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Introduction to Islam

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ISLAM THE SYSTEM OF LIFE

by
Mohd Fuad Mohd Salleh

"The messenger of Allah said: "Islam is to testify that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to perform the Solat (prayers), to pay the zakat, to fast in Ramadhan, and to make the pilgrimage to the House if you are able to do so." He said: " You have spoken rightly", said Jibreel. (From Number 2 of "Al-Nawawi's Forty Hadiths.)

"This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion". (Al-Qur'an 5:3)

"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to Allah) never will It be accepted of Him" (Al-Qur'an 3:85)

"Ibrahim was not a Jew nor Christian; but an upright Muslim." (Al-Qur'an 3:67)

Five Pillars of Islam (To be a Muslim – Submission to Allah)

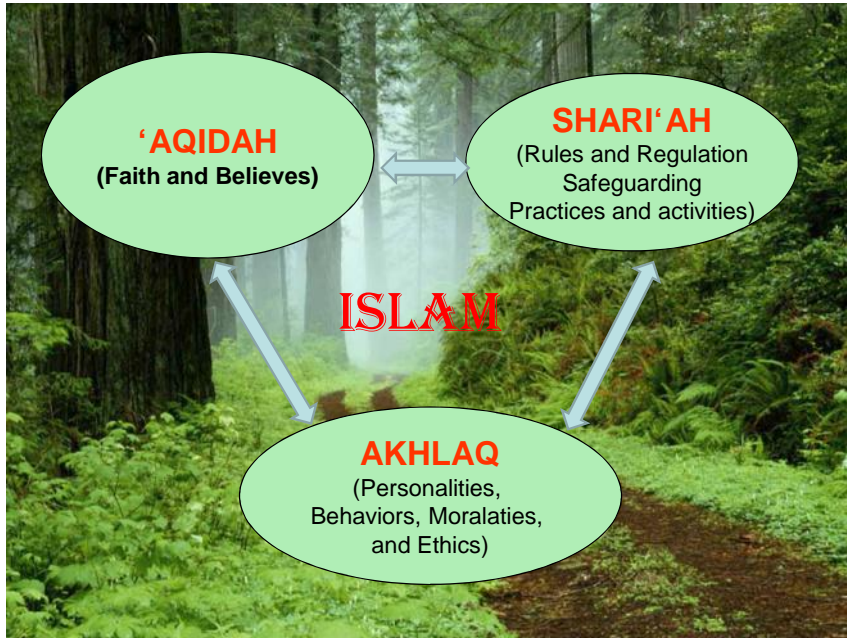
1. To proclaim the **shahadah** (the creed: "*There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Messenger*").
2. To perform the **solat** (prayer),
3. To pay **zakat**,
4. To **fast** during the lunar month of Ramadhan
5. To perform **hajj** - pilgrimage to *Makkah*, if economically and physically able.

Six Pillars of Iman (Faith – to be the Believers)

1. Believe in one God, Allah,
2. Believe in ar-Rasul (His Prophets/Messengers),
3. Believe in al-Kitab (Revealed Books),
4. Believe in the Malaikah (Angels),
5. Believe in al-Qiyamah (the Day of Judgement),
6. Believe in al-Qadar (Divine Predestination).

Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING ISLAM AS THE WAY OF LIFE



The diagram shows the fundamental of Islamic teaching that constitutes three systems 'Aqidah (the beliefs – faith), Shari'ah (the rules and regulation), and Akhlaq (personalities and behaviors)

Muslims' life at individual and societal level is governed by different sets of rules. The first set is the foundation that describes the relationship between man and The Creator, Allah. It deals with all matters of beliefs of a Muslim. It is the core set which every other set is anchored to it. The set is known as 'Aqidah (faith). The foundation of the Islamic faith is belief in the Oneness of Almighty God, Allah, the God of *Ibrahim* (Abraham), *Nuh* (Noah), *Musa* (Moses) and *Isa* (Jesus). Islam teaches that a pure belief in One God is intuitive in human beings and thus fulfil the natural inclination of the soul.

The second set of rules is *Shari'ah* (Law) consists of constitutive and regulative rules that deal with transforming and manifesting the faith and beliefs into action and daily practices because these sets of rules are derived from the main source: *Al-Qur'an* and *As-Sunnah*. All Muslims must conduct their affairs in accordance with these rules. These set of rules constitutes two components known as *Ibadah* (deal with the rituals practice with The Creator, Allah) is concerned with the practicality of ways to perform rites and rituals, to understand, and to explain the relationship with Allah SWT.

The other component is *Mu'amalah* (deal with the world and living things – the transaction). *Shari'ah* being the practical aspect is the one that gives answers to every aspects of human life which describes the practicality of day-to-day life by defining the rules governing social, political, and economic activities. This *Mu'amalah* component defines the conduct of economic activities within the Islamic economic system and lays down the rules for business, commercial, financial, and banking systems.

The third set is *Akhlaq* (personal moral behavioral disposition) concern about the behavior, attitude, and work ethics of which a Muslim should live in the society. As a result of following the guides on '*Aqidah* and *Shari'ah*, a Muslim will act according to the teaching of Islam thus *Akhlaq* is the transformation of '*Aqidah* and *Shari'ah* in the individual Muslim.

The Message of Islam

One important fact about education is by educating oneself that is to free his or her mind from being prejudice and ignorance regarding other areas, cultures, and religions. Education will open one's mind to new information and knowledge. By taking some time to learn about the religion of the Muslims, any one will come to see a beautiful Islam.

The message of Islam ("submission" to the One God, The Almighty Allah) has been propagated, preached, and taught throughout time since the existence of first mankind, beginning with Adam. All of the Prophets or Messengers mentioned in the *Taurat* (Thorah) and *Injil* (Bible) are recognized and distinguished in Islam; in fact, Islam is a culmination of the monotheistic religions that came before it. There are many similarities between Islamic practices and the moral practices of other major religions

before Islam at the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him – PBUH).

The word "Islam" is an Arabic word which means "submission" or "surrender" of one's will to the only true God, known in Arabic as "Allah". One who submits his will to God is termed in Arabic as a "Muslim". This word comes from the same root as the Arabic word "salam", which means "peace". As such, the religion of Islam teaches that in order to achieve true peace of mind and surety of heart, one must submit to Allah and live according to His Divinely revealed Law. The most important truth that Allah revealed to mankind is that there is nothing divine or worthy of being worshipped except for Almighty Allah, thus all human beings should submit to Him.

The word "Muslim" means one who submits to the will of Allah, regardless of their race, nationality or ethnic background. Being a Muslim entails wilful submission and active obedience to Allah, and living in accordance with His message. Some people mistakenly believe that Islam is just a religion for Arabs, but nothing could be further from the truth. Not only are there converts to Islam in every corner of the world, especially in Europe and America, but by looking into the Muslim World from Bosnia to Nigeria, from Malaysia to Morocco, and from China to India, one can clearly see that Muslims come from various races, ethnic groups and nationalities.

It is also interesting to note that in actual, more than 80% of Muslims are not Arabs. There are more Muslims in Indonesia than in the whole Arab World! Even though Muslims in India is represented by small percentage, only 10%, the total number is 100 million. This number is bigger than the Muslims in the whole Arab Countries. So, even though it is true that most Arabs are Muslims, the large majority of Muslims are not Arabs. Not to be left, Muslims in the United States are now increasing in numbers, more Americans are now become Muslim. The more lies about Islam is being transmitted by the media in the US, the bigger the numbers of converts. However, anyone who submits completely to Allah and worships Him alone is a Muslim.

Continuity of the Message

Islam is not an ideology. If Islam is an ideology then it has no difference with other ideology created by human beings. Islam

is not an ideology because it is not human creation. It comes from Allah, The Almighty, The Creator. The first thing that one should know and clearly understand about Islam is what the word "Islam" itself means as mentioned above. The religion of Islam is not named after a person or people, nor was it decided by a later generation of man, as in the case of Christianity which was named after Jesus Christ, Buddhism after Gautama Buddha, Confucianism after Confucius, Marxism after Karl Marx, Judaism after the tribe of Judah, and Hinduism after the Hindus. Islam (submission to Allah's will) is the religion which was given to Adam, the first man and the first prophet of Allah, and it was the religion of all the prophets sent by Allah to mankind. Further, its name was chosen by Allah Himself and clearly mentioned in the final scripture, Al-Qur'an, in which He revealed to man. Allah states the following:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (Qur'an 5:3)

"If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him." (Qur'an 3:85)

Islam is not a new religion brought by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) into Arabia in the seventh century, but rather to be a re-expression in its final form of the true religion of Almighty Allah, as it was originally revealed to Adam and subsequent prophets. Islam is not a new religion because "submission to the will of Allah", has always been the only acceptable religion in the sight of Allah. For this reason, Islam is the true "natural religion", and it is the same eternal message revealed through the ages to all of Allah's prophets and messengers. Muslims believe that all of Allah's prophets, which include Ibrahim (Abraham), Nuh (Noah), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus), and Muhammad, brought the same message of Pure Monotheism.

For this reason, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not the founder of a new religion, as many people mistakenly think, but he was the Final Prophet of Islam. By revealing His final message to Muhammad, which is an eternal and universal message for all of mankind, Allah finally fulfilled the covenant that He made with Ibrahim, one of the greatest prophets. Suffice it to say that the way of Islam is the same as the way of the prophet

Ibrahim, because both the Injil and the Qur'an portrayed Ibrahim as a towering example of someone, a person, who submitted himself completely to Allah and worshipped Him without intermediaries. Once this is realized, it should be clear that Islam has the most continuous and universal message of any religion, because all Prophets and Messengers were Muslims, those who submitted to Allah's will, and they preached "Islam", the submission to the will of Almighty Allah.

The Concept of Tauheed (Oneness of God)

The term is derived from the three Arab consonants root *waw-ha-dal*, which serves as the vehicle for the basic concept of 'oneness,' or 'unity,' along with the closely related ideas of 'singularity' and 'uniqueness.' These root letters are clearly apparent in the numerical adjective *wahid* (one) as stated in the Qur'an:

"Your God is surely One." (37:4)

The term *Tauheed* demands a lengthier translation, namely: "the realization and affirmation of Oneness." The Unity of God, the Divine Unity, Unity in its most profound sense. Allah is The Real, The Absolute. Allah is One in His Essence, His Attributes and His Acts. Before the existence of the universe there was nothing but The Creator. Only in total acquiescence in Allah's good pleasure, renunciation of one's own will, and surrender to His will and guidance is *Tauheed* made perfect. Allah's absolute unity is the beginning and the end of the spiritual life for Muslims.

The Unity of Allah is a magnificent and a beautiful concept, and Muslims reaffirm their adherence to it many times a day, when they perform Solat and when they recite the shahadah in tashahud, one of the requisite in performing Solat. To acknowledge the fact of the "affirmation-of-Oneness" renew your faith by frequent invocation of "*La ilaha illa Allah*" [**there is non worthy of worship accept Allah**] will be the means to eradicate *Shirk* (polytheism). It is a powerful and effective concept for focusing and organising one's worldview and epitomising a religious and psychological orientation and authentically expressive of an important facet of the spirit of Islam, and also the base of economic concept in Islam. All activities should be based on the uniqueness of Islam

The foundation of the Islamic faith is belief in the Oneness of Almighty God, Allah, the God of Ibrahim, Nuh, Musa and Isa. Islam teaches that a pure belief in One God is intuitive in human beings and thus fulfil the natural inclination of the soul. As such, Islam's concept of God is straightforward, unambiguous and easy to understand. Islam teaches that the hearts, minds and souls of human beings are fitting receptacles for clear divine revelation, and that God's revelations to man are not clouded by self-contradictory mysteries or irrational ideas. As such, Islam teaches that even though God cannot be fully comprehended and grasped by our finite human minds, He also does not expect us to accept absurd or demonstrably false beliefs about Him.

Muslims believe in one, unique, incomparable God, Who has no son nor partner, and that none has the right to be worshipped but Him alone. He is the true God, and every other deity is false. He has the most magnificent names and sublime perfect attributes. No one shares His divinity, nor His attributes. In the Quran, God describes Himself:

“Say, “He is God, the One. God, to Whom the creatures turn for their needs. He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none like Him.”

(Quran, 112:1-4)

According to the teachings of Islam, Allah, is absolutely One and His Oneness should never be compromised by associating partners with Him - neither in worship nor in belief. Due to this, Muslims are required to maintain a direct relationship with Allah, and therefore all intermediaries are absolutely forbidden. From the Islamic standpoint, believing in the Oneness of God means to realize that all prayer and worship should be exclusively for God, and that He alone deserves such titles as "Lord" and "Saviour". Some religions, even though they believe in "One God", do not make all of their worship and prayers for Him alone. Also, they also give the title of "Lord" to beings that are not All-Knowing, All-Powerful and Un-Changing - even according to their own scriptures.

Suffice it to say that according to Islam, it is not enough that people believe that "God is One", but they must actualize this belief by proper conduct. In short, in the Islamic concept of God, which is completely based on Divine Revelation, there is no ambiguity in divinity - God is God and man is man. Since God is the only Creator and continual Sustainer of the Universe, He is

transcendent above His creation - the Creator and the creature never mix. Islam teaches that God has a unique nature and that He is free from gender, human weaknesses and beyond anything which human beings can imagine. The Qur'an teaches that the signs and proofs of God's wisdom, power and existence are evident in the world around us. As such, God calls on man to ponder over the creation in order to build a better understanding of his Creator.

Muslims believe that Allah is Loving, Compassionate and Merciful, and that He is concerned with the daily affairs of human beings. In this, Islam strikes a unique balance between false religious and philosophical extremes. Some religions and philosophies portray God as just an impersonal "Higher Power" who is uninterested, or unaware, of the life of each individual human. Other religions tend to give God human qualities and teach that He is present in His creation, by being incarnate in someone, something - or even everything. In Islam, however, Almighty Allah has clarified the truth by letting mankind know that He is "Compassionate", "Merciful", "Loving" and the "Answerer of Prayers". But He also emphasized strongly that "there is nothing like unto Him", and that He is high above time, space and His creation.

Finally, it should be mentioned that Allah, the God that Muslims worship, is the same God that Jews and Christians worship - because there is only one God. It is unfortunate that some people mistakenly believe that Muslims worship a different God than Jews and Christians, and that "Allah" is just the "god of the Arabs". This myth, which has been propagated by the enemies of Islam, is completely false since the word "Allah" is the name for Almighty God that is given by Him in all the scriptures.

However, it should be clarified that even though Muslims worship the same God as Jews and Christian, their concept of God differs somewhat from the beliefs of other religions - mainly because it is based completely on Divine Revelation from God. For example, Muslims reject the Christian belief that God is a trinity, not only because the Qur'an rejects it, but also because if this was God's true nature, He would have clearly revealed it to Ibrahim, Nuh, Musa and all other prophets. God is not Jesus, and Jesus is not God. Even Jesus himself rejected this. Allah says in the Quran:

“Indeed, they have disbelieved who have said, “God is the Messiah (Jesus), son of Mary.” The Messiah said, “Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever associates partners in worship with Allah, then Allah has forbidden Paradise for him, and his home is the Fire (Hell). For the wrongdoers, there will be no helpers.” (Quran, 5:72)¹

God is not a trinity. Allah says in the Quran:

“Indeed, they disbelieve who say, “God is the third of three (in a trinity),” when there is no god but one God. If they desist not from what they say, truly, a painful punishment will befall the disbelievers among them. Would they not rather repent to God and ask His forgiveness? For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. The Messiah (Jesus), son of Mary, was no more than a messenger...” (Quran, 5:73-75).

Beginning with Adam, the message of Islam ("submission" to the Almighty Allah) has been propagated throughout time. For example, all of the Prophets or Messengers mentioned in the Injil

¹ It was reported by the Associated Press, London, on June 25, 1984, that a majority of the Anglican bishops surveyed by a television program said, “Christians are not obliged to believe that Jesus Christ was God.” The poll was of 31 of England’s 39 bishops. The report further stated that 19 of the 31 bishops said it was sufficient to regard Jesus as “God’s supreme agent.” The poll was conducted by London Weekend Television’s weekly religious program, “Credo.”

(Bible) are recognized and distinguished in Islam; in fact, Islam is a culmination of the monotheistic religions that came before it. There are many similarities between Islamic practices and the moral practices of other major religions before Islam at the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be Upon Him – PBUH).

Educating oneself frees the mind of prejudice and ignorance regarding other cultures and religions. Take some time to learn about the religion of the Muslims, and you too will come to see a **Beautiful Islam**.

The word "Islam" is an Arabic word which means "submission to the will of Allah". This word comes from the same root as the Arabic word "salam", which means "peace". As such, the religion of Islam teaches that in order to achieve true peace of mind and surety of heart, one must submit to Allah and live according to His Divinely revealed Law. The most important truth that Allah revealed to mankind is that there is nothing divine or worthy of being worshipped except for Almighty Allah, thus all human beings should submit to Him.

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It is also interesting to note that in actuality, more than 80% of all Muslims are not Arabs - there are more Muslims in Indonesia than in the whole Arab World! So though even though it is true that most Arabs are Muslims, the large majority of Muslims are not Arabs. However, anyone who submits completely to Allah and worships Him alone is a Muslim. Muslim and not "Moslem" as stated in the some English dictionary.

Continuity of the Message:

Islam is not a new religion because "submission to the will of Allah", i.e. Islam, has always been the only acceptable religion in the sight of Allah. For this reason, Islam is the true "natural

religion", and it is the same eternal message revealed through the ages to all of Allah's prophets and messengers. Muslims believe that all of Allah's prophets, which include Ibrahim (Abraham), Nuh (Noah), Musa (Moses), Isa (Jesus), and Muhammad, brought the same message of Pure Monotheism.

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The Oneness of God

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The Qur'an:

The Arabic word "Al-Qur'an" literally means "the recitation". When used in regards to Islam, the word Qur'an means Allah's final message to mankind that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Qu'ran, sometimes spelled Koran, is the literal the word of Allah - as it clearly says time and time again. Unlike other sacred scriptures, the Qur'an has been perfectly preserved in both its words and meaning in a living language. The Qu'ran is a living miracle in the Arabic language; and is known to be inimitable in its style, form and spiritual impact.

Allah's final revelation to mankind, the Qur'an, was revealed to Prophet Muhammad over a period of 23 years. The Qur'an, in contrast to many other religious books, was always thought to be the Word of Allah by those who believed in it, i.e. it isn't something decreed by a religious council many years after being written. Also, the Qu'ran was recited publicly in front of both the Muslim and non-Muslim communities during the life of Prophet Muhammad. The entire Qur'an was also completely reveal during the lifetime of the Prophet, and numerous companions of the Prophet memorized the entire Qur'an word-for-word as it was revealed. So unlike other scriptures, the Qur'an was always in the hands of the common believers, it was always thought to be Allah's word and, due to wide-spread memorization, it was perfectly preserved.

In regards to the teachings of the Qur'an - it is a universal scripture, and it is addressed to all of mankind, and not to a particular tribe or "chosen people". The message that it brings is nothing new, but the same message of all of the prophets -

submit to Almighty Allah and worship Him alone. As such, Allah's revelation in the Qur'an focuses on teaching human beings the importance of believing in the Unity of God and framing their lives around the guidance which He has sent.

Additionally, the Qur'an contains the stories of the previous prophets, such as Ibrahim, Nuh, Musa and Isa; as well as many commands and prohibitions from Allah. In modern times in which so many people are caught up in doubt, spiritual despair and "political correctness", the Qur'anic teachings offer solutions to the emptiness of our lives and the turmoil that is gripping the world today. In short, the Qur'an is the book of guidance for excellence.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

Unlike the founders of many religious, the final prophet of Islam is a real documented and historical figure. He lived in the full light of history, and the most minute details of his life are known. Not only do Muslims have the complete text of The God's (Allah) words that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad, but they have also preserved his saying and teachings in what is called "hadith" literature. This having been said, it should be understood that Muslims believe that the Prophet Muhammad was only a man chosen by Allah, and that he is not divine in any way.

In order to avoid the misguided wish to deify him, the Prophet Muhammad taught Muslims to refer to him as "Allah's Messenger and His Slave". The mission of the last and final prophet of Allah was to simply teach that "there is nothing divine or worthy of being worshipped except for Almighty Allah", as well as being a living example of Allah's revelation. In simple terms, Allah sent the revelation to Muhammad, who in turn taught it, preached it, lived it and put it into practice.

In this way, Muhammad was more than just a "prophet" in the sense of many of the Biblical prophets, since he was also a statesman and ruler. He was a man who lived a humble life in the service to Allah, and established an all-encompassing religion and way of life by showing what it means to be an ideal friend, husband, teacher, ruler, warrior and judge.

For this reason, Muslims follow him not for his own sake, but in obedience to Allah, because Muhammad not only showed us

how to deal with our fellow human beings, but more importantly, he showed us how to relate to and worship Allah, worship Him in the only way pleasing to Him. Like other prophets, Muhammad faced a great deal of opposition and persecution during his mission.

However, he was always patient and just, and he treated his enemies well. The results of his mission were very successful, and even though his mission started in one of the most backward and remote places on earth, within a hundred years of the death of Muhammad, Islam had spread from Spain to China. The Prophet Muhammad was the greatest of all of Allah's prophets, not because he had new doctrines or greater miracles, but because the results of his mission have brought more human beings into the pure and proper belief in the One True God than any other prophet.

The Islamic Way of Life:

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah teaches human beings that they were created in order to worship Him, and that the basis of all true worship is God-consciousness. Since the teachings of Islamic encompass all aspects of life and ethics, God-consciousness is encouraged in all human affairs. Islam makes it clear that all human acts are acts of worship if they are done for Allah alone and in accordance to His Divine Law. As such, worship in Islam is not limited to religious rituals. The teachings of Islam act as a mercy and a healing for the human soul, and such qualities as humility, sincerity, patience and charity are strongly encouraged. Additionally, Islam condemns pride and self-righteousness, since Almighty Allah is the only judge of human righteousness.

The Islamic view of the nature of man is also realistic and well-balanced. Human beings are not believed to be inherently sinful, but are seen as equally capable of both good and evil. Islam also teaches that faith and action go hand-in-hand. Allah has given people free-will, and the measure of one's faith is one's deeds and actions. However, human beings have also been created weak and regularly fall into sin. This is the nature of the human being as created by Allah in His Wisdom, and it is not inherently "corrupt" or in need of repair.

This is because the avenue of repentance of always open to all human beings, and Allah The Almighty loves the repentant

sinner more than one who does not sin at all. The true balance of an Islamic life is established by having a healthy fear of Allah as well as a sincere belief in His infinite Mercy.

A life without fear of Allah leads to sin and disobedience, while believing that we have sinned so much that Allah will not possibly forgive us only leads to despair. In light of this, Islam teaches that: only the misguided despair of the Mercy of their Lord. Additionally, the Holy Qur'an, which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, contains a great deal of teachings about the life hereafter and the Day of Judgment. Due to this, Muslims believe that all human beings will ultimately be judged by Allah for their beliefs and actions in their earthly lives.

In judging human beings, Almighty Allah will be both Merciful and Just, and people will only be judged for what they were capable of. Suffice it to say that Islam teaches that life is a test, and that all human beings will be accountable before Allah. A sincere belief in the life hereafter is the key to leading a well-balanced life and moral. Otherwise, life is viewed as an end in itself, which causes human beings to become more selfish, materialistic and immoral.

Islam for a Better Life:

Islam teaches that true happiness can only be obtained by living a life full of God-consciousness and being satisfied with what Allah has given us. Additionally, true "freedom" is freedom from being controlled by our base human desires and being ruled by man-made ideologies. This stands in stark contrast to the view of many people in the modern world, who consider "freedom" to be the ability to satisfy all of their desires without inhibition. The clear and comprehensive guidance of Islam gives human-beings a well-defined purpose and direction in life. In addition to being members of the human-brotherhood of Islam, its well-balanced and practical teachings are a source of spiritual comfort, guidance and morality.

A direct and clear relationship with Almighty Allah, as well as the sense of purpose and belonging that one feels as a Muslim, frees a person from the many worries of everyday life. In short, the Islamic way of life is pure and wholesome. It builds self-discipline and self-control through regular prayer and fasting, and frees human-beings from superstition and all sorts of racial,

ethnic and national prejudices. By accepting to live a God-conscious life, and realizing that the only thing that distinguishes people in the sight of Allah is their consciousness of Him, a person's true human dignity is realized.