

Clear Your Doubts about Islam

By Sahih International

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Foreword

No one can deny that Islam is very much in the spotlight today. In spite of extremely negative

portrayals by Western media (or perhaps because of them), increasing numbers of people are

seeking to find out more about it. And more often than not, they are being pleasantly

surprised by the fruits of their research. In fact, more people are embracing Islam today than

they did prior to September 11, 2001

However, there does remain a great deal of misconception and misunderstanding on the

subject, frequently fuelled by political policies which deem it in their interest to support

Islam's enemies. In addition, Muslims themselves, at first shocked and confused by the events

of recent years, did not really know how to respond to the challenge. Now they have been

rudely awakened to the urgency of refuting the many false claims and accusations being

spread against their way of life and of defending the truth, and accordingly, the rights and

.honour of Muslims everywhere on earth

Islam is the religion and way of life of about one-fifth of the world's population. Muslims are

of diverse nationalities, cultures and races, but their religion teaches that all men are

essentially equal and that no distinction should be made between them on the basis of such

superficial differences as colour, class status or personal beliefs as long as they remain

peaceful and law-abiding citizens. The behaviour of certain misguided groups or individuals

outside the fold of mainstream Islam cannot be attributed to the religion any more than

violence in North Ireland or mafia activities can be attributed to .Christianity

People of secular cultures often fail to understand why practicing Muslims cannot always fit in completely with modern Westernized lifestyles, why they insist upon a particular type of dress, or upon prayer at particular times. They tend to perceive Muslim attitudes as unnecessarily demanding and uncompromising. Misunderstandings are frequently due to unmistakable differences between the Western concept of religion and that of Muslims. Islam can indeed seem strange to a society in which religion no longer plays a major role in everyday life; but to a dedicated Muslim, Islam is life, and there is no division between the .secular and the sacred

Because religious practice occupies a narrow place in his outlook, the adherent to Western culture often does not comprehend the relationship between a Muslim and his religion or what motivates him to take a particular direction in life. But in the view of Islam, religion is not merely a personal issue or something symbolic pertaining to a limited area of one's existence. On the contrary, it involves moulding a balanced way of life suitable not only to

Muslims but to everyone who inclines toward peace, justice and respect for rights. More

simply, it can be said to mean the pursuit of happiness, security and moral perfection. In the

hearts of Muslims their religion remains both a secure refuge and the most effective

motivator for tackling all kinds of challenges. At the same time, it preserves the distinctive

character of the Muslim believer and the pattern of his particular .culture

An individual in the West might see religion within a limited context pertaining to worship

alone - a private matter between a person and God. But in Islam it is a dynamic system that

organizes the progression of life according to basic general principles and flexible rulings that

guarantee potential benefit from advancements in science and technology as well as new

material facilities. Since there is no conflict between Islam and scientific research, every new

discovery in the world of matter, energy, time and space only increases the believer in faith

and humility towards Him who devised, projected and systematized such a plan and then

assigned to mankind his place and noble role within it. Within this understanding it remains

to be said that knowledgeable Muslims are not in need of secularism since they have no

.problem with religion

?What Is Islam

Islam" is an Arabic word which means peaceful, willing " submission - submission to the

code of conduct ordained by God. So Islam is a religion, but it is also a complete way of life

based upon a voluntary relationship between an individual and his Creator. It is the way of

life ordained by God which was taught by each of His prophets and messengers. What

distinguishes Islam from other religions is that it refuses to accept any form of creation

whatsoever as a deity worthy of worship. Instead, it emphasizes the exclusive worship of the

one God who created the entire universe and to whom all .creation will eventually return

Monotheism is the foundation of Islam and its most important concept which cannot be

compromised in any way. Not only is God acknowledged as the sole creator and sustainer of

everything in existence, but Islam declares that He is the only true deity and He alone is

worthy to be worshipped. Further, it recognizes that the attributes of God are nothing like

those of His creation and cannot be compared to it; He is
.absolute, perfect and unique

What Is a Muslim

A Muslim is someone who practices Islam; that is, who
willingly submits to the revealed

directives of God. Everything in the universe is inherently
submissive to God, functioning

according to the natural laws created by Him. Human beings are
physically "Muslim" in that

their bodies function according to the genetic program set by
God for the period of time He

.has decreed

A "Muslim" in the religious sense, however, is someone who
consciously commits himself

to the worship of God alone, not according to his own
inclinations or those of other men but

according to the method conveyed by God through His
appointed prophets. The Qur'an gives

many examples of people who lived before Muhammad and
believed in and obeyed the

prophet that God had sent them. They entered Paradise because
of their obedience to God

".and that is the meaning of "Islam

All the prophets of God, from Adam to Muhammad, and those
who believed and followed

each of them during the period of his prophethood [i.e., until another prophet was sent after him] were called "Muslims." But since Prophet Muhammad was the last of God's messengers to mankind, a "Muslim" can now only be defined as one who accepts and complies with the final, completed message conveyed by God through him. For rationally, the most recently revised legislation always supersedes and invalidates whatever came before it

Isn't it True that Islam is an Arab Religion

This mistaken assumption is possibly based on the fact that Prophet Muhammad was an

Arab, that most of the first generation of Muslims were Arabs, and that the Qur'an is in the

Arabic language

But in actual fact, only about 18 percent of Muslims in the world today are Arabs. The largest

Muslim populations are found in Indonesia, the Indian sub-continent and other parts of Asia

Islam is also widespread in many parts of Africa, and there are substantial minorities in

Europe, North and South America, and Oceania. Islam is the fastest growing major religion

in the world, and its adherents on all continents include both Arabs and non-Arabs

Further, not all Arabs are Muslims, for there are significant communities of Christian Arabs as well as a number who belong to other religions or profess atheism. While "Arab" is a geographic and cultural term, "Muslim" refers to an adherent to the religion of Islam

While the revelation was still in its early stages, the Qur'an disclosed that Islam is indeed a global religion. Allah addressed His Prophet therein, saying "And We have not sent you but as a mercy to [all] the [worlds]."[21:107

And We have not sent you except comprehensively to mankind, as a bringer of good tidings [and a warner, but most of the people do not know.]"[34:28

Islam is meant for all people regardless of race, nationality, cultural or religious background

From the commencement of his mission, the Prophet's companions came from a wide range of lands and races. Among them was an African, a Byzantine, a Persian and a Jewish scholar

All were united in the brotherhood of faith

There are many references in the Qur'an to the universal nature of Islam. It frequently

addresses humanity, saying, "O mankind" or "O people." The Prophet, his companions and

their followers made every effort to spread the message of truth to all nations and peoples. He

naturally began the propagation of God's message among his own people, the Arabs, but that

does not mean it was restricted to them - rather, only that initially conveying it to those

nearest him was the logical first step toward the realization of a long-term goal. Later in his

mission when conditions became more favourable, he sent letters of invitation to Islam to the

rulers of the Byzantine and Persian Empires, Abyssinia, Egypt, Damascus, Bahrain

Yamamah, Oman and others who represented the influential world figures of the day

Whatever, their response to it, the Prophet's message was fully acknowledged by the major

powers of his time

Don't all World Religions have Similar Objectives

There are many areas in which religions agree, but there are also significant theological and

practical differences between them. Undeniably, one will find in every religion expressions of

wisdom, high moral values, warnings against evil, and promotion of good works. But what

distinguishes Islam from other faiths is that it goes beyond simply urging people to be

generous and morally upright. Islam identifies human problems and prescribes practical

.solutions to them, both individually and collectively

Although there are a variety of religious communities in the world, each of them content with

its own version of "the truth," Islam represents the completion of divinely revealed religion

and the finalized legal code for mankind. For this reason the :Qur'an states

[Verily, the religion in the sight of God is Islam.]"[3:19"

The divine messages revealed prior to that of Prophet Muhammad all called for the worship

of God alone and contained some legislation. However, each of them was addressed to a

specific people at a specific period of time in order to remedy particular problems and

circumstances such as moral degeneration, economic injustices and excessive materialism

misuse of power and political oppression. The final message of Islam addresses these same

social evils but as part of a comprehensive program for the amendment, reform and benefit of

every nation, community and individual that will exist until the .end of the world

The prophethood of Muhammad launched an era in which divine guidance became openly

universal, more comprehensive in scope, and precisely detailed.
The responsibility for man's

fate and moral well-being depends completely on his own free
choice and willing initiative to

.respond to the invitation of his Creator

Do Muslims worship God or Allah

One of the biggest misconceptions about Islam concerns the
name "Allah." Some people

believe that Muslims worship a different God than Christians,
Jews and others, and some

missionary organizations distribute literature in English in
:which they say such things as

Allah is the god of the Muslims" and "Muhammad told people "
".to believe in the god, Allah

They thus imply and reinforce the idea that "Allah" is some sort
.of false deity

This is totally incorrect because "Allah" is the same word that
Arabic-speaking Christians

and Jews use for God. If you pick up an Arabic Bible, you will
"find the word "Allah

wherever "God" is used in English. "Allah" is also the proper
name of God. Therefore

Muslims use the name "Allah" even when they speak other
.languages

Allah" is a special word. It indicates the only entity in existence "
who truly possesses the

qualities of divinity and lordship, the Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and earth. It is the name of the only being worthy of worship, the one upon whom all creation is dependant at every moment. This name belongs to God alone and no one else

"Allah" is the only word in the Arabic language equivalent to "God" with a capital "G." It is also a unique word grammatically since it cannot be made plural or given a masculine or feminine gender. This is consistent with the Islamic concept of God. In English and other languages the word "god" can be used in various forms such as "God," "gods" or "goddess" all with different connotations and meanings. The only difference between "god" (meaning a false god or any object of worship) and "God" (meaning the one true God) is a capital "G"

Thus, a more accurate translation of "Allah" might be "the one and only true God"

But there is another important point, which is that Islam is particularly concerned with the correct concept of God

Someone can have an erroneous concept of Him whether he uses the name "Allah" or the word "God." Followers of previous religions gradually deviated from the original pure belief

in God due to the fact that their scriptures were not adequately protected from loss and

alteration. None of these are still available for study in their original form or language

But this is not true of the last divinely revealed message, the Qur'an. Hence, the accurate

concept of God can be found therein

If Islam opposes idol worship, why do Muslims pray to a square structure

The simple cube-shaped stone building located in Makkah is called the Ka'bah or the Sacred

House. It is the point toward which Muslims face when they pray. Although Muslims face the

direction of Ka'bah during prayer, they do not worship it.

Muslims worship and pray only to

God

The Ka'bah was built by the prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael in response to God's

command over 4,000 years ago. Abraham consecrated the House for the worship of the one

true God and invited all of humanity to visit it for that purpose.

Even today Muslims who are

physically and financially able are required to make a pilgrimage to it once in a lifetime. The

Ka'bah has remained at the centre of a continuous tradition of worship and devotion up to the

.present day, symbolic of permanence, constancy and renewal

There were periods in human history during which mankind deviated from the monotheism

taught by God's prophets. Before the advent of Muhammad, religion among the Arabs had

degenerated into polytheism and paganism, and Makkah was completely submerged in

idolatry; some 360 idols had been placed in and around the Ka'bah to be worshipped there

along with God. Prophet Muhammad was sent to restore to mankind the pure monotheism

taught by all the messengers of God and reinstate the worship of Him alone. This he

accomplished, and the Ka'bah was finally cleared of all .manmade deities

Among the ancient religious rites particular to the Ka'bah is walking around it. This suggests

the integrating and unifying power of monotheism in human life and how a Muslim's

existence should revolve around a pure devotion to God. The Ka'bah symbolizes the unity of

all true religion, the brotherhood of all the prophets, and the essential consistency of their

.message

When Muslims pray facing toward this single central point, they are reminded of their

common purpose and long-term goal. Even when standing directly before the Ka'bah in

prayer, one is not to look at it but rather at the ground before him. The spiritual focus is on

.God alone and never upon any created object

What is the purpose of worship, and why should people worship
?at all

The idea of servitude has become distasteful to the modern secular mindset which concerns

itself with individual liberties. Some might say that humanity has no need to worship, and

that doing so compromises freedom. They forget, however, that absolute freedom is neither

possible nor even desirable for all members of a society, and that is why every social order

.has its laws and restrictions

Studies in human psychology confirm that man is a worshipper by instinct, that worship is

instilled in him as part of his nature, and that he tends to direct it to whatever he considers

worthy - other human beings, revered customs or superstitions, materialist ideologies, or his

own personal inclinations. An object of worship is that to which one devotes the greatest

portion of his thought and effort. So one either worships God or he worships something other

than Him - along with Him or instead of Him. The worship of God alone is liberating in that

.it frees one from servitude to all else

Many people misunderstand the concept of worship, assuming that it is merely the practice of

certain rituals. But in reality it includes everything done seeking the acceptance of the one

worshipped. According to Islam, the worship of God means willing obedience to His orders

and prohibitions which, besides prayer and other religious obligations, include the fulfilment

of promises and agreements, honesty and precision in work, teaching and counselling

encouraging righteousness, assisting others, opposing injustice .and so on

Worship is the right of the Creator upon His Creation. It is based on the perception that

everything was brought into existence by God and is dependent upon Him in whose hand is

life and death, benefit and harm, and the outcome of every matter. Further, it is based on the

knowledge that man is an accountable being in need of God's continuing guidance and

acceptance. Islam confirms that although it is His divine right, God does not gain anything

from the worship of His servants, nor is He harmed by their refusal. He ordains worship for the benefit of the worshipper himself, and this benefit is obtained by him or her in both this life and the next. When a believer understands that our Creator and Sustainer deserves to be worshipped, he wants to do so because of his gratitude and love for his Lord and because it is .inherently right and correct

Why only one God? Could He not create another God like Himself

The implication here is that the existence of dual or plural deities is possible and hence probable in the view of a polytheist. However, if the questioner claims that God can create

another like Himself, we ask, "How can this created being be God, who created all things

when it has itself been created? How can it be like God since it has a beginning, whereas God

has existed from eternity? In reality, the phrase "create another God" is an erroneous

contradiction because the mere fact that something is created means that it cannot be God. It

is obviously illogical and irrational to say that something is God and cannot be God

.simultaneously

The other implication in this question is that if we answer, "He cannot," then the power of God must be limited, negating His divinity. These suggestions are not valid because the absolute and unlimited power of God pertains to what is rationally possible and not what is rationally impossible. So when we say no, which is correct, it does not mean that the power of God is limited. Rather, it affirms the perfection of His power, meaning that He is not .incapable of doing anything that is rationally possible

Our minds cannot grasp the extent of His power, nor can our imaginations. Therefore, we must admit our inability to contain the essence and nature of God within the limits of our .intellect

?What is the Purpose of our Creation

Non-believers are unable to provide any convincing reason for the existence of this universe or of human life. People who believe there is a Creator assume that creation occurred by His will. But in a world where everything is shown to have a purpose, it is natural for a human being to wonder about the purpose of his own creation. One is surely justified in expecting

the Creator who put us on this earth to inform us why He did so
.and what He expects of us

The Qur'an informs us that He did just that. It says God created
‘us for a test here on earth

:conveying His words

Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to "
Us you would not be

[returned?]"[23:115-116

A non-believer might decide that the objective of his life will be
to collect wealth, obtain

position or pursue pleasure to the greatest extent possible. But
none of this will benefit him in

the long run. According to His final scripture, God created man
to test him with certain

responsibilities [As stated in 18:7, 67:2 and 76:2]. He did not
intend life on this earth to

necessarily be comfortable or satisfying but merely a trial of
limited duration, the punishment

.and rewards of which will be due in the Hereafter

As mentioned previously, most of creation is "Muslim" in that it
is programmed to obey the

physical laws set by God, and (his is why the universe functions
.with balanced equilibrium

Man, however, was given a free will and the ability to either
obey or disobey. But God will

not allow His universal balance to be upset indefinitely by
‘defiant, corrupt and sinful people

so He only grants human beings a measure of freedom in a
temporary world. The scheme of

birth, development, decline and death provides each with the
opportunity to prove to himself

without a doubt what he will deserve on the Day of Judgement,
which God created for the

.manifestation of His ultimate justice

This life is very meaningful and purposeful to the believing
Muslim because he realizes that

it will determine his outcome and permanent position in the next
life. He lives to earn the

approval of his Creator in preparation for the final return to
.Him

We all recognize that people make things to perform specific
functions for them, in other

words, to serve them. God has made us to serve Him, but with
one major difference; it is not

for the benefit of the Creator Himself but for the benefit of us,
His creation. The purpose of

:our existence is thus stated in the Qur'an

I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship "
[Me.]"[51:56

But man's worship of God is not automatic like the vast majority
of created beings but by his

own choice and effort, and this is what entitles him to honour
.and reward

How should one worship God in order to fulfil that purpose?" "
This question can

undoubtedly best be answered by Him. God has provided every
‘element of His creation

living and inanimate, with guidance. We can thus expect that He
would provide us with

guidance as well. His revelation instructs humanity what to do,
what to avoid, and the reason

for it. It informs man what is expected of him, how to
accomplish it, and the results of

continual positive effort. Through Prophet Muhammad, God
revealed to man the ways of

worship suitable to his physical and psychological nature and
individual talents, and in

harmony with his particular role on the earth. These, in
combination, are what enable Him to

.fulfil the purpose of His creation

‘How do you know there is Life after Death

We live in a world that demands logic and proof and is not
content with only belief. Someone

might wonder how a rational, practical minded person could
believe in life after death. People

tend to assume that anyone who believes in the Hereafter does
.so on the basis of blind faith

But in fact, belief in the Hereafter is completely logical. And it is the only way the injustices

of this world can be reconciled with a just and all- powerful .Creator

We know that in addition to physical pleasures and comforts there are certain ideal

conditions that human beings instinctively desire and strive to ‘attain, such as love, respect

security and contentment. Though many people are able to acquire a portion of these

objectives here on earth, there remains one that is largely .unobtainable - and that is justice

Most people hold the conviction that life is not fair: that they have often been misunderstood

or not appreciated, that in some way they have been harmed, cheated or oppressed. Daily

newscasts disclose the killing, torture, displacement and starvation of countless innocent

people by powerful tyrants and nations, lives ruined by the vicious or careless acts of others

or by natural disasters, and the poor and helpless being .subjected to theft and deception

Seldom is even partial justice ever restored. Yet, every human being desires justice. Even if

he does not seek it for others, he certainly wants justice for .himself

So why has the Creator instilled in man a longing for something he cannot experience in this

world? The answer is that this life is only one portion of his existence and that the logical

conclusion which restores the equilibrium found in all creation is in the Hereafter. It is there

that every person will be fully and precisely compensated for his good and evil deeds. This is

the perfect and absolute justice which God has promised all people

The present life is a trial in preparation for the next realm of existence. The explanation

given by the Qur'an about the necessity of life after death is what the moral consciousness of

man demands. If there was no life after death, the belief in God would be meaningless, or it

would be a belief in some kind of indifferent and negligent deity who, after having created

the human race, is no longer concerned with its welfare

But certainly, God is just. He will indeed punish the tyrants who have killed thousands and

caused suffering to their families, corrupted institutions and societies, enslaved people and

nations, robbed, deprived and plundered. And what about those who patiently endured so

much injustice and hardship, suffered to uphold truth, saved lives or sacrificed in order to assist many people? What earthly compensations could possibly restore the balance for them

This can only take place in an eternal life where every individual affected in the least by someone's actions will testify for or against him, and where the innermost thoughts and intentions, known completely to God, will be judged precisely and perfectly. Since man's term of life in this world is limited and because numerous individuals are affected by one's actions, adequate rewards and punishments are impossible in the present life. The Qur'an states categorically that the Day of Resurrection must come and that God will then decree the fate of each soul according to its record of deeds

Additionally, God has stated in the Qur'an that the present creation is in itself a clear proof that He is able to create and re-create as He wills, whatever He wills, however He wills and whenever He wills, for God originates and repeats creation with equal ease. Consider these words revealed to His final Prophet

Say, "Travel through the land and observe how He began " creation. Then Allah will produce

[the final creation." [29:20

Did We fail in the first creation? But they are in confusion over "
[a new creation." [50:15

Is not He who created the heavens and the earth able to create "
the likes of them? Yes, and

[He is the Knowing Creator." [36:81

Do they not see that Allah, who created the heavens and earth "
and did not fail in their

[creation, is able to give life to the dead?" [46:33

Does man not remember that We created him before, while he "
[was nothing" [19:67

And you have already known the first creation, so will you not "
[remember?" [56:62

Have they not considered how Allah begins creation and then "
repeats it? Indeed that, for

[Allah, is easy." [29:19

And it is He who begins creation; then He repeats it, and that is "
[easier for Him." [30:27

As We began the first creation, We will repeat it. [That is] a "
.promise binding upon Us

[Indeed, We will do it." [21:104

In fact, the material of creation is already in existence, merely to
be developed once again at

His command. Observable evidence of this ongoing process is
now being presented regularly

.by astronomers and specialists in other fields of modern science

Are the Good Deeds of Non-believers Rewarded

Prophet Muhammad disclosed that God rewards according to the intention of each individual

The non-believer expects to be rewarded for his deeds in the present life because he denies or

doubts the existence of another life after his death. Thus, he is keen that people should

recognize what he does; when he is praised and his deed publicized, he is pleased, for this is

the reward he sought. He might also obtain a sum of money in payment for it or a prize. This

is the compensation he likes most, and God grants it to him. But he is not given additional

reward in the Hereafter simply because he neither desired it nor worked for it

The believer, on the other hand, is not duly concerned with compensation in this life because

he is striving for the greater eternal reward of the Hereafter. He does so by worshipping God

as He stipulated and by working patiently, honestly and correctly to the best of his ability

even when no person appreciates his efforts. Because his deeds are done seeking God's

acceptance, they are appreciated by Him and rewarded

Islam teaches that there are two conditions for God's approval (and reward of any deed): 1

that it is done explicitly for His acceptance and approval and 2) that it is consistent with the methods ordained by Him. In other words, a person must work for God according to the terms He has specified and not according to his own preferences or those of other people. In order to know exactly what God expects of His servants, it is necessary to refer to the legislation revealed by Him in its final form through .Muhammad, the final prophet

Why should someone be a Muslim? Can't we follow any ?religion we please

There are many people who follow the teachings of a religion as best they can and others who

believe in God in some way without practicing any formal religion.[Anyone to whom God's

message was not adequately conveyed yet believed in Him and tried to worship Him with

sincere intention will be judged by God according to what is in his heart and mind, for He is

the ultimate judge of all affairs. The Qur'an states that God never punishes a people until after

He has sent them a messenger with the clear order to worship their Creator alone without any

associates. It also states that He does not punish for what people are unable to know or what

is beyond their capability] Many have abandoned the thought that there could be any true

religion because nearly all religions claim to be true. And some allow that all religions are

legitimate paths to God and are acceptable to Him. So how is Islam different from other

religions

Islam has several unique features which can be confirmed :through deeper study

Islam is the only religion whose sources have remained free of .1 human alteration and

.interference

Its divinely revealed scripture is in harmony with established .2 facts of science, clearly

.bearing the signature of the Creator of this universe

Islam provides answers to the essential fundamental questions .3 which occur to the mind of

every intelligent person, those related to the purpose of creation and life, and concerning a

.further existence after death

Islam is the only religion which insists upon worship of the .4 Creator alone and completely

.rejects the worship of any aspect of creation

Islam dispenses with all intermediaries between man and God .5 and allows every individual

to contact Him directly, thus eliminating religious hierarchies and other sources of

exploitation which have characterized the history of religions throughout the ages. In Islam

no cleric or establishment can come between a person and his .Creator

While monotheistic faiths share a fundamental belief in God, .^٦ their understanding of Him

differs greatly. Islam declares that God is unique and in no way ‘similar to any of His creation

nor does He merge with it in any form. His attributes are those of complete and absolute

.perfection without the slightest deficiency or limitation

Unlike other religions and ideologies which emphasize some .^٧ aspects of human nature at the

expense of others, Islam accommodates the physical, intellectual .and spiritual aspects of man

Islamic beliefs and practices are natural and appeal to common sense. They present a

balanced program of life that fulfils both physical and spiritual .needs

Islam prohibits blind following without knowledge and is .^٨ .based upon evidence and logic

The rational mind is the basis for religious accountability and responsibility. All aspects of

Islamic belief are clear, without any obscurity or ambiguity. It contains no tenet that

contradicts reason or observable reality, and it calls on people to study and contemplate as a

.means of strengthening faith

Islam's religious, moral, economic, political and social ethics .⁹ are permanent and remain

constant. They are governed by a set of unchanging principles which include such universal

values as justice, freedom, equality, brotherhood and social responsibility. History provides

an outstanding example in the model Islamic society established by Prophet Muhammad and

his companions and maintained for decades by devoted Muslims, where truth and

transparency, justice, and compassion were implemented as a .vital expression of the religion

Islam also declares that it is the religion of truth, for this is stated unambiguously in the

Qur'an. However, the Creator does not force His preference on anyone. He wants people to

accept right guidance by their own choice and free will because that is what makes them

:worthy of His approval and reward. The Qur'an states

There is no compulsion in [accepting] religion. The truth has " been made distinct from

[falsehood."[2:256

Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united " in religion], but [He

intended] to test you in what He has given you; so hasten to [all that is] good. To Allah is

your return all together

!Isn't Islam fatalistic

Muslims know that all things are from God and occur by His will. Thus, they tend to worry

less about material matters and view the life of this world in proper perspective. A Muslim

believer relies completely on God and knows that whatever happens is always for the best

whether he recognizes it or not, so he graciously accepts whatever cannot be changed

However, this does not mean that a Muslim sits around awaiting destiny and takes no

positive action in life. On the contrary, Islam demands action and effort to change every

undesirable situation, and this is a requirement of the faith. It totally rejects the teaching that

one should not go to a doctor when ill but only pray to God for cure. If human beings had no

ability to act, God could not justly expect them to do and not to do certain things. Far from

being "fatalistic," Islam teaches that man's main obligation in life is to exert effort in

obedience to God, which includes seeking benefit and avoiding harm

Islam teaches that human beings should take positive action in life and supplement it with

prayer. Some people are lazy and careless and then blame the negative result on destiny or

fate. Some even say that if God had willed, they would not have sinned or committed crimes

All this is entirely incorrect because He has provided complete guidance and instruction on

how to live and has ordered upright conduct at all times. God has not ordered anything that

man cannot do or prohibited anything he cannot avoid because His justice is complete and

perfect. Each individual is held responsible within the limits of his own ability, but not

beyond it

Although our deeds and our destiny are decreed by God and known to Him, it does not mean

He compels us to do anything. Rather, He willed to give us options about our course of

action; and thus, whatever decisions we make are within the framework of His will. God

knows what every person will choose to do and then allows him to do it, while not

necessarily approving of his choice. While He does not call anyone to account for what is

beyond his control, human beings are indeed responsible for every free choice they make, and

they will find the consequences of their choices and actions in .both this life and the next

Cause and effect" is a natural law created by God to be utilized " by His creatures. It is the

law by which one's destiny is determined. So the destiny of each individual is predetermined

by God, but it is also the direct result and consequence of his or 'her own choices and actions

.and this is what the Creator has willed and decreed

!Are there sects in Islam

Islam is one path, has one direction, and is based on one methodology -- that which Prophet

Muhammad taught according to the instruction he received from God. The religion God

ordained for mankind was meant to be a unifying factor. In fact, He addressed mankind in the

:Qur'an, saying

And this is My path, which is straight, so follow it, and do not " follow [other] ways for they

will separate you from His way." [6:153 The subtitle change in the verse from first to third

person expresses the progressive process of distancing oneself [from God's path

This divine command emphatically makes it binding on all Muslims to be united as one

community of believers; thus, all forms of schism and .sectarianism are un-Islamic

The Prophet's companions and following generations adhered very closely to the path of

God, and thus He protected them from separating in this manner. But with later generations

certain factors led to the emergence of divisions and divergence, among them: increasing

concern with worldly affairs, the influence of non-Muslim .cultures, and political rivalries

Initially, some small groups split off from the path adhered to by .the majority of Muslims

They introduced innovations into the religion and followed opinions differing from the

.original teachings of the Prophet

These schisms were rejected and opposed by the recognized scholars of Islam and the

majority of Muslims, which meant that initially they were contained and that their influence

did not become widespread during the major part of Islamic history. The majority of Muslims remained on the Sunni [A Sunni is one who takes his religion ‘from the Qur'an and Sunnah i.e., the authentically narrated teachings of Prophet Muhammad as practiced by him and his righteous followers.] path, and whenever forms of deviation emerged among them, the pious scholars always hastened to oppose them and point out their error.

Prophet Muhammad foretold that such divergences would emerge. He warned against schism and instructed Muslims to remain within the main body of Islam.

Nevertheless, over the centuries a number of people have deviated and corrupted their religion, forming sects that claim to belong to Islam but whose stated beliefs are clearly contrary to it. Some have distorted the concept of God and attributed to Him what is unfitting or incompatible with His divine status - claiming, for example, that everything in existence is God or that He is incarnate or present within His creation, while the Qur'an states that He is superior to His creation and distinct from it. And some have been misguided regarding

various major tenets of Islam to the degree that they no longer
‘submit to God and obey Him

while others have innovated and changed some of the prescribed
.forms of worship

Those sects which deviated from mainstream Islam are not the
same as the schools of Islamic

jurisprudence [The Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali schools
[and a few others less known

which developed within it and are based on the immutable
principles of the faith. These

eminent schools of thought have provided a vision of the highest
degree of scholarship for

Islamic legislation and serve to complement one another.

Differences and disagreements

within the framework of Islam do not become matters of
partisanship and intolerance except

.among the extremely ignorant

Islam recognizes the individuality of human beings and that not
all diversity of opinion and

difference in analysis is negative. However, the kind of
dissension that leads to divisions and

:sectarianism has been denounced in the Qur'an

Indeed, those who have divided their religion and become sects "
-you, [O Muhammad], are

not [associated] with them in anything. Their affair is only [left]
to Allah; then He will inform

[them about what they used to do." [6:159

Although Muslims now appear to be divided more than ever before, the number of divisions

in Islam remain fewer than in other religions. One can still find many Islamic associations

calling people to truth, proclaiming God's original message, and naming against that which is

contrary to it. Salvation does not depend on affiliation with any specific group but rather on

true faith proven by obedience to God and upright conduct in the manner revealed by Him

Who was Muhammad

Muhammad bin Abdullah was a descendant of Prophet Abraham through his son, Ishmael

Isaac, another son of Abraham, was the ancestor of the Children of Israel, among whom a

number of prophets were raised.] and was from the prominent Arab tribe of Quraysh. He was

not the founder of Islam but its final prophet and the last messenger sent by God to the world

as a mercy to mankind. Every detail of his private life and public speech has been

documented and carefully preserved up to the present day

During the 23-year period of his prophethood, he changed the entire Arabian Peninsula from

paganism to worship of the one true God, from tribal warfare to national unity, from anarchy

to disciplined living, from barbarism to the highest standard of moral excellence. At the time

of his death most inhabitants of Arabia and the southern regions of Iraq and Palestine had

voluntarily embraced Islam. To posterity he left a creed of pure monotheism that included

comprehensive legislation based on a balanced system of moral values

No other man in history excelled in so many different aspects of life. He not only taught and

established the religion but founded a state, initiated numerous political and social reforms

built a powerful and dynamic society, and completely revolutionized the realm of human

thought and behaviour - all within just over two decades

His coming was foretold in previous scriptures, and he was described therein. The honest

and open-minded among the Jews and Christians recognized him from those descriptions and

believed in his message. But the message he communicated was not meant for a particular

people, place or period; it was a global message. Muhammad was appointed to instruct all of

mankind and invite humanity to the same objective as did the prophets before him: the

.worship of God alone without associates or intermediaries

There is explicit evidence for the prophethood of Muhammad.

As the revelation descended

upon him, his companions noticed certain effects on his body; however, he never lost

consciousness or showed any signs of illness. His life was protected by God during times of

severe danger throughout the entire period of his prophethood until the divine message was

complete. Like the prophets before him, Muhammad was supported with miracles, but by far

the greatest of them was the Qur'an, an eternal miracle containing evidences for people of

.intellect for all time to come

Prophet Muhammad was chosen by the Creator of the universe and of mankind to invite all

people to correct beliefs and follow the pure way of life preferred by Him, and to demonstrate

the measures and methods leading to His acceptance. He spared no effort and no sacrifice in

carrying out this duty for the benefit of mankind. Through him, God made known truth from

falsehood and wisdom from error. And through him He showed man how to attain eternal

Paradise. Thus, Prophet Muhammad directed humanity to the one divine source of values and

.rules of conduct

‘Do Muslims worship Muhammad

Islam is based on uncompromising monotheism. God alone is to be worshipped and nothing

else, so Muslims cannot worship Muhammad or any other human being.[The basis for this

misconception actually comes from the early orientalist who called Islam

Mohammedanism," implying that Muslims worship " Muhammad]Like all prophets he was a

man, and despite his extraordinary accomplishments he never ‘claimed divine status. Rather

he always maintained that he was human like everyone else, that he poked nothing of his own

accord, and that the Qur'an was a message from God, revealed to him by God, to whom alone

belongs all glory and praise. He never took personal credit for any success. All the principles

he taught, the legislation he pronounced, and the great achievements for which he could have

attained personal renown and advantage were attributed to the guidance and support of God

.alone

Muslims strive to follow the example of Prophet Muhammad. Additionally, Islam teaches

Muslims to respect all of God's prophets and messengers. However, respecting and loving

them does not mean worshipping them, for all forms of worship must be directed only to the

.Creator

Muhammad was himself a devout worshipper of God. He gave away everything he obtained

in charity, fasted often, and would spend a great portion of the night in prayer. He was

constantly aware of his Lord, remembering Him in every situation, and his words of praise

and supplication reflected the highest degree of sincerity and servitude. His entire life was

dedicated to the cause of God. He called on people to worship God alone, and insisted that

they refer to him as merely a servant of God, telling his followers, "Do not exaggerate in

praise of me as the Christians did with Jesus, son of Mary. I am only His servant, so say, 'the

".servant of Allah and His messenger

Why should Muhammad be the Final Prophet? Haven't there been others

?after him

Prophethood is not something acquired by a person who proves himself worthy, nor is it

granted in recognition of piety. Prophethood is an office to which God appoints a man in

order to fill a particular need. The Qur'an mentions four conditions under which prophets

were sent to the world

1. When no prophet had ever been sent to a people before and no divine message had reached

them

2. When the message of an earlier prophet had been forgotten by the people or the teachings

of former prophets had been altered with time

3. When a second prophet was needed to assist a first one.

4. When a people had not yet received complete instruction from God

In each of these cases a prophet was appointed to convey divine revelation, updating previous

messages and correcting deviations that man had introduced into the religion of God

After God's message was completed through revelation to Muhammad and its preservation

guaranteed, there was no further need for messengers to convey revelation; only for teachers

and reformers to remind people of what God had revealed. [The Qur'an states: "Muhammad

is not the father of [any] one of your men, but [he is] the
‘.Messenger of Allah and seal [i.e
last] of the prophets.’ (33:40)]From the time of Muhammad's
prophethood, conditions in the
world have been conducive to the transmission of God's
message to all civilizations, making
the appointment of additional prophets unnecessary. This final
message has undergone no
amendment or alteration by man; not a single word has been
.added to it or deleted from it
If God intended to send another prophet after Muhammad, He
would have made that fact
clear in the Qur'an or commanded His Messenger to declare that
.a prophet would follow him
But the Qur'an clearly affirms that God has now completed His
divine mission through
Prophet Muhammad.[God stated therein: “This day I have
perfected for you your religion
and completed My favour upon you and have approved for you
”.Islam as religion
Therefore, the office of prophethood has been cancelled, [(°:٣)
enabling the world to unite in
allegiance to the final prophet and obedience to God. For
everyone who accepts Muhammad
as the divinely appointed final messenger will seek instruction
only within the message he

.conveyed

Didn't Muhammad write the Qur'an or borrow from the earlier
?scriptures

Opponents of Islam sometimes allege that Muhammad himself
wrote the Qur'an or that he

copied or adapted it from previous scriptures. But it is known
that the Prophet's contacts with

Jews and Christians was negligible before his emigration from
Makkah, and after it his role

was that of a teacher, openly inviting the Jews and Christians to
accept Islam while pointing

out how they had diverged from the true monotheism taught by
.their prophets

It is true that there are some similarities between the Qur'an and
the Bible, but this does not

indicate that later prophets plagiarized from former ones. It
merely reflects the common

source, which is the Creator of mankind, and the continuance of
His basic message of

monotheism. Moreover, there was no Arabic version of the
Bible in existence at the time of

Prophet Muhammad. The earliest Arabic version of the Old
Testament is that of R. Saadiah

Gaon of 900 CE - more than 250 years after the death of Prophet
Muhammad. And the oldest

Arabic version of the New Testament was published by Erpenius in 1616 CE - about 1000

.years after his death

Historically and logically, it cannot be established that there was any human source for the

Qur'an or that the Messenger of Allah learned it from the Jews or Christians. His enemies

kept a close watch on him hoping to find confirmation of their claim that he was a liar. But

they could not point to a single instance when the Prophet might have had secret meetings

.with people of other faiths

It was a sign of Muhammad's prophethood that he was illiterate. Thus, he could not be

credited with composing or editing the revelations, and suspicion that he learned what he

preached from earlier scriptures is eliminated. At the time the Qur'an was revealed, his

contemporaries among the Arabs, known for linguistic eloquence, acknowledged that its

language was unique and distinctly different from the speech of Muhammad, a man they

knew well. The Qur'an states that the Prophet was an unlettered man, so if that had not been

true, his opponents would surely have exposed him. There is, however, not a single report to

this effect, and no one denied his illiteracy. At the same time, no one denied that the Qur'an

was unequalled in eloquence, impact and clarity, including those who rejected its message

It is not difficult to verify that Muhammad did not possess knowledge of many things

mentioned in the Qur'an, such as historical events, natural phenomena and future occurrences

The kind of information he conveyed could not have been obtained through reading and

research, so it was obviously something that could only have come directly from the Creator

The Qur'an states in several places that Muhammad and his people did not know these facts

so had it been otherwise, his adversaries would have capitalized on that claim to discredit

him. Only recently, within the last two centuries, have advancements in research technology

led to the discovery of facts that were mentioned in the Qur'an by the unlettered prophet over

fourteen centuries ago. Here are a few examples

The creation of the universe from a single entity and of life from water: "Have those who

disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We

separated them and made from water every living
[thing?]"[Qur'an 21:30

All creation is based on duality, made up of pairs, counterparts .ۛ
or opposites: "And of all

things We created two mates." [Qur'an, 51:49. In contrast, God
is one, with no counterpart

[.and nothing resembling Him in any way

The different natures of the sun and moon: "It is He [Allah] .ۛ
who made the sun a shining

light and the moon a derived light and determined for its phases -
that you may know the

number of years and account [of time]."[Qur'an, 10:5. Other
verses (25:61 and 71:16) refer to

[.the sun as a burning lamp

The rotation of the earth: "He created the heavens and earth in .ۛ
truth. He wraps the night

over the day and wraps the day over the night." [Qur'an, 39:5.

The alternate "wrapping" of

sunlight and darkness is caused by the earth's turning in one

[.direction

The expansion of the universe: "And the heaven We .ۛ
'constructed with strength, and indeed

We are [its] expander." [Qur'an 51:47. The Creator refers to
Himself in the plural form which

[denotes power, grandeur and majesty

The sun is not stationary but moves in a specific direction for a limited term: "And the sun

runs [on course] toward its stopping point." [Qur'an, 36:38. The sun, as a tiny member of this

vast universe, is progressing within it toward a final destination, which indicates an end to the

[.present creation

These are words recited by Muhammad, the unlettered prophet. The Qur'an addresses

recently established scientific facts with the precision of a scientist. Could the most highly

literate, well read or scholarly man of that period, or even of the centuries that followed

possibly have come up with anything similar

How does the Qur'an differ from other Scriptures

The Qur'an was revealed over 1400 years ago. It states in no uncertain terms that it is a

revelation from God conveyed by the angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad. It is regarded

not only by Muslims but by scholars of religion and historians, as the most authentic religious

text in existence today. Unlike earlier scriptures the Qur'an has been preserved unchanged in

its original Arabic text since the time of revelation, as God had promised within it. [Its

preservation was guaranteed when God revealed: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the message, and indeed, We will be its guardian." (15:9) Note: God often refers to Himself in the Qur'an as "We," which does not denote plurality, but rather, [power and majesty

History witnessed the fulfilment of that promise, for the Book of God remains to date exactly as it was revealed to the Prophet and recited by him. Immediately memorized and recorded by large numbers of his companions, it was passed on in exactly the same form by thousands of Muslims generation after generation up until the present day. The Qur'an of today is literally the same scripture as was revealed to Prophet Muhammad. There is no other book in the history of man that in been memorized precisely and accurately, word for word, letter for letter, by millions of people over the centuries. This in itself is a .miracle

There is only one version of the Qur'an; the same revealed words continue to be read, recited and memorized in their original Arabic language by Muslims .throughout the world

Translations of the meanings into other languages assist in understanding but cannot be called

the Qur'an," as this term refers only to the actual revealed " .words of God

The Qur'an contains God's final message to humanity and legislation which encompasses all

spheres of human life. It is allied to all peoples and all times. It appeals to logic, following

clear reasoning and citing evidences from the created universe, from history and from the

human soul to establish not only the existence of God but also His uniqueness and absolute

perfection. It also contains answers to the questions which naturally occur to the human mind

.about the purpose of creation and what occurs after death

It is the primary source of the Islamic creed and its legislation. But in addition to religious

guidance it contains numerous verses that speak of the universe, its components and

phenomena - the earth, sun, moon, stars, mountains, wind, rivers and seas, plants, animals

and successive stages of human development. As can be seen from examples in the previous

chapter, the Qur'an speaks with the perfect knowledge of the .Creator about His creation

Being the final revelation to mankind, God has made the Qur'an a continuing miracle

containing evidences to be uncovered gradually as humans increase in knowledge of their

.universe

But its main purpose is to guide mankind as to how one should relate to his Creator, to his

fellow men, and to the universe in general. It outlines the practical methods of earning the

approval of God and obtaining peace and contentment in the .permanent existence to come

By following its guidance, man can fully experience his human worth and his special position

among created beings. The Qur'an was revealed containing complete guidance in all matters

of faith and its application to the affairs of human life in order that everyone might attain the

.happiness and contentment of this world and the next

Is it true that Muslims don't believe in Jesus? What does Islam say about

him

One cannot be a Muslim if he does not believe in Jesus as well as all other prophets sent by

God[The Qur'an names twenty-five prophets and messengers and suggests that there were

many more], including Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, .Solomon, Moses and Muhammad

Muslims have the highest regard for Jesus and await his second coming

The Islamic view of Jesus is one between two extremes. The Jews rejected his prophethood

and called him an impostor, while many Christians regard him as the son of God and worship

him as such. Islam considers Jesus Christ, the son of Mary, as one of the great prophets of

God, worthy of respect and honour but not worship. He was sent to confirm and renew the

basic doctrine of belief in God alone and obedience to Him

According to the Qur'an, he was born miraculously without a father. [Refer to Qur'an, 19:16

And he was not crucified but raised up to God. [Refer to [۳۰ [Qur'an, 3:55 and 4:157-158

The Qur'an attributes to him miracles that are not even mentioned in the Bible. However

Islam sees the deification of Jesus as a reversion to paganism, and the divinity of Jesus is

categorically rejected within the Qur'an's text [Refer to 5:72].

"Such doctrines as the "trinity

divine sonship" and "atonement" are not accepted by Muslims " simply because they did not

originate from Prophet Jesus himself

It is known that most of the Gospels were written by men long after the time of Jesus and

that much of the New Testament was compiled from the
.writings of Paul and his students

Unmistakable contradictions have appeared in the various
"modern," "revised" and

amplified" versions of the Bible. The once purely divine "
message conveyed by Jesus has

obviously been corrupted by human input and altered through
numerous translations; the

.original texts no longer exist

The Gospels were written several decades after Jesus' departure,
and none of their authors

had actually seen Jesus or heard him speak. Moreover, they
were written in Greek while

Jesus spoke Aramaic. Those Gospels presently in circulation
were not selected from among

the others and authorized by the Church until the decisions of
the ecumenical Council of

.Nicea in the year 325 CE

Nevertheless, belief in the divine scripture, not in its present
form but as it was originally

revealed to Prophet Jesus, is an article of Islamic faith. The final
revelation from God is the

only criterion by which information in previous scriptures can
be evaluated. Therefore

whatever the Bible says about Jesus that agrees with the Qur'an
is accepted by Muslims, and

what is contrary to it is rejected as a product of human
.intervention

What is Shari'ah

The Arabic word "shari'ah" refers to the laws and way of life
prescribed by God for his

servants. It deals with ideology, faith, behaviour, manners and
matters of daily life. We

recognize that customs and traditions, good taste, and civil law
all have some authority over

people in every culture, preventing them from doing certain
things and obliging them to do

others. So it is to be expected that religion, too, would have
some authority over people. In

Islam, this authority rightfully belongs to God and is derived
.from His final revelation

The Islamic Shari'ah is a divinely ordained legal system whose
primary objective is benefit

to mankind. Its principles are designed to protect people from
evil and direct them to what is

best in all aspects of life. Moreover, its benefit is for everyone -
rich and poor, rulers and

ruled, men and women, Muslims and non-Muslims, whose right
to worship and manage their

personal and family affairs according to their own norms is
explicit. The Shari'ah provides

injunctions that guarantee justice, promote the general welfare, preserve order, safeguard

.human rights, and define responsibilities

Its established constants are derived from the texts of the Qur'an and teachings of Prophet

Muhammad, and have been confirmed by a consensus of Muslim scholars both in theory and

practice. These basic principles are agreed upon by all, while differences over variables are

acceptable and, in fact, provide the flexibility necessary for the system to accommodate

.changing circumstances

Besides defining methods of Islamic worship, the Shari'ah provides an outline for thought

and education based upon such moral values as justice, generosity, chastity, honesty, mercy

and respect for humanity in general. It provides the standard for - social and political issues

the choice of a ruler, consultation within the government, opposition to injustice, defence of

truth and right, individual and collective duties, intellectual enlightenment based on

evidences and proofs, respect and tolerance for the viewpoints of others, and the

.encouragement of open and frank discussions

Generally, anything that is neither known to be harmful nor mentioned as forbidden in

Islamic law is permitted. In what pertains to daily life, all is allowed except for what is explicitly

prohibited in the Qur'an or by Prophet Muhammad, and this includes everything harmful

whether or not it is considered so by limited human perception.

What is forbidden in Islam is

a small segment of the whole, so that what is permitted is sufficient to make what is

forbidden unnecessary. For example, the encouragement and facilitation of lawful marriage

greatly reduces the temptation toward fornication and adultery.

When Islam forbids sexual

relations outside the framework of marriage, the aim is to purify individuals and societies

physically and morally. Similarly, interest can be replaced by lawful business gains

gambling replaced by competition in sport and religion,

fornication replaced by lawful

marriage, and forbidden food and drink replaced by healthy food and drink

The general purpose and objectives of the Shari'ah do not change. It clearly defines what is

prohibited and considers all other things to be permissible. Only harmful things have been

prohibited, and whatever has benefit has been permitted. Islamic legislation maintains a

balance between the needs of the individual and society, allowing neither to outweigh the

.other

The inner deterrent of man's moral conscience is fully integrated .with external supervision

Islam stresses the role of the individual conscience and is concerned with cultivating within it

the fear and love of God and the hope for His mercy. This ensures that an individual will be

responsive to the commandments of God even when there is no external monitoring system

and that he or she will voluntarily avoid what prohibited.

However, the system does not rely

exclusively upon the conscience. It complements its role by providing laws to be upheld by

.society and enforced by the judicial authority

It is true that the system includes a few severe penalties for certain types of criminals, but in

practice, crime has always been drastically reduced within societies that applied Islamic

Shari'ah, and this is the real purpose of its legislation. Crime and punishment cannot be

treated as separate issues. When the Shari'ah is considered in totality, one finds that initially

every measure is taken to provide what is lawful and block all avenues leading to the

unlawful. Moreover, punishment cannot be applied unless it is established beyond any doubt

that the crime was committed by someone of legal age and sound mind having knowledge of

its prohibition and without being under the least compulsion. Further, an additional burden of

providing trustworthy witnesses in some cases makes conviction highly unlikely. In light of

the numerous constraints, a determined transgressor, once convicted in a court of law, may

rightly be made an example as a further deterrent to others. Thus, the system is not only just

.but most merciful to society as a whole

On another level, the Shari'ah operates to satisfy the sense of justice of the victim and his

heirs. Contrary to what some people suppose, there is no capital .punishment for murder

Retribution is a legal decision given to the victim's family and carried out by the courts

:according to their instruction. They have three options

They can demand that the state executes the murderer on their .) .behalf

They can opt instead for a payment of blood money from the .۲ .murderer

They can forgive the murderer and forgo any kind of .ۛ
.compensation

Forgiveness in this world, however, does not necessarily mean
acquittal in the Hereafter. A

would-be offender is deterred not only by the threat of physical
or pecuniary punishments, he

is first and foremost accountable before God, who may forgive
.or punish as He sees fit

One of the features of Islamic legislation is that it has a
moderate approach to issues and

problems regarding the relationship between the individual and
society. The Shari'ah has left

particular areas open for scholars to make interpretive
judgments according to changing

norms and circumstances. It responds to the demands of social
progress in a way that keeps it

compatible with the practical realities of a changing world and
reconciles the issue of

progress with that of ideological continuity, striking a balance
between progress and

continuity in matters of human life. At the same time, it
maintains continuity in its primary

goals and objectives. Its religious, moral, economic and social
values remain constant

.governed by a set of unchanging principles

What are the "pillars" of Islam

The "five pillars" are the main requirements of Islam. Like the pillars of a building, the religion can neither stand nor be completed without them. These requirements are

The declaration of faith

To be a Muslim, one must believe in and pronounce words which mean, "I testify that there is no deity other than God [Allah], and I testify that Muhammad is His servant and messenger

It expresses the belief that God exists, that He is unlike and superior to His creation, and that

none is worthy to be worshipped but Him. And it confirms that Muhammad is among the

prophets who conveyed God's revelation to mankind. Thus the Qur'an, being the final

message revealed by God, and the authentically narrated teachings of His final prophet are

the basis of the religion, completing and superseding all that came before it, and they define

the Islamic way of life. It is a declaration by the believer of acknowledgement and willing

.obedience

The performance of regular prayer

Prayer was practiced in some form throughout history by all the prophets and their followers

as an indispensable part of God's religion. Islam, the final stage of monotheistic religion

considers prayer essential. A Muslim prays five times daily within specified intervals, as

taught by the Prophet. These prayers are obligatory and are a direct and continuous bond

between the worshipper and his Creator. Most believers are inclined also to pray additional

voluntary prayers whenever convenient, as it was the practice of their Prophet

(Zakah (obligatory annual expenditure

An important principle of Islam is that all things belong to God and that all wealth

possessions and properties are held by human beings in trust. Muslims are commanded to

obtain and spend their wealth in lawful ways. The divinely ordained system of zakah is the

right of Allah within His dominion. It is neither a charity nor a tax but an obligation due from

those Muslims who possess wealth in excess of their basic needs. It is the ideal way to meet

the needs of the poorer sections of society without causing hardship to the rich. The word

zakah" means purification and growth. Its regular payment "purifies the owner's remaining

wealth and purifies his heart from such ailments as greed and selfishness. Every Muslim

calculates his own zakah individually, and in most cases it involves the payment of two and a

half percent of his excess capital or savings each year

Fasting

Islamic fasting, which involves abstinence from eating, drinking, smoking and marital

intercourse, is observed throughout the daylight hours of the lunar month of Ramadhan. Done

in obedience to God's command, it teaches believers patience and self-control, as well as

reminding them of their responsibility toward the millions of human beings who lack

adequate food and provisions or are victims of their unjust distribution. The month of fasting

is accompanied by increased efforts toward good manners and righteous deeds, along with

additional worship at night. It is not a retreat from life but rather a supplement to the

Muslim's ordinary activities

Hajj

Hajj, the annual pilgrimage, is an obligation once in a lifetime only for those who are

physically and financially able to perform it. In spite of that, over two million Muslims

journey to Makkah each year from every corner of the globe,
providing a unique opportunity

for people of various nations and cultures to meet one another as
guests of God. Hajj is an

expression of pure faith and total submission to His command,
and the pilgrim performs rites

of unqualified obedience, seeking nothing but the Creator's
acceptance of his efforts and

forgiveness of his past sins. He returns home with a fresh
outlook on life, a purified soul, and

.I blessings from his Lord

¶Why is alcohol prohibited

In Islam all things which are harmful or whose harm exceeds
Ilu-ir benefit are unlawful. This

includes every substance that affects the mind, damages it or
.decreases its abilities

Therefore, alcohol would be deemed unlawful even if it were
not clearly prohibited in the

Qur'an and prophetic traditions. For anything that causes harm
in any way is considered

unlawful. [Some people claim that they can exercise self-control
.and never get intoxicated

But investigations reveal that every alcoholic began as a social
drinker. No one initially starts

drinking with the intention of becoming an addict. It just
[happens along the way

There are a number of medical reasons for the prohibition of alcohol consumption. Alcohol has been the scourge of human society since time immemorial. It continues to take countless human lives and cause misery to millions throughout the world. 'And it affects the mind diminishing the individual's mental powers and making him accustomed to running away from his problems. It affects his finances as well, due to the expenditure that his generally expensive habit forces upon him. There is no need to go into detail about all the ill effects of .alcohol since most of them are commonly known

Because alcohol incapacitates the inhibitory centre in the brain, an inebriated person is often found to be indulging in behaviour that is completely uncharacteristic - using abusive language, becoming aggressive and violent, or committing shameful acts. Statistics showing a rising number of deaths, soaring crime rates, increasing instances of mental illness, and millions of broken homes throughout the world bear witness to the destructive effect of .drinking alcohol

The harm that results from alcohol is not limited only to the one who drinks; it is also

damaging to others. The diseases caused by alcohol weaken society as a whole. Productivity is decreased due to its effects, and crimes result from addiction. According to a World Health Organization report on violent crimes in 30 countries, 86% of murders and 50% of rapes are carried out under the influence of alcohol. There are similar statistics in most countries around the world. Additionally, public health officials have estimated that half of the road accidents resulting in deaths and permanent disabilities are caused by people under the influence of alcohol

Islam agrees that prevention is the best treatment. However, Muslims do not abstain from drugs and intoxicants due to its detrimental effects, but rather, because God has prohibited them. So abstention is a form of worship and obedience for which they are rewarded by God in the Hereafter, as well as protecting them from harm in the present life

?Why is pork prohibited

Again, obedience to God in this matter is the primary motivation, while prohibition is based on the principle of avoiding harm. In the Qur'an as well as the Bible, pig flesh has been

forbidden and declared unclean. Regarding the physical harm caused by eating it, modern

medicine has confirmed a number of facts, such as the following

Pork is a kind of meat that contains much cholesterol, which is known to increase the

likelihood of blocked arteries

The pig's meat and fat have been found to contribute to the spread of cancers of the colon

rectum, prostate and blood. Biting it has been connected to scabies, allergies, stomach ulcers

and lung infections

Eating pig flesh has been connected to no less than fifty other diseases. Among them are

the infections caused by roundworms, pinworms, hookworms and tapeworms, whose eggs

when present in the meat, are ingested by humans, enter their blood stream, and can reach

and damage almost all organs of the body

A common misconception is that if pork is cooked well, the worm eggs are destroyed. But

in a research project undertaken in America, it was found that the ova present in pork do not

die under normal cooking temperatures. [In particular, the trichinosis worm is not destroyed

by cooking. Its growth in the body can cause infection of the
‘cerebral membrane and brain

[the heart muscle, the lungs, kidneys or nerves

It is also known that some diseases such as rheumatism and .۲
joint pain are unique to

.humans and pigs, and are not shared by any other animals

Muslims accept whatever legislation has been issued by God out
of conviction and complete

.trust in the knowledge and wisdom of the Lawmaker

؟Why do Muslims allow the slaughter of animals

This question is often posed by vegetarians, advocates of animal
rights, and some Hindus. In

fact, there are people who consider the consumption of meat to
be a violation of animal

.rights. But meat is not forbidden to Muslims

While Islam enjoins mercy and compassion toward all living
creatures, it maintains that God

has created plant and animal life for the benefit of humankind.
Man has been ordered and

entrusted by the Creator to use every resource in this world
judiciously because it is a

.blessing from Him and a trust

Islam offers one of the most humane methods of animal
slaughter. The objective of Islamic

slaughter is to ensure minimal pain and maximal blood drainage
from the animal as

detrimental microorganisms flourish in blood. Besides Muslims, people from other ethnic and

religious backgrounds are assured that meat slaughtered Islamically is healthy and of high

quality. It remains fresh for a longer period due to the lesser amount of blood in the meat in

.comparison to other methods of slaughtering

Animals are slaughtered in a swift and merciful manner with the pronunciation of words

meaning, "In the name of God; God is Most Great." This acknowledges that the animal's life

is being taken with God's permission to meet the lawful need for food. The Islamic mode of

slaughtering an animal also requires that the following conditions be met

The animal has to be fed as usual prior to slaughter and given .¹ .water

It may not be beaten or tortured in any way by man or .² machine. Stunning before slaughter

is not permitted. [This is accomplished by use of a bolt pistol, electric shock or electrified

water (in the case of poultry), all of which cause additional [stress and suffering to the animal

One animal should not be allowed to see another being .³ slaughtered. [In an authentic

narration by at-Tabarani, the Prophet scolded a man for even sharpening his blade while the

[sheep was watching him

.The knife should be large enough and razor sharp .ξ

Slaughtering is done from the front of the neck, and the .ο
butcher must swiftly sever the

respiratory tract, oesophagus and jugular vein without cutting
the spinal cord. With swift

cutting of the blood vessels in the neck at the proper place, rapid
and profuse bleeding causes

instant shock and anesthetization in the brain so that no
sensation is felt. Thus, the animal

does not suffer. [The Prophet instructed, "Allah has decreed
proficiency in all things. So

when you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen
his blade and spare suffering

[(to the animal he slaughters." (Narrated by Muslim

The animal must be completely lifeless and the blood drained
completely before skinning

.and removing the head

The promotion of healthy and correct methods of food
production is part of the Islamic way

of life. Its legislation encourages a strong respect for the sanctity
of life and an abhorrence to

.cruelty to animals

What is the Islamic View on Suicide; "mercy" Killings and
?Abortion

A true Muslim is satisfied with himself and his place in the
universe due to the knowledge

that he is not merely a worthless particle within an accidental
existence or an insignificant

creature with no purpose or role to play in life. He knows that lie
is a chosen servant of God

holding a position of honour, trust, favour and responsibility. He
is certain of his Lord's

perfection, all-encompassing knowledge and absolute wisdom,
justice and mercy. He knows

that nothing is created without purpose and that God's favours
and blessings are infinite and

.beyond human perception

Islam emphasizes the value of human life. It also teaches that
one should not despair of God's

mercy and recognize that this decree is always beneficial in
some way, even when it might

seem otherwise. The endurance of pain, discomfort or hardship
while accepting God's decree

is something that benefits a Muslim in the Hereafter and
increases his reward. Prophet

Muhammad said, "No tiredness, exhaustion, worry, grief,
distress or harm befalls a believer

in this world, not even a thorn that pricks him, but that God
expiates some of his sins

[thereby." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim

Suicide indicates impatience and a lack of trust in God. It is thus
prohibited to Muslims and

considered among the major sins that is subject to the will of
God on the Day of

.Resurrection; He may either forgive it or punish for it

So-called mercy killings come under the same ruling. Although
painkillers may be prescribed

for those who are terminally ill or badly injured, it is not
allowed to use or be given

medications that are known to cause death either sooner or later.
A basic principle of Islamic

Shari'ah is that harm cannot be removed by something else that
is equally harmful, so it is not

permitted to use medications that will cause greater harm than
the disease itself, which is the

.taking of a human life without a legally just cause

As for abortion, it is unlawful in Islam to terminate a pregnancy
at any stage unless there is a

justifiable reason, and then, only within very precise limits. If
the pregnancy is within the first

forty days and aborting it serves a legitimate purpose or will
prevent harm, then it is

permissible to do so. But fear of difficulty in raising children or maintaining and educating

them or the couple's belief that they already have enough children is not a permissible

.justification for abortion

After four months it is not lawful to abort a pregnancy unless a group of trustworthy

specialists decide that keeping the fetus in its mother's womb will lead to serious medical

consequences or threaten her life. Even then, it may only be done after all means of

eliminating the danger and keeping the fetus alive have been exhausted. In this case the

concession allowing abortion is made in order to avert the greater of two evils or serve the

.greater of two interests

!Doesn't Islamic Law Encourage Vengeance

Islam is often accused of having legislation that encourages retaliation rather than

:forgiveness. But the Qur'an itself refutes this, saying

But whoever overlooks from his brother [i.e., a killer] anything, " then there should be a

suitable follow-up and compensation to [the victim's heir] with good conduct. This is an

[alleviation from your Lord and a mercy." [2:178

And the retribution for an injury is one like it, but whoever " pardons and makes

reconciliation - his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does [not like the unjust." [42:40

Justice is the ruling spirit of Islamic law. However, the changing definition of terms such as

civilized", "freedom" and "equality" have resulted in criticism " of Islamic laws and the

argument that in view of the changing world, the Shari'ah is outdated. To a believing Muslim

this amounts to denial of the wisdom of God who put us on this earth with a purpose in life

.and a responsible role to fulfil

Punishment has always been an integral part in the concept of justice. Islam considers crime

an act of injustice towards society as well as a sin. Punishment is not atonement for sin

because a sin can only be forgiven through sincere repentance. A crime, however, is the

infliction of harm upon others which cannot be forgiven by .repentance alone

The object of all penal systems is to punish the offender and protect society from

reoccurrence of the crime. However, if societies were to rely only upon punishment, they

would fail miserably. An environment of healthy morality and faith must be the norm, where

right conduct is encouraged by all and wrongdoing is opposed and made as difficult as

.possible

In Islam, penalties are only part of a larger integrated whole. They cannot be properly

understood nor justifiably implemented in isolation. God has ordained a body of mutual

rights and obligations. He has also set certain bounds and limits in be observed by everyone

for the maintenance of justice. If men and nations want to have peace and safety on the

highways of life, they must remain within the "traffic lanes" marked out for them and observe

the "signposts" erected along their routes. Otherwise, they endanger themselves and others

and thus subject themselves to penalties - not out of reprisal but in order in regulate and

.preserve orderly interactions among all people in society

In many non-Muslim societies today, there are ongoing debates about the death penalty. In

:Islam the matter has been decided by the Creator, who said

And there is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, O you " [people] of understanding

[that you may avoid [sin]." [2:179

The verse alludes to the fact that such punishments serve as a strong deterrent to crime. They

are of a functional nature, to regulate and prevent reoccurrence

There are basically three categories of punishment in Islamic Shari'ah: First is hadd, fixed

punishments for a few specific crimes that were divinely ordained. Second is qisas, for

homicide and assault, in which the victim or family of the deceased has the right to legal

retribution or else to accept monetary remuneration or even to pardon the offender, both of

which serve to avert capital punishment. The Qur'an highly recommends forgiveness. An

injured party may take particular circumstances into account or overlook the offense with the

expectation of being compensated by God in the next life. And third is ta'zeer, which is a

discretionary penalty decided by the court. There are stringent conditions which must be met

for any of these to be applicable, and strict procedures must be followed before any person

can be convicted and punished

Another important function of these penalties is educational. They are intended to instil in

society a deep feeling of abhorrence for transgression against fellow human beings and

against God. Once one understands the basic concepts, objectives and framework of Islamic

Shari'ah, he cannot but conclude that it is capable of creating the most humane and just

society. Difficulties arise only when critics try to measure the 'ocean of divine knowledge

wisdom and justice with their own imperfect criteria and .understanding

Why does Islam Demand Harsh Punishments for Sex outside of ?Marriage

As mentioned previously, punishment in Islam has a social purpose, which is to dissuade

others from committing the same crime. People nowadays, especially Westerners, are

opposed to the Islamic punishment for fornication and adultery because they see it as too

harsh or disproportionate to the offense. A basic problem is the difference in standards by

.which the severity of a crime is measured

The Western view of man-woman relationships is usually that of permissiveness, one that

accepts extramarital and illicit relationships as normal. There is an increasingly driving

passion for more money, more comforts and more pleasure, .particularly physical pleasure

The greatest casualty of irresponsible sexual behaviour has been
‘the family, in particular

.children

Islam views sexual relationships outside of marriage as a very
serious matter because they

destabilize the family and thus contribute to the breakdown of
the entire social system. Islam

emphasizes protection of the family by imposing severe
punishments for activities that

threaten the family foundation. These punishments are the same
for men and women, and

only a legitimate Islamic government has the right to implement
.them

Moreover, the prescribed punishments are only one aspect of a
complete system which, in

addition to providing prohibitive obstacles in the path of
unlawful relationships, strongly

encourages and facilitates lawful marriage. In cases of
confirmed incompatibility or

dissatisfaction, a wife as well as a husband may request
separation, enabling each to seek a

more harmonious union. In addition, Muslims, whether married
or unmarried, are instructed

as to proper dress and behaviour at all times. Privacy is to be
respected and compromising

situations strictly avoided as a matter of obedience to God. And finally, the punishment

prescribed is severe enough to deter any who might still consider it

Any case that comes before the court for judgment must be investigated thoroughly and

proper evidence brought in order to satisfy all the requirements of Islamic law. Conviction is

subject to strict conditions which are most difficult to fulfil and is contingent on one of two

requirements

A repeated and persistent confession by the offender, who must also be proved to be of age

mentally sound, aware of the divine prohibition, and must have committed the act knowingly

of his own free will. The slightest doubt about any of these matters will prevent acceptance of

the confession. In addition, a married adulterer must be legally bound in a consummated

marriage, and there must be no physical defect in the spouse preventing a normal

relationship. Furthermore, people are not encouraged to confess their sins; rather, they should

repent to God privately

In the absence of confession there can be no conviction unless four reliable male Muslim

witnesses known for honesty and righteous conduct testify that they actually saw the act

taking place. It is insufficient that the couple was seen together, even if undressed and in an

embrace. Witnesses must be unanimous about the time, place and other details; otherwise, the

case will be rejected. This means that in reality the punishment is seldom carried out and

serves primarily as a deterrent. As an additional precaution, anyone who makes such an

accusation outside the framework of these conditions is himself subject to a severe

.punishment

Any government under which Shari'ah legislation is applied must establish justice as its core

value in all affairs so that the social and cultural environment is suitable for all its people to

live an upright and moral life. It is only after these conditions have been fulfilled that a

.government is entitled to implement penalties on its land

?Why is a woman's share of inheritance half that of a man's

The Islamic system of property distribution after death is based on rulings ordained by God in

the Qur'an. It abolished the former custom in which the entire estate was taken by the oldest

male heir and established the right of children, parents and spouses to inherit a specific share

without leaving the matter to human judgement and emotion. When Islam established

inheritance for the woman, it was the first time in history that women were able to enjoy this

right. The Qur'an stipulates that a woman automatically inherits from her father, husband, son

.and her childless brother

This system of inheritance is perfectly balanced and is based on 'the closeness of relationship

also taking into account the responsibilities imposed upon various members of a family in

different situations. In the absence of close relatives a share is apportioned to more distant

.ones

When the male is given a larger share, there is a logical reason behind it, which is that in

Islam economic responsibility is always upon the man while the woman has no financial

obligations, even if she should be wealthy or have her own income. Generally, the woman is

in charge of running the household and taking care of those within it, so she is justly freed

from financial responsibilities. When unmarried, it is the legal 'obligation of her father

brother or guardian to provide her food, clothing, medication, housing and other needs. After

marriage it becomes the duty of her husband or adult son. Islam holds men responsible by

law for fulfilling all the needs of their families. So the difference in shares does not in any

way mean that one sex is preferred over the other. Rather, it represents a just balance

consistent with the needs and responsibilities of family members

When a son and a daughter inherit from either of their parents, the son's share will be

depleted by giving an obligatory dowry to his wife upon marriage and maintaining his family

including his sister until she marries. While the daughter has no required expenses, she still

receives a share of the inheritance which is her own property to save, invest or use as she

pleases. When she marries, she will also receive a dowry from her husband and be

maintained by him, having no financial responsibilities whatsoever. Thus, one might

!conclude that Islam has favoured women over men

Although, in most cases the male inherits a share that is twice that of a female, it is not

always so. There are certain circumstances when they inherit equal shares, and in a few

instances a female can inherit a larger share than that of the male

In addition, a Muslim can will up to one third of his property by bequest to anyone who

would not inherit from him by law. The bequest may be a means of assistance to other

relatives and people who are in need, whether men or women.

One may also allocate this

portion or part of it to charities and good works of his choice

Why is the testimony of two women required in place of one man

What is meant by testimony is: giving information by which something is known to be true

and correct. With regard to the witness of two women being equal to the testimony of one

man, it is not always the case; and the Qur'anic verse that specifies this is related only to

financial dealings, where two men are preferred and the alternative is one man and two

women. Financial transactions constitute the sole case in which two female witnesses are

required in place of one male witness. It is in view of the fact that financial responsibility is

usually shouldered by men so they are expected to be better versed in financial transactions than women. It also takes into account the generally more emotional nature of women, as well as the roles of men and women in society as envisaged by .Islam

This does not reflect inferiority on the woman's part. Some women surpass many men in various aspects, including religious commitment, reasoning and memory. They may be able to give proper testimony better than that of a man regarding the issues about which they have knowledge and insight. They can even become references regarding those matters, as did some women at the time of the Prophet. A judge may accept the testimony of any person of .exceptional qualifications

Two female witnesses are not always considered equal to one male witness. There are other verses in the Qur'an which speak about witnesses without specifying male or female. In those cases, a female witness is equivalent to a male witness. It is well known that Aishah, the Prophet's wife, related no less than 2,220 narrations which are considered authentic only on

her solitary evidence. Other women have also been recognized as reliable narrators of

prophetic traditions. This is sufficient proof that the witness of one woman can be accepted

In fact, female witnesses are preferred in certain cases. There are incidents which require

only female witnesses and the testimony of a male is not accepted. Issues pertaining to

women alone, such as childbirth or menstruation as related to divorce disputes and private

matters where no men were present, obviously necessitate the witness of a woman

Isn't Islam intolerant of other religions? How are Muslims supposed to

treat people of other faiths

Tolerance is the attitude that should govern the dealings of all people with one another

Religious tolerance is an essential principle of Islam, and Muslims are ordered to have good

relations with people of all religions and be kind and courteous to everyone. Muslims are

ordered by the Qur'an to uphold their promises and agreements with non-Muslims and not

betray or transgress against them. The lives, families, properties and honour of non-Muslims

must be protected under any government that claims to apply Islamic law. Non-Muslims are

also guaranteed the right and freedom to practice their own religions in an Islamic state

Islam is a religion of mercy and justice. It teaches its adherents to interact with all people and

to cooperate with them for the betterment of mankind. More than ever today, Muslims need

to work together with other groups that oppose oppression, bloodshed, corruption

promiscuity and perversion. They should also cooperate with non-Muslims in upholding truth

and combating falsehood, in supporting the oppressed, and eliminating such dangers as

pollution and disease

Only enemies who harbour hatred and contempt against Islam are addressed by those

Qur'anic verses that warn Muslims against taking them as intimates and allies. Muslims are

ordered to deal with all other human beings with justice and compassion as members of the

human brotherhood. They are always to behave kindly toward any non-Muslims who are not

hostile, whether by offering financial help, feeding the hungry, giving loans when needed, or

interceding in connection with permissible matters, even if only by speaking kindly and

:advising them. The Qur'an addresses believers, saying

Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you " because of religion and do not

expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward

[them. Indeed, Allah loves those who are just." [60:8

Thus, it is not permissible under any circumstance for Muslims to mistreat a non-Muslim

who has not committed any aggression against them; they are not allowed to harm, threaten

or terrorize him, steal his wealth, cheat him or deprive him of his rights. It is obligatory upon

Muslims as well to honour whatever lawful treaties and -agreements are made with non

.Muslim parties

Coexistence does not mean that we cease to promote our positive values. As an aspect of

their kindness and concern for humanity, Muslims are expected to invite non-Muslims to the

truth of Islam with words of wisdom, sound arguments and a pleasant manner. This is a debt

owed by Muslims to the peoples of the world in gratitude to God for His guidance and

.countless blessings

!What is Islam's Attitude toward Western Civilization Today

Humanity lives crowded together in an increasingly small world
.of various cultures

Undoubtedly, Western culture is the dominant influence in the
modern world today. Hence, it

is inevitable that others interact with it and assimilate its positive
'values and achievements

but without adopting its negative ones. There is a cultural
dimension of most human

phenomena, religion included, and modern societies are tending
to become less exclusive and

more multi-religious. But while people are developing an
outlook that is more

accommodating toward others, acknowledging these differences
does not mean that there

.should be no distinction between good and evil

As well as being a religion and way of life, Islam is also a
complete worldview. Its attitude

toward the present Western civilization is the same as that
manifested toward every past

civilization: it accepts the goodness that such civilizations can
yield but at the same time

rejects their evils. It allows for the acquisition of particular
benefits such as scientific and

technical knowledge, yet many social aspects are seen to be
destructive and contrary to

.Islamic teachings

Islam has never advocated a policy of isolationism. It does not oppose other civilizations

merely because they are non- Muslim but believes in the unity of humanity and good

relationships with people of different races and inclinations.

And Muslims do not object to

benefiting from modernity in discovering the mechanisms for solving common problems or

to the solutions themselves, as long as they do not contradict

.Islamic legislation

Islam neither rejects the West totally nor does it accept it uncritically. Led by political and

economic interests, the upholders of Western civilization often follow policies which are

detrimental to the collective good of Muslims. What Muslims and many other peoples of the

world today reject is the presumed centrality and universalism of the West and its selfcentered

attitude. They opposed the oppression and exploitation perpetrated by Western

colonialism in the past, and they object presently to the newer, 'albeit more subtle forms

which are no less malevolent. Injustices caused by arrogant attitudes and demeaning policies

.are unacceptable to everyone

Opening up to the modern worldview and critically interacting with it has alerted Muslims to

certain problems raised by Western modernity. International relations, globalization, the

menace posed by the media and central government to the human individual, the increase of

leisure time available to ordinary people, and the processes of standardization were issues

seldom raised in the past. The study of Western modernity in a critical and interactive manner

may serve to sharpen the awareness of Muslims concerning the magnitude of the global

culture crisis and consequently, increase their knowledge and confidence in their own

.divinely ordained way of life

It can be fairly said that Islam does not oppose any civilization as long as it serves the

interests of humanity. But customs of other cultures involving principles or conduct

prohibited in Islam can never be considered as lawful for a Muslim, even one who resides

permanently in non-Muslim lands. The limits set by God are protective ones which must

always be observed, and Islam stands firm to uphold this right .for mankind

Why is so much of the Muslim world underdeveloped

No one can deny that the Muslim world has been in decline for several centuries, the causes of which go back into history. In the Muslim nation's early stages, wealth, centres of learning and public works were abundant. But affluence, excessive concern with worldly life, and the spread of corruption eventually weakened religious consciousness. The inevitable result of these human failures was an ebb in conversions to Islam and territorial expansion, losses sustained in East Asia and Europe, the ascension of Western power and influence, and a change from an ascendant to a defensive posture. The present backwardness of most Muslim societies, their political degradation and their peoples' suffering, in spite of their human and material resources and of Islam's noble values and principles, is the unfortunate reality of the .present day

The calamities that befell the Muslim world after the period of 'its early expansion eventually leading to the fall of the caliphate, cannot be attributed to Islamic thought or even entirely to errors in political leadership. The prophetic period and that of the early caliphs

which followed presented the best examples for all succeeding generations. However, the rapid influx of new peoples and nations into the community of Islam before they were properly educated as to Islamic objectives and values resulted in a later political leadership that never developed and matured as it should have. The Islamic vision became obscured and its spirit reduced to mere form, empty words and a heritage venerated, but seriously misunderstood, by later generations. The natural trend of the Islamic legal system to expand was arrested, and the vital physical sciences, economics, sociology and political thought - all essential aspects of previous development - were neglected. At the same time the Muslim world was becoming increasingly weak and vulnerable, Europe was beginning to benefit .from the achievements of Islamic scholarship and assert itself

The fact that most Muslim regions of the world were then conquered, dominated and exploited by Western colonial powers for some time is not an excuse that is condoned by Islam. Rather, it was the natural outcome of the widespread neglect and failure by Muslims to

conscientiously and comprehensively adhere to the teachings of
.their religion

The importance of obtaining knowledge and working
conscientiously with determination

was made clear by the Prophet of Islam. Muslims are taught that
because man has been given

a certain amount of free will, it must be exercised properly in
accordance with Islamic

teachings to earn approval of the Creator. This in itself is
motivation for Muslims to be the

most knowledgeable and productive people possible. If Muslim
societies today are not

meeting their potential, it is surely not due to Islam; rather, it is
from their ignorance of the

.religion and failure to apply and practice it

If Islam is such a good religion, why do we find many Muslims
‘dishonest

‘unreliable and lazy

Islam came as a message of guidance from God to all creation at
a time when ignorance and

corruption were universal. It opened peoples' minds and souls to
‘learning, development

refinement and morality. The achievements of Islamic thought
in that early period were

.sufficient to bring light, guidance and knowledge to humanity

However, as among every other people, there are indeed some
‘Muslims who are heedless

undependable, corrupt and selfish, and the media projects this
stereotype about Muslims in

particular. It can be readily noted that whenever an adherent to
any other faith commits a

crime, the media seldom brings up the issue of religion, but
when a Muslim is involved, it is

Islam that is blamed and portrayed in a negative light before
.public opinion

The fact cannot be denied that many Muslims today are
unmindful of the teachings of their

religion, due either to a lack of religious knowledge or to
various worldly inducements and

attractions. But even if one recognizes that some Muslims may
be dishonest, immoral or

impulsive, he should not judge Islam by its nonconforming or
disobedient members but

rather by those who conscientiously adhere to its teachings.

Since Islam categorically forbids

such evils as lying, cheating and negligence, the wrongdoer
must be blamed for his crimes

rather than the religion. One should instead examine the system
itself, understand its

principles, and disregard the acts of those who have serious
‘deficiencies in their knowledge

.beliefs and practice

While today's Muslim societies are not model ones by any means, they still enjoy a

comparatively stable family life, absence of delinquency, low crime rates, greater freedom

from drugs and alcoholism, as well as the warmth of .brotherhood, generosity and mutual aid

It may be observed that taken as a whole, the Muslim community produces the best citizens

in any society. As a matter of religious observance, the majority avoids the consumption of

alcohol and drugs, eliminating many intoxicant-related crimes. Collectively, Muslims are the

community which gives the maximum amount of charity in the world. And no community

can equal Muslims where modesty, sobriety and human ethics .are concerned

Islam may be fairly and justly assessed not by negative stereotypes portrayed by the media

but by what its authentic sources contain and by the practice of the most excellent follower of

the religion, Prophet Muhammad. There have been a number of unbiased non-Muslim

historians who have declared that Muhammad was an exemplary human being. It is his

pattern of life that demonstrates the true Islamic ideal and example to be followed by

.Muslims

What is Islam's view about education, science and technology

The framework of Islamic thought represents a comprehensive view of life and the

.universe

A Muslim is therefore required to acquire both religious and worldly knowledge. In fact

Islam advocated knowledge at a time when the whole world was engulfed in ignorance. In

a matter of years the early generation of Muslims became a learned and refined people

for Islam had awakened in them the faculty of intellect. Those early Muslims understood

from the teachings of their religion that useful knowledge is necessary for the benefit of

the self and of humanity. Hence, they pursued it to such a degree that they surpassed

other nations in development and productivity and carried the torch of civilization for

.many centuries

Muslim history abounds with examples of scientific and cultural ingenuity. Muslims

inherited the knowledge of the nations that came before them, developed it and placed it

in the context of a precise moral framework. Muslim scholarship made a vital contribution

.to the enrichment and advancement of human civilization

While Europe was still in the dark ages, religious Muslims were making great advances in

the fields of medicine, mathematics, physics, astronomy, 'geography, architecture

literature, and history documentation to mention but a few.

Many important new

procedures were transmitted to medieval Europe from Muslim regions, such as Arabic

numerals with the principle of the zero vital to the advancement of mathematics and the

use of algebra. Sophisticated instruments, including the astrolabe and the quadrant, as

well as good navigational maps, were first developed by Muslims. Only after people lost

sight of their religious beliefs and obligations did the scientific achievements of the Muslim

.world cease and fall into obscurity

Similarly, Islam does not now oppose any modern inventions that are beneficial to

mankind. It is sufficient that they be used in the name of God and for His cause. In

reality, machines, instruments and devices have no religion or .homeland

They can be used for either good or bad objectives, and the way they are used can affect

much of the earth's population. Even something so simple as a glass can be filled either

with a nourishing drink or with a poison. Television can provide education or immorality. It

is up to the user to decide, and a Muslim is commanded to make good use of all the means

at his disposal while being prohibited from causing harm to himself or others. Failure to

use the proper means toward benefit is, in effect, a deprecation of Islamic teachings

A truly Islamic government is required to the best of its ability to provide all means that

promote adequate education for its citizens. Education is a right for all individuals and the

required moral duty of every capable Muslim. All able, intelligent and skilled individuals in

an Islamic society are required to educate themselves not only in the basics of their

religion but in necessary worldly affairs. Further, it is obligatory upon qualified people to

study every beneficial field of knowledge. For example, since every society needs doctors

it becomes obligatory for some people to go into the field of medicine to fulfil the needs

.of society

Advancements in science and technology are among the ways and means to achieve

development of the Muslim world. Islam calls upon Muslims to pursue knowledge in the

broadest sense of the word. Prophet Muhammad said, "Seeking knowledge is an obligation

upon every Muslim." [Narrated by Ibn Majah] He also said, "For one who treads a path to

knowledge, Allah will make easy the path to Paradise." [Narrated by Muslim] And the

Qur'an contains numerous references to knowledge and its importance, such as

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the " alternation of night and day

[are signs for those of understanding." [3:190

Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' " [[39:9

Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those " who were given knowledge

[by degrees." [58:11

Qur'anic verses encourage study and contemplation of the universe that surrounds us and

is particularly concerned with those sciences that give human beings the ability to benefit

from the world around them. While encouraging investigation, the Qur'an contains

references to a variety of subjects which have been shown to be scientifically accurate. [A

few such examples were cited on pp. 27-28. "41:53]. This is the fulfilment of God's

statement over 14 centuries ago

We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within " themselves until it becomes clear

[to them that it is the truth." [41:53

Thus, when a Muslim has a sincere and wholesome intention to obtain knowledge, it will

also have a positive effect on his faith. For knowledge reinforces textual evidence for the

existence of the almighty Creator and assists in appreciation of the many scientific

allusions found in the Qur'an

There has never been an established scientific fact that contradicted the teachings of

Islam. Whatever modern science discovers only increases the Muslim's knowledge of God's

magnificent creation. Thus, Islam actively encourages scientific endeavours and the study

of God's signs in nature. It also welcomes beneficial technological advances and allows

people to enjoy the fruits of human ingenuity

To a Muslim, conflict between science and religion is an impossibility, for religion comes from God and so does His system of creation and development. The modern, purely materialistic approach to scientific and technological advancement has indeed granted man a measure of physical comfort, but not mental or spiritual comfort. Islam advocates the incorporation of knowledge within a just and balanced value system where anything beneficial for one's spiritual and worldly improvement is encouraged and advocated