

About IECRC

The overall mission of IECRC is to promote spirituality through education, research, counseling, and cultural discourse based on the centuries old Islamic traditional values of the Saints of God (Awliyah) — love for all, tolerance, peace and harmony.

IECRC is a non-profit, non-political, 501(c) (3) *Ahle Sunnah wal Jama'ah* organization. Founded in 2002, IECRC provides community services in Northern California (specifically the Bay Area and Sacramento) and British Columbia (specifically Surrey), Canada.

About Our Founder

Prof. Dr. Mohammad Ahmed Qadri is the Founding Director of the Islamic Educational and Cultural Research Center. Dr. Qadri is a renowned scholar from Pakistan who taught at its local colleges as well as the University of Karachi, Pakistan for over 20 years. He has expertise both in modern education as well as traditional Islamic Sciences having completed the Dars-e-Nizami, an 18 year traditional Islamic course from Pakistan. He has also studied with scholars from Al-Azhar University, Cairo. Dr. Qadri holds certification in Intercultural Communication from the Center for Intercultural Studies, University of British Columbia, Canada. He is also an authorized spiritual guide in the *Qadiriyyah*, *Chistiyyah*, *Naqshbandiyyah*, *Suharwardiyyah*, and *Rifa'iyyah* Sufi orders.

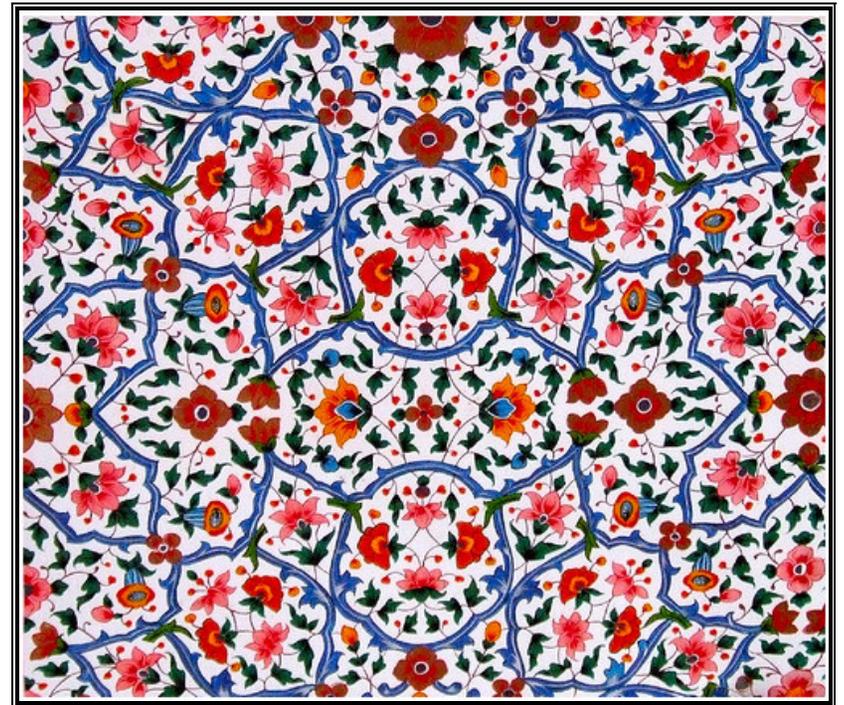
Dr. Qadri is a gold medalist from Karachi University, and has received gold medals from the Intellectual Forum of Pakistan, and the Karachi University Teachers' Society. Dr. Qadri is also the recipient of many prestigious international awards such as the [Ambassador for Peace Award](#) presented by the Universal Peace Foundation and Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace in Canada, the National Education Award presented by the Pakistan Education Forum, and the Award for Research in Social Sciences presented in Dubai.

Dr. Qadri has appeared on several television programs including the current Quranic Spectrum on QTV. He has also made regular guest appearances on radio broadcasts in the U.S. and Canada.

Dr. Qadri's goal at the IECRC is to foster and promote the light, love, and message of peace of our beloved Leader, Prophet Muhammad (prayers and peace of Allah Almighty be upon Him, His Blessed Family and Noble Companions) and carry on the legacy of the Saints of our tradition of unconditional service to humanity, creating a culture of world peace and tolerance.

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A Spiritual Journey through Islam



The Islamic Educational & Cultural Research Center

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A Spiritual Journey through Islam

Islamic Educational & Cultural Research Center, North America,
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Preface

Every year Muslims celebrate the Birth of their Beloved Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) with great happiness and joy. During these celebrations verses of poetry are read and recited in the honor of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and scholars of Islam remind us of the great favor that God Almighty had bestowed by sending His Most Beloved and Last Prophet to all of Humanity.

For several years now, the *Ahl us-Sunnah* (Sunni) Muslim Community gather each year for a commemoration of this Great Personality outside the State Capital building in Sacramento, CA, USA. As members of the IECRC, we aim to make this event a mutual benefit for those who listen and those who present their expression in honor of he who Muslims consider the Best of Creation (peace be upon him). It was with this in mind that the IECRC decided to publish this small primer on Islam and Muslims that gives the reader a quick and brief picture of the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Islamic faith and practices, and the tradition of *Tasawwuf* or Sufism. It also attempts to address common view concerning Women, Terrorism and Violence.

I am grateful to the members of the Islamic Educational and Cultural Research Center North America (IECRC) for coming together to write this primer and for the Bath family of Yuba City for sponsoring this publication. A special thanks is due to the Managing Director of IECRC, Mr. Ayyaz Yousaf Qadri for his constant and ongoing support, and our deeply gratitude to Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ahmed Qadri for his guidance and permission to use his research article on Terrorism. Additional thanks goes to all who have diligently contributed to this booklet in the shortest amount of time through their writings, including Syeda Shagufta Ahmad Qadri, Naveed Agboatwala, and Shameem Khan. We also owe special thanks to Qari Bashir Sialvi for organizing this auspicious event each year, rain or shine.

Sharaaz Khan Qadri, IECRC

Chapter 1: A Brief Biography of the Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings upon him*)

Contribution: Sharaaz Khan Qadri

Since the message of Islam came to us by way of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of God be upon him and his family) it is important to mention a very brief chronological biography of that shining personality loved deeply by Muslims and revered by many who learned about his life. Here are some highlights:

571 CE: The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) came into this world in the Spring of this year on a Monday morning around the middle of the lunar month when the moon shone at its brightest.

577 CE: The Prophet (peace be upon him) is orphaned with the loss of his loving mother at the tender age of 6 years. His father passed away shortly before his blessed birth. He was then placed in the guardianship of his grandfather Abd ul-Muttalib who took great care of the young boy. It was not long before this beloved old man, the leader of the Quraysh left this worldly life. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) then came under the care of his uncle Abu Talib. He would spend a few years with him learning trade and traveling via caravan to Syria in the North and Yemen in the South on trade missions. As a young man the Prophet (pace be upon him) soon gained a reputation of *Al-Ameen* – The Trustworthy by way of his honest and fair business dealings.

586 CE: The Prophet Muhammad marries a wealthy widow, Bibi Khadijah (may Allah be pleased with her) on her proposal, on behalf of whom he handled business transactions on several occasions.

601 CE: The at the mature age of 40 forty years the first reelation came as he began to withdraw into the mountains surrounding the city of Makkah spending hours of the day and into the night in deep meditation in a small cave known as *Hirah*. Here he was to receive the verses of the Holy Book, the Holy Quran up until his last breath for 23 years.

619 CE: In this year, known as the *Year of Sorrow*, the Prophet of God (peace be upon him) lost his Uncle whose protection he had no longer, and the gentle assurances he had from his beloved wife, Khadijah (may God be most pleased with her) came to an end with her passing on to the Divine Realm.

620 CE: While the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was resting in the sacred sanctuary of the Kaabah and in another tradition, in the home of his cousin, the Archangel Gabriel appeared and gently arose the Prophet (peace be upon him). The Prophet (peace be upon him) was asked to mount a horse-like creature with wings, known as the *Burraq*. The first part of the journey was between Makkah and Jerusalem and is called the *Isra*, while the second part was from *Masjid al-Aqsa* in Jerusalem to the Throne of his Lord and is called the *Miraj* or Ascension. During this journey, countless amazing realities were revealed to the Prophet (peace be upon him).

622 CE: The Muslim community migrated secretly to Medina in small groups after facing opposition to their faith. In Medina, the Muslims grew in their religion. A brotherhood was created between the emigrant Muslims (*Muhajirun*) and the locals (*Ansar* or Helpers), the kind never seen before in the annals of history, and thereafter, and a constitution was developed that defined the relationships between the various tribes of the city. Those who invited the Prophet Muhamad (peace be upon him) to Medina did so to bring peace to the perpetually war ridden tribes within it. They saw in him qualities of justice, intelligence, trustworthiness, forbearance, patience, tolerance, beauty, eloquence, and a host of other attributes and as someone who can bring peace between them. Qualities possessed by non other than a Prophet of God

Almighty (peace be upon him). In Medina, the Muslims prospered and grew in their number, in faith, and into a governing force.

630 CE: After the violation of a treaty known as the *Treaty of Hdaybiyya* by the Makkans, in an event unlike any other in the history of humankind, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) walked into Makkah with 10,000 strong without shedding a single drop of blood in an open and clear victory as promised to him by God in the verses that the Blessed Prophet (peace be upon him) had received in Hdaybiyya. All those who opposed him and his community in the past were forgiven. There was absolutely no retribution. At this, the Makkans realized their erroneous ways and began to see that the mission of this Beloved Prophet of God was in fact true and a pious one. Makkah came under the fold of Islam and soon the entire Arabian Peninsula accepted Islam as their way of life.

632 CE: The Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) performed his first and only Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah) teaching his Companions and the Muslims the complete rites and rituals of the Pilgrimage and delivering his farewell sermon. During this time, the famous verses of the Qur'an were revealed to him: *Today I have perfected your religion, and completed my favor for you and chosen Islam as a religion for you.* [Quran 5:3]. Toward the end of his sermon, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked: *"O people, have I faithfully delivered unto you my message?"* A powerful murmur of assent "O Allah, Yes!" arose from thousands of pilgrims and the vibrant words "*Allahumma na'm*" rolled like thunder throughout the valley. The Beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) raised his forefinger and said: *"Be my Witness O Allah, that I have conveyed Your message to Your people."* A few months after the farewell pilgrimage this Beloved Prophet of Allah become ill and eventually joined the One He Loved in the Realm of Divine Beatitude in the year 632 CE. The Prophet of Allah (peace be upon him) is buried at the very place where he had breathed his last, in the same way all Prophets (peace be upon them all) were buried, and in the living quarters of his beloved wife Aisha (may Allah be well pleased with her). His last words were, "My Lord, grant me pardon" and other sources say "The Prayer... The Prayer," which

served as a reminder for the Muslims never to forsake their connection with God.

His Personality

Those who met him saw in him an honest and truthful personality, unwavering to the truth and mild in manner with a pleasant disposition. When he smiled his face shone as bright as the morning sun. When he disliked something he would never complain but rather silently leave it aside or turn his face away from it. He loved kids and they would follow him wherever he would go. When he would place his hand on the head of a child (as a sign of affection), everyone would know that Muhammad (peace be upon him) had been here because of the sweet smell that the child would have from his blessed hand. He would find last piece of bread and invite someone to come and eat it. He would not speak much, but when he did it was as if pearls of wisdom were being put forth. His speech was concise and eloquent and he would give one his complete attention. When he had a conversation with someone, they would feel that they were the most important person to him (peace be upon him) in the world. He would help in chores at home and in his community. He was kind to elders, affectionate to children and merciful to animals. He taught that each of us is accountable for those who we are placed in a position of responsibility over. He taught that our children, our parents, our employees, our neighbors, our spouses, our community, and all living beings have rights that must be respected. He was never known to have drunken wine or engaged in vain past times and discourse. His (peace be upon him) life was a living and vibrant example of what it means to be a man. It is this example that compels Muslims to love and honor his life by following his example in every aspect of life, but most importantly from the aspect of his noble character. He once said, "I was only sent by God to perfect noble character and to make beautiful good actions." This was his nature even before revelation came to him.

His Miracles

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had countless miracles in his life including the Quran, the splitting of the moon,

the journey of *Isra* and *Miraj*, the speech of rocks in his hand proclaiming the Oneness of God, the speech of the tree and its walking on its roots when he called it to him, the talking of animals, the bringing back to life of several people from the dead, the bringing forth of water from his fingers, the light that shone when he smiled, the curing of the blind, the dry tree branches coming back to life at his command, the gushing forth of dry wells at his command, all by God's leave, are just a few well authenticated miracles among the many that occurred and observed by his Companions and wives (peace be upon him and may Allah be pleased with all of them).

What Some Have Said About Him

Our debt to him as human beings is beyond our reach and this is well captured in the sayings of some well-known figures who were not Muslim:

If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who could dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples and dynasties, but millions of men in one-third of the then-inhabited world; and more than that he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and souls.... His forbearance in victory, his ambition which was entirely devoted to one idea and in no manner striving for an empire, his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death and his triumph after death all these attest not to an imposture but to a firm conviction which gave him the power to restore a dogma. This dogma was twofold: the unity of God and the immateriality of God; the former telling what God is, the latter telling what God is not; the one overthrowing false gods with the sword, the other starting an idea with the words. Philosopher, orator, apostle, legislator, warrior, conqueror of ideas, restorer of rational dogmas, of a cult without images; the founder of twenty terrestrial empires and of one spiritual empire, that is Muhammad.

As regards all standards by which human greatness may be measured, we may well ask, is there any man greater than he?

- Lamartine

Histoire de la Turquie, Paris 1854, Vol. 11, pp. 276-77.

It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. And although in what I put to you I shall say many things which may be familiar to many, yet I myself feel whenever I re-read them, a new way of admiration, a new sense of reverence for that mighty Arabian teacher.

- Annie Besant

The Life and Teachings of Muhammad, Madras 1932, p 4

He was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, Caesar without the legions of Caesar: without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed revenue. If ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by the right divine, it was Mohammad, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports.

- Bosworth Smith

Mohammad and Mohammadanism, London 1874, p 92.

His readiness to undergo persecution for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammad an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammad.

- W Montgomery Watt

Mohammad at Mecca, Oxford, 1953, p 52.

Chapter 2: Violence and Terrorism

Credits: Excerpt taken from the IECRC Research Publication:

Western Perceptions of Islam and Global Terrorism by **Prof.**

Mohammad Ahmed Qadri, Ph.D. Oct 2004 Chapter 1 pg 1-7

Modern-day Muslims and by extension, Islam, has come under much scrutiny and criticism. Unfortunately, to some, the term “Islam” and “Extremism” have become synonymous. However, the truth of the matter is that Islam was sent to eliminate extremism¹. Islam is the “middle way” as taught by its Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and its Divine Text, the Holy Quran, which was revealed to Him (Peace Be Upon Him). The reality as it stands is that extremist tendency in the realm of action is considered an anomaly by Islam and one that is censured and severely warned against. The true devotees / servants of Allah spread goodness and prevent evil so that Allah’s earth is purified from turmoil². Allah Almighty exhorts against creating turmoil, dissension and mischief as revealed to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in the Holy Quran:

“...Do not cause turmoil in the earth ...”³

“Those who break the covenant of Allah after ratifying it - and sever what Allah has ordered to join, and who cause turmoil (evil / religious chaos) in the earth; it is they who are the losers.”⁴

“And when he turns away, he creates turmoil in the earth and destroys crops and lives; and Allah is not pleased with turmoil.”⁵

“... and Allah does not love the mischievous.”⁶

“And do not spread turmoil in the earth after its reform, and pray to Him with fear and hope; indeed Allah’s mercy is close to the virtuous.”⁷

“... do not spread turmoil in the earth after it is organized; this is for your good, if you believe.”⁸

“And seek the abode of the Hereafter with the wealth that Allah has given you, and do not forget your part in this world, and do favors [to others] the way Allah has favored you, and do not seek to cause turmoil in the earth; indeed Allah does not like the mischievous.”⁹

Those viewing Islam from outside see extremism as part of the religion. They tend to split Islam into two: Normative Islam and Radical Islam, suggesting that the roots of violence committed in the name of Islam actually lie within the religion itself. The invention “Radical Islam” is actually an oxymoron, as Islam does not advocate sudden change. The purpose of Islam is to bring about societal change for the better but in a gradual manner. Case in point is the series of verses of the Holy Quran that were revealed in the context of alcohol prohibition. The goal was to prohibit alcohol consumption due to its detrimental effects on the individual as well as the person; however the command was not sudden. Instead, several verses were revealed in a step-by-step manner with increasing restrictions until it reached the point of prohibition (see verses of the Holy Quran 2:219, 4:43, 5:90). This is a deep philosophy that reflects a complete and total understanding of human nature – which is that true and lasting change only occurs gradually. Sudden change is a pathology that is attractive to the self and the means it employs are completely antithetical to Islamic principles.

Those who commit heinous acts in the name of religion might erroneously believe that they are serving the cause of the religion. However in Islam ends don't justify means - one cannot employ criminal methods to achieve laudable goals. The truth of the matter is that there is no justification in Islam for the loss of innocent lives. There is no room in Islam for “collateral damage”. On the sanctity of life, the Holy Quran says:

“Say, ‘Come - so that I may recite to you what your Lord has forbidden for you that: Do not ascribe any partner to Him and be good to parents; and do not kill your children because of poverty; We shall provide sustenance for all - you and them; and do not approach lewd things, the open among them or concealed; and do not unjustly kill any life which Allah has made sacred; this is the command to you, so that you may have sense.’”¹⁰

The Holy Quran further says:

“And do not wrongfully kill any living being which Allah has forbidden; ...”¹¹

There is also no room in Islam for taking one's own life as the so called “suicide bombers” believe. The Holy Quran says:

“... and do not kill yourselves; indeed Allah is Most Merciful upon you.”¹²

For those who have been and continue to be the victims of oppression might find this truth bitter to swallow. To them, is the reminder from Allah, the Most Exalted is He in the Holy Quran:

“... do not lose hope in Allah's mercy; ...”¹³

Islam's response to hardship is not one of retaliation, but of patience. Two wrongs don't make a right. The Islamic spiritual tradition teaches that hardships come for two reasons: to cleanse us of our sins, and / or to raise us in spiritual ranks – for the believer, both these are good states to be in. It is also imperative to remember that Allah Almighty does not place on us a burden more than we can bear, despite how difficult this might seem at the time one is undergoing a hardship. The Holy Quran comforts us:

“... We do not burden any soul except within its capacity; ...”¹⁴

There is a further promise from Allah Almighty for reward to those who patiently bear trials and tribulations and don't retaliate:

*"... for I do not waste the efforts of any (righteous) worker, male or female; you are all one among yourselves; so those who migrated and were driven out from their homes and were harassed in My cause, and fought, and were slain - I will certainly wipe out all their sins and will certainly admit them into Gardens beneath which rivers flow; a reward from Allah; and only with Allah is the best reward."*¹⁵

For a Muslim his or her role model is the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). An analysis of His life and those who withstood the opposition to Islam in its early years should be a fine example of how modern day Muslims must respond in the face of difficulty – with patience (see chapter 9).

Desperate acts that end one's own life and / or that of others are completely outside the pail of Islam. There is no doubt that the Muslim *Ummah* has come under much hardship, oppression, and trials. However, the Islamic response to this is not to lash out at the oppressors, but to turn inward and question what caused these hardships to come our way in the first place. Allah Almighty has promised victory to the believers in the Holy Quran. So, if we are not victorious, then the lack is in our belief (*Iman*), because Allah Almighty never reneges on His Promises.

Taking up arms to fight oppression militarily is not forbidden in Islam. This is because oppression is worse than slaughter as indicated in the following verse:

*"... and to prevent from the way of Allah, and not to believe in Him and to prevent (people) from the Sacred Mosque and to expel its residents - these are greater sins before Allah'; and the turmoil they cause is worse than killing ..."*¹⁶

Turmoil (*fasad*) gives birth to societal evils and Islam was sent to eliminate the evils of society. This is why turmoil and Islam cannot be together.¹⁷

However military fighting in a self-declared manner, under the whims of one's desires and not under the strict rules as laid down in Islamic Law (*Shari'ah*) is strictly forbidden. Following are some of the rules of combat in Islamic Law:

- No plant or animal life can be hurt
- No women, children or the elderly can be hurt
- No innocent life can be taken
- It is forbidden to take up arms in certain months as indicated in the following verses:

*"Indeed the number of months before Allah is twelve - in the Book of Allah - since the day He created the heavens and the earth, of which four are sacred; this the straight religion; so do not wrong yourselves in those months; and constantly fight against the polytheists as they constantly fight against you; and know well that Allah is with the pious."*¹⁸ Also,

*"They ask you the decree regarding fighting in the sacred month; say [O dear Prophet Mohammed - peace and blessings be upon Him], 'Fighting in it is a great sin; ...'"*¹⁹

Just these simple rules would delegitimize any form of modern warfare whether practiced by those who claim to adhere to the Islamic faith or those who do not. When the Muslims lost the Caliphate in the early part of the 20th century, by *Shari'ah* we lost the ability to wage military *jihad*. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) prophesized that there will come a time for the Muslim *Ummah* that they will see a split between the Sultan and the Quran and that the *Ummah* was advised to go with the Quran. There can be no military *jihad* without a *Khalifa*. The Holy

Prophet Peace Be Upon Him, 1400 years ago had also advised that the military *jihad* is the “lesser *jihad*” and the “greater *jihad*” is that against the evil inclinations of the self. *Jihad* is an Arabic word with *jahada* as its root meaning to struggle and strive in order to achieve good, whether one is engaged in the greater struggle against the self or the lesser struggle in the battlefield.

“*And fight them until no mischief remains ...*”²⁰

Jihad purifies the heart provided it is against the self and is in accordance with Allah and His Messenger’s (Peace Be Upon Him) Will. Ostentatious *jihad* is not for Allah, it is for the self.²¹

There is no place for terrorism in Islam. Those who make the claim that “The terrorism we practice is of the commendable kind for it is directed at the tyrants and the aggressors and the enemies of Allah.”²² are simply wrong and doing a great disservice to Islam by their misconstrued thoughts and interpretations and deviant behavior. For such militants, it is sufficient for a *Mullah* or radical Muslim party to pronounce a person or a country an “enemy of Allah” to justify killing. This is vigilantism, not Islam. This akin to the justification America made for the appalling treatment of slaves by considering them less than human. This is completely antithetical to the essence of Islamic teachings.

Those who think that blowing themselves up as a symbol of resistance to oppression will give them status of martyr should think twice, and then think some more. Martyrdom in Islam is a very high status and is second only to Prophethood. As the Holy Quran states:

“*So those who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter, must fight in Allah's cause; and We shall bestow a great reward upon whoever fights in Allah's cause, whether he is martyred or is victorious.*”²³

Martyrdom is conferred upon those who truly sacrifice their lives for the sake of Allah, which means for the sake of good of others,

as this is the essential message of Islam – to serve humanity, unconditionally. “Fighting in Allah’s Cause” is akin to fighting for justice, fighting to eradicate social evils, fighting to restore peace and security in society. And there can be no transgression as warned in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

“*And fight in Allah's cause against those who fight you and do not exceed the limits; and Allah does not like the transgressors.*”²⁴

This message of high moral standing is not to be imposed on others as there is no compulsion in the religion.²⁵ This message is embodied in the personality and message of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) who Allah Almighty sent as “A Mercy to All the Worlds”²⁶.

There are many categories of people who attain martyrdom:

- Those who die drowning
- Those who die collapsed under a building
- Those who die as a result of poisoning
- Those who dedicated their entire lives to the service of Islam

The purpose of wars in Islam is to uphold the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and to create such history, which is respected not just by oneself but also by others.²⁷ Society’s greatest tribulation is to kill people without being provoked and without reason. This is just a display of power. This is mischief (*fitna*), not *jihad*.²⁸ The worst thing is the misuse of power to force people into subjugation and to forcefully kill those who don’t come to fight.²⁹

Therefore one can see that the reality of Islam is very different than what is portrayed for the masses to believe. Islam is the yardstick. It is imperative that Muslims are judged by the high ideals of Islam and not that Islam is maligned for the acts of those who claim to adhere to the faith but have no clue as to what the faith actually calls for.



Chapter 3: Tolerance of the “Other”

The following is an excerpt from a monograph printed by the Islamic Educational and Cultural Research Center (IECRC – www.iecrcna.org), California, USA authored by **Prof. Mohammad Ahmed Qadri, Ph.D.** with the title “Peace and Tolerance in Islam.”

The Islamic tradition teaches us that peace is achieved through tolerance, forgiveness, and responding to evil with good. This is a three-tiered approach that gives the human being opportunities to exercise increasing spiritual efforts.

The concept of tolerance comes into play when one is dealing with the “other”, something or someone different. The Holy Quran offers guidance in this matter:

“O mankind! We have indeed created you from one man and one woman, and have made you into various nations and tribes so that you may know one another; indeed the more honorable among you, in the sight of God, is one who is more pious among you; indeed God is All Knowing, All Aware.” -The Holy Quran 49:13

This verse is very clear that the diversity in creation is inherent and by Divine Design and that its purpose is to interact, to get to know one another, to learn from one another, to be a part of the global picture. The many different cultures that exist in the world today are a blessing. What a boring world it would be if we were all the same! It is this interaction, that allows for increased understanding and enrichment that contributes towards the promotion of peace between various communities.

Within the religion of Islam, there is much room for scholarly interpretation, which is what gave rise to four authentic jurisprudential schools of thought and forty spiritual schools of

thought that make up the rich fabric of the Islamic intellectual and spiritual tradition. The Holy Quran says:

“There is no compulsion in religion.” -The Holy Quran 2:256

And the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) said:

“The differences of opinion amongst my Ummah (Community) are a blessing.”

One of the great luminaries of the Islamic intellectual tradition, Imam Shaf’i (d. 820 CE, may God Almighty be pleased with him) would say on a given issue: “I am right with the possibility of being wrong, and you are wrong with the possibility of being right.” This is reflective of the attitude that the early community, who lived with the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*), adopted. It is also the attitude of the later generations who follow in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*), when dealing with differences. This is far from the modern day polemics that people engage in where more attention is paid to “who is right” versus “what is right”.

Islam stresses co-existence. The Holy Quran clearly tells Muslims to protect the Christian church, the Jewish synagogue, and places of worship of all other peoples as much as they defend their mosques (The Holy Quran 22:40). This is clear evidence of the emphasis that Islam has laid on tolerance and co-existence with other religions and civilizations. Islam also exhorts its followers to ensure the protection of all educational, charity and cultural centers of other civilizations. It may be deduced that the non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) working in the field of education, health and social welfare also fall in this category. One can also refer to the word *Sawamiah* used in verse 40 of Chapter *Al-Hajj*, which stipulates that all kinds of establishments of other civilizations must be protected.

Whenever Christian scholars came to the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) for a dialog, the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) arranged their stay in *Masjid-e-Nabawi* (the Prophet's mosque). On such occasions, the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) not only held talks there, but also allowed the Christians to perform their religious rituals within the mosque.

In order to keep alive the spirit and teaching of the Holy Quran, the most significant charter of tolerance was granted by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) to the Christians in the 9th year of *Hijra*. It reads:

“To the Christians of the Nijran and neighboring territories, the security of God Almighty and the pledge of His Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) are extended for their lives, their religion, and their property – to the present as well as the absent and others besides; there shall be no interference in (the practice) of their faith of their bishopric, nor any monk from his monastery, nor any priest from his priesthood and they shall continue to enjoy everything great and small as heretofore; no image or cross shall be destroyed; they shall not practice the rights of blood vengeance as in the days of ignorance; no tithes shall be levied from them; nor shall they be required to furnish provision for the troops.” **-Mohammad bin Yousuf Al-Salahi Shammi, Subul-al-Hudu**

We may also recall the diction of the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) shortly before passing on to the Divine Realm:

“Observe scrupulously the non-Muslim subjects.”
-Suyooti, Durr-e-Mansoor fī Tafseer bil Ma'soor

Another saying of the Holy Prophet (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) is:

“Whoever oppresses the non-Muslim subjects, I shall be their advocate [of the non-Muslim subject] on the Day of Resurrection (against the oppressing Muslims).”

-Alauddin Ali Al-Muttaqi, Kanzul Ummal

On the occasion of the farewell pilgrimage, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) exhorted the believers:

“You are all born of Adam and Adam was made out of clay. An Arab has no superiority over the non-Arab. Neither does a white man enjoy superiority over a black man, nor a black man over a white man except by piety. Remember that your lives and properties are sacred and inviolable among one another.” **-Allama Qastallani, Mawahib-ul-Laduniyah**

Equality in the matter of justice applies to members of all faiths. The Messenger of God (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) stressed about taking care of minorities in an Islamic state:

“Their property is like our property and their blood is like our blood.”
-Allama Sanaullah Pani Patti's Tafseer Mazhari

Therefore it can be seen that Islam provides equal protection to members of other faiths. Islam inculcates the love of God's creatures in general and of the human family in particular, as corroborated by the following statement:

“The best of you is he who is best to God's family (i.e. humanity)”
-Imam Fakhr-ar-Razi, Al-Tafseer Al-Kabeer

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (*peace and blessings of God be upon him*) said that Islam regards Muslims as one fraternity, inside

which it affirms the existence of the Islamic brotherhood, wherein all distinctions of caste, creed, tribe, color, language, and territory are suspended and obliterated, and which has been allotted the function of acting as the servant of and the torchbearers of Divine Guidance for the larger human brotherhood.

Side by side with the code of conduct meant to be observed within the circle of the Islamic brotherhood, Islam also gives a definite code of human love, which relates to the dealings of Muslims with the larger human society. In this regard, the Holy Quran says:

“The believers are brothers to each other; therefore make peace between your two brothers and fear God, so that you may gain mercy.” -The Holy Quran 49:10

The Dutch orientalist Snouck Hurgronje observes:

“The ideal of a league of Human Races has been approached by Islam more nearly than by any other ideology, for the league of Nations founded on Muhammad’s religion takes the principle of equality of all human races so seriously as to put other communities to shame.” -Snouck Hurgronje, Muslim World Today

H.G. Wells says:

“Islam created a society more free from widespread cruelty and social oppression than any society that has ever been in the world before.”
-Barbara Keith, History of Philosophy

For the Full Monograph Visit:

<http://www.iecrcna.org/publications/books/Peace&Tolerance-in-Islam-Single-Pages.pdf>



Chapter 4: Islam and Women

Contribution: Syeda Shagufta Ahmad Qadri - IECRC

Perhaps the greatest modern day stereotype against Islam is its alleged treatment of women. The media portrays images of black *burqa* clad figures whose voices are not to be heard let alone seen by the public eye; considered second class citizens with no rights to education, health or safety; oppressed with no opportunities; born simply to serve her husband and bear children with no consideration for her feelings, thoughts and opinions. However, is this the reality of the matter as seen through the eyes of the 1.4 billion Muslims around the world who are an integral component of our global village?

Before we talk about what rights Islam has given women, let us talk about Islam. Not only is it the world’s second largest religion, it is also the fastest growing religion in the world. Contrary to popular belief, Islam is not a new or alien tradition. It is the culmination of the timeless message from our Creator to humanity to teach us through the institution of Prophethood about who we are, why we are, and where we are headed. Whether we call upon God Almighty or Our Creator in Arabic as *Allah*, in Hebrew as *Elohim / Yahweh*, or in Hindi as *Ishwar / Paramatma*, we are ultimately calling upon That Source of all things who is the First without beginning, the Last without end, Who is All-Present, All-Knowing, All-Loving, All-Merciful and All-Just. There is nothing like unto Him, Our Creator. Furthermore, in creation, Islam teaches us of the centrality and ultimate excellence of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), who although was the last and final Prophet from God Almighty to guide humanity, He (Peace Be Upon Him) was the first Light of creation from which God created everything else. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) is the sweetness and the light of the hearts of the believers. He (Peace Be Upon Him) taught us who God is and who all the previous Prophets were whom He (Peace Be Upon Him) referred to as “Brothers”. Muslims believe in and love dearly all

the Prophets of God Almighty including Prophets Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them all).

Islam arrived in Arabia through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) over 1400 years ago at a time when it was steeped in the depths of oppression and shackles of abuse, especially of women. Baby girls were buried alive; women were treated like property with no inherent rights and considered second class citizens. However with the advent of Islam, women's safety, dignity and inherent rights to their property and name were not just restored but women were given the honor of being the "committed and equal partners of men" in their service to God Almighty. The Holy Quran, which is the Divine Text that Muslims believe in as the final revelation from God Almighty to all of creation, says:

O mankind! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its spouse and from them both has spread the multitude of men and women [4:1]

This verse emphasizes the noble origin of the souls of all the men and women in the world, clearly indicating the spiritual equality of men and women. The Holy Quran furthermore says:

Indeed the Muslim men and Muslim women, and the believing men and the believing women, and the men who obey and the women who obey, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity, and the men who profusely remember Allah and the women who profusely remember Allah – for all of them, Allah has kept prepared forgiveness and an immense reward. [33:35]

This verse further indicates the spiritual equality of men and women. The soul is genderless. It is our bodies that make us men or women with different roles to perform in society. The modern world struggles with questions of the role of men and women. Islam on the other hand emphasizes the goal of men and women. This goal is the same – to worship our Creator. In order to worship

Him from the depths of our hearts, we must love Him. In order to truly love Him, we must know Him. In order to know Him we must seek the means of the last Prophet from God Almighty: the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) and through His (Peace Be Upon Him) love and knowledge learn about our Creator.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said that God Almighty made three things beloved to Him (Peace Be Upon Him): prayer, perfume, and women. What is it about the woman that puts us in the category of the prayer and the perfume? Upon reflection one can conclude that the prayer is the tranquillity of the spirit, and the perfume is the tranquillity of the senses. The woman in a similar manner is the tranquillity of the home and the society if she is allowed to flourish and be all that she has been given the God-given potential to be. The annals of Islamic history shine bright with stellar examples of Muslim women who were scholars, teachers, warriors, businesswomen, guides, and mentors to their communities. The lives and contributions of these shining female luminaries are role models to the modern day woman who struggles with notions of self esteem and her role in society. The contributions of these great women are immense and warrant attention in the modern age as a source of inspiration, guidance, and healing to women both within and outside the fold of the Islamic faith and practice. Amongst the most distinguished women in Islam are those of the Blessed Household (may God be pleased with them all) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) as they drank directly from the spiritual and intellectual waters of His Blessed Company and Teachings.

Four female personalities are considered "perfect" in the Islamic tradition. Two are from the Blessed Family of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him and His Family): his daughter Syeda Fatima Zahra (may Allah Almighty be well pleased with her); and his wife Syeda Khadija (may Allah Almighty be well pleased with her). The third is Hazrat Asiya (may Allah have mercy on her), the wife of the Pharaoh; and last but not least, the Pure Virgin Hazrat Maryam (Mary), the blessed mother of Prophet Jesus (peace be upon them both). May God Almighty's prayers and blessings be upon them all. There is an entire chapter named

after Mother Mary (peace be upon her) in the Holy Quran. She is known to Muslims for her piety and devotion to God Almighty. Syeda Fatima (may God be well pleased with her) is considered by Muslims to be the leader of women in Heaven. She is known for her patience and love for humanity.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said that the best of us are those who are best to our family and He (Peace Be Upon Him) was the best to His (Peace Be Upon Him) family. This comprehensive statement and advice sums up the right of a Muslim woman in her home – the right to be respected, loved, cared for and cherished. He (Peace Be Upon Him) also said that Paradise lies under the feet of the mother. The Islamic tradition teaches that the mother has a rank three times higher than the father. This of course is connected to the immense pain and burden she bears for nine months in her womb and the pain of delivering that miracle of a child and then spending nights and days and all of her being in raising that child to be a productive citizen of the world. The institution of motherhood is held in the highest regard by Islam. As a matter of fact, the Arabic word for womb is *rahm* which shares its roots with two of God Almighty's Most Blessed Names: *Ar-Rahman and Ar-Raheem* – “The Most Beneficent and The Most Merciful”. It is interesting to note that of the infinite Names that God Almighty has, 113 out of the 114 chapters of the Holy Quran begin with these two Names related to mercy. The woman therefore is a symbol of mercy on this earth. She also shares this trait with one of Holy Prophet Muhammad's (Peace Be Upon Him) titles: *Rahmatul-lil-Alameen* – “Mercy to the worlds”. Therefore any society that values the institution of motherhood and the trait of mercy will value its women. Furthermore, the Arabic word for woman is *Nisa* and the Arabic word for humanity is *Insan* - again showing the integral connection between the woman and humanity. There is an entire chapter titled *Nisa* in the Holy Quran outlining the rights of women.

Islam does not limit the woman's role to the home. Given her circumstances she can pursue any field that serves humanity and is a means to get closer to her Creator and His Beloved Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). The Holy Prophet Muhammad's (Peace Be

Upon Him) wife Syeda Khadija (may Allah be well pleased with her) was a famous businesswoman. His youngest wife Syeda Aisha (may Allah be well pleased with her) was a scholar, teacher, orator, and poetess. Syeda Zaynab (may Allah be well pleased with her) was a great orator and warrior. Hazrat Nusayba (may Allah be well pleased with her) was also a great warrior. Hazrat Rabia Basri (may Allah have mercy on her) was a great ascetic and worshipper of God Almighty.

Islam seeks not to confine but to liberate the spirit of the woman through its various injunctions to protect her. The outward veil or *hijab* is a prime example. Although grossly misunderstood and misinterpreted as a symbol of oppression, this icon of modesty in reality is a statement of dignity for the woman. It is a stop sign for her onlookers to judge her for who she is and not what she looks like, to judge her for her mind and spirit and not her body. The woman in Islam is encouraged to develop herself to her highest potential – to gain knowledge even if she has to go to far off lands. The woman is the spirit of the society. In Islamic Sufi tradition, she is akin to the flesh of the fruit whereas the man is the outer core to protect her. So even though the inner flesh of any fruit is “hidden” or under a “veil”, it is the true essence of the fruit. The man even though he is in positions of leadership outwardly, is in reality the protector and caretaker of the woman. In Islam leadership is not about authority, it is about responsibility and accountability. The man will be accountable in front of God Almighty on the Day of Judgment as to how well he took care of this trust God has put in his reign.

Unfortunately Muslims today have become distant from these essential teachings of Islam as a result of which the Muslim world is found to be in much disarray in general and for women in particular. To make matters worse, the media has done much disservice in promoting the misdeeds of the powerful but ignorant few and not making known the voices of the silent majority who know Islam to be a peaceful, loving religion especially to its women. It behooves each mature individual to take responsibility as being part of the global community to learn in the spirit of getting to know one another who our neighbors are and not fall

into the traps of vested interest groups. It is every woman's duty to take back what is rightfully ours, given to us by Our Creator – the right to equality, justice, freedom, safety, health, education, opportunity and above all the right to seek knowledge and spirituality so we can truly be the servants of God Almighty and His Beloved Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him). May God Almighty grant us women the strength to step up to the pedestal and take on the daunting task of educating ourselves and our children and inspiring everyone towards continuous self-improvement. *Ameen.*



Chapter 5: The Religion (*Deen*)

Contribution: Sharaaz Khan Qadri

Based on a well-known *Hadith* called the *Hadith Gabriel* (peace be upon him), the religion of Islam is based on three:

- ***Islam*** - In this context, the word *Islam* means the foundational ritual practices enjoined on a Muslim to testify and accept the Oneness or Unity of God, along with the practice of the other 4 pillars of the religion – Prayer, Charity, Fasting, and Pilgrimage (See Chapter 6 for details)
- ***Iman*** - *Iman* (or Belief) is based on a creed. This creed is a set of beliefs that every Muslim is required to have conviction including an Unseen and Supreme God (free of all material or human connotations), in His Messengers, His Angels, His Books, Destiny and so forth. (See Chapter 7 for details)
- ***Ihsan*** - *Ihsan* is the certainty of God Almighty to the degree that one sees his Lord (with the eye of the heart). And if one does not reach that degree, the least of it is the realization that God is aware of all his or her actions. (See Chapter 8)

A student learns about the finer details of the practice (*Islam*) through the science of *Fiqh* or Islamic Jurisprudence and protects his faith within the boundaries of *Shariah* – the Divine Law. Likewise, to learn about faith (*Iman*) he or she sits with a teacher, whose *Iman* or faith is sound and free of invented religious innovation, who explains the subtleties of deep faith through a science known as *Aqidah*. Then if an aspirant seeks excellence in religion where they want to draw closer to their Lord spiritually, they take a solemn pledge with a Spiritual Guide, a Shaykh, a Saint who has traveled the inner path to Allah or *Tariqah*. The experiential science formally transmitted from Master (*Murshid*) to Aspirant (*Mureed*) is called *Tasawwuf*, or Sufism. Thus, if any of these aspects are missing from religion, one's religion is not complete. *Islam* is the grounding pole and protective shield of the religion, while *Ihsaan* is that which enables the spirit to soar at the highest of levels. While *Iman* is the driving force behind these two.

Chapter 6: Practice (Islam)

Contribution: Sharaaz Khan Qadri

The ritual practice of Islam consists of five pillars which form the foundation of the religion:

1. **The Testification (*Shahaadah*)** of the statement *La Ilaha Il-Allah Muhammadur Rasul-Ullah*, which means “There is no God but Allah (God Almighty), and Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah.” Islam is the religion which embodies this statement. When one testifies to this, he or she enters Islam and is called a Muslim. This phrase is also called the key to Paradise. **Note:** *Allah* is the Arabic term for God. Arab Christians and Muslims both use this term to describe the term God.
2. **Prayer (*Salaat*)** is an obligation on Muslims five times a day. *Salaat* (ritual prayer) is the second pillar of Islam. It becomes binding on the one who has born witness to the testimony of faith (the first pillar), the sane, and one who has attained puberty to pray five times a day without fail. It is blameworthy to miss one’s Prayer without a valid excuse such as insanity, occasional sleep, unconsciousness, menstruation, post-partum bleeding, or occasional forgetfulness. Its condition includes ritual purification and intention among others. The minimum are the obligatory five times but the Muslim can add to the number supererogatory of prayers as excellence.
3. **Charity (*Zakaat*)** is the third pillar of Islam. The obligation is fulfilled by giving away two and a half percent of surplus wealth, which must reach a certain amount to qualify, and is distributed to the poor each year after deducting debts and expenses. This charity is called *zakaat*. Anything above and beyond this is excellence and is encouraged. That sort of charity may be given at any time and is called *sadaqah*.
4. **Fasting (*Siyaam*)** is the fourth pillar of Islam. During the month of *Ramadan* (the 9th month of the Lunar calendar) from

dawn to dusk, the believer refrains from food, drink, and marital relations. Special attention is paid to guarding the tongue from profanity and backbiting, the eye from obscenity, the ear from listening to backbiting and slander. Muslims are urged to carry on their good and praiseworthy actions throughout the year. Many non-Muslims fast in solidarity with the Muslims and this act increases love and tolerance of each other. The health benefits to fasting are numerous. The minimum fast is the month of Ramadan but Muslims may choose to fast additional days throughout the year for spiritual closeness to God.

5. **Pilgrimage (*Hajj*)** to the House of the Lord is the fifth and final pillar of Islam. It represents a culmination of all the other pillars because all of them may be performed during the Pilgrimage at some point or another. Muslims from all over the world start gathering in Makkah each year to begin the rites of the Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage to Makkah is a tradition of the Prophets Abraham and Ishma’il (peace be upon them) and is performed solely for seeking Divine Pleasure. In it the Muslims must gather in the plain of Arafat that signifies the plain of Resurrection. Several rites are performed during the Hajj and after the Hajj is completed, the Muslims visit the Mosque and Shrine of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him in *Medina Munawwarah*). A sincere and complete Hajj washes away all previous sins. The Hajj is the minimum, but the Umrah is a smaller and shorter version of the Hajj and is optional. The Hajj is performed at a specific month of the year, which Umrah can be performed at any time.

This is a very brief introduction to the Islamic Practices. Please visit the following link for the *Inner Dimensions* or spiritual aspects of these practices at the following link:
http://www.iecrcna.org/publications/books/spirit_of_islam_ed1.pdf

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Chapter 7: Faith (*Iman*)

Contribution: Shameem Khan and Naveed Agboatwala - IECRC

Belief in Allah - Allah is One without partner, Unique, and Eternal. He is without beginning or end. He has no counterpart, no assistant, and is Self-Subsistent. He does not have a son. He is not a physical body, nor a material substance. He is Living, Unsusceptible to weakness and possessed of Absolute Sovereignty. He alone creates and begins, and his Knowledge encompasses all things. He has created all of creation and all of their actions and has predetermined their means of sustenance and their respective span of life. He Willed the whole Universe and what His creatures would be doing. He has Speech, Hearing, and Sight, but these attributes cannot be considered resembling human attributes of speech, hearing, or sight. No concept of Him can be formed by any stretch of the imagination, nor can He be assessed by any effort of the mind. There is nothing like Allah.

*Say (O Beloved Prophet): He is Allah, the One
Allah the Independent, Care free
He begot none, nor was He begotten
and nor is anyone equal to Him. [Quran 112]*

Belief in Angels - Created from light, they are part of the unseen. Muslims believe in their existence. They were created by Allah to worship, obey and carry out His commands with unquestioning obedience. Angels are sent down by Allah for various reasons. They act as witnesses for and against us and record our good and bad deeds for which we will be accountable for on the Day of Resurrection, they glorify Allah and they also intercede for on man's behalf. There are guardian angels that are meant to prevent bad things from happening to people which is not meant to happen while other allow things to happen which is meant to occur. There are four archangels: Gabriel, Izrael, Michael, Israfil, (peace be upon them all).

Belief in His Books - Muslims believe in all the revelations that were sent to previous prophets (peace upon all of them). The revelation as was sent down to Prophet Moses (*Torah*), and the (*Injeel*) New Testament to Prophet Isaa (Jesus), and the (*Zaboor*) Book of Psalms to Prophet Dawud (peace upon them all). The Holy Quran was the last message sent down from Allah through the Angel Gabriel over twenty three years, although the Qur'an descended from the highest heaven to the lowest in the month of Ramadan (when Muslims fast) in a single night. Muslims believe it is the Word of Allah and accept it as the absolute truth. The Quran today is the same as it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and it is rigorously authenticated through thousands of chains of transmission making it impossible to be tampered with.

Belief in His Messengers - Linguistically, in Arabic, Prophet is *Nabi*, which comes from the Arabic root *naba'a*. This means to inform. The meaning is that Allah informed them of the unseen, and they convey this information. *Rasul* is the second word used in describing Prophethood in Islam, and is used to mean Messenger. Allah had sent more or less 124,000 Messengers and Prophets (peace be upon them all) to humankind with twenty five mentioned in the Qur'an. Allah has chosen Prophets to convey to people knowledge about Him. Allah could have, had He willed, brought direct knowledge about Himself into the ears of his Creation along with His commandments without any intermediary, but instead has chosen the means of Messengership as a way for people to obtain this knowledge. The Messenger can be non-human, as angels are when they convey messages from Allah to the Prophets, or they are humans, as Messengers and Prophets to their own kind. The wisdom in having a human Prophet among people is so that they trust him, live among him, have affinity with him, and follow his example, among other things. The Holy Prophet Muhamad (peace be upon him) is believed to be outwardly in human form but His essence is Light (*Noor*). Messengers are truthful, trustworthy, and they have to convey the message that Allah commanded them to convey.

It is not possible that they would do anything forbidden, for example, lie. They are free from sin, and received revelation from God and are the closest to God. It is possible that they have illness, but not any such condition that would lead to a deficiency. Allah has sent Prophets to all nations. All of these Prophets preached the belief in Allah, they guided people towards ethical behavior and warned them against a day of reckoning.

Prophetic miracles are given as proof of a Prophet's truthfulness. These are actions which subsist and incapacitate the intellect and cannot be explained away. Among these miracles are the Prophet Moses' (peace be upon him) splitting of the sea, and the Prophet Jesus' healing the sick and blind. All of the Prophets foretold of the Last Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings be upon him) as the last Prophet who would be sent to all of creation.

Below is a list of the messengers mentioned in the Quran: The Prophets Adam, Idris, Nuh (Noah), Hud, Saleh, Lut (Lot), Ibrahim (Abraham) , Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac) , Ya'kub (Jacob), Yousuf (Joseph), Shu'aib, Harun (Aaron), Musa (Moses), Dawood (David), Sulaiman (Solomon), Ayub (Job), Zulkifl (Ezekiel), Yunus (Jonah), Elyas (Elijah), Al-Yasa' (Elisah), Zakariyah (Zechariah), Yahya (John), `Isa (Jesus), and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and all of the Prophets)

Belief in Resurrection and the Hereafter - Muslims firmly believe that the Last Day will come and Allah will hold everyone accountable for his beliefs and actions and will be admitted to Paradise or Hell. Allah only knows when the Last Day will occur; He has given us signs about when it will take place through information in the Holy Quran and *Hadith* (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)). After the major and minor signs have occurred, the World will be obliterated and everyone who has ever lived on the Earth will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment from their coccyx bone, in a similar way that God brought humanity into Creation out of clay, so would the Resurrection occur. *The Gathering* will take place where all of humankind and creatures of the unseen will wait for their judgment. The judgment will occur over the Scales (*Mizaaan*) where the deeds, good and

evil, of each person will be weighed. Good deeds include the sound belief, the following of obligations and responsibilities to God, parents, family, children, humanity in general, and so forth. And the opposite of these are evil deeds. Those whose weight is heavier in good deeds are successful and they who are deficient is not and will compensate by spending time in the Hellfire or forgiven by the All-Merciful as He wills. After the judgment has taken place each of us will be made to walk over a deep abyss where the flames of the Hellfire leap up, on the *Siraat*, a razor sharp bridge so thin that it will be invisible. Believers that are destined for Paradise will cross over quickly and with ease seeing it as a wide bridge; but others fall off this hair thin bridge in to the Hellfire. Intercession then occurs by Allah, the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), the Angels, and the Pious Believers of Allah, looking for anyone with an atoms worth of belief (*imaan*) in their heart; then life continues in Paradise or Hell for all Eternity for those who are left. Believers will then be led by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to a vast basin called *al-Kawthar*, where their thirst will be satisfied with a white-colored drink that tastes like sweetened milk. Heaven or Paradise is beyond the imagination of common people in terms of its delights, peace, and contentment, the highest of which is the Beatific Vision of Allah, God Himself. A reward for those most close to him, and the company of the Prophets, the Companions of the Prophets, and those pious personalities that followed. The *Jahannam* or Hell on the other hand is unimaginable pain, torture, and suffering far beyond that of this world.

Belief in Divine Predestination (Qadr) - The Power of Allah is over all things and events, the good of it and the bad. When referring to the future Muslims will often use the phrase *Inshallah* (if Allah Wills) knowing that whatever happens or will happen is under the control of Allah. Although events are pre-ordained, man possesses free will in that he has the faculty to choose between right and wrong, and is thus responsible for his actions. Pre-ordainment does not mean that one doesn't have control at all over his actions. It means that all that is to occur from the beginning of time to the Last day is in the Infinite Knowledge of God, and thus all of this has been written down on a Tablet. This fate is divided

in three categories: *Mubram*, *Shabih bil-Mubram*, and *Mu'allaq*. *Mubram* are those things about a person that are beyond change. *Shabih bil-Mubram* is those things that are changed by the supplication of those pious personalities known as the *Awliyah* or the Saints or Friends of Allah. And *Mu'allaq* is those that may change by common believers who sincerely seek a change in the situation through supplication. Occasionally, God will change that destiny which is *Mubram* at the sincere request of those most close to him like his Prophets (peace be upon them all), or one-of-a-kind, pious saints, such as the Crown of the Saints, Shaykh Abdul Qadir Jilani (1077/8 – 1166 CE, may Allah be well pleased with him). The human being, thus has some control over his destiny, and destinies are changed through piety and being in the company of the pious. However, we must realize that some things may never change and are beyond our control. And sometimes the human being is tried with something that seemingly may be bad for him but in reality is good and not in his understanding yet. And the same can be said about those things that are seemingly good. Also, if God wills for something, nothing in the Universe can change it. Thus, a true Believer surrenders to the Will of God in tragedy and misfortune and thanks Him in difficulty and ease moving on with his or her life lightly, never forgetting that the Source of all is God and prays for his or her well-being and for others who are good and bad to him or her, as they are really the tools or means by which God fulfills His Divine Will.



Chapter 8: Sufism (*Ihsan* and *Tasawwuf*)

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The Islamic Science of *Tasawwuf* also known as Sufism, Metaphysics or Mysticism, sourced in the Holy Quran, the Hadeeth of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), and the practices of the Noble Saints (*Awliya Kiram*) of the Islamic tradition, offers a time-tested comprehensive response to the purification of the human soul. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) is considered the ultimate Spiritual Master in Creation and the creation's connection with our Creator. As the Holy Quran says:

*“It is He Who has sent among the unlettered people a Noble Messenger from themselves, Who recites His verses to them and purifies them, and bestows them the knowledge of the Book and wisdom; and indeed before this, they were in open error.”*³⁰

In the above verse, Allah Almighty defines four functions for which the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was sent:

1. He (Peace Be Upon Him) gives to the people the Divine code of life, i.e. Law of God, i.e. the *Shari'ah*.
2. He (Peace Be Upon Him) purifies those that accept the message. Therefore the process of purification is different from learning the *Shari'ah*.
3. He (Peace Be Upon Him) teaches the Quran (*kitab*), and
4. He (Peace Be Upon Him) teaches wisdom.

To just know the teachings of the Noble Quran is not sufficient; what is important is how one must behave as a Muslim, and how one must proceed towards the reality of things. The purpose of *Ahaadeeth* (Sayings, actions, of the Prophet Muhammad) is that

the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) rectifies the self (*nafs*) and that people are told what the necessities of a society are and how they should live their lives according to the Quran and Sunnah.³¹

Purification involves purging the soul of its blameworthy qualities (*razail*) such as those mentioned above and then beautifying it with praiseworthy qualities (*fadail*), such as patience, tolerance, tranquility, empathy, and above all love – for our Creator, His Beloved Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and the rest of creation. The soul in the Islamic tradition is often analogized as a wild horse that needs to be tamed, such that the individual rides it, i.e. is in control of its reins and not vice versa.

The term *Tasawwuf* derives from *safaa*, which means:

“to be or become clear, unpolluted, limpid, cloudless, untroubled, serene, undisturbed, pure.”³²

Another meaning is in regards to those Companions (may Allah be pleased with them all), who used to sit in front of the door of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him), and because of their direct knowledge from the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and purification of the self, they were known as *Ashab-us-Suffa* or the “Purified People”.

The term “Mysticism” has several synonyms in Islam: *Ihsan* (beautification), *Qurb* (approaching God), *Tariqat* (road, i.e., of the journey unto God), *Suluk* (journey, i.e. unto God), *Tasawwuf* (which etymologically means: to put on a woolen cloth). The true meaning of this word has been discussed much and many books have been composed on the subject. Ultimately, the person who commits to purify his or her soul from the impurities of this world is called a *Sufi*. It is also a name, which is given to the perfect Saints and Spiritual Adepts of the Islamic tradition.

In short, Sufism or Tasawwuf means *Tazkiyah nafs* (purification of soul and heart). Every human being is confronted by obstacles that arise from within the human self. There are also obstacles in the community where one has to live and interact. One has to fight

against these obstacles successfully. And unless one fights successfully, one will not be a Muslim in the real sense of the word. Consequently there should be a methodology (through the Shari’ah) to answer the questions, especially the question of how to be a Muslim, which can be employed in transforming the human personality in accordance with Islam. Therefore, the word *Tariqah* actually means the methodology to practice Shari’ah. If one adopts the Tariqah the reward will be *Ma’rifah* – Godly knowledge in depth. We have what is called *Ilm*, which means knowledge and *Irfan*, which is superior degree of knowing and is higher than the general concept of knowledge. The reward is to gain the knowledge of things as they really are and not how they appear to be. Therefore, Tariqah teaches the methodology to attain the real knowledge from the direct source, i.e. from Allah Almighty through the Quran and Sunnah. Tariqah is a methodology to practice Islam in the real sense of the word, i.e. peace within and out side one’s own self.

