

SEEKING ANSWERS

ISLAM

- A Woman's Perspective

ASMA SOHEL



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Introduction of the Book

“Iqra” – The Divine Call That Changed Everything

As I embark on this literary journey to explore the beauty, depth, and truth of Islam, I choose to begin with the very first word revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him):

“Iqra” - *Read.*

This single, sacred word marked not just the beginning of the Qur'an but the beginning of an intellectual, spiritual, and civilizational revolution. With it, Allah did not just ask us to recite, but to awaken, to reflect, and to seek knowledge. It was a call to liberate the mind and elevate the soul.

In a world rife with misinformation, cultural distortions, and media-driven narratives, Islam is too often misunderstood - sometimes even by those who claim it, and certainly by many who do not. Stereotypes dominate headlines; misconceptions fill conversations. The richness of Islamic teachings is reduced to a few misunderstood practices or political headlines.

This book, **Seeking Answers: Islam - A woman's perspective**, is a humble attempt to counter that tide. It is not written to preach, but to **present**; not to argue, but to **illuminate**; and not to convert, but to **clarify**.

A Faith Rooted in Knowledge

The Qur'an repeatedly invites reflection and thoughtful engagement. It consistently invites readers to think, ponder, question, and observe. Allah mentions the faculties of **hearing**,

seeing, and **understanding** not as ornaments of the body, but as tools for arriving at truth. He says:

“Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned.” (*Surah Al-Isra 17:36*)

Contrary to the myth, particularly in countries like India and in many other regions, - that Islam discourages education or critical thought, the very essence of Islamic teaching is about awakening the intellect and using knowledge to draw closer to the Creator and serve humanity.

When the Prophet ﷺ declared that **seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim**, he wasn't referring only to religious sciences, but to all forms of beneficial knowledge that uplift the individual and the society.

The Qur'an even teaches us to pray for more learning:

- **“Rabbi zidni ‘ilma”** - “My Lord, increase me in knowledge.” (*Surah Taha 20:114*)

This is the voice of Islam - not ignorance, but inquiry; not passivity, but pursuit.

Reclaiming a Lost Narrative

It is no coincidence that early Muslim civilizations became beacons of science, philosophy, medicine, and art. Scholars such as Ibn Sina (Medicine), Al-Biruni (Astronomy), Al-Khwarizmi (Mathematics), Al-Ghazali (Philosophy and Ethics), Ibn Battuta (Geography) and Fatima Al-Fihri are not exceptions - they are products of a Qur'an-inspired culture that revered learning.

Despite this rich intellectual legacy, Islam is still sometimes wrongly perceived as discouraging intellectual inquiry. Such

misunderstandings stand in contrast to the Islamic tradition's enduring emphasis on knowledge and learning.

The Qur'an *commands* knowledge. The Prophet *exemplified* it. And the earliest generations of Muslims *embodied* it.

Where lower educational attainment exists in some Muslim communities, it cannot be attributed to Islamic teachings, which strongly encourage the pursuit of knowledge. Rather, it often reflects a combination of factors such as poverty, limited educational opportunities, financial constraints, and broader social conditions that affect many communities across different faith backgrounds.

Why This Book?

This book is born out of both pain and hope.

- **Pain**, because the gap between the true message of Islam and the way it is perceived has never been wider.
- **Hope**, because the Qur'an still speaks to the heart of every sincere seeker.

Each chapter in this book tackles a **common myth or distortion** - whether about women, war, Shariah, human rights, reason, or religious tolerance - and explores the **truth from original sources**, free from the lenses of culture, politics, or media sensationalism.

My aim is simple: to invite both Muslims and non-Muslims to see Islam not as it is portrayed, but as it is. To rediscover the wisdom behind the rituals, the balance behind the rules, and the mercy behind the laws.

Let the Journey Begin

Let us begin this journey of truth-seeking with the same divine word that started it all: **Iqra**.

Read - with your eyes, your mind, and your heart.

Read to learn, to unlearn, and to re-learn.

Read not to judge, but to understand.

Read to discover a faith that is often hidden behind noise and narrative.

This is not just about **seeking answers about Islam from a woman's perspective**; it's an invitation to the light that has always been there.

Note on Islamic Honorifics

In this book, you will often see honorifics used after the names of important Islamic figures. These phrases are part of traditional Muslim etiquette and are used to show love, respect, and reverence.

- (ﷺ) or PBUH stands for “Sallallahu ‘alayhi wa sallam” – May Allah send peace and blessings upon him – and is used after the name of Prophets ﷺ.
- (RA) stands for ‘Radiyahallahu ‘anhu’ – May Allah be pleased with him – and is used after the names of the Prophet’s companions.
- Note for Islamic Academic References

Whenever terms such as *Bukhari*, *Muslim*, *Ahmad*, *Tirmidhi*, or others are mentioned in this book, they refer to recognized collections of Hadith. Each reference points to a compiled source of Prophetic narrations, acknowledged within Islamic scholarship for its contribution to preserving the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Understanding Hadith

Hadith refers to the recorded **sayings, actions, approvals, and teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ**, preserved through generations by his companions and meticulously compiled by scholars. Alongside the Qur’an, Hadith serves as a foundational source of guidance in Islam, shaping beliefs, practices, and ethical conduct.

Over centuries, scholars developed rigorous methods to verify the authenticity of these narrations, resulting in several highly respected and widely recognized collections. Among the most prominent Hadith collections are:

- Sahih al-Bukhari
- Sahih Muslim
- Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal
- Sunan Abu Dawood
- Jami' at-Tirmidhi
- Sunan an-Nasa'i
- Sunan Ibn Majah

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Chapter 1: Introduction of Islam – A Balanced and Universal Way of Life

Islam is not merely a religion - it is a complete and balanced way of life that offers guidance for the soul, the mind, and the body. Rooted in peace, submission, and harmony, the word *Islam* shares the same Arabic root (s-l-m) as *salaam* (peace) and denotes submission to the will of Allah (God). It provides a clear moral compass, promotes justice and compassion, and encourages personal growth, community well-being, and spiritual fulfillment.

At the heart of Islam lies a profound equilibrium - between faith and reason, worship and work, individual responsibility and collective duty. Islam does not ask a person to renounce the world but rather to live within it with purpose, ethics, and mindfulness of the Creator.

A Muslim is someone who willingly submits to Allah and seeks to live according to His guidance. Islam is not a new faith - it is the same message conveyed through all prophets, from Adam to Muhammad (peace be upon them). It is a universal way of life embraced by more than 2 billion people worldwide, cutting across cultures, ethnicities, and regions.

Core Beliefs: The Six Articles of Faith

The foundation of a Muslim's belief rests upon six core tenets:

- **Belief in Allah** – The One, All-Powerful, All-Knowing Creator who has no partner or equal.

- **Belief in the Angels** – Beings created from light, who carry out God's commands.
- **Belief in the Prophets** – Including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (peace be upon them).
- **Belief in the Revealed Scriptures** – The original revelations given to Moses (Tawrah), David (Zabur), Jesus (Injil), and Muhammad (Qur'an).
- **Belief in the Day of Judgment** – The belief in accountability, resurrection, and eternal life.
- **Belief in Divine Destiny (Qadr)** – Acknowledging that all things happen by Allah's will, while maintaining human responsibility for actions.

Islam: A Complete and Balanced Way of Life

Islam encompasses every aspect of human life - spiritual, emotional, social, and moral. It encourages a balance between:

- Faith and intellect
- Worship and daily work
- Individual rights and social responsibilities

It promotes values like honesty, modesty, gratitude, patience, kindness, justice, and generosity. Every act done with sincerity for the sake of Allah - from prayer to charity, from raising a family to doing business ethically - is considered a form of worship.

Conclusion: Islam's Universal Message

Islam speaks to the *fitrah* - the natural inclination toward truth and goodness present in every human being. It calls people to

recognize their Creator, live justly, and fulfill their purpose in life.

It is a faith that respects reason, encourages knowledge, uplifts the soul, and builds just and compassionate societies. Its message is timeless, and its teachings are practical and transformative.

Hence, the core teaching of Islam is simple yet profound:

be good and do good - to yourself, to others, and in devotion to your Creator.

But a natural question arises here: Where does this guidance come from?

How does Islam provide such a complete system for life - covering belief, morality, law, and spirituality with clarity and consistency?

To understand this, we must turn to the primary source of Islam - the divine revelation that serves as a guide for all humanity.

In the next chapter, we explore **the Qur'an**, the final revelation from Allah, and understand why it remains central to the life of every Muslim.

Chapter 2: The Qur'an — The Final Revelation from Allah

As we explored in the previous chapter, Islam presents itself as a complete and balanced way of life - guiding human beings in their beliefs, actions, and purpose.

But this raises an essential question: **Where does this guidance come from?**

The answer lies in the Qur'an - the divine revelation that serves as the foundation of Islam and the ultimate source of truth for humanity.

The Final Revelation from Allah

The Qur'an is the final and most complete message from the Creator of the heavens and the earth - Allah, the Almighty. It is not the word of a man, nor a collection of ancient wisdom, but the literal word of God, revealed in flawless Arabic to the final Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him), through the Angel Jibreel (Gabriel).

- “The revelation of the Book is from Allah, the Mighty, the Wise.” (Qur'an 39:1)

This divine book was sent as a mercy, a guide, and a light for all of humanity, regardless of time, place, race, or language. It is a manual for life, helping mankind distinguish right from wrong and navigate the moral, spiritual, and social challenges of the world.

- “(It is) a guidance for mankind and clear proofs of the guidance and the criterion (between right and wrong).” (Qur’an 2:185)

A Timeless Message for All People

Unlike previous scriptures that were revealed to specific nations for specific times, the Qur’an is universal - the final revelation for all of humanity until the end of time. It confirms the core truths of earlier messages while correcting the changes and distortions that occurred over time.

- “O People of the Book! Believe in what We have sent down, confirming what is with you...” (Qur’an 4:47)

The Qur’an was revealed over 23 years, gradually and in stages, addressing real-life situations faced by the Prophet and his followers - Making its teachings relevant, practical, and deeply rooted in lived reality.

What Makes the Qur’an Divine? How Do We Know It’s from Allah?

1. Perfect Preservation

One of the most compelling proofs of the Qur’an’s divine origin is its miraculous preservation. Revealed over 1400 years ago, it remains unchanged - letter for letter, word for word - since the day it was revealed.

- “Indeed, it is We who sent down the Reminder (the Qur’an), and indeed, We will be its guardian.” (Qur’an 15:9)

Not only has it been preserved in written form, but millions around the world have memorised it cover to cover, in the

exact original language - Arabic - making it the MOST MEMORISED BOOK IN HUMAN HISTORY.

2. The Qur'an and the Science of Nature

The Qur'an contains numerous verses that invite reflection upon the natural world and the signs embedded within creation. While it is not a textbook of science, many scholars, physicians, and researchers have remarked upon the striking correspondence they perceive between certain Qur'anic descriptions of natural phenomena and discoveries explored through modern scientific inquiry.

Among those who reflected on this relationship was Dr. Keith L. Moore, a distinguished embryologist and former Professor of Anatomy at the University of Toronto, who expressed amazement at the Qur'anic descriptions of embryonic development. Likewise, the French physician Dr. Maurice Bucaille argued that the harmony he perceived between the Qur'an and established scientific knowledge pointed to a source beyond the scientific understanding available in seventh-century Arabia.

Examples frequently highlighted by scholars include the Qur'an's descriptions of the stages of embryonic development, the formation of clouds and rainfall, the meeting of distinct bodies of water while retaining their unique characteristics, and verses that many contemporary readers understand as being consistent with observations regarding the expansion of the universe.

For many readers, these observations raise an important question: How could a text revealed more than fourteen centuries ago, to an unlettered Prophet in the Arabian Peninsula, contain descriptions that continue to resonate with

findings explored through modern scientific inquiry? While such verses are not presented as scientific textbooks or empirical proofs, they serve as signs (ayat) that invite reflection, encouraging human beings to observe creation with both humility and curiosity, and to consider the possibility of a wisdom and knowledge beyond ordinary human authorship.

Allah says:

“We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this is the truth...” (Qur’an 41:53)

3. Challenge of Inimitability (Unmatched Eloquence)

The Qur’an challenges mankind to produce even a single chapter like it in terms of its language, message, and literary beauty - a challenge that remains unmet to this day.

- “If you are in doubt about what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it...” (Qur’an 2:23)

Even the most eloquent poets and linguists of the time, who excelled in Arabic, failed to match its style, content, and rhetorical power.

4. No Contradictions

The Qur’an contains no contradictions, despite being revealed over 23 years in various contexts and addressing countless topics - from theology and morality to science, history, and law.

- “Do they not reflect upon the Qur’an? Had it been from other than Allah, they would have found in it many contradictions.” (Qur’an 4:82)

Such internal consistency is humanly impossible in any authored text of that scope and complexity.

5. The Prophet Could Not Have Authored It

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was unlettered (ummi) and was not known to read or write. He had no formal education and no access to the scriptures, scholarly traditions, or specialized scientific and historical sources that might explain the origin of the knowledge contained in the Qur’an.

Yet the Qur’an speaks with authority, wisdom, and knowledge far beyond the capacity of any human being, especially a man living in 7th-century Arabia.

- “This Qur’an is not such as could be produced by anyone other than Allah.” (Qur’an 10:37)

A Book That Transforms Lives

The Qur’an isn’t just a book to be read - it is a book to be lived. It teaches us how to:

- Worship the One True God
- Be just, honest, patient, and grateful
- Live with modesty, humility, and compassion
- Prepare for the Day of Judgment and eternal life

Its purpose is to connect the human being with their Creator, and to bring inner peace, social justice, and ultimate salvation.

Conclusion: A Light for Every Heart

The Qur'an is a miracle, a guidance, and a mercy for all who seek truth. It is the living word of God, calling every human being to reflect, to ponder, and to recognize their purpose in life - to worship Allah alone and live in accordance with His guidance.

If one truly seeks truth with an open heart, the Qur'an will illuminate the path - just as it has transformed the lives of millions across generations.

Yet, for many in the modern world, a question still remains: Can a religious scripture truly align with science, reason, and modern knowledge?

Is the Qur'an a book of the past - or does it continue to speak meaningfully in an age of scientific discovery and technological advancement?

In the next chapter, we explore the relationship between **Science, Islam, and Modernity**, and uncover whether faith and reason truly stand in opposition - or in harmony.

Chapter 3: Science, Islam, and Modernity

As we explored in the previous chapter, the Qur'an presents itself as a divine guide for humanity - timeless, preserved, and filled with signs for those who reflect.

Yet in today's world, an important question often arises:

Can faith truly coexist with science and modern knowledge?

Is religion a relic of the past, or can it stand alongside scientific discovery and intellectual progress?

Islam addresses this question not through conflict, but through harmony.

A Divine Invitation to Knowledge

From the very first revelation, Islam made a bold and timeless statement:

- "Read in the name of your Lord who created..."
(Qur'an 96:1)

These were the first words revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) - a command to read, reflect, and seek knowledge. This was not just a call to religious devotion, but a divine invitation to explore the universe, understand its signs, and unlock its mysteries in pursuit of truth.

Islam Encourages the Pursuit of Knowledge

Islam views knowledge (*‘ilm*) as a form of worship. The Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet (peace be upon him) consistently elevate the status of those who seek knowledge:

- "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" (Qur'an 39:9)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim."
(Sunan Ibn Majah)

The pursuit of knowledge in Islam is not restricted to religious studies. It encompasses all beneficial knowledge, including medicine, mathematics, astronomy, physics, and more - as long as it serves humanity and aligns with ethical principles.

The Golden Age of Islam: A Legacy of Scientific Achievement

From the 8th to the 14th century, Muslims led the world in scientific discovery and intellectual progress. This era, often called the Islamic Golden Age, was marked by immense contributions to science, philosophy, medicine, and technology.

In cities like Baghdad, Cairo, Cordoba, and Damascus, Muslim scholars translated Greek, Persian, and Indian texts into Arabic, preserved ancient knowledge, and advanced it.

Key figures include:

- **Al-Khwarizmi** - Father of algebra (*al-jabr*), whose works shaped modern mathematics.
- **Ibn al-Haytham** - Pioneer of optics and the scientific method.

- **Ibn Sina** – His medical encyclopedia *The Canon of Medicine* was used in Europe for centuries.
- **Al-Zahrawi** – Known as the father of modern surgery.
- **Jabir ibn Hayyan** – One of the earliest chemists; considered the father of chemistry.

This explosion of scientific achievement was driven by a worldview where faith and reason worked together. Islam did not suppress inquiry - it demanded it.

THE QUR'AN AND SCIENTIFIC CONSISTENCY

The Qur'an is not a science textbook, but it contains numerous verses that invite reflection on the natural world - and many of these align remarkably with modern scientific understanding, despite being revealed over 1400 years ago. Some examples:

Embryology

- “We created man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a drop in a secure place...” (Qur'an 23:12-14)

Modern embryologists, including **Keith Moore**, noted the accuracy of these descriptions in relation to human development stages.

Oceanography

- “He has set a barrier between the two seas. They do not transgress.” (Qur'an 55:19-20)

Many scholars have associated this verse with the phenomenon of distinct bodies of water meeting while retaining their unique characteristics, an observation that

continues to inspire reflection on the complexity and order of creation.

The Expanding Universe

- “And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander.” (Qur’an 51:47)

Many contemporary scholars and readers understand this verse as being consistent with modern cosmological observations regarding the expansion of the universe. These verses are not meant to be scientific "proofs," but signs (*ayat*) - invitations to reflect and recognize the Creator behind the universe.

For many believers and seekers alike, the presence of such reflections in a text revealed in seventh-century Arabia raises profound questions about its origin and invites deeper contemplation of its claim to divine revelation.

Science and Faith: A Complementary Relationship

Modernity often promotes the idea that science and religion are in conflict. However, Islam offers a holistic worldview where science and faith are not enemies but allies in the pursuit of truth. In Islam:

- Science explains the “*how*”, but faith explains the “*why*.”
- Science explores the creation, while faith connects us with the Creator.
- Islam offers a moral framework for using scientific knowledge responsibly.

Islam teaches that knowledge without ethics can be dangerous. Science may give us the tools to manipulate the

world, but Islam teaches how to use them justly, compassionately, and for the benefit of all.

Modern Challenges: Scientism vs. Scientific Thinking

It is important to distinguish between **science** (the method of inquiry) and **scientism** (the belief that science is the only path to truth). While Islam fully embraces scientific progress, it rejects the idea that only what is observable or measurable is real.

Spiritual truths, moral values, and the existence of God are beyond the scope of the scientific method, yet they are essential to a meaningful life. Islam provides a broader framework that values both reason and revelation, both data and divine wisdom.

Muslim Contributions Today

Today, Muslim scientists, doctors, engineers, and researchers continue to contribute to global knowledge in many fields. A notable contemporary example is Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, the renowned aerospace scientist known as the “Missile Man of India” and former President of India, whose dedication to knowledge, humility, and service inspired millions across religious and national boundaries.

While the historical momentum was lost for various reasons, the potential remains strong, especially as more Muslims reconnect with their rich intellectual heritage.

Reclaiming that spirit means combining:

- Faith and intellectual curiosity
- Tradition and innovation
- Spiritual purpose and scientific excellence

Conclusion: Knowledge That Leads to Truth

Islam does not separate faith from reason - it unites them. It encourages human beings to explore the universe, question deeply, and seek knowledge, while remaining conscious of the One who created it all.

Science allows us to understand *how* the universe functions, but it cannot answer the deeper questions:

Why does the universe exist? What is its purpose? What lies beyond the physical world?

These are questions that lead us beyond observation - toward reflection. The Qur'an repeatedly invites us not just to observe creation, but to **recognize the Creator behind it**:

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and day are signs for people of understanding." (Qur'an 3:190)

Thus, the pursuit of knowledge in Islam is not an end in itself - it is a path that ultimately leads to recognizing a higher truth.

*And that truth raises the most important question of all: **If this universe has a Creator, then who is He?***

Chapter 4: The Concept of God in Islam (Tawhid – The Foundation of Faith)

Personal Relationship with the Almighty in Islam From Creation to the Creator

In the previous chapter, we explored the harmony between science and Islam, and how the universe points toward a purposeful design. But recognizing that there *is* a Creator is only the beginning.

The next step is to understand: **Who is this Creator? What is His nature? And how do we connect with Him?**

Islam answers these questions with clarity through the concept of **Tawhid** - the absolute Oneness of God.

Who is Allah?

“Allah” is the unique name of the One True God in Islam. It is not limited by gender or plurality, reflecting complete perfection and uniqueness.

The central belief of Islam is simple, yet profound:

There is only One God, and He alone is worthy of worship.

The Core Attributes of God

1. Absolute Oneness (Tawhid)

God has no partners, equals, or rivals.

He has no parents, children, or lineage.

This pure monotheism distinguishes Islam clearly from all forms of polytheism or human-like depictions of God.

2. The Self-Sufficient and All-Powerful

God is independent of His creation, while everything depends on Him. His power is complete and perfect - nothing can limit Him.

3. The Most High and Beyond Creation

God is not part of the universe. He is not bound by time, space, or physical form. Nothing resembles Him, yet He is aware of everything.

4. The Most Just and Most Merciful

God's justice ensures that every individual is accountable for their own actions.

At the same time, His mercy is vast, giving every human being the opportunity to return to Him.

RATIONAL SIGNS OF GOD'S EXISTENCE

Islam does not demand blind belief - it invites thoughtful reflection.

1. The Beginning of the Universe

The universe cannot come from nothing, nor create itself. Since it has a beginning, it must have a cause beyond it.

That cause must be eternal, independent, and powerful - **the Creator**.

2. The Order of the Universe

The precise balance of the cosmos - from galaxies to human life - points toward intelligent design.

The remarkable order, consistency, and fine balance observed throughout the cosmos invite reflection on the possibility of purposeful design rather than unguided chance.

3. The Need for Meaning and Purpose

Human beings naturally seek purpose, morality, and meaning - things that material science alone cannot provide. This points toward a higher reality beyond the physical world.

Direct Relationship with God

One of the most unique aspects of Islam is that **every individual has direct access to God.**

No intermediaries are required.

“And when My servants ask you concerning Me - indeed I am near.” (Qur’an 2:186)

God is close, aware, and responsive to every sincere call.

Worship: A Complete Way of Life

Worship in Islam is not limited to rituals. Even ordinary aspects of daily life can become acts of worship when carried out with sincere intention and within the ethical guidance that God has provided:

- Being honest
- Helping others
- Showing patience
- Acting with justice

- Caring for family

Thus, Islam transforms everyday life into a meaningful spiritual journey.

Conclusion: The Foundation of Faith

Understanding God is the foundation upon which all of Islam is built. He is:

- One and unique
- Perfect and eternal
- Just and merciful

Recognizing Him is not just a belief - it is a relationship.

But this leads to another important question:

If God exists and created us with purpose, how did He communicate that purpose to humanity?

Chapter 5: Prophethood in Islam (The Link Between God and Humanity)

The Need for Guidance

Human beings are capable of reasoning and reflection - but they are also limited.

While we can recognize the existence of a Creator, we cannot, on our own, fully determine:

- What does God expect from us?
- How to worship Him?
- What constitutes right and wrong?

This is where **divine guidance** becomes necessary.

What is Prophethood?

Prophethood is the system through which God communicates His message to humanity.

Prophets are human beings chosen by God to:

- Deliver His message
- Guide people toward truth
- Demonstrate how to live a righteous life

They are not divine - they are **messengers**.

The Message of All Prophets

Despite being sent to different nations and times, all prophets brought the same core message:

- Worship One God alone
- Live a life of righteousness
- Prepare for accountability in the Hereafter

From Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (peace be upon them all), the message remained consistent.

Why Were Prophets Necessary?

Without prophets:

- People would create their own versions of truth
- Morality would become subjective
- Worship would become corrupted

Prophets provide clarity, consistency, and divine authority. They serve as **living examples**, showing how divine guidance is applied in real life.

Characteristics of Prophets

Prophets were:

- Truthful and trustworthy
- Morally upright
- Intellectually sound
- Chosen for their integrity

They were protected from major sins and from distorting the message.

REVELATION: THE MESSAGE THEY BROUGHT

Prophets did not speak on their own authority - they conveyed revelation from God.

This revelation came in the form of scriptures, guidance, and divine wisdom. However, over time, earlier revelations were altered or lost - necessitating the sending of new prophets.

The Finality of Prophethood

The chain of prophethood concludes with Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. With him:

- The final message was delivered
- The Qur'an was preserved
- The guidance was made universal

There is no prophet after him.

Conclusion: A Message Repeated, A Truth Preserved

Throughout history, God did not leave humanity without guidance. From the earliest generations to later civilizations, He sent Prophets to remind people of a simple yet powerful truth:

- Worship One God
- Live with justice, humility, and accountability

Although these messengers came at different times and to different nations, their message was never contradictory - it was consistent, unified, and rooted in divine wisdom. However, over time:

- Messages were forgotten
- Teachings were altered
- Truth became mixed with human interpretation

This led to confusion - not because the message was unclear, but because it was not always preserved in its original form.

Islam restores clarity by reaffirming a fundamental principle:

- All Prophets were sent by the same God
- All of them deserve respect and belief
- None of them should be worshipped

“Say: We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus...” (Qur’an 2:136)

Understanding Prophethood in Islam helps remove one of the biggest misconceptions - that religions are completely separate and conflicting. In reality:

- They are part of one continuous message
- Delivered through different Prophets
- Leading humanity toward the same Creator

Among all the Prophets, there are some whose names, lives, and teachings are widely recognized across different faiths.

One such figure is **Jesus Christ** - a personality deeply revered by billions around the world, yet often misunderstood when viewed through the lens of Islamic belief. His life raises important questions:

- Was he divine, or a servant of God?
- What was his true message?
- How does Islam view him differently?

To understand Islam clearly, it is essential to understand its perspective on Jesus (peace be upon him).

Chapter 6: Jesus in Islam — An Honoured Prophet of God

A Figure of Love and Misunderstanding

Among all the Prophets sent by God, few have been as widely discussed - and as deeply misunderstood - as **Jesus Christ**.

For many, he is seen as divine.

For others, as the son of God.

But Islam presents a perspective that is both unique and consistent with the core message of all Prophets:

Jesus (peace be upon him) was a noble and honored messenger of God - not divine, but deeply beloved and respected.

The purpose of this chapter is not to challenge beliefs harshly, but to **clarify misconceptions** and present the Islamic understanding with respect, evidence, and sincerity.

Islam teaches that loving and respecting Jesus is not optional - it is an essential part of faith.

A Muslim cannot truly believe without believing in him.

Misunderstandings about Jesus are not just theological - they are one of the main reasons people misunderstand Islam itself. By understanding how Islam views Jesus, readers can begin to see:

- The consistency of divine message
- The unity of Prophethood

- The emphasis on pure monotheism (Tawheed)

This chapter will explore:

- His miraculous birth
- His mission and message
- His status in Islam
- And the key differences between Islamic and common perceptions

A Message of Continuity, Not Conflict

Islam does not reject Jesus; rather, it presents him as one of the noble Prophets in the line of messengers sent by God.

- A servant of God
- A messenger to his people
- A sign of God's power

Understanding this helps bridge confusion and brings us closer to the core message shared by all Prophets: Worship God alone

Who is Jesus (‘Īsā) in Islam?

Jesus (peace be upon him), known as ‘Īsā in Arabic, holds a unique and elevated status in Islam. Muslims believe that he:

- Was born miraculously to the Virgin Mary
- Was a Prophet and Messenger of God
- Performed great miracles by God's permission
- Was not crucified, but raised by God
- Will return before the Day of Judgment

His life was a sign of God's power, and his message was a continuation of the same truth taught by all Prophets.

A Consistent Message: Worship One God

All Prophets - from Abraham to Moses to Jesus (peace be upon them all) - brought one consistent message:

- God is One
- He has no partners
- Worship Him alone

Jesus himself affirmed this message:

“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.”

- Mark 12:29

The Qur'an confirms this clearly:

“Indeed, God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path.” (Qur'an 3:51)

Jesus: A Prophet

Islam makes a clear distinction:

Jesus is one of the greatest Prophets, but he is not God, nor the son of God. His miraculous birth does not make him divine. The Qur'an gives a powerful comparison:

“Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam...” (Qur'an 3:59)

Just as Adam was created without parents, Jesus was created without a father - both are signs of God's power, not divinity.

MIRACLES OF JESUS

Jesus performed extraordinary miracles - but always by God's permission:

- He healed the blind and the leper

- He raised the dead
- He spoke as an infant
- He gave life to a bird made from clay

These miracles were not proof of divinity - they were signs of Prophethood. They pointed not to Jesus himself, but to the power of God.

Was Jesus a “Muslim”?

In Islam, the word *Muslim* means:

One who submits to the will of God. In this sense, Jesus was indeed a Muslim. **He:**

- Prayed to God
- Called people to obedience
- Emphasized doing God’s will

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter... but the one who does the will of My Father.” - Matthew 7:21

This is the essence of Islam: submission to One God.

The Crucifixion and the Raising of Jesus

Islam teaches that: Jesus was not crucified. He was raised by God

This preserves both his honour and the truth of his mission.

His story does not end in defeat - but in divine elevation.

The Return of Jesus

Muslims believe that Jesus will return before the Day of Judgment. His return will:

- Restore justice

- Defeat falsehood (Dajjal)
- Reaffirm the Oneness of God

He will not bring a new religion - but will call people back to the same original message: Worship One God alone

Mary (Maryam): A Woman of Honour

Islam gives a special and deeply respectful place to Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is:

- One of the greatest women in history
- Chosen and purified by God
- The only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an with a chapter dedicated to her

“O Mary, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you...”
(Qur'an 3:42)

Her story is one of faith, strength, and dignity.

Love Without Worship

Islam teaches a balanced approach:

Love and honour Jesus. Do not worship him. Respect does not mean divinity.

True love for Jesus means following his message - not elevating him beyond what he himself taught.

Islam: A Return to the Original Message

Islam does not reject previous Prophets - it confirms and restores their original teachings. The message of all Prophets was one:

- Worship One God
- Live a righteous life

- Submit to divine guidance

Over time, messages were altered - but Islam calls humanity back to that pure foundation.

Conclusion: Honouring Jesus Through Truth

To truly honour Jesus (peace be upon him), one must:

- Believe in him as a Prophet
- Recognize his humanity
- Follow his call to worship God alone

Islam preserves his true identity:

- A Messenger of God
- A miracle of creation
- A sign for all humanity

While Jesus (peace be upon him) was a noble and honored Prophet of God, Islam teaches that he was part of a long and continuous chain of messengers sent to guide humanity.

Each Prophet came with the same core message: to worship One God alone and live a life of righteousness.

However, humanity continued to change, forget, or distort these teachings over time. Therefore, divine guidance was renewed through different Prophets - until the final message was revealed.

This brings us to the last and final messenger in this chain:

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, whose life and message serve as a complete and preserved guidance for all of humanity.

Chapter 7: Prophet Muhammad ﷺ – The Final Messenger of God

The Completion of Guidance

In the previous chapter, we explored how God guided humanity through Prophets - chosen individuals who conveyed His message and demonstrated how to live a righteous life. But this chain of guidance was not endless.

It reached its completion with one final Messenger -

a man whose life would serve not just a nation, but all of humanity. That man is Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Who is Muhammad ﷺ?

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is believed by Muslims to be the final Prophet in a long line of messengers sent by God.

His message was not new - it was a continuation of the same truth taught by earlier Prophets:

- Adam (Peace be upon Him)
- Noah (Peace be upon Him)
- Abraham (Peace be upon Him)
- Moses (Peace be upon Him)
- Jesus (Peace be upon Him)

Just as Moses was given the Torah and Jesus the Gospel, Muhammad ﷺ was given the Qur'an - the final and preserved revelation. However, unlike previous Prophets, he was sent:

- Not to a specific nation
- But to all of humanity

The Finality of Prophethood

“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the Prophets.”

(Qur'an 33:40)

With Prophet Muhammad ﷺ:

- Revelation was completed
- The message was perfected
- Guidance became universal

There is no prophet after him. The Qur'an he brought remains unchanged, preserved in its original form for over 1400 years - serving as a timeless guide for all aspects of life.

A Living Qur'an

When the Prophet's wife Aisha (RA) was asked about his character, she replied: “His character was the Qur'an.” (Muslim) This means:

- He did not just preach the message
- He lived it completely

Every action, decision, and interaction reflected divine guidance. He was not just a teacher of Islam - he was its living example.

A Mission of Mercy

“And We have not sent you, except as a mercy to all the worlds.” (Qur'an 21:107)

The mission of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was rooted in mercy - not force, not hatred. His compassion extended to:

- The poor and vulnerable
- Orphans and widows
- Animals and the environment
- Even his enemies

He said:

“He who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.”

(Al-Bukhari)

When asked to curse people, he responded: “I was not sent to curse, but as a mercy.”

The Prophet of Forgiveness

One of the most powerful aspects of his character was forgiveness. In Ta'if (A city in Saudi Arabia), he was rejected and stoned until he bled. Yet when given the chance for revenge, he chose mercy.

He said he hoped their future generations would believe.

During the conquest of Makkah, when he stood victorious over those who had persecuted him, he declared:

“Go, for you are free.”

This was not the reaction of a conqueror - but of a Prophet guided by mercy.

Equality and Justice

“All humanity is from Adam, and Adam is from clay.”

(Ahmad)

In a deeply tribal and divided society, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ established a revolutionary principle:

No superiority based on race, color, or lineage

True honor lies only in righteousness and character.

He actively challenged racism. When a companion made a racial remark, he said:

“You are a man who still has ignorance in him.”

(Al-Bukhari)

Patience, Tolerance, and Emotional Strength

“Repel evil with what is better...” (Qur’an 41:34)

The Prophet ﷺ taught:

- Control over anger
- Responding with wisdom
- Choosing reconciliation over revenge

He said:

“The strong one is not the one who overpowers others, but the one who controls himself when angry.” (Al-Bukhari)

Gentleness and Compassion

“By the mercy of Allah, you were gentle with them...”

(Qur’an 3:159)

His personality was marked by softness and care. A companion who served him for 10 years said:

“He never once scolded me.”

He taught: “Gentleness beautifies everything.”

Humility in Leadership

Despite being one of the most influential figures in history, he lived simply:

- Sat with the poor
- Mended his own clothes
- Ate modestly
- Refused excessive praise

He said:

“I am only a servant. Call me the servant of Allah and His Messenger.” (Al-Bukhari)

The Ideal Husband and Family Man

“And live with them in kindness...” (Qur’an 4:19)

At home, he was:

- Caring and supportive
- Emotionally present
- Actively involved in household work

He said:

“The best of you are those who are best to their wives.”

This shows that true greatness is reflected in private character, not public image.

The Universal Role Model

“Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example.” (Qur’an 33:21)

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not limited to one role. He was:

- A spiritual guide

- A leader
- A judge
- A teacher
- A friend
- A husband and father

His life provides guidance for every aspect of human existence.

Conclusion: The Final Messenger

The message of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was not limited to rituals or beliefs - it was a complete guidance for life. He did not only teach people how to live, but also prepared them for the most certain reality every human being will face:

Death

Through the Qur'an and his teachings, he consistently reminded humanity that this life is temporary, and that every action carries weight beyond this world.

Following his message means:

- Living with purpose
- Acting with accountability
- Preparing for a reality beyond what we see

But this raises a deeper and unavoidable question:

What happens after death?

Is this life the end - or the beginning of something far greater?

To truly understand Islam, one must understand its perspective on life after death - a concept that shapes not only belief, but behavior, hope, and purpose.

Chapter 8: Death and the Hereafter in Islam

Understanding Life, Death, and What Comes After – From an Islamic Perspective

Every human being, regardless of faith or background, reflects on the reality of death. It is inevitable, universal, and deeply personal. Yet, while many fear it or avoid thinking about it, Islam approaches death with clarity, balance, and purpose.

In Islam, death is not the end of existence; it is a transition. A movement from a temporary world to an eternal reality. The belief in the Hereafter is not a secondary concept in Islam; it is central. It shapes how individuals think, act, and ultimately understand the purpose of life itself.

1. Death in Islam: A Meaningful Transition

Islam teaches that death is neither random nor meaningless. It occurs at a precise, divinely appointed time:

“And no soul knows in what land it will die. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Aware.” (Qur’an 31:34)

Death is described not as an end, but as a return to the Creator: from Him we came, and to Him we shall return.

Rather than encouraging fear, Islam encourages awareness of death as a means of living more consciously and responsibly. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Remember often the destroyer of pleasures, death.”
(Tirmidhi)

This reminder is not meant to create anxiety, but to ground the human being, reduce arrogance, and encourage a life filled with purpose and reflection.

2. What Happens After Death?

One of the distinctive aspects of Islamic belief is its clear and structured understanding of what follows death. This includes the intermediate state (Barzakh), resurrection, and ultimate judgment.

Central to this belief is the Day of Judgment, a moment of complete accountability and divine justice. The Qur'an describes:

“And the Trumpet will be blown, and whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth will fall unconscious except whom Allah wills. Then it will be blown again, and at once they will be standing, looking on.” (Qur'an 39:68)

On that Day, every individual will stand before their Creator. This is not a scene of chaos or randomness, but one of perfect justice:

- Every action is accounted for
- Every intention is known
- No injustice is done

It is a moment where truth is fully revealed, and nothing remains hidden.

3. Accountability and Divine Justice

Islam emphasizes that life is a test, one that includes both ease and hardship:

“And We test you with good and evil as trial...”

(Qur'an 21:35)

Unlike human systems of justice, divine justice is complete, fair, and free from bias. Individuals are judged based on their intentions, efforts, and choices, not on wealth, race, or social status. This belief addresses one of the deepest human concerns: what about injustice in this world?

Islam provides a clear answer, no injustice goes unanswered. Ultimate justice belongs to Allah, and every oppression will be addressed with absolute fairness.

4. Paradise and Hell: The Final Destinations

After judgment, humanity arrives at its final destination, either Paradise (Jannah) or Hell (Jahannam).

Paradise (Jannah)

Jannah is described as a place of peace, beauty, and complete fulfillment. Yet beyond its physical descriptions, its greatest reward is nearness to Allah.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Allah has prepared for His righteous servants what no eye has seen...” (Bukhari & Muslim)

It represents eternal peace, complete satisfaction, and freedom from pain, fear, and loss.

Hell (Jahannam)

Jahannam represents accountability for those who persist in injustice, knowingly reject truth, and live with arrogance and oppression.

Its descriptions are serious, not to create despair, but to emphasize responsibility. Yet even here, Islamic teachings highlight a profound truth: Allah's mercy is vast, and His justice is never devoid of wisdom.

5. Why Belief in the Hereafter Matters

Belief in the Hereafter is not an abstract concept, it has a direct and transformative impact on daily life. It:

- Encourages ethical and moral behavior
- Provides comfort during loss and hardship
- Creates a deep sense of accountability
- Gives hope for ultimate justice

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) beautifully summarized this mindset:

“Be in this world as though you were a stranger or a traveler.”
(Bukhari)

This perspective reminds us that life is temporary, we are merely passing through, and what truly matters lies ahead.

6. Time, Responsibility, and the Purpose of Living

In Islam, the awareness of the Hereafter is inseparable from the value of time. Time is not something to be wasted, ignored, or “killed”, it is a trust (amanah) for which every individual will be held accountable.

Allah swears by time itself:

“By time, indeed mankind is at a loss, except for those who believe, do righteous deeds, and encourage one another to truth and patience.” (Qur'an 103:1-3)

This powerful verse establishes a fundamental reality: loss is not measured in wealth or status, but in how time is used.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“There are two blessings which many people waste: health and free time.” (Bukhari)

And he warned:

“A person’s feet will not move on the Day of Judgment until he is asked about his life and how he spent it...” (Tirmidhi)

However, Islam does not define meaningful use of time as constant ritual worship alone. Rather, it presents a balanced and comprehensive understanding of life.

Using time wisely means fulfilling responsibilities in all dimensions of life:

- Responsibility toward family
- Responsibility toward society
- Responsibility toward the vulnerable and poor
- Responsibility toward one’s own moral conduct

Earning a lawful livelihood, supporting one’s family, helping those in need, and engaging in honest work are all considered acts of worship when done with sincerity.

Islam also places strong emphasis on justice and ethical conduct in everyday dealings. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Give the worker his wages before his sweat dries.”

(Ibn Majah)

This teaching reflects a broader principle: righteousness is not limited to spiritual acts - it includes fairness, integrity, and compassion in all human interactions.

Thus, life in Islam is a meaningful blend of time and action (amal) - how one uses time to engage in righteous deeds, seek knowledge, avoid harm, and contribute positively to the world.

To waste time is not merely to lose moments - it is to lose opportunities for goodness, growth, and eternal reward.

Conclusion: Beyond Death – A Call to Live with Purpose

In Islam, the belief in the Hereafter does more than explain what happens after death - it transforms how we live before it.

It reminds us that life is temporary, actions carry meaning, and justice will ultimately prevail. But beyond these truths lies a more personal question:

How are we using the time we have been given?

Life is not without purpose:

“Did you think that We created you without purpose and that you would not be returned to Us?” (Qur’an 23:115)

Every moment carries weight. Every action leaves a trace. Every choice becomes part of what we carry forward into the next life - not in material form, but as a complete record of deeds.

This awareness calls for a life of balance - between worship and responsibility, between personal growth and social contribution, between faith and action.

Islam teaches individuals to live consciously: to seek knowledge, to act with justice, to support others, and to protect themselves from wrongdoing. It calls for a life that is not only spiritually aware, but ethically grounded and socially

responsible. Thus, belief in accountability does not burden life - it gives it meaning.

It transforms time into opportunity, actions into legacy, and life into a purposeful journey toward eternity.

And in doing so, it prepares not only for what comes after death but for how to truly live before it.

The Inner World of the Believer

While the belief in the Hereafter gives life its ultimate direction, the journey toward that destination is not free from struggle.

Human beings are not only physical and social creatures - they are emotional and psychological beings. Alongside questions of purpose and accountability, every individual experiences moments of anxiety, grief, fear, loss, and inner conflict.

The awareness that life is a test, that time is limited, and that every action carries weight can inspire purpose but it can also raise deeply personal challenges:

How does one remain hopeful in the face of hardship?

How does one cope with loss, uncertainty, and emotional pain?

How does one maintain inner peace while navigating the pressures of life?

Islam does not leave these questions unanswered.

Just as it provides guidance for life after death, it also offers profound insight into the state of the human heart and mind in this life. It recognizes emotional struggle not as weakness, but as part of the human condition and provides tools to manage it with resilience, faith, and balance.

From concepts like *sabr* (patience) and *tawakkul* (trust in God), to practices that nurture inner peace and psychological stability, Islam presents a holistic framework for mental and emotional well-being.

In a world where mental health is often misunderstood or overlooked, these teachings offer clarity, compassion, and practical guidance.

The next chapter explores this essential dimension:

How Islam understands the human mind, addresses emotional struggles, and provides a path toward true psychological well-being.

Chapter 9: Islamic Psychology and Mental Health — Healing the Heart and Soul

Understanding the Human Mind, Emotions, and Inner Healing in Islam

While the belief in the Hereafter gives life its ultimate direction, the journey toward that destination unfolds within the human heart and mind.

Life is not lived only through actions, it is experienced through thoughts, emotions, struggles, and inner conflicts. The awareness of accountability, purpose, and time gives meaning to life, but it also raises an essential question: *how does one remain emotionally and mentally balanced while navigating this journey?*

Islam does not ignore this inner dimension of human existence. Rather, it addresses it with depth, compassion, and clarity.

A Faith That Cares for the Heart

A common misconception about Islam is that it focuses only on rituals and external practices. In reality, Islam places profound emphasis on the inner state of the human being.

It addresses:

- Thoughts
- Emotions

- Struggles of the heart

Islam does not separate mental health from spirituality, it integrates them. True peace (*sakinah*, meaning inner tranquility) is not merely the absence of stress, but a state of harmony between the mind, body, and soul.

“Truly, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.”
(Qur'an 13:28)

This verse highlights a central principle: **inner peace is deeply connected to spiritual awareness.**

1. The Heart in Islam: More Than a Physical Organ

In Islamic understanding, the heart (*qalb*, meaning the spiritual heart) is not just a biological organ, it is the center of consciousness, emotions, and moral awareness.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“If the heart is sound, the whole body is sound...” (Bukhari & Muslim)

This teaching reflects a profound psychological truth: emotional and spiritual health are deeply interconnected.

A heart filled with gratitude, faith, and humility leads to clarity, stability, and peace. In contrast, a heart burdened with hatred, envy, and pride leads to emotional unrest and inner conflict.

Thus, Islam begins healing not from the outside but from within.

2. The Self (Nafs): Understanding the Inner Struggle

Islam provides a deeply insightful model of human psychology through the concept of the self (*nafs*, meaning the inner self or ego).

The Qur'an describes different states of the self:

- *Nafs al-ammarah* (the commanding self) → inclined toward desires and impulsiveness
- *Nafs al-lawwamah* (the self-reproaching self) → self-aware and morally conscious
- *Nafs al-mutma'innah* (the peaceful self) → calm, content, and spiritually aligned

Mental and spiritual growth in Islam is a journey:

From impulsiveness..To self-awareness...To inner peace

This transformation requires reflection, discipline, and a conscious connection with Allah Almighty. It acknowledges that struggle is not failure, it is part of growth.

3. A Holistic Model of Human Psychology

Unlike purely material approaches, Islam views the human being as a complete and integrated system. It recognizes multiple dimensions:

- *Qalb* (heart) → emotional and spiritual center
- *Aql* (mind) → reasoning and understanding
- *Nafs* (self) → desires and personality
- *Ruh* (soul) → connection to the Divine

An imbalance in any of these areas can lead to anxiety, confusion, and emotional distress. Islamic healing is therefore holistic. It does not reduce a person to symptoms, it addresses

the whole human being, combining emotional awareness, spiritual grounding, and ethical living.

4. Understanding Emotional Struggles

Islam does not deny emotional pain, it acknowledges it openly and realistically.

Human beings may experience:

- Anxiety
- Sadness
- Depression
- Grief

These struggles may arise from a variety of factors, including emotional, social, spiritual, and sometimes biological causes. They may include:

- Loss of purpose
- Spiritual emptiness
- Past trauma
- Guilt
- Over-attachment to worldly life
- Negative intrusive thoughts (*waswasah*, meaning whisperings or doubts)

Even the Prophets experienced deep human emotions such as grief, fear, and loneliness.

This teaches a powerful truth: **experiencing emotional struggle does not indicate weak faith, it reflects human reality.**

5. Islamic Tools for Healing and Resilience

Islam provides practical and effective tools for managing emotional and psychological challenges:

Remembrance (Dhikr)

Regular remembrance of Allah calms the heart and reduces anxiety by reconnecting the individual with a higher purpose.

Prayer (Salah)

Daily prayer creates structure, discipline, and emotional grounding, offering moments of reflection and connection throughout the day.

Repentance (Tawbah)

Repentance releases guilt and restores hope.

“Do not despair of the mercy of Allah.” (Qur’an 39:53)

Patience (Sabr)

Patience builds emotional strength and resilience during hardship.

“Indeed, Allah is with the patient.” (Qur’an 2:153)

Trust in God (Tawakkul)

Trust reduces fear of uncertainty and helps individuals cope with what is beyond their control.

Gratitude (Shukr)

Gratitude shifts focus from what is missing to what is present, fostering contentment and positivity.

Together, these practices nurture emotional resilience, inner stability, and spiritual strength.

6. Beyond Positive Thinking: A Purpose-Driven Life

Some contemporary self-help approaches emphasize “positive thinking” or manifestation. While helpful at a surface level, Islam offers something deeper, a life rooted in purpose and awareness (*taqwa*, meaning consciousness of God).

Rather than focusing only on outcomes, Islam emphasizes:

- Intentions
- Moral character (*akhlaq*)
- Conscious living

A person grounded in these values develops emotional stability during hardship and humility during success.

This approach moves beyond temporary positivity toward lasting inner strength.

7. Islam and Modern Mental Health Care

Another misconception is that faith replaces professional help. Islam does not teach this. Seeking appropriate medical, psychological, or therapeutic support when needed is consistent with the Islamic encouragement to pursue beneficial means of healing. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged seeking help, showing compassion, and supporting those facing emotional struggles.

He said:

“The strong person is not the one who defeats others, but the one who controls himself in anger.” (Bukhari)

This highlights emotional intelligence and self-regulation as true strength. Today, many approaches integrate Islamic spirituality with modern psychology. Islam supports:

- Counseling
- Therapy
- Medical treatment when necessary

Healing is not limited to one method, it is a comprehensive process that may include both spiritual and professional support.

Conclusion: Inner Healing, Outer Responsibility

Islam does not treat mental health as an isolated, personal concern. It connects the inner state of an individual with their role in the wider world.

A heart that is spiritually grounded and emotionally balanced becomes:

- More patient in difficulty
- More compassionate toward others
- More conscious of right and wrong

However, this inner stability is not the final goal, it is the foundation. Because individuals who are internally at peace contribute to:

- Healthier relationships
- Ethical communities
- Just societies

Islam therefore builds a powerful connection between **inner healing and outer responsibility**.

It teaches that managing emotions, controlling anger, being just in dealings, supporting others, and fulfilling

responsibilities are all part of mental and spiritual well-being. This naturally leads to a broader and essential question:

How does Islam translate these inner values into social systems?

How does it ensure justice, equality, and dignity at a societal level?

These questions take us to the next dimension of Islam:

*From personal transformation to societal order,
a system that not only heals individuals, but shapes entire communities.*

Chapter 10: Islam, Culture, Human Rights, and Justice

Distinguishing Divine Principles from Human Practices

The journey from inner transformation to societal responsibility is a natural progression. A heart that is spiritually grounded and emotionally balanced does not exist in isolation, it expresses itself through actions, relationships, and contributions to society.

If Islam provides a framework for inner healing, it must also offer a system for external justice.

This raises a critical question: *How does Islam translate personal values into collective systems? How does it ensure fairness, dignity, and justice in the real world?*

To answer this, it is essential to distinguish between what Islam truly teaches and what is merely practiced in its name.

Between Revelation and Reality

In contemporary discourse, Islam is often evaluated through the lens of cultural practices observed across diverse Muslim societies. As a result, the distinction between religion and culture becomes blurred, giving rise to widespread misconceptions.

Practices shaped by local traditions, historical contexts, and socio-political conditions are frequently misattributed to Islam

itself. This conflation produces a distorted image, one in which Islam is judged not by its foundational sources, but by the actions of its adherents.

To understand Islam's position on human rights and justice with intellectual integrity, a clear distinction must be made:

- Islam as a divine framework
- Culture as a human expression

Only through this distinction can one fairly assess whether Islam upholds justice, equality, and human dignity or whether these ideals are undermined by cultural deviations.

1. Islam and Culture: A Necessary Distinction

Islam, as a revealed religion, offers universal principles intended to transcend time, geography, and cultural boundaries. These principles are rooted in the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Culture, by contrast, is:

- Contextual
- Evolving
- Shaped by history and environment

While Islam interacts with culture, it is not defined or constrained by it.

1.1 When Culture Aligns with Islam

Cultural practices that promote:

- Modesty
- Respect
- Family cohesion
- Social harmony

often align with Islamic values and can reinforce them positively.

1.2 When Culture Contradicts Islam

Tension arises when cultural norms:

- Restrict rights unjustly
- Promote inequality
- Normalize oppression

Such practices, even when prevalent in Muslim societies, cannot be attributed to Islam.

The essential principle remains:

Not everything practiced by Muslims represents Islam.

2. The Concept of Justice (Adl) in Islam

Justice (*adl*, meaning fairness and balance) is not a peripheral value in Islam - it is foundational to its moral and legal framework. The Qur'an declares:

"Indeed, Allah commands justice, excellence, and giving..."
(Qur'an 16:90)

Justice in Islam is:

- Universal → applying to all people without exception
- Objective → free from personal bias or social pressure
- Comprehensive → encompassing both intention and action

2.1 Justice Beyond Identity

Islam commands justice even when it conflicts with personal or collective interests:

“O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, even if it be against yourselves...” (Qur’an 4:135)

This principle dismantles:

- Tribalism
- Racism
- Nepotism

and establishes a standard of accountability that transcends identity and affiliation.

3. Human Rights in Islam: A Divine Foundation

Centuries before the emergence of modern human rights frameworks, Islam articulated a comprehensive system of rights grounded in divine command.

These rights are not granted by governments or institutions - they are inherent, inviolable, and God-given.

3.1 Right to Life

Human life is sacred and inviolable:

“Do not kill the soul which Allah has made sacred...” (Qur’an 17:33)

3.2 Right to Dignity

Every human being is endowed with inherent dignity:

“We have certainly honored the children of Adam...” (Qur’an 17:70)

This dignity is not dependent on race, religion, or social status - it is universal.

3.3 Right to Justice and Fair Treatment

Islam mandates fairness across all spheres of life, including:

- Legal proceedings
- Economic transactions
- Social interactions

3.4 Right to Property

Individuals have the right to own and protect property. Exploitation, theft, and unjust appropriation are strictly prohibited.

3.5 Rights of the Vulnerable

Islam places particular emphasis on safeguarding the rights of society's most vulnerable, including:

- Orphans
- The poor
- Travelers
- The oppressed

This reflects a moral system deeply committed to equity, compassion, and social responsibility.

4. Equality and Accountability

Islam affirms the fundamental equality of all human beings in terms of worth, while recognizing diversity in roles and responsibilities. The Qur'an states:

"Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you..." (Qur'an 49:13)

Accordingly:

- Superiority is not determined by race, wealth, or gender
- It is measured by moral and spiritual integrity

At the same time, Islam enforces accountability:

- No individual is above the law
- Authority does not grant moral exemption

This creates a system where equality is paired with responsibility.

5. Misconceptions Arising from Cultural Practices

Many criticisms directed at Islam stem from practices that are cultural rather than religious in origin.

These include:

- Denial of women's rights in certain societies
- Forced marriages
- Honor-based violence
- Social inequalities

Such practices:

- Contradict core Islamic teachings
- Persist due to cultural - not religious - influences

Failing to distinguish between Islam and culture leads to:

- Misrepresentation of the religion
- Reinforcement of stereotypes
- Intellectual and analytical inaccuracy

6. Islam and Modern Human Rights Discourse

Modern human rights discourse highlights freedom, equality, and protection from harm - values that Islam also strongly

upholds. However, the key difference lies in their source: modern frameworks are human-made and constantly evolving, whereas Islam is grounded in divine revelation, providing a timeless and balanced moral foundation.

6.1 Source of Authority

- Modern frameworks → based on human consensus
- Islam → grounded in divine revelation

6.2 Stability of Principles

Because Islamic rights are divinely anchored, they are:

- Constant
- Not subject to shifting political agendas or societal trends

6.3 Balance Between Rights and Responsibilities

Islam does not promote unrestricted individual freedom. Instead, it establishes a balanced framework that integrates:

- Rights with responsibilities
- Freedom with moral accountability

This balance ensures both individual well-being and collective harmony.

7. Justice as a Lived Reality

In Islam, justice is not merely a theoretical ideal - it is a lived and enforceable reality. It must manifest within:

- Family structures
- Economic systems
- Legal institutions

- Social relationships

Justice includes:

- Fair treatment of workers
- Honest trade
- Protection from harm
- Upholding trust and responsibility

Any failure in these domains reflects human shortcomings, not deficiencies within Islamic teachings.

Conclusion: Reclaiming the True Narrative

Islam offers a comprehensive and coherent framework grounded in justice, human dignity, and social balance.

Misunderstanding arises when cultural practices are conflated with religious doctrine. A fair evaluation of Islam requires a return to its primary sources - not its misrepresentations.

Only then does a clear and accurate picture emerge:

- Islam does not oppose human rights - it anchors them
- It does not promote injustice - it actively resists it
- It does not degrade humanity - it elevates it

This framework is not merely theoretical - it is meant to shape real lives, real societies, and real systems of justice.

Despite Islam's profound emphasis on justice and human dignity, one of the most persistent and widely debated misconceptions concerns the status and rights of women.

This raises critical questions:

- Does Islam restrict women, or does it empower them?
- Are widely observed practices rooted in religion - or in culture?

- Has the narrative around Muslim women been shaped by reality or by perception?

To answer these questions, it is essential to once again separate divine teachings from human practices.

The next chapter explores this important and often misunderstood topic: **Women's Empowerment and Rights in Islam - between misconception and reality.**

Chapter 11: Women Empowerment in Islam

From Rights to Human Dignity

The discussion of justice in Islam cannot remain confined to abstract principles or legal structures alone. True justice manifests most clearly in how a society treats its most essential relationships - within the home, the family, and the social fabric.

Having explored the broader ethical foundations of justice, it now becomes necessary to examine one of the most debated and often misunderstood dimensions of Islamic teaching: the status and empowerment of women.

It is within this domain that misconceptions are most widespread, yet it is also here that Islam's moral clarity and transformative vision become most evident.

Women in Islam : Respected. Honored. Cherished.

There is a widespread misconception that Islam subjugates, degrades, or oppresses women. But is this true? Are millions of Muslims around the world truly oppressive toward women, or are these misunderstandings often shaped by biased media narratives, historical distortions, and cultural misrepresentations?

The Qur'an establishes a foundational principle:

"And for women are rights over men, similar to those of men over women." (Qur'an 2:228)

This verse alone challenges the very premise of inequality.

More than 1,400 years ago, Islam granted women rights that many societies, particularly in Europe - only began to recognize in the modern era. In fact, women in parts of Europe were denied independent property rights until the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The British social reformer and writer Annie Besant wrote:

“It is only in the last twenty years that Christian England has recognized the right of woman to property, while Islam has allowed this right from all time. It is a slander to say that Islam preaches that women have no souls.”

(Annie Besant, The Life and Teachings of Muhammad, 1932)

Such acknowledgments from Western intellectuals highlight a historical reality often ignored in modern discourse.

It is also important to recognize that the historical mistreatment of women has not been limited to any one region or civilization. In the Indian subcontinent, for instance, there existed deeply entrenched cultural practices that severely restricted women's dignity and autonomy. One of the most tragic among them was the practice of Sati (Sati Pratha), in which a widow was expected or in many cases coerced to immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. Even when not subjected to such extreme violence, widows were often condemned to lives of social isolation, stripped of color, jewelry, and basic participation in society, as if dignity itself had been buried alongside their husbands.

This was not a relic of distant antiquity alone; historical records indicate that such practices continued into the 19th century, with formal abolition under British rule in 1829, and social remnants persisting in certain areas even into the early

20th century before gradual reform movements brought change. These realities highlight an essential truth: the oppression of women has frequently been rooted in cultural traditions rather than divine guidance.

In contrast, Islam categorically rejected such practices. It affirmed a woman's right to live with dignity after the death of her husband, to remarry if she chooses, and to retain her social and economic identity. Widowhood in Islam is not a sentence of social death, but a phase of life governed by respect, protection, and choice. Therefore, when injustices against women occur within Muslim societies, they must be understood as cultural deviations, not reflections of Islamic teachings

Islam teaches that men and women descend from a single origin - Prophet Adam (peace be upon him). It does not accept injustice or inequality for either of them. Rather, it establishes a framework in which dignity is inherent, not earned through social struggle.

EQUAL REWARD AND EQUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Men and women worship Allah in the same manner - performing the same acts of worship, following the same divine guidance, and striving toward the same spiritual goals.

The Qur'an, in numerous verses, emphasizes that both men and women are equally rewarded for their deeds, without any distinction based on gender. Accountability is individual, and every action is valued based on sincerity and effort.

"Never will I allow the loss of the work of any worker amongst you, male or female; you are of one another." (Qur'an 3:195)

This verse makes it unequivocally clear that reward is based on action, sincerity, and faith - not gender.

Islam presents a balanced narrative regarding Adam and Eve: both were equally responsible, both repented, and both were forgiven. There is no inherited blame placed upon women. This theological clarity removes any basis for gender-based spiritual discrimination.

Equal Right to Knowledge

The pursuit of knowledge in Islam is not optional - it is an obligation.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim.”
(Sunan Ibn Mazah, Hadith 224; Sahih Al Jame’e)

This command is universal, applying equally to men and women.

Throughout Islamic history, women were not passive recipients of knowledge; they were its transmitters, scholars, and teachers. Many of the female companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were deeply learned and played a vital role in preserving and transmitting religious knowledge.

Beyond them, numerous Muslim women excelled in fields such as Qur’anic exegesis, law, medicine, and education - teaching both men and women.

Education, therefore, is not a privilege granted selectively; it is a duty equally binding upon both genders.

EQUAL RIGHT TO CHOOSE A SPOUSE

Islam honors women by granting them the right to choose their spouse, a right that was revolutionary in its historical context and remains essential today.

A woman's consent is a fundamental condition of marriage. Cultural practices such as forced marriages directly contradict Islamic teachings.

A well-known incident illustrates this principle: a woman approached the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said:

"My father married me to my cousin to raise his social standing, and I was forced into it."

The Prophet gave her the choice to annul the marriage. Although she chose to continue the marriage, she made it clear that her intention was to demonstrate to other women that they possessed this right.

Islam also allows a woman to retain her family name after marriage, preserving her identity, something that only recently became normalized in parts of the modern world.

EQUAL YET DIFFERENT: COMPLEMENTARY ROLES

Islam recognizes that men and women are equal in worth, yet different in certain natural dispositions. These differences are not a basis for superiority, but for complementarity.

"And the male is not like the female." (Qur'an 3:36)

"Does not the One who created, know? And He is the Most Kind, the All Aware." (Qur'an 67:14)

Contemporary research has also explored average differences in certain tendencies between men and women, while recognizing considerable overlap between individuals.

Scholars such as Edward O. Wilson have argued that these differences may contribute to complementary strengths within society. Such distinctions should not be viewed as deficiencies or rigid stereotypes, but as qualities that can foster cooperation, balance, and harmony.

Islam does not impose uniformity - it builds upon natural diversity.

THE FAMILY UNIT

In Islam, the family is not a hierarchical structure of domination, but a system of mutual responsibility.

Men are assigned financial responsibility, while women play a central role in nurturing, education, and emotional development. These roles are not restrictive - they are foundational to building stable and compassionate societies.

“They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them.”
(Qur’an 2:187)

This powerful metaphor reflects intimacy, protection, dignity, and mutual dependence.

Strong families create strong societies and Islam’s framework fosters cooperation, not competition.

LOVE AND MERCY IN SPOUSAL RELATIONSHIPS

“The best of you are those who are best to their wives.”
(Tirmidhi: 3895)

“And among His signs is that He created for you wives from yourselves that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and

He has put love and mercy between your hearts.” (Qur’an 30:21)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) exemplified these principles. He assisted in household work, treated his wives with kindness, and never resorted to violence.

His life serves not merely as guidance, but as a practical demonstration of dignity in action.

Lofty Status of Mothers and Daughters

Islam elevates the status of mothers to an unparalleled level.

“We have enjoined on man to be dutiful and kind to his parents; his mother bears him with hardship.” (Qur’an 46:15)

When asked who deserves the best treatment, the Prophet (peace be upon him) replied:

“Your mother.” “Then who?”

“Your mother.” “Then who?”

“Your mother.” “Then your father.”

This repetition is not rhetorical - it is a deliberate elevation.

Similarly, raising daughters is a means to Paradise:

“Whoever Allah has given two daughters and is kind towards them, they will be a reason for him entering Paradise.” (Musnad Ahmad: 11384)

Inspiring Women of Early Islam

Islamic history is rich with women whose lives reflect strength, leadership, scholarship, and unwavering faith.

Note : Bint means daughter

Khadija bint Khurwaylid (RA)

Bibi Khadija (RA) was the first to believe in Islam. A highly successful businesswoman, she was known for her intelligence, leadership, and integrity. She proposed marriage to the Prophet (peace be upon him), supported him financially and emotionally, and stood by him during the earliest and most difficult days of revelation.

She comforted him after the first revelation and took him to Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who affirmed his Prophethood. Allah honored her uniquely by sending salam through Angel Jibreel.

Zainab bint Muhammad (RA)

Zainab bint Muhammad (RA), the eldest daughter of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), is often overlooked in popular discussions, yet her life offers one of the most profound examples of how Islam honors a woman's independence, dignity, and emotional strength.

Despite being the daughter of the Prophet, she was never compelled to follow his faith by force, nor was her personal will overridden by parental authority. Instead, she was given the space to think, choose, and act with full moral agency. This in itself is a powerful testimony: even within his own household, the Prophet (peace be upon him) did not impose belief, but nurtured conviction.

Zainab (RA) embraced Islam out of her own conviction, yet at the same time remained deeply loyal to her husband, Abu al-'As ibn al-Rabi, who had not yet accepted Islam. This placed her in a deeply emotional and complex position - torn between her faith and her marital bond. Yet, rather than being forced into a decision, she was allowed to navigate this tension with dignity and autonomy.

Her life reflects a remarkable balance: she remained steadfast in her faith while honoring her relationship, demonstrating that strength in Islam is not rigidity, but principled resilience. Eventually, her character, patience, and unwavering integrity became a means through which her husband himself was moved - later accepting Islam and reuniting with her in faith.

Zainab (RA) also endured immense physical and emotional hardship. During her migration from Makkah to Madinah, she was attacked, and the trauma caused severe injury while she was pregnant, leading to the loss of her child. Despite this profound suffering, she remained steadfast, her life becoming a living example of courage, sacrifice, and Iman (faith under trial).

Even in her passing, her legacy carried forward. It is authentically reported that when she passed away, the Prophet (peace be upon him) instructed the women to wash her body, saying: "Wash her three times, or five times, or more if you see fit..." (Sahih al-Bukhari). This guidance became part of the established Islamic practice of Ghusl (ritual washing of the deceased), reflecting dignity and care even after death.

Her story is not merely historical, it is symbolic. She stands as a timeless example of a woman who made her own choices, endured hardship with strength, and remained true to both her faith and her relationships. Her life continues to inspire, reminding us that Islam does not suppress women - it empowers them to stand firm, choose wisely, and live with dignity even in the most difficult circumstances.

Fatimah bint Muhammad (RA)

Bibi Fatima (RA) was known for her piety, resilience, and unwavering faith. Despite hardship, she remained patient and steadfast.

The Prophet said:

“Fatima is the leader of the women of Paradise.” (Sahih Bukhari)

She was also the mother of Hasan and Hussain (RA), continuing a legacy of moral leadership.

Zainab bint Ali (RA)

Bibi Zainab (RA) demonstrated extraordinary courage after the tragedy of Karbala. Following the martyrdom of her brother Imam Hussain (RA), she stood in the court of Yazid and spoke truth with fearless conviction.

Her legacy represents resistance against oppression and unwavering commitment to justice.

Other Influential Women

- **Aisha bint Abu Bakr (RA):** Scholar, jurist, and narrator of hadith
- **Umm Salama (RA):** Advisor and strategist
- **Nusaybah bint Ka'ab (RA):** Defender in the Battle of Uhud

These women were scholars, leaders, advisors, and defenders - demonstrating that Islam never confined women to a single dimension of life.

Conclusion: Empowerment Rooted in Divine Justice

Before Islam, women were often degraded - denied inheritance, treated as property, and deprived of dignity. Islam abolished these injustices and established a system based on respect, rights, and responsibility.

Even in many modern societies, including parts of Europe and the West, women's struggles for equal pay, workplace respect, and social dignity continue. Islam, however, laid down these principles over 1,400 years ago - granting women property rights, education, legal identity, and honor.

The mistreatment of women in some Muslim communities today is not a reflection of Islam - it is a result of cultural deviations from its teachings.

If Islam truly oppressed women, the question remains: why do millions of women across the world continue to embrace it?

Islam affirms that men and women originate from the same essence, share the same spiritual worth, and are equally accountable before Allah.

While the empowerment of women highlights Islam's commitment to individual dignity and justice, it also points toward a broader reality: rights alone are not sufficient without a system that sustains them.

A society that truly values human dignity must ensure that its most vulnerable members are protected - not only through moral teachings, but through structured social responsibility.

It is within this wider framework that Islam introduces one of its most powerful institutions: charity - not merely as an act of kindness, but as a system designed to uphold justice, reduce inequality, and strengthen the moral fabric of society.

The discussion therefore now moves from individual empowerment to collective responsibility.

Chapter 12: Charity in Islam : Forms, Spirit, and Social Impact

An Ethical Framework of Giving and Social Responsibility

Reframing the Concept of Charity in Islam

A common misconception about Islam is that it is primarily ritualistic - concerned mainly with acts of worship such as prayer and fasting, with limited emphasis on social responsibility. However, this perception overlooks a central dimension of Islamic teaching: the integration of spirituality with socio-economic justice.

Within the Islamic framework, charity (*ṣadaqah* and *zakāt*) is not a peripheral virtue but a foundational principle that governs the ethical distribution of wealth and the moral responsibilities of individuals toward society.

The Qur'an emphasizes this dual function of charity - spiritual purification and social welfare:

"Take from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase..." (Qur'an 9:103)

This verse establishes charity as both:

- A means of inner purification, and
- A mechanism for collective well-being

Thus, in Islam, charity is not merely benevolence; it is an institutionalized and ethical obligation.

1. Conceptual Foundations of Charity in Islam

Charity in Islam extends beyond material donation to encompass a broader ethical orientation rooted in compassion, accountability, and social cohesion.

The Prophetic tradition expands the definition of charity beyond financial giving:

“Every act of kindness is charity.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

This expansive understanding includes:

- Moral conduct
- Social support
- Acts that contribute to communal harmony

Such a framework redefines charity as a continuous ethical practice, rather than an isolated act of generosity.

2. Zakat: Institutionalized Wealth Redistribution

Zakat represents the formal and obligatory dimension of charity in Islam and constitutes one of its five foundational pillars.

“Establish prayer and give Zakat...” (Qur'an 2:110)

2.1 Nature and Structure of Zakat

Zakat is:

- A fixed proportion (commonly 2.5%) of accumulated wealth
- Obligatory upon eligible individuals
- Distributed according to clearly defined categories

The Qur'an (9:60) specifies recipients, including:

- The poor (*fuqarā'*)
- The needy (*masākīn*)
- Those in debt
- Individuals working in the administration of charity
- Stranded travelers

2.2 Socio-Economic Function

Zakat serves multiple systemic functions:

- Redistribution of wealth
- Reduction of socio-economic disparities
- Prevention of wealth concentration

It reflects a structured approach to economic justice that predates modern welfare systems, embedding financial ethics within religious obligation.

3. Sadaqah: Voluntary and Ethical Giving

In contrast to the obligatory nature of zakat, *sadaqah* represents voluntary charity motivated by personal sincerity and moral consciousness. It is not restricted by:

- Amount
- Frequency

- Material form

Rather, it includes:

- Financial assistance
- Acts of service
- Emotional and social support

The Prophet ﷺ emphasized even the smallest acts:

“Protect yourselves from the Fire, even if it is by giving half a date in charity.” (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

This highlights an essential principle: the value of charity lies in intention, not magnitude.

4. Charity as Spiritual and Moral Purification

Islam conceptualizes wealth as a trust (*amānah*) from God, and charity functions as a means of ethical purification.

“And whatever you spend in charity, He will replace it...” (Qur'an 34:39)

This belief cultivates:

- Detachment from excessive materialism
- Trust in divine provision (*tawakkul*)
- Ethical restraint in wealth accumulation

Charity, therefore, operates as a corrective force against:

- Greed
- Social indifference
- Economic exploitation

5. Social Justice and Collective Welfare

The Islamic model of charity contributes to the establishment of a morally conscious and economically balanced society.

Its impact includes:

- Poverty alleviation
- Social solidarity
- Community resilience

While modern social systems often rely on policy enforcement, Islam combines:

- External obligation (law)
- Internal motivation (faith)

This ensures both compliance and sincerity.

6. Historical Manifestations of Charitable Systems

Historically, Islamic civilizations operationalized charitable principles through structured institutions. These included:

- *Waqf* (endowments): Funding education, healthcare, and public infrastructure
- Public kitchens and shelters
- Financial support systems for widows, orphans, and travelers

Such institutions demonstrate that charity in Islam is not limited to theory but has been historically implemented as a sustainable social system.

7. Addressing Misconceptions

A common misconception is that Islamic charity is informal or insufficient.

However, this assumption fails to recognize:

- The obligatory nature of zakat
- The continuous encouragement of voluntary charity
- The integration of ethics, law, and spirituality

Islam does not rely solely on state structures; rather, it cultivates a society where individuals are morally compelled to contribute to collective welfare.

Thus, charity in Islam is both:

- Systematic and conscience-driven

8. The Ethics of Intention in Giving

A defining feature of Islamic charity is the emphasis on intention (*niyyah*).

The Qur'an cautions against performative giving:

"Those who spend their wealth to be seen by people..." (Qur'an 4:38)

Authentic charity requires:

- Sincerity
- Humility
- Absence of self-glorification

This ensures that charitable acts retain their ethical and spiritual value.

9. Types of Charity in Islam: Expanding the Scope of Giving

Charity in Islam is not limited to a single obligation - it is a continuous opportunity for generosity, accessible to both the wealthy and the less privileged.

9.1 Zakat

- Obligatory charity (typically 2.5%)
- Applicable only to those with surplus wealth
- Not required from the poor

9.2 Zakat al-Fitr (Fitrh)

- Given before Eid prayer
- Purifies fasting
- Ensures inclusion of the poor in Eid celebrations

9.3 Sadaqah

- Voluntary charity
- Includes even small acts like a smile or kind word
- Accessible to everyone

9.4 Fidya

- Given by those unable to fast (due to illness or age)
- Feeding a needy person per missed fast

9.5 Lillah

- Purely for the sake of Allah
- Flexible and unrestricted

This type of charity strengthens sincerity and reinforces the internal motivation behind giving.

9.6 A Culture of Continuous Giving

These diverse forms of charity collectively establish an important principle:

- Charity in Islam is not limited to a single act
- It is not restricted to the wealthy
- It is not confined to a fixed percentage

Rather, it creates a lifestyle of generosity where:

- The wealthy contribute through obligation and beyond
- The less privileged contribute through small but meaningful acts
- Every individual remains connected to the well-being of others

Thus, Islam transforms charity from a one-time duty into a continuous moral and spiritual practice embedded in everyday life.

Conclusion: Charity as a Comprehensive Ethical System

Charity in Islam represents a holistic framework that integrates:

- Spiritual purification
- Economic justice
- Social responsibility

It transforms wealth into a trust and giving into both duty and aspiration. In an era marked by increasing inequality and

social fragmentation, the Islamic model offers a balanced approach grounded in:

- Accountability
- Compassion
- Structural fairness

Yet, this ethical system raises deeper questions:

- What is the ultimate foundation of morality?
- Can responsibility exist without accountability?
- Is justice sustainable without belief in a higher authority?

These questions lead us beyond social ethics into the realm of belief itself.

This brings us to a critical and increasingly relevant discussion: the question of atheism and belief in God.

Chapter 13: Atheism and Its Perspective in Islam

Faith, Reason, and the Search for Ultimate Reality: From Responsibility to Belief

In the previous chapter, we explored how Islam binds human life to responsibility - toward society, toward justice, and toward one another.

But this naturally raises a deeper question:

If we are responsible, then to whom are we accountable?

Is morality merely a human construct, or does it originate from a higher authority?

If human responsibility is real, then its foundation must also be real. It is at this critical intersection - between **morality, purpose, and existence** - that the discussion of atheism becomes not only relevant, but necessary.

The Rise of Atheism in the Modern World

In recent decades, atheism has gained prominence as an intellectual and philosophical position. It is often associated with:

- Scientific advancement
- Rational inquiry
- Skepticism toward religious authority

- At its core, atheism is the rejection of belief in God, commonly based on:
- The demand for empirical evidence
- The presence of suffering and evil
- The perception that religion is outdated or irrational

However, a deeper question must be asked:

Does rejecting God truly explain reality - or does it leave the most fundamental questions unanswered?

Islam does not approach this debate through blind belief, but through **reason, reflection, and evidence**.

1. The Big Bang and the Question of Origin

One of the most widely accepted scientific explanations for the origin of the universe is the **Big Bang Theory**.

It proposes that the universe began from a single, extremely dense and hot point, which expanded to form everything we observe today.

At first glance, some assume that this theory eliminates the need for a Creator.

But in reality, it does the opposite.

It raises deeper and unavoidable questions:

- If the universe had a beginning, **what caused that beginning?**
- How did matter and energy come into existence?
- Who established the laws governing this expansion?
- How did such remarkable order emerge from the earliest stages of the universe? Science explains **how**

the universe expanded. It does not explain **why it existed in the first place**. From a rational perspective:

- Something does not ordinarily come from nothing
- Effect are generally understood to have causes
- A beginning invites the question of its cause

The Qur'an remarkably alludes to this reality:

"Do not those who disbelieve see that the heavens and the earth were once a joined entity, and We separated them..." (Qur'an 21:30)

This verse points toward a unified origin of the universe before its separation - an idea that resonates with modern cosmology.

Thus, the Big Bang does not eliminate God. It strengthens the argument for a **beginning - and therefore, a Beginner**.

2. The Argument from Cause and Existence

A simple yet powerful logical sequence emerges:

- Everything that begins to exist has a cause
- The universe began to exist
- Therefore, the universe has a cause

This cause must be:

- Outside the universe
- Independent of time and space
- Not subject to physical laws

In Islamic understanding, this is **Allah** - the uncaused, eternal Creator.

The Qur'an challenges this directly:

“Were they created by nothing, or were they themselves the creators?” (Qur’an 52:35)

Both alternatives are irrational:

- Creation from nothing is impossible
- Self-creation is logically absurd

Thus, the existence of a Creator is not just a belief - it is the **most coherent conclusion**.

3. The Argument from Order and Design

The universe is not random - it is governed by precise laws. Consider:

- The exact balance of physical constants
- The complexity of DNA and biological systems
- The predictable motion of celestial bodies

Even a slight variation in these constants would make life impossible.

This phenomenon is known as **fine-tuning**. Now consider a simple analogy:

If you find a functioning watch in a desert, you do not assume it assembled itself. You conclude there is a **designer**.

So how can a universe infinitely more complex be attributed to chance? The Qur’an invites this reflection:

“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth... are signs for those of understanding.” (Qur’an 3:190)

Order points toward intelligence.

Design points toward a designer.

4. The Limits of Atheistic Explanations

While atheism raises important questions, it struggles to provide satisfying answers to fundamental aspects of existence.

4.1 The Problem of Meaning

Without belief in God:

- Life has no ultimate purpose
- Meaning becomes subjective
- Existence becomes accidental

Yet human beings naturally seek:

- Purpose
- Direction
- Significance

4.2 The Problem of Morality

If morality is purely subjective:

- No action can be universally right or wrong
- Justice becomes relative
- Oppression cannot be objectively condemned

Islam, however, grounds morality in divine guidance, providing a framework that is objective and universal.

4.3 The Problem of Consciousness

Human consciousness remains one of the greatest mysteries:

- Self-awareness
- Moral reasoning
- Emotional depth

Many philosophers and scholars argue that these cannot yet be fully explained by material processes alone.

5. Addressing Common Atheist Questions

5.1 Who Created God?

This question assumes that everything requires a creator. But in Islamic theology, Allah is:

- Eternal
- Uncreated
- Necessary

If God required a creator, He would not be God. Thus, logic demands a **first uncaused cause**.

5.2 Why Can't Science Explain Everything?

Science is limited to:

- Observation
- Experimentation
- Physical phenomena

However, many aspects of human experience and reasoning extend beyond direct empirical measurement, including:

- Logic
- Love
- Consciousness
- Moral reasoning

Thus, restricting truth to science alone is itself an unproven assumption.

6. Revelation as Guidance

If a Creator exists, it is reasonable to ask: **Has He communicated with humanity?**

Islam answers: Yes.

The Qur'an presents itself as divine revelation, supported by:

- Preservation over time
- Linguistic uniqueness
- Consistency across 23 years
- Depth of moral and philosophical guidance

It challenges humanity:

“And if you are in doubt... then produce a chapter like it...” (Qur'an 2:23)

Revelation provides what philosophy alone cannot:

- Clear guidance
- Moral structure
- Purpose for existence

7. Faith and Reason: A Unified Path

A common misconception is that faith and reason are opposites. In Islam, they are complementary.

- Reason leads to recognition
- Revelation provides direction

Faith (*īmān*) is not blind belief. It is a conclusion supported by:

- Observation
- Logic
- Inner awareness (*fitrah*)

Conclusion: From Doubt to Clarity

Atheism, in its attempt to explain the universe without God, raises important questions - but ultimately leaves the most essential ones unresolved:

- Why does anything exist at all?
- Why does the universe follow precise laws?
- Why do humans seek meaning and morality?

Islam offers a complete and coherent answer:

- The universe has a Creator
- Life has purpose
- Morality has foundation
- Existence is meaningful, not accidental

Belief in God is not merely a theological claim. It is the most rational, consistent, and fulfilling explanation of reality.

Yet, even when belief is understood intellectually, its teachings are often misrepresented in global discourse.

One of the most misunderstood concepts that emerges from this distortion is:

Jihad is a term deeply rooted in moral striving, yet frequently reduced to violence and extremism.

To understand how such a profound concept came to be so widely misunderstood, we must examine the gap between authentic teachings and their portrayal in modern narratives.

This leads us to the next chapter: Jihad, Terrorism, and Media Bias: A Misunderstood Reality

Chapter 14: Jihad, Terrorism, and Media Bias

A Misunderstood Reality: Between Reality and Representation

Among the many misconceptions surrounding Islam, few are as widespread and damaging as the association of the religion with violence and terrorism.

Media narratives, political rhetoric, and selective reporting have contributed to a perception where terms like *Jihad* are often misunderstood, misrepresented, and misused. This raises critical questions:

- Does Islam promote violence?
- Is Jihad synonymous with war?
- Are acts of terrorism rooted in Islamic teachings?

To answer these questions, it is essential to distinguish between:

- The authentic teachings of Islam
- The actions of individuals or groups
- The role of media in shaping perception

Only through this distinction can reality be understood.

1. The True Meaning of Jihad

The word *Jihad* originates from the Arabic root *Jahada* (جاهد), meaning:

- To strive
- To struggle
- To exert effort

In its most fundamental sense, Jihad refers to a moral, intellectual, and spiritual struggle in the path of Allah.

It is not limited to warfare - rather, it encompasses every sincere effort made to uphold truth, justice, and righteousness.

1.1 The Greater Jihad (Inner Struggle)

One of the most important dimensions of Jihad is the internal struggle against:

- One's ego (nafs – نفس)
- Temptations
- Moral weaknesses

It involves striving to become:

- More ethical
- More disciplined
- More conscious of Allah

This dimension of Jihad is continuous, deeply personal, and forms the foundation of a believer's character.

1.2 The Lesser Jihad (External Struggle)

The external aspect of Jihad may include armed struggle - but only under strict and clearly defined conditions. It is:

- Defensive, not aggressive
- Regulated, not chaotic
- Ethical, not destructive

The Qur'an states:

"Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors."
(*Qur'an* 2:190)

This establishes a clear principle: Even in conflict, justice, restraint, and accountability are mandatory.

2. Ethical Framework of Warfare in Islam

Islam introduced rules of warfare that were far ahead of their time. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ strictly prohibited:

- Killing civilians
- Harm to women and children
- Destruction of crops and livestock
- Attacking places of worship

War, in Islam, is never an objective - it is a last resort.

Its purpose is:

- Protection
- Justice
- Restoration of peace

3. Terrorism: A Violation of Islamic Principles

Terrorism, by definition, involves:

- Targeting innocent people
- Spreading fear
- Unjustified violence

Such actions directly contradict Islamic teachings.

The Qur'an declares:

"Whoever kills an innocent soul... it is as if he has killed all mankind." (*Qur'an* 5:32)

This verse establishes the immense value of a single human life. Thus:

- Terrorism is not Jihad
- Violence against innocents is not Islam
- Extremism is a distortion - not a representation

4. Media Bias and the Construction of Perception

In the modern world, perception is often shaped more by media than by reality.

Incidents involving Muslims are frequently:

- Generalized to represent the entire faith
- Repeated and amplified
- Framed within a narrative of fear

At the same time:

- Similar acts by others are rarely linked to their religion
- Context and nuance are often ignored

This selective framing creates:

- Misunderstanding
- Prejudice
- Islamophobia

Misuse of Terminology and Narrative Framing

In several regions, particularly in contexts like India, sacred terminology has not simply been misunderstood; it has been reshaped and repurposed to fit certain narratives. The word "*Jihad*," which in its true Islamic essence represents a deeply personal and moral struggle toward righteousness, is often stripped of its meaning and placed into sensational labels such

as “*Love Jihad*.” This phrase has no foundation in Islamic teachings. Yet, through constant repetition, it is presented as fact - planting doubt in minds and fear in hearts.

This distortion becomes even more visible when we look at how interfaith marriages are portrayed. When a Muslim man marries a Hindu woman, the relationship is frequently described using suspicious and alarming language. Questions are raised. Motives are doubted. The union is no longer seen as a personal choice, but as something calculated or threatening.

Critics of such narratives have argued that similar relationships are not always discussed with the same intensity when the religious identities are reversed. Whether one agrees or disagrees with this assessment, it highlights concerns about consistency in public discourse and media framing. It reveals a pattern where similar situations are treated differently based on identity, not on facts.

This is how narrative framing works. Words are carefully chosen, repeated, and emphasized until they begin to shape how people think. Over time, such language does more than describe reality - it starts to define it. It creates an environment where suspicion feels normal, where stereotypes appear justified, and where communities begin to view each other with distance instead of understanding.

What begins as the misuse of a single word gradually turns into something much larger. It influences perception, shapes conversations, and affects relationships at a societal level. In the end, it is not just a term that is being altered, but the way people see one another - giving rise to other constructed narratives.

Such usage:

- Detaches the word from its true spiritual meaning
- Politicizes and sensationalizes religious terminology
- Reinforces fear-based perceptions

A critical question arises:

Why are crimes committed by individuals from other backgrounds described simply as crimes or, at times, as acts of extremism - but when a Muslim individual is involved, the label “terrorist” is quickly applied and linked to Islam? This inconsistency reflects a deeper issue:

- The selective association of individual actions with an entire religion
- The construction of a biased narrative that frames Islam negatively

It is important to recognize:

Good and bad individuals exist in every society, culture, and religion. However:

- When wrongdoing occurs elsewhere, it is individualized
- When it involves a Muslim, it is often generalized

This double standard contributes significantly to global misconceptions.

The Broader Impact

In many parts of the world today, large-scale violence, oppression, and even mass killings take place. Yet, such acts are rarely framed through the lens of religion in the same consistent manner. This raises an important reflection:

If violence exists globally across different identities and ideologies, why is Islam uniquely and repeatedly associated with it? The answer often lies in:

- Narrative framing
- Selective emphasis
- Media bias

Biased representation plays a significant role in:

- Creating misunderstanding
- Fueling Islamophobia
- Distorting the perception of an entire faith

Media narratives, therefore, are not always neutral - they are constructed, shaped, and, at times, influenced by broader agendas.

5. Distinguishing Faith from Actions

A fundamental principle must be understood: A religion is defined by its teachings - not by the actions of those who misuse it. Just as:

- Criminal acts do not define a nation
- Misconduct does not define a profession

Similarly:

- Extremist actions do not define Islam

Islam must be understood through:

- The Qur'an
- The life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ
- Its ethical and legal framework

6. The Consequences of Misinterpretation

Misunderstanding Jihad has led to:

- Fear among non-Muslims
- Identity crises among Muslims
- Exploitation by extremist groups

This distortion harms:

- Global harmony
- Interfaith understanding
- The integrity of Islamic teachings

Correcting this misunderstanding is not only necessary - it is urgent.

Conclusion: Restoring the True Narrative

Jihad, in its true sense, is a concept rooted in:

- Self-improvement
- Justice
- Responsibility

It is not a call to violence - but a call to discipline, restraint, and moral courage. Terrorism, on the other hand, is a violation of everything Islam stands for.

The confusion between the two is often the result of misinterpretation and misrepresentation.

Understanding this distinction is essential. Because when meanings are distorted, actions can be justified under false pretenses.

And among the most dangerous outcomes of such distortion is the belief that even self-destruction and mass violence can be religiously justified.

If misunderstanding Jihad has led to confusion, then its most extreme and dangerous misinterpretation is seen in the concept of suicide bombing. Here, the distortion reaches its peak:

- Self-destruction is framed as sacrifice
- Violence against innocents is framed as justice

This raises a critical and unavoidable question:

Can such acts ever be justified within Islam?

To answer this, we must return once again to the core principles of the faith where the sanctity of life is absolute.

Chapter 15: The Concept of Suicide Bombing in Islam:

A Misconception Unveiled: When Misinterpretation Becomes Justification

If *Jihad* is among the most misunderstood concepts in Islam, then suicide bombing stands as its most dangerous - and most devastating - distortion.

In an age shaped by headlines and half-understood narratives, acts of extreme violence are often carried out under the claim of religious justification. These acts do not only take innocent lives; they leave behind confusion, fear, and a deeply fractured understanding of an entire faith.

This inevitably leads to urgent and unsettling questions:

- Can taking one's own life ever be an act of faith?
- Can Islam, a religion rooted in mercy, permit such actions under any circumstances?

To answer these questions with clarity and integrity, we must first separate what is divine from what is distorted:

- Authentic Islamic teachings
- The misuse of religious language

Because when truth is approached without bias, it reveals a principle that is both simple and profound:

Islam honors life - it does not justify its destruction.

1. The Sanctity of Life in Islam

In Islam, life is not accidental, nor insignificant - it is sacred.

It is an *amanah* (a trust), granted by Allah, carrying with it purpose, responsibility, and dignity. It is not something we own in absolute terms, nor something we are free to discard. Rather, it is something we are entrusted to protect. The Qur'an speaks with clarity and compassion:

"And do not kill yourselves. Indeed, Allah is ever Merciful to you." (Qur'an 4:29)

And again:

"Do not throw yourselves into destruction." (Qur'an 2:195)

These are not verses open to manipulation or selective interpretation. They establish a moral boundary - clear, firm, and unambiguous:

Life is to be preserved, honored, and safeguarded - not violated.

2. The Prohibition of Suicide

Within this framework, the prohibition of suicide is absolute.

Yet, this prohibition must not be misunderstood as a lack of empathy. Islam does not ignore human pain - it acknowledges it in its deepest forms:

- Emotional suffering
- Psychological distress
- Moments of overwhelming despair

But instead of surrendering to destruction, Islam offers a path anchored in resilience and meaning. It calls the believer toward:

- Patience (*sabr*)
- Hope in divine mercy
- Trust in Allah's wisdom

The Qur'an gently, yet powerfully, reminds:

"Do not despair of the mercy of Allah..."
(Qur'an 39:53)

This is more than a verse - it is reassurance. It is a lifeline. It tells the believer that no darkness is permanent, and no burden is without purpose.

3. Compassion Without Justification

One of the most profound strengths of Islamic teaching lies in its balance. It distinguishes, with precision and humanity, between:

- The act
- The individual

A person who takes their own life may have endured suffering beyond what others can see or understand. Their pain is real. Their struggle is significant.

For this reason, Islam calls for compassion - deep, sincere, and without arrogance - toward the individual.

Yet, it does not blur moral boundaries.

- The person is met with empathy
- The act remains prohibited

This delicate balance reflects a system rooted not in harsh judgment, but in principled mercy - where dignity is preserved, and truth is not compromised.

4. Suicide Bombing: A Double Violation

Suicide bombing is not a single transgression. It is a compounded moral rupture - one that violates the sanctity of life on multiple levels.

4.1 Taking One's Own Life

An act already forbidden, violating the trust of life given by Allah.

4.2 Killing Innocent People

An even greater injustice, extending harm to those who bear no guilt, no responsibility, and no involvement.

The Qur'an declares with unmatched gravity:

"Whoever kills an innocent soul... it is as if he has killed all mankind." (Qur'an 5:32)

Here, the value of one life is elevated to the value of all humanity. Such a principle leaves no space—none—for the justification of indiscriminate violence.

5. Not Martyrdom, But Transgression

To label such acts as *shahadah* (martyrdom) is not only incorrect - it is a profound distortion of a sacred concept.

In truth, these acts represent:

- A crime against oneself

- A crime against humanity

Islamic teachings are explicit in their ethical boundaries. Harm is strictly prohibited against:

- Civilians
- Women and children
- Non-combatants
- True martyrdom is not born from destruction. It is rooted in justice, sacrifice, and moral courage. It upholds life – it does not annihilate it.

6. The Misuse of Religious Language

At the core of this issue lies not only violence, but language - manipulated, reshaped, and stripped of its ethical essence. Extremist ideologies appropriate powerful Islamic terms such as:

- Jihad
- Martyrdom

Yet, they detach them from the very principles that give them meaning:

- Ethics
- Justice
- Accountability

Without these foundations, the words remain, but their truth is lost. What emerges is not religion, but rhetoric; not faith, but fabrication.

Islam cannot be defined by actions that stand in direct contradiction to its core values. To do so is not interpretation - it is misrepresentation.

7. A Message of Hope

Amid these heavy discussions, there is a message that must not be lost - especially for those who are silently struggling.

- Your pain is real
- Your struggle is valid
- Your life is valuable

The Qur'an offers reassurance that reaches the depths of human vulnerability:

“Allah does not burden a soul beyond what it can bear.”
(*Qur'an* 2:286)

This verse is a source of comfort and hope, reminding believers that Allah knows their struggles completely and that His mercy remains near even in moments of hardship. Seeking help is not a weakness; it is courage. It is an act of recognizing one's worth, and in many ways, an act of faith itself.

Conclusion: Choosing Life is Faith

At its core, Islam is a call - to life, to mercy, to hope. Its message is consistent and unwavering:

- Life is sacred
- Mercy is central
- Hope is never lost

Suicide bombing is not an expression of faith. It is a distortion of faith.

True Islam calls humanity toward:

- Life

- Responsibility
- Compassion

And above all, toward the preservation of the dignity and sanctity of every human soul.

While some concepts are misunderstood through their association with violence, others are misunderstood through oversimplification.

One such concept is *Halal* - often reduced to dietary laws alone, when in reality it represents a comprehensive ethical framework governing what is pure, lawful, and beneficial in all aspects of life. This brings us to the next chapter: Halal in Islam: Beyond Dietary Laws

Chapter 16: Halal, Haram, and Makruh

Beyond Food, A Way of Life : More Than What Is on the Plate

The term *Halal* (Halal – حلال – permissible) is often reduced to a discussion about food - especially meat. However, in Islam, its meaning is far deeper and far more comprehensive.

- Halal refers to everything that is **lawful, pure, and allowed** in a believer's life. Alongside it are two equally important concepts:
- *Haram* (Haram – حرام – prohibited) → That which is strictly forbidden
- *Makruh* (Makruh – مكروه – disliked) → That which is permissible but better to avoid

Together, these form a **complete ethical framework**, guiding not only what we eat - but how we live, behave, and interact. Islam is not merely concerned with actions - it is concerned with **consequences, intentions, and impact**.

Thus, Halal is not merely a set of rules. It is a conscious way of life (hayah – حياة).

1. Understanding the Three Foundations

1.1 Halal (Permissible – حلال)

Halal includes everything that is:

- Lawful

- Pure (tayyib – طيب – wholesome)
- Beneficial

It applies to:

- Food and drink
- Earnings
- Relationships
- Speech and behavior

Halal is not just about “allowed” - it is about what aligns with human well-being and divine guidance.

1.2 Haram (Prohibited – حرام)

Haram refers to anything that is strictly forbidden. These are actions or consumptions that:

- Harm the body or mind
- Corrupt the soul
- Disturb society

Examples include:

- Alcohol and intoxicants (khamr – خمر)
- Pork and impure substances (khinzir – خنزير)
- Injustice, ظلم (zulm – ظلم – oppression)
- Aggression and harmful behavior (ghadab – غضب – uncontrolled anger)
- Unlawful physical relations outside marriage (zina – زنا)
- Earning through dishonest or prohibited means, such as fraud, interest (riba – ربا), or exploitation
- Consuming wealth that is not rightfully earned (haram rizq – حرام رزق)

Haram is not restriction for the sake of restriction - it is protection (hifz – حفظ – safeguarding):

- Protection of the body from harm
- Protection of the mind from corruption (fasad – فساد)
- Protection of society from injustice
- Protection of the soul from spiritual loss (nuqsan – نقصان)

1.3 Makruh (Disliked – مكروه)

Makruh occupies a middle ground. It refers to actions that are:

- Permissible
- But better avoided

Avoiding Makruh reflects:

- Higher consciousness
- Greater discipline
- Sensitivity towards others
- It is not sinful if done, but rewarded if left.

2. Halal and Haram in Food: Wisdom Behind the Laws

- While Halal extends beyond food, dietary laws remain an important and visible part of Islamic practice.

2.1 Prohibition of Pork

Pork (khinzir – خنزير) is strictly Haram. This prohibition is rooted in:

- Spiritual discipline
- Health considerations
- Divine command

- Islam teaches that not everything beneficial must be fully understood for it to be followed - **trust in divine wisdom is itself an act of faith.**

2.2 Prohibition of Blood and Carrion

The consumption of blood (dam - دم) and dead animals (maytah - ميتة - carrion) is forbidden. This aligns with:

- Cleanliness (taharah - طهارة - purity)
- Health protection

2.3 Alcohol and Intoxicants

Alcohol (khamr - خمر) is Haram - not only in large quantities, but even in small amounts.

The wisdom is profound:

- It clouds judgment
- It removes awareness (taqwa - تقوى - God-consciousness)
- It leads to harm - physically, mentally, and socially

A person under intoxication loses control - and in that loss, may harm:

- Themselves
- Others
- Their dignity
- Islam closes the door not just to harm - but to **the path that leads to harm.**

3. Makruh in Daily Life: Subtle Ethics of Islam

- Makruh teaches refinement in behavior.

3.1 Food That Causes Discomfort

Certain foods like: Onion, Garlic are not Haram. However, consuming them before social or communal settings - especially prayer - is discouraged. Why?

Because Islam values:

- Cleanliness
- Respect for others
- A pleasant environment
- Causing discomfort, even unintentionally, goes against the spirit of Ihsan (ihsan – إحسان – excellence in conduct).

3.2 Makruh in Seafood and Preferences

Certain categories of seafood are viewed differently by various Islamic schools of thought. These differences reflect scholarly interpretation and different approaches to understanding dietary laws. This reflects:

- Differences in scholarly interpretation
- Emphasis on caution and purity
- The principle remains: If something is doubtful, leaving it increases spiritual clarity.

4. Beyond Food: Halal and Haram in Character

Islam does not limit Halal and Haram to what enters the mouth - it extends to what emerges from the heart.

4.1 Aggression and Harmful Behavior

Aggression (ghadab – غضب – anger) is strongly discouraged and can lead to Haram actions. When a person loses control:

- They lose awareness
- They act without intention
- They cause harm

This mirrors the effect of intoxication. Thus, Islam teaches: Anything that removes control over one's actions is dangerous - whether substance or emotion.

4.2 Speech, Conduct, and Interaction

Halal and Haram apply to:

- Words we speak
- Tone we use
- Behavior we display

Hurting someone emotionally, humiliating others, or creating discomfort is not aligned with Islamic ethics. Islam is not only about avoiding major sins - it is about refining character.

5. Halal as a Complete Lifestyle

Halal is not limited to consumption. It shapes:

- Earnings → Halal income (rizq halal - رزق حلال)
- Business → honesty and fairness
- Relationships → respect and responsibility

It teaches awareness in every aspect of life:

- What you take
- What you give
- How you live

6. The Deeper Purpose: Conscious Living

At its core, Halal, Haram, and Makruh form a system of **conscious living**. They teach:

- Discipline over desire
- Awareness over impulse
- Purpose over habit

The Qur'an states:

"O mankind, eat from whatever is lawful and good..." (2:168)

This is not just instruction - it is guidance toward balance.

Conclusion: From Consumption to Consciousness

Halal is not just about what is on your plate; it is about what is in your life.

Haram is not merely restriction - it is protection.

Makruh is not limitation - it is refinement.

Together, they form a path that transforms:

- Eating into awareness
- Living into responsibility
- Actions into worship

In a world driven by convenience and impulse, Islam calls the believer toward something higher:

- To live with intention.
- To choose with awareness.
- To act with responsibility.

Because in the end:

- What you consume shapes your body.
- What you choose shapes your soul.

Just as Islam provides guidance on what we consume, it also provides profound guidance on how we build and sustain human relationships. ***Among the most discussed and often misunderstood are:***

- Marriage (nikah - نكاح)
- Divorce (talaq - طلاق)
- Halala

These topics are frequently misrepresented, leading to confusion about justice, rights, and family structure.

To understand them, we must once again move beyond assumptions - and return to authentic teachings.

Chapter 17: Marriage, Divorce (Talaq), and Halala in Islam

*Clearing the Confusion Between Law, Culture,
and misunderstanding*

Marriage in Islam is not merely a social arrangement - it is a sacred bond built on **love, mercy, and mutual respect**.

Allah says:

“And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy...” (Qur’an 30:21)

And: “And We created you in pairs.” (Qur’an 78:8)

These verses establish a fundamental truth:

Marriage in Islam is meant to provide peace (sakinah), love (mawaddah), and mercy (rahmah).

It is a system designed to nurture stability - not conflict.

However, when misunderstandings arise - especially around divorce and the concept commonly called “Halala” - it becomes necessary to return to authentic teachings.

1. Marriage in Islam: A Partnership, Not Ownership

Marriage (Nikah) in Islam is a solemn covenant and a contract of mutual dignity and responsibility. It is not a relationship of

ownership, but one of partnership, in which both husband and wife are entrusted with rights and responsibilities toward one another. The Qur'an describes marriage as a source of tranquility, affection, and mercy, making it a relationship built on cooperation rather than domination. Forced marriages have no place in Islam. **Hence, consent before marriage is essential to protect what Islam grants both spouses:**

- Respect and compassion
- Defined rights and responsibilities
- Protection of dignity

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

"The best among you are those who are best to their wives." [Narrated by Abu Dāwūd, At-Tirmidhi, and Ahmad] - [Sunan At-Tirmidhi - 1162]

2. Divorce (Talaq): A Structured and Responsible Process

Islam recognizes that not all marriages succeed. However, it regulates divorce to ensure it is not misused. Although divorce is permitted in Islam when necessary, the Qur'an and Sunnah encourage reconciliation and careful deliberation before ending a marriage.

2.1 Divorce Is a Process, Not an Instant Act

The Qur'anic method of divorce is gradual:

- First Talaq → waiting period (iddah – a prescribed waiting period after divorce)
- Second Talaq → reflection and reconciliation

- Third Talaq → final separation

Each stage allows:

- Time to reconsider
- Family mediation
- Emotional clarity

This ensures that divorce is thoughtful - not impulsive.

2.2 The Misconception of Triple Talaq

A widely debated issue is the concept of pronouncing three Talaqs in a single sitting.

To understand this correctly, it is essential to distinguish between:

- What is prescribed in the Qur'an (ideal method)
- How some jurists later treated irregular cases (legal consequence)

The Qur'anic Method

The Qur'an clearly presents divorce as a **gradual and structured process**:

"Divorce is twice; then either retain [her] in a fair manner or release [her] with good treatment..." (Qur'an 2:229)

This establishes that:

- Divorce must occur in **stages**
- Each stage allows **time for reflection and reconciliation**
- It is **not meant to be instantaneous or impulsive**

Triple Talaq in One Sitting: Scholarly Perspective

There is a difference of opinion among scholars:

Many classical jurists (majority view):

- Consider three pronouncements in one sitting as legally binding (counted as three) but sinful and against proper method

Other scholars (Classical discussions by Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim):

- Consider it as one divorce, especially when done in anger or without proper intention

Authentic narrations recorded in Sahih Muslim indicate that during the lifetime of the Prophet ﷺ, the caliphate of Abu Bakr (RA), and the early years of Umar ibn al-Khattab (RA), three pronouncements of divorce made together were generally treated as one. During his caliphate, Umar (RA) later ruled that such pronouncements would be counted as three due to their increasing misuse. This historical development became one of the reasons why jurists differed regarding the legal effect of triple Talaq pronounced in a single sitting. Despite these differences, scholars across the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence agree that the Qur'anic method of divorce is gradual, deliberate, and intended to provide opportunities for reflection and reconciliation (Qur'an 2:229-230; Sahih Muslim, Hadith No. 1472, numbering may vary by edition of Hadith).

Prophetic Guidance

Authentic narrations indicate that during the time of the Prophet ﷺ:

- Divorce was treated carefully and with restraint
- Rash or excessive pronouncements were **discouraged**

What Is the Clear Takeaway?

- The Qur'anic model is gradual, thoughtful, and just
- Instant triple Talaq contradicts the spirit of this system
- It is not the recommended or ideal Islamic practice

Therefore:

Islam does not promote impulsive divorce - it regulates it to prevent injustice, especially towards women

3. Rights of Women in Divorce: A Comprehensive Framework

A common misconception is that divorce in Islam favors men. In reality, Islamic law establishes a **multi-layered system of protection for women**, ensuring dignity, security, and choice.

3.1 Right to Seek Divorce (Khula)

A woman has the right to initiate separation through **Khula** if:

- The marriage becomes emotionally or psychologically harmful
- Compatibility is no longer possible

3.2 Right to Justice Through Authority

A woman can seek annulment (*faskh*) through proper authority in cases of:

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Financial irresponsibility

3.3 Financial Security and Dignity

Islam ensures that a woman is not left vulnerable:

- **Mahr (dower)** remains her right
- **Maintenance during iddah (waiting period after divorce)** is obligatory

After the completion of the iddah, it is natural and understood that the former husband is no longer responsible for the woman, and she is fully free to make her own life decisions. This is both legally and ethically consistent, subject to any exceptions recognized under Islamic law, such as pregnancy.

3.4 Children's Rights and Father's Responsibility

If the couple has children, Islam provides clear and balanced guidance:

- If children remain with the mother, their financial responsibility remains on the father
- The mother is not obligated to financially maintain the children while the father is alive

This responsibility includes:

- Food
- Clothing
- Accommodation
- Education
- All necessary living expenses

This responsibility continues:

- For a **son** → until he becomes financially independent

- For a **daughter** → until she becomes financially secure or marry

This ensures that:

Divorce between zawj (husband) and zawjah (wife) does not result in neglect of the children.

3.5 Protection from Emotional Harm

The Qur'an commands:

"Do not retain them to harm them..." (Qur'an 2:231)

This principle establishes a powerful ethical boundary within Islamic law:

- No emotional manipulation
- **A man cannot hold a woman in marriage to control or hurt her**
- No forced continuation of marriage
- Divorce must be conducted with respect and fairness

This ensures that marriage remains a space of dignity - not control, and separation remains a process of justice - not revenge.

3.6 Freedom After Divorce

After divorce:

- A woman is completely free
- She can:
 - Remarry
 - Remain single
 - Choose her own path

The decision remains entirely hers.

Conclusion of This Section

Cultural traditions and individual actions are often wrongly attributed to Islam. To understand true Islamic principles, one must look to the Qur'an and authentic Hadith, not local customs or religious misinterpretations. This text is based entirely on those foundational sources and mainstream scholarly consensus.

4. Understanding “Halala”: Reality vs Misconceptions

One of the most misrepresented concepts is what people commonly call “Halala.”

In reality, this term is widely misunderstood.

4.1 Clarifying the Term: There Is No Ritual Called “Halala”

The word *Halal* simply means lawful or permissible. There is no prescribed Islamic ritual called “Halala.” The term is commonly used by people to describe a legal consequence that may arise after an irrevocable divorce, but Islam does not prescribe or encourage a ritual by this name. As established in Islamic teachings:

- Everything is considered permissible unless clearly prohibited
- Allah alone has the authority to declare what is lawful or unlawful

A foundational principle of Islamic law is:

Al-asl fil-ashya al-ibahah (the default ruling of things is permissibility). The Qur'an states:

*“O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good (Halalan Tayyiban)...”
(Qur’an 2:168)*

This connects permissibility with:

- Purity
- Wholesomeness
- Ethical responsibility

Scholars such as Al-Qurtubi explain that the foundation of Islamic law is permissibility and ease, not restriction.

At the same time, Islam sets clear moral boundaries:

- Aggression (zulm – injustice, oppression, or harm) is haram
- Any act rooted in harm, coercion, exploitation, or emotional injustice is not permissible

This shows that *Halal* is not merely about legality - it is about justice, ethics, and human dignity.

4.2 What Actually Happens After Final Divorce

When a couple goes through the complete divorce process properly - stage by stage - and reaches the third and final Talaq, the marriage ends conclusively.

At this point:

- The woman becomes non-permissible (not halal) for the former husband
- This reflects the seriousness of repeated divorce decisions

This ruling ensures that divorce is not treated casually.

4.3 The Wisdom Behind This Law

If, after:

- Multiple opportunities
- Months of reflection
- Mediation efforts

the marriage still ends, it indicates:

A deep and unresolved incompatibility.

Such a relationship may involve:

- Continuous conflict
- Emotional harm
- Loss of respect and trust

Forcing such a relationship to continue could lead to:

- Psychological distress
- Toxic family environments
- Long-term emotional damage

Islam does not support such harm.

4.4 Moving Forward: A New Beginning

After final divorce, the woman is free to marry someone else.

This second marriage must be:

- Genuine
- Natural
- Based on sincere intention

In this new phase, two outcomes are possible:

1. A Peaceful and Successful Marriage

The second marriage may bring:

- Love
- Stability
- Respect
- Emotional fulfillment

In such a case, life moves forward positively.

2. Another Separation

It is also possible that the second marriage may not succeed, as not every relationship is destined to endure. In some cases, the marriage may end naturally due to incompatibility, while in others, it may conclude due to circumstances such as the death of the husband.

In either situation, the woman is once again free - both legally and morally - with full autonomy over her life decisions.

She may choose to:

- Remain unmarried
- Enter into another marriage
- Or, if her former husband approaches her with sincerity and genuine reform, consider reconciliation

Equally, she may choose an entirely different path based on her own judgment, well-being, and future aspirations.

The decision remains entirely hers.

This reflects a profound principle within Islamic teachings:

A woman is not bound by her past, nor controlled by external pressure - she is entrusted with dignity, agency, and the authority to shape her own future.

4.5 When Remarriage with the Former Husband Becomes Possible

If the second marriage ends naturally (without planning or manipulation), then:

- The woman may choose to remarry her former husband
- But only if she willingly agrees

This is not a forced process - it is a natural outcome of life circumstances.

4.6 The Biggest Misconception: Pre-Planned “Halala”

The most dangerous distortion is the idea of arranged or temporary Halala marriages.

Such **practices** involve:

- Pre-planned marriages
- Intentions of immediate divorce

These actions:

- Have no basis in the authentic teachings of Islam
- Are unethical and exploitative
- The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ strongly condemned the practice of **planned or pre-arranged halala (tahleel marriage)**.
- “Allah has cursed the one who performs halala and the one for whom it is done.” (Abu Dawood – Hadith No. 207, at-Tirmidhi – 1120, Sunan Ibn Majah – 1936)

Final Clarification

Islamic teachings are not responsible for cultural misuse. Rather than oppression, the system seeks fairness for all parties involved.

The Qur'anic ruling concerning remarriage after an irrevocable divorce serves as a safeguard against treating divorce lightly; it is not a loophole to be manipulated.

Conclusion: A System of Justice, Responsibility, and Dignity

Islamic laws are not built on control - but on accountability.

They ensure:

- Marriage is honored
- Divorce is regulated
- Women are protected
- Children are not neglected

They balance:

- Emotion with responsibility
- Freedom with ethics
- Law with compassion

Islam does not restrict - it guides. It does not oppress - it protects.

Chapter 18: Sacred Signs from Makkah to Al-Aqsa

A Legacy Written by Divine Will

In Islam, sacred places are not worshipped - they are **remembered as signs (Ayat - آيات)** of Allah's presence, power, and guidance throughout human history.

Among these sacred signs, three stand unparalleled:

- The Kaaba (الكعبة - The Sacred House) in Makkah
- The blessed water of Zamzam (زمزم - The Sacred Spring)
- Masjid al-Aqsa (المسجد الأقصى - The Farthest Mosque) in Jerusalem

These are not isolated symbols. They form a **continuous spiritual legacy**, connecting the first human to the final Messenger, peace be upon them all.

The Kaaba: The First House of Worship

The Kaaba is not merely a structure built of stone. It is **Baytullah (بيت الله - The House of Allah)**, established as the first center of worship on earth.

According to many Islamic scholars and traditional narrations, the foundations of the Kaaba were first laid by Adam (PBUH), before being rebuilt by Ibrahim (PBUH) and Ismail (PBUH), making it the earliest نقطة (nuqtah - point) of Tawheed (توحيد - Oneness of God) on earth.

Among the most sacred elements of the Kaaba is the **Hajar al-Aswad** (الحجر الأسود – The Black Stone).

According to well-known Islamic narrations (riwayat – روايات):

- The stone was sent from Jannah (جنة – Paradise) along with Adam (PBUH)
- It was originally **white** (abyad – أبيض), pure and radiant
- Over time, it turned **black** (aswad – أسود), because of the sins of the children of Adam, symbolizing the effect of sin upon humanity.

While these details are not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, they are widely preserved in Hadith literature and classical Islamic scholarship. They are understood not merely as historical reports, but as **spiritual symbolism** (ramz – رمز).

The Black Stone stands as: **A witness to human history - purity touched by sin, yet preserved by divine will.**

A Structure Beyond Time and Destruction

From Adam (PBUH) to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), humanity witnessed:

- Natural disasters
- The سقوط (suqoot – سقوط – fall) of civilizations
- The عظيم flood during the time of **Nuh (PBUH)**

Despite these events, the sanctity of the Kaaba remained **mahfuz** (محفوظ – protected).

Even when its physical structure was altered, rebuilt, or affected, its divine designation was never lost.

This reflects a powerful truth: **What is established by Allah cannot be erased by creation.**

The Covenant of Ibrahim (PBUH)

Centuries later, Allah commanded **Ibrahim (PBUH)** and his son **Ismail (PBUH)** to raise the foundations of the Kaaba once again.

The Qur'an states:

“And when Ibrahim and Ismail raised the foundations of the House...” (2:127)

This act was not merely construction - it was a renewal of the covenant (Ahd – عهد) of Tawheed.

During this rebuilding:

- The Hajar al-Aswad was placed in its position
- The Station of Ibrahim (Maqam-e-Ibrahim – مقام إبراهيم) became a lasting sign

Maqam-e-Ibrahim is not merely a historical marker - it is a miracle (ayah – آية) preserved in physical form.

According to traditional Islamic narrations:

- A special stone was brought for **Ibrahim (PBUH)** through Jibreel (AS)
- This stone was granted a unique property by the will of Allah
- As Ibrahim (PBUH) stood upon it to construct the Kaaba:
 - It would rise (irtafa'a – ارتفع) when building higher walls
 - It would lower (inzala – انزل) when working on lower sections

In this way, the stone facilitated the construction, serving as a divine aid (nusrah – نصرة).

Over time, the footprints (athar – أثر) of Ibrahim (PBUH) became imprinted upon it, not as ordinary marks, but as a **lasting sign of obedience, effort, and divine assistance**.

Today, it remains preserved near the Kaaba as **Maqam Ibrahim**, fulfilling the Qur'anic command:

“Take the Maqam of Ibrahim as a place of prayer...” (2:125)

Thus, the Kaaba represents not a single moment in history, but a **continuous reaffirmation of divine unity**.

Zamzam: Mercy Flowing Through Time

Beside the Kaaba flows one of the most extraordinary signs in human history - the water of Zamzam.

Its origin traces back to **respected Hajar** and her infant son **Ismail (PBUH)**.

Left in the barren desert by divine command, Bibi Hajar ran between Safa and Marwah in desperation, searching for water.

At that moment of helplessness, Allah's mercy manifested. From beneath the feet of Ismail (PBUH), water gushed forth - Zamzam.

This was not merely survival. It was **Rahmah (رحمة - Divine Mercy)** made visible.

The Uniqueness of Zamzam

Zamzam continues to:

- Flow in one of the driest regions on earth
- Sustain millions of people
- Remain pure and beneficial

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

“Zamzam water is for whatever intention it is drunk for.”

Even in modern observation, its characteristics remain unique. Yet for the believer, its reality goes beyond science:

It is a sign that provision comes from Allah, even when all means disappear.

Masjid al-Aqsa: The Sacred Connection (located in the old city of Jerusalem (Al-Quds), in Palestine)

Beyond Makkah lies another sacred center of immense significance - Masjid al-Aqsa (المسجد الأقصى) - The Farthest Mosque).

It holds a unique and honored place in Islam:

- It was the **first Qibla** (قِبْلَة - direction of prayer) for Muslims
- It is among the **three holiest mosques** in Islam
- It represents a deep connection with the legacy of all Prophets

The Night Journey: From Earth to the Heavens

Masjid al-Aqsa is central to the miraculous journey of **Al-Isra wal-Mi'raj** (الإسراء والمعراج) - The Night Journey and Ascension).

On this night:

- The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was taken from Makkah to Al-Aqsa
- He led all the Prophets in prayer

- From there, he ascended to the heavens

This moment represents: The unity of all Prophets and the continuity of divine guidance.

On Its Construction: Between Belief and Scholarship

Islamic tradition associates the grandeur (azmat - عظمت) of Masjid al-Aqsa with **Sulaiman (PBUH)**.

He was granted unique abilities:

- Control over the unseen beings (jinn - جن)
- Understanding of animals and nature
- Authority over forces unseen to ordinary humans (bashar - بشر)

The Qur'an confirms that jinn worked under his command. Some traditional narrations suggest that jinn contributed to great constructions during his time, including sacred structures. However, from an academic perspective:

- The Qur'an does not explicitly state that Masjid al-Aqsa was built solely by jinn
- Scholars differ regarding the exact nature of its construction

Thus, it is best understood as:

A sacred site deeply connected to the era of Sulaiman (PBUH), where divine power, human effort, and possibly unseen creation intersected.

A Unified Map of Faith

When viewed together:

- The Kaaba in Makkah
- The water of Zamzam

- Masjid al-Aqsa in Jerusalem

They are not separate symbols.

They form a **sacred geography (muqaddas naqsha - مقدس نقشه - holy map)** of Islam.

A map that connects:

- Adam (Peace Be Upon Him)
- Ibrahim (Peace Be Upon Him)
- Musa (Peace Be Upon Him)
- Isa (Peace Be Upon Him)
- Sulaiman (Peace Be Upon Him)
- And finally, Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him)

Beyond Ritual: Understanding the Signs

To an outsider, these may appear as rituals tied to places.

But in reality, they are **signs (Ayat - آيات)**:

- The Kaaba → A symbol of unity and direction
- The Black Stone → A reminder of human imperfection
- Zamzam → A manifestation of divine mercy
- Maqam-e-Ibrahim → A living miracle of faith,
- Masjid al-Aqsa → A link between earth and heaven

Final Reflection

The Kaaba is not worshipped - it is a direction (Qibla - قبلة), aligning hearts before bodies.

The Hajar al-Aswad (الحجر الأسود - The Black Stone) is not divine - it is a witness (shahid - شاهد), reminding believers of faith, repentance, and return to Allah.

Maqam Ibrahim (مقام إبراهيم – The Station of Ibrahim) is not just a stone - it is a sign (ayah – آية), preserving the footprints of obedience—a place where faith was not merely spoken, but lived.

Zamzam (زمزم – The Blessed Water) is not merely water - it is mercy (rahmah – رحمة) in motion, flowing where hope once seemed to vanish.

Masjid al-Aqsa (المسجد الأقصى – The Farthest Mosque) is not just a mosque - it is a sacred link between the earth (الأرض al-ard) and the heavens (السماء al-sama), where the legacy of the Prophets (peace be upon them all) stands united.

Together, these are not symbols - they are signs (ayat – آيات).

Not objects of devotion - but directions toward the Divine.

They do not call humanity towards themselves. They point humanity beyond themselves - to Allah. This is a living testimony of divine continuity.

The survival of these sacred elements through centuries of change is not accidental. For the believer, it is a sign, a reminder, and a miracle.

Islam is not built on places - it is built on purpose.

Not on structures - but on submission.

Not on rituals alone - but on signs that guide every searching heart back to Allah.

Chapter 19: Hijab - A Choice, A Consciousness, A Quiet Strength

Who Defines Freedom?

“There shall be no compulsion in religion.” (Qur’an 2:256)

The decision to wear the hijab has religious significance only when it is made sincerely for the sake of Allah. Forced acts lose their spiritual value.

What if everything you were told about the hijab was incomplete?

What if the narrative you heard, of oppression, control, and silence, was not the lived reality of millions, but a carefully repeated assumption?

And what if the truth was far more complex... and far more empowering?

This chapter is not about defending a piece of cloth. It is about reclaiming a concept that has been misunderstood, simplified, and often judged without being truly examined.

The Part No One Talks About: Hijab Before the Hijab

The conversation around hijab often begins at the surface, fabric, appearance, visibility.

But Islam begins somewhere deeper.

- Not with women.

- Not with clothing.
- But with **consciousness**.

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their chastity...” (Qur’an 24:30)

Before a woman is asked to cover, a man is asked to **control how he sees**.

And then:

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their chastity...” (Qur’an 24:31)

This order is not incidental, it is foundational. It tells us something powerful:

Islam does not reduce women to objects of desire and then ask them to cover. Rather, it disciplines desire and builds dignity.

The first hijab is not worn on the head. It is worn in the **eyes**.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

“The adultery of the eyes is looking...” (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim)

This is not just moral teaching, it is psychological insight.

Because what we repeatedly look at, we begin to desire.

What we desire, we begin to justify and what we justify, we eventually normalize.

Islam doesn’t wait for damage to happen. It closes the door before it even opens.

What Hijab Gives - Not What It Takes

The question is often framed incorrectly:

“What does hijab take away from a woman?”

A more honest question is:

“What does hijab protect her from, and what does it give her in return?”

Hijab gives a woman something rare in today’s world: **Relief.**

Relief from being constantly evaluated. Relief from silent comparison.

Relief from the pressure to meet ever-changing standards of beauty.

It returns control.

In a world where women are often *seen before they are heard*, hijab reverses the order.

It says:

See my mind. Hear my voice. Respect my presence.

It does not make a woman invisible. It makes her **intentional.**

And perhaps most importantly, it frees her worth from being negotiated by the gaze of others.

A Design That Transcends Time: Hijab and Modern Expression

Across cultures and religions, women have historically covered their heads as a sign of modesty. Yet, many of these practices struggled to adapt with changing fashion and modern lifestyles.

They remained tied to specific garments, occasions, or cultural expectations.

Hijab, however, carries a unique distinction.

It is not confined to a single style. It is not restricted to a specific culture.

It does not resist modernity, it adapts within it.

A hijab can be styled with:

- Western professional wear
- Traditional attire
- Casual everyday clothing
- Contemporary fashion

It blends without losing its essence. This adaptability is not accidental, it reflects a principle designed to be timeless, not temporary.

While many traditional forms of head covering became less common in modern societies, the hijab has remained a widely practiced expression of modesty across diverse cultures because it fits into change without being changed by it.

For many women, this is not a burden, it is comfort. It allows them to move across spaces, cultures, and identities without compromising their values.

Modesty Across Faith Traditions

The idea of modesty is not exclusive to Islam, it is a shared moral thread across civilizations.

In Christianity, scriptures instruct women to cover their heads during prayer (1 Corinthians 11:5), and figures like Virgin Mary are consistently represented with modest coverings.

In Judaism, the concept of *Tzniut* emphasizes modest dress and includes hair covering for married women.

In many Hindu traditions, the *pallu* or *ghoonghat* reflects cultural expressions of modesty and respect.

The difference, however, lies here:

While many traditions saw these practices shift or fade with modernity, Islam preserved modesty not as a cultural habit, but as a conscious, enduring principle.

Hijab in the Modern World: Conflict or Compatibility?

A common assumption is that hijab is incompatible with modern life. Yet, millions of Muslim women across the world challenge this narrative daily.

They are:

- Doctors
- Engineers
- Academics
- Entrepreneurs
- Leaders

Their hijab does not limit them, it accompanies them.

The real question, then, is not whether hijab fits into modernity, but whether modernity allows space for diverse expressions of identity.

Redefining Freedom

Freedom is often framed as the ability to reveal. Islam offers a quieter, deeper definition:

- **Freedom is also the ability to choose restraint.**

When a woman chooses hijab:

- She is not hiding, She is deciding
- She is not erasing herself, She is defining herself

And when a man lowers his gaze:

- He is not restricted, He is refined
- He is not losing freedom, He is exercising discipline

Conclusion: A Conscious Way of Living

Hijab, in Islam, is not a one-sided rule. It is a balanced moral framework:

For men: responsibility of the gaze and behavior

For women: dignity in presentation and presence

For society: respect, boundaries, and ethical interaction

To reduce hijab to oppression is to ignore its depth. It is not about control, it is about conscious living.

In a world that constantly demands to see more, reveal more, and consume more—
hijab stands as a quiet resistance.

A resistance that says:

You are not an object to be consumed.

You are not a standard to be measured.

You are not a body to be displayed.

- You are a mind.

- A soul.
- A presence.

And your worth was never meant to be visible to everyone.

Chapter 20 : Beyond Belief: Understanding Misconceptions in Society

As I bring this book towards its completion, I find it essential to include one final section - one that moves beyond theological discussions and addresses the realities of social perception. Throughout this book, I have explored questions about Islam from a woman's perspective, drawing upon faith, reason, history, and lived experience. Yet many of the questions I have encountered over the years have not arisen solely from religious texts or doctrines. Rather, they have emerged from assumptions, stereotypes, media narratives, and misunderstandings that shape how people perceive Islam and Muslims in everyday life.

As an Indian woman, I have personally encountered many of these questions and assumptions throughout my educational and professional journey. Some were asked with genuine curiosity, while others reflected misconceptions that have become deeply embedded within society. These experiences not only shaped my own perspective but also highlighted the importance of addressing concerns that often remain unspoken.

Perhaps some of the most difficult questions about Islam are not found in scripture, but in the assumptions we carry about one another.

The Marriage of Aisha (RA) - Context Over Controversy

One of the most frequently discussed and often misunderstood aspects of Islamic history is the marriage of Aisha (RA) to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In modern discourse, this topic is often presented without context, leading to conclusions shaped more by contemporary assumptions than historical understanding.

To approach this subject fairly, it is essential to recognize a fundamental principle of historical analysis: **practices of the past must be understood within their own social, cultural, and historical frameworks.**

Historical Context

Marriage customs in the 7th century were vastly different from those of today.

- Across civilizations:
- Early marriages were common
- Puberty marked readiness for marriage
- Social structures emphasized early responsibility

This was not unique to Arabia - it was a global norm.

Examples include:

- Jewish traditions, where early betrothal was practiced within established legal and social frameworks (Epstein; Campbell)
- Christian Europe, where royal marriages at a young age occurred for political alliances, such as the marriage of King Richard II and Isabella of Valois (Saul; Parsons)

- Cultural narratives within Hindu traditions, including symbolic accounts like Brahma and Saraswati, which are understood within theological and mythological contexts rather than modern legal frameworks (Doniger).

These examples are presented within their historical and cultural settings and should not be evaluated through contemporary standards.

Within this broader historical context, the marriage of Aisha (RA) must be understood as part of a normative social practice of its time, not an exception.

Therefore, a fair and academically grounded approach requires us to:

- Understand history within its context
- Avoid selective comparisons
- Recognize the evolution of social norms over time

When viewed through this lens, the narrative shifts from controversy to clarity.

Thus, it is essential to recognize: This was a global historical reality - not an Islamic exception.

Judging a 7th-century practice solely through a 21st-century lens leads to misunderstanding rather than clarity.

Understanding the Marriage Beyond Numbers

One of the most common errors in modern discussions is reducing this marriage to a single point - age.

However, historical events cannot be understood by isolating one detail and ignoring the broader context in which they occurred.

At that time:

- Such marriages were socially accepted
- They carried no stigma
- They were part of a structured and morally regulated society

More importantly, the marriage was not questioned by contemporaries - neither by supporters nor by opponents of the Prophet ﷺ.

This silence from those who lived in that time is itself a powerful historical indicator.

Divine Wisdom and Aisha's Role

Aisha bint Abu Bakr (RA) went on to become one of the most influential figures in Islamic history. Her contributions include:

- Narrating over 2,000 hadiths
- Teaching companions and later generations of scholars
- Preserving detailed knowledge of the Prophet's personal life, character, and daily practices

Her intellectual strength, memory, and insight made her one of the preservers and transmitters of the Prophet's ﷺ teachings.

She was not only a scholar but also an active and aware participant in the social and intellectual life of the early Muslim community.

Her role extended beyond narration - she contributed to understanding, interpretation, and the transmission of knowledge with remarkable clarity and depth.

Cultural Understanding and Intellectual Fairness

It is essential to approach history with intellectual honesty.

What may seem unusual today was normal, ethical, and socially accepted in its own time. The marriage of the Prophet ﷺ to Aisha (RA):

- Was accepted by her family
- Was accepted by society
- Was never used as a point of criticism during his lifetime

This demonstrates that the issue arises not from history itself, but from how history is interpreted today.

Modern Perspective and Misinterpretation

In today's world:

- Childhood is protected and extended
- Education is prioritized
- Legal systems define age and consent differently

These developments are important and beneficial.

Islam, as a universal religion, allows societies to organize their affairs in ways that ensure justice, responsibility, and compassion.

However, applying modern frameworks directly onto ancient societies without context leads to distortion rather than understanding.

Scholarly Discussions on Age

It is also worth noting that reports regarding the age of Aisha bint Abu Bakr (RA) are found in early hadith collections such

as Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, where her age is narrated within a particular historical context.

At the same time, a number of modern scholars and researchers, through re-examining early historical sources, have proposed that she may have been older than commonly reported, with some estimating that she may have been in her mid-to-late teens at the time of her marriage.

These discussions are based on:

- Chronological analysis of key historical events, including the timing of the Hijrah and early Islamic battles
- Comparative evaluation of reports regarding her sister Asma bint Abu Bakr (RA), who is widely reported to have been ten years older
- Cross-referencing early biographical and sirah works, including those associated with Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Hisham
- Modern academic studies by scholars such as Muhammad Hamidullah and Habib-ur-Rahman Kandhlavi

While these interpretations continue to be discussed, it is important to approach the subject with scholarly balance, recognizing both the classical narrations and contemporary historical analyses. Ultimately, the central point remains unchanged:

The significance of this marriage does not lie in a number - but in its context, purpose, and outcome.

A Legacy Beyond Misconception

When viewed with clarity, the reality becomes evident: This was not a controversial union within its time. It was a meaningful and purposeful one.

Through this marriage, future generations gained unique insight into the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. As one of his wives, Aisha (RA) witnessed aspects of his character, worship, family life, and daily conduct that could not have been observed by others. Her narrations became an important source for understanding the Prophet's teachings.

Her life remains an important part of early Islamic history and the transmission of knowledge to future generations.

Conclusion

The marriage of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to Aisha bint Abu Bakr (RA) must be understood within its proper historical and cultural framework.

- Early marriage was a global norm, not an exception
- The union carried wisdom and purpose
- Its outcome shaped Islamic scholarship in profound ways

Reducing this discussion to a single modern concern overlooks the depth of history and the magnitude of Aisha (RA)'s contribution.

Her legacy is not defined by controversy - but by knowledge, leadership, and lasting impact.

Polygamy in Islam - Justice, Responsibility, and Misunderstanding

One of the most widespread misconceptions in Indian society is that Islam encourages or even requires, Muslim men to marry multiple women.

This stereotype has been repeated for decades, often without context, and has been used to misrepresent Islam, creating unnecessary fear, bias, and division.

However, when we return to the Qur'an, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and the lived reality of Muslim families, a very different and far more balanced truth emerges.

Before Islam - A World of Unlimited Polygamy

To understand Islam's position, we must first understand history. In pre-Islamic Arabia and in many other civilizations polygamy was not just common, it was **unrestricted**.

- Men could marry without limitation
- There were no defined rights for women
- Women were often treated as property rather than individuals with dignity

Historical records and cultural traditions show that some rulers and elites had dozens, and in some cases even hundreds, of wives and concubines, often without clear legal limitations or accountability. This was not unique to Arabia. Even within the Indian cultural and historical context:

- King Dasharatha in the Ramayana is described as having multiple wives, including Queen Kaushalya, Kaikeyi, and Sumitra

- Krishna, in the Mahabharata, is described as having several wives, including Rukmini and Satyabhama.
- Many kings and emperors across Indian history maintained multiple wives or harems as a symbol of power, status, and authority.

Note: These examples are presented within their historical and cultural contexts and should not be evaluated through modern legal or ethical frameworks.

Importantly, such practices have generally not been the subject of the same level of public criticism or fear as when polygamy is associated with Islam.

This leads us to an important and honest reflection:

Polygamy was not introduced by Islam, it was already a deeply rooted global and cultural norm.

A Point of Reflection for Society

It is worth asking, with sincerity and fairness:

If polygamy existed across multiple civilizations, including Indian traditions, and was historically accepted without controversy, then why does it become a point of discomfort or criticism only when discussed in relation to Islam?

This question is not raised to accuse, but to invite **consistency, fairness, and intellectual honesty**.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ - Reform, Not Promotion

When Islam emerged, it did not introduce polygamy, it **reformed and regulated it**. The Qur'an placed a strict limitation where none existed before.

Instead of unlimited marriages, Islam allowed **a maximum of four wives**, and even that under a condition so serious that it changes the entire meaning of the permission.

The Qur'an states (4:3): "Marry women of your choice, two, three, or four; but if you fear that you will not be just, then marry only one."

This verse is often quoted - but rarely understood.

The emphasis is not on numbers. The emphasis is on **justice**.

Justice - The Core Condition

Justice in Islam is not symbolic, it is absolute, demanding, and accountable before Allah.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ warned that a man who is unjust between his wives will be raised on the Day of Judgment in a state that reflects his injustice.

This teaching makes it clear: Polygamy is not a privilege, it is a **heavy moral responsibility**. It requires:

- Equal financial support
- Equal emotional care
- Equal time and attention
- Equal dignity and respect

And if this justice cannot be fulfilled, the Qur'an itself directs clearly toward **one marriage**.

Monogamy - The Practical Reality

In reality, the overwhelming majority of Muslim families - both in India and globally - are monogamous. Marriage in Islam is not built on numbers, but on a deeply spiritual foundation of:

- Love
- Mercy
- Mutual respect

The Qur'an beautifully describes spouses as garments for one another (2:187) a powerful metaphor for protection, comfort, and closeness.

Breaking the Myth

The widespread idea that Muslim men are constantly marrying multiple women is not only inaccurate, it is harmful. It creates false narratives such as:

- Muslim women being powerless
- Muslim men being exploitative

In truth, Islam places **strict responsibility** on men and grants women **clear rights, dignity, and protection** within marriage.

A Deeper Social Reality Often Ignored

At this point, it becomes important to address a reality that is often overlooked in modern discussions.

In many parts of the world today, including societies where polygamy is legally restricted, relationships outside marriage are increasingly common:

- Multiple marriages without proper closure of previous relationships
- Extramarital affairs
- Live-in relationships without legal or social accountability

In many parts of the world today, including societies where polygamy is legally restricted, relationships outside marriage

are increasingly common. These may include extramarital affairs without social recognition, serial relationships, or long-term partnerships without legal marriage or formal commitment.

Yet these realities often receive less attention than the Islamic concept of polygamy, despite involving multiple relationships without the legal responsibilities and protections that marriage provides.

This reveals a clear imbalance in how societies choose what to question and what to normalize.

Protection of Dignity Through Responsibility

Islam approaches human relationships differently. Rather than ignoring reality, it regulates it with **responsibility and accountability**. Where multiple relationships exist:

- Islam requires a legal and transparent marriage
- It ensures the woman receives dignity, recognition, and rights
- It protects the legal rights, family recognition, and welfare of children.
- It prevents secrecy, exploitation, and emotional harm.

In contrast, relationships outside a structured system often leave:

- Women socially unrecognized or disrespected
- Children without clear identity or acceptance
- Emotional damage hidden beneath social silence

Thus, what is often criticized in Islam can, in reality, be understood as a **framework that protects dignity rather than undermines it**.

Clarifying Cultural Misunderstandings

Across human history, including within the Indian cultural context, different societies have practiced a variety of marital systems, shaped by their own social, economic, and historical circumstances.

For example:

- Certain traditions have historically included forms of polyandry (one woman having more than one husband), as reflected in well-known cultural narratives such as that of Draupadi in the Mahabharata
- Historical and anthropological studies also document the presence of polyandry in specific communities, particularly in parts of the Himalayan region and South India. Detail available in George P. Murdock, *Ethnographic Atlas* and Kathleen Gough, studies on polyandry in India

Note : These examples are presented within their historical and cultural contexts and should not be evaluated through modern legal or ethical frameworks.

These examples are not presented for criticism, but for **contextual understanding** to recognize that human societies have never followed a single, uniform model of marriage.

However, such practices are rarely emphasized in public discourse today. In contrast, when it comes to Islam, even a **conditional and highly regulated allowance** is often highlighted as a defining feature of the religion.

This difference in focus can unintentionally create an imbalanced perception.

A fair and informed approach requires that all traditions be understood within their **own historical and cultural frameworks**, rather than selectively examined.

Such balance not only promotes understanding, but also fosters mutual respect in a diverse society.

Practical Reality of Today

In today's world:

- Economic pressures
- Emotional responsibilities
- Social expectations

make the condition of absolute justice extremely difficult to fulfill. As a result, most Muslims naturally live within monogamous marriages.

This itself reflects the Qur'anic principle: If justice cannot be ensured, then one is enough.

Conclusion

Polygamy in Islam is not a command, it is a **conditional allowance**.

- Before Islam, it was unlimited
- Islam restricted it
- Islam regulated it
- Islam tied it to justice

And justice is not optional, it is the foundation. To reduce this deeply structured and morally bound system into a stereotype is to misunderstand it entirely.

In reality: *Marriage in Islam is not about numbers - it is about responsibility, accountability, and answerability before Allah.*

Misconception: “Muslims are told to have more children”

Among the questions I have encountered most frequently during my life in India is the assertion that Islam instructs Muslims to have children without limit. This is one of the most widespread misconceptions about Islam. Repeated so often, this stereotype is sometimes accepted without question. It is frequently used to misrepresent Islamic teachings, create unnecessary fear, and, at times, reinforce particular social or political narratives.

However, when we turn to the actual teachings of Islam, the reality is far more balanced, responsible, and deeply ethical.

Children in Islam - A Blessing, Not a Burden

Yes, Islam considers children a blessing and encourages the building of strong, morally upright families. However, Islam does **not** promote irresponsible parenting or unplanned childbearing.

Every child is regarded as an **amanah (trust)** from Allah, something entrusted to parents with responsibility, not merely given without accountability.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

“Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you will be asked about his flock.”

Sahih al-Bukhari & Sahih Muslim

This profound teaching establishes a fundamental principle: Parenthood in Islam is not about numbers, it is about **responsibility, accountability, and care**.

Parents are answerable for:

- Education
- Moral upbringing
- Emotional support
- Physical and financial well-being

Thus, Islam emphasizes the quality of upbringing, not the quantity of children.

No Command in the Qur'an to "Have More Children"

It is important to clarify a key point: There is **no verse in the Qur'an** that commands Muslims to have a large number of children. Rather, the Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes:

- Responsibility
- Justice
- Care for dependents

For example, the Qur'an prohibits harming or killing children out of fear of poverty and affirms their right to protection and care (Qur'an 17:31). This reflects Islam's emphasis on the welfare, dignity, and proper upbringing of children. While Islamic scholars have discussed various prophetic traditions relating to family life, these have not been understood as imposing a religious obligation upon Muslims to have as many children as possible. Instead, the broader teachings of Islam emphasize responsible parenthood, fairness, compassion, and fulfilling the rights and needs of one's family.

This demonstrates that Islam promotes a balanced and responsible approach to family life, emphasizing the welfare and proper upbringing of children rather than prescribing a particular family size.

A Universal Social Reality - Not a Religious Command

If we look at the broader global picture, family size has never been determined by religion alone. In many parts of the world:

- **Historically, many European and American families have had four, five, or more children.**
- In countries like the Philippines, larger families are also common due to cultural and social factors

This raises an important and logical question: Who is telling them to have more children?

Is there a single religious command behind it?

The answer is clearly **no**.

Family size is influenced by many factors, including:

- Cultural values
- Economic conditions
- Social structures
- Personal choices

It is fundamentally an **individual and family decision**, not a religious obligation.

The Indian Context - A Shared Reality

Even within India, having larger families has never been limited to one community. Historically - and even in the present generation - many non-Muslim families have had:

- Three or more children

- Larger family structures influenced by tradition, social expectations, or personal preference

In earlier times, common reasons included:

- Desire for a male child
- Economic support through larger families
- Social and cultural norms

These realities clearly demonstrate: This is not a “**Muslim-only**” phenomenon - it is a **shared human and societal pattern**.

Changing Times - A Common Shift Across All Communities

In today's world, circumstances have changed for everyone - Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Across India and globally:

- The cost of living has increased
- Educational expectations have risen
- Awareness of parenting responsibilities has grown

As a result, families today are naturally choosing to have fewer children - not due to religious pressure, but due to **practical realities and responsible decision-making**. Parents now focus on:

- Providing quality education
- Ensuring emotional well-being
- Creating better life opportunities for each child

This shift reflects a universal trend - not a religious distinction.

The Honor of Motherhood in Islam

While Islam does not command having many children, it gives immense honor to motherhood. The physical and emotional struggles of pregnancy and childbirth are deeply recognized and respected.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ emphasized the elevated status of mothers, teaching that:

- Paradise lies under the feet of the mother (reported in classical hadith literature)
- This highlights that: Motherhood is honored not because of the number of children but because of the **sacrifice, patience, and love involved in raising them.**

Breaking the Misconception

The idea that Islam promotes having more children is not only inaccurate, it is misleading.

It ignores the core Islamic teachings of:

- Responsibility
- Balance
- Accountability

Islam does not measure success in family life by numbers. It measures it by **how well responsibilities are fulfilled.**

Conclusion

The misconception that “Muslims are told to have more children” does not stand up to careful examination.

- There is no Qur’anic command enforcing large families

- Parenthood in Islam is tied to responsibility, not numbers
- Family size is influenced by social, economic, and personal factors across all communities

Ultimately: Having children is a **personal and responsible choice**, not a religious compulsion.

And in Islam, the true success of a family lies not in how many children are raised - but in **how they are raised**.

Beyond Misconceptions, Towards Truth

As we reach the end of this journey, it is important to pause - not just to conclude, but to reflect.

This book was never merely about answering questions.

It was about **challenging perceptions, revisiting assumptions**, and most importantly, **seeking truth with sincerity**.

Throughout these chapters, we have explored misconceptions that have, over time, shaped how Islam is seen, discussed, and often misunderstood. From deeply sensitive topics to widely circulated stereotypes, one pattern becomes clear:

Misconceptions do not arise from knowledge - They arise from distance, selective narratives, and lack of context.

A Pattern That Cannot Be Ignored has emerged repeatedly:

- Historical realities have often been judged through modern lenses.
- Cultural practices have been confused with religious teachings.
- Selective focus has resulted in incomplete and often unfair conclusions.

Whether it was the discussion on marriage, family life, women's dignity, or social structures, one truth remained consistent:

Islam does not promote injustice - it regulates, reforms, and elevates.

What existed without limits, Islam brought discipline to.

What lacked structure, Islam gave responsibility.

What ignored dignity, Islam restored balance.

When the Signs Become Clear

Every human being is on a journey - whether they realize it or not. A journey not just across places, but across questions. Questions of purpose, of truth, of existence.

And in the end, every journey arrives at a single reality: **The search for Allah.**

This book was never about presenting something new.

It was about uncovering what was always there.

The same truth carried by

Adam (PBUH),

preserved through Nuh (PBUH),

established by Ibrahim (PBUH),

taught by Musa (PBUH),

exemplified by Isa (PBUH),

and **completed with the final Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ**

A message unchanged: **Worship One God.**

We have walked through misconceptions, questions, and reflections.

We have looked at Islam not through noise, but through its essence.

And what emerges is not complexity - but clarity.

Not contradiction - but consistency.

Not harshness - but balance.

Signs That Point Beyond Themselves

- The Kaaba was not meant to be worshipped - but to give direction.
- The Hajar al-Aswad was not meant to be divine - but to remind.
- Maqam Ibrahim was not merely meant to preserve footprints - but to preserve a legacy of submission.
- Zamzam Well was not meant to simply quench thirst - but to reveal mercy.
- Masjid al-Aqsa was not meant to be distant - but to connect.

These are not objects. They are signs.

And signs are not meant to be looked at - they are meant to be understood.

Beyond Religion - A Human Conversation

This book is not only for Muslims. It is for anyone willing to understand beyond headlines, beyond stereotypes, and beyond inherited narratives.

Because the questions raised in this book are not just about Islam, they are about **how we, as human beings, choose to understand each other.**

Do we seek truth? Or do we settle for what is convenient to believe?

Do we question fairly? Or do we question selectively?

The Responsibility of Understanding

Every society carries its own complexities. Every culture evolves with time.

And every belief system is often judged not by its teachings, but by how it is presented, perceived, or sometimes misrepresented.

Because true understanding requires:

- Context
- Sincerity
- Intellectual honesty

Without these, even truth can appear distorted.

A Gentle Clarification - Understanding Context Matters

Before closing, it is important to address one final point - one that often becomes the root of many misunderstandings:

Quoting the Qur'an without context.

The Qur'an is not a collection of isolated statements.

It is a complete, interconnected message where verses explain, support, and clarify one another. For example:

- The Qur'an mentions **24 months of breastfeeding** (Surah Luqman 31:14; Surah Al-Baqarah 2:233)
- And also **30 months for pregnancy and nursing combined** (Surah Al-Ahqaf 46:15)

When understood together, a deeper wisdom emerges:

If nursing is 24 months, the remaining 6 months account for pregnancy.

This understanding helped protect women from false accusations by recognizing that even a six-month pregnancy could be valid and honorable.

Classical scholars recognized this clearly:

- Ibn Abbas (RA) used these verses as evidence
- Imam Malik (RA) and other jurists affirmed this ruling in their works

This is just one example of how **context removes confusion and reveals justice.**

So when encountering something that seems controversial:

- Ask
- Reflect
- Seek knowledge

Because truth does not fear questions, it only asks for sincerity.

A Call for Balance and Fairness

If there is one message this book hopes to leave behind, it is this:

Be fair..

Be fair when you question.

Be fair when you compare.

Be fair when you judge.

No belief system deserves to be understood through fragments.

No community deserves to be defined by stereotypes.

Let us build bridges - not walls.

Understanding - not division.

What Islam Ultimately Offers

In a world overwhelmed by opinions, Islam offers certainty.

In a life filled with distraction, it offers direction.

In a heart carrying restlessness, it offers peace.

Not by removing struggle, but by giving it meaning.

Because the truth is simple:

You were not created without purpose.

You were not left without guidance.

You were not meant to walk alone.

Deep within every human being lies the **fitrah** (فطرة) - the innate nature.

It does not argue. It recognizes. It knows.

And when truth reaches it - clearly and sincerely - **it returns**.

Final Words - The Choice That Defines Everything

This book does not ask you to believe blindly. It asks you to reflect honestly. Because truth does not fear questions. It only asks for sincerity. And now, at the end of these pages, the question is no longer:

“What is Islam?” The question is:

“What will you do with the truth once you recognize it?”

Because one day:

- Every heart (qalb) will be laid open
- Every deed (‘amal) will be weighed
- Every soul will stand before the One it was always searching for

And on that day - nothing will remain except truth.

If these words have reached your mind, reflect.

If they have reached your heart, do not ignore it.

Because guidance is not forced, **it is accepted.**

And when the truth stands clear before you, remember:

Recognition is a gift. Response is a choice.

And that choice defines your eternity.

Author's Note – A Tribute to Those Who Raised Me

Before I speak as an author, I write these words as a daughter.

Whatever I am today, whatever I have achieved, understood, or become - is, after Allah, a reflection of the upbringing I was blessed with. My parents did not merely raise me; they nurtured me, guided me, and planted within me the seeds of knowledge, faith, and independent thinking.

They never imposed, they never forced, and they never restricted my choices. Instead, they gave me something far more powerful: freedom with values.

They gave me the freedom to choose my path, whether it was education, career, marriage or even my journey in faith. If I chose to study, they supported me. If I chose to work, they encouraged me. If I chose to explore, question, and understand my religion, they guided me with wisdom, not pressure.

They did not just teach me Islam, they lived Islam. And through them, I saw what faith truly looks like in action.

Allah Almighty reminds us in the Qur'an:

- "And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and to parents, good treatment..." (Qur'an 17:23)
- "We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him in hardship upon hardship..." (Qur'an 31:14)
- "My Lord, have mercy upon them (my parents) as they brought me up when I was small." (Qur'an 17:24)

These are not just verses to me, they are my lived reality.

From my childhood, my father would remind me of the very first command revealed in the Qur'an: "*Read.*" He would say: *Do not just recite the Qur'an - understand it.*

Arabic is not my native language, yet I was taught to seek its meaning, to reflect, and to connect with it beyond words. That single lesson shaped my entire perspective on Islam and life.

Everything I have achieved, my Engineering education, my Corporate journey, my engagement in social and community work, my growing understanding of diverse fields including psychology, investment, and socio-political awareness, my writing, my travel platform, and my current academic pursuit, has its roots in the mindset my parents instilled within me: seek knowledge, think deeply, and grow continuously.

Even my personal choices reflect that upbringing.

I wear the hijab, not out of compulsion, but out of conviction. Not because I was told to, but because I chose to.

It is my dignity, my identity, and my comfort. I feel safe in it, and I love it. I have never been ashamed of it. And this choice was never imposed on me, not by my parents, and not even after marriage.

Their greatest gift to me was not control, but trust.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my husband, who continued this environment of support and respect after marriage. Every decision I made, whether to continue my career, pause, change direction, or pursue something entirely new - was met with encouragement, never restriction. From engineering to psychology, from corporate work to writing, he stood by me at every step.

This journey, therefore, is not mine alone. It is a reflection of a home where:

- Faith was taught with wisdom
- Freedom was given with responsibility
- And identity was built with love

There is a common misconception that daughters are burdens, or that raising them requires control and limitation. But Islam teaches the opposite, it teaches honor, compassion, and immense reward in raising daughters with dignity and care.

I stand today as a living example of that truth.

Today, Islam is followed by billions of people across the world, spanning continents, cultures, and civilizations. From Arab lands to Asia, from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines to Europe, America, and beyond - Muslims exist in every corner of the world. They differ in language, culture, and lifestyle, yet they remain united by one belief: faith in One God, and one central source of guidance - the Qur'an.

When a faith reaches such global depth and diversity, becoming the second-largest religion in the world after Christianity, it calls for sincere reflection. It invites us to look beyond media narratives and question the misconceptions that often shape public perception.

At a time where Islamophobia continues to rise, it becomes essential to move beyond fear and misunderstanding, to seek truth through knowledge, fairness, and open hearts. This book is a small step in that direction.

So I write this not just as an author,
but as a daughter shaped by love,
a woman shaped by freedom,

and a believer shaped by understanding.

With gratitude beyond words

Asma Variava (Asma Sohel)

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