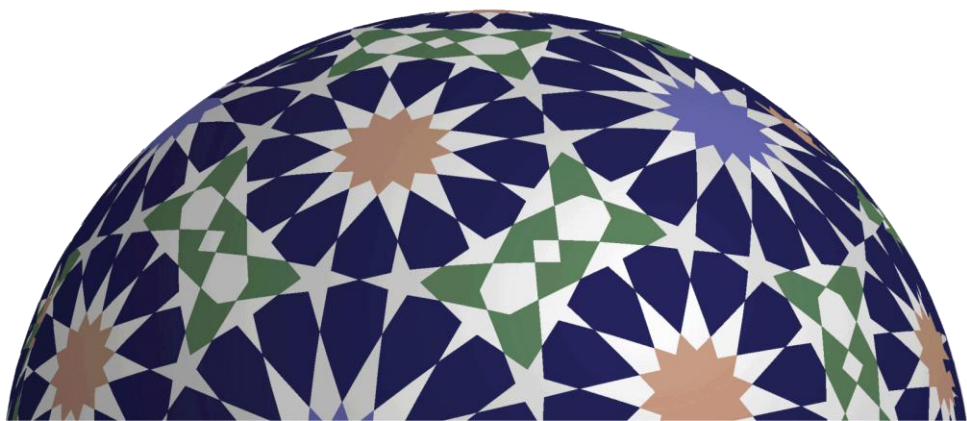


INTRODUCING ISLAM

SUHEL FAROOQ KHAN



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What is Islam?



Islam, the oldest religion on earth, is the final version of the same religion that God had sent to mankind repeatedly, through many of His **Messengers**. Some of those **Messengers** were **Adam, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Ishmael, Isaac, David, Solomon, Job, Moses, Jesus** and **Muhammad** (Peace be upon them). **God** sent the same **Message** to mankind through another Messenger after His previous Message was altered. His last Messenger **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) brought His last Message to mankind.

Islam literally means obedience to God, the Sole Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The root words of **Islam** are *Silm* and *Salam*, both of which mean *Peace*.

Islam is a religion of peace that has no room for violence, and considers as one of the worst crimes.

Forcing or luring anyone into **Islam** is strictly forbidden (The Holy Qur-an 2:256).

Islam is free from discrimination based on color of skin, cast, creed, language or nationality.

Unlike other religions, **Islam** does not merely consist of a few rituals that are to be practiced occasionally; instead it offers a complete way of life. **Islam** has set simple guidelines to lead life in a manner that pleases God. **Islam** is the simplest of all religions.

Islam does not require any intermediary for carrying out any of its religious rituals; therefore there is no clergy in **Islam**.

Who are Muslims?



Followers of the religion **Islam** are called **Muslims**.

Muslims live their lives in a manner that pleases God as told by Him in the Holy **Qur-an**, and as demonstrated to mankind by **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him), the last **Messenger** (Rasul) of God. **Muslims** live in peace and harmony with the entire creation of God and through their behavior try to make the world a better place to live.

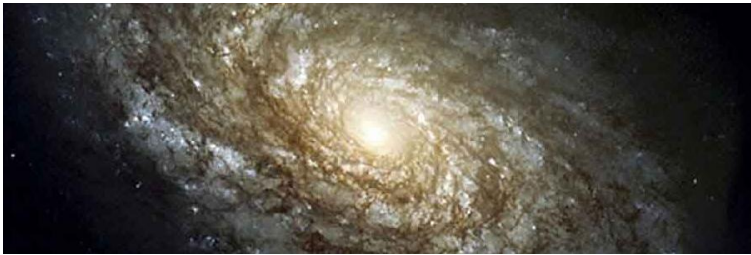
Muslims believe in only One God, offer prayers to Him five times a day, fast in the month of **Ramadan**, pay charity to the poor and visit the **Ka'bah** in **Makkah** for pilgrimage at least once in their life time if they can physically and financially afford it.

Muslims abstain from Unlawful (**Haram**) activities and do not consume Unlawful (**Haram**) foods.

With a population of over 1.25 billion, **Islam** is the largest religion of the world. Every fourth person in the world is a **Muslim**; believing in the same basic Truth that God had earlier conveyed to mankind through many **Messengers**.

The largest concentration of **Muslims** is in Indonesia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, China, Russia, Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. The U.S.A. has about 7-9 million **Muslims**. European countries also have significant **Muslim** populations. Only 18% of **Muslims** are Arabs. There are more than 50 countries in the world with a majority of **Muslim** population and significant **Muslim** populations exist in at least 172 countries.

Who is the God of Muslims?



Muslims worship the **Only God**, the Sole Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer of the universe and everything in it. **He is Truly Unique and has no partners or family.**

Muslims believe that God created everything and He Himself is Uncreated. He was there before anything existed and He will be there when everything will cease to exist by His Will.

God has complete knowledge of everything in the universe and has absolute control over everything that happens anywhere in it. Nothing is hidden from Him. He knows everything that anyone thinks or does. **God** cares about His creations and is always close to them.

Muslims usually call Him by the name of **Allāh**, the Arabic word for **God**. The Arabic word **Allāh** has neither any gender nor plural, and is most suitable to describe God. He is the same **God** that the Christians and the Jews worship. Arab Christians and Jews also use the word **Allāh** for **God**.

God, the Most Just Judge, will judge us all for our deeds in this world on the **Day of Judgment**. He will reward us for even the smallest of our good deeds and punish us for our deliberate mistakes. He is the Most Compassionate, Most Kind and Most Merciful and may forgive our mistakes if we sincerely repent.

There is only one sin that He will never forgive: Taking partners with Him.

What is the Qur-an?



The Holy **Qur-an** is the last Divine Book revealed by **God** to His last Messenger **Muḥammad** (Peace be upon him) for the guidance of mankind. The **Qur-an** is the only Divine Book that remains unchanged over fourteen centuries.

Muḥammad (Peace be upon him) received the first revelation in the year 609 CE, at the age of 40, when he was meditating in a small cave of mount *Hira* near *Makkah*. These revelations continued over a period of almost twenty-three years, through Angel Gabriel, even when **Muḥammad** (Peace be upon him) and his companions were forced to migrate to *Madinah*.

Muḥammad (Peace be upon him) used to memorize the revealed verses of the **Qur-an** and used to recite them to his companions. Many of his companions used to memorize them immediately. Some of them used to memorize them, write them down on available media like barks of trees, stone tablets, parchments, bones and leather etc. Designated writers also meticulously kept records of the revealed verses of the **Qur-an**. The tradition to memorize the **Qur-an** continues and there are millions of **Muslims** around the world who have memorized it in its entirety.

The **Qur-an** carries **three main themes**: **Oneness of God** (*Waḥdah*), **Prophethood** (*Risalah*) and an eternal **Life after Death** (*Akhirah*).

The **Qur-an** also has a uniquely rich collection of truth, wisdom and guidance for a perfect way of living for creating a perfect society.

Who was **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him)?



Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was born in the year 570 CE in a respectable **Quraysh** family of **Makkah**, a few months after his father '**Abd Allah** died.

His grandfather '**Abd Al Muttalib** raised him.

He lost his mother **Aminah** when he was barely six years old and his grandfather when he was eight.

He was then raised lovingly by one of his uncles **Abu Talib**.

God chose **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) as His last **Messenger** when he was about 40 years of age. **God** has Commanded **Muslims** to faithfully follow His last **Messenger**. Obeying **God** and following His last **Messenger**, **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) is obligatory upon all **Muslims**.

Disobeying the last Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is a great sin with severe punishment from **God**.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was a perfect human being. He was a loving father, a caring husband, a charismatic leader, most able administrator, a unique social reformer, the most wonderful teacher, a caring neighbor, a sincere human being and an extremely humble person.

All these superlatives and adjectives cannot define the unparalleled qualities of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him).

He was also an extremely honest person and was known as **Al- Amin** (The Trustworthy). People used to keep their valuables with him for safe keeping without any hesitation. While migrating to **Madinah**, his life was in immense danger

from the assassination plot hatched by the **Quraysh** leaders, he made arrangements to return all valuables to their owners.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was ridiculed, tortured and hounded for preaching **Islam**. Several attempts were made on his life. He was forced to leave his hometown **Makkah** and migrate to the city of **Madinah** with his family and companions, where **Islam** flourished.

Muslims conquered **Makkah** without shedding blood, only eight years after they were forced out of it. **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) pardoned all of his enemies including those who had tortured him and had plotted to kill him.

Soon after, the entire Arabian Peninsula embraced **Islam**. **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) went back to live in **Madinah**, where he died in the year 623 CE (11 *Hijrah*).

In a short span of 23 years, **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) changed the world for ever with the Message of Truth.

Muslims recite *Sallallahu 'Alayhi Wasallam* - a small supplication whenever they take, hear of read the name of the last Messenger of God, **Muhammad**. It means *Peace be upon him*.

Do Muslims Worship Muhammad (Peace be upon him)?



Muslims worship the **Only God**, the **Creator**, **Sustainer** and **Cherisher** of the universe. **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) also worshipped God.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was the last Messenger of God on this earth, as **Adam** (Peace be upon him) was the first. In between the two, there was a long chain of **Messengers** (Peace be upon them). All **Messengers** were humans and worshipped the Only God.

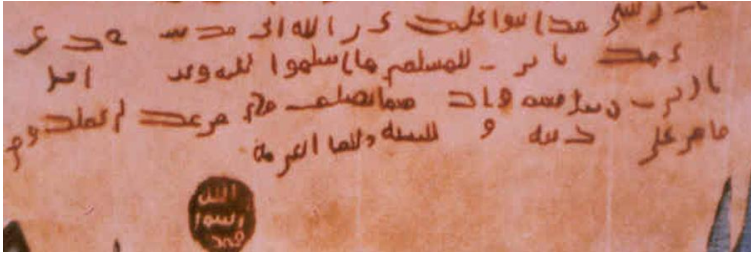
Muslims give utmost respect to **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) as they respect all the other **Messengers of God**. **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him), the last **Messenger of God**, received the last Message for the guidance of mankind from God. Every action of his life was based on that Divine Guidance and was to seek the pleasure of God.

Detailed accounts of the life of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) were carefully recorded by scores of his followers in his lifetime. No such details of any other **Messenger** of God are available. **Muslims** strive to follow the traditions of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) in their lives.

Taking a cue from the name '*Christians*' for the worshippers of Christ and '*Buddhists*' for the worshippers of Buddha; some western writers began calling Muslims, *Mohammedans* erroneously implying that they worship **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him).

What are the Traditions of Muhammad

(Peace be upon him) (*Sunnah*)?



Unlike other religions, **Islam** offers a complete code for living and is not merely a combination of a few rituals.

There are only two sources for all Islamic knowledge. The primary source of guidance is the **Qur-an**, the last Message of God that He sent to mankind through **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him). The traditions of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) provide the secondary source of guidance for **Muslims**.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) lived his life strictly in accordance with the Commands of God. Whatever he did, said or silently approved of, is among the traditions of **Muhammad** (*Sunnah*).

Traditions of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) were carefully and faithfully recorded by scores of his companions and preserved for ever. Those meticulously kept records made the life of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) an open book for generations to follow. Following the traditions of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) is obligatory upon **Muslims**.

Islam is the only religion for which historically proven, accurate and precise details of the life of its last Messenger are available like an open book.

The guidance of the **Qur-an** and the traditions of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) are extremely logical and easy to follow. Since **Islam** is the last religion sent by God, its principles are ageless. They are still relevant and are being followed with the same spirit and zeal as they were 1,400 years ago and will remain relevant in the ages to come.

The Concept of Worship in Islam



Islam is the only religion where one can seek the pleasures of God while leading a normal life. **Islam** rejects monasticism and provides a beautiful and natural balance between the physical and spiritual requirements of mankind.

In **Islam**, raising a family through lawful means, conducting business honestly, taking care of one's parents etc. are all acts of worship. Practicing kindness, showing mercy, being considerate to others, having compassion, honesty and sincerity and all other nice deeds are considered as forms of worship in **Islam**.

Basically, **Islam** teaches **Muslims** to be nice human beings and expects them to contribute positively towards the establishment of a just, kind and caring social system. **Muslims** are required to acquire and practice the best of manners following the Commands of God and traditions of the last Messenger of God, **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him).

There are certain ritualistic prayers that a **Muslim** has to offer, and all of them are relatively simple and take very little time and effort.

Muslims have to offer **Prayers** (*Salah*) five times a day, observe **Fasts** (*Sawm*) from sunrise to sunset for one month during the month of **Ramadan** every year, pay **Compulsory Charity** to the poor and the needy (*Zakah*) on their savings or wealth every year, make a **pilgrimage to the Ka'bah** (*Hajj*) once in a lifetime by those who can withstand the rigors of the journey and afford the expenses involved.

The Five Pillars of Islam

1. Declaration of Faith (*Shahadah*)



An absolute belief in and the declaration of Faith is the first requirement of **Islam**.

Declaration of Faith consists of a simple two part statement:

- a. The first part is: ***La ilaha illallah***
It means that ***No one else is worthy of worship but God***
- b. The second part is: ***Muhammadur Rasulallah***
It means that ***Muhammad*** (Peace be upon him) ***is the*** (final) ***Messenger of God***

This simple statement is the foundation of Islamic faith.

Muslims worship only One **God** whom they call by the Arabic word **Allah** and remain obedient to His Commands.

Muslims ask for everything only from Him and look to Him for help only, whenever in trouble and they stay away from whatever **God** has forbidden for them.

Muslims also faithfully follow the traditions of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him), the last Messenger of God, who explained, exemplified and demonstrated the Commands of God to mankind by living his own life in accordance to them.

Sincerely and firmly believing in and declaring the **Shahadah** is the basic requirement for accepting **Islam**.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Articles of Faith (*Shahādah*)



There are six basic components of **Faith** (*Shahādah*). **Muslims** must believe in all of the six components of **Faith** (*Shahādah*).

Anyone who does not believe in any of the fundamental components of **Faith** (*Shahādah*) cannot be a **Muslim**.

1. Belief in the **Oneness of God** including all His **Attributes** (*Sifat*).
2. Belief in all **Books of God**, and belief that the **Qur-an** is His last Book sent for the guidance of mankind.
3. Belief in all **Messengers** (Rusul) of **God**, with a belief that **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) was His last **Messenger** (Rasul).
4. Belief in **Destiny** (*Qadr*).
5. Belief in **Angels** (*Mala'ikah*).
6. Belief in **Life after Death** (*Akhirah*).

These components of basic Islamic faith come as a package, and these have to be accepted in totality; one cannot pick and choose from them.

The Five Pillars of Islam

2 (a) Prayers (*Salah*)



Muslims are required to offer prayers five times every day:

1. **Morning Prayers** (*Fajr Salah*)
2. **Early Afternoon Prayers** (*Zuhr Salah*)
3. **Late Afternoon Prayers** (*'Asr Salah*)
4. **Sunset Prayers** (*Maghrib Salah*)
5. **Night Prayers** (*'Isha" Salah*)
6. **Friday Prayers** (*Jumu'ah Salah*): Offered on Fridays in place of *Zuhr* Prayers.

Muslims must try to offer their prayers at their prescribed times at mosques in a group. These prayers can be offered anywhere if one cannot reach a mosque for any genuine reason. There is no clergy in **Islam** and any practicing **Muslim**, who has knowledge of **Islam**, can lead the group prayers.

Muslims join shoulders and toes with each other while offering prayers, irrespective of their social status. It presents a unique picture of brotherhood and solidarity.

There are two prerequisites for offering prayers:

1. **Purification** (*Taharah*): A clean body, a set of clean clothes and a mind with clean thoughts.
2. **Ablution** (*Wudu*): Washing the hands, rinsing the mouth, cleaning the nose, washing the face, arms and feet in the prescribed manner and order.

2 (b) Call for Prayers (*Adhan*)



Muslims are required to offer Prayers five times every day. A Call for Prayers (*Adhan*) is given before each Prayer. The same **Call for Prayers** (*Adhan*) resonates throughout the world using the same words that were approved by **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him):

Allahu Akbar (God is Great) **Allahu Akbar** (God is Great)

Allahu Akbar (God is Great) **Allahu Akbar** (God is Great)

Ash-hado an La ilaha illallah

(I testify that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah)

Ash-hado an La ilaha illallah

(I testify that there is no one worthy of worship except Allah)

Ash-hado anna Muhammadar Rasul Allah

(I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah)

Ash-hado anna Muhammadar Rasul Allah

(I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah)

Hayya 'Alas Salah (Come to prayers)

Hayya 'Alas Salah (Come to prayers)

Hayya 'Alal Falah (Come to success)

Hayya 'Alal Falah (Come to success)

Allahu Akbar (God is Great) **Allahu Akbar** (God is Great)

La ilaha illallah

(There is no one worthy of worship except Allah)

An additional phrase **Assalatu Khayrum Minan Nawm**

(Prayer is better than sleep) is repeated twice after **Hayya 'Alal Falah** (Come to success) in the call for the Morning Prayers (*Fajr Salah*).

3 Compulsory Charity (*Zakah*)



Islam ushered in an unprecedented social revolution and established a new kind of just and caring society. Well-off **Muslims** share their wealth with the less fortunate ones. **Muslims** pay 2.5% of their savings and wealth every year in charity. Personal place of residence, personal car and professional tools are exempted from the *Zakah* calculations. **Compulsory Charity (*Zakah*)** can be given in cash or kind for the following purposes:

1. For the poor
2. For the needy
3. For people employed to collect *Zakah*
4. To people who are inclined towards *Islam*
5. To free the captives
6. For those in debt
7. For Allah's cause
8. For travelers

Compulsory Charity (*Zakah*) is also due on farm produce at the rate of 5-10% depending upon the mode of irrigation. Such charity is called '*Ushr*'.

The literal meaning of the word ***Zakah*** is to purify or to grow. By paying **Charity (*Zakah*)** **Muslims** purify their **Halal** (Lawful) wealth and God makes it to grow further. **Muslims** pay **Compulsory Charity (*Zakah*)** by the Islamic calendar every year. Besides the **Compulsory Charity (*Zakah*)**, **Islam** put great emphasis on other Charity (*Sadaqah*) for the care of the poor and the needy.

4. Pilgrimage to the *Ka'bah* (*Hajj*)



Muslims are required to go for the **Pilgrimage to the *Ka'bah* (*Hajj*)** at least once in their lifetime. The tradition of the **Pilgrimage to the *Ka'bah* (*Hajj*)** was started by **Abraham** (Ibrahīm) after he and his elder son **Ishmael** (Ismā'īl) (Peace be upon them) constructed the ***Ka'bah* in *Makkah***.

This pilgrimage is obligatory upon only those **Muslims** who can afford the expenses and withstand the rigors of the journey. The **Pilgrimage to the *Ka'bah* (*Hajj*)** begins on the 8th day of *Dhul Hijjah* (twelfth month of the Islamic calendar) every year and lasts for five days.

During the pilgrimage, the male pilgrims wear a simple dress consisting of two unstitched sheets of cotton to cover the upper and lower portions of the body. This humble dress removes all signs of social differences. Ladies perform the pilgrimage in their usual Islamic attire.

Hajj pilgrims go around the ***Ka'bah*** seven times in an anti-clockwise manner, walk briskly between the hillocks of *Safa* and *Marwah* seven times, stand at the plains of *'Arafat* and ask for forgiveness from God, stone the Satan at *Mina*, offer sacrifice to God, and either trim or shave their heads.

Over 2.5 million **Muslims** of different nationalities, speaking different languages congregate in Saudi Arabia for the pilgrimage to the ***Ka'bah* (*Hajj*)** every year.

Muslims, who are unable to make the pilgrimage, celebrate the event around the world as *'Id Al Ad-ha* (Festival of Sacrifice) on the 10th day of *Dhul Hijjah*.

5. Fasting (*Sawm*)



Muslims all over the world observe fasting from sunrise to sunset during the month of **Ramadan** (Ninth month of the Islamic calendar), every year.

Besides completely abstaining from eating, drinking and having sex with spouses during the fasting hours, they also avoid loose talk or harsh words during their fast.

A light pre-dawn meal (**Sahur**) is highly recommended. Following the tradition of the last Messenger of Allah, **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him), **Muslims** break their fast with palm-dates or water.

The elderly, the sick, travelers, nursing mothers, pregnant women and women during their menstrual cycles are exempted from fasting. They are required to compensate for their lost days of fasting, by observing those many fasts later. Fasting is an exercise to gain self control.

God had prescribed fasting for all the other religions before **Islam**, but they have either forgotten it altogether or have reduced it to mere symbolism.

The Islamic Calendar



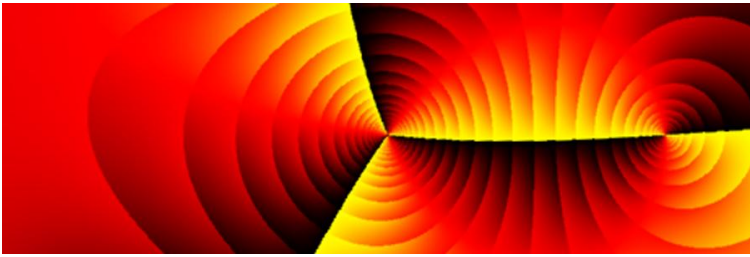
The Islamic calendar is called **Hijrah** (*Migration*) calendar. It begins from the day when **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) made a **Hijrah** from **Makkah** to **Madinah**. The Islamic calendar was implemented from July 16, 622 CE and it follows the lunar cycles. The years of the Islamic calendar are approximately ten days shorter than the Gregorian calendar of 365 days, we normally use.

Each month of the Islamic calendar could be either 29 or 30 days long, depending upon the moon cycle. First day of the month starts after the sighting and visibility of the moon.

The beginning of the month of fasting **Ramadan** (*Ninth month of the Islamic calendar*), **'Id al-Fitr** (*Festival of Fasting*) at the end of **Ramadan** and **Hajj** (*Annual Pilgrimage to Ka'bah*) are always announced only after sighting the moon. **Poor Due Charity** (*Zakah*) is also paid according to the Islamic calendar. The twelve months of the Islamic Calendar are:

1. *Muharram*
2. *Safar*
3. *Rabi' ul Awwal*
4. *Rabi' uth-thani*
5. *Jumadal ula*
6. *Jumadal Ukhra*
7. *Rajab*
8. *Sha'ban*
9. *Ramadan*
10. *Shawwal*
11. *Dhul Qa'dah*
12. *Dhul Hijjah*

Is Islam a rational religion?



Yes, besides being the simplest religion, **Islam** is also the most rational religion of the world. The following facts have made **Islam** to be the fastest growing religion of the world:

- **One God.** The concept of God in **Islam** is very simple, clear and precise. There is only One God, Who has created the entire universe and everything in it. He Alone is worthy of worship.
- **God does not have parents or offspring.** God is far above the worldly attributes.
- **All Messengers, deputed by God to carry His Message to mankind were humans,** who lived and died like humans. God had bestowed some of them with miracles.
- **There is no clergy in Islam.** **Islam** does not require any priest or any other intermediary for carrying out any of its acts of worship. **Islam** establishes a direct relationship between individuals and their Creator.
- **Islam is the only religion to reject the idea of celibacy** to receive the pleasure of God. Every normal act of life of a Muslim becomes an act of worship, if done in a manner that pleases God.
- **Islam treats all its followers alike** irrespective of the color of skin, nationality, educational levels or social status etc.
- **Islamic principles are extremely simple to follow** and are very rational and logical.
- **Islam is the first religion to recognize, define and practice human rights** more than 1,400 years ago.

Status of Women in Islam



Islam is the first religion that has recognized women as equal partners to men. She has equal rights and responsibilities in **Islam**. Persuasion of knowledge was made incumbent equally upon both men and women. Both men and women are equal and are equally accountable to God.

Throughout the Islamic history women have enjoyed complete freedom of expression. In the days of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him), women participated in serious discussions on policy matters and voted on those matters, a privilege obtained by the Western women only recently.

Islam strongly encourages marriage and **Muslim** women have right to choose their life partners. Her property or the wealth remains hers even after her marriage and she retains her maiden name. In all financial matters **Islam** recognizes women, single or married, as independent human beings with independent personalities. She is entitled to inherit property from her deceased kin as a wife, mother, sister or daughter. Islamic laws guarantee maintenance rights to her even against an adverse will. She enjoys a very high position in **Islam** as a mother.

Unlike other societies, **Islam** does not see her as a commodity and forbids her exploitation.

Muslim women dress and live modestly. They follow the same dress code that was prescribed by God for the women of the Jewish and *Christian* faith but is now limited to only nuns

Polygamy in Islam



Unlike other religions, **Islam** rejects the concept of celibacy to seek the pleasure of God. **Islam** considers marriage as a religious act that is necessary for establishing a responsible, just and stable society.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) has equated practicing marriage to perfecting half the religion.

In **Islam**, marriage is not seen as only a vehicle for the fulfillment of physical needs, it is taken as a foundation for a caring society built upon love and affection.

Both partners in marriage have equal responsibilities in **Islam**.

Polygamy is neither required nor recommended for **Muslim** men. **Islam** allows it only with quite stringent conditions and gives preference to having one wife.

Islam forbids physical intimacy without marriage. It leads to the eradication of many social evils prevalent in societies that have marginalized the institution of marriage.

Raising of this issue by the West seems quite hypocritical because a significant majority of their population practices polygamous relationships with a multitude of partners either without or outside marriage, shunning commitments and responsibilities towards them, in most cases.

Also, polygamy was a usual practice throughout the biblical period. Most Messengers of God like, **Abraham, David, Solomon** and **Jacob** etc. (Peace be upon them) all had more than one wives.

According to the census of India, **Muslims** (5.7%) are the last on the list of Polygamous marriages after Tribals (15.7%), Buddhists (7.97%), Jains (6.72%) and Hindus (5.8%).

Does Islam teach violence?



Not at all, **Islam** is the most peaceful religion in the world.

The word **Islam** is derived from the Arabic root-words *Silm* and *Salam* meaning Peace.

Islam and **Muslims** always promote peace.

The typical **Muslim** greeting *Assalmu 'Alaykum* means *May peace with you*. Its reply *Walaykum Assalam* means *May peace be with you too*.

Islam considers violence as one of the worst crimes.

Muslims, the followers of **Islam**, lead their lives in accordance with the simple, logical and peaceful guidelines laid down by the **Qur-an** and according to the **traditions of Muḥammad** (Peace be upon him), the last Messenger of God; with an objective to make this world a better place to live.

Islam, the embodiment of peace, provides a complete code of life covering every aspect of it through these guidelines and there is absolutely no room for any irrationality like violence in **Islam**.

Muḥammad (Peace be upon him) and his companions, the early **Muslims** suffered the worst kind of physical and mental persecution by the **Quraysh** of **Makkah** but they never used violence in retaliation. They forced the **Muslims** to leave their homes and entire belongings there and migrate to **Madinah**.

Only eight years after their migration, **Muslims** conquered **Makkah** without shedding any blood.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him), the last Messenger of God, pardoned even his worst enemies who had abused, humiliated and tortured him for almost 20 years and even plotted for his death; in an unprecedented show of mercy, compassion and kindness in line with the Islamic tradition of maintaining peace.

It is in sharp contrast to the many *developed* nations who had indulged in the mass annihilation of innocent native races after invading their lands only for material gains.

Islam allows fighting back in self-defense but prefers those who can forgive their tormentors.

Islam had introduced, defined and practiced human rights more than 1,400 years before the term was even coined by the West.

What is *Jihad*?



Jihad is one of the most misunderstood components of **Islam**, and in most cases is taken as holy war. Unlike crusades, **Islam** does not have the concept of holy war.

In **Islam**, fighting in a war is **Jihad** if one is fighting only and only for the Cause of God. Fighting for territorial gains, nationalism, pride, money or the community is not **Jihad**.

Islam allows **Muslims** to fight back against oppression or if they are attacked. Even under such circumstances God prefers those who forgive. **Muslims** are also required to fight for the protection and safety of people of other faiths living under their rule.

Muhammad (Peace be upon him) had set unprecedented standards of humanity during wars. He forbade killing of the innocent, women, children, the old and the sick, destruction of crops, cutting of trees, killing of livestock and damaging places of worship during wars. He treated his prisoners of war with unprecedented care. Muslims went hungry to feed their prisoners of war.

The word **Jihad** is derived from the word *Jehd*, which means to struggle. **Muslims** are required to wage **Jihad** for the Cause of God to make this world a more livable place.

The word **Jihad** has never been used in the **Qur-an** in context of combat. The word **Qital** is used for that instead.

The foremost **Jihad** is fighting against one's own evil desires to stray from the right path, by obedience of God and His last Messenger **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him).

Acquiring knowledge, applying that in one's life and passing that to others are some other forms of **Jihad**.

Jihad can be waged by actions, speech and prayers for guidance and not by spreading hatred.

Fundamentalism, Terrorism and Islam



Believing in and faithfully following the fundamentals of a religion is fundamentalism. By definition true Christians, true Jews, true Muslims and true Hindus are all fundamentalists.

Unfortunately, a lot of people have been systematically trying to demonize **Islam**. The Western media has been, for some reason, very supportive of those people by simply equating the word fundamentalism of **Muslims** to the word terrorism.

Strangely, the fundamentalism of the Jews, the Christians, the Hindus and followers of other religions is seen as a positive trait and reported accordingly.

Terrorism targets innocent people to instill fear. **Islam** forbids killing of innocent people even if they are defending themselves.

Islam equates killing of a person to killing an entire race and considers that as one of the worst crimes.

Suicide is also forbidden in **Islam**.

A true fundamentalist **Muslim** or a practicing **Muslim** can never be a terrorist or approve of terrorism because **Islam** is the most humane and rational religion.

Does Islam Tolerate Other Religions?



The Holy **Qur-an** commands to respect all other religions and to allow others to continue with their beliefs:

1. **Say** (O Muḥammad (Peace be upon him) to these Mushrikun and Kafirun): "**O Al- Kafirun** (disbelievers in Allāh, in His Oneness, in His angels, in His Books, in His Messengers, in the Day of Resurrection, and in Al-Qadr, etc.)!
2. **"I Worship not that which you worship,**
3. **"Nor will you worship that which I worship.**
4. **"And I shall not worship that which you are worshipping.**
5. **"Nor will you worship that which I worship.**
6. **"To you be your religion, and to me my religion (Islamic Monotheism)."**

[*Al-Kafirun (The Disbelievers)* Qur-an 109:1-6]

India was ruled by **Muslim** rulers, whose word of mouth used to be the law, for almost one thousand years; yet **Muslims** constitute about 12% of its population. This very fact proves that **Islam** not only tolerates other religions but also respects them and allows them to flourish even when things were under their absolute control.

Does Islam recognize Jesus?



Yes, believing in Jesus (Peace be upon him) is a part of the fundamental Islamic faith, but **Islam** does not see him as the son of God because **Islam** considers God to be beyond humanly relations. **Islam** recognizes Jesus as one of the great Messengers of God like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Moses, Solomon, David, Job, Job Ezekiel, Jacob, Muḥammad and many others (Peace be upon all of them).

God had sent Jesus some 600 years before **Muḥammad** (Peace be upon them) for the guidance of mankind. While believing in Jesus as a Messenger of Allah, **Islam** firmly rejects the irrational doctrine of trinity as **Islam** clearly differentiates between the Creator and His creations.

Islam believes in the miraculous birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) to his mother Mary without any male intervention. A complete chapter of the Qur-an is named after Mary. **Islam** also believes in the God given miracles performed by Jesus. **Islam** believes that God saved Jesus (Peace be upon him) from his Jewish tormentors before they could crucify him. **Islam** also believes that God Almighty did not have to get Jesus killed to save humanity.

Muslims believe that the actual Message of God brought by **Jesus** (Peace be upon him) was altered, modified and lost, therefore God sent His Message for the last time through **Muḥammad** (Peace be upon him). **Muslims** give utmost respect to Jesus and use *peace be upon him* as a suffix to the name of Jesus like all other Messengers of God.

Things forbidden in Islam



Islamic beliefs come as a package deal, without options to pick and choose. **Muslims** believe in all those simple and rational beliefs.

Besides any sort of dilutions of the fundamental Islamic beliefs, **Islam** also prohibits things that are harmful for the ideal society it strives for.

The following are forbidden in **Islam**:

1. Adultery
2. Alcohol, Illicit Drugs or any other form of intoxication
3. Gambling
4. Interest
5. Pork
6. Murder
7. Fraud
8. Fortune telling
9. Suicide

Besides the above mentioned, disrespecting ones parents, backbiting, taking or giving bribes, extravagance, miserliness, dishonesty in business, pride, arrogance, envy, jealousy, anger and using foul language etc are also prohibited in **Islam**.

A Simple Test



Every religion claims to be the only true religion, which can lead to salvation.

We ask you to find answers for the following questions:

1. Is the definition of God you worship, perfect?
2. Is your religion rational?
3. Have the religious texts of your religion withstood the test of time and remained authentic, unaltered and uniform?
4. Are historically correct details from the life of the Prophet (founder) of your religion available?
5. Does your religion completely discard myths and superstitions?
6. Do most followers of your religion follow its teachings completely?
7. Are the scientific facts mentioned in your religious text supported by modern sciences?

In **Islam**, the answer to all these questions is **YES**.

Does your religion also answer all these questions in affirmative?

If not, then please use the God-given intellect to compare **Islam** with your religion with an open mind and then make your own decision.

How to revert back to Islam?



Muslim is one who is totally submissive to the Will of God. **Muslims** believe that like everything in the universe, every child is also born by the Will of God and is totally submissive to Him, making every newborn a **Muslim**. They deviate from the Path of Allāh, only because of the environment they grow in.

God has given us intellect for choosing the Right Path. Compare your religious beliefs to **Islam** and make your own decision. It can change your life in this world as well as well as more importantly, the eternal life after death.

To revert back to **Islam** one does not require any religious ceremony or function. To accept **Islam** one must believe in the Oneness of God and **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) as His last Messenger.

This basic Islamic belief is articulated by reciting the *Shahādah*: ***La ilaha illallah, Muhammadur Rasul Allah.***

It means that - No one else is worthy of worship but God and Muhammad is His Messenger. This fundamental Islamic belief rejects all deities and accepts Only One God.

Muslims follow the Commandments of **Allāh** brought to mankind by His last Messenger **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him), in all walks of their lives.

After reciting the *Shahādah*, begin to learn about the traditions of **Muhammad** (Peace be upon him) to follow the way of life that is liked by God.

Contact any mosque, Islamic center, Muslim organization or your Muslim acquaintances, your Muslim neighbors or us for details or questions.

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Please mail your questions, comments and suggestions to
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