

ISLAM

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Contrary to popular understanding, Prophet Muhammad IS NOT the founder of Islam. Islam began since time began. Islam was also the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (Peace be Upon Them). It is offensive to Muslims when referred as Mohamadans.

The word Islam is derived from two Arabic words sharing same root:

Salaam – Peace, Harmony, Tranquility, purity

Aslama – Willing Obedience, Willing Submission, Total Surrender.

Therefore Islam means; Only through submission to the Will of God and by obedience to His Law can one achieve true peace and be in harmony with the created and the creator Himself.

Muslims are those who submit themselves in obedience to Almighty God. Therefore anyone who does not follow his or her own will but follows the will of Almighty God is a Muslim.

Other than human beings, the entire physical world is obedient to God and submissive to His Laws, which means that it is in a state of Islam, or it is Muslim. The physical world has no choice of its own but obeys the Law of the Creator.

Human is singled out as being endowed with intelligence and the power of making choices and he is invited to submit to the good Will of God and obey His Law. When a human chooses to obey God, he/she is known as Muslim, and as a result will be with the truth and in harmony between him/herself and all the other elements of Nature. But if he/she knowingly chooses disobedience to God, he/she is known as *Kafir*, and he/she will

deviate from the Right Path and will be inconsistent. Besides, he/she will incur the displeasure of the Lawgiver.

The Fundamental Articles Of Faith in Islam

1. Belief in God.

The following four verses from Surah Ikhlas of Qur'an gives the most concise definition of God in Islam: "1 Say: He is God, The One and only. 2 God, the Eternal, Absolute. 3 He begets not, nor is He begotten. 4 And there is none like unto Him". (Qur'an 112: 1-4)

For a Muslim, Surah Ikhlas of the Glorious Qur'an is the touchstone of theology. Any candidate to divinity must be subjected to this 'acid test'. Since the attributes of God given in this chapter are unique, false gods and pretenders to divinity can be easily dismissed using these verses.

The following verse of the Glorious Qur'an conveys a similar message:

"No vision can grasp Him but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things." (Al-Qur'an 6:103)

The Muslims prefer calling the Supreme Creator, Allah, instead of by the English word 'God'. The Arabic word, 'Allah', is pure and unique, unlike the English word 'God', which can be played around with. Allah is a unique word, which does not conjure up any mental picture nor can it be played around with. Therefore the Muslims prefer using the Arabic word 'Allah' for Almighty God. However, while addressing the non-Muslims we may have to use the word God, for Allah.

Arab Christians too refer to God the Father as Allah. In the Malay Bible; Al-Kitab, God is also referred as Allah. In the Hindu Scriptures and Sikh's scripture Grant Sahib, among others, also refers to God as Allah. "Say: 'Call upon Allah, or call upon Al-Rahman. By

whatever name ye call upon Him, (it is well): For to Him belong the most beautiful names.” (Qur’an 17:110)

2. Belief in Angels.

The true Muslim believes in the angels of God. They are purely spiritual and splendid beings whose nature requires no food or drink or sleep. They have no physical desires of any kind nor material needs. They spend their days and nights in the service of God. There are many of them, and each one is charged with a certain duty. If we cannot see the angels with our naked eyes, it does not necessarily deny their actual existence. Belief in the angels originates from the Islamic principle that knowledge and truth are not entirely confined to the sensory knowledge or sensory perception alone (refer Qur’an 16:49-50; 21:19-20).

3. Belief in Scriptures.

The true Muslim believes in all the scriptures and revelations of God. They were the guiding light, which the messengers received to show their respective peoples the Right Path of God. In the Qur’an a special reference is made to the books of Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus. The Muslims believe that the only authentic and complete book of God that survived in its original form today is the Qur’an, the Last and Final Revelation of God. Nothing of it is missing and no more of it is expected. Its authenticity is beyond doubt. The Qur’an was made so by God Who revealed it and made it incumbent upon Himself to protect it against interpolation and corruption of all kinds. Thus it is given to the Muslims as the standard or criterion by which all the other books are judged. So whatever agrees with the Qur’an is accepted as Divine truth, and whatever differs from the Qur’an is either rejected or suspended.

God says: ‘Verily We have, without doubt, sent down the Qur’an; and We will assuredly guard it’ (Qur’an 15:9; also refer 2:75-79; 5:13-14, 41, 45, 47; 6:91; 41:43).

4. Belief in Messengers of God.

A Muslim believes in all the Messengers of God without any discrimination among them. Every known nation had a Warner or Messenger from God. Some of their stories have been related in the Qur'an and some others not.

The Holy Qur'an mentions the names of twenty five of them, and the Muslim believes in them all and accepts them as authorized messengers of God. It may be useful to mention here the names of some of the great messengers like Noah and David, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Moses, John the Baptist, Jesus and Muhammad, may the peace and blessings of God be upon them all. They were, with the exception of Muhammad, known as "national" or local messenger and time bound. But their message, their religion, was basically the same and was called ISLAM, because it came from One and the Same Source, namely, God, to serve one and the same purpose, and that is to guide humanity to the Straight Path of God. Among them Muhammad stands as the Last Messenger and Mercy to all. The Qur'an commands the Muslims thus:

"We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes; and that, which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that which was given to all prophets from their Lord. We make no discrimination between one and another of them, and we bow to God" (Qur'an 2:136, also refer 3:84; 4:163-165; 6:84-87).

5. Belief in Judgment Day.

The true Muslim believes this world will come to an end some day, and the dead will rise to stand for their final and fair trial. Everything we do in this world, every intention we have, every move we make, every thought we entertain, and every word we say, all are counted and kept in accurate records. On the Day of Judgment they will be brought up. People with good records will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to the Heaven of God, and those with bad records will be punished fairly. The real nature of Heaven and Hell and the exact description of them are known to God only. There are

descriptions of Heaven and Hell in the Qur'an and the Traditions of Muhammad but they should not be taken literally. In Heaven, said Muhammad, there are things that no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no mind has ever conceived.

6. Timeless Knowledge of God.

The true Muslim believes in the Timeless Knowledge of God and in His power to plan and execute His plans. His knowledge and power are in action at all times to keep order in His vast domain and maintain full command over His creation. He is Wise and Loving, and whatever He does must have a good motive and a meaningful purpose.

We should have strong Faith in Him and accept whatever He does because our knowledge is limited and our thinking is based on individual or personal considerations, whereas His knowledge is limitless and He plans on a universal basis.

The timeless knowledge and power of God to execute His plans do not prevent us from making our own plans in our own limited sphere of power. On the contrary, He exhorts us to think, to plan and to make sound choices, but if things do not happen the way we wanted or planned them, we should not lose Faith or surrender ourselves to mental strains and shattering worries.

We should try again and again, and if the results are not satisfactory, then we know that we have tried our best and will not be held responsible for the results, because what is beyond our capacity and responsibility is the affair of God alone. The Qur'an says, "It is possible that you dislike a thing that is good for you. And that you love a thing, which is bad for you. But God knows and you know not" (Qur'an 2:216)

The Muslims call this article of Faith the belief in 'Qadaa' and 'Qadar', which simply means, in other words, that the Timeless Knowledge of God anticipates events, and that events take place according to the exact knowledge of God (refer Qur'an 18:29; 41:46; 53:33-62; 54:49; 65:3; 76:30-31).

The Fundamental Duties In Islam

Shahadah (Declaration of Faith): Declaring knowingly and voluntarily '*La Ilaha Ilallah Muhammadar Rasulallah*' (There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). All other duties in Islam originate from Shahadah.

Solat (Prayer): Offered minimum five times a day in congregation or individually and keeps a believer in constant touch with his/her Creator. Develops the qualities of self-discipline, steadfastness, honesty, truthfulness and courage. Promotes humility while removing arrogance.

Zakat (Welfare Contribution): Compulsory upon every Muslims who owns wealth more than his needs to pay the fix rate to the Islamic state. The Islamic state is responsible for providing basic necessities of food, clothing, shelter, medicine and education to every citizen. Zakat is a means of narrowing the gap between rich and poor. No one should have any fear of insecurity or poverty.

Sawm (Fasting): Muslims refrain from eating or drinking from sunrise to sunset in the month of Ramadhan. It is a means of achieving self-control designed to raise a person's moral and spiritual standards above selfishness, greed, laxity and other vices.

Hajj (Pilgrimage): A duty once in a lifetime upon every Muslims who can afford. Hajj symbolizes the unity of humankind and is an annual assembly of Muslims from all over the world.

SOME WORDS OF WISDOM FROM THE QUR'AN AND PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH).

“God commands justice and doing good and giving to relatives. And He forbids indecency and doing wrong and tyranny” (Qur'an 16:90).

“O you who believe! Enter absolutely into peace. Do not follow in the footsteps of Satan. He is an outright enemy to you” (Qur'an 2:208).

“If anyone kills a person – unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land – it would be as if he kill the whole nation: and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole nation” (Qur'an 5:32).

“Help you one another in righteousness and piety, but help you not one another in sin and rancor” (Qur'an 5:2).

“If you do judge, judge between them justly” (Qur'an 5:42).

“O you who believe! Be upholders of justice, bearing witness for God alone, even against yourselves or your parents and relatives. Whether they are rich or poor” (Qur'an 4:135).

“O Mankind! We created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous you” (Qur'an 49:13).

“For We assuredly sent amongst every people a messenger, (with the command), ‘serve God and eschew Evil’.” (Qur'an 16:36)

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“O you who believe! Show integrity for the sake of God, bearing witness with justice. Do not let hatred for a people incite you into not being just. Be just. That is closer to faith” (Qur’an 5:8).

“Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands clear from Error” (Qur’an 2:256)