Why Do Muslims Fast in Ramadan and about Islaam

It is an obligation upon every Muslim to propagate Islam and introduce its illuminating teachings to others, Muslims and non-Muslims. This season of spirituality needs to be introduced to others. The best way to introduce it to others is to make them feel that it is special. This can be done when we stick to the best of deeds and the lofty manners during the month commemorating its being special and, by this, we as Muslims are ourselves special.

Fasting as such is a human phenomenon, which is noticeable in all religions, whether primitive or developed, Divinely revealed or man-made. Allah Almighty says: **O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off evil** (Al-Baqarah 2: 183)

Fasting increases our goodness, cultivates our nature, and sharpens our consciousness of Allah. It disseminates brotherly feelings towards the community and all humanity, and above all sharpens in us the sense of responsibility towards one another. It helps us attain self-control and provides us with the ability to resist lusts and base desires during our fasting-time. Ramadan enables us to encounter hardships.
In Ramadan, we don’t only abstain from food, drink, smoking, marital sex, but also we abstain form all kinds of immoral acts and obscenity. Our social, religious, charitable acts are combined in our fasting. So, the month of Ramadan is an intensive course in physical and spiritual hygiene.
We fast also to honor the Revelation of the Qur’an in this blessed month. The Qur’an is our guide and rule to advance in this world and to draw ourselves closer to Allah.
Muslims fast in order to obey the order of Allah, their Creator. Being All-Wise and All-Knowing, He alone knows what ails humans and what benefits them. As Muslims we believe that God Who created us has provided for our spiritual welfare even as He has provided for our physical needs. He did so by sending prophets and messengers who guided us unto the straight path, and by adhering to it, humans can realize their full humanity and attain ultimate felicity in this world and the next. Fasting in Ramadan, together with prayer, zakah and pilgrimage to Makkah, is part of a comprehensive program whose purpose is to inculcate in humans true consciousness of their mission in life as God's servants and develop the right attitude.

Among the many benefits of fasting are the following:

1. It deepens our spiritual awareness by inculcating God-consciousness.

2. It helps our bodies to recuperate and renew; it is comparable to the state of hibernation that all creatures in nature go through.

3. It helps us train in patience.

4. It creates empathy for the poor who are starving.

5. The month of Ramadan gives us a month-long training course to enable us to break free of our bad habits and develop new positive habits.

6. Through fasting we discover true spiritual identity, for too often our entanglements in the physical cares and concerns make us forget our true destiny: We proceed from God and we are ever journeying unto Him.

Excerpted, with slight modifications, from [www.islam.ca](http://www.islam.ca/).

Allah says, **This day are (all) good things made lawful for you. The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them.** (Al-Ma'idah 5: 5)

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 Answer 

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**In The Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.**

Dear questioner, we implore Allah from the depth of our hearts to guide you to Islam and strengthen your feet along the path of truth.

We greatly appreciate your enthusiasm in trying to know about Islam. Indeed, your brief question indicates that your way of thinking is good and sound, and that your nature is good because it is in tune with the truth and ready to accept it. Allah Almighty says: **Allah’s Fitrah (i.e. Allah’s Islamic Monotheism) with which He has created mankind…** (Ar-Rum 30: 30)

Islam is a religion for all humanity at large. It is not limited to any particular nation or location or time.

It is always good and highly appreciated by Allah to try your best to know the truth and then to adhere to it.

First of all, we’d like to make it clear that when judging any religion to lay hand on its authenticity and veracity of its message, one should look beyond its followers or those who claim affiliation to this divine religion. This draws us to the facts clarified by Sheikh Muhammad Al-Gazzali, late Muslim thinker and renowned Da`iyah; he says “You can find some people who describe themselves as belonging to religion, and they display all the physical manifestation of religion. However, they are sick at hearts and defective in thoughts. You can be sure that these people are as far away from religion as the sickness of their hearts and the defectiveness of their minds.

Suffering from dilapidation, a house can no longer be described as luxurious or fine, even if it has been newly painted.

Likewise, a person can not be described as being religious if the nature of his or her heart and mind has been corrupted by whims.

True religiousness is built on the soundness and purity of heart, devoid of any corruption. Allah Almighty says: **So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not** (Ar-Room 30: 30).

The teachings of Islam aim to protect this part of human nature from the strange illness that try to attack it”

In the light of the above statements, there is no way for the Westerners – or non-Muslims in general – to understand the true message of Islam unless they try to objectively delve deep into the pure sources of this religion, away from stereotyped ideas they have learnt through biased media. In this way, they will certainly see that Islam is rich in resources and bounties that it offers humanity.

We human beings have mind, soul and body. We live as individuals and in families and communities. We are confronted with life and death. We need a religion that satisfies all our needs and answers all our questions and quarries.

As Muslims, Islam satisfies our minds and souls and takes care of our physical needs. Islam brings balance between our individual needs and our social and collective concerns. Islam provides success, felicity and happiness in this life and salvation in the eternal life.

Islam is the religion that is based on the true natural disposition or *Fitrah* of human beings. Islam presents in the most authentic form the same religion that Allah gave to all His Prophets and Messengers.

**Islam offers to humanity:**

1-A clear, simple, sound and profound belief system presented in an authentic Book and by the life and example of a noble, perfect and historical Person.

2-A balanced action plan, with well-documented and clear principles that are suitable for all times and places.

3-A universal outlook with a worldwide community of faith and brotherhood.

4-A clear and practical vision for success and happiness in this life and a true promise for success and salvation in the Hereafter.

**Let us take each of these points:**

**1-Clear, Simple, Sound and Profound Belief System:**

In his Introduction to George Sale’s English translation of the Qur’an published in 1734 Sir Edward Denison Ross writes:

“The central doctrine presented by Muhammad to his contemporaries in Arabia, who worshipped the stars; to the Persians who worshipped Ormuz and Ahriman; the Indians who worshipped idols; and the Turks who had no particular worship, was the unity of God, and the simplicity of his creed was probably a more potent factor in the spread of Islam than the sword of the *Ghazis*. It is an amazing circumstance that the Turks, though irresistible in the onslaught of their arms, were all conquered in their turn by the faith of Islam and founded Mohammedan dynasties.

The Mongols of the 13th century did their best to wipe out all traces of Islam when they sacked Baghdad, but though the Caliphate was relegated to obscurity in Egypt, the newly founded empires quickly became Mohammedan states.” (p. Vii)

a- Oneness of Allah: This is the most logical, rational and spiritual belief. It is simple, yet ultimate truth and desire of all human beings. Islam teaches that Allah is One, the Lord, Master, Creator with Most Beautiful Names and Attributes.

b- The Message of Islam is presented in a Book, the Qur’an. This book is most authentic and beautiful. Nothing in this Book is proved false. Its message is clear and always fresh and contemporary.

c- With the message and the Book there is a human personality who is not mythological but historical. He was the ideal human being who lived the message and presented it to the people in the most beautiful and loving way.

**2-Balanced Action Plan:**

This action plan takes care of the individual, family and society. Its guidance is comprehensive, practical and balanced. It guides:

a- In the matters of worship - to establish deep and loving relationship with Allah.

b- In ethics and morality - it teaches discipline, moderation, virtue and goodness.

c- Laws and rules - it gives rules that are practical, dynamic and progressive. The rules are not rigid. They are practical and their purpose is not burden but felicity.

**3-Universal Outlook:**

Islam is not racist or ethnocentric. It teaches that all human beings are equal. It removes the barriers of nationalism, color, caste or language. It is against all discriminations and prejudices. It teaches justice for all people. It teaches peace and tolerance, freedom of opinion and expression. Islam establishes a worldwide community of faith and brotherhood.

**4-Success Here and Hereafter:**

Islam wants its followers to be happy and successful in this world. Islam is not pessimistic, morbid or ascetic. Allah Almighty says: **Say: Who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of Allah, which He hath produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgment. Thus do We explain the Signs in detail for those who understand. Say: The things that my Lord hath indeed forbidden are: shameful deeds, whether open or secret; sins and trespasses against truth or reason; assigning of partners to Allah, for which He hath given no authority; and saying things about Allah of which ye have no knowledge** (Al-A’raf 7: 33-34)

And Allah says about the Salvation in the Hereafter:
**Say: O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful** (Al-Zumar 39 : 53).

He Almighty also says: **So set thy purpose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion, but most men know not** (Ar-Room 30: 30).

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Islam is the very nature of man. It is the religion and the path chosen by Almighty Allah for mankind so that they may gain happiness in this life and Paradise in the next life. Islam is not a religion in the common and distorted sense, for it does not confine its scope to one's private life. It is a complete way of life and is present in every field of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life—individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, and national and international. The teachings of Islam are simple and intelligible.

In his response to your question, **Sheikh Ahmad Kutty**, a senior lecturer and Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states the following:

I commend you for your desire to know about Islam. In this time of ours, when the entire world is shrinking into a global village, perhaps there is nothing nobler for us people of various religions to do than to make genuine efforts to get to know one another and thus create better understanding among all people. This alone would enable us to make this world a better place for all. God tells us in the Qur'an: **O mankind, We have created you all from a single (pair of a) male and female and made you nations and tribes so that you get to know one another; verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most mindful of Him. God is All-Knowing, All-Aware**  (Al-Hujurat 49 :13).

Let me explain, therefore, in a true spirit of sharing, what Islam means through its own authentic sources:

*Islam* is an Arabic word that is linguistically derived from *silm* or *salamah*; it denotes peace, wholeness, and submission. As a religion, Islam teaches us that it is only through submission to God's will that we can find true peace—peace within ourselves, peace with fellow humans, as well as peace with God's creation.

Islam does not claim to be a new religion revealed to Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). Rather it is essentially the same message revealed to all of God's prophets and messengers from the beginning of time. Among these messengers were Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (may God bless them all and grant them peace). A Muslim must believe in all of them as true messengers of God and must never discriminate between anyone of them.

The Qur'an states: **We believe in God and in what was sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we devote ourselves to Him**  (Al-Baqarah 2: 136).

The fundamental beliefs of Islam can be summed up as follows:

      1.           Belief in the oneness and unity of God. This entails belief in God as the one and only Creator, Cherisher, and Sovereign Lord of the entire universe.

      2.           Belief in God's angels. Angels are spiritual beings who are engaged in glorifying God and doing His bidding.

      3.           Belief in the Scriptures (revelations) that contain God's communications to His prophets and messengers. Among the scriptures are [the original] Torah, [the original] Gospel, and finally the Qur'an, which confirms and preserves intact the pristine, perennial religion revealed to all of God's prophets and messengers.

      4.           Belief in prophets and messengers. These were message bearers from God, who called mankind unto God; they were ideal Muslims (i.e., they submitted themselves wholly and totally to the will of their Lord). In this sense, the prophets are our true role models, as they represent the best of what humanity can aspire to and become.

      5.           Belief that both good and bad are decreed by God, as He alone is in charge of the entire universe.

      6.           Belief in the Last Day when all of humanity will stand before their Lord for final reckoning, where one's good as well bad deeds will be scrutinized by the One Who knows all.

Besides the above fundamental beliefs, a Muslim observes the five pillars, and lives a morally and ethically exemplary life, according to the best of his or her ability.

      1.           The first and foremost of these pillars is testifying to the oneness of God. By testifying to the divine oneness, one is recognizing God as the sole entity to worship, to attach one's ultimate loyalty. Such recognition frees one from bondage of matter and values that enslave, cripple, and dehumanize one.

      2.           The next most important pillar is offering five daily Prayers at the appointed times: dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, dusk, and before retiring to bed. Prayer in Islam is a direct communion with God, without any intermediary; it bestows on us grace, serenity, tranquility, and peace.

      3.           The next foremost pillar of Islam is offering charity. A believer parts with at least a minimum of two and a half percent of his or her wealth for the poor and needy, although he or she is encouraged to give more.

      4.           Fasting in the month of Ramadan closely follows charity as the fourth pillar. It is an institution intended to teach empathy with the poor, besides inculcating in us the need to overcome and transcend our physical desires in order to deepen our spiritual awareness.

      5.           Finally, pilgrimage (Hajj) to the house of God in Makkah, the house built by God's prophets Abraham and his son Ishmael. Pilgrimage brings us face to face with people of all races and colors, and challenges us to break the walls that separate us from one another and to embrace the true brotherhood of humanity as the sacred bond that unites all of us under the lordship of the one and only God.

The above cardinal tenets and practices of Islam are intended to instill, nurture, and deepen the basic attitudes and values of submission to the will of God. Islam essentially means to lead a life of mindfulness of God while being compassionate to all of God's creation. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was asked what was the best teaching of Islam; he said, "To feed the hungry and to spread greeting of peace to everyone, regardless of whether you know the person or not" (Ibn Majah and An-Nasa'i).

At the moral level, Islam teaches us to be truthful, honest, just, compassionate, virtuous; to shun all evils; to be ever bent on doing good deeds while sparing others of any harm or injury. Stated differently, it teaches us to think right, speak right, and act righteously.

At the spiritual level, Islam teaches cultivation of mindfulness of God—being grateful to Him, patient in adversity, and content with His decree and ever willing to make our will conform to His will.

For further information, I suggest you refer to the following work: Yahiya Emerick's *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Understanding Islam* 2nd edition. It should be available through your local library system or bookstores or you can order it online from Amazon.com.

Excerpted, with slight modifications, from: [www.islam.ca](http://www.islam.ca)

it somehow needs a detailed answer, for it touches on the core of Islam. It takes a whole book, not just pages, to explain that, but here we will just try to give you some hints. The question is, what are those characteristics of Islam which have won millions of followers to the Faith in the past and which make it so appealing to the modern age? Or, according to your question, what are the things that Islam offers, and make it so appealing to millions of people, unlike other faiths? The following are some of Islam’s distinguishing factors:

**Simplicity, Rationality and Practicality**

Islam is a religion without any mythology. Its teachings are simple and intelligible. It is free from superstitions and irrational beliefs. The oneness of God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the concept of life after death are the basic articles of its faith. They are based on reason and sound logic. All of the teachings of Islam flow from those basic beliefs and are simple and straightforward. There is no hierarchy of priests, no farfetched abstractions, no complicated rites or rituals.

Everybody may approach the Qur'an directly and translate its dictates into practice. Islam awakens in man the faculty of reason and exhorts him to use his intellect. It enjoins him to see things in the light of reality. The Qur'an advises him to seek knowledge and invoke Allah to expand his awareness: **Say ‘O, my Lord! Advance me in knowledge. ** (Taha 20: 114) Allah also says: **Are those who know equal with those who know not? But only men of understanding will pay heed. ** (Az-Zumar 39: 9) It is reported that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said that: **"He who leaves his home in search of knowledge (walks) in the path of God."** (Reported by At-Tirmidhi) and that **"Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim."** (Reported by Ibn Majah and al-Bayhaqi) This is how Islam brings man out of the world of superstition and darkness and initiates him into the world of knowledge and light.

Again, Islam is a practical religion and does not allow indulgence in empty and futile theorizing. It says that faith is not a mere profession of beliefs, but rather that it is the very mainspring of life. Righteous conduct must follow belief in Allah. Religion is something to be practiced and not an object of mere lip service. The Qur'an says: **Those who believe and act righteously, joy is for them, and a blissful home to return to. ** (Ar-Ra`d 13: 29) The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is also reported to have said: **"Allah does not accept belief if it is not expressed in deeds, and does not accept deeds if they do not conform to belief."** (Reported by At-Tabarani)

Thus Islam’s simplicity, rationality and practicality are what characterize Islam as a unique and true religion.

**Unity of Matter and Spirit**

A unique feature of Islam is that it does not divide life into watertight compartments of matter and spirit. It stands not for denial of life but for the fulfillment of life. Islam does not believe in asceticism. It does not ask man to avoid material things. It holds that spiritual elevation is to be achieved by living piously in the rough and tumble of life, not by renouncing the world. The Qur'an advises us to pray as follows: **Our Lord! Give us something fine in this world as well as something fine in the Hereafter. ** (Al-Baqarah 2: 201)

But in making use of life luxuries, Islam advises man to be moderate and keep away from extravagance, Allah says **…and eat and drink and be not extravagant; surely He does not love the extravagant. ** (Al-A`raf: 31) On this aspect of moderation, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said: **"Observe fasting and break it (at the proper time) and stand in prayer and devotion (in the night) and have sleep, for your body has its right over you, and your eyes have rights over you, and your wife has a claim upon you, and the person who pays a visit to you has a claim upon you."**

Thus, Islam does not admit any separation between "material" and "moral," "mundane" and "spiritual" life, and enjoins man to devote all of his energies to the reconstruction of life on healthy moral foundations. It teaches him that moral and material powers must be welded together and that spiritual salvation can be achieved by using material resources for the good of man in the service of just ends and not by living a life of asceticism or by running away from the challenges of life.

The world has suffered at the hands of the one-sidedness of many other religions and ideologies. Some have laid emphasis on the spiritual side of life but have ignored its material and mundane aspects. They have looked upon the world as an illusion, a deception, and a trap. On the other hand, materialistic ideologies have totally ignored the spiritual and moral side of life and have dismissed it as fictitious and imaginary. Both of these attitudes have resulted in disaster, for they have robbed mankind of peace, contentment, and tranquility.

Even today, the imbalance is manifested in one or the other direction. The French scientist **Dr. De Brogbi** rightly says: “The danger inherent in too intense a material civilization is to that civilization itself; it is the disequilibria which would result if a parallel development of the spiritual life were to fail to provide the needed balance.”

Christianity erred on one extreme, whereas modern western civilization, in both of its variants of secular capitalistic democracy and Marxist socialism has erred on the other. According to **Lord Snell:** "We have built a nobly-proportioned outer structure, but we have neglected the essential requirement of an inner order; we have carefully designed, decorated and made clean the outside of the cup; but the inside was full of extortion and excess; we used our increased knowledge and power to administer to the comforts of the body, but we left the spirit impoverished."

Islam seeks to establish equilibrium between these two aspects of life - the material and the spiritual. It says that everything in the world is for man, but man was created to serve a higher purpose: the establishment of a moral and just order that will fulfill the will of Allah. Its teachings cater for the spiritual as well as the temporal needs of man. Islam enjoins man to purify his soul and to reform his daily life - both individual and collective - and to establish the supremacy of right over might and of virtue over vice. Thus Islam stands for the middle path and the goal of producing a moral man in the service of a just society.

**Islam, a Complete Way of Life**

Islam is not a religion in the common and distorted sense, for it does not confine its scope to one’s private life. It is a complete way of life and is present in every field of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life - individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, and national and international. The Qur'an enjoins man to embrace Islam without any reservation and to follow Allah's guidance in all areas of life.

In fact, it was an unfortunate day when the scope of religion was confined to the private life of man and its social and cultural role was reduced to naught, as has happened in this century. No other factor, perhaps, has been more important in causing the decline of religion in the modern age than its retreat into the realm of private life. In the words of a modern philosopher: "Religion asks us to separate things of God from those of Caesar. Such a judicial separation between the two means the degrading of both the secular and the sacred ... That religion is worth little if the conscience of its followers is not disturbed when war clouds are hanging over us all and industrial conflicts are threatening social peace. Religion has weakened man's social conscience and moral sensitivity by separating the things of God from those of Caesar."

Islam totally denounces this concept of religion and clearly states that its objectives are the purification of the soul and the reform and reconstruction of society. As we read in the Qur'an: **We verily sent Our messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the Scripture and the Balance, that mankind may observe right measure; and He revealed iron, wherein is mighty power and (many) uses for mankind, and that Allah may know him who helpeth Him and His messengers, though unseen. Lo! Allah is Strong, Almighty. ** (Al-Hadid 57: 25) Allah also says: **“The decision rests with Allah only, Who hath commanded you that ye worship none save Him. This is the right religion, but most men know not..”** (Yusuf 12: 40)

Thus even a cursory study of the teachings of Islam shows that it is an all-embracing way of life and does not leave out any field of human existence to become a playground for the forces of evil.

**Balance between the Individual and Society**

Another unique feature of Islam is that it establishes a balance between individualism and collectivism. It believes in the individual personality of man and holds everyone personally accountable to God. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) says: **“Everyone of you is a guardian, and responsible for what is in his custody. The ruler is a guardian of his subjects and responsible for them; a husband is a guardian of his family and is responsible for it; a lady is a guardian of her husband's house and is responsible for it, and a servant is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible for it." I heard that from Allah's Apostle and I think that the Prophet also said, "A man is a guardian of is father's property and is responsible for it, so all of you are guardians and responsible for your wards and things under your care.""**(Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Islam also guarantees the fundamental rights of the individual and does not permit anyone to tamper with them. It makes the proper development of the personality of man one of the prime objectives of its educational policy. It does not subscribe to the view that man must lose his individuality in society or in the state.

In Islam, all men are equal, regardless of color, language, race, or nationality. It addresses itself to the conscience of humanity and banishes all false barriers of race, status, and wealth. There can be no denying the fact that such barriers have always existed and continue to exist today in the so-called enlightened age. Islam removes all of these impediments and proclaims the ideal of the whole of humanity being one family of God.

Islam is international in its outlook and approach and does not admit barriers and distinctions based on color, clan, blood, or territory, as was the case before the advent of Muhammad. Unfortunately, these prejudices remain rampant in different forms even in this modern age. Islam wants to unite the entire human race under one banner. To a world torn by national rivalries and feuds, it presents a message of life and hope and of a glorious future.

The historian, **A. J. Toynbee,** has some interesting observations to make in this respect. In *Civilization on Trial*, he writes: "Two conspicuous sources of danger - one psychological and the other material - in the present relations of this cosmopolitan proletariat, i.e., [westernized humanity] with the dominant element in our modern Western society are race consciousness and alcohol; and in the struggle with each of these evils the Islamic spirit has a service to render which might prove, if it were accepted, to be of high moral and social value.

The extinction of race consciousness between Muslims is one of the outstanding moral achievements of Islam, and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue ... It is conceivable that the spirit of Islam might be the timely reinforcement which would decide this issue in favor of tolerance and peace.

As for the evil of alcohol, it is at its worst among primitive populations in tropical regions which have been 'opened up' by Western enterprise. The fact remains that even the most statesmanlike preventive measures imposed by external authority are incapable of liberating a community from a social vice unless a desire for liberation and a will to carry this desire into voluntary action on its own part are awakened in the hearts of the people concerned. Now Western administrators, at any rate those of 'Anglo-Saxon' origin, are spiritually isolated from their 'native' wards by the physical 'color bar' which their race-consciousness sets up; the conversion of the natives' souls is a task to which their competence can hardly be expected to extend; and it is at this point that Islam may have a part to play.

In these recently and rapidly 'opened up' tropical territories, the Western civilization has produced an economic and political plenum and, in the same breath, a social and spiritual void.

Here, then, in the foreground of the future, we can remark two valuable influences which Islam may exert upon the cosmopolitan proletariat of a Western society that has cast its net around the world and embraced the whole of mankind; while in the more distant future we may speculate on the possible contributions of Islam to some new manifestation of religion."

**Permanence and Change**

The elements of permanence and change coexist in human society and culture and are bound to remain so. Different ideologies and cultural systems have erred in leaning heavily towards one or other of these ends of the equation. Too much emphasis on permanence makes the system rigid and robs it of flexibility and progress, while a lack of permanent values and unchanging elements generate moral relativism, shapelessness, and anarchy.

What is needed is a balance between the two – a system that could simultaneously cater for the demands of permanence and change. An American judge, **Mr. Justice Cardozo**, rightly says that “the greatest need of our time is a philosophy that will mediate between conflicting claims of stability and progress and supply a principle of growth." Islam presents an ideology, which satisfies the demands of stability as well as of change.

Deeper reflection reveals that life has within it elements of permanence and change - it is neither so rigid and inflexible that it cannot admit of any change even in matters of detail, nor it is so flexible and fluid that even its distinctive traits have no permanent character of their own. This becomes clear from observing the process of physiological change in the human body, for every tissue of the body changes a number of times in one's lifetime even though the person remains the same. A tree's leaves, flowers, and fruits change but its character remains unchanged. It is a law of life that elements of permanence and change must co-exist in a harmonious equation.

Only such a system of life that can provide for both these elements can meet all of the cravings of human nature and all of the needs of human society. The basic problems of life remain the same in all ages and climes, but the ways and means to solve them as well as the techniques of handling the phenomenon undergo change with the passage of time. Islam brings to focus a new perspective on this problem and tries to solve it in a realistic way.

The Qur’an and the Sunnah contain the eternal guidance given by the Lord of the universe. This guidance comes from God, who is free from the limitations of space and time and, as such, the principles of individual and social behavior revealed by Him are based on reality and are eternal. But God has revealed only broad principles and has endowed man with the freedom to apply them in every age in the way suited to the spirit and conditions of that age. It is through *ijtihad* (intellectual effort to arrive at the truth) that people of every age try to implement and apply the divine guidance to the problems of their times. Thus the basic guidance is of a permanent nature, while the method of its application can change in accordance with the peculiar needs of every age. That is why Islam always remains as fresh and modern as tomorrow's morn.

**Complete Record of Teachings Preserved**

Last, but not least, is the fact that the teachings of Islam have been preserved in their original form. As a result, Allah's guidance is available without adulteration of any kind. The Qur'an is the revealed book and word of Allah, which has been in existence for the last fourteen hundred years. It is still available in its original form. Detailed accounts of the life of the Prophet and of his teachings are available in their pristine purity. There has not been even one change made in this unique historic record. The sayings and the entire record of the life of the Prophet have been handed down to us with unprecedented precision and authenticity in works of the Hadith and the *Sirah* (the Prophet’s Biography). Even a number of non-Muslim critics admit this eloquent fact.

These are some of the unique features of Islam that establish its credentials as the religion of man the religion of today and the religion of tomorrow. These aspects have appealed to millions of people in the past and the present and have made them affirm that Islam is the religion of truth and the right path for mankind. There is no doubt that these aspects will continue to appeal to even more people in the future. Men with pure hearts and sincere longing for truth will always continue to say:

“I affirm that there is none worthy of worship except God, that He is One, sharing His authority with no one, and I affirm that Muhammad is His Servant and His Prophet.”

Here, we’d like to conclude with the following words that **George Bernard Shaw** is reported to have said:

I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion, which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phases of existence, which can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him - the wonderful man - and in my opinion far from being an Antichrist, he must be called the Savior of Humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring it much needed peace and happiness. I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today.

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In the first place, the important fact we would like to stress here is that Islam is the religion that lays a great emphasis on unity. It makes it crystal clear that all human beings, being the children of one father, constitute a single brotherhood that places certain rights on each member of the family. However, these rights are not the same between all members; some members are entitled to greater rights. This is just a normal case whereby you find that your relation with your brother is to some extent stronger than your relation with your cousin. However, all of you still constitute one family.

In his Farewell Sermon, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) declared: **“All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action. Know that every Muslim is the brother of another Muslim, and that Muslims constitute one brotherhood.”**

The late **Dr. Hammudah `Abdul-`Atti** recorded the following in his book *Islam in Focus*:

Another fundamental element in the value system of Islam is the value of human brotherhood. This value also is founded on the same principles which have been discussed in connection with freedom and equality. Besides those foregoing principles, human brotherhood in Islam is based on an unshakable belief in the Oneness and Universality of Allah, the Worshipped, the unity of mankind, the worshippers, and the unity of religion, the medium of worship. For a Muslim, Allah is One, Eternal and Universal. He is the Creator of all mankind, the Provider for all human beings, and the Judge of all people. To Him, social status, national supermanship, and racial origin are insignificant. Before Him, all people are equal and brothers of one another.

The Muslim believes in the unity of mankind with regard to the source of creation, the original parentage, and the final destiny. The source of creation is Allah Himself. The original common parentage is that of Adam and Eve. To this first parentage, every human being belongs and of it he partakes. As for the final destiny, there is no doubt in the Muslim’s mind that it will be to Allah, the Creator, to Whom all people shall return.

The Muslim believes in the unity of Allah’s religion. This means that Allah does not confine His religion or favors to any particular nation, race, or age. It further means that there can be no contradiction or fundamental differences in the Religion of Allah. When all this is interpreted properly, it will leave no ground for pretended supremacy or presumptuous exclusivity. And when it is imparted into the human mind, it will provide man with a clear concept and a solid basis of human brotherhood. Because the Muslim believes in the Oneness of Allah, the unity of mankind, and the unity of religion, he believes in all the Messengers and Revelations of Allah without discrimination.

Excerpted, with slight modification, from: www.wamy.org

Shedding more light on the issue of unity, we would like to cite the following:

A man's struggle to fulfill his unnecessary wishes and desires are turning his life into hell. That is, man has become a slave of his personal desires. Material benefits have become his identity, wealth has become his race, social status has become his color and love of money has become his creed. In short, we can say that materialism has become the faith of a man.

Social status built on materialistic basis have become very popular and will soon demolish all the positive and moral human values from the society. Materialistic people forget the values of the family system. Their pride in their caste makes them so selfish that they feel no need for permanent friends either, and continuously change friends on behalf of their benefits.

**Roots of the Social Problems**

One's pride in material identity and misunderstandings about the social human status are the main roots of the social problems. This confusion about the material limitation and identities leads the society to a condition of a deep social conflict, anarchy and destruction of the real culture and religion.

Islam demolishes all material limitations and equalizes the different social status to maintain a peaceful social order in the society.

**The Basis of Collective Unity**

The foremost requirement of the individuals is the provision of a basis for collective unity which links all the individuals into a single entity.

Different concepts shape the collective unity in different communities. For example:

a) Concept of Racial Unity: Individuals are unified because they belong to a particular race or tribe, and consider themselves distinct from other individuals and communities on account of this common binding factor.

b) Concept of Linguistic Unity: Individuals are woven into a unity because they speak a common language and carve out a distinct identity for themselves on the basis of linguistic loyalty and affinity.

c) Concept of Geographic Unity: Individuals are forged into a unity because they live in a particular area and crave for a separate status on the basis of this geographical affiliation.

d) Concept of Economic Unity: Individuals are linked into a unity on account of common economic conditions and regard themselves as an independent group on the basis of their economic conjugation.

e) Concept of Intellectual, Ideological Unity: Individuals are galvanized into a unity on account of their intellectual and ideological convictions, and on the basis of these views regard themselves as a separate ideological group. Their particular convictions distinguish them from other groups and confer on them a special identity of their own.

Islam rejects all constricted concepts of unity. It patronizes only the intellectual and ideological concepts of unity and transforms its followers into a unity on the basis of their adherence to this concept. All other concepts do provide some basis for stringing individuals into a unity. This initial provision is the beginning of transforming a collection of individuals into a nation. Individuals cannot own guise of national life unless they are electrified by a unifying concept. Therefore, their allegiance to a particular concept of unity is essential for threading them into a well-knit community.

**Unity of Human Race and Sanctity of Humanity**

Islam believes that the collective struggle of human beings should lead to the creation of a social setup that is primarily based on the concept of the unity of the human race and the sanctity of human life. The Qur’an refers to the unity of the human race at various places, at different places in different contexts:

1) **O mankind, be mindful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from the two created and spread many men and women.**  (An-Nisaa’ 4: 1)

2) **He it is Who created you from a single soul and made from it its mate that you might incline towards her and find communities comfort in her.**  (Al-A`raaf 7: 189)

In these Qur’anic verses Almighty Allah invests the concept of the unity of human race with fundamental significance. It is repeatedly emphasized that Allah has created human beings from a single source. Just as we cannot associate partners with Allah and entertain any notion of duality or think of an ensemble company who can challenge His exceptional and solo status, similarly it is equally perverse to conceive of the human race in terms of essential duality or plurality. As a matter of fact, the unity of the human race is recognized through what He has created. The Oneness of Allah is a transparent reflection of the oneness of humanity. This concept is clearly articulated in the Qur’an: **These people of yours are one people and I am your Lord, so worship me alone.**  (Al-Anbiyaa 21: 92) Almighty Allah also says: **Surely, this community of yours is one and I am your Lord, so fear me.**  (Al-Mu’minun 23: 52)

These verses express the unity, divinity and suzerainty of Allah with special reference to the unity of the human race. The concept of “One Nation” serves as the foundation stone in Islamic society and also asserts its own distinctive configuration.

Excerpted, with slight modification, from:

[www.westernviews.com\*\*\*](http://www.westernviews.com***)

Islam is the very nature of man. It is the religion and the Path chosen by Almighty Allah for him so as to gain happiness in this life and Paradise in the life-to-come. Sometimes, a question may raise in our minds, why are we Muslims? What are the very characteristics of this religion that has led us to choose it as a way of life? In what way Islam is better than other religions?

A True Muslim will cry proudly:

*“I'm a Muslim for all to see,*

*So very glad and proud to be.*

*Your temptations try to turn my head,*

*But I have chosen Islam instead.*

*Sure I am not like all the rest,*

*I don't eat pork, wear a mini dress.*

*I am special, I'm not the same,*

*My appearance is different, even my name.*

*My God gives me strength, He makes me strong,*

*He guides me right when I go wrong.*

*I am a Muslim for all to see,*

*Islam guides me wherever I be.”*

In this context, **Sheikh Ahmad Kutty**, a senior lecturer and an Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states:

“Islam is the rational choice for anyone who wishes to have a faith that does full justice to the demands of the three faculties of man: physical, intellectual and spiritual. Here is a concise listing of Islam’s unique features for which Islam is chosen as a way of life:

**1-**Islam is the only religion whose sources are authentically preserved and thus remains immaculately free of all human tampering and interpolations.

**2-**The Islamic scripture is free of mythical elements that are incongruous with modern man’s understanding of the world.

**3-**The Qur’an, the Islamic scripture, is fully compatible with the established facts of science; it clearly contains the signature of the author of the universe, as attested to by many objective seekers of truth, coming as they were from diverse religious and intellectual backgrounds. It also movingly records natural phenomena and enjoins the followers of the faith to respect and preserve nature and the creatures with whom we share the planet.

**4-**The Qur’an upholds the role of reason and equates those who fail to use their reason as being intellectually imbeciles; this is a far cry from the teachings of many religions which assume incompatibility of reason and revelation.

**5-**Islamic beliefs and practices are simple, natural and appeal to both reason and common sense.

**6-**In regards to most of the teachings of Islam, their benefits can be easily demonstrated by evidence of the human experience and by the objective observation of facts. Take for instance Islam’s ban of alcohol: statistics reveal that abstention from intoxicants alone could spare humanity from untold misery and suffering. The valuable resources squandered for intoxicants can alone solve all poverty related problems of the world. Add to this, the Islamic pillar of *Zakah*. If only the world’s rich were to part with 2.5 % of their excess wealth, humanity would have tackled the problem of poverty very easily.

**7-**Islam takes into account all of the Allah-given instincts and faculties of man/woman and therefore gives us a balanced program of life that caters to all of the basic needs of humans - physical, intellectual and spiritual, unlike many religions and ideologies which exaggerate one at the expense of the other.

**8-**Islam provides for us a living example of such a balanced role model in Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, whose life, unlike those of the great heroes and Prophets of other religions, is an open book easily accessible for anyone.

**9-**The Islamic story of creation is free of any of the consequences of the stigma of original sin which has weighed heavily in the consciousness of a large segment of humanity, often proving to be highly volatile, and resulting in hysterical explosions in both the individual and collective dimensions.

**10-**The Qur’an is anti-classical in its approach to knowledge, and stresses experiential knowledge, a fact which combines authentic science with authentic spirituality.

**11-**The Qur’an provides answers to questions that haunt every intelligent person, questions related to life after death, an area which is almost totally mysterious in other traditions.

**12-**Islamic teachings about the essential identity of human beings and its stress on human brotherhood can break the barriers separating humans from one another. This can save humanity from the dire consequences of nationalism and racism which tend to break up humanity artificially by creating and sustaining perpetual conflicts.

**13-**Islam promises us nothing but total freedom, liberation and bliss and the highest fulfillment and contentment that humans are capable of attaining.

**14-**Islamic history has provided us with a model society where justice, compassion, truth and transparency of justice were implemented at the human and natural levels.

**15-**Islam dispenses with all intermediaries between man and God and allows all humans to freely contact God, thus eliminating hierarchies and other sources of religious exploitation that has characterized religious history throughout the ages.”

Excerpted, with slight modifications, from: www.muslims.ca

For all these reasons, we are Muslims!

Here, we would like to cite for you the following testimony of one of the new converts- Ibrahim Jagersky from Pennsylvania- showing why he has chosen Islam as a religion:

“Islam has done a lot for me. More than I could have ever guessed. And every day, it just gets better. I went from living my life on a trial-and-error basis to embracing guidance, and now knowing what the best choices are for me to make. From seeking who I am and spending a life in confusion, I am being guided. I can't find the words to say what its like, but I'll try again: Allah reveals to me what life is. I don't have to guess anymore.

Almighty Allah says: **“By the morning hours. And by the night when it is stillest. Thy Lord hath not forsaken thee nor doth He hate thee. And verily the latter portion will be better for thee than the former. And verily thy Lord will give unto thee so that thou wilt be content. Did He not find thee an orphan and protect (thee)? Did He not find thee wandering and direct (thee)? Did He not find thee destitute and enrich (thee)? Therefore the orphan oppress not. Therefore the beggar drive not away. Therefore of the bounty of thy Lord be thy discourse.”** (Ad-Duha: 1-11)

That is what I went through, what Allah did for me - what I am. So here is my proclamation to the world. Islam is more than you think it is, in fact more liberal than most would wish it to be. But do not only listen. Study all views for yourself...and come to your own conclusion. Allah says: **“And whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expandeth his bosom unto the Surrender, and whomsoever it is His will to send astray, He maketh his bosom close and narrow as if he were engaged in sheer ascent. Thus Allah layeth ignominy upon those who believe not.”** (Al-An`aam: 125)"

Excerpted, with slight modifications, from: www.islamfortoday.com

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| Why Do Muslims Fast in Ramadan?  |
|  | Question | Respected scholars, as-salamu `alaykum. Why do Muslims fast in Ramadan? Jazakum Allahu khayran.  |
|  | Date | 17/Sep/2006 |
|  | Name of Counsellor | [Ahmad Kutty](http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?cid=1119503615013&pagename=IslamOnline-English-Ask_Scholar%2FFatwaCounselorE%2FFatwaCounselorE) |
|  | Topic | Fasting: Rulings & Regulations |

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|  | Answer |  | http://www.islamonline.net/images/English/LivingShariah/TopBar_10.gif |

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| **Wa `alaykum As-Salamu wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.** **All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.**Dear brother in Islam, we would like to thank you for the great confidence you place in us. May Allah accept our fasts and righteous deeds and grant us forgiveness by the end of Ramadan.Fasting in the month of Ramadan is one of the pillars of Islam. Muslims observe the fast happily in obedience to Allah and to seek His reward. Ramadan is a great chance for Muslims to be united and maintain their faith. It teaches Muslims spiritual discipline, self-control, patience, and perseverance.In his response to your question, **Sheikh Ahmad Kutty**, a senior lecturer and Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states the following: |  |

Why Do Muslims Fast in Ramadan and about Islaam