

# THE IDEALS OF ISLAM

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Pakistan is an ideological state, which was carved out by the Qaid-i-Azam as a separate homeland for the Muslims, so that they might live there as free men according to the teachings and the Ideals of Islam. Islamic Ideology, therefore, lies at the very roots of the Ideology of Pakistan. In fact, the two terms are practically synonymous with each other. A clear understanding of the Ideals of Islam has, therefore, special claim upon the attention of the educated leaders of this country.

As there is a wide-spread curiosity about the nature and contents of Islamic Ideology, an attempt has been made in the present article to set forth as briefly as possible the doctrines and the ideals of Islam. The religion of Islam claims to speak with authority in the domain of law, politics and social organization as much as in the sphere of theology and ethics, For the sake of lucid exposition and clear thinking on the part of the reader, the subject matter of the present article has been classified under a number of distinct categories. It is needless to add that the present exposition is entirely based on the Kitab and the Sunna.

## I. ISLAMIC THEOLOGY

(i) In the Theological Sphere, Islam acknowledges the existence of One True God, as the Creator and the supreme reality of the Universe. This doctrine of Tawheed or strict Monotheism entails a definite denial of the Dualism of the Zoroastrians, the Trinity of the Christians and the polytheism of the Hindus. According to the teaching of Islam, God is One and

Unique in His essence, and His absolute Unity does not admit any partner, or associate or relative whatsoever. The Muslim concept of the Omnipotence and Majesty of God finds a most eloquent and impressive expression in the celebrated Throne-Verse found in the second chapter of the Qur'an (Ayat al-Kursi, Sura ii, v. 256).

Alongside the majestic aspects of God as Creator, Judge, Reckoner, Avenger and Supreme Power, the Qur'an also stresses His bounty and loving-kindness. He is not only the Compassionate One, the Merciful (al-Rahman al-Rahim), but also the Protector, the Provider, the Pardoner, the Clement, ever ready to turn to the repentant offender.

As a natural corollary to the Islamic doctrine of Tawheed, God alone is worthy of receiving our devotions. Besides, the divine worship puts a Muslim in direct communion with his Lord, who is ever ready to listen to his prayers and supplications. In Islam there is no class of consecrated priests or canonized saints to act as intermediaries between God and His servants. In the Islamic system, every man is his own priest and can plead for himself for mercy and forgiveness. Congregational prayers (Namaz ba jama'at) are specially commended, as promoting the cohesion and the corporate life of the Believers.

(ii) Next to the Unity of God, the doctrine of Apostles (or Prophets) is the central doctrine of Islam. According to the Qur'an God communicates His commandments to His creatures through the medium of His special Messengers, who are called Anbiya or Rusul in Arabic. God has been sending His Messengers from time to time, whenever it was felt that Truth had been obscured and fresh guidance was needed by His servants. The last dispensation came through the Prophet Muhammad, who is God's Apostle to all mankind.

(iii) According to the teaching of Islam, man is strictly

responsible for all his actions, however trivial and insignificant they may appear to be. The Qur'an declares that "Whoever does an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil shall see its result" (Sura 99, v. 6-7). This idea of the moral accountability of man is one of the fundamental doctrines of Islam, and finds its expression in the belief that the Day of judgment will finally and certainly come, when the people will be requited according to their deserts.

(iv) The Bayt Allah in Mecca is intimately connected with the divine worship of the Muslims, and serves as the spiritual centre of the universal Fraternity of Islam. The Pilgrimage to Mecca is, therefore, a very important institution in the religious life of the Muslims. If circumstances permit, the performance of this 'pilgrimage is incumbent upon every believer at least once in his or her lifetime. The pilgrimage to Mecca draws, year after year, Muslims by thousands from the burning sands of Africa, from the snows of Siberia, the rugged mountains of Afghanistan and the coral reefs of Malaysia, towards a barren valley in the Hijaz, to raise their minds from the sordid life of the present to the memories of the glorious past and the hopes of a bright future. For fourteen centuries, Muslim pilgrims have been seen to leave their homes and hearths, facing unknown dangers and privations that they may enjoy the ineffable religious rapture of beholding the City hallowed by the life-story of the Prophet and of praying within the sacred precincts of the Ka'bah, which he restored and dedicated once more to the worship of the One True God. This visit has been a source of inspiration to many a Muslim reformer and has given rise to many a revivalist movement in the history of Islam. Moreover, this international gathering attended by thousands of pilgrims every year is an impressive manifestation of the unity of the Muslim world and serves to keep alive the feeling of brotherhood in Islam.

## II. THE ETHICS OF ISLAM

In the history of human evolution, there is probably no subject more interesting for a thoughtful student than the formulation of moral and spiritual ideals, which seek to regulate man's conduct in the ordinary relations of life by well-defined ethical standards. The conduct of a Muslim is guided by a definite ethical code, which regards moral qualities (and not wealth) as the sole criterion of a man's real worth, and prescribes clearcut duties and obligations for a Muslim as active and useful member of the Umma. Consequently, Islam has been . throughout its history an ethical religion, and stress has been persistently laid upon the due performance of moral duties. The ethical teaching of the Qur'an is closely bound up with its theology, and the moral principles are enunciated as the commands of God. In the following passage right conduct receives the same emphasis as right belief:

“There is no piety in turning your faces towards the East or the West; but he is pious who believeth in God and the Last Day, and the angels and the Scriptures, and for the love of God disburseth his wealth to his kindred and to the orphans and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming; who observeth prayer and payeth the legal alms; who is of those who are faithful to their engagements and are patient under ills and hardships and in time of trouble. These are they who are just, and these are they who fear the Lord.”  
(Sura ii, v. 172)

Here the virtues of charity, patience and the fulfilment of promises are given as much importance as loyalty to the true faith. Among the other ethical duties laid down in the Qur'an are kindness and gratitude towards parents, and one of the Traditions of the Prophet declares that “Paradise lies at the feet of your

mothers.” Moreover, the Muslims are exhorted to take care of the orphan, to reconcile contending groups of Believers, to be careful in the payment of debts and to forgive the offenders.

There are certain injunctions in the Qur’an which have had a lasting influence on the general character of the Muslim society; such has been prohibition of the drinking of wine, which is described as “an abomination of Satan’s work.” Though there have been flagrant breaches of this commandment in certain periods of Islamic history with disastrous results, yet its widespread observance has given to Muslim society a general stamp of sobriety and sanity.

### III. THE SOCIAL SYSTEM OF ISLAM

(i) The members of the human society are held together by bonds of various types — kinship, common homeland, common language, etc. So far as the Muslims are concerned, the chief bond that holds them together is their common religion. The community of faith transcends all other considerations, and the brotherhood of all Believers is a well established principle in Islam. The fraternal feeling which a Muslim entertains for a fellow-Muslim is declared by the Qur’an as a special favour which God has conferred upon the Faithful. “Remember Allah’s favour unto you: when you were enemies and He united your hearts, so that you became as brothers” (Sura iii v. 99). The principle that all Muslims are united by the ties of a common brotherhood has breathed an equalitarian spirit in the classes of Muslim society, and the consequent equality of status is visible in all the spheres of their life. For instance, no distinction is made in places of worship between the rich and the poor, who quietly and solemnly take their stand shoulder to shoulder in rows in the presence of their Lord.

(ii) Another important feature of the Muslim society is that it is remarkably free from racial consciousness. As a consequence, it does not suffer from colour prejudice or racial antagonism. The absence of race feeling among the Muslims is due to the sane and sensible view which the Prophet had taken of this matter. The Prophet of Islam was an Arab, but he did not claim any superiority for the race to which he belonged. He is reported to have declared in the course of his last memorable sermon: “O ye People, hearken to me. Verily, your Lord is one; and verily your Father is one. Remember that an Arab enjoys no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab enjoy any superiority over an Arab. Similarly, a white man has no superiority over a black man, nor has black man any superiority over a white man, except on the score of piety” (Musnad of Imam Ibn-Han’bal, vol. v).

In the words of Professor Toynbee, “Two conspicuous sources of danger in the present relations of this cosmopolitan proletariat with the dominant element in our modern Western society are race consciousness and alcohol; and in the struggle with each of these evils the Islamic spirit has a service to render which might prove to be of high moral and social value. The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding moral achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue” (Civilization on Trial, p. 205).

(iii) Islam assigns an honourable place to woman, who enjoys all the rights and privileges as a free member of the Muslim society. She is accorded the right of possessing property in her own name and of dealing with it as she thinks fit. Marriage does not interfere with her status or capacity or detract anything from her rights. Since Islam does not regard woman as inferior to man; she enjoys in most Muslim countries the right of exercising her vote alongside of men She is also entitled to share in the

inheritance of her parents along with her brothers.

(iv) “There is no monkery in Islam” is a well-known saying of the Prophet. Unmarried life for man or woman is regarded as a perversion of human nature. Islam does not call upon men and women to abandon the world or to practise asceticism in order to attain heavenly life. Islam teaches us that God has placed men and women in this world so that they may work and do their duty towards their Lord and His creatures. To withdraw oneself from the active life of this world and from the service of man is to forsake one’s post of duty. The dignity of labour is recognized in express terms ; and the man who earns his living by the sweat of his brow is far better than one who does not work for his own sustenance.

(v) Charity is a well-known social virtue through the exercise of which the poorer members of the society can receive the much-needed relief. Islam fully recognizes the great importance of charity, so that it has regularized it by the institution of “Zakat”. The payment of Zakat or legal alms is one of the basic institutions of Islam, and the term implies the dedication of a portion of the believer’s property to pious purposes, which constitutes a sanctification of the remainder to its owner. This annual payment also impresses upon the believer a sense of corporate unity and the duty of sharing in the common burdens. In early times, it was collected by state officials and devoted to pious purposes, or works of public utility.

#### IV. POLITICAL IDEAS

(i) In the political sphere, the Muslims are guided by the principle of Shoora or mutual consultation, which opens the door to a democratic approach to the solution of all their political and social problems. The Qur’an declares that the true Muslims as a

rule take counsel among themselves (Sura 42, v 38, and therefore any system of government, e g the parliamentary form of government which is based on the principle of mutual consultation and provides full scope for its operation, may be regarded as conforming to the spirit of Islam.

(ii) Islam upholds the principle of complete religious tolerance, and accordingly it gives full freedom of worship to all non-Muslim subjects of a Muslim state called Dhimmis, and had to pay a tax for the protection which the State guaranteed for their life and property. This tax was graded according to the financial position of the subjects, and women, children and infirm persons were exempt from its payment.

The principle of Religious Tolerance is a golden rule which the Muslims have followed with remarkable consistency throughout their history. They have always extended its benefits to other religious communities (such as the Jews, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists), although I am grieved to say that they have not received the same tolerance from others. But this disappointment has never deflected them from the course which they had once decided to be correct and honourable.

The beneficial and rational character of the above-mentioned principle is admirably illustrated by the history of Muslim Spain. The Arab government gave complete religious freedom to the Christians and Jews resident there, so that they were able to participate fully in the political, economic and intellectual life of the country. As a result of this wise policy, Spain entered upon a new era of unprecedented prosperity, and soon became the most advanced country of Europe. its universities and academies began to attract students from all over Europe ; and the fame of Cordova in particular, — with its brilliant royal court and its world-famous scholars — spread to distant Germany, where a Saxon nun, Hortsvitha, styled it “the Jewel of the World.” It is the

sad duty of a historian to record that at the end of the Muslim rule in Spain, the policy of religious tolerance was completely reversed by the Christian monarchs. The Muslims and the Jews were banished under distressful circumstances, and the country was thus deprived of the most industrious elements of its population. Luxuriant gardens and smiling fields were turned into desolate tracts of utter barrenness, and even the ships of gold brought to Spain after the spoliation of the newly-discovered America could not save it from inevitable ruin. The place of distinguished and broad-minded scholars was taken by ignorant and bigoted priests and the gallant cavaliers were replaced by robbers and brigands. The torch of learning and culture was extinguished, and the country was plunged in abysmal darkness.

## V. ECONOMIC LIFE

(a) The dignity of labour is recognized by Islam in express terms; and the man who earns his living by the sweat of his brow is considered far better than one who does not work for his own sustenance. The Prophet is reported to have declared that “the wage-earner is a friend of God.” He exhorted his followers “to pray to God morning and evening, and employ the day in their avocations.” He is also reported to have said that “Whoever is able and fit and does, not work for himself or for others, God would not show him any grace.”

(b) The Prophet laid great stress on the virtue of charity, but at the same time he was firm in his discouragement of beggary. He is reported to have said that: “Whoever has food for a day and night, he is forbidden to beg.” He also declared that “It is better for any of you to take a rope and bring a bundle of wood upon his back and sell it, in which ease God would guard your honour, than to beg of people. If they do not give, your reputation would

suffer ; and if they give, you would be laid under an obligation.”

(c) The Qur’an has condemned in no uncertain terms those who hoard wealth and prevent its free circulation among the people. The Qur’an has given a warning in this regard in the following words: “Those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in Allah’s way, announce to them a painful chastisement, on the day when it shall be heated in the fire of Hell and their sides and the backs shall be branded with it: This is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded.” (Sura ix, v. 34-35).

(d) USURY, too, is forbidden in Islam. Through the unrestricted practice of usury, the capitalists were sucking the blood of the needy people. This was especially the case with the Jews of Madina. They lent money at exorbitant rates of interest to the cultivators of their city and in this way they had secured a strong hold upon its agriculturist population. The Prophet wanted to protect them from their economic servitude, and therefore made usury illegal.

## VI. THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE

In the Intellectual Sphere, Islam has inspired an ardent love of learning and a thirst for knowledge that has left no field of human interest unexplored. The Qur’an has repeatedly laid stress on the importance of knowledge, and has emphatically declared that “those who know and those who do not know can never stand on parity with each other (Sura 39, v. 9). ILM or knowledge has always been a crucial concept in Islamic culture, and the acquisition of knowledge has been applauded as a useful and beneficent activity worthy of noble minds.

The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that “the pursuit of knowledge is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim man and

woman.” According to another tradition, he once exhorted his followers to go in search of knowledge even as far as the distant land of China. It is, therefore, not surprising to see that Ilm or Knowledge is one of those major concepts that have dominated the Muslim mind from the very beginning and have given Islamic Civilization its distinctive stamp. As a consequence, there is no sphere of Muslim social and intellectual life that has remained untouched by this reverent and all-pervasive attitude towards “Knowledge,” as something of supreme value to human life.

The intellectual curiosity of the Muslims has been quite insatiable. In addition to the light they received from the Qur’an, their curiosity was also excited by the literary and scientific legacy of the ancient world. After their world-wide conquests, they became heirs not only to the wealth of the Caesars, the Chosroes and the Khaqans but also to the wisdom of ancient Greece, Persia and India. The enlightened Caliphs of Baghdad and their nobles caused the works of a host of Greek philosophers and scientists to be translated into Arabic, and in this way a large number of Greek works on philosophy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, mechanics, music and geography became accessible to the Muslims and opened new vistas before their admiring eyes. This contact with the sciences of the ancients led to an outburst of intellectual activity such as the East had never witnessed before. It was during this “Oriental Renaissance” that the Muslim world produced eminent philosophers like al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd and brilliant Scientists like al-Beruni, al-Razi and Ibn al-Haitham. These savants not only illuminated the intellectual firmament of Islam, but also shed their light far beyond their original sphere.

The intellectual interests of the Muslims have manifested themselves in the establishment of numerous ACADEMIES and well equipped LIBRARIES throughout the Muslim world. Along

with Colleges and Hospitals, they constituted the chief glory of the Islamic world and testified to the literary zest of their founders. Among the Academies of higher learning, special mention is due to the Bayt al-Hikma of Baghdad and the Dar al-Hikma of Cairo. The academies of Muslim Spain played a role of special importance by transmitting the philosophy and science of the Islamic East to Mediaeval Europe. This transmission resulted not only in the quantitative increase of Western knowledge, but also in certain far-reaching changes in the moral and intellectual attitudes of the Western nations which are indicated by the employment of the well-known term "Renaissance."

While we are referring to the philosophic and scientific spirit of Islam, it is important to note that Islam places special emphasis on the use of Reason in all spheres of life. It was, in fact, the rational character of Islam that made it easily intelligible and acceptable to many nations and peoples of the world, till it became a universal religion, which now claims the allegiance of at least one-fifth of the human race. No careful reader of the Qur'an can fail to be struck by those passages, in which appeal is constantly made to our faculty of thinking and reasoning. In a remarkable verse, the Qur'an declares that it is meant and expounded for those who think and reflect (Li Qawmin yatafakkaroon, Sura X, 24). There are many other passages of the same import, in which we are given to understand that the commandments of God, i. e., the Laws of Islam, are not the fiats of a Czar or the arbitrary orders of a dictator. On the contrary, the Laws of Islam are the commands of God, who has more than once called himself al-Hakeem, i.e., supremely Wise and Knowing. Accordingly the Divine Laws are invariably based on Hikmat, and are intended for our welfare and moral uplift. The Qur'an is wholly on the side of reason, and it is our failure to recognize the importance of reason in our life that has been chiefly responsible

for our present intellectual stagnation and general backwardness.

I am convinced that a proper appreciation of the Aims and Ideals of Islam on the part of our younger generation is the crying need of the hour. The growing generation is unaware of the fact that we are the custodians of a sublime Ideology and that we are the heirs of a great Civilization, which is built upon certain definite ideas of law, ethics and social order. These ideas have played a large part in the world as civilizing forces and are still capable of acting as regenerative factors in the uplift of humanity. Our Ideology can bear a favourable comparison with any other ideology on earth, and it is our duty not only to cherish and preserve our Ideals, but also to enable others to understand and appreciate them.

Our strength as an ideological state will be proportionate to the strength we derive from our ideology. If our Ideology perishes owing to our neglect or ignorance, we too will perish along with it. The ideological State of Pakistan can endure only upon its ideological foundation. To change the metaphor, our Ideology is our sheet anchor, without which the ship of the state is bound to flounder and be at the mercy of the waves. If our idealism is not matched and sustained by appropriate action, we might come to a tragic end. We who believe in the divine origin of Islam and its sublime ideals, have a duty to perform — the duty of holding aloft the Torch of Islam and the beacon light of our Faith in the midst of threatening storms and the gathering darkness of Godless materialism. Here is a lofty aim before us — something to live for and to die for. The successful performance of this duty, naturally, calls for unshakable faith and unremitting effort on our part. Let us rise to the occasion and accept the challenge ; and let the Sons and Daughters of Islam remember that a life without a purpose and without endeavour is hardly worth living.

Islam, which claims the allegiance of about one-fifth of the

human race, is still a great spiritual force in the world of to-day. The real strength of Islam lies in its rationalistic and easily intelligible teachings, which pay due regard to the hard facts of human nature. The possibility and the hope of the survival of Islam, as a religion and a body politic, therefore, depends largely on the emphasis we can lay on the preservation and propagation of its religious, moral and intellectual ideals. Our strength also lies in our social and cultural traditions, which have been built up by the noble lives of countless generations of Muslims. In the present circumstances, the only honour-able course left for us is to stick to our guns and hope for the best. Nasrun min Allah wa Fathun Qarib.

The Holy Prophet, Muhammad of blessed memory — gave to the world a perfect religious system which has stood the test of time for the last fourteen centuries. Its high principles and sublime Ideals I have played a splendid civilizing role in the history of nations, and are capable of meeting the challenge of the changing phases of human life. Islam adopts a positive attitude to Human existence, and offers us a clear-cut programme for leading an active, useful, contented and dignified life. The religion which the Prophet gave to the world deserves to live and endure because of its rationality, its catholicity, its deep humanity and wonderful vitality. It is an honour and a privilege to adhere to a system, which inspires its followers to strive after noble ends and lofty ideals, and encourages them to seek that knowledge of all that is True and Good and Beautiful in human life.