

Principles and Foundations of Islam

Introduction:

Islam has five fundamental principles, which are intrinsically embedded within the overarching constitutional provisions in the regime of the Holy Qur'an. If however, these five principles, as given below in discussions, were to remain without necessary detailed expansions, then those five principles would be left at academic level only. Hence it is necessary to evaluate and analyse those five¹ principles with practising examples established within humanity and in all geographical regions, throughout the world. Inasmuch as a large building has sturdy foundation, the principles of Islam are also its foundation, upon which Islam rests and binds together the practising followership. In recognising the five main principles as foundations of Islam, there is dire need for good practising Muslims, to elevate their own life styles prescriptively correct, and become exemplary Muslims, for others to follow and to be recognised so by other communities.

Discussion on Principles and Foundations of Islam:

- 1) One God: Belief in absolute acceptance of Almighty God as One:** Muslims should be seen both in private and public practises to worship Almighty God only. This must be done by their actual practising demonstrations, that Muslims do not consider the existence of any other deity as parallel partners² in worshipping to Almighty God. Hence, the first principle, in descending Order, is the sincere belief in absolute acceptance of Almighty God as One God. This has been stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ2:163** *"And your God is one God; there is no God but He! He is the Beneficent, the Merciful."* Almighty God is that superlatively Supreme Spirit, and Who has no beginning, Who is ever-

¹ The first three of these five principles are compulsory obligations requiring compliance in descending order: (1st Belief in One God as Almighty God. 2nd Prayer to Almighty God five times daily. 3rd Practising Charity) and are specific activities, which are compulsory performances upon all Muslims each day and night of their life. The remaining two obligations, (4th Fasting and 5th Pilgrimage), are not daily compulsory obligations, but circumstantial obligations of compliance, which have been set for different times in their life. Fasting as the annual compliance test is in the Islamic month of Ramadan and fasting is practised globally, whereas Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) is mostly a purification event, but which requires prescribed annual global congregational gatherings centrally at Mecca, in Saudi Arabia.

² Parallel partners is taken to mean inclusion of other deities to Almighty God. In Islam there is no provision to include in belief and worship the existence of idols, existence of polytheism, astrology, superstition, witchcraft, etc. These practises are commonly referred to as shirk and shirk is forbidden in Islam.

present, Who has no ending or demise, Who is not affected by fatigue, Who has no partner or spouse of any description whatsoever, Who has no line of succession³, Who is formless and without limitations of body and shape, Who is the tireless⁴ Ever-Watcher over all peoples and everything He has so magnificently and faultlessly created, Who remains as the Architect, Designer, Controller of all universes in all Galaxies known to humanity and those Galaxies yet to be known, Who provides all resources to perfection and forgives genuine repentance, Who has provided places for reward and reprimand and Who will be the only Judge on the Great Day of Judgement. In Islam, there are no varieties of statues or any form of imagery depicting Almighty God as limiting Him in size, shape and outreach. These attributes have been stated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ59:22-24** *"He is Allah besides Whom there is no God: the Knower of the unseen and the seen; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is Allah, besides Whom there is no God: the King, the Holy, the Author of Peace, the Granter of Security, Guardian over all, the Mighty, the Supreme, the Possessor of greatness. Glory be to Allah from what they set up as partner (with Him)! He is Allah, the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner: His are the most beautiful names. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares His glory; and He is the Mighty, the Wise."*

2) Prayers: Worshipping One God only: Almighty God only through sincere prayers 5 times daily: When Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) was spiritually elevated to a state of *Kashf*⁵, whilst still in his bed on Earth⁶, and when he saw as visions

³ In Islam there is no such thing as son of god.

⁴ Whilst human security forces and government agencies work continuously in shift work to provide protective services to humanity and humanities' resources at cost to the tax-payers, Almighty God provides His absolutely superlative unbroken continuous services to humanity without any cost to them.

⁵ This elevated visionary journey was not a regular dream, which almost all people experience whilst soundly asleep with eyes closed. There is an Arabic expression "*Kashf*" which describes the peculiarity of this elevated visionary journey. In the *Kashf*, a person who experiences this is in a state of wakefulness and is seeing and recording in the mind the details of whatever transpired throughout the *Kashf*. This experience of Miraj-un-Nabi is recorded in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ17:60** *"And when We said to you: Surely your Lord encompasses people. And We made the vision which We showed you only a trial for people, as also the tree cursed in the Quran. And We warn them, but it only adds to their great inordinacy."* According to Hadith Sahih Bukhari 59:6, Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) described his experience of the Ascension as "a state between sleep and wakefulness."

⁶ On this point, the wife of Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*), A'isha (*ra*) reported and witnessed, that when Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) awoke for *Fajr* prayers, his beddings were dry and still warm, as if he had slept there the entire night. She slept next to him. This event happened in 621AD, on 27th Rajab of Islamic calendar system.

displayed to him only, in the visual journey of Miraj-un-Nabi on 27th Rajab 621AD, he distinctly saw in the *Kashf*, that Almighty God directed him to invoke prayers to Almighty God five times daily⁷. This *Kashf* happened in Mecca. Later, he received the same instructions of prayer five times daily as revealed verses in the Holy Qur'an (below). Prayer to Almighty God five times daily, is spiritual nourishment to the soul of the person at prayer, inasmuch as material food and water are material nourishments to material human body. Muslims' prayers must be performed in unison of the person's heart and mind: and not left to visual outward ceremonial only. Obviously, those persons, who wilfully avoid prayers, may not be getting that spiritual nourishment, which they need most before their material death in this world. The Divine stipulation of worshipping Almighty God directly and only through prayer five times daily, is in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ30:17-18** "*So glory be to Allah when you enter the evening and when you enter the morning. And to Him be praise in the heavens and the earth, and in the afternoon, and when the sun declines.*"

3) Charity: Contributing towards charity not less than 2.5% of nett income savings/equivalent: Muslims are given to understand in Islam, through the verses in the Holy Qur'an, that all peoples on Earth are not economically and financially of equal standing. Some people are very rich, some people are not so rich, whereas some other people are poor and some are very poor. The Holy Qur'an compels those people who are in better status than the others, to contribute towards the wellbeing of those others who are in dire need of assistance. Before the revelations on charity were revealed in the Holy Qur'an, the combined populations in Arabia and the surrounding territories to Arabia, were the not-Muslims in clear majority; and the not-Muslim communities were divided: The Mithras⁸ and the rest of idolaters, including polytheists were focussed in their Indo-Iranian cults (East of Arabia). The Jews were focussed in

⁷ On the contrary, there may be exceptional and uncontrolled circumstances, such as in employment locations or midst of travelling, when the exact times of allocation for prayers may not be easily possible, then the Muslim may combine *Zuhr* and *'Asr* together and *Maghrib* and *'Isha* together in meeting up the compliance of prayers five times daily: **HQ11:114** "*And keep up prayer at the two ends of the day and in the first hours of the night. Surely good deeds take away evil deeds. This is a reminder for the mindful.*"

⁸ Mithraism was widespread in most territories surrounding Arabia, before the coming of Christianity. The official state religion of the Roman Government was also Mithraism, which helped boost Mithraism wherever the Roman Empire had invaded, which was progressively widespread to entire Europe and England. Mithraism was an Indo-Iranian cult which commenced in Persia in 1400BC and subsequently became the official state religion of the Persian Empire. When Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire in 334BC, he destroyed much of the Mithraism infrastructures of temples. Some Mithra temples still exist in England and currently being refurbished as monuments.

their central place of worship in Jerusalem (West of Arabia). The Holy Qur'an reminds communities that focussing on those other objects of worshipping is not righteous. People must read and follow the Holy Qur'an and all its prescriptions of true worshipping and communities' management. Communities' management requires those others in their communities⁹, who are better placed, to contribute towards charity, to some extent of levelling off the poorest with those not so poor, in the least. It must be manifestly understood that cash contribution is not the only form of charity in Islam. People may have other means of wealth or businesses, such as agricultural cropping, dairy farming, livestock farming, skills in crafting, etc. Whilst contributions toward charity does not have an upper ceiling, people must save sufficiently for the general wellbeing of their own family, as a matter of fundamental obligation. On the contrary, there is lower level limit of contributing to charity, not less than 2.5% only of nett income savings¹⁰. Practising charity is neither upper restrictive nor exhaustive to actions of monetary value in cash, but includes charity in communal services¹¹. That is still very much part of charity work. Charity contributions may be in cash or other resources equivalent¹². Institutions which cater for the underprivileged and the orphans are also falling to be classified as charitable institutions¹³ to receive charity. The Holy Qur'an states those wider parameters of charity and this is given at **HQ2:177** *"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteous is the one who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the traveller and to those who ask and to set slaves free and keeps up prayer and gives the due charity; and the performers of their promise when*

⁹ People may either contribute directly to those in need or contribute to organizations, which cater for the well-being of those others who are in need. The other most common practice is to contribute to their religious organizations, which generally has records of persons in need of financial assistance.

¹⁰ This is not gross income: but nett savings after necessary deductions.

¹¹ Money and other forms of wealth can easily instil pride in people and then the urge to spend carelessly. Muslims are advised to exercise care with money and not to waste money by spending aimlessly. At the same time, Muslims must not become so miserly, as to ignore the basic principles of practising charity.

¹² Resources equivalent includes livestock, agricultural items and inventory which could be easily converted to cash.

¹³ There has to be societal provisions for orphans. This can be either as adoption of orphans and treated as own children, or there has to be an institution of orphanage, established for the general welfare of orphans.

they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict. These are they who are truthful; and these are they who keep their duty.”

- 4) Fasting 29-30 days: During the month of Ramadan for those in good health:** Fasting 29-30 days not only becomes an integral part of the whole of the month of Ramadan, but becomes a compliance test for all Muslims. The specific time for this compliance test is the full month of Ramadan every year, which requires practical fasting, from a period of darkness just before the early glow of sunrise to just after sunset, daily. The month of Ramadan is that self-assessment and testing period for Muslims to go in their lives prescriptively correct, insofar as self-discipline, self-control, honesty, purity, charity and obedience to Almighty God matter. In a nutshell, if people can pass this testing period for a month, then people must continue with that same trend for the next 11 months towards perpetuity. That implied continuity for the next 11 months is perhaps the more difficult part; some people who especially adjust their regular lifestyles into full compliance for a month in Ramadan, may need that extra drive and determination as religious acumen, to continue doing so prescriptively for the next 11 months. The Holy Qur’an was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) on the 27th night in the month of Ramadan in 610AD, as **HQ96:1-5**. The universality of Islam is linked and bound together in principal by the constitutional religious law for all Muslims, which is common knowledge as the Holy Qur’an. There is a guiding need to recollect that specific Ordinance in the Holy Qur’an on fasting, which is at **HQ2:183** as “*O you who believe, fasting is prescribed for you, as it was prescribed for those before you¹⁴, so that you may guard against evil.*” The purpose given there at **HQ2:183** is not starving Muslims from not eating food¹⁵ and not drinking all fluids of external

¹⁴ Israelite prophets (who descended from Isaac, the second son of Prophet Abraham (*as*)) all fasted as recorded in scriptures. Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) was the only prophet, who descended from Prophet Ishmael (*as*) the elder of two sons of Prophet Abraham (*as*). Israelite prophets (for example) who fasted are as follows: Moses fasted for 40 days when he went up to Mount Sinai to receive the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. Prophet King David (Bible Sam. 12:16) fasted and broke his fast when his son (from his second wife) died. Jesus Christ fasted for 40 days (Bible: all Gospels) when travelling through the mountain regions of the Great Judean Desert and he was tempted by the devil several times. Although there were in total over 124,000 prophets in this world since creation, not all of them fasted. Prophet Muhammad’s (*pbuh*) statement in Hadith No 21257 in *Musnad Ibn Hanbal* that there were over 124,000 prophets since creation, commencing with Adam (*as*).

¹⁵ Not eating throughout the prescribed period prompts Muslims to understand the experiences of those others who are not so privileged to eat food throughout the day. It reminds Muslims that they are fasting and must follow the rules of fasting as prescribed.

source¹⁶ or water¹⁷, but guarding Muslims against evil. Hence the purpose of fasting as given at **HQ2:183** is all the Muslims' individual gap-analysis and self-audit of all Muslims' behaviours, over a common compliance test-period of one month, and preventing Muslims from falling into evil activities¹⁸. Fasting during the month of Ramadan is only for those in good health or those who have certain situations¹⁹, which would make fasting most difficult, as stipulated in the Holy Qur'an at **HQ2:184-185** *"For a certain number of days. But whoever among you is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. And those who find it extremely hard may effect redemption by feeding a poor one. So whoever does good spontaneously, it is better for him; and that you fast is better for you if you know. The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to people and clear proofs of the guidance and the Criterion. So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast in it, and whoever is sick or on a journey, (he shall fast) a (like) number of other days. Allah desires ease for you, and He does not desire hardship for you, and (He desires) that you should complete the number and that you should exalt the greatness of Allah for having guided you and that you may give thanks."*

5) Repentance and Forgiveness for Salvation: Pilgrimage to Mecca if affordable; but must leave sufficient funds for survival of the rest of family at home: Pilgrimage to Mecca for those who can afford to do so, whilst leaving behind sufficient funds for survival of the rest of the pilgrim's family to meet all their

¹⁶ Swallowing of human saliva is permitted as it is internal circulation and not external source.

¹⁷ Water soothes peoples' thirst. Not drinking water throughout the day reminds Muslims that they are fasting and must follow the rules of fasting as prescribed.

¹⁸ Most communities throughout the world are driven by sins, such as those consequential from drunkenness, fornication and other descriptions of illicit sexual relations. Muslims must become better than others within all the communities and refrain from such behaviours. Muslims are required to live in peace amongst all communities and not get involved in quarrels. They must respect others' life inasmuch as their own and not kill people, unless protectively in self-defence, which includes fighting in wars. All Muslims regardless of position in society, must be honest in their all their business dealings.

¹⁹ The flexibility of exemption has been made especially for those:

- a) who may not be in sound health,
- b) who may be either very young or very old in age,
- c) people who are required to take certain necessary medications during the day,
- d) women during their monthly courses,
- e) women who are pregnant with baby,
- f) mothers who may be breast-feeding babies,
- g) people who are on extended journey and which crosses time-zones,
- h) People living in the close circles of Polar Regions¹⁹ of North and South poles where periods of darkness and daylight exceed 20 (+/-) 2 hours.

expenses for the duration of absence of the person on pilgrimage. Muslims go to Mecca for pilgrimage (called *Hajj*) to renew their sense of purpose in this world, seek repentance, seek forgiveness, prepare for salvation and prepare for material death²⁰ in this world, in readiness for the Great Day of Judgement. This event is annual and takes place in the Islamic month of *Dhu al-Hijjah*²¹. The shrine of the Kaaba²² in Mecca was initially built by the patriarch Prophet Abraham (*as*) and his first and elder son Prophet Ishmael (*as*). The Kaaba, most widely accepted as the first house of worship to Almighty God, was rebuilt several times throughout its thousands of years of existence in Mecca. This pilgrimage (called *Hajj*) is a weeklong event²³ and replicates the desperation that Hagar (*Hajra*), the second wife of Prophet Abraham (*as*) had endured when she was running between two hillocks²⁴, for visual elevation and searching for water for her only infant child Ishmael ²⁵(*as*). The gathering in the pilgrimage (called *Hajj*) at Mecca is an annual event and attracts millions of Muslims. All participants are required to level off with each other, by wearing two pieces simple white seamless cloths²⁶. In this process Kings, Rulers and Leaders of countries are aligned to common simplicity of mankind. All mankind are placed equal before Almighty God. Those participating in *Hajj* must leave off all other types of conversations, businesses and activities, and focus mainly on matters of Faith. Muslims from all walks of life are voluntarily required to perform this pilgrimage. The Holy Qur'an invites this obligation in most marvellously subtle words at **HQ2:158** *"The Safa and the Marwah are truly among the signs of Allah; so whoever makes a pilgrimage to the House or pays a visit (to it), there is no blame on him if he goes round them. And whoever does good spontaneously — surely Allah is Bountiful in rewarding, Knowing."*

²⁰ Material death in this world is not pre-designated by date to each person and requires proactive preparedness.

²¹ The dates are not constant as the Islamic Lunar Calendar and the Gregorian (solar) calendar are not the same. The Gregorian calendar overlaps the Islamic calendar by 11-12 days, depending whether or not leap years are used in comparisons.

²² The Kaaba is a cubical stone structure made of granite. It is approximately 13.1 m (43 ft.) high (some claim 12.03 m (39.5 ft.)), with sides measuring 11.03 m (36.2 ft.) by 12.86 m (42.2 ft.). Inside the Kaaba, the floor is made of marble and limestone.

²³ This takes generally 5 days.

²⁴ These two hillocks are Safa and Marwah.

²⁵ Accordingly Muslim pilgrims in *Hajj* must circumambulate the Kaaba in anticlockwise direction three times at fast pace and four times at slower pace, replicating the actions of Hagar (*Hajra*).

²⁶ These two lengths of white fabrics are called *Ihram*.

Conclusions on Principles and Foundations of Our Islam:

- a) The five principles of Islam as deliberated upon in the main text of article above, serves as the foundation of Islam. They are also personal matters between practising Muslims and Almighty God, whereas there are daily actions performed in the public domain by Muslims, which need to be witnessed and appreciated by other communities, as part of their learning curve of Islam.
- b) These actions also help to promote social solidarity and social justice in Islam with various other communities.
- c) Islam as the Final revealed Religion and with Prophet Muhammad (*pbuh*) as the Final Prophet, ordained directly by Almighty God, has set the expectations and pace for humanity to embrace Islam, as the exemplary Faith to follow and practise, in preparation for everybody's judgement on the Great Day of Judgement.

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