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## ISLAM

*By Shah Kirit bin Kakulal Govindji*

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)

## BASIC BELIEFS IN HINDUISM

by S.Gokilan

### Belief in one God

- monoisme not monotheism
- all deities reflecting features of the one GOD
- Lord Ganesha/Pillaiyaar/Vikneswaran - God in the form of sound
- Lord Muruga - Lord in the form of Knowledge
  - Vel- Knowledge should be deep, wide and sharp
  - Look of Lord Muruga - Knowledge is a beautiful attainment
  - Icha sakhti and Kriya Sakhti-If handled well, the knowledge would be able to control your mental and physical powers
- Lord Sakhti/Ambal - God in the form of love
  - *Love is power*
- Lord Vishnu - The care-taker of the People
- The Sun
  - *GOD in the form of enlightenment*
  - *Vitamin E – good for skin*
  - *Surya Namaskaram – since the early days of Hinduism*
- Lord Siva/Nadarajan
  - *Si – Sirappu – The greatness, glory*
  - *Va – Vanappu – Undefinable, no beginning and no ending*
  - *Philosophy of 'Dance of Nadaraja' – the science & philosophy*
  - *Philosophy of Sivalingam – symbol of Lord Shiva*

### **The Saints/Prophet**

- Saiva guru/Prophet 4 –
  - *Thirunyanasambanthar*
  - *Thirunaavukarasar/Appar*
  - *Sundaramurthi Nayanar*
  - *Manikkavasagar*
  
- 63 Nayanmar/saints – from various background attained the GOD

### **The Holy Scriptures for the Saivaitis**

- Thirumurai
  - *divided into 12 chapters,*
  - *the 12th chapter – Peria Puranam (history of the 63 nayanmar)*
- Philosophy of Saivism
  - *14 Meikanda Sastra*

### **Saadanas – the route to attain GOD**

- Sariyai – Service in the name of GOD
- Kiriya- rituals and temple worship - Thirumurai
- Yogam - Meditation
- Nyanam – the enlightenment by the GOD's grace

## THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

*By Lawrence Theodore Jeyachandran*

**1. God** God is encountered by the Jewish people at Mount Sinai when He comes down to give the 10 commandments. The first followers of Jesus were strict monotheistic Jews – but in Jesus, they see the amazing combination of humanity and divinity. Ten days after the ascension of Jesus into heaven, they encounter a third Person – the Holy Spirit – in an upper room who was promised by Jesus Christ before He was crucified. The Church comes to realise that the Oneness of God is constituted by the loving intimate relationship of Father and Son through the Holy Spirit (John 10:30; 17:20-23). Christians have come to reflect on this truth and realise that the Divine qualities of love, knowledge and freedom are possible only in the mystery of the Triune God.

**2. Humanity** Human beings – men and women – are made in the image of God. This does not mean that God resembles humans physically. As God is Spirit (John 4:24), the resemblance that humans bear to Him are with reference to their capacities for relationships through the use of intellect, emotion and will. They most closely resemble their Creator because of their capacity for moral choices in which they were created to live under His lordship.

**3. Sin** We humans have, however, chosen to rebel against our Creator by declaring autonomy from Him – by insisting on our own standard of good and evil. Thus, we are now enmeshed in a matrix of broken relationships – with God, with ourselves, with others, with nature; and we see nature rebelling against itself. The most physical symptom of this separation is death.

**4. Salvation** God has provided for our salvation in the death of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for our sins. Because He is human, He can totally identify with our temptations – but because He was sinless from birth, He can be an a sufficient sacrifice for

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our sins. But because of His Divinity, His sacrifice can atone for all of humanity. In the Person of Jesus Christ, two natures – Divinity and humanity – combine without confusion. This is like a 3-dimensioned cube coming into 2-dimensioned world where it would be seen as a square by other 2-dimensioned creatures.

It would still be 100% cube in 3 dimensions and 100% square in 2 dimensions because a square is the image of a cube! In the same way, Jesus becomes the perfect Human Being and in that He represents God to the full to other humans – Jesus does not and cannot take the form of any other of His creatures because only human beings are made in the image of God! – He is thus 100% God in His divine dimensions and 100% human in his human dimensions. Three days after His crucifixion, He rises from the dead and shows Himself to His disciples who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are transformed from cowards to martyrs! By faith in the life and work of Jesus Christ, God promises forgiveness of salvation and eternal life to all who believe. They are given the privilege of addressing God as Father, a relationship that is not deserved at all but is now freely available to all in Jesus Christ.

**5. Consummation** At the right time according to His wisdom, God will judge the world through Jesus Christ. God is infinitely holy and so, by His standards, no one can really be declared as just. It is only because of His grace that forgiveness is now available to all. In the final judgement (Rev. 20), all human beings will be judged by their own religious standards and will still be found wanting and therefore punished. Salvation is therefore given by God not on the basis of good works (which can never come up to the standards of an infinitely holy God), but through the grace of Jesus Christ. The Bible ends with a glorious scene where human beings who trust in Jesus Christ will stand redeemed with all their ethnic, linguistic and cultural distinctives. Along with them, the rest of creation will also be restored (Rev.21,22).

## **BUDDHISM**

*By Vijaya Samarawickrama*

### **THE LIFE OF BUDDHA**

1. Moved by compassion to take birth among man
  - Before he was born to the world.
  - Witness the dark ages engulfing the human realm.
  - Vowed to take birth to the world
  
2. Queen Maya's Dream
  - Chose Suddhodhana and Mayadevi who was the ruler of Sakya clan as his parents in the future.
  - Dreaming of an elephant touch her right side with its trunk.
  - The palace fortunetellers explained that the dream announced the queen's pregnancy
  
3. The Birth of Siddharta
  - Mayadevi carried the pregnancy without any complications or pain.
  - Followed an ancient tradition and decided to travel to her parental home.
  - Day of a full moon in the month of May near the village of Lumbini.
  - The baby who destined to be the Buddha was born (566 BCE).
  - The baby was given name " Siddharta " which means 'accomplisher of aims' by the father.
  
4. A Youth Dedicated to the Mastery of Learning and Athletics
  - Mayadevi died a week after gave birth to the prince and her sister Mahapajapati raised him.
  - Married with Yashodara when he was sixteen years old.
  - 13 years after his marriage, he finally realized that life is always accompanied with sorrow.
  
5. The Renunciation of Worldly Life
  - Siddhartha requested his father to allow him to proceed in his quest for truth.
  - His wife born a child and was given name "Rahula" which means 'chain or fetter'
  - He decided to make a final break living the luxurious palace of his father, and leaving behind his devoted wife and son at the age of 29
  
6. The Six Years of Austerities
  - He joined five other ascetics in a way of discipline based on progressively severe fasting.
  - He found the 'Middle Way' between two extremes is the path to Enlightenment.

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- He slowly rose, and went to bathe in the river. He crossed over to the far bank where a village girl offered him a bowl of milk rice. It was the first rich food he had accepted in a long time and it instantly restored his body to strength.
- Siddhartha sat under the great and shady bodhi tree near the village of Gaya, just south of the great Himalayas, to make his last bid for liberation. Absorbing himself fully in meditation, he vowed not to move from that spot until he had fulfilled his quest.

7. The enlightenment

- During the night, he was visited by Mara, the evil one, who tried to tempt him away from his virtuous path.
- He gained enlightenment at the age of 35 on a full-moon day in May and became the Buddha “The Awakened One”.

8. The Buddha Teaches

- After his enlightenment, he went to the Deer Park “ Isipatana “ near the holy city of Benares and shared his new understanding with five holy men.
- For the next forty-five years, the Buddha and his disciples went from place to place in India spreading the **Dharma**, his teachings.

9. The Last year

- Shakyamuni Buddha passed away around 486 BC at the age of eighty in Kusinara.
- His last words were “*Impermanent are all created things; Strive on with awareness.*”

## **THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTH**

“Dukkha”

*The Truth of Suffering*

“Samudaya”

*The Truth of the Cause of Suffering*

“Nirodha”

*The Truth of the End of Suffering*

“Magga”

*The Truth of the Path leading to the End of Suffering*

## **THE EIGHT-FOLD PATH**

### **Panna**

1. Samma-Ditthi  
Right Understanding of the following facts
2. Samma-Sankappa  
Right Determination to Sila
3. Samma-Vaca  
Right Speech
4. Samma-Kammanta  
Right Action
5. Samma-Ajiva  
Right Livelihood

### **Samadhi**

6. Samma vayama  
Right Effort
7. Samma sati  
Right Mindfulness
8. Samma samadhi  
Right Concentration

## DEVELOPMENT OF BUDDHISM

### 1. Theravada (The Tradition of The Elders).

- Theravada is the more conservative of the two major divisions within this religion.
- People must achieve enlightenment for themselves. i.e. Monk
- When Monk achieves the goal he is seeking, he becomes a saint.
- Buddhist cannot join the sangha & become Monk, must be content to lead the life of a layperson.
- The characteristic physical structure of Buddhism is a complex of building called a (wat).
- 2 types of the meditation: Sammatta meditation and vipassana.

### 2. Mahayana (The Expensive Way)

- Principles
  - In addition to what Buddha had openly taught his disciples, only to a select group who could understand them.
  - Gautama was really more than a man. In contrast to the teaching of early Buddhism & Theravada school.
  - Mahayanist believe that if Gautama was eternal who had come to help people, however
  - there must be many others Buddhas
- The spread of Mahayana Buddhism
  - After became popular in India, this teaching were carried into China
  - From China spread to other East Asian Nations