

# Introduction to Islam

*Over 100 basic questions answered  
for beginners and younger readers*

by

Zahid Aziz, M.Sc., Ph.D.

*Editor 'The Light'*



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The *Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam* (Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam) was founded at Lahore, Pakistan, in 1914 by the prominent followers of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. It exists to promote a liberal, tolerant and peaceful picture of Islam, as found in the Holy Quran and the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. It has published a vast quantity of highly-regarded literature on Islam in various languages, and has branches and members in several countries.

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## Preface

There has been a great demand for a booklet to introduce younger people to the teachings of Islam in fairly simple language. The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore has, over the past decades, produced a range of excellent works dealing with all aspects of Islam, which particularly aim at correcting common misconceptions about Islam as well as answering the doubts and questions that arise in the modern mind regarding this faith. This literature has been widely appreciated and acclaimed as meeting the needs of the present times, both for teaching Muslims and for presenting Islam to the world generally. It has been felt for sometime that the wonderful knowledge contained in these comprehensive works must be made more readily accessible to younger people by presenting it at an introductory level in simpler language. This booklet has therefore been prepared to satisfy these requirements.

All the basic doctrines and practices of Islam have been covered, supplemented by information about the Holy Quran, Hadith, and the moral teachings of Islam. No prior knowledge is assumed. The question-answer format used, it is hoped, will make the booklet more interesting than would be the case with a descriptive approach. I have attempted to keep the language and the wording simple, but how far this aim has been achieved can only be decided by the younger readers. I have also type-set and designed the booklet for maximum clarity and easy of reading.

There are abundant, direct quotations from the Holy Quran throughout the booklet with full references. In some places the teachings of Islam are elaborated in general words, without direct quotations or specific references, as this was not

considered necessary in those cases in an introductory booklet of this kind. For further reading on any point, or fuller explanation, the writings of Maulana Muhammad Ali, listed elsewhere in this booklet, should be consulted. In any case, as younger readers advance in their knowledge, they would be expected to move on to these standard books.

This writing being a first attempt of this nature, there is bound to be much room for improvement. The publishers would gratefully receive all comments and suggestions for revisions in this booklet.

Zahid Aziz,  
Nottingham,  
England  
August 1993

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# 1. Introduction

*“Surely the religion with Allah is Islam.” (3:19)*

## **1. What is the name of our religion?**

The name of our religion is ISLAM. This word is pronounced as:

IS — as in the word *th-is* (NOT as in the word *is*).

LAM — LA as in the word *la-rge*.

A follower of Islam is known as a MUSLIM, pronounced as:

MUS — *u* as in *pull*, and a soft *s*.

LIM.

## **2. What do these words mean?**

The word *Islam* means ‘entering into peace’ and also ‘submission to God’. *Muslim*, therefore, means one who has made peace, with God as well as with man, through submission to God.

## **3. Who gave these names to this religion?**

These names are to be found in the Holy Quran, the sacred Book of the Muslims. For instance, God says:

“I have chosen for you (O mankind) Islam as a religion.” (chapter 5, verse 3, or 5:3 for short.)

and

“He (God) has named you as Muslims.” (22:78)

## **4. What is the basic teaching of Islam?**

It is to make peace with God, which means to submit to and obey God completely. And also to make peace with man, which means to do good to people around us. This basic teaching is summed up in the Holy Quran as follows:

“Whoever submits himself completely to Allah, and does good to others, he shall have his reward from his Lord.” (2:112)

(Note that the word “he” in such places in the Quran does not mean a man only, but any human being, male or female).

### ***5. How did Islam come into the world?***

The religion of Islam in its present form came to us through the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who lived and preached in Arabia some 1400 years ago (born 571 C.E., died 632 C.E.). However, the Holy Prophet taught that he was not bringing a completely new religion into the world, because the basic principles of Islam had also been preached by all the great founders of the various religions before him. Islam, therefore, did not begin with the Holy Prophet Muhammad, but was also the religion of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Krishna, Buddha, and every other prophet of God.

### ***6. Why is this religion not named after Muhammad, the Holy Prophet?***

Because, properly speaking, the Holy Prophet Muhammad was not the Founder of Islam, but was himself a Muslim — a follower of Islam. Prophets before him too are called *Muslims* in the Holy Quran. Our religion was not named after the Holy Prophet Muhammad in order to stress that it teaches the same basic principles that were originally taught by all the prophets who appeared before him in various parts of the world.

### ***7. Are there any special reasons why our religion is called Islam?***

Yes. Because it teaches that, just as the universe around us obeys the laws God has established for it, man too should submit to the guidance the Almighty has revealed through His Prophet. It teaches that *Islam* or ‘submission to God’ is a hallmark of the physical world and of human nature. Every human child at birth is a ‘Muslim’ in the sense that he (or she) behaves according to true human nature.



**8. *If previous prophets had also taught the same basic 'Islam', what was new about the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad?***

The original teachings given to the different nations of the world by the prophets who appeared in them, had gradually become lost, altered and obscured. God then sent the Holy Prophet Muhammad to:

- i.* re-establish those original principles,
- ii.* preach other truths which had not been preached before, but were necessary now because mankind had advanced,
- iii.* to collect together the best of every religion into one faith.

So the Holy Prophet Muhammad appeared as the Last Prophet to give to the whole world one, perfect and ever-lasting, religion — Islam.

**9. *What does one have to do in order to become a Muslim?***

A person becomes a Muslim by declaring in public an oath known as the *Kalima Shahada*. This runs:

*Ash-hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah*

(I bear witness that there is no god except Allah)

*Wa ash-hadu anna Muhammad-an rasul-Ullah*

(and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah).

The *Kalima* contains the two basic points a Muslim has to believe: that there is only one God — Allah, and that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is Allah's Messenger to mankind.

## 2. Basic beliefs and practices

*“It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free, and keeps up prayer and pays the Zakaat; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict. These are they who are truthful, and these are they who keep their duty.” (2:177)*

### ***10. Is there a list of basic Muslim beliefs?***

Yes. The *Kalima* itself is known as the ‘brief expression of faith’. It summarizes the basic Muslim beliefs, which are five in number. These are belief in:

1. **God**, Who possess the most perfect and excellent qualities.
2. **Angels**, who act upon the heart of each person, inspiring him to do good.
3. **Prophets and Messengers of God**, sent to all the nations of the world, who taught virtue by their own high moral example.
4. **Books of God**, which were revealed to all the nations through their respective prophets, containing guidance on how man should live and conduct himself.
5. **Life after death**, when each person shall become conscious of all the deeds, good or bad, he/she did in this

life, and shall face the consequences.

### ***11. What is the most important point Islam teaches about belief?***

It is this, that *belief* does not just mean believing something in one's heart, but also acting on the belief. Mere faith counts for nothing if not carried into practice. The purpose of belief is to show us what to do in practice. No 'belief' by itself can bring salvation.

### ***12. How does this apply to the five beliefs of Islam?***

It applies as follows:

| <i>Belief in:</i> | <i>Means we should:</i>   |
|-------------------|---|
| God.              | Try to perfect ourselves and acquire the best qualities.                                  |
| Angels.           | Follow our good thoughts and impulses.  |
| Prophets.         | Try to model our lives on the examples of the righteous ones in all the nations on earth. |
| Books of God.     | Follow all the truths, in whatever scripture or religion they may be found.               |
| Life after death. | Remember that all our actions, good and bad, open and secret, will be judged.             |

### ***13. What are the basic practices a Muslim has to perform?***

In order to submit to God, and to be at peace with fellow beings, a Muslim has to perform certain duties to God and to fellow-beings. The duties to God are:

Prayer (*salaat*)

Fasting (*saum*)

and

Pilgrimage to Makka (*hajj*).

The duty to fellow beings is to spend one's resources, time, energy, money, etc. for the welfare of others; in particular, to give a part of one's wealth to help those in need (known as giving *zakaat*, a charity-tax).

***14. What is the main point to remember about these practical duties?***

It is that the purpose of performing these duties is to draw us closer to God, and to lead us to do good to others and refrain from wrong-doing in our daily lives. Therefore, we should carry out these duties, not as rituals, but remembering God from the bottom of our hearts. Performing these acts of worship can only benefit us if we use them as the basis for improving our character and conduct in daily life. If a person prays and fasts, but fails to do good and give up bad habits, his prayer and fasting will be useless.

### 3. Allah

*“Allah — there is no god but He. His are the most beautiful names.” (20:8)*

*“Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten, and none is like Him.” (ch. 112)*

#### **15. What is the basic teaching of Islam about God?**

Islam teaches that there is one, and only one, God Who is the Creator and Controller of the entire universe. He is unique in every respect, and there is nothing which bears any likeness to Him. He is the Knower of all things, and has full power over the whole of creation. He does not stand in need of anything at all, while everything is totally dependent on Him. He possesses all the perfect qualities, and man should worship Him, and Him alone.

#### **16. Is there any name for God that Muslims use specially?**

Yes. According to Islam, the *personal* name of God is the Arabic word *Allah*. *Personal name* means that it is the name which refers only to Him, and to Him rather than to any particular quality that He possesses. It is pronounced as follows:

AL — as in the English word *al-arm*.

LAH — *la* as in the word *la-rge*.

The word *Allah* denotes that God is *the One Who possesses all the perfect attributes*. The Quran itself gives this meaning when it says:

*“Allah has the most excellent names (or qualities).” (7:180)*

The names of God in other languages, such as *God* in English, or *Khuda* in Urdu, only convey some particular attribute of the Divine Being, and they are also used for those other than God (as in *god, gods, goddess, etc.*). *Allah*, however, has only ever been applied to God Himself.

***17. Does Islam give any arguments to prove the existence of God?***

Yes, the Holy Quran gives three kinds of arguments on this point.

Firstly, it refers us to the physical world which shows great order and arrangement, works according to laws, and where everything has a set purpose in the whole scheme of things. There is also immense beauty in nature which attracts man's heart. Science is discovering more and more of these characteristics of the world all the time. So behind this highly purposeful and beautiful working of nature must be One, single Intelligence of great beauty and attraction.

Secondly, the Quran tells us about the close and deep connection between God and the inner nature of every person. There is an in-built desire in each and every person to search for something higher than oneself, and when in difficulties a person instinctively wants to call upon a Hidden Power to help him.

Thirdly, and most convincingly, Prophets and men of God appeared in every nation in the world and showed their people the reality of God through their teachings and works. Just as most of us learn about science not by making all the discoveries ourselves, but by accepting the work and evidence of those who devote themselves to the study of science, similarly the proof of the existence of God is provided by the lives of the great luminaries whom God sent all over the world for this very purpose.

***18. Other religions also teach the existence of God. Is there any difference between their teaching and the Islamic concept of God?***

Yes, there are some important differences.

The first major difference is that Islam teaches the absolute one-ness of God, with Whom no one can share in Divinity. No idol or heavenly object, nor any religious or spiritual teacher, can possess some Divine power or attribute.

Secondly, Islam teaches the highest conception of God, and does not accept any limitation to His power and knowledge, while other religions set limits to Him. For instance, Islam rejects the Hindu belief that God is not the Creator of matter and souls but exists alongside them. It also rejects the Christian doctrine that God is unable to forgive sins unless He punishes someone, and so He sent His 'son' to suffer the punishment for the sins of all humanity. Moreover, a son is needed to take the place of the father when the father dies, and clearly this cannot apply if God is perfect.

Thirdly, Islam refutes the idea that any human being, however great, was a 'manifestation' of God on earth, or a Divine incarnate.

***19. What are the practical consequences of these three differences?***

These differences dignify and elevate the position of man. Belief in the one-ness of God means that man should not worship or be a slave to anything in the world, such as idols, forces of nature, heavenly bodies, religious leaders, kings, dictatorial systems, etc. So man is meant to conquer the world around him, not be afraid of it; and each person is meant to use his or her own intelligence and reason, not blindly obey someone else.

Belief in the highest conception of God means that man's own progress is unlimited. His knowledge and power, though insignificant as compared to God's, can go on increasing.

Rejecting the belief that a person could be a 'manifestation' of God, means that one should look upon the great Founders of religions, not as 'gods' shrouded in mystery and possessing supernatural powers, but as mortal human beings who by their own lives and example showed others how to live.

***20. Is there any other important distinctive feature of the Islamic concept of God?***

Yes. Islam teaches that Allah is "the Lord (*Rabb*) of all the worlds". (*Rabb* is pronounced like the word *rub*.) Allah is, therefore, not just the 'god' of the Muslims, nor the god of a particular race, religion or nation, but the only One God for the whole of mankind. As the Lord of all the nations He has not only provided means of physical sustenance for all the countries on earth, but also sent His guidance to every nation for its moral progress. He is equally just and loving towards every section of humanity, and has no favourite or chosen people, or rejected ones.

***21. How does man stand in relation to God, according to Islam?***

God has given man not only a body, but also a soul through which he can come into contact with his Creator. But whereas the body, like the rest of nature, is bound to obey the laws of God, the soul is free to follow God's guidance or to reject it. The soul's development lies in willingly following the guidance God has revealed through His prophets.

According to the Quran, each person's soul is "God's Spirit" which has been breathed into him or her (32:9). This means that man's soul has a special relationship with God, and man is capable of emulating the Divine attributes on his own small scale (see no. 23 below). God is unimaginably near to man's soul, nearer to it than even man himself. He knows a person's innermost thoughts, even those which the person himself does not consciously realize. In man's soul there is implanted love for God and yearning after God, and it cannot find complete contentment without God. (See, for example, the



following verses of the Holy Quran for these ideas: 50:16; 56:85; 20:7; 2:165; 5:119; 89:27–30.)

## **22. What are the other things the Holy Quran tells us about God?**

It tells us a great deal. Most frequently it calls God *Rahmaan* (Beneficent) and *Raheem* (Merciful). *Rahmaan* really means that God is so loving and generous that He has granted man innumerable blessings as free gifts without any effort on man's part. God is *Raheem* means that He is merciful so that when man makes the effort to use his God-given bounties for good purposes, God helps him to succeed. For instance, God has given man all sorts of physical resources in this world, without any effort on his part. When man tries to exploit these resources for the good, God makes him successful. The Holy Quran also tells us that God is Forgiving, Compassionate, Just, Answerer of prayers, Creator of everything, All-powerful, All-knowing, etc.

A passage of the Holy Quran which mentions several attributes of God is as follows:

“He is Allah besides Whom there is no God. The Knower of the unseen and the seen. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is Allah besides Whom there is no God; the King, the Holy, the Author of peace, the Grantor of security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of greatness ... He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares His glory; and He is the Mighty, the Wise.” (59:22–24)

## **23. What is the purpose of believing that God possesses these attributes?**

So that man can try to acquire and display the same kind of qualities in his life. The Quran says:

“(Take) Allah’s colouring — and who is better than Allah at colouring.” (2:138)

God is the *Rabb* (the Provider and Fosterer of the whole world), so man should try to provide for others. God is *Rahmaan*, and so man too should take the initiative in doing good to other people, whether they have done anything to deserve it or not. God is *Raheem*, and so man should join with, help and encourage those who are doing good. God is All-Knowing and Wise, so man too should try to perfect his knowledge and acquire wisdom.

Believing in the Divine attributes also stops one from harming others for personal gain. A person who truly believes God to be his *Rabb* (Provider) knows that He will always look after him, and so such a person would never try to take someone else’s due. A person who truly believes that God is All-Seeing and All-Knowing would know that he could never hide any bad deed, however secret, from God.

## 4. Angels

*“And We indeed created you, then We fashioned you, then We said to the angels: Make submission to Adam (or mankind).” (7:11)*

### ***24. What are angels?***

Angels are ‘spiritual’, non-material beings who put God’s commands and laws into action in this world. They have no ‘will’ of their own, unlike man, and are intermediaries between God and the world.

### ***25. What do angels look like?***

As angels are not physical beings, they cannot be seen by man’s eye. So this question does not arise. However, Prophets of God and other righteous persons can ‘see’ angels on occasions, but it is with their spiritual (or mind’s) eyes, in dreams and visions.

### ***26. What functions do angels perform?***

These are of two kinds: their functions in the physical world, and their functions in the spiritual development of man. In the physical world, the working of nature is governed by laws, as science has shown by discovering many of these laws. Islam teaches that these laws have been devised by God, and the angels — the obeying functionaries of God — put them into action. On the spiritual side, the angels communicate God’s revelation to the Prophets and other righteous ones, bring comfort and strength to the hearts of true believers, and inspire noble thoughts in the minds of all persons. They do this, of course, by acting through the spiritual senses of human beings, not their physical senses like the eyes or ears.

***27. Why are angels necessary to bring God's messages to man?***

Just as light is needed as a medium for our eyes to see things, and air is needed to carry sound to our ears, similarly an agency is required to activate our spiritual senses. The angels are that agency. They bring God's messages to the 'inner' eyes and ears of righteous people, and also cast good and noble thoughts into the 'hearts' of all people. But it is only the righteous who, because of their highly-developed spiritual senses, may be able to perceive the working of angels.

***28. Is there any other important point Islam tells us about angels?***

A most important point disclosed in the Holy Quran is that mankind has been given by God the ability to acquire knowledge of all things in the universe. The Quran further tells us that the angels, who put God's laws into action in the world, submit to man because of his great knowledge. In other words, man can use his knowledge of the laws of nature to control the world. So the Holy Quran disclosed many centuries ago that man can make the greatest progress in science and technology, because the angels, the agencies who automatically put God's laws into action in the running of the world, all submit to man.

***29. Is there a key significance of belief in angels?***

As stated earlier, every belief in Islam requires a Muslim to do something practical and positive, and belief in angels means that we should follow our good impulses and reject the bad ones. The Holy Quran also says that there exist 'devils' which put low, selfish thoughts in man's mind. However, even though they exist, the Quran does not require a Muslim to 'believe' in the devils, but in fact to disbelieve in them. This shows that in Islam 'belief' does not just mean believing in the heart but also acting in accordance with the belief.

## 5. Prophets and Messengers

*“Mankind is a single nation. So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners...” (2:213)*

*“And those who believe in Allah and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them (in belief), to them He will grant their rewards.” (4:152)*

*“And certainly We raised in every nation a messenger, saying: Serve Allah and shun the devil.” (16:36)*

### **30. What is a ‘prophet’ or ‘messenger’ of God?**

A prophet (*nabī*) or messenger (*rasūl*) of God is a human being to whom God gives His guidance and whom He charges with the task of conveying that guidance to the people, so that they may do good and avoid evil.

### **31. In which countries of the world did Prophets arise?**

According to Islam, God sent prophets to all nations on earth, at various stages of their histories. The Holy Quran says:

*“And for every nation there is a messenger.” (10:47)*

*“And there is not a people but a warner has gone among them.” (35:24)*

### **32. In which of these Prophets of God do Muslims have to believe?**

Muslims have to believe in all the prophets and messengers of God, equally, without distinction, wherever they may have appeared. In the Holy Quran (2:136, 285, and 3:84 etc.) it is stated clearly: “We make no distinction between them”.

**33. Please name some of these Prophets.**

Many prophets are mentioned by name in the Holy Quran; for example, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus from the Biblical prophets, and also non-Biblical prophets some of whose names are Luqmān, Hūd, and Dhul-Kifl. And, last of all, there is the great, universal Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him.

**34. Did any Prophets appear other than those mentioned in the Holy Quran?**

Certainly. The Quran itself tells us that it has mentioned only some of the prophets (see 4:164). Since prophets appeared in every part of the world, and there were many in each nation, to make a full list of names is impossible. Muslims have to believe in and respect all the prophets, whether named in the Holy Quran or not.

**35. It is well-known that Muslims believe in the Israelite Prophets, including Jesus. How do they regard the great figures of other religions, such as Krishna, Buddha, and Confucius?**

It is quite obvious from the teachings of the Holy Quran that, as God sent Prophets to every nation, and quite a large number of them appeared all over the world, the ancient founders of these other religions too would have been Prophets and messengers of God. In fact, wherever there are people following a sacred scripture older than the Quran, their religious founders mentioned in those Books should be accepted by Muslims as true prophets of God. It has been suggested that Buddha is mentioned in the Holy Quran by the name Dhul-Kifl, meaning *man of Kifl*, where *Kifl* is the Arabic form of the name of his birth-place Kapilvestu.

**36. But religions such as Christianity and Hinduism revere their great religious figures as 'gods' or incarnations of God. What does Islam say?**

According to Islam, all these righteous persons were mortal,

human prophets of God, like the Holy Prophet Muhammad, having the same needs that every human being has. They all eventually died, as everyone must. There are several reasons why they have come to be revered by their followers as 'gods'. One is that their words were misunderstood by the later generations, who mistook their figurative expressions in a literal sense. Another is that the details of their lives were not preserved accurately, and therefore a great many myths have grown up around them, and their works and deeds have been much exaggerated.

### ***37. Why were the Prophets humans, and not 'gods on earth'?***

Because they were sent to guide other human beings, not only by preaching, but also by personal example. So they had to be completely human to show other people how to live. According to Islam, each Prophet was himself the first and foremost follower of the guidance God revealed through him for people to follow. This is why previous prophets are called 'Muslims' in the Holy Quran, being not only teachers but also followers of God's guidance. See for example 3:67. As for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, not only does Islam teach that he was a human being, but a study of his life shows that he regarded himself as a humble mortal, and mixed with people as just one of them.

### ***38. What did the Prophets teach?***

They all gave the same basic teaching: that man should worship God, and God alone, and do good to his fellow-beings. Of course, the details of the teachings differed according to the nation and the time in which a Prophet appeared. In the Holy Quran, the teachings of all Prophets are called *Islam*, and the Prophets and their true followers are labelled *Muslims*. See, for example, 2:131–133 and 5:111. This refers to the fact that the fundamental teachings given by all of them were the same — submission to God and peace with fellow human beings.

***39. Since Muslims believe in all the Prophets equally, what is the special position of the Holy Prophet Muhammad?***

All Prophets were equally from God, and equally true, but the scope of their missions varied. The Divine messengers before the Holy Prophet Muhammad were each given teachings limited to their respective nations, because in those times a nation did not have much to do with other nations. Furthermore, the teachings of each Prophet applied for a limited period of time only, after which God would raise another Prophet to revise some of the teachings for the new circumstances. But at last the time came to unite all the nations upon a single religion so that mankind may live in peace as one nation. For this purpose was sent the Holy Prophet Muhammad, to whom God gave teachings for the whole world for all time to come.

***40. Can you give any arguments to support this belief?***

Yes. Firstly, while followers of previous religions believe that God's revelation and guidance was given only to some particular nation or land, Islam teaches that guidance from God had come to every nation and it requires Muslims to believe in all the previous national Prophets. So the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the one who confirmed and established the truth of the Prophets of all the various nations, and laid the basis for peace between them. He is thus the World-Prophet. Secondly, it is a recognized fact that, while the original teachings of previous Prophets are largely lost, the sources of Islam (the Holy Quran and details of the Holy Prophet's life) are available to us fully and accurately. This shows Islam to be the religion for all time.

***41. Could there be any Prophet or Messenger of God after the Holy Prophet Muhammad?***

No, after the Holy Prophet Muhammad there cannot come any Prophet or Messenger from God. The reasons are clear from what has been stated above. The teachings God gave to the



Holy Prophet are meant for all nations, for all times, so that the entire world be united in one, perfect brotherhood. Those teachings are preserved perfectly. So there is simply no need for a Prophet after the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

***42. Does this mean that no human being can now reach the stage of a close contact with God, and be spoken to by God?***

No, it does not mean this. It simply means that no further new religious teachings, scripture, or prophet will come into the world. There will still be people, after the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who, by following the teachings of Islam, shall have such close contact with God that He will speak to them, comfort them and disclose to them events of the future, through words of inspiration, and true dreams and visions. In Islamic history there have been countless examples of such righteous individuals who reached this high stage by following the teachings of Islam perfectly. A person such as this is known as a *wali* or saint.

## 6. Books of God

*“(Muslims) believe in that which has been revealed to thee (O Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee.” (2:4)*

*“He has revealed to thee (O Muhammad) the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it, and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel before, a guidance for the people, and He sent the Discrimination (the Quran).” (3:3)*

### **43. What is a Book of God?**

To the various Prophets that God sent for people’s guidance, He revealed His teachings. The Prophets made this revelation public, and their followers learnt it and passed it down to their children, and they in turn passed it down to the next generation, and so on. This is how we come to have the ‘scriptures’ or ‘holy books’ of various religions today. Islam calls the original revelations of the Prophets as “Books of God” because they were meant to be preserved in a collected form (whether orally or written, or both).

### **44. Please name some of the Books of God which exist today?**

The revelations granted by God to the Prophets before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, such as Moses, Jesus, Krishna, and Buddha, cannot be found today in their full and original form. However, the present-day scriptures of the followers of these great prophets do contain some fragments of the original teachings, although they are mixed up with later additions and interpretations. Some of these scriptures are: the Torah of the Jews, the Gospels of the Christians, the Vedas of the Hindus, and the Zend Avesta of the Zoroastrians.

On the other hand, the word of God that came to the Holy

Prophet Muhammad is to be found fully intact and completely preserved in the Muslim scripture, which is known as the Quran.

***45. Do Muslims have to believe in Divine scriptures other than their own?***

Muslims have to believe that the original teachings of all the Prophets, including Moses, Jesus, the Prophets of India, those of China, etc., were revealed by God. On that basis, they respect the scriptures of other religions because some of the original revelations can still be found in them. So Muslims are required to believe that the religions that came before Islam, such as Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., contain many truths, even as they exist today.

***46. In what relation does the Holy Quran stand to other Divine Scriptures?***

The Holy Quran claims to be:

- i. a “*verifier*” of previous scriptures: “a Book from Allah verifying that which they have” (2:89).
- ii. a “*guardian*” over them (5:48).
- iii. a “*judge*” to decide their differences: “We have not revealed to thee the Book except that thou may make clear to them that wherein they differ” (16:64).
- iv. to “*make manifest*” and to “*perfect*” their teachings (26:1; 5:3).

***47. Please explain the four points above a little further.***

- i. The Holy Quran verifies that all the scriptures revealed to various nations of the world are of Divine origin.
- ii. It has guarded and preserved those of their original teachings that were of permanent application, after these had become obscure due to loss and alteration in their texts.
- iii. All scriptures were from God, but they had changed so

much as to become totally different from each other, even in terms of their basic teachings. The Holy Quran came as a “judge” to decide these differences, and to sort out the original teachings from later changes.

- iv.* The Holy Quran shed full light on all essentials of faith, many of which had not been fully dealt with in the earlier scriptures. It also replaced those of their teachings which were only local or temporary by perfect and universal teachings applicable to all nations and all times.

## 7. Life after death

*“We have ordained death among you, and We are not to be overcome, so that We may change your state and make you grow into what you know not.” (56:60–61)*

*“O soul who is at rest, return to thy Lord, well-pleased (with Him), well-pleasing (Him). So enter among My servants, and enter My garden.” (89:27–30)*

*“It (hell) is the fire kindled by Allah which rises over the hearts.” (104:5–6)*

### **48. What does Islam teach about life after death?**

It teaches that a human being not only has a body, but also has a ‘spirit’ given to him or her by God. The spirit is the seed from which a higher form of life grows within man, higher than physical life, just as the body has developed from a small ‘seed’. Just as in the world around us higher forms of life evolve from lower ones, similarly from the life of the individual in this world is evolved his higher ‘spiritual’ life. During his life, man’s deeds shape and mould his spirit, for better or worse, according to his deeds. When a person dies, the physical body is finished, but the spirit remains, as he or she had moulded it by their deeds when alive. That is the life after death.

### **49. How is the spirit shaped during our life here?**

Just as our physical actions and habits affect the body and leave their impressions upon it, so does the good or evil of our deeds affect the spirit and leave an impression upon it. Sometimes we can even feel something of the effect of a good or bad deed upon us. If we nourish the spirit through prayer to God and, with the strength we get from this, do good and

righteous deeds, the spirit will develop and grow properly. But if the spirit is neglected, and bad deeds are done, it suffers harm. It is as if God has given each person a piece of soft clay. It is then up to the individual to shape it into something beautiful or ugly by his deeds.

***50. Is man rewarded after death for his good deeds and punished for the bad ones?***

As has been said above, good deeds benefit the spirit and evil deeds harm it. This effect upon the spirit is what constitutes the reward or punishment for one's deeds. In this life we can occasionally feel this effect, but only very faintly and vaguely. After death, when only the spirit is left, bearing all the impressions of deeds done throughout life, the effects of those deeds will be felt clearly and vividly. It is this which is the reward for good deeds and suffering for evil deeds.

***51. What are heaven and hell?***

Heaven and hell are not actual places somewhere in the universe, but really our inner conditions or the condition of the spirit resulting from our deeds. Heaven and hell begin in this life within a person's heart. The feelings of bliss and contentment at doing good is the heaven in one's heart. And the guilt, shame and greed felt by an evil doer is the hell of the heart. After death, the heaven or hell that developed in the heart is unfolded before us and becomes the world in which we live, and we live in it not with the physical body of this life but the 'spiritual' body made from our deeds.

***52. The Holy Quran mentions many blessings and comforts in paradise and many painful punishments in hell. What is the nature of these?***

The exact nature of these things cannot be known in this world because they are in an entirely different world where our ideas of space, time, feelings, etc. do not apply. But to describe them to us, physical terms have to be used such as "gardens and rivers" in paradise, and the "fire" of hell, to give an idea of what they feel like.

However, all these things of the next world actually begin in one's heart in this world. For instance, the "fruits" of paradise are really the fruits of good deeds that a person starts tasting in his heart in this life, and the "fire" of hell is the same fire of low desires and greed that burns in a person's heart here. In the next world, all these feelings are unfolded and manifest themselves as comforts of paradise or miseries of hell.

### ***53. What is the Day of Judgment according to Islam?***

Just as the life of an individual has an end, and the life of a nation has an end, so does the life of this entire physical world have an end. That is the 'Day of Judgment', which will bring the spiritual world into full manifestation, in place of the present physical one. As said above, immediately upon death a person begins to feel an awakening to the higher life, made from his deeds in the present life. But this is only a partial realization. It is on the Day of Judgment that everyone is fully awakened and raised to the higher, spiritual life. It is called the Day of Judgment because each person shall then become fully conscious of the effects of his deeds in this life, and have a 'body' (so to speak) made out of his or her own deeds.

### ***54. Is there any other significant point about paradise and hell disclosed by Islam?***

Yes. It is that the life after death is actually the starting-point of further progress for man. Those in paradise are advancing to higher and higher stages in knowledge and perfection of faith. Hell is meant to purify those in it of the effects of their bad deeds, and so make them fit for further advancement. Its punishment is, therefore, not everlasting.

### ***55. Do Muslims believe in re-incarnation, that is, after death a person may be re-born in this world for another life here, and in this way have several lives on earth?***

No, Islam teaches continuous progress of the soul and so it cannot return to this world after death of the body. The theory of re-incarnation teaches that if a person is born in poor or

miserable circumstances, or is suffering from some disability or disadvantage, this is a punishment for him for bad deeds done in his former life; and if anyone is prosperous, healthy, and of a 'high' family, that is his reward for good deeds done in his former life. If one believes this, it would mean that we should treat the poor, the destitute, and the suffering as if they deserve their misfortunes, and have no sympathy for them because they are only getting their just punishment; and we should have high regard for the rich and the comfortable because they are receiving their reward for past good deeds. Such an attitude would be inhuman and against the basic teachings of Islam.

Islam teaches that each person is born with a pure soul, without any burden to bear from a past life, and that both those people who seem to be facing hardship in this world and those who appear to be enjoying comforts are in a state of 'trial' to see how they behave under those circumstances. These are not punishments or rewards. In God's eyes the best person is he or she who acquits himself best in the conditions they meet.

### ***56. What is the significance of the Muslim belief in life after death?***

Firstly, it encourages man to do good and restrains him from doing evil. This is because he realizes that a good deed will always bring him benefit, even if it may not be obvious at the time; and he knows that an evil deed, even if no one at all sees him do it, will have to be answered for, and will have adverse consequences, in the next life if not immediately in this one.

Secondly, it teaches man to look at the inner worth of himself and of others, rather than the outward appearance (be it wealth, position, beauty, or education). This is because he knows that it is the inner part of man which is the real thing, and which survives forever, while the outward possessions are certainly lost at death, and often even before then.



## 8. Prayer

*"Your Lord says: Pray to Me, I will answer you."* (40:60)

*"Surely prayer keeps (one) away from indecency and evil."* (29:45)

*"And seek assistance through patience and prayer, and this is hard except for the humble ones."* (2:45)

### **57. What is prayer?**

It is to put ourselves in touch with God, remind ourselves of His greatness, goodness and beauty, think over how we can develop the qualities He has placed in us, remember the goal He has put before us, and ask for His help in enabling us to do good and refrain from evil. Prayer also makes us see our lives, with all the successes and disappointments, in their true perspective, and makes us pause for a moment to see what we are doing in the light of what God wants us to do.

### **58. Is prayer necessary?**

Just as the body requires food, cleansing, and exercise to make it fit for everyday living, the spirit or soul has spiritual needs for its development, so that one's character and conduct remains good and healthy. The needs of the spirit are provided by acts of worship and devotion, the most important and frequent of which is prayer. Not supplying these needs weakens the highest part of man, damaging his ability to do good and refrain from evil, just as not having enough food makes his body unfit to work and prone to disease.

### **59. What are the most important points Islam teaches about prayer?**

Among many other important points about prayer, the first is

that a person should say his prayers “as if he is seeing God”, or at least be conscious that he is in God’s presence. This means that prayer should be said with full attention, concentration of mind, and feeling of heart, just as if we were talking to someone in front of us. Another very important point Islam teaches is that a main purpose of prayer is to lead one to do good, to refrain from evil, and to behave better towards others. If prayer does not have this effect on a person’s daily life and conduct, it means that he or she is not performing prayers properly, in the way required by Islam.

### ***60. How does one pray in Islam?***

Prayer, of course, is a general turning towards God. Islam has prescribed a particular form of prayer in order to make it systematic and to enable the whole community to pray together. The details of the Islamic prayer are available separately in many books. Briefly, certain bodily postures are adopted (standing, bowing, prostrating, and sitting on the ground) in each of which some prescribed prayers and other words extolling and praising God are said. This is the regular prayer known as *Salaat*, and is said in congregation (if possible) at five fixed times of the day. Apart from *Salaat*, one can just address a prayer to God at any time, in any situation, using any words one chooses.

### ***61. What is the significance of the various postures during Salaat?***

It is to give greater force and feeling to the words of prayer that are being said, and in fact to address God with the whole of oneself and not just the tongue. This is just as when people talk to each other they move their hands, head, etc. to stress what they are saying. The standing posture is as if to say to God that we are ready and keen to obey Him. Bowing down and prostrating is to express the inner feeling that we want to bow to God’s commands in our daily lives and submit to Him completely, with humility. The words that are said in these two positions mean that “God is flawless and the Most High”, i.e. we, who are imperfect, humble ourselves before the

Perfect Being so that, through contact with Him, our defects may be removed.

**62. *What prayers does one say during the Salaat?***

First of all, there are a few short prayers and expressions that must be said in particular positions during the *Salaat* in Arabic. The main such prayer is the *Fatiha*, the first chapter of the Holy Quran consisting of seven short verses, which is really the heart of the whole *Salaat*. In addition to the compulsory words of prayer, we may say any prayer we like, in any language we prefer, at any stage in the *Salaat*. The Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad's Sayings contain a large number of apt and beautiful prayers for various situations. We must, of course, know the full meaning of any prayer we say, Arabic or otherwise, and it must be said with the full presence of mind and sincerity of heart.

**63. *Please explain briefly the meanings of the Fatiha?***

This is the fundamental Muslim prayer, which illustrates the basic aim of the worshipper:

1. All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds,
2. The Beneficent, the Merciful,
3. Master of the Day of Judgment.
4. You (O Allah) are the one we worship, and You are the One Whose help we seek.
5. Guide us on the right path,
6. The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favours,
7. Not those who incur wrath or those who go astray.

**64. *What are the important points to be noted about this prayer?***

We pray to be guided on the right path all the time, so that we progress along it constantly and develop the good qualities that God has placed in every person. This "right path" is that on which the righteous persons of all times have walked, whose lives show that God graced them with His spiritual favours. While praying for this, we recall that we are weak, and so we

also pray that we may avoid wrong-doing as well as wrong beliefs (no. 7). This makes one feel humble while walking on the right path, and prevents arrogance, self-righteousness, and complacency.

**65. Why are parts of the prayer said in Arabic?**

The main reason is that, when the *Salaat* is performed in congregation, some words and passages are recited aloud by the man leading it, so that the assembly is praying in concert and harmony, as a single body. Since Islam is an international religion and Muslims praying in a congregation may well come from different countries (as often happens in prayer-meetings in the West), using Arabic, the original language of the Holy Quran, means that they can pray together. The Arabic prayers and expressions necessary for a Muslim to learn are very short and easy, and can be learnt by a child in a few days. Using Arabic also enables the people gathered for *Hajj* (in Makka, Arabia), from every part of the world, to worship together in step.

**66. Does this mean that a purpose of *Salaat* is to bring people closer together?**

Yes. Besides taking man closer to God, the other main purpose of *Salaat* is to bring people together and teach them equality and brotherhood. The worshippers stand in rows, shoulder to shoulder, without any distinction of race, nation, colour, wealth, family, status, etc., and all pray together as one body. They feel humble before God and brotherly among themselves. The *Salaat* ends with the worshippers turning their faces to the right, and then left, and in each direction wishing peace and God's mercy upon those in that direction. They are really wishing peace and the mercy of God upon the whole world. The purpose of the prayer, therefore, is to train people to acquire such qualities and character that they bring peace to the world.

## 9. Fasting

*“O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you (in earlier religions), so that you may guard against evil.... And when My servants ask thee (O Muhammad) about Me, surely I am near. I answer the call of the supplicant when he calls on Me.” (2:183,186)*

### **67. What is fasting as prescribed by Islam?**

Fasting is a form of training to refrain from all wrong-doing by learning to control one's desires. It consists of giving up, for a fixed period of time, the most basic urges which human beings have, i.e. the urge to satisfy hunger, thirst and sexual desire, and devoting oneself to serving and helping others while disregarding one's own needs.

### **68. How is fasting done in Islam?**

During the month known as Ramadaan in the Islamic calendar, every day from the start of daylight in the early morning till sunset, one must not eat or drink (or have sexual relations). You take a meal while it is still dark just before dawn breaks, and then do not eat or drink anything at all until sunset when the fast ends. During the hours of fasting, extra effort must be made to be kind, generous and helping to others, and to avoid doing anything bad or harmful to other people.

### **69. Does every Muslim have to fast in Ramadaan?**

Every healthy adult Muslim man or woman must fast during Ramadaan. Those who happen to fall ill or be on a journey during any part of this month do not have to fast on those days and should complete the missed fasts after Ramadaan. People who are permanently unable to fast, or those whose reasons for not fasting are prolonged, such as the very old, the

long-term ill, and women who are pregnant or feeding babies, etc., can give in charity instead of fasting. This charity consists, at the least, of giving a day's food to one poor person for every fast missed.

***70. How does fasting enable us to give up the bad desires which lead to wrong-doing?***

During the fast, a person feels the urge to have something to eat or drink, but he withstands this strongest of all desires, in obedience to God. This daily training, for a month, exercises and strengthens his ability to control bad desires in everyday life which lead to wrong-doing. This is just as physical exercise strengthens the body, and enables it to fight off illness more easily.

***71. Are there any other moral benefits of fasting?***

Yes. Firstly, man is drawn closer to God because when he feels hungry or thirsty during the fast it is the thought of the nearness of God which stops him from satisfying his desires. This makes him feel that God is always near at hand. Secondly, fasting teaches one to be patient and resolute in difficulties, for that is what one does during the fast. Thirdly, it makes us realize the great blessings of food and drink which are so easily available, but which we normally take for granted. Fourthly, it curbs the feelings of greed that develop in people when they have all that they need, and even more.

***72. And what does fasting teach us about how to treat other people?***

It makes us realize the suffering and the feelings of those who are deprived and destitute. A very important purpose of fasting is to learn to care about the needs of other people by being less concerned with oneself. This is why charitable acts of all kinds are especially encouraged during the month of fasting. By giving up your right to consume your own food and drink during the fast, you train yourself to be able to give up something that is rightfully yours, voluntarily and cheerfully, in order to help and serve others.

## 10. Hajj or Pilgrimage to Makka

*“Certainly the first house (of worship) appointed for mankind is the one at Bakka (Makka), blessed and a guidance for the nations. ... whoever enters it is safe; and pilgrimage to the House is a duty which people owe to Allah, whoever is able to find a way to it.” (3:96–97)*

### 73. *What is Hajj?*

Every year, in the beginning of the month of *Zil-Hijja* in the Muslim calendar, a great international gathering of Muslims is held at Makka in Arabia, where they pledge that there is only One God for the whole of humanity and that all persons are equal, regardless of race, nation, wealth or status. This occasion is known as the *Hajj* (pronounced rather like the word *judge*, with *h* being read in place of *j*) or the Pilgrimage to Makka. The pilgrim goes to Makka at great personal sacrifice, and gives up many comforts of life while there. From his hardship, he learns the lesson that man has to sacrifice his desires if he is to attain nearness to God and to establish a world-wide brotherhood of equality and love.

### 74. *Please outline the chief features of Hajj?*

All pilgrims, at the commencement of the three days of the Pilgrimage, put on the same simple dress of two sheets of cloth. Thus all distinctions of wealth, position and family are removed during the Hajj by making every person appear the same outwardly. The Hajj itself consists of a number of acts of worship and remembrance of God, which are performed by the individual in the company of the vast congregation. Two of the most important of these devotions are the *tawaaf* (making circuits around the Ka‘ba, the simple four-walled

building which Muslims all over the world face in prayer), and the gathering of the pilgrims in a plain called *Arafa* to glorify God.

***75. What is the significance of these acts?***

These acts of worship are the highest spiritual experience. By going around the Ka'ba, the pilgrim expresses the greatest love for the One God because this building is the greatest and oldest memorial to the purest form of belief in One God. Going around the Ka'ba is as if to say that one's life should revolve around belief in One God. In the gathering at *Arafa*, there is a vast ocean of humanity, people of all colours, races, nations, languages, walks of life, the rich and the poor, the 'high' and the 'low', but all are exactly alike, wearing the same simple clothes, remembering God in the same way. From this, the pilgrims carry back home the lesson of the equality and brotherhood of mankind, which can only come through belief in One God.

***76. Do Muslims worship the Ka'ba, or believe that God lives there?***

No, definitely not. How can they worship the Ka'ba when, in fact, they go there to remember that God is One? And, according to Muslim belief, God is everywhere in this universe of ours, so He cannot live in any one place or building. The Ka'ba is an ancient memorial to the belief in One God, being associated with the Prophets Abraham and Muhammad (peace be upon them) who taught this belief most vigorously. It is a venue for the gathering of all nations, at which they come together and remember that only this belief can unite them. Though God is everywhere, yet when hundreds of thousands of people make the greatest sacrifice to gather in one place just to worship Him, that place rightly deserves the title of the 'House of God', as the Ka'ba is called.



# 11. Charity

*“You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend (in charity) out of what you love.” (3:92)*

## **77. What is meant by charity in Islam?**

Charity, for which the expression used in the Holy Quran is “spending out of what God has given you”, means using your energy, talent, resources, money, possessions, or whatever else, to help and do good to those in need. In Islam charity is very often mentioned alongside prayer because just as the latter is man’s relation with God, or man’s duty towards God, the former (charity) represents his relation with his fellow-beings, and indeed with all the creation of God. Prayer expresses love for God, submission to Him, and a desire to bring out the Divine qualities that lie hidden in every person. Charity is an expression of sympathy and benevolence towards God’s creation, putting into actual practice the lessons you learn in prayer.

## **78. Please give some examples of what are acts of charity in Islam.**

Innumerable examples can be given because doing any kind of good to anyone, even to yourself to make you more capable of benefitting others, by using what God has given you, is an act of charity. Feeding the hungry, helping the poor, taking care of the destitute such as orphans, lending a hand to the disabled, helping an unemployed person to find a job, etc., are the more obvious examples of charity taught by Islam. But it also teaches that there are other, smaller acts of charity which one has the opportunity to do everyday. Helping someone in any way, showing the way to a stranger, speaking a kind word to cheer someone up, giving useful advice or imparting knowledge to someone, removing from the road something that could cause an accident, even simply refraining from hurting anyone, are all acts of charity in Islam.

**79. *Charity is usually thought to be giving money or alms to the begging poor, and is said to degrade them and make them feel inferior. This is not so in Islam, then?***

Most certainly not. Firstly, charity in Islam is much broader than giving money to the poor, and can be exercised just as well even where there is no poverty, as shown above. Secondly, giving charity, or the doing of any good to someone, must be done as a duty, not to degrade them or to ask for thanks. The Holy Quran tells us:

“A kind word with forgiveness is better than charity followed by injury.... O you who believe, make not your charity worthless by reproach and injury, like him who spends his wealth to be seen by people...”  
(2:263–264)

Thirdly, charity should be given solely out of love for God, out of the desire to do good to His creation, as the Quran says about the righteous:

“They give food, out of love for Him (Allah), to the poor, the orphan, and the slave, saying: We feed you only for Allah’s pleasure — we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.” (76:8,9)

**80. *How important is charity?***

Being charitable is very strongly urged upon the Muslims, so much so that the Holy Prophet Muhammad has said that on every limb of the body, doing a charitable deed is due every day, whether it is with the hands, feet, or tongue. There is no person at all who cannot do a deed of charity to others. According to the Holy Prophet, if someone has nothing to give, he should work and earn, and give out of that; if he still does not have anything to give, he should help someone in distress; and if he is unable, for some reason, to do even that, he should try to do any good he can and refrain from doing any harm to anyone.

Apart from general charity, Islam has made compulsory a

sort of tax on one's possessions, known as *Zakaat*, to be spent on the welfare of the disadvantaged. This is explained further in no. 83.

### ***81. To whom can a Muslim give in charity?***

Just as acts of charity have the broadest possible significance in Islam, similarly the circle of those towards whom charity is to be exercised is the broadest that can be conceived. Starting with the people around us — our relations, friends, and neighbours — it extends to all Muslims, and to followers of other religions. In fact, a Muslim's charity covers even animals. The Holy Quran emphasizes that one should keep a special look-out for those who may be in need but who do not ask for help (2:273).

### ***82. What kind of things should be given in charity?***

In case of those acts of charity when we give something away, the Holy Quran teaches that we should only give good and useful things, not useless and worthless ones, and they should be the kind of things we like to have ourselves (2:267). Moreover, things given in charity must have been earned or acquired lawfully by the person giving them away.

### ***83. Please explain what is Zakaat?***

Just as Islam has prescribed a set form for prayer, to enable us to keep it up regularly, similarly it has given an outward form for charity and made it compulsory, in order to make it a regular duty. That outward form of charity is known as *Zakaat*, and consists of giving a specified fraction of one's wealth every year into a fund. This fund is administered by the Muslim community or Muslim government, and is used to help the poor, the disabled, the unemployed, and others in need.

### ***84. Is Zakaat just like a tax?***

In the sense of being collected and spent by the Muslim government *Zakaat* is like a tax. However, the great difference is that paying *Zakaat* is a religious duty to be done out of obedience to God and sympathy for people. So giving *Zakaat*

is morally beneficial to the payer because it develops the spirit of self-sacrifice in him and curbs feelings of greed. Notice that the word 'tax' means a burden, but *zakaat* means something which purifies you.

***85. Why is general charity and Zakaat a basic duty in Islam?***

Because it brings out the best and highest qualities in a person, which is really the object of existence according to Islam. God has given to each person various capabilities and resources, such as knowledge, money, strength, some talent or skill, etc. Every individual must use whatever he or she has been given to benefit other people as well as the rest of God's creation, and not for selfish ends. If this principle is neglected, then not only is there no relief for the distress and the suffering of the needy, but man's increased selfishness makes him his fellow-man's deadly enemy; and society as well as mankind become divided into factions and groups all trying to grab things from one another.

## 12. Jihad

### **86. What is Jihad?**

*Jihad* is an Arabic word meaning “striving hard” or exerting yourself to the best of your power and ability. The Holy Quran frequently urges Muslims to strive hard, using the word *jihad* to mean striving.

### **87. What kind of striving does the Holy Quran talk about?**

The Holy Quran mentions the following purposes for which a Muslim should strive hard:

1. to attain nearness to God, by struggling to overcome your bad desires;
2. to stick to Islam under difficult circumstances, such as when facing persecution and other problems;
3. to take part in the defence of the Muslim community when it is attacked by an enemy who wishes to destroy Islam.
4. to take the message of Islam to others, by devoting your time and money for this work.

### **88. Can you quote passages from the Holy Quran to illustrate this?**

Referring to the four points numbered in the last answer, we give below some verses of the Quran which mention those kinds of striving. The word translated as “striving” in all these verses is *jihad*.

1. “Those who strive hard towards Us, We certainly guide them in Our ways.” (29:69)

In this verse, God says that He guides to the right ways those who strive hard to reach Him. This is the *jihad* to improve

yourself by doing good and restraining bad desires.

2. “To those who flee after they are persecuted, then strive hard and are patient, surely your Lord after that is protecting, merciful.” (16:110)

This speaks of Muslims who were persecuted in Makka, and had to flee their homes. Their *jihad* was to remain patient and steadfast while facing severe difficulties.

3. “Allah has made those who strive, with their property and their lives, to excel by a high degree those who hold back.” (4:95)

This verse refers to the war being fought by the Muslims, and says that those who strived by giving their wealth and their lives for this cause hold a higher rank than those who held back.

4. “Strive against them (the non-believers) a mighty striving with it (i.e. with the Quran).” (25:52)

Here Muslims are told to undertake a “mighty” *jihad* against the non-believers by taking the Quran to them so that its evidence, arguments and beauty may convince them of the truth of Islam.

### ***89. So Jihad then doesn't mean war waged by Muslims against non-Muslims?***

No, most certainly not. Neither does the word *jihad* itself mean war, nor is it used in the Holy Quran to mean war. Even when Muslims were still living in Makka, during the first half of the Holy Prophet's mission, before there was a Muslim state or army in existence, God commanded them to do *jihad*, saying:

“Strive hard for Allah with due striving.” (22:78)

This could not possibly mean fighting anyone. It just meant striving to attain nearness to God and to help the cause of Islam.

**90. Why is the word *jihad* applied to the battles of the early Muslims?**

Because these battles had to be fought for the very existence of the religion of Islam, and because the Muslims had to strive hard by risking their lives and by sacrificing their possessions. Taking part in these battles was a great struggle, done only to save Islam from destruction and no other reason.

Before their emigration (*hijra*) to Madina, while living in Makka, the converts to Islam had to face terrible persecution and torture. But they bore it all with patience. In the Quran this was also called a *jihad* on their part. After the Muslims had been forced to emigrate to Madina, the opponents of Islam in Makka decided to wage war upon them. So the Muslims then had to fight battles in self-defence. As they had no proper army or equipment, each member of the Muslim community had to do, and to give, all that he or she could. They volunteered to fight in the battles, and gave their money and possessions for the war. Therefore this was called a *jihad* by means of one's life and property.

**91. Does this mean that Islam only allows Muslims to fight wars for certain justified reasons?**

Yes, and the reasons are clearly laid down in the Holy Quran. It says:

“Permission to fight is given to those on whom war is made, because they are oppressed ... those who are driven from their homes without a just cause except that they say: Our Lord is Allah.” (22:39–40)

“Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight you, but be not aggressive. Surely Allah loves not the aggressors.” (2:190)

It is only for self-defence that fighting is allowed by Islam, and not to conquer land or enslave other people. The Holy Prophet Muhammad only fought battles under these conditions. In fact, Muslims at that time did not want to fight, as the Quran says addressing them:

“Fighting is enjoined on you, though it is disliked by you.” (2:216)

**92. *If jihad does not mean fighting a war, can every Muslim take part in some kind of jihad at all times?***

Not only can they do so, but taking part in *jihad* (or striving hard) is essential, as the Quran says:

“Only those are believers who believe in Allah and His Messenger, then doubt not, and strive hard with their wealth and their lives (or selves) in the way of Allah.” (49:15)

The two kinds of *jihad*, which can be undertaken all the time, are: firstly, striving hard for personal improvement, and secondly, striving to take the message of Islam to others. The meaning of striving *with your wealth*, in case of the first kind of *jihad*, is to spend it to help others, and in case of the second *jihad* to spend it on the propagation of Islam. The meaning of striving *with your lives*, in case of the first kind of *jihad*, is to struggle against the lower and wrong desires of one's self, and in case of the second kind of *jihad* it means giving your time, talents, and energies to help in the work of the propagation of Islam.



## 13. The Holy Quran

**93. Please tell us a little more about the Holy Quran which you have mentioned and quoted throughout this booklet while explaining the teachings of Islam.**

The Holy Quran is the scripture of the Muslims. It is the word of God as communicated to the Holy Prophet Muhammad on a number of different occasions from the time God made him a Prophet, when he was 40 years of age, till his death (during the years 609–632 C.E.). All these revelations, received at various times over this period of 23 years, were arranged in a set order by the Holy Prophet, and they make up the Holy Quran.

**94. How did God communicate His messages and words to the Holy Prophet?**

God's messages are not conveyed by sound which can be heard by the human ear, but can only be received by the inner, 'spiritual' senses possessed by all human beings. In Prophets of God these senses are extremely sharp and very highly developed, and therefore they can receive clear communications from God.

In the physical world, we find that messages have to be carried by various media, such as the air which carries sound, or radio waves which carry radio and television signals. Similarly the word of God is brought to the Prophet through the spiritual beings called angels. (See the earlier section dealing with *Angels*.)

The revelations in the Holy Quran were brought to the Holy Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel in the form of clear words of the Arabic language. (According to Muslim belief, God spoke to all the other Prophets, such as Moses and Jesus, in the same manner in their languages.)

**95. How did the Holy Quran come down to us?**

It was by the following stages:

- i.* During the Holy Prophet's life, whenever a revelation came to him, he would proclaim it to people, then many of his followers would learn it by heart, and it would also be put into writing at the same time. As the Holy Quran was recited aloud in public prayers, and also read frequently at other times, every Muslim was quite familiar with its contents, and many knew it completely by heart.
- ii.* About six months after the Holy Prophet's death, which took place in 632 C.E., work was undertaken to collect a complete copy of the Quran consisting of all the writings made in the Holy Prophet's presence. This was done on the instructions of the first ruler of the Muslims, Abu Bakr, and with the help of the scribes and the Companions of the Holy Prophet. In this way, a master copy of the Quran was collected.
- iii.* Some 15 years later, when Muslim rule had spread far and wide, the third ruler of the Muslims after the Holy Prophet, called Uthman, ordered further copies to be transcribed from this master copy. These copies were sent to the big cities of the then Muslim world to be kept as standard copies. Muslims also kept up the practice of memorizing parts of the Holy Book, many learning the whole of it by heart. In this way, the Holy Quran was passed down the ages, in both written and oral form, remaining intact in its original form. Because the Quran was recited aloud everyday in public prayers and gatherings, everyone recognized the same Quran.

**96. Do all Muslims have the same Quran, then?**

Yes. Because of the reasons given above, the text of the Muslim Scripture has been preserved in its original purity. In fact, God had given a promise in the Quran itself that He would Himself guard this Holy Book:

“Surely We have revealed the Reminder (the Quran), and surely We are its Guardian.” (15:9)

All Muslims, whatever their sect, country or language, have always had exactly the same Arabic Quran, just as it was in the Holy Prophet Muhammad’s time. No two copies of the Holy Quran anywhere in the world differ in any way.

***97. Please mention some features of the Holy Quran which give it a unique place among the scriptures of the world.***

As regards just the text of the Holy Quran, it has the following distinctions not found in the case of any other scripture:

- i.* As mentioned above, the Holy Quran has not undergone any loss or alteration since it first came into the world so many centuries ago, and all the followers of Islam have the same Quran.
- ii.* The Holy Quran is still available to us today in the original language in which it was revealed.
- iii.* Arabic, the language of the Holy Quran, is still a living language spoken and written by over 100 million people, and has changed very little over the centuries. Therefore, any person today can learn it like any other modern language, and read and understand the Holy Quran directly.
- iv.* The history of the revelation and the collection of the Holy Quran is known fully and clearly, not being shrouded in mystery or uncertainty.

We should add briefly, without being disrespectful, that other scriptures have suffered much loss and alteration in the course of history. Their original languages have died out, so that only a few specialist scholars have the knowledge to study the text directly, and even they are unsure of the meanings of many words in the translations they have produced. The origin and history of these scriptures is largely unknown, and no reliable information is available about their authors or persons

to whom they were revealed.

### **98. Is there any other notable distinction of the Holy Quran?**

One that may be mentioned is that the Holy Quran tells us all about itself. From various places in it we learn that it is a Book called the Quran, a revelation from God, communicated to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, coming through the angel Gabriel, in the Arabic language. The Quran also tells us that it has been revealed in portions, not all at once, and that the first revelation came to the Holy Prophet in the month of Ramadaan.

The Holy Quran refers to itself by several names which show its qualities and the work it came to do. For instance, *al-furqān*: which distinguishes between right and wrong, *al-Hakīm*: full of wisdom, *al-nūr*: the Light, *al-hudā*: the guidance, etc.

The unique features mentioned here and in the answer to the last question concern just the text of the Holy Book. There are many distinctive points about the Holy Quran as regards its teachings, and these will be found throughout this booklet.

### **99. How is the Holy Quran divided?**

So far as the subject matter is concerned, it is divided into 114 chapters. Each chapter, called a *Sūra* in Arabic, consists of a number of verses, each verse being called an *Āyat*. Some chapters were wholly or largely revealed to the Holy Prophet during the first 13 years of his mission when he lived in Makka, and the rest after his emigration to the city of Madina. Chapters generally revealed at Makka are called *Makki*, and those revealed at Madina are called *Madani*. While the chapters are of varying lengths, the Holy Quran is also divided into 30 almost equal parts, each part being known as a *juz* (or *separa* in Urdu and Persian). This division is simply to enable a reader to complete a reading of the Holy Book in one month.

### **100. Is the Holy Quran arranged in order of the**

***sequence in which its various passages were revealed to the Holy Prophet?***

No. In fact the very first revelation which came to the Holy Prophet is actually to be found in chapter 96, not far from the end of the Holy Quran. The order in which various passages or chapters were revealed is not of any importance, especially to people after the Holy Prophet's time, because the Quran is a complete, consistent book. A verse is just as important and significant no matter when it was revealed.

***101. It is said that the Holy Quran is not arranged in an orderly form, but deals with various subjects in a disorganized manner. Please comment on this.***

This is not correct. It is true that the Quran does not cover topic after topic in a set sequence, but this does not mean that it has no arrangement. The Holy Quran is not really a book of laws or commandments on various subjects, but a book meant to guide man and convince him of the truth. Its basic theme is the greatness of God, that man's aim in life should be to acquire nearness to Him, and that his actions, good or bad, will always bear fruit according to what they are. All the topics the Quran deals with are built around this basic message which is the real point being stressed all the time.

***102. Is there an arrangement of topics in the Quran?***

Yes, there is, and for full details the English translation of the Holy Quran with commentary by the late Maulana Muhammad Ali should be consulted. Here we may briefly point out that the Holy Book begins with the famous short chapter, the *Fātiha*, which is a sort of preface summarizing the entire Quran and its teachings in seven verses. This is followed by a long chapter which begins by stating the fundamental teachings of Islam, and goes on to show why a new religion was necessary at this time, and how the followers of previous religions had gone astray. This and the next few chapters then deal in detail with Islamic teachings. Very often in the Quran, chapters revealed at Makka, containing prophecies about the

success of Islam, are followed by chapters revealed at Madina showing how those prophecies were being fulfilled. There is, thus, a clear arrangement of the subject-matter in the Holy Quran.

***103. What sort of subjects does the Holy Quran deal with?***

An enormous range of topics. It tells us about God, His attributes, man's position in the universe, his aim in life and how to attain that aim, how we stand in relation to God and to our fellow-beings. It gives details of what one should believe and how it should be put into practice. The next life is described in it in full. Histories of previous nations and their prophets, as well as many events from the life of the Holy Prophet himself, are also given in the Quran. It gives arguments to disprove false beliefs of all kinds, and answers all sorts of questions and objections raised about its teachings and about the Holy Prophet. Guidance, laws and regulations on everyday subjects such as family life, business dealings, the law, war and peace, women's rights, hygiene, government and democracy, etc., is also to be found in the Holy Book. When dealing with any topic, the Holy Quran gives reasons, arguments and evidence to support its teachings, and it challenges those who disagree with it to produce proof of their views.

***104. Does the Holy Quran give any evidence to back up its claim that it is the word of God, and not the thoughts of a man?***

Yes indeed. The Quran does not want a person to accept anything without reason and proof. The evidence it provides on this point is as follows:

- i. The Holy Quran contains such grand principles and deep points of knowledge as could not have been known to any person in the seventh century, when it was revealed. They certainly could not have been known to, or discovered by, a man like Muhammad (peace be upon him) who could not read or write, and lived in a

country which was very backward and cut off from the civilization of the time.

- ii.* The Holy Quran's moral teaching brought about a complete and astonishing change for the good in the people of a whole country, a reform which appeared impossible to do through human teachings.
- iii.* Prophecies in the Holy Quran that the Holy Prophet Muhammad shall be triumphant over his opponents, made at a time when he hardly had any followers or friends, all came true in a short period of time. And many prophecies in the Quran about the distant future have come true in modern times.
- iv.* The language and literary style of the Holy Quran was so excellent that the Holy Prophet's opponents, who included great poets and masters of the Arabic language, could not match it even though they had been challenged to do it.

For all these reasons, the Quran has thrown a challenge, standing open for all time, to those who think it is not the word of God, to produce a writing like it even one chapter long.

### ***105. What position does the Holy Quran hold for Muslims?***

The Holy Quran is the final and highest authority for Muslims on all matters. It is the fundamental source of the teachings of Islam. When determining whether a certain belief or practice is a part of Islam or not, the verdict of the Quran has the highest priority and must be accepted even if it goes against common practice or one's own wishes. If a Muslim differs with us regarding the meaning of a verse of the Quran, we must still respect his views if he gives arguments from the Holy Book in his support.

## 14. The Hadith

### ***106. What is the Hadith?***

The term *Hadith literature* (or even just *Hadith* sometimes) refers to a number of historical books which contain reports of the sayings, actions and example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, by which he showed his followers how to put the teachings of the Holy Quran into practice.

### ***107. What does the word Hadith mean?***

*Hadith* just means a saying. When used as a term in the religion of Islam, a hadith means a report of what the Holy Prophet Muhammad said or did on a certain occasion. In English books on Islam, the word *tradition* is also used to denote a hadith. The word Hadith is also applied to the books containing these reports.

### ***108. Please name some books of Hadith.***

The two most famous works of Hadith are: *Sahih Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim*. Each of these is named after the person who compiled it, i.e., Bukhari and Muslim. The word *Sahih* in these titles refers to the fact that the compilers of these books sifted the genuine reports about the Holy Prophet from unfounded and unreliable stories, so far as they could, and included only those which were trust-worthy. There are many other books of Hadith, named after the compilers, such as Tirmizi, Abu Dawud, and the *Musnad* of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal.

### ***109. How did these books come to be compiled?***

There were many teachings of the Holy Quran which the Holy Prophet had to illustrate by his practice and actions (such as how to perform the *salaat*). His followers learnt from and copied what he did, and then by their example taught the next generation how to carry out these practices. Apart from this practical side, the Holy Prophet's sayings on various matters,



and details of what he did on various occasions, were also remembered by those who saw and heard him. They then related all these things to other people. But, unlike the Holy Quran, these details were usually not written down.

So these traditions were passed down from one generation to the next by practical example (as in the case of prayer) and by word of mouth. About 150 years after the Holy Prophet's death, some scholars decided to try to trace all these traditions back to him, by following the chain of people who had passed down each report from the Holy Prophet's time to the then present time. From their great research, they compiled the books of Hadith that we now have.

***110. So the compilers of Hadith did not just record everything which they heard people calling a Saying or action of the Holy Prophet?***

No, they investigated each and every report of a saying or action of the Holy Prophet to check whether the names of all the persons involved in passing it down from his time were known. They also investigated the lives and character of all these people to find out if they could have had the opportunity of hearing and passing down the saying from one to another, and if they were trustworthy and had good memories. Bukhari and Muslim were more strict than other compilers in making these checks before accepting a report as being genuine. This is why these two books are regarded as the most reliable Hadith collections, Bukhari being ranked highest of all.

***111. What are the subjects covered in Hadith literature?***

The reports in Hadith books are largely of the following kinds:

- i.* Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad about the basic teachings and practices of Islam, such as beliefs, prayer, fasting, etc.
- ii.* His Sayings on various practical aspects of life, such as family life, business dealings, the law, food and drink, moral qualities, etc.

- iii. Apart from Sayings, the actions and personal example of the Holy Prophet which illustrate his teachings and go to show how he put them into practice (e.g., reports of how he said his prayers, what he did during the days of fasting, how he gave in charity, etc.)
- iv. Reports about what sort of a person the Holy Prophet Muhammad was, his everyday life, his noble character, his dealings with friend and foe, the important events in his life, etc.
- v. Prophecies of the Holy Prophet relating to the future of Islam, the Muslims, and mankind generally.

***112. Are all the recorded reports in Hadith true and genuine?***

No, not every single one. The people who passed on these reports by word of mouth before they were compiled made mistakes in some cases. There are also some reported sayings written down in books of Hadith which the Holy Prophet may not have ever said at all. However, the bulk of the reports, especially those contained in Bukhari and Muslim, are genuine. The teachings which the Holy Prophet illustrated by his example (such as how to perform the prayers) were copied by such a large number of people that there cannot be any doubt at all about their genuineness. Similarly, many of his Sayings were memorized and passed down by a number of Companions in each case, not by just one person, and became well-known among the Muslims from the beginning.

***113. Is it necessary for a Muslim to believe in and follow Hadith?***

Yes, especially the part relating to the observance of religion and to practical life. It must always be remembered, however, that Hadith is meant to be a further explanation of the teachings of the Holy Quran. Any report in Hadith books which appears to go against the Holy Quran must be examined carefully to see if it can be given a meaning not contradicting the Holy Book, and if not, it must be rejected.

## 15. Muslim code of behaviour

***114. According to Islamic teachings, apart from having the right belief how important is it for a person to do good deeds?***

Doing good and having the right belief go hand in hand in Islam. In fact, doing good in practice is the proof of having the right belief in the heart. This is why the Holy Quran speaks of true Muslims very often as “those who believe and do good deeds”. Both the Quran and the Holy Prophet have told Muslims that the best among them is that person who shows the best behaviour towards other people.

***115. Please give a list of some of the good qualities a Muslim must try to acquire.***

Below we give, in the words of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the chief qualities a Muslim should display:

### *1. Truthfulness:*

“O you who believe! keep your duty to Allah and speak straight, true words.” (Holy Quran 33:70)

“O you who believe, keep your duty to Allah, and be with the truthful people.” (9:119)

“Be maintainers of justice and bearers of true witness for Allah, even if it (the truth) goes against your own selves or parents or relatives or someone who is rich or poor.” (4:135)

### *2. Sincerity:*

“Serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience.” (39:2)

“It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say

things which you do not do.” (61:3)

“Woe to those who pray but are unmindful of their prayers, who do good to be seen.” (107:4–6)

### 3. *Unselfishness:*

“You cannot attain to righteousness unless you spend (in charity) out of those things which you love.” (3:91)

“They (the true believers) give food, out of love for Allah, to the poor, the orphan and the slave, saying: We feed you only for Allah’s pleasure — we desire from you neither reward nor thanks.” (76:8–9)

“Do no favour seeking gain.” (74:6)

### 4. *Humility:*

“The servants of the Beneficent (Allah) are those who walk on the earth in humility.” (25:63)

“Do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exultingly.” (31:18)

“Do not ascribe purity to yourselves. Allah knows best who is righteous.” (53:32)

### 5. *Patience:*

“Allah loves those who are patient.” (3:145)

“Give good news to the patient, who, when a misfortune befalls them, say: We are Allah’s and to Him do we return.” (2:155–156)

### 6. *Forgiveness:*

“Pardon (people) and overlook (their faults). Don’t you love that Allah should forgive you.” (24:22)

“(The dutiful are) ... those who restrain their anger and pardon people. Allah loves those who do good to others.” (3:134)

“Whenever they (true believers) are angry they forgive.” (42:37)

“The recompense of evil is punishment like it. But whoever forgives (an evil committed against himself) and amends (matters), his reward is with Allah. ... Whoever is patient and forgives, that is a matter of great resolution.” (42:40, 43)

When the Holy Prophet Muhammad defeated his enemies in Makka and returned to that city as its conqueror, he forgave them in the following words:

“No reproof be against you this day; Allah may forgive you, and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy.” (12:92)

#### 7. *Purity and cleanliness:*

“He indeed is successful who purifies himself (in mind and body), and remembers the name of his Lord, then prays.” (87:14–15)

“Purify your garments and shun uncleanness.” (74:4–5)

#### 8. *Honesty:*

“Don’t go near the property of an orphan, except in a goodly way, till he attains maturity. And fulfil the promise (you make) .... Give full measure when you measure out, and weigh with a true balance.” (17:34–35)

“Do not swallow up your property among yourselves by false means, nor offer it as a bribe to the officials so that you may swallow up other people’s property unlawfully while you know.” (2:188)

#### 9. *Goodness and kindness to others:*

“Allah commands you to uphold justice and to do good to others and to give to the relatives.” (16:90)

Three degrees of doing good are mentioned here: “justice,” which means returning any good that someone has done you with equal good; “do good to others,” which means taking the initiative in doing good to others; and “give to the relatives,”

which means doing good to people instinctively and naturally just as one does good to one's close relatives.

“Do good to others, surely Allah loves those who do good to others.” (2:195)

*10. Consideration and respect for others:*

“O you who believe! do not enter houses other than your own until you have asked permission and greeted the inmates ... and if it is said to you, ‘Go back’, then go back.” (24:27–28)

“O you who believe! avoid most of suspicion (against others), for surely suspicion in some cases is sin; and do not spy (into other people's affairs), nor let some of you backbite others.” (49:12)

“When you are greeted with a greeting, greet with one better than it, or return it (in the same terms at least).” (4:86)

*11. Courage:*

Speaking of a small number of Muslims facing a big and powerful enemy, the Quran relates:

“Those to whom men said: people have gathered against you, so fear them; but this increased their faith, and they said: Allah is sufficient for us and He is an excellent Guardian.” (3:173)

*12. Moderation:*

“Eat and drink, but do not be immoderate.” (7:31)

“Do not chain your hand to your neck (so that you are mean in spending), nor stretch it out to the utmost limit (so that you waste everything).” (17:29)

Regarding the performance of religious duties, the Holy Prophet has given the following advice:

“Religion is easy, but any one who exerts himself too much in religious devotions will get overcome by it; so

you should just act rightly, and keep to the mean, and be of good cheer, and ask for Allah's help morning, evening, and a part of the night." (*Bukhari*.)

### 13. *Cheerfulness:*

"Be of good cheer." (Holy Prophet in *Bukhari*.)

"It is an act of charity to meet your fellow with a cheerful face." (Holy Prophet in *Mishkat*.)

Finally, we give a verse of the Holy Quran mentioning a number of qualities a Muslim, man or woman, should try to acquire:

"The truthful men and the truthful women, the patient men and the patient women, the humble men and the humble women, the charitable men and the charitable women, the fasting men and the fasting women, the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity, the men who remember Allah much and the women who remember Allah much — for all these Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward." (33:35)

## ***116. How does Islam require a Muslim to treat the people around him?***

The Holy Quran and the Hadith mention various categories of people that one has to deal with, and give a great deal of guidance on how to behave towards them.

### *1. Parents and the elderly:*

"Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and do good to parents. If one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say 'fie' to them, nor chide them, but speak to them a generous word ... and say, My Lord, have mercy on them as they brought me up when I was little." (17:23–24).

"The Holy Prophet said, It is one of the greatest sins that a man should curse his parents. Someone said, How

can a man curse his own parents? He said, If a man abuses the father of another, that person will abuse his parents (in return).” (Report in *Bukhari*.)

2. *Other Near Relatives:*

“Do good to the near relatives.” (4:36)

“Give to the near relative his due, and also to the needy and to the traveller (in need of help). (17:26).

3. *Children:*

“Do not kill your children for fear of poverty — We (Allah) provide for them and for you.” (17:31)

“A man came to the Holy Prophet and said, ‘You kiss children but we do not kiss them’. The Holy Prophet said, ‘Do I have any control over you if Allah has taken away mercy from your heart’.” (Report in *Bukhari*.)

4. *Orphans and destitute children:*

“Maintain the orphans out of their property and clothe them and give them a good education. Test them when they reach the age of majority, and if you find them to be mature, hand over their property to them.” (4:5–6)

“I and the man who brings up an orphan will be in paradise like this,” said the Holy Prophet, putting together his forefinger and middle finger. (Report in *Bukhari*.)

5. *Poor and needy:*

“Righteous is he who ... gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free.” (2:177)

“What will make you understand what the uphill road (to success) is? (It is) to free a slave, or feed at a time of hunger an orphan who is a relative or the poor man lying in the dust.” (90:11–16)



“Have you seen him who goes against religion? That is the one who is rough to the orphan and does not urge the feeding of the needy.” (107:1–3)

“(The true believers are those) in whose wealth there is a known right for the beggar and the destitute. (70:24–25)

“The person who manages things for the widow and the poor is like the one who strives hard in the way of Allah.” (Holy Prophet in *Bukhari*.)

#### 6. Neighbours:

“Be good to ... the neighbour belonging to your people and the alien neighbour.” (4:36)

“He is not a believer who fills his stomach while his neighbour is hungry.” (Holy Prophet in Hadith.)

“The angel Gabriel continued to enjoin upon me good treatment of the neighbour, so much so that I thought he would make him heir to one’s property.” (Holy Prophet in *Bukhari*.)

#### 7. Wives/Husbands:

“They (your wives) are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them.” (2:187)

“Of His (Allah’s) signs is that He created spouses for you from yourselves so that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion.” (30:21)

“The best of you are those who are kindest to their wives.” (Holy Prophet in *Tirmizi*.)

#### A man related:

“I asked Aishah (Holy Prophet’s wife): What did the Prophet do when in his house? She said, ‘He served his wife’, meaning that he did work for his wife.” (Report in *Bukhari*.)

### 8. Employers/Employees:

“(The true believers) are those who are keepers of their trusts and covenants.” (23:8)

“Trusts” include the duties and the other things with which an employee is entrusted by his employer; “covenants” include the contract by which both the employer and the employee are bound.

“Allah says: There are three persons whose opponents I shall be on the Day of Judgment ... (the third is) the person who employs a servant and receives fully the labour due from him, but does not pay his wages.” (Holy Prophet in *Bukhari*.)

Ans, a companion of the Holy Prophet, related:

“I served the Holy Prophet for ten years, and he never said to me, ‘fie’, nor did he ever say ‘Why have you done this’, or ‘Why have you not done that’.” (Report in *Bukhari*.)

### 9. Animals

“There is no animal in the earth, nor a bird flying on its two wings, but they are communities like yourselves (O people).” (6:38)

Someone asked the Holy Prophet, “Is there a reward for us (from Allah) for doing good to beasts?” He replied:

“In every animal having a liver fresh with life there is a reward.” (Holy Prophet in *Mishkat*.)

“Be careful of your duty to Allah in the matter of dumb animals; ride them while they are in a fit condition, and eat them while they are in a fit condition.” (Holy Prophet in *Abu Dawud*.)

“Whoever tills a field, and birds and beasts eat from it, it is an act of charity.” (Holy Prophet in *Musnad of Ahmad*.)

### 10. Authorities:

Regarding electing and appointing people to positions of authority, the Quran says:

“Allah commands you to make over trusts (or positions of trust and authority) to those worthy of them.” (4:58)

Some other principles are as follows:

“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything (with your authorities) refer it to Allah and the Messenger” (4:59), i.e. settle the disagreement by means of the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet’s example.

“Obedience (of authority) is due only in good matters”, i.e., orders to do wrong must not be obeyed. (Holy Prophet in *Bukhari*.)

The first head of state of the Muslims after the Holy Prophet, the famous Hazrat Abu Bakr, said in a speech after his election:

“Help me if I am in the right. Correct me if I am in the wrong. Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger; in case I disobey Allah and His Messenger, I have no right to obedience from you.”

“The most excellent *jihad* is to speak the truth in the face of an unjust ruler.” (Holy Prophet in *Mishkat*.)

### 11. Muslims:

“Hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited. And remember Allah’s favour to you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts, so by His favour you became brethren.” (3:103)

“The believers are brethren, so make peace between your brethren ... Do not find fault with your own people, nor call one another by (bad) nick-names.” (49:10–12)

“Help one another in good and righteous works, and do

not help one another in sin and aggression.” (5:2)

“Do not hate one another and do not be jealous of one another and do not boycott one another, and be servants of Allah, as brothers; and it is not lawful for a Muslim to sever his relations with his brother for more than three days.” (Holy Prophet in *Bukhari*.)

“You will see the believers in their having mercy for one another, and in their love for one another, and in their kindness towards one another, like the human body: when one limb is ailing, the whole body feels it, one part calling out the other with sleeplessness and fever.” (Holy Prophet in *Bukhari*.)

“None of you has faith until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.” (Holy Prophet in *Bukhari*.)

#### 12. *Those who abuse Muslims:*

“Bear patiently what they (abusers) say.” (20:130)

“Disregard their annoying talk.” (33:48)

“When you hear Allah’s messages disbelieved in and mocked at, sit not with them until they enter into some other talk.” (4:140)

“And if you invite them to guidance, they hear not; and you see them looking towards you, yet they see not. Take to forgiveness and enjoin good and turn away from the ignorant.” (7:198–199)

“The Messenger of Allah and his Companions used to forgive the idolaters and the followers of the book (Jews and Christians), as Allah had commanded them, and they used to show patience on hearing hurtful words.” (Report in *Bukhari*.)

#### 13. *Enemies:*

“Repel evil with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you there is enmity will be like a warm friend.” (41:34)

“Many of the people of the book wish that they could turn you back into disbelievers after you have believed, out of envy from themselves.... But pardon and forgive.” (2:109)

“And you will always find treachery in them, except a few of them. So pardon them and forgive. Surely Allah loves those who do good to others.” (5:13)

#### 14. *Non-Muslims:*

“Allah does *not* forbid you concerning those people who do not fight you because of your religion, nor expel you from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly.... Allah forbids you *only* concerning those people who fight you for your religion, and drive you from your homes and help others to expel you, that you make friends of them.” (60: 8,9)

“Whatever good they (people of other religions) do, they will not be denied it (by Allah), and Allah knows who the righteous are.” (3:115)

“O you who believe, be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice; and do not let the hatred of a people incite you not to act with justice. Be just; that is nearer to observance of duty.” (5:8)

“Call (others) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the best manner.” (16:125)

“Argue not with the people of the Book (Jews, Christians, and other people having scriptures) except by the best (means), save those of them who act unjustly. But say: We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit.” (29:46)

A companion of the Holy Prophet relates:

“A funeral procession passed by the Holy Prophet, and he stood up for it. People said to him: It was the funeral

of a Jew. He said: Was it not a human life?" (Report in *Bukhari*.)

*15. Mankind generally:*

"Mankind is a single nation." (2:213)

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into races and families so that you may know each other. The most honoured of you in Allah's sight are those who best keep their duty." (49:13)

"We (Allah) have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy to the nations." (21:107)

"Speak good words to all people." (2:83)

"Allah commands you that ... when you judge between people (i.e., of any race, religion, family, class, etc.), you judge with justice." (4:58)

## Appendix

Some questions, which were brought to light after this book went to press, relating to what are known as *jinn*, are answered in this Appendix. Please study these in conjunction with the section on Angels.

### **1. What are jinn?**

The *jinn* mentioned in the Holy Quran are certainly not the genii of fairy tales or what people usually imagine them to be. This word indicates “something hidden from view”, and is used in the Quran with several different meanings referring to people or beings who are remote and not seen.

It is applied to leaders, as contrasted with the ordinary public, and to people of foreign lands. For instance, the Quran says: “O assembly of *jinn* and men, did there not come to you messengers from among you...” (6:131). As messengers from God only came to human beings, the *jinn* here are also humans, and the address “*jinn* and men” is to the leaders and the ordinary people. Similarly, the Quran twice mentions some *jinn* as accepting its teachings (46:29; 72:1). In the first case, a tribe of Jews is meant, and in the second some Christians are meant, being called *jinn* because of their remoteness.

The word *jinn* is also used for a type of invisible, non-physical creation who stir up the lower desires in a person’s mind. This is in contrast to the angels who draw a person’s mind to the doing of good.

### **2. So the jinn (of the second kind) and the angels pull a person’s mind in opposite directions?**

Yes, if you are talking about *jinn* in the second sense mentioned above. The Holy Prophet has said that each human being has a *jinn* and an angel associated with him (or her). He was asked whether it was the same with him as well. The Holy Prophet replied: “It is the same with me, but Allah has helped me against my *jinn*, so that he has submitted to God, and does not tell me to do anything but good.” So the angels and the *jinn* represent the opposite forces pulling a man to good and bad, respectively. If you overcome the urge to do wrong, then it changes into an urge to do good.

And just like angels, these *jinn* are not physical beings, and therefore cannot be seen or heard with the physical senses of man.

***3. It is said that the devil was an angel who disobeyed God by refusing to submit to Adam. Is this true?***

Angels have no will of their own, so the question of an angel disobeying God does not arise. The devil is described in one place in the Quran clearly as "one of the *jinn*" (18:50), so he could not be one of the angels.

Briefly, what the Quran tells us is that God gave knowledge of all things to Adam, and then all the angels submitted to Adam, but the devil refused to do so and misled Adam and his wife. The meaning is that man, because of the knowledge that he possesses, can bring nature under his control, but he cannot control himself from wrong-doing. Therefore God sends revelation to enable man to resist the promptings of the devil.

***4. What does the Quran mean when it says that God created *jinn* from fire?***

This refers to those human beings who rebel against God and goodness, following the prompting of the *jinn*. Due to their rebellious and arrogant nature, and due to the fact that their hearts burn with the fire of evil desires, greed and envy, they are described as having been created from fire. Similarly, man is described as having been created from "dust" because true human nature is humble and submissive to God.

***5. So the *jinn* mentioned in the Quran are quite different from how they are generally imagined to be?***

That is right. The Holy Quran and the Hadith do not support the popular picture of *jinn* as creatures who perform super-human feats, who can appear in human form and interfere in people's affairs, or who can "possess" human beings and affect them with diseases. None of these ideas is accepted by Islamic teachings.