

Islam is
AGAINST
SECTARIANISM

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ISLAMIC OUTREACH
P R O J E C T

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ISLAM IS AGAINST SECTARIANISM

Islam is the way of life that teaches unity in all aspects of human interactions. Islam presents its fundamental principles as Tauheed i.e. oneness of God, Risalah i.e. Prophethood of all messengers as Oneness of the message sent by God and Aakhira i.e. Life hereafter as the oneness of the purpose of our lives.

Not just the whole mankind but even the Muslims today have regrettably divided and subdivided themselves into numerous sects each one labelling themselves by diverse names such as Sunni (e.g. Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, Shafi, Barelvi, Wahabi, Deobandi) or Shia (e.g. Twelver, Ismaili, Jafri, Zaidiyya, Khwarij), or Sufi (e.g. Chishti, Naqshbandi, Mawlawi, Qariyyah) and many others.

The Quran strongly forbids divisions of any sort or to associate with those that break away into sects.

"As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, you have no part of them in the least. Their affair is with God; He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did." (6:159)

This is addressed to the Prophet (peace be on him) and through him to all followers of the true faith. The crux of this statement is that true faith has always consisted, and still consists, in recognizing the One True God as one's God and Lord; in associating none with God in His divinity - neither in respect of His essence, nor of His attributes, nor of His claims upon His creatures; in believing in the Hereafter and hence considering oneself answerable before God; and in living according to those principles and values which have been communicated by God to mankind through His Prophets and Books.

This was the religion entrusted to man at the beginning of human life. The religions which emerged later stemmed from the perverted ingenuity of man, from his baser lusts, and from an exaggerated sense of devotion to venerable personalities. Such factors corrupted the original religion and overlaid it with harmful innovations. Hence, people modified and distorted the original beliefs by mixing them with products of their conjecture and philosophical thinking. More and more innovations were added to the original laws of the true religion. Putting aside the Law of God, men set themselves up as their own law-makers, indulged in hair-splitting elaborations, and exaggerated the importance of disagreements in minor legal problems.

They showed excessive veneration for some Prophets of God and some standard-bearers of the true religion, and directed their rancour and hatred against the others. Thus there emerged innumerable religions and sects, the birth of each leading to the fragmentation of humanity into an ever-increasing number of mutually hostile groups. Anyone who decides to follow the true religion must therefore cut himself off from all factions and chart an independent course.

The Quran further explains:

"Surely, this brotherhood of yours is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher. Therefore serve me and no other. But they broke their religion into sects among them; yet they will all return to Us." (21:92-93)

In this verse, the addressees are the entire mankind. It means: O mankind, in reality all of you belonged to one community and had one and the same way of life (Deen) and all the Prophets brought one and the same creed which was this: God alone is the Lord of all mankind, therefore they should worship Him alone.

But afterwards the people corrupted this creed and invented and adopted the things they liked and mixed their own theories, whims and practices in it. This brought into being countless communities and religions. Thus it is absolutely wrong to say that a particular Prophet was the founder of a particular religion and another of another, and so on. The very fact that different religions came into being at different periods of time, does not prove that the Prophets created these differences. It is obvious that the Prophets of God did not found different religions nor would they teach their followers to worship any beings other than one True God.

The Quran explains what perpetuates this sectarianism in the following verse:

*"And surely this brotherhood of your is a single brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher. Therefore fear Me and no other. But people have broken their religion into sects, **each group rejoicing in that which is with them. But leave them in their confused ignorance for a time.**" (23:52-54)*

This is an allusion to the fact that the real way of life for mankind is the same way of nature. That is, all human beings have been created on the nature that none but One God is their Creator, Lord and Deity. You should be steadfast on this nature. If you adopt the attitude of independence, you will be following a way opposed to your nature, and if you serve and worship another besides God, then you will be working against your nature.

This way of life has not evolved from a polytheistic creed to monotheism, as thought by those who invent a philosophy of religion on the basis of speculation. But, contrary to this, all the religions found in the world today have appeared because of the corruption of the original way of life. This corruption occurred because different

people added their different self made creeds to the natural realities and created separate sects and everyone became a devotee of the additional thing, which was the basis of the separate sect, and these sectarian groups remained content with their own interpretations and gave undue importance to their own clergy and religious heads; thus perpetuating a never ending cycle of division and hostilities.

The only way of attaining true guidance is that one should return to the original reality which was the basis of true faith, and rid oneself of all the later additions and excrescences and their devotees. If one still keeps any kind of contact with them, one will only be harming the true faith.

According to a Hadith reported in Ahmad in a war the children of the enemy got killed. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came to know of it, he became very angry, and said:

“What has happened to the people that they have transgressed the limits and killed even the children?” A man said, *“Were they not the children of the Mushriks (polytheists)?”* The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied:

“Even the best of your people are the children of the mushriks!”
Then he said: “Every living being is born on the nature: then when he becomes able to speak, his parents turn him into a Jew or a Christian.”

Prophet (peace be upon him) said during an address:

“My Lord says: I had created all My servants on true faith; then the satans came and led them astray from their faith, and made unlawful what I had made lawful for them, and commanded them to associate with Me those for whom I have sent down no authority.” (Ahmed)

In Quran we are commanded not to divide ourselves into sects. Thus dividing our religion into sects is against God's command. Those who divide into sects are termed as idol worshippers, and not members of God's religion:

"Turn back in repentance to Him, and fear Him. Establish regular prayers, and be not among those who are Idol worshippers -- those who split up their religion, and become mere sects, each party rejoicing in that which is with itself!" (30:31-32)

We learn from above that dividing religion into sects is akin to falling into idol worship, an unforgivable sin (if maintained to death). It doesn't matter what a person calls his or her sect, it is not authorized by God. God condemns all sects.

Cause of sects:

"Ironically, they broke up into sects only after the knowledge had come to them, due to jealousy and resentment among themselves. If it were not for a predetermined decision from your Lord to respite them for a definite interim, they would have been judged immediately. Indeed, the later generations who inherited the scripture are full of doubts" (42:14)

The Quran clarifies any doubts on how the clergy were responsible for creating divisions. The divisions were created because those at the helm of affairs did not want to know the right way and so invented their own separate religions, sects, schools of thought and systems of life, despite the knowledge that had come to them from God. Therefore, God is not responsible for it, but the people who abandoned the clear principles of deen and commands of God and created their own creeds and religions are themselves responsible for it.

The motive for creating these divisions was unholy and resulted from the desire for ostentation, mutual rivalry and stubbornness, the urge to humiliate and defeat one another, and greed for worldly wealth and position amongst the clergy.

In a truthful and straight forward way of life the clergy saw no place of distinction for themselves, on the strength of which they could have their own leadership flourish so that the people should rally round them, and bow to them and also make rich offerings to them. This was the real cause which became the motive of the invention of new creeds and philosophies, new ways and rites of worship and new systems of life, and diverted a large part of humanity from the highway of divine religion and misled them into blind alleys. Then the mutual disputes of the factions and their religious, economic and political conflicts gave rise to intense bitterness, which in turn led to bloodshed and violence among humanity.

The last part of the verse further explains about the latter generations who received the altered form of the divine guidance. After the passage of the time of every Prophet and his closest followers when the divine Book reached the later generations, they did not receive it with faith and conviction but were involved in doubts and suspicions and confusions, caused by their predecessors. There were many causes for this state of affairs, which can be easily understood by a study of the Torah and the Gospel.

The earlier generations did not convey both these Books to the later generations well preserved in their original state and in their original words and language. They mixed up the divine word in them with the human word in the form of their commentary, history, verbal traditions and juristic hair-splitting. They made their translations prevail until the original was lost and only the translations remained.

Their historical authenticity also was ruined, so much so that nobody now can say with certainty that the Book in his hand is the same that the world had once received through the Prophet Moses or the Prophet Jesus (peace be upon them). Then their elders in the different periods of history initiated such discussions on religion, divinity, philosophy, law, physics, psychology and sociology and invented such systems of thought that the people were lost in them and it became impossible for them to decide as to which was the straight highway of the truth among the countless crooked ways. And since the divine Book did not exist in its original, reliable state, they could neither turn to any authority that could help them to distinguish the truth from falsehood.

Universal Brotherhood:

"The believers are but a single Brotherhood. So make peace and reconciliation between your two contending brothers, and observe your duty to God, that you may receive mercy." (49:10)

This verse establishes a universal brotherhood of all the Muslims of the world, and it is by virtue of this that the sort of fraternity that exists among the Muslims exists among the followers of no other religion and creed. The importance of this command, and its demands, has been explained by the Prophet (peace be upon him) in many of his traditions from which one can understand its full significance and spirit.

Jarir bin Abdullah says: The Prophet (peace be upon him) took a pledge from me on three things:

"That I will establish the Prayer, that I will continue to pay the zakat, and that I will remain a well-wisher of every Muslim".
(Bukhari: Kitab-al-Iman).

According to Abdullah bin Masud, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“To abuse a Muslim is sinful and to fight him a disbelief”. (Ahmed)

Abu Hurairah relates that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“The life, property and honour of every Muslim is forbidden to every other Muslim. (Muslim).

Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“A Muslim is a brother to the other Muslim: he does not treat him unjustly, he does not leave him on his own and he does not dishonour him. There is no greater evil than that one should hold a Muslim in contempt”. (Musnad Ahmad).

Prophet (peace be upon him) also said:

“A believer’s relation with the community of the believers is just like the head’s relation with the body. He feels their afflictions as the head feels the pain of every part of the body” (Ahmad)

In another Hadith bearing on the same subject the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:

“The believers’ example in the matter of their mutual love, relationship and compassion with one another is of the state of the body that when a part of it is afflicted, the whole of it is afflicted with fever and restlessness”. (Bukhari, Muslim).

In another Hadith he is reported to have said:

“The believers are with one another like the bricks of a wall so that each is strengthened by the other”. (Bukhari: Kitab al- Adab)

In the verse above 49:10 God has commanded reconciliation between contending groups of Muslims. However, instead of saying: When two factions of the believers fight mutually, it has been said: If two factions of the believers should fight. From these words, it follows that mutual fighting is not the characteristic of the Muslims, nor should it be.

It is not expected that being the believers they would fight mutually. However, if such a thing ever happens, the procedure that follows should be adopted. Moreover, the word taifah has been used for a group instead of firqah: the words taifah and firqah in Arabic are used for a small group and a large group respectively. This also shows that it is indeed a highly offensive state in the sight of God that groupism occurs within Muslims and in which large groups of the Muslims cannot be expected to be involved.

What Sustains Sects?

The Quran tells us about the edifice that sustains sects and how the leaders and teachers of particular schools of thought become so exclusive and narrow in their approaches that they adopt for themselves the right to declare what is lawful and what is not, without realising it as they are under the false impression of “serving God”. The Quran declares:

“They take their rabbis and their monks for their lords apart from God and also the Messiah, son of Mary, whereas they were commanded to worship none but the One True God. There is no god but He. Exalted be He above those whom they associate with Him in His Divinity (9:31)

“They have taken their rabbis and monks as their lords”. The Prophet (peace be upon him) himself explained its true significance. According to a tradition, when Adi bin Hatim, who was formerly a

Christian, came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) with the intention of understanding Islam, he asked several questions in order to remove his doubts. One of these was: *“This verse accuses us of taking our scholars and monks as our lords. What is its real meaning. For we do not take them as our lords?.”*

As a reply to this, the Prophet (peace be upon him) explained:

“Is it not a fact that you accept as unlawful what they declare to be unlawful, and lawful what they declare to be lawful?” Adi confessed, *“Yes, it is so.”*

The Prophet (peace be upon him) replied,

“This amounts to making them your lords.”

Incidentally, this tradition shows that those who themselves set limits to the lawful and the unlawful without the authority of God’s Book, assume for themselves the rank of godhead, and those who acknowledge their right of making laws take them as their lords.

It should be noted that attributing son to God, and giving the right of making laws to others than God are to prove that their claim that they believed in God is false, even though they do believe in His existence. Thus such a wrong concept of God makes their belief in God meaningless.

Conclusion:

What we need to ask ourselves is why there are several religions and sects to begin with? What sets them apart? If all worshipped God alone, and uphold God's words, wouldn't they all be united and not differ at all? What set these different sects apart are mainly their human factors, and the upholding of various sources besides God's words. For example – traditional Muslims uphold a multitude of

Hadith and Sunnah besides the Quran. In addition to that, some follow writings of various scholars and religious leaders that go against God's words, without any kind of proof from God.

Again, if we think about Abraham, Moses, Jesus or Muhammed, we realize they were never a member of any sect. They were simply submitters, devoted to God Alone. These sects were formed after these prophets of God had departed, and are in direct contradiction with God's teachings mentioned above.

Thus, a person who abides by the Quran says "I am a Submitter (Muslim)", not "I am Shia", nor "I am Sunni", or anything else (2:128, 132, 133, 136; 3:52, 64, 67, 84, 102; 5:111; 41:33; 46:15, and more.). People, who do so, also forget that Abraham was the original messenger of Submission (Islam), and not Muhammed pbuh. If we follow the religion of Abraham, as God commands us to do (3:95), we will call ourselves what Abraham called himself, i.e. a submitter (Muslim in Arabic).

So Who Are We?

We are Submitters (Muslims in Arabic) to God alone. We follow God's words in His Final Testament to us, Quran and accept all of God's scriptures. We believe that Quran is perfect and fully detailed as God says, and that we should not follow any other sources besides it and the Messenger. We also believe that God alone is worthy of worship, and that we have to abandon all kinds of idols.

"Who can utter better words than one who invites to GOD, works righteousness, and says, "I am one of the submitters"?" (41:33)

A person's believing in God as his Lord and adopting the right way and standing steadfast on it is indeed a great and fundamental good, but the greatest good is that man should be able to boldly say that he

is a Muslim and should invite others towards God's path, fearless of the consequences, and while performing this duty should remain so pure and pious in conduct and character that no one should have a cause to find fault with Islam and with those who uphold its message!

It is a fact that Muslims today, are divided amongst themselves. The tragedy is that such divisions are not endorsed by Islam at all. Islam believes in fostering unity amongst its followers and the rest of mankind. The Qur'an says:

“And hold fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves;” [3:103]

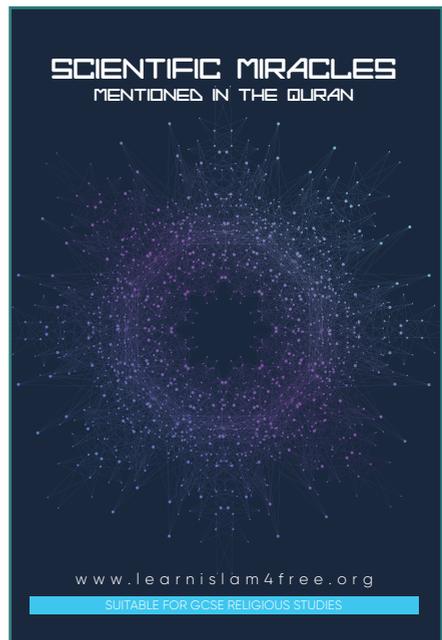
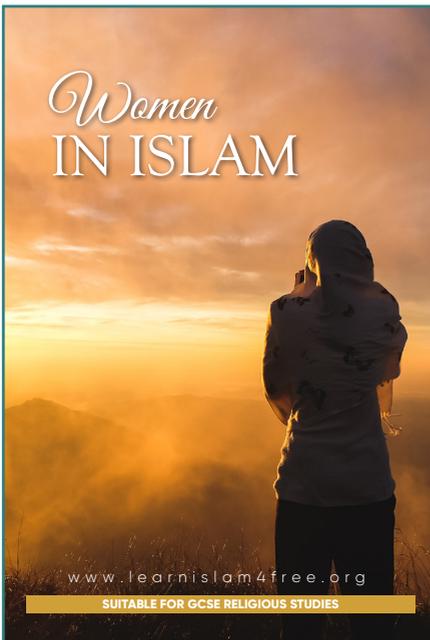
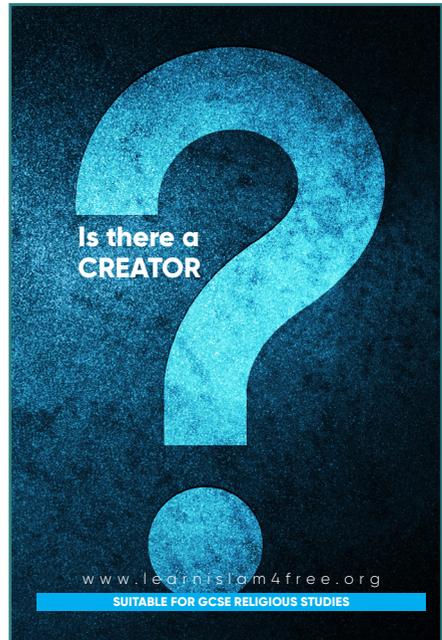
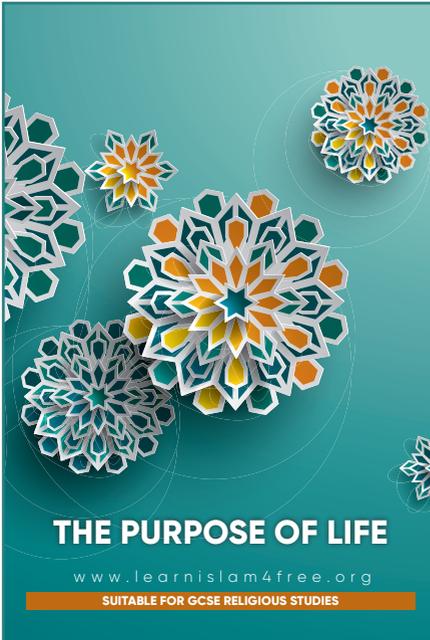
Which is the rope of God that is being referred to in this verse? It is the Glorious Qur'an. The Glorious Qur'an is the rope of God which all Muslims should hold fast to, together.

The Quran explains this with a warning about abandoning the teachings of Quran for their own sectarian opinions and giving more importance to opinions and schools of thought-over and above the clear and manifest principles of the Quranic :

“And the Messenger (Muhummed pbuh) will say: "O my Lord! Verily, my people deserted this Quran (neither listened to it, nor acted on its laws and orders)” (25:30)

Returning back to the unadulterated values, message and path of Quran is the way out of the quagmire of the vicious and useless sectarian divide. Having an opinion or school of thought is acceptable as long as it is considered to be one of the ways and not the only way and people are not expected to follow it to the exclusion of other opinions and in contrast to the Quranic directives!

OTHER ESSENTIAL READINGS



Booklets

1. The Quran
2. The Book That Shook The World
3. World's First Written Constitution
4. The Sharia Law
5. The Purpose Of Life
6. The People Of The Book
7. What Is Islam?
8. The Concept Of God In Islam
9. Jesus In Quran
10. Did Jesus Predict Coming Of Muhammad?
11. Common Misconceptions About Islam
12. Is There A Creator?
13. Women In Islam
14. The Hijab
15. Scientific Miracles Mentioned In The Quran
16. Message To Mankind
17. Islam's Solution To Terrorism
18. Islam For The 21st Century
19. Muhammed pbuh The True Role Model
20. Muhammed pbuh As A Teacher
21. Morals And Manners Of Muhammed pbuh
22. Marriage-Relevance And Importance
23. For Those Who Reflect
24. Salah-Islamic Prayer
25. Fasting In Islam
26. Hajj-The Islamic Pilgrimage
27. Islam Has No Clergy
28. Islam Against Sectarianism
29. Concept Of Halal & Haram In Islam
30. What Is Bank Interest And Riba?
31. Is There Life After Death?
32. What Is Zakah?
33. Role Of Masjid And Imam
34. What Is Shahdah?
35. The Wakeup Call
36. Islam Against Racism
37. Remembrance Of God
38. The Book Of Prayers
39. Etiquettes In Islam
40. The Rights Of Parents And Children
41. Beautiful Stories Of Prophet Muhammed pbuh For Children - Book 1
42. Moral Stories For Children - Book 2
43. The Book Of Manners For Children - Book 3
44. Islam For Children
45. The New Muslim Book

