

Who We Are . . .

Come, come, whoever you may be;
Atheist, idolater or fire-worshipper . . . yet come.
Even if you've broken your penitence a hundred times,
Ours is not a home of despair . . . still come.

(Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi)

The Canadian Society of Muslims is a non-profit Islamic organisation based in **Toronto, Ontario, Canada**. The Canadian Society of Muslims was established in the 1960s and was formally incorporated in 1980 under the direction of its founder, Dr. M. Qadeer Baig, r.a. with the following main objects:

"To promote interest in an intellectual, philosophic, and esoteric approach to the research, development and understanding of Islamic culture and civilization ... and to co-operate with other organizations ... which have objects similar in full or in part to the objects of the corporation."

Our mandate is to provide generally reliable Islamic information to Muslims and non-Muslims alike in as educated, intellectual, philosophical and esoteric manner as possible. In conformity with the tenets of Islam, we wish to promote tolerance and harmony both among Muslims and non-Muslims. To that end, this website has a great deal of information to provide its readers. Our main thrust is from the Sunni-Hanafi perspective, although we do try occasionally to provide information from other schools of thought for informative and comparative purposes

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And what we stand for ...

Hadith: Sahih Bukhari, Volume 1, Book 8, Number 387:

Narrated Maimun ibn Siyah that he asked Anas bin Malik, "O Abu Hamza! What makes the life and property of a person sacred?" He [the Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u..h.] replied, "Whoever says, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah', faces our Qibla during the prayers, prays like us and eats our slaughtered animals, then he is a Muslim, and has got the same rights and obligations as other Muslims have."

"All people of the Qibla [1] are Mu'mins"

Imam Abu Hanifah

We wholeheartedly agree with above expression which describes the true meaning of what a Mu'min/Muslim is. We also agree with the great Imam's assertion that none of the people of the Qibla will become an infidel by omission of works/duties/deeds. A person who has faith but omits to act is certainly a Muslim, although a sinful one and it is entirely up to God to either punish or forgive him.

This *Aqidah* (belief/conviction) is based on the true spirit of the teachings of the holy Qur'an. It is the most essential cardinal belief of Muslims that *Al-Qur'an* is the Word of Allah (God). Its author is God Himself. The Prophet Muhammad, p.b.u.h. never speaks in the Qur'an. The Qur'an preaches Unity of Mankind. It "brushes aside all distinctions of race and

colour and every hierarchical conception of life, social or political. It restores dignity to man by placing him next to God and recognizes only righteousness as the criterion of superiority of one over another. The Qur'an favours a world order and universal brotherhood. The Prophet Muhammad transformed that idea into an active reality in the life of his followers." (S. Athar Husain)

Followers of other religions have misguided themselves by departing from the original teachings of their scriptures and claiming for themselves a monopoly in salvation. For instance the Jews and the Christians say that "*none shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian.*" [Qur'an 2:111] Repudiating such claims the Qur'an declares: "*Nay -- whoever submits his whole self, to God and is a doer of good -- he will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.*" [Qur'an 2:112] According to the Yusuf Ali translation/interpretation, the word '*wajhahu*' used in the Qur'an implies the whole inner self or personality of man in this context. The Qur'an categorically repudiates all ideas of monopoly in truth or salvation. It therefore preaches and prescribes tolerance. But this is not mere religious tolerance which is a very passive or even a negative attitude. The Qur'an takes an active approach and issues a positive injunction to extend the Brotherhood of Faith to all those who have the essentials of faith although they may differ in their laws and rituals.

Islam is not only a spiritual attitude of mind or a code of sublime precepts, but it is also a self sufficing orbit of culture and a social system of well defined features. Belief is the basis of the Code of laws, and the Code of laws is the result of belief, for legislation without belief is like a building without a foundation -- and belief without a Code of law to put it into effect, would be merely theoretical and ineffective." (Mahmud Shaltut) Man therefore has a dual responsibility to discharge according to the Qur'an: One is in relation to himself, and the other is in relation to his external world. The discharge of these responsibilities is aided by certain disciplines which are divided into two categories: (i) prescribed disciplines, (or the so-called Pillars of Islam) and, (ii) self-discipline embodying the ethical code. Thus, it follows that since the Qur'an (as interpreted, expounded and put into practise by the Messenger of God, Muhammad p.b.u.h. himself in his capacity as the role model for all Muslims and non-Muslims alike) plays such a pivotal and critical role in the lives of Muslims (being a "guidance" for all of mankind), it seems to be only a natural and logical starting point for this Web site to make a standard English translation of the entire Qur'an available to all our visitors.

These are our mottos:

"Seeking knowledge is an ordinance obligatory upon every Muslim" &
"We seek refuge in God from useless knowledge" [2]

And these are our plans ...

What we plan to do next will be to stimulate further interest in the intellectual, philosophic and esoteric approach to the study of the teachings of the Qur'an. We hope to fulfil this mandate of ours by presenting to our readers reading materials such as essays, articles, discourses, book reviews, excerpts, etc. etc. resourced from reliable sources in as objective and as simple and understandable a manner as possible. Our ambitious undertaking has not only been to separate the wheat from the chaff from a great deal of printed material, but also to uncover hidden treasures by slashing painstakingly through the Internet jungle. That is a daunting task! We seek help and pray to Allah to grant us the ability to do our duty and ask our visitors/readers for their generosity in overlooking our shortcomings if we do not measure up to their high standards.

The exponential growth of knowledge in this 'Information Age' is overwhelming. A cacophony of misinformation blurs the boundaries between what is and what is not **genuine** knowledge. For this purpose we will, Insha Allah, be making full use of linked articles, both internal and external, on the Internet. After all, knowledge is not bounded by the limitations of time and space. And it is in keeping with the true spirit of the Prophetic Tradition: "**Seek ye knowledge even [as far as] China**" that the full use of Internet technology must be brought into service for all humanity. The simple accumulation of information does not necessarily qualify as true knowledge. In addition there seems to be an ever increasing confusion as to what the real meaning, purpose and parameters of education are. This confusion is further compounded by the tendency to compartmentalize (and hence divorce) knowledge into completely unrelated and artificially independent categories. This has led to our inability to take a more holistic approach to knowledge. According to the Muslim way of thinking, all knowledge, whether secular or esoteric, is one. This means that the purpose of knowledge must serve mankind as a whole entity. Therefore, knowledge must necessarily attend to both man's material AND spiritual needs.

The great scholar, Abdul Aleem Siddiqui, r.a. once said: "If we survey the present-day state of affairs with profound insight, we shall arrive at the inference that the world is in the firm grip of materialism and instant self-gratification, and most think that mundane prosperity and proficiency in secular knowledge to be the highest point of human progress. Islam, in contrast, allots the place of preliminaries in the code of life that it prescribes for the guidance of human beings, and a Muslim (an adherent of Islam) is expected to utilize them as stepping stones in his or her march towards spiritual

progress. Their acquirement is from the first consecrated to spiritual progress. The consecration is a double one. There is one advantage of the pursuant freeing himself from the cares of the world. The other one is that equipped with the knowledge of arts and science, he can respond to the intimacy of nature greater and richer than himself, and joining himself to the fellowship of a splendid society, he can trace his origins and development through a series of evolutionary stages through the Almighty Allah. This preference may be for any branch of knowledge and he may engage himself in any walk of life which may vary according to his temperament, inclination or capacity, all a part of the life-long process of his equipment for "*The Journey*". For the journey he has undertaken is meant to carry him to Almighty Allah, the Lord of all the Universe, i.e., the pinnacle of secular perfection is the starting point of becoming a Muslim." One must not underestimate just how disruptive the following two situations can be: (i) the spread of misinformation which blurs the boundaries between what is and what is not 'knowledge', and (ii) Materialistic greed and need for instant self gratification.

Obviously then, in order to maintain our sanity and survive the avalanche of 'junk knowledge', we have no choice but to separate the wheat from the chaff. Then again, it is also a fact that the average man, constricted by life-style choices in this modern age, does not have much time left for intellectual pursuits -- even if he has the capacity to think philosophically about the ultimate problems of life (e.g.. man's position and the purpose of his life on this planet and the context of the whole universe) etc. etc.

As a part of our mandate "to promote interest in an intellectual, philosophical and esoteric approach to the research, development and understanding of Islamic culture and civilization," we hope (*Insha'Allah*) to help modern man in three distinct ways:--

(1) To undertake the task of separating the wheat from the chaff and restrict our online published material only to the 'wheaty' kind -- only **USEFUL KNOWLEDGE** -- completely discarding the useless kind, as well as the cacophony of misinformation.

(2) Inform our readers/visitors as to what our criteria are for determining what is useful knowledge and what is not. These criteria are set out in an excerpt from the English translation of Imam Ghazzali's famous work *The Revival of Islamic Sciences* (*Ihya-al-ulum al-din*) from the chapter entitled "Book of Knowledge [to come Insha Allah]."

(3) Offer the modern harried person a practical and sensible suggestion for the study of the Qur'an -- before undertaking an in-depth and detailed study:

We recommend the excellent book entitled "*The Message of Qur'an*" by S. Athar Husain. This is a 300 page 'abridgment' of the meaning of the Qur'an. It is done in a unique way. The novel features are stated in the Forward as follows. "The author of this book has neither attempted a translation of the Qur'an nor its exegesis. He has adopted a novel approach. He has presented substance of every chapter and part of the Qur'an and for this purpose has depended on standard translations."

The author himself states at the end of the 'Introduction' to *The Message of the Qur'an* that "The purpose of this book is to highlight the ordinances and teachings of the Qur'an and to give a sketch of its thought contents in its own words to stimulate an interest in the reading of the full text and to serve as a sure guide in our daily life."

Some Helpful Hints . . .

In closing let me add that friends, acquaintances and even strangers have occasionally asked me: "**There is so much to read, what is the bare minimum that a busy person can concentrate upon?**" Without hesitation, my answer to all of them has been, "Apart from the essential Qur'an and Hadith literature, all you really need is what my teacher and spiritual mentor (Dr. M. Qadeer Baig, r.a., who was also a well known scholar and professor at the University of Toronto) said to me (and he was instructed by his great spiritual mentor, Hazrat Nawab Qadim Hasan Gudri Shah Baba, r.a. on this same point) to fully digest two well known comprehensive works :

- 1) Imam Ghazzali's "*Ihya-al-ulum al-din*" and
- 2) Shibli Nu'mani's "*Sirat-un-Nabi*."

3) I will take the liberty to add one more book that is more recent for one to start with, and it would be useful like the first book: "Introduction to Islam" by Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah.

Al hamdu li Allah, these three great personalities have influenced me more than anyone else. I take great pride in dedicating this Web site to the cherished memory of those five great scholars and masters of exoteric and esoteric knowledge.

Three other very good books which are useful for quick and easy as well as for practical reference purposes on everyday questions are: "**Everyday Fiqh**" (Vol. I and II)] and "**Etiquettes of Life in Islam**." All three books were written by Muhammad Yusuf Islahi and translated into English by Abdul Aziz Kamal.

As to the dilemma: "there is so much to read . . . what is the bare minimum a person can concentrate upon?", in relation

to Fiqh Ausath/Second Fiqh/Sufism, I would highly recommend two books: (1) The Kashful Mahjub: Unveiling the Veiled by Syed Ali bin Uthman al-Hujwiri. Translation & Commentary by W.B.S. Rabbani (which is a translation from the original Persian that was written by Ali Hujwiri widely known as Hadrat Data Ganj-Baksh, r.a. whose shrine is located in Lahore, Pakistan). (2) The Quranic Sufism, by Dr. Mir Vali-ud-din (who is the late Professor of Philosophy from Osmania University, Hyderabad Deccan, India). To give our readers a general idea as to the extensive coverage and the academic integrity of the second book, we are pleased to reproduce on this website an Introductory chapter entitled "What is Sufism" and perhaps later we will add one or two more chapters. Our readers will also note that these books are also included on our Suggested Reading List on our Sufi Website. For a select bibliography of Muslim authors click [here](#).

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Notes

1. '*Qibla*' means the direction towards the Ka'bah, which is located within the precincts of the Sacred Mosque in the city of Mecca. The Qur'an Ch. 2 v. 144 commands all Muslims as follows:

"We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) to the heavens; now shall We turn thee to a Qibla that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in the direction of the sacred Mosque: wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction." Accordingly, all Muslims who turn their faces towards the Ka'bah (*Qibla*) are described as "The People of the *Qibla*."

2. These are two Hadith from Ibn Majah