but Allah.

Thus, when we find ourselves completely overtaken by despair, we read, **"Say, O Muhammad, to My slaves who have transgressed against themselves, 'Do not despair of the mercy of God. Truly, God forgives all wrong actions. He is EHe Ever-Forgiving, EHe Most Merciful'"** (39:53).

In addition, when we find ourselves in a state of confusion while experiencing internal conflict and long for comfort and security, we find what we so desperately look for in the verse: **"If My servants ask you about Me, I am near. I answer the call of the caller when he calls on Me. let them, then, respond to Me, and believe in Me, so that they may be rightly guided"** (2:186).

When we think that life has gotten out of control and that we can no longer bear it or seek to have it under control again, we find the healing balm and constant support in the verse: **“God does not charge a soul with more than it can bear. It will have the reward it earns and the punishment it incurs. Lord, do not take us to task if we forget or lapse into error. Lord, do not lay on us a burden such as You laid on those before us. Lord, do not charge us with more than we can bear. Pardon us, forgive us our sins, and have mercy upon us. You alone are our Protector. Give us victory over the unbelievers”** (2:286).

American writer, historian and philosopher Will Durant acknowledged, along with other fair-minded academics, the effect and the unique position of the Qur'an. In his book *The Story of Civilization, IV, The Story of Faith*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), pp. 183-4). He writes,

“Revered to the edge of idolatry, copied and illuminated with loving skill and care, used as the book from which the Moslem learned to read, and then again as the core and summit of his education, the Koran has for thirteen centuries filled the memory, aroused the imagination, moulded the character, and perhaps chilled the intellect, of hundreds of millions of men.

It gave to simple souls the simplest, least mystical, least ritualistic, of all creeds, free from idolatry and sacerdotalism ... It gave men an uncomplaining acceptance of the hardships and limitations of life, and at the same time stimulated them to the most astonishing expansion in history. And it defined religion in terms that any orthodox Christian or Jew might accept: **'Righteousness does not consist in whether you face towards the East or the West. The righteous are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels and the Book and the prophets; who, though they love it dearly, give away their wealth to relatives, to orphans, to the destitute, to the traveler in need and to beggars, and for the redemption of captives; who attend to their prayers and pay the prescribed charity; who are true to their promises and steadfast in trial and adversity and in times of war. Such are the true believers; such are the God-fearing (2: 177).'**'"

Will Durant writes, "The Koran has for thirteen centuries filled the memory, aroused the imagination, moulded the character, and perhaps chilled the intellect, of hundreds of millions of men. It gave to simple souls the simplest, least mystical, least ritualistic, of all creeds ..."

Where Does the Qur'an Come From?



This

This question immediately crosses one's mind when talking about the sacred book of Muslims called the Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Why should we accept the Muslims' point of view? Are we not entitled to ask questions about this?



Historians have generally agreed that the Qur'an was propagated by an illiterate Arab man, by the name of Muhammad ibn Abdullah, who was born in Makkah in the sixth century CE (Common Era). This consistent testimony of history stands outstandingly decisive and obviously has credibility. We clearly read in this book that it is not the work of Muhammad (PBUH), that it is a noble speech that God revealed to him, and that Muhammad's task is only to convey it and explain it to the people as it is, without adding or deleting anything from it.

Could it be that Muhammad, the Messenger of Islam himself invented it or learned from others and then presented it to people after rewording and paraphrasing their work into his own?



If the Messenger of Islam really wanted to engage in deception to extend his influence on people by attributing the Qur'an to God, why did he not then claim that his own statements are from God?!

These are legitimate questions, which would immediately come to mind unless those posing them have studied the Qur'an or the biography of Muhammad and his accounts.

It is common knowledge substantiated by historical studies, that many writers and intellectuals have plagiarised others' work and attributed it to themselves. Why would then anyone in his right mind attribute his own work to anyone else?

Here a question arises: If he really wanted to engage in deception to extend his influence on people by attributing the Qur'an to God, why did he not then claim that all of his words are from God?!



It would sound completely nonsensical to claim that he authored the Qur'an and attributed it to God to extend his influence and have his status and honour raised, when at the same time we find a number of instances in the same book where it directly reproves Muhammad (PBUH), guides him and corrects his mistakes.

As is well known to those who read the Qur'an, such a holy book excludes from rebuke neither private nor public matters. Indeed, it has rebuked and advised Muhammad (PBUH) in matters relating to his family life, and pointed out to him the mistakes he committed in his leadership decisions, and even in the way he called people to Islam.

To give an example, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was once deeply and earnestly engaged in inviting pagan leaders to Islam when a blind man, seeking satisfaction for his spiritual craving, interrupted him, saying, "Teach me some of what God has taught you." The Prophet was too busy talking that he did not pay much attention to him. The blind man repeated his request more than once. The Prophet naturally disliked the interruption and wished the blind man would wait until he had finished talking to the pagan leaders. Therefore, he frowned and

turned away from him without saying a word. The Qur'an recorded this incident in history, describing it accurately and in detail, and indicating how Muhammad (PBUH) frowned at the blind man and turned away from him, and even rebuking him and instructing him, in very clear and strong words, not to repeat such behaviour. This incident is stated in a surah (an entire chapter of the Qur'an), which bears the name of the incident itself, namely, 'He Frowned' (Qur'an, 80: 1-11). This incident reflects the highest honour of the Prophet's sincerity in the revelation that was bestowed to him. The Prophet afterwards held the man in high honour and esteem and would meet him with a welcoming and smiling face, saying to him, "Welcome to him on whose account my Lord has rebuked me", and would even spread his cloak on the ground and make him sit on it as a gesture of respect.

The Qur'an has recorded a number of incidents instructing the Prophet (PBUH) and even rebuking him in such a manner that many of us would not accept to be said about him in public. How could a person seeking prestige and honour for himself publish his mistakes and record them in history in this manner?

History also proves to us in a number of instances how Muhammad (PBUH) encountered difficult times in which he wished divine revelation would come down to prove his or his family's sincerity, position and/or innocence, but it just would not come.



The Qur'an has recorded a number of incidents instructing the Prophet and even gently rebuking him in such a manner that one of us would not sometimes accept to be said about him in public.

In one such incident, his own people, who had long opposed him and even meted out harm to him, sought the help of some learned Jews in their war against him.

They suggested to them to ask him about three matters. If he answered them, they stated, he is a prophet, but if he does not, then he is not a prophet. Acting as coached by the Jews, the people of Makkah asked the Prophet (PBUH) the three questions, and he defiantly said he would answer them the next day.

No revelation came to him for the next fifteen days. His enemies would ridicule him every time they passed him. Naturally, Muhammad (PBUH) was deeply grieved as a result. After this interval of fifteen days, the answer to the questions was revealed. Also revealed along with the answers were God's instructions to Muhammad (PBUH). He was never to firmly say that he was going to do something without saying "If God wills", thus making his actions entirely dependent upon God's will, and to inform him that the delay in revelation was intended by God for instructional purposes (18: 23-24).



Recurring Accusations

It is remarkable that the life story of Muhammad (PBUH) may be considered one of the most conclusive proofs that he was truthful.

It is a fact that Muhammad (PBUH) was an illiterate man living among illiterate people. He shared their lives, attended their councils without committing any abominations whatsoever, and was preoccupied with earning a livelihood to support himself and his family as a shepherd or a trader. How could he then, after forty years and without having been in contact with the learned people, all of a sudden inform them of matters they had never heard of before and of facts they did not themselves know about their own ancestors!? He related to them stories of the ancient peoples, told them about the beginning of creation and described the lives of the previous prophets in detail, among other things. He also came up with new detailed and comprehensive legislation in all spheres of life!

This fact stunned the enemies of Muhammad (PBUH) from among his people so much so that they did not know what accusation they could bring forth to warn people against him.

It was difficult for his enemies to claim that the Qur'an was his own invention, for anyone who reads it and ponders on its verses will know with absolute certainty that this is not true. It was also impossible for them to claim that he had learnt it from others, for he lived amongst them and knew all the minutest details of his life. Therefore, they levelled contradictory accusations against him. At one time, they asserted that he himself invented it; at yet another time, they asserted he just related to them the dreams he had seen in his sleep. When they failed to prove their claims, they accused him of being a magician and a poet, and even a lunatic!

It is clear that the same accusation was levelled at other God's prophets. Moses (AS) was accused of being a magician and Jesus (AS) was accused of being a lunatic.

The other prophets, (PBUT) were subjected more or less to the same accusations. When their enemies could not find anything to accuse them of, they claimed that they were magicians or lunatics. The same position is adopted by someone bearing false witness. If he finds himself in an embarrassing situation and becomes aware that his evidence is rather weak, he starts searching everywhere for any possible accusation to save his face, which will never happen!



The Qur'an has recorded a number of incidents instructing the Prophet and even gently rebuking him in such a manner that one of us would not sometimes accept to be said about him in public.

Why not just Consider It a Stroke of Genius?

It is a truism that God has endowed the human mind with tremendously unimaginable abilities and creativity. However, is the logical reasoning faculty of the mind not rather limited, as a matter of course? Although the mind testifies to the existence of an omnipotent God and Creator and that God's justice requires the existence of another life where everyone will be rewarded or punished commensurate with his good or evil deeds, can the mind prove the minutest details of this life and other matters, for that matter, regarding which there is immediate concrete evidence?

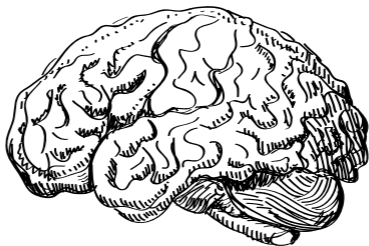
A cursory look at the texts of the Qur'an will reveal that it provides a thorough explanation of the limits of faith, a detailed description of the world and all living things,



how they began and how they will eventually end. It depicts Paradise and its bliss, and Hellfire and the torment in it, the number of its gates and the number of angels in charge of it. It further establishes detailed issues about the reality of the universe and humankind. What logical theory are all such details then based?

The fact of the matter is that this information cannot possibly be obtained through intelligence and genius. It can be either falsehood and guess, or the ultimate truth that can only be gained through divine revelation.

While modern science has now proved some of the facts stated in the Qur'an, it has not challenged any of the information it has stated. In addition, it is generally in agreement with the information found in the previous divine books regarding the unseen world.



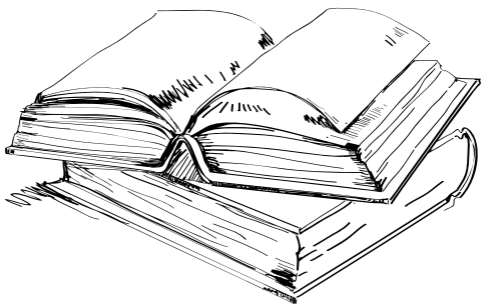
Could Muhammad (PBUH) have Rewritten the Previous Scriptures?

Let us pause for a moment and see if the Qur'an has derived such information, even to a lesser extent, from the scriptures of the previous prophets.

Muhammad (PBUH) and his people were mostly illiterate and unacquainted with the information contained in the Qur'an. He did not associate with people to whom the previous divine books had been revealed except for a very brief encounter with one person during one of his journeys as a child while in the company of his relatives. Those educated in the Jewish and Christian scriptures at that time concealed the knowledge that they had from people to maintain their position, and such knowledge was not readily available.

If we overlook all that, the ultimate truth is revealed to the serious and unbiased researcher. The Qur'an does not agree with everything in the previous divine books available at the time. Rather, it came to correct some of the false information that religious scholars had included in them.

It also came to provide the missing information in some stories, make public what religious scholars used to conceal, expose doctrinal or behavioural corruption that was attributed to the religion that their prophets at the time had brought. Indeed, the Qur'an is replete with examples testifying to this fact. Would it then be reasonable to assume that Muhammad (PBUH) has derived all that information from them?!



A Crucial Historical Fact

Any fair-minded person who is willing to look objectively at the teachings of Islam will by no means fail to ask himself these questions: Was the Messenger of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), not Arab?

Does history not inform us that his own people had no art of their own to boast about except eloquence, articulate speech and literary expression for which they held forums, councils and forums, and that an Arab tribe would rise to glory or fall into disgrace because of a poem composed regarding it?

Does history and literature books not tell us that hardly any Arabs composed a work of poetry or prose rush to rectify any defect in it, add whatever was missing and even respond using his own literary style? Do they not inform us that the power of literary expression was the area in which they excelled and contested with one another and the field in which they proudly displayed their strength and excellence?

How could his mortal enemies who left no stone unturned in their attempt to wage war on him, mete out harsh treatment upon him and warn people against him, fail to take up the challenge when he asked them to produce a Qur'an? The Qur'an similar to the one he had brought, or at least a small portion of it, remaining instead in stupefied bewilderment, unable to face the challenge?

Did Muhammad (PBUH) not fear that by mounting such a challenge regarding a skill in which his enemies excelled, they would,

as both individuals and groups, spring to action and compete with him with a view to confuting him and proving to people that what he had brought was wrong!?

Let us suppose that he only mounted such a challenge because he knew his people were not capable enough to rise to his challenge. How could he then make it a permanent challenge to the future generations until the end of time, firmly and emphatically stating that if all of them gathered together to produce a book like the Qur'an, they would fail to do so even if they helped one another as best they could?!

Taking such a step constitutes a considerable risk that could only be taken by someone whose heart is filled with confidence and is certain of what he said. By issuing such a challenge, neither his own people, the *Quraysh*, nor the then leading speakers known for their eloquence dared produce something similar to the Qur'an, or even a small portion of it. This challenge still remains unsuccessful today, and history has it that anyone who has ever attempted or entertained the thought of taking the challenge has been doomed to ignominious failure and become an object of ridicule and the target of literary derision among others.

Surat Al-Fatihah (The Opening Chapter)

It is the greatest *surah* in the Qur'an, which a Muslim always recites in his prayers. Its meaning is as follows:



The Meaning of Surat Al-Fatihah



**“In the name of Allah, The Most Beneficent,
The Most Merciful.”**

Meaning: I begin with the name of God, with due respect and reverence, The Merciful whose mercy encompasses all things.

“Praise be to God, The Lord of all the worlds.”

Meaning: I extol God with all His attributes, acts and apparent and hidden blessings, with due love and reverence. He is The Creator, Owner, Provider, Disposer of all affairs and the Bestower of all favours upon all creatures without exception.

“The Beneficent, The Merciful.”

Meaning: He has all attributes of mercy in all its forms and manifestations. He has a general mercy that encompasses all things in this universe, as well as a special mercy that He reserves exclusively for His obedient, believing servants.

“Master of the Day of Judgement.”

Meaning: He is the only King and Judge on the Day of Judgement.



“You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help.”

Meaning: We worship none but You, our Lord, and we do not worship anyone else besides You in any way. We ask only You for assistance and support in all our affairs, for the power of decision rests with You alone, and no one shares an atom’s weight with You in that.

“Guide us to the Straight Path.”

Meaning: Guide us to the Straight Path and help us adhere to it until we meet You.

“The path of those You have blessed —”

Meaning: The path to which You have guided the prophets and the righteous who know the truth and follow it.

“not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray.”

Meaning: Keep us away from the path of those with whom You are angry because they have known the truth but have chosen not to follow it; also keep us away from the path of those who have not been guided to the truth due to their ignorance and for neglecting to seek it.

“Amen”

Meaning: O Allah, answer my prayer.



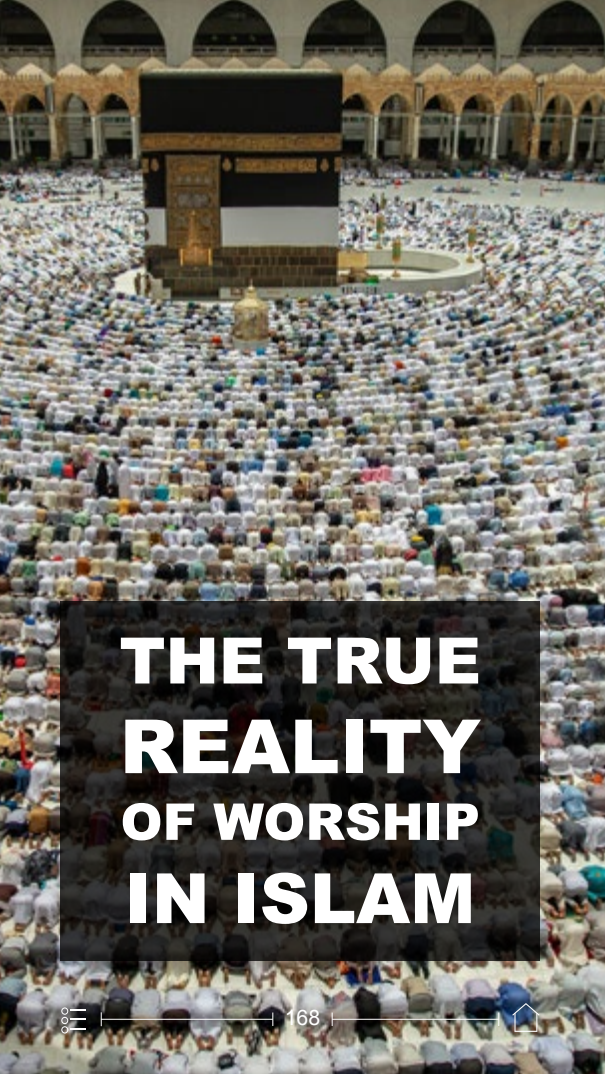


Everyone Has His Final Word

After all, everyone will have his final word in this matter. Their judgements and attitudes about the Qur'an will essentially be based on their personal experience in carefully reading it and making an earnest effort to understand it, making sure to select an appropriate translation of it in their language, if they are not versed in Arabic.

The Qur'an pointedly states that one of the greatest proofs of the sincerity of Muhammad's prophethood lies in the outcome our hearts and minds after reading the Qur'an in an effort to understand it. As it states, "What, is it not sufficient for them that We have sent down upon you the Book that is recited to them? Surely in that is a mercy and a reminder to a people who believe" (29:51).

Indeed, the Qur'an invites everyone to read it and ponder over it in order to understand it, clearly stating that only those who have "locks on their hearts and minds" refuse to do so (47:24).

A high-angle photograph of the Kaaba in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, surrounded by a massive crowd of pilgrims. The Kaaba is a large, black, cuboid structure with gold bands and Arabic calligraphy. The courtyard is filled with people, many wearing white ihram clothing. The background shows the arched architecture of the Grand Mosque of Mecca.

THE TRUE REALITY OF WORSHIP IN ISLAM

Does

Does God Need Our Worship?

God does not need our worship or our good deeds. Indeed, salvation in Islam cannot be achieved with mere rituals, formalities and financial contributions. Rather, it can be attained with one's degree of truthfulness and faith in God, which must be translated into reality by refining oneself and one's character and striving to serve society.



The Qur'an (51:56-58) says, "I have only created the jinn and mankind to worship Me. I do not require any provision from them and I do not require them to nourish Me. Truly, God is The Provider, The Lord of Power, The Ever Mighty."

When some people wondered as to what the right direction of the prayer was since Muslims must face Makkah in prayer, a few Qur'anic verses were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The revelation stressed that the true reality of religion lies in sincerity of faith, doing righteous deeds and benefiting humankind, not simply facing the east or the west in their prayer. The Qur'an states, **"Righteousness does not consist in whether you face towards the East or the West. The righteous are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels and the Book and the prophets; who, though they love it dearly, give away their wealth to relatives, to orphans, to the destitute, to the traveller in need and to beggars, and for the redemption of captives; who attend to their prayers and pay the prescribed charity; who are true to their promises and steadfast in trial and adversity and in times of war. Such are the true believers; such are the God-fearing"** (2: 177)

The Qur'an further stresses that those who strive in matters of worship and devoutness actually do so for their own benefit. Those who reject Islam are the true losers, for God is self-sufficient and does not stand in need of anyone. As the Qur'an states, **"Whoever strives hard [in God's cause] does so only for his own good; for, verily, God does not stand in need of any of His creatures"** (29:6).



When some people asked about and wondered as to what the right direction of the prayer should be, a few Qur'anic verses were revealed to Prophet Muhammad, stressing that the true reality of religion lies in sincerity of faith, doing righteous deeds and benefiting humankind, not just in facing the east or the west in their prayer.

The Pillars of Islam

These are the most important prescribed acts of worship in Islam. They are as follows:

1



Firmly and sincerely believing in and worshipping God and accepting to follow His Messenger Muhammad (PBUH). In Arabic, the basic formula of the declaration of faith (*Shahadah*) is said this way: *Ash hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah, wa ash hadu anna Muhammadan Rasulullah*. The English translation is: "I declare there is no god except Allah (God), and I declare that Muhammad is the Messenger of God." (See page 55)

2



Performing the prescribed prayers
(See page 179)

3



Paying the prescribed charity (*zakat*)
(See page 187)

4

Fasting during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar (See page 193)

5



Undertaking the journey to God's Sacred House in Makkah (*Hajj*, or pilgrimage) for those can afford it and are physically able (See page 197)



Why Moral Responsibility and Afflictions?

The following question is repeatedly asked, albeit in different forms, “How is it that God has given us a mouth, teeth and a stomach, among other things, so we can eat and yet commands us to fast? How is it that He has created beauty and lust and then orders us to lower our gaze and preserve our chastity?” One may perhaps audaciously ask, “Why does He give us strength and then forbid us from assaulting and oppressing others?”

Indeed, this issue is absolutely clear from an Islamic perspective. According to Islam, God has given us such faculties and abilities to control and not to be controlled. To illustrate, God has given us horses to ride and control, not for it to control us. As a matter of fact, our bodies and strength were created to serve us, so we can ride them, restrain them and use them at the appropriate times and places and not the other way around.

Hence, the real worth of man and his supremacy lies in his ability to control his whims and desires and to use such faculties in useful ways. In this way, God has distinguished man and prepared him to be put to the test. This is indeed the reason why God created us in the first place.



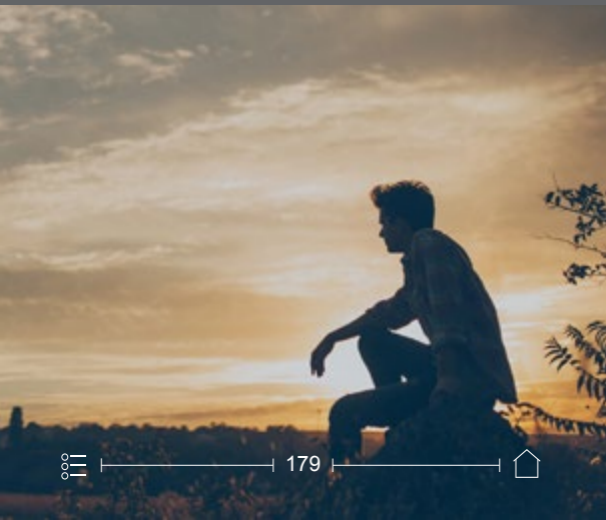
Man's real worth and merit lies in his ability to control his whims and desires and in using such faculties in useful ways.

As the Qur'an says, "We have created man from the union of the two sexes, so that We may put him to the proof. We have endowed him with hearing and sight. We have shown him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful" (76:2-3)

Thus, all the afflictions, calamities and suffering to which we are subjected as humans actually constitute an additional test for us to boost our spiritual and moral growth. It is designed to increase our faith and recall our goal and our position in this life. As the Qur'an states, "We shall test your steadfastness by afflicting you in some measure with fear, and hunger, and decrease of wealth, and loss of lives, and scarcity of fruits. Give good news to those who endure with fortitude; who in adversity say, 'We belong to God, and to Him we shall return' (2:155-156).

This life, therefore, provides an opportunity for us to progress or regress in matters of faith and morals.

God Almighty gives us constant opportunities to follow the path of righteousness and mend our ways. He does not compel us. Instead, He gives us free will to make choices in our lives and instructs us to develop Earth, build a civilisation and benefit humanity. Despite all this, He urges us to turn to Him and mend our ways whenever we fall into error or make a mistake. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said in this respect, "Were you not to commit sins, God would replace you with a people who would commit sins and then seek forgiveness from God; and God would certainly forgive them" (Muslim: 2749).





Prayer

You may have already wondered about the strange scene you, yourself have witnessed in person or seen in the media, where one or more Muslims move in a specific direction and then engage in taking standing, bowing and prostrating postures and look as though they were cut off from the world around them.

What is then the Muslim Prayer?

The prayer occupies a position of the very highest significance in Islam because it is the most important way to be close to God and to pray and submit to Him. God orders Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and all Muslims to prostrate in prayer and draw near to Him (96:19). It is for this reason that it is considered the second pillar of Islam after the declaration of faith.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Islam is built on five [pillars]: Testifying that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of God, performing the prescribed prayers, paying the prescribed charity (*zakat*), making the pilgrimage to the [Sacred] House, and fasting in Ramadan" (Al-Bukhari: 8).

Islam teaches that a Muslim is rewarded for his prayer commensurate with the effort he makes in purifying his heart, keeping distractions away by concentrating in his prayer, sincerely demonstrating total humility before God and feeling closeness to Him. Such a state allows him to experience peace and tranquillity in His presence. Indeed, the prayer was the source of Prophet Muhammad's greatest joy.

Hence, the Qur'an instructs Muslims to perform the prayer by engaging the entire body, as well as the heart, the mind and the spirit, and not restrict it to physical movements. If performed in this way, it will surely be the best means for doing good and keeping away from sins and wrong-doings. Therefore, remembrance of God and turning to Him is the best thing one can possibly do.

As the Qur'an states, "Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book, and establish the prescribed prayer. Surely, prayer restrains one from indecency and evil,



The prayer consists of a set of actions and words as means of extoling God and recognising His greatness.

and remembrance of God is greater still. God knows what you do" (29:45).

Those who assume that the prayer is confined to physical exercise preceded by ablution and cleanliness have indeed failed to realise that the set of actions and litany of short recited passages and phrases, in which God is praised are actually means of extoling God and recognising His greatness.

For instance, the phrase the worshiper speaks as he stands in reverence and humility in prayer while raising his hands is *Allahu akbar* (Allah is The Greatest). Then he bows, showing total humility before God and recognising His greatness stating, *Subhana rabbiy-al-'adheem* (Glory be to my Lord, The Almighty). Then he prostrates himself, seeking nearness to his Lord and His response to his prayers by placing his knees, hands, forehead and nose on the floor, stating, *Subhana rabbiyal-a'la* (Glory be to my Lord, The Most High). Thus, all the acts of prayer are not simply movements and murmurs instead, they are very meaningful moments that link the believer to his Lord and Creator from Whom he derives his happiness and his very existence.

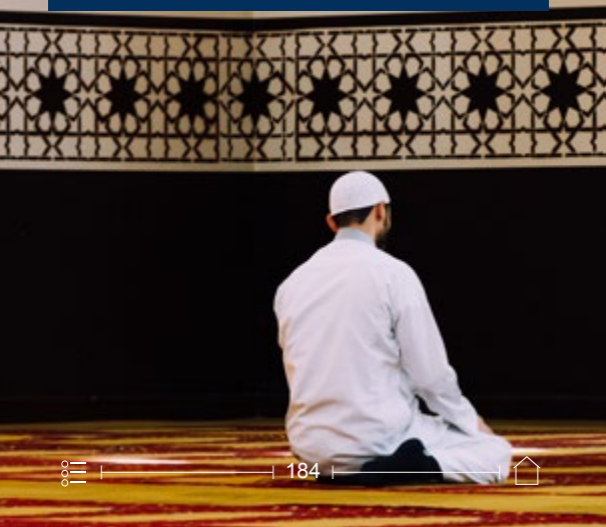
God commands Muslims to pray five times a day at predetermined times. They may perform such prayers anywhere, but He urges them to do so in mosques to strengthen community bonds, deepen their relationships and help one another in religious and worldly matters.

He also urges Muslims to engage in optional prayers as much as possible.

Muslims pray in the direction of the Ka'bah, a cube-shaped building located inside the Holy Mosque in Makkah, in the western part of the Arabian Peninsula. The Ka'bah was originally constructed by 'The Father of Prophets', a reference to Abraham (Peace Be Upon Him), and all prophets made pilgrimage to it. Contrary to popular belief, the Ka'bah is a stone structure that can neither do harm nor good, but God commands the Muslims to face it during the prayer to serve as a focal and unifying point among them.



The prayer was the source of Prophet Muhammad's greatest joy.



The Muslim call to Prayer, the *Adhan*

The *adhan* is the Muslim call to prayer, which notifies Muslims that the time of the prescribed prayer has begun and prompts them to come to the mosque.



It is a form of remembering and revering God, as well as preparing Muslims to attend the prayer in the mosque. Its sequence is as follows:

- 1- Allah is The greatest. Allah is The greatest. Allah is The greatest. Allah is The greatest.
- 2- I declare that there is no god but Allah. I declare that there is no god but Allah.
- 3- I declare that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. I declare that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.
- 4- Come to prayer. Come to prayer.
- 5- Come to success. Come to success.
- 6- Allah is The greatest. Allah is The greatest.
- 7- There is no god but Allah.





The Grand Mosque in Makkah is the holiest mosque in Islam. It houses the Ka'bah, a cube-shaped stone structure. The Ka'bah was originally constructed by Prophet Abraham, and Muslims are commanded to face it during their prayers although they believe that it can do neither harm nor good.



The Prescribed Charity (*Zakat*)

It is everyone's conviction that there should be a solution to the dichotomy of extreme wealth and abject poverty. The gap between the rich and the poor, and the decline and disintegration of society leads members into a life of increased vices and crimes. Countless attempts have been made by economic systems, ideological trends and government laws in order to solve this problem. How does Islam deal with it?

Islam requires wealthy Muslims to pay 2.5 percent of their accumulated annual wealth that is in excess of their personal possessions to the poor and the needy; this duty its third pillar.

This prescribed charity is paid by the rich not as a favour to the poor, but because it is the right of the poor to be from the excess wealth of the rich. This process allows charity to be given without making the poor feel impelled to ask the rich or subjecting him to disgrace.

This minimum amount is all that wealthy Muslims are required to spend. As for the maximum amount, Islam has afforded them many opportunities to compete with one another and spend on various good causes. This results in attaining more wealth, health, success and happiness in this life; and in the hereafter, they will find ample rewards and eternal bliss.

The Qur'an likens those who spend their wealth in God's way like a grain that grows into seven ears with a hundred grains in each ear, which are then multiply up to seven hundred times, God increases their reward. To those who act with sincerity and good intentions and those who spend their wealth for the good, He is extremely generous, and He has full knowledge of people's intentions:

“The likeness of those who spend their wealth in God’s way is as the likeness of a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. God gives increase manifold to whom He wills. God is Munificent and All-Knowing” (2:261).

The Qur’an also informs us that giving charity to the poor and the needy actually purifies the benefactor’s heart from selfishness and greed. It says, “Take *zakat* from their wealth to purify and cleanse them with it ...” (9:103).

It further informs us that those whose stinginess prevents them from spending their wealth and helping the poor will be the real losers, for by so doing they actually deprive themselves of happiness in this world and bliss in the hereafter.

The Qur’an says, “Here you called upon to spend in God’s cause, and among you are some who are niggardly; and he who is niggardly is but niggardly against his own soul, but God is rich and you are poor; and if you turn your backs, He will substitute another people in your stead, then they will not be like you” (47:38).

The implementation of this great Islamic duty helps realise the concept of social security and relative equality among members of society.

By giving out *zakat* to those entitled to it, financial wealth ceases to build up in a few hands in society. It is for this reason that history tells us, the early Muslims would more often than not look for the poor and the needy to pay *zakat* to them but would not find any.

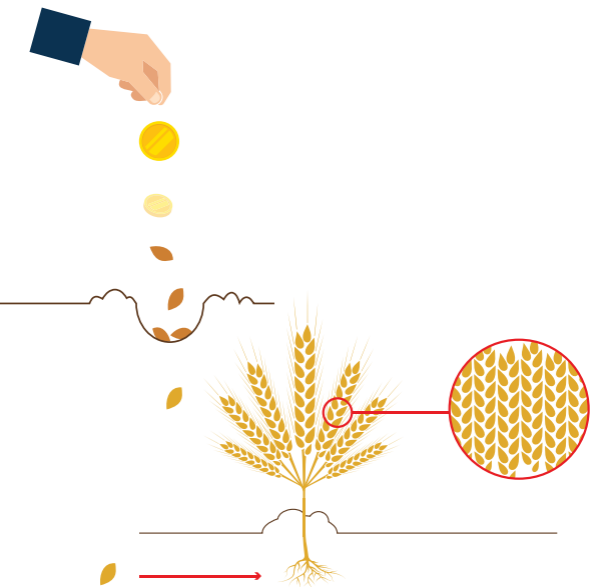
Paying *zakat* nurtures feelings of affection, harmony and fosters community cohesion. Because people generally have a disposition to like those who do them a good turn, members of the Muslim society become increasingly close-knit that they resemble bricks of a building, supporting one another. Crimes such as theft and robbery tend to decrease under such circumstances.





The prescribed charity, or *zakat*, is paid by the rich, not as a favour to the poor, but because it is the poor's right that is taken from the wealth of the rich without making the former feel impelled to ask the latter or subjecting them to disgrace.





The Qur'an likens those who spend their wealth thereby seeking His good pleasure to a grain that grows into seven ears with a hundred grains in each ear, which are then multiplied up to seven hundred times.



Fasting

We all admire those who control themselves and refrain from eating, or avoiding certain types of food to maintain good health, lose weight or to stay in compliance with the doctor's advice. We always consider their ability to control their desires for a greater and more important goal a major achievement.

In fact, when Muslims fast, they achieve greater outcomes than that. By observing a fast, they discipline themselves to bring their desires under control and comply with the orders of God, the best of Judges.

Fasting (*siyyam* or *sawm* in Arabic) is the fourth pillar of Islam. A fasting person is required to abstain from all food, drink and sexual activity with his spouse from dawn until sunset, during the entire month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

The Qur'an informs us that fasting was prescribed for the previous nations, albeit in different ways at times. The objective behind fasting is the same, which is to attain righteousness, be conscious of God and express true worship and total submission to Him:



The Prophet of Islam once stated that a person would never benefit from his fast if he does not mend his ways and become a better person after fasting.

“O You who believe, fasting has been prescribed for you just as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may remain conscious of God” (2:183).

When a Muslim overcomes the lawful desires of the body by abstaining from them for hours a day, he becomes his own master and capable of controlling himself and avoiding desires that are impermissible under all circumstances.



It is for this reason that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), once stated that a person would never benefit from his fast if he does not mend his ways and become a better person after fasting. He said, “A person who does not desist from deceitful speech and actions [while fasting] must know that God is not in need of him leaving his food and drink” (Al-Bukhari: 1804).

The pangs of hunger and thirst that Muslims experience while fasting has an important purpose. It makes them realise the severe effects of such pains on the poor and the needy who might be deprived of the essentials of life for a long period of time and undergo extreme hunger and thirst. This feeling provides Muslims with the greatest incentive to come to their aid.



Fasting (*siyyam or sawm*) is the fifth pillar of Islam. A fasting person is required to abstain from all food and drink and sexual activity with his spouse from dawn until sunset, during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan falls on the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.



By commanding Muslims to fast, Islam aims to remind its adherents of the pangs of hunger and thirst that the poor and the needy experience.



The Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)

Most religions include the component of a spiritual journey whereby the faithful earnestly implore their Creator and express their devotion to Him. However, of all the journeys in the world, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah stands out due to the sheer magnitude of its size and scope. Every year, more than three million Muslims flock to Makkah where they gather to perform the pilgrimage rites.

What Exactly is Pilgrimage in Islam?

Hajj, the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Makkah, is the fifth pillar of Islam. This duty must be undertaken by every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so at least once in his lifetime.

It is a remarkable journey whereby distinctions of social class, nationality, race, dress and wealth disappear. All pilgrims don the same colour garb and chant, with an earnest heart, the same words embodying the true reality of the relationship between man and his Lord. These words translate as follows: "Here I am at Your service. O God, here I am at Your service. There is no partner with You. Here I am at your service. All praise and all bounty belong to You. All dominion is Yours and You have no partner."

Despite the various rituals Muslims perform during this journey of faith and the diverse supplications they recite, they are all meant to remember God. The purpose is to be conscious of Him, to demonstrate their need for Him and to seek forgiveness and rewards from Him. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) once observed, "Going round the Ka'bah and walking between the hills of As-Safa and Al-Marwah have only been prescribed to remember God" (Ibn Abi Shaybah: 15334).

The person who travels to Makkah with the intention of performing the pilgrimage, or *hajj*, takes off his ordinary clothing and puts on two plain pieces of clothing to declare his submission to God and to feel equal to fellow pilgrims despite their different worldly ranks.



THE FAMILY IN ISLAM



200





Today

Today, it is true that the numerous cases of the profound lack of family cohesion has reduced families to a sad state of affairs, whereby its members are nothing more than a group of unrelated individuals who have multiple keys to the same house.

R

Regrettably, many men now tend to evade the responsibility of maintaining their wife and/or children. What would then prevent them from enjoying themselves and fulfilling their carnal desires without assuming such a responsibility?

Even though this trend is more noticeable today than ever before, it has been embraced by numerous people since the dawn of history. Such a trend is nothing more than a naive tendency to pursue one's own self-interests that is dictated by selfishness regardless of the negative effects this has on the individual and society.

It is for this reason that Islam pays utmost attention to the family, its system, as well as its rights and its duties towards its members. This is because Islam views the family as the centre of awareness, education and advancement. Integrity in society can only be achieved if the family is established on sound moral foundation and manages to fulfil its mission.

This concern is reflected in countless provisions, including the following:



Islam Stresses the Principle of Marriage to Form a Family

- Marriage is one of the most meritorious acts in Islam and constitutes one of the practices of God's messengers. When some of the Prophet's companions intended to remain celibate and devote themselves completely to worship, continuous prayer and fasting, he advised them by saying, "I observe fast and break it; I perform voluntary night prayer and sleep; and take wives. Therefore, whoever does not follow my practice is not one of my true followers" (Al-Bukhari: 4776).

- In the course of reminding people of the countless bounties God has bestowed upon them, the first thing the Qur'an mentions is the love and tenderness God has set between husband and wife. As the Qur'an states, "Among His signs is that He created spouses for you of your own kind so that you might find tranquillity in them, and He has placed love and compassion between you ..." (30:21).
- Islam commands its followers to make marriage easy and promises divine help to those who seek it to guard their chastity. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "There are three people whom God will surely help." Amongst these three, he mentioned "a person who desires to get married in order to preserve his chastity" (At-Tirmidhi: 1655).
- It commands young men to get married, for marriage is the right course of action for them to help them control their intense sexual impulses and to find tranquillity in their spouses.



In the course of reminding people of the countless favours God has bestowed upon them, one of the first things the Qur'an mentions is the love and tenderness God has set between husband and wife.



2



It has Shown Respect to Every Member of the Family, Males and Females Alike.

It has charged the parents with the great responsibility of raising their children. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "Every one of you is a guardian and is responsible for those in his custody. The ruler is a guardian of his subjects and responsible for them; a husband is a guardian of his family and is responsible for it; a woman is a guardian of her husband's home and is responsible for it, and a servant is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it" (Al-Bukhari: 853).

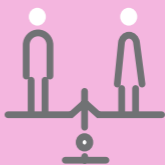
3



It Encourages Children to Honour their Parents and Commands them to Express Respect and Appreciation to them, Look after them and Show them Due Obedience Until their Death.

Regardless the age of the children, they are duty-bound to obey their parents and show kindness to them. Indeed, the Qur'an considers obedience to one's parents a meritorious act of worship and warns the believers against being rude to their parents, even by saying a word of disrespect directed at them. The Qur'an says, "Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and that you should show kindness to your parents. Whether one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say 'Ugh!' to them out of irritation and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them with gentleness and generosity" (17:23).

4



Islam Commands Parents to Safeguard their Children's Rights and Urges them to Spend on them Equally and Treat them Justly Under all Circumstances.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "A man who neglects those who are under his care would surely be committing a sin." (Abu Dawud: 1692). As regards spending on daughters in particular and caring for them, he said, "Whoever is in charge of any of these girls and treats them well, they will be a shield for him against Hellfire" (Al-Bukhari: 5649).

5



It Enjoins Muslims to Maintain the Bonds of Kinship.

These relatives include paternal and maternal aunts and uncles and their children. Indeed, Islam regards maintaining the ties of kinship one of the most commendable acts, warns against severing such ties and considers doing so a major sin. The Prophet (PBUH) said, “The person who severs the bonds of kinship will not enter Paradise” (Muslim: 2556).



Islam warns the believers against being rude to their parents in any way, even by saying a word of disrespect to them.

WOMEN IN ISLAM





A cursory

A cursory look at the television, roadside advertisements or magazine covers will reveal the magnitude and enormity of the crime that the material civilisation has committed against women who have been dehumanised as sexual objects or commodities that only serve to excite lustful desires and ignite men's imagination.



Perhaps this is only another aspect which is seemingly less distorted than was the case in primitive societies in which women were degraded and reduced to chattels and commodities that were bought and sold.

As a result of their long struggle, women who have long suffered oppression and discrimination did not seek to escape the forlorn state to be plunged into a similar depressing state but in a rather less distorted image.

When Islam emerged 1,400 years ago, it effected a real revolution against the unfair treatment women had long suffered. It also laid down laws and detailed provisions to protect their rights and status, and to afford them the chance to lead an honourable life, thus giving them the opportunity to carry out their mission in life in the best possible manner.

It is for this reason that one of the longest chapters of the Qur'an is titled "Women" due to the thorough provisions it provides for women. In the Qur'an, God tells us stories of a large number of righteous women, and has even named one of the chapters of the Qur'an after Mary, the mother of Jesus, peace be upon him.

Thus, Islam came to change the erroneous concept people had of women, urging men to treat them as human beings just as God created them and intended them to be, and not as commodities. It urges men to look at women as life partners, not one-night partners; and to regard them as a source of love, mercy and peace and tranquillity, and not as physical sexualised objects.

Examples of Provisions on Respect of Women Islam

- It grants them the right to choose their husbands and places a large amount of the responsibility of rearing children upon them. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "A woman is a guardian of her husband's home and is responsible for it" (Al-Bukhari, 853).
- It grants them the right to retain their maiden names. In Islam, a woman does not change her surname to that of her husband upon marriage, as is common in many parts of the world. A woman retains the honour of keeping her maiden name, and thus her independent ancestry.
- It establishes total equality between men and women in numerous matters including all financial transactions. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Women are the twin halves of men" (Abu Dawud: 236).
- It makes it the husband's duty to spend on those women entitled to his support, such as his wife, mother and daughters, without attempting in the least to remind them of his favours.
- Islam grants them the right to inheritance, allocating them equitable shares with men, which sometimes differ under

certain circumstances depending on their relationship with others and the financial obligations they have to discharge. It is true women's share of inheritance compared to that of men is less, but it is not without exceptions. There are cases when women inherit as much as men, inherit more than men, and inherit while men do not inherit anything. It would be unfair to focus only on the case where they inherit less than men. Even in this case, they inherit less because while men support the entire family as a matter of religious obligation, women are not obliged to spend a penny. In this way, Islam is a comprehensive and well-balanced system where no aspect of it prevails over another.

- It stresses the importance of helping women who are in need of support, even if they are not one's relatives. It also urges its followers to engage in such a noble act, considering it one of the most meritorious deeds in the sight of God. The Prophet (PBUH) said, "The person who looks after a widow or a poor person is like a warrior who fights for God's cause, or like one who performs prayers all night without slackness and fasts continuously and never breaks his fast" (Al-Bukhari: 5661).



Whilst some writers accuse Islam of oppressing women and infringing on their rights claiming that it is incompatible with the requirements of the present time and civilization, we find that of the hundreds of thousands of converts to Islam in such a developed country as Great Britain, 75 per cent of them are women. This happened following their study of the provisions of Islam on the various family issues. (Richard Peppiatt, "Women and Islam: The rise and rise of the convert", *The Independent*, Sunday 6 November 2011)



Islam Stresses Women Should Be Given Extra Care



The Mother: A man once asked the Prophet (PBUH), "Messenger of God, to whom should I show the most kindness?" "Your mother," he replied. The man asked, "Then to whom?" The Prophet again said, "Your mother." The man further asked, "Then to whom?" The Prophet (S) replied, "Your mother." The man asked again, "Then to whom?" The Prophet (S) said, "Then your father" (Al-Bukhari: 5626).



The Daughter: The prophet (PBUH) said, "Whoever has three daughters and he remains patient with them, provides for them and clothes them from his money, they will be a shield for him from Hellfire on the Day of Judgement" (Ibn Majah, 3669).



The Wife: The Prophet (PBUH) said, "The best among you are those who are the best in treating their wives, and I am the best of you in treating my wives" (At-Tirmidhi, 3895).



The relationship between men and women in Islam is not based on a struggle between them. Rather, it is complimentary, in that each one of them remedies the deficiency of the other in an attempt to build the Muslim society.

There Is No Place in Islam for the Battle of the Sexes

There is no such thing in Islam as the battle of the sexes; there is no need for a fierce rivalry for worldly pursuits between them; nor is there a necessity to launch an attack against any of them in an attempt to disparage, harm, criticise or find fault with any one of them.

Thus, a man cannot possibly fight his other half, for the noble Prophet (PBUH) said in a tradition that women are men's other halves. In other words, the relationship between men and women is complimentary, each of which remedies the deficiency of the other in building the Muslim society.

The Qur'an depicts each one of them to be a 'garment' for the other, revealing an excellent image of a perfect physical, emotional and mental union: "They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them" (2:187).

Therefore, what a man may at first glance perceive in a woman to be weakness is in fact is an aspect of strength which he lacks and which the family needs. Similarly, what a woman perceives to be weakness in a man is perhaps one of the things that do not suit her as a woman, but which life and society cannot dispense with.

It would be ludicrous to think that God created humankind, both men and women who are distinguished by a single gene, but with significant physical and psychological differences between them, and then claim that they must be identical in every way.

When some men coveted rights Islam granted women and some women coveted the rights it granted men, the following verse was revealed: "Do not covet those things in which God has bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others: To men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn; but ask God of His bounty, for God has full knowledge of all things" (4:32).

Hence, Islam has honoured both men and women, and allocated each of them distinctive characteristics and roles whereby they may strive to gain God's bounties and attain His good pleasure. It does not give preference to any of the two sexes; rather, it aims to promote the welfare of the individual in general and that of society at large.



The Relationship between Men and Women

Throughout history human societies have devised and adopted countless ways of regulating the relationship between men and women in matters of punishments, laws, customs and traditions. However, history and anthropology texts tell us about innumerable practices in this respect. For instance, some peoples would not see anything wrong with nudity and the rampant sexual chaos, some others would bind their wives with fetters of iron for fear of being assaulted, and yet others would impose a certain type of covering on men to the exclusion of women or would simply cover certain parts of the body.

Most of these peoples, particularly those who had reached much higher levels of development believed that a law was urgently needed to govern this relationship. In so doing, preventing human lives from turning into savagery, where no distinction whatsoever exists between humans and animals.





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The Nature of the Relationship between Men and Women in Islam

The relationship between men and women in Islam is not governed by the dictates of human laws that are obviously limited by historical and geographical factors. In fact, the law governing such relationship in Islam is comprehensive and suitable for all times and places, as God Himself revealed it in the Holy Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught it to humankind.

The nature and scope of this relationship differs depending on men's relationship to women.

Men, in relation to a woman, fall into different categories.

1 He could be her husband:

God describes each one of them to be a 'garment' for the other, revealing an excellent image of a perfect physical, emotional and mental union: **"They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them"** (2:187).

2 He could be a *mahram*::

A woman's *mahram* (pl. *mahaarim*) is a male relative to whom she is not allowed to marry due to their close relationship. They consist of 13 male relatives, including the father, the grandfather, the son, the brother, the paternal uncle, the maternal uncle, the son's son and the daughter's son. Thus, a woman does not have to be fully covered in front of these male relatives. She may appear before them in the manner she normally dresses, but without exceeding the limits of decency.

3 He could be a non-*mahram*

A non-*mahram* is any male person whom a woman could marry and thus must cover herself in his presence. In other words, he is any male who does not belong to the category of men known as *mahram* stated above.

Regarding this category of women, Islam has laid down a number of rules and criteria that govern a Muslim man's relationship with such women in an effort to protect people's honour and block all the means that are bound to lead to evil. The Creator of humankind knows full well what is best for us. The Qur'an says, **"Does He who has created all things not then know? He is The All-Pervading, The All-Aware"** (67:14).





Why Does Islam Command Women to Wear the *Hijab* before *Non-Mahram* Men?

- So that they would carry out their mission in life and society in the various scientific and academic fields in the best possible manner while preserving their modesty.
- So that they would reduce chances of temptation in order to purify society on the one hand, and safeguard women's honour, on the other.
- So that they would encourage male on-lookers to control themselves even more and thus treat them as civilised and educated human beings, and not as physical objects of male sexual desires, whose value is tied to their appearance and sexual appeal to men.

Rules Governing the Relationship between a Man and a Woman to Whom He Is not Related and Can Marry

1 Lowering the gaze

God commands both men and women to lower their gaze and avoid looking at anything that is bound to lead to sexual arousal. Indeed, avoiding lustful looks leads to modesty and helps safeguard people's honour, while lustful looks generally pave the way to sins. The Qur'an says, **"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty. That is purer for them. God is aware of what they do. Say to believing women that they should lower their gaze and remain chaste ..."** (24:30-31).

2 Observing modesty and politeness when dealing with each other

Islam teaches that when dealing with a member of the opposite sex one is not related and can marry in matters relating to work and education, and in all spheres of life, men and women must do so with politeness and modesty and avoid any words or gestures that may lead to sexual arousal.



3 Wearing the *hijab* (the modest Muslim style of dress)

God commands women, but not men, to wear the *hijab* because women in particular enjoy a natural beauty and attraction that could easily tempt men into sinful acts than vice versa. It is for this reason that throughout history, since ancient times up to this day women are more often exploited and used to satisfy men's desires, and not the other way round. This is obvious in the manner women are objectified in the different types of mass media today.

A woman's *hijab* should cover all her body except the face and the hands. The Qur'an says, "... They should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof ..." (24:31).



Many of those who criticise the modest Muslim woman's style of dress, or hijab, fail to perceive that most traditional depictions of the greatest women in history, including that of the Virgin Mary, show them clad in veils similar to the Muslim veil.



ISLAMIC DIETARY LAWS



The

The first question those exploring Islam usually ask is: Why does Islam prohibit the consumption of alcohol and pork?



To answer this question, an important clarification must be made:

The Qur'an allows Muslims everything on Earth for their own benefit and categorically states that God has created everything on the earth for human benefit from (2:29).

This includes, of course, food and drink. Thus, everything is permissible for human consumption with the exception of anything the Qur'an considers unlawful due to its innate impurity, that is hazardous to health or intoxicates and clouds the mind. Perhaps you will be interested in learning about the prohibition of pork and alcohol in Islam.

Pork

The Qur'an explicitly declares the flesh of pigs forbidden even though the pig was not known to the Arabs at the time the Qur'an was revealed. Some people are amazed of this prohibition and even criticise it even though this pertains not only to Muslims but also to the Jews whose sacred book, the Old testament, clearly declares it forbidden. Surprisingly however, numerous theologians have proved beyond any doubt that pork is also forbidden in Christianity, as evidenced by clear texts in the New Testament, which have been subjected to a great deal of corruption and distortion. See for instance, (Mark 5: 11-13, Matthew 67, 2 Peter 2/22 Luke 15/11)

Why should God not test us by forbidding us to consume certain types of foods after allowing us to consume most of them? God generally does so to test our faith and our obedience to Him, just as He tested Adam (AS) by forbidding him to eat from a certain tree after allowing him all types of food in Paradise.



Why should God not test us by forbidding us certain types of foods after allowing us to consume most of them? Indeed, God does so to test our faith and our obedience to Him, just as He tested Adam, peace be upon him, by forbidding him to eat from a certain tree after allowing him all types of food in Paradise.



Intoxicants

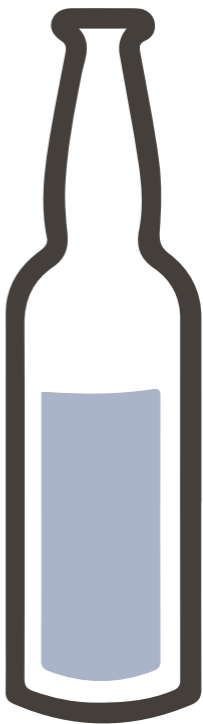
One of the most important policies which governments have adopted is to combat epidemics and diseases that destroy human life. Strict laws and regulations have been imposed to protect people's health and lives. Any defect in this respect is bound to lead to serious detrimental effects on both the individual and society.



It is rather shocking to learn about the detrimental effects of alcohol revealed by well-documented studies, such as the study conducted by Oxford University and published in Nature journal on 15 March 2010, and the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health analyses published by World Health Organisation (WHO), on 11 February 2011. According to this study, alcohol leads to more deaths worldwide than the combined mortality rates of AIDS, tuberculosis and violence, and that the mortality rates from alcohol is almost three times higher than that from all wars, genocide and terrorist acts in the same year. Here are some figures that have been confirmed by this study and WHO reports.:

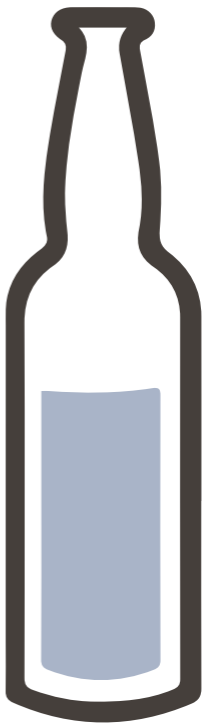


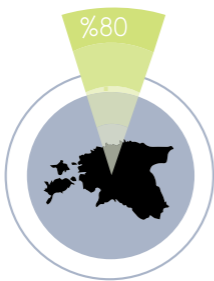
Globally, 320,000 young people aged 15-29 years die annually from alcohol-related causes, accounting for 9% of all deaths in that age group.



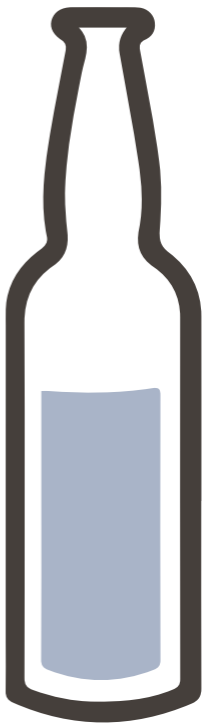


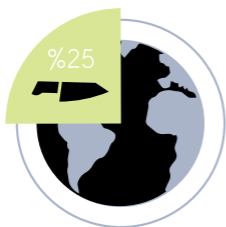
An American study showed that some 700,000 university students are assaulted each year by other students who have been heavily drinking.



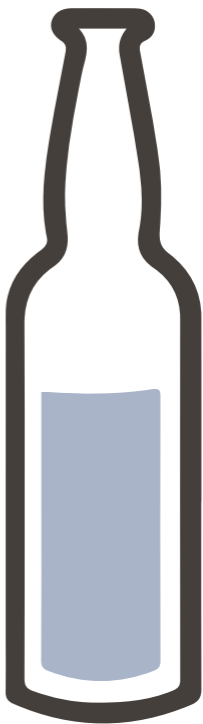


A report released **in 2001 showed that 80% of violent crime** committed by young people in Estonia has been linked to alcohol abuse.



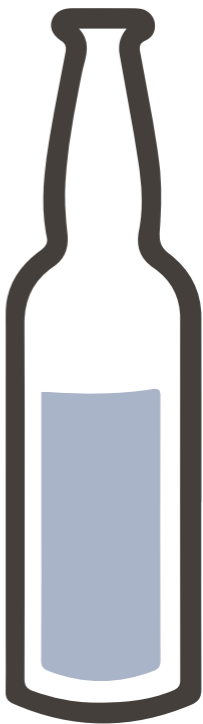


Alcohol is implicated in one quarter of all homicides globally.





All WHO statements and reports call on all states to take strict measures to reduce or prevent the daily alcohol-fuelled tragedies.





In one single year in Great Britain alone:

- Almost one million violent crimes were alcohol-related, and around half of all violent crime was considered alcohol-related by victims.
- Nearly 7 million attendances at hospital accident and emergency services are estimated to be alcohol-related, at a cost of around 650 million British pounds sterling (£) per year to the taxpayer.
- Overall, the total costs of alcohol-related crime and disorder to the taxpayer are estimated to be between £8 and 13 billion per year.



How Does the Qur'an Deal with Alcoholic Beverages?

Islam did not wait for the reports of the World Health Organization to find out about the harmful effects of alcohol on the individual and society because God, the Creator of humankind, knows what works best for their lives and society.

Islam came to the Arabs at a time when they were hardly sober and when alcohol, in all its types, provided the greatest and the worthiest of all pleasures and amusements. Indeed, Arabs praised wine drinking, boasted about it and did whatever it took to obtain it.

The Qur'an treats the matter in a very logical and objective manner. While it recognises the few benefits of alcohol stating that it may offer those who consume it temporary pleasure and relief from distress and depression, it draws their attention to its psychological, behavioural and health risk on the individual and society. The Qur'an says, "They ask you about drinking and gambling. Say, 'There is great harm and sin in both, although they have some benefit for people ...'" (2:219).

The Qur'an further stresses its prohibition in another verse, stating that it is an abomination devised by Satan to sow enmity and hatred amongst the faithful and to turn them away from their duties and responsibilities. In response to the divine command in the verse prohibiting intoxicants, "Will you not then abstain from them?" (5:90-1), Muslims poured out all alcoholic drinks they had left onto Madeenah streets, repentantly saying, "We will indeed abstain from them."

SIN AND REPENTANCE

The

The philosophy of right and wrong poses one of the major intellectual problems in a number of religions, which all differ among themselves in the way of dealing with error and guilt, on the one hand, and repentance and remorse, on the other.



Islam clearly considers human nature that God created has an inclination towards good and evil. It does not treat human nature as being intrinsically good. It declares that all human beings make mistakes and commit sins and, at the same time, holds them responsible for their decisions and choices, hence the view of Islam about sin and repentance, which can be concluded as follows:

- The Qur'an states in a clear, simple and unequivocal term that sin is individual, as is repentance. There is no sin as inborn sin or the original sin, and that no person can forgive sins. Rather, human beings are born sinless and do not bear any 'original guilt' from Adam and Eve's sin. In addition, the sin Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) committed was personal and he turned directly to God and asked for forgiveness. Likewise, the sins of the descendants of Adam are also personal and the door to repentance is open to everyone. This fair and clear understanding of repentance in Islam encourages every human being to put forth effort and turn to God without despair. In this way, Islam holds everyone responsible for their own sins and does not hold anyone responsible for the sins of others. This is the very concept of sin and repentance all the prophets of God taught their own people. As the Qur'an (53: 36-41) says, **"Has he not been informed of what is in the Scrolls of Moses, and of Abraham who honoured his pledge, that no bearer of a burden shall bear the burden of another, and that man shall have only that for which he strives, and that his labour shall surely be made manifest hereafter?"**



In Islam, all a person needs to do to repent is simply give up the sin immediately, feel deep regret for having committed it and sincerely resolve not to commit it again. If the sin involves other people's rights, then he must restore these rights to them.



- Repentance, which is one of the most significant acts of worship and one of the various means of seeking closeness to God, is not limited to specific individuals to the exclusion of all others. Islam teaches that in order for one to repent, one need not do so in a special place, confess one's sin to another person, or seek his permission to do so. Rather, it is an act of worship between God and His servants. God's Beautiful Names mentioned in the Qur'an include,

among others, *At-Tawwaab* (the One who forgives those who turn to Him), *Ar-Raheem* (The Most Merciful), *Ghaafir-udh-dhanb* (The Forgiver of Sins) and *Qaabil-ut-tawb* (The Acceptor of Repentance). According to the Qur'an one of the attributes of the pious who will be admitted into Paradise is that whenever they commit a sin, they hasten to repent and ask forgiveness from God. As the Qur'an (3: 135) says, **"...and who, after they commit a shameful act or wrong themselves, remember God and ask pardon for their sins, -- for Who forgives sins except God? -- and do not knowingly persist in their misdeeds."**

All a person needs to repent in Islam is to give up the sin immediately, feel deep regret for having committed it and sincerely resolve not to commit it again. If the sin involves other people's rights, then he must restore these rights to them. If someone commits the sin again, his first repentance is not affected in the least, nor will he be burdened by his previous sins. This simply means he has committed another sin which requires him to repent again.

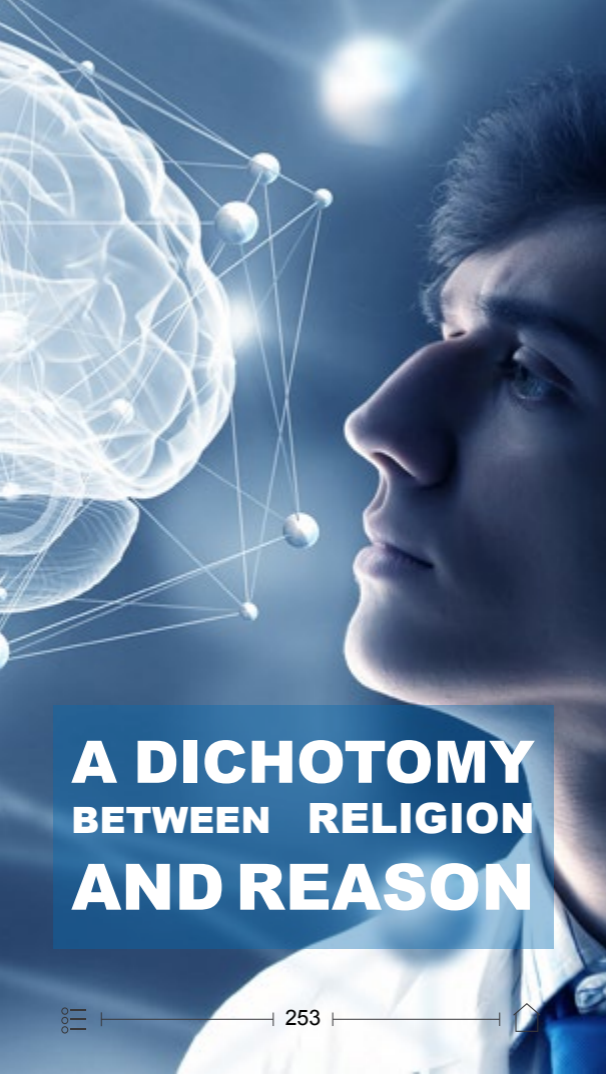
Thus, man in Islam leads a well-balanced life in that he works hard to improve himself and reach perfection, avoid mistakes and understand human nature, which may become weak and deviate him from the right course. He must never lose hope, regardless of the state of piety and virtue or impiety and negligence. In all conditions, man must turn to God and seek His forgiveness.

The Qur'an states that the difference between the righteous and all others is that when the righteous commit a sin they remember God and turn to Him, while others persist in their sins and do not take heed. (7: 201-202)



In Islam, there is no such thing as an inborn sin or original sin. Rather, human beings are all born sinless and do not bear any 'original guilt' from anyone else.





A DICHOTOMY BETWEEN RELIGION AND REASON



Some

Some erroneously believe that religion contradicts reason and science. They view religion as the source of illusions, myths and superstitious beliefs while science and philosophy are the way to access systematic knowledge through application of scientific processes and methods. However, upon reflection, it becomes clear that this view is not completely accurate.



It is accurate from the aspect in that a number of religions reject reason altogether or contradict it based on myths and superstitious beliefs that clearly contradict science.

However, it is inaccurate to make assumptions that all faiths are the same with similar beliefs, without considering the major differences that exist between religions with respect to their origin, themes, methods and evidence!

A closer look at the Qur'an, the primary source of Islam, reveals beyond any shadow of doubt that Islam has granted the intellect a status that is not matched in other religions. A person who studies the Qur'an discovers that it urges and calls its readers to contemplate and reflect in depth. This is evidenced by the question, which is mentioned more than thirteen times, "Will you not use your intellect?"



Anyone studying the Qur'an does not really need the power of accurate observation to discover that it calls its readers to contemplation and reflection.

The Qur'anic instructions to employ the intellect is evident in countless aspects including the following:

1



The Qur'an addresses people who are open-minded and who are free from all forms of tyranny, arrogance, fear and ignorance. It proves the necessity of believing in God with logical reasoning and numerous rational proofs. For example, one verse says, **"Were they created out of nothing, or are they the creators? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Surely, they have no faith"** (52: 35-36).

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It discusses the proofs of its opponents and rejects unfounded statements and arguments. The Qur'an (2:111) says, **"Say, 'Give your proofs if you speak the truth.'"**

3



It criticises those who do not use their intellect and describes them as though they are devoid of their senses because they do not benefit from the signs they see or hear in order to make the right decisions and choices. The Qur'an (22: 46) says, **"Have they not travelled on through the land? And have they not hearts to understand with, or ears to hear with? For it is not their eyes which are blind, but blind are the hearts which are within their breasts."**

4



It warns against those matters that affect man's thinking. It not only urges people to use their intellect and senses and respect them, but also warns against the pitfalls of mind due to the fact that human nature is torn apart by good and evil. This may otherwise lead to the wrong conclusions and sometimes deviate from the truth as a result of desires, fear or deception.

Obstacles to Clear Thinking According to the Qur'an

- **Blind Following:** Inherited beliefs and practices leading to negative thought patterns may affect people's way of reasoning to such an extent that it becomes difficult to accept the truth and reject falsehood. It may prevent them from using their intellect altogether on the pretext of having been raised with specific thoughts, beliefs and practices. The Qur'an (2: 170) bluntly says about those who seek the truth, but blind traditions prevent them from following: "When it is said to them, 'Follow that which God has sent down,' they say, 'Nay, we follow the ways of our fathers.' What! Though their fathers were utterly ignorant and devoid of guidance?"
- **Stubbornness and arrogance:** A person may be convinced of the truth but may refuse to accept it in order to safeguard his interests, out of jealousy or as a result of disparaging the source from which it comes. As the Qur'an (27: 14) states, "They denied those signs out of iniquity and arrogance although their hearts were convinced of their truth ..."

■ **Following whims and desires:** A person may know the truth but may not rouse the courage to follow it due to following his whims and desires. The Qur'an (7: 175-176) gives us the example of a man who was given a great deal of knowledge; however, instead of acting on this knowledge and living by its dictates, he willingly gave it up in an effort to follow his vain desires and immediate interests. He indulged so immensely in his whims and desires that he could no longer make the right decisions.

Thus, the Qur'an always calls man to utilise his intellect under all circumstances. Intellect should be applied in asking questions, in taking heed, in employing reasoning and in contemplation for the incredible wonders within himself, in the universe and creation without employing preconceived ideas or blind convictions.

Only people who fear enquiry and contemplation hides what is bound to contradict them. Indeed, the true religion must be from God Who created man and endowed him with the reasoning faculty. In no way can God's creation contradict the religion He has prescribed for humankind. There is no need, therefore, to fear asking questions and using one's intellect and reasoning.

As the Qur'an (7: 54) affirms, "His is the creation and His is the command. Blessed be God, Lord of the universe!"



“

Muslims believe that in no way can God's creation contradict the religion He has prescribed for humankind. Why would one, then, fear asking questions and using one's intellect and reasoning?

ISLAM IS THE RELIGION OF PEACE





Due

Due to stereotypes that are repeated regularly in the media, people are surprised when they learn that peace occupies an exceptional position in Islam. In fact, a Muslim repeats the word *as-salaam* (peace) and fully understands its meaning a numerous times every day.

A *As-Salaam* (the Source of Peace) is one of the names of God; Paradise is called the 'Abode of Peace'; Muslims greet each other using greeting of peace (*As-salaamu 'alaykum*, 'peace be upon you'); and they conclude their prayers by repeating this phrase twice. Islam, the very name of the Muslim faith, means peace.



Indeed, Islam calls its adherents to promote peace and enjoins them to respect the rights of even the weakest of animals. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) once spoke about a woman who will be doomed to Hellfire because of a cat which she had tied,



neither giving it food nor setting it free to eat from the vermin of the earth (Muslim: 2242). On another occasion, he mentioned that a prostitute will be admitted to Paradise because she gave a thirsty dog water to drink (Al-Bukhari 3280).

In this way, Islam sets wonderful examples through its laws which require the adherents to respect human rights and to coexist with others despite their different religions and ways of thinking. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warns anyone who wrongs a non-Muslim, harms him, or forces him to work beyond his capacity, stating that he will be



Prophet Muhammad once warned that he himself will be the adversary, on the Day of Judgement, of those who wrong non-Muslims, harm them, or force him to work beyond their capacity, and that he will plead for such non-Muslims.

his adversary on the Day of Judgement and will plead for the non-Muslim (Abu Dawud, 3052).

It is worth noting here that the peace Islam calls for is certainly the true and just peace that gives each one their due rights, deters oppressors from oppressing and usurpers from usurping others' property. It does not promote false peace that allows the thief to get away with anything he has wrongfully taken and attempts to appease the victim by giving them a paltry sum.

Many people resort to media campaigns and vague terminology to propagate their own viewpoints. The end result is that there is a multiplicity of perspectives and versions of the same story. Very few people, however, take the trouble to search for the truth and debunk propaganda campaigns with the perspective of examining and analysing information based on primary sources and judging things objectively and fairly.

Before you are some interesting facts to ponder.



Very few people take the trouble to search for the truth and debunk propaganda campaigns with the perspective of examining and analysing information in its primary sources and judging things objectively and fairly.



LAUNCHING

CURIOSITY

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Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today:

According to the PEW Research Centre, a non-profit American “fact tank” based in Washington D.C., Islam is spreading at a phenomenal pace around the world from America to Europe, Africa to Asia. This is all



occurring despite the scarcity of resources, Muslims' weaknesses and the all-out smear campaigns launched by world media in attempts to distort the image of the Muslim faith. The trend in the defamation of the Muslim faith is proliferating due to the erroneous information against Islam and highlighting the actions of the few atrocious Muslims who do not accurately represent Islam. Has Islam, then, spread by force or out of deep conviction involving a personal choice?

A well-informed person knows that others' interest in the Muslim faith is due in large measure to Muslims' commitment to safeguarding people's rights and the respect they have shown to their cultures and personal choices. They are also aware that this is not because of a favour Muslims have done for them; rather, it is mainly due to their implementation of the principle that the Qur'an has so clearly stressed, namely in the verse 2: 256: "There is no compulsion in religion. Right guidance has become clearly distinct from error ..."

Have People Been Compelled to Embrace Islam?



Man has often used force to impose his opinion and influence and serve his own interests. Indeed, history is replete with cases of this nature from the broad spectrum of religious affiliations and doctrines.

History, for instance, bears witness to the horrific atrocities the indigenous peoples of the New World suffered at the hands of the colonisers when they arrived. Bartolomé de las Casas, a 16th century historian, social reformer and priest, who witnessed such atrocities, wrote, "Indeed, given that the Spaniards normally spare only women and children, it has led to the annihilation of all adult males, whom they habitually subject to the harshest and most iniquitous and brutal slavery that man has ever devised for his fellow-men, treating them, in fact, worse than animals."

A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies
(Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd. 1992), p.9.

What did Muslims do when they ruled new lands?

Muslims ruled Andalusia (Muslim Spain) for eight centuries:



Muslims ruled Andalusia (Spain) for 781 years, from 711 CE to 1492 CE. During this period, Andalusia was the centre of world civilization, and no single Christian was forced to embrace Islam. Muslims preserved the rights of Christians who occupied key positions in the Muslim state as their trade flourished. Additionally, many of the injustices that had been imposed on the Jews prior to Muslim rule were lifted. In fact, history is replete with cases to this effect.

When the Spanish Army, under Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, whose marriage created the union of Castile and Aragon, thereby forming the Kingdom of Spain, they restored the whole of Spain to Christian rule. Consequently, they prevented all manifestations of Islam and established the Spanish Inquisition, a court that imprisoned or killed Muslims who had proved to practise their religion even in secret.

Muslims were expelled and forced to leave their homes. It is remarkable, that with the expulsion of Muslims from Andalusia, Jews were also expelled and together they travelled to Muslim lands, where they found safe shelter and a decent life.



Muslims have ruled Egypt for over 1,400 years during which time they have preserved the status of the Copts:



Muslims have ruled Egypt since the early beginnings of Islam, when 'Amr ibn al-'Aas, one of Prophet's Muhammad's companions, conquered it. 'Amr ibn al-'Aas not only preserved the Copts' faith and holy places but also saved them from the persecution and deprivation which they had suffered at the hands of the Romans on account of having accepted a separate Christian sect. With the Muslim rule in Egypt, the Copts regained their freedom of religion. Copts number more than five million in Egypt today.

Muslims ruled India for a thousand years when 80% of the inhabitants of India were not Muslim:



Muslims ruled the Indian subcontinent for nearly a thousand years. During this period, they protected the rights of followers of other faiths under their rule, allowed them to practise their religion freely, and lifted the oppression to which religions had been subjected. In fact, all historians assert that Islam did not spread by force and that no one was coerced into embracing Islam.

Islam reached the world's most populous Muslim-majority country without war or an army:



Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority country, with over 250 million citizens, 87% of whom are Muslim. Islam was introduced in Indonesia through the good character Muslim traders displayed in the sixteenth century of the *Hegira* (the Islamic calendar). Not a single Muslim army invaded Indonesia, and the country only witnessed a great deal of bloodshed after the arrival of the successive Portuguese colonizers, followed by the Dutch and English.




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Islam Versus the Bad Behaviour of Some Muslims



What

What is this terrible contradiction? What is this stark contrast between Islam and Muslims? These questions may be asked by people once they learn about the Islamic teachings, which urge Muslims to observe good manners, and establish a civilisation to benefit humanity and spread peace in the world, only to see bad examples of Muslims who are removed from such teachings. Could these so-called Muslims be followers of the true religion?

In fact, this matter is all the more perplexing and requires a calm discussion of several points:

- Not everyone who regards himself Muslim or was born a Muslim is a truly practising Muslim who follows all Islamic teachings. Indeed, many Muslims around the world neglect many of the teachings of Islam; worse yet, some Muslims know nothing about Islam but its name.
- Under no circumstances should people's mistakes be attributed to their religions. It would be utterly wrong, for instance, to attribute Hitler's tyranny to his religion, or to say that Christianity calls for violence because Hitler was a Christian, or that atheism requires its adherents to kill people just because Joseph Stalin, who was an atheist, killed tens of millions. All these claims are by no means objective, accurate and right.



Under no circumstances should people's mistakes be attributed to their religions or sects.

- Everyone testifies to the greatness and genius of the numerous positive role models and their true application of the teachings of Islam and the spirit of peace, science and development in which history abounds in different parts of the world, from the borders of India in the East to Spain in the West. Indeed, the considerable influence of such positive role models is still quite visible to us today and serves as a guiding light that has paved the way for present-day civilisation. There are also positive role models at the level of countries that seek to keep up with the ever-increasing pace of development today, in addition to distinctive individual models in all fields of science and in various countries around the world.
- No sensible person would reject the facts of modern medicine and prevent himself from medical treatment just because he knows examples of bad doctors around him. By the same token, no sensible person would ever oppose education and prevent his children from going to school just because he knows some schools or teachers who have abused this noble profession. Thus, Islam should be judged by its sublime principles, not by the bad behaviour of some Muslims.

- It is rather surprising that despite the fierce smear campaign launched against Islam by some of its followers or enemies, many people from all over the world are still able to perceive its pure original version and continue to embrace it.



No sensible person would ever oppose education and prevent his children from going to school just because he knows some schools or teachers who have abused this noble profession.





A New Perspective

How many times have you hesitated to make a decision and seize a chance for your own benefit? Are still blaming yourself for letting the opportunity slip by?

Indeed, man's greatest honour lies in his freedom and ability to make a decision for his own benefit without fear or hesitation.

If showing firm resolve in the face of challenges and obstacles is considered a form of courage for which one is lauded and appreciated, showing courage to make a decision when perceiving some personal interest or to admit one is wrong when the truth becomes clear is indeed far greater. This is because it is courage before the self and victory over vanity and the ego, whose positive effect is almost immediately perceived in oneself and in one's personality.

Just as you have given yourself the opportunity to know the features of Islam from its sources, do not hesitate to stop and think about what you have read.

If you have perceived the beauty of this religion and still need to do further research and discover more about Islam and its advantages, there is considerable scope for reading and learning, engaging in dialogue and asking questions. However, you need to look at it now from a completely different perspective.



We are glad you have read the entire book, and we hope that it has raised serious questions or stimulated some of your intellect as to areas of agreement and disagreement. We would be more than happy to hear your opinion, or any questions or objections you may have, and we promise to take your feedback very seriously.

For more information about Islam:



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