

# *The Islamic Customs and Traditions*

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**Abstract:** *The religion of Islam includes a set of basic tenets, and regulations which regulates and adjusts the thoughts and behavior of the religious person. The practical part of this divine religion has various personal and social aspects, that “the Islamic customs” are parts of it. Being acquainted with these customs can beautify the treatment of a Muslim, and is a sign of his deep belief in God, and his stipulation towards the God’s law.*

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1- Researcher and writer

## *The origin of the customs and traditions*

To pay attention to the source and origin of the customs and traditions is very important not only from point of view of anthropology, but also it plays a great role in acceptance of them. When nationalistic ideas exist in a society, whatever that comes under the title of national customs and manners, are accepted immediately and would be prevalent.

A study of the history shows that the most important patronage of the customs and the traditions comes from the “religions”, and the continuance of some of the customs during the centuries relates to their religious nature, and the religious ideas that have supported them.

In this lesson, we study the roots of the Islamic customs and try to find their authenticity.

### *1- The Honored and the Glorified God*

Based on the Islamic monotheistic view, the source and origin of the all ideals and perfections is the Divine Majesty, just as He has all the “Good Names”. In Islamic literature, the real beloved is God, and the only way to reach the ideals is the path toward God, that ends to Him as well. The aim of the creation of human beings is that through service to God, he finds his divine essence, and gets adorned by the Islamic ethics.

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

***“One who is trained by the divine ethics, will get the eternal salvation.”<sup>1</sup>***

What is the divine morality? And how can you find it?

A simple way to study this subject is paying attention to the manner that God talks to the angles, prophets, and the people in Quran. As

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1- Behaar-ul-Anwar, Vol.92, P.214

an example, when God addresses Mohammad (a.s.) in Quran, He uses the titles like “the Messenger” and “the Apostle”.

## *2- The Previous messengers (p.b.u.h.)*

Abraham (a.s.) the great messenger of God, and the symbol of the monotheism, spent all his life keeping the people away from polytheism and sins. God introduces him in Quran as the leader, a good sample for the men of virtue, and his treatment and manner as a complete way to followed by all the Muslims.

❦“There is for you an excellent example (to follow) in Abraham and those with him.” (The holy Quran, 60:4). ❦

## *Hanafieh Ashareh*

The ten traditions of Abraham (a.s.) which were performed up to the time of appearance of Islam, were called “Hanafieh Ashareh”. “Hanif” is a person who is willing toward truth and it is called so as Abraham’s religion was based on the monotheistic nature. ( “Ashareh” means “ten” in Arabic). “Hanafieh” which is a theoretical idea, has practical effect as well; And Abraham was the founder and beginner of some customs which were confirmed by the messenger of Islam, too. Some of these customs relate to head, and some others to body.

### ***A: the part related to the head:***

- Cutting the hairs
- Growing the beard
- Cropping the mustaches
- Brushing the teeth
- Cleaning the teeth by the tooth-pick

### ***B: the part related to the body***

- Washing the body after sexual intercourse

- To circumcise
- To shave the outgrowth hairs of the body
- To cleanse the body by water
- To cut the finger-nails

3- *The honorable Messenger of Islam* One of

the essential aims of revelation to the messengers by God is to provide a “model of behavior” for the people, as well as showing the correct and divine path to them. The main goal of the messengers, especially those who were Imams, was not only communication of the celestial revelation, but also during their social life they taught people the Practices of the humanity, and the divine morality.

Among these messengers, the one who is the master of the “noblest behavior” and in the world of religion his amber like presence attracted all the human hearts, and God has characterized him as follow, was Mohammad (a.s.):

“you were left alone if you were harsh and hard-hearted”.

Thus his holy personality is introduced as the superior model of conduct, to all the religious people of the world:

“In God’s messenger you have a fine model for someone who looks forward to meeting God and the Last Day, and mentions God frequently.” (The holy Quran, 33:21).

The theory of religion known as the “Practice of the Messenger” is a set of his behaviors and speeches, which are clarified through Quran, and the origin of it is his being as a pattern of conduct.

Being a Muslim can not be justified unless by taking advantage of the Messenger’s customs (Sonnah), and the level of respect of every Muslim to him can be recognized and judged through his similarity of treatments with the Messenger’s customs.

The God’s Messenger (a.s.) said:

“The one who raises my Sonnat (Practice) has revived me, and the one who revived me, will accompany me in the Heaven.” (Sonan-Ol-Nabi)

Imam Ali (a.s.) said:

“The best and the most favorite people is the one who follows the custom of the Messenger Mohammad (a.s.) and searches for the thoughts which have been left by him.” (Qurar-Al-Hekam, P.110.).

Imam Sadeq (a.s.) also said:

“It is unpleasant to me that somebody dies while one of the Prophet’s practices has been left undone by him.” (Makarem-Ol-Akhlagh, vol.1; P.41).

### *The meaning of custom and tradition*

In Arabic language “Adab” means custom and good manner. This word is used in Quran, in way to invite the people towards the good behavior. Due to this matter, the holy Messenger (a.s.) said:

“Quran is a source, and a school of teaching the good manners. Thus get trained through it as much as you can.” (Behar-Ol-Anvar, Vol.92, P.19).

In the above mentioned narration “source” has two meanings:

1- It means Quran is the divine blessing, that God have favored to His people, and has invited all to take advantage of it.

2- Quran is the school of divine training and custom.

“Sunnah” also verbally means the way and the manner of treatment and practice.

Sunnah and Terminology

“Sunnah” in jurisprudence means: “Narration, Actio, and Approval of Infallible persons (a.s.).

An example for the narration and statement is that the Messenger (a.s.) said:

“Marriage is my custom (Sunnah).

Or the other recommendations and advices that are found in the various “Hadith” and “narration books”, and are considered as “Sunnah” or the Islamic practice.

The sample of “Sunnah” as action is like the way the Messenger (a.s.) made his ablution. He used to wash his hands from up to the down, and Imam Sadeq (a.s.) said, “I make my ablution just like the Messenger, with all the details.”. Or the action of teaching the Muslims the Hajj Ceremony by the Messenger, which also is called a “Sunnah”. It means he has left his “Sunnah” (customs and traditions) thorough his narrations and actions.

Approval of the innocent Persons: It is called “Sunnah” also if something is done in front of one of the Innocent Persons, and they have confirmed it, or by their silence have shown satisfaction.

### ***The difference between the customs and traditions, and the religious Jurisprudence***

Most of people do not make any difference between the “Obligatory” and “recommended” precepts. But what makes Islam distinguished is “The Four Percepts”: “obligatory”, “recommended”, “abominable” and “prohibited” laws, that are intresting and attractive for studying.

In this lesson two percepts are going to be studied: the “recommended” and the “abominable”.

Therefore, custom and tradition are rooted from the same Islamic percepts but are not indispensable ones.

By the Islamic custom, we mean what you see in Muslim's behavior and treatment. These acts are for two essential reasons:

1- To obtain God's satisfaction, and be capable of receiving His rewards. Since God likes the good manners. If you ask the Christians why they say their prayers in groups? They will answer because God likes it in this way. And if you ask a Muslim why does he say "In the name of Allah, and the Messenger Sunnah when he brushes his teeth?", he would reply, "as it meets God's satisfaction and it will bring the heavenly reward."

2- To show that he follows a particular religious pattern.

3- To act in the best way and manner, as the religious laws include both permitted and the prohibited affairs; While the religious leaders not only are innocent of doing the prohibited deeds, but also do not do any useless action, or anything out of the logics and interests.

Thus, whatever the Messenger has done had been based on the wisdom. We read in "Nodbah Prayer" about Imam Ali (a.s.) that,

"He exactly followed the Messenger (a.s.) step by step."

It has come in the narrations that wearing the gate ring in the right hand is useful for the health, but how? We do not know. Just as this statement belongs to the Messenger, it must have some reasonable wisdom.

### ***The differences between custom and Ethics***

- In Ethics we face "must" and "must not". While in custom it changes to "better" and "more deserved". Of course, the custom can be a primary step to the ethics.

- The ethics has root in the nature and the soul, while it is not the same for the custom. A normal human being, who has been grown up in a healthy environment, may not be a murderer or a cheater; he has a high inclination towards the goodness and beneficence. The customs have the

practical and imitating aspects. If there is no repeat and limitation, the custom and tradition can not be created.

An example:

Hospitality in ethics: The norm of hospitality itself (Everywhere, even among the primitive tribes).

Hospitality as a custom: The way of hospitality (how to serve the guests, to present a gift, washing the hands of the guests, or how to meet them and say hello, or good bye, etc.)

- The customs are relative, but the ethics are decisive.

As mentioned before, the ethic is a set of “must” and “must not” things. They are essential truths which are the same everywhere. For example, stealing or telling a lie are bad for all people around the world. While everybody admires the honesty, and loyalty. But the customs are relative. They are accepted in some areas, while they may be disagreeable in the other area.

### ***Some important points about the Islamic custom***

1- The best way to publicize the Islam religion is to observe and perform the religious customs that beautifies our behavior. The person who cares to do his daily affairs of life according to the Islamic precepts has a very attractive and noble behavior, and in this way he may attract other people. In many cases, the attractive and humble behavior of the holy Messenger or Imam(s) (a.s.) has made some people to convert in to Islam. For example, the Messenger visited a Jewish patient who used to pour dust on his head every time. This affected the Jewish so much, and this kind courtesy attracted him and caused him to convert to Islam. Also escorting of one of the Imams (a.s.) to see some non-Muslim person off motivated the man to follow the Islam since after.

2- Following the religious customs and traditions unifies the people in action, and causes the social unit, which results in bringing their hearts near together. For example, washing hands before taking meals by

the Muslims, or saying “In the name of God” on the food table collectively, or visiting relatives in the off-days, all and all bring the social unit.

3- The Islamic custom is a harmonized and associated collection, that its parts are related to each other. Thus, as much as we follow them, we can get a better result.

4- An important characteristic of the Islamic customs is that they are accompanied with prayers. A difference between the Islamic traditions and other religions’ customs is that no action is done except by saying prayers, even in satisfying the body needs. As matter of fact, the whole actions of a Muslim is somehow related to God. One who brings his meal with the praying “in the name of God” in fact he takes his meal with a divine light and this action creates a beautiful and effective spiritual atmosphere.