

What is Islam?

NICHE OF TRUTH

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The universe has a Creator, the Most Merciful God who provided air and water so that life may flourish on this planet. Through the periodic message He sent through messengers, God instructed us how we should live and what should be the ultimate aim of our lives. We are accountable to God for all our actions and after we die, we shall be rewarded for our good deeds and punished for our crimes. Hence, a man's only way to spiritual salvation is to live according to the directions given by God Almighty, The Qur'an is the last code of such revelations made by the Creator. It was through Prophet Muhammed that these invaluable instructions reached mankind. Amongst men there are some who have received the supreme knowledge and others who have not It is the obligatory duty of everyone who has received the message to convey it to others.

NICHE OF TRUTH is an organization which makes dedicated efforts to convince Muslims of this duty and to enlighten others of the excellence of Islam, its teachings and values. WHAT IS ISLAM, is one of the many books published by NICHE OF TRUTH to introduce Islam to non-Muslims. The book was originally published in Malayalam. This translation in to English has been done by Prof. Ranga Rajan of Maharajas College, Ernakulam.

O' Lord! This is a humble venture intended for the propagation of the Religion of Truth, an earnest attempt to fulfil the responsibility that Thou hast entrusted us. I beseech Thee that this endeavour may be justly rewarded (Ameen).

**Director,
Niche of truth**

WHAT IS ISLAM?

Do they seek for other than the religion of Allah?-while all creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed to His will (accepted Islam). And to Him shall they all be brought back,-

Holy Qur'an 3.83

What is Islam?

The Arabic word 'Islam' stands for 'Submission' or 'Peace'. In a religious context, it implies the peace that reaches out to one when one completely submits oneself to the will of Almighty God. This is achieved only when the individual acts in accordance with the direction of his Creator in all spheres of life.

Who is the founder of Islam?

The Almighty God who created the universe, endowed man with a special gift of intelligence and thought, to enable him to discriminate between good and bad. Man has also been given, the freedom to choose his own path by either accepting or rejecting the in-

structions of the Almighty Creator. The divine revelations were conveyed by God to mankind through numerous prophets who preached the ideals to all communities during different periods of human history. The thousands of prophets whom God selected for human guidance have promulgated the basic doctrine with remarkable similarity.

The belief in and the profound reverence for all messengers and revealed scriptures from God forms an integral part of Islamic faith. Islam is not a religion founded by Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ). The Qur'an has most emphatically corroborated the fact that the Islamic conception of life was revealed to man by a long chain of prophets chosen by the Almighty Creator.

Who are Muslims?

The word 'Muslim' means one who has submitted oneself to the Omnipotent Creator. A true Muslim is one who has disciplined his life in accordance with the instructions conveyed by God through His messengers. A person becomes a Muslim not by birth alone, but by his faith and deeds.

How can one be a Muslim?

"I testify that there is none who deserves to be worshipped but Allah. I testify that Muhammed is the messenger of Allah". By taking this solemn oath sincerely and endeavouring to regulate one's life following the instructions conveyed by Allah through his messengers, one becomes a true Muslim. By declaring that there is none worthy of worship save Allah, and that

Muhammed is the Prophet of Allah, the believer announces his or her faith in God's oneness, His sole right to be worshipped and that Muhammed is the last of the prophets. It also confirms his or her belief in all prophets and the scriptures they brought.

Why does Islam seem to be strict?

No prophet taught that religion is to be confined within the walls of places of worship. On the contrary, Muslims are expected to follow the instructions of Almighty Allah in the Course of all their activities in life.

The word 'Muslim' means 'one who has submitted his self to the will of Allah', and for the same reason a true Muslim cannot compromise on anything that stands in the way of guiding his life according to divine strictures. The view that consciousness of God is to be confined only to the place of worship is alien to Islam. Muslims always have religion foremost in their minds whereas many others consider religion as irrelevant in the present age.

Say: "We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord; We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam)".

Holy Qur'an 3:84

O people! Worship your Guardian Lord, Who created you and those who came before you that you may become righteous; Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy, and sent down rain from the heavens: and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; Then set not up rivals unto Allah when you know (the truth).

Holy Qur'an 2:21,22

What are the Islamic beliefs?

Muslims believe in one, unique, incomparable God, in the angels created by Him, in the revealed Scriptures, in the prophets through whom His revelations were made to mankind, in the Day of judgement and life after death, individual accountability for actions, and in God's complete authority over human destiny.

What does faith in 'one God' mean?

Allah, the Creator and Protector of all beings in the universe, big and small, in His essence, His goodness

and His deeds, remains alone and unique. One offers worship only to Him, who is Almighty, higher than everyone else and Himself being perfect in everything. By monotheism, Islam implies, not the mere belief that there is just one God, but it powers the way for prayers and offerings to the one who is all Merciful and Omniscient.

Who is Allah?

The Arabic word 'Allah' is the shortened form of 'al-ilah', The God, the one and only God, the first, the last, the eternal, the hidden, the manifest, the ultimate real-

ity'. Even non-Muslim Arabs use the term 'Allah' when they speak of God. The basic creed of Islam is this simple formula: 'There is no God but Allah' (La ilaha illallah'). The Arabic term 'Allah' denoting God, is unique in many ways. It has no plural like 'gods'; it has no gender like 'goddess'; nor does this work generate a visual image of any kind. 'Allah', He is God, the One true God, He is the one who deserves all worship and there is nothing comparable to him. Nevertheless, ninety-nine different attributes of Allah are named in the Qur'an.

Who are the angels?

Angels are the servants of God and they were created from light. They are beyond the realm and reach of human comprehension. They do not have freedom

of action and can only carry out the commands of God.

What are the scriptures?

The Scriptures are the sacred books containing divine revelations from God which were conveyed through His messengers for the guidance of man. Prophets were sent to all peoples of all ages, to warn them and guide them to righteousness and virtue. The names of the four known scriptures are 'the Torah', 'the Zabur', 'the Injeel' and 'the Qur'an'. 'The Torah' was revealed to Prophet Moses (Peace be upon him) and it is the greatest among the Israelites books. 'The Zabur' was revealed to Prophet David (Peace be upon him). 'The Injeel' which Allah revealed to Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him), is a confirmation of 'the Torah' and a comple-

ment to it. 'The Qur'an', which was revealed to the last of the prophets, is but a re-statement of the faith delivered to the prophets before him. The more the Qur'an is studied with an unprejudiced mind, the more this truth emerges, that the Qur'an is a confirmation of all the earlier scriptures and messages sent by God through His messengers who lived and preached among various sects of humanity.

*And there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past).
Holy Qur'an 35:24)*

Who are prophets?

Prophets are men, chosen by God at various stages and under varying circumstances of history, to lead

men from darkness to light. The Qur'an repeatedly states the fact that prophets with the same message were sent to each and every community. The process of revelation continued unabated, sometimes in succession, at other times in broken sequences until the termination of Divine revelation and messengership, with the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) became a significant milestone in the history of mankind. It is true that the lives and mission of many a prophet has been made obscure and distorted by legends that grew around them or by people with

*Mankind was one single nation and Allah sent messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed.
Holy Qur'an 2:213)*

I do swear by the Resurrection Day, And I do swear by the self-reproaching soul. Does man think that We cannot assemble his bones? Nay, we are able to put together in perfect order the very tips of his fingers

Holy Qur'an 75: 1-4

vested interest, who used the names of these prophets to exploit men and mislead them from the right faith. No prophet of God has claimed himself to be divine. They were all mortals who lived and passed away from this earth after completing their mission of conveying the basic message to mankind. Which was a call for the recognition and affirmation of God's existence, uniqueness and Lordship over all creation. It is an integral part of Islamic faith to believe in all the prophets of God.

What does Islam say about life after death?

Death does not terminate man's life. On the other hand,

Islam teaches that it is the door that opens to an eternal life after death. The appropriate reward for one's earthly deeds, good or bad, is disbursed only in the Hereafter. The Islamic belief is that mankind will be resurrected, on the Day of judgement, after every creation is destroyed. After being reborn, man will face a trial which will be in absolute control of the Almighty. Here, all the good and bad acts of men during his sojourn on earth will be unfurled before his eyes in order to be ultimately judged by God. The virtuous will be rewarded with virtue and the wrongdoers punished appropriately. Those who have made sacrifices and dis-

As for the righteous. They will be in Bliss; And the wicked they will be in the Fire, which they will not be able to keep away therefrom.

Holy Qur'an 82:13-16

charges noble deeds will receive the shelter of peace in Heaven and those who have denigrated their lives through vices and evil will be condemned to suffer the horrors of Hell. Islam inculcates the concept of accountability both in public and private life of a person by emphasising the paramount importance of life Hereafter for mankind.

What does faith in destiny mean in Islam?

The Law of God, the Creator and Ruler of the worlds, is a powerful, all pervasive law which governs all that comprises the universe. No creation can lodge this Law and man's position is no different. Even man's environment and physical consti-

tution are regulated on the basis of this divine law. The good and the bad that befall him happen on the basis of divine Destiny. How they befall on each one is in accordance with the predetermined decision made by the Omniscient Creator, who is aware of the ultimate good and evil of mankind. Hence, Islam directs man to believe in Destiny, whether good or bad, which Allah has measured and ordained for all creatures according to His previous knowledge and as deemed suitable by His wisdom.

What are the fundamental sources of Islamic faith?

The sacred fundamental sources of Islamic faith are the Qur'an, and the practice and example of Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

Who is Muhammed?

Muhammed (ﷺ) is the last of the prophets of Islam. It is through him that the religion of absolute submission to God, was perfected. Muhammed (ﷺ) is not just the

successor of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, but of all the prophets who were sent across the world, whose names are either known or unknown. His mission was not to establish a new religion, but on the other hand, to perfect the Religion taught by the earlier prophets.

How was the life of Muhammed?

Muhammed (ﷺ) was born at Mecca in AD 570. Having lost his father be-

“Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own (scriptures), in the Taurat and the Gospel; For he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. So it is those who believe in him, honour him, help him, and follow the Light which is sent down with him, It is they who will prosper”,

Holy Qur'an 7:15

We have not sent thee but as a (Messenger) to all mankind, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men know not.

Holy Qur'an 34:28

fore his birth and his mother at the age of seven, he grew up as an orphan. Despite the immoral circumstances prevailing in the Arabia of his time, Muhammed was particularly well known for his personality radiating honesty, nobility, sincerity, generosity and trustworthiness. Muhammed (ﷺ), at the age of twenty five married Khadeeja, a forty year old trader. He started receiving divine revelations at the age of forty. Being chosen as a prophet, he preached the divine messages to the people of Mecca. Their response however was bitter, arrogant and violent. Beaten up, tortured, and threatened with death, he fled his motherland

to Yarthrib (Medina) a city in the northern side of Arabia. Consequently a Muslim nation was formed in Madina and its leadership was taken up by him. Battle after battle had to be fought while in Madina when unbelievers attacked the Muslims seeking to destroy the religion of truth. Infact, they were battles fought for freedom to practice religion.

The most amazing success of the Prophet's life is the tremendous success which he achieved in transforming the life of his followers in all aspects, in a span of just 23 years, he raised them from the depth of degradation to great moral and

spiritual heights so as to make them a model for future generations. He passed away at the age of 63 in Medina, having lived a most fruitful life.

Why is Muhammed called the last prophet?

The earlier prophets had been sent exclusively to particular regions or sects. We learn that many prophets had predicted the arrival of a great prophet who would be a blessing to the whole world. Muhammed (ﷺ) is indeed a prophet to the entire world. The messages presented through him are applicable to the last of man on earth. The super human

powers which were bestowed on some prophets never lasted beyond their lives. However, the Qur'an which proves the prophethood of Muhammed (ﷺ), illustrates its consistency and supremacy and is open for verification by anyone. All authorities are unanimously agreed upon the fact that the life and mission of prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) was realised completely under the fullest glare of documented history. The whole life of Muhammed (ﷺ) has been recorded in detail and each incident, whether major or minor is worthy to be adopted as a model. It has been emphati-

Muhammed is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the messenger of Allah, and the seal of prophets; and Allah has full knowledge of all things

Holy Qur'an 33:40

cally asserted that no messenger of God would appear after Muhammed and that all mankind ought to adopt the guidelines laid down in the Qur'an and to emulate the practice and example of Muhammed (ﷺ) since the religion of Islam was perfected by them.

What is Qur'an?

The Qur'an is the final sacred scripture presented through the Last Prophet of Islam. It contains nothing but the words of God. It is the scripture that can guide all mankind to the last day. For the same reason, the very God who presented it, promised mankind that the Qur'an will be protected and preserved to the last without any alternation or interpolation. The Qur'an is the only religious text that is free from any human tampering. It is

at the same time a text that can guide men of all times through the right path and is also an irrefutable evidence for the prophethood of Muhammed (ﷺ)

What does the Qur'an narrate?

The Qur'an contains the moral instruction, essential for man to succeed during this life on earth and during the life after death. We may say that, the central theme of the Qur'an borders on the relationship between the Creator and the created. The Qur'an is full of narrations that speak of beliefs and practices needed to guide one's life through the path of virtue. The purpose of illustrating incidents of the past that have provided lessons for mankind, is to warn mankind against deviating from the path of God. Along

with the precepts that aid to the refinement of the self, it contains the rules and regulations to be observed in life. Besides, the Qur'an also explains various universal phenomena, in a manner that convinces anyone of the existence of God. The Qur'an can also be said to be the crystallization of one and the same religious consciousness preached by all preceding prophets, and the collection of the essence and clarification of all the scriptures of the past.

Why is the Qur'an considered divine?

The Qur'an is a unique book, the like of which no man is capable of composing. Despite being compiled by an illiterate, who had displayed no literary flair until the age of forty, the unique literary style of the Qur'an,

is one that remains absolutely inimitable. Amongst the existing scriptures, the Qur'an remains apart, for it can claim to be the only divine text that maintains the very form in which it was first presented. The moral codes laid down in the Qur'an are applicable for all times and matchless is the righteousness that they manifest. It is indeed a wonder, that over a spell of twenty three years, under varied circumstances, the Qur'an verses dealt with subjects that are vast and intense, without any discrepancy whatsoever. Incomparable and great is the transformation that the Qur'an engendered. In such a short span, the Qur'an transformed a degraded and depraved society to a point that attained the highest levels of moral excellence,

And if you are in doubt as to what We have revealed from time to time to Our servant then produce a Sura like thereunto; And call your witness or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if you are truthful. But if you cannot-and of a surety you cannot then fear the fire whose fuel is men and stones- which is prepared for those who reject faith.

Holy Qur'an 2:23,24)

making them the models for the future generations of men.

It has been proved beyond doubt that, word for word the prophecies in the Qur'an stem from a supreme source. It is a greater wonder that the Qur'an, which was revealed fourteen centuries ago, at a time when the world was in absolute darkness in the fields of science and technology, does not contain a single statement that is contradictory to modern scientific knowledge. Yet another explicit evidence

that indicates the supremacy of the Qur'an is that many of the findings of modern science attest the view that the Qur'an is indeed the word of the Almighty, the Creator of the universe.

Recite what is sent of the book by inspiration to thee, and establish regular prayer; for prayer restrains from shameful and evil deeds; and remembrance of Allah is the greatest (thing in life) without doubt and Allah knows the (deeds) that you do.

Holy Qur'an 29:45

What are the `Five Pillars of Islam'?

There are five compulsory acts of worship that are paramount to Islam. They are the Vow of truth, Salaat (Prayer), Zakaat (Charity), Fasting and Hajj (Pilgrimage).

What is the Vow of truth?

``I testify that, none but Allah deserves to be worshipped and Muhammed (ﷺ) is the messenger of Allah". It is after taking this pledge that one becomes a Muslim. The person who

chants this pledge vows that he will offer worship to the One and Only creator and none else, and that he will lead his life, following the practice and example of Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ).

What is Salaat (Prayer)?

It is the compulsory responsibility of every Muslim to offer Salaat five times a day. The timings to be strictly adhered to fall before sun rise, during midday, evening, after sunset and at night. The Salaat is to be performed after doing ritual ablutions which symbolises

purification of body and soul. It is certain that the life of a true Muslim who sincerely takes the vow of truth and offers prayer five times, me-

A person, who does not desist from bad and unjust deeds after offering prayers, strays away from Allah

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

ticulously standing with folded hands, bowing, prostrating and sitting, thus involving oneself in a conversation with the Creator, will be freed of all wrongs.

What is Zakaat (Charity)?

The literal meaning of Zakaat is 'to purify'. It is not just a form of charity or almsgiving. Muslims are liable to set apart a share of their own wealth for those who suffer poverty and want in the society. This compul-

sory charity is known as Zakaat. The Zakaat rate of per annum is fixed at the rate of 2.5 % for goods to be traded and 10 % for agriculture produce, (5 % if the produce is the result of irrigation). Certain minimum limits have been prescribed for each item, above which 'Zakaat' is due. The Zakaat is to be collected from those liable, by the government or by an institution entrusted by

Of their wealth take alms, that so thou mightest purify and sanctify them; and pray on their behalf.

-Holy Qur'an 9:103

the community, in order to distribute to the deserving.

What is Fasting (Saum)?

It is the responsibility of a Muslim to abstain from taking food and drink and also to abstain from sexual

Ramadhan is the (month) in which was sent down the Qur'an, as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgement (between right and wrong). So everyone of you who is present (at his home) during that month should spent it in fasting

Holy Qur'an 2:185

intercourse during day time for a period of one month. Ramadhan, the month in which the Qur'an was first revealed, is the stipulated month for fasting. The believer who observes fasting for a month is able to elevate his self above all temptations of a physical nature.

What is Hajj (Pilgrimage)?

Every healthy and affluent Muslim should undertake a pilgrimage to Mecca, once in his life time. This pilgrimage is known as Hajj. People of different nationalities, languages and colours, gather in millions at Mecca during

the month of Hajj. The concept of one humanity upheld by Islam is explicit during Hajj pilgrimage when the pilgrims have the same thought, carry the same prayer on their lips, and are uniformly dressed (the man using just two pieces of cloth-one to wear and the other to cover and the women covering all the parts of their bodies except their face and hands). A single humanity, where there is no discrimination between master or labourer, black or white, elite or lowly, native or foreigner, is symbolized by the multitude of humanity that assemble for this holy pilgrimage.

Whoever performs Hajj solely for the sake of Allah and, in the course of it, abstains from sensuality and disobedience, he returns from there as immaculate as a child just born. -

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

What is Ka'aba?

The Ka'aba is a place of worship situated in Mecca. It is the first shrine built to worship the Almighty. It was in the premises of the Ka'aba that Ibrahim (ﷺ), the prophet, abandoned his child and wife, obeying God's command. Ka'aba was rebuilt by Ibrahim and his son Ismail following God's command. Muslims around the world offer Salaat, facing Ka'aba. The Hajj rituals are performed in the premises of Ka'aba.

Do Muslims worship Ka'aba?

Muslims worship only the

Omnipotent Creator of the universe. The Ka'aba is a creation, and being the first monument built for the worship of the One True God, Muslims revere it. The Hajj is performed around the Ka'aba, but it does not contain any prayer to the Ka'aba. This applies also to the Salaat being performed facing the Ka'aba. He who worships the Ka'aba and offers prayers to it, does not belong to Islam.

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards east or west; But it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the last day and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messenger; To spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; To be steadfast in Prayer, and give Zakath, to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the God-fearing.

-Holy Qur'an 2:177

What is the view of Islam with regard to Virtue and Vice?

Man is incapable of accurately distinguishing and understanding virtue and vice. Prophets were sent by the Almighty to enlighten man on the nature of virtue and vice. Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) is the last prophet and therefore for any man after Muhammed (ﷺ),

the yardstick to measure virtue and vice is simply the life of Muhammed (ﷺ) and the Qur'an, the sacred scripture presented through him. It is sufficient to look up the Qur'an and the ideal life of Muhammed (ﷺ) to comprehend the good and bad related to any subject.

** All creatures are Allah's family; and Allah loves them most who treat His family well and kindly.*

** Allah will not show mercy to him who does not show mercy.*

** The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but strong is the one who controls himself while in anger.*

** Modesty and chastity are the parts of the faith*

** The one, who protects the honour of his brethren in his absence, will be saved from the horrible sufferings of Hell.*

** It is treacherous to lie to your brethren in matters that he trusts you.*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

What are the specialities of the character of a Muslim?

The Qur'an and the sayings of Muhammed (PBUH) enjoins each Muslim to have the following characteristics in each of his actions. They are-honesty, justice, honouring of contracts, patience, perseverance, tolerance, mer-

cy, humanity, affection, decency, love, respect etc.

What are the characteristics that ought not to be in a Muslim?

The Qur'an and the sayings of Muhammed (ﷺ) make it clear that, Muslims ought not to harbour feelings of deceit, Jealousy, greed,

** Anybody who speaks a lot will have a lot of mistakes, and those who commit a lot of mistakes will have a lot of sins and those who have a lot of sins will be in the Hell fire.*

** No one will enter Paradise who have even a little bit of pride.*

** To be virtuous is to be morally upright. Vice is which causes doubts in your mind and which you did not wish to be seen by others.*

** Miserliness and immorality are two bad qualities, which can never come together in a true believer.*

** Gossippers and slanderers will never enter the Paradise. If any one has any of the following four bad qualities, he is a hypocrite. If he has only one of these four, there will still be signs of hypocrisy in him until gets rid of that vice. The four bad qualities are-betrayal of trust, speaking untruth, breaking agreements and shouting foul words during quarrels.*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

hatred, treachery, extravagance, miserliness, pride, hypocrisy, vainglory, mockery, falsehood, gossip, scandal-mongering and short temper.

What is the Islamic stand with regard to food?

Islam does not accept the stand which recom-

** To speak boldly about justice to an arrogant and tyrannical ruler is the best form of jihad.*

** Actions will be judged according to intentions.*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

- * Anyone, who refuses to admit the mistakes done by his community, can be called communal.*
- * The most rewarding form of charity is what you give while you are healthy, thrifty, and afraid of poverty.*
- * To give a Dirham in charity during your lifetime is better than giving a hundred Dirham's from your deathbed.*
- * The food, served at a feast to which the rich are invited and the poor are ignored, is not good food.*
- * Every good deed is charity.*
- * The best of alms is that which the right hand gives and of which the left hand knows not.*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

mends the absolute abstinence from food and drink, in order to attain salvation. While permitting the consumption of all good food and drink, Islam strongly and particularly disapproves excesses in this field. A true Muslim is one, who completely abstains from the forbidden food and drink such as carcass, pork, blood, alcohol and the meat that is slaughtered in the name of

some one other than Allah.

What is the Islamic code of dress?

Garments are for beautifying and for covering one's body. The mode of dress should never display excess show and arrogance. Islam teaches a decent way of dressing to all women and men. The paramount purpose of clothing is to cover one's nakedness. No man or

- * Your strength lies not in over powering your opponent, but in controlling your anger.*
- * Anger is devilish.*
- * May Allah bless those who are lenient in all types of transactions and while demanding repayment of loans.*
- * Allah looks not at your countenance or affluence. But at your intentions and actions.*
- * Whoever resorts to begging in order to accumulate wealth should be aware that he is begging for burning embers of coal.*
- * Shun the seven deadly sins such as associating partners with Allah, indulgence in witchcraft, committing murder, consuming what is earned by way of usury, enjoying the wealth of orphans, fleeing from battle fields in the course of fierce struggle, and spreading gossips about chaste, modest and believing women.*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

a woman should dress in a way which rouses sexual desire in a stranger. Women ought to fully cover all the parts of their bodies except the face and hands. The aim of prescribing such a dress code for woman is to protect her honour and to ensure her safety.

How do Muslims regard

entertainments?

Islam, while allowing all entertainments that cheer one's mind and body, strictly states that they should not transgress the limits. Islam detests all those pleasures which keep man away from the consciousness of God and those that cause moral degeneration.

And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); Verily in that are Signs for those who reflect-

Holy Qur'an 30:21

What is the Islamic view of marriage?

It is the stern command of Islam that the sexual instinct natural to man should attain consummation only through wedlock. Matrimony is a holy act. Celibacy has been strongly prohibited. Marriage is viewed by Islam as a sacred contract. The dos and don'ts that the two mates ought to adopt in matrimonial life have been prescribed by Islam.

The resources of this world are for you to enjoy. The best wealth you can have in this world is a good wife

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

Obeying these stipulations, man and woman can ensure a successful and blissful married life and a peaceful life after death.

What is Islamic wedding?

When the father or the guardian of the bride offers to give her in marriage to the bridegroom and when he accepts the offer in the presence of witnesses, the marriage is solemnised. The prescription of Islam is that the bridegroom ought to give the bride 'mahar' (dower) on the occasion of the wedding and that the consent of the bride should be sought beforehand.

** The best wealth that a man can have in this world is a good wife. A good wife is one who is a joy to look at, one who obeys her husband's commands and one who protects the wealth during his absence.*

** The best of men are those who treat their wives well*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

What are the responsibilities of man and woman in a family?

Going by the teachings of Islam, though the responsibilities and rights of man and woman are different in matrimonial life, they are complementary. It is the responsibility of the woman to maintain the home and rear the children. The man's duty is to protect his home and earn decent livelihood. Islam, which reveres the motherhood of women, reposes the full responsibility on man to

look after her and the children.

What is the Islamic view on polygamy?

Islam permits polygamy on condition that the husband treats the wives in a just manner. However the number of wives should not exceed four. It is sinful and mean to have extramarital relations. As per the strict code of Islam, on no account should a man stray towards another woman. A man who cannot satisfy his thirst for sex with one wife is allowed to resort to polygamy. Islam completely bans the heinous practice of disowning responsibility after having sexual relation with a woman. Instead, Islam permits, in unavoidable circumstances, a sacred arrangement for keeping wives legitimately, where they are protected and al-

** What a wife can expect from her husband; he should feed her if he has anything to eat, he should provide her clothes if he has anything to wear, he should never hit her on the face or bruise her, and he should never quarrel with her outside the house.*

** You should accept my advice to live in the most exemplary manner with your women. They are related to you on the basis of nuptial contract. You do not have any other rights over them. But if they transgress the limits of modesty and decency, you may boycott their beds for a while. Then, you may beat them lightly without bruising them or their honour. If they mend their ways and start leading disciplined lives, the matter should not be pursued further and all their past mistakes should be forgiven and forgotten.*

** One who beats his wife is not an honourable man.*

** The woman, who dies while her husband is happy with her, is sure to be admitted in to Paradise.*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

lowed their rights without any partiality. There are contexts where the practice of polygamy becomes more of social necessity than a personal need. Especially when the number of women in a society exceeds that of men. Generally women outnumber men. During war times the proportion varies further,

as men are more likely to die in action. Islam takes into account situations like this, when polygamy becomes socially indispensable, and permits it conditionally,

What does Islam say about divorce?

Islam gives necessary instructions for the preser-

** Do treat your woman well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed consorts.*

** Do not approach your woman in the way that cattle do. Let there be a messenger before that. Conversation and kisses are those loving messengers.*

** The worst among men who would stand before Allah on Resurrection Day is one who has maligned his wife with slander after his close relationship with her.*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

vation of family relationship. Conformation to these instructions paves the way for a strong family bond and trouble free matrimonial life. However, Islam is not blind to the discords that may occur in family life. Islam recommends three practical and scientific methods to prevent the severing of family relations due to discord caused by lack of discipline. The first procedure recommends good advice, failing which one boycotts the bed. If this also fails, mild physical punishment can be given, with-

out bruising her body or mind. When all the three methods fail, the relatives of the couple can arbitrate and try for a compromise. If this attempt also fails to reunite the couple, Islam permits a divorce in a decent manner. Islam is very stern on the issue of divorce and it is allowed only in absolutely unavoidable situation.

A permissible thing which is most hated by Allah is divorce.

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

Who has the right for a divorce?

A divorce is possible for both man and woman who are certain that they cannot get along in any way with the partner. Only the manner of divorce varies a little between the man and the woman.

Know that all of you are rulers and that you will be questioned about all that you rule over. A leader is a ruler. Every man is the ruler of his household. The woman is in charge of her house and children. Hence every one of you is a ruler and you are responsible for those whom you rule.

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

**Those who do not show mercy towards the young and those who do not show reverence towards elders are not to be considered to belong to our community.*

** The greatest gift that a father can give to his son is to teach him good manners.*

** The greatest among the most abominable sins are to associate partners with Allah and to be disobedient to parents. Not to obey one's parents is nothing short of ingratitude*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

What does Islam say about bringing up children?

It is the duty of the par-

ents to bring up children who are the blessing of family life, in a manner beneficial to their life on earth and life after death. Parents should

- * One who breaks family ties will never enter Paradise.*
- * To give alms to the poor is charity. But if assistance is provided to a relative, then it is charity as well as strengthening of family ties.*
- * Paradise lies at the feet of the mother.*
- * He who wishes to enter Paradise through the best door must please his parents*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

take care of the material and spiritual needs of the children. They should be loved and respected. Besides, they should be encouraged to do good and prevented from indulging in evil deeds. Islam permits minor punishments to correct wrong deeds

without causing injury to their pride. Children should be treated equally. Islam strongly desires that both boys and girls should be brought up with equal regard, without any discrimination.

Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them but address them, in terms of honour and, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: "My Lord! bestow on them your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood".

Holy Qur'an 17:23,24

How should one behave to one's parents?

Islam teaches that after the obligation to the Creator, one's great obligation is to one's own parents. It is a great sin to be impertinent, negligent and disobedient to them. Only if parents ask the children to act against God,

they shall disobey. Even if the parents remain non Muslims, it is the responsibility of the Muslim children to look after them. It is the unavoidable responsibility of the children to protect their parents who have attained old age. Islam also teaches that it is sinful to rebuke and abuse one's aged parents.

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other not that you may despise (each other). Verify the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

Holy Qur'an 49:13

How are the societies that have been conceived by Islam?

Islam teaches that all men are the creations of the One and Only God and that they exist under His protection. It is from a single matter, the essence of clay, that everyone has been created. The origin of all humanity is from the first parent-Adam and Eve. The distinctions that men have created have absolutely no place before the Almighty who created them. The worship offered only to One True God is the source of strength that can unite mankind. Narrowmin

dednes and shrivelled outlook disappear when one prostrates before the almighty. When one realises that faith and good deeds alone are what makes a man noble in the presence of God, all haughtiness and arrogance fostered by pride and vanity evaporates from his mind and he becomes humble and pious. With the realisation that there is only one God, and that all men are His servants, with no distinction between the rich and the poor, the native and the foreigner, the fair and the dark, the elite and the lowly, the master and the slave,

I swear in His name, Who holds my life, no man is a true believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desire for himself

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

they prostrate only before him, the Almighty, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful. This is the picture of the society that has been conceived by Islam, a society without narrow boundaries.

What does Islam say about the neighbourhood?

Just as relationship in a family, Islam views that the relationship between neighbours ought to be warm and cordial. The Prophet (ﷺ) advised decent behaviour to the neighbours without causing any kind of disturbance to them. He taught us to take

into account the opinion of the neighbour with regard to one's character and personality. It is clear that the mutual responsibility amongst neighbours is indeed significant, as exemplified by the advice of the Prophet when he said that no true Muslim fills his belly when his neighbour is starving and that should be considered even if one has to dilute the broth by adding a little water.

Can a Muslim be communal?

Islam teaches that it is not one's birth, but good deeds and faith that determine one's nobility. The Islamic slogan 'One God for one mankind' aims at eliminating all the narrow views, like communalism, casteism, racism, etc... Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ) declared in plain words that

“He who invites to communalism, fights and dies for communalism, does not belong to us”. The followers of Muhammed (ﷺ) therefore can never be communal.

What are the Islamic directions in the financial front?

According to Islam all the resources on earth have been created for mankind. It is the right of every human being to make use of the natural resources. Everyone

has the right to work hard and earn wealth. However, the earnings should not be the result of the exploitation of others. Income can be earned through business, cultivation, hardwork, trade, and the like. But in every transaction, clear moral instructions have to be observed. What one earns while observing these moral laws, is his own and not of the society or of the nation. But it is the responsibility of the individuals to spend from their income, to meet the

** Know that you are good if your neighbours speak well of you. Know that you are bad if your neighbours speak badly of you.*

** If Allah has blessed you with wealth, let Him see in you the greatness and consequence of His blessing.*

** Eat what you like, dress as you like; but see that the two evils, pride and extravagance do not touch you.*

** Do not let your life be surrounded by luxuries. Luxury life is not compatible with piety.*

** Riches are not from an abundance of worldly goods, but from a contented mind. -Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)*

needs of the society and the nation. While Islam sanctions business transactions and approves of fair profit, it prohibits profiteering and hoarding. It bans taking or giving interest and usury. In business, there ought not to be deceit, treachery or fraudulence. The field of production should be free from exploitation. No product should be marketed suppressing its drawbacks. Miserliness and extravagance should

be shunned. Aid should be provided to those who suffer from poverty. Zakat has been instituted for this.

What does Islam say about master-labourer relationship?

It is only natural that the master and labourer come to picture when production, trade and cultivation sets in. The relationship between the master and labourer does not warrant any confronta-

** One, who eats his fill while his neighbour starves, is not a true Muslim.*

** The trader who is prompt and honest will be among prophets, martyrs and the righteous on Day of Judgement.*

** Weigh correctly anything that you sell and when you buy something have it weighed correctly.*

** Tell the buyer about the defects, if any, of the goods you sell. Having done that, the transaction is acceptable, if not it is detestable.*

** All fraudulent and treacherous transactions are forbidden*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

** Hoarding is a sin. One who hoards food grains in order to sell the same for a better price is a criminal*

** One who repays his debts promptly and in the best manner is the best amongst you.*

** Allah's curse will fall on those who lend money on interest and on those who bear witness to such deals.*

** Monopoly is unlawful in Islam*

** Cheat not in weights and measures. |*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

tion. On the other hand, it ought, to be of co-operation, as per the teachings of Islam. The Prophet has said that the income earned through one's own labour is the best income. The labourer should be given the wages that they deserve. There should be a proper agreement with regard to the wages, between the employer and the labourer, before the work starts. The amount thus arrived at should be disbursed without making any deduction whatsoever and it should be paid

even before the sweat of the labourer dries up. The employee should not be exploited and he should have complete security while doing the work assigned to him. It is the responsibility of the employee to endeavour sincerely for a satisfactory completion of the work assigned to him.

What should be the approach of Muslims towards non-Muslims?

The teachings of Islam state that the Muslim community should coexist in

** The best wealth is that which does a labourer earn.
 * The best food is that which is earned by one's toil.
 * Allah considers the labourer as His friend.
 * Allah loves the labourer. One who toils for his family is like one whose struggles in the cause of God.*

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

complete harmony and tolerance with people of other religious communities. The Qur'an prescribes that as long as the other communities do not oppress the members of the Muslim community, they ought to coexist in love and tolerance. This has been demonstrated by Muhammed (PBUH) through his life. Even the subjects of a Caliphate have no right to hamper the freedom of faith

nor the freedom of worship of the non-Muslim citizens. The ruler is liable for the complete protection of their lives and property. The Prophet (ﷺ) has taught that it is an unpardonable sin to be unjust to non-Muslim citizens.

What is 'Jihad'?

Jihad means "effort", "strive" or "struggle". All efforts to sacrifice, adopting

Once, Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him) told a man: "Help your brother when he is being wronged or when he is doing wrong". The man asked: "Oh! Prophet of Allah, how can I help him if he is doing wrong?" Then Prophet replied: "Forbid him from doing wrong. That is how you can help him".

Prophet Muhammed (ﷺ)

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you. But do not transgress limits; For Allah loveth not transgressors.

Holy Qur'an 2:190

the divine path and in the pursuit of truth are Jihad. The control over self and the surrender to the will of God, is the first phase of Jihad. Jihad is the conquest of one's self in order to ward off all kinds of temptations which might ultimately lead to evil.

Jihad is also the worthy utilization of one's wealth, energy and time for the divine cause. Just as it is imperative for a person to worship the One True God for becoming a member of the Islamic community, after pledging the vow of truth, it is also his responsibility to propagate the message of the true religion amongst his fellowmen. The efforts of sacrifice which form the path of fulfilling the afore-

mentioned responsibility, is indeed Jihad. The message of the true religion should be conveyed to others by making one's own life the example of the teachings of the religion and also by resorting to the use of logic and good advice. Islam is averse to the idea of forced conversion. The Qur'an makes it very clear that in matters related to religion there ought to be no coercion, and the duty of the followers of the faith is just to enlighten the people and that if any person accepts the faith should be done it on his own accord. Islam does not permit attack on innocent people in the name of religion. Islam permits the use of force if it is indispensable, to ensure freedom of reli-

Allah forbids you not, which regard to those who fight you not for (your) faith nor drive you out of yours homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: For Allah loveth those who are just.

Holy Qur'an 60:8

gion in the event of a situation where the right to live according to the tenets of Islam is denied and the freedom to propagate religion is hampered. Islam has sanctioned war only to ensure the end of violence and restoration of peace. It is the stricture of the Qur'an that even in war one should not shed one's dignity nor should one transgress the limits. In the event of a Muslim society being forced into war, all those who are able and healthy should volunteer. All these efforts of sacrifice to protect the true religion constitute Jihad. The armed war is but the last of them, which would be resorted to, when every other choice fails.

How did Islam Spread in the world?

The reason for the rapid spread of Islam was the attraction that the thinking people developed towards and ideal free from superstition upholding the worship of the 'One and Only God', the Creator and the pursuit of His messengers. It was only natural for those thinking people to be drawn to the practice of a faith that sought the path of 'surrender to God', at a time when their perceptions were fogged by false deities, and their agents who posed as priests. The ideal of 'One God', one humanity', simultaneously put forth by Islam,

uproots the parochial beliefs put up in the name of ones birth. The access to the message of 'one humanity' experienced by those who were being oppressed in the name of religion and caste, further led to the propagation of Islam. The selfless and sincere lives led by Muslims who migrated different parts of the world for busi-

ness purposes and the like, also drew the people of those countries to Islam.

To this day, Islam, which occupies the mind of man though manifold noble ways, continues to influence the thoughts and deeds of millions of peoples in all continents around the world, with its sterling ideals.

**What you ought to do to learn more about
Islam?**

The fundamental documents for understanding Islam are the Qur'an and the Hadith. NICHE OF TRUTH is conducting a Correspondance course for those who would like to learn about the religion of truth. This course will help in providing a reasonable knowledge about Islamic teachings and principles. Those who are interested may contact any of the centres of NICHE OF TRUTH, the address of which are given below:

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