

Preface by the Author

As a person who is "knowledgeable about religion" and whose field of study is "the history of religions", I reached the following conclusions as a result of my study and research of the historical evolution of each faith whereby I compared what the faiths were in the past and what they are now as well as a comparison in the differences between the "truth" and the "reality" of the faiths. My conclusion is not based on personal religious feelings or prejudices:

If we study and evaluate the effectiveness of each religion in terms of the happiness and evolution of mankind, we will discover that there is no prophecy which is as advanced, powerful, and conscious as the prophecy of Muhammad (S) (i.e. Islam and its role in man's social progress, self-consciousness, movement, responsibility, human ambition and struggle for justice; Islam's realism and naturalness, creativity, adaptability with scientific and financial progress and orientation toward civilization and the community).

Contemporaneously, we will discover that there is no prophecy which has deteriorated and been transformed into a completely different representation as much as the prophecy of Muhammad (S)!

It seems that some power composed of all physical facilities as well as knowledgeable advisors, openly or secretly has hired a group of the most educated and intelligent philosophers of history, social scientists, sociologists, social psychologists, politicians, human scientists, ethnologists, orientalists, experts in Islamic studies, Qur'anic interpreters and people who are familiar with Islamic literature, the social relations of Muslims, the traditions of Muslims, the personalities of Muslims, the weaknesses and strengths of Muslims, the interests of Muslims, the socio economic behavior of Muslims, the roles of special people ... to completely change the Islamic doctrine through the pursuit of cautious and scientific research of Islam and Muslims!

As far as I know, from the practical and conceptual point of view, the most important pillars of the Islamic doctrine which motivate the Muslim nation and make its citizens conscious, free, honorable and socially responsible are: TAWHEED, JIHAD, and HAJJ

Unfortunately, the teaching of the concept of TAWHEED is limited only to elementary schools. Beyond

that, it may be spoken of at the philosophical and theological discussions held by religious leaders; but such discussions are totally foreign and inapplicable to the lives of the people. In other words, only the existence and oneness of God are considered – not TAWHEED in its real sense!

As for the concept of JIHAD, it is absolutely forbidden and buried in the graveyard of history. The fundamental principle of JIHAD, "encouraging people to do good deeds and to avoid wrong deeds" is only applied when blaming the friends instead of when correcting the wrongdoers. And lastly, HAJJ is viewed as the ugliest and most illogical action that Muslims perform yearly.

The enemies of Islam were successful in bringing about changes by implementing a unique policy. The "prayer book" was brought from the grave yard into the city while the Holy Qur'an was taken away from the citizens in the city and given to those at the graveyard who read for the souls of the dead. A similar approach was used in the theological schools (madrasah). The Holy Qur'an was seized from the hands of students who studied Islam and put away on the shelf; it was replaced by the book of principles and philosophical discussions. So, it is obvious what the enemies can do to us when the Qur'an is absent from the lives of Muslims and not included in the curriculum of Muslim students!

Does the intellectual individual who feels a responsibility towards his people and a Muslim whose faith endows him with a responsibility or an intellectual Muslim who has this dual responsibility feel at ease by sitting passively? Does he think resorting to a western ideology will save his people and solve their problems?!? NO!! !

Oh my intellectual friend and my Muslim brother – either you feel a responsibility toward the people or toward Allah. It does not matter; we are in the same boat and are endowed with the same responsibility. In order to liberate ourselves and regain our honor, it is best to employ the same tactics that our enemy used. We must return to the path from which we were abducted! Therefore, we have to bring the Holy Qur'an from the graveyard back to the city and read it to those who are alive (not deceased)!

We have to remove the Qur'an from the shelf, open it before the eyes of the students and let them study it. Since our enemies could not destroy the Qur'an, they closed it and left it in a corner to be respected as the HOLY BOOK! It is our duty to re-use it as a "book" – a "book to study" – as is designated by the name QUR'AN!

May we hope that one day the Qur'an will be accepted as the classic book of our Islamic school and used for our Islamic teachings! May we hope to see the day when Qur'anic study will be required in order to qualify for a degree in Ijtihad. [Exegesis of divine law on theological and legal matters]. If we return to the Qur'an and make it part of our lives, we will realize the essence of Tawheed. If we consider the Qur'an as the structure of our system, we will realize the creativity and efficacy of such duties as: Hajj, Jihad [holy war], Imamate [Leadership of the Islamic Community], Shahadat [Martyrdom] ... and the meaning of our lives!!!!

Now let us look at one of these duties – Hajj – and search for its significance from a monotheistic point

of view. This book is a summary of my personal experience and understanding after performing the Hajj three times and touring Mecca once. It is only the comments and interpretations of the rites by a humble servant of God. No Muslim has the right to view the rites on the basis of this writing since it is not a book on "religious jurisprudence" but rather a paper to make you think!

I have attempted to interpret the ceremonies as a Muslim Hajj who is entitled to talk about the Hajj when he returns home. I can discuss my views with others; this has been a "tradition" too. Every year the minority who were able to participate in the Hajj will share their views with the majority who did not have this opportunity. If there was a responsible leadership who demonstrated as much interest in teaching more than a million Muslims from various parts of the world (ie. from the least developed villages and least trained natives) as they do in their meals, health, souvenirs and luxurious but ugly shows of aristocracy (which contradicts Hajj) and if they were only a bit concerned about realizing the meaning of the rites rather than being meticulously obsessed and prejudiced about performing the rites themselves then the Hajj could have been a yearly course of practical and theoretical teachings of the Islamic doctrine given to more than a million Muslim representatives from all over the world!

They could learn the purpose of the Hajj, the meaning of the prophecy, the importance of unity and the fate of the Muslim nation. With a reserve of knowledge and information they could return to their countries and their individual lives to teach their community. As a result, all his life a Hajj could remain a guide in the darkness of his society – like a glittering beam in the darkness!

Dr. Ali Shariati

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/hajj-pilgrimage-ali-shariati/preface-author#comment-0>