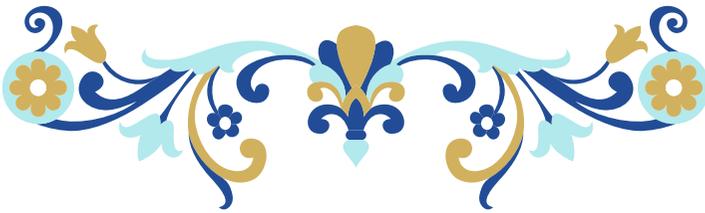




What is Shahadah?



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What is Shahadah?

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What is Shahadah?

“Shahadah” is an Arabic word used in the Quran multiple times- 160 times to be precise- with different connotations.

Shahadah basically means to bear witness to something: to present truthfully whatever is known to one through actual viewing or through insight {Imam Ragib}. One who does this is called a “Shahid” or the witness! “Shahida” means to give evidence, be a witness and to swear. It is due to this very aspect of bearing witness and declaration that the act of accepting Islam is described as Shahadah. Shahadah is the first step taken by an individual towards the declaration of his faith-which may have been deep-rooted in ones heart but didn’t come out up until its formal declaration- when it is termed as Shahadah.

When an individual accepts Islam he in effect declares faith in the fundamental realities of life and thus fulfils the duty of bearing witness to the rest of mankind that:

“I have accepted the sovereignty of the creator of the universe and am accepting his message to mankind as my lifestyle. I am agreeing to abide by the same laws of equilibrium that govern the balance and peace in the rest of the universe – from the same creator- I will be a witness to the message of our creator for the people in and around me”

So on one hand the person declares his faith in the oneness of God and the realities that come with it and on the other hand he becomes part of the mission of all the Prophets –of bearing witness to the rest of mankind by sharing this message with them.

The Shahadah thus acts as the creed of Islam- summing up in a nutshell what a Muslim stands for.

Following is the text of Shahadah that Prophet Muhammed pbuh used to ask a person to testify and recite upon taking Shahadah:

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَحْدَهُ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهُ وَرَسُولُهُ

I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah alone, Who has no partner; and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and His Messenger.

Ash-hadu 'an laa 'ilaaha 'illallaahu wahdahu laa shareeka lahu wa 'ash-hadu 'anna Muhammadan 'abduhu wa Rasooluhu.

Shahadah as two parts

Firstly, understanding the concept of oneness of God, who is free from the need of having any partners or family!

The second aspect is to accept Muhammed pbuh as His final messenger and by believing in him one accepts all previous prophets as well, the other aspect of accepting Muhammed pbuh as a human servant of God-with no form of divinity attached or ascribed to him.

In the Quran, the first Shahadah takes the form “la ilaha illa'llah” [There is deity except God] twice in 37:35 and 47:19.

And “Allahu la ilaha illa hu (God, there is no god but He) much more often. It appears in the shorter form “la ilaha illa Hu (There is no god

but He) in many places. It appears in these forms about 30 times in the Quran, and never attached with the other parts of the Shahadah.

Though the two phrases of the Shahadah are both present in the Quran (for example, 37:35-37 and 48:29), they are not found there side by side as in the Shahadah statement quoted above. Versions of both phrases began to appear in coins and monumental architecture in the late seventh century.

An inscription in the Dome of the Rock (est. 692) in Jerusalem reads *"There is no god but God alone; He has no partner with him; Muhammad is the messenger of God"*.

Another variant appears in coins minted after the reign of Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan, the fifth Umayyad caliph, in the form *"Muhammad is the servant of God and His messenger"*

Although it is not clear when the Shahadah first came into common use among Muslims, it is clear that the sentiments it expresses were part of the Quran and Islamic doctrine from the earliest period.

Islam's monotheistic nature is reflected in the first Shahadah, which declares belief in the oneness of God and that he is the only entity truly worthy of worship. The second Shahadah indicates the means by which God has offered guidance to human beings. The verse reminds Mankind that they accept not only the prophecy of Muhammed pbuh but also the long line of prophets who preceded him. While the first part is seen as a cosmic truth, the second is specific to Islam, as it is understood that members of the older Abrahamic religions do not view Muhammed as one of their prophets.

Shahadah is a statement of both testifying the fact and worship. The Prophet pbuh defines Islam as

"Witnessing that there is none worthy of worship except one true God and that Muhammed is God's messenger, giving of Zakah

(annual charity), performing the five daily prayers, fasting during the month of Ramadan and making a pilgrimage to the Kabba” (Bukhari).

The five pillars of Islam are inherent in this declaration of faith.

The first part of this testimony states that God has the exclusive right to be worshipped inwardly and outwardly, by one’s heart and limbs. In Islamic doctrine, not only can no one be worshipped apart from Him, absolutely no one else can be worshipped along with Him. He has no partners or associates in worship. Worship, in its comprehensive sense and all its aspects, is for Him alone.

God’s right to be worshipped is the essential meaning of Islam’s testimony of faith: *Lā ‘ilaha ‘illa llāh*. A person becomes Muslim by testifying to the divine right to worship. It is the crux of Islamic belief in God, in fact all of Islam. It is considered the central message of all prophets and messengers sent by God – the message of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, the Hebrew prophets, Jesus, and Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon them. For instance, Moses declared:

“Hear, O Israel The Lord our God is one Lord.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Jesus repeated the same message 1500 years later when he said:

“The first of all the commandments is, “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord.” (Mark 12:29)

...and reminded Satan:

“Away from me, Satan! For it is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.” (Matthew 4:10)

Finally, the call of Muhammad, some 600 years after Jesus, reverberated across the hills of Mecca,

'And your God is One God: there is no god but Him.' (Quran 2:163).
They all declared clearly:

"Worship God! You have no other god but Him." (Quran 7:59, 7:73;
11:50, 11:84; 23:32)

No Faith without Deeds

Shahadah is not a mere verbal profession of faith; instead it is followed by action in its entirety. Faith is not merely conviction of the truth of a given principle, but it is essentially the acceptance of a principle as a basis for action. Acceptance of the doctrine of Unity of God is what is termed faith in Islam. However, faith in the Islamic sense is not merely intellectual assent to a certain dogma or a subjective emotional response to a great personality, but a volitional and dynamic reaction to belief in one God, Who stands for the highest perfection and belief in the Hereafter -- a belief that fully assimilates both intellectual and emotional responses. It is at once an affirmation of a truth and a surrender to the truth affirmed.

The faith, in which knowledge, emotion and will are all involved, is manifested not in the form of a doctrine or dogma, but in the form of an ideal value.

Faith in Islam is the moral ground and basis for action and not a dogmatic assertion of salvation-justification like Christianity. The well-being of man, therefore, depends upon faith that is accompanied by good actions.

Thus, faith is firm belief arising out of knowledge and unshakable conviction in the Unity of God, in His Attributes and revealed guidance. One who believes as such is called Momin (faithful).

This faith invariably leads man to a life of obedience and willingly accepting the laws of our creator. A person who lives this life of voluntary acceptance of God's laws is known as a Muslim. Thus, we find that faith is the starting point that leads man to a life of regular and unflinching connection with God, and that a man cannot become a Muslim without faith.

God mentions that Islamic way of life has been completed and perfected, and has no need for alteration or adjustment:

"This day I have perfected for you your Deen (way of life) and have bestowed upon you My bounty in full measure, and am pleased to assign for you Islam as your Way of life" (5:3)

The 'perfection of Deen' mentioned in this verse refers to making it a self-sufficient system of belief and conduct, and an order of social life providing better solutions and answers to the questions with which man is confronted. This system contains all necessary guidance for man, either by expounding fundamental principles from which detailed directives can be deduced or by spelling out such directives explicitly so that in no circumstances would one need to look for guidance to any extraneous source.

The Prophet pbuh said:

"There is not one thing that shall bring you closer to the Paradise and away from the Fire without me having informed you of it, and there is not one thing that will take you away from Paradise and towards the Fire except that I have warned you about it."

Islam does not draw a distinction between the "inner" and "outer" aspects of life, between belief and actions, religion and politics; in reality, such distinctions are fallacious. Man's beliefs are the foundations and prime motivators for actions, for what is held to be true on the inside must manifest itself outwardly.

Islam makes no distinction between outward and inner, private and public life. The concept of taking Shahadah consciously makes the path clear to the individual taking it that rebellion against God's laws and associating partners in any form is the unforgivable sin that must be avoided at all cost.

The terms, Eeman (Faith or belief) and 'amal-us-saalihaat; (Good deeds) are so often conjoined in the Qur'an that the reader is convinced of the fact that they are intertwined. Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) is reported to have said;

"Faith and Good Action are partners. One is considered incomplete without the other."

Faith and action are components of an inextricable set, the Quran e.g. 98:8 and 18:30 make it explicitly clear.

The Qur'an describes life as a test of deeds (Qur'an 67:2) and in Islamic tradition all good deeds are considered 'ibaadah' (a form of worship). Quran declares that the human beings have been created primarily for 'ibaadah' it is obvious that all actions of a believer must be of the highest ethical standard. From this we understand that worship is not limited to mere rituals but to all expressions of goodness and righteousness in our daily lives.

Good deeds in Islam are of such great significance that salvation is dependent on good actions that emanate from sincere intentions.

People will be held individually accountable in the hereafter for all their wilful actions (ie. actions they did by choice not by force), and each will be rewarded or punished accordingly.

"Whosoever does righteous deeds, male or female, who have faith, to such God will grant a higher existence in the hereafter that is good and pure. They will be rewarded according to the best of their actions." (Qur'an 16:97)

Witness over all mankind

According to the Quran (2:143), the entire nation of Muslims is "Shuhada'a alan naas" i.e. the nation that keeps watch over all the nations of the world, and their centre (Rusool), acts as safe keeper of their deeds (2:143)

"And it is thus that We appointed you to be the community of the middle way so that you might be witnesses to all mankind and the Messenger might be a witness to you" (2:143)

This verse constitutes the proclamation appointing the community (Ummah) consisting of the followers of Muhammed to be a source of guidance and leadership for the world. This honour is bestowed upon this nation for the reason of being the "Community of the middle way" and this community will stay as leaders only if they continue to demonstrate the signs of following the middle way!

The Arabic expression which we have translated as 'the community of the middle way' is too rich in meaning to find an adequate equivalent in any other language. It signifies that distinguished group of people who follows the path of justice and equity, of balance and moderation, a group which occupies a central position among the nations of the world so that its friendship with all is based on righteousness and justice and none receives its support in wrong and injustice. It's the moral upper ground that defines this community or nation and not its status based on colour, ethnicity, geography, culture or any other accidental trait!

Islamic society is based on the equality of all men. Islam lays great emphasis on the factors that unite mankind. As already stated, it disapproves of all divisions of mankind on the basis of colour, race, creed, language or territory. Such division cuts at the very root of unity. This is why the Qur'an addresses the believers as constituting

"The best community that has been raised for the benefit of mankind" (3:109).

In the second chapter of the Qur'an, the Kabba is declared to be the centre of the social life of Islam as well as the symbol of its ideals. In the same chapter we are reminded of our duties to mankind in these words:

"And thus have We made you an international people that you may keep an eye on what mankind does" (2:143).

The Muslim community, the Ummah, is thus entrusted with the task of leading mankind to its goal. It is enjoined to evolve a universal society on the basis of the absolute values affirmed in the Qur'an. The steady moral and material progress of mankind as one family is thus assured. The institution of Hajj gathers men from all parts of the world in one place, Mecca. This truly international gathering provides a fine opportunity for devising a suitable programme for the unification of mankind in accordance with the principles laid down in the Qur'an.

Upholding Justice is Shahadah

The Qur'an enjoins us to be strictly just in our dealings with even our enemies. In this matter we have no right to discriminate between friend and foe. The Qur'an is explicit on this point:

“O’ you who believe! Be steadfast witnesses for God in equity, and let not enmity of any people seduce you that ye deal not justly. Deal justly; that is nearer to your duty. Observe your duty to God” (5:8).

We should always act justly, even when regard for justice is detrimental to our own interests:

“O ye who believe! Be staunch in justice; witnesses for God, even though it be against your own selves, or your parents, or your kindred, whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for God is nearer unto both (than you are). So follow not passion lest you lapse (from truth), nor do distort truth or turn aside, verily God is well informed of what you do” (4:135).

Devotion to justice means much more than being just ourselves. We should also see to it that justice prevails everywhere. It is the duty of the Muslims to fight against injustice wherever and in whatever form it raises its head. Here the question naturally arises: how are we to fight against injustice? The answer is that as far as it is possible, we should fight injustice by peaceful means, such as persuasion and rational argument. Only when all these efforts fail, are we justified in resorting to force.

The purpose of creating 'the community of the middle way', according to this Quranic verse, is to make it stand as witness 'before all mankind and the Messenger might be a witness before you'. What this means is that when the whole of mankind is called to account, the Prophet, as God's representative, will stand witness to the fact that he had communicated to the Muslims and had put into practice the teachings postulating sound beliefs, righteous conduct and a balanced system of life which he had received from on high.

The Muslims, acting on behalf of the Prophet after his return to the mercy of God, will he asked to bear the same witness before the rest of mankind and to say that they had spared no effort in either communicating to mankind what the Prophet had communicated to them, or in exemplifying in their own lives what the Prophet had, by his own conduct, translated into actual practice.

This position of standing witness before all mankind on behalf of God, which has been conferred on this community, amounts to its being invested with the leadership of all mankind. This is at once a great honour and a heavy responsibility. For what it actually means is that just as the Prophet served as a living example of godliness and moral rectitude, of equity and fair play before the Muslim community, so is the Muslim community required to stand vis-à-vis the whole world. What is expected of this community is that it should be able to make known, both by word and deed, the meaning of godliness and righteousness, of equity and fairplay.

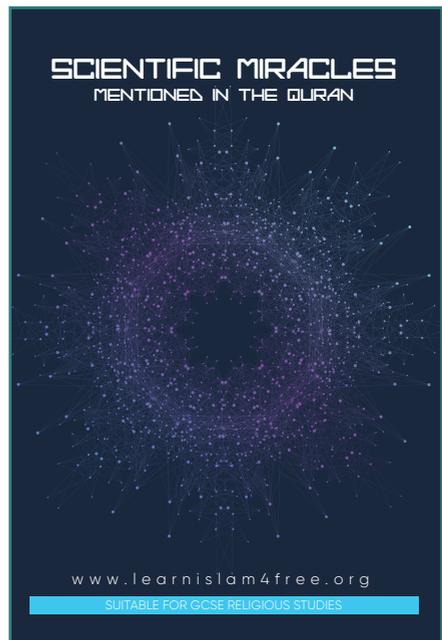
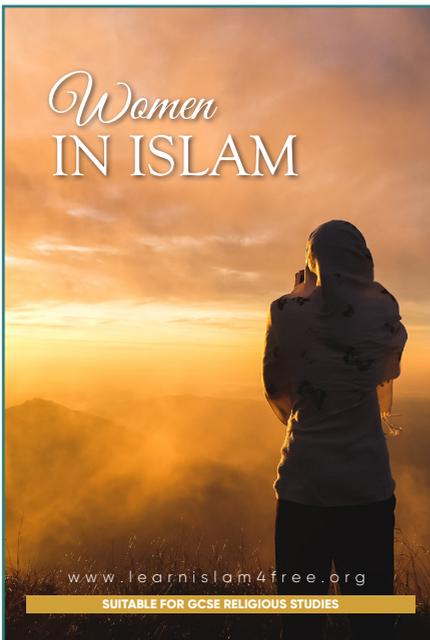
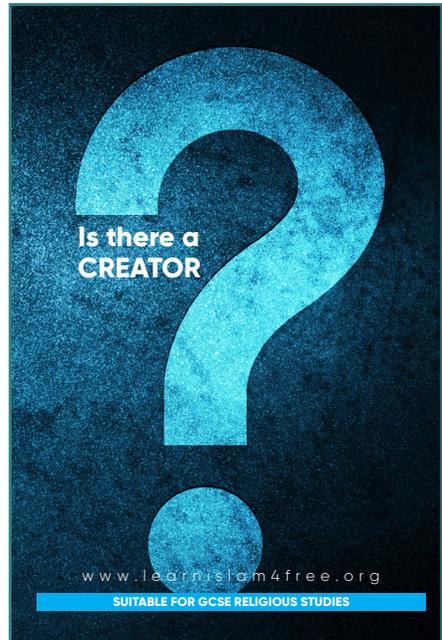
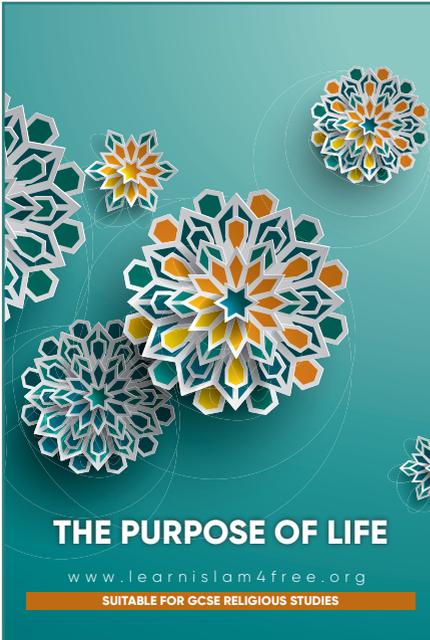
Furthermore, just as the Prophet had been entrusted with the heavy responsibility; of conveying to the Muslims the guidance which he had received, in a like manner a heavy responsibility has been laid on the Muslims to communicate this guidance to all mankind. If the Muslims fail to establish before God that they did their duty in conveying to mankind the guidance they had received through the Prophet they will be taken to task seriously and their honourable position as the leaders of the whole world, far from being of any help to them, will spell their disaster.

They will be held responsible along with the protagonists of evil for all the errors of belief and conduct which have spread during their term of leadership. They will have to face the grim question: What

were they doing when the world was convulsed by storms of transgression, injustice and error?

This is where the concept of Shahadah on an individual as well as on a community level takes a practical form and shape. It no longer remains an “individual’s personal” act or choice but becomes a community and a global phenomenon. It suddenly begins to bear the fruits and brings communities together on a similar path of truth, justice, equality and brotherhood.

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?
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32. What Is Zakah?
33. Role Of Masjid And Imam
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36. Islam Against Racism
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39. Etiquettes In Islam
40. The Rights Of Parents And Children
41. Beautiful Stories Of Prophet Muhammed pbuh For Children - Book 1
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43. The Book Of Manners For Children - Book 3
44. Islam For Children
45. The New Muslim Book

