

Islam and Misconceptions

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah the Gracious ever Merciful

Respected Chairperson, all our distinguished Scholars and guests, Brothers and Sisters,
Assalamo Alaikum wa rahmatullahi wa barakatohu

‘May you all live in peace, may you go on enjoying the mercy and infinite blessings of God Almighty.’

It is an immense privilege and honour to share some thoughts on the topic of **“Islam and Misconceptions”**. Permit me to confess that the address I am going to make poses a great challenge to me. It is a wide subject, and as such I am over-awed.

Before I start my address, I would like to clear one point that, we as a community in Islam are not built on the same pattern as the commonly perceived image of Islam on the reflecting mirror of the so-called fundamentalists and extremists. Today, therefore, I will try to present Islam to you not with reference to the Muslim behaviour in different countries, but with reference only to the basic teachings of Islam found in the Divine Book, the Holy Quran, and the conduct and traditions of the Holy Founder of Islam, Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be on him.

Islam is a religion which was revealed by the Almighty Allah for the guidance of mankind. It was founded by Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, over 1400 years ago in Arabia. He received revelation from the Almighty Allah in which he was told that Islam was the final Divine Guidance for mankind. The Holy Quran is the holy book of Islam, which was revealed by God to Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, over the period of 23 years. The followers of Islam are called Muslims.

The purpose of man’s life

Every single object has the purpose of its being, so has man. Different people choose different purposes for their lives and most of them limit themselves to worldly goals and ambitions. However, the Holy Quran, which is the basic source of Islam, mentions that the real purpose of life is to worship God Almighty, the attainment of His understanding and complete devotion to Him. The Holy Quran states:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥١﴾

I have not created the Jinn (chiefs) and the men (common people) but that they may worship Me. (51:57)

“Thus the true purpose of man’s life is the worship of God, His understanding and complete devotion to Him. It is obvious that man is not in a position to appoint the purpose of his own life, for he does not come into the world of his own accord, nor will he depart therefrom of his own will. He is a creature of God, and the One Who created him and invested him with better and higher faculties than those of all other animals has also appointed a purpose for his life. Whether anyone penetrates to it or not, the purpose of man’s creation without a doubt is the worship and the understanding of God and complete devotion to Him.” (*The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, p 106, Published: 1996*)

According to Islam, the object of human life is its complete spiritual transition, to worship One God and serve His creations, to love and to serve mankind. It teaches that everyone has the seed of perfect development, and it rests solely with a person to achieve or realize the full potential, or let it remain unaccomplished. According to Islam, humans are the best of creation.

God Almighty has not only clearly stated the purpose of man's life but He has also guided mankind through His Messengers and Books (Divine Scriptures) to the means of achieving the purpose of life.

Worship of God is not confined only to prayer and meditation but embraces every thought, word and action; for whatever we think, say or do for the sake of God is an act of worship.

While we are connected with this world, our goal in life should be self-purification. We should seek the attainment of this goal through prayer and constant effort in reflecting the attributes of God in our general behaviour. High is the goal and tremendous the task; efforts made in this direction are always most rewarding. We should never despair despite our failures and weaknesses but rather find inspiration in the following words of Hadrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II:

"Islam rescues man from despair and tells him that he can, in spite of his errors and mistakes, attain the purity of mind and conduct which is the highest goal of man. It thus encourages him to make constant efforts towards virtue and purity and enables him ultimately to arrive at his goal." (*Review of Religions, Vol. LXXXV, No. 9, 1990, p 24*)

Significance & Purpose of Religion

Religion helps man to achieve the object of life. Religion guides man into communion with his Maker, and through such communion, puts him in beneficent accord with his fellow beings, all of the creatures and servants of the same Creator, the One, without associate. It is the function of religion to furnish guidance on this behalf. How shall man know his Creator? How shall he form a concept of His attributes? What means shall he adopt to put himself in communion with Him?

Religion is the way of life that should enable each individual to attain to the highest possible development in the spiritual, moral and physical spheres. Its function is to establish and maintain the most harmonious relationship between man and his Maker on the one hand, and between man and man on the other.

The Promised Messiah, the Founder of Ahmadiyya Community has defined religion as follows:

"Religion of a man is the way of life he adopts for himself. Everybody must have a religion. Even the person who does not believe in the existence of God has to adopt a way of life and that way is his religion. But of course, what one should ponder over is whether the way he has adopted is the one that gives him sincere steadfastness, eternal joy and unending contentment. Behold! Religion is a very common word. Literally, it means a walkway or a path." (*Malfuzat Vol. II, p 236*)

The Promised Messiah further states:

"The purpose of religion is that man should obtain deliverance from his passions and should develop personal love of God Almighty through certain faith in His existence and His perfect attributes. Such love of God is the paradise which will appear in diverse shapes in the

Hereafter. To be unaware of the true God and to keep away from Him and not to have any love for Him is Hell, which will appear in diverse shapes in the Hereafter. Thus the true purpose is to have full faith in Him." (*Chashma Masihi*, pp 20-23)

Islam and a Muslim

After this brief introduction about the purpose of man's creation, need of religion which is a Divine mean of the fulfillment of that purpose, let me come to the main subject of today's address.

Islam is the name given by Allah the Almighty to the true religion revealed by God. Islam is an Arabic word. Literally the word Islam means *Peace and submission; Surrender of one's Will;* and to be in amity and concord with the Will of Allah. The significance of the name Islam is the attainment of a life of perfect peace and eternal happiness through complete surrender to the Will of God.

God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an:

هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا

He (God) named you Muslims both before, and in this *Book* (The Holy Quran) (22:79)

Islam is the religion that provides true understanding of God and prescribes His true worship. Islam is inherent in human nature and humans are created in accord with Islam. Islam teaches that the highest reach of human faculties is to meet God, the Exalted, through purification of the soul by worshipping Him and performing good deeds.

Islam is the essence of all truth. There is not a single fundamental verity that is not comprised in the Holy Qur'an. Islam is a living faith and claims to be able to place the relationship of man with God on the same plane as it was in the days long past. Islam does not consider revelation and communion with God to be a thing of the past. It believes that the avenues of spiritual bliss trodden upon by Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and, above all, the Holy Prophet of Islam, are still open and beckoning to those desirous of close communion with God.

One of the distinctive characteristics of Islam is that it requires its followers to believe that all the great religions of the world that prevailed before it were sent by God. It requires faith in all Prophets and in the revelation that was vouchsafed to them. It is thus a universal possession and a perfect guide.

God Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an:

85. Say, "We believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them and to Him we submit."³⁷³

قُلْ أَمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ آبَائِنَا
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا
أَوْتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ
بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

(3:85 *Al-Imran Verse 85*) Also see [2:137]

Islam is a very comprehensive religion. It presents a way of life and gives guidance under all possible situations. Islam covers the entire sphere of human activities. Furthermore, in Islam, the beliefs must be reflected in actions. Islam delivers a message of peace to its adherents in their relationship to fellow human beings as well as in their relationship to God. Islam condemns discrimination based on nationality, colour or social class. There can be no master-race or aristocracy. The Holy Quran states:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَى
وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ
أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَى إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ
خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٣﴾

O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely, Allah is All-knowing, All-Aware. (49:14)

Islam conforms to human nature and fulfills all human needs. Furthermore, Islam is the only religion that accepts previous teachings and their bearers as coming from God. Islam teaches that the Holy Quran incorporates in itself the true meanings of these previous teachings, and that its own integrity will always be guarded by Allah Himself.

The Islamic Beliefs (The Articles of Faith)

Islamic teachings can be divided into two broad categories, namely '*Iman*' which is to say belief and '*Amal*' the practice. The former deals with the philosophy of Islam, while the latter deals with the practical implementation. The essence of almost all the tenets of Islam has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in the following words:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces to the East or the West, but truly righteous is he who believes in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets, and spends his money for love of Him, on the kindred and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and those who ask for charity, and for ransoming the captives; and who observes Prayer and pays the Zakat; and those who fulfill their promise when they have made one, and the patient in poverty and afflictions and the steadfast in time of war; it is these who have proved truthful and it is these who are the God-fearing. [2:178]

Islam has six fundamental articles of faith, which must be professed by everyone who desires to become a Muslim.

1. Unity of Allah (Tauhid)
2. Angels
3. Books
4. Prophets
5. The Day of Judgment
6. Divine Decree (Taqdir)

“The first of these is to firmly believe in the absolute oneness of God. It is a Unity which is unsplittable and indivisible, and one which cannot be multiplied or compromised in any form.

The second article relates to the belief in angels. Although there are varying opinions among Muslims about the concept of angels, nonetheless all Muslims believe in the existence of angels.

The third article relates to belief in the books. The books in religious terms refer to such divine scriptures as contain new teachings and bring a new religious law. They are mentioned after the angels because most often revelation is transmitted to man through the agency of angels, who play a central role in carrying the divine message to the messengers. Angels have many other tasks to perform, but of that we will discuss later.

The fourth article relates to the messengers or prophets, who sometimes bring a new code of life and a new law for a specific people in a specific age, and who sometimes are sent only for the purpose of reform.

The fifth and last article of faith relates to the Day of Judgement. It also implies that every human being will be raised after death in some form, and will be held answerable to God with regards to the life he had led here on earth.

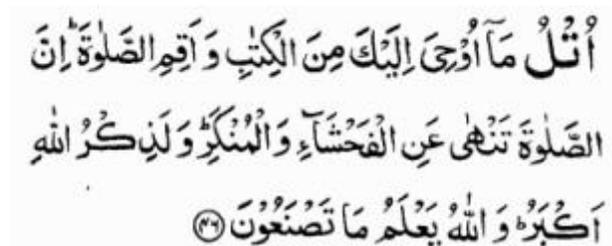
These are the five fundamentals of Islam. However, according to some there is a sixth constituent of Muslim belief included in the fundamentals by the Holy Founder of Islam, and that is belief in divine decree.” (*An Elementary Study of Islam: Page 2-3*)

THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Islam has five basic duties which a Muslim has to perform. They are known as the Five Fundamentals of Islam or the Five Pillars of Islam. Which are:

- 1. Bearing witness that there is none worthy of worship but Allah, and Muhammad is His Servant and Messenger.**
- 2. Observance of daily prayers**
- 3. Fasting during Ramadan**
- 4. Paying Zakat – Charity**
- 5. Pilgrimage to the House of Allah – The Kaaba in Macca**

- 1- The belief in the Oneness of God is the basic requirement of believing in Islam
- 2- The second pillar is to pray five times a day according to the prescribed manner. Worship is common to all religions. What differs is only the manner and style of worship. Prayer is the basic and most important means by which man communicates with his Lord and draws himself near to Him. Prayer is the most beautiful way to supplicate from God and to beg His pardon, it also provides a security against sins. The Holy Quran states:



أَتْلُ مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ
الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ
أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

Surely, Prayer restrains one from indecency and manifest evil, and remembrance of Allah indeed is the greatest virtue. [29:46]

- 3- Fasting is another form of worship found in all the major religions of the world. Islam gives great importance to this worship. Fasting in Islam is a highly developed institution, and needs to be studied in depth. Muslims are expected to fast in the month of Ramadan. By fasting, a Muslim can purify himself spiritually, elevate his soul and obtain nearness to Allah. To fast is to abstain from food, drink, smoking and conjugal relations from dawn to dusk.

Fasting is not allowed to the elderly, sick and children. Fasting is temporary not allowed for travellers, but travellers are instructed to complete their fasting during other days of the year.

- 4- The fourth pillar is called Zakat – which means spending in the cause of Allah. It is a form of levy which Muslims are to pay annually in cash or kind, which is considered as purification of wealth. It is used for the upkeep of the poor, the destitute, travellers in need, for those working for it, for those fighting in the way of Allah, for slaves to buy their freedom, and for benevolent works.
- 5- The fifth pillar is Hajj – which is to perform pilgrimage to the Kaaba, the House of God, in Mecca, at least once in the lifetime of a Muslim if he affords and has the means to go for.

Freedom of Faith

Islam believes in absolute freedom of faith. The Holy Quran makes it absolutely clear and categorically rejects the concept of compulsion, and clearly states that every human being is

free to choose between good and evil. The Holy Quran states: **لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ**

There should be no compulsion in matters of faith. (2:257)

وَأَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَىٰ And that man will have nothing but what he strives for (53:40)

**وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِرْ
وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا**

And say, 'It is the truth from your Lord; wherefore let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve. (18:30)

For you your religion, and for me my religion (109:7) **لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ**

These verses make it absolutely clear that Islam does not condone with any sort of force or violence in the matters of religion. And categorically declares that the all human beings who are living on this planet are totally free to choose their religion, whichever they like, without any fear and compulsion. There is no one on this planet who can in any way compel or force anybody to accept the religion of Islam, not even the prophets and Divine teachers were allowed by God to use force to convert people. Islam believes that the freedom of belief is a basic human right, thus no one can be deprived from this right; let everyone choose the religion he likes.

Punishment for Apostasy:

It is extremely unfortunate that there are many people and scholars, including, some Muslims, who believe that the punishment for apostasy in Islam is a death penalty. In some Muslim countries they practise this and punish the apostate with killing.

As I have mentioned above that Islam declares that “There is no compulsion in religion”, it clearly gives the commandment that under no circumstances may force be resorted to for the purpose of converting non-Muslims to Islam. It makes no difference whether non-belief was before or after one’s acceptance of Islam. Compelling a person to believe in Islam and to punish a person for leaving and disbelieving Islam is absolutely forbidden. The non-believers and apostates are free to accept any religion, and there is no punishment in Islam.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ آمَنُوا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوا ثُمَّ أزدَادُوا كُفْرًا
لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۝

The Holy Quran says:

Those who believe, then disbelieve, then *again* believe, then disbelieve, *and* then increase in disbelief, Allah will never forgive them nor will He guide them to the way. (4:138)

Just ponder over this verse and think that if it had been the punishment of apostasy a death, then how can a person who disbelieved Islam come back into the fold of Islam for the second time? In this verse it is not mentioned once, but for three times, that if a person disbelieves for three times still there is no worldly punishment for him. Not even a lesser punishment is mentioned.

Religion is a matter of choice, and everybody can believe or disbelieve any religion.

The Holy Quran says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَنْ يَرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَسَوْفَ
يَأْتِي اللَّهَ بِقَوْمٍ يُحِبُّهُمْ وَيُحِبُّونَهُ أَذِلَّةٌ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ
أَعَزَّةٌ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ يُجَاهِدُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَا
يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ ذَلِكَ فَضْلُ اللَّهِ يُؤْتِيهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۝

O ye who believe, whoso from among you turns back from his religion let him remember that in place of such a person, Allah will soon bring a people whom He will love and who will love Him, who will be kind and considerate towards the believers and firm and unyielding towards the disbelievers. They will strive hard in the cause of Allah and will not at all take to heart the reproaches of fault finders. That is Allah’s grace; He bestows it upon whosoever He pleases. Allah is the Lord of vast bounty, All-Knowing. (5:55)

107. "Whoso disbelieves in Allah after he has believed—save him who is forced *thereto* while his heart finds peace in the faith—but such as open their breasts to disbelief, on them is Allah's wrath; and they shall have a severe punishment. 1907

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَ
قَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكَفْرِ
صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٠٧﴾

(16.107)

145. "And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Verily, *all* Messengers have passed away before him. If then he die or be slain, will you turn back on your heels? ^bAnd he who turns back on his heels shall not harm Allah at all. And Allah will certainly reward the grateful. 428

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ
أَفَأَنْ تَأْتِ أَوْ قُبُلًا أَوْ قُبُلًا أَوْ قُبُلًا أَوْ قُبُلًا
يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيَجْزِي
اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

(3.145)

No corporal punishment can be understood to have been mentioned by any stretch of imagination in these verses of the Holy Quran.

"To conclude, apostasy is the clear repudiation of a faith by a person who formerly held it. Doctrinal differences, however grave, cannot be deemed to be apostasy. The punishment for apostasy lies in the hand of God Almighty, against whom the offence has been committed." (*Murder in the name of Allah, page 92, revised edition 1990*)

Punishment for Blasphemy:

Another issue which remains in the news many times is the blasphemy and the punishment for blasphemy. It is said and believed by many people, even by many Muslims and their leaders that the punishment for blasphemy is death; they say that there cannot be two opinions on this issue.

The fourth leader of the Ahmadiyya Community says:

"Islam goes one step further than any other religion in granting man the freedom of speech and expression. Blasphemy is condemned on moral and ethical grounds, no doubt, but no physical punishment is prescribed for blasphemy in Islam despite the commonly held view in the contemporary world.

Having studied the Holy Quran extensively and repeatedly with deep concentration, I have failed to find a single verse which declares blasphemy to be a crime punishable by man.

Although the Holy Quran very strongly discourages indecent behaviour and indecent talk, or the hurting of the sensitivity of others, with or without rhyme or reason, Islam does not advocate the punishment of blasphemy in this world nor vests such authority in anyone." (*Islam Response to Contemporary Issues, page 48, edition 1997*)

The Holy Quran says:

“And He has already revealed to you in the Book that, when you hear the Signs of Allah being denied and mocked at, sit not with them until they engage in a talk other than that; for in that case you would be like them.” (Quran: 4:141)

What a beautiful response to the utter ugliness of blasphemy! There is no punishment prescribed, but only a decent protest of not accompanying them. And also that is not permanent, this protest should not be prolonged than the time they are involved in such talks. We have evidence in the traditions of the Holy Prophet (saw) where Abdullah bin Ubayyee (Chief of the hypocrites) continuously abused the Prophet (saw), and opposed him severely in Madinah.

When he passed away, the Prophet (saw) stood to offer his funeral prayers but was asked by one of his companions, “O Allah's Apostle! Do you offer the prayer for this man although he said so-and-so on such-and-such-a day?” and “that he is a hypocrite!”. The Prophet (saw) ignored his statements and continued to offer the funeral prayers of the dead man. (*Sahih Bukhari, Volume 6, Book 60, Number 192*)

Islam commands to Muslims that they are not allowed to blaspheme even against idols or imaginary gods. This is such beautiful teaching of Islam; the Holy Quran states:

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا
اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ كَذَلِكَ زَيْنًا يَكِلُ الْأُمَّةَ
عَمَلَهُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ مَرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

Reville not those whom they call upon beside Allah, lest they, out of spite, revile Allah in their ignorance. Thus unto every people have We caused their doing seem fair. Then unto their Lord is their return; and He will inform them what they used to do.

Loyalty to the country

Some people raise the question of divided loyalties of Muslims living in non-Muslim states or Western countries. But when we look into the Islamic teachings, we find that loyalty to the country one lives in is an integral part of Muslim faith. The Holy Prophet Muhammad saw said:

“Love for one’s country is part of faith” (Sakhavi)

Muslims are therefore required to live by this noble teaching and remain loyal to their country. The present head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), explains:

“...I must say that every Ahmadi who lives in Great Britain [and elsewhere in the world] is an extremely loyal citizen of the country and loves it; and this is because of the teachings of our Prophet [Muhammad] (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who instructed us that love of one’s country is an integral part of one’s faith.” (*Address delivered at the House of Commons, Oct. 2008 by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad – Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim community*)

Obedience to the laws of land

Islam gives great importance to the rule of law, and it is an important religious duty of a Muslim to obey and abide by the law of the land. The Holy Quran commands Muslims to remain faithful to the authority they live under, it states:

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and those who are in authority over you. (Ch.4: V.60)

The Promised Messiah as, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam explains that:

“Believers are to obey those in authority, besides God and His Prophet. To say that ‘those in authority’ does not include a non-Muslim-Government would be a manifest error.” (*Works and Speeches, Vol. 1, p.261*)

The Holy Prophet Muhammad saw says:

“One, who obeys his authority, obeys me. One, who disobeys his authority, disobeys me.” (*Muslim, Kitab al Ijarah*)

The present head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), has also explained:

“A true Muslim can never raise his voice in hatred against his fellow citizens, nor for that matter against the ruling authority or government of the time. It is the responsibility of a true Muslim that he should remain loyal and fully abide by the laws of the land of which he is a subject.” (*Baitul Futuh Inauguration Reception, 11 Oct 2003*)

He further says: “We (the Ahmadiyya Community) have always implemented the teaching of Islam that you should never take the law into your own hands and always keep the best interests of your country in view and never create disorder, because this is a requirement of true love for your country. Wherever in the world Ahmadis reside, no matter which country they originate from, be they Asian, or African, or Arab or European or American, their behaviour is always the same. For the sake of attaining Allah’s pleasure they always steer clear of all forms of disorder. And this is the conduct that one day will not only save the world from anarchy, in fact it will be its guarantor for world peace.” (*Keynote address of Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad on 8th Annual Peace Symposium, UK, 2011*)

This makes clear that according to Islam Muslims must obey the law of the land as anything to the contrary would mean that they are not obeying their Prophet or their religion. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community believes and acts upon these Islamic teachings, it is a peaceful and law abiding community and the members of the community always remain loyal to the countries they live in.

Women in Islam:

It is a very long subject and needs more time to address, and I have requested the CAM YOUTHS organisers that if they may like we can hold another meeting in future on this subject. However, I will try to comment very briefly on this matter.

Regarding this topic there is also one huge misconception about Islam as a large number of people believe that Islam does not give any right to women and women are considered inferior, and they have often regarded Islamic women as being backward in a male-dominated world.

On the contrary, Islam was the first religion to formally grant the women a status never known before. In the Holy Quran hundreds of teachings which both apply to men and women are explained. The moral, spiritual and economic equality of men and women as ruled by Islam is unquestionable. The study of the Holy Quran shows that the divine scheme of regulation of the relationship between men and women, Islam has assigned a position of dignity and honour to women. Such beneficent regulation is essential for peace, comfort, happiness, and the continuation of the species and progress.

It will be appropriate to talk briefly about the position of women before Islam. Before the advent of Islam, women were considered as a worthless creature. Women were not given any rights, they were considered as the property of men. Men had a full right and authority over women; and women had no authority whatsoever. Before Islam, women were sold as personal commodities. In Arab countries many tribes used to bury their newborn daughters alive, as they used to consider them a dishonor for them.

Let me show you some beautiful examples from Islamic teaching about the dignity and honour for women. Once a companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad saw asked him "Who is best entitled to kind treatment and good companionship from me?" The Prophet answered: "Your mother". The companion then asked "And after her?" The Prophet answered, "Your mother". The companion then asked the same question a third time to which the Prophet gave the same answer. When the companion repeated his question for the fourth time, the Prophet then said, "Your father and then other close relatives." (Bukhari)

The Holy Prophet has admonished:

- 1: The best amongst you is he who treats his wife best.
- 2: He who brings up his daughters well, and makes no distinction between them and his sons, will be close to me in Paradise.
- 3: Paradise lies at the feet of your mothers.

These sayings alone refute the misconception that women are inferior to men in Islam, and in particular it demonstrates how much importance Islam gives to the respect for women.

Jihad:

Jihad is an Arabic word that means striving for a noble objective. With the study of the Holy Quran it becomes very clear that calling people for Jihad means striving for a noble cause and objective. It can be carried out in many ways but the ultimate aim is to establish and promote peace, serenity and tranquility within and in the society at large. Although, it cannot be denied that there are certain Muslim groups and organisations that believe in the Jihad of fighting and killing people. The Promised Messiah, the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community says:

"The prevailing practice found amongst Muslims of attacking people of other religions, and which they call "**Jihad**" is not a lawful war; for it is clearly against the commandment of God and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and constitutes a grave sin." (*The British Government and Jihad*, Islam International Publications Ltd. (2006), p.20)

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community (as) also declares:

‘Some wild and savage Muslims name the cruel shedding of blood Jihad, and they know not that to confront a just ruler is rebellion and not Jihad. Moreover, a person who breaks a promise, and who commits evil instead of doing a good deed, and who punishes the innocent is a tyrant, and not a victorious general.’ (*Tohfah Qaisariyyah in Ruhani Khaza'in, vol. 12, p.280*)

So, this is the true Islamic teaching explained to us by the Messiah of this age(as), who was to establish peace on a strong footing, and was to enrich the world with an atmosphere of love and affection.

The greatest Jihad is to struggle against selfish temptations such as greed, lust, egoism and other worldly desires; preaching the message of Islam with wisdom, tolerance and respect; serving mankind and helping the vulnerable and the destitute and to save mankind from the suffering and pain and to provide remedies to their wounds.

It is also to be noted that engaging in self-defence is also a form of Islamic Jihad, but that is only permitted in certain circumstances. The Muslims can take up arms in self-defence only if they have been attacked, suffered oppression, faced a threat to their life and been driven out of their homes simply for practicing their religion. The Verse in which Muslim are permitted for their self-defence states: (22:41-42)

40. Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged—and Allah indeed has power to help them—²⁴⁷⁰

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتَلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ
نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

41. Those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly, only because they said, ‘Our Lord is Allah’—^aAnd if Allah did not repel some people by means of others, there would surely have been destroyed cloisters and churches and synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is oft commemorated. ^bAnd Allah will surely help one who helps Him. Allah is indeed Powerful, Mighty—²⁴⁷¹

الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ
تَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۖ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ
بِبَعْضٍ لَهَدَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَ
مَسَاجِدُ يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا ۗ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ
اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٤١﴾

The permission is granted for self-defence, to restore peace and the rule of law and to protect places of worship. It is important to note that for a Muslim, a battle can only be defensive and not an offensive one. And defending oneself is the natural and basic right of every human being.

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat draws the attention of his community to the greatest Jihad and says:

“I therefore admonish you: refrain from evil and be truly compassionate towards mankind. Cleanse your hearts of malice and spite, for you will become like angels through this habit. It is a filthy and unholy religion that is devoid of sympathy for humanity, and polluted is the path riddled with a rancour based on selfish desires... Be compassionate towards all for the sake of God so that you may be shown mercy in the heavens. Come, and I will teach you a way that will cause your light to prevail over all other lights. Abandon all lowly spite and jealousy; be compassionate for mankind, and lose yourselves in God.”

“I have come to you with an order: Jihad with the sword has ended from this time forward, but the Jihad of purifying your souls must continue. I do not say of this on my own accord. This is indeed the Will of God” (*The British Government and Jihad*, Islam International Publications Ltd. (2006), pp.16-17)

Terrorism:

A little glance at the recent history shows that hardly a day passes in which an Islamic event does not make headlines. Very unfortunately, in the world today, Islam is portrayed as a religion sanctioning violence, bloodshed, extremism, fundamentalism, fanaticism and terrorism. But, in reality, there is no connection between Islam and terrorism at all; Islam is as closely related to terrorism as light is to darkness or life is to death or peace is to war. Islam very strongly condemns terrorism and encourages establishing peace and order in the land; and any act related to violence or disrupting the peace is to incite the wrath of God the Almighty.

However, one cannot deny that on many occasions some Muslims are found involved in terrorist activities either individually, on behalf of a group or on behalf of a country with a predominately Muslim population.

But, let it be very clear that we do not justify terrorism of any kind whatsoever, whatever the colour, religion, sentiment or objective the terrorist may claim to represent. Islam does not approve of disorder in any form. Islam is far from teaching terrorism. It teaches rule of law, obedience to the authorities and does not let anyone to take the law in his own hands. The Holy Quran clearly states:

“O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey His Messenger and those who are in authority over you.” (Ch.4: V.60)

The Holy Quran further states that ‘those who create disorder in the earth, they are the real losers’; ‘and commit not iniquity in the earth, creating disorder’; ‘and Allah loves not disorder’. Such words and phrases are found in the Holy Quran repeatedly.

The Holy Quran in fact champions the sanctity of human life and states:

“...whosoever killed a person — unless it be for killing a person or for creating disorder in the land — it shall be as if he had killed all mankind; and whoso gave life to one, it shall be as if he had given life to all mankind.” (5:33)

The Holy Prophet saw also said that to murder a human being is one of the greatest sins. In his Farewell Address he said that to take anyone’s life is totally unjust.

As far as suicide bombing is concerned, the Holy Quran clearly sets out its prohibition.

“And kill not yourselves. Surely, Allah is Merciful to you. And whosoever does that by way of transgression and injustice, We shall cast him into Fire; and that is easy with Allah.” (Ch.4: V.30-31)

The forbiddance of suicide is further observed in saying of the Holy Prophet (saw):

“... And whoever commits suicide with a piece of iron will be punished with the same piece of iron in the Hell Fire.” Narrated Jundab the Prophet said, "A man was inflicted with wounds and he committed suicide, and so Allah said: My slave has caused death on himself hurriedly, so I forbid Paradise for him.” (*Bukhari Vol. 2, Bk. 23, No. 445*)

Suicide is therefore unconditionally forbidden. When it is used as a mechanism to murder others then it becomes an even greater sin. As a protest against intentional suicide the Holy Prophet (saw) has forbidden observing funeral prayer for a person who commits suicide, [unless the person was mentally ill].

After this clear teaching such terrorist actions and suicide bombing of some Muslim individuals or groups has no cover or justification at all, and they must be condemned widely.

The Fourth Caliph of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (ra), has explained Islam's view on terrorism in the clearest terms. He said:

“As far as Islam is concerned, it categorically rejects and condemns every form of terrorism. It does not provide any cover or justification for any act of violence, be it committed by an individual, group or government... I most strongly condemn all acts and form of terrorism because it is my deeply rooted belief that not only Islam but also no true religion, whatever its name, can sanction violence and bloodshed of innocent men, women and children in the name of God.

God is love, God is peace!
Love can never beget hatred,
and peace can never lead to war.”

(Murder in the name of Allah page 116 – 120, revised edition published 1990)

Farewell Address of the Prophet saw

Please permit me to present some quotes from the last address, famed in history as the farewell address of the Holy Prophet Muhammad saw at the time of Hajj. He stood before a large gathering of Muslims and delivered an address which is the real picture of Islam. In the course of this address he said:

"O men, lend me an attentive ear. For I know not whether I will stand before you again in this valley and address you as I address you now.

Your lives and your possessions have been made immune by God to attacks by one another until the Day of Judgment. God has appointed for everyone a share in the inheritance. No 'Will' shall now be admitted which is prejudicial to the interests of a rightful heir. A child born in any house will be regarded as the child of the father in that house. Whoever contests the parentage of this child will be liable to punishment under the Law of – Islam. Anyone who attributes his birth to someone else's father, or falsely claims someone to be his master, God, His angels and the whole of mankind will curse him.

O men, you have some rights against your wives, but your wives also have some rights against you. Your right against them is that they should live chaste lives, and not adopt ways which may bring disgrace to the husband in the sight of his people. If your wives do not live up to this, then you have the right to punish them. You can punish them after due inquiry has been made by a competent authority, and your right to punish has been established. Even so, punishment in such a case must not be severe. But if your wives do not do such things, and their behaviour is not such as would bring disgrace to their husbands, then your duty is to provide for them food and garments and shelter, according to your own standard of living.

Remember you must always treat your wives well. God has charged you with the duty of looking after them. Woman is weak and cannot protect her own rights. When you married, God

appointed you the trustees of those rights. You brought your wives to your homes under the Law of God. You must not, therefore, insult the trust which God has placed in your hands.

O men, you still have in your possession some prisoners of war. I advise you, therefore, to feed them and to clothe them in the same way and style as you feed and clothe yourselves. If they do anything wrong which you are unable to forgive, then pass them on to someone else. They are part of God's creation. To give them pain or trouble can never be right.

O men, what I say to you, you must hear and remember. All Muslims are as brethren to one another. All of you are equal. All men, whatever nation or tribe they may belong to, and whatever station in life they may hold, are equal.

While he was saying this the Prophet raised his hands and joined the fingers of the one hand with the fingers of other and then said:

Even as fingers of the two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to one another. No one has any right, any superiority to claim over another. You are as brothers.

Then the Prophet said:

Even as this month is sacred, this land inviolate, and this day holy so has God made the lives, property and the honor of every man sacred. To take any man's life or his property, or attack his honor, is as unjust and wrong as to violate the sacredness of this day, this month, and this territory. What I command you today is not meant only for today. It is meant for all times. You are expected to remember it and to act upon it until you leave this world and go to the next to meet your Maker.

In conclusion he said:

What I have said to you, you should communicate to the ends of the earth. Maybe those who have not heard me may benefit by it more than those who have heard. (*Sihah Sitta, Tabari, Hisham and Khamis*)

The Prophet's address is an epitome of the entire teaching and spirit of Islam. It shows how deep was the Prophet's concern for the welfare of man and the peace of the world; also how deep was his regard for the rights of women and other weak creatures. The Prophet knew his end was near. He had hints from God about his death. (*Life of Mohammad, Hadrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, p 279-281, edition 2005 published in UK*)

Introduction to Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is the Divinely promised revival of Islam prophesied in the Holy Qur'an and by the Holy Prophet of Islam. It was prophesied that in the latter days, God Almighty had destined to send Imam Mahdi, the rightly-guided by God, and the Promised Messiah in Islam to revive and reform the true message of Islam. The Ahmadiyya Community is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam in its pristine purity that promotes peace and universal brotherhood. It was founded by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, the Imam Mahdi and the Promised Messiah in 1889, in India. Now the Community has its branches in 198 countries around the world.

It is purely a religious organisation with no political objectives and believes in the everlasting love of God and in the service of mankind. It holds and practises its famous slogan of "Love for All, Hatred for None", which is the epitome and essence of Islam.

The Community is serving mankind, irrespective of their faith, colour, creed, nationality or politics. Humanity First is a charitable agency of the community which is set to provide assistance to the vulnerable people of our planet.

The Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community in Islam beautifully sums up the teachings of Islam. He said:

“A person can be held to be a Muslim when the whole of his being together with all his faculties, physical and spiritual, is devoted to God. This devotion has two aspects. First, that God Almighty should become the object of worship and the true goal and beloved, and that no one should be associated in His worship and in His love. The second, that one's life should be devoted to the service of His creatures and to sympathise with them and to share their burdens and sorrows. One should suffer pain to bring them comfort, and one should experience grief to bring them consolation.” (*Aeena Kamalat-e-Islam pp. 559-62*).

He further said:

“Be the true well-wishers of every one. There should be nothing inside you except truth and there should be nothing outside you except truth and sympathy for mankind. If you desire that God should be pleased with you in Heaven, become to each other like real brothers. It is our principle to have sympathy for the whole of mankind. If a person sees that fire has broken out in the house of a Hindu neighbour and he does not get up to help in putting it out, I tell you truly he is not of me. If one of my followers sees a Christian being killed and he does not go to his assistance to rescue him, then I tell you quite truly that he is not of us.” (*Malfoozat, viii pp 26-27*)

My very dears! Let us build bridges and demolish all the walls of hatred and malice, let us unite together to establish peace, serenity, love, respect, tolerance and universal brotherhood, because the entire humanity is looking for the lasting peace.

Dear brothers and sisters, I thank you again for your gracious and kind invitation and according me the privilege and honour to make a very humble presentation.

God bless you and reward you generously.

And my last words are that all praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds!