



Who is a Muslim?

PRESENTATION BY ZAHID AZIZ

FOR A.A.I.I.L. (UK), JANUARY 2021

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The need of identifying a Muslim in Islam

- Members of any group or community have a special responsibility towards one another.
- In a family you have certain obligation towards other family members, which you don't have towards those who are not in your family.
- This doesn't mean you are hostile of people outside your family or community! It's just that your obligations are different to those who are closer to you by some link.
- Why is it necessary in Islam to identify or recognize a Muslim?

- Islam creates a brotherhood: “The believers are brethren” (The Quran, 49:10). They have certain obligations towards each other. So you need to know what makes a person a member of that brotherhood.
- In the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, all Muslims had embraced Islam from being non-Muslims. What was the step they took which made them members of the Muslim community?
- In his time, non-Muslims were waging a war against the Muslims, and at the same time people from their side were also accepting Islam. So a Muslim had to know how to distinguish between one who was still an enemy and one who was now in the Muslim fraternity.

- Even today, the law of a country might need to identify who is a Muslim. For example, if a Muslim country has established a system for collecting zakat, the government would need to collect it from every Muslim, but not from non-Muslims.
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- **Important note:** The issue under discussion is **not** who is a true Muslim in the sense in which Allah wants us to be, and which is our real aim and goal.
- As to who is on the right path in that sense, the Quran says: “Surely your Lord — He knows best who goes astray from His way, and He knows best the guided ones” (6:117). It is **not** in the scope of any human beings to determine who is a real and true Muslim.

Accepting Islam by the *Kalima*

- There is only one way which was established by the Holy Prophet Muhammad for a person to join Islam. That is by the person testifying to the creed that: **There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah**, which is known in brief as the *Kalima*.
- There are many recorded incidents in the life of the Holy Prophet which show that when anyone wanted to inform people that he or she had become a Muslim, from being a non-Muslim, he made a declaration of this *Kalima*.
- There are other incidents which show that whenever the Holy Prophet asked someone to accept Islam he asked him to do so by reciting the *Kalima*.

Sincerity cannot be questioned

- When a person declares the *Kalima* to be his creed, **just by saying this in words**, it imposes an obligation upon other Muslims to accept that he is a Muslim.
- The Holy Prophet **prohibited** any Muslim from questioning the sincerity of a person who had testified to the Kalima.
- Usama ibn Zaid related that once in a battle he came upon an enemy soldier and was about to kill him when the enemy soldier called out: “There is no god but Allah”. Still, Usama killed him. When this news reached the Holy Prophet, he asked Usama: “Did you kill him **after** he had said ‘There is no god but Allah’?” Usama replied: “He was only trying to save himself.” Usama relates that the Holy Prophet kept on repeating: “Did you kill him **after** he had said ‘There is no god but Allah’?” until, says Usama, I began to wish I was not a Muslim.

Sincerity cannot be questioned

- When Khalid ibn Walid said to the Holy Prophet about a certain man that he was not sincere in his practice of Islam, and he doubted the sincerity of that man's prayers, the Holy Prophet told him: "I have not been commanded (by Allah) to look into people's hearts nor to look inside their breasts."
- This is even though Khalid had grounds for doubting that man's sincerity.

- When some rural Arabs, having little knowledge of Islam, became Muslims and said: “We are believers”, Allah told the Holy Prophet in the Quran to tell them:
- “You do not believe, but say, “We have become Muslims”; and faith has not yet entered into your hearts” (49:14).
- This shows that people having little knowledge and no understanding of faith, are entitled to claim to be Muslims, just by the act of accepting Islam.

Identifying a Muslim

- The Holy Prophet made the following clear statement:
- “Whoever testifies that there is no god but Allah, and faces our Qibla, and prays as we pray, and eats the meat slaughtered by us, he is a Muslim who has the rights of a Muslim and the duties of a Muslim.” (Bukhari, hadith 393)

Identifying a Muslim

- Maulana Muhammad Ali writes as follows about this:
- “Thus it will be seen that membership of the brotherhood of Islam is a thing **not to be tested by some great theologian, well-versed in logical quibbling**, but rather by the man in the street, by the man of common sense, or even by the illiterate man who can judge of another by his very appearance, who is satisfied with even a greeting in the Muslim style, who requires no further argument when he sees a man turn his face to Qiblah, and to whom Islam means the confession of the Unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad.”

A Muslim cannot be called *Kafir*

- The Holy Prophet Muhammad also made clear that when a person is known to be a Muslim by the definition given above he cannot be declared as *kafir* by anyone. He told Muslims that as regards a person who professes the *Kalima*:
- “you should not call him *kafir* for any sin, nor expel him from Islam for any deed” (Abu Dawud)
- He also said: “Whoever accuses a believer of *kufr* (unbelief), he is like his murderer.” (Tirmidhi, Bukhari, h. 6047)

▪ **Muslim jurists laid down the following principles:**

1. “Nothing expels a man from faith except the denial of that which made him enter it.”
 - What makes a person enter the faith of Islam is testifying to the *Kalima*. The only way he leaves Islam is by denying, in his own words, that he no longer accepts the *Kalima*.
2. “if there are ninety-nine reasons for considering someone as kafir, and only one reason against it, the mufti and the judge is bound to act according to that one reason for negating the kufr.”
 - The “one reason” for negating his being a kafir would be that he professes the Kalima or that he faces the Ka‘bah and prays like Muslims. That is sufficient for him to be not declared as an unbeliever even though there may be ninety-nine grounds for doing so.

Calling Muslims as *Kafir*

- Despite these clear principles taught by the Quran, the Holy Prophet Muhammad and the Fiqh or Islamic law, leaders of Muslims sects have for centuries been declaring other sects as being *kafir* as well as declaring many famous personalities of Islamic history as *kafir*.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya

- It is the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore which has the distinction of being **in the forefront** of presenting the above mentioned teachings of Islam:
 - That there is a simple definition in Islam, for legal and community purposes, of who is a Muslim.
 - That no Muslim can be called as *kafir* by another Muslim.
- The Lahore Ahmadiyya Movement came into existence in 1914 to uphold and proclaim these teachings.

The Ahmadiyya Movement

- Before the time that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad began his mission, various Muslims sects were declaring one another as *kafir*.
- In the Indian subcontinent the Wahhabi sect had been declared as *kafir* and its members banned from entering the mosques of the so-called Sunni Muslims.
- So when Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and his followers were declared as *kafir* by the Ulama, this was nothing new or unusual.

The Munir Report

- In 1953, just after the creation of Pakistan, the Ulama launched a violent campaign to have Ahmadis declared as non-Muslim in Pakistan. This agitation was put down by the authorities and the government appointed a Court of Inquiry to look into the causes of the disturbances.
- That Inquiry questioned all the leading Ulama on what they regarded as the definition of a Muslim. In its Report it says about this:
 - “if the ulama of the various sects believed the Ahmadis to be kafirs, they must have been quite clear in their minds ... about the definition of a Muslim because the claim that a certain person or community is not within the pale of Islam implies on the part of the claimant an exact conception of what a Muslim is.”

The Munir Report

- But from questioning the various Ulama the Inquiry concluded that: “no two ulama have agreed before us as to the definition of a Muslim”. And it found that all the sects had issued *fatwas* declaring the others as *kafir*.
- The Inquiry then states about these *fatwas*:
 - “The net result of all this is that **neither Shias nor Sunnis nor Deobandis nor Ahl-i-Hadith nor Barelvis are Muslims** and any change from one view to the other must be accompanied in an Islamic State with the penalty of death if the Government of the State is in the hands of the party which considers the other party to be kafirs.”

1974 Pakistan Constitutional amendment

- In 1974 the Ulama again started a violent campaign to have Ahmadis declared as non-Muslims in the law of the land.
- The socialist, secular and non-religious government of Mr Z.A. Bhutto joined hands with the Ulama on this issue and they agreed to add a clause into the Constitution to say that Ahmadis are non-Muslims.
- The government which supported this amendment did not believe that Islam should any role in politics or running the country.
- The party of that government, the Pakistan People's Party, and the Ulama of the Islamic parties were deadly opponents of each other, both before and after passing this amendment.

1974 Pakistan Constitutional amendment

- The government Party and its leader had themselves been declared as *kafir* by the Ulama, but they joined hands to declare Ahmadis as non-Muslim.
- Not only are Ahmadis declared as non-Muslim, but **any person** who considers Hazrat Mirza sahib to be a Muslim or considers Ahmadis to be Muslims is himself declared as non-Muslim.
- Every person in Pakistan who calls himself a Muslim has to sign an official government form to declare that he is not an Ahmadi, that he considers Ahmadis as non-Muslims, and that he believes Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be an imposter.

1974 Pakistan Constitutional amendment

- Our opponents faced the problem that if they defined 'Muslim' by any principle, then it was very difficult to exclude Ahmadis. To get round this, they added in the definition of a Muslim that a Muslim must also declare that he is not an Ahmadi.
- But they were still worried that many Ahmadis might still sign this form in order to call themselves Muslims.
- So they added further that every Muslim must call Ahmadis as non-Muslim and call Hazrat Mirza sahib as an imposter.

1974 Pakistan Constitutional amendment

- When a non-Muslim embraces Islam, he is never required to issue a denial of his previous faith or to curse and abuse what he was worshipping besides Allah.
- The Holy Prophet never asked any idol-worshipper who was becoming a Muslim that, along with reciting the *Kalima*, he must curse and abuse the idols in order to become a Muslim.
- Followers of the *Ulama* in Pakistan are also using threats, intimidation and boycotts to force Ahmadis to declare that they are Muslims and not Ahmadis. On the other hand, the same *Ulama* also tell the world that there is no compulsion of religion in Islam and a non-Muslim cannot be forced to become a Muslim!

1974 Pakistan Constitutional amendment

- In Pakistani societies, in Pakistan and elsewhere, social pressure is brought on Ahmadis to declare that they are Muslims and not Ahmadis. The reasons given to them are:
 - You will be a Muslim according to the Pakistan Constitution
 - People will like you and socialise with you
 - This world's life will be better for you.
- They **never** say to Ahmadis:
 - Be a Muslim and follow the Quran, act on the teachings of the Holy Prophet, say your five daily prayers, etc.
 - We will prove to you that our religion is true, so you should accept it.

1974 Pakistan Constitutional amendment

- The Quran says: “Do people think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and will not be tried? And indeed We tried those before them...” (29:23)
- **The Quran says:** Become a Muslim and you will face worldly tests and trials and difficulties.
- **Our opponents say to us:** Become a Muslim (according to the Pakistan Constitution) and you will not face any test or trial and instead you will have an easier, better worldly life.

Kufr reflecting back on the caller

- The Holy Prophet said: “No man accuses another man of being a sinner, or of being a kafir, but it reflects back on him if the other is not as he called him.” (Bukhari)
- How does calling another Muslim a *kafir* reflect back on the caller himself? Because the caller is denying that reciting the *Kalima* is enough to make a person a Muslim. So by the caller’s **own standard** he himself cannot be a Muslim just because he recites the *Kalima*.
- If we ask those who call us as *kafir*, how would **you** prove yourselves to be Muslims, then whatever reason they give as to why they should be considered Muslims, the same reason will be found to be true of us as well!