

# ISLĀM AT A GLANCE

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Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) himself was an unlettered man who could not read or write. The Noble Qur'ān was revealed to him over a period of 23 years and committed to memory and writing by his followers under his supervision during his lifetime. The original and complete text of the Qur'ān is available to everybody in Arabic, the languages are widely used.

Hadith, the teachings, sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), meticulously reported and collected by his devoted companions, explain and elaborate the Qur'ānic verses.

## CONCEPT OF WORSHIP

Islām does not teach or accept mere ritualism. It emphasises intention and action. To worship Allah is to know Him and love Him, to act upon His laws in every aspect of life, to enjoin goodness and forbid evil and oppression, to practise charity and justice and to serve Him by serving mankind. Islām seeks to implant in man's heart the strongest conviction that his every thought and action are with Allah, Who sees him at all times and in all places.

## ISLĀMIC WAY OF LIFE

Islām provides definite guidelines for all people to follow in all walks of life. The guidance it gives is comprehensive and includes the social, economic, political, moral and spiritual aspects of life. The Qur'ān reminds man of the purpose of life

on earth, and his duties and obligations towards himself, his kith and kin, his community, his fellow human beings and his Creator. Man is given fundamental guidelines about a purposeful life and then he is left with the challenge of human existence before him so that he might put these high ideals into practise. In Islām man is a wholesome, integrated unit and not a collection of fragmented, competitive parts. The sacred and secular are not separate parts of man; they are united in the nature of human being.

## STATUS OF WOMEN

No discrimination is made on the basis of sex. But Islām makes one realise that the sphere of potential capabilities and hence responsibilities of men and women are equally important in themselves but not exactly the same. The roles of men and women are complementary to each other.

## JIHĀD

Jihād consists in exerting oneself to the utmost in order to personally follow the teachings of Islām. A Muslim, therefore expends all the power of body and soul, his wealth, possessions and even life in the fight against the evil forces of the world in order that injustice, oppression and contumacy are annihilated and Allah's just order is established. Therefore to struggle in the path of Allah with the pen; speech and the sword is Jihād.

Islām is an Arabic word which means peace, purity, acceptance and commitment. The religion of Islām is the complete acceptance of the teachings and the guidance of Allah.

A Muslim is one who accepts freely and willingly the supreme power of Allah and strives for total reorganisation of his life according to the revealed teachings of Allah. He also works towards the establishment of a just social order which would totally reflect the guidance of Allah.

### THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLĀM

Every action which is done with the awareness that it fulfils the will of Allah is considered an act of worship in Islām. Nevertheless, the specific acts of worship, termed the pillars of Islām, provide the framework of spiritual life.

They are the following:

1. **The declaration of faith**, *“I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah and that Muhammad is His seroant and messenger (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), the Prophethood of Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) obliges the Muslim to follow his exemplary life in every way.*

2. **Prayers** are prescribed five times a day as a duty towards Allah. They strengthen and enliven the belief in Allah and inspire man to a higher morality. They purify the heart and control the temptation towards wrong doing and evil. It should be stressed that while Allah does not need our prayers we

cannot survive without His blessings and guidance.

3. **Fasting** is observed once each year during the month of Ramadhān. This means abstention from food, drink and intimate marital relationship from dawn to sunset, and also from evil intentions and desires. It teaches love, sincerity and devotion. It develops a sound social conscience, patience, unselfishness and will-power. When we fast by choice, Allah remembers our sufferings.

4. **Zakāt** – payment annually of 2.5% of one’s net savings as a purifying sum to be spent on the poor and needy. Zakāt implies that everything man possesses belongs to Allah and therefore anyone in need has a share in it.

5. **Hajj (pilgrimage)** to Makkah, once in a lifetime provided one has the means to do so. Hajj implies man’s temporary suspension of all worldly activities and his realisation of himself as a naked soul in front of Allah alone.

### ONENESS OF ALLAH

Islām enjoins faith in the Oneness and Sovereignty of Allah, which makes man aware of the meaningfulness of the Universe and his place in it. This belief frees him from all fears and superstitions by making him conscious of the presence of Allah and of man’s obligations towards Him. Belief in one Allah requires that we look upon all humanity as one family irrespective of colour, class, race or territory, under the Omnipotence of Allah the Creator and

Nourisher of all. Islām rejects the idea of a chosen people, making faith in Allah and good action the only way to Heaven. Thus a direct relationship is established with Allah, open to all alike.

### LIFE AFTER DEATH

The world according to Islām, is a place of trial and man is being judged in it. Man is accountable to Allah for all that he does herein. Life on earth will, one day, come to an end; and after that new world will be resurrected. It will be in this Life after Death that man will be rewarded or punished for his deeds and misdeeds. Allah will judge man on the day of existence which leads to further blessings, or to Hell, a stage of suffering and punishment.

### QUR’ĀN AND HADITH

The Qur’ān is the last revealed Word of Allah and such affirms and completes the total process of revelation which has come from the Divine Guidance of the human race. The Qur’ān is the basic source of Islāmic teachings and laws and deals with the bases of creed, morality, history of humanity, worship, knowledge, wisdom, God-man relation, and human relationship, in all aspects. Comprehensive teachings on which sound systems of social justice, economics, politics, legislation, jurisprudence, law and international relations can be built, are important contents of the Noble Qur’ān.