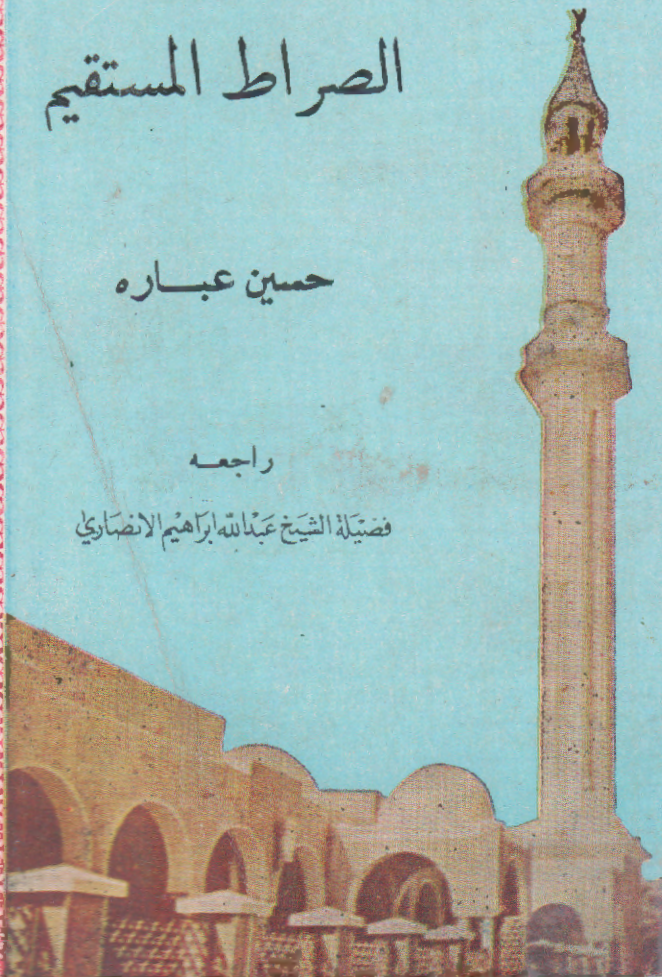


الصراط المستقيم

حسين عباره

راجعہ

فضيلة الشيخ عبدالله ابراهيم الانصاري



THE STRAIGHT PATH

Hussein Abbara

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IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL

INTRODUCTION

It is not the aim of this booklet to make a comprehensive survey of the whole field of Islam ; rather, the aim here is to highlight certain aspects which would be of great interest to anyone who has no preconceptions about the Muslim religion and which are illustrated herein with original material . The background material included has been selected in order to give the reader the necessary basis for a fuller understanding of the subjects which are introduced and I have also tried to explain the rational bases of Muslim beliefs . Similarly, I offer some explanations of the Qur'an . It is a concise booklet that embraces not only principles of belief but also the basic tenets of social welfare and legal precepts ; containing both commands and prohibitions .

Islam is a religion as well as a complete way of life . It aims at producing a balanced personality in the individual . Unfortunately , one cannot judge a Muslim by the fact that he calls himself one , or even by his profession of faith in the religion . He may call

himself a Muslim simply because he is born to Muslim parents . However, he may have made very few attempts to acquire a deep understanding of his religion . One would hope, however , that those who have no understanding of Islam will not judge it by the conduct of the non - observant Muslim .

As the Prophet said « He who innovates something in this matter of ours that is not of it will have it rejected » .

I hope that this succinct informal essay will serve to stimulate the intellectual interest of readers and act as a guide for further study of Islam from original sources . For purposes of further study the reader is referred to the short bibliography at the end of this paper , all of which publications are in English .

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1. The Meaning of « Islam »

What does « Islam » mean and who is a Muslim ? « Islam » is an Arabic word that connotes « submission », surrender and obedience . As a religion , « Islam » stands for complete submission and obedience to Allah (God) - thus the term « Islam » .

Another literal meaning of the word « Islam » is « peace » and it signifies that one can achieve real peace of body and mind only through submission and obedience to God . Such a life of obedience brings peace to the heart and establishes real peace in society at large .

A « Muslim » is an individual who chooses to acknowledge his Creator , accepts Him as his real Master , honestly and scrupulously submits to His laws and injunctions and follows the Code of Islam . According to the Holy Book revealed to Muhammad , a Muslim is one who resigns himself to God and thereby professes the faith of Al-Islam . A Muslim , therefore , believes in the prophets of all the three monotheistic religions , viz : Judaism , Christianity and Islam and makes no distinction between them except that he also believes that the message received by the last prophet , Muhammad , is the most comprehensive and the final form of God's message to man .

In Islam mere acknowledgement of these tenets will not suffice . A Muslim will not be a good Muslim unless he carries out in practice the instructions given by the Prophet as ordained by God . Islam is not only a belief but also a practice .

Faith , practice and worship - each complements the others ; they are like the links of a chain ; if one link is broken , the whole chain is worthless .

2 . God in Islam

Muslims call God 'Allah' as He called Himself 'Allah' in the Qur'an in chapter 47 : 19 « Know that there is no God but Allah » . « And your God is one God exclusive of any other » .

God is one and unique . He has no partner , or equal and no son . He is the sole Creator and sustainer of the universe wherein every creature bears witness to His justice , ensuring order in His creation in which nothing is believed to be out of place , and His mercy is unbonded and encompasses everything . « He it is Who appointed the sun a splendour and the moon a light , and measured for her stages , that ye might know the number of the years , and the reckoning . Allah created not (all) that save in truth . He detaileth the revelations for people who have knowledge » 10:5 . The whole universe is replete with signs of God : the human soul itself is viewed as a witness and sign of the unity and grace of God . The messengers of God have throughout history been calling man back to God . Few men have accepted the truth ; most of them have rejected it and become disbelievers - « ungrateful » .

Nothing in all creation has been made without a purpose and man himself has not been created in vain , his purpose being service and obedience to

God's will . The qualities of God are described in numerous places in the Qur'an , such as : « Say , He is Allah , the One ! Allah , the eternally Besought of all ! He begetteth not nor was begotten . And there is none comparable unto Him . » 112.1-4 .

Also in Chapter 59 : 22-24 « He is Allah , than whom there is no other God , the knower of the invisible and the visible . He is the Beneficent , the Merciful . He is Allah , than whom there is no other God , the sovereign Lord , the Holy One , Peace , the Keeper of Faith , the Guardian , the Majestic , the Compeller , the Superb . Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him) ! He is Allah , the Creator , the Shaper out of naught , the Fashioner . His are the most beautiful names . All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Him , and He is the Mighty , the Wise » .

3. The Quran

The Quran , an Arabic word meaning « reading recitation » , is the Holy Book of Islam . It is a revelation of God , Master of all the Universe and is regarded as the true word of God delivered to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel for the guidance of all Mankind .

It is eternal , heavenly , original ; divided into 114 chapters (Surah) of unequal length , each chapter divided into verses called « Ayah » , meaning « Sign » and every chapter , except one , begins with the verse , « In the name of Allah , the Compassionate , the Merciful » . It is the fundamental source of Islamic teaching . It deals with creeds , gives moral instructions , lays down laws , invites people to Islam , admonishes the disbelievers , draws lessons from historical events , administers warnings , gives good tidings - all blended together in a beautiful manner ; the form and style of which is unique , enchanting and beyond imitation .

Likewise , it follows its own method of solving cultural , political , social and economic problems and deals with the principles and injunctions of law in a manner quite different from that of sociologists , lawyers and jurists . The aim of the Quran is to guide man , to invite humanity , to follow the Right Path .

Therefore , it determines a way of life for human beings in which they are held responsible for their actions before God and are promised reward or punishment in the next life , according to their deeds , after their resurrection . The Quran guides them through Al -Islam towards a way of life which fulfils all their requirements and is the most appealing to the human mind as the best way to peace and prosperity .

The chapters revealed at Makka during the earliest part of the prophet Muhammad's career are mainly concerned with ethical and spiritual teachings and the basic knowledge of the reality . They give brief answers to the basic common issues and establish the fundamental principles of belief and morality . The chapters revealed at Madina at a later period in the career of the prophet are concerned , besides the topics mentioned , with social legislation , politics and moral principles for constituting and ordering the community , the building up of the state of Islam and the construction of a progressive civilisation for the conduct of different affairs of life . Therefore , they transformed the lives of all those people who came into direct contact with the prophet and thus created the best society of the human race which can ever be conceived and this is an adequate proof of its influence on the human mind as a Divine Scripture .

The Quran proves that it is beyond the scope of human capability to produce the like of it and hence it cannot be the work of mortals . The following verse

indicates that it is the conjecture of disbelievers , or their ignorance of the realities of nature which leads them to a denial of the truth : « And this Quran is not such as could ever be invented in despite of Allah , but it is a confirmation of that which was before it and an exposition of that which is decreed for mankind therein is no doubt from the Lord of the Worlds . Or say they : He hath invented it ? Say , then bring a Surah (chapter) like unto it and call (for help) on all ye can besides Allah , if ye are truthful . Nay , but they denied that , the knowledge whereof they could not compass , and whereof the interpretation (in events) hath not yet come unto them . Even so did those before them deny . Then see what was the consequence for the wrong -doers ! » 10 :38-40 .

4. Translations of the Quran

Translating the Quran is very difficult . It is not a book of Arabic literature but is a spiritual literature from God . Insofar as classical Arabic has a vocabulary in which the meaning of each rootword is so comprehensive : it is difficult to translate it in a modern analytical language word - for - word or by the use of the same word in all places where the original word occurs in the text . An Arabic word is often a full ray of light when a translator looks at it through the prism of the modern analytical language he misses a great deal of its meaning by confining his attention to one particular colour - European or non-Muslim translators have often failed in this respect .

It may be reasonably claimed that no Holy Scripture can be fairly presented by one who disbelieves its inspiration and its message , so , the translator must have faith and deep understanding of Arabic Literature , must have studied history and the most important interpretations and must have studied the reasons of revelation in order to understand the Quran . He should , therefore , first of all free his mind from preconceived notions and get acquainted with distinctive features of this Book . Then , and then alone , can he understand it . The Quran itself indicates this in Chapter 3,7 : ~ He it is who hath revealed unto thee (Mu-

hammad) the scripture wherein are clear revelations , they are the substance of the Book and others (which are) allegorical . But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue , forsooth , that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it . None knoweth its explanation save Allah . And those who are of sound instruction say : We believe therein ; the whole is from our Lord , but only men of understanding really heed » .

5. The Pillar of Faith (Iman)

What is the Faith ? Faith in Islam consists of affirming your belief : (i) in God, (II) in His Angels , (III) in His Books, (IV) in His Prophets , (V) in The Resurrection and (VI) in The Will of God in all its entirety . (See Sahih . Muslim Vol.1, Ch.2) . « It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces to the East and the West , but righteous is he who believeth in God and the Last Day and the Angels and the Scripture and the Prophets and giveth his wealth , for love of Him , to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask , and to set slaves free and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor due . And those who keep their treaty when they make one and the patient in tribulation and adversity and time of stress . Such are they who are sincere . Such are the Godfearing » . 11:177 .

Islam has given faith the importance it deserves . It was studied carefully and the rational basis of Islamic beliefs were explained and purified from misrepresentation and superstition , chief among which is joining partners with God and protectors other than He .

.5 (1) Belief in God

A Muslim believes that God is the Creator of the Universe , « There is no God save Allah » 37 : 38 and « Naught is as his likeness » 42:11 . He has no partner

or competitor . « If there were therein Gods besides Allah then verily both (the heaven and the earth) had been disordered » 21:22 . He is without any similar . Eternal without any opposite . Separate without any like . He is one , prior with nothing before Him from eternity . Without any beginning abiding in existence with none after Him , in Eternity without any end , subsisting without ending , abiding without termination .

The belief that there is no deity but God , the Omnipotent and All-knowing God , will instil in you sincerity for truth alone and encourage you to make sacrifices for noble causes . You will enjoy peace and satisfaction in the remembrance of the great power guiding you to the Right Way . See Qur'an 41:30 « As for those who say' Our Lord is Allah and take the right path to Him , the Angels will descend to them saying , Fear ye not , nor grieve .

You will not bother about trifles , nor waste your energy in search of material ends alone as atheists do . Your faith in the one God gives you profound confidence in Him and uplifts your aim in life to high standards of righteousness and virtue . You will never be a party to oppression and tyranny .

He knows that no man or any other thing has the power of taking away his life or making it longer ; God alone has the power to do so , « No soul knoweth what it will earn to-morrow . and no soul knoweth in what land it will die . Lo ! Allah is knower , Aware » .

31:34 . However , « If Allah took Mankind to task by that which they deserve . He would not leave a living creature on the surface of the earth . but he reprieveth them unto an appointed term and when their term cometh - then verily (they will know that) Allah is overseer of His slaves » .

Humanity can seek no higher example than a true Muslim who will always choose the right path in every field of knowledge and action . He lives by the high ideals of Islam that enable him to tread the path of true human perfection . « Whosoever doth right whether male or female and is a believer , him verily we shall quicken with good life and we shall pay them a recompense in proportion to the best of what they used to do » . 16 : 97 .

5. (11) Belief in Angels

The second article of faith is belief in the existence of God's angels . « Who is an enemy to Allah and His Angels and His Messengers and Gabriel and Michael ! Then , lo ! Allah (Himself) is an enemy to the disbelievers » . 2:98 . We know that man's senses are limited to things of physical perception and so are incapable of knowing things beyond this material world . But there is no doubt that there are facts and revelations that have been accepted by reasoning and rational thinking . It would be foolish to deny all that is not perceptible to the human eye or felt by the other senses . Among these are the angels . Imperceptible spiritual beings that are under God's command , they

carry out His orders faithfully and worship Him , they pray for forgiveness for all beings on earth . « And the Angels hymn the praise of their Lord and ask forgiveness for those on the earth , Lo ! Allah He is the Forgiver , the Merciful » .42:5.

5. (III) Belief in Prophets

A Muslim believes in all the Prophets who had been raised among every nation , at different stages of the history of mankind to warn their people and guide them to the right path . The first Prophet was Adam and the last was Muhammad . « Say (O Muslims) : We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac , and Jacob , and the Tribes and that which Moses and Jesus received and that which the Prophets received from their Lord . We make no distinction between any of them and unto Him we have surrendered . » 2:136 . Also the Qur'an stated for believers : « Before Thee also , the apostles we sent were but men to whom we granted inspiration » 21:7 .

5. (IV) Belief in the Book

The Belief in Prophets naturally includes belief in The Books revealed to them by God . These books are : The Old Testament « Taurah » which was revealed to Moses ; the Psalms « Zabur » which were revealed to David ; the New Testament « Al Injeel » as revealed to Jesus , and The Quran revealed to Muhammad which was the last revelation . These books are normally referred to as Divine Books in their origi-

nality at the time of their revelation . « And who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee and are certain of the Hereafter . These depend on guidance from their Lord . These are the successful » 2:4-5 .

5. (V) Belief in the Day of Resurrection

A fundamental article of faith is the belief in the Day of Judgement (Resurrection) . « What is the life of this world but play and amusement ? But best is the home in the hereafter for those who keep their duty (to Allah) . Have ye then no sense ? » 6:32 . This means that all human beings will be restored to life after death , to be presented before God for final judgement . « Deemed ye then that we had created you for naught and that ye would not be returned unto us ? » 23:115 . They will be rewarded or punished according to their actions in this life . « Say (unto them O , Muhammad) : Allah giveth life to you , then causeth you to die , then gathereth you unto the Day of Resurrection whereof there is no doubt . But most of Mankind know not » 45:26 .

Your belief in the Day of Judgement makes you fully conscious of your responsibility for your actions . Belief in a hereafter creates in you bravery , determination and sacrifice of possessions, or even life, in the defence of truth and justice, because you hope you will get your reward from God in paradise . « Enter it in peace . this is the day of immorality , there they will have that they desire and there is more with us »

5. (VI) Belief in the Will of God

A Muslim believes in the Will of God i.e. that God is the absolute sovereign and the sustainer of the entire universe . He is omniscient and knows everything that takes place in the heavens or the earth . God has ordained that a certain action will take place at a certain time for a certain reason .

Belief in the Will of God leads him to put his trust in God . Man submits to God and depends upon Him to give him success in all his actions . But this does not mean that he should remain idle and ask God to help him without making any effort , as some misguided people think . God commands us to do our best to earn our livelihood . We should work hard to seek the bounty of God and put our trust in Him , hoping for best results .

Sincere trust in God is an incentive to hard work as it demands making resolutions and following the right path to achieve your aim . At the same time, it establishes your right and conscious relationship with your Creator and fills you with peace and contentment . You will be satisfied with whatever comes your way without undergoing any worry or discontent , for He only is praised in fortunes and misfortunes .

e. Adam and Prophets

God created Adam , the first man on earth . All human beings born in this world have descended from that earliest pair : Adam and Eve .

Qur'an 2: 30-37

«And when thy Lord said unto the angels : Lo ! I am about to place a viceroy on the earth they said : Wilt Thou place thereon one who will do harm thereon and will shed blood , while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee ? He said : Surely I know that which ye know not » .

And He taught Adam all the names , then showed them to the angels , saying : Inform Me of the names of these , if ye are truthful . They said : Be glorified ! We have no knowledge saving that which Thou hast taught us . Lo ! Thou , only Thou , art the Knower , the Wise . He said : O Adam ! Inform them of their names , and when he had informed them of their names , He said : Did I not tell you that I know the secret of the havens and the earth ? And I know that which ye disclose and which ye hide . And when We said unto the angels : Prostrate yourselves before Adam , they fell prostrate , all save Iblis . He demurred through pride and so became a disbeliever . And We said : O Adam ! Dwell thou

and thy wife in the Garden , and eat ye freely (of the fruits) thereof where ye will , but come not nigh this tree lest ye become wrongdoers . But Satan caused them to deflect therefrom and expelled them from the (happy) state in which they were , and We said : Fall down one of you a foe unto the other ! There shall be for you on earth a habitation and provision for a time . Then Adam received from his Lord words (of revelation) and He relented towards him . Lo ! He is the Relenting , the Merciful » .

In the story of man's creation , angels , who protested to God against the creation of man who « would sow mischief on earth » , lost in a competition of knowledge against Adam . The Quran , therefore , declares man to be the noblest of all creations , the created being , who bore the trust (of responsibility) that the rest of creation refused to accept . The Quran thus reiterates that all nature has been made subservient to man .

Adam was also appointed as the first prophet of God . God revealed His religion to Adam and enjoined him to convey and communicate it to his descendents who were good : follow the right path shown to them . But those who were bad abandoned their father's teaching and gradually drifted away into devious ways . Later they spread over the globe and formed different races and nations . God began to raise prophets who reminded His people of the lesson they had forgotten :

worship God (Quran 16:36) . « We have sent in each nation a messenger to command them to worship God and avert idols » .

The ultimate aim of all the prophets' missions in the world has been to establish the Will of God on earth and to enforce the system of life received from Him . Some of the prophets , called messengers , received books from God , as did Abraham , Moses , David , Jesus and Muhammad . About twenty -five prophets were mentioned in the Quran -Noah , Isaac , Jacob and Joseph , to name but a few . Muslims make no distinction between one prophet and another - they give recognition to them all . « Lo ! We inspire thee as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him , as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes , and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon , and as we imparted unto David the Psalms ; And messengers We have mentioned unto thee before and messengers We have not mentioned unto thee ; and Allah spake directly unto Moses ; Messengers of good cheer and of warning , in order that mankind might have no argument against Allah after the messengers . Allah was ever Mighty , Wise . » 4: 163-165 .

God often vested them with miracles : Abraham was saved from fire , Noah from the deluge and Moses from the pharaoh . Not only was Jesus born from the Virgin Mary , but God also saved him from crucifixion at the hands of the Jews . All prophets are human

and never part of the divine being ; they are simply recipients of revelations from God , who never communicates directly to a human ; he either sends an angel messenger to him , makes him hear a voice , or inspires him : « And it was not (vouchsafed) to any mortal that Allah should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation or from behind a veil , or (that) He sendeth a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave . Lo ! He is Exalted , Wise . » 42:51. Muhammad is accepted as the last prophet of this series . God revealed to him the greatest miracles of Islam : The Qur'an - the like of which no human can produce .

7. Some Aspects of the Life of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be on Him)

Muhammad was born in Makka in about 570A.D. Both his parents died young ; his father , Abdul -lah, died a few months before he was born , and his mother , Aminah, when he was about six years of age . His grandfather , Abdul Muttalib , a prominent leader in Makka , took charge of him - upon the death of his grand-father Muhammad's guardianship passed to his uncle, Abu-Talib .

The uncle and nephew - at the age of twelve - traveled together to Syria until they reached Busra to the south of Syria . Historians state that in this journey a Christian holy man named Buhaira saw Muhammad and discovered in him signs of the promised prophet mentioned in Christian books, and that he advised Abu-Talib not to take him to Syria lest the Jews might recognise these signs and do him harm .

He came to be known as « Al-Amin » (the most trustworthy) . He was the one man upon whom everyone, young and old, could implicitly rely . Many of the citizens of Makka used to entrust their valuable belongings to Muhammad for safekeeping; they continued to do so even after he became the Prophet , although they held no belief in him as such .

When he was about twenty -four years of age , a lady

called Khadija who was a relative of Muhammad and also a rich widow , wanted a mercantile agent . Muhammad was selected for the position on account of his conduct and set out towards Syria with a servant of Khadijah called Maisara . Maisara reported back favourably to Khadija upon their return regarding Muhammad's deportment during the journey . One year later , at the age of twenty -five, in 595 A.D. Muhammad married Khadija and they lived twenty-five years together and had two sons, who died in their infancy, and four daughters .

In 610 A.D. Muhammad received the first revelation . At that time he was in the habit of worshipping in solitude in a cave on Mount Hira, outside Makka . It was whilst praying, during the sacred month of Ramadan, that an angel came to him and said, « Recite » . « I cannot recite » , he replied . But the angel repeated the order « Recite » . « I cannot recite » , he reiterated . Then the angel said , « Recite in the name of your Lord who created . Created man from clots of blood. Recite : Your Lord is the most bountiful one , who by the pen taught man what he did not know » 96: 1-5. He returned home frightened and shivering . Khadija comforted him saying « No , you have nothing to fear , God will never let you down, you are kind to your relatives, you are patient, you give to the needy . You are generous to guests and you never fail to relieve people from distress . »

Muhammad quietly preached his faith in one God

for some time, and won a few converts. Then he received the command to preach in public and the struggle grew in intensity. He went out to his relatives and to their people with the call to believe in the one Creator . They rejected his message and sought to turn him away from it . Every possible attempt was made to check the onward march of Islam . They resorted to isolate them socially , they imparted upon them a boycott . For three years this social boycott continued - no business would deal with them , their supplies of food were almost stopped.

In 622 A.D. Makka was no longer a safe place for the Muslims . Quietly they started to move out to Yathrib : Madina . In a few months , more than a hundred families left their homes and migrated . The migration was a threat to the Makkans , and they were determined to prevent it at all costs . They decided to kill Muhammad . Representatives of all clans would plunge their swords into him - so that the Hashimites , his clan , faced with this joint responsibility , would be prevented from taking vengeance on a single clan . In the meantime he had been invited to Yathrib (Madina) therefore , that night Muhammad decided to migrate with his companion , Abu-Baker , their migration was successful, and the Makkans failed to catch him.

The Muslim or Islamic calendar begins from the date of the migration of the Prophet from Makka to Madina . This event , known as the Hijrah, began on

16th June 622; this Islamic calendar is based on the lunar year which consists of twelve months determined by the appearance of the New Moon .

Trying to spread his preaching outside Arabia, Muhammad sent his messengers to Arabia's neighbouring emperors and rulers : -

1. Heraclius of Byzantium
2. Chasroes of Iran
3. Muqawqas of Egypt
4. Harith of Ghassan, King of South Syria under the Byzantines
5. Harith, King of Yemen
6. The Negus of Abyssinia

The wording of some of the messages was similar . A translation of the one sent to Heraclius would do as an example : —

In the name of God (Allah) the most Merciful and Compassionate . From Muhammad Ibn Abdul -lah to Heraclius , the Emperor of Rome . Peace be with (him) who follows the guidance . Accordingly I invite you to the call of Islam . (If) you submit (or be at peace) , you will enjoy safety and God will grant you a double recompense.. But if you turn your back , the sin of your subjects will be on you » .

« O ! people of scripture (book) come to an agreement between us and you , that we shall worship none but Allah and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him , and that none of us shall take others for

Lords beside Allah and if they turn away , then say :
Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered
(Muslims) » 3:64.

In the tenth year of the Hijrah , the prophet made his last farewell pilgrimage to Makka and delivered his farewell speech at Mount Arafat « O , people , listen to me . I may not ever meet you again here after this year ... » At the end of his sermon came the last revelation : « This day have I (God) perfected your religion for you and completed my favour unto you and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM » 5:3.

He and his companions felt that his end was near . He died three months later , in 632 A.D. after his return to Madina . However , Islam arose in Arabia in the seventh century A.D. with its emphasis on an uncompromising monotheism and a strict adherence to certain religious practices and spread rapidly all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean , from Africa and Europe to China and Indonesia . Though there have been many Islamic sects , all followers are bound by a common faith and a sense of belonging to a single community .

In his last pilgrimage the Prophet , who proved to have had an intimation of the impending completion of his vocation and eventual death , was most particular to assert the equality of all Muslims ; the fidelity to God alone and the necessity of final elimination of all other loyalties to race , tribe , country or otherwise . That was the first and most valuable declaration of

human rights which influenced the behaviour of Muslims towards minorities and made theirs the most tolerant civilization in history .

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8. The Traditions « Sunnah » of the Prophet Muhammad (peace of God be upon Him)

The traditions of the prophet of Islam are next in importance to the Holy Quran . This collection of sayings , transmitted from the Prophet through his companions and successively from each generation to the next , is called « The Hadith » . In the technical sense they are reports of the words and deeds , indicating approval or disapproval of the prophet . Muslims believe that the Prophet neither said anything nor did anything of his own accord , as far as religious matters are concerned ; whatever he said and whatever he did emanated from the Lord . The Quran says , « Say , I follow only that which is revealed to me from my Lord » .

These sayings were collected into different books beginning in the Second Century of the Islamic era . The most important among them are Sahih Al Bukhari and Sahih Muslim (see Sahih Muslim p.i-viii) (Sahih means « sound » or « authentic ») . The Qur'an laid down the principles and the Prophet explained and clarified them . The Qur'an , for example , does not state in detail the types of possessions that fall within the jurisdiction of the poortax (Zakah) or the amount that must be paid - these questions are answered in Islamic tradition by a letter which the Prophet

wrote to those whom he placed in charge of distributing all the funds set aside for the poor . Therefore , without a study of the Hadith a Muslim's knowledge of his faith remains incomplete and without it the non-Muslims are unable to form a true picture of the Islamic faith and its fundamental , spiritual moral , legislative and cultural principles .

The following Hadiths have been chosen as examples of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (the blessings and peace of God be upon Him (: —

1. « Actions are but by intention and every man shall have but that which he intended .
2. « Whosoever does an act which has for it no command of ours is a reprobate » .
3. « None of you (truly) believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself » .
4. « Whosoever removes a worldly grief from a believer , Allah will remove from him one of the griefs of the Day of Judgement . Whosoever alleviates (the lot of) a needy person , Allah will alleviate (his lot) in this world and the next . Whosoever shields a Muslim , God will shield him in this world and the next . God will aid a servant (of His) so long as the servant aids his brother . Whosoever follows a path to seek knowledge therein , God will make easy for him a path to Paradise . No people gather together in one of the houses of God , reciting the Book of God and studying it amongst them-

selves , without tranquility descending upon them , Mercy enveloping them , the Angels surrounding them , and God making mention of them amongst those who are with Him . Whosoever is slowed down by his actions will not be hastened forward by his lineage . » As reported by Sahih Muslim .

9. The Five Pillars of Islam

There are five « pillars » on which the whole structure of Islma stands :

1. The Declaration of Faith (Al-Shahadah)
2. Prayer (Al-Salah)
3. Alms (Al-Zakah)
4. Fasting (Al-Saum)
5. Pilgrimage (Al-Haj)

1. The Declaration of Faith (Al-Shahadah)

This is the declaration that « there is only one God and Muhammad is the messenger of God » . « And your God is one God exclusive of any other » . 2:163 . This is the most fundamental principle of Islam on which all the other principles are based and sums up all the elements of the Islamic Faith . In accordance with it , converts to Islam begin by reciting this phrase (Al-Shahadah) in Arabic — - « Ash'hadu An La ilaha illa Allah Wa Ashadu Anna Muhammadan Rasulul-lah » . « And those who believe and do good works and believe in that which is revealed unto Muhammad and it is the truth from their Lord - He riddeth them of their ill-deeds and improveth their state » . 47:2 .

2. Prayer (Al-Salah)

This Arabic word means « connection » , the rel-

tionship between God and man . « Establish worship at the two ends of the day and in some watches of the night . Lo ! good deeds annul ill deeds . This is a reminder for the mindful » . 11: 114 .

By regular worship five times a day a Muslim disassociates himself from his worldly affairs and problems to seek audience before God , and their timings are : —

Al Fajr Prayer : During one and a half hours before sunrise

Al-Dhohr Prayer : From Midday up to Mid-afternoon

Al-Asr Prayer : From Mid-afternoon to sunset

Al-Maghrib Prayer : During one and a half hours before sunset

Al-Isha Prayer : After one hour and twenty minutes from sunset until one hour and a half from sunrise .

« Successful indeed are the believers who are humble in their prayers and who shun vain conversation » 23:1-3 .

Islam has liberated « worship » from the bondage of intermediaries between man and his Creator . Islam seeks to create a direct link between man and his Lord in any place or at any time and wants man's heart to remain in perpetual communion with Him .

« And when my servants question thee concerning me , then surely I am nigh . I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he crieth unto Me . So let them hear My call and let them trust in Me , in order that they may be led right » . 2:186 .

Islam also wants that man should observe ceaseless vigilance over his desires so that his life may become a source of his welfare .

Congregation prayer in Mosques produces feelings of love and fraternity in their hearts . It gives a practical example of equality in Islam , as the rich stand in prayer beside the poor , the rulers beside the ruled , all equal in the sight of God . There are other occasions for Muslims to meet in prayer in the audience of God , e.g. in the Friday noon prayers .

« O , ye who believe ! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday , hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of God and leave off business , that is best for you if ye but knew » . 62 :9 .

Before praying , a Muslim should perform ' ablution ' (Al - Wudu'a) not only by means of cleansing the limbs and the face , but also a symbol of internal purification and a preparation for presenting himself before his God with a clean body and heart , free from malice or envy , and with a humble soul that submits to none but God . « O , ye who believe when ye prepare for prayer , wash your faces and your hands (and arms) to the elbows ; rub your heads (with water) ; and wash your feet

to the ankles . And if ye are unclean , purify yourselves . And if ye are sick or on a journey , or one of you cometh from the closet or ye have had contact with a woman and ye find not water , then go to clean , high ground and rub your faces and your hands with some of it . God would not place a burden on you but he would purify you and would perfect His grace upon you , that ye may give thanks » . 5:6.

When a Muslim prays he reads the first chapter of the Quran :

« In the name of Allah the Beneficent , the Merciful . 'Praise be to Allah , Lord of the Universe , The Compassionate , The Merciful , the Master of Judgement Day , You alone we worship , and to You alone we pray for help . Guide us to the straight path , the path of those whom You have favoured , not of those who have incurred Your wrath nor of those who have gone astray » 1:1-7 .

Moreover he repeats the above verses more than seventeen times per day . Furthermore , it is meant to create a strong desire in the heart of the person praying to seek guidance to the straight path from the Lord of the Universe . It is called « Al-Fatihah » , which means « the opening of the Quran » . This Fatihah includes an amazing briefing of the criteria of a muslim's life and needs .

3. Alms (Zakah)

The Arabic word 'Zakah ' means ' purity' - to purify and to grow , thrive . The levy for the poor is an annual amount prescribed at two and onehalf percent of one's income and savings, computed after the completion of a year . « The Alms are only for the poor and the needy , and those who collect them , and those whose hearts are to be reconciled and to free the captives and the debtors , and for the cause of God and (for) the wayfarers ; a duty imposed by God . God is Knower , Wise . » 9:60 .

It is an ideal social insurance legislation . It strengthens social bonds among the members of the society and fosters in them the sentiments of love , sympathy and cooperation in which it is better to seek no publicity . It takes from the rich to help the needy and thus helping to ensure social justice . « But righteous is he who believeth in God and the last day and the Angels and the Scriptures and the Prophet and giveth his wealth for love of Him to kinsfolk and to orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and set slaves free and observeth proper worship and payeth the poor due ... » 2:77 .

In regard to this matter , the Quran speaks of human nature thus : « Lo ! man was created anxious , fretful when evil befalleth him . And , when good befalleth him , grudging . Save worshippers . » 70 : 19 -22. Those who hoard wealth without recognising the

rights of the poor are threatened with direst punishment in the hereafter ; their neglect is declared to be one of the main causes of the decay of societies in this world .

With this socioeconomic doctrine cementing the bond of faith , the idea of a closely knit community of the faithful who are declared to be « brothers unto each other » the believers are naught else than brothers , therefore . make peace between your brethren » . 49:10 . Distinctive about the Zakah is that the rich pay it voluntarily in good faith and loving care and the poor tend to take it only if in dire need of it .

4. Fasting (Saum)

Muslims fast every day from dawn until sunset for one lunar month in a lunar year , the month of « Ramadan » ; physically one does not eat , drink or smoke , nor have sexual contact , during those times . Spiritually , one abstains from all evil thoughts , actions and sayings . « The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran , a guidance for mankind , and clear proofs of the guidance , and the Criterion (of right and wrong) . And whosoever of you is present , let him fast the month , and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey (let him fast) the same number of other days . God desireth for you ease he desireth not hardship for you , and He desireth that ye should complete the period and that ye should magnify God for having guided you and that , peradventure , ye may be thankful » . 2:85 .

Fasting develops the Muslim's determination and strengthens his will, and so enables him to be patient in the face of disasters and saves him from being an easy victim to temptation. Fasting makes him share his poor brethren's feeling of hunger - he sympathises with them and tends to help them. So in addition to the spiritual side of fasting there are social advantages as well.

5. Pilgrimage (Haj) .

Pilgrimage to « The Ka'aba », Mount Arafat and other holy places in Mecca is required once in a lifetime, but only from those who can afford the journey. « Pilgrimage to the House is duty unto God for mankind for him who can find a way thither (those who can afford the journey) but if any deny faith, God stands not in need of any of His creatures » 3:97. Pilgrimage manifests the unity of Muslims in its best form. Millions of Muslims, flock from all parts of the world to celebrate the name of God - all in one simple uniform, devoid of all ornament and earthly material, all equal before God with no differences in rank or class, colour or race. The most honoured by God are the most righteous. « O, Mankind! Lo! we have created you male and female and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you in the sight of God is the best in conduct. » 49:13.

10 . Islamic Law : The Shariah and Jurisprudence :

The most important and comprehensive concept of Islam at the practical level is that of the « shariah » . The term literally means « the path leading to the watering place » ; in other words , the source of life . In religion the term means « the highway of righteous life leading to God » , or the sum total of divine commands to man . In its comprehensiveness , it includes law , moral principles and the creed to which every Muslim must subscribe .

The Shariah shapes the Islamic society in a way conducive to the unfettered growth of good, virtue and truth in every sphere of human activity and gives full play to the forces of good in all directions . At the same time it removes everything standing in the path of virtue . Along with this it attempts to eradicate evil from its social scheme by prohibiting vice and hatred , by obviating the causes of its appearance and growth , by closing the inlets through which it creeps into society and by adopting different measures to check its occurrence .

In classical form the Shariah differs from Western systems of law in two principal respects . In the first place the scope of the Shariah is much wider since it regulates man's relationship not only with his neighbours and with the state , which is the limit of

most other legal systems , but also with his God and his own conscience . The Shariah is also concerned as much with ethical standards as with legal rules, indicating not only what man is entitled or bound to do in law , but also what he ought , in conscience , refrain from doing . The Shariah is not merely a system of law , but a comprehensive code of behaviour that embraces both private and public activities . The second major distinction between the Shariah and Western legal systems is the result of the Islamic concept of law as the expression of the divine will . In Islamic jurisprudence it is not society that moulds and fashions the law , but the law that precedes and controls society .

Islamic law governs all human acts , public or private , duties toward God , duties toward mankind and himself . The methodology of deduction in Islamic law consists of four principles called « the roots of the law » . The first two roots are the Quran and the Prophet's Tradition (Sunnah) . This means that if a belief , a practice or a point of law has been clearly enunciated in a text of the Quran or the prophetic Sunnah , it must be accepted as absolutely binding . The third principle , or root is called « Qiyas » (analogical reasoning) or « Ijtihad » (a personal effort to think out a point on the basis of the relevant teaching of the Quran and the Sunnah) . If a new case or issue arises that is not textually covered by the Quran and the Sunnah , this process is followed . The fourth

principle is « Ijma » or consensus . In terms of actual efficacy , consensus is the most important factor . It is in particular the Agency that validates or rejects the results of individual thought or reasoning (i.e.Qiyas or Ijtihad) . It can be defined as the general will of the community .

èè. Duty of Muslims Under Islamic Law

The law of Islam imposes three kinds of duty and obligations upon every Muslim :

1. Duties toward God
2. Duties toward people and other parts of creation
3. Duties toward himself or herself .

1. Duties towards God : First of all , man should have faith in God alone . He should acknowledge His authority and His alone and follow His guidance , as contained in the Quran and the Sunnah . Secondly , he must worship Him . Worship , according to Islam , is a means for the purification of man's soul , his practical life and his every deed . « I have created jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me » . 51:56 .

2. Duties towards people and other parts of creation :
« Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none save Him , and (that ye show) kindness to parents . If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee , say not « Fie » unto them nor repulse them , but speak unto them a gracious word . And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy and say : My Lord ! Have mercy on them both as they did care for me when I was little . » 17 : 23-24. and « We have prescribed for Man kindness towards his father and mother » 46:18.

Islam tries to make the whole society as one body so all things that threaten the relationship between Muslims are forbidden and condemned such as : contempt , pride and slander . « The believers are naught else than brothers . Therefore , make peace between your brethren and observe your duty to God that haply ye may obtain mercy . » 49:10. « If ye are saluted answer with a nicer formula , at least return the salute , God of all things takes account. » 4:86 . Islam has strongly forbidden the telling of a lie in every form and shape . « Cursed are the liars » 51:10. It has totally forbidden theft , robbery , («As to the thief , male or female , cut off his / her hands . It is the reward of their own deeds and exemplary punishment from God . God is Mighty , Wise » 5:38 . It is agreed that the punishment is very hard but the destruction the thief causes to society is harder .) , bribery , forgery , cheating , interest , usury , for whatever man gains by these means is really obtained by causing loss and injury to others « God shall blot out the gains of usury and shall make charity profitable » . 2:276 . Backbiting and calumny are utterly forbidden : « And spy not neither backbite one another » 49:12 . Gambling , lottery , speculation and all games of chance have been prohibited , for in all of them one gains at the cost of thousands of others : « Seek not to possess yourselves of each other's wealth by unlawful means nor offer it to the judge that you may appropriate consciously and unjustly part of the wealth of another man » 2:188 . On the other hand He asked them to pay

charity and look after each other : « Those who spend their wealth for the cause of God and afterward make not reproach and injury to follow that which they have spent , their reward is with their Lord and there shall no fear come upon them , neither shall they grieve . » It is better to seek no publicity in charity , « If ye display (acts of) charity it is well , but if you bring it in secret to the poor it will be better for you and will atone for some of your ill-deeds. God is informed of what ye do » 2:271 .

Fornication and Adultery and unnatural sexual indulgence have been strictly prohibited for they not only vitiate the morality and impair the health of the perpetrators of these crimes but also spread corruption and immorality in society : « And come not near unto adultery . Lo ! it is an abomination and an evil way » 17:32 . And in brief the Quran states that : « Those who misbelieve assist one another . Unless you do the same there will be disorder on earth and great tribulation . And God has prescribed for them who killed or harmed others . And those who disbelieve are protectors one of another - if ye do not so , there will be confusion in the land , and great corruption » 8:73 . « And Muslims who repress their wrath and forgive those who have offended them . God loves the righteous . And those who , when they do an evil thing or wrong themselves , remember God and implore forgiveness for their sins- Who forgiveth sins save God only ? And will not knowingly repeat the

wrong they did » 3:134-135 . Islam says that the rest of creation imposes certain duties upon man , he should not waste them on fruitless ventures nor should he unnecessarily cause harm . In the tradition « Verily God has prescribed proficiency in all things » .

3. Duties Towards Oneself : Man is in fact more cruel and unjust to himself than to any other being . Islam stands for human welfare and its avowed objective is to establish poise and balance in life .

It forbids the use of all those things which are injurious to man's physical , mental or moral existence : « O ye who believe! Strong drink and games of chance and idols and divining arrows are only an infamy of Satan's handiwork . Leave it aside in order that ye may succeed . » 5:90 . It forbids intoxicating drugs , drinking and the flesh of unclean animals , for all these things have effects upon the physical , moral , intellectual and spiritual life of man : « Forbidden unto you (for food) are carrion and blood and swineflesh and that which hath been dedicated unto any other than God , and the strangled , and the dead through beating , and the dead through falling from a height , and that which hath been killed by the goring of horns and the devoured of wild beasts , saving that which ye make lawful by the death stroke , and that which hath been immolated unto idols , and forbidden is it that ye swear by the divining arrows . This is an abomination . This day are those who 'disbelieve in despair of ever harming your religion ; so fear them not , fear

Me ! This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM . Whoso is forced by hunger , not by will , to sin : (for him) Lo ! God is Forgiving , Merciful . » 5:3 . and « O ye who believe ! Seek help in steadfastness and prayer . Lo ! God is with the steadfast » . 2: 153 .

It asks him not to deprive his body of clean food and drink , for man's body too , imposes a duty on him . Islam does not believe in the suppression of the sexual desire : « And of His signs is this : He created for you Helpmates from yourselves that ye might find rest in them , and He ordained between you love and mercy . Lo , herein indeed are portents for folk who reflect » 30:21 , rather it enjoins man to control and regulate it and seek its fulfilment in marriage : « This day are all good things made lawful for you . The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them . And so are the virtuous women of the believers and the virtuous women of those who received the Scripture before you (lawful for you) when ye give them their marriage portions and live with them in honour , not in fornication , nor taking them as secret concubines . Whoso denieth the faith , his work is vain and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter . » 5:5. and « And let those who cannot find a match keep chaste till God give them independence by His grace .. » 24:33 - but « Must ye needs lust after men instead of women ? Nay , but ye are

folk who act senselessly .» 27:55.

It totally forbids suicide and impresses upon man that life belongs to God . « Say ; Lo ! My worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for God , Lord of the Worlds .» 6:162 .

12. The Family in Islam

The family in Islam occupies a very important position in this scheme of life . It is the first block in the construction of the ideal society and the basic unit of that society . The family is the first cradle of the human being where the primary character traits are set . However , it is also the cradle of civilization .

A basic social teaching of Islam is the encouragement of marriage . This is the only way of satisfying sexual instinct and any other behaviour is totally condemned ; at the same time let the wife and her husband concentrate on each other to satisfy their desire and the relationship between them of love , mercy and compassion . The Quran regards celibacy definitely as something exceptional to be resorted to only under economic stringency . « Let those who cannot afford to marry live in continence until God enriches them » . 24 :33 .

Islamic injunctions about the family are very explicit , as in the Tradition : « All of you are guardians and responsible for your work and the things under your care ... A man is guardian of his family and is responsible for them . A woman is guardian of her husband's house and is responsible for it ... »

A husband is given the position of the head of the family , and in this way makes it a well - disciplined

primary unit of civilization : a model for the society at large . « Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because God has given the one more strength than the other and because they support them from their means . Therefore , the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard (in the husband's absence) that which God would have them guard . » 4:34 . Islam assigns to man the responsibility of earning and providing the necessities of his wife and children and to protect them from all vicissitudes of life . The primary responsibility of the wife is to concentrate on the home and the family child rearing and upbringing with compassion , love and mercy ; their education , orientation and providing for her husband and children the greatest possible comfort and contentment - altogether a full time job . Islam does not want to tax them doubly : to rear the children and to earn a living or do the outdoor jobs also is not required . Out of those who are in need and if the woman wishes to help her husband by working , she may do so on condition that she dresses herself properly and does not mix unnecessarily with other men . Even some Western thinkers are talking in terms of women going back to their homes . Professor Cyril Joad goes to the extent of clearly saying « I believe the world would be a happier place if women were content to look after their homes and their children , even if some slight lowering of the standards of living were involved thereby » . (Variety - 1.12.52).

It is a general rule that the aim of the family is to bind together its members into one unity , to keep their mutual relations close and healthy and to make each one of them a source of support , strength and contentment to the other .

The virtue of chastity is regarded as of prime importance by Islam . The Quran advanced its universal recommendation of marriage as a means to ensure a state of chastity . The general ethic of the Quran considers the marital bond to rest on mutual love and mercy : « And of his signs is this , He created for you helpmates from yourselves that ye might find rest in them and he ordained between you love and mercy » 30:21 . and the spouses are said to be each other's garments : « They are raiment for you and ye are raiment for them » 2:187 .

13 : The status of Women in Islam

The Holy Quran raises the status of woman to make her man's equal . For the first time in history' woman was given the same rights as those of man by Islam : « And they (women) have rights similar to those of men over them in a just manner » 2:228 . The Holy Quran clears woman of the responsibility for the fall of Adam and vindicates her honour and dignity .

Modern man recognises that there can be no true freedom and dignity without economic rights . Fourteen hundred years ago , Islam gave woman the right to inherit the property and wealth of her father and husband and to acquire , own and dispose of wealth as she liked . « Unto men a fortune from that which they have earned and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned » 4:32 . « Unto men (of a family) belongeth a share of that which parents or near kindred leave , and unto women a share of that which parents or near kindred leave , whether it be little or much - a legal share » 4:7 .

In marriage a woman is considered by Islam to be an equal and free partner . Marriage in Islam is a contract between a man and a woman and the consent of both parties is to be taken before marriage can take place .

To impress upon his followers the exalted position

and sacredness of womanhood the Prophet declared « Paradise lies at the feet of the mother » Nasal 25:6. He said that « women are the twin-halves of men » and that men and women come from the essence ; Islam makes no distinction between them as regards their moral and spiritual capabilities and rewards « The believers , men and women , are protecting friends of one another , they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong and they establish worship and they pay the poor-due , and they obey God and His messenger . As for these , God will have mercy on them Lo' ! God is Almighty , All-wise » 9:71 .

14 : Polygamy

Polygamy is permitted in Islam as Islam is a practical religion . « This is not recommended but is looked upon as a remedy in exceptional cases » and this permission was made dependent upon the condition that justice be done among fellow -wives : « And if you be apprehensive that you will not be able to do justice to the orphans then you may marry other women who seem good to you , two , three or four of them , But if you apprehend that you might not be able to do justice to them , then marry only one wife » . 4:3.

The Quran even suggests that « You shall never be able to do justice among women , no matter how much you desire » . In practice the majority of Muslims are monogamous . The acceptable norm is one man , one wife . But Islam takes into account different situations where it becomes necessary to have another wife . If a true Muslim takes advantage of this permission , there is a strong reason behind his doing so such as :

- a. the failure to produce children in the marriage
- b. the long term illness of the wife where someone is needed to look after both her and her husband .
- c. a shortage of men compared with women , especially after war .
- d. in the case where the wife cannot satisfy the sexual needs of the man .

Islam is against any illegal relationship and does not tolerate any secret relationship . It is no use insisting on having one wife and at the same time having other illegal relationships if it becomes necessary . It must be in the open in a respectable and legal manner which protects the rights of all those concerned . At the same time it removes all anxiety , uncertainty and emotional disturbance connected with illegal practices . However , human fallibility makes forgiveness between them and tolerance essential prerequisites for a happy marriage . On the other hand , severe incompatibility may make divorce necessary - which is considered as the most hated thing in Islam ; there is a special procedure to be followed in that situation .

The following passage is quoted from « Life and Teachings of Muhammad » , Madras 1932 page 3 by Annie Besant :

« There are people who object to polygamy , but accept polygamous life as a form of human behaviour ... (and) as many ... 'girlfriends' as one likes is accepted in good grace . The contradiction between these two attitudes is conveniently ignored . It may be instructive to quote Mrs . Annie Besant ... on this point . Mrs. Besant says : « There is pretended monogamy in the West but there is really polygamy without responsibility ; the mistress is cast off when the man is weary of her , and sinks gradually to the 'woman of the street' , for the first lover has no responsibility for her future and she is a hundred times worse

off than the sheltered wife and mother in the polygamous home . When we see thousands of miserable women who crowd the streets of Western towns during the night , we must surely feel that it does not lie within western mouths to reproach Islam for polygamy . It is better for women , happier for women more respectable for women , to live in polygamy , united to one man only , with the legitimate child in her arms and surrounded with respect , than to be seduced , cast out in the street - perhaps with an illegitimate child outside the pale of the law - unsheltered and uncared for , to become the victim of any passerby , night after night , rendered incapable of motherhood , despised by all ! »

Of course much of the stigma of the unmarried mother , as referred to above , no longer exists in the West today but the fact remains that they suffer both physically and mentally in the struggle to bring up the offspring of such liaisons single - handed . An illegitimate child no longer suffers « the slings and arrows » of society , nor is it treated as an outcast but the fact remains that the person can suffer both inwardly and outwardly as a victim of abuse and ridicule .

15. Slaughtering of Animals

In accordance with Islamic law there are some conditions that a Muslim follows when slaughtering animals . First , he should mention God's name , as « God the Greatest » (Bismillah) at the time of slaughter as mentioned in the Quran Chapter 6:121 « And do not eat the flesh of animals over which God's name has not been mentioned at the time of slaughter as mentioned in the Quran Chapter 6:121 « And do not eat the flesh of animals over which God's name has not been mentioned at the time of slaughter » . All animals are the creation of God who made their flesh good food for human beings . Mentioning his name implies asking permission from Him and thanking Him for His blessing .

Secondly , it must be slaughtered using a sharp knife and much of the throat is cut to enable the blood to flow freely . This cannot happen if the whole of the neck is cut off or if the animal is strangled or killed in any other way such as by stunning , shooting in the head or carbon monoxide (CO) inhalation , because in that case most of the blood remains in the body and congeals at different places and sticks to the flesh . When it is slaughtered in the prescribed way , the whole of the body remains connected with the brain for a sufficiently long time to allow the blood to flow

totally out of the body and the flesh is cleansed of the blood which itself is unlawful for Muslims to consume . In Islam nothing is forbidden without reason or wisdom .

16. Animals Slaughtered by Christians or Jews

On the other hand , Muslims are permitted to eat the flesh of the animals slaughtered by the people of the Book (Christians and Jews) only . According to the Quran Chapter 5:4 « All the good and pure things have today been made lawful for you . The food of the people who were given the scripture is lawful for you and your food for them » .

The food includes what has been slaughtered by Christians or Jews . This means that there are no restrictions either on us or on them to take food together . The interpretations fo the commentators are in two directions .

- a. Some of them say that Muslims are permitted to eat flesh animals slaughtered by Christians or Jews if they mentioned God's name and slaughtered by cutting the throat without stunning . It is also interesting to note that the Jews have basically the same method as the Muslims and the flesh animals slaughtered by Jews is lawful because there is no pre-stunning .
- b. The others say that God gives us permission without conditions and makes what has been slaughtered by them lawful , and we take this permission without comment .

As in the traditions of the Prophet « What I have forbidden to you avoid , what I have ordered you (to do) do as much of it as you can » .

Both of the interpretations are legislative and Muslims can choose the more lawful between them , so Islamic principles are to make life easy for Muslims .

17. Islam is the Continuous Message

Now let us respectfully analyse the parallels and differences relative to the three heavenly monotheistic religions of Islam , Christianity and Judaism . Whilst we admit to certain similarities there are nevertheless certain basic points of discordance .

Islam reaffirms the messages of both Moses and Jesus Christ as proponents of Islam , preaching the worship of One God . Muslims , therefore , are urged by their faith to respect all prophets and give equal reverence to all of them exactly as that given to their prophet Muhammad . « And verily We gave unto Moses the Scripture and We caused a train of messengers to follow him and We gave unto Jesus , the Son of Mary , clear proofs of (God's) Sovereignty and We supported him with the Holy Sprit . Is it ever so , that when there cometh unto you a messenger (from God) with that which ye yourselves desire not , ye grow arrogant and some ye disbelieve and some ye slay . » 2:87.

Christians believe that their religion is the only true religion, with Judaism as a precursor of Christianity . God chose the children of Israel out of all races and peoples for the purpose of revealing His religion ; they do not accept Muhammad — the last prophet — as a prophet of God . Whereas the Muslim believes in the

divine origin of the other two monotheistic religions , viz Judaism and Christianity and in their prophets and has a profound love and respect for both Jesus and Moses , believing that God is the loving Creator of all the peoples of the World .

There are many uncertainties in the Gospels of The New Testament as they were in the main written sometimes between forty and eighty years after the departure of Jesus and , therefore , in many places the Gospels conflict with one another . Whereas the Quran was immediately memorised and written down by Muhammad's followers in its true original form . Muhammad , being completely illiterate , could neither read nor write and in any case the very words of the Quran are beyond the ability of the highest scholar in terms of form and content likewise .

Christians believe that there are three separate and distinct Divine Persons in Godhead : God the Father , God the Son and God the Holy Ghost . However , in Mark 12 : 29-30 Jesus mentioned « Hear Oh Israel , the Lord our God is one God...» Whereas Islam preaches the plain and simple Unity of God: « Say , He is God , the One God , the eternally Besought of all , He begetteth not nor was begotten and there is none comparable unto Him » Quran 112:1-4. And : « Say : O People of the Scriptures come to an agreement between Us and You that we shall worship none but God and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him and that none of us shall take others for Lords beside

God . And if they turn away then say : Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him) .»
3:64

Christians believe that Jesus Christ is God from all Eternity the second person of the Divine Trinity , that nearly two thousand years ago he chose to appear in a human body and was born of the Virgin Mary . At the same time they look upon him as « The Son of God » . Although the Gospels record the words of Jesus thus : « Why callest thou me God ? There is none God but one , that is , God (Mark 10:18) . According to the Gospels - in His agony on the cross Jesus cried out » My God , My God , why hast thou forsaken me ? Mark 15: 34 and John 8:39,40 « Jesus saith unto them , if ye were Abraham's children ye would do the works of Abraham . But now ye seek to kill me , a man that hath told you the truth , which I have heard from God » .

The third Christian dogma is that Jesus Christ was the Son of God in a special exclusive sense . Many earlier Prophets were referred to as « Son of God » as Moses , Exodus 4:22 , Israel was referred to thus : « And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh , Thus saith the Lord , Israel is My son , even my first born » . On the other hand the Holy Qur'an mentions « It befitteth not (the Majesty) of God that He should take unto Himself a son . Glory be to Him ! When He decreeth a thing . He saith unto it only , Be ! And it is » (19:35) .

The fourth Christian dogma is that of the Atonement ; Christianity declares that by disobeying God's order not to eat of the forbidden fruit of knowledge Adam sinned . They believe that the sin of Adam is inherited by all the children of Adam i.e. all human beings are born sinful and the only way of wiping out sin is the shedding of blood . As St. Paul said « Without the shedding of blood there is no remission (Hebrews 9:22) . However , they also believe that Jesus Christ , shed his holy sinless blood and died to pay the penalty for the sins of men and therefore , no one can be saved unless he accepts Jesus as his redeemer .

In contrast to the above belief Islam regards children as pure and sinless at birth « Whoso doeth evil or wrongeth his own soul , then seeketh pardon of God (and reformeth himself) will find God forgiving Merciful . Whoso commiteth sin commiteth it only against himself . God is All-Knowing , All Wise » . Qur'an 4:110,111; and « Whosoever goeth right it is only for the good of his own soul that he goeth right , and whosoever erreth , erreth only to its hurt . No laden soul can bear another's load » Qur'an 17:15 .

Whilst the Christians believe that Jesus died on the cross , Islam dismisses that dogma and refers to it thus : « And because of their saying : We slew the Messiah Jesus , son of Mary , God's Messenger — They slew him not nor crucified , but it appeared so unto them , and lo ! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof , they have no knowledge thereof

save pursuit of a conjecture , they slew him not for certain . But God took him up unto Himself . God was ever Mighty , Wise ». Qur'an 4:157 , 158 .

Contrary to the beliefs of both the Christians and the Muslims , the Jews continue to repudiate the concept of Jesus being either a Messenger of God (as believed by the Muslims) , or a Son of God (as believed by the Christians) and regard him as an imposter (together with his mother) and they are still awaiting the arrival of their Messiah .

A Muslim , whilst believing in all the prophets of the three monotheistic religions also believes that the message received by the last prophet , Muhammad , , is the most comprehensive and the final form of God's message to man .

«This day have I (God) perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you , and have chosen for you as religion .

ISLAM...»

Qur'an V:3

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