

Frequently Asked Questions About Islam



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1. Introduction

In a world of myriad religions and belief systems, misconceptions and concerns about other religions abound. Such misconceptions can be dangerous as they lead to hostility, and are one of the root causes of conflicts.

Religious hostility can be greatly diminished, if not completely eliminated, if we make a sincere attempt to understand the "other". The alarming level of religious hostility in the world, and its subsequent manipulation by political forces, has made interfaith dialogue the need of the hour.

The most misunderstood faith that is practiced by over 1.5 billion in the world is Islam. In an age when popular stereotypes of Muslims are undermining a faith and an entire civilization, explaining and clarifying their religion is a moral obligation on Muslims. WhyIslam.org hopes to fulfill this obligation through this compilation of answers to the most common concerns about Islam.

In doing so, it is hoped that the truth about Islam would have been conveyed in conformance to the highest standards of dignified discourse.

2. Islam and Violence

2.1. Why does Islam have the concept of *jihad* or holy war, which some use to justify violence and terrorism?

Islam and Peace

Islam comes from the root word *Salaam*, which means peace. It also means submitting one's will to Allah (swt). The word *Salaam* is also an attribute of God. In this context, it means 'The Giver of Peace'.

Muslims greet each other with *Assalaamu alaikum* which translates to wishing peace for one another. Even when wronged, the Glorious Qur'an advises Muslims to struggle against the temptation for hostility:

And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend...

[Al-Qur'an 41:34]

The Qur'an refers to Paradise as the "abode of peace". Thus peace is a goal that Muslims are required to strive for, in their own selves, in their families and in their communities. It is ironical therefore, that Islam is perceived by many as being the motivation behind the wanton killing of innocent people.

Definition of Jihad

While Islam in general is misunderstood in the western world, perhaps no other Islamic term evokes such strong reactions as the word *Jihad*.

The word *Jihad* is mistranslated as "Holy War". The Arabic equivalent of "Holy War" is *harb-u-muqadasah*. This term is not found in any verse of the Qur'an. There is nothing in the Islamic sources that permit a Muslim to fight against non-Muslims solely on the basis that they are not Muslim.

The word Jihad comes from the root word *jahada*, which means to struggle. At the individual level, jihad primarily refers to the inner struggle of being a person of virtue and submission to God in all aspects of life.

At the collective level, jihad can take various forms, such as:

1. Intellectual Jihad, which comprises of the struggle to convey the message of God to humankind and to combat social evils through knowledge, wisdom and dignified discourse. As the Glorious Qur'an says:

Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness, and says, "I am of those who bow in Islam"?

[Al-Qur'an 41:33]

2. Economic Jihad, which comprises of economic measures, and spending from one's means to improve the living conditions of the poor and the downtrodden.
3. Physical Jihad, which involves collective armed self-defense, as well as retribution against tyranny, exploitation, and oppression.

Thus the concept of Jihad is vast and comprehensive. Admittedly, it's the last category of Jihad that is a cause for concern to many, and which we shall explore in detail.

Physical Jihad

Jihad on the battlefield, in the Islamic perspective, is the last resort, and is subject to stringent conditions. It can be waged only to defend freedom, which includes freedom of faith. The Glorious Qur'an says:

"To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged;- and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid;-

(They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, - (for no cause) except that they say, "our Lord is Allah".

Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure..."

[Al-Qur'an 22:39-40]

Moreover, the Qur'an says:

"And why should ye not fight in the cause of God and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? - Men, women and children, whose cry is: "Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from thee one who will protect; and raise for us from thee one who will help!"

[Al-Qur'an 4:75]

Thus the conditions of physical Jihad are clearly defined in the Qur'an.

Rules of Engagement

Although Islam permits Jihad on the battlefield under the conditions mentioned above, the rules of engagement reflect Islam's inherent inclination towards peace:

No aggression towards civilians

Military conflict is to be directed only against fighting troops and not against civilians, as the Glorious Qur'an says:

"Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors"

[Al-Qur'an 2:190]



The Tragedy of War is that it uses Man's best....



... to do Man's Worst !

As far as the non-combatant population is concerned such as women, children, the old and the infirm, etc., the instructions of the Prophet are as follows: "Do not kill any old person, any child or any woman"¹ "Do not kill the monks in monasteries" or "Do not kill the people who are sitting in places of worship."²

During a war, the Prophet saw the corpse of a woman lying on the ground and observed: "She was not fighting. How then she came to be killed?" Thus non-combatants are guaranteed security of life even if their state is at war with an Islamic state.

Upholding Justice

The ravages of war are not an excuse for Muslims to engage in any form of cruelty or violation of human rights. As the Qur'an says:

"O ye who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety: and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do."

[Al-Qur'an 5:8]

It is forbidden under Islamic law, to ill-treat prisoners of war or to deny them the essentials of life, including medical treatment.

Respect for religious freedom

Physical Jihad cannot be waged with the objective of compelling people to embrace Islam. The Glorious Qur'an says:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion"

[Al-Qur'an 2:256]

"If it had been thy Lord's will, they would all have believed, - all who are on earth! wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!"

[Al-Qur'an 10:99]

¹ Narrated in the collection of traditions of Abu Dawud

² Narrated in the Musnad of Imam Ibn Hanbal

Accept peace

If the enemy offers peace, it should be accepted even at the risk of possible deception. The Glorious Qur'an says:

“But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah: for He is One that heareth and knoweth (all things)”

[Al-Qur'an 8:61]

Can terrorism be compared to Jihad?

Terrorism is usually defined as ideologically motivated indiscriminate violence that targets civilians, with the intention of inspiring terror in order to achieve political ends.

Although this definition ignores the reality of state terrorism, it is clear that terrorism has no place in the noble concept of Jihad. Even Jihad that involves physical conflict is the very antithesis of terrorism, as is clear from the following differences:

1. Jihad can be launched only by an established authority as a policy in order to deter aggression. Terrorism, on the other hand, is committed by individuals or groups that have no legitimacy to speak for the majority. When terrorism is committed by states, it usually depends on misleading the masses.
2. Jihad is limited to combatants while terrorism involves indiscriminate killing of civilians.
3. Jihad, when the need arises, is declared openly, while terrorism is committed secretly.
4. Jihad is bound by strict rules of engagement while terrorism is not bound by any rules.

Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that Jihad is a vast concept that encompasses various spheres of activity, all directed towards the betterment of self and society.

Regardless of how legitimate a cause may be, Islam does not condone the killing of innocent people. Terrorizing the civilian population, whether by individuals or states, can never be termed as jihad and can never be reconciled with the teachings of Islam.

2.2. What about verses in the Qur'an that encourage you to kill non-believers wherever you find them?

This is a question that often comes up in critiques of Islam, especially in light of recent political events. It is incumbent on Muslims to respond to and clear misconceptions stemming from Islam's perceived stance on violence and interfaith relations.

The Importance of Context

The word 'context' has two dictionary meanings:

1. The parts of a written or spoken statement that precede or follow a specific word or passage, usually influencing its meaning or effect.
2. The set of circumstances or facts that surround a particular event, situation, etc.

Any discussion on Qur'anic verses that refer to violence would be meaningless, without a study of the surrounding context. Before we study the verses in question, therefore, let us examine this issue in a wider perspective:

The Sanctity of Life

The Glorious Qur'an says:

"...take not life, which God hath made sacred, except by way of justice and law: thus doth He command you, that ye may learn wisdom."

[Al-Qur'an 6:151]

Islam considers all life forms as sacred. However, the sanctity of human life is accorded a special place. The first and the foremost basic right of a human being is the right to live. The Glorious Qur'an says:

"...if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people."

[Al-Qur'an 5:32]

Such is the value of a single human life, that the Qur'an equates the taking of even one human life unjustly, with killing all of humanity.

The Verses of War

The words that often causes consternation among those unfamiliar with Islam, is:

"...and slay them wherever ye catch them..."

The truth is that this is only part of the verse 191 of Chapter 2 of the Qur'an. Let us read the verses 190 to 191 in order to get a complete picture:

"Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have Turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith."

[Al-Qur'an 2:190-191]

It is a well-known fact of Islamic history, that fighting against aggressors was prohibited during the first thirteen years of the Prophet's mission. After Muslims migrated to Medina, the verses above were revealed to enable the community to fight in self-defense. The verses that follow clearly indicate Islam's prohibition on aggression and inclination towards peace:

"But if they cease, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression."

[Al-Qur'an 2:192-193]

The verses above specifically refer to fighting against oppression and in defense of religious freedom as the Glorious Qur'an says:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion"

[Al-Qur'an 2:256]

Fair-dealing towards all

When read in context, the above verses do not even remotely suggest an exhortation for Muslims to be vicious or hateful towards people of other faiths. Far from this, the Qur'an actually requires that Muslims conduct themselves with fairness and dignity in all matters, and especially in regard to interfaith relations, as indicated by the following verse:

"Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just."

[Al-Qur'an 60:8]

2.3. Why are Muslims not condemning terrorist acts?

Prominent Muslim scholars, organizations and movements, representing the vast majority of Muslims worldwide, have repeatedly condemned terrorism, and have spoken out for peace and justice. Following is a very brief list of such open condemnation of terrorism, including statements issued in the wake of the heinous attacks on September 11.

1. The American Muslim Political Co-ordination Committee (AMPCC), which is a group of major American Muslim organizations, including ICNA (our parent organization), issued a statement on September 11, 2001 condemning the terrorist attacks. The AMPCC statement read in part:

"American Muslims utterly condemn what are vicious and cowardly acts of terrorism against innocent civilians. We join with all Americans in calling for the swift apprehension and

punishment of the perpetrators. No political cause could ever be assisted by such immoral acts."

2. Major American Muslim organizations including the Islamic Circle of North America, are signatories to the following statement released on September 21, 2001.

American Muslim Response to the September Attacks

Released September 21, 2001

We, the undersigned Muslim organizations, support the President and Congress of the U.S. in the struggle against terrorism. Holding to the ideals of both our religion and our country, we condemn all forms of terrorism, and confirm the need for perpetrators of any such acts of violence to be brought to justice, including those who carried out the attacks of Tuesday, September 11, 2001.

At the same time, in the planning of this "war against terrorism," we call upon the President and Congress to reaffirm the values and principles that make this country great, namely that one is innocent until proven guilty, that all accused have the right to a fair trial, that no one be punished for the acts of another, and that respect for human life is supreme, regardless of race or religion. To this end, we urge the U.S. government not to abandon the due process of law in determining responsibility for the attacks and punishing the guilty parties.

We are saddened by the possibility of military action, as we do not believe that terrorism can be eliminated solely or even effectively through military force. Rather we call upon our leaders to recognize that in order to rid the world of the ugliness of terrorism, our nation must understand its root causes. We hold out the hope that these root causes can be addressed through non-violent means, in a way that promotes peace and harmony between the nations of the world.

Signed:

Afghan Muslim Association (Fremont, CA)
American Muslims for Global Peace and Justice (AMGPJ)
American Muslims Intent on Learning and Activism (AMILA)
Arab-American Congress, Council on American-Islamic Relations (Northern California)
Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) Bay Area
Islamic Networks Group (ING)
Islamic Society of the East Bay (Union City, CA)
Islamic Society of San Francisco
Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) West Zone
Muslim American Society
Muslim Community Association (MCA)
Muslim Peace Fellowship (Nyack, NY)
South Bay Islamic Association (San Jose, CA)
Zaytuna Institute (Hayward, CA)

3. Prominent scholars worldwide have condemned terrorism as a heresy against Islam. The Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University, the oldest seat of Islamic learning, Sheikh Muhammed

Sayyed Tantawi, has repeatedly condemned terrorism. He said in the name of Islamic law, he rejected and condemned the aggression against innocent civilian people, regardless of whatever side, sect or country the aggression came from.

Prominent scholars of Saudi Arabia, Shaykh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah bin Baz and Shaykh Uthaimeen, also condemned the terrorist attacks. Every other major scholar of Islam, has come out against the indiscriminate killing of innocent civilians.

3. Statements of Prominent Islamic Scholars

"Hijacking planes, terrorizing innocent people and shedding blood constitute a form of injustice that can not be tolerated by Islam, which views them as gross crimes and sinful acts"

Shaykh Abdul Aziz al-Ashaikh (Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia and Chairman of the Senior Ulama, on September 15th, 2001)

"The terrorists acts, from the perspective of Islamic law, constitute the crime of hirabah (waging war against society)"

Sept. 27, 2001 fatwa, signed by: *Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi* (Grand Islamic Scholar and Chairman of the Sunna and Sira Council, Qatar)

Judge Tariq al-Bishri, First Deputy President of the Council d'etat, Egypt

Dr. Muhammad s. al-Awa, Professor of Islamic Law and Shari'a, Egypt

Dr. Haytham al-Khayyat, Islamic scholar, Syria

Fahmi Houaydi, Islamic scholar, Syria

Shaykh Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Chairman, North America High Council

"Neither the law of Islam nor its ethical system justify such a crime."

Zaki Badawi, Principal of the Muslim College in London. Cited in Arab News, Sept. 28, 2001.

"It is wrong to kill innocent people. It is also wrong to praise those who kill innocent people."

Mufti Nizamuddin Shamzai, Pakistan. Cited in NY Times, Sept. 28, 2001.

Ingrid Mattson, a professor of Islamic studies and Muslim-Christian relations at Hartford Seminary in Hartford, said there was no basis in Islamic law or sacred text for Mr. bin Laden's remarks. **"The basic theological distortion is that any means are permitted to achieve the end of protesting against perceived oppression."**

Dr. Ingrid Mattson, (now President of the Islamic Society of North America)

Conclusion

Muslims stand united in their condemnation of terrorist attacks and any attempt to link their faith to heinous acts that question the humanity of the perpetrators. The vast majority of Muslims worldwide find in Islam, a faith that preaches devotion and good character, not one that calls for hatred towards fellow humans.

2.4. Was Islam Spread By the Sword?

One of the bizarre myths perpetuated about Islam, during the centuries of mistrust during and after the Crusades, is that Muslim armies forced people to accept Islam at the point of the sword. Unfortunately this myth survives to this day.

Many Western scholars have now repudiated this myth. The great historian De Lacy O'Leary wrote in "Islam At the Cross-roads":

"History makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated."

Indeed, it is a historical fact, that Islam spread much faster during periods of peace than in periods of war. Islam continued to spread, as it does now, when Muslims were not prevailing economically, socially or politically.

History of Tolerance and Mutual Respect

The Glorious Qur'an says:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error"

[Al-Qur'an 2:256]

Traditionally Muslims have treated other religions with respect, even when they were in a position to use force.

Muslims ruled Spain for about 800 years. During these 800 years, until Muslims were finally forced out by the crusaders, non-Muslims flourished in Spain.

Muslims have ruled Arabia for 1400 years, except for brief periods of British and French rule. Yet there are today 14 million Arabs who are Coptic Christians whose families have been Christians going back several generations.

The Muslims ruled India for about a thousand years. They had the power to forcibly convert each and every non-Muslim of India to Islam. Today more than 80% of the population of India is non-Muslim. All these non-Muslim Indians are bearing witness to the fact that Islam was not spread by the sword.

Thomas Arnold, a former Christian missionary in India, who cannot be accused of being pro-Islam, in his famous book *'The Preaching of Islam'*, indicates that there have been certain periods where Muslim rulers have diverted from this tolerance, but it was due to a deviation from Islamic principles, rather than conformance to them.

He concludes that the two primary reasons for the spread of Islam all over the world were merchants and the Sufis, two groups of people who went out, worked with humanity and gently invited others to their faith.

Legal Safeguards for non-Muslims under Islamic Law

The Quran and *Sunnah* (Traditions of the Prophet ﷺ) explicitly dictate regulations and rights for the protection of non-Muslim minorities living under the rule of Islam. The Prophet ﷺ even said that if a Muslim hurts a covenanted person, i.e. a non-Muslim living under the rule of Islam, or commits any injustice to him, then on the Day of Judgment the Prophet ﷺ would be the advocate on behalf of the non-Muslim against the Muslim. What would be the sense and need for all of these prescriptions and advice, if Islam required that they be compelled to accept the religion?

The Rapid Spread of Islam

An article in Reader's Digest 'Almanac', year book 1986, gave the statistics of the increase of percentage of the major religions of the world in half a century from 1934 to 1984. This article also appeared in 'The Plain Truth' magazine. At the top was Islam, which increased by 235%, and Christianity had increased only by 47%. May one ask, "Which war took place in this century which converted millions of people to Islam?"

Indonesia is a country that has the maximum number of Muslims in the world. The majority of people in Malaysia are Muslims. Similarly, Islam has spread rapidly on the East Coast of Africa. May one ask, "Which Muslim army went to Indonesia and Malaysia, and to the East coast of Africa?"

Today the fastest growing religion in America and in Europe is Islam. Which sword is forcing people in the West to accept Islam in such large numbers?

3. The Prophet of Islam



The Prophet's Mosque in Medina

3.1. How can Muhammad ﷺ be considered a true prophet, when he married so many women?

Over the centuries since the revelation of the Glorious Qur'an to Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), there have been several attacks on the Prophet's personality. Many of them are centered around the fact that he had several wives (nine according to some Traditions), in the latter part of his life. It is important to highlight some salient aspects of the Prophet's marriages that will enable us to view them in a broader perspective:

1. Polygamy is neither universally wrong nor immoral. What is wrong is adultery; having illicit relations with women one is not married to. Furthermore, one has to look at polygamy in terms of the specific circumstances of different times and places; for example, polygamy played a key role in facilitating the care for orphans and widows at times of war. For a detailed answer on polygamy, please refer Section 4, question 4.3.

2. Being in polygamous marriages is not a sound basis on which to reject someone as a prophet. Most of the prophets, as their stories are recounted in the Bible, such as Abraham, David and Solomon (peace be on them all), had more than one wife.
3. Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) married Khadijah (RA), a widow who was 15 years his senior when he was 25. He remained in this monogamous marriage for 24 years, until she died. It was only after her death, after he reached 50 years of age, that he had more than one wife simultaneously. These subsequent marriages were not the result of desire or obsession; rather they served a variety of functions and exemplified appropriate behavior. Some of the motives behind his marriages were:
 - i) to strengthen his relationship with his close companions by marrying the daughters of Abu Bakr (RA) and Umar (RA).
 - ii) to establish bonds with enemies; for instance his marriage to Umm Habiba, the daughter of Abu Sufyan. He also married women from Christian tribes, such as Maria, and from Jewish tribes. These unions were very noble as they reconciled the hearts of enemies. If one considers these marriages as political, aimed at unifying fighting people and reducing hostility between tribes, then let them be called political marriages.
 - iii) to care for orphans; for instance, Umm Salma was a widow with four children who was about 50 years old at the time of her marriage to the Prophet (SAW).
4. When the question of polygamy arises in relation to Prophet Muhammad (SAW), it is often really raised in order to question his chastity. What is disregarded is the fact that even though he lived in a loose society where fornication was a common place, not even his enemies raised any doubts about his chastity.

3.2. Why did Prophet Muhammad ﷺ limit his followers to four wives, while he had more than this?

Polygamy was a common practice in several cultures including the Arab. During the time of the Prophet ﷺ, the Arabs practiced unrestricted polygamy. What logic was there for a leader to limit his followers to four wives, when more was common, and then to say that he was exempted?

The truth is that the Prophet ﷺ did not limit his followers of his own volition. It was the command of Allah in the Glorious Qur'an.

In reference to the restriction on polygamy, Islam was the first Abrahamic religion with a scripture that limited the practice of polygamy.

In reference to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as an exception, there are sound reasons why Allah exempted him from this restriction. One reason is that each of the marriages of the Prophet (SAW) embodied a type of wisdom, for example to unify tribes, and exemplified different elements of the marriage union, i.e. protection, care, unity, diversity and love.

3.3. Why did Prophet Muhammad ﷺ marry a child, Aisha? Is that not illegal?

According to widely accepted accounts, Prophet Muhammed ﷺ, married Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), when she was six. The marriage was consummated three years later.

It is interesting to note however, that Ibn Ishaq, the most authoritative historian of the life of the Prophet Muhammed ﷺ, mentioned the names of Aisha and, her sister, Asma amongst the earliest of people who accepted Islam. The Prophet's (SAW) marriage with Aisha was consummated (i.e. she moved to his house) three years after the contract/engagement, and this took place in Madina. Since the Meccan period alone was 13 years, it is much more likely that the contract took place at the age of 16 and that the marriage was consummated at the age of 19. Whether or not this is true, it is an interesting point to note.

Acceptability in certain practices varies across culture and across time. Even in America there was a time when there were no laws restricting the age of marriage, and some were married at the age of 12 or 13. States, then, started to limit the age of marriage to 14 and, in some states, 16. All such practices and related law are tied to the socio-cultural practices of the time and place.

In terms of the marriage practices in Arabia during the time of the Prophet ﷺ, there are some important points. First, you could negotiate the marriage of a minor child and have a contract for marriage, like an engagement, in those times, without the actual marriage taking place until the age of adolescence. There is evidence that this practice was accepted in Islam. The enemies of the Prophet ﷺ never raised any issue about his marriage to Aisha which, also, shows that it was a social norm in that culture at that time. Islam actually added some restriction to this practice. It allowed the engagement contract in childhood, but this becomes null and void if the two parties reach the age of adolescence and do not agree with what their guardians arranged. Secondly, Islam explicitly placed the minimum marriageable age at adolescence, rather than an arbitrary, chronological age. Adolescence can vary from one culture to another.

Islamic scholars are unanimous that the Prophet's marriage to Aisha was a singular act of tremendous wisdom. Aisha, as the youngest wife of the Prophet, was in a position to observe many aspects of the Prophet's life, and imbibe spiritual knowledge from a young age. She lived many years after his demise, and conveyed thousands of authentic traditions of the Prophet. Many Companions of the Prophet ﷺ looked up to her for guidance, and her scholarship has been a boon to Islam and the wider world.

4. Islam and Gender Issues

4.1. Why do Muslim women veil themselves?

The modest attire of Muslim women has become so commonplace, that *hijab*, the Arabic word used to refer to the Islamic dress code, is now commonly used in English. One of the most visible aspects of Islam, *hijab* is often the subject of controversy as well. Some view it as a sign of the subjugation of Muslim women, while some others see it as an obstacle to the integration of Muslims in Western society.

However, to Muslim women who practice hijab, it represents an act of obedience to God. It also represents a step towards freedom, i.e. freedom from being judged by their looks rather than their intellect.

Modesty – Required of both men and women

A common misconception about hijab is that it is mandated only for women. Hijab is actually mandated for both men and women. The difference lies in how they are required to implement it. The Glorious Qur'an says:

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that will make for greater purity for them; and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands...”

[Al-Qur'an 24:30-31]

Both men and women are required to dress and conduct themselves in a manner that befits their dignity and is not the cause of temptation for others. Hair is considered part of a woman's physical attractiveness. Therefore, covering of hair for the woman is considered essential to modesty of her attire, even in the Bible. This is the reason that nuns and orthodox Jewish women also cover their hair.

It is the outer dress of Muslim women which includes the head covering that is usually referred to as hijab. Hijab is not merely a covering dress, but more importantly, it is behavior, manners, speech and appearance in public. The headscarf is an outer manifestation of an inner commitment to worshipping Allah – it symbolizes a commitment to piety. Self or inner morality is what gives meaning to the external scarf.

The Face Veil

In the opinion of the majority of Muslim scholars, a woman should cover everything except her face and hands. The face veil however, is worn by some Muslim women, who either consider it a requirement, or wish to adhere to a higher level of modesty.

Hijab – A liberation



A Typical style of Hijab worn by Muslim women

In a society in which women's beauty has been commoditized, and where women often end up associating their self-worth with their looks, the hijab and its concomitant de-emphasis of physical beauty can be tremendously liberating. Muslim women wear the hijab out of obedience to God, while recognizing the immense wisdom behind His commandment.

4.2. Why do women in Muslim countries not have the same rights as women in the West, such as rights for education and employment?

Gender issues the world over, including the Muslim world need urgent attention. However, the issues faced by women in the Muslim world are of a vastly different nature as compared to issues faced by women in the West.

Firstly it is important to differentiate between the status of women in Islam and the present status of women in the Muslim world. It is also important to appreciate the vast diversity of the Muslim world, with its varying levels of adherence to Islamic injunctions, with regard to

the status of Muslim women. In a world-wide population of 1.5 billion Muslims, the status of women varies from culture to culture and often within the same culture. Thus the stereotypical image of the oppressed Muslim woman with limited or no access to education is just that, a stereotype based on gross misinformation.

The bedrock of the Islamic civilization was learning and intellectual striving, and women scholars have been common from the earliest days of Islam.

Limiting women's access to higher education either openly or by tacit discrimination as happens in some countries is a violation of Islamic injunctions. It is true that in some places, parents tend to favor their sons over their daughters. This is in clear violation to the Prophetic tradition³.

Social evils such as "honor" killings, domestic violence and the abuse of women exist in Muslim as well as non-Muslim cultures. They are completely anathema to the Islamic concept of *adl* (justice). To associate these evils with Islam is a grave injustice to the cause of women's empowerment.

To say that women in Muslim countries do not have the same rights as women in the West assumes that the general status of women in the West is worthy of emulation by Muslim women, something that even ardent Western feminists would disagree with strongly. Germaine Greer, the renowned feminist, writes in her book "The Whole Woman" in 1999 referring to her earlier bestseller written thirty years ago:

"When The Female Eunuch was written our daughters were not cutting or starving themselves. On every side speechless women endure endless hardship, grief and pain, in a world system that creates billions of losers for every handful of winners". (p. 3)

It is therefore important to understand that the status of Muslim women need not be viewed through the prism of the aspirations of Western women. The aberrations in the present status of Muslim women are a result of **not** following the teachings of Islam, rather than conforming to them. Therefore, improving the status of women in the Muslim world requires more and not less adherence to Islamic injunctions.

4.3. Why does Islam permit polygamy?

1. Definition of Polygamy

Polygamy means a system of marriage wherein one person has more than one spouse. Polygamy can be of two types; one is polygyny wherein a man marries more than one woman, and the other is polyandry, wherein a woman marries more than one man. Islam permits limited polygyny while prohibiting polyandry completely.

³ Reported by Ahmad

2. Legal Position of Polygyny in Islam

Muslims derive the permissibility of polygyny in Islam from the Qur'anic verse:

"If you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then (marry) only one..." [Al-Qur'an 4:3]

From this verse, it is evident that polygyny is neither mandatory, nor encouraged, but merely permitted. The Qur'an also warns about the difficulty of dealing justly between multiple wives:

Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire: But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air). If ye come to a friendly understanding, and practise self-restraint, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

[Al-Qur'an 4:129]

Nevertheless, it made fair and equitable dealing with wives an obligation. If one is not sure of being able to deal justly with wives, the Qur'an says: *"then (marry) only one"* (Qur'an 4:3).

The Qur'anic injunction, thus, made polygyny restrictive, when compared with the prevalent practice in the world.

Dr. Jamal Badawi, a Canadian Islamic scholar says:

"The requirement of justice rules out the fantasy that man can "own as many as he pleases." It also rules out the concept of a "secondary wife", for all wives have exactly the same status and are entitled to identical rights and claims over their husband. It also implies, according to the Islamic Law, that should the husband fail to provide enough support for any of his wives, she can go to court and ask for a divorce."

3. Is Polygyny Exclusive to Islam?

The question that arises is: "Did the institution of polygyny originate in Islam"? A brief look at major world religions and cultures clearly indicates that this is not the case.

- a) Polygyny is permitted in Judaism. According to Talmudic law, Abraham had three wives, and Solomon had hundreds of wives. The practice of polygyny continued until Rabbi Gershom ben Yehudah (960 C.E to 1030 C.E) issued an edict against it. The Jewish Sephardic communities living in Muslim countries continued the practice until as late as 1950, when an Act of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel extended the ban on marrying more than one wife.
- b) There is no passage in the New Testament that expressly prohibits polygamy except in the case of bishops and deacons. This was the understanding of the early Church Fathers and for several centuries in the Christian era.

Westermarck, the noted authority on the history of human marriages states:

“On various occasions Luther speaks of polygamy with considerable toleration. It had not been forbidden by God: even Abraham, who was a "perfect Christian", had two wives. It is true that God had allowed such marriages to certain men of the Old Testament only in particular circumstances, and if a Christian wanted to follow their example he had to show that the circumstances were similar in his case; but polygamy was undoubtedly preferable to divorce.

In 1650, soon after the Peace of Westphalia, when the population had been greatly reduced by the Thirty Years' War, the Frankish Kreistag at Nuremberg passed resolution that thenceforth every man should be allowed to marry two women. Certain sects of Christians have even advocated polygamy with much fervor.

In 1531 the Anabaptists openly preached at Munster that he who wants to be a true Christian must have several wives. And the Mormons, as the entire world knows, regard polygamy as a divine institution."

- c) Many Hindu religious personalities, according to their scriptures, had multiple wives. King Dashrat, the father of Rama, had more than one wife. Krishna had several wives.

4. Polygyny is a Solution

Let us consider a few honest questions: What is the situation in countries that have banned polygamy? Do they really enjoy sincere and faithful "monogamy" as the norm? Are infidelity and secret extramarital sexual relationships more moral than the legitimate, legally protected husband-wife relationships, even under polygamy if there is a pressing need for it? Which of the two situations is better?

There are societies where women outnumber men. Besides these, wars take a heavier toll on men as compared to women. For unmarried women who cannot find husbands and widows who aspire to a respectable family life, polygyny is often an acceptable alternative.

5. Conclusion

The association of polygamy with Islam is a serious misunderstanding. Polygamy was practiced, often without limitations, in almost all cultures. In Islam, polygyny is not a substitute for monogamy, but merely a permission to practice limited polygyny, which is consistent with Islam's realistic view of human nature, as well as social needs.

As Dr. Jamal Badawi states: "Rather than requiring hypocritical and superficial compliance, Islam delves deeper into the problems of individuals and societies, and provides for legitimate and clean solutions that are far more beneficial than would be the case if they were ignored."

5. The Muslim World

5.1. Why are Muslims divided into so many rival sects?

1. Disunity Among Muslims

It is a fact that Muslims today, are divided amongst themselves. The tragedy is that such divisions are not rooted in the Islamic sources, but are later accretions to the understanding of Islam.

The Glorious Qur'an says:

*"And hold fast, All together, by the rope
Which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves;"*

[Al-Qur'an 3:103]

The rope of Allah that is being referred to in this verse is the Glorious Qur'an, the revelation from God Almighty to all humankind.

Islam in fact, prohibits its followers from engaging in sectarian disputes.

The Glorious Qur'an says:

"As for those who divide their religion and break up Into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: Their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did."

[Al-Qur'an 6:159]

2. No Disagreement on the pillars of Islam

While it may be true that Muslims are divided into several sects, often at odds with each other, a closer scrutiny reveals that there is no disagreement on the fundamental pillars of Islam, among the vast majority of Muslims.

3. Single Identity

The Glorious Qur'an and Prophet (peace be upon him) refers to the followers of Islam as Muslims.

"Who is better in speech Than one who calls (men) To Allah, works righteousness, And says, 'I am of those Who bow in Islam (Muslim)?' "

[Al-Qur'an 41:33]

A Muslim is 'one who submits'. In that sense, earlier prophets and their true followers were also Muslims.

4. Ethics of Disagreement in Islam

The ethics of disagreement are very much a part of the Islamic tradition. Muslims have traditionally accepted the existence of a plurality of opinions on various aspects of their religion. While one may hold a certain opinion to be more authoritative as compared to others, there is nothing in the Islamic sources that encourages a Muslim to disparage the views of others.

It was this acceptance of diversity that was a distinguishing feature of the great Islamic civilization. Muslims now need to revive the ethics of disagreement which was in the past, a hallmark of Islamic thought.

6. Restrictions in Islam

6.1. Why does Islam prohibit the consumption of alcohol?

Alcohol has been the scourge of human society since time immemorial. It continues to cost countless human lives, and causes terrible misery to millions throughout the world. Alcohol is the root cause of several problems facing society. The statistics of soaring crime rates, increasing instances of mental illnesses and millions of broken homes throughout the world bear mute testimony to the destructive power of alcohol.

1. Prohibition of alcohol in the Qur'an

The prohibition of alcohol in Islam is derived from the following verse of the Glorious Qur'an:

"O ye who believe! Intoxicants and Gambling, (Dedication of) stones, And (divination by) arrows, Are an Abomination – Of Satan's handiwork; Eschew such (abomination), That ye may prosper." [Al-Qur'an 5:90]

2. Prohibition of alcohol in the Bible

The Bible prohibits the consumption of alcohol in the following verses:

- a. "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." [Proverbs 20:1]
- b. "And be not drunk with wine." [Ephesians 5:18]

3. Can Alcohol be beneficial?

Some research indicates that limited consumption can have some health benefits.⁴ This is consistent with the verse of the Glorious Qur'an:

They ask you (O Muhammad, peace be upon him) concerning alcoholic drink and gambling. Say: "In them is a great sin, and (some) benefit for men, but the sin of them is greater than their benefit."

[Al-Qur'an 2:219]

4. Alcohol inhibits the inhibitory centre

⁴ *The Health Benefits of Wine* by Gerrman JB, Walzem RL, Department of Food Science, University of California at Davis

language with people he or she respects and/or make sexual advances towards them, and regret the actions later after becoming sober.

5. What about drinking in 'moderation'?

Some argue that it is possible to drink in moderation and exercise self-control in order to prevent oneself from getting intoxicated. Investigations reveal that most alcoholics started off as 'social drinkers'. Suppose a 'social drinker' loses self-control just once. In a state of intoxication he or she might commit a terrible crime, with life changing consequences. The scores of deaths and injuries due to accident involving drunk drivers bring untold grief to thousands of families every year.

According to National Crime Victimization Survey Bureau of Justice (U.S. Department of Justice) in the year 1996 alone everyday on an average 2,713 rapes took place. The statistics tell us that the majority of the rapists were intoxicated while committing the crime. Even if the act is later regretted, a normal human being is likely to carry the guilt throughout his life. Both the victim and perpetrator are marred for life.

6. Diseases associated with alcoholism

There are several scientific reasons for the prohibition of consumption of intoxicants i.e. alcohol. The maximum number of deaths in the world related to any one particular cause is due to the consumption of alcohol. Millions of people die every year only because of intake of alcohol. Below is a simple list of few of the alcohol related illnesses:

1. Cirrhosis of the liver (the most well known alcohol associated disease).
2. Cancers of the Oesophagus, of the head and neck, of the liver (Hepatoma) and of the bowel.
4. Coronary Artherosclerosis, Angina and heart attacks are linked to heavy alcohol intake. Similarly strokes and different types of paralysis are linked to alcohol intake.
5. Beriberi and other deficiencies are not uncommon among alcoholics. Even Pellagra occurs in alcoholics.
6. Delerium Tremens is a serious complication that may occur during recurrent infection of alcoholics or post operatively. It also occurs during abstention as a sign of withdrawal effect. It is quite serious and may cause death even if treated in well equipped centers
7. Recurrent infection is very common among chronic alcoholics. The resistance to disease and the immunological defense system are compromised by alcohol intake.
8. Chest infections are notorious in alcoholics. Pneumonia, Lung Abscess, Emphysema and Pulmonary Tuberculosis are all common in alcoholics.
9. During acute alcoholic intoxication, the drunk person usually vomits, the cough reflexes which are protective are paralysed. The vomitus thus easily pass to the lung causing Pneumonia or Lung Abscess. Occasionally it may even cause suffocation and death.

10. The ill effects of alcohol consumption on women deserves special mention. Females are more vulnerable to alcohol-related Cirrhosis than men. During pregnancy alcohol consumption has a severe detrimental effect on the foetus. Foetal Alcohol Syndrome is being recognized more and more in the medical profession.

11. Skin diseases are also related to alcohol indulgence.

12. Eczema, Alopecia, Nail Dystrophy, Paronychia (infection around the nails) and Angular Stomatitis (inflammation of the angle of the mouth) are common diseases among alcoholics.

7. Is Alcoholism a disease ?

If alcohol is a disease, it is the only disease that:

- Is sold in bottles
- Is advertised in newspapers, magazines, on radio and television
- Has licensed outlets to spread it
- Produces revenue for the government
- Brings violent deaths on the highways
- Destroys family life and increases crime
- Has no germs or viral cause

ALCOHOLISM IS NOT A DISEASE – IT IS SATAN'S HANDIWORK

Islam is called the "Deen-ul-Fitrah" or the natural religion of Man. All its injunctions are aimed at preserving the natural state of man. Alcohol is a deviation from this natural state, for the individual as well as for society. Hence the consumption of alcohol is prohibited in Islam.

6.2. Why do Muslims abstain from pork?

The prohibition of pork in Islam is derived from the following verse of the Glorious Qur'an:

"Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah."

[Al-Qur'an 5:3]

Let us examine various aspects of this prohibition:

1. Prohibition in Earlier Scriptures

Islam is a culmination of the same monotheistic religion that was revealed to earlier prophets. Although the Glorious Qur'an is the only revelation that is extant in its original revealed text, some remnants of earlier revelations can be found in the Bible.

The Bible prohibits the consumption of pork, in the book of Leviticus

"And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you".

"Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcass shall ye not touch, they are unclean to you."

[Leviticus 11:7-8]

Pork is also prohibited in the Bible in the book of Deuteronomy

"And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you. Ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcass."

[Deuteronomy 14:8]

A similar prohibition is repeated in the Bible in the book of Isaiah chapter 65 verse 2-5.

2. The Nature of Pork

The main utility of pigs in the ecosystem is as scavengers. They live and thrive on muck, feces and dirt.

It could be argued that in developed countries, pigs are bred in very clean and hygienic conditions. Even in these hygienic conditions the pigs are kept together in sties, and so the chances of them consuming filth are very high.

3. Health Aspects

Research has shown correlation between pork consumption and several diseases. Eating pork can expose the individual to various *helminthes* (worms) like roundworm, pinworm and hookworm. One of the most dangerous of worms is *Taenia Solium*, which, in lay man's terminology is called the pork tapeworm. It harbors in the intestine and is very long. Its ova i.e. eggs, enter the blood stream and can reach almost all the organs of the body. If it enters the brain it can cause memory loss. If it enters the heart it can cause heart attack, in the eye it can cause blindness, and in the liver it can cause liver damage. It can damage almost all the organs of the body.

A common misconception about pork is that if it is cooked well, these ova die. In a research project undertaken in America, it was found that out of twenty-four people suffering from *Trichura Tichurasis* (another worm commonly found in pork), twenty two had cooked the pork very well. This indicates that the ova present in the pork do not die under normal cooking temperature.

Pork has very little muscle building material and contains excess of fat. This fat gets

deposited in the vessels and can cause hypertension and heart attack. It is not surprising that hypertension is a common ailment due to the prevalence of the consumption of pork.

Thus the prohibition of pork in Islam is a blessing.

7. Islam and Other Faiths

7.1. Why does the Quran refer to Jews and Christians as *kufar*, or infidels? What kind of respect and tolerance is that?

The translation of the word *kafir* as infidel is a grave error. The word infidel means someone who does not believe in God. The Qur'an does **not** allege that Jews and Christians do not believe in God. On the contrary the Qur'an refers to Jews and Christians respectfully as "People of the Book" and says:

"And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)."

[Al-Qur'an 29:46]

The term *kafir*, referring to a type of person, or *kufr*, referring to an act, is used in the Quran in a variety of ways:

1. Anyone who believes in one thing is a *kafir* of its opposite. Here *kafir* means one who rejects and can even be used in a positive sense.
2. *Kufr* can be used in a neutral/ benign sense as the origin of *kufr* in the Arabic language means to cover up. So the farmer who is putting a seed in the ground and covering it up is performing *kufr*.
3. The word *kafir* is used in the Qur'an not only for Jews and Christians but also for those who periodically rejected their prophets. While the Qur'an accords a special respect for Jews and Christians, it does not gloss over the major theological differences. For instance, the Glorious Qur'an says:

"They indeed have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary..."

[Al-Qur'an 5:17]

4. The word *kafir* can also be used to imply a rejection of Islam. It describes one who knows the truth, but rejects it out of pride or vanity. This is someone who knows the truth in their heart and deliberately rejects it.

Nonetheless, Muslims believe it is their duty to convey the message of God to humankind, and leave the matter at that. God alone is the judge.

7.2. Does the Quran contain anti-Semitic verses?

A common misconception about Islam is that it espouses hostility with Jews and Christians. The verse quoted in this regard is:

“O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other.”

[Al-Qur'an 5:51]

In this regard, it is important to note the following:

1. The Arabic word used in the Qur'an is *awliyah*. As a general rule, believers are encouraged to turn only to God for protection and security.
2. It is necessary to consider this verse in light of other verses of the Qur'an such as:

“Did not Allah check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, in which the name of Allah is commemorated in abundant measure.”

[Al-Qur'an 22:40]

“Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just.”

[Al-Qur'an 60:8]

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other)). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).

[Al-Qur'an 49:13]

3. Islam permits Muslim men to marry chaste women from among the Jews and Christians. The Muslim man is obligated to treat his Jewish or Christian wife with mercy, love and compassion. Which is more intimate, the marital relationship or friendship? Does it make sense that a Muslim would be permitted to marry a non-Muslim, but not befriend one?
4. It is ludicrous to say that the Prophet of Islam or the Qur'an is anti-Semitic, because the Prophet ﷺ himself was Semitic.
5. How could the Qur'an be considered anti-Semitic when the name of Moses ﷺ is mentioned many more times than the name of Muhammed ﷺ? The Quran describes the original Torah revealed to Moses as giving light and guidance, and demands the respecting of the rights of all people, including Jews.

6. It is incumbent on Muslims to believe in the original revelation sent to Prophets Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them). The criticism in the Qur'an is aimed at distortions and sinful acts of Jews, Christians as well as some Muslims.
7. It is true that in parts of the Muslim world, one can find anti-Semitic views. These have nothing to do with the Qur'an and are a distortion of Qur'anic principles. Political problems often take a religious hue, and like every community, fanatics exist among Muslims too.
8. Through the better part of the history of Islamic civilization, Muslims understood that their faith required that they treat people of all religions with respect. Christians and Jews lived in peace and security within the Ottoman Empire. In Muslim Spain, Muslims and Jews co-operated in creating a glorious civilization, whose light shone over Europe during the Middle Ages. None of this would have been possible, if the Qur'an, the fountainhead of Islamic teachings, preached hostility towards people of other faiths.

7.3. Did the Prophet massacre and persecute the Jews in Madina?

Historical accounts of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ describe in detail his clear and fair dealings with the Jewish tribes in and around the city of Madina.

As soon as the Prophet ﷺ emigrated to Madina, he established the Constitution of Madina or 'Sahifa'. It was the first multicultural, multi-religion constitution in the world that gave everyone equal rights, including the Jews. It gave legal autonomy and the right to practice one's own religion freely. It required a commitment to defend the city of Madina against external aggression.

The Prophet ﷺ upheld both the letter and spirit of this agreement. Even non-Muslim scholars, such as Montgomery Watts, never mention that the Prophet ﷺ betrayed his agreements. In fact, it was the other way around; other parties committed acts that were contrary to the agreement. This occurred on more than one occasion. Penalty was imposed but only to the specific group of people who committed the offense. Had it been applied to all, one could suspect group bias, such as anti-Semitism. However, that was not the case.

Furthermore, the punishment was always proportionate to the offense that was committed. Uncovering a Muslim woman was different to conspiring to kill the Prophet ﷺ, and such actions were handled in different manners.

The ultimate betrayal occurred in the Battle of the Trench, when a group of Jews from Madina contacted the enemy, renounced the constitution of Madinah, and helped the enemy during war against Madinah. In modern times, this is referred to as high treason at the time of war.

Penalty was imposed but it was not the Prophet's ﷺ sentence. The people of *Banu Quraiza* had their own arbitrator. He ruled according to the law of the Torah, which specifies killing of

men for treason. The Prophet ﷺ simply agreed with his sentence. To say that the Prophet ﷺ massacred Jews is therefore a distortion of historical facts.

8. Islam in the West

8.1. Is the 'Nation of Islam' a Muslim organization?

The beliefs and tenets of the 'Nation of Islam' are contrary to some of the fundamental tenets of Islam. It is therefore incorrect to consider the Nation of Islam a Muslim organization.

The Nation of Islam was formed to address racial inequity and civil rights concerns of African-Americans in the United States. The Nation uses terminology borrowed from the religion of Islam. However, it has simultaneously developed an elaborate belief system to support its doctrines of black racial superiority.

The Nation of Islam considers its founder, Elijah Muhammad, as a prophet of God. It further believes that Elijah Muhammad's mentor, W.D. Fard was God Incarnate. These beliefs are contrary to the basic testimony of Islam. Therefore, the Nation cannot be considered as a branch of Islam. The racial outlook of the Nation of Islam, contradicts the universalistic beliefs and worldview of Islam.

A large number of members of the Nation of Islam, have renounced their beliefs in the doctrines preached by the Nation, and embraced mainstream Islam. Among those who were able to rise above the racialism preached by the Nation was Malcolm X. He traveled to Makkah, Saudi Arabia, to perform the *Hajj* or pilgrimage. There Malcolm X saw the brotherhood of Islam, where people of all races and colors were united in their seeking of divine pleasure. Upon his return, he took the name of El-Hajj Malik El Shabazz, and began developing a new organization to further the cause of African-Americans in the US, without the racial trappings of the Nation. Malcolm X was assassinated on February 21, 1964.

9. Suggested Reading

1. **The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an**

Translator: Abdullah Yusuf Ali

Publisher: Amana Publications

ISBN: 0-915957-76-0

Available at: Amana Publications, Phone: 1- (800) 660-1777

2. **Islam - The Natural Way**

Author: Abdul Wahid Hamid

Publisher: MELS

ISBN 0-948-196-09-2

Available at: Soundvision.com and probably other online stores too

3. **Jihad vs Terrorism**

Author: Dr. Maher Hathout

Publisher: Multimedia Vera International,

ISBN: 1-881504-54-9

Available at: MPAC (Muslim Public Affairs Council) or the distributor, Dawn Books LLC

Phone (626) 796 3041

4. **Jesus - Prophet of Islam**

Author: Muhammad Ata-ur-Rahim

Publisher: Tahrike-Tarsile-Quran Inc.

ISBN 1-879402-07-6

Available at: Soundvision.com and probably other online stores too

5. **Islam in Focus**

Author: Hammudah Abdalati

Publisher: The Islamic Foundation

ISBN: 0-86037-036-4

Available at: Soundvision.com and probably other online stores too

6. **What Everyone Should Know about Islam and Muslims**

Author: Suzanne Hanif

Publisher: Library of Islam

ISBN: 0-935782-00-1

Available at: Soundvision.com and probably other online stores too